

Nova Suecia

The Last Letter Home®



A game of Colonization, Trade and Survival
in the New World 1638-1655

for 2-5 players (playing time 60 minutes)

by Nicholas Hjelmberg
Nova Suecia Games
<http://www.novasuecia.se>
Version 3.07

1. Introduction

The kingdom of Sweden is emerging as a major European power and Queen Christina is looking towards the New World for expansion. As a Governor of Nova Suecia, it is your duty to acquire land, build a sustainable colony and seek out prosperous trade opportunities. Occasional ships from the mother land will arrive to supply and demand goods but for the most part, you are left to your own.

Beware, Dutch colonists have come before us and will not look kindly on Swedish ambitions. You will have to balance between cooperation and competition to succeed or the entire colony may succumb. Nova Suecia's fate is in your hands.

2. Game Components

The game consists of the following components:

- 12 Delaware river cards
- 2 fort cards; Fort Christina (Swedish) and Fort Nassau (Dutch)
- 24 Nova Suecia district cards; 4 farms, 4 forestries, 4 forges, 4 plantations, 4 spins and 4 trade posts
- 8 resource market cards; grain (yellow), timber (white), iron (black), plant (green), tobacco (purple), fur (red), colonist (blue) and gold (orange)
- 5 letter cards; 1 per player
- 2 treasury cards; 1 debit and 1 credit
- 1 Governor card
- 1 ship bag
- 2 ships; 1 Swedish (blue) and 1 Dutch (red)
- 24 blue colonist meeples
- 12 blue colonist log cabins
- 120 resource cubes; 12 grain (yellow), 12 iron (black), 18 timber (white), 12 plant (green), 18 tobacco (purple), 18 fur (red), 12 colonists (blue), and 18 gold (orange)
- 90 thaler chits; 50 copper (1), 30 silver (5), 10 gold (10)
- 60 seal chits; 12 of each player color

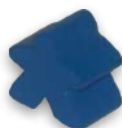
Ship bag



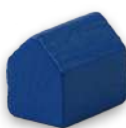
Ship



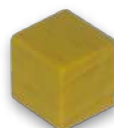
Colonist



Log cabin



Resource



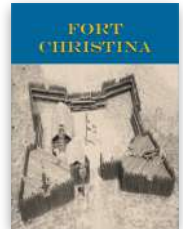
3. Game Preparation

1. Place the 12 Delaware river cards in a row from 1 to 12.
2. Place the **Fort Christina card** next to the leftmost Delaware card with the **Swedish ship** (blue) on it. Place the **Fort Nassau card** next to the rightmost Delaware card with the **Dutch ship** (red) on it. Shuffle the 24 **Nova Suecia district cards** and place them face down in two rows on the table, one above the Delaware river cards and one below.
3. Place **6 resource cubes** of each resource on its corresponding **resource market** (grain cubes on the grain market etc.). Fill the markets from left to right, top row first, with 1 resource cube in each resource square. The remaining resource cubes form the **stock**.
4. Place **1 resource cubes** of each resource in the ship bag (except green plant that are never placed there).

