

51 Amazing Facts You May Not Have Known About Baseball Cards

Baseball cards are famous for providing fans with heaps of interesting statistics and fascinating facts about baseball.

But what about the cards themselves? Is there anything intrinsically noteworthy about these cardboard rectangles that

pry their way into our lives during childhood and never lose their grip?

As it turns out, there are at least as many great stories about baseball cards as there are cards themselves.

To that point, here are 51 intriguing facts about baseball cards that you may not have known before now.

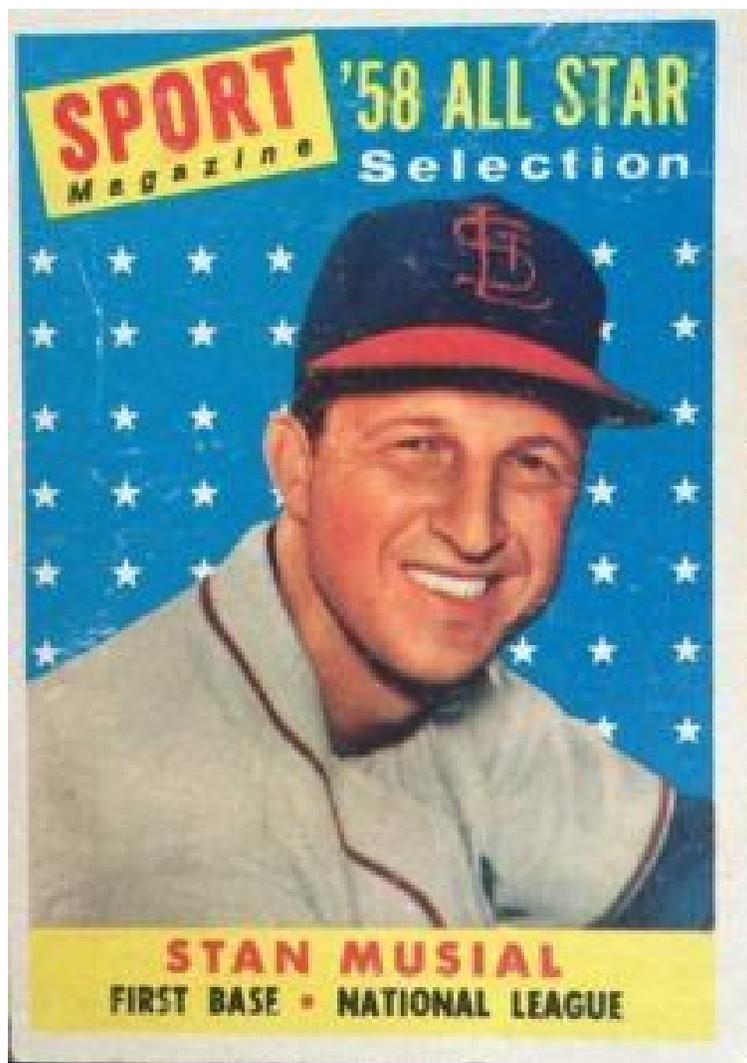
- Indians and Padres first baseman Bill Davis appeared on multi-player rookie cards each year from 1965-1969.



- Topps' longest-running product is not baseball cards — it's Bazooka Gum, which debuted in 1947.
- Fleer Ultra was called "Elite" in promotional material the company distributed prior to the first release in 1991. Fleer

