a game by Mike Hinson

END OF THE TRAIL
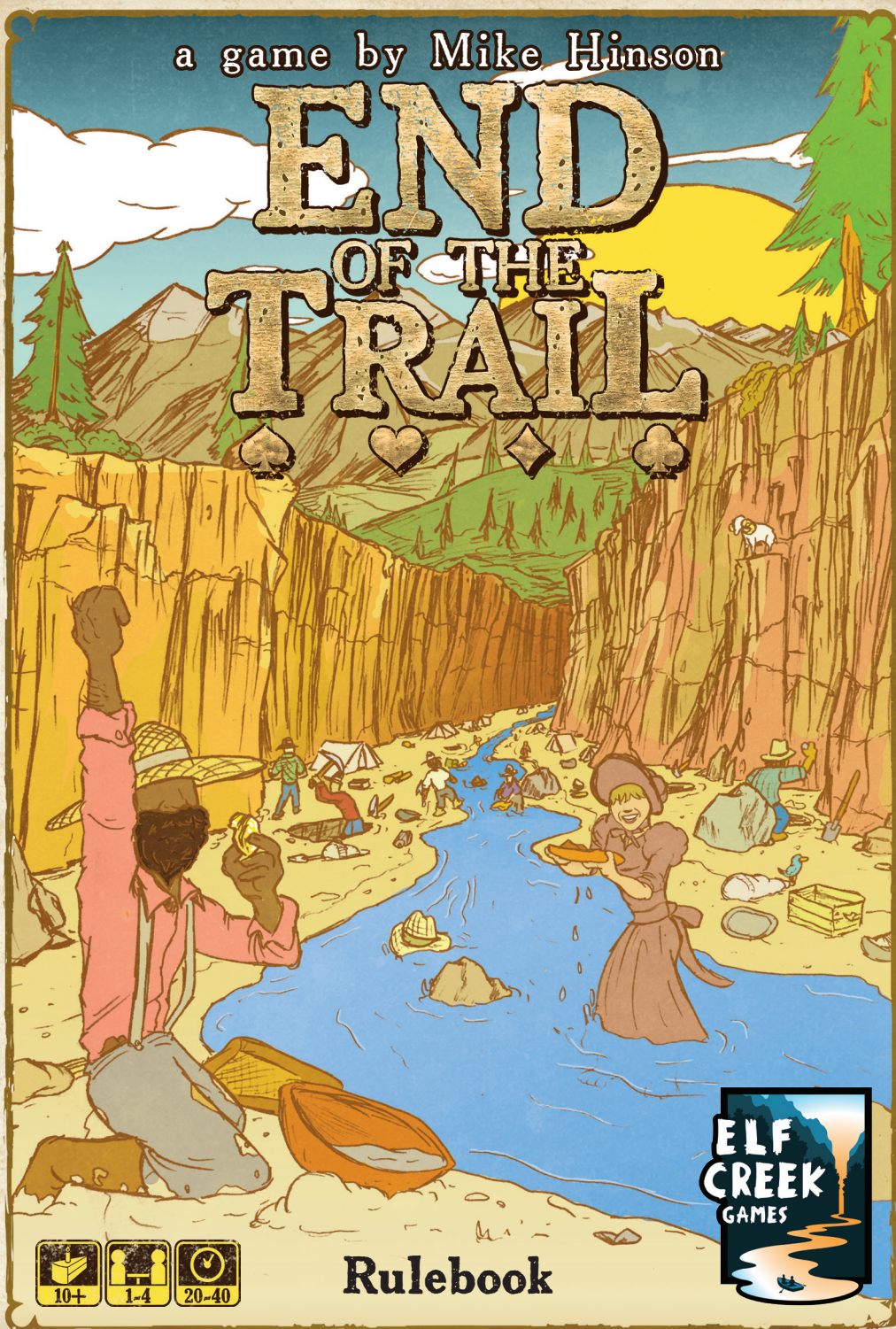
♠ ♥ ♦ ♣

ELF CREEK GAMES

10+ 1-4 20-40

Rulebook

INTRODUCTION

California, 1849. Gold. Hundreds of thousands from all over the world make the long journey to America's west coast in the hope of fortune and a better life. You and your wagon train just trekked across the vast unknown of the Great Plains and Rocky Mountains and have arrived in California in search of land and the promise of gold. At the end of that trail, how will you fare?
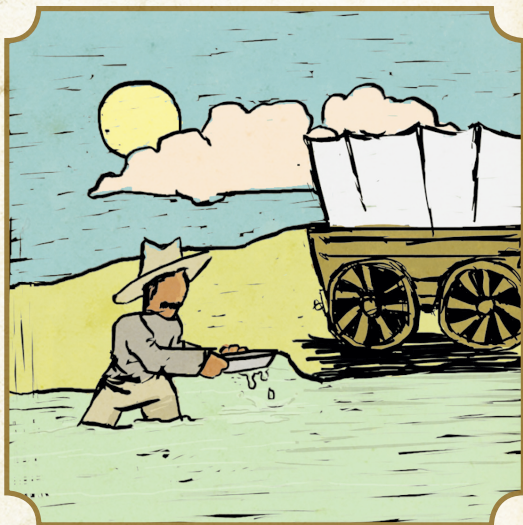
End of the Trail is a press-your-luck card game for 2-4 prospectors of the California Gold Rush. Your goal is to lay claim to territories worth the most gold, by strategically managing your hand of cards so that you can effectively prospect the lay of the land.

Be warned: If you get too greedy and uncover land worth less than what you have seen before, you will be forced to claim it. So plan ahead! The cards that you use to prospect will ultimately be used again at the poker table, good for extra gold and one final shot at claiming territory at the end of the game. When the dust has all settled, the player with the most gold is the winner of the game.

COMPONENTS - REGULAR

28 Land Tiles
10 Canyons and Foothills,
8 Mountains

54 Prospecting Cards
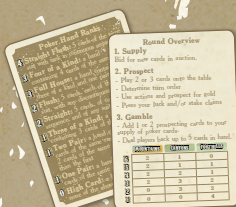2-10,J,Q,K,A in 4 suits
& 2 (optional) Jokers

4 Turn Order Tiles

4 Prospector Meeples
1 in each player color

4 Movement Track Tiles

4 Prospector Camps
1 in each player color

12 Prospector Tents
3 in each player color

1 Dealer Marker

4 Player Reference Cards

3 Argonaut Cards
Solo Game.

1 Rulebook

COMPONENTS - DELUXE

3 Covered Wagon Meeples

16 Gold Nuggets

2 Ox Animeeples

1 Horse Animeeple

1 Mule Animeeple

1 Deluxe Dealer Marker

SETUP

