

# The Game of Faro

A Dissertation

by

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## **The first and most obvious question is: “What is Faro?”**

Well the simple answer is, that it is a card game, a banking game similar to Black Jack or more probably Roulette. The banker, or the “house” fronts the money to cover the bets and the punters (players) bet against the banker. The principals follow that the player places a bet down on a card and the cards are drawn. If the player’s card is drawn first, you lose the bet and if your card is drawn second, you win. However, if neither card is drawn it is a push, nothing happens.

Sounds simple enough, right? Well actually it was, which is why it gained in popularity so fast across America in the nineteenth century, from the East Coast Gambling Dens to the quickly growing mining towns of the west. It was once stated: “ that there were as many Faro games operating as there were prostitutes plying their trade in these towns.”

Well with a statement like that, the desire to know more has to pique your curiosity. It certainly did mine.

I first came across Faro on old west poster I saw that stated that some gambling establishment had just received five new Faro tables along with their many barrels of whiskey. Having never heard of Faro, I made a note and “hit the internet” trying to get some information about what that was. The rest as they say is history... no, really it is a incredible ride into history as the game reigned supreme for three hundred years, became the most widely played game in the United States and had gained a foot hold from which it was not dislodged for more than one hundred years! A game that far exceeded any other, including poker.

Faro was so much more than a card game, it was an obsession, an addiction, a creator of great wealth and the poison that cost men their fortunes, their homes, plantations, mines, property, and even other people, such as slaves and wives...

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## Okay, Let's Begin

My original goal was to break the game down into each of its areas and focus on each part as thoroughly as I could. Often times, I found conflicting accounts or different versions of various pieces, even various terms were sometimes defined differently. Usually, I tried to offer both versions or at the very least a composite of those differences. And where, it deviated too far, I chose to ignore it, which eventually led to my creating a Terms, Phrases & Definitions that kept growing and growing.

- The first area contains: History (and background) and A Step Back.
- The second area delves into the details: an Overview of the "American" game version, which includes: Equipment; Play; Betting; Laws; Cheating; and A Commentary.
- The last area presents a full glossary of Terms, Phrases & Definitions, which I found to be quite colorful and intriguing.
- The last page lists the Acknowledgements, Sources & Credits that I used to gather my information to which I am greatly beholden.
- Finally, I have added an appendix detailing "my rig."

So, without further ado, I present my dissertation on the game of Faro, the most popular game ever played in America. A banking game of unequalled rivalry. The game, a legend in itself is also the game legends were made from...

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## Faro History

The genesis of Faro, for nearly three hundred years one of the most popular of all banking games, is uncertain and is quite likely to remain so. The following passage was taken from De Moivre's book *Faro and Rouge et Noir*.

"The name this game first bore in France was Pharaon, although it has since been called Faron, Pharaoh, Pharao, Pharo, Faro. Faro is Italian for a phare or lighthouse. The original denomination seems to have been the title anciently belonging to the kings of Egypt, derived from the Hebrew, which is interpreted *a making bare*: this may be an apposite name for the game, and the best reason that can be assigned for adopting it. The ingenious *grec* who invented it, probably knew the signification and enjoyed the conceit. Although an adventurous punter may on occasion win a large sum of a banker, and perchance break his bank, yet the chances being in favour of the banker, the probable consequence of a series of play is, that it would *make bare* the ponte.

The games of Bassette and Pharaon were soon introduced into England, and the legislature enacted new laws for the suppression of gaming-houses, under severe penalties. But it may be remarked, that they seem chiefly directed against the lower classes of society indulging their passion for gaming; lest they should abandon the tedious, although certain emoluments of useful occupations, in search of the rapid gains often experienced at games of chance. Pharaon still continues the most fashionable game and vespertine amusement of the *hautton*, from whose occasional gains or losses no extravagance is to be expected, or any injury to the general interests of society."

Excerpted from **Faro and Rouge et Noir**

By De Moivre

Printed for J. Debrett, opposite Burling-House, Piccadilly. 1793.

In England we have not been able to trace the game farther back than the reign of George the Second during which a statute was enacted by parliament prohibiting gambling under a penalty of two hundred pounds fine, faro being one of the games particularly mentioned in the said statute. Coming down to more recent times, we find Washington Irving, in his tale of the Mississippi Bubble, thus describing the Paris life of John Law, the Scotsman who was the leading spirit of that great swindle. He says:

“Law remained for a while in Paris, leading a gay and affluent existence, owing to his handsome person, easy manner, flexible temper and a faro-bank which he had set up. His agreeable existence was interrupted by a message from D’Argenson, Lieutenant-Governor of Police ordering him to quit Paris, alleging that he was *rather too skillful at the game he had introduced.*”

This event took place in the year 1700. The faro which John Law dealt and which Hoyle describes in his “Book of Games” had not been in use over forty years.

The popularity of faro on the continent in those days was very great. There were enterprising adventurers who traveled from place to place, establishing a bank wherever they stopped and remaining until there was no more money for them to win. At that period gaming was a universal vice in aristocratic circles, and those itinerant gamesters were floridly prosperous.

Some of them made such pretensions to aristocracy that they were received at court, and dealt their game to princes and even kings. Others were so modest as to confine their ministrations to the servants’ ball, for the benefit of the lackeys and hangers on. But one and all made faro pay them while its popularity lasted.

Excerpted from **Faro exposed, or The gambler and his prey ...**

By Alfred Trumble

New York, 1882

The popular theory goes that Faro was brought to America by the French colonists, which included many professional who settled Alabama and Louisiana early in the eighteenth century as part of John Law's failed Mississippi company. The eventual spread of Faro was then quickened by the Louisiana Purchase of 1803 and within the next decade after that historic event Faro had become the most widely played game in the United States and which gained a foothold that was not dislodged for more than one hundred years.

Many often believe the name Faro is said to derive from old French playing cards that had on their backs, pictures of Egyptian Pharaohs, but as described above, from De Moivre's book the name Faro derived from a litany of previous variations, either way it came to be know as Faro in America.

Manufactures of gambling equipment, fell into the habit of painting tigers on the mahogany boxes in which Faro equipment was packaged. Therefore, the animal came to be identified with the game and was often used above a bar to advertise the game was played there. Consequently, Faro was referred to simply as "the tiger" and men who played it were said to be "bucking the tiger."

The game followed the paddle ships from Louisiana up the east coast, into the gambling dens of the most popular houses, From there it moved west following the gold rush and was set up in every mining town, where it gained such popularity that men like Wyatt Earp, Doc Holiday and Bat Masterson to name a few became well known Faro dealers, either cutting the saloon in, or dealing the game for the saloon and taking their cut. There was money to be made and they wasted no time joining in. Faro was reported to be played widely during the Civil War, in camps, during bivouac and even in the prison camps.

By the turn of the century, state after state outlawed gambling of any sort and it wasn't until Nevada allowed gambling in the 1930s that Faro came back, but by then interest had been lost and even with a combination of new betting schemes finally died off. However, the last Faro table was closed in 1985, marking the end of 182 years the game was played in America. Today, Faro is seldom heard of, but until the early years of the twentieth century, when it began to succumb to a changing public taste, Faro was the mainstay of every important gambling house in existence and the ruin of thousands who tried to beat it.

No other card or dice game, not even Poker or Craps, has ever achieved the popularity that Faro once enjoyed in this country and it is extremely doubtful if any has equaled Faro's influence upon American gambling or bred such a host

of unscrupulous cheats. Faro is still credited with being the first extensive cheating at cards ever seen in the United States.

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## A Step Back...

As part of the history of Faro, I thought it appropriate to include a version of the game that is generally not known, but was probably the version most used in France and England during the 18<sup>th</sup> century and most likely in the early days of the French Colony of Louisiana.

During my research, I came across a book by Jonathan Harrington Green titled: *An Exposure of the Arts and Miseries of Gambling* from 1845, that like most books I found was a denouncement of gambling in general with a section on Faro, specifically the introduction of "that box." What I found most interesting about this passage was a copy of the section on Faro from *Hoyle's Treatise* (circa 1805, perhaps earlier) that contained the rules, terms and play of the game that is very different from how Faro was played throughout the 19<sup>th</sup> century, here in America. [A description quite similar to De Moivre's book from 1793.]

In Green's long and sometimes rambling commentary he even states: "[The game] has been so entirely remodeled and changed, as at present to bear no resemblance to the Faro introduced by Mr. Hoyle..." Green's book was finished around 1838 and first published in 1845, with a revised copy in 1847, both of which used *Hoyle's Treatise*.

As often stated, (the English Version of) Faro was a descendent of Bassette, so I have also researched the rules for Bassette as well and while there are a lot of similarities and looking at this description of Faro against the description of Bassette, the differences are not that obvious. In fact in many instances they are the same game. By making slight changes to the play and betting, they could claim they were not playing Bassette, but instead were engaging in a game of Pharaon (Pharaoh - Faro). One difference that did stand out was a description of *figure* betting, which was also prevalent in the "American Faro," whereby the player can bet on combinations of cards.

I find it interesting that an 1835 edition of *Hoyle's Games* (as well as an 1877 and 1887 edition) still contained Faro described with the rules, terms and play as the original version. It wasn't until a 1914 edition of *Hoyle's Games* that Faro was described as the game that was played throughout America, in the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

However, I have a copy of *The American Hoyle*, by Dick & Fitzgerald from 1864, that states in its' preface: " In it [the present volume] will be found all the



Games common or fashionable with the American People..." Further along it specifically addresses the game:

"The game of Faro has been prepared with great care, and is now for the first time correctly published in any book of Games. The Faro of Hoyle, as presented in the English editions, and in all American reprints, is a game long since obsolete, and will scarcely be recognized as the Faro of to-day."

I have an 1880 edition of *Hoyle's Games* (Modern Pocket Hoyle) that has the "American" rules (that I have presented, from both editions, in detail later as part of the overall picture of Faro), so it is a bit confusing, but more than likely, Faro spread by actual play and those were the rules that applied.

While that may have been the game that was still played in England with the original rules, it appears the new game was developing in America. I have come across several instances talking about or describing Faro as it was played in the "American" version as early as the 1820s.

It is around this time that Faro was making it's way up the Mississippi and points east. Because most of the details we have on Faro (in the books I have found) largely talk about Faro as it was played in the later years of the century here in America, I thought a look into the original, or at least the game that was played in the late 1700s and early 1800s would be integral to this chronicle.

This Faro game, as it is described immediately following, has two significant differences in that the players have their own booklet of cards or *Livret* as it is termed, by which to place their bets, where as the game most known in America has a *layout* to place bets upon. However, the *figure* betting is available in both games. The second difference is the ability to compound the stakes that are better explained later by Mr. Hoyle.

If you look at the two games together, the French/English (or original game) and the American version, they are basically the same game. All that's really missing from the American version is the ability to make the various *parolets* that gives the bettor an opportunity to multiple parlay his original stake.

It would not be too great a stretch to envision how the game morphed into the American version. In the original game a player was handed (purchased or otherwise attained) a booklet of cards, his *livret*, in which to play the game. This

booklet is for the player to place his stake upon the card (kinda like bingo, every bettor has their own), as well as, engage in the aforementioned aggregate betting. Let us suppose, that as the game progressed here, it was not practical (or simply not available) for each player to have their own *liveret*, and that for simplicity, the dealer simply laid out a suit of cards for each player to each place their multiple bets upon. Eventually, someone got the idea to glue or paste these thirteen cards to an oilcloth for stability, the advent of the *layout*. The only issue then would be to distinguish the bets being made, which was done by colored markers, and cheques.