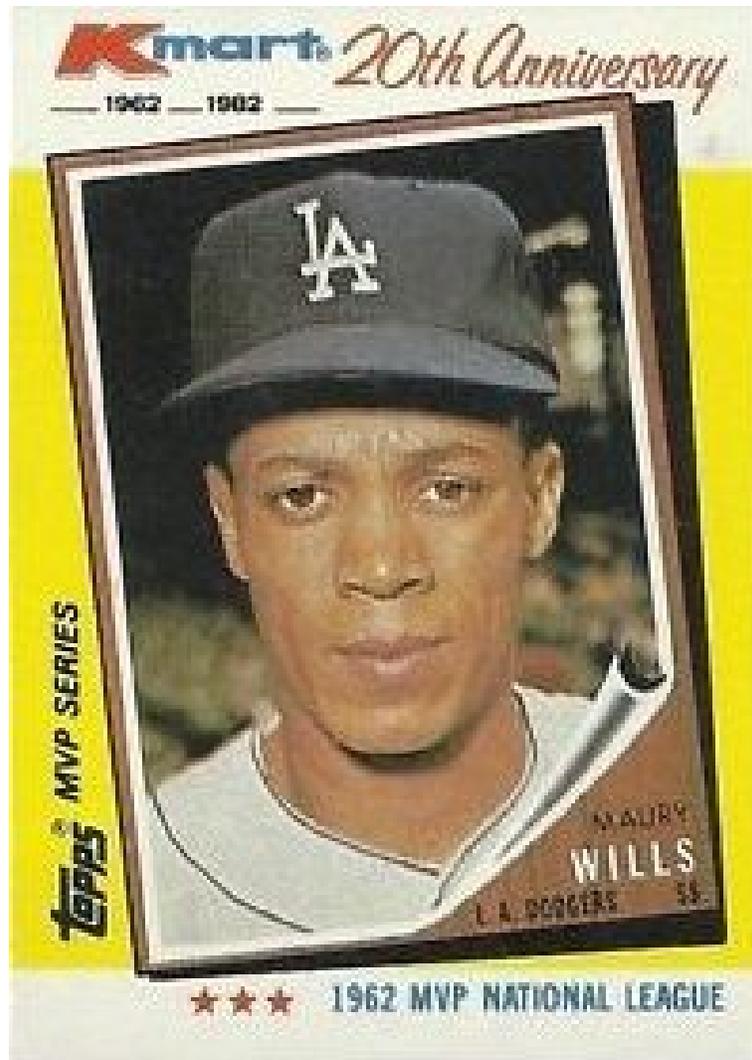
had to change the name of the set when Donruss protested because they already had an insert set named “Elite.”

- The first Topps card of Stan Musial was his 1958 All-Star issue. The Man did not sign a contract with Topps until 1957.



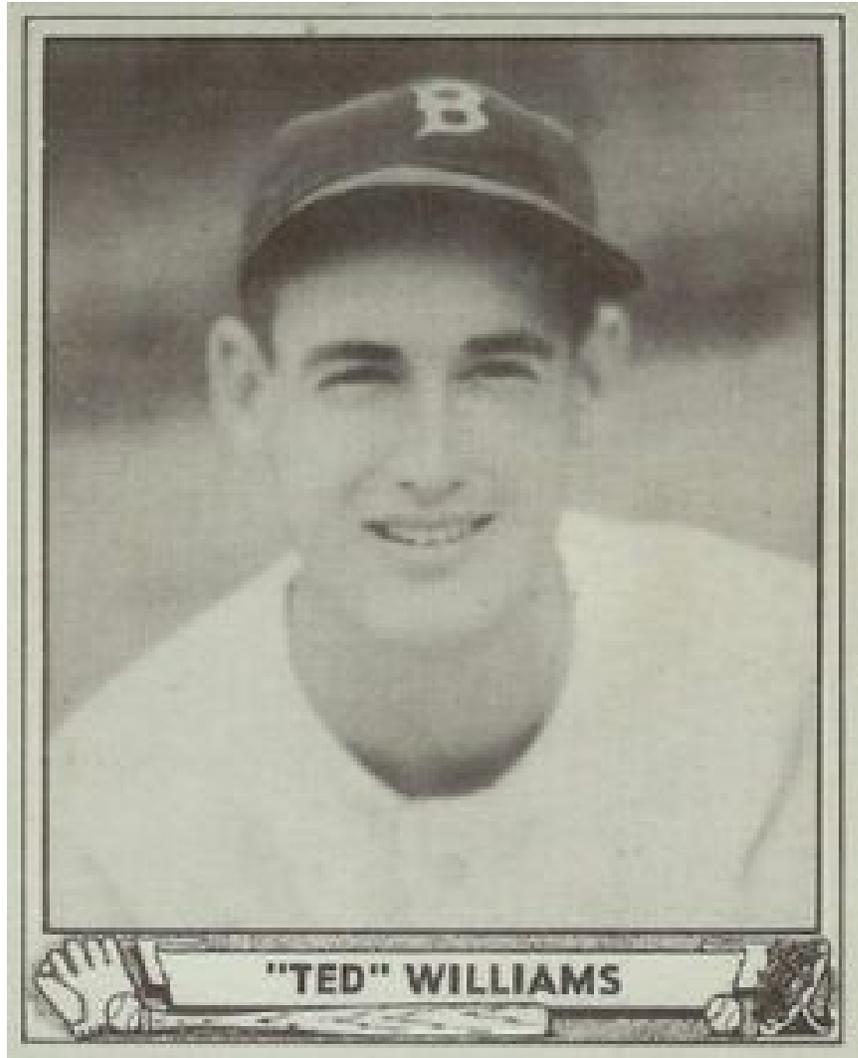
- The 1985 Topps Gary Pettis rookie card actually pictures his younger brother Lynn.
- Before his death in 2014, Sy Berger often carried a 1986 Topps Buddy Bell card in his wallet because Berger was close to the Bell family.
- In *The Accountant* (2016), Christian Wolff had a collection of tobacco cards that included the T206 Honus Wagner.
- The 1962 Topps Maury Wills and 1975 Topps Fred Lynn cards depicted in the 1982 KMart set never existed in real life. Wills didn't have a Topps card until 1967, and Lynn's 1975 rookie card was shared with three other "1975 Rookie Outfielders."

