Among the whimsical whimwhams (toys) and old fashioned frolics (games) fancied by our forefathers, the game of “The Fox and The Geese” amused both child and adult then as it does today. However, it was not purchased from the Sentimental Preceptor, as early eighteenth Century toy makers were called, but was handcrafted of almost any material available and was an adult game before it was introduced to children.

The game is said to have been brought to the American Colonies during the Revolution. There is some question as to who brought it, the Hessian mercenary troops or the French troops under Lafayette. Most likely both troops brought it with them from Europe. It was a popular board game among the soldiers for it offered them entertainment during moments of relaxation. Their playing grid was oftentimes ruled on the ground beside a campfire, with pebbles used for markers. If cardboard was available, it was used with kernels of dried corn or beans for the fox and the geese.

The rules of the game are simple. It calls for two players, one to represent the fox and the other to represent the geese. The object of the game is for the geese to advance across the board without being captured by the fox. Playing roles are exchanged at the beginning of each set.

The fox starts from the center of the board and the geese are arranged at one end of the board as you will see in the following diagram.

The fox can move in any direction and must jump geese if the geese demand that he do so.

Now that you have some history of the game and the rules, the illustration will show you how to make the game board.

Materials needed:
(A) Cypress or Balsa wood—8” x 8” x 1” thick, or hardwood if preferred.
(B) One colored marble for the fox.
(C) Fifteen marbles of another color for the geese.

Construction:
Lay out lines and depressions on top of the board with felt tip pen and cut them with a router. Sand board smooth. Bevel edge if desired.

This game board is still handcrafted throughout the Appalachian Mountains in the same fashion our forefathers made them for the children of the post-Revolutionary days. It can also be found in modern toy shops, but made of wood or more generally of plastic.

What with an emphasis today upon the do-it-yourself technique, it may not be too much to hope that the present generation will be inspired to try their hand at making a “Fox and Geese Frolic” that can be passed from generation to generation as whimwhams and frolics once were.

Whirligigs, whimmydiddles and a frolic of “Battledore and Shuttles” are fun and worthy subjects of a future issue. Interested readers are encouraged to write to the Broward Legacy to request instruction for yesteryear toys they might like to make. Their Sentimental Preceptress will try to provide them with the basic ingredients.
Starting Position

WITH \( \frac{1}{4}'' \) diameter round Router Cutter, make 33 depressions \( \frac{1}{2}'' \) diameter and \( \frac{1}{4}'' \) deep.

Cut lines for 20 squares 1'' X 1'' with Vee Router.