

The Restoration of Cards

In the winter issue of TOJ I made mention of a collector I was introduced to who had the ability to take a T206 card with rounded corners and make it into a "mint" card. The process of layering paper is a known one and accepted by paper conservators. As I mentioned at that time the collector was doing it for his personal satisfaction with cards in his collection.

In early 1986, I received a letter from the collector, Tom Faith, asking me to send him a Goudey and a T206 with rounded corners and he would "restore" them. He suggested I photograph and measure the cards before sending them so I could refer back to them. He indicated a limitation on the restoration of T206's, i.e. the inability to match the cards' gloss on the rebuilt corners. I also found out that there were certain cards that were more difficult for him than others, Goudey's weren't all the same, '34 Goudey high numbers were not the same paper composition as low numbers. I also learned that Tom could remove superficial creases from cards (creases which did not break the fibers of the card). He indicated that he knew this practice had been going on for awhile in the hobby.

I indicated that TOJ's interest was in the story itself so that the hobby would be aware of, not so much what HE could do, but WHAT could be done. Some people in the hobby were spending large additional amounts of money to get mint cards and they might have a special interest in the restoration process. I also expressed concern that while he may have enhanced cards for his personal satisfaction, others would not hesitate to use such a service to bilk the public. There was no question that what he can do is immoral or illegal, because it isn't. Any serious collector, especially those with large display items, knows paper conservators who can repair, clean, enhance or remove foreign particles from items in their collection. Tom said "I'm proud of what I can do. I have a talent and don't think there's anything wrong with it." I agreed in theory, but was still concerned with whether his talent would wind up in wrong hands and I decided to ask others their opinions.

Richie Neighbor, an "E" card collector from Long Island expressed concern over what the collector could do. Ron Oser, from Philadelphia and Wayne Miller from Maryland, both reputable dealers used the same word, "scary" to describe the prospects. Most collectors and dealers I spoke to thought nothing was wrong with a dealer removing a crease from a card and selling it without saying so. Almost everyone agreed that a repaired or enhanced corner had to be noted by the seller. The distinction would have to be in the addition of a "foreign substance" to the original card. The removal of a crease or the cleaning of a card would not fall, most feel, in that category.

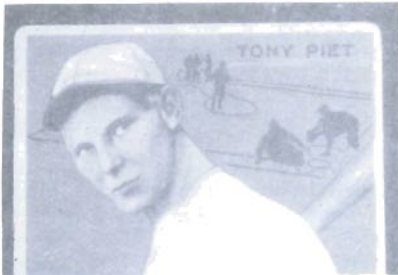
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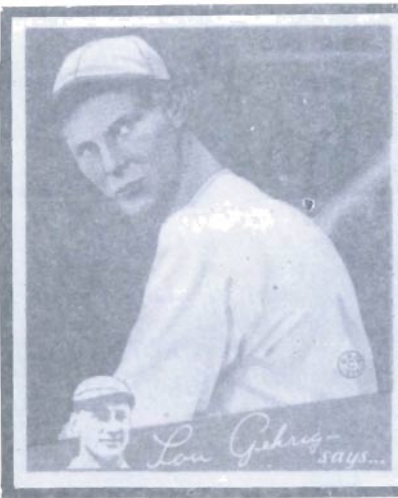
BEFORE



BEFORE



AFTER



AFTER

About two weeks after I sent the T206 and R320, I received them back. The illustrations show both cards before and after the work was done. Tom described the T206 as "very difficult" because of the severe rounded corners. He said it took over 3 hours and indicated he wasn't fully satisfied with the job he did. There were very subtle tone differences on both the front and back corners of the card. The difference would be perceptible to a collector who was looking for it. On the other hand, the only thing perceptible on the Goudey was a slight difference on the back corners. It was simply impossible to tell it from a Mint card. That is, aside from the underlining of Tony Piet's name.

I decided to seek other opinions on Tom's work and I contacted a woman I've known for several years, who's a sought after specialist in 19th century paper conservation. I described Tom's work and she suggested I bring the cards over and wondered if they would hold up under an ultra violet light. I thought this would be an excellent test as I remembered that ultra violet light was used in Philately to detect reparations.

The conservator, whose name was Collette, was amazed when she first saw the two cards. "Whoever did this is a miracle worker." We put the cards under the ultra violet light and it was evident that the restored corners would not show up. I arranged for a conference call between Collette, Tom and myself. After an hour's discussion, most of which was too technical for me to understand, Collette conceded that what Tom used was "legitimate restoration procedure" that would be accepted by any museum, library or historical society. Tom and I quibbled on the concept of adding foreign particles. He said he wasn't because his repara-

tion used only paper from a similar card. He also said he was restricted to working with T206's, Goudeys, Diamond Stars, Playballs and early Bowmans.

In later conversations Tom told me that there were other people doing this. That he had been offered cards by dealers that were restored without the acknowledgment that they were. That he had recently sold several cards he restored to a dealer, informing the dealer of the restoration. At this point it would be naive to think that:

a. He is the only one doing this.

b. They aren't being sold as mint cards.

c. It won't become more widespread, especially if the disparity between mint and ex-mt card prices continues to grow.

As I originally indicated the main purpose here is to make TOJ readers aware of this possibility. As always, reader reaction is invited and we will follow up on it.