❶ Sort the land tiles according to their type, into piles of Mountains, Canyons, and Foothills:

❷ Pick random tiles from each pile, based upon the number of players:

- **2 players:** 2 mountain, 3 canyon, and 3 foothill tiles
- **3 players:** 3 mountain, 5 canyon, and 4 foothill tiles
- **4 players:** 4 mountain, 6 canyon, and 6 foothill tiles

Return the rest of the tiles back to the box. They will not be used this game.

❸ Shuffle the picked tiles and arrange them in a grid, without looking at their facedown values. Thematically, this grid represents the section of California that players will be prospecting. The grid always contains 4 rows, but the number of columns is based upon the number of players:

- **2 players:** 2 x 4 grid
- **3 players:** 3 x 4 grid
- **4 players:** 4 x 4 grid

❹ Place the turn order track tiles at the bottom of the grid

❺ Give every player 1 prospector meeple, 3 prospector tents, and 1 prospector camp in their player color.

❻ Place the four movement tiles to the left side of the grid. The tiles with ox-drawn wagons are placed nearest the bottom of the grid, followed by the mule-drawn wagon tile and the horse tile. When placed correctly, the tiles form a connected landscape.

❼ Shuffle the deck and determine a dealer by having each player cut the deck. The player who reveals the highest card rank (2-10, J, Q, K, Ace) is the dealer. Players who tie should follow this procedure again until there is a clear winner.

❽ The dealer gives 6 cards to each player as their starting hand. The remaining cards are placed to the side as the draw deck.
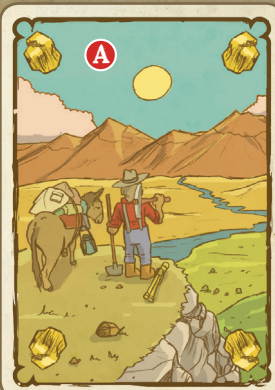
❾ After looking at their hand, each player selects 1 card to be their hole card, placing it facedown in front of themselves on the table. This card is the first card of a personal supply of poker cards that they will collect over the course of the game.

