

JM10 (Jesse Merandy 10): Baseball Card Conservation

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It was early March 2020 when a friend dropped by my apartment with a large bin of sports cards that he had purchased at an estate sale (fig. 1). I had recently shown him some cards from my collecting days in the 1980s and he thought that the gift might serve as an enjoyable distraction from the pandemic, and maybe, just maybe, it might contain a hidden treasure. Upon removing the broken lid, I was greeted by the musty smell of moldering cardboard. There were thousands of cards—some were stacked, some were grouped together with rubber bands, but most were jumbled together in a chaotic pile. As I began to examine the cards, I was skeptical that I would find anything of value. Estate sales and online sellers are notorious for offering large lots of sports cards that have already been picked over, and these cards exhibited the creases, rounded corners, and surface wear indicative of improper storage and handling. Still, with little else demanding my attention during New York City's stay-at-home order, I slowly began to remove the layers of cardboard, digging into the pile where I discovered, much to my surprise, cards dating back to the early 1960s, with a number of star players interspersed among the countless "common cards" of everyday players.



Fig. 1 The card bin. Photo: Courtesy the author

Getting a little more excited, I began to pull out the cards and sort them, ordering them by year, team, player, and number, evaluating their condition, and pulling aside anything of interest or potential value. Even though I had been out of the card collecting hobby for nearly thirty years, a long-forgotten skill from my childhood instantly resurfaced. I fondly recalled the days from my youth spent as an amateur conservator of cardboard, curating albums of my favorite players, handling each card with care, and trying with unskilled hands not to bend or damage them. I spent countless hours poring over the stats on their backs and dreaming of my own certain future as a major league player. With each card and passing hour, more memories came flooding back to me. I remembered my uncle giving me a small shoebox containing his 1962 Los Angeles Dodgers cards with their distinctive wood-grain design. The card for Sandy Koufax (b. 1935) among them became the prize of my collection (a card that was stolen and replaced twenty years later as a wedding gift, see fig. 2). I thought back fondly to my strange obsession as a New Yorker with third baseman Wade Boggs (b. 1958) of the Boston Red Sox, and how my quest to collect all of his cards led to a family trip to Boston's Fenway Park to see him play. I also found myself contemplating the life of the unknown collector who had amassed the cards that I now sifted through. I could not help but wonder who their heroes were and what dreams of summer grass, home runs, and crowd cheers lay imbued and now dormant in this bin. I paused for a moment, considering how a simple piece of cardstock could evoke such strong nostalgia, like a small portal connecting me to my past, to other collectors, and to the history of baseball and sports cards.

