

American Games: A Historical Perspective /

by Bruce Whitehill

Historians investigating board games of the world have traditionally examined ancient or early games, using artifacts, drawings, and available text. From this, they hoped to learn more about the cultures in which these games flourished, how the games moved from one territory to another (trade routes), and how they changed and evolved in different cultures. Traditional classic games such as chess, checkers (draughts), Mancala, Pachisi, Mill (Mühle or Nine Mens Morris), Fox and Geese, and the Game of Goose, among others, have been studied in great detail by many scholars. Some of these games were played on quite elaborate, carved wooden boards, and, as such, they were available only to a privileged few. In the middle 1800s, however, advances in lithography and in techniques of the mass production of printed matter allowed games to be commercially produced in large quantities. They were also inexpensive enough to be affordable by the less affluent. This meant that games could reach a larger portion of the population, and become a staple in more homes.

What purposes have games served in society? Were they recreational or were they intended as educational or instructional instruments? And who manufactured and supplied these games to the public?

In the United States, a study of games poses one immediate limit for the researcher: the term “ancient” hardly applies to a country that was not formally “discovered” until 1492. Well into the 1800s, most board games played in North America were of European origin. Culin (1907) lists the board games played by the American Indians under the heading “European games,” though games he categorized as “dice games” are actually board games that use dice to determine movement. However, these games were made by individuals and were not commercially manufactured for sale.

The emergence of small publishing companies beginning to produce games in the United States after 1860 led to a major game industry within thirty years. Yet little has been studied about commercially manufactured American games. Murray (1952) lists in his index of games arranged by countries only three game variants originating in the U.S.A.: Tit-Tat-Toe (Noughts and Crosses), Acey-deucey (French or Double Backgammon), and Chuba, a Mancala variant. (He failed to recognize Halma as American, which it is). Since the game industry in America by that time was nearly a century old, one must assume that Murray did not consider American games to have enough “history,” or else, he was not interested in proprietary games (those owned by a particular company), though Chuba, by Milton Bradley, was.

This article attempts to provide a history of American games (games manufactured in the United States), with reference to the companies that produced them and the environment in which they flourished. These games provide a mirror of the American culture in which they were made, and the examination spreads some light on the values of the people who purchased and played them. Just as a study of ancient artifacts and games reveal something about the early cultures in which they were found, so do the games mass produced within a populace yield valuable insights into the values and demeanor of that society.

An eclectic mix of research methods was employed over nearly two decades to amass the material that formed the basis of this paper. A search of the literature did not yield much in the way of books on American games history, but locating early company game catalogs and obituaries of leading figures in the industry did. Newspaper reports and magazine articles provided incidental information and, more importantly, sources for additional data. Books by early researchers, like Culin, Falkener, and Murray, helped set the scene, while newer authors, such as Anspach, Levy & Weingartner, Orbanes, Peek, and Williams, revealed information on the American game industry of today. And the beautifully illustrated, oversized books of Bell and Love imparted inspiration. Playthings magazine was an excellent source, as were old American International Toy Fair directories, the promotional booklets of Parker Brothers, and the book by Milton Bradley president, James J. Shea. A study of game patents and early print advertising was illuminating as well. But perhaps most importantly, a considerable amount of knowledge was gleaned from a study of the actual products – the board games themselves – which collectors (including this author) have acquired, and by comparing many of these games to the events of the time period in which they were produced. Also, the lore of the industry, from the anecdotal to the pragmatic, was drawn from years of working behind the walls of the buildings in which some of those products were designed, manufactured, and marketed. Finally, the insight gained through personal interviews with game inventors, marketers, game company presidents, and others in the game industry, as well as their descendants, was crucial to putting a human perspective on all the information realized.

Before Mass-Production

Centuries ago, game boards (the ones that have survived) were carved in wood, etched or drawn on stone and slate, or even woven into baskets. There is evidence that board games were played over 5000 years ago. A gameboard for the game of *Senat* was discovered in 1922 in the tomb of King Tutankhamen where it had been buried for over 3200 years. Some of these ancient games have survived only in or near the area in which they were introduced, while others have been taken up around the world and are still played today. Identifying the earliest dates and countries of origin for ancient games is difficult because these games have evolved over the centuries, and sometimes the modern successor bears little resemblance to its early ancestor. In looking for origins, historians examine implements and play patterns.

Classic games are ones that have been played around the world for generations, in one form or other: checkers, called draughts in England, dates back to the 12th century – it is played in some areas of the world on a board that's eight spaces by eight, and in others on a 10 x 10 board; chess was said to have originated either in India in 600 A.D. or China before 200 A.D.; and backgammon, a variation of a game called *Tabula* (known as Chasing the Girls in Iceland), goes back to the 1st century. European favorites that at various times have had a following in the United States include Fox and Geese, which had its origin around the year 1300, possibly in Iceland, and the Game of Goose which

originated in Europe around 1500. By way of contrast, the earliest known American Game of Goose was printed in 1851.

The origin of many ancient games can be traced to Africa and to the Orient. One of the oldest boards found showing the game of Nine Men's Morris, also known as Mill or Morelles, was found in Egypt; the game has been popular throughout the world for centuries. Go, an ancient game from China, became the national game of Japan, and has earned a great following in the United States. Mah Jongg, the game that became a craze in the U.S. in the early 1920s, had been the game of China for hundreds of years. The Game of India, one of the most widely-played games in the world, is centuries old, though its date of origin is still a matter of speculation. Milton Bradley and a company called McLoughlin Brothers produced the game in the United States around the turn-of-the-century, while in 1896 a similar version was being played in England under the name Ludo. The most famous Game of India, however, was produced in this country in 1867 as Parcheesi, still one of the most popular games today. All these classic games, originating in other parts of the world, found their way to America, where they are now mass-produced.

Trade routes provided a pathway for games to reach other lands; the personal possessions or memories of travelers could serve to establish a game in a new culture. Strategic in their nature, early games were often table simulations of conquest, and allowed one player to best another without the loser suffering perilous consequences. Games of pure strategy required the capture of opponent's pieces, the positioning or alignment of one's own pieces, or the entrapment of an opponent's piece. Playing board games was one avenue of mental stimulation – activities requiring less cerebral exercise were relegated to sports and skill and action pastimes.

The Industrial Revolution, which began around 1760 in England and later in other countries, allowed for machinery to take over much of the work of busy hands. The amount of leisure time available to workers increased. Early, commercially produced gameboards were printed on paper, or on linen-backed paper, and sold to those who could afford both the cost and the time required to play. Just after the mid-1800s, however, advances in printing technique resulted in more games being manufactured at a lower cost, and allowed a greater number of people to own and play games. By the end of the 19th century, games were as much a part of the western family as was the new urbanization.

