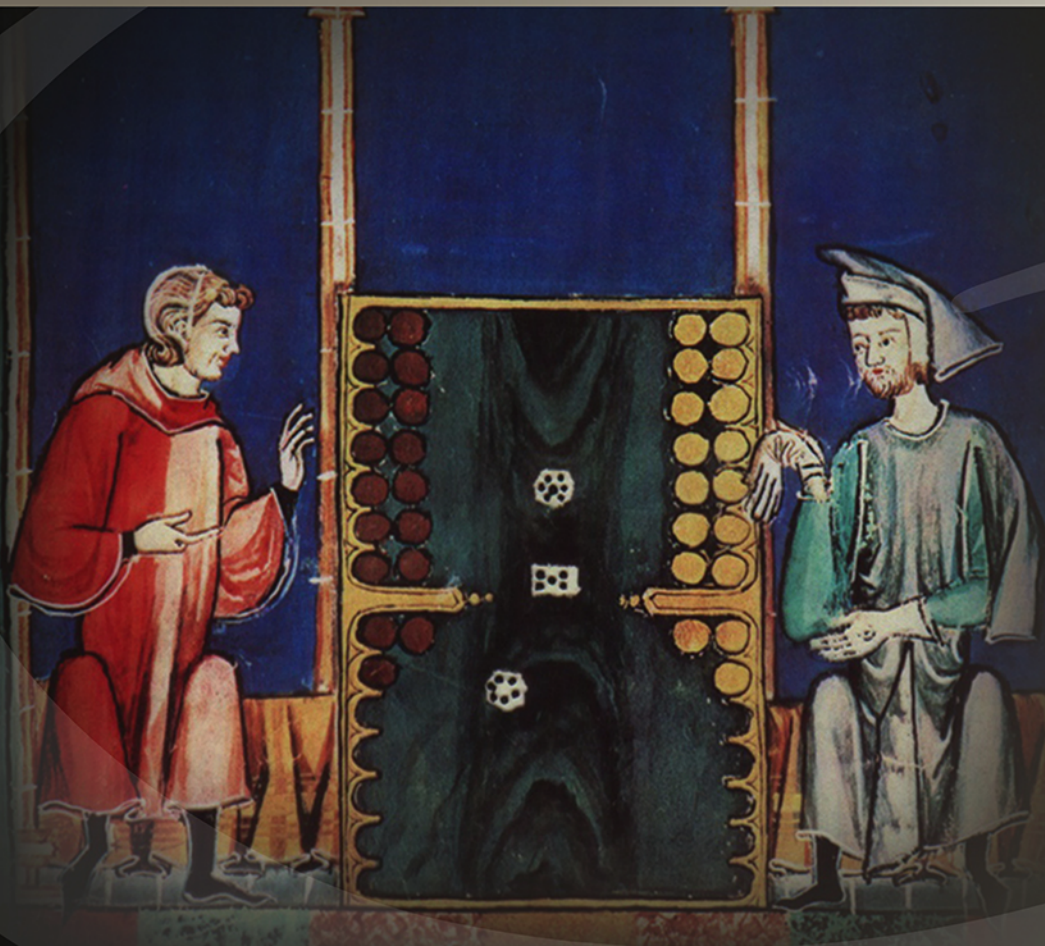


# BOARD GAME STUDIES

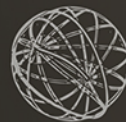
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## ARTICLES

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## GAMES OF AMERICA IN THE NINETEENTH CENTURY

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*Bruce Whitehill*

Author of the books

*American Games and Their Makers, 1822–1992*

*Americanopoly: America as Seen Through Its Games*

**Abstract:** *Though commercially manufactured American-made games have been found in the United States from as early as 1822, the games “industry” can be said to have started around the mid 1840s, when hand-printed games were turned out in greater quantity by at least one publishing company, W. & S.B. Ives. By the 1860s, thanks in part to now-forgotten publishers like John McLoughlin and E.G. Selchow and, in particular, to a lithographer whose name is still used today, Milton Bradley, game production continued to grow. The mechanized printing process resulted in the mass production of games. And in the 1880s, the man credited with promoting games for adults and families, not just children, George Parker, helped develop games into a major American pastime. Games were now “manufactured by. . .” instead of being “published by. . .”. There are other names associated with the beginnings of the American games industry, such as Rufus Bliss, who produced what collectors categorize as exceptional games in his unique line of toys. And games still played today made their debut: *AUTHORS*, *TIDDLEY WINKS* and *PARCHEESI (PACHISI)*, among others. Increased trade saw American games travel to Europe, while Americans had been playing European — especially British — games for decades. In one curious switch, *HALMA*, which was invented by an American, went on to become a European favorite, while *CHINESE CHECKERS*, named and popularized in the U.S., actually began in Germany as *STERN-HALMA (Star Halma)*. This article serves to introduce readers to some of the men, the companies, and the products that made up the American games industry in the 19th century, and to provide a sense of the times and culture in which these pastimes were created.*

It is not known exactly when the commercial manufacture of games began in the United States. Two games discovered from 1822 are the earliest American games known — no games or relevant records have been found prior to then. These first two games, published by New York booksellers F. & R. Lockwood, had themes of travel through Europe and through the United States. Why Lockwood didn't produce any other games (that we know of), and why there is a period of 21 years during which few, if any, games have been uncovered remains a mystery. In 1843, W. & S.B. Ives, a long-established Massachusetts publishing company, began printing and selling both board games and card games in enough quantity to reach a large audience.

