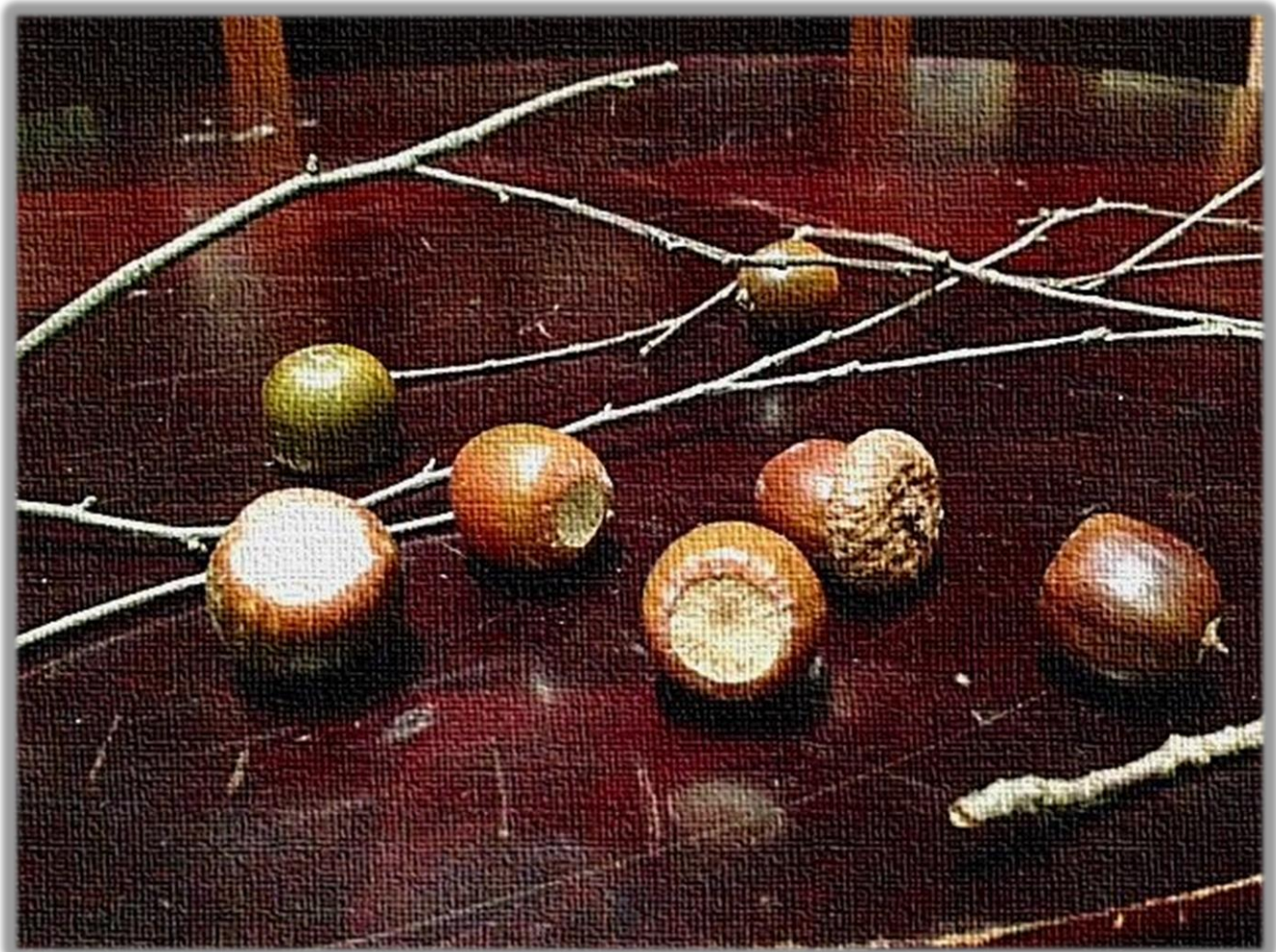


## The Revolutionary Experience: Play Inspired By Nature “Acorn Tops”

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### The Big Idea

There were very few manufactured toys available in the 18<sup>th</sup> Century. Most children played with simple toys made by family members or simply made their own toys using common materials. Every Autumn, the Oak trees native to Maryland provide abundant acorns, a tasty treat for squirrels and pigs, as

well as a great material for young toymakers . These acorns were gathered by children and used to make various toys and games, such as spinning tops.

Visitors will gather acorns and small sticks from around the Mount Clare Mansion, then use them to build and play with a spinning top made from natural materials and tools available to children in the 1770's. The larger the variety of acorns and sticks



available, the more creative exploration is possible! This activity works well with individual families as well as groups.

### Activity Supplies and Materials

- Acorns, chestnuts, or other large nuts (abundant each Fall)
- Thin wooden sticks or branches
- Iron nails or awl (no sharp points)



## Activity Instructions

1. Gather acorns and small sticks surrounding the Oak trees near the Mansion. Make sure to gather acorns of varied size and shape.

2. Remove the acorn cap, if needed, and insert a nail or awl into the center of the light brown “stalk” area, as shown.



3. Push the nail halfway through the acorn, then remove the nail.



4. Insert a small stick or wooden matchstick into the hole, as shown.



5. Balance the top on the pointy tip of the acorn, called the style, and give it a good spin.



Philippe Mercier 1689-1760

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*Boy in Blue Coat with Spinning Top, 1750*



Jean-Baptiste-Siméon Chardin 1699-1779

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*Boy with a Spinning Top, 1738*

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