The original rules talk of *cocking*, or crooking the corner of the card, or the next corner, to extend, or parlay the bet, which could only be done on a player's individual card. [From De Moivre the following was noted: "This is often termed a cock; but as the use of this word gives rife to some ridiculous, not to say immodest allusions, the term *paroli* is invariably used in good company." ] Without the benefit of each player having their own cards, specifically each player placing multiple bets upon the same pasted card on the layout, it would not be possible for a player to work his *parolet* of the bet, which was conveniently left out of the play or just forgotten all together. In the American version you could still parlay the original stake (or bet), but it was only a multiple of the stake (and up to the dealer's limit). In other words, if the player bet five dollars and the card won, the next bet would be ten dollars and so on. There is no seven, or fifteen, or thirty-one, or sixty-three times the original stake to be had in the American version. An advantage of this version of the game allowed a player to simply walk up to a table and place a bet, without any prerequisites. He merely had to lay his money upon a card or group of cards.

The original version (and the difference from Bassette) was the four additional cards by which to place bets on certain combinations of cards called *figures*, allowing the player to place combination bets. The American version continued this option by the unique design of the *layout* allowing for the placement of the player's bet to signify these combination bets.

So, remove a couple of the terms, Americanize the rest and without too much effort you have what became known as the American version of the Game of Faro, a hybrid of the game, that itself was a hybrid of the game...

My theory, and it is only that, is that the original game was the one played when those first settlers came to the French Colony of Louisiana in the 18<sup>th</sup> century. However, as I have read and note later, Faro can be simply played with

two decks of cards, one to place bets on and the other to draw the cards for a turn and if you keep in mind that Faro was largely played with a deck of cards and a makeshift *layout*, then you can see how easily it could spread from that early beginning in Louisiana up the Mississippi to all points east prior to the Civil War. It was during this transition that other “tools” were added to the Faro setup, a faro board (layout), case keeper and most specifically the dealing box, which to Green is the basis for his condemnation of the game.

I have included a portion of his passage following the Treatise, largely due to his reference and his description of the game, which again refers to the later version of the play of Faro. It strikes me as curious, that even though he refers to the later game, for he by 1838 must have had knowledge of the current play, he chose to include the rules to the original game (or English version). I can only surmise that, those were the only rules that existed for him to seek out.

While this “English” version has a bit of pomp and circumstance; I could envision a gentleman or lady entering a fine house, or club and handed their *livret* (booklet of cards) approach a table, where sat a dealer with only a pack of cards and cheques or paper money, waiting on his prey to take a seat next to the others and the anticipation as a punter paroli’s his bet in the hopes of a seven times, or fifteen times, or thirty-one times, or sixty-three times his stake. There must have been certain magic in the air.

Whereas, in the “American” version, a person enters a club, or gambling den, or saloon and walks up to a table where other players are standing and fights his way in to place his bet on the layout in front of the dealer. Certainly absent any pomp and circumstance, but a quick and easy way to leave much lighter than he entered.

Maybe, I’m just a romantic at heart, but I would have liked to have learned and played the game that was fashionable in England at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century. Hell, who am I kidding, I would have liked to play that game that swept across America in the 19<sup>th</sup> century as well!

Here then is that original game as described by Hoyle in his Treatise on games before it became the “American” game.

## Arts and Miseries, by J. H. Green 1847

### The Game of Faro

[From Hoyle's Treatise.]

"The game of pharo, or faro, is very similar to basset, a game formerly much in vogue. It may be played by any number of persons; and each player, or punter, as he is termed is furnished with a suit of cards denominated a *livret*, and four other cards which are called *figures*; viz. : the first is a plain card, with a blue cross and is called the *little figure*, and designates the ace, deuce, and three. The second is a yellow card, and answers for the four, five, and six. The third is a plain card, with a black lozenge in the center [De Moive calls it a *carreau* or diamond]; and designates the seven, eight, nine, and ten. The fourth is a red card, and answers for the king, queen, and knave.

The game may be played without these figures, as every punter has a suit of cards; but they are convenient for those who wish to punt, or stake upon seven cards at a time.

The money placed on the cards by the punter is answered by a banker, who limits the sums to be played for according to the magnitude of his bank. At public tables, the banker, according to the number of punters has two, three, or more assistants, called *croupiers*, whose business it is to watch the games of the several punters.

### Terms used in the Game of Faro

*Banker*, the person who keeps the table.

*Couche*, or *Enjeu*, the stake.

*Coup*, any two cards dealt alternately to the right or left.

*Croupier*, an assistant to the dealer.

*Doublet* is when the punter's card is turned up twice in the same coup; in which case the bank wins half the stake. A single *parolet* must be taken down, but if there are several, only one retires.

*Hockley* signifies the last card but one, the chance of which the banker claims, and may refuse to let any punter withdraw a card when eight or less remain to be dealt.

*Livret*, a suit of thirteen cards, with four others called *figures*, viz. : one, named the *little figure*, has a blue cross on each side, and represents ace, deuce, trois; another yellow on both sides, styled the *yellow figure*, signifies 4, 5, 6; a third

with a black lozenge in the center, named the *black figure*, stands for the 7, 8, 9, 10; and a red card, called the *great*, or *red figure*, for knave, queen, king.

*L'une pour l'autre* means a drawn game, and is said when two of the punter's cards are dealt in the same coup.

*Masque* signifies turning a card, or placing another face downwards, during any number of coups, on that whereon the punter has staked, and which he may afterwards display at pleasure.

*Oppose* is reversing the game, and having the cards on the right for the punter, and those on the left for the dealer.

*Paix*, equivalent to double or quits, is, when the punter, having won, does not chose to parolet and risk his stake, but bends or makes a bridge of his card, signifying that he ventures his gains only. A double paix is, when the punter, having won twice, bends two cards, one over the other; treble paix, thrice, &c. A paix may follow a sept, &c. or quinze, &c. & c.

*Paix-Parolet* is when a punter has gained a parolet, wishes then to play double or quits, and save his original stakes; double paix-parolet succeeds to wining a paix-parolet; treble paix-parolet follows double, &c.

*Parolet*, sometimes called *cocking*, is when a punter, being fortunate, chooses to venture both his stake and gains, which he intimates by bending a corner of his card upwards.

*Pli* is when a punter, having lost half his stake by a doublet, bends a card in the middle, and setting it up with the points and foots towards the dealer, signifies thereby a desire either of recovering the moiety, or of losing all.

*Pont*, the same as Paix.

*Punt*, the punter or player.

*Quinze, et le va*, is when the punter, having won a sept, &c., bends the third corner of the card, and ventures for fifteen times his stake.

*Sept, et le va*, succeeds the gaining of a parolet, by which the punter, being entitled to thrice his stake, risks the whole again, and bending his card a second time, tries to win sevenfold.

*Soixante, et le va*, is when the player having obtained a trente, ventures all once more, which is signified by making a fifth parolet, either on another card, if he has paroleted on one only before, or by breaking the side of that one which contains four, to pursue his luck in the next deal.

*Tailleur*, the dealer; generally the banker.

*Trente, et le va*, follows a quinze, &c., when the punter again tries his luck, and makes a fourth parolet.

## Method of Dealing, Rules of The Game, &c.

1. The dealer, who is generally the banker, is seated at such a part of the table where he can best observe the games of the several punters. He then takes an entire pack of cards, which he ought invariably to count, lest there should be one card more or less than fifty-two. When this happens to be the case, the dealer forfeits his deal, and the bank must then pay every stake depending on the cards of the different punters.

2. After the cards are counted, the dealer must shuffle and mix them well, as no one but himself, or one of the bankers, is suffered to touch the cards, except to cut them; which is generally done by one of the punters.

3. After the cards are cut, the dealer shows the bottom card to the company, and leaves one of the same sort turned up on the table, that every one may know what card is at the bottom, without asking the dealer. The punters having made their game, the dealer announces that he is about to begin his deal, by saying 'Play'.

4. He now proceeds to turn the cards up from the top of the pack, one by one, placing the first card on his right hand, the second on his left; thus continuing till he has turned up every card in the pack, laying twenty-six on one side, and twenty-six on the other. He also specifies the cards he turns up as thus, ace, queen, &c. The first card, which is placed on the right side, is for the bank; the second, which is placed on the left side, is for the punters, and so on alternately, until the whole pack is dealt out, stopping at the end of every second card, to observe if an event has taken place; in that case, to receive or pay, and to give the punter an opportunity of making their games.

5. When the punter wins upon his card, and does not desire to receive his money from the bank, but wishes to proceed on with his game, he makes a paix, or parolet. A paix is made by doubling his card, and leaving his stake on it, which, if he wins a second time, entitles him to receive double the amount of his stake; and if he loses upon the second event, he saves his stake, having only lost what he had won upon the first event.

6. If having won a second, he ventures to proceed, he doubles another card, and places the card he plays on at the head of his double paix, and so on, as often as an event in his favor takes place, still continuing to save his original stake, if he loses, with the right to change his card, after every event; or even without an event, it is never refused, by asking leave of the dealer.

7. The parolet is made by cocking one corner of your card, and if you win the second time, it entitles you to three times the amount of your stake; but by the same rule, if you lose, you not only lose what you had won, upon the first event, but your stake likewise.

8. After making a successful parolet, it not unfrequently, happens that the punter, in order to save his stake upon the next event, makes a paix-parolet; which is done by doubling his card as before, after he has made his first cock, and which, if he wins, entitles him to receive six times the amount of his stake.

9. But if the amount of the stake should be inconsiderable, he makes a second cock on his card, instead of doubling it, and which, if he wins, entitles him to receive seven times the amount of his stake, and is called *sept et le va*.

10. If he should happen to win a third time, and determines to proceed, he either makes a paix to his *sept et le va*, or puts a third cock on his card, which is called a *quinze et le va*, and which, if he wins, entitles him to fifteen times the amount of his stake; and so on, as often as an event in favor of the punter takes place, and he continues his game without receiving from the bank the amount of his winnings as they arise. Doubling every time the amount of what he was entitled to receive upon the last event, besides including his stake at his own option, either to paix upon his parolets, or to add another cock to his card; which is called *trente et le va*, and entitles him to receive thirty-one times the amount of his stake.

11. If, after this, they continue fortunate, it very seldom happens they make a fifth cock; but this has been done by cutting the card in the side, and making a cock from that part of the card. But in general, those who play so bold as to venture to the fourth cock, and are fortunate enough to win upon that event, double this card with the four cocks; which will entitle them, if they win to sixty-two times the amount of their stake; with this reserve, in case they lose, they save their stake. This is called a *soixante et le va*.

12. It is the duty of the dealer to be particularly attentive to the punters, to observe that they do not, by mistake, double or cock a card when they are not entitled to do so, as it is considerably against the bank.

13. The dealer ought also to be extremely careful to hold the cards close and tight in his hand; as a person with a keen eye, by placing himself on the right hand of the dealer, may discover the cards going to be turned, and making his game accordingly.

14. The dealer must be ready to answer how many cards remain to be dealt, when he is asked by any of the punters, in order that they may know how to proceed; as it is considerably against them to make a fresh game, a paix, or a parolet, when the cards are nearly out.

15. When the left-hand card turned up is like that on the right, as two kings, two queens, &c., it is called a *doublet*, and the punter thereby loses half his stake. This is greatly in favor of the bank.

16. When this happens with a card on which the punter has made a parolet, he must take it down, but does not lose his stake. When there are more parolets than one, the punter is to take down but one corner of his card.



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**Odds at the Game of Faro.**

The chances of doublets vary according to the number of similar cards remaining among those undealt. The odds against the punter increase with every coup that is dealt.

When only eight cards are remaining, it is 5 to 3 in favor of the bank.

When only six cards, it is . . . . . 2 to 1

When only four cards, . . . . . 3 to 1

That the punter does not win his first stake is an equal bet.

