

**GAMING METHOD AND APPARATUS WITH  
TRIGGERING OF BONUS EVENTS BY THE  
PRESENCE OF A TRIGGER SYMBOL IN  
PARTICULAR LOCATIONS**

**BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION**

**[0001]** 1. Field of the Invention

**[0002]** The present invention relates generally to gaming methods and apparatus and, more specifically, to gaming methods and apparatus that include primary games and bonus events. In particular, the gaming methods and apparatus of the present invention are configured to award one or more bonus events upon the occurrence of a triggering event in the form of a selected image in one or more predetermined locations of an array of image sites.

**[0003]** 2. Background of the Related Art

**[0004]** Gaming devices for playing games of chance, including mechanical, electromechanical, and electronic slot machines, or reel type gaming devices, electronic card game devices, and their methods of operation are well known.

**[0005]** Initiating a game can be done by simply inserting into a gaming device some means of payment, such as currency (i.e., a coin or paper money), a coupon, by electronic funds transfer, such as by use of a credit or debit card, as disclosed in U.S. Pat. No. 5,902,983, or by use of a so-called "smart card" that includes a programmed microchip or magnetic strip coded with the cardholder's identification and credit totals, such as that disclosed in U.S. Pat. No. 5,265,874, the disclosure of which is hereby incorporated in its entirety by this reference.

**[0006]** Some gaming devices and methods entice and retain players with the possibility of receiving a bonus of increased award amounts or additional play in the way of bonus games. These bonus awards and games, which take a variety of forms, are available in many types of gaming devices and methods, including slot machines and other reel type gaming devices, as well as in card gaming devices.

**[0007]** Among known slot machines are gaming devices that include bonus components for determining whether an award to a player based on the results of a primary game will be increased and, if so, the amount such an award will be increased. Such bonus components include ancillary spinning wheels, as disclosed in U.S. Pat. Nos. 5,848,932, 5,823,874, and 6,059,658, and pinball type devices including ancillary spinning wheels, as taught in U.S. Pat. No. 5,882,261. The spinning wheels of these devices indicate whether an award based on the primary slot game of these devices will be increased and, if so, the amount of award increase that will be provided to the player.

**[0008]** Slot machine payouts may also be increased in accordance with bonus events of other types of games of chance, such as the player-interactive video game disclosed in U.S. Pat. No. 6,159,097 and the automated game-of-chance video of U.S. Pat. No. 6,155,925. In each of these devices and their accompanying methods, the bonus event is triggered by the appearance of a trigger symbol or a certain combination of symbols on a payline.

**[0009]** Another type of slot machine and method in which a bonus event may be made available to a player is described in U.S. Pat. Nos. 6,033,307 and 6,059,289. This type of slot

machine includes a single payline in which the appearance of a trigger symbol initiates a bonus game, in this case another single slot machine payline.

**[0010]** U.S. Pat. Nos. 6,120,378 and 5,976,016 disclose electronic, reel type gaming methods in which a player is permitted to select, by way of placing wagers, a number of paylines, up to a maximum number, that will be played. Symbols are randomly assigned to a first payline and an award is granted to the player if one of several predetermined winning combinations of symbols is present along the payline. One or more symbols from the first payline may be selected by the player to be held over to the remaining paylines upon which wagers were previously placed. The remaining symbols of each payline are then replaced with randomly selected symbols. Awards for each additional payline are also provided to the player based on the combinations of symbols present thereon.

**[0011]** Bonus awards are also available in card game type devices. For example, in U.S. Pat. No. 5,911,418, a video poker game and accompanying method are described in which an award may be increased based on the results of a spin of an ancillary spinning wheel.

**[0012]** In conventional "double-down stud" gaming devices and methods, as disclosed in U.S. Pat. Nos. 5,820,460, 5,411,257, 5,251,897, and 5,167,413, a hand of five cards is dealt, with the faces of one or more of the cards not being shown to the player. Based on the cards that are made visible to the player and prior to making the remaining cards visible to the player, the player may choose to wager an additional amount, thereby increasing the amount of winning that are available to the player.

**[0013]** U.S. Pat. No. 5,851,148 discloses a single hand poker gaming device and method in which the number of cards of each face value that have been dealt is recorded. Bonus awards are provided upon reaching certain milestones, such as upon the dealing of a certain number of cards of one or more face values over the course of a series of games.

**[0014]** As another example of bonus awards or other bonus events in card games, U.S. Pat. No. 6,149,521 describes a gaming device in which a poker hand is dealt. Certain awards may be provided to a player upon receiving certain hands, or winning combinations of cards. The award may be increased based on another card that has been dealt with certain winning combinations. For example, if a winning combination of four-of-a-kind is dealt to a player, the base award for such a winning combination may be multiplied by a value assigned to the remaining card of the hand (e.g., the face value of a numbered card, 11 for a Jack, 12 for a Queen, 13 for a King, and 15 for an Ace).

**[0015]** Other poker type gaming methods, such as those disclosed in U.S. Pat. Nos. 6,098,985, 6,007,066, 5,823,873, 5,816,916, and 5,732,950, allow a player to select, by way of placing wagers, a number of "hands" of cards, up to a maximum number, that will be played. A first, "five card stud" hand of cards is dealt to the player. An award for the first hand is determined based on the combination of cards present in the hand. The player is also permitted to select one or more cards, up to four cards, from the first hand that will be held over to any additional hands of cards upon which a wager was previously placed. The remaining cards for each