- Though Rated Rookies technically debuted in the 1984 Donruss set, several cards in the 1983 set contained the “Rated Rookie” designation on their backs.
- Hoyt Wilhelm, Donn Clendenon, and Jose Cardenal each appeared on baseball cards for five different teams from 1968 through 1972.



- Alex Rodriguez does not have a Topps rookie card because of a dispute with the gum company stemming from their decision to exclude him from their sets.

- Only one Hall of Famer has a rookie card in the 1958 Topps set: Orlando Cepeda.
- Topps Finest debuted as a football factory set in 1992, with the baseball staple following the next year.
- Tony LaRussa appeared on Topps cards as a player in 1964, 1968, and 1972, but had no cards in between.
- The 1970 Topps set contains the rookie cards of three players who died before 1971 dawned: Miguel Fuentes, Herman Hill, Paul Edmondson.

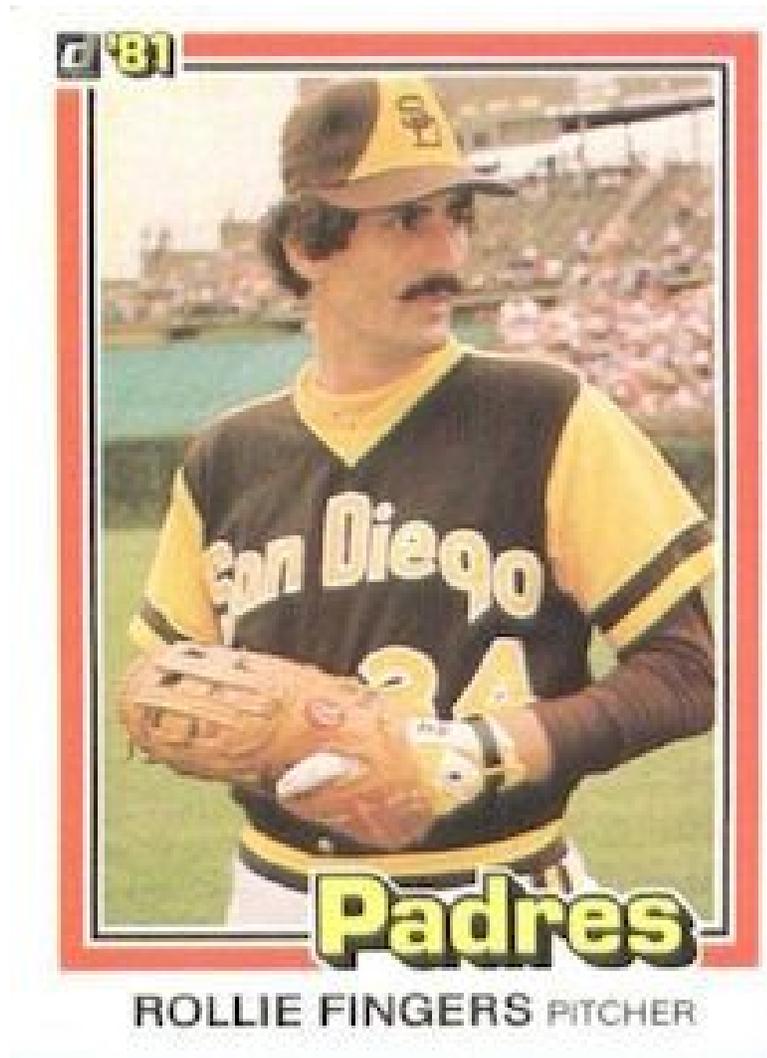


- There were only about 3400 different baseball cards produced in the 1940s according the PSA Population Report. That's the fewest of any decade in the 20th Century.

- Tommy Davis appeared on Topps cards for seven different teams from 1966 through 1972.
