The Colonists of Natick - das Tilenspiel

A Good Portsmanship game for the piecepack by Gary Pressler
Based on The Settlers of Catan Card Game by Klaus Teuber
Version 0.6, 2007.03.22
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2 players, 30 minutes
Equipment: One standard piecepack

Overview

Two players compete to colonize the newfound Island of Natick. A player earns victory points by expanding their colony: constructing new villages and towns, and employing traders and knights. The first colony to reach 7 victory points (VPs) will dominate the island and the local music scene.

Components

Coins represent *resources* and are always played face down (suit-side-up). Each of the four suits represents a different type of resource, as shown in the table below.

 Wood

 Stone

 Grain

 Iron

The four dice are used to determine resource generation and random events, as described below.

The sixteen **numbered** tiles are *regions* and produce resources of the matching suit. Resource coins are placed on the region tiles when produced. Each region may hold up to three matching resources.

The four null tiles represent *villages*. The four ace tiles represent *towns*. In both cases, the suits are irrelevant. Both village and town tiles are used to represent *roads* when placed face-down.

Pawns represent *traders* and *knights*, depending on their placement relative to the tiles. The color of the pawns is irrelevant.

A player's total arrangement of tiles and pawns is considered their *colony*.

Setup

Randomly determine which player goes first. The first player places one village tile face-up. Next, they choose four region tiles and place them diagonally around their starting village in any desired order. The combination of regions must contain one of each number and one of each suit. Finally, one town tile is placed face-down as a road on either side of the village, between two of the region tiles. The second player then follows the same steps for their initial colony.

The remaining village and town tiles are placed in two stacks between both players. All resource coins are placed in a common resource pool. The remaining region tiles are shuffled and placed in a face-down stack. The completed setup should look similar to Figure 1 below.

The first player then takes their turn. Take note of who is the first player, as this will matter at the end of the game.
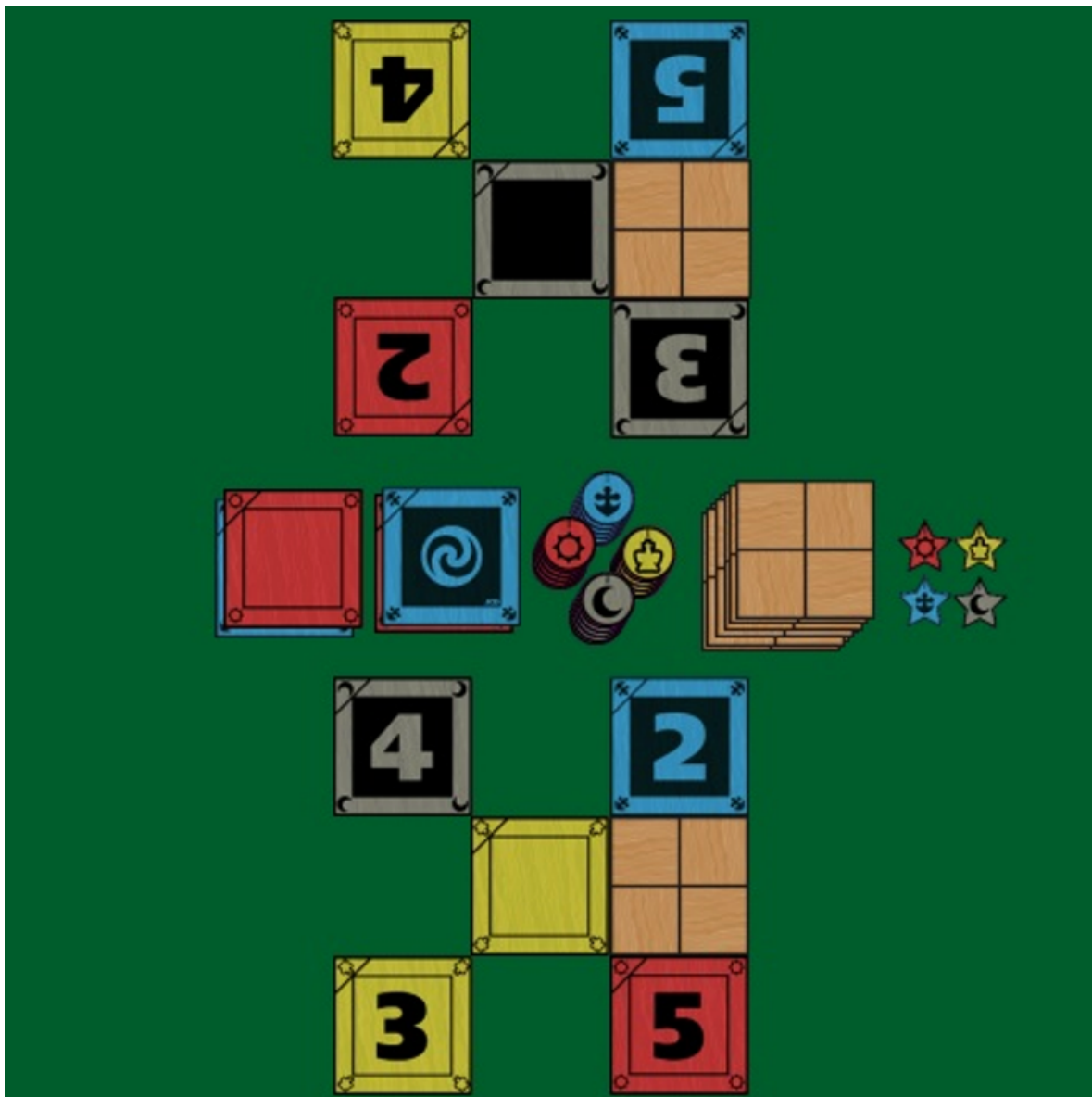
Gameplay

