

PIONEER IN THE FAR WEST

WELCOME TO WALNUT GROVE

WHO WILL BE THE MOST PROSPEROUS?

Do you remember the American TV series "A factory in the prairie"? Well, it seems that Welcome to Walnut Grove was inspired by that novel and is of course about farming in the Far West, with frequent visits to the nearby village in search of resources and/or workers, and perhaps a brief stop to Joe's Saloon for a beer! The graphics are reminiscent of Agricola and/or Ora et Labora as the artist is the same.

This is a simple game for the whole family, but not a "stupid" one: it may be considered a "light" mix of Agricola and Carcassonne (by placing tiles in a puzzling way and using workers for any sort of job) and you should program well your hard job and take care of your workers if you wish to harvest your fields, bring goods to the local store, and so on.

Opening the box you will not be surprised to find cardboard tiles, wooden cubes, coins and various markers and pawns: the tiles ("Carcassonne" style) immediately suggest the idea of connecting them in order to get large fields, but some strange colored squares printed on them let you initially doubt. Following the set-up instructions cut your big "terrain" tiles and store them in a large white bag, while a smaller bag wait for the coins. Some big round tiles (the Year Discs) will surely rise your curiosity too, so you will quickly look at the rules and start the first game.

Each player gets a small board on which are printed a factory, some "conestoga" carts (one for each of your future workers), five different "fields" (green for cattle, blue for fishing and water, yellow for crops, brown for wood and grey for rocks), a small hut and some further emplacements to be filled with finished product to sell and/or special tiles to acquire.

The main board shows a small Far West style village with some buildings (Town Hall, Church, Saloon, Post Office and different Stores): players' Farmers will turn around the central plaza passing in front of each building and deciding which one to use. Of course each building offer something (goods, new workers, building materials for new huts and barns, improvement tiles, etc.) and you should try to get what you need before the opponents. The players move clockwise their Farmers any number of spaces, but they must pay 1 coin every time that they pass in front of the Church or the Town Hall. The first Farmer to move

will be the most far away from the Town Hall: please note that sometimes being the first to move is vital if you absolutely need to purchase something in town or if you need to sell goods to gain some coins. So you need to pay high attention when you program your Farmer's move.

The "strange" circular Year Tiles are placed in the middle of the plaza and are used to indicate the flow of the time (turns):

- In Springtime you randomly pick up terrain tiles from the large bag and place them in your farm: the Season Disk tells you how many tile you may draw and how many you may keep and use.

- In Summertime you send your workers in the fields to harvest the related resources (yellow cubes for grain, blue for fish, white for dairy products, brown for wood and grey for minerals) and you put them in the "squares" printed in the Terrain tiles or, if available, in the space inside the barns: the Season disc also tell you if there are any bonus cubes for that turn.

- In Autumn you go to the Village and try to sell your goods, to hire new workers or to buy building materials to install new barns and/or huts in your farm or to purchase some special tiles that will grant extra VP at the game's end.

- Finally when Winter comes you have to feed your workers (you need a good of the same color of the worker, white, blue or yellow) and keep them "warm" inside their "conestoga" (you need some wood for the fireside). Workers inside new huts do not need fire. The Season Disc will tell you if you must pay extra food or extra wood for your workers.

If you are unable to pay the necessary goods, wood or taxes (coins in town) you are forced to take a "Penalty Tile": this will allow you to bypass the payment but you need to discard 3 goods, taken from your reserve or your fields, in order to get rid of the Penalty. If you are unable to discard it you will lose -2 VP per Penalty at the game's end.

Once that all the above phases are finished the Season Disc is discarded and the following one is shown, starting the whole process again: at the end of the 8th turn the game is over and the player with most Victory Points (VP) is the winner.

You have some important decisions to take during each turn:

- First you must decide which Terrain tile to place and where. Each tile may be combined with 2 or 3 different terrain (you do not need to match all the tile's sides with the adjacent terrain, as in Carcassonne, if at least one side is coupled with the same color). But it is very important to decide how you place a new tile as they cannot be moved anymore and they have of course a great influence in the following turns. In other words you have to program the action that you wish to do in Autumn at the village, in

Pietro Cremona*A simple game on agricultural life in the far West*

order to decide which goods must be produced and therefore which tile should be selected. If, for example, you want to build a HUT you have to pay a visit to Johansen's Mill (paying 1 brown and 1 white cube) or to the Carpenter (1 grey and 1 blue cube); if you need a new worker you may find them at the Hotel (2 blue cubes) or at the Dakota Lodge (2 yellow cubes) or at the Saloon (just 1 white cube but ... mmm ... it seems very strange that the workers at the saloon need milk to be hired ...).

- Then you have to send your workers to the right fields: harvesting is possible ONLY in fields where a worker has been placed and each field produces as many goods as there are connected tiles of that type. For example, if you send a worker to a yellow field composed of three tiles you will get 3 yellow cubes that you have to place on 3 different squares. If you do not have enough free squares in that field you may store the extra good in a free space inside a barn (you start the game with 1 available barn that gives you up to 4 store positions, but during



the game you may buy up to another two extra barns for another 2+2 positions). It is always possible to move goods from the fields to the barn, if you wish. It is also possible to substitute existing goods in a barn with different ones from a new harvest.

