

Hobby History

A \$1 Burdick Card and Baseball Cards in a 1945 Magazine

Did the cards belong to Burdick, Warshaw, or Dunshee?



by
George Vrechek



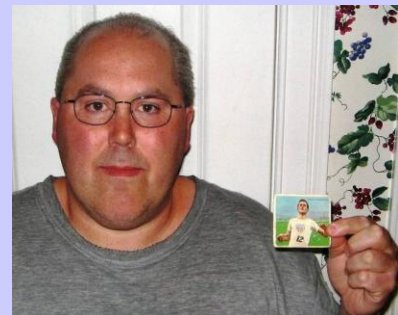
Jefferson Burdick

The Father of Card Collectors, Jefferson Burdick (1900-1963), who donated his 306,353-card collection to the Metropolitan Museum of Art in New York City and who originated the classification system for all cards, is still making news as you'll see from the following two stories.

The Find

Erik Powell is a fellow collector of older cards and has had an interest in hobby history. One of his methods of collecting has been to visit antique shops with his father-in-law in the hope of running across some hidden treasures. A recent visit to an antique store in New York produced a modest "find" that also had a hidden bonus.

Erik Powell with Burdick's T218



Erik described what happened, "I go out 'picking' whenever I can to tag sales, flea markets, and antique shops looking for sports memorabilia and trading cards, the good stuff, not 1988 Topps. I have had many great finds over the years, as has anyone who goes out on a regular basis, but it is getting harder and harder. I think you need to be good and lucky; mostly I think I am lucky. Anyway, I was out on a cold New York Easter weekend to antique shops along the Hudson River. I had seen an advertisement for The Dew Drop Inn Antique Center in Cold Spring, New York, and told my father-in-law we should stop there first as we had never been there before. One part of the room had a lot of paper. I had been going through the stuff for about an hour with no luck; then I came across a binder with some Mecca and Hassan athlete cards (T218), good to VG shape. They are not rare but I love them, and I really love them for \$1 each, \$13 total purchase price plus tax.

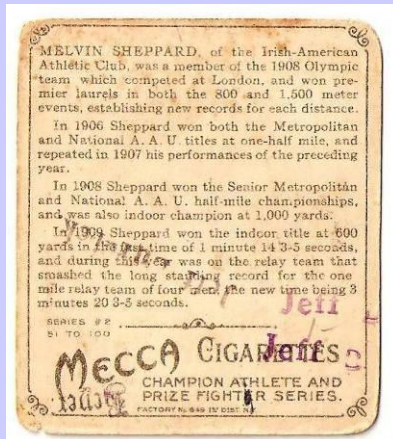


Powell's T218s, \$12 a dozen

After we left, I was with my father-in-law and we had to stop and get gas. As he was filling up the tank, I was looking at the back of the cards and one of them, Melvin W. Sheppard, a runner with a Mecca back, had some stamping on the back. Upside down in black ink was ‘Jeff Burdick,’ then ‘Jeff B’ stamped two more times.”

Burdick’s Stamps

Burdick’s T218 of Melvin Sheppard



Erik sent me the card for inspection. Burdick worked on cataloging card issues and solicited help from others. I recall reading that he had stamped the back of some cards he sent to other collectors in order to identify them for later return, apparently not worried about what grade PSA might give the cards years later. Hobby pioneer Buck Barker would also pencil his name on the back of cards, or the name of some collector who had sent him a card, as a record of its ownership history.



Burdick was very organized (a colossal understatement) and had a stamp with his name and address that he used for correspondence. I hadn’t seen a “Jeff B” stamp, but it seems fairly certain that Jefferson Burdick’s T218 is now Erik Powell’s. I’ll bet that Burdick paid maybe 10 cents for the card; 70 years later Powell got the same card for \$1. Good find, Erik!