River



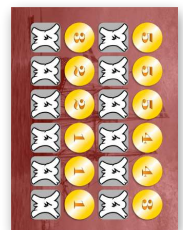
Fort



District



Market



Letter



Treasury

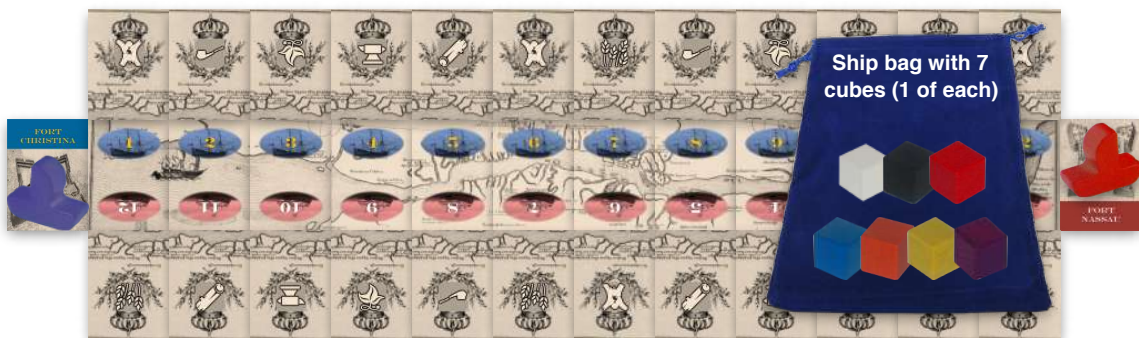


Thaler, Seals

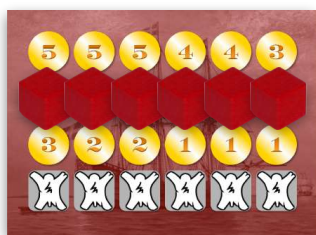


5. The player who last sailed takes the **Governor card**.
6. Each player takes **1 letter card**, **1 colonist**, **1 thaler**, and **1 seal** with the same color as the latter each. Player 3-4 take **1 extra thaler** each and player 5 takes **2 extra thaler**.
7. In turn order, each player takes **1 resource cube** each of their choice from stock and places on their **letter card** (except green plant that are never placed there). Resources are chosen based on strategy but for your first game you may choose to place random resource cubes instead.

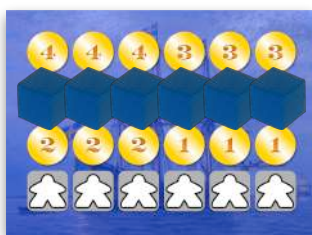
Nova Suecia: 2 fort cards and 24 district cards around 12 river cards



Sample resource market: Fur with 6 cubes (current price 3)



Sample resource market: Colonists with 6 cubes



Sample starting hand: Letter with resource, colonist, thaler, and seal



4. Object of the Game

You play a Governor of the colony of Nova Suecia. Your object is to open the districts, put the colonists to work, and buy and sell resources on the common markets. When the game ends, the player who has placed the most seals in Nova Suecia wins.

To successfully govern Nova Suecia, it is important to understand the colony economy. Resources are **supplied** and **demand**ed by the Governors as well as by the motherland at fluctuating **market prices**. The motherland's supply and demand is influenced by the players' letters home.



Resources are always **bought** from the last full price square and **sold** to the first empty price square and paid the price above that square. The more resources the lower the price and vice versa. If you buy and all 12 price squares are empty, take a resource from stock and pay the highest price. If you sell and all 12 price squares are full, place the resource in stock and get paid the lowest price.

The Dutch merchants Samuel Blommaert and Peter Minuit convinced Chancellor Axel Oxenstierna to extend Swedish trade to the New World and formed the New Sweden company.

In 1638, Peter Minuit arrived with the ships Calmare Nyckel and Fogel Grip. He bought land at the Delaware River from five Lenape chieftains and built the fortress Christina, named by the Swedish Queen.

Resources are semi-limited; you may temporary use other means if necessary to buy and sell but never place more resources on your letter than available (see 5.1 Letter).

Resource	Market	Color	Purpose	Supplied	Demanded
Gold		Orange	Loans/deposits	Ship/Player	Ship/Players
Colonist		Blue	Provide colonists	Ship	Players
Grain		Yellow	Feed colonists	Farms, ship	Colonists
Iron		Black	Double production	Forges,	Tools
Timber		White	Build log cabins	Forestries	Cabins, ship
Fur		Red	Deliver to ship	Trade posts	Ship
Plant		Green	Use to produce	Plantations	Spins
Tobacco		Purple	Deliver to ship	Spins	Ship

The Governor who best knows what and when to buy and sell will win!

5. Course of the Game

Starting with the player with the Governor card, take turns to perform the actions below in order. Each action is described in detail later in the rules.

Action	Description
1. Letter	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Place the resource on your letter in the ship bag and place another there. Then draw 1 resource from the ship bag to determine the market change. <ul style="list-style-type: none"> If the resource is supplied by the motherland (colonists/grain/iron), add 1 resource to the corresponding market. If the resource is demanded by the motherland (fur/timber/tobacco), remove 1 resource from the corresponding market. If the resource is gold, choose whether to add or remove.
2. Ship	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Move the Swedish ship 1 or 2 river cards and open 1 adjacent district card. Move the Dutch ship 1 or 2 river cards and close both adjacent district cards.
3. Colonist	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Choose 1 of the 4 work actions below: <ul style="list-style-type: none"> Invest: Move 1 colonist to a district. Buy resources. Produce: Lay down 1 colonist in a district. Sell resources. Day work: Lay down 1 colonist on the letter. Take 1 thaler. Assemble: Take back colonists. Take 1 thaler each.
4. Raid	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> Pay to the Dutch for Invest and Produce actions.

