



## It's fun to Look 'n See

### Let's take a look again

By George Vrechek

The Topps 1952 Look 'n See set has been a favorite of collectors and has provided a (mostly) affordable way to collect cards from Topps non-sport creations of the early 1950s. Topps former creative editor Len Brown described how his mentor, Woody Gelman (1915-1978), and the art department would get enthused about such off-season non-sport sets.

#### Fun for the art department

Designing cards for baseball and football players had to first take into account which players Topps had under contract. Photography and photo rights were important as were accurate statistics and biographies. Artwork and creativity were not the first thoughts.

However for non-sport sets, the creative people had a chance to unwind and shine. Brown started at Topps in 1959 and worked there for 41 years. According to Brown, he was told that Topps executives in the early 1950s had the view that their customers were gum-chewing youngsters whose spending money was limited to their weekly allowance. During the baseball and football seasons, their discretionary income might be spent on baseball and football cards. If non-sport cards were introduced during the sport seasons, Topps would be competing with their own sport sets for the limited allowance. However, allowances kept coming and Topps executives felt that a few non-sport sets would provide a nice way for youngsters to spend their allowance with Topps during the short off-season.



*Woody Gelman, photo courtesy of Richard Gelman*

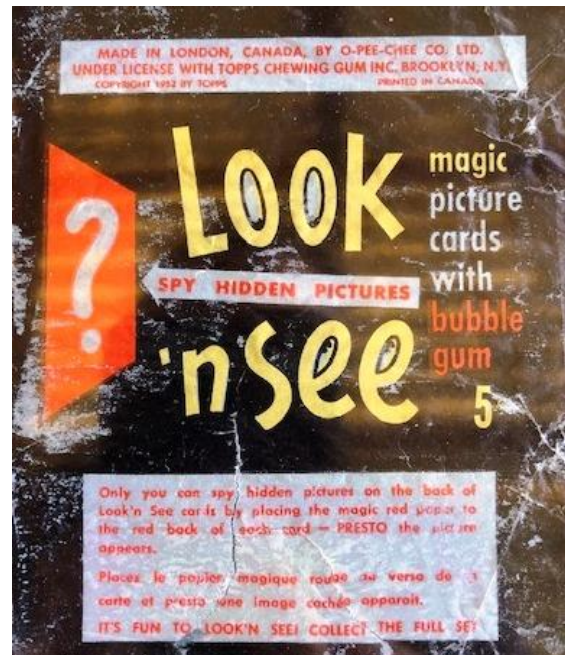
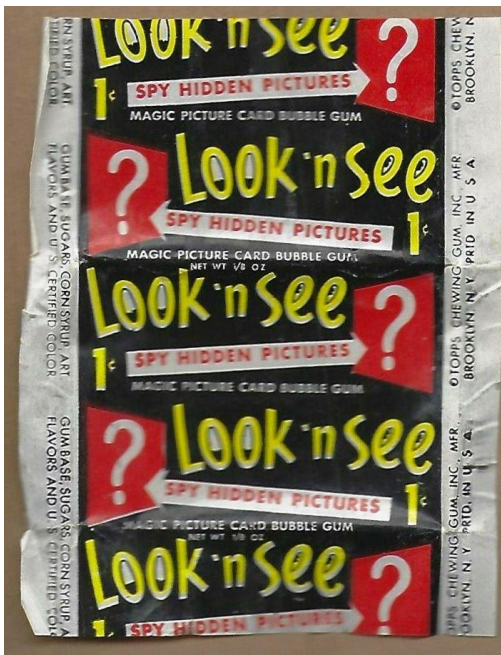
Brown said it took Topps a while to conclude that non-sports could be sold year-around and not eat into the sports products. However in 1952, Gelman and his partner Ben Solomon were just getting their feet wet at Topps. Gelman and Solomon had been drawing animations for Paramount (previously Fleischer, subsequently Famous Studios) until they reportedly had the audacity to try to unionize their group and

got fired. They formed a partnership in New York and demonstrated a knack for creating characters and artwork that would appeal to youngsters like Topps customers. Brooklyn-born Gelman was a collector, enjoyed comics and related artwork. He made the effort to remain in touch with the younger audience and enjoyed pop art – think pulp fiction, *MAD* magazine, sophomoric humor and Tom Hanks in “Big.”

### Gelman’s involvement in early sets

In 1951 and 1952 Topps issued limited cards of boxers and baseball and football players, thus starting the bubble gum war with Bowman that lasted until 1956. Non-sport sets in those years included Animals of the World, Fighting Marines and Wings. Card sizes bounced around with a variety that differed from the competing Bowman sets. Topps used Solomon & Gelman for artwork and brought them in-house by about 1953. Solomon and Gelman remained free to continue their earlier creations like Triple Nickel books.

Digging into the history of a product 67 years later is a challenge. Without someone around to describe what happened or a paper trail, you develop assumptions to explain the results. I contacted several people to get a better understanding of the set. I will be delighted to report any additional information which readers wish to convey.



Topps U.S. wrapper (left) and OPC wrapper (right). Photos Eric Cooper

### Designed in mid-1952

Collectors remember the 135-card Topps Look ‘n See being sold in 1952, 1953 and as late as 1956. The cards were likely designed in mid-1952 based on the bios, in that #104 Queen Elizabeth II became queen in February 1952 and #41 General (rather than President) Eisenhower wasn’t elected until November 1952.

There were two series: 75 cards in Series 1 and 60 cards in Series 2. Cards and gum were sold in both 1 and 5 cent packages. The wrapper mentions spying and magic. The wrapper title is "Look 'n See" and states "magic picture cards with bubble gum" and "spy hidden pictures." The fine print on the rare OPeeChee wrapper states, "Only you can spy hidden pictures on the back of Look 'n See cards by placing the magic red paper to the red back of each card. PRESTO – the picture appears. It's fun to Look 'n See. Collect the full set."

Notice the set is not purported to be the most famous people who ever lived. The creative people were free to include whoever they wanted. The hook was the magic red paper, vital to the mystery of the set. The hidden artwork and text in cyan is revealed by viewing them through a red filter – "red reveal." The hidden images and red backs also made for difficult reading and condition challenges. The set was described by Topps in 1989 as "an experiment in a fun gimmick for kids."













### Portraits and line art

Topps hired freelance artists to do the 1953 baseball paintings. The paintings had to be in a consistent, realistic style and were allocated to Gary Dvorak and about four other artists in order to produce them quickly enough. The paintings were about twice the size of the eventual cards and were utilized by the Topps art department who pasted on name blocks and logos.

Eric Cooper advertised recently in *The Wrapper*, looking to buy original artwork from the Look 'n See set. He has obtained several black and white drawings ("line art") used for the images on the card backs which were purchased directly from "Topps Vault" several years ago. He also acquired a painting of one card front which was not in the Topps sales. Like the baseball paintings, the Look 'n See art is larger by about 70% than the eventual card size and was cropped slightly for the card.