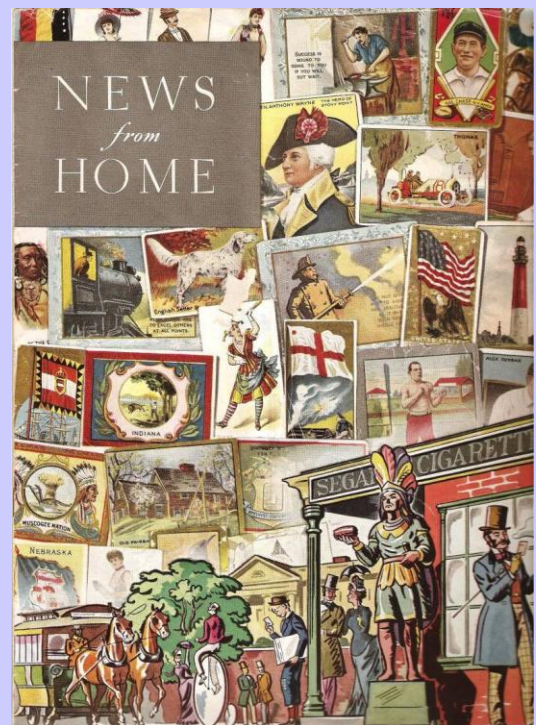
News from Home 1945

I’m always interested in finding anything associated with Burdick. Within a few days of looking at Powell’s card, an eBay listing caught my eye: “1945 Tobacco Card Magazine T206 Ty Cobb T205 J. Burdick” The owner was guessing that Burdick may have had a hand in this obscure, old publication featuring illustrations of tobacco cards. Heck, I was born in 1945, so it wasn’t THAT old of a publication. I concluded I needed to bid on this item and find out for myself about any Burdick connection. Fortunately, I wound up being the only person in the world interested in the listing.

Home Insurance’s “News from Home” is covered with tobacco insert cards including Hal Chase

Magazine Contents

The magazine arrived; it wasn’t actually a tobacco company or card publication. Many companies produced periodicals for business purposes in those years. There seemed to be a certain amount of “keeping up with the



Joneses” involved in having your own in-house publication. The magazine I won was called *News from Home* and was produced in the summer of 1945 by The Home Insurance Company to send to their agents. It had a few things pertinent to insurance such as posters that could be customized for use in promoting insurance at the authorized agencies as well as articles on insurance, but it also had a greater assortment of stories of historic or sentimental value. Perhaps the theory was that you needed to entertain your audience somewhat in order to get them to read the boring parts. The armed services used this approach with comic book-like publications that would intersperse attractive young ladies with information on how to properly repair a jeep. The editor of this 24-page, color magazine was Kenneth H. Dunshee. In addition to the article on cigarette cards, there were articles on the history of the tobacco industry, harness racing, cigar store Indians, Winston Churchill’s mother’s house, the history of fire-fighting, courageous letters from Home Insurance employees and agents in the armed forces, and an editorial discussing the atomic bomb and dealing with post-war Germany. A *Wall Street Journal* article was reprinted proclaiming the good news that insurance companies and banks had “agreed to be gentlemen in their dealings with one another” by “not encouraging borrowers (car buyers) to shop around for favorable loan terms.” The banks promised “not to ask kickbacks on insurance premiums.” Good news, indeed, except for consumers.



A succinct article with McGraw and Bergen’s T205s

Tobacco Insert Cards



The cigarette card article featured 90 insert tobacco cards with a fair representation of the types of cards issued. Actresses outnumbered the five baseball players: a T206 Ty Cobb and T205s for John McGraw, Hal Chase (both ears), William Bergen, and Paddy Livingston. The very brief article mentioned “the collecting of the colorful pictures which used to come in packages of cigarettes....As the initiate will remember, it was only by besieging relatives and friends and through swapping that boys acquired their collections; these were also the stakes in various games....Many thousands of cigarette cards were issued covering a variety of subjects....Most of the brands in favor at the time the vogue was at its height have suffered a decline in popularity, but some of the cards are still preserved in various collections.” They added “it was an educational as well as entertaining hobby, and many a lad acquired a fund of information from his card collection far less painfully than from his schoolbooks.”