The First American Games

The publication and manufacture of board games in the United States is, by European standards, an industry still in its infancy. As might be expected, most of the first American-made games were based on ideas brought over from Europe, especially Britain, though the games may have originated in Africa or the Orient. According to McClinton (1970), games of travel, history, and geography were advertised in the Pennsylvania Packet as early as 1775, but it is presumed these games were of British manufacture. Though card games using special cards (rather than playing cards) were manufactured

in the United States in the late 1700s or early 1800s, American-made board games did not appear until much later.

Because cards and game boards were printed on card stock or paper, the earliest games were produced by lithographers and publishing companies. The games, therefore, were recorded as being “published” rather than “manufactured.” It is interesting to note that some of the inventors of these early published games were given credit – something not seen very often in the American games of today. It is possible that the concept of being published, as is an author, lent itself more to crediting the creator. Once games were “manufactured,” the inventor’s name, so it seems, was lost among the multitude of artists, designers, writers, and engineers responsible for bring the product to readiness for market.

No commercially produced board game has been found in the United States prior to 1822, when two games, *Travelers’ Tour Through the Unites States* and *Travelers’s Tour Through Europe*, were produced by New York booksellers, F. & R. Lockwood. The lack of English imports after trade restrictions with Great Britain were imposed in 1809 may have paved the way for companies such as Lockwood to attempt the manufacture of their own games, but it is curious that no other games have been discovered from this period.

There is no record of an American-made board game being manufactured for the next twenty-one years! However, very little research has been done, and one would expect to find other games invented and sold, at least on a regional basis. In 1843, a small, Massachusetts publishing company, W. & S.B. Ives, produced *The Mansion of Happiness*, which was little more than a direct copy of its English namesake originally published around 1800. The significance of this game is its theme of moral instruction: those who pursue vice are punished (sent back), and those who possess admirable virtues are rewarded. On the gameboard, printed under the title was, “an instructive moral and entertaining amusement.” This was followed by a poem:

“At this amusement each will find
A moral fit t’ improve the mind;
It gives to those their proper due,
Who various paths of vice pursue,
And shows (while vice destruction brings)
That good from every virtue springs.
Be virtuous then and forward press,
To gain the seat of happiness.”

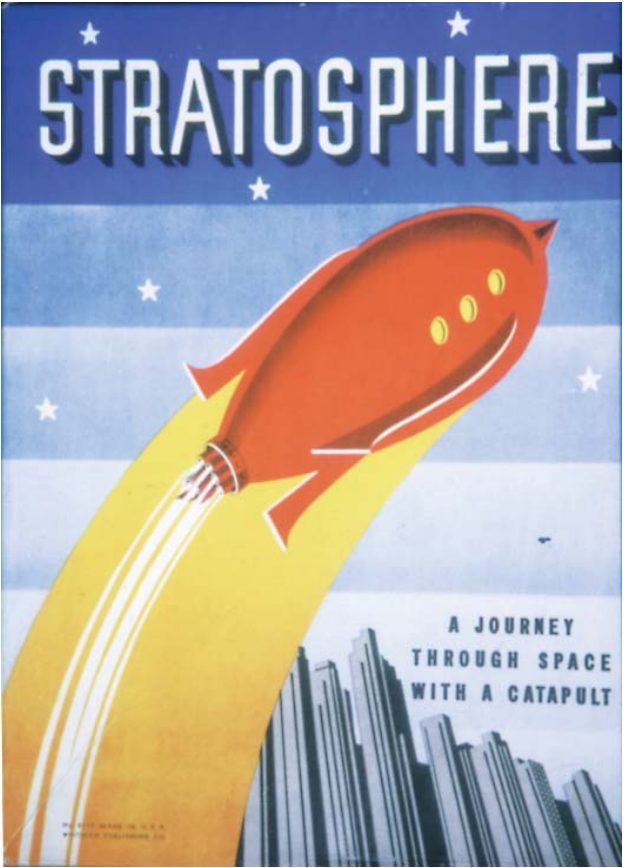
Movement along the inwardly spiraling path toward the Mansion of Happiness was governed by a teetotum; when a player landed on a space denoting a virtue, the player was directed to move ahead toward the Mansion of Happiness; when landing on a space illustrating one of the vices, the player was instructed to move back toward start. For example, a player who landed on space number fourteen, marked “Passion,” had to return to space number six, “The Water”; the rule read: “Whoever gets in a Passion must be taken to the Water and have a ducking (sic) to cool him.” Landing on Idleness sent



Parker Brothers, The Mansion of Happiness, 1894



Eddie Cantor's Game "Tell It To The Judge", 1936



Parker Brothers, Stratosphere, 1930

the player to Poverty; players on the Road to Folly had to return to Prudence; the Perjurer was put in Pillory (a wooden framework with holes for the head and hands); the Sabbath Breaker was "taken to the Whipping Post and whipt"; any player who reached the Summit of Dissipation (a state of wastefulness) went to Ruin. The tone of the game can be summed up best by two of the rules:

"Whoever possesses Piety, Honesty, Temperance, Gratitude, Prudence, Truth, Chastity, Sincerity, Humility, Industry, Charity, Humanity, or Generosity is entitled to advance...toward the Mansion of Happiness.

Whoever possesses Audacity, Cruelty, Immodesty, or Ingratitude, must return to his former situation...and not even think of Happiness, much less partake of it."

The moral fervor of the period was reflected in other Ives' games, such as a game whose title said it all: *The Game of Pope or Pagan, or the Siege of the Stronghold of Satan* by the Christian Army, published in 1844. The *National Game of the American Eagle*, another 1844 entry, offered a political bent with its teachings, including this surprising instruction: "He who sacrifices his principles by becoming an Office-seeker moves back," whereas "Whoever possesses Disinterestedness can proceed."

This theme of moving forward for good traits or deeds and back for unfavorable characteristics or conduct is evidenced in many games published into the 1890s, especially the "Messenger Boy" and "Errand Boy" games in which the hard-working youth could rise to become president of the company. This concept was based on the rags-to-riches principle fostered by Horatio Alger, an American writer popular during the 1860s and '70s. The heroes of his books for boys were characters who achieved success by leading exemplary lives and who struggled to overcome such adversity as poverty.

During this period of religious and moral fervor, gambling also was considered unacceptable in polite society. The dice so often associated with gambling games were termed "tools of the devil." During the Civil War (1860-1864), soldiers sometimes carried dice to gamble with, in spite of puritanical sentiments against them. But a soldier would often remove the dice from his pockets before going into battle, so that if he were killed in combat, the dice would not be included as part of his personal effects sent back to the family. Civil War battlefields are an excellent place to unearth early bone dice.