That he does not win twice following, is . . 3 to 1

Three times following, is . . . . . 7 to 1

Four ditto, is . . . . . 15 to 1

Five ditto, is . . . . . 31 to 1

Six ditto, is . . . . . 63 to 1.”

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**The Game of Faro** Excerpted from **An Exposure of the Arts and Miseries of Gambling**  
by Jonathan Harrington Green  
1845 – Revised 1847

(Actual passage attributed to **Hoyle’s Treatise** by Edmond Hoyle circa 1805, possibly earlier)

## Arts and Miseries

### **Deceptions Used in the Game of Faro**

This game has proved to be the most destructive one ever introduced among us, both on account of its being the greatest banking game, and the most exciting and fascinating game ever known. And I [Green] think no one, after becoming somewhat acquainted with the details of this game, will judge it to be otherwise than I [Green] have represented it to be.

Mr. Hoyle, in his *Treatise on Games*, contemplated in this, as in every other game of his introduction, fair play, and has so laid the game down, and given a scientific exposition of his principles and positions, that persons reading his *Treatise* would get but a trifling knowledge of the game as played at present by the gamblers throughout our country. This has been so entirely remodeled and changed, as at present to bear no resemblance to the faro introduced by Mr. Hoyle; and as I [Green] have undertaken to expose the deceptions of this game, I [Green] hope to be able to complete the task (adhering strictly to the truth) in such a manner as shall convince all of the immense evil of it, and fully expose to all the artifices of those who play it; indeed a man, it will clearly appear, would act more rationally and correctly to burn his money than to bet it on faro. In both cases he would lose his money, but in the former it would be lost without the sin of gambling being committed, his time wasted, and his reputation injured; all these, and more, he will save by burning his money, in preference to betting it on faro.

Mr. Hoyle, I [Green] doubt not, little supposed that any one would wish to improve his games, and there is only one class of persons that would wish to do so, and that is the class of professional gamblers, who are usually quite ingenious, through their ingenuity all runs into rascality; and faro, as Mr. Hoyle left it, certainly afforded a fine scope for them to exercise their talents. This they have done so effectually that the banker now possesses almost all the chances to win; and there are very few against him that would cause him to lose. And just as the banker's chances are for winning, so are the better's chances for losing. Mr. Hoyle never spoke of such a thing in his *Treatise* as a box being connected in any manner with the game; but he directs that the game be played with fifty-two cards, and these cards be subject to every body's inspection. When all were ready, the dealer would begin by shuffling and cutting fairly, and then deal from his own hands, one to the right and one to the left; that which was dealt to the right was for the banker, and the left is for those who bet, whom Mr. Hoyle calls "punters." I [Green] would have recommended to the reader to examine what Hoyle says in relation to the chances for and against the better; that is, in the faro

which he introduced, (which is tenfold fairer than the game now played under that name;) and I [Green] think any rational man will be satisfied that the odds are not less than forty per cent in favor of the of the banker, when the game was played comparatively fairly; but this is known to but very few of those who bet on it; and of late years these odds have been immeasurably increased in favor of the banker. All men who have seen this game played of late years can testify that it is now dealt from a box, and this box we find to have been introduced by the banker, and not by the betters on the game; and should a banker be questioned as to his motives for introducing the box, or why the box was introduced at all, his reply will be, that it was to prevent the betters from taking advantages of him by marking the cards; and then, to render his story probable, he will mark his cards on the edges, and pretend to show how easy it would be for him to be imposed upon by the crafty, and how great a risk he would run of being ruined if the box were not used.

Now all this is the height of improbability; for in Mr. Hoyle's day, and at the present time [1838], the dealer has from one to four assistants, who are called "croupiers," or "look-outs;" whose business it is to assist the dealer by looking out for his interests all through the game, to see that all bets which win are paid, and none paid out that was not lost by the dealer; and, in fine, to guard his interests wherein and wherever they may be at stake. And it is idle to tell us that the dealer can suffer from such intrigues, when he is so well guarded by men who have the same interest in the game that he has, and who are well versed in all the various tricks and cheats, and know perfectly well how to guard against them. On the contrary, he is the only one that possesses any chance of practicing cheats; and this he continually does, so long as he is playing. And the motives for changing this game from the hand to the box, were as base and nefarious as any that ever actuated the ingenious but wicked gambler; his object was nothing less than to be absolutely sure of stripping completely every man that should bet against him. And what is said by the banker of protecting himself against the cheats of the betters, was in reality, nothing but an artifice, or blind, to screen himself in practicing his cheats against the persons that would bet against the game. As before suggested, the banker, even in Hoyle's time, had advantages over the betters; but this class of men have such an insatiable avidity for pelf, - they are such very slaves to the love of money, that if a man loses ninety-nine dollars with them when he has a hundred, they are eager (if not more so) for the last dollar as if they had won nothing, both that they may have the boast of having won all before them, and to gratify their lawless, villainous, and morbid desire of possession.

Hoyle never says, in a single instance in his Treatise, that the odds are at any time in favor of the better, but always in favor of the banker; and we may be

sure that no change would ever be made by him that would lessen the odds that are in his favor. Though it is true, that some unimportant bets are sometimes won from the bank, yet it is very seldom indeed, that a man leaves it with more money than he carried to it; for it matters but little how lucky a man may be, - the banker has equal chances with himself as far as luck may go, and with his sources of artificial advantages, he can beat any and every man who may play against him. And I [Green] am of the opinion, had every man that has bet against faro, been furnished with a copy of Hoyle's Games, and studied the chances against the better, that the game would have gone down; or at least, the attempt to introduce a set of tools in the game would have failed. But a great majority have never had a copy of this work, which I [Green] doubt not, would have deterred multitudes from betting when the odds were manifestly so great against them.

Excerpted from **An Exposure of the Arts and Miseries of Gambling**  
By Jonathan Harrington Green  
1845- Revised 1847

\* \* \*

While Green may have every reason to make his assumptions, knowing the “rules” would probably have had little effect on the players. Assuming they could read at all, no one would have bothered to learn rules other than what they witnessed as the game was played, regardless of what was “legal” or not. The game was fast and furious and if you didn’t step up, someone else would, regardless of what device the dealer was using.

There is no question that cheating was prevalent in Faro and especially after the invention of the dealing box.

However, while we are still here, I’d like to present a tidbit from a book titled: *Old Times* by John Ashton (1885), where he talks about social life at the end of the 18<sup>th</sup> century England, specifically the section on gambling. He talks quite extensively about the ladies that ran the Faro banks at London’s West End and the ladies that played the game. The time period was 1789 to 1793 or so, and while there were many passages relating to events at the Faro houses, there was one passage I felt appropriate to share here simply because it brings another dimension to the game, albeit the original game.

“Mrs. G. is said to understand Faro better than any other Lady of the town, particularly in the art of *doubling* the corner of a card, so as to win triple stakes if it is successful. She has *doubled* the Faro Bank holders out of so much money, that they shrink at the sight of her presence. There is so much running upon *tick* with the Faro Tables, that, like the Country Banks, they are breaking every day. They will soon want some other assistance than Cards, and Wax Lights, to keep up some of the Establishments at the West End of the town.”

“The Faro Bank Holders now lose money almost every evening. The *punters* are now becoming the *rooks*, and the *bankers* the *pigeons*. The Ladies understand the game so well, and they play so *keen*, that it requires the eyes of *Argus* to detect all their *tricks*. As little *Quick* says in the play, a greenhorn has only to put down his money, and he is sure to find some one *to take it up for him*.”  
– (*Times*, May 1, 1793.)

Here we find an example of the players, Ladies no less, adept at beating the bank and the dealers, far different that what we will read about later in the text. Maybe the dealers did need an advantage!

Now that we have explored what may be the original game and got a sense of the play and excitement of the game, let us move on to the next section, to the game that swept America during the 19<sup>th</sup> century.

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The “American” Game of Faro, Featuring:

Faro Equipment

Faro Play

Faro Betting

The Laws of Faro

Faro: “That Cheating Game”

—

## Faro Equipment

In its most basic form, all that is needed to set up a game of Faro is two decks of cards. The first deck we will only use the 13 cards of the spade suit. The second deck will be used for the deal. Checks are placed on any of the thirteen cards spread out and the second deck is shuffled and placed face down in the dealer's left hand. The cards are then turned over one at a time, the losing card and the winning card, which completes a turn.

However, from the beginning, a layout of some sort was used to set out the 13 cards, if for no other reason than to keep the cards from shifting about. Typically, it was simply the 13 cards pasted (or painted) onto a green felt (oil-cloth). As time went on, more items were added to the setup and became part of the "Faro Rig".

*The Layout*            The designation of this adjunct to the game is derived from the fact that it forms that part of the table upon which the players "lay out" their stakes. Usually it is a green cloth, having painted upon it a presentation of the thirteen cards of one suit.

*The Cue-keeper*        Also known as the cue-box, or case keeper. This is a piece of apparatus used for the purpose of recording the cards as they are played and is under the control of a man who is specifically told off to attend it. By its means at any stage of the game the players can see at a glance what cards have already been played and what remains in the pack. It is constructed upon the principle of the ancient 'abacus' and consists of a framework of wood, supporting thirteen wires, upon each of which slide four small beads. Opposite each wire there is attached to the framework a miniature reproduction of one of the cards of a suit. In Faro, the suit of any card is of no importance. The position of the beads at the commencement of the game is at the left hand side of their respective divisions. As each card of a denomination is pulled the corresponding bead is moved to the right, until all four cards of a denomination is displayed. The person operating this device is called the "case-keeper". (The device is often referred to as a "casekeeper.")

*Cue-cards*            These are small cards upon which are printed the names of the thirteen cards, a space being left opposite each name, for the purpose of enabling the players to check off the cards as they are played. They are sometimes used in place of a case-keeper, but even where a case-keeper is employed, they are utilized by the players for recording the winning and losing



cards. Any card that wins is marked with a cross and one, which loses is marked with a naught.

***The Dealing Box*** This is a metal box in which the cards are placed face upwards and from which they are dealt one at a time. The box is open at the back and cut away at the top sufficiently to allow a large portion of the face of the card to be visible. The plate overlaps the front side about one-eighth of an inch and below its front edge is a slit, only just sufficiently wide to allow one card at a time to be pushed out so that the cards are bound to be dealt one by one and in the order they occupy in the pack. They are slipped out by the thumb, which presses upon them through the aperture in the top plate. The cards are inserted through the back and constantly pressed upwards by a moveable plate or partition below, which, are springs sufficiently strong for the purpose.

***The Check Rack*** This is a polished wooden tray lined with billiard-cloth. It is used by the dealer to contain his piles of counters and his money. It stands at his right hand upon the Faro table, during play.

***The Faro Table*** This is simply an oblong table having a recess or cavity cut out in the center of one of the long sides. In this recess the dealer sits, being thus enabled to be as near to the layout as possible and at the same time to have to have all his appliances within easy reach. [Also, a portable Faro Layout "A Snap" (so called because of its ability to fold up) was used and placed upon a table, usually covered in green cloth.]

***Pack of Cards*** A standard pack of playing cards, made up of 52 cards. The cards were made of hard paper and squared at the corners. They also did not contain indices.

***Coppers*** Usually a copper penny (where the name came from), but these were also improvised or man-made objects to place on the top of checks to signal the bet was "coppered" basically meaning the usual action on the bet was reversed.

***Equalizer*** A piece of equipment not required but most likely present at every game. Everything from a double barrel shotgun to a Colt single action six shooter to the fanciest of derringers, "an equalizer" was usually brought to the table. Since most of the players were carrying, it was in the dealer's (or lookout's) best interest to be as well. It went a long way toward solving any disagreements.

\* \* \*



Faro ready, with layout, casekeeper, dealing box and checks.