I had found an article on cigarette cards in the popular 328-page December 1945 *Esquire* magazine and reported on that story in *SCD*. Burdick and Bray were quoted and various tobacco cards were shown in color along with a long article by a freelance writer Karl Baarslag and a few gratuitous cheesecake photos to keep *Esquire* readers' attention. This Home Insurance piece was certainly not of the scope or circulation of the *Esquire* article, but it did pre-date the *Esquire* article and ranks among the earliest articles on cards in a (somewhat) national publication.

Whose Cards Were They?

The eBay seller of the Home Insurance magazine guessed that Burdick may have had a hand in providing the cards illustrated. It was possible, in that the magazine was produced in New York City and Burdick was in Syracuse at the time, but the magazine makes no mention of the source of the cards and the article doesn't sound like it was written by Burdick. (Maybe Burdick stamped his name on the back of the cards and sent them off to New York City before they were sent up the Hudson River to Cold Spring?) I assumed the article was written by editor Dunshee and not by Burdick. But whose cards were they?

Kenneth H. Dunshee, Too Busy to Collect?

My research found that magazine editor Dunshee was also the curator and historian of the American Museum of Fire Fighting at Hudson, New York, wrote books on the subject, and received the William Randolph Hearst Medal in 1952. He was also married three times and had six children. I had never seen his name mentioned in any early hobby publications, and the article didn't reference any collecting experience. I checked my copies of Burdick's *Card Collector's Bulletin (CCB)* from that era to look for any clues as to whose cards were in the article. Burdick was enthused about any publicity involving the hobby and would mention in the *CCB* the steady trickle of hobby publicity that came to his attention. The *CCBs* from early and mid-1945 made no mention of the *News from Home* article. I had just about concluded that the little article was too obscure for even Burdick when I found what I was looking for in the October 1945 *CCB*. Burdick wrote, "All collectors will want to see the Summer 1945 issue of *News from Home*, organ of the Home Insurance Companies. The front cover illustrates many old cigarette cards in colors and there are two similar inside pages in black and white. Feature article is "A Brief History of the Tobacco Industry" and there is a page on cigar store Indians. We are indebted to Mr. Warshaw and to Mr. Sturtevant for copies. No doubt some Home Insurance agent near you can supply a copy." Now I had to check out Mr. Warshaw and Mr. Sturtevant.

C.G. Sturtevant's Cards, Water, and War

I recalled reading an amusing 1943 article in *CCB* by Colonel C.G. Sturtevant. It was one of the few articles not written by Burdick. C.G. was a boy in 1885 and started his collection of tobacco cards. Unfortunately part of his collection was ruined in an 1890 rainstorm and the balance disappeared while he was away in service during 1898. The Spanish American War of 1898 lasted less than four months, but it was apparently too long to save C.G.'s baseball cards. Those mothers were throwing out the cardboard as early as 1898, thereby jacking up prices today. Sturtevant wrote in *CCB* that he "never recovered his losses, so confined himself mostly to recollections." Sturtevant was one of the most active writers and advertisers in the *CCB*, but he never mentioned his involvement in the article. Clearly the cards in the article weren't from Mr. Sturtevant.

Isadore Warshaw

What did the CCBs have to say about Mr. Warshaw? In a 1943 CCB I learned “Mr. Warshaw of the Warshaw Collection of Business Americana has stored his vast collection and is at an Army training camp in Georgia.” I also learned Burdick had visited “leading dealer” Warshaw in New York City around 1943. The collection had to include cards otherwise it wouldn’t have been of much interest to Burdick. With a few more turns of the search engine I found that I had stumbled upon the Jefferson Burdick of business ephemera collectors.