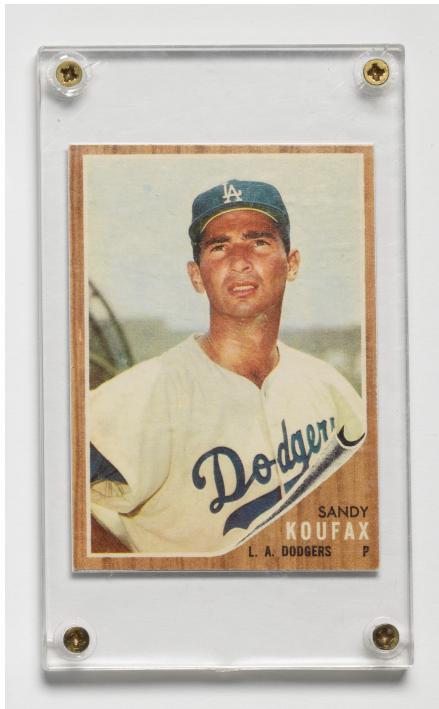


Fig. 2 Sandy Koufax Baseball Card, 1962. Photo: Bruce M. White

Baseball cards first emerged in the late nineteenth century when businesses sought to leverage the sport's growing popularity to promote their brands.¹ Peck and Snyder, a sporting goods store in New York, is largely believed to have produced the first baseball cards in 1869, which displayed a photograph of Cincinnati's Red Stockings baseball club glued onto a piece of cardboard measuring 3 ¼ by 4 ½ inches (8.3 by 10.2 centimeters).² By the late nineteenth century, tobacco brands began featuring images of baseball players on pieces of cardstock that were inserted into soft packs of hand-rolled cigarettes to protect the product. In 1887 Goodwin and Co., makers of Old Judge cigarettes, pasted photographs of baseball players onto cards measuring 1 ½ by 2 ½ inches (3.8 by 6.4 centimeters) with blank backs. Although unnumbered, documentation has revealed that the set included over five hundred players in various poses, including several action shots fabricated by photographer Joseph Hall (1865–1915) in his New York studio.³ In 1888 cigarette manufacturers Allen and Ginter issued their iconic *World's Champions* card set celebrating fifty athletes from a variety of sports, including ten baseball players, six of which would become Hall of Famers.⁴ Although the dimensions of the cards in Allen and Ginter's set did not vary much from typical tobacco cards at the time (measuring 1 ½ by 2 ¾ inches [3.8 by 7 centimeters]), each of these cards did feature a full-color lithograph of the athlete on the front and a checklist of the set's cards on the back.⁵ Design and print innovations such as these became necessary to distinguish brands from one another in the growing tobacco market, a competition that further fueled demand for the cards and led to increased production costs. One major tobacco company, W. Duke, Sons and Co., estimated that they were spending \$500 a day printing cards and that particular ones could cost as much as half of a pack of cigarettes to produce.⁶ When the major tobacco companies eventually joined to form the American Tobacco Company in 1889, they quickly halted production of the costly picture card inserts.⁷ Yet, their prior efforts provided the foundation for the modern sports card industry, developing card design and manufacturing techniques, a keen understanding of the power of an athlete's celebrity, and a recognition that there was a market of passionate collectors that desired to acquire these simple pieces of cardboard. What they did not consider was the future value that these cards would hold and the need for conservation methods to maximize that value. Left to their own devices, collectors resorted to improvised methods of preservation, often gluing their cards down onto the pages of scrapbooks and albums. Today, tobacco cards with tearing caused by removal from these albums are commonly found on the secondary card market, however their existence is likely due to the same preservation techniques that damaged them.

Despite the strong interest in collecting sports cards from their inception, it was not until the late 1930s that the hobby truly began to formalize, a development that was almost single handedly the result of the efforts of Jefferson R. Burdick (1900–1963),

an electrician from Syracuse, New York. His monthly *Card Collector's Bulletin*, which launched in 1937, connected the small contingent of sports card collectors and created a rudimentary marketplace for buyers and sellers before it became a popular hobby.⁸ The network of contacts also allowed Burdick to share knowledge with other avid collectors across the country in an effort to document every baseball card and set issued since the start of the nineteenth century. *The United States Card Collectors Catalog* (1939), a publication containing the results of his efforts, which was republished seven years later as *The American Card Catalog*, became the first comprehensive history of sports cards in America.⁹ Through this work he successfully detailed the majority of sports cards ever printed, assigned them values, and devised a classification system to number and identify each by manufacturer and illustration type, a system still in use today.¹⁰ The publication is also notable for presenting some of the earliest documented guidance on card conservation. In an introduction titled "Housing Collections," Burdick suggested mounting collections in albums to "keep them clean, to prevent damage to them, and to make examination and display easier" and implored collectors not to "stick" cards to the pages with glue. Yet, even as he promoted albums as the most effective storage device for collections, he lamented that, "as yet, there are none made especially for cards in this country," drawing attention to the lack of options for conservation available to collectors at the time.¹¹ Burdick also discussed the importance of a card's physical state, its correlation to value, and the subjectivity of that evaluation: "Condition must be considered in pricing cards. Many are found with creases, stains, tears, tack holes and other defacings to such an extent that they are almost valueless. The prices in this are for specimens in good to perfect condition. As in all collecting, this is often a matter of personal opinion."¹² Perhaps obvious to today's collectors, these were issues that no one had seriously explored before, which would ultimately help standardize card collecting and move it beyond what was considered a frivolous child's hobby toward a more serious pursuit with established practices, languages, and structures.