EXAMPLE SETUP FOR 4 PLAYERS

(A) Card back.

(B) Card rank and suit used to create poker hands.

(C) Card name.

(D) Buying power of a card, used in Supply Auctions to purchase cards in a winning bid, and Prospecting to determine player order.

(E) Prospecting action, used while prospecting to look at tiles.

9 ♠ Shortcut $1

Move your prospector to any unclaimed tile and look at it without busting.

HOW TO FIND YOUR GOLD

To find their fortune at the End of the Trail, players will need to carefully manage both a hand of cards and their navigation of the California gold field tiles.

During the Prospecting part of a game round, players will select 2 or 3 cards from their hand to prospect (search) the gold field tiles. They place these cards faceup in front of themselves for all players to see. The most common prospecting cards are: **Oxen** (18 of 52 cards), **Mules** and **Horse** (9 cards a piece).

2 ♥ Oxen $4

9 ♥ Mules $2

J ♥ Horse $1

Each card represents how quickly a prospector reaches the California gold fields from the nearby cities. Slow moving Oxen reach any tile in the first two rows, whereas faster Mules are able to reach the third row as well. And a prospector racing out to the gold fields on a Horse can reach any tile on the board.

This top row of tiles can be reached with a **Horse** card, but not a **Mule** or **Oxen** card.

Horse or **Mule** cards can reach this row of tiles, marked by the mule-drawn wagon.

Oxen cards reach any tile in these first two rows marked by the ox-drawn wagons. **Horse** and **Mule** cards also reach the tiles in these two rows.

Players turn one of their faceup cards sideways to indicate that they would like to use it. They select a tile from the available corresponding row and look at its hidden value. They commit the tile's value to memory, taking care not to reveal it to anyone else. The player must then decide if they wish to stake their claim on the tile or press their luck, hoping to find richer land elsewhere.

If a player wishes to stake their claim, then they place their prospector's tent on top of their current tile, claiming it for themselves and preventing other players from looking at that tile's value. **When a player stakes a claim their turn is over; they will not play any more prospecting cards during the current round.**

The facedown side of a gold field tile. Values range between 1 and 6. For a distribution of how many of each value a particular landscape type has, see the player reference cards.

If a player decides to press their luck, then they place their prospector meeple on the tile that they just looked at, and play passes to the next player in turn order. This marks a player's spot, but it does not claim the tile for the player. While the player waits for their next turn, another player may investigate the tile and stake a claim.

When a player presses their luck, they may play a card on their next turn to look at the value of another unclaimed tile in play or to use a special action. However, if a new tile has a **lower value** than the last tile that they saw, then they **bust** and they **MUST** stake their claim on that tile, although they do not need to that announce they busted. **If the value is the same or higher,** then they face the same choice: stake their claim or, if they have a third and final prospecting card, press their luck one more time.

After every player has placed one tent, each player chooses 1 or 2 cards they used (turned sideways) while prospecting this round, selecting them for their rank and/or suit, hoping to create a certain poker-hand set. Over the course of the game, players will slowly collect poker cards for the chance to win a little more gold and a 4th and final claim among the gold field tiles.

For an overview of poker sets, see the back side of the player reference card. A more detailed explanation of which poker set beats another is found in the section of final scoring. That section also includes how much gold your poker sets will be worth, regardless of whose is the best.

You're now ready to setup the game, dig deeper into the rules, and find your first gold nuggets!

ROUND OVERVIEW

End of the Trail is played over three rounds. Each round is divided into three parts, played in order:

- **Supply Auctions**
- **Prospecting**
- **Gambling**

After three rounds, players advance to the end of the game & final scoring, where they will and compare poker hands to compete for one final claim. Finally, they compare their combined territories' value to determine a winner.

SUPPLY AUCTIONS

A Supply Auction is a player's opportunity to make sure that they have what they need to get their job done: a hand of cards that can help them prospect for gold and collect a good set of poker cards.

The dealer begins the Supply Auctions by dealing out cards as a series of faceup auctions, each consisting of three cards. The number of auctions is equal to one less than the number of players (1 auction in a 2-player game, 2 auctions in a 3-player game, 3 auctions in a 4-player game).

