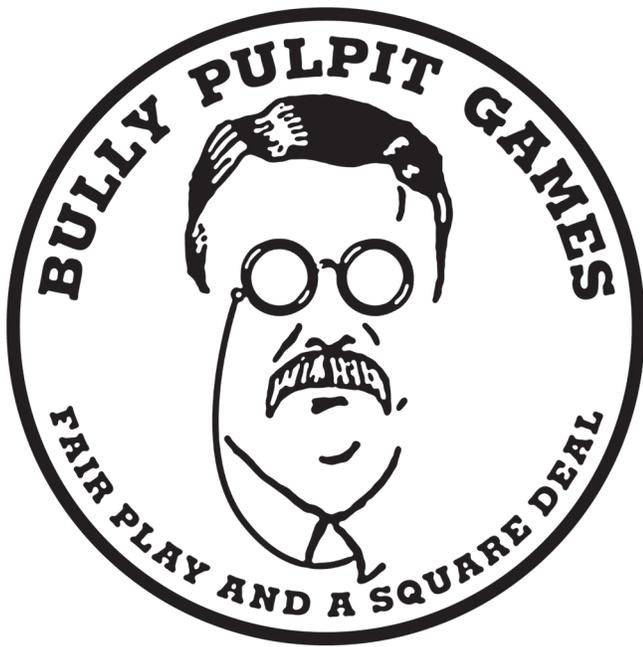


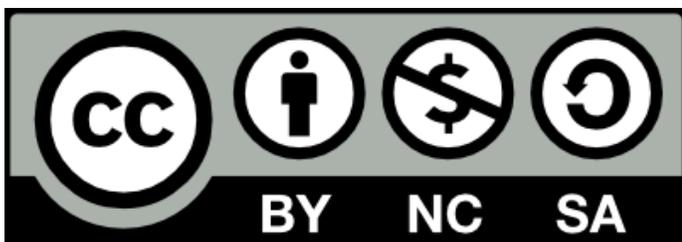
# Betula

I hope you enjoy *Betula*. I certainly enjoyed bringing it to you and if you have comments—particularly if you play it—I would like to talk to you. I can be reached at [jason@bullypulpitgames.com](mailto:jason@bullypulpitgames.com) or @jmstar on Twitter.

None of this was done in a vacuum—there’s a whole community of talented, generous, creative people out there making and sharing their work. I borrowed from a few and stole from many, who in turn eagerly did the same.



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# Betula

## ABOUT

*Betula* was written by Jason Morningstar under a Creative Commons Attribution 3.0 license. If you play it let me know! I'm [jason@bullypulpitgames.com](mailto:jason@bullypulpitgames.com).

For a system, use something lightweight like the resolution cards from *Archipelago* or, for a more surreal twist, *Itras By* with this adventure. I used *Itras By* with great success! It got beautifully weird.

I took great liberties with history, please do the same.

## CHARACTERS

It is April, 1921. Ask the players to create new agents of the Baldwin-Felts Detective Agency. Baldwin-Felts is known as a no-nonsense gang of tough guys who always get their man. They are notorious union-busters comfortable with applied brutality, personal score-settling and the occasional murder. Although Baldwin-Felts' most horrific years are behind them, they still hire bad people who are comfortable doing bad things. *Some ideas:*

- A veteran recently returned from the Great War with a taste for violence
- A gangster hand-picked out of a prison lineup by **Thomas Felts** himself
- An ambitious immigrant willing to do anything for a paycheck
- A sad sack rejected by - or ejected from - the Justice Department Bureau of Investigation

## THE JOB

Sit the new detectives down in the grimy Pittsburgh office of **Charles Everett Lively**, an experienced Baldwin-Felts agent and straight-up murderer. Lively is sending them to northwestern Pennsylvania, the shit-heel backwater of McKean County, to find some missing persons who don't want to be found, put handcuffs on them, and deliver them to waiting justice.

## LIVELY'S BRIEFING

A few days ago there was a hearing in the McKean County courthouse in Smethport over a land dispute between **B.D. Hamlin**, coal magnate and all-around Lord of all he surveys, and the Brogger brothers, **Lars and Sven Brogger**, a pair of Norwegian immigrants who run a timber and barrel-making operation in nearby Betula. For some reason this hearing got out of hand, and pistols were drawn, and shots were fired. When it was all over five people had been shot - a clerk, a cleaning lady, Commonwealth attorney, Judge and County Sheriff Thomas Curtis Jr. The Sheriff died.

The Brogger brothers and one of their friends, a guy named **Mattis Ingebretson**, all left the scene and have not been seen since. They are no doubt back in Betula, secure in the welcoming embrace of their Norwegian immigrant community. One of them - nobody knows which one - is a murderer. The other two are at least accessories.