The player who is taking their turn is called the *active player*. Their opponent is the *passive player*. Each turn involves the following steps:

1. Roll and Divide Dice
2. Resolve Events
3. Collect Resources
4. Trade and Build

Roll and Divide Dice

The active player rolls all four dice. Aces and nulls trigger events, as described in the next section. Numbered results (2 through 5) produce resources. The passive player divides the dice into two sets. A set may contain any number of dice, including zero. (If a die shows an event that affects neither player, it may be placed aside.) The active player then chooses one set to keep and one set to give to the passive player.

Resolve Events

Any dice showing nulls or aces cause events, depending on the suit (color). The active player resolves all events from their own set of dice, in any order they desire. The passive player then resolves all of their own events, in any order. The table below lists the four events and their results.

Rich Harvest -- Place one resource of your choice on any matching region with less than three resources already on it.

Trade Advantage -- If you have one or more traders and at least as many traders as your opponent, you may take any one resource from your opponent and give them any one resource of your choice. You must have a resource to give, and both players must have a region with room for the received resources.

Tournament -- If you have one or more knights and at least as many knights as your opponent, you may take any one resource from your opponent. You must have a region with room for the resource.
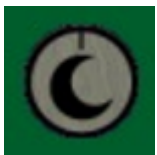
Raider Attack -- If you have six or more unguarded resources, you must discard half of your resources, rounded down.

Collect Resources

Resources are collected for each numbered die in a player's set. The active player collects all of their resources before the passive player. For each die, **all** regions with a matching number produce one resource. The suit (color) of the die does not matter. The number on the die determines which regions produce; the suit of the region determines which type of resource is produced. Remember that each region may only hold up to three resources.

If no coins for a specific suit are available in the resource pool, then no more of that resource may be produced during that turn. Likewise, if a player's region already contains three resources, then a die showing that region's number will not produce a resource in that region. If a player's set contains multiple dice with the same number, then all matching regions produce once for each die.

Trade and Build

The active player may perform, in any order, as many trading and building actions as desired. Each trade and build is a separate action.

When trading, the active player may exchange three resources of the same type for one from the resource pool. The three resources may come from one or more regions. Players may also freely trade with each other during this step. With any trade, there must be a region with capacity to hold the received resource. A player may **not** transfer resources between two regions of the same suit.

To build, resources are spent from any combination of regions and returned to the resource pool. The cost for each development is listed in the table below.

Road

Village

Town

Scout

Trader

Knight

Villages

Each village, including the initial one, is worth 1 VP.

A new village must be placed next to a road. There must be exactly one road between consecutive villages and towns. A new village may not be built if there are already four villages built amongst the two colonies. Once a village is upgraded to a town, the village tile will be returned to the pool and is then available to be built again. The new village will be diagonally adjacent to two regions. One additional region tile is drawn and placed in either of the empty spaces diagonally adjacent.

Each village has a *unit limit* of 1. This means that a village may have, at most, one trader **or** knight adjacent to it.

Roads

A road is built on either side of a village or town. (Again, exactly one road must be between consecutive villages and towns.) A face-down village or town tile is used to represent the new road. A tile used to represent a road may be swapped by either player if an additional village or town tile is needed. Once a road has a village or town on both sides, the road tile is returned to the pool, although the road is still there.

