



### The Vintage Baseball Photo Auction Minefield – Watch Your Step

The photo below appeared in the December 21, 2008 *Heritage Auction Galleries* online auction with the following conservative description:

*Exceptionally-composed team photograph from the early 20th century originates from the Griffith Studios in Stanberry, MO. Ten attractive portraits have been mounted onto a back which measures 11x14". Pinholes and rounding to the corners can be counted among the flaws, along with some regions of light foxing. A tremendous visual example nonetheless.*

The winning bidder paid \$143.40.

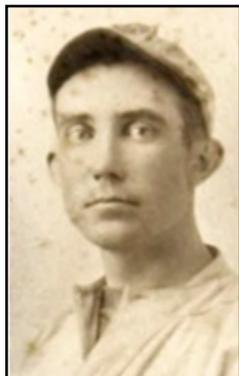


The same item surprisingly turned up again in an early January 2009 *eBay* auction held by an independent seller. Perhaps the seller was the winning bidder in the Heritage auction. It clearly was the same set, based on the identical flaws and tears. But now it was described as the 1900 St. Louis Cardinals! Did Heritage miss something here?

The new seller broke the composite up into individual photos. The set was claimed to include John McGraw, Bobby Wallace, Jesse Burkett, Mike Donlin, Lave Cross, and other unidentified Cardinals. If you are wondering who is who, below is a sampling of the seller's claims:



"John McGraw"



"Mike Donlin"



"Bobby Wallace"



"Jesse Burkett"

Most readers of this column are now probably saying, "huh?". At least I hope so. Just for reference, here is what the real guys looked like:



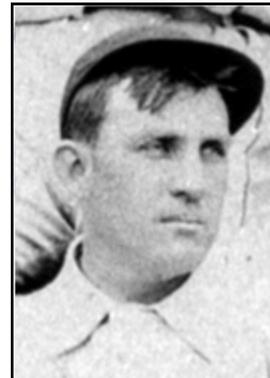
John McGraw



Mike Donlin



Bobby Wallace



Jesse Burkett

Not only do these guys not look like the big name players they are claimed to be, but a quick trip to the HoF's online uniform database would show that they were not wearing the Cardinals' 1900 uniforms. A bit more research would indicate that the Cardinals never wore anything like these. One would think a potato chip that looked like Roger Clemens would bring in more money.

The early bidding was sparse and the total for all the photos was not much different from the Heritage auction result. However, near the end of the bidding period, it was shocking to see about a half-dozen contestants leap-frogging each other in an effort to gain this prize. In the end, one "lucky" bidder won the entire lot for a

price of \$681.17. The "Wallace" photo alone went for \$229.72.

A few weeks later, I coincidentally got an email from Paula Homan at the St. Louis Cardinals Hall of Fame. She had heard from the now distraught winner of the auction. An eBay member had anonymously emailed him a warning that the photo set description was bogus. He was looking for an educated opinion. The bidder had no idea how to find photos of the real guys for comparison, nor did he know how to research the uniforms. In other words, he had no idea what he was bidding on. Hopefully he succeeded in getting a refund.

Reader opinions on what team was pictured in the set are welcomed.

## You Can't Move a Hole

Though they called it right on the above composite, Heritage Galleries swung and missed on three other photos. The first of these is from December 2005:

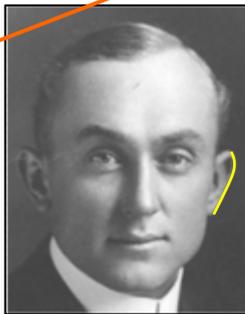
...Royston [team]... a vintage ink notation...*mistakenly* locates the young Tyrus Cobb as seated [front row] far left, the... young man standing in the back row wearing a straw bowler and bow tie ...is *clearly* the future terror of the American League. We date this...to the 1902 to 1904 range, when Ty was 15 to 17 years old. [winning bid - \$597.50]

Heritage Auction photo



Of course the main value in a photo like this is that it includes Ty Cobb, but there is a big hole right on top of the skinny kid, seated far left, who was originally so identified. Could the un-observed guy in the straw hat in the back row be the real Cobb?