- The first year Topps used unaltered photos for their base set was 1957.
- John Titus is the only player to appear with a mustache in the T206 set.
- J.R. Richard's last regular-issue baseball card was in the 1982 Topps set after more than a year away from the game due to a stroke. His stat line for 1981 reads "ON DISABLED LIST." Richard never appeared in the majors again.

- Topps assigned the same color scheme to each team for their base sets in 1966, 1968, and 1969. In addition, National League and American League teams were paired up so that one team from each league had the same color scheme, and those pairings were held constant across the three sets. For instance, cards depicting Cincinnati Reds and Minnesota Twins players featured white text on a blue background in the 1966, 1968, and 1969 Topps sets.
- Bowman Gum Company was originally Gum, Inc., and first issued baseball cards with their Play Ball sets from 1939 to 1941.
- Baseball cards date back to at least 1870, when Peck and Snyder Base Ball and Sportsman's Emporium produced trade

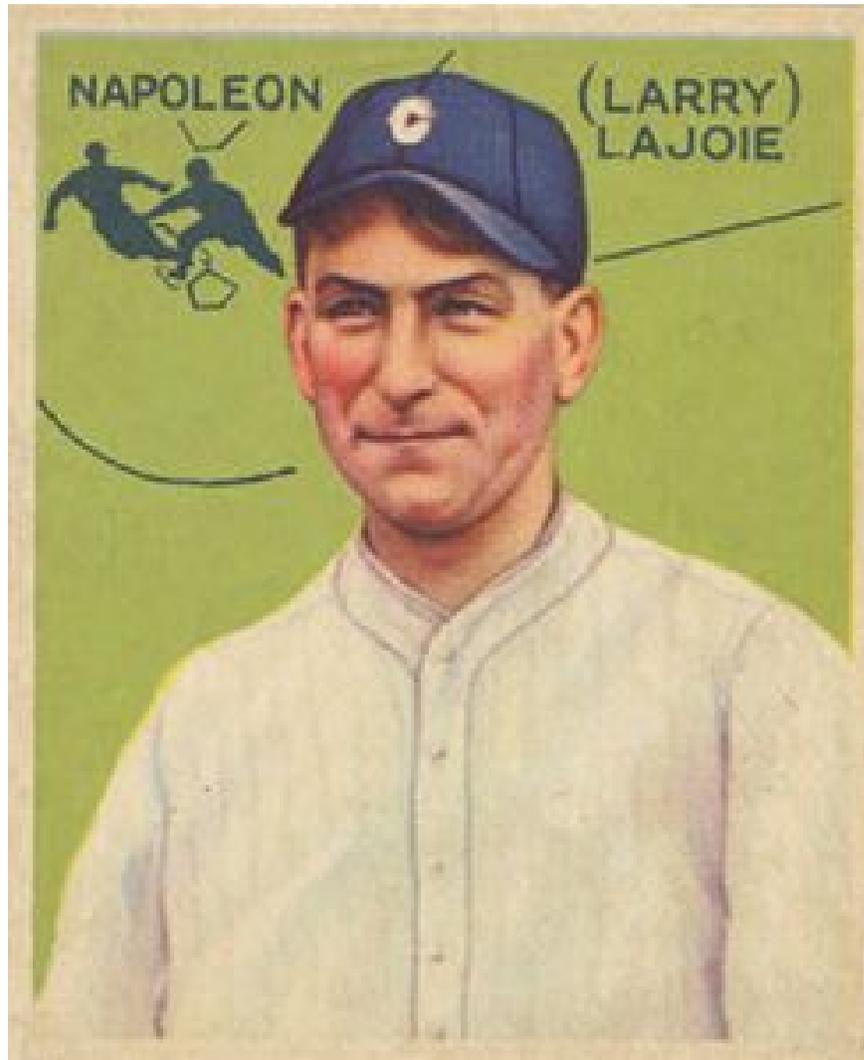
cards of the Cincinnati Red Stockings.



