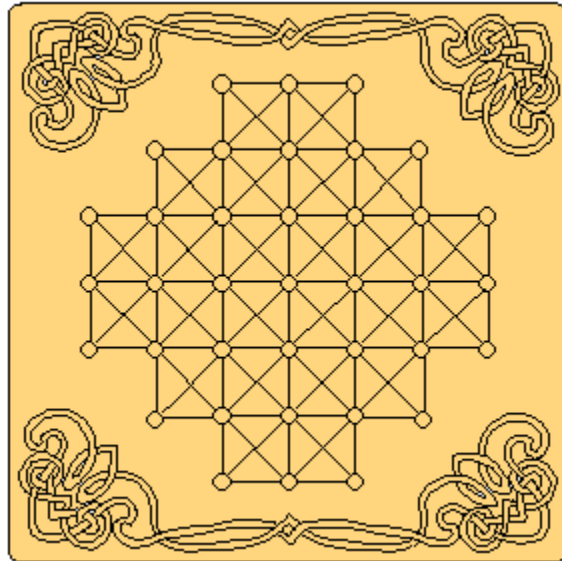


MEDIVAL GAMES

NINE MEN'S MORRIS and FOX & GEESE



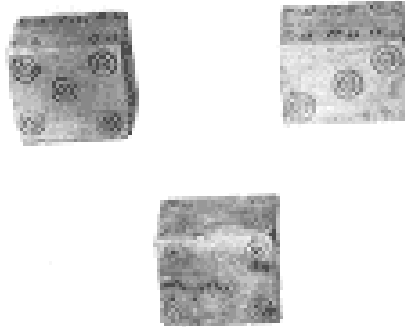
A wood Nine Men's Morris board. The board is laser-engraved with the classic Morris squares and a handsome Celtic knot border design. This was an instant hit at our Renaissance booth. On the flip side is the traditional Fox and Geese Fox and Geese

Dice game



People have been playing dice games for a very long time. The very first dice were just sheep knucklebones, and you won if it landed on this side or that side. There have been cubic dice like ours since at least 5000 BC, in ancient Sumer. Later dice were made of bone or ivory (or wood or stone, but usually of bone), and they looked just like our dice today, with different numbers of spots on each side. Like ours, even the oldest dice almost always have the one opposite the six, the three opposite the four, and the two opposite the five. This is true all over Europe, Asia, and Africa. The reason they have spots instead of written numbers is that people have been using dice since long before they invented a way to write numbers. Because they were small and not very valuable, archaeologists often find ancient dice.

Roman dice



People often used these dice to gamble for things or for money. Archaeologists at the Roman city of Pompei have even found dice which had been weighted on one side with tiny bits of lead to make them come up more often on a certain number. The lead was carefully hidden so the other players wouldn't know that you were cheating!

