

Period Games Of Chance

Chuck-A-Luck

By John Wedeward

Chuck-A-Luck, also called "Sweat" and, sometimes, "Hazard", "Sweet Cloth" or "Bird-cage", was probably the most popular dice game of the Civil War soldier. **This game kept more men on their knees than did the Chaplains.** Numbered squares, 1-2-3-4-5-6, called "Set ups" or "Layouts" were often painted on ponchos or gum blankets.

Three dice are tumbled in a cup and are thrown to rest face up. Players bet on the layout by placing their money on the numbered squares on the poncho corresponding to their bet. Bets may be made that any particular number or total will show on the 3 dice. The principal bets are:

Single number-1 to 6. If the selected number shows on one dice, the "house" pays even money; on 2 dice, double; on all 3 dice, triple. (The odds are 216 to 199 in favor of the house, or about 7.9%.)

Triples - (also called a raffle) A bet that the throw

will be any triple (all dice the same). The "house" pays 30-1 (actual odds are 35 to 1).

A particular total- from 4 to 17. (In each case, the "house" pays less than the full odds, its advantage ranging from about 10% to 20%.)

High or Low -11 to 17 or 4 to 10

or

Odd to Even - Odd or even total

On the above two bets the "house" pays even money, but wins whenever a triple shows. (These, however, are the best bets for the player, the house percentage being only 2.78%.)

SOURCE: Hoyle's Games, by Henry F. Anners.

Seven - Up

Seven-up, a popular card game with Civil War soldiers, is a form of "All Fours" brought to America during colonial times. It is also known as "Old Sledge" or "High Low Jack".

Players - 2 to 4. Four may play in two partnerships.

The Deal - (Ace high) Each player receives 6 cards, 3 at a time. Dealer turns next card up; this is trump suit (if jack, dealer scores 1 point). The player at left, after looking at his hand must say "I stand" or "I beg".

To "stand" is to accept the suit of the turn-up as trump, whereupon the play begins.

To "beg" is to pass the decision to the dealer. The dealer may then say "take it" or "refuse". "Take it" means the dealer accepts the turn-up, whereupon the left opponent scores 1 point. "Refuse" means the dealer rejects the turn-up.

Thereupon he deals a batch of 3 more cards to each hand, and makes a new turn-up. And the same thing happens until a trump is decided.

The Play - Once trump is decided, each player reduces his hand (if necessary) to 6 cards by discarding excess face down. Player on left of dealer makes opening

lead. The hands are played out in tricks. A hand, if able to follow suit to a lead, must do so or play a trump card. A trick is won by the highest trump card played or, if no

trump card was played, then highest cards of suit led. The winner of a trick leads the next.

Scoring - The object of play is to win points in tricks--there are, at most, 4 points:

High - the highest trump in play

Low - the lowest trump in

play Jack - the jack of trumps, scored

by player who wins it in a trick

Game - a plurality of points for high cards taken in tricks, counting:

Each Ten - 10

Each Ace - 4

Each King - 3

Each Queen - 2

Each Jack - 1

If there is only one trump in play, it scores 2 as both high and low (or 3 if it is the jack). The point for game is not counted if there is a tie for highest count. The first player to win 7 points wins the game.

SOURCE: Hoyle's Games, by Henry F. Anners



Euchre

Euchre was an extremely popular card game with the Pennsylvania Germans in the Eleventh Corps. The term "bower" is the German "Bauer" (farmer), one of the names for the Jack. Euchre was sometimes called "Fun Alive".

Players - 3 to 7. 4 handed partnership game most common.

Cards - The game is played with only 32 cards, after discarding all 2' s thru 6' s, inclusive. The highest trump is the jack (called the right bower). The second highest is the jack of the same color (called the left bower). The rest of the trump suit ranks Ace (third best, King, Queen, 10,9,8,7).

Deal- Each player received 5 cards, dealt in batches of 3-2 or 2-3. The last card of the pack (dealer's) is turned face up, and proposes the trump suit, but only becomes trump if some player accepts it, whereupon the dealer picks it up. If all 4 players reject it, then each in turn, to left of dealer, has a second chance to pass or name a trump suite. The person who names the trump has a right to say "I play alone" whereupon his partner must discard his hand and stay out of the game.

Either opponent of a lone player may say "I defend alone" whereupon his partner must stay out.

The Play - If the turn-1,1p is accepted, the dealer has a right to use it as part of his hand, discarding any other card face down. Against a lone player, the opening lead is made by the player at his left, otherwise the player on the dealer's left. The hands are played out in 5 tricks. A player must follow suit if he is able, other wise any card. A trick is won by highest trump or, if no trump, by highest card of suit led. Winner of trick leads next.

Scoring - Only the side that wins 3 or more tricks scores. Winning all 5 tricks is called a march. When the making side (decider of trump) fails to win the majority, it is said to be Euchre. The making side, when both are playing score 1 point for winning 3 or 4 tricks, 2 for a march. A maker alone scores 1 for 3 or 4 tricks, or 4 for a march. Opponents, when both play, score 2 for Euchre. Lone defender scores 2 for 3 or 4 tricks, or 4 for a march.

SOURCE: Hoyle's Games, by Henry F. Anners