To avoid the stigma attached to dice, many early game makers used "teetotums" – devices like spinning tops; the numbers 1-6 (or 1-8) were printed on a hexagonal (or octagonal) piece of cardboard; then a small, wooden shaft with a pointed tip was pushed through the middle of the card, creating a balanced implement that one could spin between the thumb and forefinger. When the teetotum stopped spinning, the uppermost number dictated the number of spaces (or the direction) the player was allowed to move.

W. & S.B. Ives, of Salem, Massachusetts, is credited with being the first major manufacturer of games in the U.S. The firm published at least two dozen games in the mid 1800s, including one of the first card games, *Dr. Busby*. *The Mansion of Happiness*, from 1843, was once thought to be the first American board game. (Parker Brothers bought out Ives in 1887 and reissued *The Mansion of Happiness* in 1894; on the gameboard was written the line, "The first board game ever published in America" – a statement now known to be untrue.) Ives dominated the scene until 1850, when John McLoughlin star-

ted selling hand-colored card games through his book publishing business.

McLoughlin developed one of the earliest assembly lines in the U.S. – different artists were responsible for different colors, so the cards passed from artist to artist until all the colors had been added. In 1858 McLoughlin formed McLoughlin Brothers, a company that was to manufacture what are considered today some of the most beautiful games ever published in the United States. McLoughlin Bros. reached its heyday in the 1880s and was a prolific manufacturer of games until the company was bought out by Milton Bradley in 1920.

The Beginning of an American Industry

The American game business did not take hold as an industry until 1860 when Milton Bradley, a lithographer, made vast improvements in the printing process, allowing for the mass-production of color images. His first game, *The Checkered Game of Life*, was another “morality” game, designed as a path that took the player from Infancy to Happy Old Age. *Playthings* magazine later described it as “the first game with a purpose (that) taught a lesson of success through integrity and right living,” though many earlier games shared that purpose. *The Checkered Game of Life* used a teetotum to determine if a player could move one or two spaces left, right, or diagonally. Many spaces were marked with traits or consequences. Landing on Bravery sent the player to Honor, Perseverance to Success, and Ambition to Fame; Gambling led to Ruin, and Idleness to Disgrace. Bradley’s success was furthered by the introduction of what could be considered the first “travel games” – small versions of *The Checkered Game of Life* designed to fit in the pocket or knapsack of soldiers during the Civil War.

By 1860, innovations in printing allowed for the mass production of games, and the work of the hand-coloring artist all but disappeared. Board games were made by pasting a sheet of colored lithography on a piece of cardboard. What is interesting is that the 18" x 18" board size used in the 1870s or even earlier (Milton Bradley's 1876 game of *Bamboozle* for example) is the same size used for most of the gameboards today, a result of industry standardization in printing and manufacturing.

Bradley was prolific. He patented the first croquet game in the U.S. in 1866 and established a set of rules. He brought the zoetrope (moving picture machine) to the U.S., produced paper cutters, and even sold a print of a beardless Abe Lincoln – which would be worth a fortune to collectors today. Following the end of the depression in 1879, Milton Bradley kept pace with the rapid changes in theories of education, and his company produced school supplies and optical toys in addition to educational games for youngsters and their families. According to James J. Shea in *It's All in the Game*, the book documenting the history of Milton Bradley, Bradley “devoted himself increasingly to experiments in the development of material for a universal kindergarten system.” Though he lost money at first, his company eventually became a profitable leader in educational material for children. His was the most productive company of the period, and by 1900 he had incorporated, with offices in New York, Kansas, Atlanta, San Francisco, and Philadelphia.

After Bradley's early success, other printing and publishing companies began producing games. In 1867, Elisha Selchow took over a toy and game selling business in New York and just three years later sold one of the most popular games of the era, Pigs in Clover, which was actually a dexterity puzzle. His firm of E.G. Selchow & Co. later became Selchow & Righter, a name not particular well known in the U.S. in spite of a 119-year history and three very famous games: Trivial Pursuit, which it introduced to the United States' market from Canada in 1984, Scrabble, first mass-marketed in 1953 and still considered the world's number one word game, and Parcheesi, The Game of India.. Parcheesi, based on the Indian game of Pachisi, was introduced around 1870 and was trademarked in 1874 – one of the oldest trademarks given to an American game. E.G. Selchow and Selchow & Righter were "jobbers" – that is, they sold other company's games. In 1877, the E.G. Selchow catalog listed 149 Milton Bradley games and puzzles, 45 McLoughlin games and blocks, plus dolls, iron and tin savings banks, calliopes, boxing gloves, lamps, barometers, pocket stoves, artificial ivy, and a toy mouse. (The company began manufacturing its own products in 1927 under the guidance of company president Harriet T. Righter, who had taken over in 1923, years after both her father, John Righter, and Elisha Selchow had died.)

Selchow & Righter,
Parcheesi. 1899
advertisement.

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The depression of the 1870s probably delayed the entry of other companies into the market. Then, in 1883, fueling a passion for inventing games, George S. Parker started a company in his own name. Five years later one of his brothers joined the firm and Parker Brothers was created. The company's 1894 catalog stated, "Our new factory (in Salem, Massachusetts) is the only large building in America devoted exclusively to parlor games." Whereas Milton Bradley's games seemed to be aimed predominantly at children and the family, Parker geared a number of products to the family/adult market.

Along with the morality games of the period, many of the early American games, like the ancient games, were strategy games that employed tactical maneuvers closely associated with warfare, the goal being to outmaneuver or outrace an opponent, or to trap an opponent's pieces or remove them from play. Classic games brought over from England, Europe and Asia included The Game of Goose, Fox and Geese, Mancala, and of course, checkers, chess, and backgammon. Only one 19th century strategy game invented in the United States is still widely played around the world – but not in the U.S.! Though other authors have mistakenly attributed its origins to England, the game of Halma, forerunner of Chinese Checkers, was invented in 1885 by George Howard Monks; Monks, often correctly credited as the inventor, had family that visited England, but he was American born and developed the game in Massachusetts. Halma was produced by E.I. Horsman in 1885, and, for a short time, by Milton Bradley as well. Bradley and Horsman (a company more famous for its dolls than games) got into a legal battle over Halma. Eventually, Bradley dropped Halma and issued a similar game, calling it Eckha, while Horsman was billing itself as “The Halma Company.” Meanwhile, the British equivalent of Halma was being marketed as Hoppity.



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Halma. 1890 advertisement.



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Eckha. 1889 advertisement.

Until the great influx of immigrants during the 1880s began to change American society, the concept of leisure time had not varied much from Colonial days. As pointed out in Bradley's *The Checkered Game of Life*, Idleness lead to Disgrace. Even the youngest children had much more responsibility, be it on a farm, or in a shop or factory, than the youth of today. Amusements were allowed, of course, but games were expected.

ted to be instructive and educational. A large proportion of the nineteenth century games were about history and geography. (The most popular card game was Authors). Many board games used maps, and card games frequently contained questions and answers – factual, educational versions of the trivia that is still the trend today.

