

 *The Humble History* 

of

PRESIDENTIAL
SOLITAIRE

the deck of cards made
on a shoestring budget
that ended up at
"The Mall of America"

1996-2014

Where It Began

In 1985, I was interpreting for deaf students in a high school in Minnesota. On one particular day, as the English teacher discussed Tennyson or Alcott, my mind drifted back to a childhood favorite game I loved to play—*Authors*. Thus began my obsession with finding that game for my daughter, Bethany, who was nine years old at the time.

Minneapolis is blessed with several game stores, and I started my search at one of the “Games by James” stores near our home. They, like every game store I searched, had heard of the game, but didn’t carry it. Finally, at “Grand Games,” the owner and I reminisced about why we loved that game as children. She told me it had been in print since 1861 and had been published by various publishers, but was now out of print. **“Someone needs to republish that game,” she said. That set me on a path that I had never realized I would be traveling.**

On a shoestring budget, I set about publishing “American Authors” with images drawn by a student in an Art class at our high school and the cards printed by a small printer in St. Paul using only a two-color process to save money.

My family and I collated the decks and assembled the boxes in our living room. Even though the small run of “American Authors” was obviously not Parker Brothers quality, nevertheless, Grand Games and Games by James started purchasing a dozen decks at a time, and I was thrilled.

As fate would have it, shortly after the game stores started carrying my version, “American Authors”, the owner of United Game Systems on the East Coast had the same idea I had, as he, too, remembered “Authors” with fondness and published a version of the “Authors” game that looked close to the original. When I saw his game, even though mine was “American Authors”, I decided I couldn’t compete with this polished, full-colored copy of the original game, and I closed down the business, even though the game was selling at the Mall of America at the time.

How is “American Authors” connected to “Presidential Solitaire?”

Around the 1990s, while I was still interpreting, people began to use computers for both business and personal use. I noticed a significant number of those people were playing the classic game of “Solitaire” on their computers. (Microsoft included it in Windows to teach people how to use the mouse in their new computers.) It struck me that playing a simple game of “Solitaire” could be made much more challenging if numbers were excluded. That “ah ha moment!” struck, and I realized that the order of the Presidents would be a perfect way to make classic “Solitaire” challenging and intellectually stimulating.

And so, I went back to the printer I had used for “American Authors” and went through the

entire process of creating “Presidential Solitaire,” not knowing whether any game shop would pick it up.

To my delight, Games by James at the Mall of America said, “Sure.”

Again, I sold my new deck of cards, “Presidential Solitaire,” in small batches. That first version ended with President Clinton, and when GW Bush became president, we reprinted the deck and continued up until we got to President Obama. By that time, my husband and I were following his software consultant jobs around the country. He had also created an online digital version of “Presidential Solitaire,” and we dropped the short runs of the latest version, which ended with President Obama.

Just recently, more than ten years after ending our production of the last physical version of “Presidential Solitaire,” we were clearing out our storage locker. To our surprise and delight, we found approximately 30 decks of the Obama version of “Presidential Solitaire.”

We then decided to offer them as copies of a unique deck that collectors might be eager to have, considering the few decks that remain of the final physical run. This 2014 Obama Edition is a limited vintage, a hand-made release, reflecting a time when hope and change were in the air. Crafted with passion and on a shoestring budget, the cards may lack the polish of mass-produced games, but they brim with character and authenticity. Each deck serves as a testament to creative ambition and the spirit of innovation.

We sincerely thank you for your purchase, as it reflects your acknowledgement of all those small inventors who continue to create products that are unique and, in that uniqueness, are valuable representations of the human drive to strive for innovation, hoping that somehow or another, it stimulates others to add to our very human story.