



COLONIAL
Gothic

Rulebook
THIRD EDITION



Colonial Gothic
Third Edition

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This is a game where people make up stories about wonderful, terrible, impossible, glorious things. All the characters and events portrayed in this work are fictional. Any resemblance to real people, historical figures, unspeakable horrors, or cultists dedicated to ushering the Old Ones into our dimension is purely coincidental. You have to admit it is kinda hilarious.



Colonial Gothic *Third Edition*

 Rogue Games, Inc., *Publisher*

ROGUE GAMES

COLONIAL
Gothic



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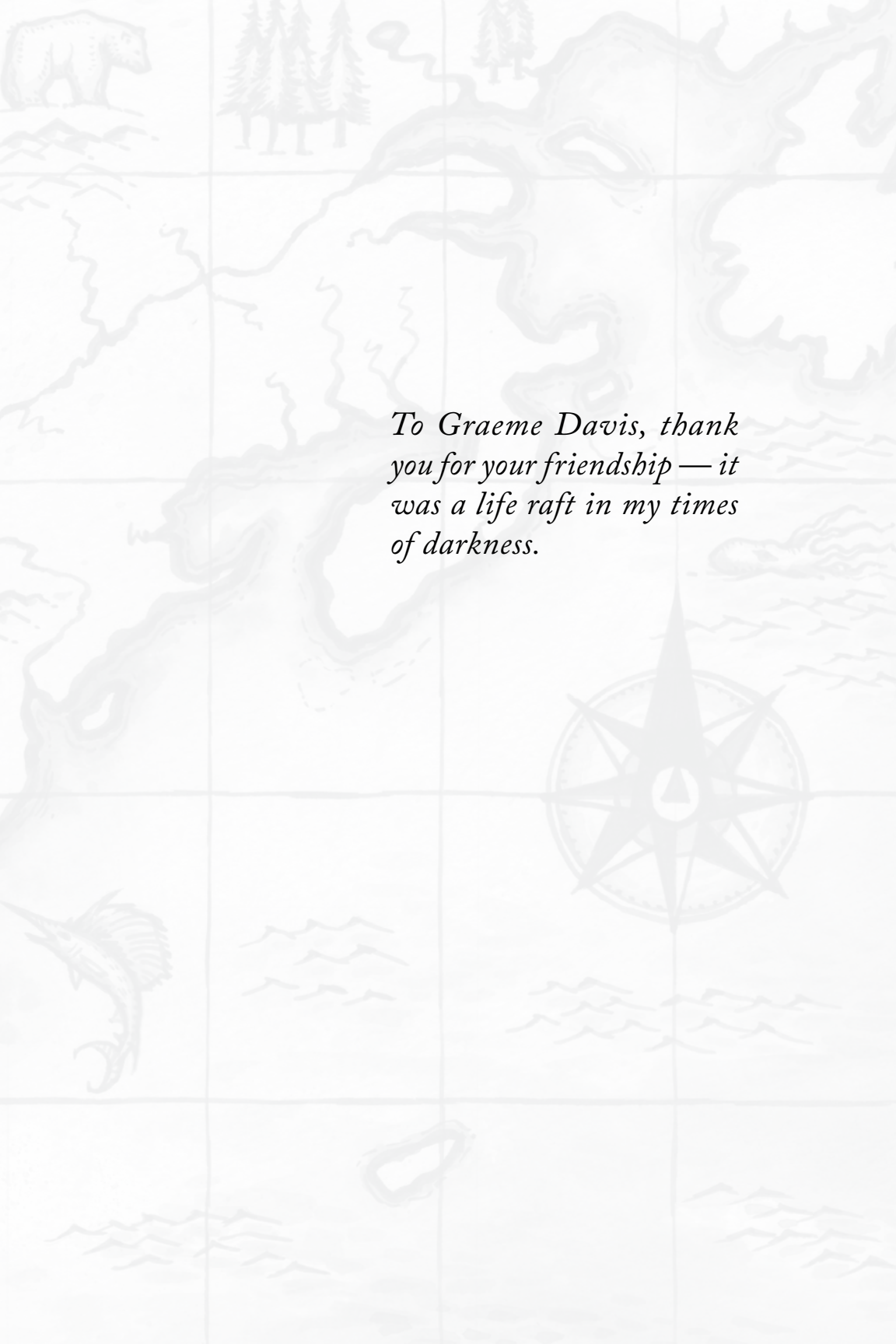
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*To Graeme Davis, thank
you for your friendship — it
was a life raft in my times
of darkness.*

