
Backgammon Books & Paper

Catalogue

February 2025



About This Catalogue

I'm a backgammon player, historian and collector. This catalogue is designed to facilitate my sales of occasional backgammon items I have acquired over time and am ready to part with. Rather than duplicating the efforts of description and posting in various venues, I'll maintain this catalogue, updating as needed and posting it to various interest groups. This document is intended for viewing on digital devices in landscape mode – not for printing.

The most current version of this catalogue can always be found here: <https://nebackgammon.org/index.php/backgammon-in-bakelite/>

Representation of Items

The pictures offered here have been deliberately rendered to provide a fair representation of the items, while taking up no more than a single page in the catalogue. *If there are flaws or blemishes, I have taken care to make them visible.* So, for instance, you can trust that the "hidden" surfaces in a picture of 30 checkers are just as good as the 30 sides you can see. Pictures of doubling cubes will reveal all 6 faces. Where there are meaningful flaws in an item, I will draw attention to them in the descriptive text. The resolution of the images is high enough that zooming in on them on your device will reveal substantial detail. **Please be careful to note item size before offering to purchase.**

Measurements were taken in inches and converted to metric, and in the case of checkers, were based upon the practical needs of use in a backgammon set: the width of six checkers side by side to fit into a table quadrant, and the height of each stack of 15 checkers, to fit into checker trays. Individual piece measurements are then based on these larger group measurements. Caliper readings of individual checkers can be misleading, as minor variations of thickness and diameter (and color) are common in bakelite backgammon pieces. Differences in the stack heights may be visible in the photos, but any substantial variations among pieces will also be explicitly noted in the text description.

Accurate descriptions make for realistic expectations, simple, trouble-free transactions and repeat sales to happy buyers over time.

Prices are Firm

I have priced items based on the upper end of what similar ones tend to fetch on auction sites such as eBay. Collectors may very well "do better" by patient following of online or local auction listings. My items have the virtue of being available for purchase immediately.

In some cases an elevated price reflects my ambivalence about letting an item go. **Prices may be lowered – or raised – in subsequent versions of the catalogue.** Items will be marked as sold when no longer available, and will be removed in the next full revision of the catalogue.

What is “Bakelite?”

I use the term “bakelite” as a broad generic term for 20th-century decorative plastics that have in common a pleasing density, coloration, and tendency to build a patina that will cause a Q-tip smeared with Simichrome polish to turn yellowy-orange. Most of the checkers and doubling cubes hailing from the 1930’s would more accurately be called “Catalin,” referring to the corporation that applied the original bakelite formula to decorative items such as brooches, bangles, household implements, and game pieces. But the term “bakelite” is broadly applied to a variety of companies that produced such items over time, until its production was outlawed in the United States due to health hazards sometime in the 1960s.

Some bakelite items, particularly black and ivory-colored pieces, so not pass the Simichrome test because they do not build up the typical patina that colored pieces demonstrate. Experienced collectors know bakelite when they see it first-hand, and you can be confident I am an experienced collector. If I have doubts, I will share them in the description. Learn more at <https://nebackgammon.org/index.php/backgammon-in-bakelite/>

I will name other plastics when I can, or refer to them as a “modern resin” and price them accordingly.

Cleaning and Polishing

I employ a very gentle vibratory tumbling process for anywhere from a few hours to an entire day to remove light wear, dirt, and abrasions *without* stripping away the patina that builds up on bakelite over time and provides much of its appeal. I aim for a clean, gleaming surface that shows off colors and subtle variations, not a high gloss effect. At right is an example of checkers (top) with a “dusty” residue that I’ve removed without markedly affecting the checker colors (zoom in for closer detail). Once a patina has been demolished, it may not return for decades. *Checkers that have been further polished by a buyer are not eligible for return.*

Guarantee of Satisfaction

I will provide a full refund *including* shipping costs for any item found to have been meaningfully misrepresented in my listings. I will also happily provide an *item-price refund* (not shipping costs) for any item the buyer wishes to return for any other reason.

Items must be returned in as-delivered condition and postmarked within 14 days of delivery.



Payment

Payments may be made via **Venmo, Zelle, Apple Cash, or Paypal ("Family & Friends" gift mode) only**. In-person payment and delivery is also possible if you will be in the Boston area or if you would like to arrange a purchase at a backgammon tournament that I attend (NY Metro, San Antonio, and Chicago are most likely). If you would feel more secure transacting with eBay as an intermediary, I can list an item for you that way, but the Item price will be increased by 20% to cover eBay and PayPal fees.

Shipping

I ship all items via USPS Priority Mail and charge the actual amount based on weight and the buyer's address. Buyers may request extra security measures such as **insurance**, signature confirmation, or for the parcel to be held for pick-up, the cost of which will be added to your bill.

Risk of Loss

Outright losses by USPS are *exceedingly* rare, but theft from front porches or mail boxes may be common in your area, and is beyond my control. **A USPS tracking confirmation of delivery to the proper address will stand as sufficient proof of delivery. The filing of a USPS insurance claim by the buyer will be the only recourse in the event of an item lost or damaged in the mail.** Only in the event that improper packing is determined to be the cause of loss in the course of an insurance claim will the seller provide a refund for an item confirmed as delivered by USPS.

Reputation & Trust

I am a well-known and respected member of the backgammon community and an organizer of the New England Backgammon Club (NEBC). I have been a seller in good standing on eBay since 1998 under the username *Wickerman5*.

Listing Order & Purchase Requests

Items in this catalogue are ordered by price, from highest to lowest within categories (Checkers, Cubes, etc). **To make a purchase, email your request, including the Item #, along with your name, shipping address, and preferred method of payment to: asteg@mindspring.com**



Presentation Edition, Hardcover in slipcase (7.5" x 10.5" / 404 pp.)