As pointed out by **Ron Cobb**, board member of the Ty Cobb Museum in Royston, the same image (right) appeared in the March 1912 issue of *Baseball Magazine* as well as in Richard Bak's *Peach-Ty Cobb in His Time and Ours*, but without the hole, giving us a clear, un-holy view of this skinny kid. Both *BBM* and Bak identified him as Cobb, and there is no mention of the guy in the straw hat. Let's figure out who is correct.



Cobb age 26



Cobb age 20



The back edges of the real Cobb's ears (two center photos above) are very straight when viewed from the front and angle sharply towards the imaginary vertical center line of his head. The skinny kid, above right, passes this test. Not so for the young man in the straw hat – hence he cannot be Cobb.

Fortunately, Bak also included a nice photo of Tyrus at age 12, near right, a few years earlier than the team photo. Not only do both pairs of ears look the same, but the hairline matches that of the skinny kid perfectly – from his left ear, up to the hair part, and around to his right ear. And, they both do appear to have the same eyes. There is no reason to change the vintage identification - the skinny kid is Cobb.



Cobb age 12



## Way Off the Mark

In March 2009, Heritage offered the photo, near right, described as “Hall of Fame pitcher Ed Walsh with the Chicago White Sox.”

The same image resides in the Library of Congress correctly ID'd as Jimmy Walsh, far right, along with about a half-dozen other clear images of Connie Mack's weak-hitting outfielder. He also appears in numerous other A's team photos. Though Jimmy looks nothing like Ed, apparently the penciled in “Ed Walsh” on the mounting was enough to garner \$191.20.

ED WALSH



Lib. of Congress  
Bain Collection



Heritage's "Ed Walsh" Jimmy Walsh

Then, in the April 2009 Heritage signature auction, there was the photo below and its description:



Circa 1922...with Chicago Black Sox...Shoeless Joe Jackson.....with fellow Black Sox conspirators Eddie Cicotte and Lefty Williams...All three of these banished ballplayers stand in a row here beside Perry Mark, the owner of Zanesville, Ohio's "Mark Americans" ballclub..... Please visit our website at [www.HA.com](http://www.HA.com) to see images of Jackson, Cicotte and Williams from their Black Sox days beside close-ups of their images from the [above] cabinet photograph. Est. \$4000-\$6000.

Heritage not only claimed that Jackson, Cicotte and Williams are in the photo, they “proved” it with the image pairs below.



Lefty Williams



Eddie Cicotte



Joe Jackson

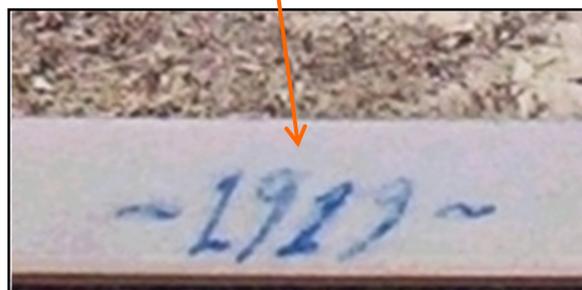
Williams doesn't look even remotely like his supposed counterpart – pointing out the extreme ear mismatch is superfluous. Any vague resemblances for the other two pairs are quickly overcome by comparing the ears (also the chin for Cicotte). Also, there is no newspaper account of these guys ever playing in Zanesville. When all this was pointed

out, Heritage responded, “We welcome debate about any lot in our auction, but I can assure you we would not run any lot if we were not convinced of its legitimacy.” Well, apparently they were somehow convinced that a photo of Jimmy Walsh was Ed Walsh. →Continued on next page

If that wasn't enough, **Mike Nolan**, photo collector, proprietor of blackbetsy.com (Joe Jackson's Virtual Hall of Fame), and steadfast guardian of all things related to Joe Jackson, pointed out that a person had tried to sell him this same photo in 2005. He rejected it but kept the scan (below left), and marked clearly on the mat is a date - "1919" – not 1922!

