An American Pastime

TIME

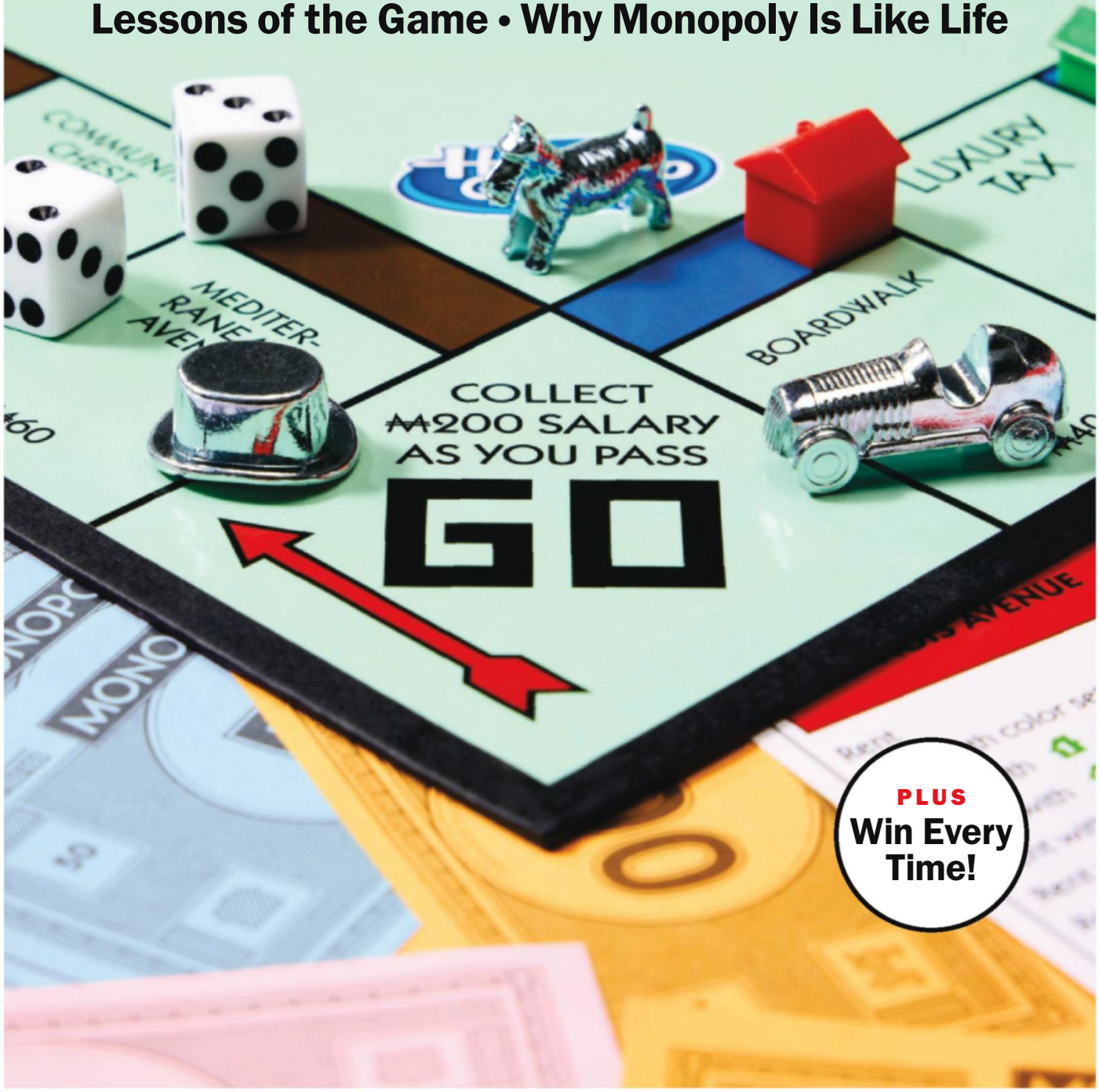
SPECIAL EDITION

Mr. Monopoly at 90!

MONOPOLY

The World's Greatest Board Game

Lessons of the Game • Why Monopoly Is Like Life



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MONOPOLY
1
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TIME

MONOPOLY

The World's Greatest Board Game


MONOPOLY
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PARKING
FREE
NEW YORK AVENUE
TENNESSEE AVENUE
COMMUNITY CHEST
ST. JAMES PLACE
PENNSYLVANIA RAILROAD
VIRGINIA AVENUE
STATES AVENUE
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JAIL
JUST
VISITING
CONNECTICUT AVENUE
VERMONT AVENUE
READING RAILROAD
INCOME TAX
BALTIC AVENUE
COMMUNITY CHEST
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THAT'S ENTERTAINMENT!

Monopoly thrives on conflict, disguises luck as skill, and goes on forever. The world loves it.

BY EILEEN DASPIN

Turk Lown of the Chicago White Sox played Monopoly with his family in the 1960s.

By any standard game board analyzing metric, Monopoly should have disappeared from toy store shelves decades ago. The game is unfair by design: It disguises luck as skill, strips players of agency, and heavily favors early frontrunners. It is long and slow and frustrating. Its mechanics appear to rely on randomness to move around the board—the dice and Community Chest cards—but the rules of probability point to unrandom outcomes. Instead of fostering community, like many tabletop games, it thrives on conflict. It is a last-man-standing endurance contest that eliminates players who run out of cash. The sidelined, in turn, become bored, annoyed, hotheaded—upturning boards, storming out of rooms, severing relationships.

Yet here we are, more than 90 years after Parker Brothers introduced Monopoly to the market in 1935, and it remains one of the world's most popular board games, having been played by an estimated billion people and having sold upward of 275 million copies—including more than 6 billion green houses and 2.25 billion red hotels. Monopoly's been used to train executives in decision making and in research on human behavior in conflict situations. It's been adapted to teach young children cognitive abilities and by AI researchers hoping to develop an agent capable of learning winning strategies.

Hasbro, which has owned Monopoly since 1991, does not break out the game's annual revenues, but it is safe to say Monopoly has fattened the bottom line. One indicator is *Monopoly GO!,* the mobile version released by Scopely in 2023: In the game's first 1,275 days, it generated more than $6 billion from in-app purchases—the fastest mobile game in history to reach that milestone. In 2025, Hasbro collected $168 million in *GO!* licensing fees.

There is no denying the nostalgia factor here. Monopoly is so old and so easy to learn, successive generations have passed on their affection for the game to their children. Hasbro regularly cranks out zeitgeisty new editions, keeping the game relatable and fresh. But given all of the game's defects, many have struggled to understand the Monopoly phenomenon beyond brand recognition and sentimentality. Behavioral scientists, ludologists (people who study game mechanics), educators, and historians have all taken their peer-reviewed stabs, offering explanations that run from emotional gratification (who doesn't like to feel the flush of success?) to the American dream.

Volkan Davut Mengi, a professor who studies game mechanics at Mimar Sinan Fine Arts University in Istanbul, chalks up the Monopoly miracle to human nature. "Aggressiveness, risk-taking, and opportunism—qualities that are frequently valued in culture" are the very ones "rewarded in Monopoly," writes Mengi in his 2025 paper, "Rethinking the Game of Monopoly from a Ludological Perspective." For winners, Mengi adds, the game is "a low-stakes representation of financial competence."

Nowhere is Monopoly's greed-is-good DNA better illustrated than in its own origin story, which started not with Charles Darrow, long credited as the game's sole inventor, but with Lizzie Magie, an

inventor, feminist, and early 20th-century devotee of economic theorist Henry George. In 1902, when Magie was in her late 30s, she invented The Landlord's Game to popularize George's progressive principles about land ownership and taxation. The square board is familiar; its four borders were lined with properties, utilities, and railroads. It had Chance cards, play money, tokens, houses, and the bold directive "Go to Jail." When players landed on an "absolutely necessary" space, such as coal or shelter, they had to pay $5 into the treasury, representing one of George's ideas about indirect taxation. There were also two sets of rules, one of which encouraged monopolies and crushing opponents, the other anti-monopolist, which rewarded community-building.

The timing of Magie's invention, at the tail end of the Gilded Age, was hardly accidental. As the 19th century drew to a close, America was increasingly prosperous, but 80 to 90 percent of the wealth was concentrated in the hands of the top 10 percent (tycoons, bankers, and politicians), who lived lavishly while the working class scraped to get by. Slums sprang up across the country, with lighting, sanitation, and medical care practically nonexistent. The inequities and injustices fueled the rise of progressive reformers who demanded government intervention, leading to antitrust laws, consumer protections, and labor reform.


Designed to Teach

Game of "Monopoly" Was First Known as "Landlord's Game."

Magie's hero, Henry George, was one of those reformers, and in her efforts to champion his ideas, she decided to market the game to the public. She applied for a patent, which was approved in 1904, gave some copies of the game to friends, and eventually found a publisher. Then she waited to see if The Landlord's Game would catch on.

That it did, though perhaps not in the way Magie might have hoped. Instead of selling in stores, the game spread, folk-style, by word of mouth, with most players unaware of Magie's role in its creation. Many began crafting their own Landlord's Game boards out of wood, cloth, and crayon. An economics professor at the University of Pennsylvania was introduced to the game and began using it as a tool to teach his students about rent gouging. Some of his students made copies of their own so they could play whenever they wanted. Along the way, as the game spread to other universities and towns, the crush-your-opponent capitalist version proved far more popular than the community-building iteration, and the original purpose of The Landlord's Game faded from view.

In 1929, the year of the stock market crash and the start of the Great Depression, Monopoly, in its full free-enterprise-promoting glory, arrived in Atlantic City via Ruth Hoskins, a teacher at the local Friends School. A recent college graduate, Hoskins had first played the game in Indianapolis. When she moved to Atlantic City, she showed it to her fellow Quaker teachers. They liked the game so much they began personalizing it, renaming the properties after Atlantic City streets that had personal meaning for them and hosting weekly game nights. A real estate agent who got hooked on The Landlord's Game helped assign new values to the properties, which he grouped by color, and built wooden boxes to use as houses.

It was at this point that Magie was sidelined from her own story. Quaker friends of Charles Darrow, who lived in Philadelphia, introduced him to the game. Darrow, an unemployed salesman looking to support his family, became obsessed, began to update the game's look and focus, and attempted to sell it as his own invention. He contacted Parker Brothers, which said it was uninterested, as the game seemed too complicated to market. But after Darrow managed to get F.A.O. Schwarz to stock what by then he was calling Monopoly—and copies sold at a healthy clip—Parker Brothers changed its mind. Floundering under the strain of the Depression, the company decided to take a chance and pay Darrow a reported $7,000 (about $165,000 in 2026) for the rights. When the toy company, worried about patent challenges, pressed Darrow about the game's origins, he at first dodged questions and later doubled down, claiming that he was Monopoly's sole inventor.

Magie is a member of a well-populated club of

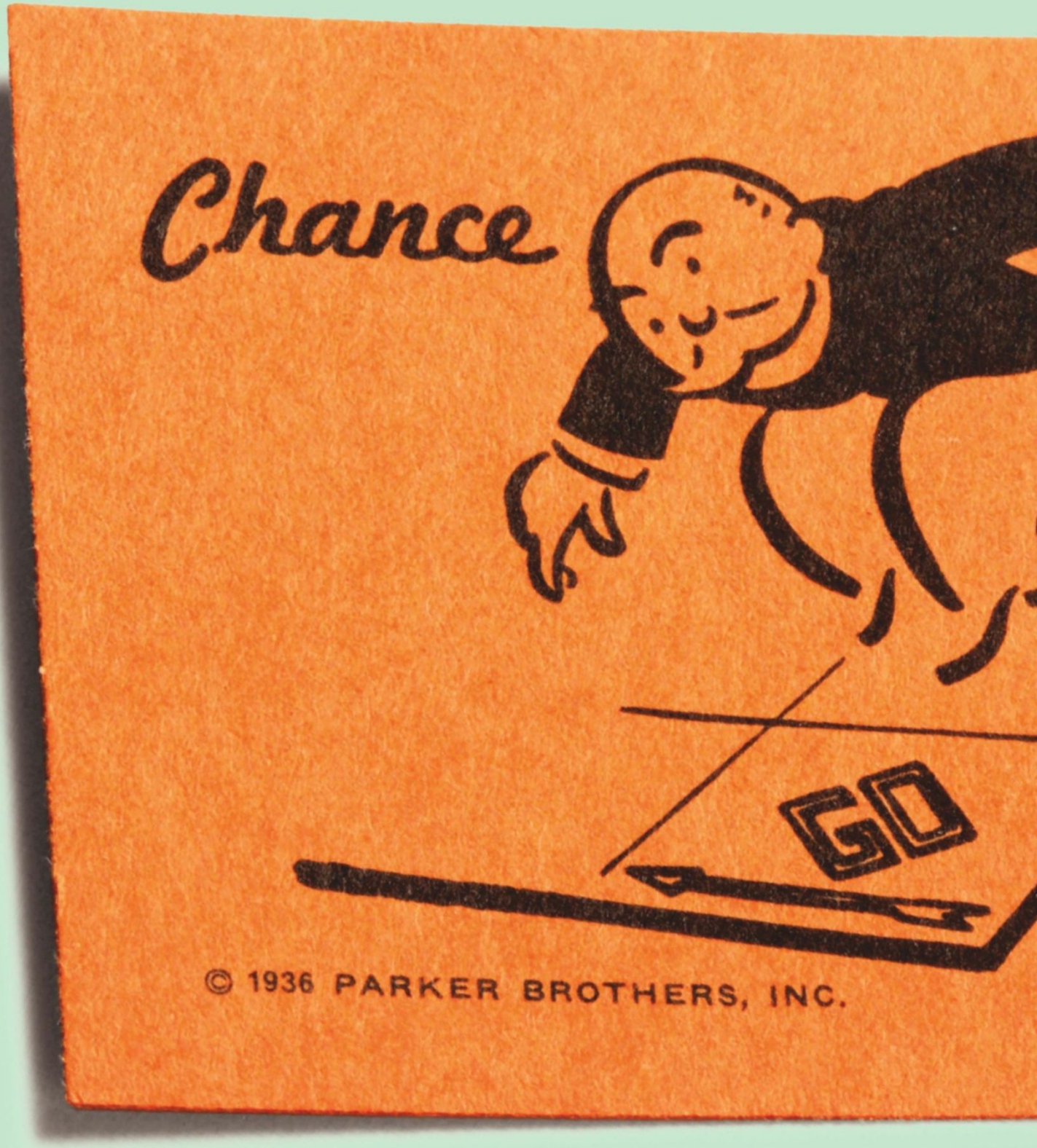
Monopoly, retrofitted with London property names, was released in the U.K. by a Leeds game maker in 1936. The British version helped popularize Monopoly globally, and it is still beloved by Londoners, shown here at a treasure hunt promotion in 2013. Opposite: A 1936 article in Washington, D.C.'s Evening Star *credited Elizabeth Magie with the idea that led to Monopoly.*

brilliant women denied credit where credit is due. In 1903, the same year Magie was putting the final touches on The Landlord's Game and applying for a patent, Mary Anderson of Alabama was finishing up her manually operated "window cleaning device," or windshield wipers. Before the year's end, Anderson would win approval on her patent, yet into the future, a handful of men would be cited as the wipers' inventors. In 1905 and 1906, geneticist Nettie Stevens would publish her groundbreaking paper, "Studies in Spermatogenesis," that would show chromosomes determined sex, but it would be her male colleague, Edmund Beecher Wilson, who would earn the lion's share of the plaudits. During World War II, German-born physicist Lise Meitner co-discovered nuclear fission, but only her male colleague, Otto Hahn, was awarded the Nobel Prize. The list, of course, goes on.

In the case of Monopoly, Magie's exclusion was life-altering. Darrow got so rich he was able to retire at 46, travel the world, and grow orchids full time. In the last known record of Magie, the 1940 census, her profession was listed as "maker of games," and her annual income recorded as "0."

Monopoly remains such instant shorthand for Magie's anticapitalist message that during the Occupy London protest in 2011, an oversize Monopoly board materialized—many credited the street artist Banksy with the installation—amid the protester tents near the London Stock Exchange. In the middle was a destitute Rich Uncle Pennybags. The red Monopoly house was marked "TOX," an allusion to the toxic subprime loans that sparked the financial crisis. The board included the sites of some Occupy camps, as well as Greece and Italy, whose economies were embroiled in the eurozone crisis.

To be fair to Darrow, it's important to acknowledge that he transformed the game we now know and love as Monopoly. Magie's version was distinctly Victorian, with cramped copy, a crowded board, and a muted, earthy color palette. Darrow's version, by contrast, was a sleek Mondrian-esque homage. The colors were bright, the board streamlined, and the illustrations iconic. Where Magie lectured players about the evils of capitalism and attempted to convince them to behave better, Darrow celebrated laissez-faire economics and appealed to players' baser instincts. Magie built an instructional tool. Darrow built a category killer. According to the book *Values at Play in Digital Games* by professors Mary Flanagan and Helen Nissenbaum, when students at Virginia Tech played both versions, they found that while The Landlord's Game made its point, Monopoly was much more fun.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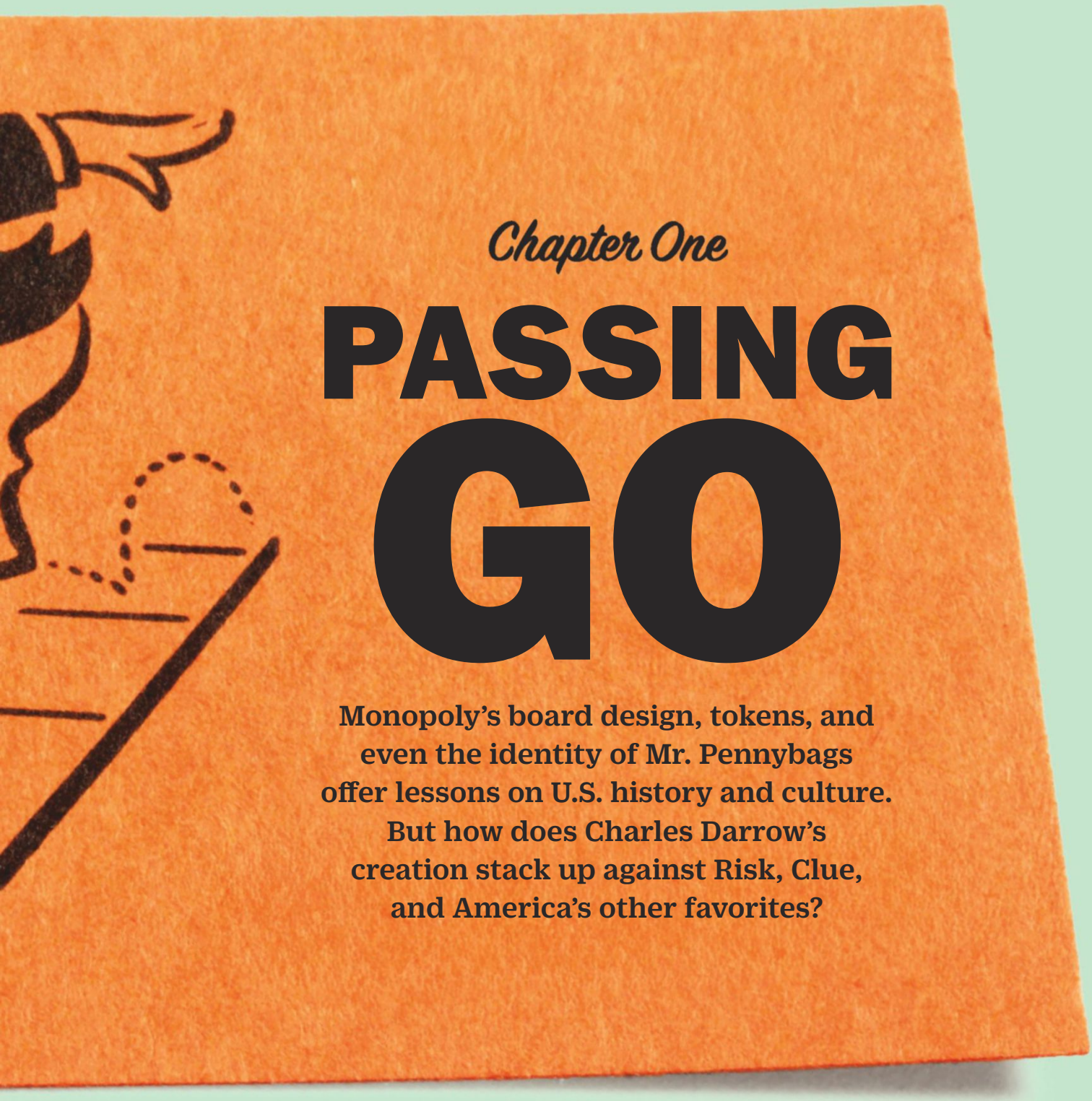
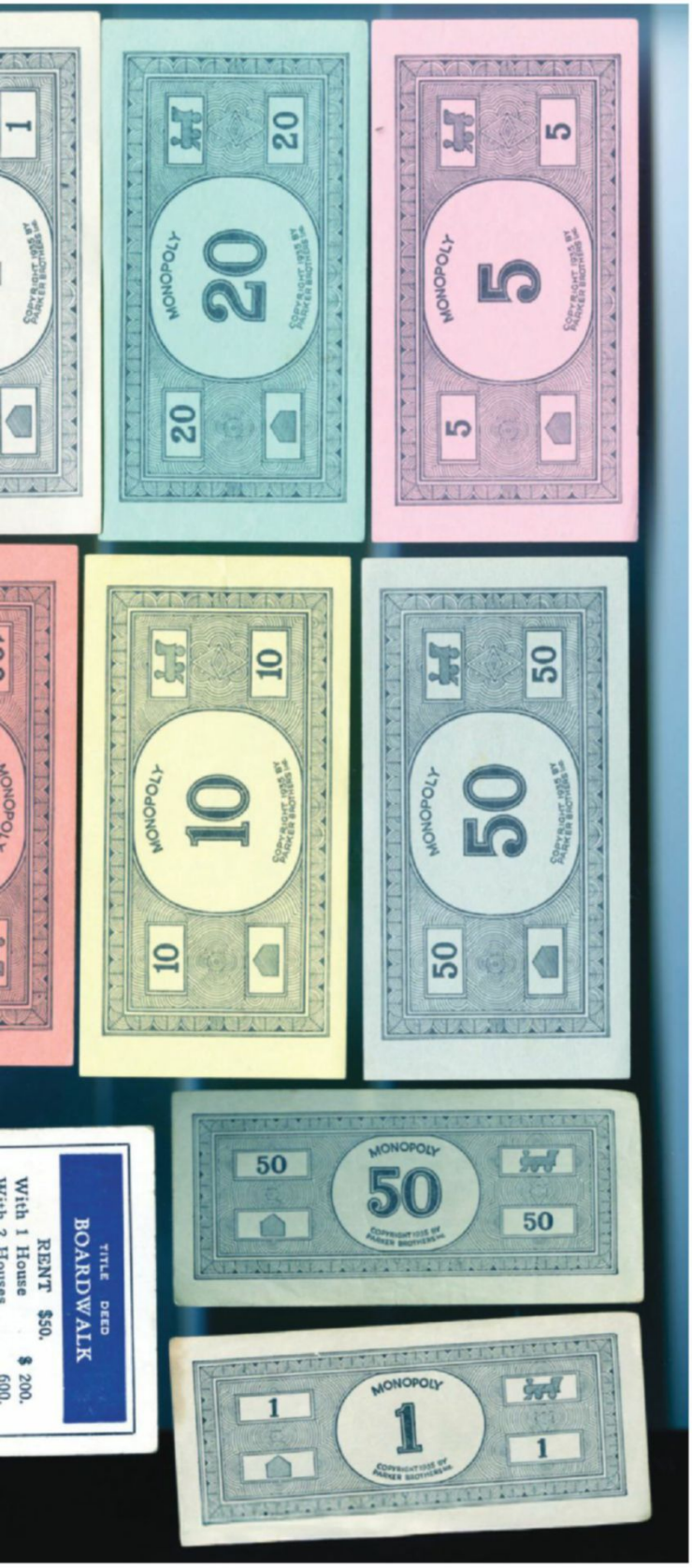


Chapter One

PASSING GO

Monopoly's board design, tokens, and even the identity of Mr. Pennybags offer lessons on U.S. history and culture. But how does Charles Darrow's creation stack up against Risk, Clue, and America's other favorites?

The first year Monopoly was published—in 1935, like the game shown here—Parker Brothers sold 278,000 copies.



THE PARKER BROTHERS MAKE A BET

With revenue plummeting, the toy company backpedaled and agreed to pay Charles Darrow $7,000 for a game he was calling Monopoly—a game that wasn't his.

BY MARY PILON

In 1932, with the Great Depression grinding on and Americans struggling to pay their bills and put food on the table, Parker Brothers' sales figures were disastrous: Revenues were half of what they had been just a few years earlier. In addition, the company's management structure was antiquated and ill equipped to handle the turbulence of the downturn. The firm that George Parker had founded as a teenager nearly 50 years before was on the brink of implosion.

The turmoil at Parker Brothers mirrored the unrest of national politics. In the wake of the stock market crash of '29, debate raged over whether President Herbert Hoover was being too interventionist in his government's attempts to speed up the economy—or too passive. The ability of average Americans to accumulate and generate their own wealth was under fire, with proponents of the New Deal dubbing Wall Street executives "Princes of Property." While campaigning for office in 1932, Franklin Roosevelt gave a nod to the trust-busting era that economist Henry George had inspired. "Clearsighted men saw with fear the danger that opportunity would no longer be

equal," Roosevelt told a San Francisco audience. "That the growing corporation, like the feudal baron of old, might threaten the economic freedom of individuals to earn a living. In that hour, our antitrust laws were born. The cry was raised against the great corporations."

In 1933, George Parker decided to step down. The realities of the economy were painfully undeniable by then, and he felt that a newer, younger leader might better be able to handle the difficult climate. He asked his new son-in-law, Robert Barton, married to his youngest child, Sally, to take the job.

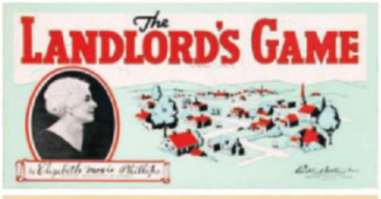
Barton, a lawyer, had no experience with the game industry, but he told his father-in-law that he was willing to accept his offer on one condition: He was to be granted complete control of the firm. With his options limited, Parker agreed, and remained on at the company as chairman—an office fixture known for his thick white mustache upturned at the ends, pointed beard, and elegant suits.