EXAMPLE AUCTIONS FOR 3 PLAYERS

Auction 1 — K♥ $1 Horse, 6♦ $3 Oxen, 6♥ $3 Oxen

Auction 2 — Q♠ $1 Horse, 10♣ $2 Mules, 4♣ $4 Oxen

The dealer chooses one of the auctions and bidding begins, with the player to the dealer's left making the opening bid. The minimum starting bid that a player can make is $0. Instead of bidding, a player may choose to pass on that particular auction and not bid (but may still bid in a different auction later in the round).

Once the starting bid is made, the next player in clockwise order must then choose to raise the bid or pass. Bidding continues in this manner, moving in a clockwise direction around the table. When all but one player has passed, that player is declared the winner of the auction. **If the dealer chooses one of the auctions and no player places an opening bid, then the dealer MUST make a bid to win that auction**, for $0 or more.

The winner must pay for their bid by openly discarding cards from their hand until their monetary value meets or exceeds the value of their bid. The discarded cards are placed faceup, next to the draw pile, in a separate discard pile. **Any player may look through the discard pile at any time.** If a player must overpay for their bid, then they do NOT receive any change back. Once a player has paid, they take all 3 auction cards into their hand.

A player may only win one auction per round. Once a player has won an auction, they are out of the bidding for the rest of the round. If the dealer wins the first auction, then the dealer marker moves to the next player on the dealer's left who has not won an auction. That player then decides on the next auction, selecting from the remaining cards on offer. If the dealer did not win the first auction, then they begin a new one by selecting one of the remaining auctions.

If a player wins an auction and cannot pay, the last legal bid wins. The player who could not pay forfeits any remaining auctions that round. If they are the dealer, they must pass the dealer marker to the next player on their left who is still bidding in the auctions, or to the player who won the last auction.

Supply Auctions continue in this manner until all auctions have been won. Because there is always one fewer auctions than the number of players, there will always be a player who does not win an auction. That player receives the dealer marker and will be dealer in the next round.

PROSPECTING

Prospecting is a player's opportunity to explore the land for gold, in search of the best place to stake their claim.

SELECTING CARDS

To begin the Prospecting part of the game round, all players simultaneously select 2 or 3 cards from their hand and place them facedown in front of themselves on the table (separate from their hole and other poker cards). When all players are ready, they reveal these cards at the same time, spreading them out, faceup on the table, for all to see. These are the cards that a player will use both to determine where they are in turn order for the round and also to navigate the gold field tiles in their search for gold.

EXAMPLE SELECTION OF 3 CARDS

Strategy Tip: *Players should select cards that will help them both while Prospecting now and Gambling later. But they might also want to hold back from using certain cards right now, either to use to pay for future auctions, or to play while Prospecting and Gambling on future game rounds.*

DETERMINING PLAYER ORDER

Players add up the total monetary value on their revealed cards. The player with the highest total value becomes the starting player for this round of Prospecting. That player then places their prospector meeple along with one tent on the 1st position of the turn order track.

The player with the second highest monetary value places their prospector and tent on the 2nd position, and so forth, until all players have placed their prospector and tent on the turn order tiles. In the case of a tie, the player with the higher ranked card will place their prospector and tent ahead of the other tied player(s) in turn order. If this is a tie, use the 2nd highest ranked card, etc.

EXAMPLE FOR A 3-PLAYER GAME

Blue Player	Purple Player	Red Player
J ♥ — Hand — $1	8 — Mules — $2	8 — Mules — $2
10 ♥ — Shovel — $1	8 ♠ — Mules — $2	7 ♠ — New Payment — $1
4 ♠ — Oxen — $4		6 ♣ — Claim Jump — $1

Examining all revealed cards, we see that the blue player has spent $6, which is more than $4 spent by both the red and purple players. Therefore, the blue player goes first, placing their pieces on the 1st player tile. To break the tie for second, the red and purple players compare their highest cards. Because these are both 8, the second highest card is compared, making the purple player second and the red player third.

Sacramento — 1   2   San Francisco — 3

SEARCHING GOLD FIELD TILES

Beginning with the first player and proceeding in the established turn order, players take turns prospecting the California gold field tiles by using any one of their selected cards turning that card sideways. After using a card, play passes to the next player on the turn order track.