When his health deteriorated in 1948, Burdick approached A. Hyatt Mayor (1901–1980), the Metropolitan Museum of Art's curator of prints and photographs, with a hope that the museum would house his extensive collection of cards and print ephemera. Mayor agreed on the condition that Burdick catalogue the items himself, a herculean task that the collector completed over the next fifteen years by affixing his entire collection of over three hundred thousand items into albums with water-soluble glue.¹³ When he finally finished his work on January 10, 1963, only two months before his death, the set of completed binders, which followed the order and classification system that Burdick employed in his *Catalog*, became an incredibly important visual companion to his publication and an indispensable historical record of baseball cards. Moreover, even as he chose to disregard his own conservation advice for the project—an act that baseball card historian Dave

Jamieson attributes to Burdick's desire to preserve the collection's research value over its physical condition—his archival work established baseball cards as objects with significant historical value worthy of a prestigious museum's permanent collection.¹⁴

I thought of Burdick while organizing, spreading, and stacking the cards from the bin across my office floor. His care for and interest in baseball cards went beyond their monetary value. Yet, even in the infancy of sports card collecting, when the most expensive card could still be purchased for pennies, he recognized the inseparable relationship between a physical card and its value. Sorting through these cards, I looked over to a bookshelf where my own album of childhood baseball cards sat wedged between several other nondescript binders and thought back to the baseball card boom of the late 1980s. For the majority of my childhood, card collecting had been driven by a simple love for the game and its players, but as card prices skyrocketed and turned what were once collectibles into commodities, it was impossible to ignore value as the central driving force in the hobby. My friends and I would tear open packs of cards acquired after bike rides to the local deli, hoping not for our favorite players, but for that highly sought-after rookie or error card that would bring us a big payday at the local card shop. Immediately upon returning home we would furiously flip through the pages of the *Beckett Baseball* monthly magazine, charting the value of our new cards like stocks. The publication, first published in 1979 by James Beckett III and Dennis Eckes as the *Sport Americana Baseball Card Price Guide*, listed card values derived from a variety of factors including player popularity, card scarcity, and card condition. Aside from offering an established source for prices and trends, the guide's grading scale—mint, excellent, very good, good, fair, and poor—helped establish a common criteria and language for card conditions that made explicit the importance of a card's overall physical state in its valuation.¹⁵

With the undeniable importance of condition in the guide's price formula and in the card market, even if those evaluation standards remained somewhat subjective and opaque, came a surge in demand for options to house and conserve collections in order to maintain their maximum value. Fortunately, innovations in card design in the 1950s—realized through the partnership of Sy Berger and Woody Gelman for Topps, the upstart Brooklyn-based card company—established a foundation for the future of mass-produced preservation tools. In addition to introducing full-color photos, autograph facsimiles, team logos, and players' career and yearly statistics on card backs, they also decided to reduce the dimensions of their self-described “giant” card in 1957, adjusting those measurements from 2 ½ by 3 ¾ inches (6.7 by 9.5 centimeters) to a smaller 2 ½ by 3 ½ inches (6.4 by 8.9 centimeters), printing the new cards on 1/50-inch-thick (0.05-centimeter-thick) cardstock.¹⁶ Following the production of that Topps set, nearly all modern baseball cards conformed to the new

size, moving the industry away from the wide variety of early baseball card dimensions. When the card market boomed in the 1980s and people began to amass large collections, the standardization of card size also made several storage and conservation tools possible, allowing collectors to move beyond the shoeboxes and bespoke scrapbooks that they had previously relied on. The foremost of these was the card binder, which fulfilled the need for a specialized card album that Burdick had identified nearly fifty years earlier. As with the makeshift portfolios of the late nineteenth century, these binders were excellent for organizing and displaying card collections. But the semirigid polypropylene insert sheets that housed the cards in the binders offered a substantial upgrade in protection and eliminated the need for glue. Cards could easily be inserted and removed from the pockets in the sheets, and new sheets could be added through the spring-loaded rings of the binders at any time, making the system expandable and capable of holding large collections.



