

M101-4 and M101-5 advertising backs: Curiosities and Scarcity by Todd Schultz

Since Tim Newcomb and I co-authored a primer on m101s for *Old Cardboard* in 2008, additional information has come to light about those sets, their distribution and scarcity. Given the passage of time and because that article did not rank the various advertising backs specifically, I wanted to lay down a historical marker here at the beginning of 2017, from which a ranking baseline might be established and subsequent changes traced. What follows comes from my collecting these sets, observing them closely through auctions and other hobby outlets such as population reports, contacts with fellow collectors and some independent research.

The Mendelsohn m101-4 and 5 sets are far most commonly seen with blank backs, likely because the cards were offered directly to the general public by the publisher and probably were made available at least as soon if not earlier than their counterparts with advertising. More m101-4 blank backs were produced than the earlier m101-5s—about 50% more—which itself is partly explained by a longer period of their distribution in 1916. Nearly 40% of all m101 backs are blank.

Although exact production information likely never will be unearthed, there is circumstantial or indirect evidence from which to make educated guesses about the initial number of cards printed with some of these m101 backs. Mendelsohn's mailer offered the cards to advertisers who ordered a minimum of 500 sets, with 1250 as the next offered increment. Many of the m101 advertisers likely did not order beyond the first of those numbers, as that would equate to 100,000 cards, and less than 1/10th of one percent of that number is now presently known for several ad backs. Even if Mendelsohn did not require an order of at least 500 sets, a commitment of some minimum seems likely, if only to cover set-up costs. In any event, it would not be surprising if 500 or fewer sets comprised a full printing for some advertisers, and that at most 1250 sets were printed for nearly all the rest.

Relative scarcity among the advertising backs continues to be a moving target. Prior to 2008, the Everybody's ad back was considered one of the most difficult to locate. Then around that time one or two finds provided the hobby five dozen or so new specimens with the Everybody's advertising, or about ten times the confirmed number of previously known examples. This took an extremely difficult back and made it rather available, at least relatively speaking. The *Old Cardboard* article noted the infusion and opined that Green-Joyce advertising reverses had supplanted Everybody's as the scarcest ad back for m101-4. Ironically, since then a modest find of more than 50 Green-Joyce cards has relegated that wholesaler to a less esteemed spot itself on the scarcity list of m101 advertisers. And so it goes. The lesson learned is that a half dozen or so m101-4 advertising backs and all but one or two of their m101-5 brethren are so small in known population that even minor finds of a couple dozen cards can change the pecking order, and such finds are still encountered every so often despite the passage of 100 years since their initial distribution.

Relative scarcity among the m101 ad backs is also a function of how that term is applied by collectors. Some collectors focus on players or teams, childhood locales and heritage as their principal interest in baseball cards. Demand for cards fitting such criteria

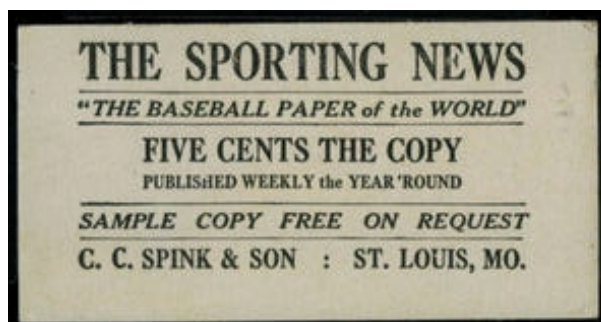
will influence their scarcity insofar as they are less subject to turnover or re-circulation. *See*, e.g., Jewish American J. Erskine Mayer. Moreover, the four short-print cards and to a lesser extent their replacements will be scarcer as well; again, these are considered but not emphasized here. Similarly, scarcity is influenced by the number of subjects available for a particular back, as this will be important to HOF, player, team and other niche or specialized collectors. A good example is again found in the cards advertising El Paso department store Everybody's, of which around 60 cards surfaced nearly all at once eight years ago. Despite the influx, all of these cards were of subjects bearing card numbers 20-40, with multiples of 2, 3 or even 5 of almost every player. Thus, although there are more than five dozen Everybody's cards confirmed to exist, fewer than 25 different subjects are represented by that number, so team and all but a few player collectors would still consider the set highly scarce for their purposes.