Table of Contents

INTRODUCTION	13	Damage	33
Setting	14	Damage Penalty: Too Harsh?	33
For the Players	14	Shock	33
For the Gamemaster	14	Melee Combat Damage	34
12°	16	Ranged Combat Damage	34
Playing the Game	16	Unarmed Combat Damage	34
Rules Summary	16	Healing	34
Skills	17	Other Types of Damage	35
Ability Tests	17	Drowning	35
Skill Tests	17	Falling	35
Opposed Tests	18	Fire and Smoke	35
Success & Failure	18	Avoiding Attacks	36
Degrees	18	Ability Tests	36
Bonuses & Penalties	19	Charm (Reason)	36
Hooks & Action Points	19	Confusion (Reason)	36
What's Next?	19	Constriction (Might)	37
CHAPTER 1: RULES	21	Disease (Vigor)	37
Basics	21	Gaseous Attacks (Vigor)	37
Abilities	21	Fear (Resolution)	37
Might	21	Gazes (Nimble)	37
Nimble	21	Illusion (Reason)	37
Vigor	21	Magical Range Attacks (Nimble)	37
Reason	22	Mental Attacks (Resolution)	38
Resolution	22	Paralysis (Might)	38
Vitality	22	Poison (Vigor)	38
Sanity	22	Psychological (Resolution)	38
Actions	22	Trap (Nimble)	38
Initiative Rating	22	Defend	38
Skill & Spell Rank	23	Dodge	38
Skills & Hooks	23	Carrying, Lifting, & Pushing	39
Ranks	23	Social Interaction	40
Challenge & Skill Test Modifiers	24	Attitudes & Social Interactions	40
So How Does This Work?	24	Changing Attitudes	41
Degrees of Success	25	Social Interaction & Your Character	41
Degrees of Failure	26	Fear & Sanity	42
Action	26	Fear	42
Telling Time	26	Sanity	42
Initiative	26	Using Sanity	43
Surprise	27	Regaining Sanity & Losing Disorders	43
Tactics	27	Common Disorders	44
Actions	27	Absentmindedness	44
Rate of Fire	28	Agoraphobia	44
Range	29	Alcoholism	44
Movement	29	Allergy	44
Throwing	29	Amnesia, Short-Term	44
Personal Combat Basics	29	Anorexia	44
Note on Combat	30	Claustrophobia	45
Additional Modifiers	30	Depression, Severe	45
Area Attacks	30	Foolhardiness	45
Called Shots	31	Gluttony	45
Careful Aim	31	Migraines	45
Charge	31	Nightmares	45
Cover	31	Obsession	45
Darkness / Obscured Vision	32	Other Phobias	46
Miscellaneous Combat Modifiers	32	Diseases & Ailments	46
Size	32	Ague	46
Two Weapons	32	Barrel Fever	46
		Bloody Flux	46

Bright's Disease	46
Bursten	46
Camp Fever	46
Chin Cough.....	47
Consumption.....	47
Curse of the Grave	47
Diphtheria	47
Dock Fever	47
Enteritis.....	48
Falling Sickness	48
French Pox.....	48
Gripe	48
Headmouldshot.....	48
Hemiplegy.....	48
Jaundice	48
Lung Fever	48
Lycanthropy.....	49
Morsal	49
Planet-struck	49
Spotted Fever.....	49
Rickets.....	49
St. Anthony's Fire.....	49
St. Vitus' Dance	49
Poison	50
Pharmasistics & Poison	50
Specific Poison Examples	51
Arsenic.....	51
Cyanide	51
Hemlock.....	51