### SILENT AUCTION BIDS































The following items in the catalogue will be sold through the mail only, by silent auction. The forms for the silent auction are located in the rear of the catalogue. These should be received by Guernsey's no later than December 31, 1989, at which time the highest bid for each item will be determined, and successful bidders will be notified. Complete information on absentee bids is located in the rear of the catalogue "Absentee Bidding". Let us reiterate here that this "Silent Auction" has no bearing on persons wishing to bid by mail or in person on any of the items preceding this section.

|   |   |   |   |   |   |
|---|---|---|---|---|---|
| 222   |   | 223   |   | 224   |   |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| STEPHEN FOSTER  | WASHINGTON IRVING   | ELEANOR ROOSEVELT   | BALBOA  | JOHN PAUL JONES   | LEONARDO DA VINCI   |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| BENEDICT ARNOLD   | CHARLES DICKENS   | AL SMITH  | CHARLES DARWIN  | JOHN D. ROCKEFELLER   | ANNE OF CLEVES  |

### LOOK AND SEE

The Topps Look and See card series was an experiment in a fun gimmick for kids. The fronts of the cards are impressive, full-color portraits of famous individuals, the backs were mystery scenes from that person's life that a kid could only "decode" using a special sheet of red cellophane enclosed in the package. The 48 3"x4½" paintings offered here constituted the card fronts. They are wonderful, expressive works that attempt to capture an atmosphere along with the individual's portrait. Victor Herbert is dressed in a red uniform with gold braid as notes dance on an aqua background; Caruso lifts his head proudly, the pyramids and palm trees silhouetted in blues behind his golden crown.

LOT: 2 INDIVIDUAL DRAWINGS PER LOT AS PICTURED.  
 SIZE: 3"x4½" PER DRAWING.  
 COMPOSITION: FULL COLOR DRAWINGS.  
 CONDITION: SINCE THESE DRAWINGS ARE THE ORIGINALS USED FOR PRODUCTION, A FEW MAY HAVE PENCIL MARKS OR SMUDGES DUE TO HANDLING. OVERALL CONDITION IS VERY GOOD.  
 ESTIMATE: \$200-300 (PER LOT OF 2)

|   |  |   |   |   |   |
|---|--|---|---|---|---|
| 225   |  | 226   |   | 227   |   |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| MARSHALL  | DOUGLAS McARTHUR   | MICHAELANGELO   | DANIEL DeFOE  | MACHIAVELLI   | ROGUEKE   |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| LAFAYETTE   | WHISTLER   | VICTOR HERBERT  | WILL ROGERS   | TOSCANINI   | FRANCIS DRAKE   |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| WILLIAM PENN  | JOHN PHILIP SOUSA  | WALTER RALEIGH  | CHIANG KAI SHEK   | REMBRANDT   | HORATIO NELSON  |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| CAPTAIN MORGAN  | SIR ISAAC NEWTON   | TOM PAINE   | CARUSO  | BELLINI   | PERCY SHELLEY   |
|  |  |  |  |  |  |
| ELIAS HOWE  | CYRUS Mc-CORMICK   | JEFFERSON DAVIS   | EMILE ZOLA  | PATRICK HENRY   | TECUMSEH  |

Guernsey Catalog for 1989 Topps archive sales, Photos, Mike Jaspersen



Duke of Windsor painting and Topps line art, photos Eric Cooper



### Topps art sales

Mike Jaspersen worked for Topps when the line art was found and auctioned through their Topps Vault site. He recalls, "I found a few bits and pieces. My guess is most of the line art was disposed of in the move to Manhattan (1994). Topps sold a bunch of the front color art in the sale. I believe around \$200-up for two different."

The color portrait art was included in the Guernsey auction of Topps archives in 1989. Portraits of 48 of the 135 subjects were to be auctioned according to the catalog, but only 42 were pictured. Two portraits were in each lot. The whereabouts or fates of the other portraits in the set were not mentioned.



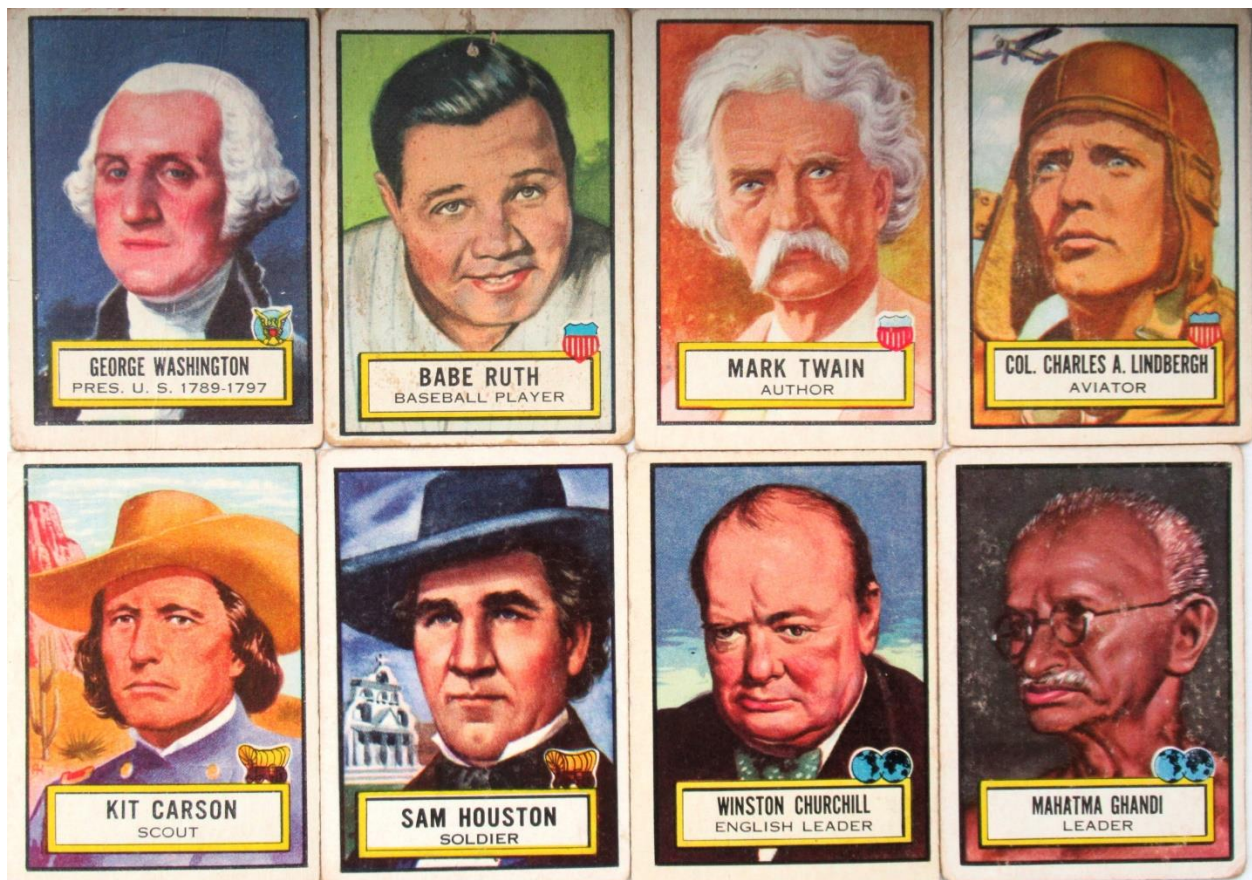
Whoever the Topps artists were for this set, I will bet they were getting paid, as with the 1953 baseball cards, by the portrait and not the hours spent. It would make sense if they were the same artists used for the baseball set. Topps had to tell the baseball artists, after they started submitting work, they needed to make their backgrounds more interesting, no more blank walls. The Look 'n See set had a fair share of plain backgrounds as well, but it also had landscapes, seascapes, pirates being hanged, people and flags behind their subjects. Maybe that's where the current penchant originated for putting a forest of American flags behind politicians making speeches.