Scarcity might also be measured by card condition, as some collectors will only hunt for examples that would grade excellent or stronger. Several of the m101-4 and m101-5 ad backs are nearly always found in lesser states. For example, only five of more than 120 graded cards with Indianapolis Brewing backs are slabbed as excellent, with none higher. Weil Baking is similar, although it does show about a handful graded higher than excellent. Most m101-4 cards from many of the department stores were issued with light pressure marks running horizontally about 40% from the top and vertically about 15% from the right edge. These are factory "flaws", yet strict grading leaves cards with such traits in vg or vg-ex holders, and thus these sets have very few cards considered excellent or better regardless of their presentation. Finally, several dozen m101-5 Holmes to Homes Bread cards are known, representing more than 40% of the set; however, fewer than one dozen can be found without back damage. These were glued into a scrapbook or album, removal from which led to their most desirable feature--the advertising back depicting a baker at his trade--horribly scarred with paper loss. Thus, a collector seeking just one presentable Holmes to Homes card would look beyond the total number of known examples when assessing that advertiser's scarcity, and a mid to high-grade only collector would probably pass altogether.

Set collectors of m101-4 and m101-5 with ad backs are few and far between. Only cards sponsored by The Sporting News or Famous and Barr offer any reasonable chance of set completion. Moreover, because 200 cards comprise a base set, even those with ample financial resources will find themselves searching a long while to complete so much as either of these two, which of course would require also the cash layout for card #151--the Babe Ruth rookie. Near sets of Herpolsheimer (189 different) and Gimbels (156) were offered at auction over the past few years, but even the winners of these lots could spend a long time in search of the remaining pieces from those two advertisers, which are not among the most difficult to find. I have yet to confirm the existence of more than a dozen of the Gimbels cards lacking in that near set, and even assuming they are out there somewhere, it is unlikely they are together. The consignor of the Herpolsheimer auction lot had acquired the group from his grandfather decades earlier, and he had added only one card thereafter. In short, there are so few of almost all of these cards that assembling a set of 200 different is a monumental challenge and in most cases impossible, even with a healthy head start and irrespective of cost.

Instead and probably for that reason, most pursuing m101-4/5 ad backs appear to be type collectors, seeking one example of each back regardless of subject. Scarcity to such collectors would be defined by the overall availability of a particular back, and the following discussion of the eighteen different m101-4 and m101-5 versos primarily employs this definition. Finally, it should be observed that the Gimbels and Everybody's advertising backs have minor typeface variations, and others can be found with different ad orientations, often in the blended sets but probably also as the result of mistake. These are usually of great interest to type collectors, particularly the typeset/font variations, and will be addressed when discussing those advertising backs where such variations are known. With all the above considerations in mind, what follows is the author's opinion of relative scarcity for all of the m101-4 and m101-5 ad backs, in order from least to most scarce.

1. **The Sporting News**



The most easily found advertising-backed card by far, this set of m101-4 cards is one of two contenders for completion at 200 cards. Besides having greater production than the others, there are three reasons for the relative availability of these cards. First, they were obtainable through a national sponsor, as TSN circulated throughout the country. Only Successful Farming can make that same claim among the various m101 advertisers, as the others were regional or local. Second and unlike Successful Farming, the sponsor's target audience was sports aficionados, and particularly baseball fans, making it more likely to be something of interest to its readers. Finally, the cards were available as a subscription enticement longer than any other advertiser's offer, probably by far, as they could be had all the way into the Summer of 1917. These factors combine to make The Sporting News the most commonly encountered advertiser of m101-4s, and perhaps because they were acquired by mail, they are about as easily found in ex to nm-mt grade as they are in lower condition. These are not known to have any variations in back advertising. Moreover, the one m101-4 short print card—#168 Stanage portrait to waist— is not likely to be found with this back, as it was part of the early m101-4 print run, and Sporting News cards first became available much later (about 4 months) in m101-4 production.