CHAPTER 2 CHARACTER CREATION 53

The Character Creation Process.....	53
Abilities.....	53
Vitality	55
Sanity	55
Initiative.....	55
Actions	55
Backgrounds.....	56
Colonists	56
Frontier Colonist.....	56
Urban Colonist.....	57
Immigrant	57
Freedman	57
Freed Slave	59
Former Indentured Servant.....	59
Military.....	59
Militia.....	59
British.....	60
Native.....	61
Native-Born.....	61
Tribe-Adopted.....	61
Choosing Skills.....	62
Action Points	62
Gaining a Success	62
+1 Bonus.....	63
Hook	63
"Editing".....	63
Hooks	64
Choosing Hooks.....	64
"Bad" Hooks.....	64
Using Hooks	65

Hook Examples.....	65
Hooks in Play.....	65
A Final Word on Hooks & Action Points.....	66
Experience Points	66
Finishing Touches.....	66
Name.....	66
Age.....	67
Gender.....	67

CHAPTER 3: SKILLS 69

Skill List.....	69
Acrobatics (Nimble)	70
Alchemy (Reason)	70
Animal Handling (Reason)	70
Archery (Nimble, Untrained)	70
Astrology (Reason).....	70
Athletics (Might, Untrained).....	70
Bargain (Resolution, Untrained).....	70
Brawl (Might, Untrained).....	72
Bureaucracy (Reason, Untrained)	72
Craft (Reason).....	72
Defend (Might, Untrained).....	73
Diplomacy (Resolution, Untrained).....	73
Divination (Reason)	73
Dodge (Nimble, Untrained)	74
Empathy (Resolution, Untrained)	74
Gaming (Reason, Untrained)	75
Heal (Reason).....	75
Herbalist (Reason).....	75
Intimidation (Resolution, Untrained).....	75
Investigation (Reason, Untrained).....	75
Language (Reason).....	75
Lore (Reason).....	76
Magic (Resolution).....	76
Melee (Might, Untrained).....	76
Merchant (Reason).....	76
Observe (Reason, Untrained)	76
Performance (Resolution, Untrained).....	78
Profession (Reason)	78
Resist (Reason, Untrained).....	79
Ride (Nimble, Untrained).....	79
Sense (Reason)	79
Shoot (Nimble, Untrained).....	80
Socialize (Resolution, Untrained).....	80
Stealth (Nimble, Untrained).....	80
Streetwise (Resolution, Untrained).....	80
Subterfuge (Nimble).....	82
Survival (Reason).....	83
Tactics (Reason)	84
Throw (Nimble, Untrained).....	84
Track (Reason)	84
Trade (Might).....	84

CHAPTER 4: THE MAGICAL ARTS 87

The Magic of Colonial Gothic.....	87
Categories of Spells.....	87
Acquiring Spells.....	88
Spell Power Ranks & Tests.....	89
Using Spells	89
Time.....	89
Attack Rolls	89

Resistance.....	89
Range.....	90
Sanity Cost.....	90
Maintaining Spells.....	90
Spell Descriptions.....	90
Common Spells.....	91
Awake.....	91
Beauty's Face.....	91
Bless.....	91
Burn.....	92
Celestial Music.....	93
Circle.....	93
Conceal.....	93
Dispel.....	94
Divine Breath.....	94
Draw.....	94
Eagle Eyes.....	95
Evergreen.....	96
Fish's Breath.....	96
Form the Cloud.....	96
Guardian.....	97
Guidance.....	97
Healing Wind.....	97
Insight.....	98
Invocation of the Stone.....	98
Liquid Courage.....	99
Luck.....	99
Mark.....	99
Missive.....	100
Preserve.....	100
Quicken.....	101
Reveal.....	101
Shadow of the Moon.....	101
Shield.....	102
Spirit of the Fire.....	102
Spirit of the Wood.....	102
Strength of the Earth.....	102
Strike True.....	102
Warmth.....	103
Warn.....	103
Arcane Spells.....	104
Animate Dead.....	104
Align.....	104
Babble.....	105
Breath of Life.....	105
Clear Vision.....	105
Cloak.....	106
Contact Elder God.....	106
Control.....	107
Covering Cloud.....	107
Curse.....	108
Discerning of Spirits.....	109
Distant Eye.....	109
Exorcise.....	110
Gift of Tongues & Interpretation of Tongues.....	110
Grace of Healing.....	111
Inspiration.....	111
Plague.....	112
Prayer to the Twelve.....	112

