

GET OUT OF JAIL FREE

I have visited jail more times than I care to admit, and I dare say most of you folks reading this story have visited jail several times, too. To leave jail, folks can pay their way out or, with the correct authorization, get out of jail free. Jail isn't all that bad considering bankruptcy is habitually the conclusion, such is the



game of Monopoly. One of the most played and internationally recognized board games, a game of Monopoly in WWII meant 'get out of a prisoner camp' for thousands of Allied POWs during the war.

During the Great Depression, an out-of-luck gentleman named Charles Darrow developed a game to entertain his friends and family. This game, he called Monopoly, utilized an oil cloth for a playing board. Mr. Darrow eventually sold his homegrown game invention to Parker Brothers, a fruitful transaction that made him enormously wealthy. His success is an example of Capitalism at its best, the rags to riches story of the down-and-out moving up-and-in.

reporter in 1906, "I hope in a very short time, men and women will discover that they are poor because the Rockefellers and Carnegies have more money than they know what to do with."

'The Landlord's Game' was sold for a short time by a New York publisher, but homegrown versions became the rage of East Coast writers, radicals, and intellectuals. Along comes Charles Darrow, hawking a Quaker adaptation of the game to Parker Brothers in 1935, along with the misspelling of a neighborhood in Atlantic City called 'Marven Gardens', still misspelled today as 'Marvin Gardens'.

In its first year, Monopoly sold 278,000 copies. In the second year, over 1,750,000 copies were purchased. Wildly popular, Monopoly became one of the most widely recognized board games in the world. Thus its use in WWII to support escaped Allied POWS to gain and retain their freedom. A simple board game helped win WWII, and this is the story.

American aircrews are receiving an initial briefing before their first missions and will hopefully retain a plethora of information tossed in their direction: procedures, enemy aircraft and anti-aircraft capabilities, how to avoid the risks of 'grouping' after takeoff...a seemingly endless list of intelligence. If shot down, survival and evasion are discussed, as is the game of Monopoly if evasion fails.

For Allied POWs, German camps offered a much better chance for survival than did the Japanese detention facilities. Abiding, somewhat, to the Geneva Convention, the Germans allowed

humanitarian groups like the Red Cross to distribute various 'care packages' including 'games and pastimes' to prisoners of war. MI-9, a British Intelligence operation from 1939 to 1945, was responsible for resupplying and assisting various resistance groups in occupied territories for the purpose of helping in the return of allied personnel shot down or attempting to escape from enemy captivity. MI-9 hooked up with MI-5, the British Secret Service (and hypothetical home of the fictional James Bond character) to figure out how to supply Allied POWs with the tools and instruments needed to successfully escape, like money, metal files, compasses, and most crucially, maps.

Paper maps were limited as to how small they could be folded, plus paper maps made 'noise', not a good thing if the enemy is around the corner. Paper maps tore easily and would dissolve in water. **Silk maps** were the answer, easily folded to miniscule size