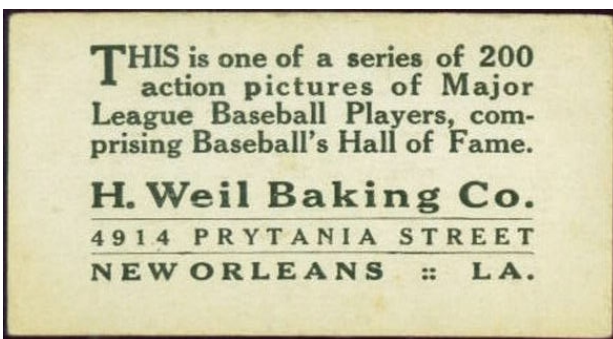
2. **Famous & Barr**



The cards from this St. Louis department store comprise one of the blended or hybrid sets, meaning the 200 card base set includes some m101-4 subjects and some from m101-5, but with rare subject duplication. The typical blended set has low numbers 1-20 from the earlier distributed m101-5 set and then the remainder from m101-4. Famous and Barr goes the opposite route, with the first twenty cards associated with m101-4 and the rest from m101-5. Also with Famous and Barr, there are a half dozen or so cards numbered between 178-185 that for some unknown reason associate with both m101-4 and m101-5.

Famous and Barr provides the second most easily-collected back, and although noticeably less plentiful than The Sporting News, it is also far more common than the next in line. Blended sets have different back orientations in the numbers 1-20 than in the higher numbers, and Famous & Barr has its ad running from top to bottom for the first twenty and in the opposite direction thereafter. However, among its idiosyncrasies (this is the most unusual of all m101 sets), Famous and Barr also has most of the cards from numbers 34-50 oriented with top to bottom reading, and at least five of those can be found oriented in either direction. Moreover, a relatively recent near-set break offered the low numbers 1-20 with advertising reading bottom to top, which means between 5%-10% of those low numbers can be found that way. So far, the advertising orientation does not appear to have any effect on pricing, either because collectors have not noticed the differences or they just do not care. No typeset/font variations are known for this advertiser, and, because Famous& Barr appears to have issued from among the later printings of m101-5, the short print cards of #12 Becker, #23 Cady and #186 Wallace are not expected to be seen with this ad back.

3. Weil Baking



The m101 cards from the next five advertisers have similar availability, yet they differ in minor respects and all are significantly more difficult to find than Sporting News or Famous and Barr. Weil Baking appears slightly more plentiful than the rest, but as stated earlier, this set is rarely found in anything better than vg-ex condition, meaning those chasing high-grade cards would rank this set as scarcer. The ad back is identical to that used by the company the following year when it distributed another set akin to E135 Collins-McCarthy (designated D328), which makes it appear even more plentiful to anyone casually perusing auctions and finding the same advertisement back on two somewhat similar-looking sets of 200 cards. No typeset/font variations are known for this m101-4 advertiser, and the set likely does not include the short-printed Stanage portrait card.

4. **The Globe**



Cards bearing The Globe back are not uncommon, and often are found in mid to high grade. The advertisements for this Harrisburg, Pennsylvania store are seen on 160 confirmed subjects, around the same as for Weil Baking, and have been graded approximately 300 times. I have seen only two instances where the orientation has been reversed, evidencing that there were at least two print runs with one scarcer than the other, but have observed no effect on price. This m101-4 set likely does not include the short-printed Stange portrait card. An ad in the May 5, 1916 *Harrisburg Telegram* pronounced that “Hundreds of Boys Started to Collect the Famous Baseball Stars Photographs”, suggesting that fewer than a thousand sets had been ordered.

5. **Herpolsheimer**



Herpolsheimer is a blended set, with low numbers 1-20 associated with the m101-5 set and the remainder with m101-4. The low numbers are oriented top to bottom and the rest read the other way. The short-printed Stange portrait is found in this set, indicating that the Grand Rapids department store was among the early recipients of Mendelsohn’s revised effort. It is not known whether the corrected version of Stange is also found in Herpolsheimer; in fact, no advertiser has been found to have both. The low numbers contain #12 Lute Boone and not the short-printed Beals Becker, so it appears the m101-5 portion of the blend came later in that set’s print run.