Important: *Players may choose not to play all of their selected cards, but only cards played in this round of Prospecting can be used in the coming Gambling portion.*

Players now play cards and look at tiles, making the decisions outlined in the introductory section, **How to find your gold**. After making their decision whether to stake their claim or press their luck, play advances to the next player in turn order. Note that when a player stakes a claim, their Prospecting is over for the remainder of this game round (thus, they will play no further cards for prospecting actions). They should then remove any remaining pieces from their place on the turn order tiles. Prospecting continues until all players have claimed 1 tile by placing one of their tents (or until players have played all of their cards). The game then proceeds to the Gambling portion of the round.

Staking a Claim

A player may always claim a tile that contains their prospector as long as it has not been claimed by another player. They may do this at the beginning of a second or third turn, after pressing their luck on their previous turn. Or a player may do this if they ever use all of their cards without staking a claim. But be careful: If the tile containing a player's prospector has already been claimed by another player, and they have no cards left to play, then they have lost their chance to stake a claim this round.

For a player to claim a tile their prospector previously occupied, they must play a new card to move them back to the desired tile.

Camps

When staking a claim, a player may place their prospector's camp instead of a tent. Camps are like tents, but once placed, they cannot be moved. They represent not just a single prospector's tent, but a group of prospecting friends who will help the prospector watch their claim. Staking a claim with a Camp prevents other players from targeting that tile with a **Claim Jump** or **New Prospects** card. Camps can also be used to stake a claim with the **Claim Jump** card.

Special Card Actions

Claim Jump

OCCURRENCE (4): 2♠, 6♣, King of ♦, & Ace of ♥

Place a tent on a tile previously claimed by another player's _tent_. That player may then look at the value of this tile. Both they and their opponent will score points for this tile during end game scoring. However, if the player places their _camp_ with this action, then any other _tents_ on this tile are pushed to the nearest, unclaimed, orthogonally adjacent tile _of their owner's choice_. If multiple players are moved, new tiles are chosen in player order. A player may not use a camp to Claim Jump their own tent.

Double or Nothin'

OCCURRENCE (4): 4♦, 8♥, Jack of ♠, & Ace of ♣

Look at two orthogonally adjacent, unclaimed tiles. The player _must_ immediately claim one of them. Be careful! If there are no adjacent unclaimed tiles on the board, then this action cannot be used.

Shortcut

OCCURRENCE (4): 5♣, 9♠, 10♥, & Ace of ♦

Look at any unclaimed tile on the board. If the player is pressing their luck, then the tile they look at using **Shortcut** will not cause them to bust. If they decide to not claim this new tile, then they must place their prospector there.

New Prospects

OCCURRENCE (4): 3♥, 7♦, Queen of ♣, & Ace of ♠

Move any player's tent (including one's own) to an orthogonally adjacent, unclaimed tile, chosen by the tent's owner.

Note: *if all tiles touching the original tile are claimed, then the nearest tile is 2 tiles away. After placing their tent, they may then look at the value of this new tile.*

## EXAMPLE PROSPECTING FOR A 3-PLAYER GAME

1. The blue player uses their **Horse** card in order to look at the Mountain tile in the first row. They discover a value of 6—the maximum amount of gold! They would like to stake their claim and place a tent, but then they would only be able to add this Jack of hearts to their poker cards. They also want to be able to add the 10 of hearts to their poker cards, which means that they must play it also. So, they announce that they will press their luck, placing their prospector on the tile isntead.

2. The purple player uses their **Mules** card to look at the Mountain tile in the 1st column of the Mule row. They discover a gold value of 4. They are happy with their find, so they decide to stake a claim and place a tent, even though this will mean that they will only be able to move their 8 of clubs into their supply of poker cards at the end of the round. They then remove their pieces from the turn order tiles.
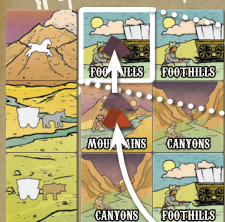
3. The red player wants to play both their 7 and 8 of diamonds so that both go into their poker cards. They decide to play their **New Prospects** card first, forcing the purple player's tent to move to a new tile. The purple player selects the Foothills tile above the original Mountain tile. They move their tent and get to look at their new tile, discovering 2 gold. The purple player may later want to play a **New Prospects** card on their tent to move it to a more lucrative tile.