- As we have noted before, in the village you may move your Farmer as many cases as you wish, but anytime that you pass in front of the Church or the Town Hall you must pay 1 COIN (to help poor people and for taxes, I suppose!). You get 2 "copper" coins at the beginning (placed in the barn) and you may get extra coins selling your goods in the village. Coins are of three types: copper, silver and gold (but this is kept secret to the opponents that may only see the frontal side, that is the same for all the coins). Silver and Gold coins have a number on the back, used as bonus VP at the game's end.

- The first Farmer to move is always the furthest away from the Town Hall: as most of the buildings accept only one pawn you need to program also your position inside the track in order to be certain to arrive first at the necessary building, otherwise you risk to lose the opportunity to make an action in that turn that could be very important for your strategy.

- Some special tiles are also available in town: they have an high cost (3 grey + 1 colored goods) but they give you extra VP at the game's end based on what you did in your farm. For example one tile gives you 1 VP extra for each Barn and/or Hut that you own; another one gives you 1 VP extra for each good that you have in stock inside your barns, etc.

- Purchasing Barns will help you towards the end of the game, when the fields are larger and harvesting becomes interesting, while Huts will help you in keeping "warm" your workers in winter (they do not need wood for heating).

It is difficult to find the "right" winning strategy in this game, because a lot depends on the Terrain tiles that you draw in the first 2-3 turns; they will determine your actions and therefore you have to cope with your possibilities: anyway it is always suggested to try to get at least one extra barn (to save some more goods) and a hut (to protect one worker by the cold winters of the last turns). Then you may hire one or maybe two extra workers if you have enough fields of their color (remember: at the turn's end you have to pay a cube for each worker, same color of the worker itself) and enough wood for winter. At the end of turn 5 you have to decide which special tiles to buy in order to get some extra VP at the game's end and if you wish to get money selling your good (coins are randomly drawn from the small bag and may give you 0, 1 or 2 VP).

In the last 2-3 turns is common to move your pawn in town not only to purchase important items, but also to occupy buildings just to avoid that they may be used by your opponents: for example it is very nasty to occupy the last store just before a tax cases (Church or Town Hall) if the following player does not have any coin: he will be obliged to bypass the tax case and, because he does not have any money, he will be forced to take a penalty tile (-2 VP at the end) and thus spend useful goods.

Between experienced players a game of Walnut Grove will last 40-50 minutes and it will be very funny and interactive if everybody "fights" the others in town to cut the opponents from the needed sales. All in all an excellent "starter" for a gaming evening.

In family also the younger children (6-7 years and on) will be very happy to beat Daddy or Mummy (especially if they will help them a little with suggestions at the right moment) because the mechanics are really very intuitive (placement of Terrain tiles, placement of the workers, business in town).

So I suggest this game to everybody.

Pietro Cremona

INFORMATION	
Designer: T. Tahkokallio, P. Laane	PLAYERS: 1-4
Artist: Klemens Franz	AGE: 10+
Price: ca. 35 Euro	TIME: 60+
Publisher: Lookout Games 2012	
www.lookout-games.de	

EVALUATION	
Resources management For families Version : multi Rules: de en In-game text: no	
Comments: Intuitive mechanisms * Good for experienced players, too * No fixed winning strategy * Pretty components	
Compares to: Part Agricola, part Carcassonne	
Other editions: Currently none	

GAMES BUYER INFORMATION SYSTEM - GABIS

STRUCTURE

Each game review also features an evaluation which can help you to find the game that best suits your tastes. The color accompanying each game title represents the USER Group. The headline also contains icons for age and number of players.

The BAR in the evaluation box displays color codes for up to 10 features of a game.

USER GROUP

We have defined 4 target groups (color accompanying the head line)

Children:

Games for children an educational games. Adults can play in a guiding function.

Families:

Children and parents play together, all have the same chance to win and have fun.

Friends:

Young people and adults play together as equals

Experts:

Games with special demands on rules and playing time. Especially for game geeks

Please note for the user groups **Children**, **Family** and **Friends**: Children who love to play can be ahead of their peers! Please note that our target group "families" does not imply the classical concept of "family games"! Furthermore, our user groups can overlap. The choice of suitable games always depends on your playing partners and your fun with games!

Games that are especially eligible for **Solo** play or for **2 players** or **Large groups** of players are marked with an icon.

FEATURES

Each game targets preferences for different features in a player, therefore each game is not suitable for each player. We have listed 10 features players note when deciding on a game. Only if a player finds his preferred features in a game he will enjoy the game. The color code marks the dominant features. Educational games train the highlighted preference.

Empty boxes: This feature is neglectable or not present
One colored box: This feature is present, but not essential
Two colored boxes: This feature is present and important in the game
Three colored boxes: This feature is dominant and essential

Chance:

The game is influenced by dice, cards or any other form of random generator

Tactics:

Take decision, short-term planning, planning based on one move

Strategy:

Think ahead, long-term planning, planning for several moves

Creativity:

The player has to provide words, phrases, images and other creative efforts

Knowledge:

Cultural and educational knowledge, long-term memory

Memory:

Remember, learn by heart, short-time memory

Communication:

Talk to each other, negotiate, inform

Interaction:

Influencing each other, bluffing, auction

Dexterity:

Motor skills

Action:

Body movement, balance and reaction

ADDITIONAL INFORMATION

Version: The edition of the game on which the review is based

Rules: This lists the languages in which rules are available or are included in the game, often even more translations can be found on the web.

In-game text: A YES marks a game with language-dependent components that cannot be played without translation or knowledge of the language.