As mentioned, a very near set of these cards was auctioned a few years back, and if/when that grouping is disassembled, expect Herpolsheimer to move ahead of Globe and maybe Weil Baking among the less scarce backs, all else being equal. Even without that event, however, there are ample numbers of this ad back to warrant its spot here on the list. Like Globe, these cards are often found in mid to higher grade, at least ex to nm.

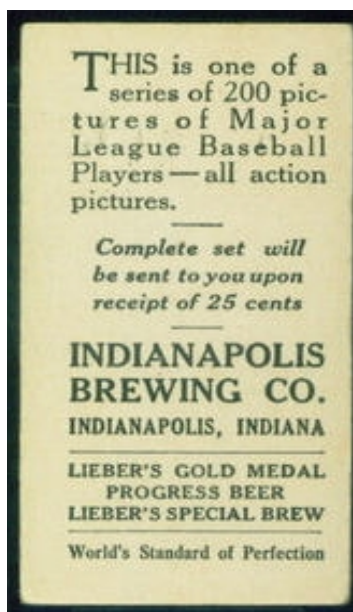
6. Standard Biscuit



Standard Biscuit is one of only two sets, along with Morehouse Baking, to have issued the full 200 cards found in both m101-4 and m101-5. Actually, neither has confirmed subjects of even half that 400 total. However, because Mendelsohn's sets were printed in full 200 card sheets and there are no gaps of more than ten consecutive numbers in the known Standard Biscuit (or Morehouse Baking) checklists, it is not unreasonable to assume that all were printed and that their distribution occurred back in the day. No pattern suggests otherwise.

For a few years around the turn of the millennium, Standard Biscuit cards were routinely seen in decent numbers on ebay; not as often as Famous & Barr or of course Sporting News, yet noticeably more than the others. Collectors would have seen a similar run of Weil Baking cards during the preceding few years.

That frequency then diminished by 2006, although Weil Baking showed resurgence in 2011-2012. Like Weil Baking, Standard Biscuit also used an identical advertisement on its own set of E135-styled cards in 1917 (designated D350-2), and a nearly identical ad for a set of cards ala e121 (designated D350-3) around 1921. All of these factors— that there were twice as many potential cards, that there had been a consistent showing of Standard Biscuits over a period of years and that a casual observation showed these ad backs on many cards—might have caused collectors to believe that this advertiser's m101 cards were more plentiful than is actually the case. Still, they are by no means difficult to acquire. An exception can be stated for the short print m101-5s of Becker, Cady and Wallace, all of which have been found with Standard Biscuit backs. I have not confirmed any m101-4 Stanage back to determine whether Standard Biscuit was also in on the early m101-4 print run. I have seen a handful of Standard Biscuits with reverse oriented or upside-down backs, all from the m101-5 set. These may have garnered a slight premium in their prices realized, but nothing meaningful. The m101-4s with this back are a little more prevalent than their counterparts.