Quake.....	112
Rainmaking.....	113
Raising of the Dead.....	113
Spirit Walk.....	113
Summon.....	114
Thunder.....	115
Transport.....	115
Alchemy.....	116
Acid & Alkali Creation.....	116
Alchemical Vitriol.....	117
Distillation.....	117
Metallurgy.....	119
Pigments & Dyes.....	119
Poisons, Alchemical.....	119
Pesticides & Purifiers.....	120
Soap & Perfumes.....	120
Transmutation.....	120

CHAPTER 5: CURRENCY, WEAPONS &

EQUIPMENT..... 123

Note on Historical Accuracy.....	124
Starting Your Adventure.....	124
Descriptions.....	129
Melee Weapons.....	129
Hand-Axe.....	129
Hand – Blunt.....	129
Hand-Edge.....	129
Hand – Spear & Polearms.....	129
Ranged Weapons – Archaic.....	130
Ranged – Pistols.....	130
Ranged – Muskets & Rifles.....	131
Ammunition.....	132
Objects of the Occult.....	132
Clothing.....	132
Traditional Native Clothing.....	133

CHAPTER 6: A GUIDE TO THE COLONIES... 135

Colonists.....	135
Education.....	136
Government.....	137
The Tories & Whigs.....	138
Printing & Publishing.....	139
Libraries.....	139
Religion.....	140
Anglicanism.....	141
Catholicism.....	142
Puritanism.....	142
Quakers.....	145
Other Groups.....	145
Transportation.....	147
Travel.....	147
The Major Land Routes of the Colonies... 148	
The Boston Post Road.....	149
Braddock's Road.....	149
The Conestoga Road & Forbes' Road.....	149
The Fall Line Road.....	149
The King's Highway.....	150
The Mohawk Trail.....	150
Water Travel.....	150
Alchemy & Magic.....	151
Alchemy.....	151

Goals of Alchemy.....	153
Magic of the World.....	153
The Five Elements.....	154
Historical Persecution.....	155
Natives.....	155
Abenaki.....	156
Catawba.....	158
Cherokee.....	159
Chickasaw.....	160
Haudenosaunee.....	161
Lenape (Delaware).....	162
Mahican (Mohican).....	163
Shawnee.....	164

CHAPTER 7: ENEMIES & MONSTERS 165

Colonists.....	166
Agent of the Inquisition.....	166
Freemason Agent.....	167
Knight Templar Agent.....	167
Minuteman.....	168
Soldier.....	169
Colonial Alchemist.....	169
Typical Colonial Mage.....	170
Woodsmen.....	170
The Mandoag.....	171
Mandoag Warrior.....	171
Mandoag Shaman.....	172
Native-Born.....	172
Typical Shaman.....	172
Typical Warrior.....	173
Creature Basics.....	174
Creature Design.....	175
Step 1: Determine Power Level.....	175
Step 2: Purchase Abilities with Creature Points.....	175
Step 3: Purchase Traits with Traits Points.....	175
Acidic.....	176
Attack Bonus.....	176
Attack Penalty (Drawback).....	176
Bite.....	177
Bony Spurs.....	177
Breath.....	177
Brittle Bones (Drawback).....	177
Cold Iron Deficiency (drawback).....	177
Claws.....	177
Combat Fear (Drawback).....	177
Control.....	177
Curious.....	178
Damage Reduction.....	178
Disease.....	178
Drain.....	178
Elasticity.....	178
Extra Arms.....	178
Fear.....	178
Fierce.....	179
Flight.....	179
Frailty (Drawback).....	179
Gaze.....	179
Gills.....	179
Glider.....	179
Gore.....	179