When the player to the right of the Governor has completed his or her turn, the Governor card is passed to that player. The new Governor starts the next round and gets two consecutive turns.

5.1 Letter

The Letter action reflects the Governors' correspondence with the motherland, where they request supplies and receive demands for goods. The risky sea travel of the time made the deliveries uncertain. **Colonists**, **grain** and **iron** are sent **to** Nova Suecia while **fur**, **timber** and **tobacco** are sent **from**.

Place the resource on your letter in the ship bag and place another resource from the stock on your letter. The new resource must be of a different type than the previous one.

Twelve expeditions were sent to Nova Suecia with immigrants and tools and returned with fur and tobacco. They followed the winds and currents past the Canary Islands and West Indies and back across the Atlantic. The journeys were dangerous and the ships needed to be repaired afterwards.

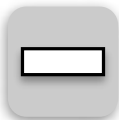


Example: Player 1 started with a colonist cube on the letter and places it in the bag. Then she places an iron cube from stock on the letter.

Then draw 1 resource from the **ship bag** to determine whether the motherland supplies or demands resources:



Resources that are **supplied** (colonists, grain and iron - all marked with a "+" on the letters) are **added** to the corresponding markets. This means that more of them are available and hence the price is lower.



Resources that are **demanded** (fur, timber and tobacco - all marked with a "-" on the letters) triggers a **removal** from the corresponding markets. This means that less of them are available and hence the price is higher. Both the resource from the ship bag and the resource removed from the market are placed in stock.



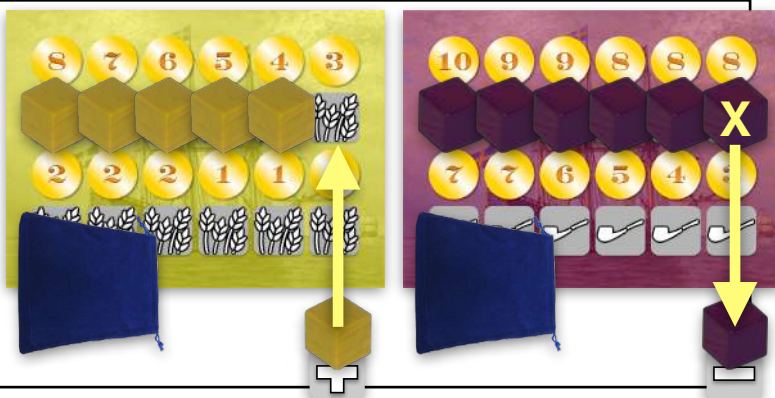
Gold (orange) can be both **supplied** and **demanded**. The player drawing gold chooses whether to add to or remove from the market.



Plant (green) are only **supplied** and **demanded** by the **players** and hence is never placed in or drawn from the ship bag.

Governor Johan Printz was instructed to promote fur trade, cultivate tobacco, prospect metal and even rear silkworm. In reality, Nova Suecia yielded little and requests for supplies were frequent.

Example: Player 2 draws 1 grain and the grain price falls 1 step. 1 grain can now be bought for 3 thaler. Player 3 draws 1 tobacco and the tobacco price rises 1 step. 1 tobacco can now be sold for 8 thaler.



5.2 Ship

The Ship action reflects the Swedish settlement of districts in competition with the Dutch.

Move the **Swedish ship** 1 or 2 river cards in the direction and **open** (flip face up) any 1 of the 2 adjacent district cards. You **must** move so that a district can be opened if possible. When it reaches a fort card, immediately turn the ship and continue in the other direction. A fort card does not count towards the movement limit, i.e. a ship never can never stop at a fort card.

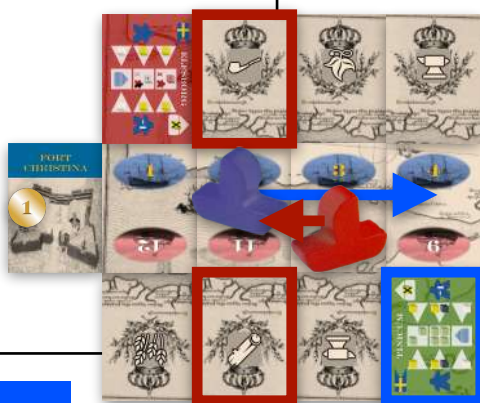
Then move the **Dutch ship**. The Dutch ship follows the same rules with the exception that it **closes** (flips face down) **both** adjacent districts if they are empty (no player seal). Districts with seals are never closed. You **must** move so that a district can be closed if possible.