According to Pennsylvania Commonwealth law, the County Sheriff is charged with investigating all murders. Since that officer is currently dead, until an election is held there is no legal authority in McKean County to pursue justice. The Governor has asked the Baldwin-Felts Agency to quietly intercede and do what they do best.

**C.E. Lively** will make it clear the agents have two options:

- Bring in all three men - the Brogger brothers and **Mattis Ingebretson** - alive. *Or*
- Find out who killed Sheriff Curtis and bring that man in alive, preferably leaving the other two not quite as alive.

Lively has train tickets to Smethport, detective badges, handcuffs, and a safe full of firearms he's happy to share. He wants the perpetrator in his office in three days.

# SMETHPORT

Smethport is a grim industrial town and the seat of McKean County. It is run as a fiefdom by the Hamlin Wood Chemical Corporation. **B.D. Hamlin** built the town to house his workers, and he built the school, hospital, and courthouse as well. It is always raining here.

## THE VICTIMS

Only the Judge (**Leander Wallace Moseley**) remains in the hospital. The clerk (**Charles Meeks**), cleaning lady (**Antonella Costa**) and attorney (**Sprague Sutton**) all suffered minor injuries and have been released - they can be found around the courthouse. All of them tell more or less the same story - the "big Norwegian" (**Mattis Ingebretson**) pulled a gun, then the Sheriff responded in kind, then the Brogger brothers, then the Bailiff, and it was a confused melee as shots rang out. Ingebretson definitely started the trouble so maybe he killed Sheriff Curtis? hard to say precisely, but all those Norwegians are basically wild animals.

## THE ACID FACTORY

Smethport's main industry is the production of methanol and acetate of lime, which is accomplished by converting staggering quantities of Pennsylvania timber into charcoal, from which these products are extracted. The Hamlin Works, known locally as the acid factory, employs most of the people in Smethport.

Business is booming, thanks to Prohibition. Manufacturers are required to denature their grain alcohol, so bootleggers are buying 8,000 gallon freight cars of methanol, keeping the receipts to show the Treasury Department, and dumping them into local streams and sewers upon arrival.

## B.D. HAMLIN: AN EVIL MAN

**B.D. Hamlin** is getting very rich, but he is running out of timber. He has arranged some legal chicanery to steal the Brogger's ten thousand acres, which is what prompted the court hearing and eventual shootout. This isn't public knowledge, but anyone who thinks about it for a few moments will realize what is going on.

## AROUND SMETHPORT

- Stay at the Imperial Hotel or the Commercial House (**Sissy Cornelius**)
- Eat at the Novelty Restaurant or Bennett House (**D.C. Hichaman**)
- Pick up stuff you need at Fry and Herzog's Dry Goods (**Henry Herzog**) or the Johnson Pharmacy (**Mary McGrath-Johnson**)
- Have some fun at the Lyceum Theater with a high school basketball game or a "Shop Girl's choice" dance (**John Hall, Jr.** or **Jane Chipp**)
- Get a drink in the secret bar on the second floor of the Backus Safety Check Hook Manufacturing Company (Bartender **Mario Bartolotti**, patrons **Fillison Door**, **Donald Abel**, **Agatha Herzog**)
- Visit the courthouse and jail and the gaunt 1895 monument (**L.B. Danforth**, **Lamont Taylor Bee**)
- Get tickets to Colgrove Station, the nearest passenger rail junction to Betula, at the Depot (**Benjamin F. Davis**)

## NORWEGIANS

There are a few Norwegians in Smethport, and they tend to stand out. Some are here to keep an eye out for new arrivals from Pittsburgh, and these (**Ulf Christiansen** and **Roger Valla**) will skulk around and report to the Brogger brothers in Betula by telephone. If they can catch one of the detectives alone they will administer a vicious beatdown. If questioned, arrested or otherwise interfered with, Christiansen and Valla are two simple lumberjacks who don't know nothin'. If pressed, maybe they know that the Brogger brothers are in trouble and hiding out in Betula and that if anybody shot anybody, it was Mattis Ingebretson, who is crazy.

They drove to Smethport in a battered Pennsylvania Stave Mill Co. Model T. In the back are two bottles of beer, a loaded revolver, a copy of Luigi Galleani's bomb-making booklet *Health is In You!* and various bewildering chemicals, wires and explosives precursors.

# BETULA

Betula is eleven years old, a town that sprang up to meet the needs of the “wood hicks” - Norwegian immigrant lumberjacks who spend most of their time up in the hills, felling, stripping and hauling timber. The Brogger brothers own ten thousand acres of prime hardwood, some of the last in the Commonwealth, and they have encouraged fellow Norwegians to flock to the area for hard, low-paying work among their own. In the valley they brought in all the machinery to transform raw logs into stout barrels.