Isadore Warshaw, 1942, courtesy The National Museum of American History

Isadore “Sonny” Warshaw’s collection of business Americana, ca. 1724-1977, was purchased by the National Museum of American History (The Smithsonian) in 1967. According to the museum, the collection represents the largest advertising ephemera collection in the United States, occupying more than 1,020 cubic feet of storage space. The collection turns out to be one of the most used reference sources in the Archives Center. Warshaw collected items of business history that the companies themselves were unwilling or unable to retain. Warshaw's interest in collecting business ephemera began in 1928 when an important event inspired him. The Smithsonian website describes that “in the process of searching for books, (Warshaw) often ran across various pieces of ephemera. In these posters, labels, ledgers, invoices, calendars, business cards, correspondence on letterhead stationery, and advertising cards, he could see the romantic side of big business.” Boy, he did sound like Jefferson Burdick.



Goodie Goldfaden 2009 with author George Vrecek

Checking on Sonny with Goodie

Warshaw sold his collection, but couldn’t stay away from accumulating more and produced another trove of business ephemera that the Smithsonian purchased in the 1970s. Warshaw was born in 1903 and died in 2007 at the age of 103. I had stumbled across the Goodie Goldfaden of business ephemera. Sports book dealer Goodie Goldfaden, now 96, turns out to still be a youngster



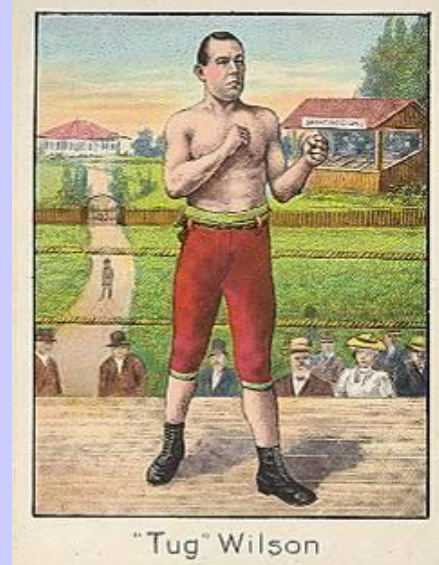
Louis Goldfaden

compared to Warshaw. I called Goodie of Sherman Oaks, California, to see if he had dealt with Mr. Warshaw. Goodie was doing fine after recent cataract surgery, although his 90-year-old brother Louis had just passed away in Houston a few days earlier. Louis Goldfaden had started with Goodie in the sports program business helping sell programs outside Cleveland Municipal Stadium in the early 1930s. Goodie didn’t know Sonny Warshaw which is surprising given that they were both active in dealing with American ephemera for most of the 20th century, albeit at opposite sides of the country.



The Archives Center

The final piece of the puzzle was to see if the Smithsonian had the cards shown in the article, or if they had disappeared before or after acquisition by the Smithsonian. I contacted the Archives Center and they mentioned that the Warshaw Collection continues to be in great demand, and that they were indebted to Mr. Warshaw for collecting what some might have considered the “junk mail” of the time. Kay Peterson of the museum was very helpful and confirmed that they had some twenty boxes of tobacco industry material from the Warshaw Collection which included many tobacco insert cards stored in plastic sleeves. Baseball players were just a small portion of the cards. The staff remembered the colorful 6 by 8 inch Turkish Trophies cards of Hamilton King Girls (T7). Christine Windeuser from the museum dug through the boxes and found a T220 of boxer Tug Wilson, a card found on the cover of *News from Home*.



A T220 of boxer Tug Wilson was on the cover of the 1945 magazine and is resting comfortably today at the Smithsonian

I found it extremely likely that editor Dunshee, writing for the Home Insurance Company, wandered over to Isadore Warshaw's place in New York City and photographed the cards for the 1945 article. The rest of the gang of actresses and baseball players from the article are likely also tucked away safely at the National Museum of American History in Washington, D.C., a happy ending to the story; although I'll have to see the cards for myself one of these days.

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This article appeared in the August 12, 2011, SCD; a big OBC thank you to [Sports Collectors Digest \(SCD\)](#) for allowing us to reprint George's article here on the OBC site.