

The History of Scrabble Part One

In 1931, Jackson Heights in New York State was in a similar predicament to the rest of the USA ...deep in the depths of the depression. When a local architect, mild-mannered, bespectacled Alfred Mosher Butts, lost his job he decided to explore his passion for games setting out to devise a word game that was half luck and half skill. The initial game was called Lexiko. It was played without a board, players scored on the basis of the lengths of the words formed. Butts calculated the letter frequency and value of each letter of the alphabet by analysing the front page of the New York Times.

In 1933, Butts applied for a patent for Lexiko but was turned down. When he submitted the game to two games manufacturers, Parker Brothers and Milton Bradley, he received polite refusals. For 5 years Butts made games himself which he gave away or sold, but the game looked set to never appear commercially.

Undeterred, in 1938 the popularity of crosswords gave Butts the idea of combining the letters in the manner of a crossword on a playing board.

Extracted from: http://www.facebook.com/Scrabble?sk=app_141135349248557

1. What time period is covered?
2. Which characters are mentioned?
3. How did they help Scrabble develop?
4. What changes did the game undertake during this time?

The History of Scrabble Part Two

He changed the name to Criss-Crosswords and drew boards and tiles utilising his architectural know-how. In spite of the considerable craft used, Criss-Crosswords met the same flat refusals from the patent board and more games manufacturers. Later that year he returned to being an architect.

No further development was considered until 1948 when he was approached by James Brunot, an owner of one of the first Criss-Crosswords games, with a deal that interested him. In return for allowing Brunot to manufacture the game, Butts would receive a royalty on every game sold. He quickly agreed and allowed Brunot to rearrange the premium squares and simplify the rules. At last copyright application was granted and after much searching, the name Scrabble was decided upon. The trademark was registered on 16 December 1948.

The Brunots initially set up shop in the living room of their home in Newtown, Connecticut. Brunot bought in the parts of his finished product and assembled them with the help of his wife, painstakingly stamping letters on wooden tiles one at a time.

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The History of Scrabble Part Three

During 1949, their first year, they sold 2251 games in this way and lost \$450. They continued to struggle in the years that followed. Suddenly in mid-1952, Brunot returned from holiday to find that word-of-mouth recommendation had finally succeeded. In the fourth quarter of 1952 they sold 37,000 units.

Almost at the same time Jack Straus, the Chairman of Macy's, New York, the huge department store, played Scrabble whilst on holiday. On his return, he discovered the Games Department did not stock the game. That changed and Macy's supported a promotional campaign that captured the imagination of millions.

By 1953, it became clear to Brunot that he couldn't match demand and he licensed the game to manufacturers around the world. Now, the North American rights rest with Hasbro and other rights are owned by Mattel, the largest toy company in the world.

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