The small colony maintained good relations with the natives and purchased rather than conquered land (but the natives thought land couldn't be owned and often sold it again). The Dutch also claimed ownership to the river and skirmishes were common.

The ships may never end on the same river space. Each time they pass each other, place 1 thaler on the fort closest to the district where the ships met.

Example: Player 2 already has a spin and needs plant to run it. She moves the Swedish ship 2 river cards to open a plantation and.

Then she moves the Dutch ship 1 river card to close a competing spin as well as a forestry. Since the ships met closest to Fort Christina, 1 thaler is placed there.



5.3 Colonist

The Colonist action reflects the economic activities of Nova Suecia. Choose 1 of the actions Invest (5.3.1), Produce (5.3.2), Day Work (5.3.3) and Assemble (5.3.4). Optionally take the Treasury action (5.3.5). End with the Raid action (5.3.6).

5.3.1 Invest

The Invest action reflects the allocation of colonists to and investments in economic activities.



First, choose 1 **open district** with no opponent seal for your action. If there is no seal there, pay 1 thaler for each district with your seal to place a **seal** there (0 for the 1st, 1 for the 2nd etc.).

Second, move 1 **colonist** from your letter to a **investment triangle** in the district. There may be 1 colonist in a left-hand triangle and 1 in a right-hand.

The **investment triangle** shows which resources you need to **buy** in order to produce and the **production square** next to it shows which resources you then **produce** in the Production action. To buy a resource, pay the market price and move the resource from the market to the stock.



If you move a colonist to a right-hand investment triangle, produce 1 less of each resource shown. (Note that spins invest 1 less plant in that case.)



If you have no colonist on your letter, you must first buy one from the market following the rules above. You may only buy colonists from the market if you have none on your letter.



Example: Player 1 moves 1 colonist to the farm district of Finland and has 3 choices:

1. Buy 1 grain to produce 2 (1) grain.
2. Buy 1 grain + 1 iron to produce 4 (3) grain.
3. Acquire 1 timber to produce 1 log cabin.

Over 1 000 colonists immigrated to Nova Suecia but many died at sea or returned home. Few free men were willing to cross the Atlantic and the first colonists were deserters, convicts or deported Finns. Several Governors complained about the lack of women, forcing men to do "women's work".

Farms were founded and given Swedish names. Pennsylvania's first water mill was built in Mölndal. The first log cabins in America were built in Nova Suecia, from where the construction method spread.



For some investment actions, special rules apply:

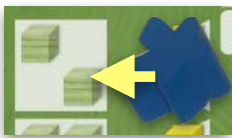
Log cabins feed 1 colonist in the district. You buy 1 timber instead of 1 grain in the turn you invest in them. Once produced, you may flip it instead of buying 1 grain to a colonist in the district. Unflip it in the Assemble action.

Trade posts produce either **fur** (trade with the natives) or **any other resource** except gold, colonists and tobacco (trade with the other colonies).

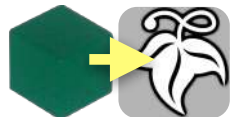
The Governors established forts to control the river trade routes, along which fur was traded with the natives. However, in bad times the colonists often had to trade food and other necessities instead.

5.3.2 Produce

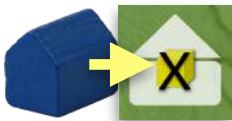
The Produce action reflects the production and sales of resources.



First, choose 1 **upright colonist** in an investment triangle and lay it down to show that it has produced.



Second, sell the **resources**/build the **log cabin** shown in the production square (1 less if the right-hand investment triangle was used but never less than 1).



- When selling **resources**, receive the market price and move the resources from stock to the market.
- When building a **log cabin**, move it from stock to the district.

Plantations were established but abandoned 1647 and tobacco bought from the English colonies instead. Bog ore was extracted using lime and charcoal but tools still had to be imported. However, the forges eventually came to supply George Washington with arms.

For some produce actions, special rules apply:



Trade posts' red **fur** production squares produce **as many fur** as there are trade posts with colonists.