If only one region is located above or below a newly placed road, then another region is drawn from the stack and placed in the empty location.

Towns

A town upgrades an existing village. The village tile is returned to the pool, and a town tile is put in its place. A village may be upgraded to a town during the same turn in which it is built. A town is worth 2 VP.

If only three regions are located diagonally around a town, then another region is drawn from the stack and placed in the empty location.

A town also has a unit limit of 2, allowing a second trader or knight to be placed adjacent to it.

Scouts

A scout may be hired each time a new region is to be added to a player's colony: when building a new village, town, or road. The scout costs one grain (crown) resource and allows the player to search the stack of region tiles and freely choose which one to add. Reshuffle the region stack afterwards. (There is no physical representation of the scout in the game since its effect is immediate.)

Traders

A trader is placed on a road for 1 VP.

The active player may use each of their traders to make one special trade per turn. There are two possible special trades to choose from. (1) The trader may make a single one-for-one trade between the two regions adjacent to it. (2) The trader may trade two resources from one of the adjacent regions for any other resource. A trader may make a special trade on the same turn in which it is built.

The trader also allows a player to use a Trade Advantage event if they have at least as many traders as their opponent.

Note that the trader will often be adjacent to two villages or towns. The trader counts against the unit limit for both. For example, if a trader is placed between two villages, then no additional traders or knights may be placed adjacent to either village. Also, a trader may only be placed on locations were a road has been previously purchased, whether or not a tile is still there to represent the road (see Roads). Once all four pawns have been purchased, no additional traders may be hired.

Knights

A knight is placed directly above or below a village or town and is worth 1 VP.

A knight guards the two regions adjacent to it. When resolving the Raiders event, the resources in these two regions are *guarded*, and therefore not counted. However, if there are more than five *unguarded* resources, then half (rounded down) of **all** the player's resources, including guarded ones, must be discarded.

Additionally, if you have at least one knight, and at least as many knights as your opponent, you can take advantage of the Tournament event.

Once all four pawns have been purchased, no additional knights may be hired.

End of the Game

Once a player has a combination of villages, towns, traders, and knights that equals at least 7 VP, the game will end after the second player completes their turn. Thus, if the first player reaches 7 or more VPs during their turn, the second player has one turn to match their feat. The player with the most VPs at the end of the game wins. If the players have the same number VPs , the player with the most resources wins. If both players have an equal number of resources, the game is a draw and another piecepack game should be played to determine who will rule the Island of Natick.

