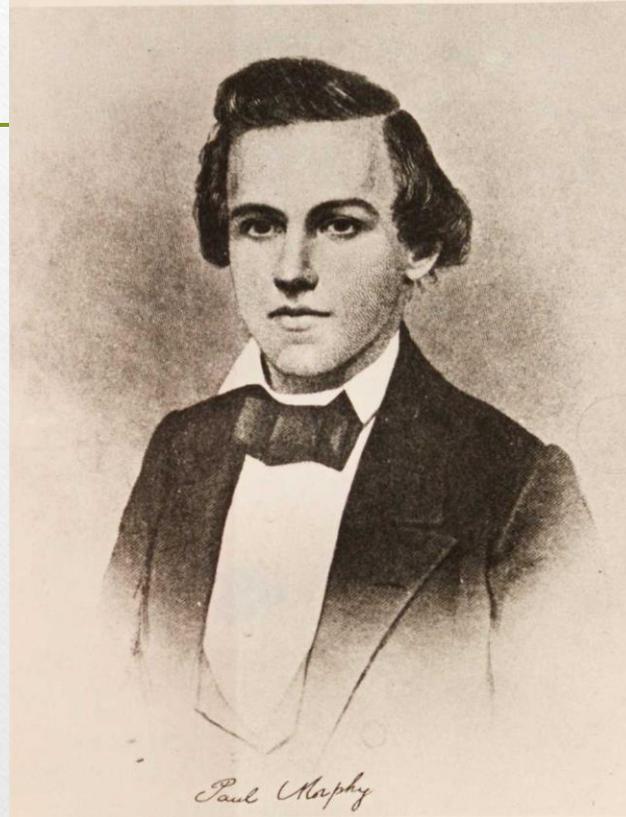


The Historic New Orleans Collection presents  
**Play Chess with Paul Morphy**



Lesson 1, History



**Daguerreotype of Paul Morphy framed in an embossed case, between 1857 and 1859** (THNOC, acquisition made possible by the Boyd Cruise Fund, 1996.75)

In the winter of 1857, 20-year-old Paul Morphy had just returned home to New Orleans after defeating the best chess players in the country at the first American Chess Congress, held in New York City.



### NATIONAL CHESS CONGRESS.

#### PAUL MORPHY THE WINNER.

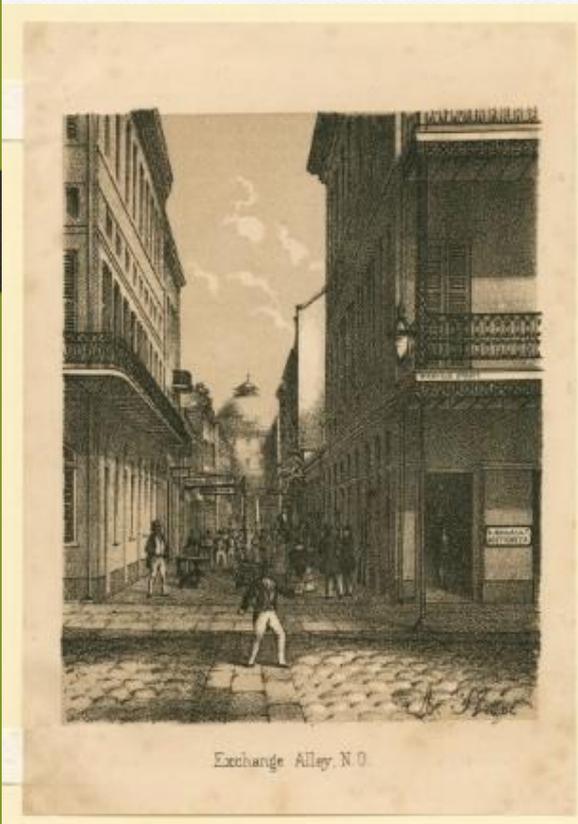
This festival of the devotees of Caissa is now rapidly drawing to a close. After a prolonged and gallant struggle, Mr. Paulsen has succumbed to the prowess of the young Louisianan, Paul Morphy—a result which was long ago foreseen by nearly every member of the Congress, and one which least of all astonished Mr. Paulsen. On the latter's arriving in this city, he declared his opinion that in the event of Mr. Morphy's entering the list, he would certainly be successful, and his convictions are now seen to be right.

Announcement in the *New-York Tribune*, November 7, 1857

Members of the first American Chess Congress, 1857 (courtesy of Cornell University Library)

Because of Morphy's accomplishment, a chess craze swept New Orleans.