## Faro Play

Faro is played with a full deck of fifty-two cards. The dealer sits at a table prepared for the purpose, with an assistant or "looker-out" at his right hand. Upon the center of the table is a suit of cards arranged in the following order [from the dealer's view: K, Q, J, 10,9,8, top row; A, 2,3,4,5,6, bottom row and on the right end the 7 between the two rows – see diagram under Faro Betting] upon which the players place their money or stakes and which is called the layout.

The stakes usually consist of counters or checks, made of ivory, representing different sums. They are purchased of the banker and are redeemed by him at the option of the holder. The banker usually limits the sums to bet accordingly to the amount of his capital.

The game may be played by any number of persons and each player may select any card or number of cards upon the "lay-out" and may change his bet from one card to another whenever he pleases.

The players having placed their stakes upon the "lay-out" and all other preliminaries being settled, the dealer shuffles the cards, cuts them and places them face up, in a small metal box, usually silver, which is a little larger than the pack to be admitted. This box is opened at the top, so that the top card may always be in view. It also has a small opening at the side sufficiently large to permit a single card to pass through it conveniently. As the cards are pushed out or dealt from the top through this opening, the remainder of the deck is forced upwards by springs placed in the bottom of the box until the pack is exhausted.

We will suppose, by way of illustration, that the Ace is the top card as it appears in the box. This card is shoved through the opening, when a Ten appears-this is the banker's card and wins all the money which may have been placed upon it. The Ten like the Ace is removed, disclosing a King, which is the player's card, the bank losing all the stakes found upon it. The drawing of these two cards is called "a turn", which being made, the dealer takes and pays all the money won and lost and then proceeds as before, drawing out two more cards-the first for the bank and the second for the player and thus he continues until the whole pack is dealt out.

Whenever two cards of the same denomination, as for example, two Sevens or two Fours, appear in the same turn, the dealer takes half the money

found upon such card-this is called a "split" and is said to be the bank's greatest percentage, to avoid which, old Faro players wait until there is one Seven or Four, or card of any other denomination left in the box and then place their heavy bets upon that, thus avoiding the possibility of a "split".

If a player wishes to play upon the banker's card, or to bet that any certain card will lose, he indicates it by placing a copper upon the top of his stake and if the card turns up for the bank, that player wins.

When there is but one turn left in the box, the player has the privilege of "calling the last turn" that is, of guessing the order in which the cards will appear and if he calls it correctly, he receives four times the amount of his stake.

In order to keep an accurate record of the game, so as to exhibit at a glance every phase of the deal, printed cards are given to the players upon which they keep the game in the following manner: each case is noted with an "O" which means the card has lost or an "I" which means the card has won and when there are four marks, won or lost it means the case is played out.

Another mode of keeping the game is by a "cue-box" by which the different stages of the game are correctly noted by one of the players, or by a regular "cue-keeper" who is usually attached to the bank.

The cue box is a miniature "lay-out" with four buttons attached to each card. At the beginning of each deal, the buttons, which are placed upon wire, extending from each card are all shoved close up to the card, as soon as a turn is made, the buttons are pushed to the opposite end of the wire, so that by a glance at the eye, the player can see how many of each card remains in the dealer's box.

(Excerpted from **The American Hoyle** 1864 Edition and the **Modern Pocket Hoyle** 1880 Edition)

\* \* \*

*(While I chose to use Hoyle's Rules in its entirety, I felt it appropriate to include other passages that were more detailed in its explanation of the play.)*

The limit of a Faro game was determined by the prosperity of the banker, who announced before bets were made the amount for which he would play. The top limit was allowed when two, three, four cards, commonly called doubles, triples and quadruples, of a particular denomination remained in the box. When only a single, or case, card remained, thus giving the bank no chance of a split, the limit was halved. The banker also announced whether the limit would be open to running. If the former, a player was permitted to bet only a stipulated amount, but he could bet it as often as he pleased. If the latter, a gambler was given the privilege of "going paroli", a phrase which, incidentally, has been corrupted into parlay and is common usage on the race tracks. In other words, a Faro player could parlay his winnings, if any, to a sum previously agreed upon as the extreme running limit and then, if he wished, bet the whole upon a single card or combination.

The first card exposed in the box when the dead card had been withdrawn was a "loser" and counted for the bank. It began the pile nearest the box. The next card was a "winner" and counted for the players. Every two cards drawn in this manner were called a "turn" and the game thus proceeded until twenty-five turns had been made, in each of which there was a "loser" and a "winner." If two cards of the same denomination appeared on a single turn, it was called a "split" and the bank took half of all money, which had been bet on the card. When the last turn was reached, with a "loser" and a "winner" and a dead card remaining in the box, the players were invited to make bets on the order in which they would appear. To the correct guesser the bank paid four to one. If, however, two of the cards were of the same denomination, the odds were only two to one. On all turns before the last even money was paid.

To avoid the confusion of betting upon a dead card, wagers were not placed until the pack had been cut and placed in the dealing box. In the early days of Faro bets could be made only upon the figures, the squares, the pot and single cards, but as the game developed they were allowed on innumerable combinations.

\* \* \*

## Faro Betting

Faro was possibly the simplest gambling game ever devised. Players bet against the house, or banker, or bank (someone who put up a bank) placing bets upon a green cloth-covered layout with the images of all thirteen cards, ace through king, painted or pasted on. The usual suit of choice was spades, but suits didn't matter only the case (denomination) did.

Betting is fast and furious at a Faro table, with each "turn" of the cards. A losing card was pulled for the bank and a winning card was pulled for the player. All bets were settled after each "turn". Bets were placed upon the layout or moved about prior to the next "turn".

The dealer is the banker and sets the minimum and maximum bet amounts. The maximum bet limits refer to the wager amount for plain bets and to the number of times a bet may be parlayed.

The layout of a Faro table is comprised of two rows of six cards each, the seven placed on the dealer's right spaced evenly between the two rows. In addition the layout contained a strip at the top by the dealer with the words "High Card" that could also be bet on.

The cards were placed (pasted) onto the layout with the Ace, deuce, three four, five and six starting from the dealer's left. On the bottom row, facing the player were the eight, nine, ten, Jack, Queen and King. Positioned in the middle next to the six and the eight was the seven. On the top of the board by the dealer was the High Card spot.

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HIGH CARD						
	6	5	4	3	2	A
7						
	8	9	10	J	Q	K

---

*This is how the layout would look from the player's point of view.*

Basic betting involved placing a check (chip) on a particular card, which was called backing a card; a check placed on the Q would be referred to as “Backing the Queen” or Flat-footing the Queen” and so on.

The gaps between the cards allowed you to place a check between cards, such as a check between the 2 and A was a bet on the deuce and Ace, “splitting the Ace-Deuce”, or a check between the A and K would be betting the Ace and King, “splitting the Ace-King”. A bet of this nature would lose if either card came up the losing card, or win if either card came up the winning card. (This was also known as a combination bet.)

The board layout was such that multiple combination bets were available. The 6-7-8 was know as “The Pot” and a check to the right of the seven was a bet on “The Pot”, with the same rule as above. If either of these cards came up as the losing card the bet was lost and conversely if either came up as the winning card the bet was won.

Three card bets consisted of a check placed beneath the 4, for instance, which was, a bet on the 3-4-5, with the above rule that if either of these three cards came up as the losing card the bet was lost and if either of these three cards came up as the winning card the bet was won. Similarly, a check placed above the 2 was a bet on the “Little Figure”, that is the Ace, Deuce and Three, or below the Q, was a bet on the “Big Figure”, the King, Queen and Jack and so on.

Another multiple combination bet involved betting “the squares”. Based on the layout format it was possible to place a bet on the 9-8-6-5, which was referred to as the “Nine Square”, or the J-10-4-3 was called the “Jack Square” and the K-Q-2-A was called the “Grand Square” (also know as “King Square”). If either, of these four cards, bet in the “square,” came up the losing card, the bet was lost; if either, of these four cards, bet in the “square,” came up the winning card the bet was won.

A “split” occurred when the losing card and the winning card were of the same case, such as two Jacks, then the dealer would take half of the bet placed on the card (if it wasn’t an even split the dealer would take the bigger half). A “split” was also declared in a combination bet if one card lost and one card won. For instance if a check was placed on “The Pot” and the losing card was a 6 and the winning card was a 7, thereby, the same bet both won and lost, a split was



declared. (Same as when the losing card and winning card was of the same case, such as two fours.) However, in some games, this bet was declared a “push” neither a loser nor a winner. Again it was house or dealer rules that set the play.

In the early days of Faro, players could only back single cards, or groups of cards referred to as “splitting,” the pot, figures and squares. While the above bets were basically straight placement bets other bets were allowed that were not so obvious, but a bit more involved.

Diagonal combination bets were also employed. A check placed on the left hand bottom corner of the 3 was a bet on the Three-Ten; likewise a bet on the top left corner of the 9 was a bet on the Nine-Six. A check placed on the right hand bottom corner of the 4 was a bet on the Four-Jack. As in all combination bets the same rules applied, if either card came up as the losing card the bet was lost and conversely if either card came up the winning card the bet was won.

Corner bets were another combination and usually meant barring (or skipping) the card in between. A check placed on the lower left hand corner of the K meant a bet on the King-Jack, barring (or skipping) the Queen and so on. A check placed on the top left hand corner of the A meant a bet on the Ace-Three, barring the Two and so on. A check placed on the top left hand corner of the 5 is a bet on the Five-Seven barring the Six and a bet placed on the left hand bottom corner of the 9 is a bet on the Nine-Seven barring the Eight. Once again, the same rules applied, if either card came up as the losing card the bet was lost and conversely if either card came up the winning card the bet was won.

While this all may sound confusing, the placement of the check was the key to the bet. On diagonal betting, checks were placed above the bottom row or below the top row, in other words on the inside, whereas the corner bets were placed above the top row or below the bottom row, in other words on the outside. However, as mentioned before, it was always a good idea for the player to make sure the dealer (or lookout) understood what the bet covered, that was being made. Especially in the case of a crowded table, with multiple bets on the same card, checks may not line up as intended.

In the simplicity of the game, a check was placed upon a specific card, or cards. However, several “turns” may occur before that card was exposed, either as a losing card or a winning card, leaving the player waiting for action. With combination betting, it was possible for the player to make multiple bets with one check and a better chance of getting action on every “turn”.

Although most bets were acceptable (and a few exotic bets as well) by the dealer, it was the dealer's discretion of what to accept. If a lookout was employed, it was usually his job to control and pay all bets, but if a lookout was not employed, the dealer may limit the betting options for better control. However most dealers would usually take on any wager offered.

During the mid 19<sup>th</sup> century a "High Card" strip was added to the layout. A check placed on the High Card Bar is a bet that the winning card will be higher than the losing card (the Ace is low to the King high, thereby a deuce is higher than an Ace).

A unique bet called "coppering" was also in play for any bet. If a check was placed on the Q, "Backing the Queen" that meant the player was betting the Queen would be the winning card or the second card of the turn. However if a "copper" (usually a penny, hence the name) was placed on top of the checks bet on the Q, the bet was considered reversed, that is, the player was betting the Queen to be the losing card or the first card of the turn, in which event the player would win and the bank would lose. Conversely, if the Queen came up the winning card the player would lose and the bank would win. Basically, reverse of the normal action.

Any of the bets, single or combination, described above could be "coppered" that is, reversed. Even the High Card bet can be coppered to bet the losing card will be higher than the winning card.