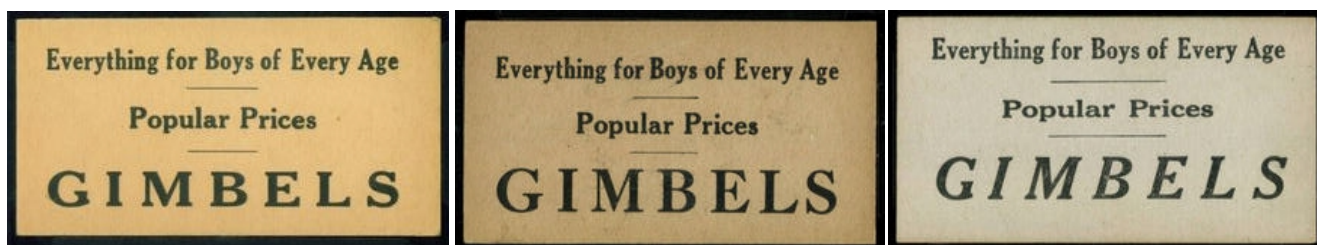


7. Indianapolis Brewing

This m101-4 advertising back has slightly more than 60% of the set subjects confirmed and approximately 150 cards graded. They were available by mail—the entire set for a quarter—as advertised in at least one baseball dope book called *Facts for Fans*. It is unclear whether other advertising media also promoted the cards, or whether they were made available to customers either at bars and taverns or by purchase of off-sale products. The Indianapolis newspapers from 1916 show many advertisements for Indianapolis Brewing, but they are somewhat discreet in size and content, probably due to the growing Prohibition movement that would soon see Indiana dry, and none makes mention of the baseball cards.

Although hardly a truism, it would seem that mail-delivered cards would stand a better chance of surviving in high grade than those packaged with product or hand-delivered with beverages, yet no Indy Brewing card higher than excellent has been circulating in the hobby. Of course, even crisp cards newly arrived from the postman are subject to being well handled over time, and given the small number of surviving specimens, there is really no conclusion to draw as to why these cards are not found in better condition. About twenty years ago, a near set of more than 100 very badly damaged cards with Indy Brewing backs was offered as singles on ebay. The listings stated they had been left out in a bag on a porch and glommed together when rain came, thus leaving substantial frontal paper loss. Notably, the corners and edges of these are such that they were only vg to vg-ex even without that surface damage. They are at best fillers; yet, in the strictest sense of overall population they might be counted and considered so as to make Indianapolis Brewing less scarce than one or two of the backs already discussed. Finally, there are no known orientation or printing variations, and the one Stanage card seen with an Indy Brewing back is not the short-print portrait.

8. Gimbels



Small Block

Large Block

Slanted/Italicized

Until 2016, Gimbels could be considered a blended set like Herpolsheimer's, with m101-5 cards occupying the first twenty cards of the checklist and m101-4 thereafter. However, a run of the lower numbers with m101-4 correlation was part of a Gimbels near set in the Spring 2016 REA auction. Thus, Gimbels now enjoys a unique status among m101 sets as the only advertiser with a full run of one of the sets and only the low numbers of the other. Of course, that is not to say a similar find for more of the other blended sets might not some day surface. This leaves several questions concerning distribution of these sets, to be explored further elsewhere.

As for overall scarcity, Gimbels is at least a bit more difficult than the foregoing advertisers listed here, even when one accounts for the near set and its possible breakup. These are not difficult to find in mid grade or better, as nearly half of the known examples are in at least excellent condition. What makes the Gimbels scarcity discussion more difficult is the treatment of the low numbers.

Gimbels can be found with three different backs, by far the most common of which uses a slanted or italicized-looking font for the sponsor's name. All high-numbered cards from the Milwaukee-based department store, i.e., numbers 21-200, share this font or typeset. Until the REA auction, all low-numbered Gimbels, of which there are very few, displayed one of two smaller, block-print typesets for the department store name. These two appear similar, perhaps best differentiated by the "E" and "L" if only one is examined without the

other. On the large block Gimbels, the lower serif on the “E” and “L” will extend at a 45 degree angle as is used by the Times New Roman font, with an appearance like a clown/jester’s shoe, whereas these serifs will point straight up on the small block Gimbels, as is found with Cambria font. Each of the block-style font Gimbels is very difficult to find, scarcer than all m101 advertiser cards other than perhaps a couple of the Everybody’s backs to be discussed later. As it stands, the large and small block-lettered Gimbels are found in roughly the same proportion, although the numbers are too small for conclusions, with fewer than a dozen total confirmed.

Now that the low number Gimbels have been found correlated with m101-4, these too are very scarce; however, since they show the identical backs as the moderately easy high numbers, they may not impress type collectors. In sum, low-numbered Gimbels with any back are at present very difficult to find, but those with block-style typesets are both slightly more scarce and likely more in demand. As for other variations, the m101-4 short print Stanage card (portrait to waist) is known with the Gimbels back, but the m101-5 short print of Becker has not been seen and likely does not exist. All Gimbels cards show a bottom to top orientation.