### Categories and subjects

I couldn't find anything on who made the selections of subjects for the set. I would like to think it was Woody Gelman and his gang with input from Topps executives. Topps was sneaking some education into their product, and they likely decided the subjects needed to have well-known accomplishments, preferably admirable, patriotic accomplishments. It would help sell the cards, if the subjects were considered "famous" or among the "greatest." Gelman's knack for doing art and stories to get the attention of youngsters is consistent with the inclusion of people like Edgar Allan Poe, Cleopatra, Jules Verne, Nero, Machiavelli, Joan of Arc, Phineas T. Barnum, Captain William Kidd and Leif Ericson.

If the magic red paper didn't get you, maybe the artwork and interesting descriptions and quizzes would pry those nickels out of your hands. Incidentally, in 1952 I was on a fixed income. My disposable income for food and entertainment was 15 cents a week. My allowance was 25 cents, but 10 cents had to go to the church, and you had to use envelopes, so there was no way of fudging your permanent record. A nickel wasn't chump change. It was the equivalent of 48 cents today.

Topps selected 135 famous subjects that fit into categories used in the two series: Americans (men) 38 cards, World Figures 24, Explorers 12, Women 11, Military leaders 11, Men of the West 11, Writers 10, Presidents 9, Inventors 7 and 2 Canadians – keeping in mind that OPeeChee got to distribute these sets as well. The first series starts with nine presidents in the first nine card numbers, which sounds organized, but Abraham Lincoln on card #4 gets to be "Number 1 of 9 Presidents." There is some semblance of an alphabetic order within categories, but then the system starts to wander.



The 60 cards in Series 2, starting with card # 76, all mention “2<sup>nd</sup> Series” on the backs and the four border edges around the images are all slightly smaller than the chubby borders in Series 1, making the images in Series 2 about 8% larger than in Series 1. The succinct biographies are interesting, and to reinforce the impression that this was all great stuff, the writers liberally used exclamation points!

### Who made the team?

Who made the Topps team for famous subjects as of 1952? Nine recognizable presidents were included. Eleven explorers and seven inventors were well-known to those paying attention during history and geography classes. Nine men of the West were known to readers of western tales, but here the selections start to include infamous people as well, such as Jesse James and Billy the Kid. Cochise, Sitting Bull and Geronimo were in there along with Kit Carson and Daniel Boone.

Women got all of 11 cards in the set – Cleopatra, Joan of Arc, Anne of Cleeves, Dolly Madison, Clara Barton, Florence Nightingale, Annie Oakley, Marie Currie, Amelia Earhart, Eleanor Roosevelt and Queen Elizabeth II. Queen Victoria didn’t make the cut, nor did Elizabeth I since they combined for a mere 109 years on the throne. Anne of Cleves must have made the team for spending six months as Henry VIII’s queen without getting beheaded. Queen Elizabeth II is the only remaining living member of the Look ‘n See team.

Military leaders included Chennault, Decatur and Ridgeway who were considerably less known than Patton, MacArthur and Eisenhower. Lee and Stonewall Jackson are included with Custer. Grant is in with the presidents, although by most accounts he was a better general than president.



Famous Americans and World Leaders were catch-all categories, and the selections generally made sense as of 1952. There was no category for artists or musicians, and they got lumped in with everyone else. Gandhi's card has Mahatma Ghandi on the front and Mohandas Gandhi on the back. Humor was represented by Will Rogers and Mark Twain.

Babe Ruth is the only professional athlete included and is one of the most popular key cards. Ruth died in 1948. Was Topps concerned about horsing around with licensing contracts with any other athletes? Their Scoop set in 1954 had 156 cards and included Ruth and several living sports stars.

Churchill, Paul Revere and Patrick Henry make the set, as do Machiavelli, Nero, Genghis Khan, Jefferson Davis and Benedict Arnold. George Washington Carver is the lone African-American.

### **Who didn't**

Elvis and Marilyn were not yet on a major stage and there were no movie, radio or theatrical stars included. The ancient Greeks got shut out as well. I guess there was not much to say about Plato, Aristotle or Socrates. Alexander the Great wasn't great enough. Religious figures were left out, likely intentionally as Garrison Keeler might say "so as not to offend any Rastafarians or Zoroastrians among us." Joan of Arc was the only saint. Beethoven and Bach must not have had enough memorable tunes. Leaders on the opposite sides of recent wars certainly weren't going to get their own magic cards.

### **Let's lay out some sheets**

After selecting the subjects, dressing up the artwork with glued-on nameplates, adding logos for their famous categories, writing descriptions and adding in the quizzes and answers, Topps organized the cards onto printing sheets. Now the fun really began.

Dave Hornish has a website <http://toppsarchives.blogspot.com/> and has tried to figure out how Topps sets were printed. Hornish keeps an eye out for uncut sheets, partial sheets or other clues. He ran across images of four quadrants of an uncut sheet of the Look 'n See cards in Series 2 covering numbers #76 to #135.

### **Uncut clues**

The uncut sheet contains cards 11 wide and 11 deep for a total of 121 cards. Forty-one of the card numbers are double printed on the sheet, nine are single printed and 10 are triple printed. The single print numbers are all on the bottom row with #82 Rembrandt in the lower right corner. The other single prints are #84 Caesar, #88 Amundsen, #98 Adlai Stevenson, #101 De Foe, #112 Rockefeller, #118 Vespucci, #130 Herbert and #133 Joan of Arc. Several hobby sources repeat the finding about the single printed cards. Triple printed cards are #: 79, 86, 93, 99, 100, 106, 108, 121, 129 and 131. The right corner #82 Rembrandt card has been identified in articles as a hard card to find, especially in decent condition. Hornish hadn't run across any Series 1 printing evidence.