At this time in America's development, the population of the U.S. surpassed 17 million, slightly less than that of Great Britain. The economy was still recovering from the financial panic of 1837. But America's railroads were growing quickly, linking Eastern U.S. cities. Steamer travel was increasing between New York and England; and *The New York Herald* became the first American newspaper to employ a European correspondent. The system of Morse code was promising to make the world a touch more connected. Wood pulp paper was invented, leading to cheaper paper for publishers. And John Fremont crossed the Rocky Mountains into California, foreshadowing a mass movement to the western United States.

In terms of amusement, the game of nine pins ("bowling" minus one) reached its height of popularity; Phineas Barnum, later of Barnum and Bailey circus fame, was exhibiting strange oddities and freaks of nature; the first bicycle was constructed; America's first boat race was held, baseball came into being and the sport of skiing was "invented". And the polka peaked in popularity.

## **The early years — W. & S.B. Ives and the forgotten companies**

W. & S.B. Ives responded to a growing need for Americans to find additional tools to help teach children the modes and morality of the period, and to provide amusement for the family without resorting to anything that smacked of gambling, like playing cards. Card games had cards designed with images and often text to clearly set them apart from the numbers and pictured royalty of four-suit playing cards. This was a period of moral fervor, a time when "children's rights" were being legalized, and the beginning of the Kindergarten movement in Europe that would soon sweep the United



States. In 1843, Ives published what was long considered to be the first American board game, until research uncovered the existence of the Lockwood games. Ives' game, **The Mansion of Happiness** (Figure 1), was a game of luck in which players moved their pieces toward the center of the board, much like in the **Game of Goose** (from which this game may have derived), in an attempt to reach the “Mansion of Happiness” (i.e., heaven). Landing on spaces of virtue propelled you further, while those of vice sent you back toward the beginning. According to 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.’ A player who landed on the space marked “Passion” had to go back to “The Water”, since, it was explained, “Whoever gets in a Passion must be taken to the Water and have a ducking (sic) to cool him”. Landing on “Idleness” sent the player back to “Poverty”; players on the “Road to Folly” had to return to “Prudence”; and the Sabbath Breaker was “taken to the Whipping Post and whipt”. In this watershed game — which must have been popular, considering the number of copies that are still around today — children and their parents embarked on a voyage of discovery, instruction, and amusement that was the beginning of games becoming part of American family life.



Figure 1: Mansion of Happiness Board.

Much of America's non-native population had come over from England, so it is not surprising that Ives produced games that often were copies of English items. **The Mansion of Happiness** was based on a game of the

same name made by a London firm in 1800. **Reward of Virtue**, another American version of a British game, was touted as being “A new moral and Entertaining Game By the Author of the Mansion of Happiness”. **Dr. Busby**, considered the first truly American card game, was nonetheless similar to, or maybe even taken from, the European game of **Happy Families** (Figure 2). But other Ives games were original, uniquely American. **The National Game of the American Eagle** was not only patriotic, but political in nature, and **The Game of Pope or Pagan**, or **the Siege of the Stronghold of Satan by the Christian Army** gives an indication of the moral and religious sentiment of the times (both games were published in 1844). Incidentally, like **Pope or Pagan**, many of the early games had long, double titles — a practice presumably taken from the book publishing business.



Figure 2: Dr. Busby, touted as the “Oldest American Game” (it isn’t, by a long shot), 1890s, Parker Brothers

It is interesting to note that in an industry that from its infancy and through the present has been dominated by men, America’s first renowned game author was a woman: Anne Abbot invented not only **Dr. Busby**, but other games for Ives, including the first truly American sports game, the **Game of the Races**; she is also assumed to be the “lady” in the 1845 game of “**Characteristics: An Original Game by a Lady**”, and in Wm. Crosby’s **The Strife of Genius**, (invented) “by a lady”.

Within one year of the serialization of *Uncle Tom’s Cabin* in *The National Era*, an abolitionist weekly, Ives released the **Uncle Tom’s Cabin** card game, complete with images of characters and objects from the book that was published that same year, 1851. The game had no other connection to the literary work. Nonetheless, the game might have even helped

popularize the book, which was written during a time of increasing conflict between the slave-owning states in the south and the anti-slavery factions in the northeast. (**Uncle Tom's Cabin** was played like the modern American game of **Go Fish**, a game generally unknown in Europe. According to historian Thierry Depaulis, the closest equivalent would be the Italian game of **Cuccù** [from the early 18th century] and a German offshoot called **Hexenspiel** or **Vogelspiel**.)

Overall, Ives published more than two dozen games early on. Because of its rapid development of a growing line of games and its seemingly successful distribution, the company is credited with being the first major manufacturer of games in the United States. The Ives partnership broke up in 1853, but family members continued producing games for four decades.

Shortly after Ives started publishing games, other small companies followed suit, many of them located in book publishing districts in New York City. The names of most of the companies are obscure today, but the titles of their games tell us something about the time in which they were produced. Some of the games were seeped in English historical literature: **Nick Bottom's Game of Shakspere** (sic) (Nick Bottom is a character in Shakespeare's *A Midsummer Night's Dream*; Shakespeare used him for comic relief, periodically transposing his head into a donkey's head); and **The Pickwick Cards** (*The Pickwick Papers* was published by Charles Dickens in book form in 1837, after first appearing in serial form). **The Game of Kings** — very British and highly political — provided a brief history of English monarchs, with a satirical poem written on each card. For example, the card for William II reads:

*Sir Walter's arrow, from the string  
Sped at a deer, but killed a king;  
For the poor realm 'twas wisely struck-  
Better the tyrant than the buck.*

Early titles with American themes included **The New World Game of American History**; **The National Game of the Star Spangled Banner** (the 'Star Spangled Banner' was written as a poem in 1814 and was not made the American national anthem until 1931); **Biographical Amusements**, "A New and Entertaining Game on the Biography of Distinguished Men of America"; **Multiplication Merrily Matched**; and **The Oracle of Fortune**. Historical themes, then, were popular, as were humorous renditions of educational subjects and fortune telling. Playing cards were used

in England for fortune telling in the middle of the 18th century and earlier in France; Tarot, Divination or Oracle cards probably led to fortune telling games gaining favor in America.