Head Butt.....	179
Heat/Cold Susceptibility (Drawback).....	179
Horrific Visage.....	180
Horns.....	180
Hug/Squeeze.....	180
Hypersensitivity.....	180
Infernal.....	180
Immunity.....	180
Invisibility.....	181
Insubstantial.....	181
Kick.....	181
Leaper.....	181
Lethargy (Drawback).....	181
Light Sensitivity (Drawback).....	181
Manifest.....	181
Mindslave (Drawback).....	181
Moan.....	181
Natural Armor.....	181
Natural Armor Penalty (Drawback).....	181
Night Vision.....	182
Poison.....	182
Plasm.....	182
Prehensile Tail.....	182
Rejuvenation.....	183
Second Wind.....	183
Scent.....	183
Shift.....	183
Size.....	183
Spawn.....	184
Speed.....	184
Spellcaster.....	184
Spirit Animal.....	184
Stench.....	184
Stomp.....	184
Swarm.....	184
Tail.....	185
Taint.....	185
Telekinesis.....	185
Thermal Vision.....	185
Thick Fur Coat.....	185
Undead.....	185
Unfathomable.....	185
Wall Crawler.....	186
Weakness.....	186
Weak Immune System (Drawback).....	186
Webbed Digits.....	186
Step 4: Purchase skills with Skill Points.....	186
Step 5: Calculate Plasm, Taint or Vigor, Initiative Rating, and Actions... ..	186
Step 6: Assign Hook.....	186
Step 7: Pit Creature Against Characters.....	186
Creatures Great & Small.....	187
A-senee-ki-wakw.....	187
Apotamkin.....	187
Badger.....	188
Bat.....	188
Bear, Brown.....	188
Bear, Black.....	188
Beaver.....	189
Boar.....	189

Cat, large	189
Cat, small.....	189
Chepi.....	190
Devils.....	190
Dog.....	191
Eagle.....	191
Ewah	191
Ghost	192
Ghoul	193
Golem.....	193
Headless	194
Honochenokeh	195
Horse.....	196
Jogah.....	196
Owl.....	197
Pim-skwa-wagen-owad	197
Pok-wejee-men.....	197
Rat	198
Raven.....	198
Skeleton.....	198
Snake, poisonous.....	199
Ability Description.....	199
Background	199
Spirit.....	199
Vampire	200
Wendigo	201
Werewolf	201
Wolf.....	202
Zombie.....	202

CHAPTER 8: USE & ABUSE OF HISTORY..... 203

Two Types of History.....	203
A Note about the Word “Cinematic”	206
Don't Sweat the Small Stuff.....	208
Using history to your advantage.....	209
Antagonists & Villains.....	211
The Heart of Villainy.....	212
Bringing It All Together.....	213
Nuts & Bolts of Villain Design.....	214
Assign Hook & Action Points.....	214
Running a Horror Game	215
Setting the Mood.....	215
Pacing & Horror.....	216
Creating Teamwork.....	216
Awarding Experience Points.....	217
Spending Experience Points	217
Raising Skill Ranks.....	218
What About Raising Abilities?	218
The Cost of Skills & Spells.....	218
Campaigns	218
The Colonies	219
In The Shadows.....	219
The Revolution.....	220
Dawn of the American Revolution.....	226

APPENDIX: TIME LINE..... 227

BIBLIOGRAPHY 231

INDEX 235

INTRODUCTION

Colonial Gothic is a supernatural historical role-playing game inspired by the history and setting of the American colonial period, from founding of Roanoke in 1568 to the end of the War of 1812 in 1815 at the Battle of New Orleans. From the initial discovery of America by the Europeans to the War of Independence, Colonial Gothic provides both Gamemasters and players with everything they need to set games in this period, but with a supernatural twist. In Colonial Gothic you will play a character who, through the course of your adventures, will slowly come to discover that the “New World” is so much more than what it seems to be.