Hornish has checked the few uncut sheets found on other sets of small Topps cards. Topps sets from that era with the same card size include Ringside (96 cards), Magic Football (75 cards), Fighting Marines (96 cards) and Scoop (156 cards). With the different number of cards in each set, it didn't seem possible

to decipher a formula or standard layout. Hornish felt that Topps likely had the cards printed at Lord Baltimore Press in Baltimore.

**1952 TOPPS LOOK 'N SEE HIGH NUMBERS UNCUT SHEET**

|   | 1   | 2   | 3   | 4   | 5   | 6   | 7   | 8   | 9   | 10  | 11  |
|---|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| A | 129 | 117 | 119 | 87  | 128 | 102 | 76  | 96  | 97  | 79  | 129 |
| B | 86  | 134 | 125 | 123 | 111 | 91  | 104 | 120 | 116 | 93  | 86  |
| C | 121 | 132 | 114 | 81  | 94  | 109 | 83  | 78  | 77  | 106 | 121 |
| D | 131 | 135 | 95  | 122 | 103 | 104 | 115 | 107 | 126 | 108 | 131 |
| E | 100 | 92  | 110 | 90  | 127 | 124 | 85  | 89  | 80  | 99  | 100 |
| F | 79  | 117 | 119 | 87  | 128 | 102 | 76  | 96  | 97  | 79  | 129 |
| G | 93  | 134 | 125 | 123 | 111 | 91  | 104 | 120 | 116 | 93  | 86  |
| H | 106 | 132 | 114 | 81  | 94  | 109 | 83  | 78  | 77  | 106 | 121 |
| I | 108 | 135 | 95  | 122 | 103 | 104 | 115 | 107 | 126 | 108 | 131 |
| J | 99  | 92  | 110 | 90  | 127 | 124 | 85  | 89  | 80  | 99  | 100 |
| K | 113 | 98  | 118 | 101 | 112 | 130 | 133 | 84  | 88  | 113 | 82  |

|      |    |    |    |    |     |     |     |     |     |     |
|------|----|----|----|----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|-----|
| SPs: | 82 | 84 | 88 | 98 | 101 | 112 | 118 | 130 | 133 |     |
| TPs: | 79 | 86 | 93 | 99 | 100 | 106 | 108 | 121 | 129 | 131 |

*Chart information as to card number locations on an uncut sheet, courtesy of Dave Hornish*

Hornish commented, "My take is that Look 'n See was printed in two series on an 11 x 11 half sheet array. I don't believe any full sheet of 242 deviated from the half sheet array for the Look 'n See sets. So, there should be 46 extra prints in Series 1, which was clearly printed in greater quantities than Series 2's 60 cards. As for 121 card half sheets, 1956 Jets also were printed that way so it's a known array. I think Look 'n See was the first set issued in the rough size that defined Topps from 1950 until very early 1952 that wasn't intended to be issued in two card panels in the nickel and dime packs as Topps reconfigured the latter into Trading Card Guild cellos and transitioned the former from long horizontal packs to a more vertical look.

"As for the half sheets, my thinking is the Look 'n See sets were too short to have two separate half sheets. The oddity of Look 'n See is in Series 2 they could have double printed all cards and triple printed one additional in Series 2. It's possible, but I don't think Topps did so on the smaller sizes of cards in the early 50s. Solomon and Gelman came in house in 1952 or so, and a lot of Topps printing practices seemed to follow, especially from 1953 onward. Still, there is consistency in their inconsistency!"



### **Check with Christensen**

Bill Christensen wrote about this set in *The Wrapper* about 10 years ago and mentioned the one-sheet 121-card printing theory. He also referred to single, double and eight triple prints in Series 1. Bill recalled, "My original notes have been lost to history, as the saying goes, but I used three or four sources if I remember. One was the Non-Sports Bible, and I recall (editor) Chris Watson sharing his single, double and triple print theory on the first series with me, but even after he explained it, I wasn't 100% sure he was right with his thoughts. I may have also used a couple of old-time non-sports collectors like Hugh Jones and Mike Berkus. I did ask a couple of them what they were basing their information upon and was told by Mike that since he had built many sets, he was able to figure out which cards were usually needed and that those numbers were consistent."

### **Check out a bible**

Dr. James C. (Chris) Watson produced 500 copies of the weighty 2007 Non-Sports Bible mentioned by Christensen. The informative set description was quite specific in mentioning the single and triple prints in Series 2 based on the uncut sheet. In forming an opinion about relative scarcities in Series 1, Watson states, "Assuming that the first 75 cards were printed on a single 121-cards sheet, then it must contain eight overprints and 37 single prints, with the remainder (30) appearing twice. Tabulation research can be used to identify all eight overprint cards as well as approximately half of the single print cards from the first sheet." Watson identified the eight overprints as #s: 8, 18, 19, 58, 61, 67 and 72.

### **Experiences of some collectors**

A few other collectors were contacted as to their experiences with scarcities. John Stamper completed the set several years ago and responded, "The Rembrandt was readily available but much more expensive than the others; my guess is the price brought the card out for sale. My last two cards were 130 and 133. So, I would say that was due to SP."

Stamper added, "When I was buying most of the set through lots on eBay, I had competition from another buyer on almost every lot I bid on. The other buyer was Mike Berkus, the co-founder of the National. I didn't know who he was at the time, but we talked, and I bought some cards from him. We both enjoyed talking about and collecting the Look 'n See set. It was tough to hear of his passing."

Kevin Glew mentioned in a 2013 article for PSA's set registry that Berkus once owned 21 sets of Look 'n See cards. Bill Bengen, Christensen, Berkus and Hornish were all contacted for that article.

Eric Cooper had trouble finding most of the cards known as single prints in great shape. He has focused on PSA-8 cards and feels that the bottom row of single prints has resulted in many off-center or otherwise damaged cards that never make the grade. He can't be quite so sure that the difficulty in finding these cards is proportionate to the single printing. He has noted "edge cards" with scarcities in higher grades – Scott, Hudson, Beaverbrook, Poe and Zola. Some of these cards were even triple printed on the sheet. Cooper noted, "Stevenson I would say is somewhat tougher, but certainly not as tough as you would suspect, if it's truly a single print. And Vespucci seems quite common, so is it really a single print? A mystery."

When I asked Cooper to forget about grades for a moment he responded, "If you are collecting a set in lower grade, every card is pretty much available."

Mike Glasser completed the set and responded, "The Rockefeller and the Rembrandt were the two toughest - the Rockefeller being tougher for me to find in decent shape."

I bought a lot of 40 cards on eBay recently. The lot included none of the single prints and seven of the 10 triple prints in Series 2. That should cinch it.

Just for fun, let's dig a little deeper. After all, the Topps wrapper indicates that it is fun to Look 'n See.

### **PSA numbers**

PSA started grading in 1998. Some opinions about relative scarcities of sets were formed before PSA population reports were as available and extensive as they are now. Let's look and see what current information is available.

