COPPER CREEK

Copper Creek is a new game about building an Old West town. Players will construct the town and invest in the businesses, earning money and scoring points. It's a simple and unusual game with plenty of luck and strategy, and just a little politics.

This game is in "open beta," which means the rules and components are still changing. We hope you will play and send us feedback, so we can make Copper Creek as good as it can be!

Players: 3 to 6
Playing time: 60-90 Minutes
Components:
> Deck of 24 Building Cards
> Train Station Board (calendar & scoring track)
> Six small stones for marking the Calendar
> 15-20 small stackable tokens/chips for each player
> Money, approximately $50 per player.
> One "Active Player" token

Making Your Own: To make your own components for Copper Creek, you can download the files from Crab Fragment Labs: **crabfragment.com/copper-creek**.

Setup:

Buildings: Take out the six cards with gray buildings (the Bank, Land Office, etc) and shuffle them.

Choose three of these cards at random, and arrange them face up in the center of the table, as shown here. The gaps between them form Front and Main Streets, which are the only unbuildable areas of the table.

Shuffle the rest of the building cards, and then place the other three gray cards face down on top of this deck. This becomes the draw pile.
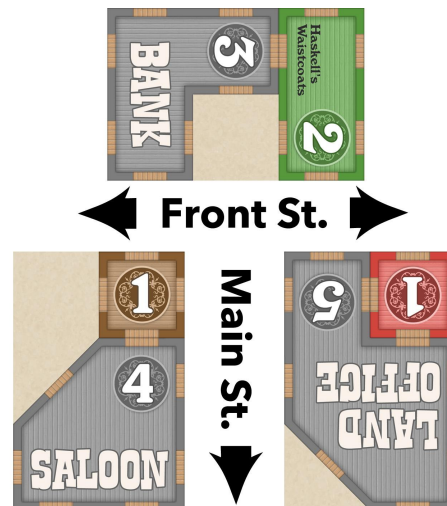
Train Station: Place the train station board somewhere to the side, allowing room for the town to grow. Each player places one token on the station, for the scoring track.

Place the six calendar stones in the "Start" column in the calendar. These stones will move one space forward each time a building of the matching color is drawn. Sometimes this will trigger a scoring round, as explained below.

Update the calendar during setup by advancing the three stones that correspond to the colored buildings already on the board.

Money: Give each player $15, and put the rest of the money in the Bank. Give the job of Banker to the owner of the game. They may delegate it to whoever buys the "Bank" building.

Sequence of Play: Determine randomly who will go first, and give that player the Active Player token. Turns will proceed to the left.

Definitions:

Buildings: Each card has one or two buildings on it. These buildings will form Copper Creek's downtown: shops, storehouses, municipal buildings, and so on. The important details of each building are its *color*, its *doors*, and its *point value*. There are six colors of buildings, plus gray. Gray buildings are, for the most part, treated as having no color.

Open Areas: All open space on the table, including Front and Main Streets, as well as the sand-colored parts of cards, are considered part of the network of walkable streets and alleys.

Shares: Players can buy shares in all the town buildings. This is shown by stacking a player token on that building. Each token in the stack is a *share*, and each owner is a *shareholder*.

Stack Order: Multiple players can own shares in the same building, and individuals may own multiple shares in the same building. The shares are stacked in the order they were purchased, with the oldest token on the bottom, and the newest one on top.

Owner: The top chip in a stack is the "owner" of the building. All the shareholders participate in the *money* that a building earns, but only the owner earns the *points*. The object of the game is to score the most points.

On Each Turn:

There are five steps to each turn. The active player starts by drawing a card (1). This can sometimes trigger a scoring round (2) and will usually cause some buildings to produce money (3). The player builds the card into the city map (4), and then may then buy shares in one or more buildings (5). Each time the active player buys something, the rest of the players may also buy something. The turn ends when the active player decides not to buy anything.