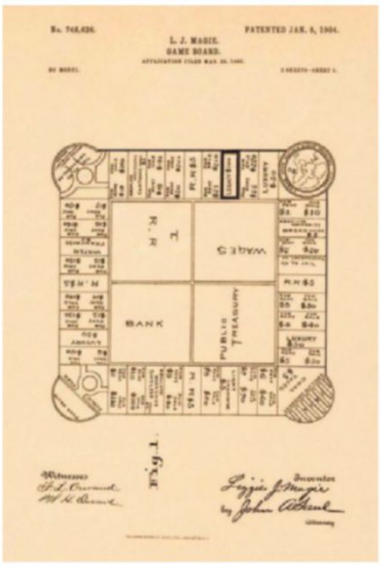
In Philadelphia, far from Barton's office, Charles Darrow was successfully selling the game now being called Monopoly. He had even secured a spot in F.A.O. Schwarz's catalog, a notable achievement for a rube in the game business. Hearing about F.A.O. Schwarz's popular new game, Sally Barton excitedly told her husband and father about it. Parker Brothers had rejected Darrow's game earlier because they had found it too complicated. And who would want to play a real estate game now, when housing was at the root of so much distress for many American families?

There was just one problem. Darrow hadn't created Monopoly. Lizzie Magie—a Washington, D.C., inventor, feminist, and political progressive—had, decades earlier. Magie's version had been called The Landlord's Game and was designed to teach players about unfair economic policy. In 1904, Magie even got a patent for her board game—the very game Darrow was introduced to at the home of friends in the 1930s.

But with his firm poised for collapse and nothing to lose, Barton listened to his wife and, in 1935, summoned Darrow to the Parker Brothers' showroom in New York City. Quickly agreeing on the basic terms, the jolly Philadelphian and the meticulous executive drew up a contract that allowed Parker Brothers to buy Darrow's version of the game for a reported $7,000, plus residuals. The version included artwork

Magie's The Landlord's Game (top left), the "Go to Jail" square on her board, and her patent.





Arden, which is just south of Philadelphia, is one of three single-tax villages in Delaware. Residents pay land rent into a trust that funds the village, the county, and local schools.

Monopolyville

Elizabeth Magie developed The Landlord's Game, the precursor to Monopoly, in the progressive community of Arden, Delaware.

BY GINA McINTYRE

WITH ITS POPULATION OF ABOUT 430 residents, Arden, Delaware, can lay claim to an outsize historical legacy. *The Jungle* author Upton Sinclair once called the arts community home; so too did Ella Reeve "Mother" Bloor, a founder of the Communist Party USA. The pastoral region was also frequently visited by performer, writer, and activist Elizabeth "Lizzie" Magie as she was developing The Landlord's Game, which would eventually evolve into what we know as Monopoly.

Magie couldn't have chosen a better location. Sculptor Frank Stephens and architect Will Price founded Arden in 1900 as a "single-tax" community, one of just two such places in the United States, with the goal of putting into practice not only Henry George's single tax theory, but also the socialist-art theory of William Morris (return-to-the-land craftsmanship) and the worker-centric ideas of Russian anarchist Pyotr Alexeyevich Kropotkin. "We were so disgusted with civilization that we decided then and there to go out into the open and start a new one," Stephens explained in a speech at a tax conference the U.K. in 1923.

Magie's game aligned with those principles, she explained in a 1902 issue of *The Single Tax Review.* "It is a practical demonstration of the present system of land-grabbing with all its usual outcomes and consequences," she wrote. "It might well have been called the 'Game of Life,' as it contains all the elements of success and failure in the real world, and the object is the same as the human race in general seems to have, i.e., the accumulation of wealth."

Handmade prototypes of her game were played in Arden as early as 1902, winning over enthusiasts including Scott Nearing, a professor at the University of Pennsylvania's Wharton School, who shared The Landlord's Game with his students. As Magie continued to refine the game, receiving a patent for it on January 5, 1904, Arden continued to thrive, with sister communities Ardencroft and Ardentown springing up alongside its original 160 acres.

Although there is little trace of the Georgist ideals that inspired Monopoly in the game's present incarnation, the town of Arden has stuck with its progressive approach. Rather than purchasing property, local residents receive a 99-year lease for their land, which is owned by a municipal trust. The rent funds village services and local schools, giving its residents a sense of common identity and purpose, even if few Henry George believers remain.

by Darrow's friend Franklin Alexander and all of the details that the Quakers had added to the game, including the Atlantic City locations, the hotels, the color groupings of the properties, the Income Tax, 10% space, and the "Marvin Gardens" misspelling that had originated with Charles and Olive Todd, onetime friends of the Darrows who had played a version of Magie's game and taught it to them. Barton arranged to purchase Darrow's remaining inventory, and Darrow headed back to Philadelphia.

Magie was about to be erased from history.

By 1936, Monopoly was defying an industry notion that business-themed games did not sell—that they were archaic, technical, and often boring. As the Parker Brothers catalog proudly advertised, "MONOPOLY: THE GREAT FINANCIAL GAME . . . is sweeping the country because it appeals to every American's love of bargain and business dealing. Give a Monopoly party and guests want to play all night!"

With the popular edition of Monopoly costing $2 and the deluxe edition costing a dollar more, the game was an undisputed smash. In its first year at Parker Brothers, Monopoly sold 278,000 units; the next, the figure rose to 1,751,000 units. To buoy profits further, Parker Brothers released a Stock Exchange expansion pack, priced at 50 cents, that allowed players to buy and sell stocks such as General Radio, American Motors, Motion Pictures, and United Airways in addition to real estate. Reports emerged that Parker Brothers was receiving so many telegraphed orders for Monopoly that its employees were filing them in laundry baskets. The overwhelmed toymaker placed an order for three million dice. It's difficult to pinpoint exactly why, after being around in various versions since the early 1900s, Monopoly exploded in the 1930s. Was it because players wanted to live vicariously and handle large sums of money—something that so few could do in the 1930s? Was it because of the game's streamlined design? Or its comic-strip appeal? Or was it merely because the game could be mass-produced and -marketed now, making it accessible to people in a way that hadn't been possible before?

> MONOPOLY "GAVE [PLAYERS] A FEELING OF WEALTH. BUT WHAT KEPT IT GOING IS THE CHANCE FOR INDIVIDUAL GAIN."
> **—EDWARD PARKER**

Edward Parker, the grandnephew of the founder, recalled years later, "During the Depression, people did not have enough money to go out to the shows. . . . So they stayed home and played Monopoly. It also gave them a feeling of wealth. But what kept it going is the chance for individual gain. It appeals to the competitive nature of people. The player can always say to himself, 'I'm going to get the better of the other guy.' People also can play Monopoly without it being the end of the world. Sort of a release from the tensions of everyday life."

Parker Brothers wasn't the only one benefiting from Monopoly's overnight success—the game had dramatically changed the fortunes of the Darrow family as well. Suddenly, they had more money than they knew what to do with. Charles Darrow told one reporter that he had made more than $5,000 in royalties his first year, and that sales had been 25 times greater than expected during Monopoly's first few years. He was on track to become the rare board game millionaire, a real-life manifestation of a Monopoly player who got rich quick.

One journalist after another asked Charles Darrow how he had managed to invent Monopoly out of thin air—a seeming sleight of hand that had brought joy into so many households. "It's a freak," Darrow told the *Germantown Bulletin,* a Philadelphia paper. "Entirely unexpected and illogical." Barton, too, was curious, and decided he needed to bulletproof his claim on the game, to find out the precise origins of Monopoly from Darrow, and to get those details in writing. In a letter with the signature Parker Brothers letterhead, dated March 20, 1935, Barton wrote:

Dear Mr. Darrow:
I trust that you had a more comfortable night on the train and that you made proper connections to arrive in Philadelphia this morning. It was a pleasure to have you with us yesterday and we certainly appreciate your courtesy in coming up here. After thorough consideration this morning, we have concluded that we will take some of your present stock and box

Charles Darrow, who claimed sole credit for inventing Monopoly, in an undated photo. He became rich, retired at 46, and tended his orchids.

it up for a $3 edition. . . . Under the circumstances we will make very little money out of doing this but at the same time we want to be entirely fair to you and so, for every game of yours that we box up and sell as a $3 number, we expect to pay you an additional five cents. . . . Please remember that we are particularly anxious to have you write us a rather detailed history of the game beginning with the time and place where you first received the idea and working up to your final contract with us. The history is exceedingly interesting and we may well want to use it for publicity purposes in one or more of the trade journals. Also, if any patent questions do come up, we will be fully prepared for them and will not have to bother you. Please let us have this as soon as you can. . . . I believe I told you that we wired our men last night and by now are undoubtedly selling "Monopoly" in all sections of the country. I hope for the sake of us both that these sales will be immediate and large.

With kindest regards, I am
Sincerely yours,
Robert B. M. Barton
President

On March 21, the next day, Darrow responded.

Dear Mr. Barton,
The history of monopoly is really quite simple. Friends visiting at our house in the later part of 1931 mentioned a lecture course they had heard of in which the professor gave his class scrip to invest and rated them on the results of the imaginary investments. I think the college referred to was Princeton University.

Being unemployed at the time, and badly needing anything to occupy my time, I made by hand a very crude game for the sole purpose of amusing myself. Later friends called and we played this game, unnamed at that time. One of them asked me to make a copy for him which I did charging him for my time four dollars. Friends of his wanted copies and so forth. By mid summer of 1933 it was obvious that we should cover a valuable product with a copyright so applied for this on October 24th of that year. The publication upon which the copy right was asked came out as of July 30th, though the actual game had been in circulation some time. At least two months prior to the date of the application for a copy right.

A group of sunbathers played in 1939. Opposite: Students passed the time with Monopoly when forced inside by the winter cold in January 1973.

…At the time my brainchild was born, I was far more thoroughly unemployed than I even like to imagine now. Not only unemployed from a financial point of view but a morale point of view. I simply had to have something to do. The theme of this paragraph (number three) can be pathetic itf [sic] you choose with an under note of "Work and Win" or something like that. During that period, when I was selling to friends and friends of friends there was a tremendous thrill in every sale. One game a day was our objective and when we reached it, there was rejoicing. Remember that I drew each figure on oil cloth with a drafting pen and a sketching pen in India ink. Colored each plot of ground with odds and ends of oil paint. Put in the lettering by hand, cut houses and hotels out of scraps of wood and painted them and then typed all of the paperwork.

Later (prior to applying for a copy right) I had Patterson and White print on oilcloth the black lines and a conventionalized form of my original drawings. These blanks I would color in by hand. On this basis I could produce six games a day. The result was still crude but much better than past efforts.

Presently Wanamakers [sic] wrote to me saying that they were getting requests for monopoly. Then I came to the conclusion that some form of protection was in order. I could not afford a patent and I did not think a patent possible so it had to be a copyright. After putting in an application for the copyright and feeling some degree of security from theft of my idea, I called upon Mr. MacDonald and showed him monopoly. He by the way has been a splendid friend through all of my experiences with him. A brutal critic but a fine friend. I think this gives you about what you want. If any point is obscure or if thereis [sic] anything I can add be sure to advise me.

Very truly yours,
Charles B. Darrow

It's impossible to know what was running through Darrow's mind as he wrote his letter. Perhaps the class scrip story is true, but to call the game "my brainchild" and "my idea" when it had essentially existed in the public domain for 30 years was somewhere between a stretch of the facts and a lie.

Parker Brothers executives stewed over what to do. After Barton and Darrow had met and corresponded, a vice president at the firm wrote to Barton to say that after Parker Brothers had published Monopoly, another game publisher had told him "frankly and I think without prejudice that the original trading game came out in 1902." In addition, the vice president wrote, "lawyers had investigated the situation and found that Darrow had appropriated the discarded name MONOPOLY—and further, that Finance was on the market quite some time before MONOPOLY. Also [the game publisher] says he has been selling ten times as much Finance as MONOPOLY and that he has sold approximately two or three thousand of MONOPOLY this past year."

The Parker Brothers vice president told Barton that he should prepare a statement that the company could use when answering questions from others in the business. Barton then sent a letter to Darrow asking if he was willing to affix an affidavit to the history of the game. "We have been doing well with MONOPOLY ," he wrote. "And we want to do everything that we can to protect its reputation and position in the trade. Please help us just as much as you can."

> "I COULD NOT AFFORD A PATENT AND I DID NOT THINK A PATENT POSSIBLE SO IT HAD TO BE A COPYRIGHT."
> **—CHARLES DARROW**

Creation stories are thought to make patents less vulnerable and were a routine part of the patent business at the time. But Parker Brothers executives also knew that Monopoly's creation story was good public relations. Little was more irresistible to a prospective customer than a compelling Horatio Alger backstory, especially during the Depression. When hearing a rags-to-riches tale, people didn't just hear the story for itself—they became emotionally connected to the storyteller and his or her product or invention. They also identified with the storyteller. If an everyman such as Darrow could become a millionaire overnight, so could they.

Darrow never submitted an affidavit. ●

Operation Monopoly X

During World War II, British intelligence included the game in care packages for Allied POWs. Hidden inside the boxes were tools to aid daring escapes.

BY GINA McINTYRE

OF ALL THE CHAPTERS IN THE history of Monopoly, the pages involving World War II might be the most astonishing. To help Allied prisoners escape from German camps during the war, British intelligence commissioned special editions of the game—Monopoly X—that they packed with secret maps, hacksaws, money, and other useful implements of escape. The boxes were smuggled across enemy lines inside care packages, and the Germans, bound by the Geneva Convention, were forced to accept the parcels, which they then distributed to POWs.

The story is laid out in *Monopoly X: How Top-Secret World War II Operations Used the Game of Monopoly to Help Allied POWs Escape, Conceal Spies, and Send Secret Codes*, written by former Parker Brothers executive Philip E. Orbanes. After learning of the clandestine initiative in 1985, Orbanes embarked on a decades-long quest to uncover the details, tracking down survivors and family members of those involved.

Instrumental to the ingenious plan, devised by British intelligence unit MI9 and later used by American intelligence, was the Leeds, England–based printing firm John Waddington Ltd., which specialized in the silk maps that were distributed to soldiers (silk didn't rustle when unfolded, nor did it deteriorate if it got wet). The company also held the U.K. license for Monopoly, so Waddington executives were recruited to make editions marked with "a little innocuous dot," says Orbanes, typically on the Free Parking space. Small enough to avoid detection by guards, the tiny mark alerted prisoners to look for equipment concealed inside the box.

"There was opportunity to carve compartments in the carboard liner of the game board and insert lots of objects that were invaluable to a POW once he had made it over the wire," Orbanes says. "Those items included a low-profile compass, German money, documents, and, maybe most important, a silk escape map of either the local area or the entirety of the country where the POW camp was located."

John Powell Davies (left) and Colonel James Yule were POWs at Colditz. They celebrated the 50th anniversary of the game in 1985.

While it might sound odd that guards would allow prisoners to play Monopoly, there was an advantage to keeping soldiers occupied. "Germany is a game-playing culture," says Orbanes, "and the Nazis thought if the POWs had an adequate supply of games, it would take their minds off trying to escape."

Orbanes estimates 1,200 to 2,000 so-called Monopoly X games made it into the camps, with nearly 11,000 prisoners managing to escape. Of those, however, just 1,600 successfully made their way back to England.

The Tax Theory That Spawned Monopoly

SOCIAL PHILOSOPHER HENRY GEORGE BELIEVED THAT A SINGLE TAX ON LAND—WHICH HE ARGUED BELONGED TO THE PUBLIC—WOULD FULLY FUND THE U.S. GOVERNMENT.

BY MARC PALEN

IT'S A THRILL THAT NEVER GETS old: in a cutthroat game of Monopoly, bankrupting your friends and family and gobbling up all the property on the board for yourself while gleefully leaving others penniless. With its iconic top-hatted mascot, this perennially popular board game holds a special place in our hearts.

Heart theoretically should be front and center in this game, as it was created around 1902 to promote social reform and help level the playing field for the least fortunate members of society. It was invented by feminist Elizabeth Magie during a time when she was a regular visitor to a utopian community in Delaware called Arden, which was dedicated to the ideals of social philosopher Henry George. Among other things, George argued that land ownership allows some people to earn income without contributing to production, which causes poverty. He wanted to prevent land speculation, reduce income inequality, and abolish poverty.

Magie arrived in Arden with beliefs that dovetailed with the other residents. Her father, an Illinois newspaper editor named James Magie, had instilled in her a passion for abolitionism, feminism, and anti-monopolism. To support the latter concept, Mr. Magie had also lent his daughter his dog-eared copy of George's best-selling book *Progress and Poverty* (1879), which explored the links between industrialism and social inequalities. In the text, George laid out his proposal for a tax to replace all other taxes. He made the provocative case that a single tax on the estimated potential value of land would make all other forms of taxation unnecessary—and break up land monopolies along the way.

So what exactly was Henry George's single tax proposal? According to George and his followers, the nation's land was God's creation, the fruits of which rightfully belonged to all Americans. Yet, perversely, a small, avaricious group of monopolists instead laid claim to the country's vast land wealth. Land monopoly invariably led to inefficiency and exploitation; the ill-gained profits of land speculators and railroad tycoons came at the nation's expense.

In the Georgian view, placing a single tax on land based on its potential value would therefore either incentivize monopolists to develop their land to maximize its wealth—e.g., build more factories or farms—or force them to rent the land to someone else.

But for Lizzie Magie and her fellow Georgists, the single tax transcended domestic politics—it also had implications for U.S. foreign policy. In their view, the single tax promised to provide enough revenue to fund the U.S. government, so that other forms of taxation would become

Henry George supported a land tax to encourage development. Elizabeth Magie tried to teach his theories through her game.

A cartoon poking fun at oil barons and monopolists skeptical of Henry George's views appeared in the U.S. humor magazine Puck *in 1886.*

unnecessary, including tariffs, at the time the country's main source of revenue. The end goal of the single tax was unfettered free trade.

George's theory was as simple as it was appealing, arriving at the height of the Gilded Age, a time infamous for its extreme disparities in wealth and economic panics. And though critics sought to discredit the single tax as a radical attack on property rights and a move toward socialism, *Progress and Poverty* was such a success that George became famous, and his ideas sparked reforms across the globe, from Australia and New Zealand to parts of Canada. In the U.S. and Britain, *Progress and Poverty* inspired grassroots movements, including the founding of Arden.

Today, Georgism has moved to the fringes, but it still lives on. In December 2023, the *New York Times* reminded us that the Georgists are still "out there," kept alive by 21st-century disciples the Young Georgists of America, New York's Henry George School of Social Science, and the Progress & Poverty Institute in Princeton, New Jersey. And Arden remains a testament to the movement's longevity.

For Georgists in Arden and across the country, America's embrace of free trade would fundamentally transform the U.S. economy, which had remained highly protectionist since the early 1860s. Like land monopoly, protectionism was deemed inefficient, an unnatural mechanism used to monopolize and exploit the national market at the consumer's expense. In the view of George and his disciples, protectionism led to colonialism, as protectionism forced nations to acquire new markets to export surplus U.S. capital. Unsurprisingly, Georgists became the heads of the turn-of-the-century U.S. anti-imperialist movement. In fact, the country's main Georgist publication, Chicago's *The Public,* was launched in 1898 to oppose the U.S. imperial conflict with Spain.

Georgist radicals in Chicago, Boston, New York City, Philadelphia, and Magie's Arden would keep up their pacifistic fight by taking a lead role within the U.S. peace movement that grew out of the First World War.

The next time your family digs out that worn-out Monopoly box from the attic for an afternoon of fun, remember that you are also dusting off a remarkable artifact from the nation's left-wing anti-imperial past.

BY DESIGN

Monopoly's colors, lines, and typeface serve a specific purpose: to transport players into a "greed is good" state of mind.

BY DANIEL S. LEVY

FOR BOARD GAME EYE CANDY, IT'S HARD to beat Monopoly, an ingenious masterwork in design multitasking, where all the details have a double meaning. The stripped-down typography suggests wealth and success. The color-coded properties signal value and strategic goals. The metal tokens, down to the rubber ducky, are gratifyingly heavy, evocative of valuable coins. Even the momentum of the gameplay itself, in which competitors aspire to empire building, is intentional. And what says Master of the Universe quite like plunking down a hotel on Park Place?

Monopoly's design echoes the works of artist Piet Mondrian, whose prices in turn are Monopolian: The painting here sold for $27.8 million in 2021.

None of these features are accidental. Monopoly as we know it was born in 1935, the age of the robber baron, when industrialists such as John D. Rockefeller built massive fortunes while most Americans struggled to put food on the table. The average consumer couldn't buy a railroad line, but they could play a railroad tycoon sitting around a Monopoly board, and as they played, they internalized those design details. As successive generations sat at the board, its map became a shared point of reference: familiar, like mashed potatoes. Indeed, says design critic Steven Heller, the design of Monopoly is "the comfort food of games."

Much of Monopoly's visual appeal lies in its Art Deco optimism, reflecting the desire to leave behind the trauma of World War I. Launched in France in the early 20th century, by the 1930s, Art Deco was de rigueur. It exuded energy, glamour, and confidence and could be found in furniture (the Eileen Gray adjustable table), kitchenware (Hotpoint toasters), skyscrapers (New York City's Chrysler Building), and other commonly seen and used items. The style's appealing look, bold typography, and luxury associations spoke to class, distinction, and success, all attributes that Monopoly championed.

To transport players into a robber baron "greed is good" mindset, the game's board, cards, buildings, and money lean into color psychology. One of the pioneers of color psychology was the early 20th-century Swiss psychiatrist Carl Jung, who noted that "colors are the mother tongue of the subconscious." Most competitors are likely unaware that the hues are influencing their behavior. The shades of the Monopoly board evoke specific responses, which is why, for example, the low-rent properties Mediterranean and Baltic avenues are tinged an uninspired brown, the color of laborers' work clothes. Monopoly's tints become more vibrant and alluring—from orange and red to yellow and green—as one progresses around the grid of the board. At the end, players make it to the most sought-after spots, Park Place and Boardwalk, marked by a deep blue, a color not common in nature but a sign of wealth and authority.

At the time of its creation, Monopoly was distinct from existing 19th-century games, which tended to be laid out around a dominant hero image, such as the windy serpent of The Game of Sociable Snake, with some spaces rewarding good behavior and others punishing bad; in a maze, such as Telegraph Boy, where players moved up the ranks of a corporation; or in a checkerboard pattern. These games often stressed positive beliefs and warned against moral failings. Inventor Elizabeth Magie's 1904 The Landlord's Game, which Monopoly was heavily based on, was a major design departure. Instead of moving along a path or web, players made their way around a square board

with each side composed of nine property rectangles, such as Goat Alley: For Sale $50, Land Rent $8. Magie was "an unheralded game design genius," says Eric Zimmerman, cofounder of New York University's Gamelab. She created a modern-feeling game, one with a "focused simulation approach to game design," he says, in which players learn rules and strategies through repetition.

The Landlord's Game caught on with families, students, and church groups, with many creating their own variations. Those playing it in a Quaker enclave in Atlantic City, New Jersey, applied such distinctive local street names as Ventnor Avenue and St. Charles Place. Charles Darrow made a large round version based on the Quakers' board. Eager to profit from it, he stripped out Magie's lessons about fairness and rebranded it Monopoly.

American jeweler and artist Sidney Mobell created this gold Monopoly set for the eighth Monopoly World Championship in 1988.

Because he didn't have design experience, Darrow asked his cartoonist friend Franklin Alexander to simplify the game board's look. Best known for the Sunday newspaper comic strip "Hairbreadth Harry" (it looked like "Gasoline Alley" but parodied old-fashioned melodramas), Alexander retained Magie's stylistic DNA—including the nine properties around the border—but scrapped the visual clutter and shrank the type on the properties. Alexander also gave the board its gloss of Piet Mondrian, the Dutch artist famous for his white canvases overlaid with thick-black-lined grids and filled with primary colors red, blue and yellow.

Some accounts of Monopoly's design history credit Alexander with coming up with the policeman and Jake the Jailbird, both of whom are outlined in heavy black, like cartoons. Alexander also included Marvin Gardens, an earlier misspelling of the Atlantic City neighborhood Marven Gardens. Like a meticulously planned city, Monopoly "offers the pleasure of building methodically on a perfect grid, layer by layer, with just enough risk and strategy to keep the tension alive," says Alexandra Cunningham Cameron, curator of contemporary design at the Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum in New York.

When Parker Brothers bought the game from Darrow, the company further streamlined and Deco'd its look. Out went the utilitarian serif lettering with the projecting decorative feet; in came Kabel, the footless, sans-serif font that gives the game its clean, minimalist feel. Parker Brothers artist Daniel Fox illustrated the Chance and Community Chest cards and modeled the Mr. Monopoly character on either the financier J.P. Morgan or the banker Otto Kahn. The functional-looking houses and hotels call to mind architect Walter Gropius' Masters' Houses in Dessau, Germany, from the 1920s.

As sales of the game boomed, Parker Brothers took advantage of advanced mass production methods and finer and more consistent color gradients to upgrade its look. Seeking a more contemporary feel, the game maker began using on the box the ITC Korinna typeface, a variation on the Art Nouveau font from the early 20th century. It also applied Copperplate Gothic/Futura, which pairs the elegant turn-of-the-century Copperplate Gothic font with the minimalist 1927 Futura font, to the title deed cards.

Since 1935, more than 275 million copies of Monopoly have been sold as it has nestled into the cultural consciousness. It has been embraced and played by generations of hopeful monopolists. This

Grading the Game's Look

What do the experts think of Monopoly's design?

BY DANIEL S. LEVY

Alexandra Cunningham Cameron

Curator of contemporary design at the Cooper Hewitt, Smithsonian Design Museum in New York

The Landlord's Game's emphasis on land use and fairness is full of text and a Progressive Era instinct to earnestly explain things. Monopoly employs a cleaner, sharper, more modern style. The board becomes a system of confident shapes. Its capitalism doesn't lecture and makes the mechanics of development feel natural. You could argue Monopoly's design is so modular, so essential, that it can be endlessly reskinned without ever losing its identity. But you could also say the opposite: that its real staying power comes from its ability to evolve. It's the brand's ethos of agility, more than the design itself, that keeps it alive.

Dr. Lindsay Grace

Professor at the University of Miami School of Communication

You build a narrative around this game, and the longer you play, the more you're sort of like, "Wow. I only started with this much money, but look at the empire I've built." It is the same thing you see in contemporary franchises like Civilization or SimCity. It's just that this one allows you to sort of see some of the visualization. You get to see those hotels being built. It's quite visually literate that way. There is a literal graphic of performance on the board as you continue. If I showed you a board that's been played for an hour and one that's been played for five hours, you'd immediately notice the difference.