9. **Green-Joyce**



As mentioned previously, Green-Joyce was considered the toughest m101-4 back to locate not that long ago, but the addition of 55-60 cards in the past three years makes this advertiser’s reverse not nearly as difficult to find. Still, collectors of mid-grade or better cards will find Green-Joyce to be very challenging. Most of the cards bear the factory pressure lines mentioned at the beginning of this discourse, limiting their grades to vg-ex or worse. Also, more than two dozen of the known examples have been stained with a teal coloring along the bottom corners, as if something came in contact with a stack of the cards and bled a water-based dye onto many of them. Oddly, all but one of these is numbered 124 or higher, suggesting that the cards may have been in numeric order when this unfortunate coloring event occurred. Finally, there are several duplicates in the current grouping of Green-Joyce backs, moreso than in any of the sets that follow except for Everybody’s. There are no back variations known, either as to font style or orientation, and the Stanage card has not been confirmed but is not expected to show the short-printed variation.

10. **Altoona Tribune**

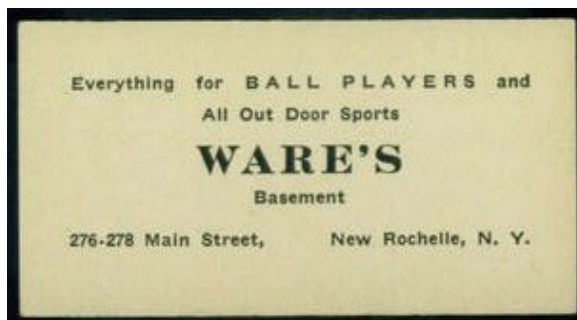


The next three advertising backs share roughly the same availability, and are noticeably more difficult than the above-listed sets. Altoona Tribune is one of the m101-4 advertisers whose cards are affected by pressure lines, both vertical and horizontal, and as such these usually top out at vg-ex, although a few have graded higher and many present far better. No variations are known either as to orientation or typeset, nor is the short-print Stanage expected to appear here.

Twenty Tribune cards were given free to the first twenty kids who showed up at the Newspaper's offices on June 12, 1916. For those and others, "all that is required to secure the full set of 200 pictures is a little service", stated the ad in that morning's paper. The nature of such service is unknown, but the paper ran an article the following morning naming the first youngster who obtained the full set, so apparently it could be accomplished in one day. As for the twenty cards given free, there is no evidence to show their composition, unlike the case with the department stores that distributed twenty-card "series" in numerical order. Given the advertiser, it is possible that interested kids were asked to sign up new subscribers for the paper and were awarded twenty or some other number of cards for each subscription, which would explain how the full 200 card set could be completed in one day.

Importantly, the initial ad specifically beckoned "2000 Boys Wanted Today", implying that such number of sets was available, yet the next day's story mentioned that "Hundreds of boys in Altoona will have the entire set of 200 if the present interest is a criterion". This suggests that less than a thousand showed interest, as the paper would have no reason to minimize the success of its ad campaign, and if anything would have puffed the number of participants. Also, while the Tribune asked for 2000 attendees to its event, the following day's account claimed "we have arranged with the concern printing them to supply us with any quantity desired". This could mean that the printer was prepared to fulfill a 2000 set order or more, but that a smaller number had been printed with potentially more to follow. It also could be mean that an initial order of 2000 sets had been placed and printed, leaving open the question of whether/how many unissued cards were discarded. In any event, a little more than one-quarter of the set and a total of around sixty cards is all that has been confirmed to exist, which seems consistent with a low distribution of under 1000 sets.