Fig. 3 Binder with assorted baseball cards, late 20th century. Photo: Bruce M. White

It had been years since I last examined my own blue vinyl binder (fig. 3), but I was compelled to revisit its pages and better understand what I had deemed worthy of conserving thirty years prior. Housed in plastic pages, I looked at the players of my childhood—the stars now enshrined in the Hall of Fame, the rookies who never fulfilled their promise, the players whose careers were cut short by injury, and the

bulked-up steroid behemoths that pushed the game to new heights in its darkest days. The binder held the promise and failures of the sport and brought with it a harsh reminder of the sports card market's volatility and its precipitous crash, which was largely driven by card overproduction and a drop in baseball's popularity following the Major League Baseball strike in 1994–95. The industry, which had produced over eighty million cards a year and racked up over one billion dollars in annual sales in the early 1990s, quickly bottomed out, leaving many enterprising individuals with collections of worthless cardboard.¹⁷ At the time, I had already accepted that most of the cards in my binder were of little to no value and had read numerous accounts of adults trying to cash in their childhood collections only to discover this harsh reality. Yet I still wanted to find out if any cards in my possession were valuable and perhaps gain a better understanding of the current state of the baseball card market and any methods that I might be able to use to preserve them.

With the majority of independent card shops now closed (the once-authoritative source for card information and supplies), I turned online to begin my research. I was surprised to find a vibrant market for both vintage and newly issued cards through auction sites like eBay. The sheer volume of options available online, no matter how obscure or esoteric, reminded me of the cluttered displays of the card conventions that I attended in my youth, except with the added luxury of search engines and filters. Although it is still possible to purchase card packs or boxes containing multiple packs of cards, referred to as "hobby boxes" or "blaster boxes," there is a clear shift toward single-card purchases, pressing sellers to provide incredibly detailed listings with comprehensive descriptions, condition assessments, and multiple product images. This evolution also clearly targeted conservation and storage at the individual card level. The vinyl binders that I had once relied on for storage and display are now avoided for taking up too much space. Their plastic sleeves, which yellowed and became brittle over time, are criticized for their failure to hold cards securely in place and protect against environmental factors, as well as the propensity for cards to suffer corner damage when inserted into the individual pockets of the sleeves. Bulk collection storage is now relegated to inexpensive custom cardboard boxes (fig. 4), which are streamlined versions of the shoeboxes that collectors had used for years, offering basic protection, minimized movement, and the ability to hold anywhere from one hundred to five thousand cards. That said, any card of value is now immediately isolated and treated through conservation methods commensurate with their worth.



Fig. 4 Cardboard box with assorted baseball cards, late 20th century. Photo: Bruce M. White

Single-card conservation first emerged in the 1980s with the “screwdown case,” an over-the-top DIY conservation technique that placed a card between two $\frac{1}{4}$ inch-thick (0.6-centimeter-thick) slabs of lucite or acrylic, which were joined together by four screws. Although some of these cases had recesses notched into the material to house the cards, most versions simply pressed the card between the slabs, sometimes permanently damaging the very thing that the case was meant to protect. Today, collectors turn to simpler, cheaper, and incredibly effective tools for preserving a card’s physical condition. The most basic level of protection employed is a soft or “penny” sleeve. This thin, acid-free, non-PVC, archival-safe polypropylene film hinders surface wear and prevents cards from sticking together when stacked. Once a card is inserted into one of these sleeves, it is typically placed into another thicker, semirigid plastic holder called a “toploader,” which offers additional protection for the card’s surfaces, edges, and corners while preventing accidental creasing and bending. Only slightly larger than the cards that they hold, this space-efficient combination offers substantial protection that has become the standard for baseball card conservation and the preferred method chosen by online vendors to ship cards through the mail. Still, aside from their many benefits, the top-loading design can cause corner damage if cards are inserted improperly and its opening is vulnerable to moisture, dirt, and debris. For collectors seeking additional protection, snap and magnetic card holders are also available, which encase cards within two interlocking pieces of rigid, PVC- and acid-free plastic. These updated and improved versions of the screwdown case use simple clasps and magnet closures, which allow a card to be easily inserted and secured.

