



ALPHABET BLOCKS



Patented By:
Adeline Dutton Train Whitney



Braille Alphabet Blocks



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Adeline Dutton Train Whitney (1824 – 1906)

Adeline Dutton Train Whitney was an American poet and writer of books for girls. Although she is best known as a poet and writer, she also patented a set of alphabet blocks for children. The original alphabet blocks were made of wood, and over the years have gone through many transformations. They are found in wood, plastic, inflatable plastic, hard plastic foam, and even a Braille version is now available. However, whatever their form, they continue to imitate Whitney's original alphabet blocks model.

Adeline Dutton Train was born on September 15, 1824 in Boston, Massachusetts. She was the daughter of Enoch Train and Adeline Dutton. Her father was the founder of a line of packet ships, which operated between Boston, Massachusetts and Liverpool, England. A packet ship is a vessel employed to carry post office mail packets to and from British colonies and outposts. Since this was a prosperous business, she grew up in luxury, and was well educated. She attended the school of George B. Emerson in Boston from 1837 to 1842. On November 7, 1843, at the age of 19, she married Seth Dunbar Whitney, a wealthy merchant who was twenty years older than she was. She left Boston, and went to live with him in Milton, Massachusetts.

After having her four children, Whitney started her writing career when she was in her thirties. She first wrote poems and stories for local journals, and after a period, she published her first book – Mother Goose for Grown Folks – in 1859. She wrote mainly for young girls, championing conservative values, and promoting the message that a woman's happiest place is in the home. Her values and belief that the home was the source of all

goodness made her books very popular among parents, and her books sold extremely well throughout her life. Her books conveyed a message that the people during that time wanted to hear. Some of her books went through 20 printings, and one sold more than a thousand copies in one month.

Whitney was a staunch opponent of women's suffrage, and took no part in public life, which was in accordance with the message in her books. She died in Milton, Massachusetts on March 20, 1905 at the age of eighty-one.

Alphabet Blocks

For centuries, parents understanding the connection between play and development have made alphabet blocks standard equipment of the well-stocked toy box. In 19th century America, these toys were found in most schools, and marketed as tools to help children recognize shapes of letters before learning to read. Today, virtually all American preschools and many home playrooms have at least one set of alphabet blocks. Currently, Uncle Goose Toys and Old Fashioned Blocks produce and manufacture these toys.

Parents know that these blocks carry educational value, but children like them because their colors delight the eye, their pictures provoke stories, and their numbers, patterns, and symbols look nice piled up. Alphabet blocks with just one letter on each block are a great toy for preschool children. They can learn a great deal through playing with them. Not only can a child become the architect of great buildings, roads or skyscrapers (which are fun to knock down), but building can also help their coordination skills.

Children who enter kindergarten knowing many letter names tend to have an easier time learning to read than children who have not learned these skills. It is unreasonable to believe that children will be able to read until they can recognize and name a number of letters. To read, children must be able to recognize letters and know how to connect these individual letters and sometimes combinations of letters with the sounds of spoken words.

Braille alphabet blocks are now available. They have embossed letters and the corresponding Braille cells are impressed into two sides of each of the 1-3/4" colorful wooden blocks. Realistic animal drawings and names, plus numbers and letters are stamped (not impressed) into the other sides. Children and adults can learn Braille by tracing the letters in association with the Braille dots. This is a wonderful product for the blind because it can help children learn while having fun.

Alphabet blocks are one of thirty-six toys that have been enshrined in the National Toy Hall of Fame. This organization recognizes contributions of toys and games that have sustained their popularity for many years. The National Toy Hall of Fame was established in 1998, and was originally housed at A.C. Gilbert's Discovery Village in Salem, Oregon, but was moved in 2002 to the Strong Museum (now the Strong – National Museum of Play) in Rochester, New York after it outgrew its original home.

Chronology of Adeline Dutton Train Whitney

- **1824:** **Born in Boston, Massachusetts**
- 1842: Married Seth Dunbar Whitney
- 1844: First child born, Mary Adeline
- 1846: Second child born, Theodore Train
- 1848: Third child born, Maria Caroline
- 1853: Fourth child born, Caroline Leslie
- 1857: "Footsteps on the Seas" (poem)
- 1859: Published *Mother Goose for Grown Folks* (new editions in 1870 & 1882)
- 1868: Published *Boys at Chequasset*
- 1863: Published *Faith Gartney's Girlhood*
- 1865: Published *The Gayworthys*
- 1866: Published *A Summer in Leslie Goldthwaite's Life*
- 1868: Published *Patience Strong's Outings*
- 1869: Published *Hitherto*
- 1870: Published *We Girls*
- 1871: Published *Real Folks*
- 1872: Published *Pansies* (poems)
- 1873: Published *The Other Girls*
- 1876: Published *Sights and Insights*
- 1878: Published *Just How: A Key to the Cook Books*
- 1880: Published *Odd or Even*
- **1882:** **Patented a set of Alphabet Blocks**

- 1885: Published *Bonnyborough*
- 1886: Published *Homespun Yarns*
- 1886: Published *Holy Tides*
- 1887: Published *Daffodils*
- 1888: Published *Bird Talk*
- 1890: Published *Ascutney Street*
- 1891: Published *A Golden Gossip*
- 1894: Published *Square Pegs*
- 1896: Published *Friendly Letters to Girl Friends*
- 1897: Published *The Open Mystery: A Reading of the Mosaic Story*
- 1900: Published *The Integrity of Christian Science*
- **1906: Died in Milton, Massachusetts**

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