

Mah Jongg Has Oriental Fascination Seattle Women Fall Victims to Game



A few Mah Jongg players around a table at the residence of Mrs. Charles Hansen, who is in the center of the group. The long sticks in the background are the bone-counting sticks, while the little pieces in front are the Mah Jongg blocks. Their names, from left to right, are: First row, Four Character, and Seven Circle; second row, Nine Bamboo, One Bamboo (a special figure), a Season, West Wind, One Circle, and Red Dragon.

By Wanda von Kettler
Alack and slack. How many days are carefully building the Chinese wall, only to see it, piece by piece, following its completion!
Scores of people—hundreds of them—right here on the Pacific coast. Seattle residents number with the rest.
The building of the Chinese wall is the first step in the sudorifically popular Oriental game of Mah Jongg, and Seattle, too, plays Mah Jongg.
Just about six months ago (1921) began to grow on the Pacific coast, in Mandarin coats and sliver windows, drew the shades of their apartment windows, turned on

shaded rose lights, set the incense burning, then gathered about the Mah Jongg table to play the new-found game in all the Oriental atmosphere attainable in an Occidental dwelling.
New-found game. I have said. Yes, it is that—on the Pacific coast and in Seattle. But alack, again—how far behind times are the Pacific coast and Seattle. Mah Jongg fascinated Confucius and his lady friends in China more than 2,000 years ago.
MAH JONGG IS CHINA'S FAVORITE
It is believed the game originated in Ningpo or Canton, and from one or the other of these places spread throughout China. For years past, now, the youth of that country have

learned to keenly play Mah Jongg, to take it with them as a favorite pastime into middle life, and then in old age to consider it a blessing with which to while the hours away.
Ships for many years have been making trips from the Pacific coast to China. Yet, somehow, the skipper and adventures failed until recently to pay particular attention to the seemingly fascinating game, the little bamboo and ivory blocks, with the pretty figures painted upon them, meant nothing to the Occidentals but unintelligible heaps and rows of good-looking "dominoes."
Last summer, however, the Mah Jongg industry had reason to grow in China. Some sea captain, or tourist, perhaps, became interested by chance in the game. He played it in the Orient, and his friends there joined him. The interest grew among the white people of the Far East, and gradually spread across the Pacific to the west coast of America. Mah Jongg sets, having been carried as entertaining little curios from the Orient, at first by individuals, commenced being imported in larger numbers by firms that placed them on exhibition and sold them to those whom the Mah Jongg craze was beginning to affect.
Just before Seattle's craze began its development, Charles G. Hansen, at that time port captain for the Admiral line in this city, made a trip to the Orient, returning with a set of Mah Jongg in his suitcase. Hence, Mrs. Hansen, wife of the captain, became one of Seattle's Mah Jongg enthusiasts.
FIRST CLUB ORGANIZED
It was she who organized the first Mah Jongg club in the city. More than three months ago, at the residence of Mrs. Hansen in the De La Mar Apartments, eight young women met to play the Chinese game. They wore mandarin coats and Chinese kimonos. In their hair were Oriental combs, bands and pins. Incense smoldered in the room they occupied, while shades were drawn and rose-shaded globes cast their light over the Mah Jongg tables. The women were Mrs. John Griffith, Mrs. Warren W. Bell, Mrs. E. W. Horseman, Mrs. A. V. Holman, Mrs. W. A. Kautz, Mrs. A. G. Craig, Mrs. Harvey B. Cochran and Mrs. Hansen. They had met previously and played, they had not until this day "organized." They now meet practically each week at the residence of some one of their members for an afternoon of Mah Jongg.
Just what is the secret of the game's fascination? Players themselves aren't quite certain. Maybe it's the prettiness of the little half-inch "thick blocks" with bamboo backs, and designed bone or ivory faces. Maybe it's the Chinese words which the players needs must use while involved in the game. One experiences a delightful Oriental thrill when, making a play, he can say "chow" or "pong," or better yet, "Mah Jongg." Maybe the secret of the fascination lies in the combination of all these things and more—even in the silliness of the funny little game that in some ways resembles rummy and dominoes.
It is, however, much more complicated than either of the latter. The first step in the playing of Mah Jongg, as said, is the building of the Chinese wall. With four people at a table, each player selects 34 of the blocks at random, making a row before him 17 blocks long and two high, all placed close together, and of the wall.



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ber, being labeled definitely from 1 to 9. Of each separate number there are four, making 108 in all. The winds and the special honor pieces complete the set.
By the shaking of dice the wall is opened. The individual making the highest throw becomes the "east wind," and opens it.
And the game progresses. There is much "drawing" and "giving away," much usage of almost meaningless Chinese words. A sequence of three is "chow"; three of a kind is "pong"; four sets of three and a pair is "Mah Jongg."
But one cannot appreciate the crazy little game till one has played it; nor can one learn it by reading about it.
Get ye a Mandarin coat, throw dice with the hope of being an East Wind, and ye, too, will possibly lose thy head to Mah Jongg.
Wore Pajamas on Motorcycle Ride
ST. JOSEPH, Mo., Dec. 29.—Wearing pajamas, Thomas Carlton dashed into town on his motorcycle to get help when his farmhouse caught fire. Quick aid was given and the building saved.
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