If every card ever printed was saved and sent to PSA for grading, we could easily tell which cards were single, double or triple printed. However, only some fraction of vintage cards produced were saved, some cards are more popular than others, and it doesn't make sense to have PSA grade inexpensive cards. You expect to see PSA numbers that show more Rembrandts graded than Pasteurs (both in Series 2) and more Babe Ruths graded than General Ridgways (both in Series 1). (The layout artists were not usually the same people who wrote the backs, and they must not have gone to lunch together. Hence, card #35 is misspelled Ridgeway on the front but Ridgway on the back. However, the back text writers for #72 knew how to spell McCormack, while the front artists went with McCormick.)

Indeed, 561 Babe Ruth cards have been graded to date and only 116 General Ridgways. Rembrandt has 229 cards graded and Pasteur has just 99. We will put Ruth and Rembrandt over to the sideline, and identify the cards found on the Series 2 sheet to be single or triple printed.

### **Series 2 numbers**

Cards in Series 2 which were double printed on the sheet average 95 PSA submissions, with a wide range of 45 to 125 cards. Cards in Series 2 (excluding Rembrandt) which were single printed average 82 submissions, with a tighter range of 77 to 94 cards. While single prints have only about 14% fewer submissions, you could argue that single prints are known to be more valuable and therefore more of them were submitted than a 2 to 1 production ratio would predict.

Triple printed cards submitted average 78 submissions, with a range of 68 to 81. Therefore the 10 triple-printed cards were submitted in numbers lower than even the single prints! How does that make sense? There were no big-name rookie cards in the triple prints: Poe, Cellini, Dewey, Pearson, Beaverbrook, Machiavelli, Michelangelo, Zola, Gutenberg and Hudson. Two of the three columns of triple prints were on the edges of the uncut sheet and consequently not in great shape for grading. Maybe, that explains the surprisingly small number of submissions? You could argue that triple prints are cheaper and why waste the money on grading, or that moms threw out the triple prints which were left on the floor or...you could start scratching your head a little more.

**Series 1**

No uncut sheet or partial sheet seems to be known for Series 1. Pulling Ruth out of the 75 cards in Series 1, the 74 cards averaged 113 submissions with a range of 61 (Carver) to 171 (Patton). If the 75 subjects in Series 1 were printed on one 121-card sheet, the widest distribution would be to double print 46 cards, leaving 29 single prints. Watson’s theory is that there were eight triple prints, 30 double prints and 37 single prints. PSA submissions for the “Watson” triple prints average 121 submissions versus 112 submissions for all other cards, excluding Ruth – not exactly an indication of a glut of the eight cards.

|               | Current thinking |          | PSA Population Report    |          |
|---------------|------------------|----------|--------------------------|----------|
|               | # of cards       |          | (exc Ruth and Rembrandt) |          |
|               | Series 1         | Series 2 | Series 1                 | Series 2 |
| Single prints | 37               | 9        | *                        | 82       |
| Double prints | 30               | 41       | 112                      | 95       |
| Triple prints | 8                | 10       | 121                      | 78       |
| total         | 75               | 60       | 113                      | 90       |
|               | Cards produced   |          | * not all single prints  |          |
| Single prints | 37               | 9        | were identified          |          |
| Double prints | 60               | 82       |                          |          |
| Triple prints | 24               | 30       |                          |          |
| total         | 121              | 121      |                          |          |

**Series 2 versus Series 1 scarcity**

Without Ruth, Series 1 averaged 113 submissions; without Rembrandt, Series 2 averaged 90 submissions – 20% less than Series 1. Since there are 60 subjects in Series 2 versus 75 in Series 1, you could produce 80% as many of the individual cards in Series 2 with 64% of the cardboard.

All these numbers can hurt your head, and we didn’t even get into any anomalies between higher and lower graded cards, or find any information on ungraded cards, or what, if anything, these cards cost.

**Let’s think about this**

The wrapper for the set says, “It’s fun to Look ‘n See. Collect the full set.” How much fun would it be to chase around single prints to collect the set and get stuck with a bunch of triple prints of guys named Beaverbrook?

**Baseball lessons**

Over ten years ago, I re-read some published information to get a better handle on the relative scarcities of 1952 and 1953 Topps baseball cards, which I reported in articles for *Sports Collectors Digest*.

Beckett and Eckes Sport Americana Baseball Card Price Guide No. 3, 1981 contained a great article on 1952 Topps baseball cards attributed to Mike Aronstein, Larry Fritsch, Lew Lipset, Tom Reid, Herb Ross and Nick Shoff. The article concluded that the scarcities in the 1952 5th series were the single printed cards #s 281 to 300, citing a find of three unopened boxes of the 5th series consisting of 1,620 cards.

Dealer Alan Rosen made a famous find of unopened boxes of Topps cards in 1986 and wrote about it in his 1994 book “True Mint.” Rosen found scarcities in numbers 271-280 and 301-310, rather than 280-300. He found 35 of every 5th Series cards except the previous numbers which were found in quantities of 17 or 18 - single printed. I posed the question, Who was right?

My theory was that everyone was "right." It seemed obvious that Topps printed at least two sheets of 100 cards each and that they cut, collated and distributed the cards from the two sheets separately. In this way, Retailer A would get a box of cards from sheet A with scarce numbers 281 through 300. Over in Retailer B's store they would find scarcities from sheet B in numbers 271-280 and 301-310. The A and B boys and girls would finally get together and trade, thus evening out the scarcities. Both the 1981 article and Rosen were right except they only had one-half of the print run of the 5th series.

I concluded that in a two-sheet, 200-card print run, individual subjects for the 1952 baseball set were either double and triple printed, or they were triple and quadruple printed. In no instance did you wind up with cards which were even twice as scarce as others, let alone three times as scarce. There were no single prints, only "short" prints.

### **Two sheets of Look 'n See?**

Woody Gelman, Ben Solomon and the same Topps art department had to be involved in the layout of sheets for both the Topps baseball and Look 'n See sets in 1952. The 1952 Topps baseball set would have been created prior to the Look 'n See set – based on Queen Elizabeth's bio. Gelman was a collector himself. In order to make it interesting, Topps was not above short printing some cards, but would they triple print some cards and single print others?

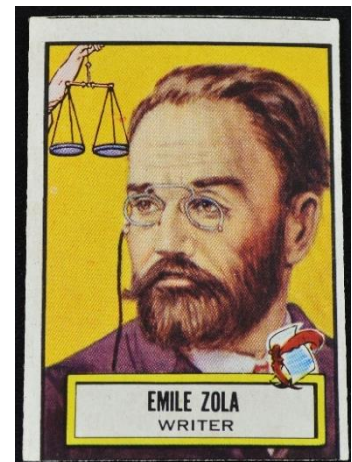
Bill Bengen, who had the #1 set on the PSA registry, didn't recall any investigations as to whether one or two sheets were used. Collectors I contacted seemed to be telling me that the tougher cards were not impossible to find, just hard to find in decent shape and at a decent price.