BOARD GAMES

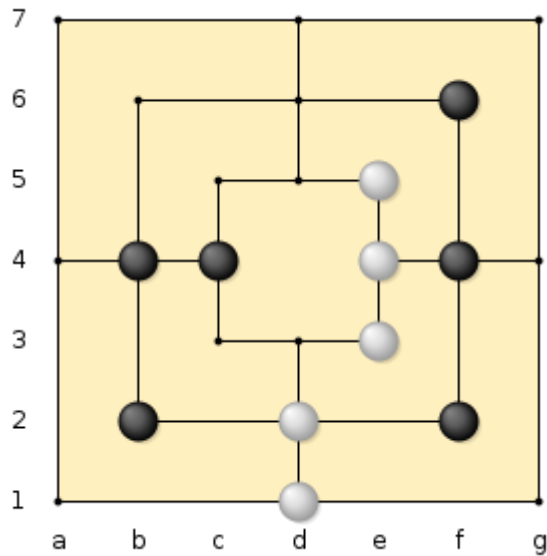
CHESS



Chess was played many centuries ago in China, India, and Persia. No one really knows for sure in which country it originated. Then, in the eighth century, armies of Arabs known as Moors invaded Persia. The Moors learned chess from the Persians. When the Moors later invaded Spain, the soldiers brought the game of chess with them. Soon the Spanish were playing chess, too. From Spain, chess quickly spread throughout all of Europe. Europeans gave chess pieces the names we know today; they probably had trouble pronouncing and spelling the Persian names, so they modernized them to reflect the way they lived. Today, the names certainly aren't modern but a thousand years ago they represented the very way in which both ordinary people and persons of rank lived their lives. The pawns on the chess board represent serfs, or laborers. There are more of them than any other piece on the board, and often they are sacrificed to save the more valuable pieces. In medieval times, serfs were considered no more than property of landowners, or chattel. Life was brutally hard for serfs during this era of history. They worked hard and died young. They were often left unprotected while wars raged around them. They could be traded, used as a diversion, or even sacrificed to allow the landowners to escape harm. The castle piece on a chess board is the home, or the refuge, just as it was a home in medieval times. In chess, each side has two castles, or rooks, as they are sometimes called. The knight on a chess board represents the professional soldier of medieval times whose job it was to protect persons of rank, and there are two of them per each side in a game of chess. Knights in a game of chess are more important than pawns, but less important than bishops, kings, or queens. Their

purpose in the game of chess is to protect the more important pieces, and they can be sacrificed to save those pieces just as pawns can. There is a bishop in the game of chess, who represents the church. The church was a rich and mighty force in medieval times, and religion played a large part in every person's life. It is no wonder that a figure that represented the concept of religion found its way into the game. A bishop was the name for a priest in the Catholic church who had risen through the ranks to a more powerful position. In the game of chess, there are two bishops for each side. The queen is the only piece on the board during a chess game that represents a woman, and she is the most powerful piece of the game. In the game of chess, there is only one queen for each side. Many people do not realize that queens in medieval times often held a powerful, yet precarious, position. The king was often guided by her advice, and in many cases the queen played games of intrigue at court. But kings could set wives aside or even imprison them in nunneries with the approval of the church (and without the queen's approval), and many women schemed merely to hold her place at court. The machinations of queens working either for or against their kings are well noted in history throughout medieval times, and often she held more power than the king did. The king is the tallest piece on the board, and is as well defended on the chessboard as in medieval life. In medieval times, the surrender of the king would mean the loss of the kingdom to invading armies and that could mean change for the worse. It was to everyone's advantage, from the lowest serf to the highest-ranking official, to keep the king safe from harm. The king is the most important, but not the most powerful piece in chess. If you do not protect your king, you lose the game.

MEDIEVAL THREE-IN-A-ROW GAMES



Nine Men's Morris is a strategy board game for two players that emerged from the Roman Empire. The game is also known as **Nine Man Morris**, **Mill**, **Mills**, **The Mill Game**, **Merels**, **Merrills**, **Merelles**, **Marelles**, **Morelles** and **Ninepenny Marl**^[2] in English. The game has also been called **Cowboy Checkers** and was once printed on the back of checkerboards. Nine Men's Morris is a solved game in which either player can force the game into a draw.

Three main variants of Nine Men's Morris are Three-, Six- and Twelve-Men's Morris.

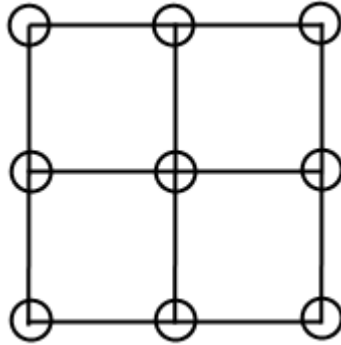
Games rules

The board consists of a grid with twenty-four intersections or *points*. Each player has nine pieces, or "men", usually coloured black and white. Players try to form 'mills'— three of their own men lined horizontally or vertically—allowing a player to remove an opponent's man from the game. A player wins by reducing the opponent to two pieces (where he could no longer form mills and thus be unable to win), or by leaving him without a legal move.

The game proceeds in three phases:

1. Placing men on vacant points
2. Moving men to adjacent points
3. (optional phase) Moving men to any vacant point when a player has been reduced to three men

Nine Holes



Nine Holes is a simple board game which has been found scratched on the floor of medieval cathedrals and Japanese temples, probably by young apprentices who were waiting their turn to serve. Although the game's rules are very simple, it can take a lot of strategy to beat an experienced opponent. A board can be easily drawn on a piece of paper or cardboard, or can be made as easily as scratching in the dust with some pebbles, seeds or coins as counters.

Age: Adults and older children

No. of players: 2

Equipment: Board; six counters (three black and three white, or other colours)

Time: 5 minutes+

Aim: To be the first player to get three counters in a row.

Backgammon



The Islamic Empire also saw an increase in the popularity of backgammon. It was already being played under Roman and Sassanian rule and may go back as far as the Persian Empire in the 400's BC.



Chess and backgammon to a large extent replaced the gambling games with dice which had been very popular under Roman rule. Islam forbade any kind of gambling.