Example of Play
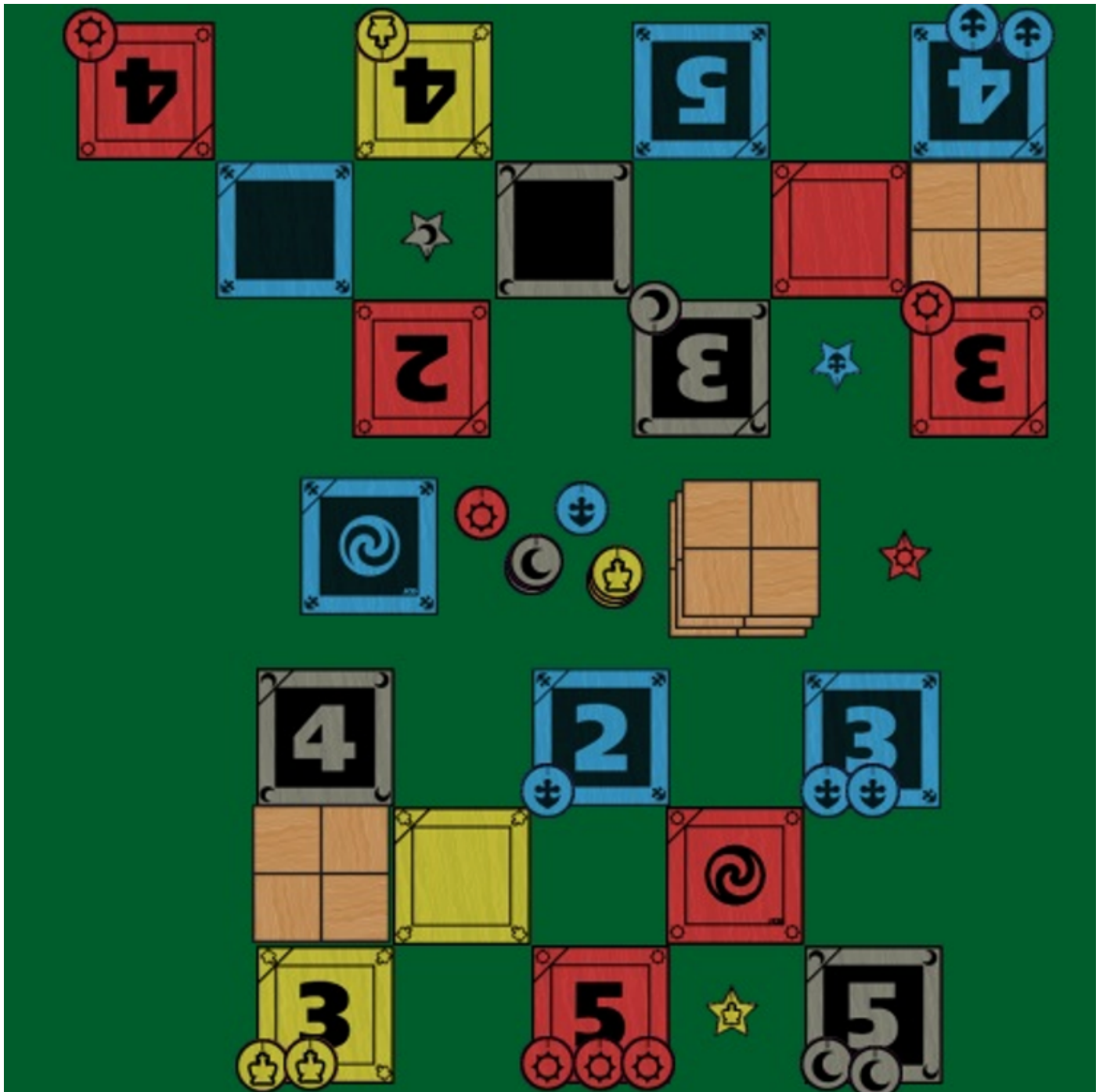
An example game is shown in the figure above. The upper player has 5 VPs, and the lower has only 4. The bottom player is the active player and rolls the dice. The results are:

Both players only have 5 *unguarded* resources, so neither is susceptible to the Raider Attack event. This die may be placed aside. Both players have one knight, so either could use the Tournament event. The top player decides to divide the dice with the 4 in one set and the 2 and Tournament event in the other. Her reasoning is

that if the bottom player takes the tournament event, she will be able to produce in all three of her "4" regions. If the bottom player takes the 4, she will still get more resources than her opponent. The bottom player has a tough choice.

If either of the players had six or more unguarded resources, the Raiders Attack event would have remained. However, it would only have taken effect if the offending player ended up with the set containing that event. Similarly, only the upper player in the figure could presently use a Trade Advantage event.

Now assume that the figure above shows the game state during the Trade and Build Phase. The bottom player may spend 2 grain and 2 wood to hire a trader. The trader may be placed on either side of the yellow village. Although the bottom player still has enough resources to purchase another village, all four village tiles are in use. Thus, he must wait until one of the existing villages is upgraded to a town.

Design Notes

Klaus Teuber's *The Setters of Catan Card Game* is one of my favorite two-player games. However, the long playing time and the many different types of cards to learn can be a turn-off for some. My goal was to make a faster, easier-to-learn, and, thanks to piecepack, more portable port of this great game. Those familiar with the card game will immediately recognize the basic structure. It is impossible to represent all the dozens of cards in the game, but many common elements remain. The knights are a combination of the knights and garrisons from the original. The traders resemble the trade fleets and commerce buildings.

The most significant addition to the game is the "divide and choose" mechanism for resource generation and event resolution. The limited number of pieces makes it difficult to have any strong advantage in military or commercial strength. Thus, very often both players are able to take advantage of an event. However, they may only do so if they get the set containing that die. The passive player is often able to give themselves good income, but they must wait a turn to build.

Another change from the original is that a new village (settlement) only adds a single new region to the colony. This helps to prevent the perceived need to focus on settlements in the original to maximize production. Here, the increase in production is more gradual. The limited number of village tiles also helps to prevent a "settlement race".

Perhaps I'll develop an expansion set using a four seasons piecepack. =)

Version History

0.6 -- 2007.03.22 -- Clarified victory conditions.

0.5 -- 2006.12.03 -- Original entry submitted for piecepack contest #7