The family unit was strong, and most games were made to be played by parents and children both; many of the early game box cover illustrations showed three generations and both sexes playing the game. One might surmise that the element of family togetherness was as important as the outcome of the game, or its intrinsic educational or entertainment value.

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1898 advertisement.

By the 1890s, game production in the United States was a full-scale industry. The industry was centered in the Northeast, with most of the major manufacturers being in Massachusetts or in the New York metropolitan area. One noteworthy company, R. Bliss, was in Rhode Island, and Pennsylvania had its share of game companies, as did,

to some extent, Ohio and Illinois. Rebounding from the depression of the 1870s, companies such as McLoughlin Brothers, Parker Brothers, Milton Bradley, and J.H. Singer produced well-made games with exceptional lithography; some of the games were quite large, using wood for the box frame and incorporating bone dice, metal tokens and figural wooden playing pieces turned on a lathe.

Many other companies produced games in the United States during the mid and late 1800s, but none had the impact of Ives, McLoughlin, and the three giants in the industry, Milton Bradley, E.G. Selchow, and George S. Parker. McLoughlin had been selling games in New York for ten years when Milton Bradley first started his company in Massachusetts; independently, the two companies, along with Selchow the following decade and Parker the next, began what was to become the game industry as it is known today. By the late 1880s, Parker had the rights to Ives' games, and in 1920, Bradley bought McLoughlin; Bradley, Selchow, and Parker, remained independent, family-owned companies until the latter half of the twentieth century.

By the 1880s, the games being produced in the United States reflected what was happening around the world and on the home front. The completion of the transcontinental railroad led to numerous games with a train motif. Velocipedes (a bicycle with large front wheel) were pictured on game boxes when they were the rage on pavement, until bicycles with equal size wheels – and the games that showcased them – passed them. The famed Brooklyn Bridge began to appear on game box covers soon after its completion. Skyscrapers led to the skylines used in game illustrations, and when the Statue of Liberty moved from France to New York, it moved also onto gameboards and box covers. The trolley was pictured on countless game boxes after the electric railway made its debut in Virginia. Nellie Bly's record race around the globe (beating the fictional Phileas Fogg's 80 days) became the subject of a beautiful McLoughlin game. Expositions such as the Columbian Exposition of 1893 provided great visuals for game designers.

When George Du Maurier's "Trilby" was serialized in the magazine, Harper's Monthly, it was instantaneously translated into a game (by E.I. Horsman). Soon after Marconi invented the wireless telegraph, numerous companies released games with a telegraph theme. The Klondike gold rush in Alaska became a potential moneymaker for the companies that produced the many games that followed. And by the end of the century, the Spanish American War became the first conflict that could be played by thousands at home, as American companies produced patriotic pastimes popularizing (and benefiting from the popularity of) such names as Roosevelt, Dewey, and the Roughriders. Many events in American society became the topics of games produced by an industry that was increasingly more interested in selling items of popular culture than merchandising for our moral and educational benefit.

A New Century, a New Culture

By the early part of the 20th century, commercially manufactured boxed board games, card games, and dexterity games had become a staple of American leisure life; games could be played for sheer enjoyment, not just the academic or moral teachings so often

associated with games decades before. Games were no longer merely an adjunct of a company's lithography business or an off-shoot of a manufacturing concern focusing on toys. Companies prospered with games as the predominant products in their line.

Society was changing rapidly in the United States. America had moved westward, but Oklahoma, New Mexico and Arizona (and, of course, Hawaii and Alaska) were not even states yet. Industrialization led to a migration from the farms into the cities. Immigration rose significantly, causing an infusion of different cultures into the U.S. mainstream. There were major advances in transportation and communication. Companies expanded their regional sales areas and competed for the same dollars.

As competition grew, companies turned to cutting costs to increase profits. After 1900, there were fewer large games produced, and wood boxes were used less frequently. Less attention was paid to the ornamentation of the lithographic design. Game production slowed because of the financial panic in 1907, followed by the first World War. By the early 1900s, all the company fathers were gone, and the businesses were left to the children. J.H. Singer was out of business, and, by 1915, John McLoughlin, Milton Bradley, E.G. Selchow and John Richter had died, and Rufus Bliss and E.I. Horsman were no longer making games. Most of the active, smaller companies from the 1800s, such as Clark & Sowdon, and Ottmann, were gone by WWI. In 1920, one of the McLoughlin brothers died and the company was bought by Milton Bradley. The game industry was being run by – and catering to – a new generation.

Parker Brothers cut back on the development of new board games and began to focus more on card games. Parker introduced the now-classic card game *Flinch* in 1902 (the same year it imported *Ping-Pong* into the United States), followed by two others, *Pit* and *Rook*, in 1904 and 1906 respectively; *Rook*, invented by George Parker and sold under a separate company title, the *Rook Card Co.*, became the largest selling card game in the world. Parker Brothers also began manufacturing a line of wood jigsaw puzzles which were of superb quality. In 1909, the company devoted its production entirely to jigsaw puzzles, which later, during the teens and '20s, created quite a craze.

"The Roaring Twenties," a time of gaiety and gangsterism, were a boon to the game industry. The end of the first world war meant that industry could turn from supporting the war effort abroad to helping the home front. Americans felt they had earned the right to enjoy their leisure. Many now-classic games emerged. *Uncle Wiggily*, a character from a series of children's bedtime stories of Howard Garis, was born into *The Uncle Wiggily* game in 1916, quickly growing in popularity as American family life returned to normal. *Mah Jongg* became a fad, and Parker Bros. and Milton Bradley, as well as a host of smaller companies, cashed in. Around the same time, *Chinese Checkers*, introduced by a new company, *J. Pressman Co.*, also became the rage. The discovery of King Tut's tomb in 1922 added to America's interest in the exotic, and a wealth of games were spawned with themes and illustrations of the Orient and other continents.

Alderman-Fairchild (All-Fair) of upstate New York began producing beautiful board and target games, while another new company, *Wilder*, of St. Louis, Missouri, started manufacturing boxed board games with wonderful lithography. *Saalfeld*, a publishing company that added games to its line around 1911, became more prominent. *Wolverine*



Milton Bradley,
Camelot. ca. 1930
advertisement.

Supply & Mfg. began manufacturing games on lithographed metal boards. In 1927, Selchow & Righter Co. stopped jobbing other companies' games and started making their own. The Toy Manufacturers of America, headquartered in New York, became a strong, cohesive force for the industry.