Dr. Patrick Jagoda

Director of the University of Chicago Media Arts and Design program

The Darrow-Alexander board that leads to the iconic Monopoly board we know today is visually clear and easy to understand. Each property space stands out with distinct and bold colors. The typography is authoritative and neutral in a way that makes each property interchangeable with any successful brand. Even as the design of the board has changed across the years, the look and feel of Monopoly always contributes to a familiar narrative of a classic American Dream ruled by competition and the possibility of success. Over the years, the Monopoly board also grew in appeal because of the nostalgia it evoked from one generation to the next.

nostalgia has allowed it to morph. Hasbro acquired Parker Brothers in 1991 and has created thousands of themed variations of the game, many that have their own color palate but still honor the original look. There is a SpongeBob SquarePants edition with Bikini Bottom locations and tokens of such characters as Patrick. There's a Swarovski edition with 2,000 crystals. Cunningham Cameron plays with her children on a Dungeons & Dragons edition, something she notes has "pulled them into the game." The varieties have made Monopoly what Zimmerman calls the world's "most reskinned game," something that on the surface looks different but underneath is the same.

The Monopoly board has even made it into museum shows. In 2024, Cunningham Cameron's Cooper Hewitt, which is housed in the former home of monopolist Andrew Carnegie, held its design triennial. Part of the museum's exhibition included a Carnegie-inspired twist on Monopoly called Philanthropy, in homage to the steel magnate who funded more than 2,500 libraries along with schools and public pools around the world. The interactive game was played in Carnegie's intricately wood-paneled office and encouraged visitors to use their wealth to benefit society.

Some Monopoly sets aspire to be works of art worthy of a museum's permanent collection. In 1988, jeweler Sidney Mobell created a 23-carat-gold board complete with gold houses and hotels with ruby-and-sapphire-topped chimneys and dice made with diamonds. At $2 million, it is now part of the Smithsonian Institution's collection.

Meantime, the classic Art Deco–designed game, which in 1935 cost $2, can be bought new for about $20 and played whenever and wherever you want.

TOKENS OF APPRECIATION

Monopoly's famous playing pieces—from boot to horseman to automobile—offer social commentary on the eras in which they were introduced.

BY AVA ERICKSON

THE DECISION DID NOT SEEM LIKE A head turner. In 2013, following an online vote in which Monopoly fans could choose their favorite token, Hasbro honored the public's choice, swapping out the almost 80-year-old iron for a sleek new kitty cat. Yet almost as soon as the announcement was made, major media outlets—the BBC, *Smithsonian* magazine, CBS News, and the *Christian Science Monitor,* among others—jumped into action. "Scottie the dog is not going to like this news," NPR's Mark Memmott noted.

On the Monopoly Facebook page, fans weighed in with their views, which ranged from "Yay, down with ironing and hooray for kittens!" and "Scrap the IRON" to "What? The cat? I demand a recount!!!" and "IRON FOR LIFE!!!"

The hoopla was a reminder of how deeply Monopoly's tokens sit in the American cultural imagination. Our personal connections to these tiny pewter-cast pawns stir nostalgia, instigate family fights, prompt historical research, and inspire essays dissecting why we identify with certain pieces. According to *Monopoly, Money and You: How to Profit from the Game's Secrets of Success,* by former Parker Brothers executive Phil Orbanes, if you choose the wheelbarrow, you're a team player, while those partial to the cannon have a stubborn streak. Those who like the top hat are strategic thinkers, while boot-token lovers tend to be dependable. Some vintage tokens have become collectors' items, with some grouping on eBay for upward of $500.

Well aware of the emotional power of the pieces, Hasbro has sponsored multiple online polls to engage players and generate publicity. In 1998, based on a public vote, they added a bag of money. In 2000, they retired the cannon and horse and rider. Some

additions have even been celebrated in advertising campaigns, like the 2013 cat, which got a full-blown marketing rollout with a 30-second commercial.

To be sure, every game-board aficionado has their favorites. There's an undeniable appeal to the smoothness of a wooden Scrabble tile, the heaviness of the coins in Scythe, and the chunky gems of the Lost Ruins of Arnak. And rest assured there have been fights over who gets to be Colonel Mustard and who gets Miss Scarlet in Clue, the go-to gingerbread man in Candy Land, and pawn color in Sorry! What makes Monopoly tokens different is the way they reflect American history. Each piece recalls the time it was issued and offers a window onto the past. According to Ian Bogost, writing for *The Atlantic* in 2017, "To play the game with a thimble—that symbol of domesticity and humility—instead of a T. rex connects players to that history, both in leisure and in economics." Sorry, Sorry!

Before Parker Brothers purchased the game,

and even before Charles Darrow gave it the name Monopoly, there was The Landlord's Game, the precursor to Monopoly that had caught on in Atlantic City, New Jersey. The Landlord's Game had no official tokens. Instead, players improvised with whatever they had on hand: buttons, bottle caps, other household odds and ends. Even when Darrow started to develop Monopoly in 1933, he intended to keep The Landlord Game's DIY approach, without official playing pieces.

There are different versions of how Darrow decided to use tokens, the most charming of which is that his niece suggested modeling the tokens after the jangly charm bracelets that were in style at the time, though it's hard to document the story. What's known for sure is that soon after Parker Brothers bought the rights to the game in 1935, the company moved to manufacture tokens en masse and contacted Dowst Manufacturing Company in Chicago. Dowst happened to already be making some tokens—such as the iron and the battleship—for other clients, and these pieces were adopted for Monopoly. The top hat, thimble, boot, and cannon were added, bringing the original total to six, all of which were made from Zamak, a zinc alloy that oxidized and turned black, necessitating a change to a mix of lead and tin. Eventually, Parker Brothers moved production in-house.

It was a time of deprivation, with the average American living by the Depression-era motto "Use it up, wear it out, make do, or do without." Many homemakers were stretching their food budget with casseroles and one-pot meals such as chili, macaroni and cheese, and soup. Potlucks, often organized by churches, became a cheap form of social entertainment and a popular way to share food. Thrift gardens, where people grew their own vegetables and herbs, helped with self-sufficiency. Without much money to spend on entertainment, families turned more and more to board games. Monopoly, with its tokens of everyday life, took off.

The simple set of playing pieces turned the choice of token into a miniature social commentary. The fashion-related pieces—the top hat and boot—quietly captured the era's economic divide, a disparity echoed throughout the game itself. The top hat, a common everyday article of clothing throughout the 1800s, was a symbol of wealth and status for the financier class in the 20th century. In contrast, the boot, commonly worn by working-class men during the Depression, nodded to the era's defining "bootstrapping" work ethic. The battleship and cannon represented the era's military mindset, as Monopoly was released between the two World Wars. For players, especially veterans, these tokens would have been resonant.

During World War II, metal shortages forced Parker Brothers to temporarily switch to wooden pawns or composite materials—some from sawdust and compressed paper—that resulted in less-than-sturdy tokens. In the U.K., most were cardboard cutouts slotted into wooden bases. After the war, the times changed, and so did the pieces. Scottie the dog, today's most popular piece, entered the game in 1946, which some toy historians believe was a tribute to Franklin Roosevelt, whose companion throughout the 1940s was a Scottish terrier named Fala. The airplane was introduced that same year, just as commercial air travel was starting to become common, and with the new decade came a tank, and a wheelbarrow, an emblem of hard work.

The 1991 acquisition of Parker Brothers by Hasbro greatly expanded the token-verse. Seeking to tap into popular culture, the toy giant embraced a strategy that included hundreds of different licensed Monopoly editions, each of which had its own themed tokens. The Star Trek version included

There have been a number of Pokémon Monopoly editions, with classic tokens replaced by characters such as Pikachu. Opposite: The cat took the iron's place in 2013. The Scottie has held his ground.

a mini TOS Shuttlecraft, and one Pokémon version featured Pikachu, Mewtwo, Bulbasaur, Charmander, Clefairy, and Blastoise.

The token-verse expanded within the classic game as well. Hasbro introduced community polls. The first was held in 1998, when the world voted to add the sack of money. The 2013 poll ushered in the cat and ushered out the iron. Participants in the 2017 poll passed on more than 50 options—including the hashtag and the emoji—but nevertheless retired the thimble, wheelbarrow, and boot and embraced the addition of the T. rex, penguin, and rubber ducky. The most recent poll, in 2022, resurrected the thimble in place of the T. rex, perhaps a sign of COVID-era nostalgia.

Not everyone agreed that the crowdsourcing of token shapes was a positive development for Monopoly fans. *Atlantic* writer Bogost complained that the new playing pieces and playing boards intended to make Monopoly more "relevant" to younger players deprived them of the chance to understand, on a symbolic level, the economic calamity of the Great Depression and the tide of industrialism and monopolism that allowed the few to influence the fates of the many. "Perhaps what today's Monopoly players really need isn't easy familiarity and identification, but an invitation to connect to a time when the same game bore different meaning and embraced different experience," Bogost wrote.

Today, Monopoly exists in countless licensed editions, from America's National Parks to Sephora. For some fans, these new editions and their sets of tokens are exciting and modern, while others still cling to the classic tokens that first captured their imagination.

People's choices to buy these licensed versions, vote out a classic token, or simply select a familiar go-to piece in a game at home reflect both changing cultural trends and the deep-seated nostalgia Monopoly inspires. No matter how many new editions appear on store shelves, the classic game, with its tiny top hat, dog, and thimble, endures, connecting to decades of family game nights and shared memories.

The Real Streets of Atlantic City

THE NAMES OF THE MONOPOLY PROPERTY SETS WERE BORROWED FROM THIS FAMED NEW JERSEY SEASIDE TOWN.

BY AVA ERICKSON

THE STORY OF HOW THE official Monopoly board ended up with Atlantic City street names is as circuitous as the popular game is square. The real estate properties on the very first playing board, created and patented by Elizabeth Magie as The Landlord's Game, were either luxury or rental. Though Magie was unable to find a manufacturer to mass-produce her invention, the game spread by word of mouth to communities in the Northeast and mid-Atlantic, where players created their own boards, often substituting in street names from their own neighborhoods.

One of those places was the seaside refuge of Atlantic City, which was attracting people looking for a healthy getaway or full-time residence. The latter category included Ruth Hoskins, a recent college graduate and Quaker teacher, who had learned a game by then known as "monopoly" at school and began introducing it to her friends in Atlantic City. The Quaker regulars began replacing the generic street names with ones that had personal meaning. One couple lived on Pennsylvania Avenue, had friends who lived on Park Place, and once employed a housekeeper who lived on Baltic Avenue near Mediterranean Avenue. A real estate agent assigned new values to the properties, which he grouped by color, and the prices assigned corresponded to real life: Boardwalk ($400) and Park Place ($350) took their names from the city's most glamorous stretches, while Baltic ($60) was a lower-income neighborhood. Later, when Charles Darrow adapted the game, he preserved the Atlantic City names, inspired by fond memories of vacations there. Today, some of these streets look just the same, while others would be unrecognizable to those who gave them their spots on the board.

Brown Set

THEN: Parallel streets located on the northwest side of the island Atlantic City sits on, Baltic and Mediterranean avenues were predominantly low-income areas where Black residents from the Jim Crow South had settled in search of economic opportunity. The neighborhoods tended to be lower income with lower property values. Baltic Avenue was mainly residential, while Mediterranean Avenue was more commercial and industrial, home to Abbotts Dairies and Wrigley's Chewing Gum.

NOW: Mediterranean and Baltic avenues are mainly residential areas with a median listing price ranging from $199,000 to $270,000. (By comparison, the median sale price for homes across the U.S. was more than $400,000 in 2025, according to RedFin.) The Baltic Avenue Canal, a draining system that runs under the street, is currently undergoing a major $22 million reconstruction after the original floodgates were destroyed by vandalism and fire in the 1960s and 1970s. The revitalization project aims to prevent the accumulation of standing water in the neighborhood, which has been an ongoing issue since the gates were destroyed.

BALTIC AVENUE


ORIENTAL AVENUE

Light Blue Set

THEN: Connecticut, Oriental, and Vermont avenues were located in Inlet, the city's northernmost neighborhood. A working-class community when Monopoly's streets were first named, Inlet was home to many Chinese American families who had moved east to open restaurants after facing discrimination on the West Coast, as well as to Jewish families—both vacationers and year-round residents.

NOW: With a median home sale price of around $305,000, the area remains ethnically diverse and is the focus of revitalization efforts aimed in part at community enhancements and housing and economic development. The historic Absecon Lighthouse, built in the mid-1800s, still stands near Vermont Avenue and welcomes visitors.

Magenta Set

THEN: Virginia Avenue, St. Charles Place, and States Avenue branched off Pacific Avenue and were the site of a number of famous now-gone hotels, including Hotel Morton on Virginia Avenue, original home to radio station WFPG (for World's Famous Play Ground).

NOW: States Avenue is mostly gone and runs along one side of the Showboat Resort, while St. Charles Place was paved over during the development of that hotel. Virginia Avenue is more residential, with median home prices that range from about $172,000 to $270,000.

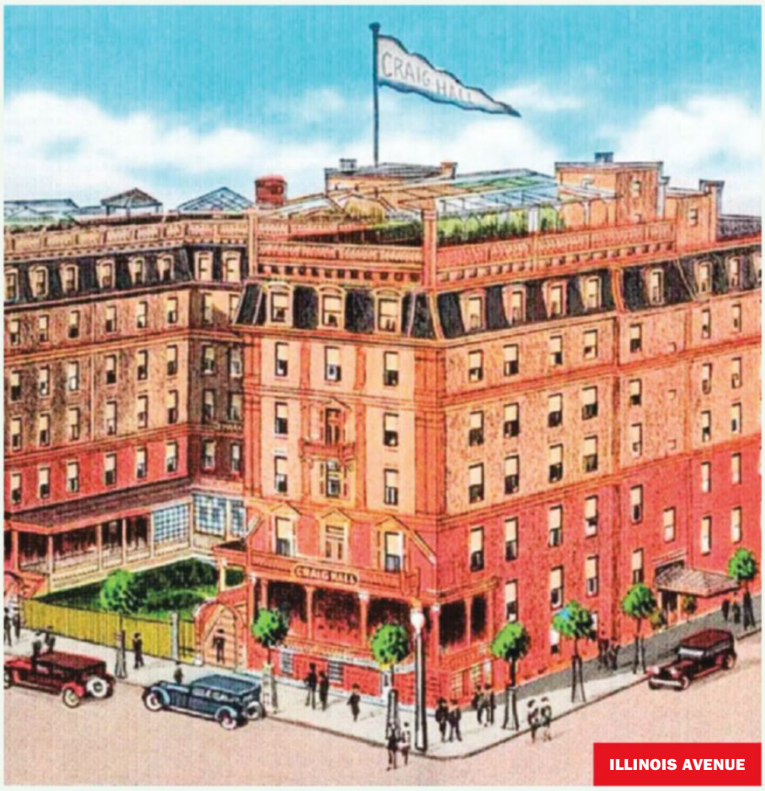
VIRGINIA AVENUE

Orange Set

THEN: Tennessee and New York avenues were parallel routes that crossed central Atlantic City, while St. James Place was a short street just a block from the beach. New York Avenue was the home to some of the earliest gay bars in the country, and into the 1980s, it remained a hub for drag shows and all-night parties.

NOW: Though the neighborhood still has pockets of nightlife, it is generally quieter than it was during its mid-century peak. In recent years, an effort to revive the city's arts and entertainment scene has brought new energy to one part of the neighborhood: the Orange Loop, named for the orange properties in the Monopoly board game. The three-block destination is full of lively restaurants, cafés, bars, and even a yoga studio. Median home listing prices range from $172,000 to $182,000.

TENNESSEE AVENUE



ILLINOIS AVENUE

Red Set

THEN: Kentucky, Indiana, and Illinois avenues were major thoroughfares that ran through central Atlantic City from the bay to the ocean. In the 1930s, the streets throbbed with nightlife. The area around Kentucky and Arctic avenues, nicknamed "KY & the Curb," was the center of a thriving Black business community and included venues that attracted celebrities and politicians who wanted to see performers including Count Basie, Ella Fitzgerald, Louis Armstrong, Billie Holiday, and Frank Sinatra. While many of the establishments were segregated, some, including Club Harlem, Atlantic City's premier Black-owned nightclub, welcomed both Black and white patrons.

NOW: Illinois Avenue was renamed Martin Luther King Jr. Boulevard in the 1980s, but the three main drags remain central hubs of the city. Median home prices in the area are around $172,000 to $199,000.

Yellow Set

THEN: Ventnor Avenue ran north through Margate and Ventnor, two cities located just south of Atlantic City on Absecon Island. Marven Gardens, a portmanteau of the two names, was a small neighborhood located on the border that was famously misspelled as Marvin Gardens on the Monopoly board. During the 1930s, the area was a quiet summer residence district, distinguished by Spanish Colonial Revival–style homes, which were popular across the country. These wealthy neighborhoods had high gates, reflecting the harsh segregation of the time. Ventnor Avenue turned into Atlantic Avenue in Atlantic City, encompassing two bayfront residential neighborhoods, Ducktown and Chelsea. Ducktown was largely Italian American, named for the duck houses built by its residents for raising poultry, while Chelsea became a middle-class Jewish enclave.

ATLANTIC AVENUE

NOW: Margate and Ventnor remain wealthy enclaves, with median home sales ranging from $720,000 to $1.2 million. In Chelsea and Ducktown, median home sales range from $150,000 to $356,000.

PENNSYLVANIA AVENUE

Green Set

THEN: Pennsylvania Avenue and North Carolina Avenue dissected central Atlantic City and were high-end residential streets in the 1930s. The Harveys, an influential Atlantic City Quaker family who helped popularize Monopoly, lived on Pennsylvania. Pacific Avenue was another main drag that was part of the city's nightlife scene. It was also home to the Post Office building, where federal agents called in witnesses during the 1930s tax evasion investigation of politician and crime boss Enoch L. "Nucky" Johnson, who controlled everything from local elections to bootlegging, gambling, and prostitution.

NOW: Homes on Pennsylvania and North Carolina avenues run about $172,000. Pacific Avenue, which runs parallel to the boardwalk, is mainly home to resorts, casinos, and restaurants.

BOARDWALK

Dark Blue Set

THEN: The two most expensive spaces on the board, Boardwalk and Park Place, were ritzy areas in the 1930s. Boardwalk was just that, a wooden walkway along the oceanfront lined with swanky hotels and restaurants, including the famous Claridge Hotel, known as "the Skyscraper by the Sea."

TODAY: Park Place has a median home value of $182,500, while homes in the Boardwalk area list for a median price of $450,000 but can go much higher. Hotels and casinos continue to operate here, though most of the original resorts from the 1920s and '30s have been demolished or converted to condos. One holdout: The Claridge has kept its doors open. It has counted Marilyn Monroe, Frank Sinatra, and Bob Hope among its famous guests.

MR. PENNYBAGS

The mustachioed mascot, perhaps inspired by New York banker Otto Kahn, is one of the richest men who never lived and a fixture on the Forbes Fictional 15.

BY STEVE RUSHIN

Though he once won second prize in a beauty contest, the real estate mogul Mr. Monopoly is physically unremarkable. He's short of stature, except when appearing as a 42-foot-tall balloon in the Macy's Thanksgiving Day Parade. His black top hat conceals a scalp as barren as a vacant lot—though no lot remains vacant for long in the money-spinning hands of Monopoly. Indeed, his countless hotels and houses have made him a fixture of the Forbes Fictional 15, a real-life list of the richest characters who never lived.

As the imaginary embodiment of the impossibly rich, Mr. Monopoly has many rivals. Ebenezer Scrooge hated Christmas and coined the phrase "Bah, humbug." His waterfowl namesake, Scrooge McDuck, dived into a vault of gold coins and swam through his own fortune. When a telemarketer offered *The Simpsons*' Mr. Burns eternal happiness for a dollar, Burns replied, "I'd be happier with the dollar." These cartoon tycoons give greed a bad name.

From Charles Foster Kane to Cruella de Vil, the fictional filthy rich are seldom sympathetic. But Mr. Monopoly is different. For starters, he is not always rich, and—cruelly—he has never been young. When he was born, in 1936, he was already middle-aged and mustachioed. As chronicled over the decades on various Chance and Community Chest cards, Mr. Monopoly has made and lost multiple fortunes. In his endless clockwise laps of the board, he is forever returning to square one.

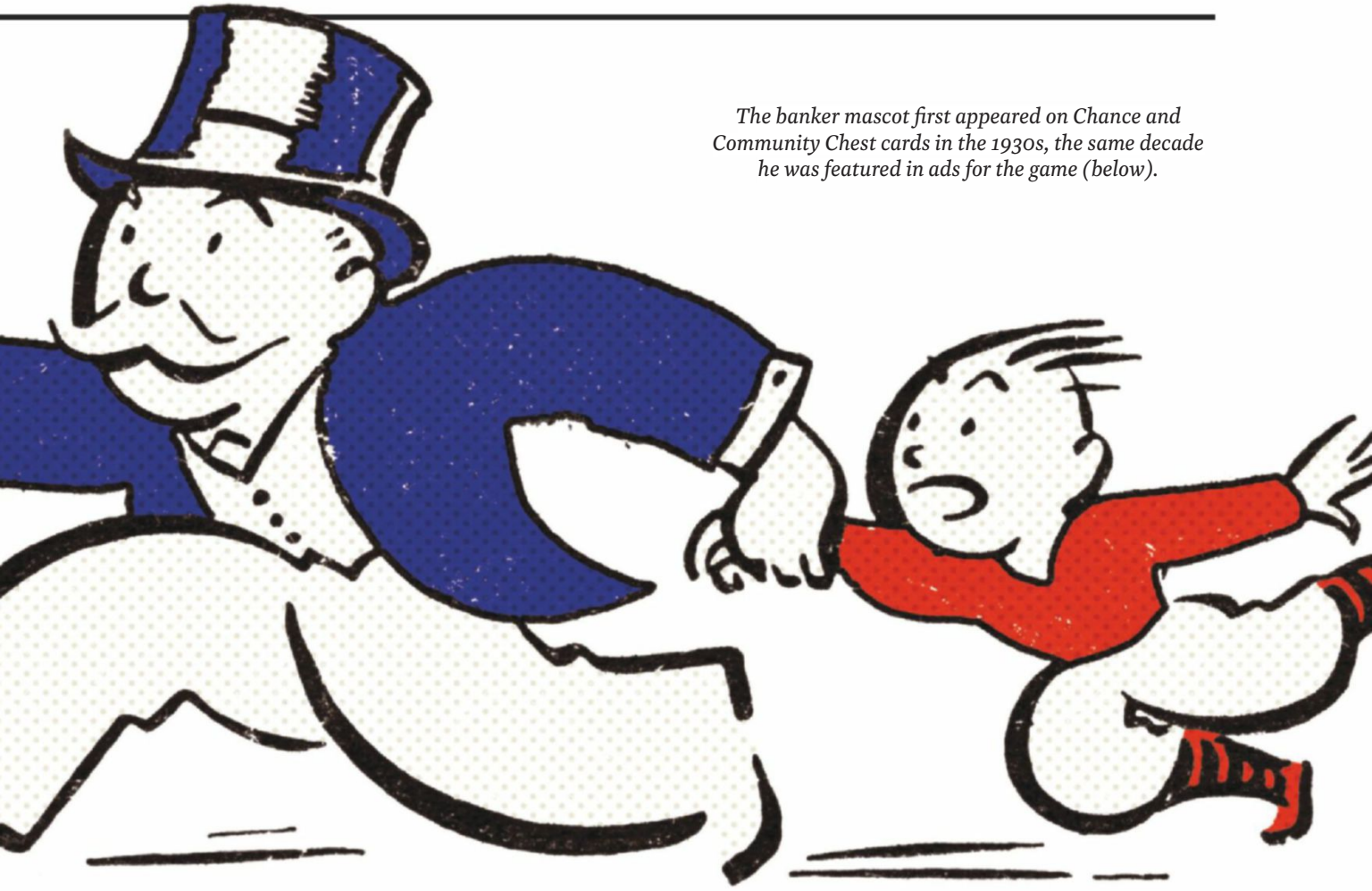
But what a varied life it has been (and will be again). Polished shoes propped on his desk, Mr. Monopoly has blown smoke rings after taking a deep drag on his zeppelin-shaped cigar while celebrating a bank dividend. And he has carried his every earthly possession wrapped in a polka-dotted kerchief tied to a stick, befitting his birth in the Great Depression.

He has been dragged to jail by a uniformed officer of the law (Officer Edgar Mallory, in board game lore) and literally been kicked out of that same jail while wearing his striped convict's jumpsuit. With the occasional exception of that jumpsuit, Mr. Monopoly always wears a top hat and tails, and a general expression of conviviality.

With his waxing and waning bank account, his history of recidivism, and his ill-fated pursuit of first prize in a beauty contest, Mr. Monopoly is a lovable rogue, like the character in the Tom Waits song "I Beg Your Pardon" who tries to win his lover back with the line "I'd give you Boardwalk and Park Place and all of my hotels."

You just might believe Mr. Monopoly if he whispered that in your ear. He might even believe it himself.

Like God, Mr. Monopoly is known by many names, including Milburn Pennybags, Rich Uncle Pennybags, and Monopoly Man. He was first drawn for Parker Brothers by an artist named Daniel Fox, whose work went uncredited until 2013, when his descendants contacted former Parker Brothers executive Philip Orbanes, the au-



The banker mascot first appeared on Chance and Community Chest cards in the 1930s, the same decade he was featured in ads for the game (below).

thor of *Monopoly: The World's Most Famous Game and How It Got That Way.*

Some think Fox's model was J.P. Morgan, the real-life financier who straddled the 19th and 20th centuries like a financial colossus, and whose likeness can be detected in Mr. Monopoly's bearing. Others point to a German-born New York banker, philanthropist, and man-about-town named Otto Hermann Kahn, to whom Mr. Monopoly bears an uncanny facial and sartorial resemblance. Kahn, who died in 1934, appeared on the cover of TIME in 1925 with a white mustache that looks unmistakably plutocratic. Writing in 1910, a *New York Times* reporter admired Kahn's "smiling manner . . . at which one could not possibly take offense, even if he were looking for trouble."

And yet, Mr. Monopoly is also very much his own man, having accrued archaeological layers of biographical data over the decades. He is married to Madge Monopoly, and the couple live on the Monopoly estate in Marvin Gardens. According to

the game's in-house lore, Monopoly is rich enough to own a stable of thoroughbred racehorses but sufficiently self-aware to have saved his father's old boot, which reminds him of his early days in the Great Depression.