In addition to the advancements in the preservation tools available to card collectors over the past thirty years, the industry's transition online clearly put a renewed focus on card condition and evaluation practices. As already noted, card conditions have long been important in determining value and preservation methods. Burdick understood in the 1930s that evaluating a card's condition was largely a "matter of personal opinion."¹⁸ The price guides of the 1980s managed to establish a common baseline for condition evaluation, but implementation of that standard was inconsistent and is still quite subjective. With buyers seeking assurances on the quality and authenticity of their purchases (particularly through online auction markets where fraud and card manipulation are problematic), independent professional card grading and authentication services rose dramatically in popularity beginning in the early 1990s. One of the leaders in this industry is the Professional Sports Authenticator (PSA), which was launched in 1991 by David Hall.¹⁹ PSA was one of the first companies, along with Beckett Grading Services (BGS) and Sportscard Guaranty (SGC), to professionalize card evaluation and put in place a transparent grading criteria and process.²⁰ Cards submitted to this service are each evaluated on a number of factors by at least two trained graders who then assign the card with an overall grade on an eleven-point scale: GEM-MT 10 (Gem Mint), MINT 9, NM-MT 8 (Near Mint-Mint), NM 7 (Near Mint), EX-MT 6 (Excellent-Mint), EX 5 (Excellent), VG-EX 4 (Very Good-Excellent), VG 3 (Very Good), GOOD 2, FR 1.5 (Fair), and PR 1 (Poor).²¹ For a card to receive a GEM-MT 10 grade, the holy grail of card condition coined by TV baseball card salesman Don West, it must be unaltered, possess four perfect sharp edges and corners, and have an unblemished surface.²² In addition, the card must be centered on the front and back and must not have any printing imperfections such as poor image focus or coloring. Although the company strives for objectivity in its grading and depends on it for legitimacy, it does acknowledge that there is a degree of subjectivity inherent in the grading process and that a card may have a certain "eye appeal," which can slightly impact a final grade.

Following the initial grading process, any disputes between graders are settled by a third team member, and then a label is printed with the card's final grade, description, certification number, and barcode. The card and label are then sonically sealed in a tamper-evident, hard-plastic case, also known as a "slab," which protects the item from future damage or deterioration. Once a card is graded by PSA, it is added to the company's online database, which provides a record of all cards that they have evaluated and their corresponding grades. A database of auction prices also offers information on the sales of cards with each grade over time. Together, these tools and valuable data allow collectors to make informed decisions based not only on condition, but also on scarcity and market trends influenced by a variety of factors, including player popularity, statistical fluctuations, professional achievements, and even personal scandal.

The merging of card condition evaluation, authentication, and conservation into one service, along with the distribution of reputable and reliable data on the card market has elevated grading services to powerful players in the sports card industry. Their standardized evaluation criteria is relied on and respected by buyers and sellers, typically translating into auction prices that are much higher than an ungraded card of equal or similar condition. The legitimacy and reliability that this service brings, however, is not without cost. As demand has risen exponentially, particularly since the beginning of the pandemic, so too have wait times and grading prices.²³ As a consequence, many online sellers have opted out of the service and have instead chosen to borrow the language and criteria of grading services for their ungraded cards. Listings will often pose a card's condition in the form of a question (such as "KEN GRIFFEY JR. ROOKIE GM10?"), inviting buyers to make their own educated assessments on condition and value. Many baseball card purists also prefer to purchase ungraded cards, lamenting the loss of the tactile interaction with cards once sealed. Additionally, any card in a slab donated to the Major League Baseball Hall of Fame's collection is immediately removed from its petroleum-based plastic encasement in order to prevent long-term damage, preferring to insert cards into mylar sleeves, the industry standard for museum preservation of paper items.²⁴

Over time, the baseball card industry has continued to evolve and redefine itself, just like the sport itself. With the pandemic, a new generation of enthusiasts began collecting for the first time, and many, like myself, returned to the hobby. The landscape, now dominated by the Topps brand, features an incredible assortment of set issues and card variations. Beyond their standard sets, Topps churns out multiple offerings each year that nod to the history of baseball cards, including sets based on classic tobacco card designs by Allen and Ginter as well as Gypsy Queen that feature standard size cards and variations emulating the original smaller dimensions of tobacco card inserts. Topps also pays homage to their own history with their Archives and Heritage series, which revisits iconic card designs from the past that have been updated with current and former players. Additionally, their *Project 2020* and *Project 70* series invite artists to reimagine iconic cards and designs from past sets in their own styles. From graphic to graffiti artists, the work for these sets has ranged widely, bringing the art of card design to the foreground while creatively unsettling familiar motifs and often including topical subjects like Brooklyn artist and muralist Efdot's take on Dwight "Doc" Gooden, which features a pandemic surgical mask and stethoscope.