Step 1, Draw

Usually, the active player starts the turn by drawing one card from the draw pile. The only exception is that on the very first turn of the game, there is no draw. (The first player already has plenty of options!)

Advance the Calendar: After each draw, advance the calendar stones for each color of building on the card. (Gray buildings don't advance the calendar.) This may cause an *election*.

Step 2, Elections (Scoring Rounds)

There are three scoring rounds, called the elections of 1882, 1883, and 1884.

The 1882 election happens as soon as *two or more stones* have reached the *second column* of the calendar (the column marked with 2s). The 1883 election takes a little longer, because at least three stones must advance into (or beyond) the 1883 column.

The 1884 election takes longer still, requiring that at least *four* calendar stones have reached or moved past the 1884 column. This election is the final scoring round, and it ends the game.

In each scoring round, the owner of each building scores the point value of that building. The "owner" is the top chip in the stack; other shareholders score nothing.

Represent your score with a token on the scoring track. If you pass 40 points, you can leave one token on "40," and add another token to the track.

Note: Because the 1884 election ends the game, you can stop playing as soon as you tally the score. You will only proceed to the income step if you need to use money to break a tie.

Step 3, Income

Buildings that match the color(s) on the new card will produce money. Some of this money will flow *into those buildings*, and some will flow *into their neighbors*.

Open Doors: A building's open doors produce income for that building. Each open door "pulls" one dollar into the building, as follows:

To be "open," a door must be accessible to foot traffic. It can't be blocked by another building, or hidden in a dead zone. If a customer could walk into a door from the intersection of Front and Main, without passing through another building, then that door is open. For example, Farmer Smart's Barn Stuff has ten doors, and if they are all open as shown here, it earns $10 when another brown building is drawn.

Connected Doors: Any door that touches the door of a neighboring building produces one dollar also, but *for the neighboring building*. Connected doors "push" money into the buildings they touch.

In this example, if a yellow card is drawn, Norman's Fine Cutlery makes $5 from its open doors, and it also pushes $2 into its purple neighbor, through the two connected doors. (Norman's does not pay this $2; the money comes from the bank.)

Note: Connected Doors always make money for their neighbors, no matter how inaccessible they might be. There is no "walk from Front and Main" test.

Note also that drawing a gray building does *not* cause other gray buildings to pay. The only income those buildings can ever make is the money that is pushed in from their neighbors. Consider this when you are arranging and buying gray buildings!

Dead Zones: Doors that are not connected to other doors, and are not accessible to foot traffic from the main streets, are *dead*. These doors make no money.

Below is an example of a dead zone. This zone is formed by three cards, and it is a space to which a customer could not walk without passing through a building. The six doors that touch this zone are not "open," and they therefore make no money.

Early Rounds: You will notice that for the first four turns, there can never be any income, or an election. The six gray building cards are always the first six cards, and each gray building is attached to a different color of building. This means that players will earn no money over the first four turns, so they may wish to spend their money very carefully in the early rounds. It also means that the 1882 election can't happen until at least the 7th card.

Distributing Income: The money for each building is divided among its shareholders. Usually this is easy, since a building often has only one investor. But when there are multiple players invested in the same building, the money is divided as follows:

- First, accumulate all the money paid by a single color. (If the drawn card has two colors, deal with each one separately). A single building might be connected to several buildings of the same color, but all this income counts as a single block.
- Once it is accounted for, divide the money as equally as possible among all the shares. Players who have multiple shares will earn a fraction for each share.
- Finally, pay any leftover money to the oldest shares first. So the rounded-off dollars go to the lowest chips in the stack.

Here's an example: A building makes a total of $8, and it has three chips on it: From bottom to top, they are owned by Players 1, 2, and 3. Players 1 and 2 make a total of $3 each, and player 3 makes $2.

Distributing money can sometimes be complex, especially when the drawn card has two colors. Go slowly, doing one color at a time, and count through those buildings one by one.