Most of the early games were card games, since it was much easier to print small cards than larger paper sheets, which then had to be folded or pasted onto cardboard. Board games were not put into boxes, but were sold with a separate parts box or a small pouch containing the game pieces attached to the back of the gameboard. Board games came with small playing pieces, like pawns or small round markers (about 8mm-high), and, instead of dice, used “teetotums” to govern the movement on the board. Teetotums were small spinning tops that, when they stopped spinning, landed in such a way to indicate how many spaces the player could move. Dice were considered implements of gambling and “tools of the devil” and were therefore avoided.

## The middle of the century

This moral sensitivity continued throughout the 1840s and '50s. But then so did the improvements in the welfare of children, and the increased industrialization that led to more leisure time and a movement from farmland to cities; children were allowed more time for play, once the schooling and the chores were done. The war with Mexico ended, resulting in a treaty that would give the U.S. much land that was to be developed as the American West. The discovery of gold in California in 1848 secured this migration westward as the country's first gold rush began, the newsmaker to end that decade. In 1850, the population was listed as 23 million (including over 3 million slaves), compared to 34 million in Germany and less than 21 million in Great Britain. Through the 1850s there were continuing advances in rail and steamship travel and progress in the new form of communication, the telegraph.

Other companies emerged during the 1850s. Their games also reflected the events and attitudes that were shaping the developing America. The **Railroad Game** capitalized on the growth of the country's rail lines. **The Conquest of Nations** spoke to the war and turmoil that covered much of the globe during that period. Many titles, including **Trip to Paris**, **Peter Coddle's Trip to New York**, **Travels and Sojourns of Ichabod Solo Esquire Among the Pee-Wee Indians**, and **The Five Navigators, or, a Voyage of Discovery**, mirrored the increasing interest in travel and learning about distant cultures. **Presidential Quartets** and **The Little**

**Corporal**, a title given to Napoleon, were two of the many games embracing history. The **Game of Goose** made its debut into the American market in 1851 with an exact copy of a game sold in England three years earlier — except that the image was reversed — and was based on the **Royal Game of Goose** invented in Italy in the 16th century. The **Game of Goose** was another morality game, where landing on the good spaces — in this case, those with a goose — allowed you to move forward, while landing on a bad space either sent you back to start or kept you on the space until you were rescued. Like many games of the period, the **Game of Goose** was pure luck; there was no strategy involved — or maybe one could say you had no control over your own destiny.

## McLoughlin brothers — the company that set the standard

The accomplishments of Ives and these other smaller companies of the 1850s were overshadowed by the work of a single publishing company, McLoughlin Brothers. In the early part of the decade, John McLoughlin Jr. took over the book publishing business of his father, who had emigrated from Scotland in 1819 and established a company known for its exceptional print illustrations. When his father, John McLoughlin Sr., and his father's partner, printer and engraver Robert H. Elton, retired, they turned over their company, Elton & Co., to the younger McLoughlin, who had learned printing and wood engraving while working for the firm. (Figure 3) John Jr. added card games to the line, including **Yankee Pedlar or What D'ye Buy** [sic], in or soon after 1850, and **Conundrums** in 1853. (Figure 4) **Yankee Pedlar** was, literally, a commercial game — that is, one that illustrated many common products that could be found in shops during that time. **Conundrums**, presumably based on the popular parlor game of the same name, consisted of elaborate riddles, the answer to which were often puns. McLoughlin's games were not packaged like other company's card games in "card packs" (thin cardboard boxes that opened at one end like a cigarette pack, or at both ends so that an inner cardboard tray holding the cards could slide out) — they were put in sturdy, small boxes, with attractive lithographed sheets pasted on them. Other games included **Where's Johnny**, **Peter Puzzlewig's Comic Round Game of Alliterations**, and **The Amusing Game of Conundrums**, also by "Peter Puzzlewig", presumably an invented character. McLoughlin, then, was clearly stepping away from the games of instruction and morality and introducing true games



of amusement. All the games were hand-colored, and John McLoughlin is credited with being the first to use an assembly line process to achieve this — a number of color-artists worked on one game, each artist being responsible for adding only one color to the image.

