Great Finds!

Article and photos by Fred Horn

While standing inside his shop I noticed behind the pile of games (which were in excellent condition) some awful damaged game boxes and material laying about. Pointing to those I said "These games surely must be cheaper?" He started to laugh and told me that he normally had nothing to do with games, but someone he knew found the games and had asked him if they were worth anything. This was of course long before the Internet and eBay!

Although the owner had given some monetary indication for the games in good condition, he had not said anything about the damaged ones.

The others are above my budget, but I will pay 25 guilders for these damaged ones," I offered. The man looked at me and replied, "I cannot say yes now, but I will ask and within two days you will have our answer."

Thus, two days later I arrived back at his shop and for 40 guilders I could purchase these "damaged" games, because in his and in his friend's opinion they would be difficult to sell in that condition.

For myself I had budgeted no more than 50 guilders, so the deal was easy.

Part I

One of these "finds" happened for me in the early 1980s when a friend told me to look in an antique shop on the Willemsparkweg in Amsterdam. He had seen some old games displayed in the store window. It wasn't at all easy to find that shop because he did not know the exact address and the Willemsparkweg is a long street with multiple antique stores. But within an hour, starting from one side of the street, I located the shop.

Although the games were displayed in the rear of the window I immediately spotted them. Unfortunately, the shop was closed, but I noticed some movements inside so I decided to ring the bell. The shop owner was there and he was willing to open the door and let me in and to hear what I had to say.

I told him I collected games and was interested in the items in his window, asking as well what price he wanted for the games. To my regret his prices were way above my budget! — but what would you expect for antique games and toys at auctions and in antique shops.
As a collector you always hope that someday that unbelievable moment will come when you find something really special. Looking back over all of these years of collecting there sure were moments of...WOW!

Part II

In the early 1980s, a journalist of the famous Dutch weekly "De Panorama" conducted an interview with me concerning my game collection.

Interest was there because of the two exhibitions of games out of my collection and my appearance on a television program called "Hoge Ögen" (High Dots). The show also generated a lot of letters with questions about games and rules. But also, people were offering me games they did not play anymore.

One such letter came from an elderly woman living in the town of Haarlem. She wrote that she was 'cleaning up' and wanted to give me some games she had laying about.

After calling her—she had written her telephone number in her letter—we made an appointment.

It has always been, and still is my thought, "You never know!"

Traveling from Amsterdam to Haarlem was no problem, and with a small box of chocolate bonbons in hand, I arrived on a street behind Haarlem's train station, ringing the bell of a mansion.

A sweet old lady opened the door and we started our conversation with coffee and my bonbons. To my astonishment the woman began to talk about her children and how they behaved, and how they did not treat her as she expected. She told me they were only after her money and belongings, and thus she had decided to give things away to interested people—and I was a good choice she thought!

What does one say? You start to mumble some sympathetic words and try to change the subject as quickly as possible to the issue you came for. So after we finished our coffee it was time for the games.

She had the games ready in an adjacent room piled up on a table. There were some nice old ones, some more from the fifties, but nothing really interesting as a supplement to my collection.

Of course I showed enthusiasm—never say NO to a gift—but then the lady relayed: "And then there is also this. But you will not be interested because it is old, damaged, and incomplete. I should have thrown it away!"
Out of a cabinet came that box, immediately recognizable as from the 19th Century.

That is THE object you are looking for as a collector of Dutch related games: old, unknown, nearly complete. AND with the Dutch rules!

It was a game her parents had once owned, and, as I showed enthusiasm for it, it was all mine along with all the other games. Driving back home I could only think of: "WOW, ...lucky me!"

The manufacturer is SALA, a German publisher. Because of all the English text on the board, I believe it was aimed for the foreign market. For a small country like Holland, only the rules and cards were translated in Dutch.

The game itself is a simple race game. Columbus is sailing 3 (or 6) ships to America and each ship (or 2 related ships) follow a different route. Missing are the (probably tin-figure) ships; all 4 dice; the 'ship' cards 4, 5, 6; one money plate; and play money. The rules exist (but only in Dutch) so it is possible to play the game.

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Dutch rule book

Front and back-side of the "event" cards