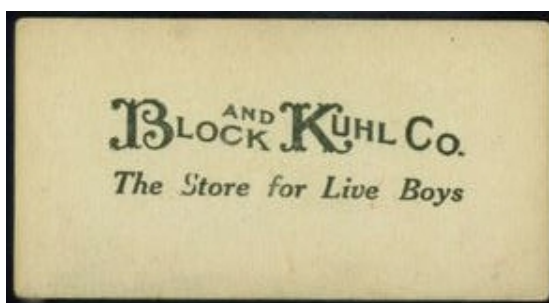
11. Wares Basement



Little is known about the distribution of cards by Ware's Basement, a New Rochelle department store. Contrary to what the name might imply, the store was not some modest to second-rate mercantile outpost, but was among the largest department stores in the country in its day--with three floors of goods for sale above the basement--and was later taken over by Bloomingdales and run as its first suburban store. However and despite operating within the huge environs of New York City, Ware's has not been found to have provided any newspaper advertising for this m101 set to date. It is thus unclear whether the store followed the same advertising regimen as several of the other department stores that bought into Mendelsohn's promotion and made the cards available to customers in twenty card series. It is also unclear whether Ware's cards are associated with m101-4 only, or are instead one of the blended/hybrid sets found among some of the other department store issues, for reason that no low-numbered card 1-20 has been confirmed to exist.

Only about fifty Ware's cards are known, or about 15% fewer than from the aforementioned Altoona Tribune set. No short-prints have been confirmed, nor have any variations in either typeset or orientation. Like Altoona Tribune and others, Ware's cards display the pressure lines that impair condition, although they are not as noticeable in this set.

12. Block & Kuhl



Block and Kuhl is one of the blended sets, with low numbers 1-20 corresponding to m101-5 and the remaining 180 cards lining up with m101-4. This advertiser's back includes the short-print Stanage, so the m101-4 part of its composition was produced in the early print run for that set. The number of known examples for this Peoria, Illinois department store is about a handful less than Ware's, and a little more than 20% of the 200 subjects have been confirmed. Of those, nearly 20% are from the low-numbered m101-5s, which is nearly double the percentage that one would find with even distribution. Still, the overall sample size for Block & Kuhl is too small to make any conclusions about the "ease" in which the low numbers are found, as fewer than ten of those are known. The backs on the low numbers can be found oriented in either direction with about equal frequency, which is unusual for a blended set, while the high numbers read in the typical m101-4 bottom to top fashion.

13. Morehouse Baking



The placement of Morehouse Baking here on the scarcity list should be noted with a disclaimer that it could change at the whim and caprice of a single collector. There are about 120 different subjects known to exist with this Lawrence, Massachusetts bakery back, but 3/4 of those are believed to be owned by one man, who shared scans of his grouping some years ago. That collection may have grown to include some of the other known examples, or may have decreased by unknown amounts if he has been disposed to parting with any. Although near sets of Gimbels and Herpolsheimer have been sold and apparently kept thereafter, decent numbers of those cards have circulated before and since. By contrast, excluding the singular collection of Morehouse cards leaves only 45-50 others confirmed in the hobby. Scarcity of this ad back is therefore very unstable, for it could change substantially on short notice.

Like Standard Biscuit, Morehouse Baking issued all cards from the m101-4 and m101-5 sets, meaning in theory there are twice as many cards that could carry this advertising. Thus far, the m101-4 version of these cards approximately doubles the number of known for m101-5. Morehouse Baking cards were subject to redemption and are often found with a purple "cancelled" stamp on the back, no doubt much to the chagrin of graded card collectors. No variations are known, either as to orientation or typeset, and no short-printed cards have been identified.

14. Everybody's



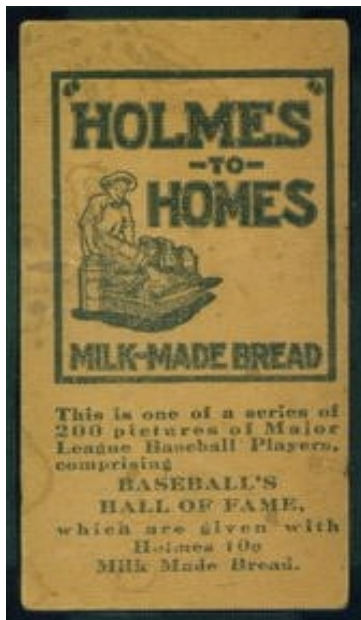
Probably the most difficult m101 back to rank in scarcity is the m101-4 advertising for the

