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GAME WRITING PORTFOLIO

Pioneer Trail (Facebook) : Jack's Worrisome Wedding



BACKGROUND

Pioneer Trail (originally FrontierVille) is a social game where you manage a homestead. Well, it started out that way! Now, it's a game where players enjoy new features once or twice a week. These features have a self-contained story which uses a core set of characters, and are often tied to a specific game mechanic. The story plays out across a number of missions, typically three to five.

The writer's job is to convey the story using an intro for the feature, a dialog at the start and end of each quest, and sometimes an outro. The average length for each entry is two sentences. Two sentences!

CREATIVE DIRECTION

Jack's Worrisome Wedding was the fifth installment of a story that began in 2012, when Frontier Jack – the grubby, beloved host of the game – got lost in a cave, found oil, got rich, and went on a world tour. In this feature, we'd be introduced to his European fiancée, throw a wedding, then watch her try and escape with all of his wealth in a hot-air balloon, setting up the next feature in the series.

FRAMEWORK

The story would get an intro animation, five quests, four “multi-stage buildable” screens where players would build a wedding gazebo and take care of Goldie (I didn't name the character), and an outro animation.

A Project Manager determines what actions the players will do, and gives designers a range of options (e.g. “for this task, harvest a crop or tree that is purchased with in-game currency, and has a ripen time between 4 to 8 hours”). I work with the lead designer and try to get those tasks into alignment with the story we're telling. This waterfall process doesn't always result in a perfect fit, but unless circumstances are dire, we don't push back for changes from the PM. Sometimes, the creative binds actually work in our favor!

INTRO



Jack made his millions, traveled the world, and brought home a gal named Goldie. There's gonna be a wedding, but does she love Jack? Or his gold?

MISSION ONE: HERE COMES THE BRIDE

Goldie: I suppose I should thank you for hosting our wedding, but even Jack's money can't turn this dump into a classy estate. I suggest you start decorating now.

- Place Weddin' Gazebo
- Clear eight Debris
- Gather 25 Flower Baskets

Mission Complete

I'd like to say we were done, darling, but it seems we're just getting started. Do as I say, and it will all go according to plan.

A LETTER APPEARS!

Bess: Goodness gracious, would you read this letter? I think that gal Goldie is up to no good!



Bess is Frontier Jack's niece, making this a "family problem." The letter text was actually written by a programmer as filler during development. I realized I couldn't do much better with a re-write, and he was happy to hear his text was placed, verbatim, into the game. Then our artist went to town on the letter. See? Social games! Fun times!

MISSION TWO: THE SMOKING GUN

Bess: Goldie's settin' up uncle Jack for a double-cross! I'd settle her accounts here an' now, but Jack would be awful sore. Keep her happy 'til I find him!

- Gather 15 Silver Vases
- Pamper two Snooty Poodles
- Keep Goldie happy in her Weddin' Gazebo! (*opens multi-stage buildable [MSB] window*)

MULTI-STAGE BUILDABLE: BRIDEZILLA



Goldie's got a taste for fine things, expensive things, and everything in between! Keep her happy while Bess finds Jack, and shows him Goldie's secret note!

Gather or craft the following:

- Bubbly Champagne
- Flower Water
- Bon Bon Platter
- Hand Cream
- Porterhouse Steak
- Ornate Candle

Mission Complete

I ain't been able to find Jack, but we can't let this weddin' go on! Maybe we could "convince" Goldie this isn't such a good idea?

MISSION THREE: HERE'S MUD IN YER EYE!

So a fancy foreign gal wants to take advantage of our man Jack? Well! She asked for a mud bath to spruce up. Let's give her one she won't forget!

- Gather 20 Cold Water Pails
- Clean up two Muddy Animals
- Give Goldie a Mud Bath

MULTI-STAGE BUILDABLE: MUDDY WATERS



Apparently, fancy folks use wet dirt to get clean, so Granny's set on givin' Goldie an authentic frontier mud bath experience! Help her out!

Gather or craft the following:

- Bubbly Champagne
- Flower Water
- Cucumber Blindfold
- Rough Towel
- Chilly Washbasin
- Sloppy Mud Bucket

Quest Complete

Heh heh! She might look clean after washin' off, but don't get downwind of that gal for a while!

MISSION FOUR: HERE COMES THE HARPY

Goldie: Found my note, did you? I convinced Jack it was a joke. He's on my side, forever, and if you don't make me happy, you won't be at our wedding!

- Harvest 15 Nightshade
- Craft six Expensive Bouquets
- Fill the Weddin' Gazebo with flowers

MULTI-STAGE BUILDABLE: BUSINESS IS BLOOMIN'!



Goldie's gone into overdrive with the decorations, and she's sparin' not a single cent of Jack's money on the flowers. You had no idea flowers could cost so much!

Gather or craft the following:

- Flower Clips
- Gold Leaves
- Long Stem Tulip
- Pink Rose Petals
- Honeysuckle Vine
- Wedding Bouquet

Mission Complete

This will have to do. Come on, Jack! Get that preacher here so we can get married!

MISSION FIVE: UNINVITED GUESTS

Goldie hates farm animals. If we dress 'em to the nines and pack the wedding with 'em, she's sure to explode and show Jack her true colors!

- Tend a Princess Kitty four times
- Tend all four cleaned up Muddy Animals: High Class Goat, Refined Llama, Billionaire Sheep, Uptown Chicken
- Finish the Weddin' Gazebo

MULTI-STAGE BUILDABLE: FOR RICH AND NOT POOR



This is it! We've got to stop Jack from marryin' that schemin' coin-grubbin' gal Goldie! Let's give her the full frontier, animals and all!

Gather or craft the following:

- Boutonniere
- Silk Scarf
- Pre-Nuptial Agreement
- Gazebo Chair
- Wedding Bouquet
- Sloppy Mud Bucket

Mission Complete

Yeehaw! That gal blew up like a dynamite stack! Hold on... where's she goin' now?

OUTRO: WEDDING CANCELED!

Goldie took off in Jack's hot air balloon with his gold, but had to dump it all to clear the mountains! She's gone, but is the gold lost forever?