The PSA population numbers are tricky to make logical, but for me they point to a less dramatic case of scarcities for short prints. Consequently, I am starting to think that the cards known as "single prints" on one sheet were likely double prints on another sheet and not as scarce as you might be led to believe.

Even without an uncut Series 2 B sheet, this theory could be confirmed if a miscut Series 2 card could be identified as being adjacent to a card number OTHER than those shown in the layout of the one surviving sheet. The most likely clue would be to find a single print card, printed on the bottom border of the known sheet, that showed any portion of any card border below it. Such a find would indicate that the cards known as single prints were printed differently on another sheet. (Scott #113 was a double print, but both his cards were on the bottom line as well.)

Unfortunately, those printers may not have been exact, but while I've seen a wrong-back and a plethora of off-center cards, I haven't run across sufficiently miscut cards that would prove the theory – or disprove it.

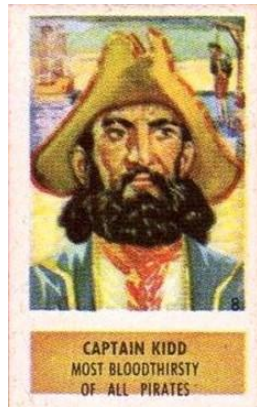
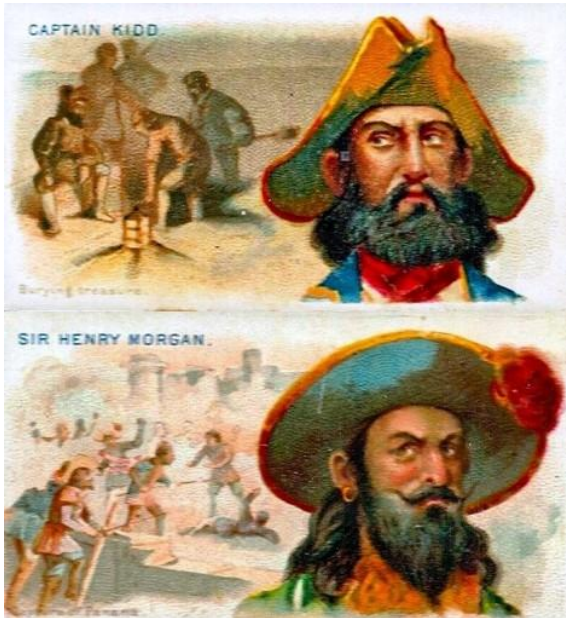
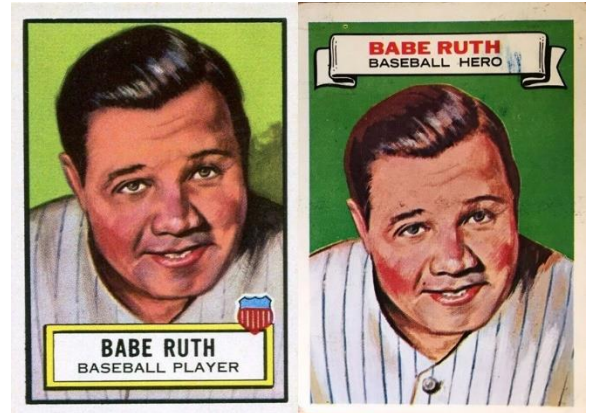
Finding such a miscut would also indicate that Series 1 was very likely printed on two sheets, which would mean 75 cards were spread around 242 spots and that they were no single prints.



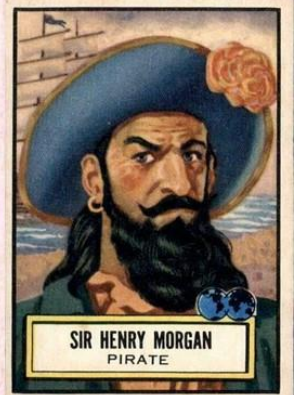
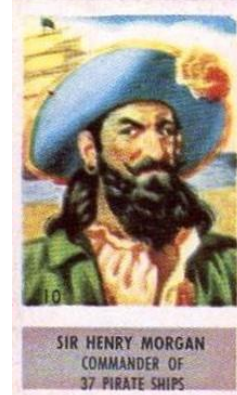
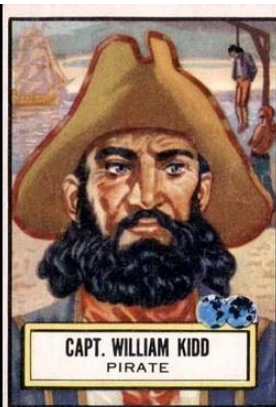
For example, card #121 Zola is a triple print on the sheet but has #86 Cellini printed above him in all three instances. If the sliver of a card at the top of this miscut could be determined to be someone other than Cellini, we would know two sheets were used.

**Artwork afterlife**

Artwork used in the Topps Look 'n See set has been spotted by Hornish in other sets. Babe Ruth shows up in the 1967 issue of Who am I? Captain Kidd's artwork is also in the Who am I? set, the 1949 X-ray Roundup set and on the back of his 1954 Scoop card, although his eyes got more or less shifty. Kidd's portrait and that of Sir Henry Morgan weren't much different from that used in the 1888 N-19 Pirates of the Spanish Main set by Allen & Ginter. They didn't age much between 1888 and 1967, and it looks like they went to the same barber – occasionally. Genghis Kahn and Henry VIII also show up in the 1967 Who am I? set. There is likely some additional borrowed artwork around.



*Captain Kidd in 1888 and in Topps issues of 1949, 1952 and 1967  
Henry Morgan in 1888, 1949 and 1952*