Everybody's store in El Paso. As mentioned earlier, there are more than five dozen of these cards known, which would make it more plentiful than the preceding Altoona Tribune, Ware's Basement and Block & Kuhl issues, although not by all that much. However and again, there are only around two dozen different subjects confirmed, which is more in line with the scarcest ad backs. Moreover, there are four different font types used in creating the Everybody's backs, all much more nuanced than the different Gimbels backs. Three of these tougher font styles are seldom seen, and only six players can be found with them, which of course makes this issue much scarcer for those collecting back variations.

The letter "E" helps distinguish the four font or typeset styles. If the top two arms are of the same length, it is a Type 3. If not and the top and bottom serifs on the E point out at 45 degrees (like Times New Roman) then you have Type 4. If neither of these then a Type 1 will be thicker/bolder than Type 2 if both are in hand. If you do not have two for comparison then Type 1 will have a long-tailed apostrophe which extends down to a point almost even with where the arms of the adjoining Y meet to form a V point, while Type 2 apostrophe is short tailed and will extend to a point not even half-way down the Y arms.

In sum, Everybody's scarcity is determined not by its overall population and the ability to find one copy of the back but is instead augmented by the few number of card subjects and multiple back possibilities. The Type 1 back is by far the most common, and again will show as thicker/bolder/darker than the rest. All read bottom to top. The short-print Stange portrait is unknown to this set.

15. **Holmes to Homes**



Three of the final four scarce backs,—one from m101-5 and two from m101-4— are noticeably tougher than all others. The “easiest” is Holmes to Homes, which owes its claim of scarcity to the fact that nearly all known examples have significant back damage from album or scrap book removal. Most of this damage is paper loss on the ad itself, while others have glue stains from more careful removal, any and all of which of course detracts from the desire to collect the back. It is not as if the card fronts are otherwise pristine either. The cards present mostly at vg-ex or worse even apart from the back damage, so it appears that their affixation onto the pages of an album occurred after they were well handled. In short, condition scarcity is what defines this issue. Only about a dozen of undamaged Holmes to Homes cards are known, and a couple of these appear to have light stamping on the ad back, which lowers their technical grade as well.

The stamping may be a cancellation—this would be consistent with newspaper ads promoting the cards in the Washington D.C. area where the bakery operated. The ads offered three major prizes to those who collected and redeemed the entire set of 200 cards, which were inserted one to each 10 cent loaf of Milk-Maid Bread. Interestingly, the fourth-place

and final prize was a large framed copy of the 200 cards—Mendelsohn’s uncut sheet— and 200 of these sheets were supposedly available. None has been seen in the hobby, which seems odd. If indeed that many complete sheets were printed, then it almost surely was anticipated that there would be a significant response to the promotion. The company would not reasonably expect to give out 200 such prizes if only 500 sets were distributed as singles, as that would mean an unrealistic 40% of the cards had been collected, assembled as a set and redeemed. It would follow that more than Mendelsohn’s 500 set minimum order would have been placed, yet the surviving population does not support such assumption.

Moreover, redemption does not explain the paucity of known Holmes to Homes cards. Because only three grand prizes were awarded, redemption of the three complete sets needed for those prizes would hardly impact the total population of 500 sets (the Mendelsohn minimum) or more that had been ordered. If more sets were redeemed to earn the fourth prize—a complete sheet of the cards—then one would expect those sheets to have survived. It would make little sense to scrimp, save, barter and trade to amass the 200 individual cards, redeem them for a nicely framed full sheet, and then discard the sheet.

Whatever mysteries surround the production of Holmes to Homes cards, it is certain that very few have circulated in the hobby. Moreover, it appears that nearly all of the known examples emanate from one source. Most of the cards display remarkably similar damage, as if removed from a scrapbook or album at or around the same time. The newspaper advertisements for the cards did not mention any album in which the cards could be displayed, and none seems likely given that the advertiser’s goal was for kids to redeem them. