



Bowling has a long and noble history! The earliest known forms go all the way back to ancient Egypt, with wall drawings depicting bowling being found in a royal Egyptian tomb dated to 5200 BC and miniature pins and balls in an Egyptian child's grave also c. 5200 BC. Remnants of bowling balls were found among artifacts in ancient Egypt going back to the Egyptian protodynastic period in 3200 BC. That is thought to be a child's game involving stone balls, a miniature trilithon, and nine breccia-veined alabaster vase-shaped figures—thought to resemble the more modern game of skittles—was found in Naqada, Egypt in 1895.

Balls were made using the husks of grains, covered in a material such as leather, and bound with string. Other balls made of porcelain have also been found, indicating that these were rolled along the ground rather than thrown due to their size and weight. Some of these resemble the modern-day jack used in target bowl games. Bowling games of different forms are also noted by Herodotus as an invention of the Lydians in Asia Minor.

About 2,000 years ago, in the Roman Empire, a similar game evolved between Roman legionaries entailing the tossing of stone objects as close as possible to other stone objects, which eventually evolved into Italian Bocce, or outdoor bowling.

Around 400 AD, bowling began in Germany as a religious ritual to cleanse oneself from sin by rolling a rock into a club representing the heathen, resulting in bowlers being called keglers.

In 1299, the oldest-surviving known bowling green for target style bowling was built: Master's Close (now the Old Bowling Green of the Southampton Bowling Club) in Southampton, England, which is still in use. In 1325, laws were passed in Berlin and Cologne that limited bets on lawn bowling to five shillings. In 1366, the first official mention of bowling in England was made, when King Edward III banned it as a distraction to archery practice.

In the 15th–17th centuries, lawn bowling spread from Germany into Austria, Switzerland, and the Low Countries, with playing surfaces made of cinders or baked clay. In 1455, lawn bowling lanes in London were first roofed-over, turning bowling into an all-weather game. In Germany, they were called kegelbahns, and were often attached to taverns and guest houses. In 1463, a public feast was held in Frankfurt, Germany, with a venison dinner followed by lawn bowling.

English King Henry VIII was an avid bowler. He banned bowling for the lower classes and imposed a levy for private lanes to limit them to the wealthy. Another English law, passed in 1541 (repealed in 1845), prohibited workers from bowling, except at Christmas, and only in their master's home and in his presence. In 1530, he acquired Whitehall Palace in central London as his new residence, having it extensively rebuilt complete with outdoor bowling lanes, indoor tennis court, jousting tiltyard, and cockfighting pit.

Protestant Reformation founder Martin Luther set the number of pins (which varied from 3 to 17) at nine. He had a bowling lane built next to his home for his children, sometimes rolling a ball himself. On 19 July 1588, Sir Francis Drake allegedly was playing bowls at Plymouth Hoe when the arrival of the Spanish Armada was announced, replying "We have time enough to finish the game and beat the Spaniards too."

In 1609, Henry Hudson discovered Hudson Bay); Hudson's men brought some form of lawn bowling with them.[11] In 1617, English King James I published the Declaration of Sports, banning bowling on Sundays but permitting dancing and archery for those first attending an Anglican service, outraging Puritans. In 1670, Dutchmen liked to bowl at the Old King's Arms Tavern near modern-day 2nd and Broadway in New York City. In 1733, Bowling Green in New York City was built on the site of a Dutch cattle market and parade ground, becoming the city's oldest public park to survive to modern times.

On 1 January 1840, Knickerbocker Alleys in New York City opened, becoming the first indoor bowling alley. And, in 1846, the oldest surviving bowling lanes in the United States were built as part of Roseland Cottage, in Woodstock, Connecticut. The lanes are now part of Historic New England's Roseland Cottage House Museum.

In 1952, American Machine and Foundry (AMF) of Brooklyn, N.Y., began marketing automatic Pinsetter machines. This eliminated the need for pinboys and caused bowling to rocket in popularity, making the 1950s the Decade of the Bowler. In 1958, the Professional Bowlers Association (PBA) was founded in Akron, Ohio, eventually reaching about 4,300 members in 14 countries.

In 1960, the Professional Women's Bowling Association (PWBA) was founded as the first professional women's bowling association; it went defunct in 2003. [<https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Bowling>]

At league bowling's peak in the late 1970's there were over 9 million league members in the United

States. Back then just about every bowling center customer bowled in a league. The "golden years" of league bowling lasted through the 1970's until the decline began in 1980. As of 2019, there were only 2 million league bowlers in the US. The number continues to decrease, having gone down 5% in each of the last three years. [<https://www.bowlingseriously.com/bowling-today.html>]

Interesting, but what about the covers! Well, with bowling's long history, it's not surprising to find that there are lots of older covers in this category. There are also a lot of stock designs and a few long series.

This isn't a category that has many Fancies, although there are a few Matchoramas, such as the one pictured here. There are also several VIP conjunctives to be seen here, as some celebrities (football players and the like) branched out and bought bowling alleys.

This is a moderately large category, numerically, although they're not very commonly seen circulating within the hobby (probably because those Bowling collectors are pulling them out of circulation. But, they appear now and again. Unfortunately, you're not like to see current ones due to society's current circumstances.

Kathie Williman, MD, reported having 5,439 in her collection as of October 2013.