In the new century, many world events and episodes in the development of a growing United States became the subject of games, as games continued to reflect what was happening in society. Games pictured everything from the Zeppelin to the white-clothed Phoebe Snow, an advertising character introduced in 1900 by the DL&W railroad to promote its comfortable and clean passenger line. The Teddy bear, popularized after Theodore "Teddy" Roosevelt spared the life of a bear cub on one of his hunting trips, made bears a frequent image on game boxes and cards. (The Teddy Bear doll, incidentally, was introduced by Ideal after Morris Michton got permission from Roosevelt to use his name; Ideal produced its first games 54 years later, in 1961.) All sorts of animals, given human characteristics, started to appear on game boxes, most likely a result of the "animal dancing" crazes, such as the "Turkey Trot," that gyrated the nation between 1911 and 1913. Robert Peary's success in reaching the North Pole, followed two years later by Roald Amundsen's journey to the South Pole, resulted in games themed in polar exploration; Amundsen, who also took part in the first flight over the North Pole, traveled the Northwest Passage, another area that eventually gave its name to board games.

Games were themed around the first continental airmail route, Lindberg's flight and the development of commercial aviation, Admiral Byrd's building of a "Little America"



Strategy. 1924 advertisement.

base in Antarctica, the Panama Canal, the rise of radio, and the merchandising of the first U.S. shopping centers. America's fascination with transportation and travel, and the nation's fixation with the automobile, have all been translated into many styles of games.

Advertisers used games as premiums to help pitch their products; Woolson Spice Co., from Toledo, Ohio, was prolific in its promotion of Lion Coffee, producing at least 60 card games and numerous small, one-piece thin cardboard board games ranging in topics from Abraham Lincoln (From Log Cabin to White House, 1895) to the circus (1903). Football, golf, basketball, and especially baseball became popular as table-top entertainment. Other sports, like auto racing were also showcased, with the premiere example being the Vanderbilt Cup Race (Bowers & Hard, Connecticut, ca. 1906), which showed a race course going through Roslyn, Lakeville, and Old Westbury, the Long Island towns that had been the locale of the prestigious event since 1900 (prior to the now-famous race courses at Indianapolis and Daytona). Nursery rhymes, such as Mistress Mary, Quite Contrary (Parker Bros., 1905) and fairy tales found their way into game boxes. Outdoor activities, like the game of Duck on the Rock played by throwing small stones at tin cans placed on a large rock, were boxed for indoor play (Duck on the Rock, Milton Bradley, ca. 1910). Fortune telling games were abundant. The establishment of the Boy Scouts in the U.S. and the Girl Scouts two years later led to games on those subjects being produced almost immediately.

In 1911, Milton Bradley introduced the first version of a game that would continue in popularity into the 1950s, Pirate and Traveller; the game was "indorsed (sic) by Educators indispensable in the home circle," although these educators didn't know how to spell "endorsed." Parker's Pollyanna, based on American author Eleanor H. Porter's title character, also began a long run. Movies became the subject of games, as the film industry changed from silents to sound. Historical events provided for home amuse-

ments, such as Chasing Villa, a game from, curiously enough, the Pennsylvania pharmaceutical firm of the Smith, Kline, & French; Pancho Villa was pursued by the U.S. army in Mexico for eleven months after he killed American citizens in New Mexico. Cartoon games made their first group entry into the game industry, from Foxy Grandpa, in 1906 – based on the popular cartoon strip by Carl “Bunny” Schultz – to the favorite cartoon series of the ‘20s, now available in boxed form: Walt & Skee-zix Gasoline Alley Game and Skee-zix (both Milton Bradley), based on Frank King’s “Gasoline Alley” strip; Bringing Up Father Game (Embee Distributors), with numerous comical illustrations based on the comic strip of George McManus; Keeping Up With the Joneses (Phillips), by A.R. “Pop” Momand; and Barney Google & Spark Plug (Milton Bradley), from the pen of Billy De Beck.

Then came the Great Depression of 1929. Because games, like movies, provided inexpensive entertainment during troubled times, the Depression wasn’t felt by the game industry until around 1932. Backgammon was revived and jigsaw puzzles became quite popular. As the fad of miniature golf (born in Tennessee) grew in 1930, so did the number of table golf games that reached the market. That same year, United Airlines offered the first in-flight stewardess service, and Pan American’s “China Clipper” provided the first passenger flights across the Pacific, resulting in cheerful travelers in the air and at the tables that sported the home games. The opening of the Empire State Building, then the world’s highest building, allowed another identifiable icon to grace gameboards and box covers. The National Recovery Administration and the Tennessee Valley Authority were established to help fight the economic inertia, and “NRA” and “TVA” (and later the “WPA,” Works Progress Administration) became initials on a number of gameboards. The Century of Progress, an international exposition in Chicago from 1933–34, hinted at economic recovery and became a new theme for games. Games of high finance became very popular, and, in 1934, Parker Bros. accepted a game that an unknown Charles Darrow had sold for two years on his own, called Monopoly.

The Big Business of Monopoly

Parker Brothers’ big break came when the company bought Monopoly in 1935. No proprietary game had ever gained such popularity around the world. The prevailing story is that the Depression paved the way for a game that allowed people to buy property and make millions, but one wonders why a similar game from a few years earlier, Milton Bradley’s Easy Money, didn’t meet with equal success. The original Easy Money, incidentally, had property cards like Monopoly, but this disappeared in later additions – probably the result of some deal-making with Parker Bros.

Monopoly, once thought to have been a product of the Great Depression, actually began as The Landlord’s Game, patented by Elizabeth Magie in 1904. Ms. Magie ascribed to the principles of economist Henry George, and was hoping to promote the advantages of George’s Single Tax concept. She devised a game in which she aspired to point out the folly of a system of property ownership in which each player attempts to become “monarch of the world.” The game was even adapted for teaching economics at

various schools, including Columbia University where the board took on New York City street names.

The Landlord's Game became fashionable, especially on college campuses, but in its thirty years of evolution, the game lost its original intent – the second half of the game, that part teaching the Single Tax system, was discarded, leaving the game as we know it today, a race for financial dominance. The game was played in many areas of the country, earning the popular title of Monopoly sometime after 1910. In this American folk game, as it had now become, properties on the board were assigned regional street names. The game was brought to Atlantic City where a group of Quakers and their friends made gameboards incorporating the names of local streets.