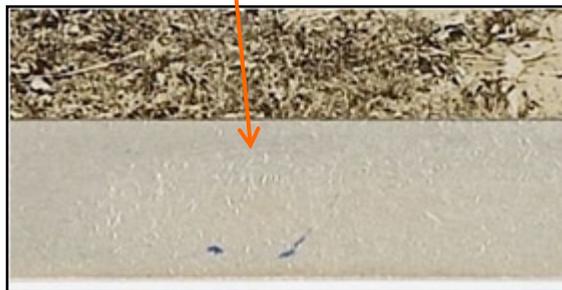
Soon after Mike refused to buy it, other scans of

Mike Nolans's 2005 scan



the photo were circulated in an effort to sell it, but with the date *erased*. Well, if you zoom in on Heritage's display of the photo, below right, where the date should be – you can see that it looks like someone erased it – though not completely. Apparently this occurred years before it was consigned to Heritage. Upon seeing this, I posted the information on a well-known public internet forum for baseball card and memorabilia collectors – *Net54*.

2009 auction photo



Within 2 hours of that posting, nineteen days after a Heritage exec informed me that [“I do not agree with your assessment and we are comfortable with the piece,”](#) the photo was pulled from the auction.

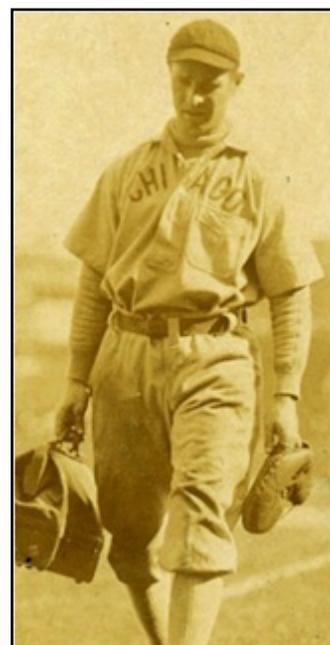
### **Ignorance of Tools**

Interpreting early baseball photos can be difficult, and, as we have seen, reputable auction houses can get it wrong. In a December 2005 online auction for the photo on the right, Lelands.com made this claim:

A scarce and very desirable early photo of Frank Chance..... noting the early *catcher's mitt*, we can date the photograph somewhat, since Chance caught from 1898 until the middle of the 1902 season [played first base thereafter].

**Winning bid - \$531.46**

A full figure 1902 or earlier photo like this of Chance would be a scarce item. But, the rather small “catcher's mitt” is just an ordinary Deadball Era first baseman's mitt, and Chance is wearing a unique-to-1905 Cubs road uniform. Good photos of Chance in this later period are not quite so scarce.



## Special Occasion?

A misinterpreted photo can also be under-valued by the seller. In November 2008, Lelands offered the photo below (*numbers added*) with this description:

Members of the Boston Red Sox and Chicago White Sox inspect a wreath and flowers at the Boston Baseball Grounds. The exact date and event is not identified. *Ed Walsh*, Bill Carrigan and Harry Lord are pictured standing in the crowd. Chip in the mount, o/w Mint, 7x9" photo on 11x14" mount.

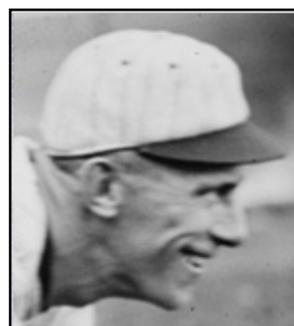
The winning bid was only \$119.50. Lelands was right about Carrigan (5) and Lord (2), but that's about it, and they missed the fact that this scene was part of a significant event.



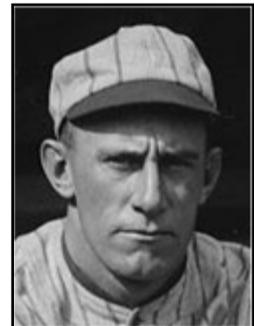
It was player #3 who was thought to be Ed Walsh. In fact #3 is clearly Shano Collins. Walsh is not visible in the photo, which might seem to lower its value.



#3



Collins



Collins

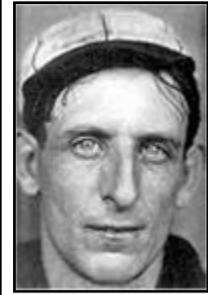
The key is noting that player #1, near right, is Rollie Zeider. He was on the White Sox 1912-1913. He was traded to NY AL in June, 1913 and only visited Boston as a member of the White Sox in 1912 – thus the Lelands photo was taken in 1912.



#1



Zeider



Zeider

The Boston Globe during this time period gave extensive daily front page coverage to the Red Sox. Any pre-game event would not go unreported. For only one of the nine White Sox dates at Fenway in 1912 was there any mention of pre-game festivities. The 5-18-1912 Boston Globe displayed the page-one headline: "Crowd of 17,000 at Formal Opening of Fenway Park."

Though not the first game played there, this was the "Formal Dedication" of Fenway. The White Sox were the visitors and there was considerable pre-game hoopla – brass band, singers, flag raising, dignitaries and flower arrangements. So the Lelands photo was taken on 5-17-1912 (Walsh did pitch that day).



JIMMY CALLAHAN AND SOME OF HIS FLORAL GIFTS

In light of this, most collectors who commented thought the photo was a steal at \$119.50. (Only one thought the absence of Walsh would offset this).

Player ID's for Lelands photo:

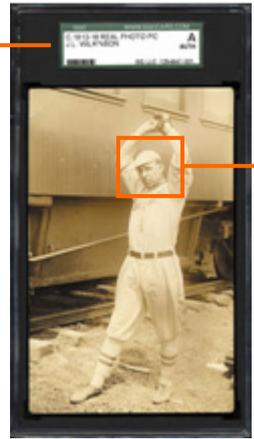
#1 Rollie Zeider, #2 Harry Lord, #3 Shano Collins, #4 Jim Scott, #5 Bill Carrigan, #7 Hugh Bedient, #8 Larry Pape, #9 Larry Gardner. Let us know if you have an opinion on player #6.



## Un-authentication

From Robert Edward Auctions (REA), 2008:

The extraordinarily significant and rare (possibly unique) real-photo postcard presented here captures recently elected Hall of Fame owner *J. L. Wilkinson* in uniform as a member of the All-Nations Team.....this is the only card picturing Wilkinson alone.... [winning bid - \$4112.50]



Also, the card housing and its label indicates that the card has been “authenticated” by Sports Card Guaranty – one of the top sports memorabilia authentication houses.

HoF'er Wilkinson, longtime Caucasian owner of the KC Monarchs, and prior to that manager of the 1910's integrated All-Nations team, is well known to Negro League historians. He is also well known to his granddaughter **Diane Pond**, who simply said, “I am quite sure this is *not* my grandfather.” Wilkinson's grandson, **Ed Catron**, rendered the same verdict with certainty. Let's take a closer look for ourselves.

The lineup below includes the player in question far right, and next to him two other photos of that same player plucked from All-Nations team photos. On the left, a photo of an older “Wilkie” and two photos of a much younger Wilkie, all of which originated with the Wilkinson family.



----- J. L. Wilkinson -----



Courtesy Ed Catron

After a simple subjective comparison of c1910 Wilkinson, near right, to the All-Nations player next to him, it stretches credulity to say that they look anything alike.

Also, team photos show the All-Nations player to be one of the tallest on the team – over six feet. KC Monarchs team photos that do include Wilkinson show that he was not nearly that tall.



Comparing photos taken from virtually the same angle, a complete ear mismatch is apparent – long and thin vs. rounded shape, detached earlobe vs. attached earlobe. These comparisons are valid because, even after aging, changes to the ear would not be enough to account for the stark differences seen here.



It is difficult for auctioneers and authenticators to judge photos such as those presented here. They represent a very small part of their business, so there is considerable reliance on consignor honesty. The rapid response from **Robert Lifson**, president of REA, working with **Brian Dwyer** of SGC, was perfect: “..that is great work, and very convincing. We are in communication with SGC to address and remedy this error. We will be contacting the buyer of the card and presenting all information and offering a refund.” It should also be said that the bidders in all of the auctions described here are part of the problem – perhaps they get what they deserve. 🙄

## Response to Utica 1886

The last issue opened with an article about the photo of the 1886 Utica International League club, below, which had been mis-identified as the 1882 Pittsburgh AA team in *The Beer and Whiskey League*.



National Baseball Hall of Fame Library, Cooperstown, NY

**David Nemeč**, primary author of *The Beer and Whiskey League*, posted the following response:

Mark made me aware of his important discovery some weeks ago [prior to the Feb. issue publication] and is to be congratulated by all of us.

There are many more discoveries like it waiting to be unearthed, not only in my books but also in those of other writers who make a sincere effort when they publish rare early-day (and probably nowadays that means everything prior to 1940 or so) photos to identify the individual or all of the individuals in them, or, in the case of teams, everybody in the team photo. IMO there is nothing more lazier or more careless, and in the long run more damaging to a writer (and of course his or her audience), than to publish rare and sometimes even never before seen photos with only the most cursory identification or, alas, in far too many cases none at all.

David Nemeč

My post in response to David:

Just in case I wasn't clear enough in the column, IMO David's *BWL* (and *19thC Encyclopedia*) are both awesome and highly valuable works - I don't think there is anything comparable out there for that time period. They are examples of great research with some flawed photo captions - a much too common occurrence and often not directly the fault of the primary researcher, who may not be a photo expert.

Mark Fimoff

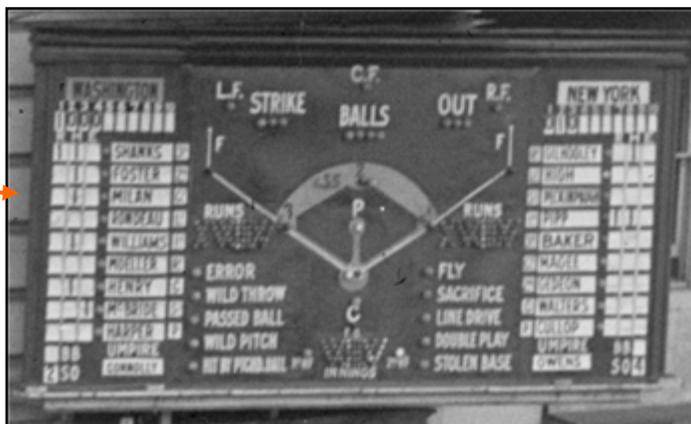
Incidentally, this photo also appeared, with correct identification, on page 115 of the 1999 Sotheby's auction catalog for the Barry Halper collection. Hence, many serious collectors were aware of the correct identity of this photo at least as of 1999. 📖

## New Old Photos at the Library of Congress

The Harris & Ewing photo below appeared in the previous issue. The question was “Can anyone determine the date of this photo?” There were a number of responses. (Photo available in hi res at <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/hec.07858>)

**Bill Carle** was the first to respond - seemingly within seconds of the release of the issue. He simply stated, “That picture of the scoreboard from the Washington/New York game would appear to be from June 23, 1916.” Bill didn’t “show his work,” but my logic was as follows: *For Washington, Rondeau's last year there was 1916. This overlaps NY's Gedeon/Magee/Cullop 1916-1917, so it must be 1916. The only Harper vs Cullop matchup in 1916 was on 6/23. The Washington Post box score for that day matches the partial line score on the scoreboard.*

Library of Congress, Harris & Ewing Collection



Reader **Barton Durham**, using similar logic, did deduce that the year was 1916. **Bob Kerler** got the 6/23/1916 date and noted that it was the second game of a double header. **Cary Smith** and **Mark Wolven** came up with the same answer. Mark also noted that the building was the Evening Star building, and provided an interesting modern update for that same location, where the ground floor now hosts Fogo de Chao, an upscale Brazilian steakhouse. 🇧🇷



## Slide, Jack, Slide Revisited

Dennis Goldstein's 7/19/1922 Braves-at-Cardinals photo was analyzed in the last issue. There was, however, one unresolved aspect to the analysis. The Boston Globe stated that Holke threw Jack Smith out at home after a putout at first base, but we clearly see Holke walking in front of home plate as Smith slides in. Reader **Dwayne Isgrig** provided the following excerpt from the 7/20/1922 *St. Louis Globe-Democrat*:

"The Braves were out in order in the first inning, when the Cardinals got to Miler for their first tally. Maxie Flack, hitting the ball at a gratifying rate poked one against the right-field fence for two bases. Smith walked and Hornsby slashed a two-bagger off Ford's glove, scoring Flack.

It looked like a big inning for the Cards, but some dumb base running by Hornsby, who later proved to be the hero, nipped the rally in the bud. Smith was on third and Hornsby on second after the latter's two-

base poke when Mueller hit to Kopf. Larry threw Heine out at first and Holke woke up to see Hornsby nearly on third base and Smith still on the far corner.