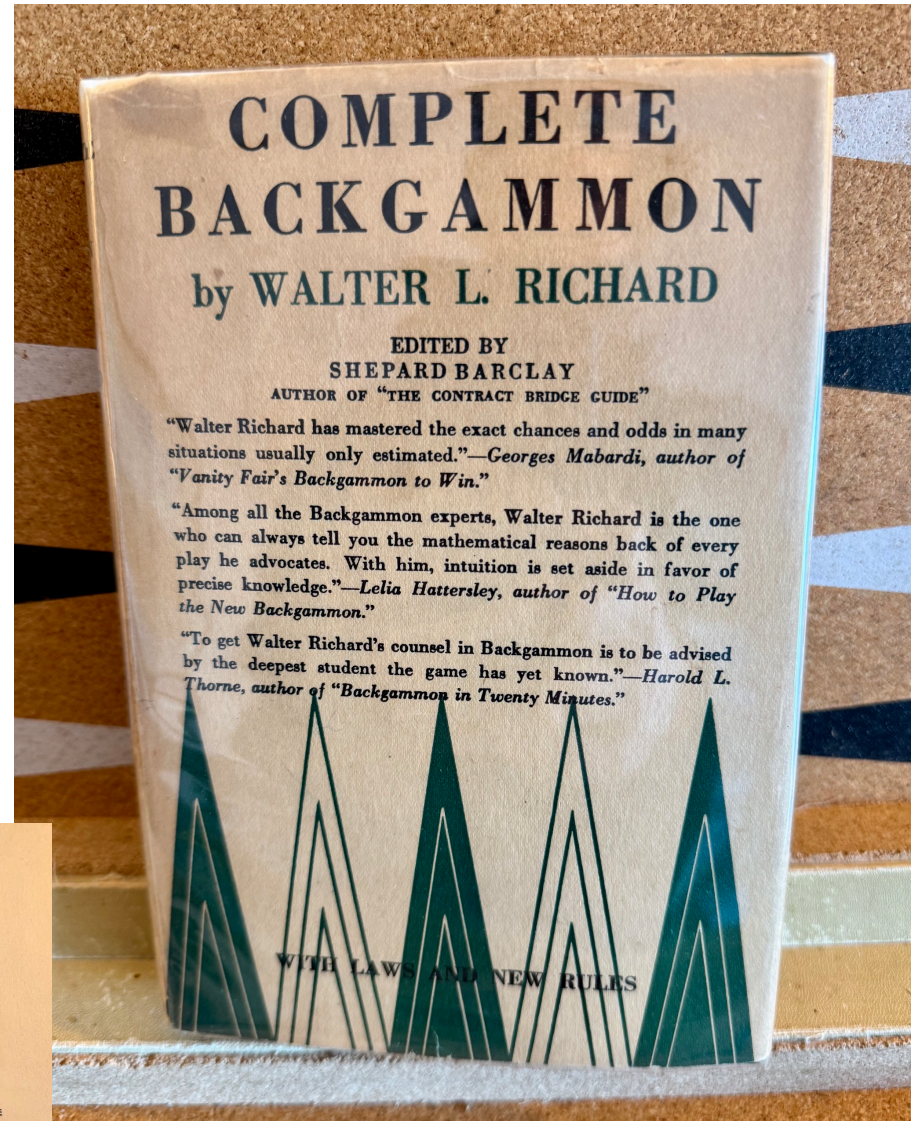
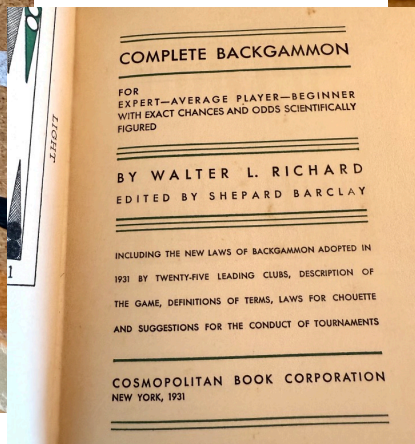
First editions -- and even signed first editions -- of Magriel's 'Backgammon' are not terribly rare . . . unless they are one of the 100 gilt-edged 'Presentation' 1st Editions bound in red leather, individually numbered and signed by the author. This specimen, #67, is in as-new condition, including that delicious "new book smell" that takes me back to grade school. The only flaw is a small bit of tape affixed to the back of the slip-cover (see picture) -- which hardly matters since you'll be putting this on your shelf with the gold-embossed title on display.



This Limited Edition of
one hundred copies of the
first edition has been
specially bound in leather
for distribution by X-22 Press.
Signed by the author
Paul Magriel
This is copy number
67

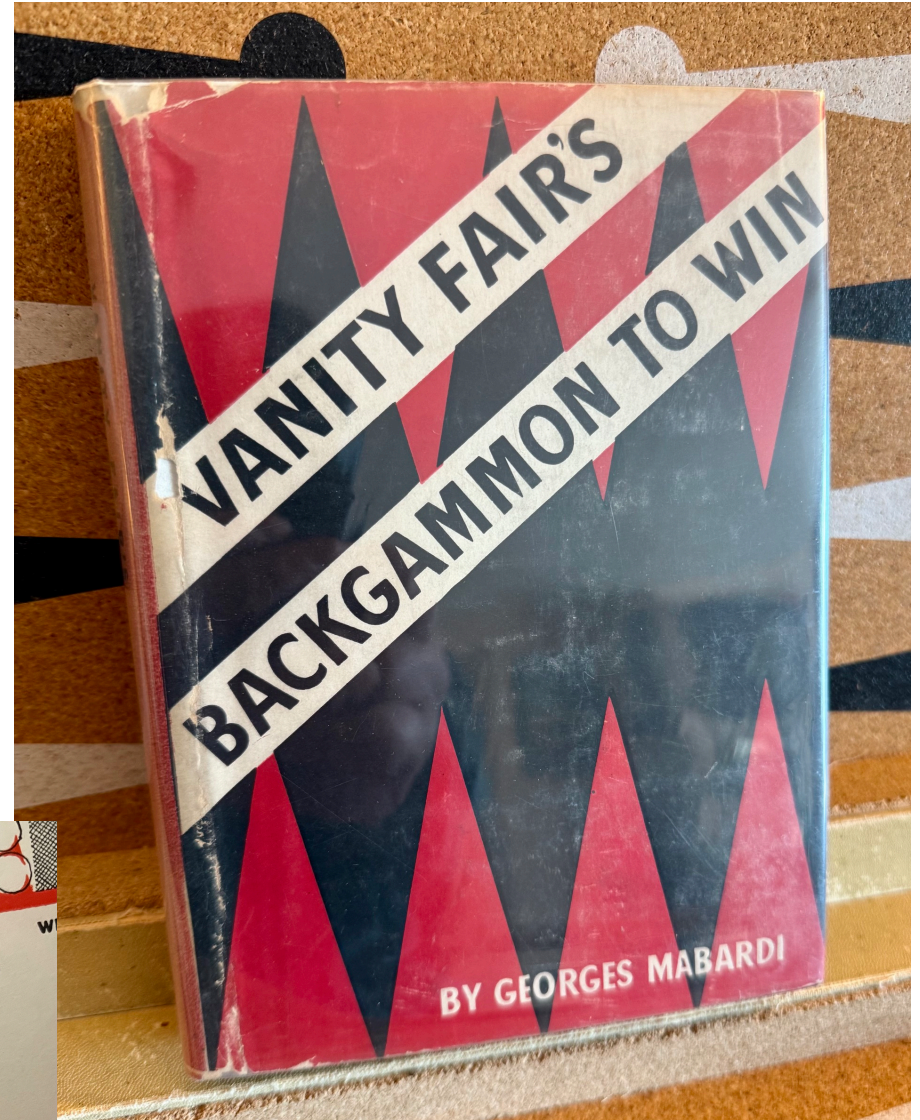
5th Printing (1940), Hardcover (7.5" x 5.125" / 116 pp.)

This is a very nice 1st edition printing of Richard's authoritative book on the game published in the spring of 1931 and including the newly-codified "Laws & Rules" of the game as agreed upon by the private clubs of the day. Original dust jacket is fully intact and enclosed in a mylar sleeve. The inside cover features a bookplate from The Princeton Antiques Bookshop in Atlantic City.



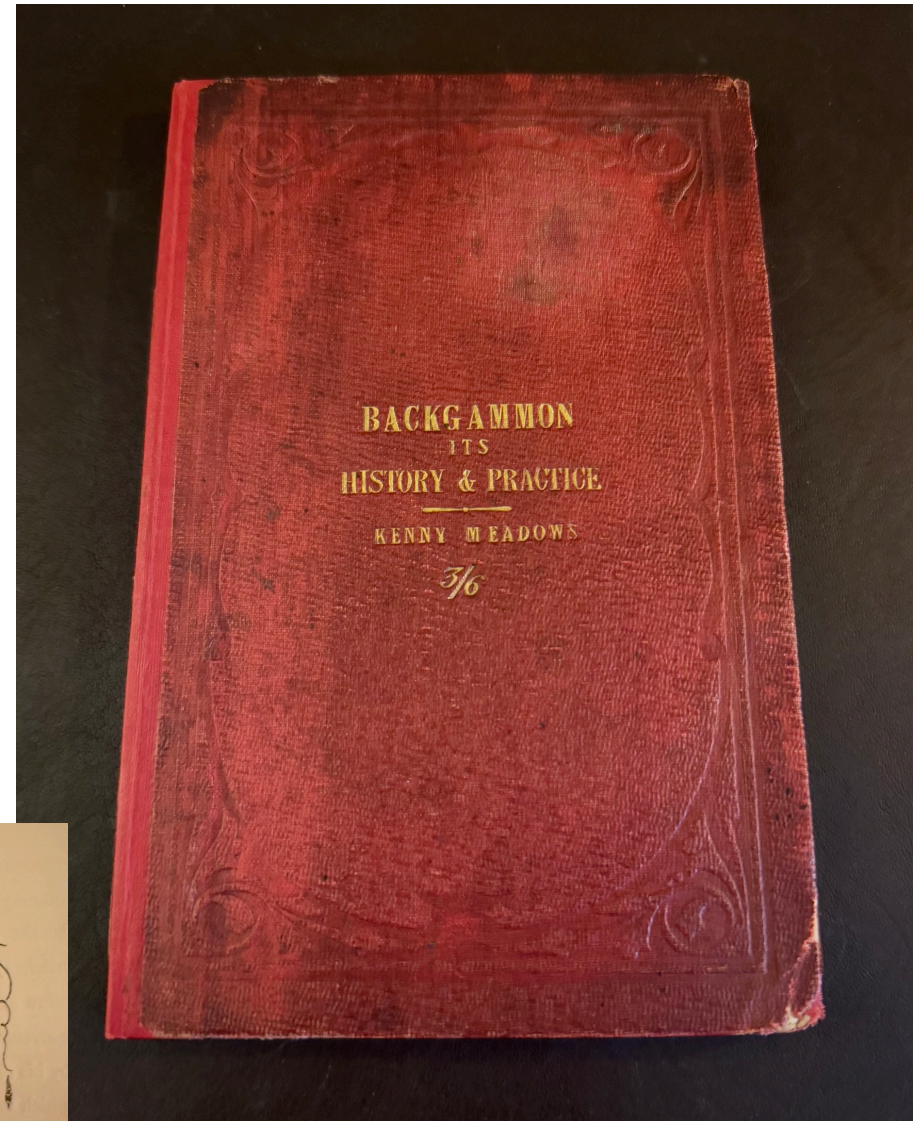
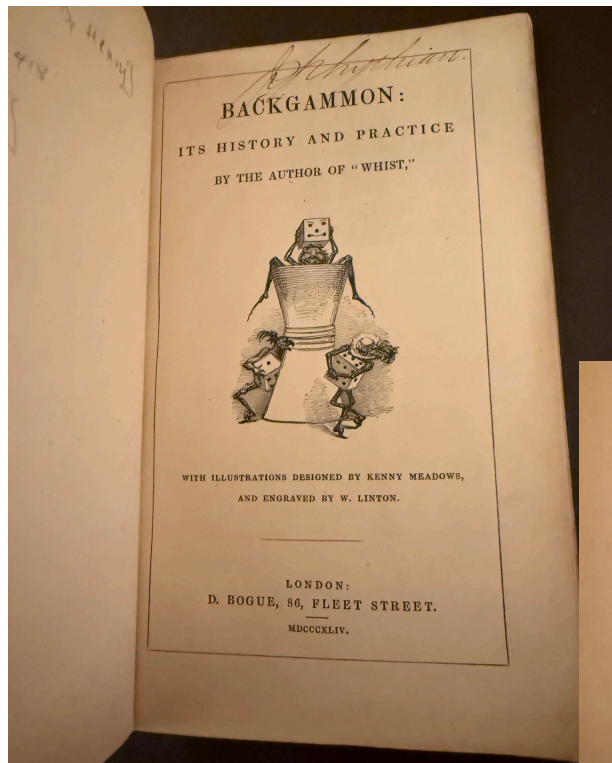
1st Edition, Hardcover (7" x 5.25" / 158 pp.)

Vanity Fair brings all the bold graphical and illustrative style you could hope for in this delightful jazz-age gem. The bold theorizing by Egyptian master Georges Mabardi is often wrong-headed, even for its time, but along with a delightful chapter on etiquette his commentary provides a vivid and atmospheric account of how backgammon was played during its first US boom. Don't settle for the weak 1970's reprint, which stripped out the dozens of charming high-life images! While first editions are not rare, fewer have survived with their original dust jackets intact as we have here.



1st Edition, Soft card covers (4.25" x 6.5" / 79 pp.)

Here we have a scarce copy of the original 1844 printing that was re-issued during the 1930 backgammon craze in a facsimile edition under the title '*Comic Backgammon*'. This copy has been meticulously restored by applying the original cloth cover to fresh red boards -- even the original spine has been affixed to the new binding. Interior is in good shape, with some bibliographic pencil markings on the title and facing page, and a bookplate on the inside cover.



1st Edition, Softback (8.5" x 11" / 124 pp.)

Easily one of the best books written on doubling strategy. Woolsey methodically addresses nine of the most common doubling scenarios, providing the reader with an arsenal of reference positions that are sure to come up in virtually every match you play. The book is long out of print, though it may be available somewhere as a digital download. This one is in as-new condition.