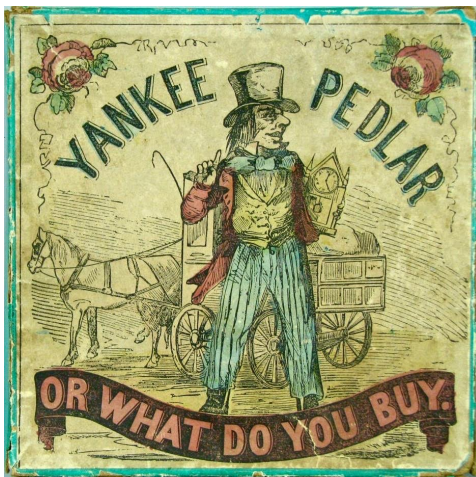


Figure 3: Yankee Pedlar or What Do You Buy, ca. 1850, John McLoughlin; instructions title it as “Yankee Pedlar Or What D’ye Buy” Photo courtesy of The Strong, Rochester, NY

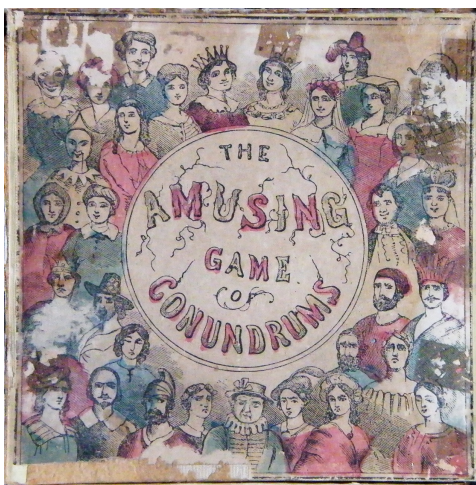


Figure 4: The Amusing Game of Conundrums, 1853, John McLoughlin

In 1855, John McLoughlin brought his brother Edmond into the business to create McLoughlin Brothers, though that name did not appear in the city directories until 1858. McLoughlin Bros. became the premiere name in early American games. They introduced board games with lavish illustrations and wonderful coloring into the line. And they were prolific, producing an astonishing assortment of games over the next sixty years.

John McLoughlin, Jr., according to Laura Wasowicz of the American Antiquarian Society, “continually experimented with color illustration — progressing from hand stenciling, to the mechanical relief process of zinc etching, to the planographic process of chromolithography”. In 1871, the company opened a color-printing factory in Brooklyn, employing as many as 75 artists for their book, game and lithograph work.

## Milton Bradley — making the game business an industry

As the McLoughlin brothers were getting started venturing into games, another lithographer, Milton Bradley, the man that would turn America’s game business into an industry, opened his enterprise in Springfield, Massachusetts. It was 1860. During the past decade, over 1,338,000 people emigrated to the U.S. from England and, especially, Ireland. Tensions continued to rise between the North and the South over the issues of slavery. Anti-slavery candidate Abraham Lincoln was elected the 16th president of the United States, prompting the state of South Carolina to secede from the union in protest. An interesting sidelight is that Milton Bradley printed many copies of Lincoln — a beardless Lincoln — only to find that the new president had grown a beard; most of the prints were discarded. Today, they are very rare and quite valuable.

Milton Bradley was a draughtsman who started printing games as a sideline to his lithography business. He allegedly made improvements to the printing process that allowed for games to be mass-produced for the first time. The hand-coloring of games became a thing of the past as Bradley used — or possibly even developed — new ways of printing multiple copies of the same game in a short time. His first game was **The Checkered Game of Life**, a morality game similar to Ives’ **Mansion of Happiness**. (Figure 5) Bradley’s board was a simple checkerboard (hence the title), and the players attempted to be the first to reach Happy Old Age, beginning at Infancy. Landing on a space indicating a positive trait took players closer to their goal: “Bravery” sent you to “Honor”, “Ambition” brought you to

“Fame”, and “Perseverance” took you to “Success”. Some of the moves were very telling for the period: a “Government Contract” shot you to “Wealth”, and “Influence” took you to a “Fat Office”. Of course, “Crime” would send you to “Prison”, and other spaces noting ill deeds would move you back as well. A teetotum governed whether a player could move one or two spaces, and in what direction: “up or down”, “right or left”, or “diagonally in either direction”.

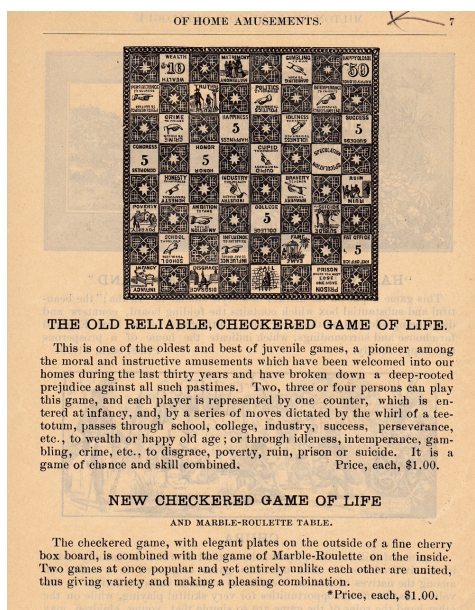


Figure 5: Checkered Game of Life illustration and description from 1895 catalog

Many of Milton Bradley’s games had covers with images of the extended family in the living room or parlor. They sometimes showed six people on the box lid, covering three generations (and both sexes), suggesting the game was fun for all ages, even if the younger ones would just be looking on. Bradley was extremely interested in education and, as his company grew, sold a wide range of school supplies and optical toys in addition to educational games. He was very active in the new “kindergarten” movement that began in Germany and eventually swept through the U.S. He produced many games aimed primarily at children, often depicting animals and sometimes based on popular folk stories. Like McLoughlin Bros., Milton Bradley was prolific, though the company produced mostly smaller and less ornate, less colorful games than its older competitor. By 1876, if not earlier, Bradley

was gluing lithographed sheets to cardboard and producing colorful folded gameboards exactly the same size (18.5 in / 47 cm square) as the standard used in the U.S. today. In 1876 he was awarded the Medal of Excellence at the Centennial Exposition, the first award ever made “for ethical teaching of children through play”.