- The first card to show Saves in a pitcher's stats line was the 1981 Donruss Rollie Fingers (#2).

- According to the PSA Population Report, about 58,000 different baseball cards were issued in the 1980s. More than 2.1 million from the decade have been submitted for grading.
- The 1989 Fleer Fred McGriff card makes a cameo in *Home Alone*.
- The 1966 set is the only Topps issue of the 1960s that does not feature a World Series subset.
- Hank Aaron is shown batting left-handed on his 1957 Topps card even though he hit exclusively from the right side in the Major Leagues. The uncorrected error is the result of a flipped photo negative.

- Hank Aaron and Mickey Mantle appeared on one regular-issue card together — 1958 Topps #418, “World Series Foes.”



- Goudey listed Nap Lajoie as card #106 in their 1933 set but never actually issued the card in packs. Instead, Goudey sent

the card to collectors who contacted them in 1934 to complain that it was missing from the previous year's set.

- Jim Grant didn't appear on any baseball card in 1970 but appeared on cards for five different teams in the other five years from 1967 to 1972.
- Angels outfielder Dick Simpson appeared on multi-player rookie cards each year from 1963-1966.
- The 1968 Topps set contains the rookie cards of three players who died within 10 years of the issue: Don Wilson, Bob Moose, Danny Frisella.

- Topps' original baseball card gum was hard for a reason — so it wouldn't break or buckle when machines pushed it into packs of cards.

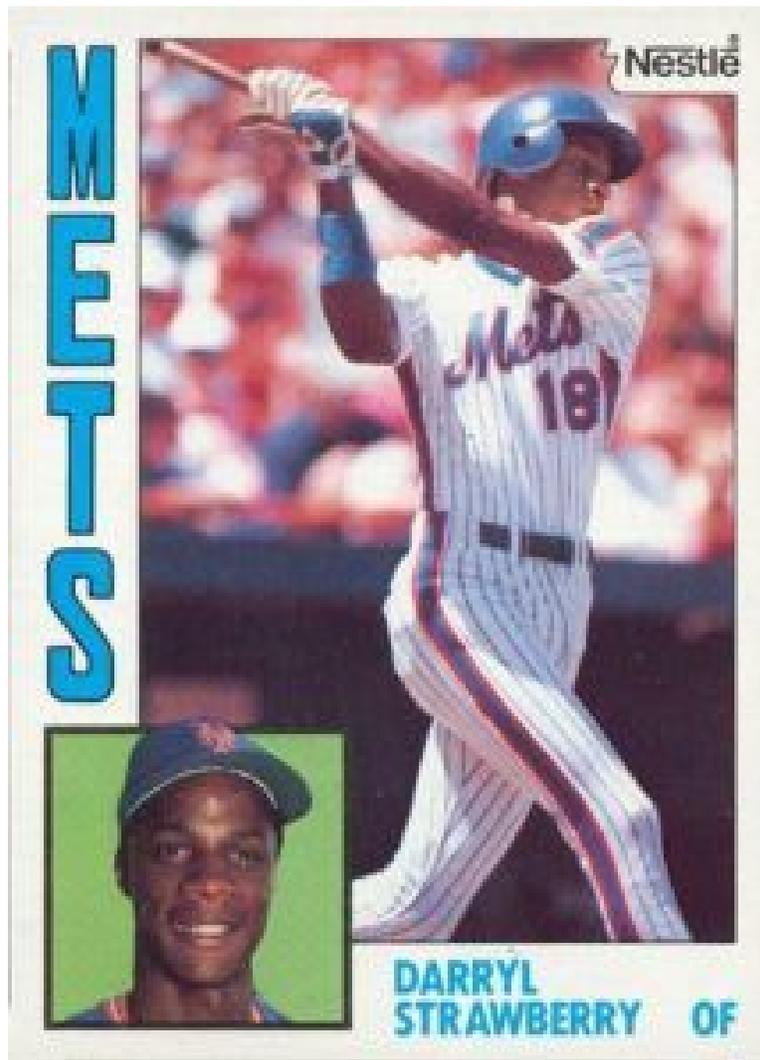
- Only 15 of the 25 San Diego Padres cards in the 1974 Topps set exist with the "Washington Nat'l." variation.



