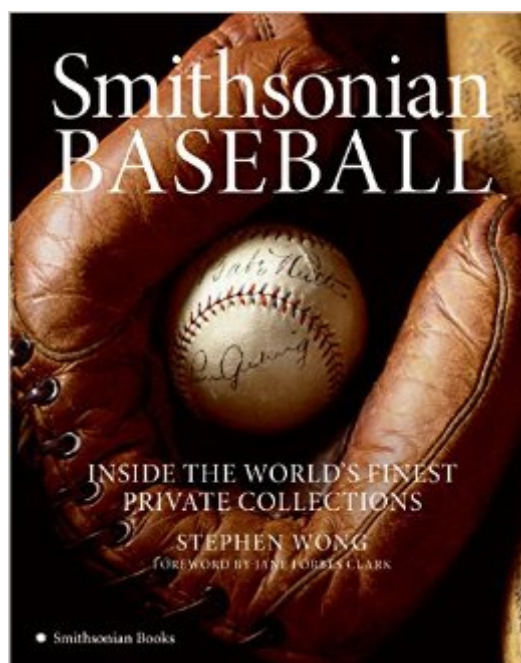


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Smithsonian Baseball: Inside The World's Finest Private Collections



Synopsis

To a collector, there is no joy parallel to finding that elusive home-run ball, or a jersey worn by a legendary player. Smithsonian Baseball: Inside the World's Finest Private Collections celebrates the abiding passion for our national pastime, as witnessed by the dedication of the sport's most devoted collectors. The first book of its kind, Smithsonian Baseball features revealing stories and lavish photography highlighting 21 of the best private collections of baseball memorabilia in existence. From a rare copy of the first written rules of the game (1848) to Mark McGwire's record-shattering home-run ball (1998), these impressive collections span baseball's entire history. Some of the game's most historically significant artifacts are part of these private collections, yet most have never before been seen by the public. Marvel at the memorabilia as you read about the historical background of the objects and get to know each collector's passions and motivations. Some of the collections are all-encompassing; others focus on a specific era or type of memorabilia -- game-used bats, for example, or folk art, or celluloid pin-back buttons. One collection features only relics and memorabilia from the grand old ballparks of the past; another comprises items from overseas exhibition tours of the late 19th and early 20th centuries. Some of the most valuable vintage photographs and advertising displays as well as the most sought-after baseball cards are in these collections, including the famous T206 Honus Wagner, the highest professionally graded set of 1915 Cracker Jacks, and a gem-mint condition 1952 Topps Mickey Mantle. A father-daughter collecting duo has an impressive collection of World Series scorecards and programs, dating back to the inaugural series in 1903. The book also includes seven "tips" essays. The hobby's leading experts offer advice on collecting and authenticating artifacts, and show how to build and organize your own impressive 19th-century memorabilia or baseball card collection. Weigh the benefits of having a general collection versus a very narrow one. Find out how to store and display your collectibles. Learn to distinguish between an original first-generation photograph versus a wire photo, a vintage jersey worn at home games as opposed to one worn on the road, a player's game-used bat and one made for retail sale -- and much, much more. It's the perfect gift for any baseball fan, young or old, a baseball collectible in its own right.

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Customer Reviews

This beautiful book belongs in every baseball enthusiast's library, but it would be a mistake to keep it on the shelves. Author Stephen Wong has partnered with the Smithsonian to publish the most stunning book on baseball on the market. It deserves to be on your coffee table not only because of its wonderful photographs but also due to the wonderfully rich way he presents the history of the game. Wong gained remarkable access to the sport's foremost collectors, combing through hundreds of images and memorabilia items. The payoff is tremendous for anyone with an interest in baseball or, for that matter, in American history and culture. Readers will learn the essential facts about the game, and the fascinating tidbits, such as the origins of the curve ball. They then get to see remarkable shots, some most unusual - from folk art statues to Don Larsen's enshrined shoes from his perfect game to the bricks of former stadiums. In fact, this book should be placed in the Hall of Fame!

