



# Curious Chess Facts

*By Irving Chernev*

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## Curious Chess Facts By Irving Chernev

Curious Chess Facts is Irving Chernev's first book. Published in 1937, it is his famous collection of chess anecdotes. The facts in this book are so famous that they have become part of chess lore, repeated thousands of times, published in countless books and magazine articles by many different authors, such that it is almost forgotten that this book is the original published source. Here are some examples: At a dinner somebody gave a toast to the World Chess Champion. Both Steinitz and Zukertort stood up. (They played a match to determine the real world champion. Steinitz won the match but Zukertort had finished three points ahead of him in London 1883.) This is Curious Chess Fact Number 197 in this book. One that I use that often helps me remember chess history is that Steinitz was World Champion for 28 years. His record was not quite equaled by Lasker who was world champion for 27 years. This is Curious Chess Fact Number 21. Since I remember that Lasker lost the world title to Capablanca in a match in 1921, I can calculate back to determine the year in which Lasker won the world championship by defeating Steinitz in a match. Then, going back another 28 years I can calculate the year that Steinitz defeated Adolf Anderssen who some consider to have been the first world chess champion. Another example is that Marshall won a famous game by a queen sacrifice that was so brilliant that the spectators showered the board with gold pieces. This is Curious Chess Fact Number 9. The moves of the game itself with the spectacular queen sacrifice are to be found in almost every anthology of famous chess games. The story that the spectators showered the board with gold pieces is always included with the moves. The list goes on and on. There are so many of them that you just have to read this book to see and recall them.

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### Editorial Review

#### About the Author

Irving Chernev was born on January 29, 1900 in Pryluky in the Ukraine. He emigrated to the United States in 1920. He wrote some of the most successful and widely read chess books ever written. Contrary to popular belief and to the publicity blurbs on the chess books he wrote, Chernev was not an especially strong player. According to those I know who played him, his real strength was not more than Expert, although he did play in the 1942 US Championship. However, he was a lively and entertaining writer. On a percentage basis compared with the number of books he wrote, he is probably the most popular writer ever on the game of chess in history. His books are not read for the deep analysis but rather for the unusual games and chess positions, the curious facts and the amusing stories which have become part of chess lore that every chess player in the world now knows even those who have not read his books. He wrote that he "probably read more about chess, and played over more games than any man in history." He wrote 20 chess books, among them: Chessboard Magic!; The Bright Side of Chess; The Most Instructive Games of Chess Ever Played; 1000 Best Short Games of Chess; Practical Chess Endings; Combinations: The Heart of Chess; and Capablanca's Best Chess Endings. In 1945, he and Kenneth Harkness wrote An Invitation to Chess. Perhaps his most famous book is Logical Chess: Move by Move. Irving Chernev died in San Francisco, California on September 29, 1981.

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