Step 4, Build

The active player adds the new card to the map. The card can be played almost anywhere, in any orientation, according to the following rules:

Grid Lines: Each card covers six squares of an imaginary grid, extending forever. New buildings do not have to touch the existing buildings, but they must conform to that grid. Note that you can create permanent alleys by placing cards just one square apart.

Front and Main: Cards can never overlap Front or Main street. Like the grid lines, these streets extend forever, dividing the town into three zones.

Gray Buildings: These six buildings must be placed with at least one door *touching* Front or Main Street. (Other buildings do not have this restriction.)

Colors: Buildings of the same color, *including gray buildings*, cannot be connected to each other.

Step 5, Buy

The active player may choose to buy shares in one or more buildings, or may pass.

The Buying Round: If the active player buys something, this starts a full round of buying, in which other players in turn may also do the same. After that buying round, the active player may choose to buy something else, which causes another buying round. This repeats until the active player decides to pass. If the active player buys nothing on their turn, then there is no buying round.

Purchase Price: The price to buy a share in a building is equal to its current income, plus a fee for each opponent share in the building. These are defined as follows:

- **Income:** A building's "income" is defined as its number of open doors. (This is true even for the gray buildings, even though they never draw any income from those doors.)
- **Minimum Price:** If a building has no open doors, its base price is one dollar.
- **Share Price:** For every *share* in the building, not counting the buyer's own shares, add dollars to the price equal to the point value of the building.
- All of this money is paid to the bank.

For Example: If a building has four open doors, and no one else owns a share, then its purchase price is $4. Later on, if the same building still has four open doors, but two other players also own a share, the price goes up by the point value for each share. If the point value is 3, then the cost for a new investor to buy a share is $4 (for the doors) plus $3 x 2 (the point value times the number of other players' shares), for a total price of $10.

Re-Buying: A player can choose to buy extra shares in the same building, even if no one else has invested in it yet. The price with no other players involved would be the same as if it were empty, because players don't have to pay against their own shares. This would be just the base price, equal to the number of open doors (or a minimum of 1).

The value of having more shares in a building is that this makes the building more expensive for other players. If you want to protect your investment, especially in large-value buildings, this can often be a strong move.

Ending the Turn: The buying round ends after the active player decides not to buy anything, at which point the turn is over, and the turn passes one player to the left.

Note About Two-Color Cards: There are six cards with two different colors of building. For example, Tan and Brown, Green and Purple, etc. Not all possible two-color combinations are represented. Instead, the six actual pairs correspond to *adjacent rows in the calendar track*, plus tan and red (the top and bottom rows). So if you are curious which two-color cards might still be in the deck, you can review the connected colors on the Calendar.

Ending the Game:

The game is over after the 1884 election, which is triggered as soon as four or more calendar stones have reached the fourth column.

Score all the points for this election, and check for a winner. If there is a tie, calculate income as well, and use money as the tiebreaker. If this is also tied, the advantage goes to the player who drew the last card, or to the player closest on that player's left.

More About the Game:

Copper Creek was designed by James Ernest and the Lone Shark / Cheapass Games design squad in the early 2000's, and it spent a few years shopping around to various game publishers. After failing to sell, it took a long sleep, and finally woke to join the ranks of the "we should work on this" catalog in 2019, in the early days of Crab Fragment Labs.

At some point the game acquired some very strange scoring rules that we have since removed. Now it's a fairly decent, quirky resource management game, with a little bit of figuring, and a whole lot of "I should have thought about that more."

Copper Creek shares DNA with James Ernest's previous tile-laying games including Agora, Cube Farm, and Nexus (all from Cheapass Games), along with later designs like Capital City (Calliope Games) and Lords of Vegas (Mayfair / Lone Shark).

We're pretty happy with the rules at this point, and we hope you'll enjoy it too. Let us know what you think, and thanks for playing Copper Creek!