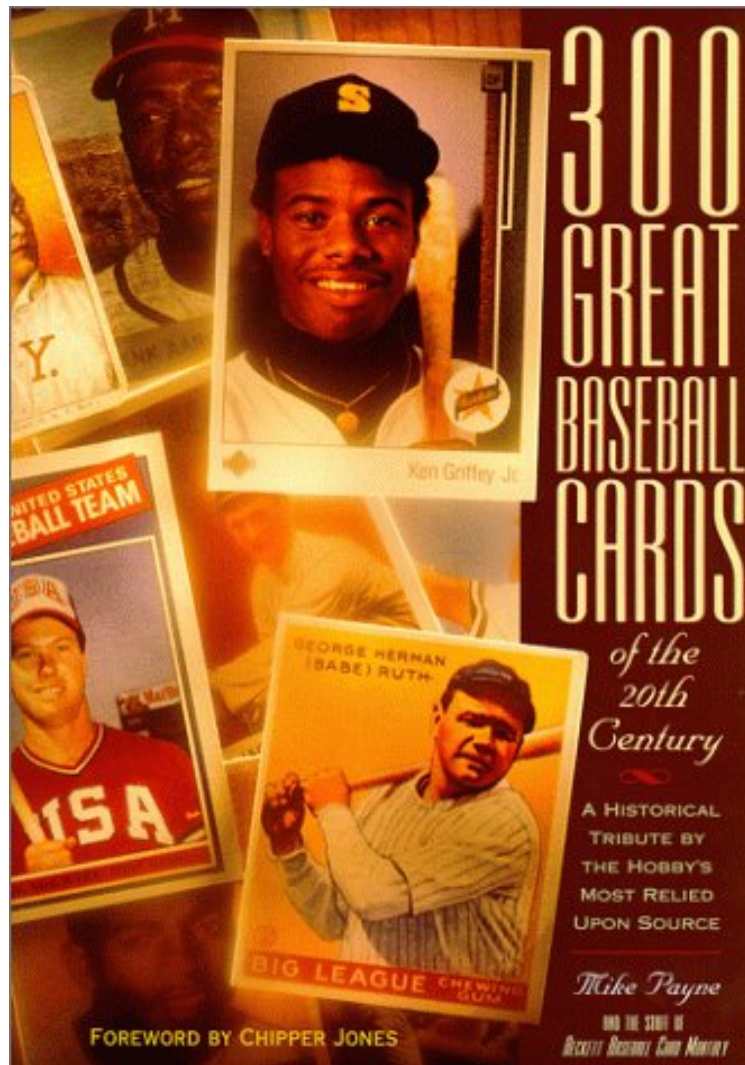


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300 Great Baseball Cards of the 20th Century: A Historical Tribute by the Hobby's Most Relied Up

Beckett Publications, Mike Payne : 300 Great Baseball Cards of the 20th Century: A Historical Tribute by the Hobby's Most Relied Up before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised 300 Great Baseball Cards of the 20th Century: A Historical Tribute by the Hobby's Most Relied Up:

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Bernabo One of the things I like about this book is that the title, for once, is not overstated. "300 Great Baseball Cards of the 20th Century" does not profess to provide the 300 greatest cards and therefore provides exactly what the subtitle indicates, "A Historical Tribute by the Hobby's Most Relied Upon Source." Okay, so there is some promotion here since the book is compiled by Mike Payne and the staff of "Beckett Baseball Card Monthly." Of course you will find the most famous (and expensive) baseball cards of all time, such as the legendary 1909-11 T206 Honus Wagner (\$112,500-\$225,000) and the 1952 Topps #311 Mickey Mantle (not his first card, which would be the 1951 Bowman #253), which are the respective Holy Grails for the first and second half of the century. You will find cards for most of the greatest players in the history of the game, from Ty Cobb (1909-11 T206 Green Background) and Babe Ruth (1933 Goudey #43) to Mark McGwire (1985 Topps #401) and Barry Bonds (1987 Fleer #604). Not surprisingly, it is Mantle, in whose honor Topps has retired card number 7 in their sets, who has the most baseball cards with 21. Ruth and Ted Williams have 13 each, Willie Mays a dozen, and Hank Aaron 10. Of course, within those you will find cards with Mantle and Mays, Mantle and Aaron, and Aaron and Mays. While there are cards of famous players you might recognize, such as the 1914 Cracker Jack #103 with Shoeless Joe Jackson that served as the model for a card in "Field of Dreams," there are some that are included because of their oddities, like the 1954 Topps #139 which has the O'Brien twins, Eddie and Johnny, the 1957 Topps #20 Hank Aaron where the reverse negative has the Hammer batting left-handed, and 1976 Topps #564 Kurt Bevacqua "Bubble Gum Blowing Champ" (I swear that gun Topps had would break your teeth but also preserve your cards in the box). You will find rookie cards, combination cards (e.g., 1957 Topps #407 Power Hitters: Mantle Berra), all star cards, World Series card, commemorative cards (e.g., 1959 Topps #550 Roy Campanella, "Symbol of Courage"), traded cards, update cards (e.g., 1984 Fleer Update #U43 Dwight Gooden), error cards (e.g., 1985 Donruss \$424 Tom Seaver), and variation cards (e.g., 1974 Topps #250B Willie McCovey "Washington Nat'l League"). A lot of the cards represent baseball history, talking about what happened with particular players in a given year or what was happening with baseball card companies (e.g., 1955 Bowman #179 Hank Aaron talks about how Topps bought Bowman after its ambitious 1955 TV release). There are also entries from the collector's perspective, such as the 1990 Leaf #220 Sammy Sosa that everyone was pulling out of their commons and semi-star boxes when Sosa was chasing Roger Maris and Mark McGwire during the great home run race of 1998 (ironically, the card shows Sosa bunting). The book, of course, is illustrated with photographs of all 300 cards, along with photos of ballparks and players, mostly from the National Baseball Hall of Fame Library. For the die hard collector or the knowledgeable baseball fan this is a great book to leaf through and walk down memory lane. For the record I have 135 of the 300 cards, although by the end I am pretty much back to where I am in the beginning in terms of seeing cards I have never really seen let alone tried to own.

Book by Beckett Publications, Payne, Mike

.com "The beauty of baseball cards," writes Mike Payne in his brief introduction, "is that you don't have to have played the game to collect the men who do play the game." And the beauty of the 300 particular cards that he's collected here is how much these little pieces of cardboard convey about the evolution of the national pastime and the personalities of the players. From the early cards of Walter Johnson, Ty Cobb, and the record-breaking Honus Wagner that sold at auction for \$640,000 to the 1999 Mark McGuire series commemorating his 70th home run, every picture tells a story. Dividing his volume into the 10 decades of the century, Payne provides appropriate card and collecting history as he displays significant, though not necessarily the most historical or valuable, cards from each. Every card is accompanied by a ballpark price and short commentary on why that card is particularly interesting. For example, a 1952 Mickey Mantle card pictures a pensive, almost troubled young Mantle, avoiding eye contact, his arms folded protectively over his chest. Payne reminds us that Mick's '51 rookie year was a hard one, and the pressures attending the off-season death of his father and indications he'd be replacing the retired Joe DiMaggio in centerfield were enormous. "So, back in '52, being Mickey Mantle wasn't all it was cracked up to be," Payne tells us. "This '52 Bowman card"--valued at between \$1,500 and \$2,500--"seems to capture the mood at the time." It's amazing how many other cards--from Aaron to Zernial--follow suit, and how much richer the game is simply for their presence. --

Jeff Silverman