4. The blue player wants to be able to add their 10 of hearts to their poker cards. So they play it, hoping to use their third and final card to return to the 6 gold Mountain tile. **Shortcut** ensures that they will not bust. They look at the only uninvestigated Mountain tile, discovering a hidden value of 3 gold. They place their prospector, biding their time for their final turn this round.

5. The purple player's turn is over this round (note that no purple pieces remain on the turn order track), so play advances to the red player. They suspect that the blue player is hiding something, so they decide to use their **Mules** to check the first Mountain that the blue player explored. Eureka! They were correct and find the 6 gold Mountain tile! Not wanting to risk losing that tile, they place their camp and remove their pieces from the turn order tiles. Their turn is over this round.

6. The blue player is the last remaining player. They have one unused card, an **Oxen**. Their prospector is currently occupying a tile worth 3 gold. One of the unclaimed tiles in the Oxen rows might contain more gold, but it might contain less! Rather than playing their Oxen card and gambling on an unknown tile, they decide to stake their claim on their present tile, replacing their prospector with a tent.

7. Prospecting is now complete. The round continues with Gambling.

Gambling

After a hard day working the gold fields, prospectors return to town and try their luck at games of chance and skill. Gambling is when players choose 1 or 2 cards from among those they played while Prospecting to add to their supply of poker cards for use in their end of game poker hand.

Take the faceup cards that were set aside for Prospecting and discard any that were not used. From those remaining, players choose 1 or 2 cards for their rank and/or suit and move them to their personal supply of poker cards. These cards are placed faceup, next to the facedown hole card.

Note: If a player used 3 cards while Prospecting, no more than 2 of those cards can be moved over, so everyone should be sure to plan ahead.

IMPORTANT: *A good set of poker cards is crucial if you want to win. At the end of the game, the player with the best set of poker cards will be able to place their fourth and final prospector's tent on any remaining, unclaimed Foothills tile.*

Preparing for next round

If this is the first or second round of play, then the dealer deals each player back up to 5 cards in their hand, and a new round begins. Recall that the new dealer is the player that did not win an auction in the round. If, at any point, the draw deck runs out of cards, then players should shuffle the discard pile to reform the draw deck.

End of Game & Scoring

After the third round, the game is over. Players advance to end of game & scoring, where they will play out their poker cards and earn a score for their total gold from claimed land tiles.

Poker Cards

Players choose from among the cards in their poker supply to create their best possible five-card poker hand. Any remaining cards are discarded and not considered in the hand.
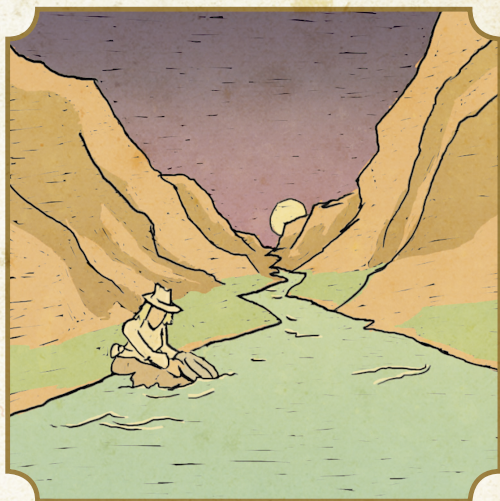
The player with the poker hand wins the title to a fourth and final claim (this is the only way to use all 4 of a player's claim meeples). That player places their last claim meeple (tent or camp) on any unclaimed tile among those of the lowest remaining rank. **The tiles rank: Foothills «« Canyons «« Mountains.** If they have already used all 3 tents, then they should place their camp instead.

Thus, players must choose an unclaimed Foothills tile if one is available. If not, then they choose an unclaimed Canyon tile. If all Canyon and Foothills tiles are already claimed, then they choose an unclaimed Mountain tile.

Poker sets cannot end in a tie—one hand is always better than another. When two or more players have hands of the same type, compare the highest card contributing to the poker set (i.e. the high card in a two-pair hand of 10, 10, 7, 7, Ace is 10).

In the case of two pair, if the high pairs are the same, then the second pair is compared. If these are still the same, then the final, unmatched card is compared. In the case of a numerically identical straight, flush, or straight flush, hands are compared by ranking suits. **Suits are ranked, from highest to lowest: spades, hearts, diamonds, clubs.** The hand with the higher ranked suit wins.

