barrel, then pushed it through as far as possible with the ramrod. It needed to be about flush with the end. When we forced another pellet into the barrel and pushed it through rapidly with the ramrod, the first pellet was forced out with considerable velocity and a loud "POP". We never aimed the pop gun at a person but the pellets were probably too soft to hurt even if we accidentally hit somebody. We tried to keep the pellets slightly moist because they shrank rapidly when they dried and would no longer fit tightly into the barrel.

Perhaps the most popular of all summer-time games was marbles or "mibs." Just about every boy carried a bag of marbles and those with the most marbles seemed to get the most respect. Marbles were traded much like baseball cards are traded today. There were several different kinds and qualities of marbles with corresponding differences in prices. As far as I know, marbles were originally made for "shooting" from a person's hand, as in mibs. A marble was "shot" by cradling it tightly in the bent index finger, placing the knuckles on the ground and then forcing the marble forward with a flipping motion of the thumb. With sufficient practice, most people can achieve reasonable accuracy and range.

I remember playing two games with marbles. One involved a sequence of three holes in the ground. Each player made one shot per turn and attempted to negotiate the three holes in order, then a much smaller hole, usually placed on a slope to make it more difficult. If a player's marble fell into one of the holes, he earned another shot. A player could play defensively by trying to knock another player's marble away from a hole when it was close. The game was always played on bare, well-packed, smooth ground.

The other marble game was called "keeps." A large circle was scratched into the ground and each player was required to place the same number of marbles somewhere in the circle. Each player in turn got one shot from anywhere he chose outside the circle. A marble knocked out of the circle could be kept by the shooter and it earned him the right to shoot again. If a player knocked a marble out of the circle and his shooter stayed inside, he could shoot again from where his shooter stopped. If it came out of the circle along with the other marble, he got another shot from outside the circle. If a shooter stayed inside the circle without knocking another marble out, it became "fair game" for other players to shoot at. Players usually used their best marbles as shooters because they could be shot more accurately. Some of us kids who couldn't afford to buy good marbles were occasionally able to claim one in a game of keeps. As in any competitive activity, some boys took the games of marbles very seriously.