- Topps offered its 1985 Traded cards in wax packs as a test run.
- The 1989 Upper Deck Ken Griffey, Jr., rookie card has been graded more than 100,000 times by PSA and BGS combined.

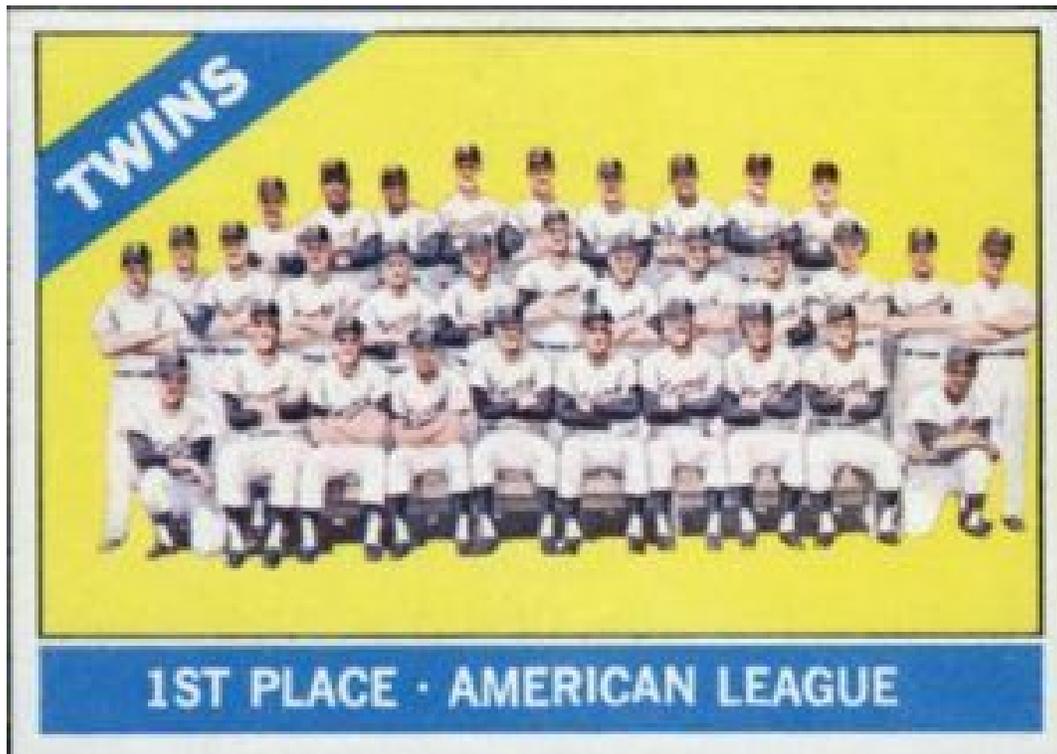
- Willie McCovey (1960) and Mark Fidrych (1977) appear as All-Stars in the same set as their rookie cards. In Fidrych's case, the All-Star designation was *part* of his rookie card.
- In the 1950s and 1960s, Topps often gave gifts to ballplayers in exchange for the rights to use their images on baseball cards. One year, Willie Mays complained in a letter to Topps that the toaster he received was burning his toast, and he requested a replacement.
- Cincinnati Reds Hall of Fame catcher Johnny Bench makes a cameo on the 1973 Topps Willie McCovey card.

- According to the PSA Population Report, nearly 93,000 different baseball cards were released during the 1990s, more than any other decade in the 20th Century.



- In addition to the 22-card Nestle Dream Team set inserted into packages of candy bars in 1984, Topps also created an entire 792-card parallel for Nestle that year. The candy company issued the set as six 132-cards sheets for promotional purposes.
- Bobo Holloman pitched a complete game no-hitter in his Major League debut for the St. Louis Browns in 1953, which proved to be the last year in Majors for both Holloman and the Browns. Holloman would not appear on a baseball card of any sort until the 1990 Baseball Wit set featuring former Little Leaguers.
- The 1988 Al Leiter rookie card originally depicted Yankees teammate Steve George but was later corrected to picture the current MLB Network analyst.