Soon after Morphy's victory, the New Orleans Chess Club elected him as president. The meetings were held at the Mercantile Library Association, located on Exchange Alley. At these events, Morphy entertained crowds with extraordinary feats on the chessboard.



**THE NEW ORLEANS CHESS CLUB** are pleased to announce that they have made arrangements to meet, hereafter, at the fine Chess Rooms of the Mercantile Library Association, corner of Exchange Place and Canal street

On **WEDNESDAY EVENING**, 13th inst, the President of the Club, Mr. **PAUL MORPHY**, will play one game, blindfolded, and, on the following **SATURDAY EVENING**, two games, at one time, also blindfolded.

Persons desirous of joining the Club, will make application to the Librarian of the Mercantile Library Association.

There is positively no admission to any except persons particularly invited, and members of the Mercantile Library Association, who are requested to show their cards when called upon.

**L. W. BAQUIE**, Sec'y pro tem.,  
N. O. Chess Club.

**Ja11—MoWeSa ¶**

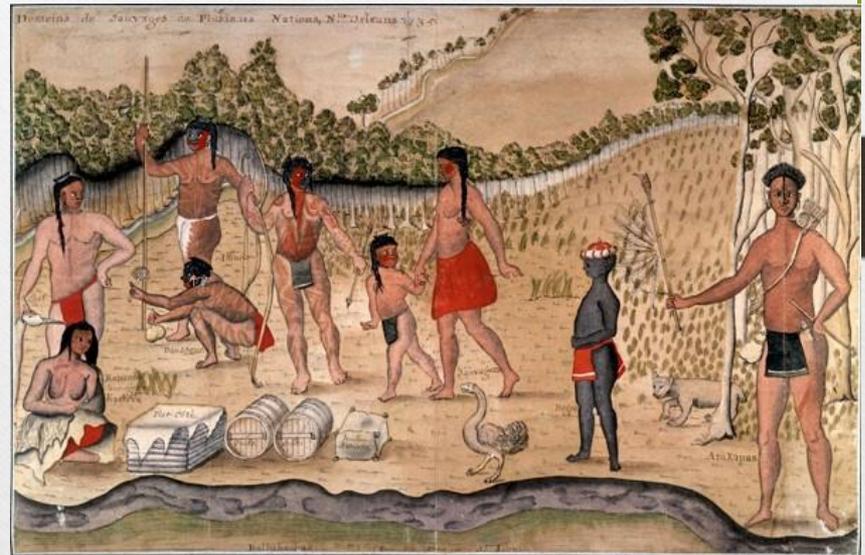
New Orleans Chess Club announcement in the *Times-Picayune*, January 13, 1858

Lithograph illustration of Exchange Alley, ca. 1870, by Marie Adrien Persac. (THNOC, The L. Kemper and Leila Moore Williams Founders Collection, 1950.39)

Modern chess developed in the Mediterranean during the 15th century, as part of the Italian Renaissance. Around this same time, Europeans began to voyage to Africa and the Americas. Spanish, Portuguese, French, and English ships spread the game of chess—along with plants, technology, and disease—throughout the New World.



*Taking Possession Of Louisiana And The River Mississippi . . .*, ca. 1860, by Jean-Adolphe Bocquin (THNOC, 1970.1)



*Sauvage matachez en guerrier*, 1735, by Alexandre De Batz (courtesy of Peabody Museum of Archaeology and Ethnology, Harvard University)



In New Orleans, the game grew in popularity as francophone émigrés poured into the city following the French and Haitian Revolutions at the turn of the 19th century.

**Map of New Orleans and Mississippi River**, 1833, by Charles F. Zimpel (THNOC, 1945.13 i-xix)

It was within this community of chess players that Paul Morphy trained.

His life (1836–1884) spanned a time of great change in the city and around the world, as colonies throughout the Americas challenged Old World control. The feats that Morphy accomplished on the chessboard in Europe from 1858 to 1859 served as a microcosm of events taking place on the world political stage.

This series of lessons, released over the next few weeks, will look at world history through the game of chess, leading up to the period of Morphy's death.



**Paul Morphy with chess set, 1859**  
(THNOC, 1983.51.5)

That's our chess master, Paul Morphy!

Now, let's get into the game itself. Continue to part 2 of lesson 1, where we'll get acquainted with the chessboard, notation, and the role of rooks.