SCORING

Players reveal the gold values of all their claimed tiles (those which contain their prospector's tents). Players also receive gold winnings based upon the strength of their poker hand. Players with deluxe components should receive gold nuggets for the poker winnings to help them count their score.

SCORING CHART

4	**Straight Flush**	5 cards of the same suit with rank in continuous sequence
3	**Four of a Kind**	a hand containing 4 cards of the same rank
3	**Full House**	a hand containing three of a kind and a pair
2	**Flush**	5 cards, each of the same suit, with any discontinuous sequence
2	**Straight**	5 cards, of continuous sequence and any suits
1	**Three of a Kind**	a hand containing 3 cards of the same rank
1	**Two Pair**	a hand containing 2 cards of the same rank and another 2 cards of the same rank, different than the first
1	**Pair**	a hand containing 2 cards of the same rank
0	**High Card**	a hand containing none of the above sets

The player with the most gold wins. In the case of a tie, the player with the higher poker hand wins.

Solitaire Variant - Argonauts

During the Gold Rush, prospectors were known as Argonauts, an allusion to the Greek myth of Jason and the crew of the Argo searching for the Golden Fleece. It was only later that they came to be known as 49ers.

The End of the Trail solitaire variant uses the three-player setup (page 4). You will **select two Argonauts** from the solitaire cards to be your opponents. Select Argonauts based upon the difficulty of the game you would like to play.

- **A1** & **A2** is the hardest combination.
- **A2** & **A3** is the easiest.
- **A1** & **A3** is in between.

Separate out the 9 **Horse** cards, 4 **Claim Jump** cards, and 4 **New Prospects** cards from the deck. Shuffle these 17 cards and deal 4 of them, facedown, to each Argonaut to form their personal reserve. Shuffle the remaining 9 cards back into the main deck.

Deal yourself six cards and select one to be the starting hole card in your personal supply of poker cards. Your Argonaut opponents do not need a supply of poker cards. Instead, each Argonaut has a predetermined end of game poker hand listed on their card.

Supply Auctions

Deal the Supply Auctions as normal. You will bid first, followed by each Argonaut. Once you place your opening bid, the next Argonaut will bid or pass. To determine their play, draw the top card of the main deck.

	Pass	Bid
Argonaut A1	♥ ♦	♠ ♣ , Joker
Argonaut A2	♠ ♣	♥ ♦ , Joker
Argonaut A3	Ace, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6	7, 8, 9, 10, J, Q, K, Joker

If the Argonaut does not pass, then they will make one bid. Draw 2 additional cards from the top of the draw deck. The **sum of these three cards** is their bid. If one or both of them outbid you, then you must decide whether or not to win the auction by bidding more than the largest bid.

Auction 1

Auction 2

BID

PASS

DRAW DECK

BID

YOU

A1

A3

PASS

If you do so, the Argonauts do not bid again and you win the cards. If either Argonaut wins an auction, place those three cards into the discard pile.

If an Argonaut wins the auction, then they are out of the bidding for the rest of this round's Supply Auctions. You must then decide whether or not you will place an opening bid for the remaining set of three cards. If you win an auction, or decide that you would like to pass on trying to win any available auction, then the Supply Auction portion of the game round is over. Any cards drawn or won by the Argonauts and any remaining cards on offer in the Supply Auctions are discarded.

PROSPECTING

Choose 2 or 3 cards to use for Prospecting. For each Argonaut, draw 2 cards from the main deck and the top card from their personal reserve. These three cards are prospecting cards for the round. Place each set faceup in front of their respective Argonaut card. Determine turn order as in the three-player game, comparing combined monetary values.

Each Argonaut will take one turn, thereby using exactly one of their 3 cards for its prospecting action. Consult the following flow chart to determine which card they will use:

Does the Argonaut have a Claim Jump among their 3 cards?

Yes → Play the Claim Jump.

No → Do they have a New Prospects Card?

Yes → Play the New Prospects Card

No → Play their Horse card.

*Note: **Double or Nothin'** and **Shortcut** cards, if drawn, are ignored. On rare occasions, it is possible for an Argonaut to draw three cards that do not allow them an opportunity to stake a claim for the round (e.g. 2 Claim Jumps and 1 New Prospects as the first play of the first game round). If that happens, then the Argonaut should perform a **Horse** action instead.*

Argonauts perform their action on the highest-ranking available tile location (Mountains > Canyons > Foothills). If two tiles of the same rank are available and within reach of the Argonaut, then they will claim the tile furthest from the player order tiles. If more than two tiles of the same rank are in the same row, then they will claim the leftmost tile in that row. The first time that they use a **Claim Jump**, they should use their camp.

Claim Jump and **New Prospects** may be played on an Argonaut's tent, either by the player or by the other Argonaut. The Argonaut will always move to the nearest tile of the highest rank. In the event of multiple tiles of the same rank an equal distance from their original claim, the Argonaut will pick the next available tile going clockwise, starting with the left. If an Argonaut's tent is ever moved, by either the player or the other Argonaut, then the tent should be moved to the highest ranked tile it can legally reach.

GAMBLING

Argonauts do not collect poker cards throughout the course of the game. Instead, each Argonaut has a pre-determined final poker hand that contributes the usual corresponding gold value to their final score. It also represents the five-card poker hand that the Argonauts use to compete with the player for the winner-take-all final claim.

- **Argonaut A1:** Four of a Kind
- **Argonaut A2:** Full House
- **Argonaut A3:** Flush

These poker hands are generic, rather than containing specific ranked cards. Thus, for the purposes of a tie, the player always wins the tie-break. For example, you would beat Argonaut A1 with a set of four 2's. And you would beat Argonaut A2 with three 2's over a pair.

END OF GAME & SCORING

The end of the game and final scoring proceeds normally.

CREDITS

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HISTORICAL CONTEXT

On January 24, 1848, gold was discovered in the South Fork American River by carpenters constructing a mill in what would become Coloma, California. News of the discovery spread slowly at first, but soon around 300,000 fortune seekers came from all over the world, with the hope of starting a new life.

The California Gold Rush was an exciting time—one of the first worldwide events in human history. But for all the possibility that it brought, between the racism and lawlessness of the era, it wrought terrible tragedy. Black, hispanic, and Chinese miners were often brutally attacked, while American Indians were systematically slaughtered and driven off gold-rich sites.

We do not wish to brush these atrocities aside. In designing this game, we have imagined it as taking place during the earliest moments of the Gold Rush, before the passing of a "foreign miners tax" or the proliferation of organized violence against non-whites. We encourage anyone who is curious to visit their local library and check out books and documentaries about this fascinating era, in all its facets.

QUICKPLAY GUIDE: ROUND OVERVIEW

1. Supply Auction

1. The dealer deals cards faceup in sets (auctions) of 3. The number of sets equals one less than the number of players.

2. The dealer begins bidding on one set, which continues until someone wins that auction.

3. Players continue bidding on sets until there are no more sets to bid on.

4. The player who does not win an auction becomes dealer for next round.

2. Prospecting

1. Each player chooses 2 or 3 cards to use for prospecting. When everyone has chosen, all players simultaneously reveal their cards.

2. Each player adds up the amount of money on their revealed cards. The player with the most money becomes starting player, followed by the second most, and so on. Each player places their prospector and 1 tent on their turn order tile.

3. Players use their chosen cards for special actions or to search tiles for gold, choosing if they want to stake a claim or press their luck.

   1. When claiming a tile, players place a tent or camp and remove their prospector from the tile (other players' prospectors stay).

   2. When pressing their luck, players leave their prospector on the viewed tile and play continues in turn order. On the player's next turn, they play another card. If a newly viewed tile is lower than the previous tile, then they bust and must claim the new tile.

3. Gambling

1. Discard any cards not used while prospecting. Out of the cards remaining, each player chooses 1 or 2 to move to their poker hand.

2. The dealers deal all players back up to 5 cards in hand.

OPTIONAL PLAY: JOKERS

If players wish to use Jokers, shuffle them into the deck at setup. We recommend against making the Jokers wild cards, as in our playtesting this made the cards too powerful for players who drew them. Because of this, each Joker has the same special ability, allowing players to exchange them with another card.

If two players both play a Joker in order to claim the same discarded card, the Jokers should resolve in the current turn order. Jokers may still be used during game end, before final sets of poker cards are revealed. Players do not receive new cards for their hand at the end of round 3. An exchanged Joker should always be placed in the discard pile.