Within each of these numerous sets is a dizzying array of card variations that include multiple color prints, die cuts, foil, chrome, and refractor cards as well as limited edition, highly sought-after insert cards, also known as "chase cards." In 1990 Upper Deck inserted Reggie Jackson autographed cards into their packs, sparking a

trend that has since been used to generate collector excitement.²⁵ In 2003 Donruss went a step further inserting 2,100 cards into their sets that contained swatches of a 1925 Babe Ruth jersey, one of only three in existence.²⁶ Today, collectors can find “relic” cards containing samples of game-used memorabilia from MLB players past and present and even more unusual inserts such as hair samples from Abraham Lincoln and Charles Dickens or fossilized shards of a wooly mammoth femur bone.

With each of these new cards comes new conservation challenges for collectors. From the extremely meta proposition of preserving a card that itself houses memorabilia, to the many deviations from standard card size, materials, thickness, and shape, new approaches need to be deployed to store, protect, and evaluate collections. A one-size-fits-all methodology that relies on past techniques and tools will certainly prove inadequate for the task, particularly as card values continue to rise and demand for top-tier conservation treatment expands.

As I finally reached the bottom of the bin, the conditions of the cards worsened and the accumulation of mold forced me to deploy a mask for the first time in months for non-virus-related reasons. There, amidst the unsettled debris, I found multiple stacks of ten to fifteen cards that had been fused together by moisture. There was no way to separate them, no longer any difference between one card and the next, the star or common player, the year or make. Everything had melded together like layers of sedimentary rock.

In the end there were no million-dollar cards in the bin. Most were just common cards that I carefully placed into cardboard storage boxes. I did find one 1973 Nolan Ryan card that I set aside. Although it was not GM10—its corners were rounded and the surface had suffered from bin life—it was my trophy from the experience, a reminder of the cards that had helped me to leave the confines of my apartment and reconnect with a sport that I love. I found refuge in baseball cards and the connections that they opened to the past and to others. Suddenly I was having long conversations about cards with my brother, eventually traveling upstate together in a pandemic lull to retrieve our own collections from forgotten storage bins. I reconnected with a childhood friend that I had collected cards with as a teenager, exchanging stories over the phone and cards in the mail over the course of the next year. I forged a friendship with a colleague who had inherited his brother’s cards long ago and we spent hours looking through his perfectly preserved collection while he shared stories about their childhood. Each collector makes choices about what they invest in and why. Some seek profit, while others do it for personal reasons. For myself, these connections were what made baseball cards valuable. What I chose to care for and conserve were the cards that marked moments in my life. My Sandy Koufax card, my Wade Boggs rookie, and now this Nolan Ryan, these were the cards

that mattered to me, that had personal meaning imbued in the cardboard and that were worth conserving. These were Jesse Mint 10, JM10.

Notes

¹ Dave Jamieson, *Mint Condition: How Baseball Cards Became an American Obsession* (New York: Atlantic Monthly Press, New York, 2010), 17.

² Ibid., 13.

³ See the entry for “1887 Old Judge (N172),” Professional Sports Authenticator, <https://www.psacard.com/cardfacts/baseball-cards/1887-old-judge-n172/111>.

⁴ See the entries for “1887 N28 Allen & Ginter Baseball Cards,” Cardboard Connection, <https://www.cardboardconnection.com/n28-allen-ginter-baseball-cards>; and “1888 Allen & Ginter (N28),” Professional Sports Authenticator, <https://www.psacard.com/cardfacts/multi-sport/1888-allen-ginter-n28/208>. See also Jamieson, *Mint Condition*, 19.