That boot is not the only token of Monopoly's esteem. Another game piece, the race car, is a replica of the vintage roadster that Mr. Monopoly drives. And if you've ever pushed the dog around the Monopoly board, you have paid unwitting homage to Mr. Monopoly's Scottish terrier, whose name is Scotty.

Activist David Barrows dressed as Mr. Monopoly—a symbol of wealth concentration—for a social justice protest in Washington, D.C., in 2021.

As for children, the Monopoly brood, like the Monopoly fortune, comes and goes. Mr. Monopoly has been depicted on game cards pushing a baby to Boardwalk in a pram, dragging a child to St. Charles Place, and clutching newborn twins to his chest while paying a hospital fee of $100. He has no known direct descendants. In spite of persistent rumors, Mr. Monopoly is not the biological father of the comic-book scion Richie Rich.

Rather, Rich Uncle Pennybags has a number of nephews, either two or three, depending on the source. Orbanes reports their names as Randy, Sandy, and Andy, which echo those of Huey, Dewey, and Louie, the grandnephews of Scrooge McDuck.

In 1946, a year before Disney gave the world Mr. McDuck, Rich Uncle Pennybags appeared as the mascot for another board game from Parker Brothers. It was called Rich Uncle, and Mr. Monopoly's familiar face featured on the game's play money.

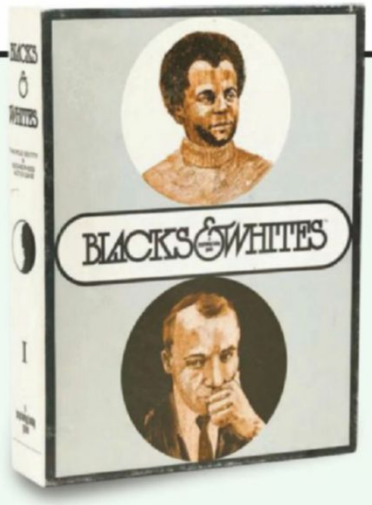
In the decades since, he has scarcely aged. Though he sometimes carries a cane, Mr. Monopoly remains strong enough to carry a sack of money with a dollar sign on it. This signature display of ostentatious wealth has made Mr. Monopoly an easy effigy. In recent years, a consumer rights advocate named Ian Madrigal has appeared in costume as Monopoly Man behind various titans of industry at congressional hearings in a wry mockery of the billionaire class.

When Seattle Seahawks cornerback Walter Thurmond turned up to a game in 2013 in a top hat and tails, his teammate Richard Sherman referred to him as "the Monopoly man." Said Sherman: "I thought he was going to pull a monocle out."

Mr. Monopoly has never actually worn a monocle but many are certain that he does, perhaps conflating him with Mr. Peanut, the Planters mascot, who wears one with his top hat and spats. In this regard, Mr. Monopoly is among the most famous examples of the Mandela effect, in which a large number of people share the same false memory, a phenomenon that was given its name by a researcher who mistakenly thought Nelson Mandela had died in the 1980s. Famous movie quotes that were never actually said—"Luke, I am your father" and "Play it again, Sam"—are other examples.

These two prominent loci of faulty memory—movie lines and Mr. Monopoly's phantom monocle—converged in the 1994 comedy *Ace Ventura: Pet Detective.* In it, a tuxedoed dandy at a stuffy soiree clutches his monocle and asks a companion, "Who is this ghastly man?" The man in question, played by Jim Carrey, replies: "Ace Ventura, pet detective. And you must be the Monopoly Guy."

He isn't, of course, and the animal activist Ventura will soon wear the man around his neck like a human mink stole. But first, Ace leans in and offers a few words of gratitude to the would-be Monopoly Guy. "Hey," Ventura whispers. "Thanks for the free parking."



Black, White, and Rigged

In the 1960s, a progressive California psychologist created a Monopoly-like game to illustrate racial inequity and inequality.

BY EMMA FERRARA

THE LONG GAME OF MONOPOLY provides players with the opportunity to sit and think, but only a few among them use that time to mull the social implications of trying to bankrupt friends while buying up as much property as possible. Robert Sommer, an environmental psychologist whose life goal was to leave the world a better place, was one of them.

In the mid-1960s, Sommer, a professor at the University of California, Davis, was troubled by the America he saw around him. Black communities were suffering unequal treatment; there was racial unrest across the country; California's Rumford Fair Housing Act, intended to end racial discrimination in buying or renting homes, had been repealed by voters in 1964, just a year after it had passed. One day, as Sommer watched his children playing Monopoly—rolling dice and erecting colorful housing—he realized that the board game offered an ideal opportunity to highlight the racial and economic disadvantages plaguing the United States.

Collaborating with Judy Tart, the wife of a colleague, Sommer created Blacks & Whites, a version of Monopoly that simulated how the system is racially rigged and plagued with stereoptypes. Players chose to be either Black or white and competed to invest in properties in ghetto, integrated, suburban, and estate zones. White players started with $1 million in cash, while Black players got just $10,000. A white player who declared bankruptcy was ejected from the game, while a Black player who went belly-up would collect $5,000 in welfare from each white player. To bring Blacks & Whites to the public, Sommer and Tart collaborated with the magazine *Psychology Today,* which ran an article about the project and its rules and included a special tear-out version in the March 1970 issue. If players enjoyed Blacks & Whites, they could buy a full version for $5.95, complete with dice and fake cash, by mail order.

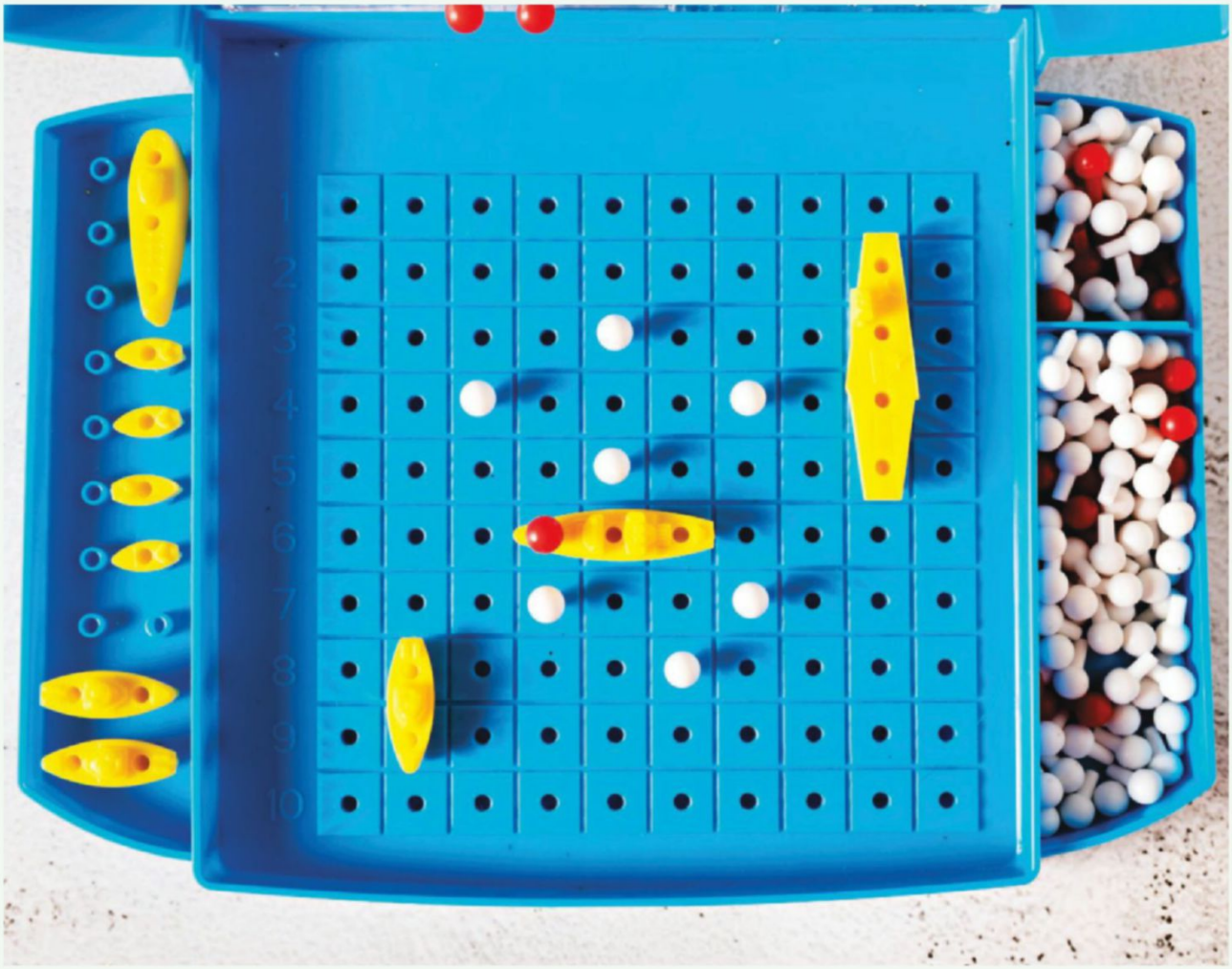
You can still buy and play Blacks & Whites today, though it has been modernized by Nehemiah Markos and Jed Feiman, a comedy duo who first learned about the game after reading an article about it in 2016. The two comics thought that Blacks & Whites still had something to teach Americans, and they got Sommer's blessing (he died in 2021) to update it. The neighborhoods in the new version of the game are called the 1% area, lower-priced zone, ungentrified zone, integrated zone, and suburbia zone. There are also darkly funny contemporary allusions, such as DMs and a character named Karen, after the nasty-white-woman persona.

Consumers could mail-order the 1970 version of Blacks & Whites from Psychology Today *magazine.*

Better Than Monopoly?

WHEN IT COMES TO CLASSIC BOARD GAMES, THERE IS SOME STIFF COMPETITION.

BY EMMA FERRARA



Battleship

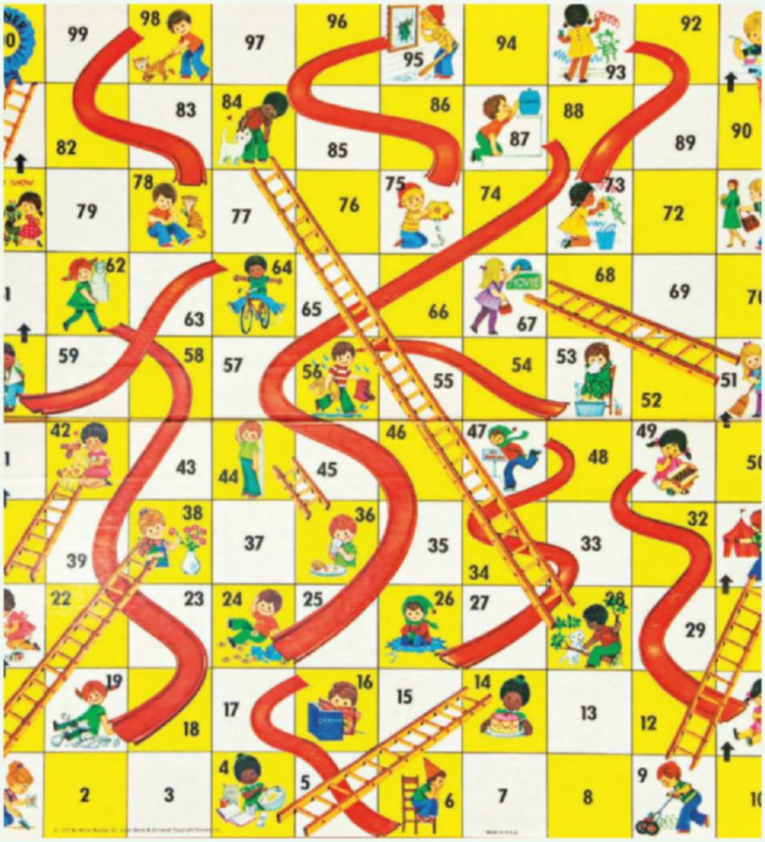
ESTIMATED SETS SOLD: 100 MILLION

The earliest versions of Battleship, the strategy game where opponents try to destroy each other's carrier fleets, can be traced at least back to the 19th century, when a U.S. toymaker, E. I. Horsman Company, copyrighted Basilinda, a game involving wooden pegs representing armies and a cardboard screen. During World War I, Russian officers reportedly played a similar game on a hand-drawn paper grid, and 1931's Salvo included printed grids. It wasn't until 1967 that the game we know today, with its iconic tiny ship tokens and plastic boards, was introduced by Milton Bradley. The updated Battleship was so popular, it was one of the first games adapted for computers in 1979, and it helped inspire the 2012 film *Battleship,* featuring Rihanna.

Candy Land

ESTIMATED SETS SOLD: 75 MILLION+

Retired schoolteacher Eleanor Abbott was hospitalized with polio in 1948 and started looking for a way to help relieve the boredom of the children around her in the hospital who were suffering from the same disease. She wanted something with simple rules that didn't require counting and would pass the time. Her solution: the happy place of the Peppermint Stick Forest and Gumdrop Mountains. The young patients loved Candy Land, and Abbott decided to pitch the game to Milton Bradley, which had it on shelves for Christmas 1949. The first games included artwork on the board that depicted a boy and girl running happily in the fresh air. The boy wore a brace on one of his legs. Abbott's timing was sweet: The baby boom was beginning, and many parents had money to spoil their kids. Candy Land quickly became the company's top-selling game.



Chutes and Ladders

SETS SOLD: N/A

The board game we know as Chutes and Ladders evolved from an ancient Hindu teaching tool called Moksha Patam, designed to demonstrate the concepts of karma, represented by ladders, and desire, portrayed as snakes. In the original, there were more snakes than ladders, making it harder to attain spiritual liberation. India's British colonizers adapted Moksha Patam in the 19th century so the ladders represented virtues and the snakes vices, and the number of snakes and ladders were made equal. They renamed it Snakes and Ladders. When Snakes and Ladders jumped the pond to the U.S. under the auspices of Milton Bradley in 1943, it was again renamed, this time Chutes and Ladders, and simplified. Today, players race to see who can climb to the board's top without getting tossed down too many chutes. It allows children to practice counting, waiting their turn, and losing with grace.

Clue

SETS SOLD: 150 MILLION+

It is a sentence construction as familiar as any nursery rhyme: It was Colonel Mustard in the conservatory with the candlestick. It was Mrs. Peacock in the kitchen with the lead pipe. But the story behind the game of Clue is a little richer. The seeds were planted in the first half of the 20th century, when British musician Anthony Pratt observed clients playing murder-mystery parlor games. To alleviate the stress and tedium during the blackouts of World War II, Pratt and his wife, Elva, created a whodunit board game they called Murder! The Pratts sold their game to London's Waddington's Games, which changed the name to Cleudo. In the U.S., Parker Brothers revised the title to Clue, and Americans were off and running, scrambling to solve 324 potential murder-scenario combinations.

The Game of Life

ESTIMATED SETS SOLD: 50 MILLION+

It was 1860 when nascent game maker Milton Bradley introduced The Checkered Game of Life, in which players sought to progress from infancy to happy old age by making the proper strategic choices and avoiding poverty, idleness, and disgrace. The game made the company into a brand name, and a century later, to commemorate their first big hit, Milton Bradley released The Game of Life. Inspired by the original but suited to a modern era, The Game of Life challenged players to make fateful decisions: whether to make a long-term investment in college or begin working right away; when to buy a house; when to have children. Fifty years later, Milton Bradley updated The Game of Life again. Housing in Poor Farm or Millionaire Acres was revised to Countryside Acres or Millionaires Estates, and the white plastic spinner became shiny gold.

Risk

ESTIMATED SETS SOLD: 25 MILLION

In 1957, as the Cold War was heating up, the game Risk tapped into the global zeitgeist much like the launch of *Sputnik 1*. Players commanded armies of tokens on a world map and attempted to capture all 42 territories and control all six continents. Surprisingly, given the history of the world, Risk (called La Conquête du Monde—The Conquest of the World—when originally conceived by a French filmmaker) was the first popular game that involved strategy, diplomacy, conflict, and conquest. It paved the way for many more war games, including Avalon Hill's Axis and Allies and, by extension, strategy games called Eurogames, such as the very popular The Settlers of Catan.

Rummikub

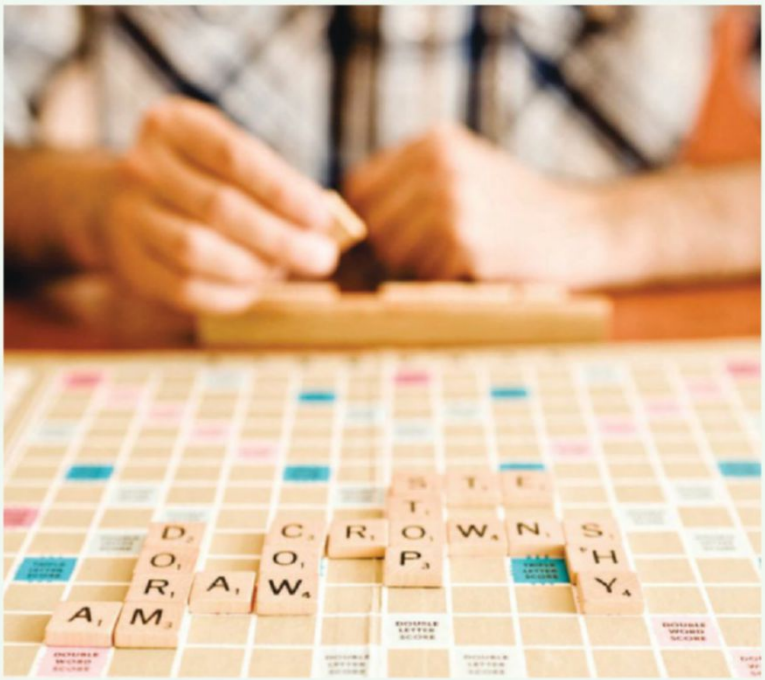
ESTIMATED SETS SOLD: 55 MILLION+

Proof of the maxim "Invention is the mother of necessity," the tile game Rummikub was invented in Romania in the 1940s after the country was occupied by the Soviet Union and citizens were prohibited from playing gin rummy on grounds it was "bourgeois." Once Israel was founded, Romanian toothbrush salesman Ephraim Hertzano emigrated from his homeland, bringing with him the idea for a commercially produced version of Rummikub, which combines luck and strategy and uses numbered tiles. He infused the game with elements of Israeli culture, such as play moving counterclockwise, a nod to Hebrew script, which is read right to left. Initially, Hertzano first sold Rummikub out of the back of his car, and after it caught on, he became a professional game designer.

Scrabble

ESTIMATED SETS SOLD: 165 MILLION+

Scrabble was invented during the Great Depression by Alfred Mosher Butts, an unemployed architect who was inspired by the commercial success of Monopoly and hoped to replicate it with a word-centric game. As it happened, Butts was a lousy speller but a fan of crosswords, and he incorporated aspects of those, as well as chess and jigsaw puzzles, into what would become Scrabble. Butts refined his idea with his wife, and soon the couple were inviting friends to play at a local church. Sales were very slow until the president of Macy's happened to catch a game of Scrabble and decided to add it to his store's inventory. Before long, Macy's was moving some 6,000 sets a week, and Scrabble was on its way into the American lexicon.



Trivial Pursuit

ESTIMATED SETS SOLD: 100 MILLION+

In 1979, Scott Abbott and Chris Haney, two Canadian journalists and Scrabble addicts, were mid-game when Haney wondered aloud whether the two could invent something as good. That night, in 45 minutes, Trivial Pursuit was born, built around a simple concept: After answering trivia questions, players moved pawns around a brightly colored board. Abbott and Haney's first batch of 1,200 games, released in 1981, sold out in three weeks. In 1982, the board game was licensed by Selchow & Righter—which also produced Scrabble—though ownership changed hands a number of times until it landed with Hasbro in 2008. Trivial Pursuit ushered in an era of broader trivia popularity. Sales peaked with 20 million copies sold in 1984, the same year that fellow Canadian Alex Trebek began hosting the quiz show sensation *Jeopardy.*

The OGs: Backgammon, Checkers, Chess, and Mancala

Many centuries before Monopoly was a gleam in Charles Darrow's eye, the ancients had devised board games to while away the hours.

BY EILEEN DASPIN

THERE'S NO EVIDENCE THAT ADAM and Eve played board games in Eden, but in the scheme of things, it wasn't all that long before their descendants came up with amusements such as mancala, thought to have originated somewhere near the Red Sea around 6000 to 5870 BCE; backgammon, possibly 5,000 years old, from Mesopotamia; checkers, which may date to the Middle East as far back as 1400 BCE; and chess, which can be traced to 600 CE India.

Clockwise from top left: Backgammon, checkers, chess, and mancala.

Backgammon

While we don't know the exact origins of the game, we do know that in the 1920s, when an archaeologist excavated Ur of the Chaldees—the birthplace of the biblical Abraham—he found five game boards that looked a lot like modern backgammon. It seems the concept caught on, as boards for a game called Senet, dating from 1500 BCE, were found in King Tut's tomb in Egypt. Fast-forward to ancient Rome, where the locals were so besotted with backgammon they proclaimed it the sport of emperors. Then it was on to the rest of the continent, imported by soldiers returning from the Crusades.

Checkers

Checkers, also known as draughts, may have begun as a game called alquerque in Egypt. Unfinished alquerque boards have been found carved into the roof slabs of ancient temples in Kurna. The game, which featured round, flat pieces, was also mentioned by Plato and Homer, and in a 10th-century work titled *Kitab al-Aghani.* We don't know exactly what the rules were, but game historians say there were 12 pieces per side, and play unfolded on a 5-by-5 grid, with the goal of capturing your opponent's pieces. While modern-day checkers is considered easy, the ancients saw it as a game of skill that tested a player's insight into the future.

Chess

The pieces in chess are believed to be based on military elements of 600 CE India: the infantry, the elephants, the cavalry, and the chariots. Through global trade, the game made its way to Europe around 1200, through both the playing pieces and rules evolved. In Italy and Spain, pawns were empowered to move two squares on the first turn, bishops endowed with diagonal locomotion, and queens elevated so they could move anywhere. By the 18th century, chess had become a favorite pastime in France and England, where the game was played in coffeehouses. In the U.S. alone, more than 3 million chess sets fly off the shelves each year.

Mancala

Mancala comes from the Arabic word *manqala,* which is derived from the verb *naqala,* "to move." The game involves moving marbles or stones (you can also improvise with seeds and beans) counterclockwise around a pocketed board (holes in the ground also work). The goal is to capture your opponent's pieces and earn extra turns. Historians think mancala was brought to the Americas by enslaved Africans; in the U.S., a traditional mancala game called Warra was played in Louisiana in the early 1900s. A commercial version was introduced in the 1940s under the name Kalah.

THE INDUSTRIOUS BROTHERS PARKER

How three siblings from Salem, Massachusetts, built a global board-game empire.

BY CHRIS NASHAWATY

Over the past 140 years, the name Parker Brothers has become synonymous with rainy afternoons, hot cocoa, and heated sibling rivalries. Monopoly. Risk. Clue. Sorry! Trivial Pursuit. The company's roster of iconic, family-friendly board games stretches on seemingly into infinity, even tiptoeing into the spookier realms of the Great Beyond with its supernatural slumber-party staple, Ouija. But Parker Brothers wasn't a rec-room giant right out of the box. Far from it.

In 1883, less than two decades after the final shots of the Civil War were fired, George Swinnerton Parker, a 16-year-old amateur game designer from Salem, Massachusetts, founded the George S. Parker Company. At the time, most board games promoted tidy, Victorian moral lessons. In The Mansion of Happiness, for example, published by W. & S.B. Ives of Salem, "players advanced by landing on piety, honesty, and humility, and regressed when landing on vices such as cruelty, immodesty, and ingratitude," according to the SFO Museum, which mounted a board game exhibition in 2013. Meanwhile, most board games relied on teetotums, numbered spinning tops, instead of dice, since dice were viewed as immoral gambling tools. Parker's conventional wisdom-bucking belief was that there was value in entertaining players rather than preaching at them. His instincts would prove to be dead-on.

Ironically, Parker's first big idea for a board game didn't involve a board at all. Rather, it was played with a set of cards and was based on a game called Everlasting that Parker and his older brothers, Charles and Edward, considered dull but had been playing at home. Parker gave his version the dry name Banking, and the objective was to borrow money and invest money. A stack of 160 cards dictated and predicted how players' investments fared. At the time, banking was a hot topic, as the establishment of chartered banks had increased confidence in the financial system. Though two Boston-area publishers passed on Banking, George was convinced the idea was timely and commercial. He sunk in $40 of his own money to produce 500 sets of Banking, which arrived in time for the 1893 Christmas shopping season. He sold almost all 500 copies and found himself at the end of the run with a small but symbolic $100 profit.

By 1888, the George S. Parker Company had marketed more games and opened a shop, and George had asked Charles to help with the accounts, giving

Circa 1965, a family played Sorry!, a game that was adopted by the Parker brothers (opposite).

birth to Parker Brothers (Edward joined several years later).

Looking back from a 21st-century point of view, Banking sounds, well, stressful. After all, fretting about paying back a bank loan hardly seems like a carefree form of recreation. However, at the tail-end of the late 19th century, Americans, no doubt fueled by fantasies of becoming the next Getty or Rockefeller, were, in a word, game. In 1890, Parker Brothers became the first game maker to advertise in newspapers, turning the company into a household name. Within three years, Parker Brothers would hit two more milestones, winning a gold medal at the 1893 Chicago Columbian Exposition and establishing import-export agreements with several British game makers, becoming one of the first American game companies to enter the transatlantic trade.

Today, the name Parker Brothers is loaded with so much childhood nostalgia that just hearing it is enough to get your taste buds watering for melty grilled-cheese sandwiches whipped up by Mom on a snow day while you and your brothers and sisters battled to land on Park Place, move armies into Kamchatka, or take a wild guess on Colonel Mustard in the observatory with the candlestick. Chances are if you grew up at any point in the last hundred years, you have one of the company's battered game boxes in a closet or on a basement shelf in your home right now—minus a few pieces, of course.

Parker Brothers' business took off through word of mouth and advertisements, like this one from the 1920s.

By the turn of the century, the family-owned brand had branched out with a roster of new diversions. George, operating on the insight that games should be based on the principles of business—know your goals, find winning moves, learn from failure—was the mastermind. He came up with the games and their rules. In the company's infancy, those new games successfully capitalized on events of the day. For example, one early board game, Klondike, played off Gold Rush fever. Another, War in Cuba, was inspired by the Spanish-American War of 1898.