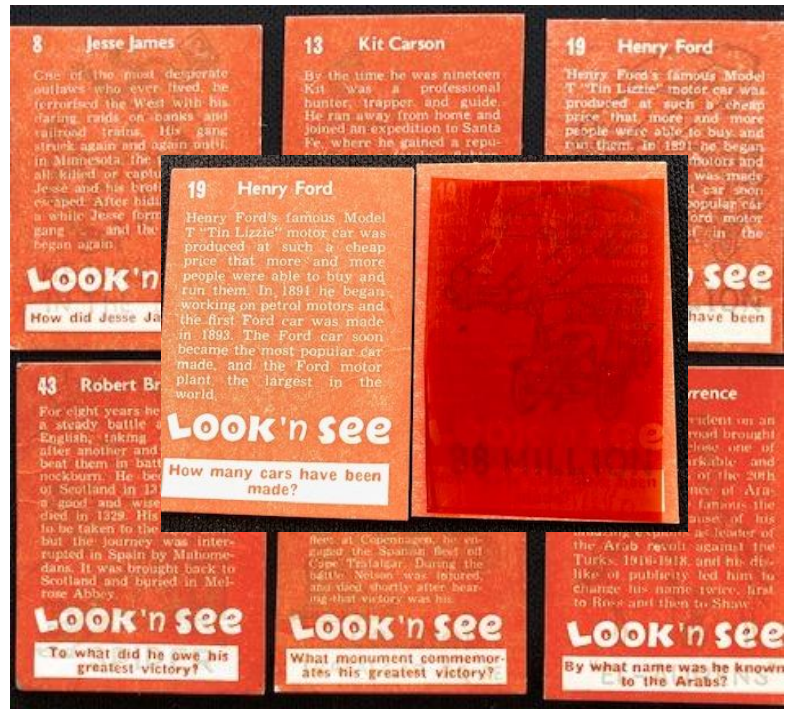


**Afterlife for the backs of the cards**

You wouldn't think that just the back of a card would be borrowed for another set, but that appears to be what happened to the Look 'n See cards. In 1959 Colinville Caterers of London, England, issued a set using the design from the back of the 1952 Topps Look 'n See cards - including the magic red paper, cellophane and hidden artwork. In some cases, they used Topps bios verbatim, some were changed, and several new subjects were added. The Topps name does not appear on the cards, and the backs (or are they the fronts?) are blank – a truly strange set that looks like it was interrupted in mid-production. An English collector wrote that he lived practically around the corner from this

establishment at the time and never saw the set. Tim Thornham of London confirmed that the set is not well known.

Fortunately, Eric Cooper grabbed a few of these including a wrapper. The highest number seen is #56 and I have not found a checklist or any information as to a connection to Topps.



Colinville wrapper and cards, Photos, Eric Cooper

The Look 'n See set has kept many of us looking 67 years after it was issued. Topps let the set speak for itself. It has been up to us to figure out what they were up to which adds to the magic and fun which Topps promised on their wrapper.

George Vrechek can be reached at [vrechek@ameritech.net](mailto:vrechek@ameritech.net) and would enjoy hearing from any readers who have additional information to add – or have come across Series 2 miscuts that would show an adjacent card.

This article appeared in two installments in *The Wrapper* in 2019. Our thanks to *The Wrapper* for letting us post the article on the OBC site.



# Another Look ‘N See

By George Vrechek

Thank you, readers, for the responses to my prior two-part article on the 1952 Topps Look ‘N See cards. The set has attracted many enthused collectors.

Pete D’Luhosch wrote, “I like the type of article that tries to figure something out just based on the limited information that is currently available.” Bill Bengen’s note was also encouraging, “Well researched and well-written!”

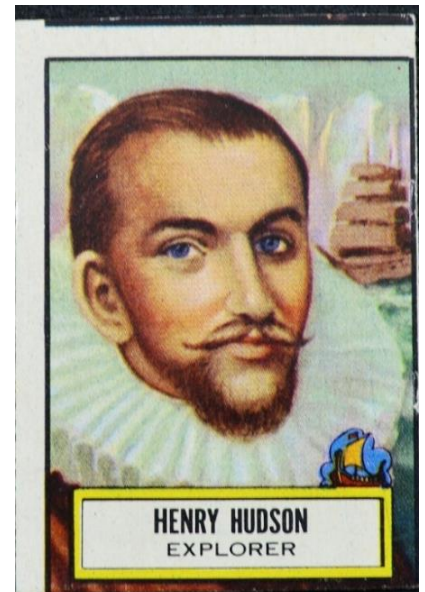
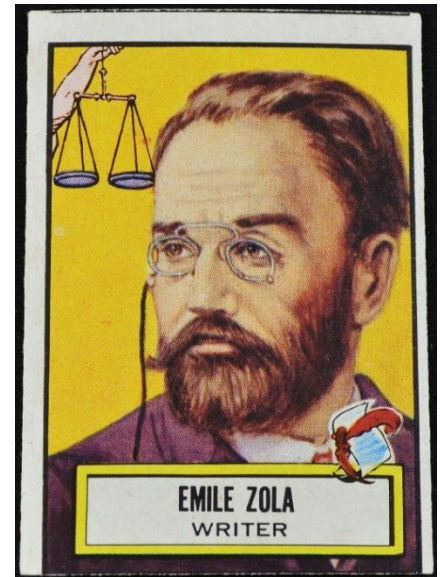
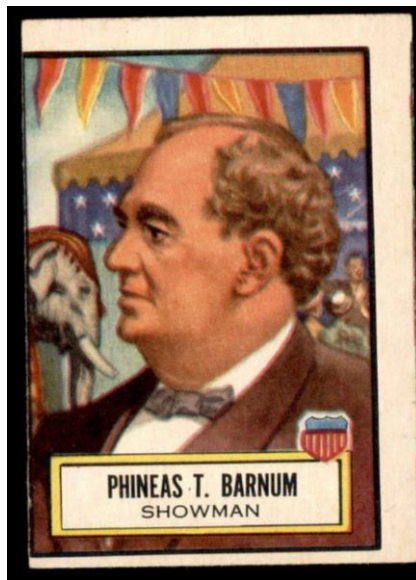
I didn’t get any leads on mis-cut second series cards to see if any layouts differed from the one known uncut sheet. Ironically, mis-cuts seem to be the norm for this set, but the borders are large, and few mis-cuts give you much info. I found mis-cuts of Zola which matched nicely with mis-cuts of Hudson and Cellini, but all that makes sense since the uncut sheet showed this threesome together in three different locations.

*Even significantly off-center cards like Barnum don’t help much in identifying adjacent cards. However, Zola’s mis-cut bottom fits nicely with Hudson’s top.*

## Spell check

I found more instances where the layout people doing the card fronts didn’t talk to those writing the texts on the backs.

In addition to Ridgway/Ridgeway, McCormack/McCormick and Mahatma Ghāndi/Mohandas Gandhi which were mentioned in the articles, I found Samuel F.B. Morse/Samuel B.F. Morse, Edgar Allan Poe/Edgar Allen Poe, Hans Christian Anderson/Hans Christian Andersen and Wendell Wilkie/Wendell L. Wilkie. Dolley Madison was consistently spelled “Dolly” which looks right to most of us anyway.