Finally, "Calling the Turn" or "Making the Turn" was betting the order in the deal of the last three cards, the last (25<sup>th</sup>) turn and the hock card. Hopefully the casekeeper did his job right and the players would know which three cards were left in the deal. Now all they had to do was determine the order. This was usually one of the most exciting moments in a Faro deal. The right guess paid 4:1, unless two of the last three cards were of the same case "A Cat" then the payout was 2:1. Most dealers counted the last turn as a turn as well, creating a double bet on the last turn. Typically this final play also contains the 25<sup>th</sup> "turn" which pays 1:1. Any checks left on the table after "The Hock" card was exposed, belonged to the dealer.

After, the last turn was called the "deal" was ended and another was started. The cards were shuffled and placed back into the dealing box face up. A "deal" consisted of 25 turns with the first card "The Soda Card" not being used

and the last card "The Hock" only used as part of the "Calling the Turn" bet. In early versions of the game, the "Soda" and the "Hock" were winning cards for the bank.

One other advantage of the casekeeper (or Tab Card) was to protect a player from placing a bet on a "Dead Card." Should a player place a check on a "Dead Card" (or dead case) that is, all of a particular denomination, had been played, then the first player to notice the mistake can claim the bet, a "Sleeper", declaring a dead case.

A player may chose to "bar" his bet for a turn or two, by announcing to the dealer that, "I bar this bet" and it stays that way until the player says "It Goes." Or, he may state that "half goes" which means that only half the amount of the checks are bet. However it is a good idea to make sure the dealer understands and agrees to the request. Most dealers preferred that the checks were removed if not making a bet to avoid confusion. So if a player wanted to "Bar this Bet" he would simply remove his checks from the layout and place them back when he was ready to make a new bet.

In later years of the game (some say the end) other combination bets were added, or permitted. A player could bet if the card would be even or odd similar to the "High Card" bet that winning card would be even or odd. Or, you could bet that the losing card would be even or odd. "Coppering the Odds" was a bet that all odd cards would lose. There was another bet, which was a bet on all odd numbered cards to win, or lose, or all even numbered cards to win, or lose. Some dealers also offered row bets, a check placed next to the six meant the player was betting the top row and a check placed next to the eight was a bet on the bottom row. This bet was also known as a "High/Low" bet, betting the high numbers; 8-9-10-J-Q-K or the low numbers; 6-5-4-3-2-A. Again, any bet was based on the dealer acceptance. Several of these later bets were devised to keep the game interesting, but in most cases made it more confusing and were not embraced. There was a bet that was referred to as "Colors" whereby the player bets all black cards to win and all red cards to lose or vice versa. A bet referred to as "One Side Against The Other" is a bet whereby the player bets the ace, deuce, three, four, five and six to lose and the king, queen, jack, ten, nine, eight to win or vice versa. The seven is usually barred.

Every bet was based on the "turn" a losing card and a winning card regardless of the placement or combination of the bet. After each turn, bets could be removed, repositioned or left in place for the next "turn". Betting usually

consisted of checks of different colors to distinguish each player, but all forms of value was excepted and would be identified by a colored marker to distinguish the player. Bets were made in gold dust, jewelry, deeds, mining claims, slaves, women, plantations, weapons, cash and just about anything of value previously determined by the player and dealer before the turn. Even Faro Banks were won and lost on the turn.

\* \* \*

## The Laws of Faro

1. All bets are to be taken or paid as they lie upon the card, except when there is an understanding to the contrary. The intentions of a player are not to be considered by the dealer, his bet supposed to represent his intention.

2. If the player wishes to bar a bet on a card, he must make the dealer understand that he bars it, when it will remain barred until he says, "it goes".

3. If a player should put a bet upon a card and say to the dealer "One-half of this bet goes", it would be so understood until the end of the deal unless the order was revoked.

4. Should a player, or the dealer, by design or accident remove or alter a bet belonging to another, he is responsible for its loss.

5. When two players bet the same stake, "single" upon different cards, one copped and the other to win and they both win upon the same turn, the copper bet, being the first to win, must be paid.

6. The dealer must pay all bets for which he turns provided they are made in checks, but only the limit of the game if in bank-bills.

7. The dealer should take and pay correctly and not make mistakes by design or through carelessness; nor should he alter the position of the cards dealt, but allow them to remain upon their perspective piles undisturbed.

8. When the players have broken a bank, the dealer must take and pay the largest bets first. Suppose the bank to have but one dollar left-a turn is made by which the dealer wins one dollar and loses two, he must take the dollar he wins and pay the dollar lost. The rule is, to take and pay the amount of the bank in sight.

9. The dealer has the right to close his game or to quit dealing whenever he sees proper to do so.

10. Players have the right to count, or otherwise examine the cards of the dealer, if they suspect foul play, or if they wish to guard against it. In all cases the

dealer has the right to the last shuffle and cut and where he permits a player to shuffle or cut, it is an extension of courtesy to the player and not his right.

(Excerpted from the **Modern Pocket Hoyle** 1880 Edition)

### Faro: "That Cheating Game"

The game of faro was first played on a large oval shaped table covered with green cloth. On the one side was the dealer, or "tailleur," as he was then called, and on the opposite the "croupier," or assistant, performed his functions of taking and paying all bets. In the course of time many innovations were introduced, and many changes made.

The dealer of those days shuffled and cut his cards, and placing them firmly in his hand, face downward, proceeded to make his deal, the players having previously placed their bets. The first card on the top was taken from the deck and turned face upward on the table, and the next one having been exposed in a like manner, the assistant took all bets or stakes found on the first or bankers' card, and paid all bets or stakes found on the second or players' card. As the soda and hock cards were parts of their respective turns, the deal then consisted of twenty-six turns instead of twenty-five as now played.

Dealing boxes were first introduced about the year 1831-2, for the protection of the bank. Sharp eyes were ever on the lookout to detect the slightest bend, blotch, speck or scratch on the sides, ends, edges or corners of the cards, by which they might be recognized and thus turned to the advantage of the keen sighted player. The players also soon found that they, too, needed some protection from swindling dealers, so that when the dealing box came, it served a turn to both sides.

For many years [the bankers] received *hock* or *hockelty*, that is all money bet on the last card; this gave the bank a heavy percentage. There were many bankers who would not allow a bet once placed upon the table to be removed until and action on it had taken place.

But competition and rivalry soon brought about many desirable changes. Hockelty was soon abandoned, cue boards, cue papers and case keepers were introduced, and the open limit as opposed to the running one was allowed. "Oppose" or copper betting was identified with the old game. Copper betting, however, was kept up so persistently by the players among themselves that bankers soon found it to their interests to again give it a place in the game.

If the faro sharper can cheat and swindle his customers with a square pack of fifty-two cards, using a square *one card box*, what can he not do with a two-

card box and a pack of fifty-three or more cards to say nothing of strippers and rounds?

The dealers are skilled artists in their line, and being well up in their trade their services are always in demand at exorbitant salaries. That alone should sound a note of warning in the public's ears. Known tricks and contrivances, invented and devised by cunning sharpers for the purpose of fleecing both players and verdant bankers out of their money at faro:

Dealers used modified dealing boxes, such as the **Gaff**, the **Coffee Mill** and the **Horse Box**, in addition they used **Roughed Cards**, also called **Strippers**, **Sanded Cards** and **Rounds**, which even passed **Snow Outs**, that is scattered cards over the table, after a deal and before a shuffle, **Squared Sights and Tie Ups** and even inserting the **Odd Card**, to disrupt the flow of the turn.

But players or dealers looking to beat the house, or bank, that hired then had the **Tongue Tell**, the **Sand Tell**, **Corking the Checks**, **Dropping** [Checks] and the **Horse Hair** all for "Snaking" the tools of the faro dealer.

There is not in the United States to-day one single faro-banker who is willing and content to confine himself to the strict percentage of an honest game. They practice every trick, cheat, fraud, device, contrivance, skin and scheme known to the "trade," save and except that which they themselves do not know. Nothing but the fear of detection will prevent them from taking every possible advantage of their customers.

The artist who can manipulate a square pack of cards in a one card box is a genius in his way and his attainments are not to be sneered at or despised. Their skills are exhibited in such events as: **Putting up the First Turn**, **Putting up Splits**, **Putting up Cards to Win or Lose Out**, **Chopping Out**, **Breaking Even** and **The Last Turn**, all manipulated by the skilled dealer.

**The Skill of Skin Gamblers**, sometimes a dealer will shuffle, one, two, three, four or five cards from one part of the pack to the other, either on the top or the bottom or both, and as the denomination of at least three to four of those cards is known to him he can tell to a certainty the winning and losing cards of the first or the last three turns.



“All I shall say in concluding my work will be to repeat Douglas Jerrold’s famous advice to young folks about to marry, applying it to a young man about to tackle the tiger in his lair: Don’t!”

Excerpted from **Faro exposed, or The gambler and his prey ...**

By Alfred Trumble

New York, 1882

A famous quote (or story) attributed to “Canada Bill” Jones, who was himself, a notorious bunco artist, but had an unfortunate passion for Faro. When a friend spotted Canada Bill “bucking the tiger” in a gambling hall along the Mississippi in the late 1850s he warned Canada Bill that the game was brace. “Yes,” replied Canada Bill wistfully, “But it is the only game in town.”

\* \* \*

## A Commentary

There is no question that the Game of Faro was racked with cheating of every device and on every level possible, mostly perpetrated by the “dealers” of the game, but there were also some chicanery going on amongst the players.

If you take out the splits and last turn it was basically a 50/50 game, you either won or lost. General opinion says that is what ultimately killed the game. To deal the game square didn't give the house much of an edge and as we all know, gambling houses are not built on 50/50 odds.

It is quite fascinating that a game that was known to be dishonest, was still wildly played, as evidenced in the statement from Canada Bill. I suspect much has to do with the excitement the game brought to each player. Every turn of the card could have action, bets were arranged to have several bets going simultaneously, thereby giving the player more options to win... or lose.

Looking at the original version of the game, that which was played in England and before that in France gives a sort of sophistication to the play, a sense of elegance. You can picture the punters dressed in their finest, sitting at the table, opening their *livret*, setting the figure cards to the side and summoning their bet, patiently waiting as the dealer turned a card. However, once the game reached the shores of America, it morphed into what we came to know to be the game. Men pushing their way up to a Faro table, placing their bets on the layout and waiting as those two cards were turned, basically no elegance about it.

Faro became so much more than a card game, for many it became a way of life, whether as a dealer or an obsessed player. Fortunes were won and lost at the table. Staggering amounts even by today's standards were separated from the willing to partake in a game. Faro banks sprung up all over America, from the back alley skin games to the opulent gambling dens to the tents in a mining camp, almost everyone “bucked the tiger.” It is hard to imagine how one game, a simple card game at that and one that was known to be fixed or crooked, a “brace” game so completely captured America during the 19th century. What I find the most amazing is how completely Faro disappeared as the 20th century marched in! A game so wide spread, so popular, a game that so completely enraptured the country, just faded away!

As I stated earlier, I would have liked to play either version of the game.

\* \* \*

## Faro Terms, Phrases & Definitions

The section contains words, phrases, slang expressions and various other tidbits, I found throughout my research. Many times I found several descriptions of that word or phrase, consequently I tried to present each one, but sometimes I omitted the description, especially if it was not in keeping with the scope of the phrase or word or did not agree with other descriptions.

While certainly there are, a basic set of terms identified with the Game of Faro, I thought a compilation of all the words, phrases, slang and such identified with the game, would be informative and fun to check out. As I continued my research through several books, articles and general pieces of information in the course of putting this together, I came across various terms - and various definitions for those terms - that I just kept adding and before I knew it, I had quite a collection. I also found several words that were similar, but put them in as they were discovered and often used in different descriptions of the game or just simply another version of that word.

For ease of access, I have arranged the section alphabetically and while the list is long, it shows just how many words, phrases and descriptions grew out of a single game. They run the gamut from the early days of the French and English Game of Faro right through the longevity of the game in America, through what became the last ditch effort to keep the game alive.