Charles Darrow, thought by many to be the inventor of Monopoly, actually learned about the game from a friend. Charles Todd misspelled the street name "Marven Gardens" when copying the board from the Atlantic City version; the error, "Marvin Gardens," remained on the board that Darrow later revised and copyrighted in 1933. He offered it to Parker Brothers a year later, but Parker rejected the game, pointing out 49 basic problems, including that the game took too long to play. So Darrow printed up about 500 or more sets and sold Monopoly on his own; his version did not come with any playing pieces but instructed the players to use common household objects such as buttons or keys. Eventually, either after learning about Darrow's success in selling his game or because a friend of the Parker family strongly recommended it, the head of Parker Brothers bought the rights and began manufacturing it in 1935. Rich Uncle Pennybags, the mustached character who adorned the Parker Brothers' Monopoly board, game box, and cards, was born a year later.

A number of other well known games owe their origin also to Elizabeth Magie Phillips (her married name by the time these games were produced). Finance, from the Finance Game Co. and then Knapp Electric, Finance and Fortune, by Parker Bros., Easy Money, by Milton Bradley, and possibly Big Business, from Transogram, all derived from The Landlord's Game and all were on the market in 1936, though their origins may have been earlier. In fact, some of these games shared the same patent number – a second patent number given to Ms. Phillips for the revised 1924 version of her game put out by Parker Brothers in 1939. Ms. Phillips was touted as "the famous inventor" of a number of games sold by Parker Brothers; Parker once credited Ms. Phillips as the inventor of Monopoly too, but only up until the expiration of her patent.

According to Philip Orbanes in his book, *The Monopoly Companion*, using the voice of Rich Uncle Pennybags, there were many ways in which Monopoly became big business: the game is marketed in at least 15 languages in 33 countries, and over 100 million sets have been sold world-wide; Parker Brothers manufactures 100 million houses and prints \$50 billion worth of Monopoly money each year; Dunhill produced a Monopoly game with solid gold playing pieces valued at \$25,000; Neiman-Marcus made a set with solid chocolate pieces – and chocolate board – which could be bought for a mere \$600.

In its 1989 Christmas catalog, a respected New York gallery offered what it said was one of the original six to twelve oilcloth Monopoly boards made by Darrow in his own

home. Their asking price: \$50,000. In 1991 the Franklin Mint offered a collectors' edition of Monopoly in a hardwood box with drawers for the money and tokens; the tokens were crafted in solid pewter and embellished with 24 karat gold. The houses and hotels were die-cast metal. The price was cheaper than chocolate: only \$500.

In 1974, a game called Anti-Monopoly was the subject of a trademark infringement suit regarding, primarily, the use of the word "Monopoly" in the name. In the decision handed down in 1977, Parker Brothers prevailed, and thousands of Anti-Monopoly games, by court order, were buried in a land fill. The inventor, Ralph Anspach, then marketed the game as "The Trust Busters Game" under the title ANTI _____* (*a figure was depicted whispering "Shhhh.") As a result of an appeal heard in 1982, the earlier decision was overturned, and Anti-Monopoly got its name back. Anspach has continued to sell his game around the world, and he published what he says is the true history of Monopoly (Anspach, 1998), based to a large extent on the court proceedings with Parker Brothers. His book recounts, among other things, how Parker Bros. knew about – and covered up – the true origins of Monopoly. Anspach even located the man (Dan Layman) who played Monopoly in 1926 and later produced the game in Indianapolis under the name Finance; a letter he wrote to this effect was published in Time magazine on Feb. 21, 1936. Whatever its origins, Monopoly went on to become the most popular proprietary game in the world.

From Recovery Through War

Most firms weathered the difficult period of the Depression, and 1936 and '37 began another boom, with companies filling sturdier game boxes with more parts and pieces than ever before. Milton Bradley, noted for putting games into classrooms, made the classroom into a game with Go to the Head of the Class, a question-and-answer game that has served an educational and entertainment value for children since then.

The U.S. kept a close watch on Europe as that continent readied itself for war. Between the two world wars, new companies had emerged, such as Alderman-Fairchild, Cadaco-Ellis, Einson-Freeman, Pressman, Rosebud, Russell, Stoll & Edwards, Whitman, and Wilder. Transogram managed a transition from playsets to games, and Sam'l Gabriel Sons & Co. and Wolverine also changed from selling other products to producing games.

Once again, the United States had to turn its manufacturing efforts toward defense. The use of metal was restricted, and the metal playing pieces in many companies' games were changed to composition pieces; Parker Brothers' Conflict and Around the World are prime examples. Companies like Wolverine, noted for board games made of metal, were greatly hampered. War and patriotism became popular themes for all types of games, but the war took its toll on game production. The game giants reduced their output considerably. In 1941, Milton Bradley cut its game line from 410 to 150. That same year, a U.S. patent number was assigned to Chinese Checkers, a world classic game derived from the 19th-century American game of Halma.

In spite of restrictions and economic hardships, companies still produced games, which, like movies, afforded an inexpensive respite from the curtailments of war. For

some of the smaller companies, though, the outbreak of war was fatal. However, Bradley maintained itself, and two special properties emerged: in 1940, the Game of States was introduced, and eventually became another American staple, and three years later, one more soon-to-be classic was released, Chutes and Ladders. Chutes and Ladders was significant in that the game was taken from Snakes and Ladders, the morality game of India, and which, according to the Bradley catalog, was "England's most famous indoor sport." Incidentally, pop-culture author Eric Partridge attributes the phrase "back to square one" to Snakes and Ladders, where an unlucky throw of the dice could send a player back to the beginning.

Milton Bradley president James J. Shea (1960) reported that 1946 was a banner year for the company, allowing it to reduce its indebtedness by half a million dollars. In 1949, Bradley introduced Candyland, which is still one of its most popular children's games, and that same year Parker Bros. bought the rights to the English Cluedo and brought out Clue.

With economic recovery came new companies, like National Games, a Springfield, Massachusetts, company that made paper toys during the war and games beginning in 1946. Another small company began manufacturing and selling a cross-word game. It was called Scrabble.

By Word-of-Mouth, the Final Word is Scrabble

The most popular word game in the world, Scrabble, was a post-war success in a country that was moving toward a new prosperity. It represents one of the last great games to achieve success without relying on television. (Trivial Pursuit is another, but that's trivia.) Though first marketed in 1948, the game actually took form about ten years before when Alfred Butts decided to add a playing board to an earlier game he devised, called Lexico, which used letter tiles. Each letter was assigned a numerical value, and the words formed were made to intersect one another, as in a crossword puzzle. The distribution of letters was based on his study of cryptography and on a letter frequency count of words appearing on the first page of *The New York Times*. Butts felt that although crossword puzzles had become a major pastime in the United States, there was no word game on the market better than Anagrams.