This is a wonderful baseball book. It captures the entire sweep of our national pastime's history through the description and display of the best (and undoubtedly the most valuable!) private collections of baseball memorabilia. The collectors themselves are a varied lot, from a Wall Street exec to a famous Hollywood celebrity, and each has built up a remarkable collection of some of the rarest, most historically significant baseball memorabilia in existence. This book is a lot more than baseball cards and home run balls, although there is plenty of that. The various collections include amazing original photographs, and the bats, gloves, and uniforms of all the baseball greats, plus lots of unexpected gems like board games, old posters and advertisements, and even folk art fashioned from baseball odds and ends. The photos are accompanied by excellent captions that are very informative, sometimes funny and sometimes heartbreaking, like the game itself. In this book, done to the Smithsonian's usual high standards, the baseball greats of yesteryear seem to come alive

and stride the basepaths once again. It almost seems like you can reach out and touch Ty Cobb's bat, or feel the texture of Ted Williams' uniform, or hear the roar of the crowds at The Polo Grounds. Anyone with an interest in baseball will thoroughly enjoy this book, and I heartily recommend it.

I picked up this book with only a passing interest in baseball memorabilia born of my childhood baseball card collection that my mother eventually disposed of, much to my dismay, when I moved out. As a result of reading this book, I now have a greater appreciation for the art of baseball memorabilia. I would recommend this book to those who recall their childhood card collections with fondness as well as to fans of the game of baseball itself. The author has combined an insider's knowledge of baseball memorabilia with a reverence for the history of the game and an understanding of the game's place within American culture. It is clear from the book's essays that he knows how intertwined baseball and America really are. The book's pictures make these one-of-a-kind private collections appear like the works of art that many of them truly are. In addition to well-known baseball memorabilia (the Honus Wagner baseball card, Babe Ruth's bats), the author has an eye for unusual private collections. One of my favorites in the book was the person who focused his collection on Moe Berg, an Ivy League grad and backup catcher in the majors during the 1930s who spoke six languages and served in the Office of Strategic Services, the precursor of the CIA, during World War II. I also had no idea that Penny Marshall (director of "A League of Their Own"), who is featured in the book, is such an avid baseball memorabilia collector. A great gift for baseball fans of all ages.

Smithsonian Baseball is simply the very best baseball book ever produced! It captures like no other the soul of our national pastime, as passionately expressed in the introduction by its author, Mr. Stephen Wong. It should be treasured as a museum piece itself with the same reverence as the collections it so perfectly captures. Baseball has been the cornerstone of my life literally each and everyday I could remember, truly a best friend. Like baseball, the book's spirit is a personification of my being. Tremendous thought and care went into every word and illustration of the book. The quality is unparalleled; the cover, the paper, the photography, the essays, the captions, the organization, all representing the love of the game. What Michelangelo is to the Sistine Chapel, Stephen Wong's one-of-a-kind masterpiece is to baseball!

I have had the great privilege of being a baseball fan for over 50 years and my humble library includes over 1,000 books on our National Pastime. I do not claim to be an authority or a worthy

critic of baseball literature. I am simply a lifelong devoted fan who, like many, have reveled in (time and time again) the rich prose from the game's most legendary scribes - Angell, Honig, Ritter, Kinsella, Kahn, Stanton, Thorn, Halberstam, et al. What has impressed me most about this book is that it exudes so much passion about baseball's history and its underlying emotions. I have never come across a baseball book that has captivated my attention on such a high level. Wong's text is extraordinarily rich with layers upon layers of historical context and plenty of time honored baseball anecdotes. The photographs are breathtaking. I can not imagine how much time Wong and his photographer must have spent on producing many of those unforgettable montage shots - positioning of the pieces, lighting, shadowing effect, etc. The artifacts simply jump off the pages. This is not one of those typical "formula-driven" baseball books that slaps together old photos with dry text in time for opening day sales. This is truly a work of art . . . so much time and effort went into the layout of every page. The positioning of the artifacts with the text in each chapter flow like a Mozart symphony. It really all comes together very well. I can only tip my hat to Mr. Wong. No corners were cut in this magnum opus. This is baseball history at its finest. Well done.

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