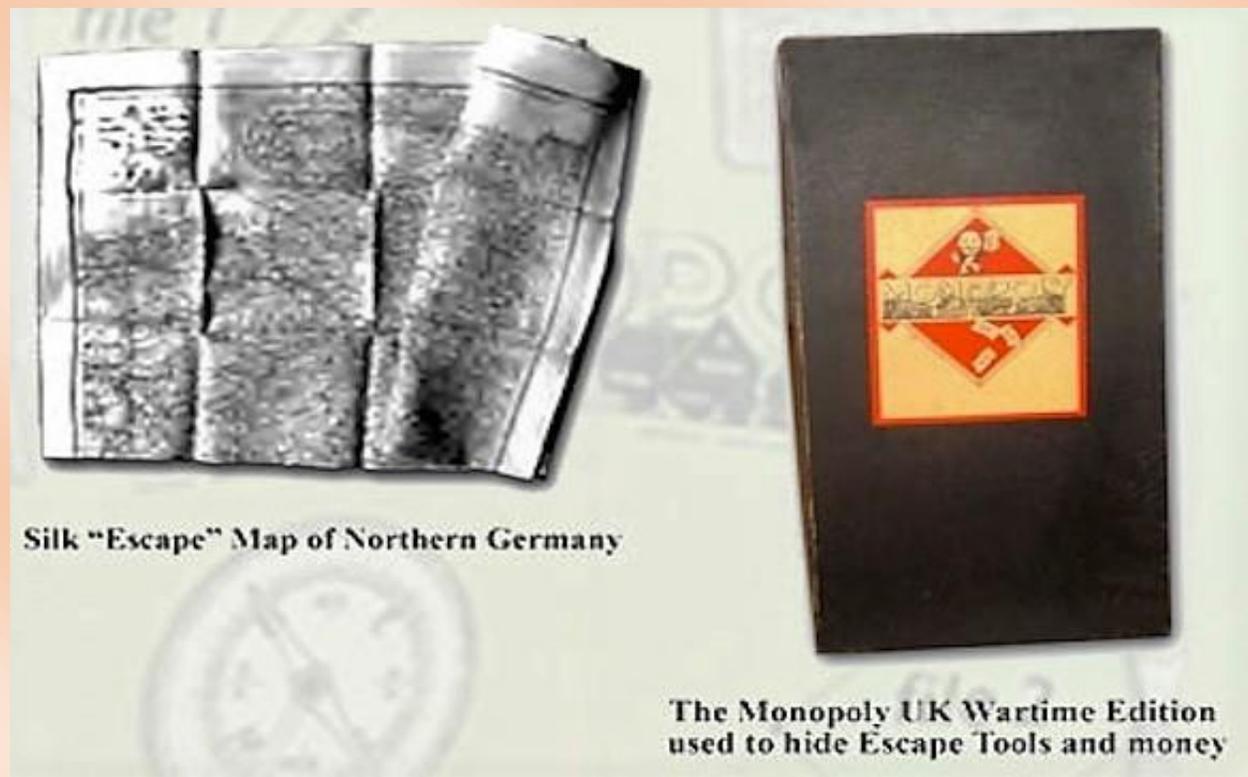


plus silk didn't make 'noise' when in use. The compasses, money, and metal files could also be disguised and reduced in size. So, how to deliver these 'escape kits' in a single

package without drawing unwanted attention? Monopoly boxes were a perfect size, the game pieces could be utilized to conceal small-scale files and compasses, plus the silk map could be concealed in the board itself. British Intelligence officers

approached John Waddington, Ltd., the only licensed manufacturer of Monopoly in England, and due to a stroke of luck, the only manufacturer that had mastered the art and technology of printing on silk.

John Waddington, Ltd. was happy to do their patriotic duty, not to mention gaining a financial windfall for the company. An old workshop was chosen for the project, the work done in secrecy, yet under armed security.



The workmen plunged into the project with vigor. Production began on silk maps of Italy and Germany, which map in what Monopoly box contingent on the location of a POW camp. In short order, detailed silk maps folded into tiny speckles were fitted inside a Monopoly playing piece. Other playing pieces

housed a miniature magnetic compass or a tiny two-part metal file the POW could easily screw together. But what about the currency? How do you hide genuine money in a game box?

High-denomination French, German, and Italian currency was ingeniously hidden in plain sight, laced within the compact piles of Monopoly money. Naturally, not all of the Monopoly game boxes harbored concealed escape paraphernalia. Most were sent to the POW camps so the prisoners could, well, play the game of Monopoly, for recreation, to kill time, to keep their minds active, to forget for a few moments they were in the hands of the enemy.

Occasionally a Monopoly box arrived with a printing flaw, not



overly obvious, but a flaw nevertheless. A printing glitch, not unheard of during a world war, and if one looked hard enough, could be found as a tiny red dot on the game board, located

in a corner of the Free Parking square. Those occasional boxes containing a Monopoly game board with a printing irregularity gave hope and a fighting chance for escaping Allied POWs.

During the war in Europe, approximately 35,000 Allied POWs escaped their confinement. Their escapes sidetracked enemy soldiers from defensive positions to a useless armed posse. Of the 35,000 escapees, at least a third of them made their dash to freedom with the aid of the contents from a rigged game of Monopoly.



The British government considered the Monopoly deception a handy tool to be used in future wars. Therefore, all the POWs who escaped via the Monopoly ruse were sworn to secrecy, ad infinitum. John Waddington, Ltd. and a few surviving workers of the company were finally honored for their contribution to the war effort in a public ceremony in 2007. And only then, in 2007, was the WWII Monopoly story declassified.

It gives a whole new meaning to the words 'get out of jail free'.