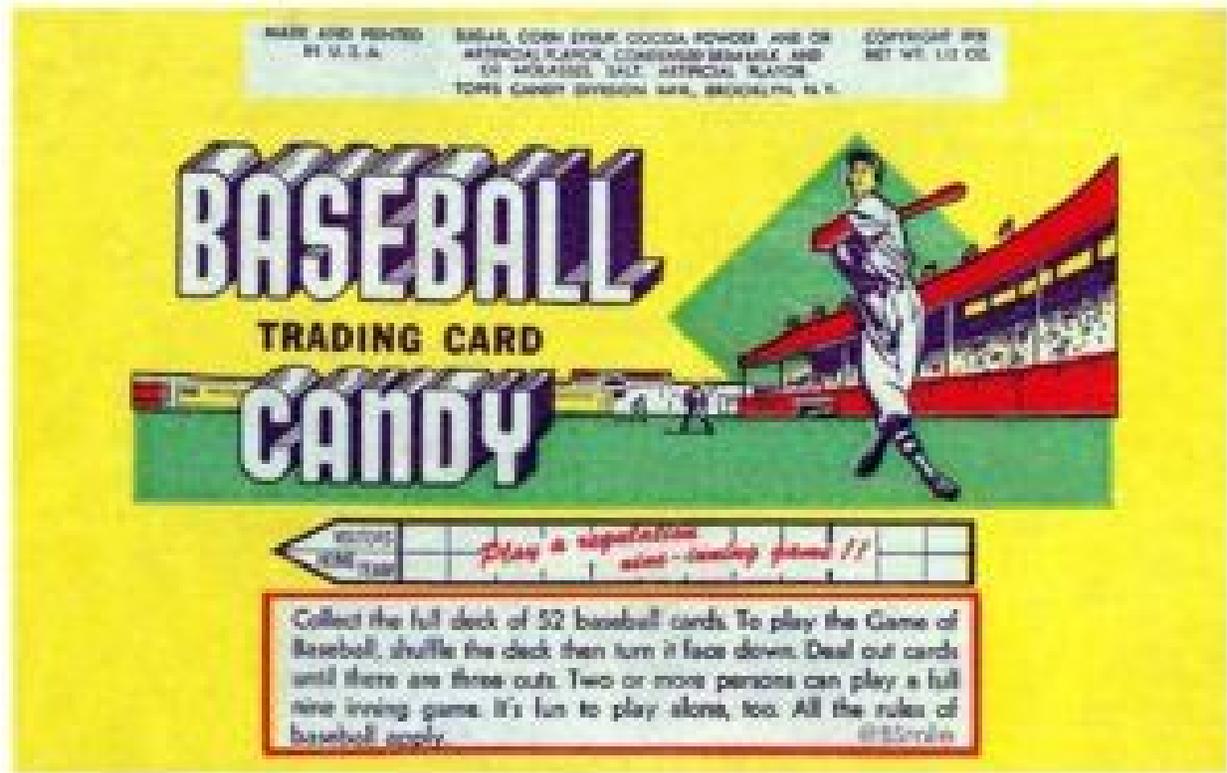
- The 1966 Topps Dodgers Rookie Stars card (#288) featured Don Sutton and Bill Singer, both of whom would eventually become 20-game winners in the Majors.



- In 1965 and 1966, Topps team cards displayed each club's finishing position from the year before.

- Stan Musial didn't appear on any mainstream baseball cards from 1954-1957.
- When Mickey Mantle died in 1995, Topps retired #7 in its base sets. Since then, the only time #7 has been issued is for special Mantle cards.
- The 1991 Topps Stadium Club set were the first borderless cards issued by a major manufacturer.
- The 1951 Topps cards were originally sold with pieces of caramel, which tended to melt and damage the cards. Whether for this reason — as Sy Berger contended — or because Bowman threatened with a lawsuit, Topps revamped

their packaging to sell the remainder of the cards with no confection included.



- The Houston Astros were the only team for which Topps did not issue a team card in any year from 1965 through 1969.

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