Trade posts' gray **wildcard** production square produce **half as many other resources** of your choice as there are trade posts with colonists (rounded up). Gold, colonists and tobacco cannot be produced.

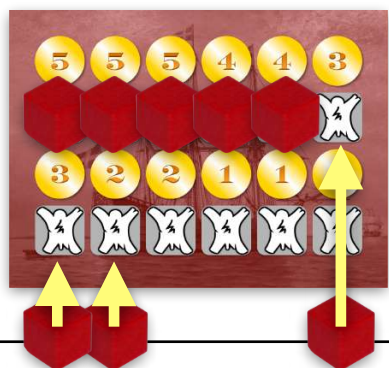
It does not matter who owns the colonists or whether they are upright or laid down.



Example: In the previous turn, player 3 took the Invest action and acquired 1 grain to move 1 colonist to the fur production of the trade post district of Trefaldighet.

There are currently 3 colonists at trade posts (1 at this province and 2 at another trade post owned by player 4).

Player 3 takes 3 fur from stock and places them on the fur market, earning $3+3+2=8$ thaler. She then lays down the colonist at the trade post.



5.3.3 Day Work

The Day Work action reflects work on the Governor residence.

Lay down 1 colonist on the letter and take 1 thaler.

5.3.4 Assemble

The Assemble action reflects the assembling of the colonists to discuss public matters.

Return all laid down **colonists** from the **districts** to the **letter** and return them to their upright position (including colonists already on the letter due to Day Work), thus making them available for new Colonist actions, Take 1 thaler for each assembled colonist. The action may be taken even if not all colonists and/or districts have been utilized but with a negative impact on the colonists' morale.

- **Colonists** who remain standing on the letter are returned to the **stock** (i.e. not to the market). This reflects unemployed colonists giving up on Nova Suecia.
- **Seals** on districts without any colonists are returned to the **letter** and the district is closed. This reflects the government giving up on the district.

During the last years of Nova Suecia, the colony was shaken by internal strives and increasing tensions with the Dutch. In 1653, 23 colonists demanded Governor Printz' resignation. He responded by executing one of them, after which 15 fled to the Dutch.

5.3.5 Treasury

The optional Treasury action reflects monetary transactions with the motherland.

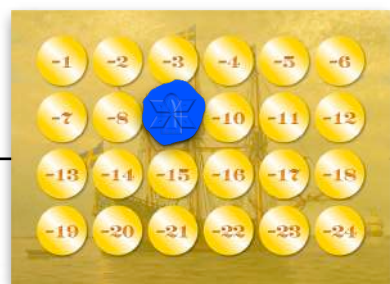


The action may be taken once at any time during a turn to make a **deposit** or a **loan** on the **gold market**. Each gold step has 3 amounts; a thaler amount, a deposit amount (+) and a loan amount (-).

- **Deposit:** Add 1 gold from stock, pay the thaler amount and increase your deposit amount (+).
- **Loan:** Return 1 gold to the stock, receive the thaler amount and increase your loan amount (-).

Deposit and loan amounts are tracked with seals on the treasury cards. They cannot be withdrawn/repaid during the game but they are netted against each other, e.g. a loan amount of -8 and a deposit amount of +7 counts as -1.

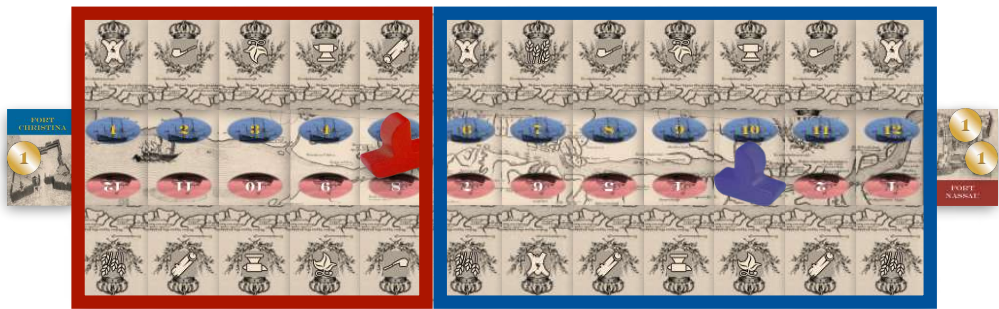
Example: Player 2 needs more thaler for her Invest action. The current gold price is 4 (+6/-8). She returns 1 gold to the stock, takes 4 thaler and places a seal on the -8 space on the treasury.