⁵ See the entry for “Allen & Ginter,” Cardboard Connection, <https://www.cardboardconnection.com/brand/topps-cards/allen-and-ginter>.

⁶ Jamieson, *Mint Condition*, 26.

⁷ Ibid., 28.

⁸ Ibid., 74.

⁹ Ibid., 76; George Vrechek, “The First of Many: Jefferson Burdick Introduced the First Card Catalog in 1939,” *Sports Collectors Digest*, October 3, 2012, <https://sportscollectorsdigest.com/cards/the-first-of-many-jefferson-burdick-introduced-the-first-card-catalog-in-1939>.

¹⁰ Ken Belson, “A Hobby to Many, Card Collecting Was Life’s Work for One Man,” *New York Times*, May 22, 2012. That classification system, which was used to signify early candy and gum cards, F denoted releases by food companies and T indicated the tobacco card issues such as the famous T206 Honus Wagner card.

¹¹ Jefferson Burdick, *The United States Card Collectors Catalog* (Syracuse, NY, 1939), 9.

¹² Ibid., 7.

¹³ Jamieson, *Mint Condition*, 81–82, 87. See also “Baseball at the Met,” Metropolitan Museum of Art, <https://www.metmuseum.org/about-the-met/collection-areas/drawings-and-prints/burdick-collection/baseball-at-the-met>; and Allison Rudnick, “Baseball Cards in the Jefferson R. Burdick Collection,” Metropolitan Museum of Art, November 2018, https://www.metmuseum.org/toah/hd/ball/hd_ball.htm.

¹⁴ See Jamieson, *Mint Condition*, 82; and Ira Berkow, “Baseball Cards: Out of the Pocket and into the Met,” *New York Times*, August 13, 1993, <https://www.nytimes.com/1993/08/13/arts/baseball-cards-out-of-the-pocket-and-into-the-met.html>.

¹⁵ Jamieson, *Mint Condition*, 149–50.

¹⁶ Ibid., 90–91; see the entry for “1952 Topps,” Professional Sports Authenticator, <https://www.psacard.com/cardfacts/baseball-cards/1952-topps/152>.

¹⁷ Jamieson, *Mint Condition*, 6.

¹⁸ Burdick, *The United States Card Collectors Catalog*, 7.

¹⁹ Jamieson, *Mint Condition*, 220.

²⁰ Ryan Gaeta, “Journey of a PSA Card,” *PSA* (blog), Professional Sports Authenticator, August 7, 2020, updated September 11, 2020, and October 21, 2020, <https://blog.psacard.com/2020/08/07/journey-of-a-psa-card/>.

²¹ “Grading Standards,” Professional Sports Authenticator, <https://www.psacard.com/resources/gradingstandards>.

²² Jamieson, *Mint Condition*, 185.

²³ Basic services begin at \$100 per card with a maximum declared value of \$999 and up to \$10,000 for “Premium 10” one-day service for cards with a \$250,000 or higher declared value. Only ten years ago, these same services were covered by a \$99 membership fee and a per-card fee of \$10 for basic cards and \$250 for vintage cards. See Jamieson, *Mint Condition*, 221. On the pandemic boom, see Emma Baccellieri, “How the Internet Created a Sports-Card Boom—and Why the Pandemic Is Fueling It,” *Sports Illustrated*, May 4, 2020,

<https://www.si.com/mlb/2020/05/04/breaking-the-fall-sports-cards-and-the-pandemic>; and Ryan Fagan, “It Has Been Absolutely Insane”: Trading Card Industry Has Boomed During Pandemic,” *Sporting News*, October 13, 2020, <https://www.sportingnews.com/us/mlb/news/trading-card-industry-has-boomed-during-pandemic/10t850qdlc24c101eezddjxibg>.

²⁴ David Moriah, “Special Care: Baseball HOF Says No to Slabbed Cards,” *Sports Collectors Digest*, May 25, 2016, updated December 3, 2019, <https://sportscollectorsdigest.com/cards/special-care-baseball-hof-says-no-to-slabbed-cards>.

²⁵ Jamieson, *Mint Condition*, 188.

²⁶ Ibid., 191.