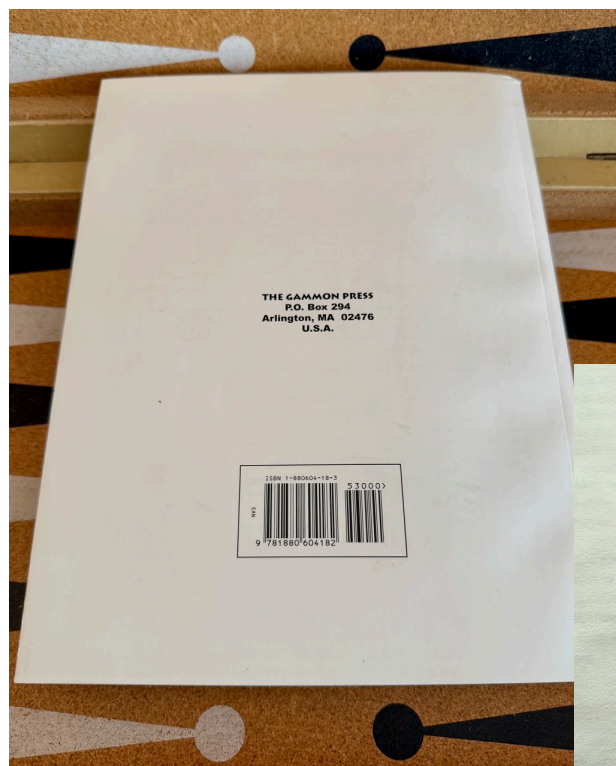
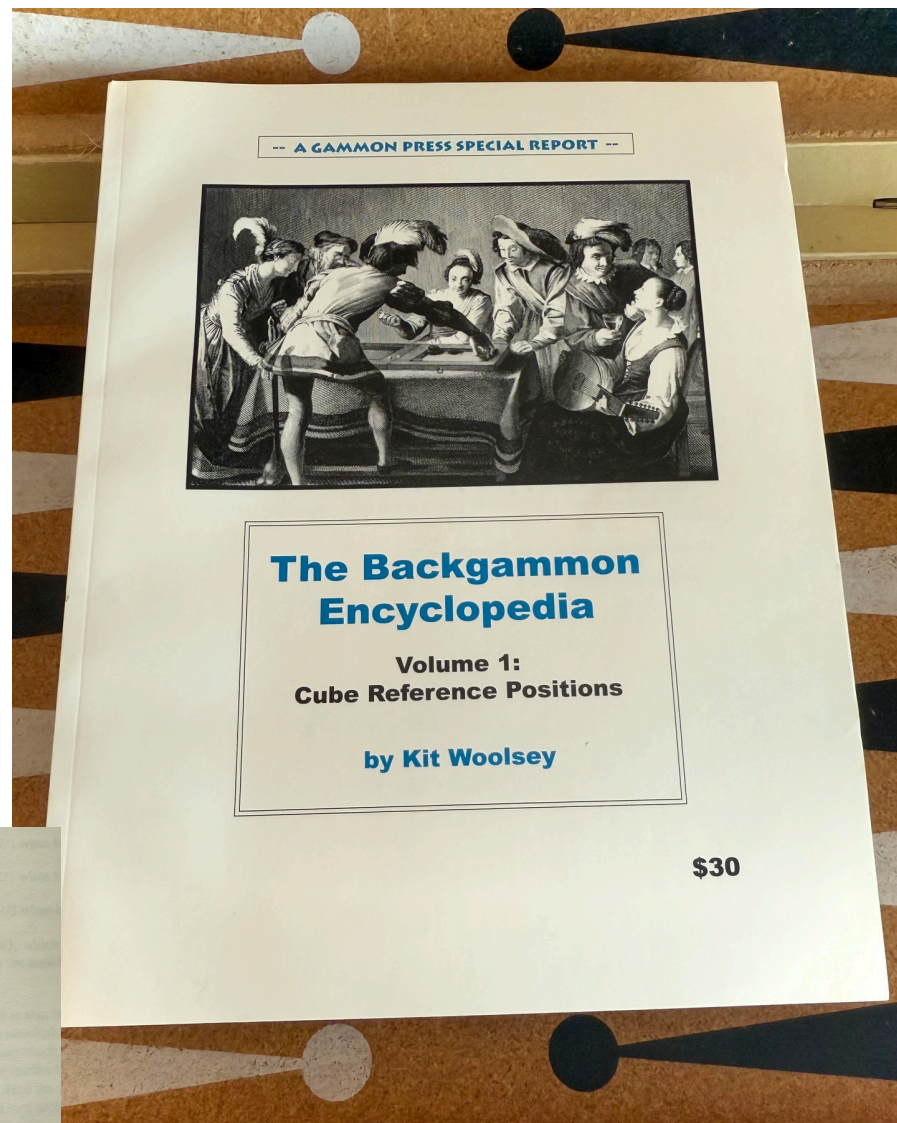


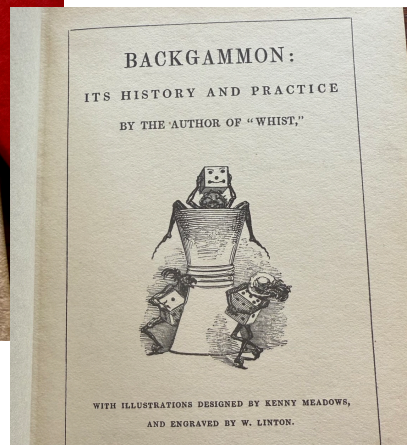
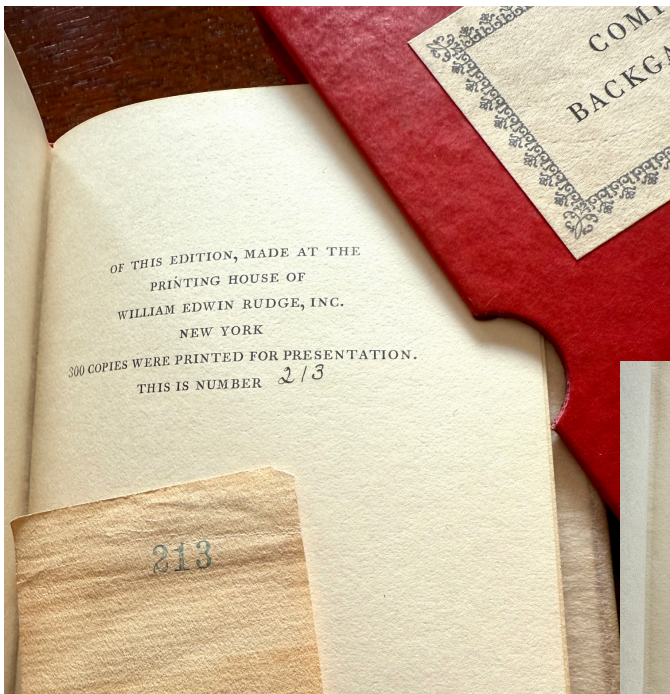
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Presentation Edition, Hardcover (6.5" x 4.25" / 79 pp.)

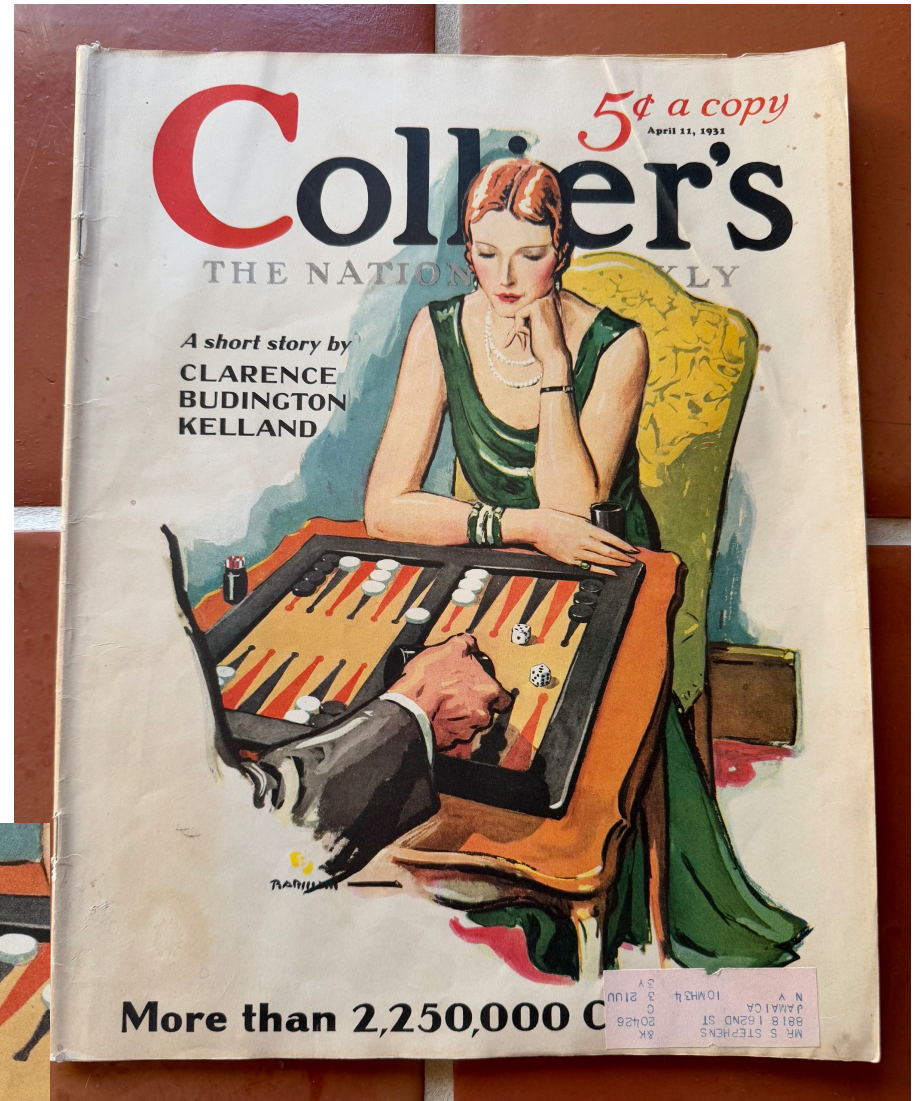
A Barry Vail reprint of *Backgammon: Its History and Practice* (1844), this is a lightly satiric introduction to backgammon accompanied by whimsical illustrations. While the reprints are not rare, these individually numbered 'presentation copies' in their original slip covers are quite scarce. This one is notably fresh, with original crepe wrapper in place. (The underlying book cover is the same as the other copy of the book in this catalogue.)



April 11, 1931 (14" x 11", 74 pp.)

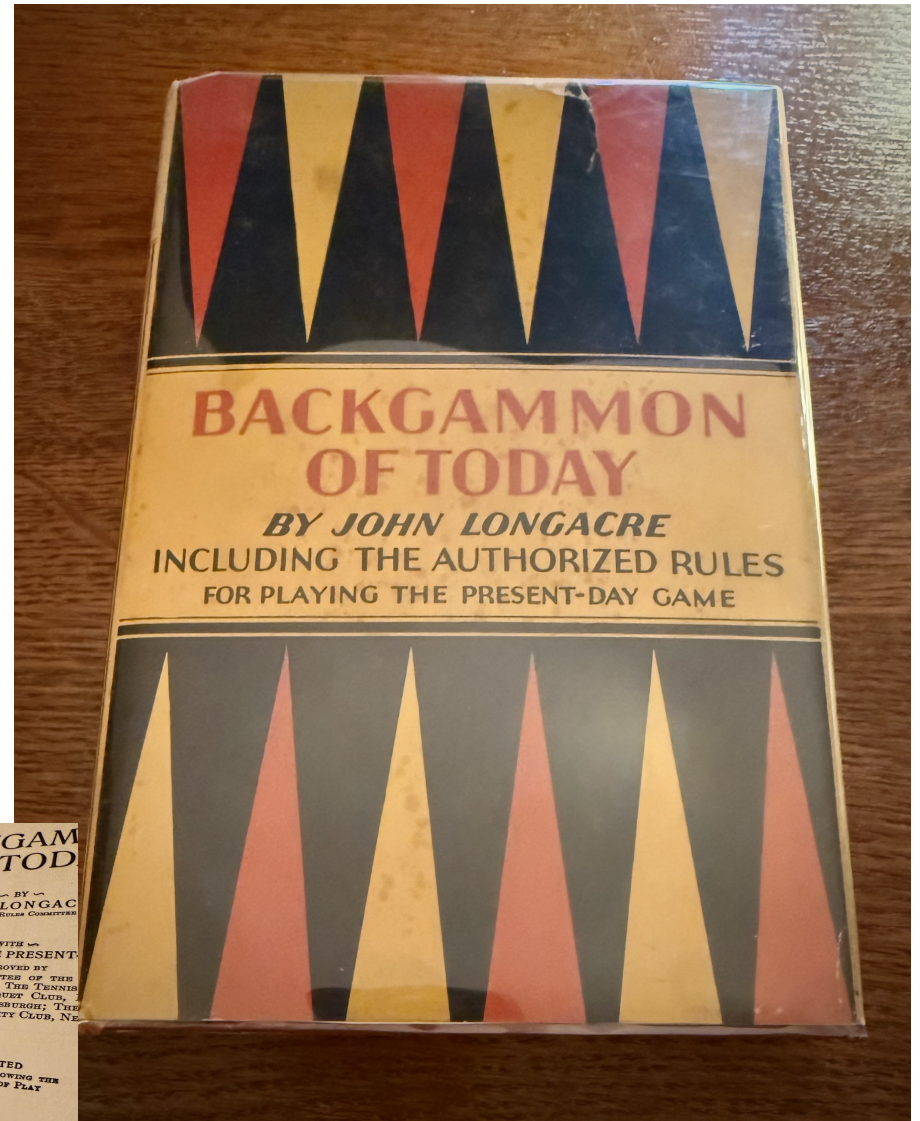
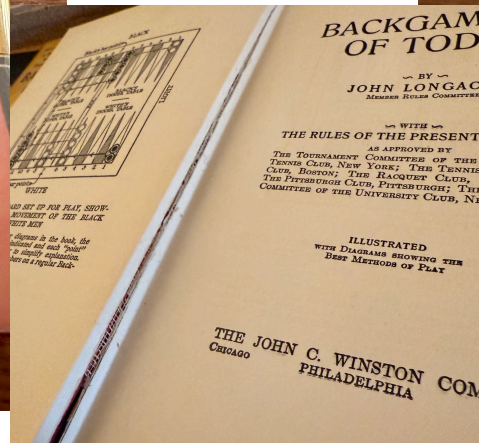
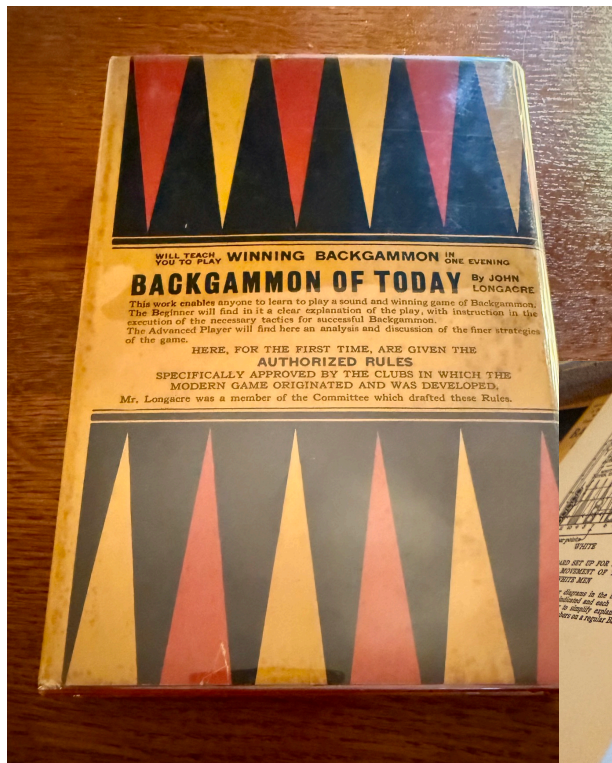
This issue of Collier's features a wonderful cover illustration by Jay Hyde Barnum capturing the stylish Jazz Age appeal of backgammon. A notable detail is the cylinder of "Backgammon Matches" at the side of the table, in place of a doubling cube.

This is a notably bright, complete copy of this desirable issue, ideal for framing. Note crease across upper right corner, some rolling of the spine near the upper staple, and some discoloration along edges. I recommend framing the entire issue as an artifact rather than removing the cover.



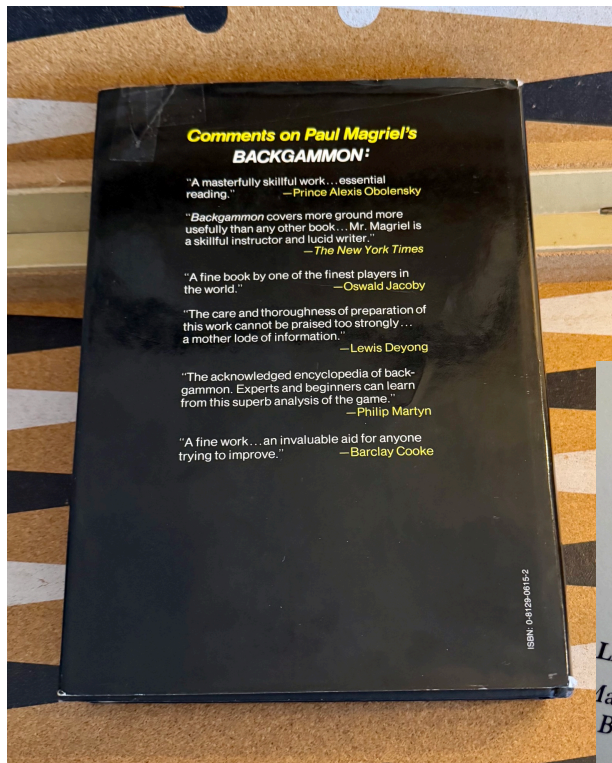
1st Edition, Hardcover (5.25" x 7.5" / 132 pp.)

Another stylish hardback from the 1930-31 American boom. Longacre was one of the major figures in codifying the rules, but was almost comically slow to grasp the concept of risk and reward when it came to doubling, as you will see here. This is a nice copy with the handsome dust jacket intact and in very nice condition save for a minor tear visible at the top front, and there is a split along the paper at the title page -- both visible in the images below, as is some mottling on the jacket.



6th Printing, Hardcover (7.5" x 10.5" / 404 pp.)

'Magriel' remains the essential exposition of backgammon principles for the serious student of the game. Although computer analysis has proven some of the examples technically incorrect, Magriel's principles remain unchallenged. This original 1970's-era hardback with the iconic dust jacket intact (note small tape repair on upper left back side) should serve as a good talisman on your bookshelf once you've studied it. Very nice clean condition, no markings.



Chapter 1 previously
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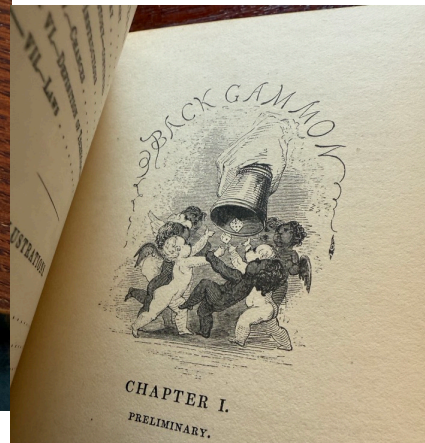
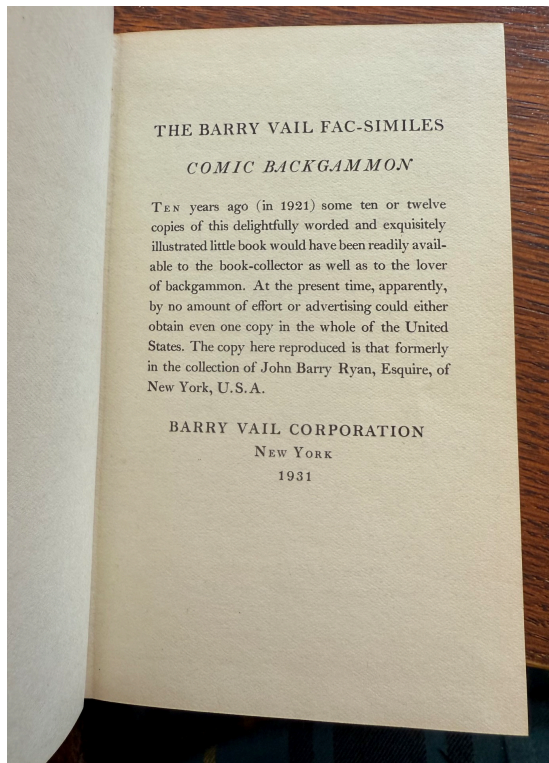
New Yorker, advertisement (8.5" x 11")

Backgammon was in a popularity lull in the 1950's, but still associated with high-living glamor and sex appeal, as suggested by this stylish print ad. Note the page (the whole issue actually) was printed at a slight angle, as you can see if you look at the lower margin. There is also a very slight crease visible, owing to the magazine being folded over for delivery. The entire magazine will be sent to protect the ad in shipping. Careful removal of the ad will be the buyer's task.



Reprint, Hardcover (6.5" x 4.25" / 79 pp.)

A Barry Vail reprint of *Backgammon: Its History and Practice* (1844), this is a lightly satiric introduction to backgammon accompanied by humorous illustrations. A very clean, firm copy, not numbered. Comes in a nice thick mylar dust cover, not pictured here.

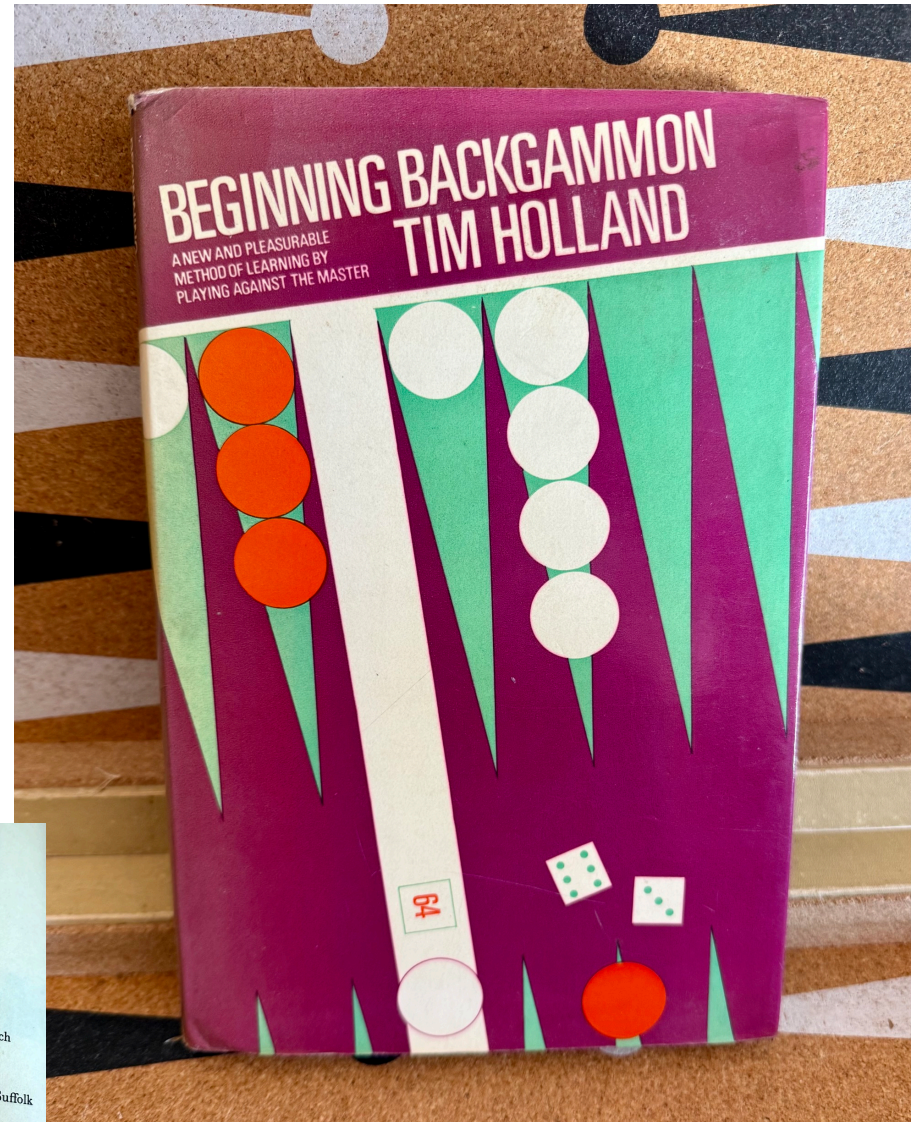


1st British Edition, Hardcover (6.5" x 9.5" / 209 pp.)

For the book collecting completist, here's a british printing of Tim Holland's first book, featuring an alternative dust jacket design. In solid, clean shape, some yellowing of pages.

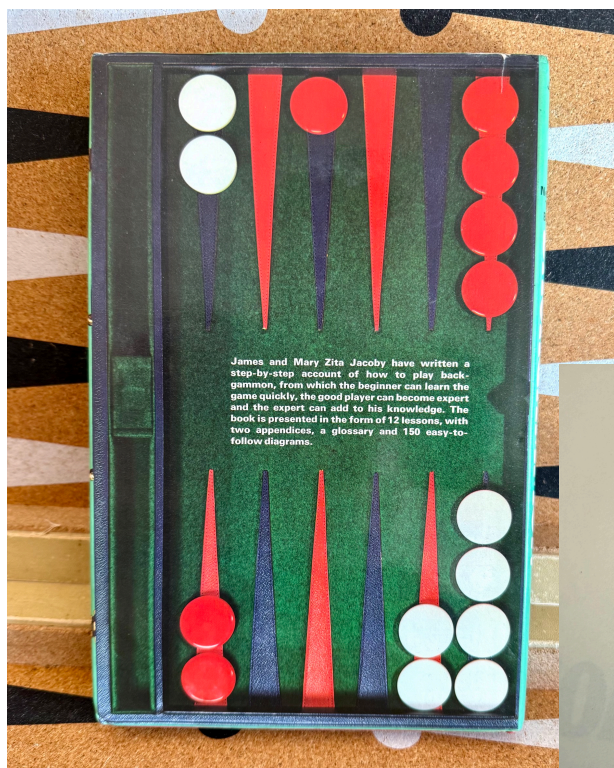


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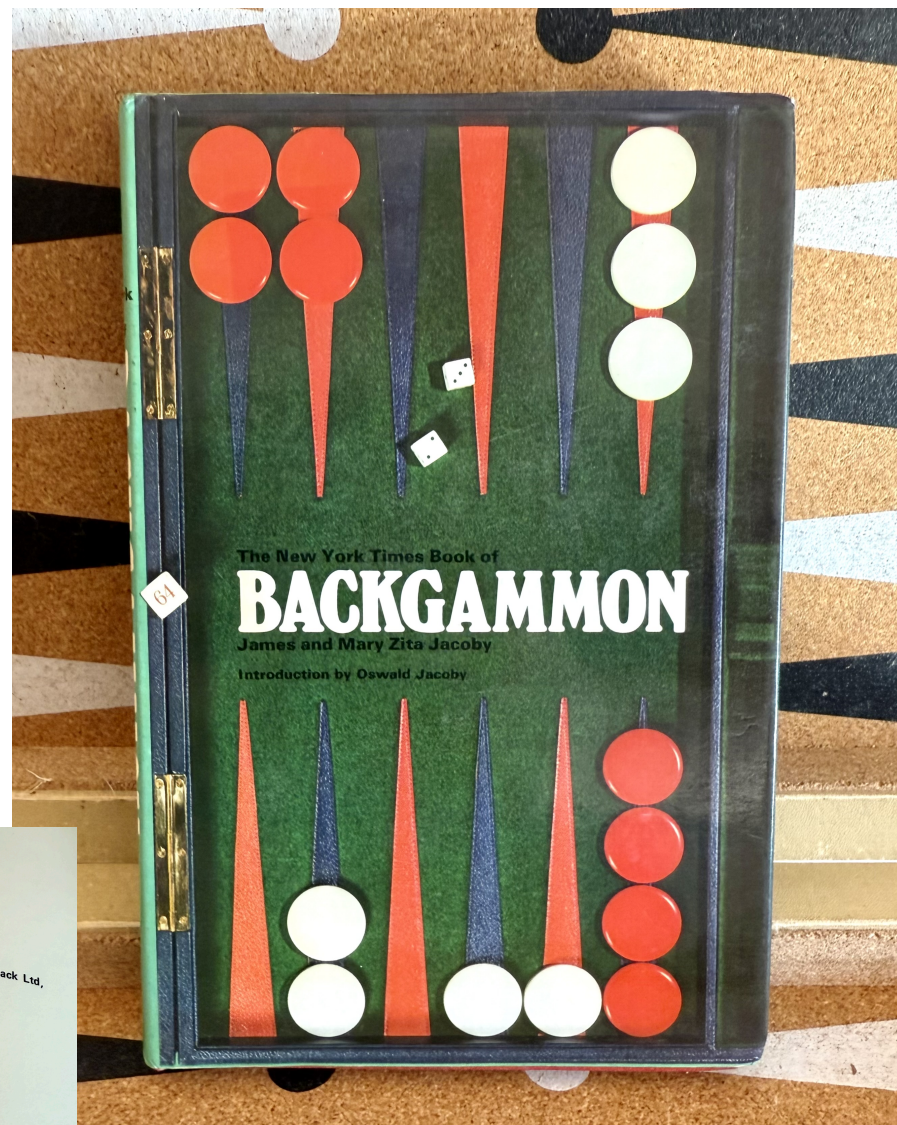


British Edition, Hardcover (6.25" x 9.5" / 175 pp.)

This is a softback 1937 printing of Richard's authoritative book on the game published in the spring of 1931 and including the newly-codified "Laws & Rules" of the game as agreed upon by the private clubs of the day. AP Games, Arthur Popper's equipment company, licensed rights to print this edition for inclusion in their popular backgammon sets of the day.



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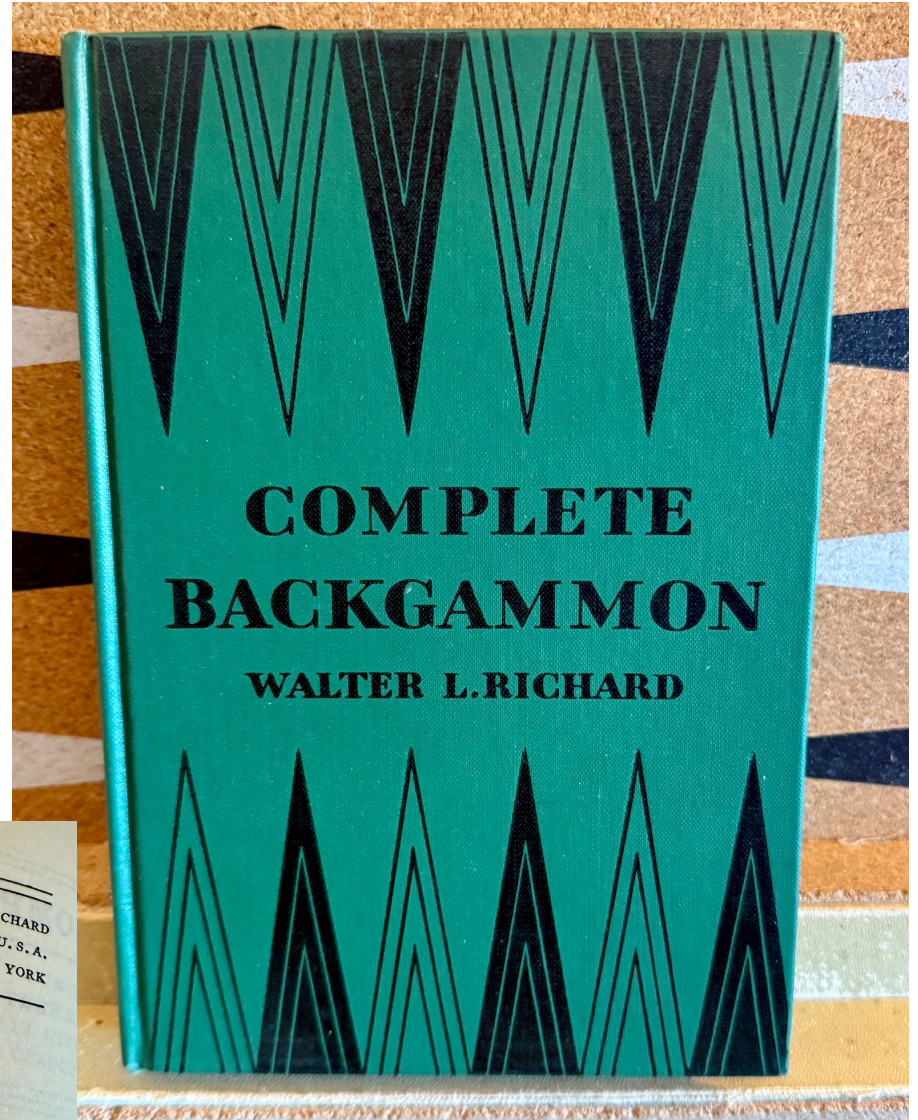
5th Printing (1940), Hardcover (7.5" x 5.125" / 116 pp.)

This is a clean later printing of of Richard's authoritative book on the game, originally published in the spring of 1931 and including the newly-codified "Laws & Rules" of the game as agreed upon by the private clubs of the day.



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Third printing, June, 1935
Fourth printing, December, 1937
Fifth printing, September, 1940*



1937 AP Games Printing, Softcover (5" x 7.25" / 113 pp.)

This is a softback 1937 printing of Richard's authoritative book on the game published in the spring of 1931 and including the newly-codified "Laws & Rules" of the game as agreed upon by the private clubs of the day. AP Games, Arthur Popper's equipment company, licensed rights to print this edition for inclusion in their popular backgammon sets of the day. In clean, flat condition, some minor creases to the cover are somewhat exaggerated in these photos.