He called his new game Criss-Cross, and later Criss-Cross Words, and applied for a patent, which was rejected, Butts believed, because there was no novelty in giving numerical values to letters. Like Darrow, he made and sold his own copies (about 125 of them) until another party became interested in the product. In 1947, James Brunot approached Butts and worked out an agreement whereby Brunot would manufacture and market Criss-Cross Words, in an amended form, and Butts would receive royalties. Though Butts is credited with the game, it was actually Brunot who altered the design of the board, revised the rules, changed the name to Scrabble, and obtained a copyright. Brunot's Production and Marketing Company made the crossword game in the living room of his home in Newtown, Connecticut, not unlike the small manufacturers of a century before. And from this point on, Alfred Butts, the game's inventor, had no more

direct involvement with the game (though we was consulted by, and remained friends with, Brunot).

It is interesting to see how one game grew in popularity through word of mouth and print advertising, and how it changed the fortunes of two men and, eventually, those of an 87-year-old company. Brunot made twelve to sixteen Scrabble sets a day and was still \$450 in the red by the time he had completed around 2,400 sets in 1949. But by the end of 1952, the company was selling over 400 sets a day. The following year, when Brunot could no longer keep up with the demand, Selchow & Righter, the company that had been making the gameboards for Brunot, licensed Scrabble and took over the manufacturing and marketing of the entire game. This move eventually made Selchow & Righter one of the big players in the American game industry.

The sudden interest in Scrabble was uncanny, and one can only speculate what had made sales take off so unexpectedly. One theory is that the game was played at fashionable resorts around the country during a period of post-war leisure, and when vacationers returned home they looked to their local stores to carry the game; another theory attributes some of the game's success to the owner of Macy's department store who personally enjoyed the game and made certain that it was well-stocked in his store.

S&R bought the rights to Scrabble, and Coleco acquired the game when it purchased Selchow & Righter in 1986. The Scrabble® Brand Crossword Game is now owned by Hasbro, the company that acquired Coleco after that company's bankruptcy a few years later. Scrabble has become the most popular word game in the United States and many parts of the world, having been sold in many languages, including Hebrew, Arabic, Japanese, and Russian; there has been even a version in Braille. The government of Thailand promoted Scrabble because it encouraged the use of English which it deemed important for international business.

Whereas successful games are often copied, Scrabble has neither been cloned nor outsold by other word games. Only two similar games exist (besides the original Criss-Cross Words): Pressman's Wordy was an 1939 entry nearly identical to Scrabble except that the letters were color-coded, each color representing a point value; and Skip-a-Cross, a Cadaco-Ellis game from 1953, was a cheaper, cardboard tile version of Scrabble, and was the only Scrabble game officially licensed to another company by Selchow & Righter. Still a best-seller, Scrabble has sold well over 100-million copies.

Television, Licensing, and Game Distribution Change the Industry

World War II had a major effect on the game industry (as it did on so many other enterprises), but not nearly as great an effect as did the popularity of television. Television was a live, visual medium with a sense of immediacy. Its novelty was such that the sale of TV sets and the growth of the broadcasting industry during the late 1940s and early '50s was phenomenal. Television, of course, changed the game industry in the way in which it changed so many other things in society – it changed the family, brought the world into the home, ended our innocence, and provided a new “toy” that would replace reading and game playing for many Americans.

The new medium served people from coast to coast with a variety of programs, all interrupted by a multitude of commercial messages. The products' pitch men were often famous personalities that people never expected would be sharing their living rooms. Television advertising became big business.

Soon companies realized they could reach a larger audience through television than through any of the print media. But only the larger companies had the capital required for promoting products on television. Many small manufacturers were forced out of business because they couldn't compete with the giants in advertising and marketing their games, even though their products were often as good as, if not better than the competition's. A lack of regulations in the early days of broadcasting let advertisers pander to children who would then push their parents into buying the game that had the most frequent airing or appealed to the child's sense of being part of a special group. Youngsters were urging parents to buy games the parents knew nothing about, and the 'bandwagon' approach ('all kids have one, so should you') in that medium was a powerful inducement. And, as companies began to develop games based on television shows, much-respected TV hosts and personalities offered persuasive testimonials about the new TV-tie-ins.

By the 1950s, the distribution of games changed too, with the development of large, retail toy store chains. These conglomerates were able to buy in huge quantities and sell at a discount, and they soon replaced the small, independent dealers who, with lower sales volume, needed a higher markup to stay in business. Shopping malls provided convenient one-stop shopping, and national chains could buy products more cheaply, advertise extensively, and sell some games as "loss leaders," games sold at a sale price at or below cost in order to bring customers into the store; the customers' other purchases more than made up for the money lost on the sale items.

The tie-in with television is that once these retail giants gained control, they could dictate what products they would and would not stock in their stores: unless a game was already a runaway best-seller because of free media coverage and exceptional word-of-mouth, a game would not be accepted unless the manufacturer backed its sales with TV advertising. However, the larger game companies, such as Milton Bradley, could get unadvertised products into stores like "Toys-R-Us" because of deals and promises that their other products would carry a heavy TV promotion. Independent inventors and small manufacturers without sufficient capital for a TV ad campaign were forced to rely on much more limited avenues of distribution.

Television also effected, albeit indirectly, the quality of game play. With word-of-mouth advertising being replaced by a visual media blitz, what became important was how a game looked, and who or what character promoted it. The question was not so much whether a game was exciting to play as whether it could be made to look exciting in a 15 or 30-second commercial. And what went in the game box became much less important than the character name that went on it.

The character licensing that seemed to consume the industry called for television programs or characters to be licensed to the game manufacturers, who would then develop a game based on the TV show or character. This was the beginning of a kind of plan-

ned obsolescence in the game industry – a game was good only for the duration of the television series on which it was based, or on the mortality of its star's popularity. (The exceptions were a handful of quiz show games that continued to be sold after the programs were canceled.) During the '50s, many game companies, especially Milton Bradley, Lowell, and Transogram, began to produce more and more games linked to television shows. This meant that companies that once hoped to sell an item that would be a staple in the company's line for decades were now making products almost guaranteed to be out of fashion within a few years. And it meant, once again, that the small game manufacturer who couldn't afford to license a product, was left selling products that had no name recognition.

So it wasn't a game box that changed the course of the American game industry, but "the box" called television. Nothing had a more profound effect on American leisure. TV soon became the child's babysitter, taking time away from such activities as playing games. From its early days when one television was watched by many in the neighborhood who gathered together in front of the black and white "tube," to the proliferation of the TV set so inexpensive that a child could have his own, television affected the family unit. TV became a medium that changed the way we lived, and it permanently altered the game industry.

Games continued to represent society, but more themes now seemed to be pegged to entertainment and media events than to history and cultural lifestyle. Sports games were still popular after TV licensing began in 1950 (with Bradley's Hopalong Cassidy), and games of politics, transportation, travel, and geography were still produced with regularity. Games reflected the space program and increasing concern with pollution. The television period saw also non-licensed games on welfare, capital punishment, crime, and a myriad of other social issues.