I suspect, that there are still more to be found, and as I do, I will add them to the list. For now, here they are.

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Terms

Descriptions, Definitions and Such

<b>Banker</b>	The person who furnishes the money for the game, or who keeps the table. Could also be the "house."
<b>Back a Card</b>	Place a bet on a specific card. (As in "Back the Queen".)
<b>Backer</b>	Same as the banker...
<b>Bar a Bet (To)</b>	A player having a bet upon a card and wishing to bar it for a turn, must say to the dealer, "I bar this bet for the turn" pointing to it, in which case, it can neither lose nor win.
<b>Basset</b>	<i>(French: Bassette)</i> , which is said to have been invented by a noble Venetian, for which he was banished. Bassette was first introduced into France by Signor Justiniani, ambassador from Venice in 1674; but the princes of the blood having soon lost immense sums at it, and many of the noblesse and persons of the first distinction being ruined, severe laws were made against it by Louis XIV. To elude the royal edict, they disguised it under the name of <i>Pout et contre</i> , that is, "for and against," which occasioned new arrets and prohibitions of parliaments; to evade which it was varied, and the name of <i>Le Pharaon</i> adopted.
<b>Behind the Six</b>	The money drawer [check rack] often located behind the six-card on the Faro layout. Broke or short on funds, since one's money has gone into the drawer.
<b>Bet</b>	Place a check (chip), gold dust, bills or coin upon a card, or figure.
<b>Betting Even Stakes</b>	When the player constantly bets the same amount.
<b>Betting the Turn</b>	To guess correctly the order in which the last three cards in the box would appear.
<b>Big Figure</b>	The King, Queen and Jack.
<b>Bonneting</b>	Throwing a blanket over a Faro dealer's head and making off with his bank.
<b>Both ends against the middle</b>	A method of trimming cards for dealing a brace game of Faro. A dealer who used such a pack was said to be "playing both ends against the middle".
<b>Brace Game</b>	A crooked Faro Bank

<b>Breaking Even</b>	A system of betting by which each card was placed to win and lose an even number of times.
<b>Bucking the Tiger</b>	Playing the odds at Faro; the professional frontier gambler carried his Faro outfit in a mahogany box upon which was painted the likeness of a Royal Bengal tiger; tigers also were pictured on the aces of his cards, his chips and his oilcloth spread; as a form of advertisement, saloons that featured the game typically displayed a tiger marquee over their front doors or in their windows, the game thus became colloquially known as <i>the tiger</i> , or <i>bucking the tiger</i> .
<b>Call the Turn</b>	On the last turn, when three different cards are left in the box, any player who can "call the turn" will be paid 4 for 1. All such bets are "heeled" from the card they think will show first, toward the card that they pick for the winner on this last turn.
<b>Can</b>	A Faro dealer's metal dealing box; a Faro box.
<b>Capper</b>	Professionals who posed as players at a Faro table to help skin a Mark.
<b>Case Card</b>	When three cards of one denomination are out, the one remaining in the box is called the bet, case or single card. The fourth and last card of any denomination drawn from the dealer's box.
<b>Case-Keeper</b>	The person who marks the game on the case-keeper. Also, the name of the device itself, "The Case-keeper." The man who operates the case at Faro, by which the different stages of the game are correctly noted by one of the players or by a regular "Case Keeper" who is usually attached to the bank.
<b>Cat (A)</b>	When the last turn consists of two cards of the same denomination and one other card as two Kings and a Ten it is called a cat.
<b>Catching a Turn</b>	Sometimes the dealer is so careless in shuffling his cards, that a shrewd player will know what cards have not been separated or will have some other advantage, by which he will beat the turn.
<b>Check Rack</b>	A polished wooden tray, lined with billiard-cloth. It is used by the dealer, to contain his piles of counters (checks or chips) and his money.
<b>Checks</b>	Ivory tokens representing money with which the game is played; they vary in color, size and value. The counters at Faro (Chips).
<b>Chips</b>	Same as Checks ... [25¢ white; \$1 blue; \$5 or \$10 Red]
<b>Chops</b>	A system of progressive betting in Faro, in which the player adds a check if he wins and removes one when he loses.

<b>Chopping Out</b>	In square packs the cards intended to be stocked are gotten together and all that is necessary, whether they are on top or bottom or middle, is to butt in and thus insert but one card before what would otherwise be a “split” for the pair and a “split out” for the card. They can also be slipped under the bottom of either portion and one card placed before so as to have the first card win and the next card lose.
<b>Cocking</b>	The original rules talk of <i>cocking</i> , or crooking the corner of the card, or the next corner, to extend, or parlay the bet, [From De Moivre the following was noted: “This is often termed a cock; but as the use of this word gives rife to some ridiculous, not to say immodest allusions, the term paroli is invariably used in good company.”] See Paroli for details.
<b>Coffee Mill</b>	So-called from the crank, by which the lever was worked, was an improvement upon the “Gaff” and its introduction followed close upon the heels of the detection of the latter trick. Hidden beneath the top covering of the box and opposite the mouth was placed a lever worked by a small crank. Turning this crank in one direction the two topmost cards were forced from the box and being immediately seized by the thumb and forefingers of the right hand were placed as one card upon the proper pile.
<b>Coffin Driver</b>	One who kept case, the casekeeper or cue-keeper.
<b>Cold Deck (To)</b>	To introduce a stacked deck into play. Used in reference to Faro when it is played with the pack held in the dealer’s hand, in which case the dealer would also use all the other tricks of the card manipulator. In the early days, Faro dealers depended entirely upon their skill in stacking and dealing from the hand.
<b>Cold Game</b>	A game, which is so thoroughly “snaked” that the player has no chance of winning.
<b>Colors</b>	A system of betting in Faro by which the player bets all black cards to win and all red cards to lose, or vice versa, the player following one color-combination throughout the entire deal or reversing it once or more if he chooses (Added in the final years of the game).
<b>Copper</b>	Usually a penny or some other design as designated to be the copper marker.
<b>Coppering a Bet</b>	If a player wishes to bet that the losing card will win for the player, or that the winning card will lose for the bank, he indicates his wish by placing a cent, or whatever may be provided for that purpose, upon the top of his stake. It is called “coppering” because copper pennies were first used to mark such bets. Basically reversing the usual action.

<b>Copper the Odds</b>	To bet all odd case cards to lose; a variation on the even/odd bet. (Added in the final years of the game).
<b>Corking the Checks</b>	The <i>modus operandi</i> of performing it consists in taking ten or fifteen checks from a stack and hiding the theft by a potato, carrot or piece of wood in the same circumference and color and of exactly the same height as the number of checks extracted. The remaining checks of the stack or stacks are placed upon the top of this vegetable or wooded substitute and the deception is perfected.
<b>Couche or Enjeu</b>	<i>The Stake.</i>
<b>Coup</b>	<i>A Stroke or Pull.</i> Any two cards dealt alternately to the right and left.
<b>Croupier</b>	<i>Croup.</i> An assistant to the dealer.
<b>Cue-box</b>	A mode of keeping the game by which the cards played are noted by the sliding of a bead away from a card (case).
<b>Cue-Keeper</b>	The person who marks game on the cue-box, by which the different stages of the game are correctly noted by one of the players or by a regular "Cue Keeper" who is usually attached to the bank.
<b>Deal (A)</b>	The dealer is said to have made a deal, when he has dealt out the whole deck. Twenty-five turns, including the last turn. [Before the invention of the dealing box it was twenty-six turns.]
<b>Dead Card</b>	A bet placed on a card after all four of that case have been exposed, which is why a casekeeper or "keeping tabs" was used to let the player know all of the cards for a particular denomination were exposed.
<b>Dead Case</b>	Same as a "Dead Card"...
<b>Dealer</b>	He who deals the cards and takes and pays the bets.
<b>Dealing Box</b>	A small metal box, usually silver, which is a little larger than the pack of cards to be admitted. This box is opened at the top, so that the top card may always be in view. It also has a small opening at the side sufficiently large enough to permit a single card to pass through it conveniently.
<b>Doublet</b>	Is when the punter's card is turned up twice in the same coup, then the bank wins half the stake. A single paroli must be taken down; but should there be several, only one retires.
<b>Drive the Hearse</b>	To keep a record of the cards played at Faro, using a casekeeper.



<b>Dropping</b>	The person intending to operate in this way seats himself in front of the table, and while the dealer is making a turn and all eyes are bent on the dealing box to see the result, drops, as noiselessly as possible, a pile of checks, bills or coin behind the three cards next to him, after he has seen the first card of the turn and is satisfied that he cannot lose and may perhaps win.
<b>Earthquake</b>	Betting heavily on the last turn, which paid 4:1. "From Earthquaking the Dealer"
<b>Even/Odd</b>	Betting that the losing card or the winning card would be even or odd. (Added in the final years of the game).
<b>Fat Players</b>	Players who bet heavily.
<b>Flat-footing</b>	Place a bet on a specific card. (As in "Flat-foot the Queen".)
<b>Faro</b>	Is a card game, a descendant of Basset. It enjoyed great popularity during the 18 <sup>th</sup> century, particularly in England and France and in the 19 <sup>th</sup> century in the United States, particularly on the American Frontier. A game of Faro was often called a "Faro Bank".
<b>Faro Bank</b>	A gambling house, where a Faro game is set up. The "bank" for the game of Faro, that is the capital with which the proprietor backs the game. The game of Faro.
<b>Faro Apparatus</b>	The equipment used to have a Faro Bank, Faro play. Usually comprised of, a folding board with layout painted on it, or table with layout, or table upon which the layout is placed; Case-keeper, or cue-papers to mark the play; Deck of 52 cards; Dealing Box; Checks (chips), or markers to designate the player, coin, bills, gold dust, etc.; Copper(s). Most games had a "croupier" or lookout to watch the bets placed or taken.
<b>Gaff</b>	This was the first trick played upon the unsuspecting after the introduction of the dealing boxes. The Gaff-a small pointed instrument about one quarter of an inch in length and the size of a small darning needle, shaped like the point of a shoemaker's awl and hidden underneath one of the fingers of the left hand and usually attached to a gold ring in order to avoid detection, the operator had a box so constructed that he could see the size of the cards opposite the mouth and could at his pleasure force either one or two cards as the interests of the game demanded.
<b>Grand Square</b>	The King, Queen, Ace and Deuce. A bet, as in bet the "Grand Square." Also known as the "King Square."

<b>Gut Puller</b>	A Faro dealer. Probably so-called because pulling cards from the dealer's box suggests the act of gutting crayfish and other crustaceans by selecting the middle fin of the tail and pulling out the large intestine.
<b>Hangman's Turn</b>	A combination consisting of a Jack and a King drawn in a single turn. Reputedly so called from an old-time Faro dealer named Jack King who was hanged for murder.
<b>Have Action (To)</b>	A bet placed any card, or combination, to win or lose at Faro.
<b>Hearse Driver</b>	A casekeeper in a Faro game.
<b>Heeled Bets</b>	Wagers which played one card to win and another to lose.
<b>Heeler</b>	A player who consistently made heeled bets.
<b>Hell</b>	A gambling house.
<b>High/Low</b>	Betting all of the High numbers: 8-9-10-J-Q-K will win or betting all of the low numbers 6-5-4-3-2-A will win. Also known as a "Row" bet. (Added in the final years of the game).
<b>Hock Card (The)</b>	Is the last card remaining in the dealing box after the deal has been made. When one turn remains to be made, there are three cards in the box. They may be for example, the five, six and seven. We will suppose the last turn to be five-six, leaving the seven in the box, which would be called the hock card, because as the game was originally played, the dealer took "Hock", that is all the money which happened to be placed upon that card, the bank therefore had a certainty of winning that money without the possibility of losing it; hence the term "Hock," which means certainty.
<b>Hockelty</b>	The dealer claimed any money bet on the last card drawn.
<b>Hockley</b>	<i>A certainty.</i> Signifies the last card but one, the chance of which the banker claims, and may refuse to let any punter withdraw a card when eight or less remain to be dealt.
<b>Horse Box</b>	With the hole widened in the top of the box, and placed near the opening, which admitted the pack, and beneath the covering, one of the most ingeniously contrived pieces of mechanism ever devised for cheating the player at Faro. When the dealer saw a card that would win for the players he could place his hand over the hole to hide it from their observation and at the same time, by the aid of this invention, force out the card next underneath and place it upon the player's pile, while the top one legitimately belonging to them was cast on the banker's side.