There were a few other front/back inconsistencies which bothered me, but perhaps not many others - George W. Carver/Geo. Washington Carver, Gen. George S. Patton, Jr/George Smith Patton, Stonewall Jackson/Stonewall” Jackson (with a one-legged quotation mark), Col. William F. Cody/Bufalo Bill, Alfred

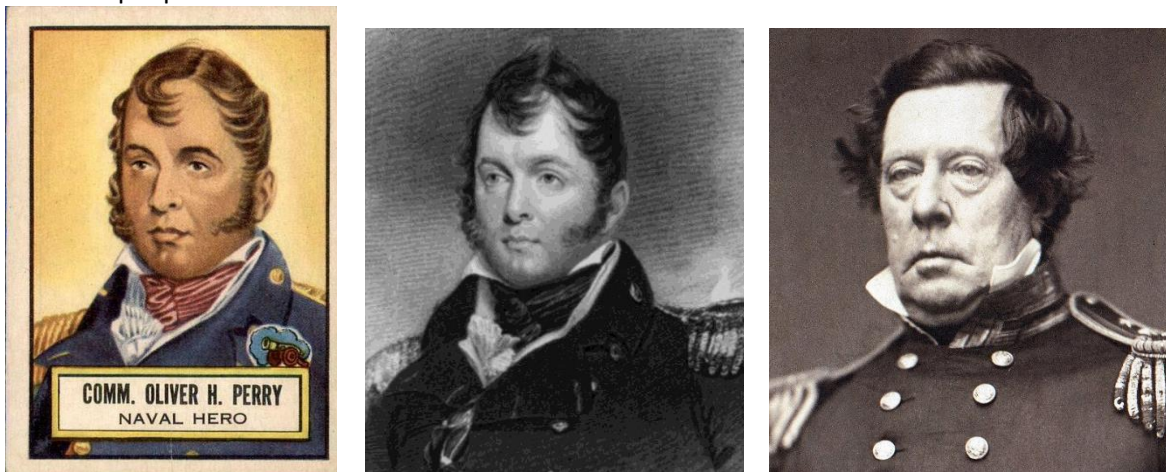
E. Smith/Al Smith and Daniel De Foe/Daniel Defoe. Alert reader Roderick Boucher pointed out that Harry Truman (front) and Harry S. Truman (back) wasn't quite right either. Truman said that the "S" didn't stand for anything, that he didn't have a middle name and everyone should leave out the darned period after the "S." (Sorry, Harry, I had to use a period to end the sentence.)

### The Perry Boys

However, the biggest goof I noted was on card #33 of Commander Perry. The front of the card calls him Comm. Oliver H. Perry, while the back of the card calls him Matthew C. Perry.

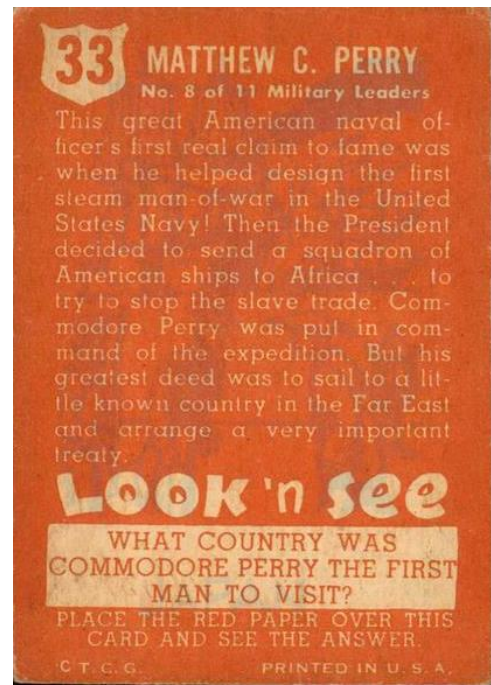
Oliver H. Perry (1785-1819) and Matthew C. Perry (1794-1858) were brothers. Both were naval commanders and Matthew sailed under Oliver when he first joined the navy.

The painting of Perry used for the card front sure looks like the U.S. Navy's engraved portrait of Oliver H. Perry. The text on the back of the card mentions that Perry helped design the first steam man-of-war, commanded an expedition to Africa to stop the slave trade and went to Japan to sign a treaty. All of that is basically true, and was accomplished by Commodore Perry, but it was Matthew C. not Oliver H. Perry. Topps got the front of the card right and the back of the card right, but the front and back were of two different people!



*Oliver H. Perry (center) engraved by Henry Meyer from an original picture by John W. Jarvis. Matthew C. Perry (right) from a photo by Mathew Brady, both images in the public domain per Wikimedia Commons.*

You might guess that Matthew C. Perry was the guy Topps wanted in the set. The writer for the back of the card checked out what they could say about Matthew. The artist doing the front of the card found an image of what Commodore Perry looked like and painted it, except he had the wrong Commodore Perry. The Perry boys had the same fancy buttons and epaulets, but they didn't look much alike.





The quiz on the back of Perry's card asks, "What country was Commodore Perry the first man to visit? Topps' answer was Japan. Under Matthew C. Perry's "gunboat diplomacy," Americans visited Japan in 1853, but Westerners had been visiting Japan since 1543, not to mention other Asians who were "men."

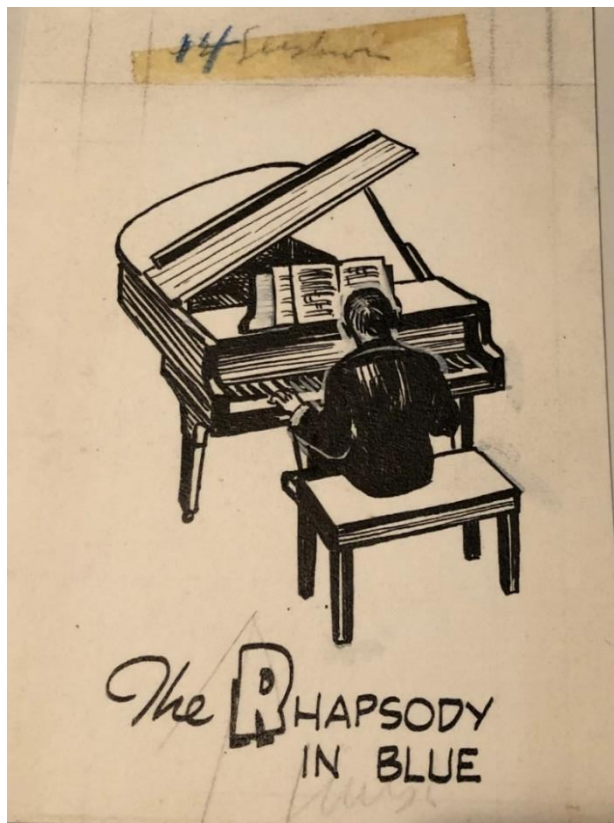
With a little more research, I confirmed that I certainly wasn't the first collector to spot this mix-up. Well, at least I was the first "man" in my house to spot the error.



#### Unused Line Art

Eric Cooper, who provided significant information for my Look 'N See story, provided some additional line artwork he acquired of Rhapsody in Blue (George Gershwin) and Anne Boleyn. Cooper explained, "They were in the same lot with the line art that was used in the set. I'm guessing the Gershwin and Boleyn were going to be additional cards in the set. There is no card in the set in which Gershwin would be the answer. However, I suppose Boleyn might have been considered as the answer to the Henry the Eighth card but not used."

*Eric Cooper, photo by G. Vrechek*



George Vrechek can be reached at [vrechek@ameritech.net](mailto:vrechek@ameritech.net) and would enjoy hearing from any readers who have additional information to add.

*This follow-up article appeared in The Wrapper #326 March 24-May 15, 2020. Our thanks to The Wrapper for letting us post the article on the OBC site.*