Nothing Trivial: The Legacy of Trivial Pursuit

For Selchow & Righter, the rush to meet the increasing demand for Scrabble forced the company to cut back on the development of other products. Later, the company focused its attention on Scrabble variants and other word games. Then, in 1984, the company acquired the license for Trivial Pursuit from Horn Abbott Inc., a Canadian company that had had great success with it. The game, consisting of interesting and well-written trivia questions in six categories, soon became one of the best sellers of the century.

What was significant, however, was that Trivial Pursuit was priced at more than almost any other mass-marketed game, and it was aimed at an adult audience, not a family. An "adult" game was traditionally a high-level strategy game, not a "parlor" game, and sold for around \$12. The success of Trivial Pursuit started a new classification for game makers: Adult Games or Party Games (still categorized usually under "board games"). As a result of the Trivial Pursuit phenomenon, not only has there been a glut of trivia games, but a plethora of parlor games, some selling for as high as \$35. These games, mostly ones that promote laughter and discussion or word play more than com-

petition, have brought a renewed interest in games in general. Many of the games also allow or require players to form teams, taking pressure off the individual player.

The End of an Era

Only Milton Bradley Co. and Parker Brothers survived from the 1800s through two World Wars and the Great Depression and into the era of television. Of the companies that emerged between the great wars, only one, Pressman Toy Co., still exists as an independent. (Cadaco, which started in 1935, is now a division of Rapid Mounting and Finishing Co.) The 1980s and '90s saw an unparalleled move to buyouts and takeovers, leaving only a handful of significant, family-owned game companies in the U.S. today.

Parker Bros. remained a giant in the industry throughout the beginning of the television era until it was bought by General Mills in 1968. In 1984, the Milton Bradley Company was bought by Hasbro, ending 124 years of family ownership. After being in business 119 years – making it the oldest family-owned game company in the United States after Hasbro's takeover of Bradley – Selchow & Righter was sold to Coleco in 1986. A short time later, Coleco went bankrupt and was bought by Hasbro, and the Selchow & Righter name came to an end.

Parker Bros. changed hands a couple of times until it was purchased by Hasbro in 1991. Hasbro, having gained ownership of both Parker and Bradley, once the two largest game companies in the U. S., decided to consolidate and closed the Parker Brothers factory in Salem in 1991, ending a Parker legacy that had begun in that area 108 years before.

Classic Parker Brothers games include Boggle, Chivalry, Flinch, The Mad Magazine Game, Masterpiece, Mille Bourne (based on the game of Touring acquired by Parker), Ouija (an 1890s fortune-telling device acquired in 1966), Payday, Pente (an ancient game revived in 1977 and purchased by Parker in 1984), Risk, and Sorry, a Parcheesi-variant acquired from England.

The Milton Bradley saga is a great American success story. In addition to its early successes and its television games, Milton Bradley introduced many other games which have become classics, including: Battleship, Concentration, Connect Four, Hangman, The Game of India, The Game of Life, Mousetrap, Operation, Password, Racko, Simon, Stratego, Twister, and Yahtzee (which it acquired when it bought the E.S. Lowe Company).

Since Parker, Bradley, and Coleco had acquired smaller companies along the way, now the old product lines of Lakeside, E.S. Lowe, Ideal, Gabriel, Avalon Hill, and others are all owned by Hasbro.

The key companies that were still around in the 1950s – Ideal, Lowell, Transogram, Standard Toykraft – are gone. Mattel, though very active in the toy industry, has been in and out of games since it closed its game division in the late 1980s. Pressman Toy Company, in business since 1921, is now the oldest family-owned game company in the U.S. Only a handful of companies, like Cadaco, Cardinal, Aristoplay, and University Games are still active after many years in business. New companies, like Winning Moves

and Endless Games continue the legacy with a full line of games to take us into the new century.

America, like much of the world, has changed. We have more leisure time, but many more things to fill that time with. Family life is very different: more children grow up with fewer siblings, children leave home earlier, and grandparents less frequently live in the same household with their grandchildren. More time is spent with television and video games and less time with books and family activity. In an era of knowledge, wealth, and sophistication, board games are seen more as playthings for children than as leisure activity for families and adults.

As computer and video games take over a larger share of the game market, companies are having a more difficult time placing board and card games. Major companies are looking for “gimmicks,” and are moving toward producing more three-dimensional games, such as in the Skill & Action category. New, small companies, including inventors working independently out of their homes, seem to be taking over the marketing of traditional board and card games. The success rate for these independents is not high, however. Because the small company devotes more time to one product and needs a better quality product to compete with the mass merchandisers, the eventual result may be a higher caliber of American board games and card games on the market.

There has been much change in the structuring of the game business since 1980, plus a recession that effected all the industry in the late '80s and early '90s. The internet, with its interactive possibilities, has added a new dimension to game playing, and has started to effect even the way games are sold.

Conclusion

Games help a culture pass on some of its rules and rituals to a younger generation. Games allow families to spend time together, and to communicate. Board games can sometimes level the unequal playing field for the adult and child, by allowing the child, mostly through the luck of the teetotum, spinner, or dice, to best the parent. And board games can allow participants to meet in battle – in competition – without harm coming to the ones eventually defeated. Games can be instructional or educational, or can be used for escapism and recreation.

American games form a capsule history of the experiences of a young United States, from the westward-expansion gold rush days of the mid 1800s to the decade of defining social issues for the 21st century. This writing has attempted to show how games commercially manufactured in the United States served as a mirror to events that were a part of a growing America and a shrinking world. Games of Colonial days were mostly from Europe and they, and their new American counterparts, were primarily used to teach morality and the value of virtue and hard work. By the turn of the century, after the United States experienced an onslaught of immigrants seeking political freedom and good fortune, games became less reverent and more instructive. Eventually, as a leisure class developed, games became pastimes, and game crazes became new recreations. Today, board games are secondary sources of entertainment, after television, video games, and

the new draw of the internet. And an industry once concerned with education, moral instruction, and family values has given way to competitive conglomerates driven by licensing, the demands of advertising and packaging, and the inescapable bottom line.

Independent, family companies once made up the entire game industry. Now, there are fewer than a handful of significant, family companies that have been around for more than one generation. This article has hopefully served also as a brief introduction to some of these companies, and to some of their games that have lasted from one generation to another, while exploring how an industry was born and grew, and changed to meet the demands and interests of each succeeding generation.

With the major changes that have taken place in the game industry in less than two decades – the takeovers and turnarounds, the bankruptcies and buyouts – it is important for researchers to try to collect the histories of bygone companies before all that information is lost forever. More needs to be done to record and preserve the history of the American game industry, along with the products that embody it. Games not only help change and define a society, but they serve as record of what that society valued.

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