5.4 Raid

The Raid phase reflects the increasing Dutch raids.

If an **invest** or **produce** action was taken, an amount of thaler is **paid** to the stock depending on the number of thaler on the forts (the "current raid amount") and the positions of the ships. The districts on both sides of the Swedish ship up to, but not including, the Dutch ship are within Swedish influence while the rest are within Dutch influence. Note that the Treasury action cannot be used to make a deposit before the Dutch raid the district.



- If the action was taken within **Swedish influence**, no raids take place.
- If the action was taken within **Dutch influence**, the Dutch raid the province. Pay an amount of thaler to the stock equal to the closest fort less the number of log cabins in your districts (but never more than the available amount of thaler).

Example: The Swedish ship is positioned at the 10th district and the Dutch ship at the 5th district. There is 1 thaler at Fort Christina and 2 thaler at Fort Nassau. Invest and Produce actions at district 6-12 are safe from raids while Invest and Produce actions cost 1 thaler, unless the player has at least 1 log cabin.

6. End of Game

The game can end in one of three ways:



Governor victory: A governor starts the turn with at least 2 more provinces than any other player AND has a positive amount of thaler. The governor has won the Queen's favor and the game.



Swedish victory: A seal is placed on the last of the 24 districts. Sweden has consolidated the colony and all players with a positive amount of thaler has won the Queen's favor. Each governor plays one more turn, ending with the governor who placed the 24th seal, after which the governors with the most seals or 1 less than the most seals are eligible for the victory. Among them, the governor with the highest positive amount of thaler including loans and deposits wins.

Dutch victory: The number of Fort Christina thaler times the number of Fort Nassau thaler exceeds the total number of seals on the districts. The Dutch conquers the colony and banish the colonists. There is no winner in the game but the governor or governors with the **fewest seals** on districts is blamed by the Queen and loses. This also happens if no governor ends with a positive amount of thaler, in which case the colony is deemed unprofitable and is abandoned.

In 1655, the Dutch Governor Stuyvesant laid siege to Christina and pillaged the colony. In spite of support from the natives, Johan Rising could not match his 300 soldiers and artillery and surrendered after a couple of weeks. Nova Suecia was lost but the colonists were allowed to stay and their descendants spread across America.

Example: There are seals on 23 of the 24 districts when Player 1 starts her turn. There are also 4 thaler on Fort Christina and 5 thaler on fort Nassau and the ships will pass each other next turn.

Player 1 invests in the 24th district and places her 6th seal there. All governors play one more turn so Player 1 gets to produce from the newly acquired district. Player 2 has only 4 seals and cannot win. Player 1 ends up with 12 thaler, a loan of -15 thaler and a deposit of 10 thaler. This is more than Player 2 and 3 so she wins.

If the game had continued another round, a 5th thaler would have been placed on fort Christina (bringing the multiplier to 25) and the Dutch would have won.

7. Advanced Game

Try one of the following rules for even more challenging decisions for the Governors of Nova Suecia.

7.1 Stormy Seas

The journey across the Atlantic was dangerous and ships from Sweden were sometimes lost. Reflect this by placing 1 green plant cube in the ship bag at the start of the game. If drawn, draw a new resource from the ship bag and return it to the stock without affecting any market. Then return the green plant cube to the ship bag. This adds uncertainty to the game.

7.2 Pirate Seas

The Swedish ships sometimes resorted to piracy. Reflect this by placing 1 green plant cube in the ship bag at the start of the game. If drawn, choose any cube in the ship bag to affect a market. Then return the green plant cube to the ship bag. This removes uncertainty from the game.

7.3 Letters Answered

The Swedish government often neglected Nova Suecia. To reflect the opposite, play without the ship bag and let the resource on your letter affect the markets directly. This adds control to the game.

7.4 Royal Audience

The colony occasionally sent colonists back to Sweden to petition for supplies. To reflect this, add an optional audience action when the Assemble action is taken. For each colonist assembled, you may pay 1 thaler and do the following:

- Place 1 additional resource from the stock on your letter. (which still must be of a different type than the previous ones) OR
- Ignore the requirement of a different type for one resource.

When the resources eventually are placed in ship bag, draw the same number of resources from it. This adds flexibility to the game.

