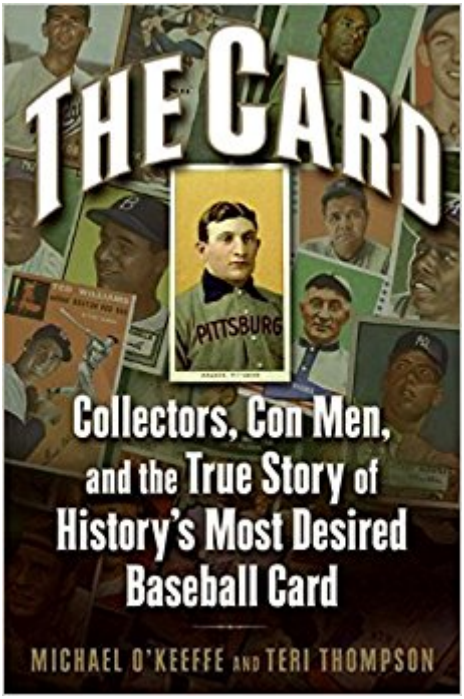
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The Card: Collectors, Con Men, And The True Story Of HistoryÃ¢â‚¬â„¢s Most Desired Baseball Card



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Synopsis

Since its limited release just after the turn of the twentieth century, this American Tobacco cigarette card has beguiled and bedeviled collectors. First identified as valuable in the 1930s, when the whole notion of card collecting was still young, the T206 Wagner has remained the big score for collectors who have scoured card shows, flea markets, estate sales, and auctions for the portrait of baseball's greatest shortstop. Only a few dozen T206 Wagners are known to still exist. Most, with their creases, stains, and dog-eared corners, look worn and tattered, like they've been around for almost a century. But oneÃ¢â ¬â •The CardÃ¢â ¬â •appears to have defied the travails of time. Thanks to its sharp corners and its crisp portrait of Honus Wagner, The Card has become the most famous and desired baseball card in the world.Over the decades, as The Card has changed hands, its value has skyrocketed. It was initially sold for $25,000 by a small card shop in a nondescript strip mall. Years later, hockey great Wayne Gretzky bought it at the venerable Sotheby's auction house for $451,000. Then, more recently, it sold for $1.27 million on eBay. Today worth over $2 million, it has transformed a sleepy hobby into a billion-dollar industry that is at times as lawless as the Wild West. The Card has made men wealthy, certainly, but it has also poisoned lifelong friendships and is fraught with controversyÃ¢â ¬â •from its uncertain origins and the persistent questions about its provenance to the possibility that it is not exactly as it seems. Now for the first time, award-winning investigative reporters Michael O'Keeffe and Teri Thompson follow the trail of The Card from a Florida flea market to the hands of the world's most prominent collectors. They delve into a world of counterfeiters and con men and look at the people who profit from what used to be a kids' pastime, as they bring to light ongoing investigations into sports collectibles. O'Keeffe and Thompson also examine the life of the great Honus Wagner, a ballplayer whose accomplishments have been eclipsed by his trading card, and the strange and fascinating subculture of sports memorabilia and its astonishing decline.Intriguing and eye-opening, The Card is a ground-breaking look at a uniquely American hobby.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Ã¢â ¬Å“Lively and well-researched.Ã¢â ¬Â• (Sports Illustrated.com)

Michael O'Keeffe is an award-winning journalist who is a member of the New York Daily News sports investigation team. He has been a reporter and editor for more than twenty years. A graduate of the University of Colorado, he lives in Brooklyn with his wife and son.Teri Thompson is a former top editor at the New York Daily News, where she created the newspaperÃ¢â ¬â„¢s award-winning sports investigative team that broke the Chuck Blazer story in 2014. Before coming to the News, she was a sports Ã Â olumnist at the Rocky Mountain News and an editor at ESPN. She has co-authored two books, including the critically acclaimed Ã¢â ¬Å“American Icon: The Fall of Rogers Clemens and the Rise of Steroids in AmericaÃ¢â ¬Â• and is also a member of the Connecticut bar.

"The Card" is a fantastically written story about thy card ... a PSA 8 NM-MT T206 Honus Wagner ... and the unusual history & conflicting stories surrounding the mystery of what is now know as "The Gretzky Card"! The path this specific card has taken from its discovery & introduction to the public back in '85 by Bill Mastro (now a convicted felon), after purchasing from a small time card dealer, is simply amazing! This book takes you on a compelling journey on how this card was originally purchased for $25,000 by Mastro, with the financial assistance of Robert Lifson (President of Robert Edward Auctions, LLC), to eventually being sold/auctioned off another 6 times culminating in a $2.8 million purchase (presently owned by Ken Kendrick/owner of Arizona Diamondbacks). "The Card" keeps you captivated and does a nice job filling in the back stories and developing the characters who have been influential in either purchasing and/or buying The Card! Its a fun read and highly recommended!

ABOUT THE BOOK: As someone who once collected baseball cards as a kid, it was interesting to learn a little something more about the hobby and it's most sought-after baseball card. I never knew

how cut-throat baseball card collecting really was. It was also nice to learn a little something about Honus Wagner, a long-forgotten Hall of Famer. For anyone who has collected baseball cards, this book is worth reading for the the history and background on the hobby and some of its key players even if the book might be a bit dated already (technology evolving and all). The book is well researched and interviews are solid. I'd expect as much from a reporter and O'Keeffe delivers.ABOUT THE PRODUCT: For a 99-cent Kindle edition, remember you get what you pay for. There are many errors throughout this edition including broken words. For example... Since it appears most often, the word "service" or "services" is 99 percent of the time presented as two words: "ser vice" or "ser vices." Only once did I notice it as one word. Numericals were also broken into two elements after commas. There was even one sentence where a word was misspelled and not even a line and half later, spelled correctly. Extremely annoying, but no one is perfect when it comes to typos. However, not presenting words correctly is just down right irritating. It was almost as if the Kindle editor didn't know the English language or was a computer with its autocorrect malfunctioning. But again, for a 99-cent Kindle book, it is what it is. (And I'm far from perfect, so I hope I haven't littered this review with typos!)STARS: The topic gets 4 stars, the Kindle errors knock it down to 3 stars.

Like any true baseball fan, my first trip to Cooperstown is one of the enduring memories of my life. Unfortunately childhood memories fade over the decades, and these days I would be hard pressed to name the five most memorable moments of my visit. I can, however, easily name the most vivid highlight: seeing the T206 Honus Wagner card in person for the one and only time of my life. Here it was: the unattainable card, an avatar for an entire hobby. A masterpiece.One never really forgets the T206 Wagner, but the sense of awe that I felt that day was not re-awakened again until I watched the magnificent 30-For-30 Shorts film by the Barnicle Brothers. Shortly afterwards, I purchased "The Card," and promptly devoured it.As the first comprehensive telling of the story of the most prized baseball card ever collected, OÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢Keefe's book works on a number of levels. It is at once a history of baseball card collecting, a history of the groundbreaking T206 set, and ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â œ not immaterially ÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â œ a history of the great Honus Wagner himself. Above all, though, the book is a history of the "perfect" Wagner card, most famously owned by Wayne Gretzky. It is this cardÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s story that makes and breaks the book: a tale of intrigue and skullduggery worthy of any mystery novel. The "genesis" story of the Gretzky Wagner is of particular fascination. How did the most prized baseball card of all time appear at a Florida flea market; possibly in an unheard-of format? How did it end up in the hands of a down-on-his-luck

Long Islander, and what became of it in his possession? And what happened in the back room of a shabby card shop in Hicksville, New York before the card set off on its incredible journey to becoming the worldÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s most famous piece of cardboard? I could have read 200 more pages about these events.As the tale unfolds, and the WagnerÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s murky past is drowned out by the blur of millions of dollars, one unfortunately begins to wonder if O'Keeffe himself got in too deep in the course of writing the book. Whether he's cynical by nature or just became that way after peeling back the curtain on a bloated, oversaturated hobby rife with hucksters and grifters, at times there is a sneering undertone to "The Card" that makes it a little difficult to truly love. As an unapologetic child of the junk wax era, I could never really identify with the bookÃƒÂ¢Ã â ¬Ã â„¢s quixotic Wagner-chasers, the men with "holes in their psyches," but neither did I find them as contemptible as O'Keeffe seems to. "The Card" reads like a book that still wants to believe in the romance of the Wagner and the fun of collecting, but has seen too much and been let down from too great a height to really see past the monolith of "The Hobby." For someone who still finds enjoyment in the simple pleasures of a white elephant like the 1987 Topps baseball set, "The Card" is a bit like the Wagner T206 itself: fascinating, but always just out of reach.

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