<b>Horsehair</b>	By way of illustration let us suppose the Queen to be the dead or base card, on the one side of which is the King while on the other side is the Jack, and three or four of these cards still remaining in the dealer's box. Should this operator, while the dealer is making a turn and all eyes are bent upon the box, see one of these cards come winning, he has but to lean back in his chair and this movement [a horse hair fastened to his vest button] drags his stack of chips off the Queen and the bet then takes in the King and Jack as a combination bet.
<b>Horsehair Copper</b>	Simply a "copper" with a strand of horsehair attached, so it could be secretly yanked from a winning card.
<b>In Hock</b>	The last card in the box was said to be "in hock". Originally it was known as the "hockelty card" and in the early days of Faro, when it counted for the bank, a player who had bet on it was said to have been "in hock". Also, a gambler who had been trimmed by another sharper was said to be "in hock" to his conqueror.
<b>Jack Square</b>	The Jack, Queen, Two and Three. A bet, as in bet the "Jack Square".
<b>Keeping Cases</b>	Manipulating the Case-Keeper.
<b>Keeping Tabs</b>	Making the record of which cards were played. A winning card is indicated by an "I"; a losing card is indicated by an "O"; the soda card is indicated by a dot (·); the hock is indicated by a dash (-).
<b>King Square</b>	The King, Queen, Ace and Deuce. A bet, as in bet the "King Square". Also known as the "Grand Square."
<b>Last Call</b>	When three cards only remain in the box, any player has the privilege of calling the order in which they will be dealt-this is termed the last call. The checks (chips) are placed so to express the call and if correctly made, the bank pays 4:1 and if "A Cat" 2:1.
<b>Last Turn</b>	The last three cards in the dealing box, the final turn and The Hock Card.
<b>Layout</b>	An oil cloth containing a suit of thirteen cards, usually spades, painted or pasted on. The cards were arranged in two parallel rows, from the player's point of view, in the following order: 6-5-4-3-2-A, top row; 8-9-10-J-Q-K, bottom row and on the left end the 7 between the two rows. At the very top is the "High Card" strip.
<b>Le Pharaon</b>	<i>The Pharaoh.</i> One of the names used to disguise the game of Basset to elude the laws against its' play.
<b>Leg</b>	A professional gambler, probably a corruption of "blackleg".
<b>Little Figure</b>	The Ace, Two Three.

<b>Livret</b>	<i>A small Book. A suit of thirteen cards, with four others called Figures, viz. one, named the little figure, has a blue cross on each side, and represents ace, deuce, tray; another, yellow on both sides, styled the yellow figure, signifies, four, five, six; a third, with a black lozenge in the centre, named the black figure, stands for the seven, eight, nine, ten; and a red card, called the great or red figure, for knave, queen, king; these figures are useful for those who punt on several cards at once.</i>
<b>Looker-out</b>	Same as a Lookout...
<b>Lookout</b>	The dealer's assistant, also called the croupier.
<b>Looser</b>	The first card drawn in a turn, which was a loser for the player, but a winner for the bank.
<b>Losing Card</b>	The first card drawn in a turn, which was a loser for the player, but a winner for the bank.
<b>Losing it Out</b>	Betting on a card, which loses four times in one deal.
<b>L'une pour L'autre</b>	<i>One for the other.</i> Means a drawn game, and is said when two of the punter's cards are dealt in the same coup.
<b>Make a Brush</b>	To build up a small initial bet into a considerable sum.
<b>Making the Turn</b>	To guess correctly the order in which the last three cards in the box would appear.
<b>Marker</b>	An article, sometimes a small piece of ivory provided by the bank, used by the player whose credit was good. He announced the value of the marker as he made his bet and was supposed to settle after each deal.
<b>Masque</b>	Signifies turning a card, or placing another face downwards, during any number of coups, on that upon which the punter has staked, and which he afterwards may display at pleasure.
<b>Mechanic</b>	Banker/dealer; handler of the deal; worker of the dealing box.
<b>Needle-tell Box</b>	This cheating box is also used with prepared cards, but the preparation is of a very different kind. In this instance there is no roughening of the surfaces, but those, which are required to tell are cut to a slightly different shape to the others. The dealing box is so constructed that when either of the tell-cards arrives at a certain position the projecting corner presses against a light spring and causes a little "needle" or point to project from the side of the box.
<b>Nine Square</b>	The Nine, Ten, Four and Five. A bet, as in bet the "Nine Square".

<b>Odd Card (The)</b>	Putting an extra one into the pack to create the “build up” of the pack.
<b>Open Bets</b>	Wagers, which played cards to win.
<b>Oppose</b>	<i>The Opposite Game.</i> Is reversing the game, and having the cards on the right for the punter, and those on the left for the dealer.
<b>Paix</b>	<i>Peace.</i> Equivalent to double or quits; is when the punter having won does not choose to paroli and risk his stake, but bends or makes a bridge of his card, signifying that he ventures his gains only. A double paix is, when the punter having won twice, bends two cards one over the other. Treble paix, thrice, &c. A paix may follow a sept, quinze or trente, &c.
<b>Paix-Parolet</b>	Is when a punter having gained a paroli, wishes then to play double or quits, and save his original stake, which he signifies by doubling a card after making his first paroli; double-paix-paroli succeeds to winning a paix-paroli; treble-paix-paroli follows double, &c.
<b>Parlee</b>	Same as Paroli ...
<b>Parolet</b>	<i>Double.</i> Sometimes called <i>Cocking</i> , is when a punter, being fortunate, chooses to venture both his stake and gains, which he intimates by bending a corner of his card upwards.
<b>Paroli</b>	Suppose a player to bet five dollars upon the Ace-it wins and the dealer pays it; if the player then allows the ten dollars to remain on the Ace, he is said to play his paroli, which means the original stake and all its winnings. [Parlay in horse betting came from this word by way of parolet, parlieu and parlee.]
<b>Passed in his Checks</b>	A player cashed in, quit the game. Originally this expression was “passed in his chips”.
<b>Pharaon</b>	<i>Pharaoh.</i> See Le Pharaon.
<b>Pigeon</b>	From about 1600 to recent times the victim of a professional gambler was called a “pigeon”.
<b>Piker</b>	One who made piking bets.
<b>Piking</b>	Making small bets all over the layout.
<b>Playing a Bet Open</b>	Is to bet a card will win, not to lose
<b>Playing a Shoe-String</b>	Starting with a small sum and running it into a large amount by consistently lucky bets.

<b>Playing on Velvet</b>	Betting money previously won from the bank.
<b>Pli</b>	<i>Bending.</i> Is used when a punter, having lost half his stake by a doublet, bends a card in the middle, and setting it up with the points and foot towards the dealer, signifies thereby a desire either of recovering the moiety, or of losing all.
<b>Plunger</b>	A better; a player; a heavy bettor.
<b>Pont</b>	<i>A Bridge.</i> The same as Paix.
<b>Ponte or Punt</b>	<i>A Point.</i> The punter or player
<b>Pot (The)</b>	The Six, Seven and Eight. A bet, as is bet "The Pot"
<b>Pour et Contre</b>	<i>For and Against.</i> One of the names used to disguise the game of Basset, during the Reign of Louis XIV to elude the law against its' play, before it became <i>Le Pharaon</i> .
<b>Prepared Cards</b>	Cards that were rigged or "prepared" so the dealer could tell the placement of the cards; sanded cards and roughened cards were typical.
<b>Pressing a Bet</b>	To add to the original stake.
<b>Punted</b>	A term in Basset, meaning "Laid a stake against the bank."
<b>Punter(s)</b>	(From Ital. <i>puntare</i> , to point) Name referred to each player or players.
<b>Putting up the First Turn</b>	The first turn can be arranged or put up in many ways, and it is capable of many different variations. The dealer invariably chooses for this purpose some card or cards that have been made favorites of, by some "fat fish" playing at the time against the game.
<b>Putting up Splits</b>	Next to the "call," "splits" are said to be a bank's greatest percentage, it being calculated that a deal will average one and one-half to two splits. Judge then of the enormous percentage of a game obtaining four to six extra ones through the superior ability of its artist, who can arrange at least that number by carefully watching the many opportunities occurring during the progress of a deal.
<b>Putting up cards to Win or Lose</b>	The dealer having selected his cards, which are the ones upon which fat fish are playing, taking the most favorable opportunities during the progress of a deal, for slipping the desired ones beneath the two piles of the pack. The object to be obtained is to make these cards reverse their play that is to make them lose.

<b>Quintze et le va</b>	<i>Fifteen and it goes.</i> Is when the punter having won a sept, &c., bends the third corner of the card, and ventures fifteen times his stake.
<b>Repeating and Reversing</b>	A card is said to <i>repeat</i> when it plays as it did upon the previous deal and to <i>reverse</i> when it plays directly opposite; that is, if it won four times, it reverses if it loses four times
<b>Roughed Cards</b>	Each one of the pack is trimmed lengthwise, leaving untouched the corner at which the shaving away was commenced. This trimming is continued more heavily to the other end, taking from the card a long thin edge, and leaving the pack slightly that shape. This operation was long used as an easy and favorite method of putting up splits.
<b>Rounds</b>	Are manufactured by taking out all the Kings, Queens, aces, deuces, trios and the red sevens as follows: On one of their sides, near the corner, a slice about the width of the thickness of two cards was trimmed off, the middle being left untouched, thus giving a slight oval shape. The trimmed cards were sanded on their faces, while the others were sanded on their backs. When the trimmed and untrimmed cards were put back together, one side had a separated appearance while the other had its natural shape.
<b>Row Bets</b>	A bet placed on the entire top row or the entire bottom row. A check placed next to the six was betting that the 6-5-4-3-2-A, would win or a bet placed next to the eight would be a bet that the 8-9-10-J-Q-K, would win. Or the bet could be coppered, reversing the action. Also known as "Row betting." (Added in the final years of the game).
<b>Sanded Cards</b>	First take a pack of strippers and separate them by drawing them apart, leaving the Kings, Queens, Jacks, etc, in one part and the nines, eights, sixs, fives, fours and the remaining two sevens in the other. The backs of the first and the faces of the latter are then rubbed with sand paper. They are then put together and shuffled in the usual manner after which they are stripped and "milked down," then cut and placed in the box preparatory to being dealt.
<b>Sand-tell Box</b>	A false plate similar to those used in the two card boxes is fastened on the inside and not allowed to reach the mouth by the thickness of a single card. A groove is thus formed into which the second card in a turn is dragged as the first is leaving the box. This second card will be thus dragged the space of the thickness of the false plate until its edge comes in contact with the mouth of the box. The groove thus formed must be large enough to admit but one card at a time and no more, and the cards must not be made to travel in the box a greater distance than three times the thickness of an ordinary playing card, if the "snakers" would avoid detention. Cards will not travel in a square box, but when a plate of this kind is inserted they will do so.