Mysterious conspiracies and evil plots abound. Malevolent enemies lurk in shadows, pulling strings and influencing events. While the world might be the dawn of the Age of **Reason**, there is much remaining mysterious and hidden, defying the rationality and logic of the new philosophies: Magic is real; creatures of the occult and supernatural exist. The player characters might already know this, or will come to know it as they begin uncovering the truth about the world they live in.

Everything you need to know about **COLONIAL GOTHIC** as a player or Gamemaster (GM). This introduction serves as your primer to the game, describing the setting, explaining the core mechanic, providing you with general knowledge of how the game works, and what you are able to do with it. As a player, this chapter gives you a sense of what your character is about to experience in the world of **COLONIAL GOTHIC**. As a Gamemaster, you find plenty of ideas and inspiration of what you can do with the game and setting, and how you craft adventures and campaigns that work best for your group's taste and preference. Consider this chapter an amuse-bouche, if you will, a single tasty bite to help prepare you for the feast to come.

So without further ado, welcome to the world of **COLONIAL GOTHIC**!

SETTING

COLONIAL GOTHIC is a world deeply mired in mysteries, secrets, and plots. The sense of darkness and horror your group experiences in your game sessions rely heavily upon both the Gamemaster's creativity and the players' imaginations—and this book provides plenty of ideas and resources to stimulate both. Together, the Gamemaster and the players craft a story in which the characters face increasing wickedness and villainy in the world, discovering that while some enemies are all too human, others have never been human at all. Whether your character is a soldier grimly facing the brutality of war in the campaigns of the American Revolution, or a witch hunter relentlessly searching out and battling evil, is entirely up to you.

COLONIAL GOTHIC is designed with a simple premise: the occult and supernatural are real and extant within the world. Drawing upon history, **COLONIAL GOTHIC's** perspective is that of the American Colonists: witches are real, devils and monsters run rampant in the world, and Magic exists—usually with terrible effect on all involved. Most Colonists have either chosen to deny the supernatural or rationalize it away, while others have been irreversibly damaged by their experiences with it. But some know and accept it for what it is and act accordingly, willingly choosing to place their reputations, faith, and **Sanity** on the line to fight back. Seeing themselves as the last line of defense against the onslaught of evil, these characters war with the terrifying forces that lurk in the shadows.

FOR THE PLAYERS

Your character is a Colonist hailing from one of the 13 English Colonies in America. For the most part, the world is entering a new era, what Thomas Paine called the “Age of **Reason**,” slowly but steadily leaving behind old beliefs rooted in myth and superstition, and beginning to embrace new philosophies defined by logic, mathematics, and science. The works of Descartes, Hobbes, and Newton have changed the way mankind thinks about not only the world, but existence itself. Though many have adopted these new beliefs and thoughts, some have not. There are those who know the truth: Magic is real, a power immanent in the very fabric of reality itself!

In **COLONIAL GOTHIC** you play a character who not only knows Magic is real, but also the unspeakable horrors it spawns—and these horrors are everywhere: witches who curse an isolated settlement, a vampire that followed European immigrants to the New World, or angry spirits terrorizing a Cherokee tribe. Whether your character is fighting in the frontier or fending off a supernatural disease like *Curse from the Grave* (see page 47), you—along with others like you who know the truth—ceaselessly wage a hidden war against the forces seeking to plunge the world into chaos and darkness. There are none but you and your compatriots brave enough to face the Devil's minions, fight them, and triumph.