By the late 1920s, board games had become big business in the United States. Parker Brothers had encouraged people to broaden their horizons and look beyond checkers, chess, backgammon, and jigsaw puzzles. However, the company's next triumph would, oddly enough, arrive in the darkest days of the Great Depression. During that decade of economic upheaval, Americans sought escapism at the movie theater with the films of Fred Astaire, Clark Gable, Greta Garbo, and the Marx brothers. But penny-pinching families would also find an even cheaper respite with board games including Sorry! in 1934 and the smash hit Monopoly in 1935.

Unlike previous Parker Brothers hits, Monopoly, the free-enterprise-first game, didn't spring sui

generis from the fertile mind of George Parker. Instead, and ironically, Monopoly was created by a capitalism skeptic, Elizabeth Magie, who created The Landlord's Game in 1902 to teach Americans about unfair economic policies. Eventually, an unemployed salesman named Charles Darrow discovered Magie's game and repackaged it in pro-capitalism dressing. He brought what he called Monopoly to the Parker Brothers in 1934, but the firm passed, telling Darrow that the game, with its conceit of buying and selling real estate properties, was too complicated and had too many rules. Furthermore, as the U.S. economy continued to languish under the weight of the Great Depression, a game that celebrated wealth seemed tone-deaf.

However, within a year, the company, whose sales had fallen precipitously, grew increasingly desperate and decided to roll the dice—especially after George noticed that Darrow's game had become a hot seller at New York's flagship toy store, F.A.O. Schwarz. By 1936, Monopoly was raking in millions for Parker Brothers. It singlehandedly saved the company.

WHEN DARROW FIRST BROUGHT MONOPOLY TO PARKER BROTHERS IN 1934, THE FIRM PASSED, SAYING THE GAME HAD TOO MANY RULES.

Monopoly would become an instant phenomenon. Yes, it was complicated, and it did have a lot of rules, but it also allowed Americans to dream big dreams for a few hours. Maybe these folks couldn't be real estate moguls in real life, but at their kitchen table, they could pretend to be robber barons. Darrow wasn't the only game developer who found unlikely success during the Depression. In a period that some refer to as the golden age of board games, Alfred Mosher Butts, an out-of-work architect from Poughkeepsie, New York, began developing the game that would become known as Scrabble.

By the late 1940s, Parker Brothers was humming. In the years following World War II, Americans were enjoying an unparalleled period of peacetime wealth and prosperity, and the company's products moved seamlessly from store shelves into living rooms across the country. In addition to Scrabble, the company acquired the rights to Clue, invented by the British game designer Anthony E. Pratt. The mystery game, in which players acted as sleuths trying to solve a locked-room murder, made sense in the Agatha Christie–obsessed U.K. But Americans proved to be just as keen on figuring out whodunit when Parker Brothers snapped up the game's North American rights and released it stateside in 1949.

George Parker passed away in 1952 at age 85. By that point, Parker Brothers was a major corporation. Over the next two decades, the hits for the company would keep on coming. It managed to cash in on the white-knuckle anxieties of the Cold War with Risk, "the game of global domination" created by the French filmmaker Albert Lamorisse in 1957, and then, in 1966, Oujia. A controversial, gamified take on the "spirit boards" whose roots dated back to the seances of the late 1880s, Oujia pushed (or gently slid with two fingers) the parameters of what a board game could be—even though several Christian groups were not amused.

The complaints of religious groups notwithstanding, Parker Brothers wasn't just three siblings in a Massachusetts workshop anymore. It was a cultural force shaping the way families bonded and bickered—and attracted a series of buyers. In 1968, Parker Brothers was acquired by General Mills (under whose umbrella it introduced the Nerf ball). In the early '80s, the company branched out into book publishing and rolled out kid-friendly titles featuring the Care Bears and Strawberry Shortcake. It also aimed at the tyke demo with a record label that released Cabbage Patch Kid–themed discs. In 1985, Parker Brothers merged with Kenner. In 1987, Kenner Parker Toys was gobbled up by Tonka.

Eventually, in 1991, Parker Brothers was acquired by Hasbro, where it was combined with its former Massachusetts rival, Milton Bradley. The mom-and-pop days—or in this case, the brother-and-brother days—were long over. But Parker Brothers, the groundbreaking board-game behemoth, lived on. If you don't believe it, just head down to your basement and look on the shelf. There you're likely to find a nostalgic repository of glorious rainy-day treasure.

Ready, set, roll: How to get into the Monopoly mindset, plan and execute a winning strategy, and even apply investment lessons from the game to your own real-life portfolio.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RKER BROTHERS, INC.

THE MONOPOLY PLAYER'S BRAIN

In a famous study of contestant conduct, those with more money behaved badly. Very badly.

BY KRISTAL BRENT ZOOK

Inside a University of California, Berkeley, laboratory, 100 pairs of student volunteers had a unique assignment. They were there to play Monopoly. Each table had a generous bowl of pretzels. The players weren't exactly sure what the study was about, but it soon became clear that the games were rigged. A coin flip had randomly determined that one player on each team—the "rich" one—would begin with twice as much money and would collect twice the salary of the other player when they passed Go. The rich player would also get to roll two dice instead of one, allowing them to move around the board more quickly.

Paul Piff, who had recently received his Ph.D. from Berkeley's department of psychology in 2012, the year the study was conducted, had been hoping to do this kind of experiment for years, going back to his days as an undergraduate student at Reed College in Portland, Oregon. He'd enrolled in graduate school six years earlier to study precisely these kinds of hierarchies of power.

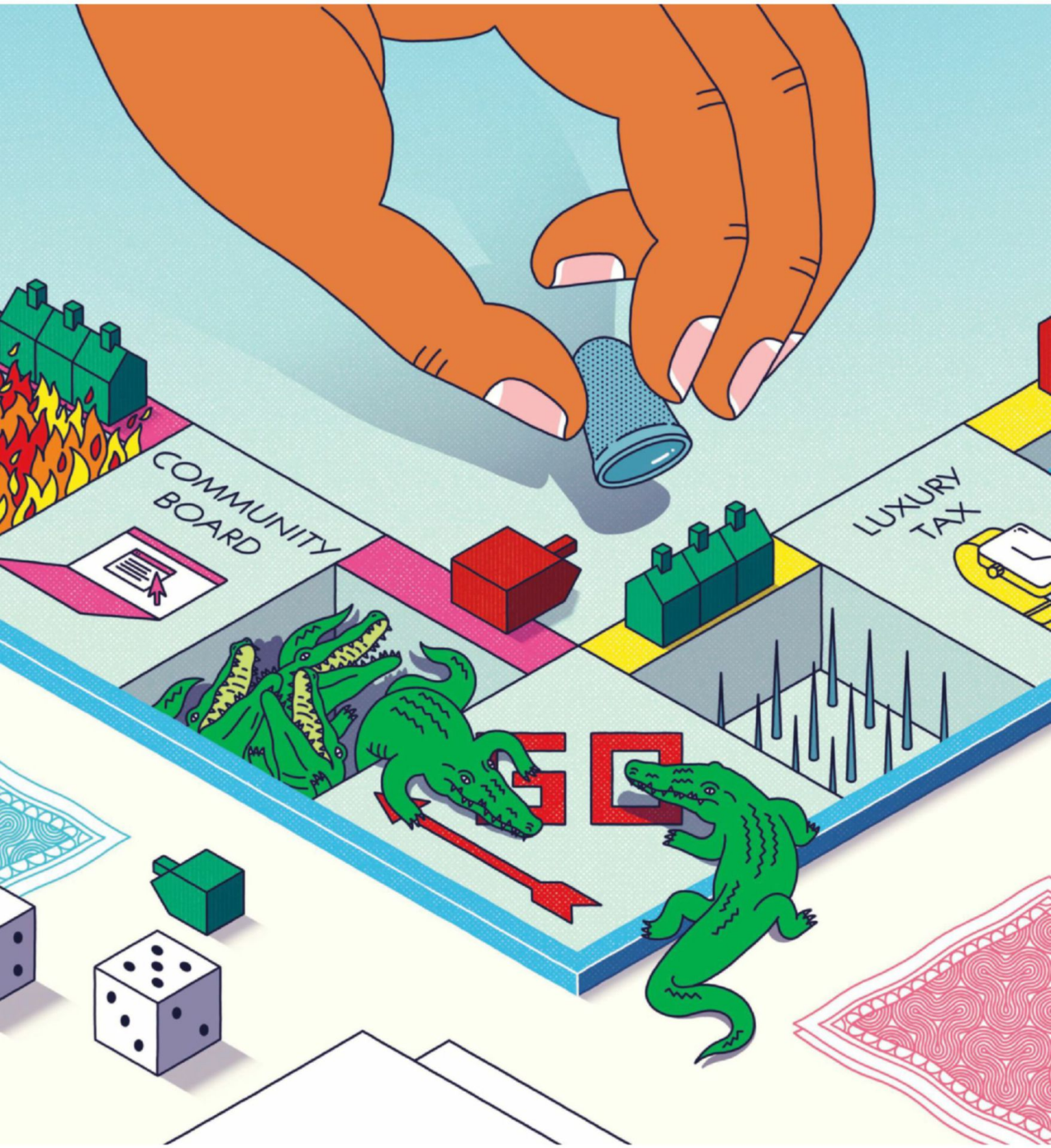
Imagine you arrive at a friend's house a little late, he said, and when you get there, everyone is already playing Monopoly. You're told that you can have a seat at the table, but all the properties have already been divided up. You have no way to acquire land or goods, and no way into the system. How did being randomly placed in a position of privilege in a rigged system influence the way someone thought about themselves, he wondered?

Piff, who was raised in Israel from the age of 3 to 17, recalled transferring in fifth grade from an Arabic-speaking school in Haifa, where kids wore uniforms, to the Walworth Barbour American International School, just north of Tel Aviv, where they did not. To fit in, he bought a pair of LA Gear sneakers, but his plan backfired. His size wasn't available, so instead of admiring Piff's keen sense of fashion, his classmates made fun of his oversize shoes.

"I remember reflecting on that so much when I was an adult," Piff said, recalling how even children used these "little markers of status" to differentiate themselves from each other. "I was really interested in how these systems of stratification shape their inner and outer lives," he continued. "I started asking questions through the lens of wealth and money and status in part because I felt like no one was talking about it in psychology."

The results of the Monopoly experiment were fascinating. Observing on hidden cameras, Piff's team began to see dramatic differences between the rich and poor players. For example, as they gained more power and wealth, the rich players began to smack the board loudly with their pieces as they moved around it, in a flagrant display of arrogance. They raised their arms triumphantly, becoming louder, ruder, and less compassionate toward their poorer counterparts. They even ate more of the pretzels.

Equally fascinating were the postgame reflections. How did both rich and poor players make sense of what had happened to them? Piff's team


COMMUNITY
BOARD
LUXURY
TAX
GO

As rich players in the study pulled ahead, they smacked the board loudly with their tokens, raised their arms triumphantly, and even ate more pretzels.

found that even though players knew the game was rigged from the start, the rich ones tended to focus on all that they'd done to win, emphasizing their own skills and innate Monopoly prowess, while ignoring the advantages that got them there in the first place. Poor players, on the other hand, accurately acknowledged the coin flip and the disadvantages stacked against them. The takeaway, said Piff, is that we tend to be "way less aware of all the invisible forces that have helped get us to where we are." While having money doesn't necessarily make anybody anything, Piff told *New York* magazine in 2012, "the rich are way more likely to prioritize their own self-interests above the interests of other people. It makes them more likely to exhibit characteristics that we would stereotypically associate with, say, a--holes."

The findings of Piff's study, while never published, have nonetheless been widely cited by the press. "I think it strikes a chord with people because it's like an allegorical representation of a dynamic that we all know," he said, "which is this idea that people are born on third base and think they did a triple." What's more, once they have it, those with an advantage seem to forget about how they got it.

For Piff, the results of his Monopoly study, especially the aggression and competitiveness, didn't come as a complete surprise. He had seen firsthand how the game turned even his own family members into bloodthirsty capitalists.

"I grew up playing Monopoly. I love Monopoly," he said. It, along with Pictionary, was a favorite in Piff's household. And yet, he added, "sometimes, much to our discontent…it wasn't the most family-friendly game.

"Like, we'd have just celebrated Thanksgiving, and everyone would be so loving to each other, just to finish the gratitude exercise." (Piff's father, a sociologist of religion, served as an archivist for the Bahá'í World Centre, where his parents were devoted members.) "And now we're playing Monopoly, and my brother, and I are, like, wrestling on the ground because we both want Park Place."

It didn't bring out the best in anyone, he recalled, laughing. Even his mother, whom Piff described as a "small Iranian woman," and presumably someone you wouldn't imagine displaying such cutthroat behavior, was transformed into a merciless competitor.

"With Monopoly, it all comes out," he said.

Piff describes the Monopoly study as a metaphorical model for life, with the game being the perfect choice, since it mimics our notions of American achievement and the American dream. When you pass Go, there's this idea of a salary, where economic mobility is kind of "baked into the game," he said. If you don't do well, or if you make a poor decision, you go to jail. People resonate with the way the game models real life, Piff said.

After conducting dozens of similar studies involving thousands of participants over the past decade or so, Piff has repeatedly come to the same conclusion: As wealth increases, compassion and

empathy go down, while a sense of entitlement and self-interest increases. As for why, Piff and others have theorized that the disadvantaged are more sensitive to negative or potentially hostile situations and, as a result, may respond with greater compassion to the suffering of others as an adaptive means of building relationships.

For example, Piff's studies have shown that poor people are more willing than rich ones to give money to strangers, just as they are more willing to slow their modest cars at crosswalks to allow pedestrians to pass, and so on. But while Piff has spent much of the past two decades studying the kind of meanspiritedness that seems to be encouraged by wealth and privilege, he has also looked at its counterpart: the ways that can change.

In 2015, he founded the Morality, Emotion and Social Hierarchy Lab (MESH) at the University of California, Irvine, where he currently serves as an associate professor of psychological science. There, his research teams study kindness and morality to try to understand behavior that bridges hierarchical divides. Piff is especially interested in the role of awe and how its impact seems to make those from privileged backgrounds more empathetic and charitable.

Whether it's the experience of seeing the Grand Canyon or witnessing the birth of a child, awe reminds people of what Piff calls "the small self"—that is, the sense that there is something larger and more important than themselves.

It's ironic, as he points out, that in Western culture, the emphasis is so often about setting oneself apart from everyone else. And yet what people long for are those experiences that have the opposite effect: experiences that remind them that they're "not that big a deal" after all in the grand scheme of things.

How can people of different socioeconomic status work together toward common goals—for instance, in the face of a pandemic or a climate emergency? Piff says one answer may be exposing those with privilege to what he calls "small nudges" of empathy. In a 2010 study published in the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*, his team asked privileged subjects to watch a brief video about compassion. They found that this seemingly small reminder served as a kind of equalizer. Afterward, the rich subjects became as generous as their poorer counterparts.

Still, Piff isn't quite done with games.

In a new study, which he describes as a continuation of the Monopoly experiment, his team uses the game of Cornhole—the beanbag-toss game often found in bars and in children's parks—to answer some remaining unanswered questions.

Again, with a flip of a coin, one player starts with an advantage, where they're allowed to stand closer to the hole when tossing, while another player must throw from farther away. This time, however, Piff said, his team uses a metric that calculates far more precisely than in the Monopoly study how much actual privilege, or "unearned advantage," there is with each player's toss. So while the advantaged players still attempt to explain away their privilege, insisting that the distance is less pronounced, or less important than their own innate skills, this time, the actual metrics tell another story.

> "IT'S AN ALLEGORICAL REPRESENTATION OF A DYNAMIC WE ALL KNOW . . . PEOPLE BORN ON THIRD BASE THINK THEY DID A TRIPLE."
> **—PAUL PIFF**

Piff also wanted to know whether winners would be motivated to share some of their money—or, in the case of Cornhole, some of their unfairly earned tokens. It was a question he had not asked in the Monopoly study. Once they knew the game was rigged, would the advantaged Cornhole players be willing to give back to the others to equalize conditions and to make the game more fair?

"Weirdly," said Piff, players who were inclined to share tokens were moved to do so—not with the disadvantaged players, but with those who were also, like them, in a privileged position, and who already had more tokens than the disadvantaged players.

"We're still trying to dig into that," said Piff, "trying to unpack what's going on."

He seemed genuinely baffled by this finding, adding that it's almost as if "they want to conserve the advantage within the advantaged group."

In Monopoly, cash is king, dealmaking paramount, and ruthlessness necessary.

HOW TO WIN AT MONOPOLY

Luck can only get you so far in this game. Follow these strategies to vanquish your opponents.

BY GINA McINTYRE

MONOPOLY IS THE MADDENING, madcap, winner-take-all pastime that celebrates accumulating wealth and sending your opponents to the poor house. Winning takes endurance and luck, but strategies go a long way. Here are some tried-and-true tactics.

PLAY BY THE RULES, WHATEVER THEY HAPPEN TO BE

Every new Monopoly set contains an in-depth pamphlet outlining the how-tos of gameplay. In short: After rolling two dice, players move their tokens—these days, a standard set comes with eight tiny figures, including a race car, a top hat, and a rubber ducky—clockwise around the 40 spaces on the board. Landing on one of the 22 color-coded squares representing various properties allows the player to purchase that property. Acquiring all of the properties in a single color group leads to a monopoly, and the player may then begin to "build" on those properties, paying the bank a set fee per tiny plastic home. Any player who lands on another player's property pays rent, which escalates dramatically with the addition of houses and hotels. Players might also purchase utilities or railroads to secure a monopoly. When there is only one person with assets remaining, that person wins the game.

Monopoly is unique among popular board games, evolving over the decades to include players' improvisations (which are colloquially referred to as "house rules"). Stashing cash under Free Parking? Plenty of folks stand by the practice, even if it was never officially sanctioned. Doubling the $200 issued for passing Go? Same idea. To avoid unnecessary bickering, ensure that everyone gathered around the game board agrees to any such digressions from the official rule book.

GO ON A SPENDING SPREE

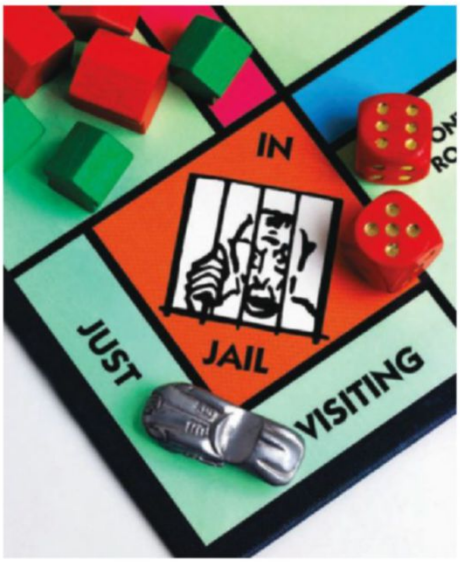
"Early in the game, buy every property you land on, even if you don't think you want to keep it," advises Philip E. Orbanes, a Monopoly expert who spent years working on the brand and has written numerous Monopoly-themed books. He says it's important to build up a bank of real estate to give you leverage with other players who might be in the market to bolster their own holdings. "You need trading material," Orbanes says. "If you have a property that you ultimately don't feel will do anything for you, it could be very important to someone else, so you have the means to make a good trade."

COUNT SPACES QUICKLY

"If you're taking the time to count out eight spaces, that means you're not taking the time to look at the different trade possibilities that are happening around the table," says 2003 U.S. National Monopoly Champion Matt McNally. It's important to know how many properties and how much cash your opponents have on hand to assess your own smart plays, so spending time staring at the dice and watching as you move your token around the board is a missed opportunity.

NEGOTIATE TRADES CLEVERLY

Do whatever you can to flatter, cajole, or bribe your way into a great deal. "Every player around the table is trying to swindle other players, while at the same time, they know those other players are trying to swindle them," McNally says. "It's about trying to convince someone to do something that they think is in their best interest, knowing full well that I may have a slight advantage once that trade is complete." Also, never trade away a property that will give an opponent a monopoly unless you get one in return, McNally advises. "A player has a huge advantage in the game if they have a monopoly and others don't," he says.



THINK ORANGE

Or maybe red. The hottest properties on the board lie on either side of Free Parking, as, statistically speaking, those are the spaces that players land on most frequently. "Some squares on the Monopoly board are landed on quite a bit more than others—the squares between Jail and Go to Jail, the second and third quadrants of the board, people land on those squares more often," says Truman Collins, a computer scientist who in 1997 published a comprehensive study of Monopoly online, titled "Probabilities in the Game of Monopoly."

Collins' findings have become a kind of bible for devoted players of the game who swear by St. James Place, Tennessee Avenue, and New York Avenue as the keys to victory. But if the oranges, as they are collectively known, have already been purchased, the next best bet are the reds, just around the corner: Kentucky Avenue, Indiana Avenue, and Illinois Avenue. "A lot of people like to own Boardwalk and Park Place, but the truth is that the oranges and the reds actually get hit much more frequently," McNally says.

BUILD WISELY

The experts agree: Once you have a monopoly, you should build three houses on your properties as quickly as possible. Then stop. "If you look at the deeds for any property in Monopoly, you'll notice that the rent has an enormous increase between two houses and three houses—between four houses and hotels, it's a moderate increase," Orbanes says. "The sweet spot is three."

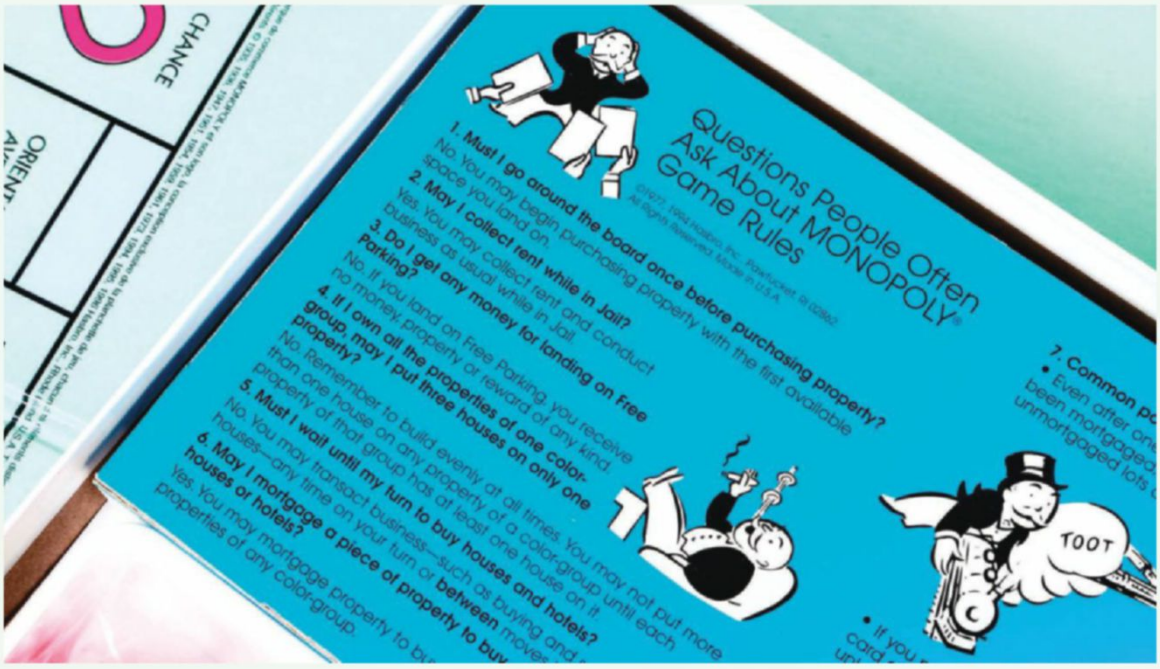
Unless, of course, you ascribe to a more aggressive philosophy and are looking to corner the market on houses. "The game is limited to 32 houses, and once those 32 houses are built, no more houses can be built until houses return to the bank," McNally notes. A player owning, say, a two-property monopoly and a three-property monopoly could buy up 20 houses all on their own. That would leave just 12 houses available for sale, significantly limiting other players from building on their properties.

GO DIRECTLY TO JAIL—AND MAYBE EVEN STAY THERE

It might sound counterintuitive, but in certain instances, it's best to remain behind bars. "Toward the end of the game, all the properties that you could buy have already been bought, so if you're moving around the board, you're oftentimes going to land on someone else's property and have to pay them," Collins says. "If you're sitting in jail, you're not going to be doing that. You're less likely to be paying other people." Your opponents, however, do still have to pay you should they land on your properties while you're incarcerated.

UNDERSTAND THAT SKILLFUL PLAYING CAN ONLY TAKE YOU SO FAR

Even with all the strategies in the world at your disposal, winning Monopoly does sometimes come down to the roll of the dice. "Unlike a game like chess—where the best player will almost always win—in Monopoly, there is a certain element of luck that gives any person an opportunity to win," says McNally. Win or lose, sportsmanlike conduct is always advised.



A House Divided

Two-thirds of Monopoly players say they've never read Hasbro's official rules in their entirety. My family, like many others, makes up its own.

BY COURTNEY MIFSUD INTREGLIA

EVERY THANKSGIVING, MY HUSBAND and I get into one of the biggest arguments in our marriage. No, we're not fighting over who's going to carve the turkey, whether I've poured my aunt too many glasses of Merlot, or which side dish is the best. Our dispute concerns the annual post-dessert Mifsud Monopoly match. Rob never wants to join in. It's not that he has anything against Monopoly—the game was just as much a fixture in his childhood as it was mine. But what really grinds his gears is my clan's unyielding commitment to creative play.

Nearly every family has its own set of house rules, and the Mifsuds have adopted some of the standards. Landing on Free Parking means an extra payout. It's fine to build across a color group unevenly. And you absolutely cannot collect rent while you're in jail, as the official rules allow. What would be the point? After all, jail is not where you go to relax and avoid the risks of moving around the board while raking in cash!

For the record, Rob always loses the to-play-or-not-to-play battle, and he's fine with most of our tweaks. What he can't abide is the Mifsuds' more inventive rule-bending. For example, when my brother holds the green properties Pacific Avenue and North Carolina Avenue and I have Pennsylvania Avenue, it is allowed, *chez nous,* for me to hand over the property to complete his color group. In exchange, I don't have to pay rent on any of those properties for the rest of the game. By hour two of such post-turkey horse-trading, we're rarely close to the finish line, since there are too many deals on the table to collect a bankrupt-worthy sum of rent. Well, except for Rob, who on moral grounds refuses to bargain with the fast-and-loose Mifsuds and so is the first forced out of pretty much every match.

According to Hasbro, 49 percent of Monopoly players say they make up their own rules, with 68 percent admitting they've never read the official rulebook all the way through, making clear just how common house rules are. Typically, the personalizations extend the playing time, so if you're hoping for a standard hour-long session, go with Hasbro's rules.

If you're on board for an epic conquest involving backdoor trades, shady deals, and ignoring whatever interest means, I'll leave you with the final rage-inducing Mifsud house rule. After several hours and the game still far from over, my mother, no matter how much money she has, declares bankruptcy and retreats to bed. Instead of handing her properties over to the player to whom she owes rent (the official rule) or handing them out randomly (an oft-cited house rule), she forks over her cards, houses, hotels and cash to her favorite family member of the night—likely whichever kid did the dishes.

Decoding the Board

WHAT'S IN A SQUARE? MONOPOLY HAS 40, INCLUDING PROPERTIES, RAILROADS, UTILITIES, AND JAIL, EACH WITH ITS OWN RULES OF PROBABILITY AND BACKSTORY.

BY EILEEN DASPIN

Before World War I, some U.S. businessmen formed volunteer groups, called **Community Chests,** that pooled donations to help localities. The organizations perhaps inspired the spaces on the board that sometimes offer players good fortune.

Given **New York Avenue**'s location between Jail and Free Parking, the property is one of the most landed on, according to probability models. Like its orange companions, it has a relatively cheap development cost and can be a valuable acquisition.

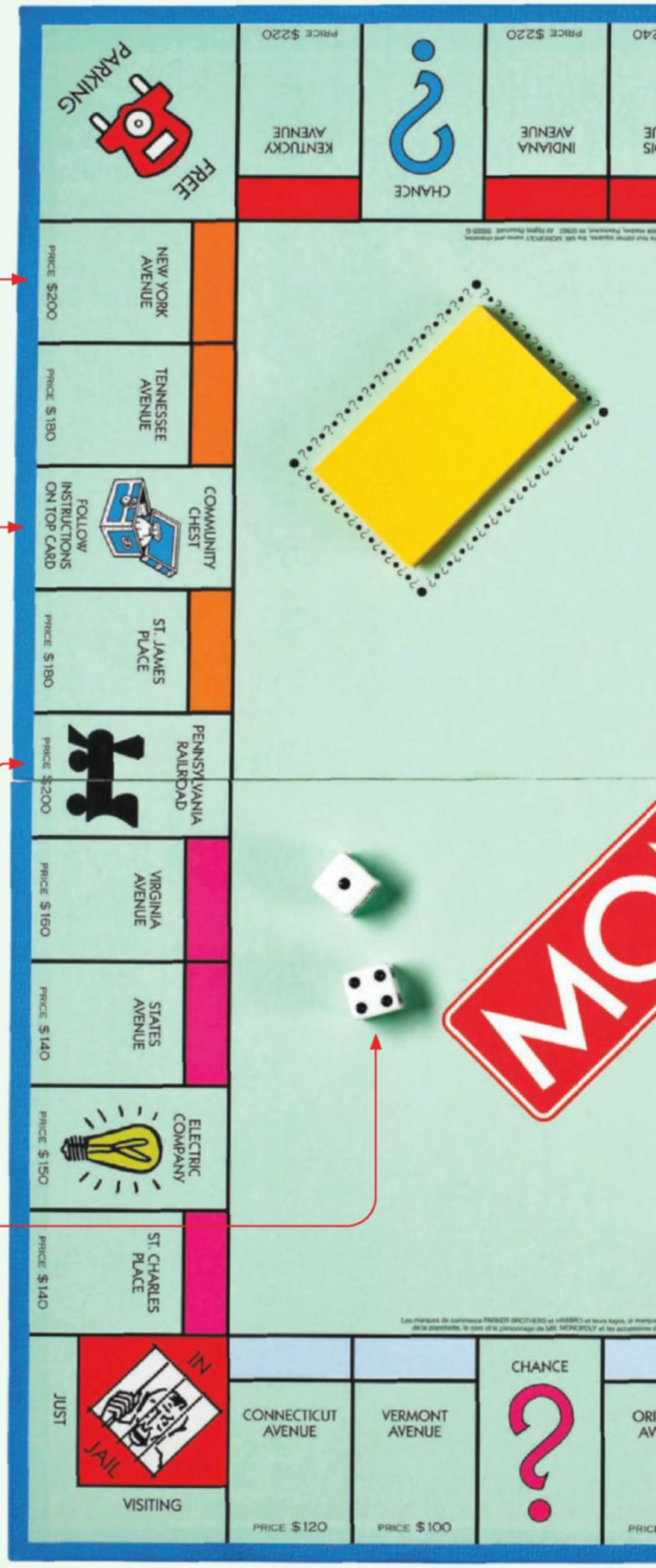
The standard size of a Monopoly **die** is 16 millimeters, which is smaller than a casino die but the same as a Yahtzee die. Regardless of size or game, seven is the most common dice roll.

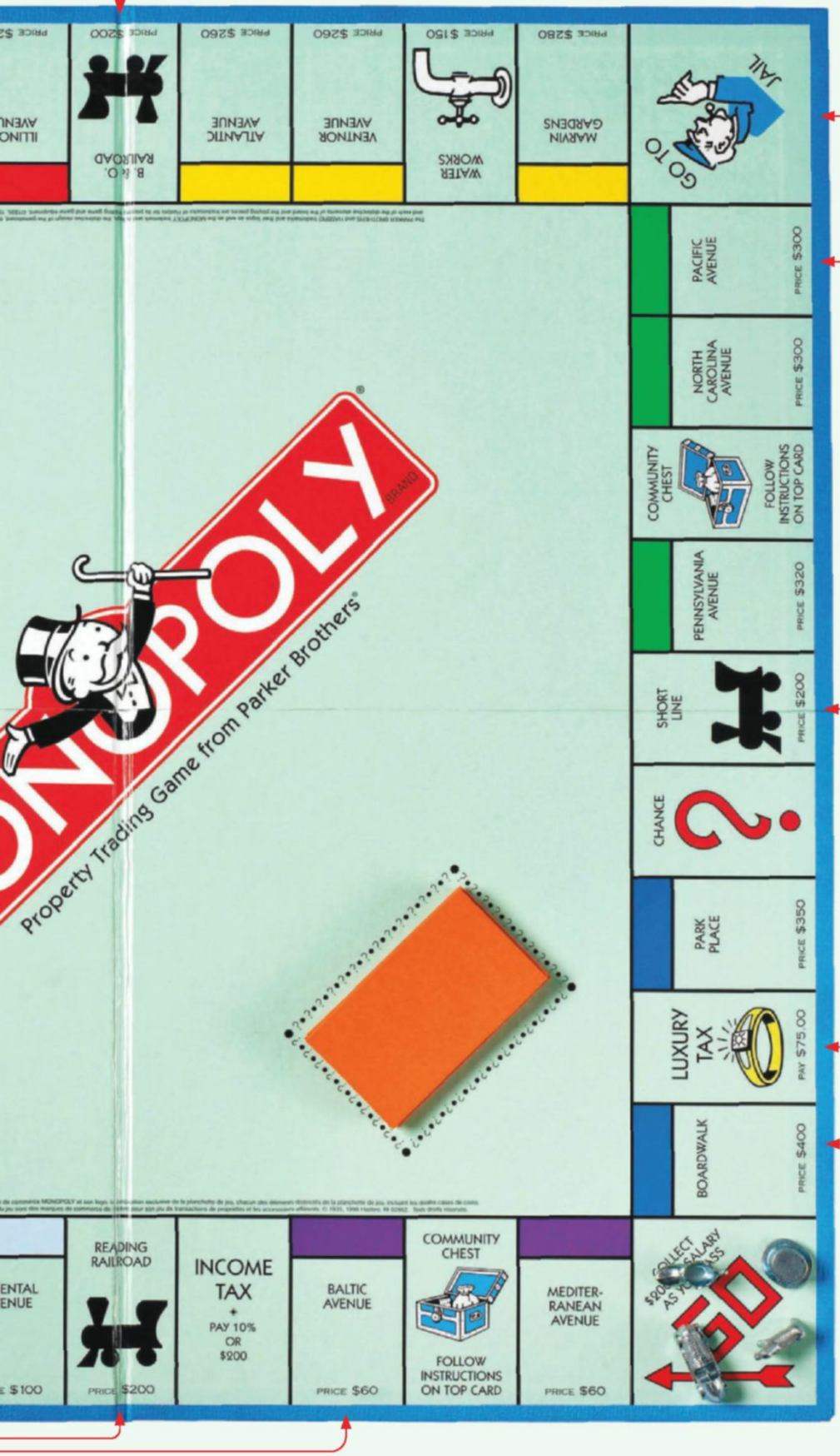
Baltic Avenue has the second-highest value when fully built, at 72.6 percent, just behind Boardwalk, at 72.7 percent.

The **B&O (Baltimore and Ohio)** and Pennsylvania rail lines were such bitter rivals around Pittsburgh that the state legislature blocked the B&O from securing early routes into the region.

The real-life **Pennsylvania Railroad** was for many years the largest railroad in the world in terms of traffic. The original line connected Philadelphia and Pittsburgh, but the Pennsylvania served a region bounded by New York, Chicago, St. Louis, and Washington, D.C.

The **Reading Line** (pronounced redding) was a small railroad, serving only Pennsylvania, Delaware, New Jersey, and Maryland. But thanks to the hauls of coal it carried from mines to cities throughout those states, it was highly profitable.





Go to Jail is the most frequently landed-on square on the board because there are so many ways to get here: by drawing a Community Chest card, by drawing a Chance card, or by rolling doubles three times in a row.

Compared to the oranges or light blues, **Pacific Avenue,** the first of the green properties, is somewhat expensive. The greens have high rents but are also costly to buy, and they generate a lesser rate of return. Pros say they are best used for their trading value.

Unlike the game's other railroads, the **Short Line** wasn't named for a real-life line. At the time Monopoly was first marketed, the term applied to any independent railroad with tracks covering a short distance or small region.

A **luxury tax** is a tax on goods not considered essential, such as a fancy car or pricey piece of jewelry. These items are sometimes called Veblen goods, which means demand for them increases as their price increases.

With its $400 price tag, **Boardwalk** is the costliest property on the board. What's the return on investment? According to boardgamegeek.com, if you add a hotel, it will take about 25 rolls to earn back your outlay. After that, Boardwalk has the highest average per-roll earnings of any property.

YIKES! WHAT'S THE RULE ON THAT?

What happens if the bank runs out of money? How do I get out of jail? Monopoly emergencies, solved.

BY COURTNEY MIFSUD INTREGLIA

WHILE HASBRO INCLUDES A printed rule book in each Monopoly box, certain policies are tricky to follow. Plus, situations arise in hours-long sessions that Monopoly's rule makers might not have anticipated. Here are some common game crises and guidance on how to handle them.

How much do you collect if you land exactly on Go?
According to the official rules, a player receives exactly $200 if they pass Go or land directly on it. But many house rules double the sum if the player lands on the space directly.

Is the amount of money a player has public knowledge?
The current rules don't offer a clear mandate on funds being public or private. Official Monopoly tournaments state that bills must remain out in the open, but a player does not have to announce how much they have in their piles.

Can I borrow money from another player?
No. If you're short on cash, only the bank can help you out. According to the official rules, money can be loaned to a player only by the bank, and then only by mortgaging property.

What happens if a player refuses to trade?
No player can force another to trade or sell their properties. If the holdout player has a property of a particular color group that you need, you simply have to make them a better offer. If this player is

After Monopoly Here & Now: The World Edition launched in 2008, fans in London joined cities around the world to successfully break the Guinness World Record for simultaneous play.

slowing down the game and refusing to trade with multiple players, the table can work together to give the holdout a big enough incentive—or team up to bankrupt them.

What happens if the bank runs out of money?
Even if you run out of the provided paper money, the bank never really "goes broke." The rules state that the player acting as the banker can just dole out makeshift bills written on random scraps of paper. Whatever keeps the game going!

Can you collect rent, buy or sell houses, and trade while you are in jail?
Monopoly jail is not such a bad place to be. According to the official rules, a jailed player can buy and build houses, construct hotels, sell or buy property, collect rent, mortgage properties, participate in auctions, and

make deals with other players from behind bars. Once the board is filled out, sitting in jail can seem more lucrative than scrambling around the board avoiding hefty rent payments. For that reason, one of the most common house rules is that while you're in jail, you forfeit all property-related actions.

If you need to mortgage properties to raise some cash, how much do you have to pay to the bank to unmortgage them later?

The mortgage value of each property is printed on the back of each title deed card. The interest rate on mortgages is 10 percent. This must be repaid, along with the full amount borrowed, when the mortgage is lifted. For example, Park Place has a mortgage value of $175. With the 10 percent interest, if a player wants to unmortgage the property, they owe the bank $193.

Can you build houses between turns?

Yes. Once a player owns a monopoly of a color group, they can build houses or hotels anytime during their turn and also between the turns of their opponents.

Monopoly houses can only be bought when all of the properties in a monopoly are owned by the same player.

What if I don't want to buy a property?

If you land on a property and do not want to or cannot afford to buy it, the bank puts it up for auction. That means the players offer bids and pay the highest amount to the bank in exchange for the property and its title deed card. Bidding can start at any price; it does not need to be as high as the listed value.

I own all four railroads, but one is mortgaged. How much rent do I collect?

When you have all four railroads, you can collect $200 per space. If they land on your mortgaged railroad, you collect nothing.

What happens if we run out of houses and hotels or lose tokens and money? Can we buy replacements?

Unlike the bank's cash, house supply is fixed: The game comes with 32 houses and 12 hotels that players can purchase. If all of those properties are on the board, no more building can occur until some properties return to the bank. If you lose some of these properties over the years, Amazon and Ebay sell replacement pieces. You can also designate coins or tokens from another game.

How do I get out of jail?

If you want to get out of jail (see above why that might not be such a great idea), you have three main options. First, on every turn, the player rolls two dice as if they are still on the board. If you roll doubles, you're freed from jail and advance those spaces. Second, a player can use the coveted "Get Out of Jail Free" card, drawn from Chance or Community Chest or bought from another player. Finally, a player can pay a $50 fine before rolling the dice. After throwing the dice on their third turn and having not rolled doubles, the player must then pony up the $50 and get on with the game.

What happens if a player owes more than they can pay?

If you're low on funds, you can raise money by selling buildings (at half price) or mortgaging properties to the bank. If you still can't deliver the cash, you have to declare bankruptcy, and you've lost the game.

How do I calculate how much I owe for income tax?

A player who lands on the income tax space can either pay $200 to the bank or pay 10 percent of all their assets (including cash, houses, mortgaged properties, and unmortgaged properties). According to the official rules, a player can't sit there and tally up their assets to make this decision, so it's to your benefit to always have a general idea of where you stand. But if you have a dizzying amount of assets, the $200 is most likely the sweeter deal.

A Faster Way to Play

In 2006, Hasbro introduced a special edition with a Speed Die. It was popular enough that the company added it to the standard Monopoly game.

BY COURTNEY MIFSUD INTREGLIA

IT TAKES A LONG TIME TO FINISH A game of Monopoly. Although official tournaments limit gameplay to one hour (Monopoly has been hosting international championships since 1973), many players find that when playing with four to six people and following the official rules, games tend to take more than two hours. And that's not taking into account snack breaks and interludes to duke it out over Park Place or Boardwalk. Monopoly's lengthy gameplay is by design distinct from other board games, according to the game's publisher. "We always felt that 45 minutes was about the right length for a game, but Monopoly could go on for hours," Edward P. Parker, a former president of Parker Brothers, said in the 1985 book *The Monopoly Omnibus.* "Also, a game was supposed to have a definite end somewhere. In Monopoly, you kept going around and around."

In 2006, for those unable or unwilling to commit hours, Monopoly introduced a faster way to play. The release of Monopoly: The Mega Edition came with the Speed Die, which was added to the Standard Edition one year later. This red or blue six-sided die features three numbers (1, 2, and 3), two sides with Mr. Monopoly's portrait, and one face with a bus symbol.

The Speed Die rules begin when starting the game. One player must hand out an extra $1,000 to each player (two $500s in the Standard Edition). The extra cash helps facilitate the fast-paced buying and building that follows. Players cannot use the Speed Die until they've landed on or passed Go for the first time. Once a player collects that first $200 stipend, they can use the Speed Die for the rest of the game.

A player rolls the Speed Die along with the two standard white dice on their turn. If the player rolls a 1, 2, or 3 on the Speed Die, they add that number to the roll of the two white dice, increasing their speed across the board. The bus lets the player "get off the bus early," meaning they have control over how far they move. If a player rolls a two on one white die and a five on the other, say, they can pick one of the two numbers or use the sum of both dice. The somewhat riskier face is Mr. Monopoly. First, the player resolves the sum of the two white dice as standard (buying a property, paying rent, or drawing a card). Then there are one of two outcomes, depending on if there are still properties in the bank. If there are, the player can advance to the next property that the bank still holds and buy it, should they wish. If there are no more properties in the bank, then the player advances to the next property on the board and pays the player who owns it their rent. The Speed Die also allows for rolling three-of-a-kind across all three dice. This feat lets the player move anywhere they want on the board.

By using the Speed Die, time-conscious players can get to the action of the game—buying and building on properties—faster, instead of crawling across the board.

Chapter Three

GAME CHANGER

One of the best-selling games of all time, Monopoly has spread capitalist principles to generations—here in the U.S. and internationally.


HOW TO FIX IT
R BROTHERS, INC.

INSIDE THE EDITIONS

There are more than 300 licensed versions of Monopoly for sale around the world, accounting for a jaw-dropping third of board-game sales.

BY CHRIS NASHAWATY

Shelves dedicated to Monopoly editions in a New York City toy store in 2011.

RECENTLY, I WALKED INTO A SOUTHERN California bookstore with my 12-year-old twin sons. It was a rainy day, and rather than just melt into the couch watching TV, we decided to jump in the car and go pick out a book. Near the front door was a table of board games, most of which featured the image of a well-heeled dandy in a top hat and spats. Many of us know this mustachioed mascot simply as the Monopoly Man, but it turns out he has a name: Rich Uncle Pennybags. And on that rainy day in that mom-and-pop shop, you couldn't miss him if you tried. Because in addition to the regular, run-of-the-mill version of Monopoly, there was a Los Angeles Edition, a Manhattan Beach Edition, an L.A. Dodgers Collector's Edition, a Lakers Legends Edition, and a Hollywood Edition. If only someone were collecting rent.

If anyone knows a thing or two about capitalism, it's the folks behind Monopoly. In recent years, they've given the business world a master class in licensing and marketing strategy for established brands, proving that apparently you can reinvent the wheel over and over and over again simply by changing the tires. There are more than 300 licensed editions of Monopoly for sale somewhere on the planet, including a Stockholm edition, an Antwerp version, and one for Bilbao, Spain. It's fair to say that no matter where you are on the globe, you're just a dice roll away from passing Go!

Parker Brothers set its sights on the international crowd even before the ink on the first print run of Monopoly was dry. In 1935, just after Parker had obtained the rights from Charles Darrow, the company sent a copy to British game maker John Wadding-

ton Ltd. of Leeds to see if it would be interested in publishing on the other side of the pond, according to the collector's site WorldofMonopoly.com. The son of Waddington's general manager took the game home over a weekend and was so impressed, he convinced his dad to call Parker Brothers on Monday morning—though transatlantic calls at the time were practically unheard of—and soon Parker's first licensing deal was underway.

Waddington guessed, correctly, that for the game to succeed in the U.K., the properties would have to be renamed, so the general manager and his secretary were dispatched to scope out London locations. In a practice that would become standard, Waddington

substituted the names of local roads as well as areas such as the Angel, Islington, and Mayfair. The U.S. version's income tax square was replaced with a flat-rate square, and the $75 Luxury Tax space became a £100 Super Tax space. Soon, Monopoly began its march across Europe, with versions in France, Holland, Sweden, Denmark, Belgium, Spain, Switzerland, Italy, and Austria. A German version was created in 1936 but was later reportedly banned by Nazi propaganda minister Joseph Goebbels for being damaging to the Hitler Youth due to its "Jewish speculative character." The capitalistic game was also prohibited in the Soviet Union until the iciness of the Cold War began to thaw during 1988's détente. (Though that hadn't stopped Russians from hand-fashioning bootleg Monopoly boards of their own in secret.)

While there were multiple foreign editions, the board itself hewed to the classic real-estate version. It was like the Coca-Cola Classic of board games. Today, though, there's an AC/DC Collector's Edition, a National Parks Edition, and a commemorative HM Queen Elizabeth II Edition looking back at the life and legacy of the late royal. There's a *Game of Thrones* edition, a *Stranger Things* edition, and a *Friends* edition in which landing on Central Perk requires a $200 payment. There are *Star Trek* editions, a *Dune* edition, and seemingly endless iterations from that galaxy far, far away. All told, Monopoly is licensed in 114 countries and more than 40 languages, including Italian, Icelandic, and Arabic.

How did we get here? The simple answer is that you need to look at Monopoly's daisy chain of post–Parker Brothers owners—owners who would change hands over and over again in a string of multimillion-dollar mergers and acquisitions, and who also expanded their vision for where the game could go and who it could reach. In 1968, Parker Brothers was acquired by consumer foods giant General Mills, which in 1973 introduced the first Braille edition of the game. In 1985, Rich Uncle Pennybags was sent packing again when GM merged its subsidiaries, Kenner and Parker Brothers, into Kenner Parker Toys. Two years later, Kenner Parker Toys was acquired by Tonka. Finally, in 1991, Monopoly found its current home at Hasbro (once also the home of Parker Brothers' nemesis, Milton Bradley, a brand that was retired in 2009). For a game about real estate, Monopoly has had a surprising amount of trouble putting down roots.

Most of the credit for Monopoly's world-conquering global expansion belongs to Hasbro, which has aggressively licensed the brand across various media channels (*Monopoly GO!* mobile apps, McDonald's collabs, an in-the-works movie produced by *Barbie*'s Margot Robbie).

Shortly after acquiring Parker Brothers, Hasbro introduced a European Edition reflecting the national and economic realities of the early '90s. The game's currency would ultimately be changed to euros. (However, the first EU edition mistakenly identified Geneva as Switzerland's capital.)

In 1995, a 60th Anniversary Edition was released in a gold box. Three years later, Hasbro went to the public for its next development: a new token to expand the classic assortment of top hat, boot, thimble, iron, race car, and dog. It was the first such change since the 1950s. Hasbro urged fans to cast their vote for a biplane, a piggy bank, or a sack of money, and capitalism triumphed in the form of a bag of cash. (The piggy bank finished last.) A few years later, Rich Uncle Pennybags got a makeover, and his name was officially changed to the Monopoly Man.

In the 2000s, Hasbro and the game's licensing operation, USAopoly, have been cranking out new themes and locales at such a feverish clip that the original Marvin Gardens and Baltic Avenue version of Monopoly almost seems exotic. The goal: to reduce costs and retain market share. Since 1994, USAopoly (now known as "The Op") became the official licensee for not just new Monopoly spin-

Hasbro keeps Monopoly fresh by issuing frequent special editions, such as the Rolling Stones version above (with drum set and tongue-and-lips-logo tokens). Opposite: A German edition.

offs but also for those related to Trivial Pursuit, Yahtzee, Scrabble, The Game of Life, and Clue. In other words, they're the folks behind Trivial Pursuit: World Of Harry Potter Ultimate Edition and RuPaul's Drag Race Clue. As for Monopoly, the game has spread like kudzu into the worlds of gaming (Pokémon), cars (Corvette), motorcycles (Harley-Davidson), and even sweets (M&Ms).

Such brand extensions, while newer for board games, were commonplace in business long before Hasbro tried to Monopol-ize the world. So-called Limited Editions have a special place in the pages of marketing textbooks. The strategy was pioneered in the rare books and wine industries to imply scarcity and desirability (and adds the inflated price tag attached to such goods).

Not every new spin on Monopoly has been a smash hit. For example, in 2019, a Ms. Monopoly version of the game was released, featuring inventions by women in lieu of properties: Oriental Avenue was reimagined as Modern Shapewear, Boardwalk was Chocolate Chip Cookies, and so on. The intention was to course-correct societal inequities by giving female-identifying players monetary advantages. (Women started out with more money than men and earned more money each time they passed Go.) It flopped. More successful were the company's Here & Now editions in 2006 and 2008, which brought players out of the game's Depression past into the modern day with boards that mirrored the financial and geographical realities of the 21st century. One of those realities is our era's shortened attention span—Here & Now speeds up gameplay.

With Mr. Monopoly having passed his 90th birthday, it's fair to say that if they were alive today, neither the game's inventor, Elizabeth Magie, nor its proliferator, Charles Darrow, nor the Parker brothers themselves would recognize the vast array of Monopoly boxes they'd find on toy store shelves. The world has changed, and their game has more than met the challenge and changed right along with it. While Risk, another Parker Brothers game, claims to be all about world domination, Monopoly is actually practicing that. ●

The Culture Complex: Monopoly Is Us

THE INTRODUCTION OF MONOPOLY HERE & NOW IN 2006 PROMPTED A HUE AND CRY FROM TRADITIONALISTS, BUT OUR CRITIC SAW AMERICA IN THE GAME-BOARD MIRROR.

BY JAMES PONIEWOZIK

IF YOU WANT TO UNDERSTAND the American attitude toward capitalism, look inside your hall closet. There's probably a Monopoly game in there somewhere. Monopoly is the most popular board game in history, with more than 275 million copies sold. You may never have taken a real estate seminar or cracked an economics textbook. But if you grew up in an American home, and at some point it rained or snowed, you played Monopoly with family and friends.

Smarter writers than I have tried to figure out why Americans resist the regulation of business and markets, often even when we would personally stand to benefit from that regulation. But you could do worse than to start with the fact that for more than 90 years, we have played a game whose object is to corner a market and beggar our neighbors. Every year, pundits decry video games such as *Mortal Kombat* and *Grand Theft Auto,* yet our first introduction to one of business's most predatory, illegal practices is through a widely loved game with adorable dog and thimble pieces. It's as if someone had invented a children's board game called Racketeering or Usury.

In September 2006, however, Monopoly changed its face. At least the dog-and-thimble part. In Hasbro's Monopoly Here & Now editions, the game was made over, and upscaled for the 21st century. The properties, originally named for locales in Atlantic City, were updated to include real estate from around the country, selected by online vote. The railroads became airports. Weimar-style hyperinflation set in—you started the game with $15 million instead of $1,500 and collected $2 million for passing Go—but Times Square was a bargain at $4 million. And while it was a refreshing admission that, yes, you could buy the White House, it cost the then occupant, George W. Bush, far more than $3.2 million.

Most controversial were the tokens, which went corporate. With the Here & Now edition, you could travel the board as a Motorola cell phone, a bag of McDonald's fries, a cup of Starbucks coffee, a Toyota Prius, or a New Balance sneaker. The companies represented did not pay a placement fee, but the consumer group Commercial Alert decried the change as a sign of

The Here & Now editions (one is above) reimagined Monopoly for the 21st century. Most controversial were the tokens (opposite), which critics decried as celebrating the overbranding of American life.

the over-branding of American life. Which it was, and which was why the change was overdue. It's part of Monopoly's cultural role, after all: to let people playact modern business, pretty or not.

Monopoly was introduced in 1935, in the midst of the Great Depression. Marketing a game about building a business empire to a country whose economy has collapsed sounds like some kind of dark satire, and fittingly, the game has a conflicted attitude toward wealth. On the one hand, it portrays business as Darwinian, random and vaguely criminal. (You do occasional unexplained stints in jail and can get out by rolling a double, paying a $50 fine, or using a get-out-of-jail card.) On the other hand, it makes real estate moguldom seem homey and attainable. Maybe it's not surprising that the game became a hit. It suggested—1930s-populist style—that the fat cats hid great crimes behind their great fortunes. Yet it promised that you too could get rich by saving your salary, seizing lucky opportunities, and winning second prize in the occasional beauty contest.

Fast-forward to 2006, and what were the obsessions of American culture? For starters, getting rich off property—after years of skyrocketing home prices and flattening salaries—which made the real estate game more relevant than ever. (HGTV at that point in time had practically become a financial channel with shows like *Designed to Sell, Buy Me,* and *My House Is Worth What?*) We had moved from a manufacturing to a service economy, and the white-collar icons—goodbye, wheelbarrow, hello, laptop—seem aimed at the buyer willing to shell out $29.99 ($10 or so more than the old edition).

Combine all that with consumers creating the illusion of status with luxe accessories—the camera phone, the iPod, the $4 latte—and the gentrification of Monopoly made perfect sense. Was it so ridiculous to allow a Toyota Prius to define your identity on a game board? That's what Toyota Prius drivers did on the street.

For those who hated the new Monopoly, all wasn't lost. The old version was still for sale, and there would be plenty of new Monopolies before long. After all, that 2006 hybrid car and phone would look pretty dated in a couple of years, and as with your personal electronics, you would want an upgrade. Just another reason to keep passing Go and collecting your $2 million.

THE MONOPOLY MELTDOWN

Eight out of 10 players say they've gotten into a fight while playing the game. Blame cheating, old jealousies—and sheer exhaustion.

BY JUSTIN KIRKLAND

As is true in homes across the U.S., Thanksgiving for the Coles of Knoxville, Tennessee, is a time of celebration. Of gratitude. Of togetherness.

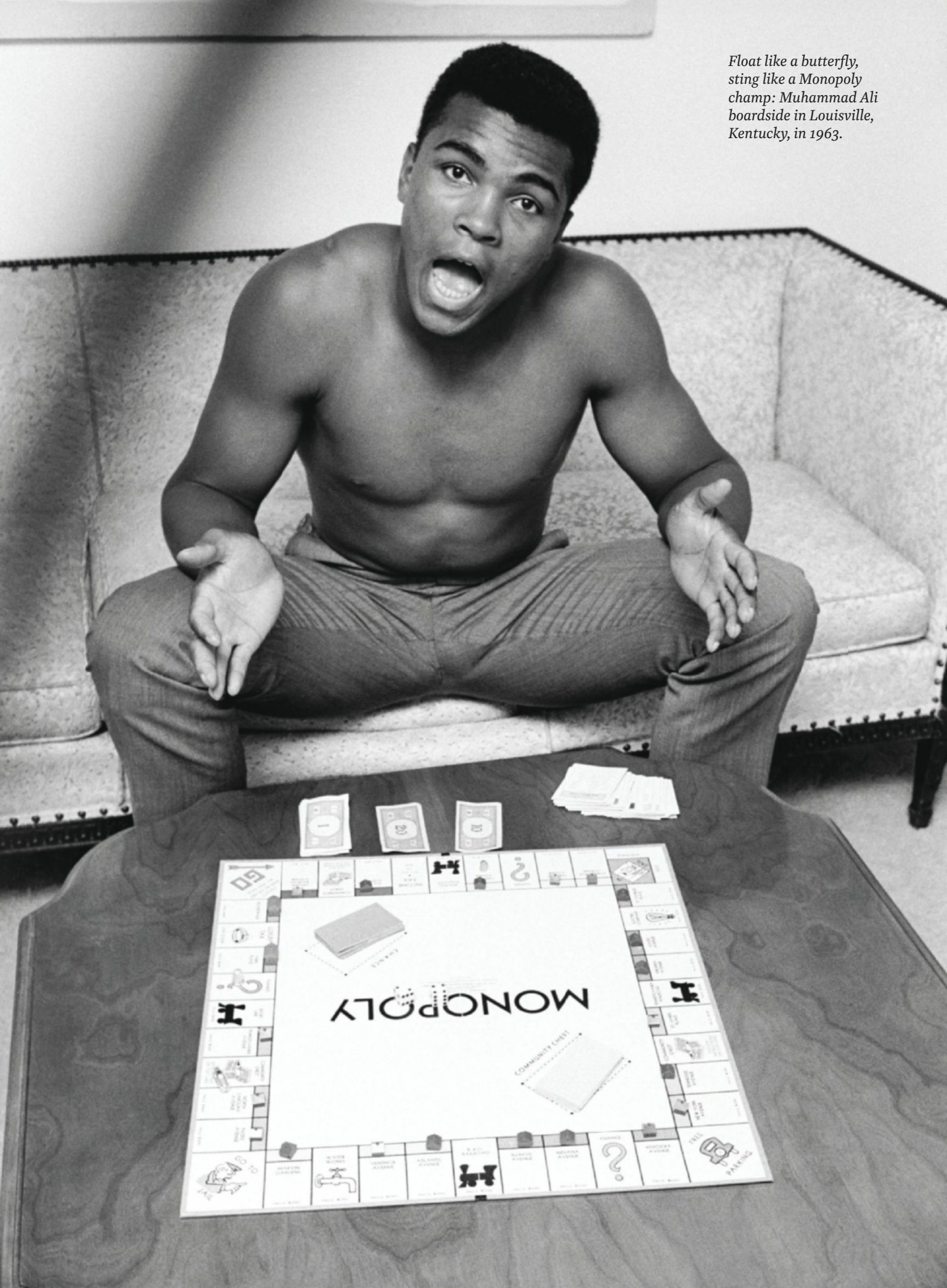
That is, until the Monopoly board comes out. Some games have ended with the tokens being tossed in the family pool. Others have involved ripping up the game's paper money. But by far the most infamous family Monopoly episode unfolded in 2007, when the three Cole children and their parents stayed up late playing a game ahead of a planned Black Friday outing.

Chelsey Cole Byrd, the eldest, teamed up with her younger brother, Shawn, to best their little sister, Sarah, boxing her in so there was no way she could win. As the game went on, Sarah got angrier and angrier until she exploded. "She flipped the board on us," Chelsey remembers. Houses and hotels went flying. So did the property cards, the rent cards, and the Community Chest cards. Sarah almost got punched in the face. "It was devastating," says Chelsey. "We ruined her fun, so she ruined ours. It was like she crossed some sort of sacrilegious line, all because she was a crappy sport."

Anyone who has played Monopoly is familiar with what might be called "the unraveling," when the game reaches late-stage capitalism levels of frustration, whether over semantics of the rules or accusations of cheating. As one player's wealth accumulates rapidly, other players careen toward bankruptcy; the properties—or at least the better part of them—are all claimed. Old resentments, jealousies, and guilts surface and play themselves out in real time. Cue the yelling, the tears, and the recriminations.

The unravelling is not a matter of hearsay—it's documented. Eight out of ten players admit to having gotten into fights while playing the game, while more than half of all games end in a row, according to research conducted for Monopoly's parent company, Hasbro. Perhaps the meltdowns are justified: Hasbro also found that 13 percent of players admitted they've stolen money from the bank on the sly. In the U.K. about a decade ago, fights got so bad that Monopoly's owners set up a hotline that could be used to deescalate arguments and provide an official referee (it has since been decommissioned).

The volume of Monopoly bust-ups parallels the enduring and staggering popularity of the game. First introduced commercially in 1935, Monopoly was a favorite of the Greatest Generation, then the boomers, Gen Xers, millennials, and Gen Zers, and over the years has sold over 275 million copies globally. Those figures translate into billions of games played, which adds up to a lot of simmering game-night tensions. Some of the frustration can be pinned on the fact that Monopoly and games like it—where luck is more important than competence—can lead to aggressive feelings and an increased likelihood of blowups, reports the *Journal of Personality and Social Psychology*. Other factors include differing notions of fairness, drawn-out games, real-life stress or tensions that spill into game time, and underlying wrinkles in our relationships with each other,



Float like a butterfly, sting like a Monopoly champ: Muhammad Ali boardside in Louisville, Kentucky, in 1963.

which, stirred together, are a recipe for a crashout.

That's not to say Monopoly is the only board game that's ever caused a rift or two. Everyone has that one friend that makes you whip out the dictionary during Scrabble (turns out, yes, *zorilla* is an animal and not just a desperate play to get rid of that extra Z). From Battleship to Boggle, board games bring out that competitive nature that raises the temperature of the room a couple of degrees. After a study of Monopoly player behavior was published in 2012, Paul Piff, an associate professor of psychology at the University of California, Berkeley, observed in a 2013 TED Talk, "Rich players actually started to become ruder toward the other person [and] less and less sensitive to the plight of those poor poor players." They smacked their tokens more loudly as they moved them around the board and bragged about their cash on hand. Monopoly is "a metaphor for understanding society," Piff said. "As a person's levels of wealth increase, their feelings of compassion and empathy go down."

A group of unhappy girls around a Monopoly board in Bavaria in 2003. According to Hasbro, more than half of games end in fights.

Was Monopoly always this way? Kind of. Back at the turn of the 20th century, a woman named Elizabeth Magie created The Landlord's Game, a precursor to Monopoly, which functioned as a game and teaching tool. Those pesky Luxury Tax and Income Tax spots were supposed to show how money should go back into the community, keeping others in the game longer. But if and when players got caught up in accumulating personal wealth, the descent into greed would begin, demonstrating, as Magie intended, the divisive potential of capitalism. In fact, it wasn't long after Parker Brothers began marketing Monopoly that consumers began complaining about the rifts the game was causing, according to *The Monopolists: Obsession, Fury, and the Scandal Behind the World's Favorite Board Game,* by Mary Pilon: "In one exchange, a player identifying himself as Iron Duke from Brooklyn, New York, wrote: 'Do you idiots know how to play this game, or are you trying to disrupt homes and destroy families with your damn rules?'"

A decade later, Monopoly fights were making their way into the general press. In 1950, *The New Yorker* ran a story by a World War II vet, Gordon Cotler, who described a Monopoly blowup among officers stationed in the Philippines. To shield the identities of the parties involved, Cotler referred to his fellow players by code names: High Hat, Old Shoe, Battleship, and Pebbles. According to Cotler, the men played daily for a week with escalating tensions over rules. But the big blowup came the night High Hat landed on Electric Company and refused to pay the rent. (He claimed he didn't "like the ethics of absentee ownership.") Old Shoe flew into a rage, called High Hat "a dirty practitioner," leapt to his feet, and like many players decades into the future—indeed, like our Sarah Cole of Knoxville—launched the board into the air, sending houses, hotels, and currency flying. The almost fisticuff was only settled when the officers gave the board to a group of local girls. "We've got a nice game for you," Battleship told them diplomatically.

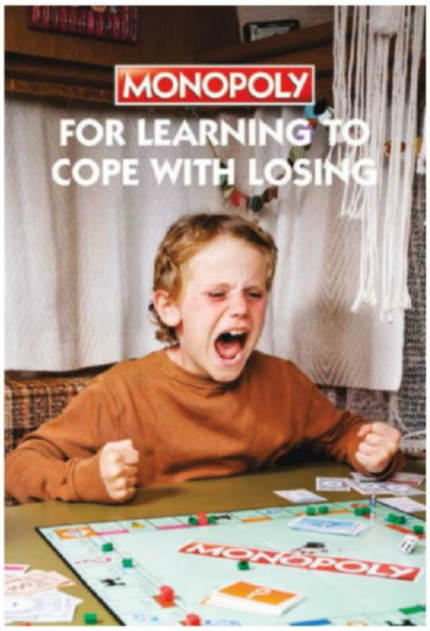
MONOPOLY-RELATED INCIDENTS HAVE continued to make the news domestically and abroad. In 2008, the *Telegraph* in the U.K. reported that when (now former) Prince

Andrew was given a Monopoly board to mark a visit he made to the Leeds Building Society, he declined the gift because his mother, Queen Elizabeth II, had banned family matches as too "vicious." A decade later, a game night in Kansas ended in a brawl, with one player pushing another into a mirror. The wound required stitches. More recently, in Belgium, four people set up an early-morning sidewalk game and a nearby resident, irritated by the noise, emerged from a building wielding a Japanese katana (a curved sword—notably, not a famous token). Two of the men ended up having to go to the hospital.

Game-board violence is not the norm by any measure, but friction among family members, friends, and sometimes strangers is as common as landing on Illinois Avenue. There is no end to the potential sources of conflict in daily life, large and small. Fights can arise because people have different points of view, cultural divides, unresolved past issues, poor communication, clashing personalities, generational differences, and money disparities. "The key is to approach conflicts with the aim of resolution and understanding rather than winning an argument," advises Southern California's Abundance Therapy Center. "It's important to listen actively, acknowledge the other person's feelings, and work together to find a solution that appeases both parties."

That's great advice, but the conciliatory approach doesn't get much traction when you're flush with orange $500 Monopoly notes, newly released from jail, and have been harboring a grudge since childhood. That's a lesson New Yorker Joe Gallo learned as a child during summers spent on Cape Cod with cousins. On rainy days, the close-knit group of eight would pull out the Monopoly board. As they grew up, the tenor of the games changed, Gallo says. "When an older cousin bullies you and then you find out you're better than them at something? It's not good. Resentments from outside of Monopoly pass into the game of Monopoly."

In his teens, the now 33-year-old Gallo sought to settle old scores. "I would manipulate people into giving me things and then everyone would be very, very upset…to the point where people would refuse to do deals. Like a Cold War of Monopoly," he says. "One holiday, the game got real heated. My mom had to come in, shut it down, and ban it from the house. And at this point, we were 18 or 19. Grown adults were crying."



The theme of a 2022 Monopoly campaign in Europe was "Fighting Is Good."

For its part, Hasbro has gone as far as leveraging Monopoly's rage-inducing nature for marketing ends. In 2022, Hasbro launched a "Fighting Is Good" advertising campaign in Belgium and the Netherlands in which the company positioned Monopoly meltdowns as character-building. In one ad, there was a picture of a screaming young boy seated at a Monopoly board with his fists clenched. The copy under the Monopoly logo read, "For Learning to Cope with Losing." In another ad, a girl playing the game glowered angrily under text that read, "For Dealing with a Setback."

"No other game can get you as frustrated and irritated as Monopoly," Floor Peters, brand manager at Monopoly Benelux, told TheDrum.com, which covers advertising and marketing. "You could say that fighting is our biggest [unique selling proposition]."

Back in Tennessee, the Cole family has tried to protect its Monopoly set by sticking to the Millennium version, because its money is harder to rip up. But the strategy can't curb ruthlessness, Chelsey admits. "When we play, my brother and I have an alliance where our first goal is to eliminate all other players so we can go head-to-head. If you want to play in our family, you better come ready to lose."

The Night of the Monopoly Sleepover

IN THE SUMMER OF 1976, THE AUTHOR AND HIS FRIEND SEAN PULLED AN ALL-NIGHTER, TESTING THE LIMITS OF THEIR PSYCHES, BLADDERS, AND TOLERANCE FOR SLEEP DEPRIVATION.

BY STEVE RUSHIN

IN THE BICENTENNIAL SUMMER of 1976, at a sleepover in Sean Burke's basement on Southbrook Drive in Bloomington, Minnesota, I did two things for the very first time: stayed up all night and completed a game of Monopoly.

At the time, the official rules of Monopoly resembled the United States tax code, but longer and more complex. They ran to eight pages and were accompanied by a second, supplementary set of instructions, Rules for a Short Game of Monopoly, for those lightweights who wanted only "sixty to ninety minutes of the fun and pleasure of the regular game of Monopoly."

Sean and I resolved to play the long game, by the rules, until one of us was rich beyond comprehension and the other one was bankrupt—depleted financially and emotionally. Fortified with 7Up and Jiffy Pop, we settled in for a zero-sum exercise in capitalism. We were 10 years old.

Monopoly was one of those board games—Risk was another—that could span days. And like Risk, Monopoly was a war of attrition. From December 26, 1974, to January 5, 1975, four teenagers in Pinole, California, played Monopoly for 264 consecutive hours. In the summer of 1974, 34 masochists in Denver, working in shifts, played for 42 straight days.

Were we aware of these endurance records on the night of the Monopoly Sleepover? I can't say for certain, except that Sean and I and every other kid in Southbrook was acutely familiar with Guinness World Records and its superlative contents: world's tallest man, world's longest fingernails, world's heaviest set of motorcycle-riding twins.

We couldn't hope to join their startling ranks during a single session of unbridled capitalism. Still, in the middle of that Bicentennial night 50 years ago, in that Golden Age of Marathon Monopoly Games, two 10-year-olds in suburban Minneapolis set out to explore the fine line between Monopoly and monotony.

UNTIL THEN, MOST OF THE MONOPOLY games I played with my four siblings had ended abruptly: in a fight, usually within an hour, often with the board being flipped and the tokens scattering across the room. Some of the games began that way, with an argument over who got to be the race car, top hat or terrier—our top three choices—and who had to be the Depression-era boot, the iron, or, God forbid, the thimble. And yet each of those metal tokens was beautiful in its own way and reminded me of the charms on my mom's tennis bracelet.

My brother, the oldest of the five Rushin kids, always had dibs on being the banker, doling out two crisp, pale yellow hundred-dollar bills every time one of us passed Go. "Go directly to bed," our dad often told us at bedtime. "Do not pass Go, do not collect two hundred dollars." The phrase had escaped the Monopoly box into the wider world, much the way the game's dice found their way into our other games, until we only ever had mismatched dice.

Likewise, Monopoly money was used as a kind of Confederate currency in our house. Five-dollar bets might be paid off with a pink Monopoly fiver. Either that or five hairs plucked from the Mrs. Beasley doll that belonged to my little sister Amy. "You thought I said five dollars? No, I bet you five doll hairs."

Our delight in delivering pain to one another, our propensity for sibling schadenfreude, was richly rewarded in Monopoly. Chance has seldom dealt a crueler card than the Chance card in Monopoly, the one that read: "Pay Poor Tax of $15." A poor tax? Was that a real thing? What other indignities awaited in adulthood?

Sean Burke and I were about to find out. In his finished basement, we stayed up past our bedtimes, and then past our parents' bedtimes, into uncharted television territory. The Friday late-night shows playing out on the basement Zenith—*Midnight Special* and *Don Kirshner's Rock Concert*—were a sneak peek of young adulthood. But Monopoly was a time machine. It skipped our teens and 20s entirely and threw us headlong into middle age, with all its attendant rewards and responsibilities. We paid income tax, received bank dividends, were periodically incarcerated, got fined for speeding, were elected chairman of the board, sold stock, paid school fees, and had no moral qualms

Steve Rushin and Sean Burke are not pictured here, but they could have been the inspiration for these exhausted young players.

whatsoever about taking money that wasn't rightfully ours. For what else is implied by that most glorious of Community Chest cards: "Bank error in your favor. Collect $200"?

Though Sean Burke's basement games cupboard also had The Game of Life, Monopoly was the real game of life, with mortgages, property tax, and hospital fees. For a history of the game published by the company in that decade, the ubiquitous 1970s celebrity psychologist Dr. Joyce Brothers told Parker Brothers, "The skill and luck factors in Monopoly are reassuring to many people. There is enough skill involved so that if you win, you can compliment yourself on being the best player, and enough luck so if you lose, you can blame it on the dice. It can be very comforting." Made a fortune? You earned it. Went bankrupt? Not your fault. Monopoly was not just a game. Monopoly was a fail-proof philosophy to live by.

THE BASEMENTS OF MY 1970s subdivision were all stocked with the same board games, probably all at once, like a man-made lake stocked with trout. Every house had some combination of Clue, Battleship, Stratego, Scrabble, Yahtzee, a deck of playing cards, and a round metal set of Chinese checkers. Some basements had air hockey, ping-pong, or that singular diversion of the '70s: bumper pool. But every house had Monopoly.

As familiar and timeless as the game was to all of us, I didn't know anyone who strictly adhered to the rules. That changed in Sean Burke's basement, where the game tested the limits of our psyches, our bladders, and our tolerance for sleep deprivation. Though details of that all-night battle are hazy, there remains no doubt about who won.

Like Cornelius Vanderbilt, Sean Burke presided over a railroad empire. Like Conrad Hilton, he had hotels on all the best properties. He owned the utilities that supplied his many houses with water and electricity. And though he became richer than J. Paul Getty—who Guinness World Records regularly informed us was the world's richest man—Sean Burke was still accorded that right of all monopolists: Free Parking.

Soon after our Monopoly sleepover, Sean Burke and his family moved to Iowa, where his dad—my parents informed me—ran a bank. I took some solace in knowing I had lost in Monopoly to the son of a banker, and continued to play for the next half century.

Today, my own family's game closet has two versions of Monopoly: a Star Wars edition, and the traditional game, on whose box is emblazoned a 21st-century concession to our short attention spans: "Play Faster with Speed Die!" This edition of Monopoly calls itself "The Fast-Dealing Property Trading Game."

But Monopoly, I learned in 1976, is not something to speed through. Monopoly, like monogamy, is a lifelong commitment, rewarded over time. The game was an early lesson in finishing what you start, no matter how endless and pointless (and sleepless) that pursuit might become. I staggered home the morning after my sleepover and went directly to bed. I did not pass Go. I did not collect two hundred dollars.

CAPITALIST TOOL

The American toy shelf is crowded with board games that teach free enterprise, consumerism, and wealth accumulation.

BY AYANA BYRD

Business leaders gathered at Brown's Hotel in London in December 1970 to play Monopoly.

"MONOPOLY WAS INVENTED TO DEMONSTRATE the evils of capitalism." Or so proclaimed the BBC in 2017 by way of an inflammatory headline. The article was about the origin story of Monopoly, which was created as an anti-capitalist teaching tool. Yet to many who have played the game that urges acquiring property, bankrupting opponents, and leaving debtors imprisoned, the headline could be interpreted as an indictment of the popular pastime.

Rather than merely being "just a game," Monopoly is a cardboard-and-plastic lesson on being a good capitalist. It is a big seller in a crowded category of board games that teach that capitalism, acquisition, greed, and obtaining wealth aren't just good topics for a game—they are cultural values that should be learned, and learned well.

"Monopoly is distinctly American," says Mary Pilon, author of *The Monopolists: Obsession, Fury, and the Scandal Behind the World's Favorite Board Game*. "It is obsessed with money and land and property, like many aspects of our culture."

MONOPOLY'S POLITICALLY PROGRESSIVE BEGINNINGS

It is ironic that the world's most popular game about capitalism was originally created by feminist Elizabeth Magie to show how unjust the system is.

Popular in leftist circles, the game made it into the hands of Charles Darrow, who copied the idea, sold it to Parker Brothers, claimed sole credit, and became a millionaire. Renamed Monopoly and released in 1935, during the Great Depression, Darrow's version did not warn people about the financial system but urged them to lean into it to win. "Its valorization of unbridled capitalism conforms closely to broader values in our society,"

says Patrick Rael, a professor of U.S. history at Bowdoin College in Maine, who regularly uses board and computer games as teaching aids in his classes. "Monopoly embodies American myths of 'self-made men' succeeding in the economy through wit and guile."

Mirek Stolee, curator of tabletop games and puzzles at the Strong National Museum of Play in Rochester, New York, believes Monopoly is "one of the cleanest representations of capitalism" in a board game, emphasizing private ownership, property development, and the role of luck. "While there is certainly strategy, fortune intervenes in the form of die rolls and card draws," Stolee points out. "It's possible that no one lands on Park Place after you've spent all your money developing it to perfection."

While Monopoly certainly highlights—and

celebrates—many fundamental aspects of capitalism, there are limits to it as a teaching tool. "Games are necessarily simplified systems. When you represent capitalism in a game, you pick and choose the elements of capitalism to include," says Stolee. "Monopoly ends once players are bankrupt, but you don't see any of the aftermath. You also don't see negative side effects of the profit motive, like environmental destruction."

Pilon agrees that while the game is a reflection of American capitalism, it is not a mirror of real life. "I don't believe the world is like Monopoly. I think that the pie of success is large, and everybody can have a slice—my success doesn't depend on destroying everyone else around me," says the author, adding that Monopoly is "a reflection of the darkest part of capitalism."

GAMES AS TEACHERS

Monopoly is not alone in being a game that doubles as a teaching tool. "The idea that games were fun is relatively modern, only in the last 100 years or so," explains Pilon. "Originally, they were very much about [teaching] good and bad, right and wrong."

The phenomenon of games as teaching tools dates back to the 1800s. One of the most popular early examples was The Mansion of Happiness, a version of which was available in the U.S. as early as 1806, and which W. & S.B. Ives began selling in 1843, incorporating changes made by the Boston-based editor of a children's magazine. Players took turns moving along a board in a "racing game" format (think Candy Land) and could find themselves on one of 66 spots with names such as Charity, Purity, Cruelty, and Ruin. Punishments for taking wrong turns in life—for example, being a drunkard—included public whippings or water dunkings. The best-behaved player won the game by reaching the Mansion of Happiness, a place not unlike heaven. As decidedly un-fun as it was, The Mansion of Happiness sold 4,000 units in its first 10 months, going on to become the century's most enduring game. It became a staple of Victorian parlors and even made its way West on the Overland Trail.

Many other games were based on the idea of teaching morality. It was not until Checkered Game of Life, released in 1860, that a popular game mixed moral integrity with financial success. Checkered Game of Life was created by Milton Bradley, who founded the Milton Bradley Company and is credited with launching the board-game industry in the U.S. In the game, players landed on squares such as Prison, Ruin, and even Suicide. The reward for having a good character was money and opportunity—linking virtue and wealth in a popular game for the first time. In its first year of release, Checkered Game of Life sold out its first run of 45,000 units.

In 1960, Checkered Game of Life was rebranded The Game of Life. "In [the newer version], players weigh choices like whether to go to college or buy insurance. Players who go to college begin to earn money later than players who opt out of college but are rewarded with a larger salary. This is a clear-cut argument—college is a costly investment in your future wages," explains Stolee. "It presents a pretty instrumentalist view of education." Other updates were meant to make the game appeal to baby boomers and their parents, with players trying to get their dream job, dream house, and dream life (complete with cash, a life partner, and children).

CAPITALISM'S HOLD ON THE GAME INDUSTRY

In both of its iterations, Life is one of many games focused on wealth as a means to success. In 1883, 16-year-old George Parker launched a company that would become known as Parker Brothers (the future manufacturer of Monopoly) with a game he'd invented, called Banking. To win, you had to become the richest player. This was followed by titles such as The Good Old Game of Corner Grocery (1887), another Parker Brothers game, that rewarded being the best shopper. Pay Day, created in 1974, is still played today; in it, players must be the smartest spender and have the most money after managing their

The Game of Life, first released in 1860, coached players in morals and finances. The Mansion of Happiness (opposite) awarded decency.

monthly budget. "Capitalism is heavily ingrained in the United States culture. And as an ideology, it has its own values. It makes sense that these values would slip into our games, intentionally or unintentionally," says Rael. "A game in which players compete to make the most money, for example, makes sense in a society that values one's financial earnings as the primary metric of success."

Capitalism remains a popular theme in games. Monopoly itself has hundreds of spin-offs, including a card game and express version. There are also competitors such as Cashflow, which was created in 1996 by *Rich Dad Poor Dad* author Robert Kiyosaki and Kim Kiyosaki, whose website says it is "not just a game—it's a personal finance learning activity, an investing board game, and a money management tool that transforms how you think about wealth." Others include Chinatown, from 1999, which focuses on property development, and Hegemony, a political-economic game based on class warfare that debuted in 2023. "In just over a year, I've cataloged more than 30 games with a stock market theme," says Stolee. "Many of these teach basic investment principles, like buying low and selling high. Sid Sackson's [1964] game Acquire is a great example, with its focus on stock trading and business mergers."

Though it was not the first, nor the last, Monopoly remains the touchstone for games based on capitalism and the distribution of wealth. More than simply being a fun way to pass the time, it requires us to explore the same questions that led to its creation. Says Pilon, "Liz Magie was reading texts from the late 1800s, early 1900s, but we're arguing over the same things today: How are people taxed? Who gets land? Who has the rights to it? What is equality? What is justice? It's all the same, the inconvenient truth of what America is."

Monopoly Investment Advice

KEEP CASH ON HAND, BE PATIENT, DIVERSIFY, AND OTHER VALUABLE FINANCIAL LESSONS FROM A 90-YEAR-OLD GAME.

BY SHAM GAD

MOST PEOPLE PULL OUT the Monopoly board for fun and a chance to be a pretend real estate tycoon. But if you've played long enough, you know the game offers a lot of financial wisdom and lessons. Here are five.

1. ALWAYS KEEP CASH ON HAND

This is the most important lesson in both the game and the financial world. To win in Monopoly, you have to be the last player left—in other words, the last one to have money. So if you move around the

Monopoly board aimlessly buying up everything in sight, you are likely to run out of cash and won't be able to meet your financial obligations. Then you'll have to start selling off the properties (assets) you acquired at a deep discount to what you paid for them.

Cash on hand is important in real-world financial matters, too. The U.S. got a front-row seat to this principle during the Great Recession of 2008, when loosey-goosey lending policies allowed people to spend cash like crazy. Then, when the housing market went bust and the U.S. banking crisis erupted, the Monopoly effect took place. Without cash and unable to make mortgage payments, people were forced to sell their houses for significantly less than what they paid for them, or worse, the lender foreclosed on the property. Any equity was wiped out.

Similarly, when the credit markets seized in 2008, many investors scrambled to raise cash by selling securities at any price, which led to huge stock market losses. Hardworking people lost significant investable assets. On the other hand, the people who had cash had the opportunity to snap up stocks, real estate, and bonds for a fraction of what they were worth. In the end, they won the game and made the most money.

2. BE PATIENT

To win at Monopoly, you have to be patient and have a game plan. You usually can't win by buying every piece of real estate you land on and spending all your money.

Similarly, in real life, if you invest willy-nilly, you are essentially hoping the market will behave nicely. Successful investors don't invest based on pipe dreams; they invest with discipline.

During the internet boom of the late 1990s, Warren Buffett was ridiculed for not investing in dot-com companies while speculators around him were capturing triple-digit gains. A lucky few got in and out at just the right time. However, for the vast majority, there were painful losses. In the end, when the market and investors ran out of money, the speculative investments came crashing down.

3. FOCUS ON CASH FLOW

Monopoly is a simple game: You start off with some money, and your goal is to be the last player standing with money. The way you win in Monopoly is by collecting rents on property, or cash flow.

The most valuable properties on the Monopoly board, those with the best cash flow, are the railroads. With each railroad costing $200, by owning all four, you collect $200 in rent, or a 25 percent return. A bizarre way to look at the game? Maybe, but it is precisely the kind of valuable financial and investing lesson Monopoly offers.

Over time, assets increase in value based on the cash flows they produce. Even something as simple as a savings account or savings bond becomes more valuable if it is earning more cash (i.e., a higher interest rate). Iconic companies such as Coca-Cola, Johnson & Johnson, and IBM have been successful investments for decades because of the growth in cash flows they produce.

4. THE MOST EXPENSIVE ASSET IS NOT ALWAYS THE BEST

Most Monopoly players want to own Park Place and Boardwalk because they have the biggest payouts. But these properties are also the most expensive to maintain. Owning Boardwalk and Park Place is not how you vanquish your opponents; you do so by making the most money.

In investing, you win by buying low and selling high. When you focus on the most expensive assets, odds are you are overpaying and setting yourself up for losses.

5. DON'T PUT ALL YOUR EGGS IN ONE BASKET

You won't win much in Monopoly by only owning one property and loading it up with hotels. It's also hard to win if you try to buy everything on the board and spread yourself too thin. Occasionally, you get lucky and every opponent lands on your property, but usually the winner has spread out properties across the board, creating multiple chances at capturing rents.

The same principle applies to investing. If you bet everything on one or two stocks, you are exposing yourself to a potential wipeout if something goes wrong. At the same time, you can dilute your gains by trying to own 100 different stocks. Diversify intelligently. Studies have shown that a portfolio gains no additional diversification benefits after 15 to 20 securities. Don't just bet on one or two assets, or try and keep up with 50.

HATERS GONNA HATE

The game goes on forever, it's tedious, it rewards the least fun person in the room, and other complaints from Monopoly naysayers.

BY RICHARD JEROME

Oh, look outside the window, there's a woman bein' grabbed
They've dragged her to the bushes, and now she's bein' stabbed
Maybe we should call the cops and try to stop the pain
But Monopoly is so much fun, and I'd hate to blow the game

So reads the first stanza of Phil Ochs's "Outside of a Small Circle of Friends," a bitterly satirical 1967 tune about apathy in the face of human suffering. With its scathing lyrics and ironically jaunty tune, it's widely recognized as an American classic. More than a few people, however, might take issue with Ochs's fourth line.

Monopoly is a venerable institution, likely the first name that leaps to mind when someone mentions board games, especially for those who never play them. Who hasn't heard the phrases "do not pass go" and "get out of jail free card" or seen that mustachioed cartoon brand ambassador in his top hat and tails? But Monopoly also has more than its share of critics—haters, even—who cannot fathom how anyone in their right mind could possibly consider the game "fun." That is, if they're not, say, a rapacious New York real estate developer, or Mr. Potter from *It's a Wonderful Life*.

Indeed, a Google search yields a raft of articles, blog posts, YouTube videos, and Reddit forums—many by serious gaming enthusiasts—with headlines such as "Why People Hate Monopoly," "Monopoly Is the Worst Game Ever," and "Monopoly Sucks." It's "the most overhyped, under-enjoyed board game of all time," author Brian Rosta wrote on Medium. "It's long. It's tedious. It rewards the least fun person in the room."

Tom Chivers of BuzzFeed UK was more blunt: "Monopoly is shite," Chivers waxed unpoetic in his post. The subhead summed up his thoughts: "There are hundreds and hundreds of really good board games. Why are you wasting your life playing this crap?" As alternatives, he cited, among others, Ticket to Ride, which is all about building railways across Europe, and Twilight Struggle, a card-based simulation of the Cold War.

Several studies have found that Monopoly is a singularly triggering pastime, one that incites more disputes than any other board game. "Every family has their own Monopoly story that is spoken in hushed tones," journalist Matt Berical wrote on Fatherly.com in 2020. "These stories all follow the same arc: We decided to play Monopoly, we started to regret it, we didn't speak again until Grandpa's funeral."

To be sure, Monopoly can transform an innocent game night gathering into a *Real Housewives* episode. Stories abound of screaming matches, overturned tables, and occasionally even assaults: In 2011, a New Mexico grandmother stabbed her boyfriend repeatedly because she suspected him of cheating (he survived). A few years later, Hasbro set up a British holiday Monopoly hotline specifically devoted to avoiding imbroglios, donnybrooks, and other brouhahas. "We'll have experts on hand with the official rulebooks to instantly settle any disputes," explained Craig Wilkins, marketing director of Hasbro UK & Ireland.

So what, exactly, is supposedly so bad about Monopoly? There are several recurring complaints. Top

Monopoly exemplifies what game theorists and economists call the zero-sum game: For one player to gain something, another must lose it.

of the list is Monopoly's overall ethos. Back in 2009, an article in *Wired* complained that the game, in its most familiar form, is ill conceived. "Monopoly has you grinding your opponents into dust. It's a very negative experience," Derk Solko, an ex-Wall Streeter who cofounded the website BoardGameGeek.com, a forum featuring reviews and analyses, told the magazine. "It's all about cackling when your opponent lands on your space and you get to take all their money." Monopoly exemplifies what game theorists and economists call the zero-sum game: For one player to gain something, another must lose it. And when it comes to the ultimate winner, it gets even uglier—to prevail in Monopoly, you must drive

Games with a high luck to skill ratio, such as Monopoly, tend to be frustrating for unfortunate players. The only recourse for someone on a losing streak is hoping their luck returns.

your opponent into bankruptcy and ruin. "Gouging and exploiting may be perfect for humiliating your siblings," *Wired* puckishly pointed out, "but they're not so great for relaxing with friends."

Or with children, as pediatrician and author Alison Escalante cautioned in a blog entry titled "Why You Should Never Play Monopoly with Your Kids (It was never designed to be fun)." When her son suggested the family get up a little game one lazy Labor Day weekend, Escalante wrote, "my stomach dropped in dread."

"I should have known better," she continued. "After all, I hate Monopoly. I have so many horrible childhood memories of Monopoly: They all ended in tears. Were we supposed to pretend we actually enjoyed losing?" Escalante assuaged herself because her family was playing a festive version called Mario Kart Monopoly (one of 300 licensed versions taken from pop culture, sports, brands, and other realms). But Mario Kart wasn't enough to salvage the evening. "In an experience that echoed every memory I have of playing Monopoly, one of the kids took an early lead while the other one became the obvious loser," Escalante wrote. "Our moods went from happy to tense as we watched my son reach the brink of bankruptcy while his brother became lord of the board.… Even the adorable game pieces [brightly colored figures of characters Mario, Peach, Luigi, and Toad] and the video game touches didn't make Mario Kart Monopoly fun."

Unlike Escalante, filmmaker Stephen Ives had no such qualms about the game—at one time, anyway. In fact, he saw Monopoly as a cultural touchstone and was eager to teach it to his young children as a kind of rite of passage. "It's like the early Beatles or Disneyland or something," he told *The New Yorker* in 2023. "'When are they going to be ready?' What you don't really realize is that you're performing this ritualistic introduction to raw, unbridled American-style capitalism. You're saying, 'This is how society works.

This is how you have fun and crush other people.'"

Of course, that was the intended effect when Lizzie Magie created Monopoly's precursor and prototype, The Landlord's Game, which she patented 1904. It wasn't intended to be a lighthearted romp. Rather, it was designed as a harsh lesson in the brutal reality of Gilded Age capitalism, in which winning wasn't everything but the only thing, and cruelty was often the point. Far from a plutocrat or robber baron, Magie espoused the economic theories of Henry George, who posited that people should own the value they produced, and the economic value of land and natural resources should be shared equally by all. "Magie conceived it as a direct critique of monopolies," says Michael "Wheels" Whelan, a British game designer, streamer, and videographer. "And it was made to exert a feeling of frustration and unfairness in its design."

Social and economic theory aside, many gaming aficionados find fault with Monopoly's design and with a typical game's tediously predictable story arc. To begin with, Monopoly essentially relies entirely on luck—rather than, for instance, general knowledge, expertise, or strategy. "There's a sort of 'variance scale' in games that goes from the left side, where games are completely random—like flipping a coin and guessing heads or tails," Whelan explains, "and the right side, where there's no luck involved at all apart from the actions of your opponent, like in a game of chess. There's a big spectrum of games in between, and the points on the scale you favor are mostly determined by your personal taste. But with Monopoly largely decided by the dice rolls of each turn and where you end up, there's not a huge amount of choice involved in the game outside of picking whether or not to purchase or bid on properties."

Whelan notes that games with a high luck-to-skill ratio tend to be frustrating for those with bad luck. "In a game of poker, you can read your opponents and try to gauge the likelihood of their having a better hand than yours, you can press them with big bets, and—most important—you can fold when you sense that luck is against you," he says. "But Monopoly offers few opportunities for players to express their agency. A Monopoly player on a bad streak can do nothing but hope their luck turns."

A single game of Monopoly can drag on for hours as each person takes their turn, rolls the dice, and decides whether to buy. Players commonly introduce "house rules" (where players make up their own) that can either streamline the game or gum up the works even more. Despite Monopoly's marathon running time, the winner of this Darwinian exercise in capitalism is often determined early in the game. The other, doomed players must soldier on to the end, through all the mind-numbing, soul-crushing inevitability of defeat, while enduring the victor's self-satisfied smirk as they conquer the board.

The scenario does seem vaguely sadistic. If your baseball team is on the wrong end of a 10–0 blowout by the sixth inning, you could, theoretically, stage a dramatic comeback—it's been done. On a more macro level, your team may be eliminated from the pennant race in August (as were the hapless Colorado Rockies in 2025), yet you play out the last 30 or so hopeless games anyway. The difference is that the players don't necessarily go home empty-handed at season's end—for instance, the ones who enjoyed strong individual seasons may find solace in their stats. By contrast, a losing Monopoly player leaves the board with nothing but a bitter memory—and minus several hours of their life they'll never get back.

"OUR MOODS WENT FROM HAPPY TO TENSE AS WE WATCHED MY SON REACH THE BRINK OF BANKRUPTCY."

Granted, even many anti-Monopolists grudgingly concede the game must be doing something right to have ruled the roost for so long in a—well, ruthlessly capitalist system. But could it be revamped to pacify the haters—perhaps made more competitive or faster paced? "I'm sure it's possible," Whelan says. "But I'd urge players to just grab a better and more recently designed game instead. Games like Ticket to Ride, Codenames [an espionage-themed word association game] and Settlers of Catan [in which players build settlements, cities, and roads and deploy natural resources] have cemented themselves as very family-friendly modern classics, something simple and fun that players of all ages and skill levels can engage with and enjoy."

Sitcom Gold

ON THE SMALL SCREEN, MONOPOLY—WHICH ALMOST ALWAYS GUARANTEES BAD BEHAVIOR—IS GOOD FOR APPRECIATIVE (IF UNCOMFORTABLE) LAUGHS OF RECOGNITION.

BY EILEEN DASPIN

Diff'rent Strokes

"THE SQUATTER"

Monopoly shows up in multiple episodes of *Diff'rent Strokes,* including 1982's "The Squatter," in which Mr. Drummond (Conrad Bain) decides to tear down some of his low-income apartment buildings to make way for luxury condos, echoing the themes of Monopoly. His plan displaces a long-term tenant, Mrs. Martinson (Audrey Meadows, above right), who refuses to pay the rent and moves into the Drummond household.

Friends

"THE ONE WITH THE CHICKEN POX"

In this 1996 episode, Phoebe gets chicken pox the same day an old flame, Ryan (Charlie Sheen), arrives in town, and infects him. For date night, the two—dotted in calamine lotion to relieve the itchiness—play Monopoly. Though Ryan tries to convince Phoebe to stop scratching, she can't control herself, leading to this memorable cry of distress: "I just wanna grab all these houses and rub 'em all over my body."

The Simpsons

"BRAWL IN THE FAMILY"

When a storm destroys the Simpsons' television antenna, the family grudgingly turns to Monopoly in this 2002 episode. Bart takes the lead, erecting a planned community's worth of homes and hotels on his properties, but Lisa discovers he's been using Lego blocks instead of regulation Monopoly pieces. Simpson-level mayhem follows, and, as has happened in real life, the police must be called in to restore the peace.

Black-ish

"ADVANCE TO GO (COLLECT $200)"

As Dre unboxes a Monopoly board for game night, he foreshadows his own misbehavior. "How you play reveals who you are," the Johnson dad declares in this 2017 episode. Cut to Dre hitting a hot streak and rubbing the others the wrong way, then running out of luck and flipping the board when it's clear he has lost. Yet all's well that ends well: Dre realizes how well suited he and Rainbow are, and Ruby and Pops rekindle their romance.

MONOPOLY GO!

The mobile game is free to play, addictive, and wildly profitable. It's generated more than $6 billion in revenue since launching in 2023.

BY COURTNEY MIFSUD INTREGLIA

I'm deep in Monopoly mode and ready for my next move. I roll the dice, hope for good luck, and score: Double sixes! I hop my token ahead 12 spaces, pass GO, and earn my $200. I'm happy about the cash, as it will come in handy to fund the five properties I'm developing.

The payout, however, will not help me beat my husband, or my parents, or anyone I know personally. That's because I am not seated around a board with loved ones in our living room. I am not in a game café with friends. I am alone, glued to my phone, engrossed in *Monopoly GO!,* the addictive, free-to-play mobile game based on the Hasbro classic.

I'm in good company—*Monopoly GO!* has been downloaded more than 150 million times since it launched in 2023, and every day, more than 10 million fans log on to engage. Created by the video game producer Scopely, *Monopoly GO!* surpassed $6 billion in lifetime in-app purchase revenue via purchases of extra dice rolls, in-game currency, and sticker packs faster than any mobile game in history.

While *GO!* and traditional Monopoly share some DNA, such as the Monopoly Man and vibrant colors, the games are quite different. Instead of moving tokens around a physical board with properties you develop, in *Monopoly GO!,* you toggle between two screens. On the home screen, you click a button to roll dice, which moves your token avatar accordingly. Then you toggle to the second screen, one of the "build" screens, which are city-themed, such as Venice, which is complete with gondolas, or Paris, where pedestrians wear berets. With in-game dollars that you earn during play, you can build and upgrade structures such as sports stadiums, zoos, museums, and landmarks. The *Monopoly GO!* action heats up when one player invades another player's board, destroying their buildings for cash or raiding their earnings with a minigame. If a player doesn't have any contacts imported into the game, *Monopoly GO!* pairs them up with strangers.

Even before *Monopoly GO!,* Scopely was a highly profitable operation. Founded in 2011, the Culver City, California, mobile game group developed and published franchises such as *Marvel Strike Force* and *Yahtzee with Buddies,* earning a $3.3 billion valuation (including investments from venture capitalists) by 2020. When Savvy Games Group, part of the Saudi government's Public Investment Fund, scooped up the business in 2023, it paid Scopely $4.9 billion. That same year, Scopely released *Monopoly GO!,* which it had spent seven years developing (about twice as long as expected), work that clearly paid off. After just seven months, the title had generated $1 billion, and it hit the $2 billion mark three months later. In 2024 and 2025, TIME named Scopely to its Top 100 Most Influential Companies, citing the record-breaking earnings.

Technically, *Monopoly GO!* is gratis. It costs nothing to download from the Apple Store or Google Play. During the first few sessions, it inundates new players with rewards on the house and a seemingly endless number of dice rolls. But after you finish the introductory "build" board (Paris, Venice, New York, and so on), the freebies quickly run out. You can wait an hour to earn five more dice rolls (which feels paltry compared to the 40-plus you started with), or you can pay for more rolls.

This offer is called a "microtransaction," a term

Players of Monopoly GO! *toggle between two screens. The one here reflects the classic board game and is where the dice are "rolled" with a click. The other is a "build" screen of a city.*

built into games across genres, including other free-to-play games such as *Fortnite* and *League of Legends,* along with full-priced games such as *Call of Duty* and *NBA 2K*. While full-priced PC or console games, which hover around $70 to $80, can afford to be strategic with their in-game offers, microtransactions are how free-to-play games rake in the profits.

Free-to-play gamers know this setup well; some 26 percent of them spend money during gameplay, according to a study published in 2022 in the *International Journal of Environmental Research and Public Health*. Microtransactions can be risky for free-to-play users, the study's authors warned, as they can lead to gaming habits that resemble a gambling disorder. Given the association between in-game spending and internet gaming disorder, the authors raised the question of harm-prevention tools and regulation of free-to-play games.

Analog Monopoly was ripe for the mobile-game market, Scopely execs say, because of its high brand recognition and loyalty among fans, two factors that made it easy to integrate social media connections. "We thought if we could harness that built-in interest with a game that would be truly social so you would feel OK inviting your friends and family, because the game is for everybody, the game has a chance to really scale," Scopely's general manager of *Monopoly GO!,* Massimo Maietti, told GamesIndustry.biz in 2023.

As an experienced gamer—*Pokémon GO* and *Fire Emblem Shadows* are my go-tos—I'm no stranger to the microtransaction. I have spent at least a $100 on Pokémon Remote Raid Passes, and I have poured more cash into buying Fire Emblem orbs than I'd like to admit. These bona fides, plus the fact that I am an avid Monopoly devotee, theoretically made me Scopely's target consumer.

The first time I logged on to *Monopoly GO!* I got a head-spinning tutorial. Within just a few minutes, I had circled the board, spent my earnings on building in NYC, and participated in a bank raid. I hardly understood what I was doing, just that if I kept clicking, I'd stay on the ride. It was different from *Pokémon GO,* where there are some guardrails to keep the game at a civilized pace: I can only catch as many 'mon or spin as many PokéStops as there are physically around me. It was also different from *Fire Emblem Heroes,* where you're eased into play with compelling storytelling. Not so with *Monopoly GO!* Once you roll the dice, it's full steam ahead. When the game offered me 1,300 in dice rolls for a paltry $7.99, it took great willpower to put down the phone and wait to earn more rolls an hour later. So far, I've not spent any money in *Monopoly GO!* But who knows if I will be able to resist in the long run?

Scopely itself has been on a roll. In 2025, it acquired Niantic's game business, including *Pikmin Bloom, Monster Hunter Now,* and a title that hit home in a major way with me: *Pokémon GO.* Pokémon fans wondered what the $3.5 billion deal was going to mean for the free-to-play game. Some worried Scopely would apply the same hyper-monetized strategies of *Monopoly GO!* But *PoGO,* as fans refer to it, has been pretty successful as is, having generated more than $8 billion in revenue since it launched in 2016.

Some critics have been less concerned about changes to *Pokémon GO!* than about Scopely's parent company, Savvy Games Group. Established in 2021 by Saudi Arabia's Public Investment Fund, the gaming company was founded with Saudi Arabia's economic diversification and social transformation in mind. Mohammed bin Salman, the crown prince of Saudi Arabia, serves as the PIF's chairman. In 2025, some workers at the French video game publisher Ubisoft raised concerns about Ubisoft management's alleged dealings with Saudi Arabia, and Human Rights Watch has criticized the regime for making such investments "to whitewash the country's abysmal human rights record." Similar criticisms have been made about the regime bringing professional golf and soccer tournaments and comedy festivals to the country.

But since Savvy Games Group now owns 40 percent of the total e-sports market (video games played by professional gamers in tournaments), steering clear of Saudi investments has become challenging. The kingdom is building a gaming city with its own e-sports district outside Riyadh, and companies funded by the Public Investment Fund have partnered with the biggest players in the video game sector, including Sony and Activision Blizzard, owned by Microsoft. Scopely operates as an autonomous entity under Savvy's umbrella.

Scopely has teased that it will expand its community-building into the physical world and continue to support *Pokémon GO*'s in-person events. Co-CEO Javier Ferreira told TIME that the swarms of devoted Pokémon fans can expect more of the same: "We have never pursued short-term gains at the expense of the player experience."

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Divers participated in an underwater Monopoly charity fundraiser at the Owensboro Family YMCA in Kentucky in 2001.

Credits

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Numbers Game

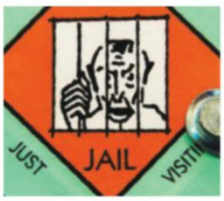
WITH 90 YEARS ON THE MARKET, MONOPOLY HAS A RÉSUMÉ PACKED WITH FUN FACTS, FIGURES, AND BROKEN RECORDS.

BY EMMA FERRARA

$30 BILLION

The amount of **Monopoly money** that Hasbro prints each year—about a fifth of what the U.S.Bureau of Engraving and Printing printed in 2024.

The name of Monopoly's cop is **Officer Edgar Mallory,** while the man he imprisons is known as **Jake the Jailbird.**



The Guinness World Record for most monopoly memorabilia is held by Briton **Neil Scallan,** who owns

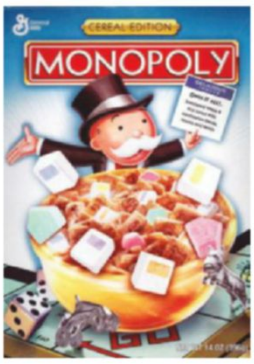
4,379 PIECES.

The longest Monopoly game was played for

70

consecutive days.

The Beatles' **John Lennon** loved to play Monopoly in hotels and on planes.



Hasbro's out-of-the-box licensing deals include a 2003 **General Mills breakfast cereal** with marshmallows shaped like Monopoly houses, hotels, and property cards; **Monopoly Pizza,** in which players bought up different kinds of pizza; and **Monopoly Steakhouse,** slated to open in San Pedro Garza García, Mexico, in 2026.

A **1933 edition of Monopoly** made by Charles Darrow sold for $146,500 in 2010.


MONOPOLY
1
5
10
100
500

GAME ON

Beloved across generations, Monopoly isn't just a game. It's pure Americana, a family favorite that celebrates competition, capitalism, and last-player-standing stamina. Ready to roll the dice? Learn Monopoly's fascinating history—and a few winning moves.