## THE BROGGERS

It's actually *Brøgger*, but, you know, America.

Lars and Sven are twin brothers, big strapping dudes who seem to barely fit in their conservative black sack coats. They own the staveworks and the land for miles around, and they were involved in the courtroom shootout. The Broggers are in a bind, because Hamlin and his greasy coterie of lawyers had a solid lock on their land even *before* the shootout. They are going to end up penniless, and all the families they encouraged to come to Betula will be ruined as well. As a result they can't be counted on to be entirely rational. They are currently going about their business in the open, but they are expecting trouble. They will know within minutes that strangers have arrived in Betula.

- **Lars** is quiet and smart and scared.
- **Sven** is charming and sort of dangerous.
- **Henrik** is their younger brother, who works as a druggist in Betula and isn't on great terms with his land-and-timber baron siblings. In his free time, he is also an Anarchist bomb-maker.
- **Irene** is Lars' wife. Two daughters, **Agnes** and **Elin**.

## THE INGEBRETSONS

Mattis Ingebretson is the Brogger's friend and all-purpose go-to guy, a handyman, valet and fixer. He is currently keeping a very low profile, possibly up in Frog Camp, but is likely to show up if the Broggers are threatened or arrested. He won't hesitate to kill.

- **Mattis** has a bad temper and a short attention span.
- **Louise** is Mattis' sister, who works odd jobs at the Karlsen House hotel and the drug store. Louise will go to great lengths to protect her stupid brother.

## LITTLE NORWAY

Betula is essentially a tiny Norwegian boomtown. Many business signs are in Norwegian, and cater to Norwegian tastes and enthusiasms. The people here generally like and respect the Broggers and won't tolerate outsiders meddling in their business. Everybody knows everything and any hint of trouble will draw a well-armed mob. It would be suicide to try and take the Broggers in public.

Describe torrential, unremitting rain, a debris-choked Potato Creek overflowing, mud bogging down the streets, wooden sidewalks and deep, water-filled ditches lining Main street - the only street. Without a County Sheriff there is effectively no law; drunks litter the landscape despite Prohibition.

## AROUND BETULA

- Stay at Karlsen House, the only hotel, where **Louise Ingebretson** is a part-time maid
- Eat at the Betula Chop Suey Restaurant (**Leong Yung**) or at the counter in **Roy Bredesen's** Grocery for a taste of the Old Country, including färikål, pickled herring and fresh krumkaker
- Gaze upon the magnificent Pennsylvania Stave Mill Company, or the mansion of the Brogger family on the hill opposite
- Take a half day trip into the deep woods to Frog Camp, where the wood hicks work for two weeks at a time and outsiders sometimes fall in bottomless holes.
- Visit the Betula post office and jail, currently being used as an impromptu bar (**Edvin Thorsen**)
- Attend a performance at the Betula Theater, featuring a Viennese operetta called *Madame Sherry*, featuring the hit song “Every Little Movement (Has a Meaning All Its Own).” (**Renato** or **Viola Petrucci**)
- Do some shopping at Dr. Geir Lindeman's Drug Store (where **Henrik Brogger** works as druggist) or **Amund Guttormsen's** Hardware Store
- Catch a lift at the Livery and Taxi service next to the Karlsen (**Havard Hegge**)
- Enjoy life at the wild and wooly Skating Rink and attached Pool Room, where alcohol is flowing (**Noah Waaler**)

# COLGROVE STATION

Colgrove Station is the nearest passenger rail junction to Betula. Freight, in the form of finished barrels and supplies for the staveworks, continues on into Betula once each week on a private extension.

From Colgrove it is two miles, either on foot or in Harvard Hegge's reliable Stanley steam-powered taxi. Hegge is a talkative young man who is eager to give newcomers the lay of the land in his adopted home town, Betula.

It is worth noting that the locals know damn well that Colgrove Station is where you catch the train if you are leaving Betula in a hurry.

## AROUND COLGROVE STATION

- Wait for a train
- Go somewhere else

### WHO DID IT?

Who knows? Maybe one of them knows for sure, maybe they all do, maybe none of them do. Go with whatever seems most interesting. All three men feel pretty secure surrounded by their kinsmen and fellows in Betula, and rightly so. If things need spicing up, Henrik Brogger hates Baldwin-Felts detectives and has a variety of bombs in his home and workplace.

### WHAT HAPPENS?

Who knows? Play to find out!

### ARCHIPELAGO?

It's great!

[http://dl.dropbox.com/u/3441990/archipelago\\_third\\_edition.pdf](http://dl.dropbox.com/u/3441990/archipelago_third_edition.pdf)

### ITRAS BY?

Also great!

<http://itrasby.com/>

### AND YOU ARE?

I'm Jason!

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