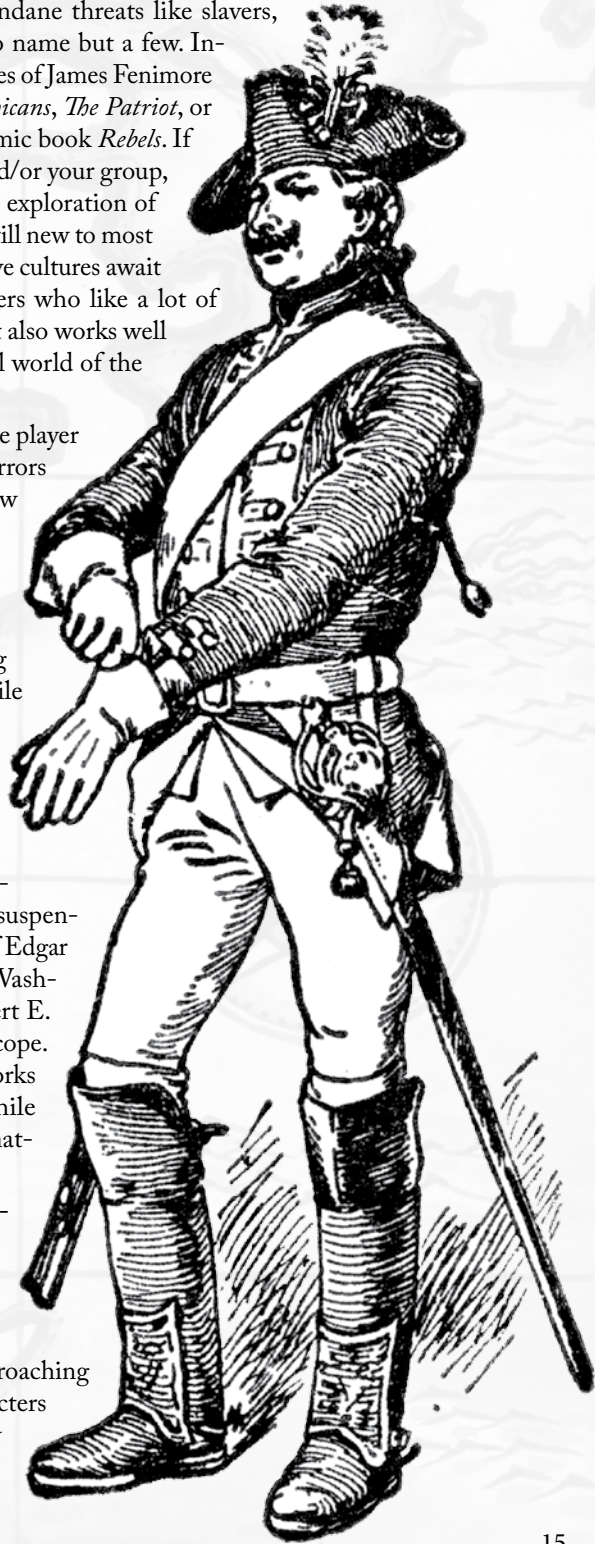
FOR THE GAMEMASTER

As the Gamemaster, you create adventures and campaigns inspired by Colonial American history. The adventures you create revolve around both the mundane and the supernatural. From scheming royal agents and power-hungry politicians to practitioners of the dark arts and horrific monsters, many campaign possibilities await you and your group in **COLONIAL GOTHIC**. As guidelines to aid you in crafting your game, there are three recommended styles of play, each emphasizing different elements of the setting: *High-Action*, *Occult & Mystery*, and *Supernatural*.

The *High-Action* style downplays the occult and supernatural. Instead of slaying monsters, characters fight against common and mundane threats like slavers, French traders, and the British military, to name but a few. Inspirations for this style are found in the stories of James Fenimore Cooper, or movies like *The Last of the Mohicans*, *The Patriot*, or *Dances with Wolves*, or in Brian Wood's comic book *Rebels*. If a military campaign doesn't interest you and/or your group, you could create a campaign based around exploration of the American continent. The Colonies are still new to most people—many wonders, resources, and native cultures await “discovery.” This style works well for players who like a lot of movement and action in their game play; it also works well for players who want to explore the natural world of the **COLONIAL GOTHIC** setting.