Bradley was in business only a year when the American Civil War began in 1861, setting brother against brother in battles between the Union armies of the Northeast and the Confederate armies of the South. It is interesting to note that at this time, almost all the game companies were in the industrialized north, particularly New York and Massachusetts; few, if any, were operating in the South. Of the industrial establishments listed in the U.S., nearly 86% were located in Union states. Over 90% of the money invested in real and personal property devoted to business in America was concentrated in the North, and the combined investments of Pennsylvania, New York, and Massachusetts were larger than in the entire South.

After the war began, Milton Bradley decided to produce small versions of **The Checkered Game of Life** that were designed to fit into a soldier’s pocket or knapsack. Because of this, one could consider him the designer of America’s first “travel” games. In 1866 he patented the first American croquet game. He sold his own paper cutter and introduced the zoetrope (an optical toy) to America.

## **The growth of America and the promulgation of America’s smaller game companies**

The 1860s saw the completion of America’s transcontinental railroad and a “War Between the States”. Lincoln won re-election, then was assassinated a short time later; the Confederacy lost the war, and slaves won their freedom. “In God We Trust” was first imprinted onto U.S. currency, the Ku Klux Klan was founded, and the Pony Express began mail service between Missouri and California. The first sleeper (train) cars made tracks; and the first American train robbery took place. The U.S. spent \$7,200,000 to buy Alaska, and John D. Rockefeller started Standard Oil Co. Baseball turned professional, intercollegiate (American) football began, and roller-skating wheeled its way into the hearts of Americans.

The 1860s were also a prominent time in world literature. Dickens, Longfellow, Browning, Wilkie Collins (originator of the crime novel), Ibsen, Dostoevsky, Tolstoy, and Americans Mary Mapes Dodge, Louisa May Alcott, Walt Whitman, and Mark Twain (Samuel Clemens) were all ac-

tive. (Incidentally, Twain's *The Innocents Abroad* was parodied in the title of Parker Brothers' 1888 game, **the Amusing Game of Innocence Abroad**). Many of these literary giants were featured in various games of **Authors**, the first one having been developed by A.A. Smith and published with his partner in 1861 under their company name, Whipple & Smith.

A.A. Smith was also responsible for bringing the game of **Squails** into the U.S. in 1865, though Milton Bradley seems to have appropriated the honor with his 1867 introduction of the game. **Squails** was first produced in England by John Jaques in 1857, and is a table game that involves counters or disks being propelled toward some post or goal by finger-snapping or pushing. As such, the game represents one of the earliest American examples of what came to be known as a dexterity or "skill & action" game.

## Selchow & Righter — the forgotten giant — and Parcheesi

In 1865, Albert Swift published **Bezique**, a two-player card game that originated in France as **Bésigue** before 1840 (Figure 6). It was introduced to Britain around 1860, was extremely popular, and then became highly fashionable in America in the early 20th century. **Bezique** evolved in the U.S. into the two-handed game of pairs called pinochle ("pee'-nahkl"). Albert Swift, another nearly-forgotten name in American game history, played an important role, not because of **Bezique** or because his New York toy business was taken over by E.G. Selchow in 1867, but because as part of the deal, or in addition to it, Selchow obtained the rights from Swift to **Parcheesi, the Game of India**. **Parcheesi** went on to become the longest-selling game in America, and one of the most popular. In **Parcheesi**, players control different pieces that they can move at different times, the object being to get each piece once around the gameboard and into a home base; moves are governed by a throw of the dice. These game mechanisms share some similarities with backgammon, a world favorite that dates back to the 1st century (Figure 7).

**Parcheesi** was trademarked in 1874, giving it one of the oldest trademarks for an American game. Also in 1874, Selchow released **Vignette Authors** (Figure 8). After E.G. Selchow took in John Righter as a partner, the company name was changed to Selchow & Righter in 1880. The company's first great success was perhaps **Pigs in Clover**, a dexterity game (now categorized as a mechanical puzzle) by Charles Crandall, the famous inventor and maker of building blocks. **Pigs in Clover** became a fad,



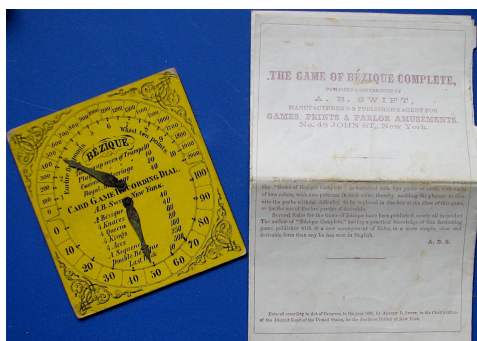
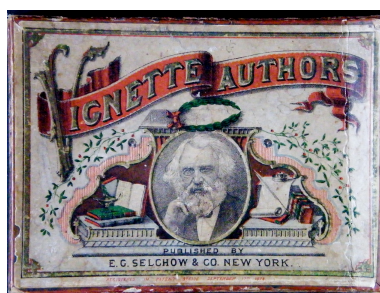


Figure 6: Beziq, 1865, counter and instructions

Figure 7: Parcheesi detail, 1870,  
E.G. SelchowFigure 8: Vignette Authors, 1874,  
E.G. Selchow

probably the most popular dexterity game in the U.S. in the 19th century. Selchow & Righter were “jobbers” — that is, they sold other company’s games rather than manufacture their own — a practice that continued for another 47 years. Listed in Selchow & Righter’s 1887 catalog were nearly 150 games and puzzles from Milton Bradley, 45 McLoughlin games, **Authors** and **Beziq**, four versions of **Parcheesi**, and an assortment of articles from artificial ivy to a toy mouse.

## Intelligence is bliss; the 1870s & ’80s

In or soon after 1871, the R. Bliss Manufacturing Co. began to add games to its newly successful line of paper litho-on-wood toys, many of which were “skill & action” games in which a ball or marble was rolled or shot at a target. Rufus Bliss started a company in 1832 that manufactured wood screws and clamps for piano and cabinet makers; one of his inventions was a machine

that cut wood screws rapidly, allowing for a process later utilized to make the “turned men” or shaped wooden playing pieces used in games. Bliss retired in 1863, years before the company produced its first toy. He died in 1879, long before his company ceased production at the beginning of WWI. Bliss was famous for target games, parlor ring toss, floor and table croquet, and **Fish Pond**. The gorgeous board games for which the company was later famous were made after the founder’s death, mostly during the 1890s (Figure 9).



Figure 9: Minnehaha, 1891, R. Bliss

In spite of “The long depression of the 1870s” (as described nearly a century later by James Shea in his book about the Milton Bradley Co.), throughout the 1870s and 1880s, numerous smaller game companies began to appear, selling everything from educational to whimsical games, from the patriotic to political parody, or specializing in a particular area, such as with the music games of Theodore Presser Co. These decades in America saw the first tennis tournament, the first public telephones, and the first fruits and meats sold in cans. The American Federation of Labor was formed. New York street lights were powered by electricity. The U.S. had almost 89,000 miles of railroad in operation compared to a combined 67,000 throughout Britain, Germany, France and Russia. There was a huge increase in the number of immigrants entering the United States, and New York reached a

population of over one million, the same as Berlin. The Chinese Exclusion Act barred almost all Chinese immigration for 10 years, following a large influx of Chinese who were escaping problems in China and/or were searching for gold or working on the railroads of the American West. The Oklahoma land rush helped propel the surge westward.

The first skyscraper — 10 stories high — began the elevation of the American landscape. The Brooklyn Bridge became an architectural wonder, and The Statue of Liberty, a gift of France, made its way to New York. Buffalo Bill Cody organized his “Wild West Show”, while Nellie Bly (a.k.a. Elizabeth Cochrane) beat the imaginary ‘round-the-world-in-80-days feat of Jules Verne’s Phileas Fogg. Golf was introduced to the nation. All of these happenings were significant enough to lead to numerous game box illustrations and to games themselves commemorating or capitalizing on the events.

## George Parker and the brothers he made famous

In 1883, another Massachusetts games enthusiast, George S. Parker, went into business selling games of his own invention, and aiming at an adult market. He was still in high school when he invented his earliest games, his first being the game of **Banking**. He invented **Baker’s Dozen**, **Great Battlefields**, **Ivanhoe**, **The Dickens Game**, **When My Ship Comes in**, and **Chivalry**, which he described as his favorite game, all before he was 21 (Figures 10, 11 and 12). In that same period he also published **Famous Men**, invented by one of his high school instructors. **Billy Bumps Visit to Boston** and **Johnny’s Historical Game** were two other early entries. Parker was a game player interested in strategy games, and, as his **Banking** might suggest, a good businessman as well. In a few years he was selling — in addition to his own games — games by Horsman, Bliss, and W. & S.B. Ives, whose entire line he gained the rights to in 1887.

In 1888 George’s brother Charles joined the firm, creating Parker Brothers, and the company became to family and adult games what Milton Bradley was to children’s and family games. (*A detailed history of Parker Brothers is told in The Game Makers — The Story of Parker Brothers, a 2004 book from Harvard Business School Press by games historian and former Parker Bros. Vice President Philip E. Orbanes.*)



Figure 10: Great Battlefields, 1886, first edition, Geo. S. Parker

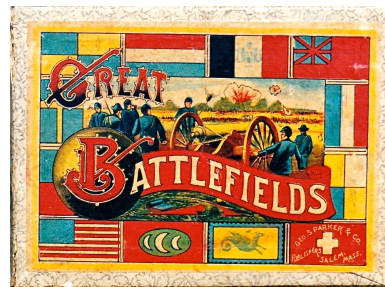


Figure 11: Great Battlefields, 1886-7, color edition, Geo. S. Parker



Figure 12: Ivanhoe, 1886, Geo. S. Parker

## Tiddley Winks, Halma, Reversi, and the inspiration of Horatio Alger

In the 1880s, the game with the greatest variety of spellings (Figure 13), **Tiddley Winks**, **Tiddely Winks**, **Tiddly Winks** or **Tiddledy Winks**, reached America from England, where it had been played since 1860, if not much earlier. The first use of the name “tiddlywink” was as a game played with dominoes; the name of “Tiddlywinks” as a game in which one flat game piece was used to flick other game pieces into a pot wasn’t trademarked until 1889 in England. (Now in the public domain, **tiddly winks** has popped up all over, and over 70 patents have been issued for a profusion of variations).

In 1885, Harvard professor George H. Monks invented **Halma** (Figure 14). He was inspired by the British game, **Hoppity**, which his brother Robert told him about after a trip to England. **Halma** is the oldest American game still played today — albeit not in America! It is a race game in





Figure 13: Tiddledy Winks Tennis, 1890,  
E.I. Horsman



Figure 14: American Game of Halma,  
possibly manufactured in England

which players' pieces move one space or jump over other pieces (the player's own or an opponent's), but the jumped pieces are not removed. (It is seen as the forerunner of **Chinese Checkers** in the U.S., though **Chinese Checkers** was actually taken from the German **Stern-Halma**.)

**Halma** was published by E.I. Horsman (spelled without an "e"), beginning a ten-year run of games before the company went on to become famous for dolls. Horsman, incidentally, fought Milton Bradley's claim that Bradley had the rights to **Halma** from the inventor, but Bradley eventually backed down, stating: "... Owing to the fact that certain parties claim to possess exclusive rights to the use of the word 'Halma,' ... (and) in order to avoid any controversy, we now designate that game by the new name of 'Eckha'." **Eckha** didn't last (Figure 15).



Figure 15: Eckha,  $\geq$  1885, Milton Bradley Co.

In 1886, McLoughlin Brothers released **District Messenger Boy, or Merit Rewarded**, based on the theme running through the novels of Horatio Alger that began in 1867 and earned great recognition in America.





Figure 16: Errand Boy gameboard, 1891, McLoughlin Bros.

The stories recounted the “rags to riches” idea in which an impoverished youth through hard work and good deeds rises to at least the security of the middle class. In McLoughlin’s game and many others like it (including Parker Bros.’ **Office Boy** game in 1889 and McLoughlin’s 1891 **Errand Boy**), the first player to reach the center or last space becomes head of the company and wins the game (Figure 16).

In 1888, McLoughlin published what may be its only game to have become a classic: **Reversi**. The American **Reversi** was based either on an 1870 British game called **Annexation** (later called **Annex, the Game of Reverses**) that employed a cross-shaped board, or on the British game of **Reversi**, invented in 1880 and patented in 1888, that used the checkerboard as in the game of today. (**Reversi** fell out of favor in the U.S. after the 1950s, and returned in the 1970s as the “new” game of **Othello**, which has been highly successful ever since then (Figure 15).)



Figure 17: Annexation or Reversi parts box, 1870s–1880, T.W. Mollett; instructions in English and Dutch.

## The end of the century

McLoughlin Bros. and Parker Bros. both reached their peak in the 1880s and 1890s in terms of creating many large, gorgeous games that used wood for the box frame and incorporated bone dice, metal tokens and figural wooden playing pieces turned on a lathe. Many Parker games featured a patented sliding drawer in which the implements were kept. These were superb games that reflected popular culture. In 1894, Parker reproduced **The Mansion of Happiness**, erroneously calling it “the first board game ever published in America”.

Bliss reached its heyday in the 1890s as well, having made its first folding board game probably in 1889 or shortly before then. Bliss also had superb lithography, with games often as beautifully constructed and illustrated as McLoughlin games. Bliss’ game titles were frequently incorporated into the box design — a design that consisted of separate images linked by graphic elements (Figure 18).

Milton Bradley, too, showed continued success in the 1890s in spite of the Panic of 1893 — an economic downturn the same year as the Chicago World’s Fair, an exhibition that served as a platform for larger companies to display their games. Many businesses, including railroads and banks, failed, especially in the West, though the larger game companies did not seem to be unduly affected. This may have been due to the low cost of games and the high value of amusement during times of financial hardship.

Games continued to portray and reflect the events of the period, includ-

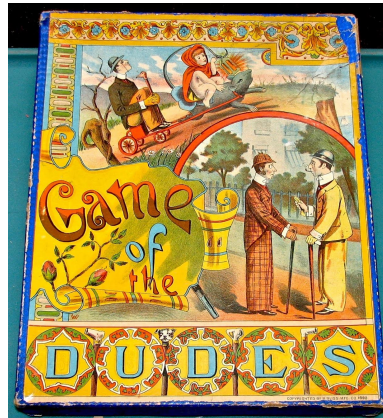


Figure 18: Game of the Dudes, 1890, R. Bliss Mfg. Co.



Figure 19: Geschäft, Chaffee & Selchow ad, 11.1897, McClures



Figure 20: Geschäft, Or the Game of Business, 1897, Chaffee & Selchow; collection of Debby & Marty Krim

ing a new gold rush in the Klondike (that helped develop Alaska) and the new fashion of velocipedes (bikes with large front wheels). The growth in department stores continued in the larger cities (Figures 19, 20, 21). The Spanish-American War in 1898 led to the first series of games (mostly from Chaffee & Selchow company) based on a war.

By 1900, European immigration was high and the culture of America was changing. The society continued turning from agriculture to industry, evenings at home were becoming brighter as gaslights became electric, and





Figure 21: Department Store, 1898, Parker Bros.; numerous playing pieces are products of the times

the morality of earlier decades was shifting, allowing for more leisure and play. Games were becoming so popular they were even printed in Sunday newspapers as full-page color supplements, made possible by advances in the printing process (Figure 22). Dozens of U.S. companies were supplying the American family with games designed to inform and amuse.



Figure 22: Bicycle Game — Art Supplement to “Rochester Democrat & Chronicle” newspaper

## Epilog

At McLoughlin Bros., the firm began to struggle after John McLoughlin, Jr. died in 1905, and in 1920 the company sold out to Milton Bradley. The McLoughlin name continued in book publishing but disappeared from games. In spite of the high level of artistic design and workmanship, no McLoughlin game besides **Reversi** ever became a “classic”.

By 1904, the Milton Bradley Company had offices in three major eastern cities as well as in the Midwest (Kansas), the South (Atlanta), and the West (San Francisco). Milton Bradley the man died in 1911, leaving the company in the hands of a new generation. Many of Milton Bradley’s early games were dexterity games, like **tiddlywinks** or **ring toss** games. Besides the numerous popular and timeless Bradley games still played in the U.S., the company’s classic board games known over the world include **Battleship**, **Candy Land**, **Chutes and Ladders**, **Connect Four**, **The Game of India**, **The Game of Life**, **Mousetrap**, **Operation**, **Twister**, and **Yahtzee**. In Europe, Milton Bradley is known simply as “MB”.

Selchow & Righter was a prolific manufacturer of games during the 20th century but never gained the popular recognition that Bradley and Parker enjoyed. In 1927 the firm went from selling other company’s games to producing its own, and in 1948 finally scored big with **Scrabble**. The game was so successful that Selchow & Righter narrowed its focus to concentrate on **Scrabble** variants and other word games. In 1986, two years after the company acquired the rights to **Trivial Pursuit**, company owner Richard Selchow, descendant of founder E.G. Selchow, shocked the industry by selling the 119-yr-old company to Coleco — a company that went bankrupt soon after and was bought by Hasbro. Selchow & Righter was the oldest family-owned game company in America; their name has since disappeared from the marketplace.

George S. Parker held the reins at Parker Brothers until his death in 1952. Parker introduced Americans to **Ping Pong** in 1902 and the classic card games of **Rook**, **Pit**, and **Flinch** that same decade. The company produced such a high quality line of wood jigsaw puzzles that it devoted its entire production facility only to jigsaw puzzles in 1909. Parker brought **Mah-Jongg** into the U.S. in 1923, though it may not have been the first company to do so. To save the company from depleted revenues after the Great Depression, Parker bought **Monopoly** from a person who misrepresented the game as his own (**Monopoly** was actually a folk game taken from **The Landlord’s Game** invented in 1904 by Elizabeth Magie). In 1968, General Mills, a huge food company, bought Parker Bros.; the com-



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pany continued to change hands, eventually winding up owned by Hasbro in 1991; Hasbro continued to use the Parker name for a couple of decades, but now “Parker Brothers”, like “Milton Bradley”, has disappeared into history. The products of the two giants, Parker and Bradley, made up the majority of what Americans played during most of the 20th century. Parker’s classic games (many of which originated in England and were part of an exchange deal with the Waddingtons company) include **Boggle**, **Careers**, **Clue**, **Flinch**, **Masterpiece**, **Mille Bornes**, **Monopoly**, **Ouija**, **Payday**, **Pente**, **Pit**, **Risk**, **Rook**, and **Sorry!**.

Hasbro incorporated as Hassenfeld Brothers in 1926 and went on to become the second largest toy company in the world (behind Mattel — a company that has been in and out of games for decades). Hassenfeld sold its first game in 1954, and in 1968 changed its name to Hasbro. Over the years, Hasbro bought out or obtained the product lines of Ideal, Lakeside, Coleco, Playskool, Tonka, Avalon Hill, Wizards of the Coast, Selchow & Righter, Milton Bradley, and Parker Brothers, and today it dominates the game industry worldwide.

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Board Games Studies was first published in 1998, an initiative inspired by the colloquia on board games held at Leiden University, the Netherlands, in 1995 and 1997. Five institutions affiliated themselves with the journal: the Institut für Spielforschung und Spielpädagogik in Salzburg, the International Institute for Asian Studies in Leiden, the Russian Chess Museum in Moscow, the British Museum in London, and the Department of Computer Science at the University of Maastricht. The journal, which was published by CNWS Publications in Leiden on a yearly basis, was partially funded through the assistance of patrons and boasted a modern layout, trilingual summaries and color plates. The broad ambition of this journal required a continuous commitment from the editors, who reviewed contributions in German, French and English, provided translations of summaries for each article and, in several cases, collaborated extensively with authors to develop manuscripts that were to the academic standards of the publication. The journal had a trial run of three years, after which the format, content and review process was evaluated. The authors of the articles integrated wide-ranging literature necessary for a comprehensive understanding of particular games. Contributions from different disciplines — including psychology, computer science, philology, classical archaeology and history — allowed for a better historical and systematic understanding of board games to emerge. Starting in 2000, a section with a translation of primary sources was added. Book reviews and research notes further complemented the multi-faceted contents. Its first ambition, to serve as a platform for the publication of board games research, was met quickly, while gradually the journal gained prominence among researchers by publishing seminal historical overviews. The colloquia continued from 1995 onwards, moving from a biennial to a yearly schedule. The host institution was expanded beyond Leiden to universities and museums throughout Europe as well as Jerusalem, Philadelphia and, in 2013, the Azores. The colloquia continue to gather an enthusiastic group of scholars, players and collectors. Despite the institutional affiliations and a group of patrons, the production of the journal became financially and logistically problematic with CNWS no longer able to serve as a publisher. Reluctantly, the paper version of the journal was discontinued after volume 7 was published in 2004. The possibility of an online version of the journal had been explored with the online publication of the first issues, a decision that greatly assisted the dissemination of knowledge accumulated in those early volumes. The next step, an online journal that operates again as a platform for recent board games research, was not far away but required the skills and enthusiasm of previous and new editors to materialize. In these last fifteen years, the study of board games has gained momentum and this journal will not only showcase new results but, most of all, will encourage and publicize the work of the dedicated researchers in this field.

Alex de Voogt



## To the authors

Board Game Studies is an academic journal for historical and systematic research on board games. Its object is to provide a forum for board games research from all academic disciplines in order to further our understanding of the development and distribution of board games within an interdisciplinary academic context. Articles are accepted in English, French, and German and will be refereed by at least two editors under the final responsibility of the Editorial Board. Please send your contributions in any editable format (Word, L<sup>A</sup>T<sub>E</sub>X, rtf, ...) with a matching PDF file. Please send all the illustrations in separate files.

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