Making sure that he was not seeing things, Holke got Smith to start for the plate. It was the only thing Jack could do. When he did, Holke shot to Mickey O'Neil and the fleet-footed Smith was out a good many feet. Hornsby made third, but died there after Fournier walked and Stock rolled to Kopf."

Dwayne then surmised, "Though the article doesn't mention Holke's position when he threw to the plate, I guess Holke is in the frame near home plate because he came down the line from first to home as he was trying to psych out the runner from third." 🏆



Dennis Goldstein Collection

**Say, It Ain't Joe, It's Buck**

Library of Congress George Bain collection photo 10313, shown in the last issue, is currently identified as "Smokey" Joe Wood (near right). By comparing the left ear in 10313 to that in a known photo of Wood (far right), we have proof positive that 10313 is not Joe Wood. It's often easier to prove who it's not than to show who it is. So, who is this c1913 Boston Red Sox player?

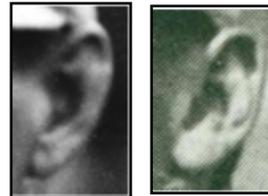
There was only one response to this question. Reader **Bob O'Leary** replied, "The fellow mis-identified as Joe Wood is Buck O'Brien." Bob's assertion is supported by the following evidence.

For starters, Bain 10313 is a perfect ear, nose and chin match to another photo, Harris & Ewing 02534, far right. These are the same person.

So, who is H&E 02534? He is repeated just below next to an undisputed image of Buck O'Brien (below left). We are forced to do a right side to left side comparison, but all major features in both are cropped out and matched (below right). Thus, both H&E 02534 and Bain 10313 are Buck O'Brien. 🇺🇸

LoC Bain 10313  
ID'd as Joe Wood

Joe Wood



Bain 10313

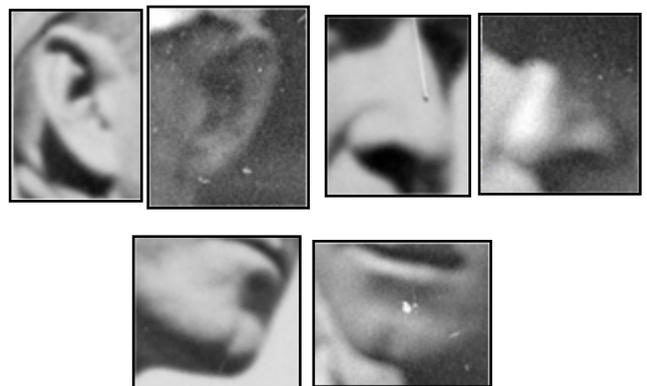
H&E 02534



Buck O'Brien



H&E 02534



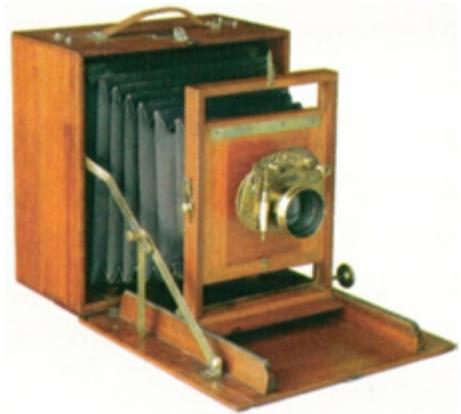
## To Tell the Truth



These three different individuals have all been identified as Candy Cummings. Will the real Candy Cummings please stand up?.....More next issue.



The new camera for our masthead is an 1880's self-casing type. The image is courtesy of **Jay Miller, Joe Gonzowski, and Richard Masson**. It appears in their outstanding *The Photographic Baseball Cards of Goodwin & Company (1886-1890)*. The book is essential for anyone seriously interested in 19<sup>th</sup>-century baseball images.



*Special thanks to Ed Catron, Diane Pond, Ron Cobb, Mike Nolan, Peter Gorton, Dan Bretta-moderator of the Net54 Baseball Card and Memorabilia Forum, Steve Steinberg, and Matt Fulling for their assistance with the auction article. If you have a photo or a relevant article that you would like to submit for a future issue, please send it to Mark Fimoff, bmarlowe@comcast.net.*