

0. BIRTH of BASEBALL CARDS - Story Preface

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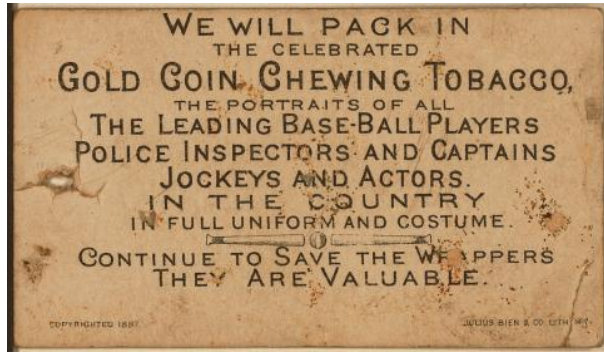
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9. BIRTH of BASEBALL CARDS

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Together with an image of Tip O'Neill, from the St. Louis Browns, the D. Buchner Company published this notice in 1887, letting people know the company would also release images of other famous people—including leading baseball players—in packages of chewing tobacco. This was near the beginning of the baseball-card industry. [Online via the Library of Congress](#). Click on the image for a full-page view.

Before we explore how nineteenth-century tobacco companies used baseball cards to market their products, we need to ask this question: Were there health concerns about tobacco use at that time?

In 1836, Dr. Caleb Ticknor warned that tobacco was “the most deadly, the most noxious poison.” In fact, there was considerable controversy about tobacco use in the 1800s, as demonstrated by numerous *Harper’s Weekly* cartoons.

Despite health concerns which existed at the time, American tobacco users - after the Civil War - were not satisfied with merely smoking pipes and snuffing or chewing tobacco. They wanted cigarettes, which were hand-rolled at the rate of about four per minute.

Mass production could never happen at those numbers, so Allen & Ginter (a Richmond, Virginia company) offered a \$75,000 prize to anyone who invented a workable cigarette-rolling machine. James Bonsack, an eighteen-year-old Roanoke student, left school to work on a design. He filed a patent for his cumbersome-looking device on the 4th of September, 1880.

Bonsack’s cigarette roller didn’t always work properly, and it was shunned by every tobacco producer except James Buchanan (“Buck”) Duke. Taking a chance with the machine, Buck Duke (from W. Duke & Sons in Durham, North Carolina) mechanized the tobacco industry - and made a fortune for himself.

With two of the new machines, Duke’s company produced 4 million cigarettes a day - compared to about 46,000 by his competitors. Able to substantially reduce the price of his product, Duke more than made up in volume what he gave up in price-per-unit.

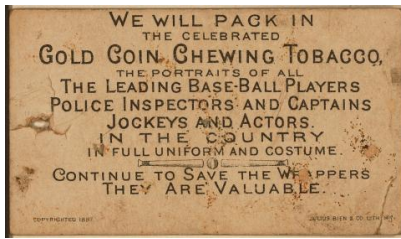
Mechanized production required new packaging to separate, and protect, the cigarettes. A small piece of cardboard would do the job. Historians are not sure who made the first cards which helped to stiffen a pack of cigarettes, but Duke gets the credit for first using them.

See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/BIRTH-of-BASEBALL-CARDS-Baseball-Cards>

See [Learning Tasks for this story online at:](#)

<http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicActivities/BIRTH-of-BASEBALL-CARDS-Baseball-Cards>

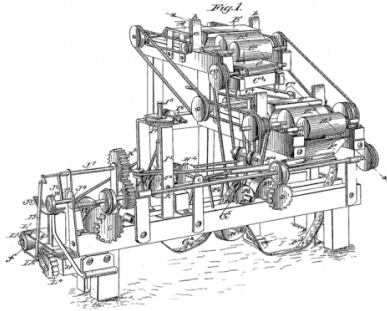


Birth of Baseball Cards

Library of Congress, D. Buchner & Company

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Cigarette Rolling Machine

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Buck Duke

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