Example: Player 2 assembles 3 of her 4 colonists and has 1 tobacco on the letter. She plans to let the 4th colonist produce 4 tobacco in her next turn and decides to stimulate the tobacco demand. She pays 1 thaler to place 1 additional resource on the letter and 1 thaler to have this resource being a tobacco. (She does not use the option to pay a 3rd thaler. In her next turn, she will place 2 tobacco in the ship bag and draw 2 resources.

7.5 Two Player Variant

Play as a normal 3 player game but let the 3rd player be neutral. When the player to the right of the Governor has completed his or her turn and the Governor card has been passed, the new Governor plays with the neutral player instead of getting two consecutive turns.

On their return home, Calmare Nyckel traded goods in the Caribbean Sea while Vogel Grip pursued piracy against the Spanish silver fleet. Less fortunate was the ship Kattan, which was shipwrecked near Puerto Rico. The colonists were enslaved, tortured and killed. None of them ever reached Nova Suecia.

Back in Sweden, Chancellor Axel was busy with the peace negotiations for the Thirty Years' War and the interest in Nova Suecia fell. Governor Johan Printz sent many letters and even his relatives to Sweden but in his last six years as a Governor, the only answer was silence.

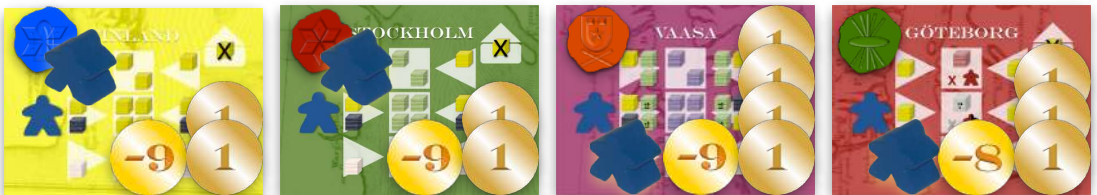
8. Sample Game

The sample game illustrates the first turns of a 4 player game. They start with 1, 1, 2 and 2 thaler respectively. Player 1 has the Governor card and starts.



Player 1 draws 1 colonist from the ship bag and takes a loan of 5 thaler against an interest of -9 thaler. She then opens a farm (1) and pays 4 thaler for 1 grain to place her seal and colonist there and raises the grain price to 5. Player 2 draws 1 grain so the grain price returns to 4. She also takes a loan of 5 thaler against an interest of -9 thaler. She then opens a plantation (2) and pays 4 thaler for 1 grain to place her seal and colonist there, raising the grain price to 5 again.

Player 3 draws 1 gold and chooses to add it to the market so that she may also borrow 5 thaler against an interest of -9 thaler. She opens a tobacco spin (3) but buys 1 timber for 3 thaler instead of grain to have her colonist build a log cabin first. Player 4 draws 1 grain and opens a trade post (4). She may only borrow 4 thaler against an interest of -8 thaler and buys 1 timber for 3 thaler to build a log cabin.



For her 2nd Governor turn, player 4 draws another 1 grain and since she can now buy grain for 3 thaler, she decides to borrow 4 more thaler against an interest of -8 to invest in the trade post she opens (5) It costs 1+3+3 thaler for the seal, colonist and grain. During her turn, the ships pass each other and 1 thaler is placed on the closest fort (Christina). Player 1 draws 1 colonist, opens a forge (6) and takes the Produce action to produce 2 grain, earning her 3+2 thaler and decreasing the grain price to 2. This is within the Dutch influence so the Dutch raid 1 thaler from her.

Player 2 draws 1 tobacco and opens a spin (7). She is annoyed that player 3 also entered the tobacco market but sees no better option than taking the Produce action, earning her 3+3 thaler for 2 plant and making plant cheaper for player 3. Like player 1, she loses 1 thaler to the Dutch. Player 3 draws 1 gold and opens a trade post (8). Given the cheap plant, she hurries to make her tobacco spin productive by taking the Produce action to place a log cabin in her spin district.



Credits

Game design: Nicholas Hjelmberg

Artwork: Nicholas Hjelmberg

Production: The Game Crafter

Game testers: Magnus Anderlund, Samuel Hägg, Kristoffer Johansson, Stefan Malmquist, Henrik Strinning

Special thanks: My wife Su-San Oh for having to listen to my endless historical and game-technical considerations
