Traveling for months got pretty boring for everyone, but there were ways to have fun, too. This game was played by children when the wagons were stopped for nooning, while waiting to cross a flooded river, or while waiting for hunters to bring back meat or lost mules and oxen. A Mormon girl traveling to Utah wrote about playing this game in her travel diary.

Materials

Playing field
4–6 sticks for each side
Players for 2 teams, at least 6 on each side

Divide the players into two equal teams. Line out the playing field so it has two lines about 30- to 60-feet apart. Mark an area at each end, about 6 by 10 feet, to be each team’s prison.

Place an equal number of sticks on the ground in each prison. Space them out across the length of the prison.

Begin the game by one side sending out a player to dare the opponents to tag her. One of the enemy starts to chase her and she runs for home.

Home is the safe area behind the line. If she is tagged before she can make it to home, she is a prisoner and must immediately go over and stand in the enemy’s prison. She goes there alone, because the one who tagged her gets chased by another player from her...
team, who goes into the playing field. Players try to run across the field and free prisoners held by the other side. If the player who runs across tags a prisoner, she is free. Prisoners need keep only 1 foot inside the prison, so it is easier to tag their hands. A team must rescue all its players who are being held in prison before they can steal any of the sticks held there. If there are no players in prison, the players try to take 1 stick at a time back to their home. Players can’t be tagged on the way back home with a stick.

The first team to take all of the sticks from the other team wins.

People faced not only hardships on the trail, but sometimes tragic conditions.
Here’s what one girl wrote in the spring of 1847:
The past winter has seen a strange fever raging here. It seems to be contagious and it is raging terribly. Nothing seems to stop it but to tear up and take a six-month trip across the Plains with ox teams to the Pacific Ocean.