

## **THE HOCHMAN ENCYCLOPEDIA OF AMERICAN PLAYING CARDS**

*A comprehensive catalogue of American Playing Cards and Manufacturers with almost 1600 illustrated listings and a special 24 page colored insert:*

*Authors - Tom and Judy Dawson*

*Publisher - U.S. Games Systems, Inc.  
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Stamford, CT 06902*

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### **A Review by Glenn K. Currie**

For a collecting interest to become more than just a random assortment of similar items, someone has to do enough research and information gathering to bring it structure.

In the 1970's, Gene Hochman made huge strides in bringing this sense of structure to the collecting of American playing cards. Hochman, through his private publication of four volumes and two supplements, stretching over a period of six years (from 1976 to 1981), allowed collectors to finally develop a general understanding of the history, beauty and relative rarity of a wide range of different types of American cards. In so doing, he provided a system for cataloging the cards and bringing order to the hobby.

Now, after a hiatus of nineteen years, Tom and Judy Dawson, two Canadian collectors with extensive knowledge of the subject, and a similar love for the subject, have taken the hobby another giant step forward.

In a broad and ambitious work, they have taken Hochman's original effort and expanded and updated it. They have added a great deal of new information, and made the text much more readable. They have improved the quality of pictorial reproductions, and added whole new sections covering makers and issues. There is a wonderful color sec-

tion that brings out to the reader the beauty and art inherent in the hobby, and, in conjunction with U.S. Game Systems, they have produced a one-volume publication that should become a widely available "bible" for both the new and the experienced hobbyists.

One of the reasons that this book stands out so wonderfully when compared to the typical collector books on the market is that there is so much substance to it. Often a collector book will show a few pictures and some prices, and add five or six pages of text as an after thought. This book is dealing with a hobby that is rich in art, history, and human nature, and it contains the depth and detail to feed the curiosity and passion of collectors who have become fascinated with the stories that these cards tell.

The Encyclopedia of American Playing Cards will allow existing collectors to enhance their knowledge, and it will be an open door for new participants to develop an interest and understanding of the hobby.

One of the reasons that this book provides so much to the reader, is that the cards themselves encompass so much of the American experience. There are chapters on war, politics, advertising, sports and entertainment, transportation, expositions, art, and much more.

The authors have wisely decided to limit the scope of this work to the period from the American Revolution to World War II. Attempting any more in one volume would have resulted in a dilution of the effort, or a book too unwieldy to comfortably use. Nevertheless, it should be said that one of the great attractions of the hobby is that it is a continually growing and evolving area. Playing cards cross all continents, languages, cultures and social strata. They are a universal language that unites people today and represent a common tie with ancestors living 500 years ago. New and interesting decks are being put out somewhere in the world almost every day, and they will continue to provide insights into the history and cultures of each new generation. Even in the current high-tech world, it is interesting that almost every computer is issued with playing card games included. That is one of the elements that make a publication such as this so interesting to those with knowledge of the hobby.