The *Occult & Mystery* style introduces the player characters to the occult, but softens the horrors awaiting them. The threats they face are few and far between, with adventures usually centered on a particular mystery. The mystery you design might be a strange cult intent on winning the war for its own devilish reasons, or a mage intent on infiltrating the militia for some devious purpose. While the setting details of the comic book *Manifest Destiny*, or movies like *Sleepy Hollow* and *From Hell* are not an exact fit for **COLONIAL GOTHIC**, they do have similar elements suitable for an *Occult & Mystery* campaign: a strong sense of period authenticity, an atmosphere of dark mystery, and suspension of disbelief. As for books, the writings of Edgar Allan Poe, Nathaniel Hawthorne, Irving Washington, and even H. P. Lovecraft and Robert E. Howard are ideal for tone, setting, and scope. Whatever mystery you devise, this style works best when encouraging investigation while de-emphasizing (but not necessarily eliminating) action and combat.

The *Supernatural* style is **COLONIAL GOTHIC**'s default. Similar to *Occult & Mystery*, this style also has Magic and mayhem, but significantly more of it. The threats the characters face are far more widespread and epic than they are in *Occult & Mystery*, approaching a world-changing scale. At first, the characters might not know that Magic exists or how it works, having only a vague understanding of how to fight the monsters and perils



spawning from it. As their knowledge and experience grow, some characters might try to use Magic and the occult to their advantage, while others will shy away or recoil in horror from it. For inspiration, movies like *Brotherhood of the Wolf*, the *Pirates of the Caribbean* series, and *Van Helsing* have dark forces within them that, if unchecked, will somehow change the world's very fabric of reality. In works of literature, Mary Shelley's *Frankenstein* and Bram Stoker's *Dracula*, while much later than the Colonial era in the period they dramatize, are close enough in time for their themes and tone to also be representative of the *Supernatural* style.

Regardless of the style you choose, the action in **COLONIAL GOTHIC** is larger-than-life. What does this mean to you as a Gamemaster? Characters and villains are capable of performing feats that others find impossible. When designing adventures and running your game sessions, remember: think big, but more importantly, give your players the opportunities to have their characters react "bigger."

12°

The basic descriptions found in this chapter allow you to quickly understand the game's mechanical foundations and dive right into playing. **COLONIAL GOTHIC** is a relatively simple game to learn and play, with straightforward rules easy to remember. Nevertheless, there are a handful of occasions when multiple modifiers and special cases might come into play. The more you understand the basic rules, the better equipped you are to deal with those situations as they come up.

PLAYING THE GAME

To play **COLONIAL GOTHIC** you need:

- Two twelve-sided dice (d12), preferably with each player having their own set. Gamemasters should probably have several d12s on hand.
- A blank piece of paper (or a character sheet) and a pencil.
- A willingness and desire to have fun, tell stories, and share in a great game session with fellow players of like mind and manner.

RULES SUMMARY

Action in **COLONIAL GOTHIC** isn't intended to be "realistic" or "gritty." It is instead meant to recreate the kind of action you've likely read in adventure books and graphic novels/comic books, or seen in a movie or television show. But by the same token, **COLONIAL GOTHIC** is not cartoonish or ridiculously over the top: it emphasizes verisimilitude instead of a strict, detailed

TABLE OF TARGET NUMBERS

CHALLENGE	TARGET NUMBER (TN)	SITUATION ±FOR TESTS ¹
Otherworldly	48	-9
Impossible	42	-8
Nearly Impossible	38	-7
Heroic	34	-6
Daring	30	-5
Reckless	26	-4
Formidable	22	-3
Challenging	18	-2
Difficult	14	-1
Routine	10	±0
Easy	6	+2
Trivial	4	+4
Instinctive	2	+6

1. These Situation modifiers do not increase or decrease the value of your ability, or the TN. They simply come into play when you need to make an ability test.

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