<b>Sept et le va</b>	<i>Seven and it goes.</i> Succeeds the gaining of a paroli, by which the punter being entitled to thrice his stake, risks the whole again and bending his card a second time, tries to win seven fold.
<b>Sharper</b>	A professional gambler.
<b>Sleeper</b>	A bet placed on a dead card. In many houses it belonged to the first man who grabbed it. A bet becomes a sleeper, when the owner has forgotten it; it is then public property, any one having a right to take it.
<b>Snap</b>	A temporary bank, not a regular or established game.
<b>Snaking a Game</b>	A game is said to be snaked when the dealer's cards have been stolen and privately returned marked or prepared in such a manner, as that when they are dealt, the snaker will know what cards will win or lose. Faro banks are often broken in this way.
<b>Snow Outs</b>	Players fondly supposed that if the cards after a deal or before shuffling, were all "snowed out;" that is, scattered over the table it would be a safe guard against fraudulent practices.
<b>Snowball the Layout</b>	To distribute white checks all over the Faro layout; the mark of a cheap gambler (white checks were the least expensive, usually 25¢.)
<b>Soda Card (The)</b>	Is the top card of the deck when the cards were put into the dealing box preparatory to a deal. The first card, exposed, face up before bets were made. Said to have been a corruption of zodiac. For many years a common expression was from "soda to hock".
<b>Soixante et le va</b>	<i>Sixty-three and it goes.</i> Is when the player having obtained a trente, ventures all once more, which is signified by making a fifth paroli, either on another card, if he should have parolied on one only before, or by breaking the side of that one which contains four, to pursue his luck in the next deal.
<b>Split</b>	If the turn yielded two cards of the same denomination the turn was declared a "split" with the dealer taking half of the money, which had been bet on the card. A split was also declared when a losing card and a winning card came up in a single combination bet.
<b>Splitting Cards</b>	Placing a bet between two, three or four cards such as "splitting the Ace-King".
<b>Square Deal</b>	Twenty-five turns in which the dealer used a pack with squared edges. With these cards the chances of a crooked deal were minimized.
<b>Square Game</b>	An honestly dealt game of Faro, which used squared cards exclusively.



<b>Squared Sights</b>	The Kings, Queens, aces and deuces are sanded on their backs and dotted on their faces near the margin of their sides. Whenever one of these cards has won on a turn and a card sanded on its face is next underneath it is dragged forward against the plate in the mouth of the box providing the third card is also sanded upon its back. The dealer can tell by the dot upon the card what the third card underneath is. Should it be desirable to make this card win for the bank, he can do so during any turn of the deal. The introduction of case keeping rendered all these frauds useless.
<b>Stake Money</b>	Money borrowed by a gambler so that he can continue his play, or money given him by by-standers who believe that his luck is due to change; if he wins, he repays the loan and divides the profits.
<b>Stand Pat</b>	Leaving the original bet where it was from the previous bet or turn.
<b>Stringing a Bet</b>	Is taking in one or more cards remote from the one upon which the bet is placed.
<b>Stringing Along</b>	Betting all odd or even numbered cards to play one way.
<b>Strippers</b>	Cards that were shaved or shorter on one end to tell them apart. Also, a device that was used for "stripping" or "shaving" the ends of cards. Cards prepared by cutting them into the form of wedges. By turning them vice versa, and catching hold of the end, they can be drawn in bunches, which is twenty-five percent in favor of the dealer. They are sometimes prepared on the sides; at other times on the end. A different article of strippers is frequently called <i>Hollows and Rounds</i> , made by hollowing one half, and making the balance round.
<b>Stuck</b>	A player who went broke trying to call the turn was stuck.
<b>Tabs</b>	Printed sheets on which the players noted the cards as they won or lost.
<b>Tailleur</b>	<i>The Dealer</i> . Generally also the banker.
<b>Tell-Box</b>	One type of dealer's box for Faro. An intricate and effective internal mechanism enables the dealer not only to "tell" the location of the cards, but to manipulate the cards in order to deal seconds, etc.
<b>Throwing Off</b>	When a dealer, by a preconcerted plan, allows a player to win he is said to throw off the game.
<b>Tie Ups</b>	Tie ups were often as many as nine cards stacked so as to make the last four cases lose, and they were manipulated in this way: The nine cards selected were each pierced near the corners with a very fine needle and through the hole thus made a fine hair passed and tied and the trick was

never practiced by any but the most expert artists. The sharpers had now four case cards to lose upon the four last turns, and any one at all conversant with the game knows that it is upon these cases gamblers stake their heaviest bets. Copper betting being soon after adopted as a constituent of the games destroyed all use of the "tie ups."

<b>Tiger</b>	During the early 1830's a first-rate professional gambler carried his Faro outfit in a fine mahogany box on which was painted a picture of the Royal Bengal Tiger. A representative of the animal was also carved on the ivory chips and painted on the oilcloth layout. The gamblers adopted the tiger as the presiding deity of the game and Faro soon became known throughout the country simply as "the tiger."
<b>Tongue Tell</b>	Simple in conception and ease of execution is made by inserting a false plate inside the dealing box underneath its mouth. To this was fashioned a piece of fine watch spring, running lengthwise between this plate and side of the box, and terminating in a fine polished steel point, which came under the screw, on the right-hand side of the box, facing the players. Fastened to this watch spring was a pivot of the thickness of an ordinary sewing needle, and about one-eighth of an inch long, which was made to penetrate the false plate through a hole drilled especially for that purpose. The point of this pivot was made to extend inward, so as to rub against the forth card from the top in the dealing box.
<b>Trente et le va</b>	<i>One and Thirty.</i> Follows a quintze, &c., when the punter again tries his luck and makes a fourth paroli.
<b>Turn (A)</b>	The two cards drawn from the dealer's box – the "losing" card for the bank and the "winning" card for the player, which thus determines the events of the game, constitutes a turn.
<b>Velvet</b>	The bank's money.
<b>Wash</b>	Two denominations, from a turn, on which no wagers had been laid.
<b>Whipsaw</b>	When a player has won an open and a coppered bet upon any one turn.
<b>Whipsawed</b>	Losing two different bets on the same turn.
<b>White Chip</b>	The lowest denomination chip but up to the dealer to set the limit
<b>Winner</b>	The second card drawn in a turn, which was a winner for the player, but a loser for the bank.
<b>Winning Card</b>	The second card drawn in a turn, which was a winner for the player, but a loser for the bank.
<b>Winning Out</b>	Betting on a card, which won four times in one deal.

### Acknowledgements, Sources & Credits

As you will note, the books I used were from the 1800s, as that was when Faro was alive and well and several of these books were actually written to expose the evils of Faro. The bulk of what I used were found in these books. It was quite exciting to actually put my hands on an 1864 version of *The American Hoyle*, and an 1880 version of *Modern Pocket Hoyle*. Of course it was equally exciting to put my hands on De Moivre's *Faro and Rouge et Noir* from 1793, Green's *Arts and Miseries* from 1847 and Alfred Trumble's *Faro Exposed* from 1882.

Here is the list of books and such that I used to create my work. As you will notice, all but one are from the nineteenth century and talked about the game as it was being played during that time, which made it all the more intriguing. It has been an interesting journey obtaining copies of those older books, not to mention reading them.

#### Books

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**American Hoyle (The)** – Dick & Fitzgerald, 1864

**An Exposure of the Arts and Miseries of Gambling** – Jonathan Harrington Green, 1845

**Faro and Rouge et Noir** - De Moivre, 1793

**Faro Exposed, or, The Gambler and His Prey...** - Alfred Trumble, 1882

**Gaming Table** - Andrew Steinmetz, ESQ, 1870

**Handbook of Games (The)** - H. G. Bohn, 1867

**Hoyle's Games** – Edmond Hoyle, 1835, 1877, 1887

**Modern Pocket Hoyle, 10<sup>th</sup> Edition** – Dick & Fitzgerald, 1880

**Old Times: A Picture of Social Life at the end of the Eighteenth Century** – John Ashton, 1885

## Appendix A: My Faro Rig

The purist way to understand the game of Faro is to view the equipment and pieces used in the game, which is what started me on my quest.

My initial search of all things Faro left me a little vague about the structure and play. I was able to order a layout, green felt cloth with the pictures of the thirteen cards of a suit “painted” on, and a couple of packs of 1800s playing cards, cards faced one way with no indices. This at least enabled me to “bank” a game or two to get the feel.

I next ordered clay composite chips that I also had stamped with a denomination: blank for five-dollars, twenty-five dollar, one hundred dollar and five hundred dollar (adjusted for today’s values), in six different colors. Now I could “bank” a game with each color rising to a total of five thousand dollars.

I went in search of a case-keeper, but could not find one and the very few I did come across, were antiques and way out of my (hobby) price range. So, I tried to make my own and actually created a pretty decent basic one. One of my friends, who sat in a couple of games and who is a finish carpenter offered to take a stab at creating the board for the layout, the case-keeper and a card press. Working from photos, he put together a nice set for me that I have used many times.

In my travels, I picked up an old west style shirt and vest (for my dealer persona) and I came across an antique watch and chain to put in that vest. I found a replica (non-firing) black powder 1860 Army Colt revolver, because every dealer had to have an “equalizer.”

The next piece of the game I acquired was a dealing box, a very nice replica that I had a custom leather case made for. I looked for a “check rack”, but could not find anything so I finally had one made out of a hybrid “inbox” you would normally find in the office. The exception is the felt lining.

The last item I added was money. I found a place that sold old “stage” money that was used in the movies. I was able to put together two thousand dollars worth of bills. I usually stake each player to five hundred dollars in cash that they exchange for chips and the game begins. I have a few actual silver dollars that I had and I have added a few more to give the look more

authenticity. I use real Indian Head Pennies to act as my “coppers” for coppering bets.

So, in no particular order here is “My” Faro Rig:

- Fold up Faro Layout – reproduction
- Several Decks of cards, no indices
- Casekeeper – reproduction
- Dealing Box – reproduction; with Leather Jacketed Case
- Checks (chips), six different colors with a value of \$5,000 each
- 20 Indian Head Pennies (pre 1900) to use as “Coppers”
- Check Rack, for six-color storage, by the dealer’s side
- 14 Silver Dollars (pre 1900) for “making” change
- Paper (stage) money in the amount of \$2,000
- Pocket watch (circa 1900) and vest chain (circa 1865)
- 1860 Army Colt Revolver (non-firing) replica
- Leather dealer’s vest with collarless white shirt
- Card press – reproduction; to keep the cards flat

With all, but the folding layout, neatly tucked into a satchel bag for transporting to the “next town” or next game!

[See next page for a photo of the rig in operation.]

At the start of the night, each player is issued \$500 in money that they then redeem for checks. They can take additional “markers” for \$500 each as the game progresses. At the end of the night (or when the dealer surrenders) the chips are sold back to the bank and/or the markers are reclaimed, or counted up, then the player can determine if he/she is a winner this night.



“My” rig setup ready to go. On the far left, the case keeper.

In the center is the Faro layout. On top of that in the upper left corner, a stack of Indian head pennies for “coppering.” Also on top by the 10 and Jack a stack of silver dollars (all 1800s), just above them are two 1876 half dollars) Toward the bottom of the layout is a stack of currency, And finally a pocket watch and chain.

On the upper right is the check (chips) box stacked with six different colors of checks (for six players) ranging in denomination from \$5 blank to \$500 stamped chips - adjusted for inflation. The game was often played with nickels and dimes.

Right center is the dealing box loaded with a deck of shuffled cards and next to that is a “fresh’ deck of unopened cards.

Lastly, on the bottom right is that 1860 Army Colt Revolver, “The Equalizer.” Most dealers carried some form of weapon, from a derringer to a shotgun. Since most players were “packing” it was expected the dealer would be as well.

On the very top right of the picture you can see that satchel bag.

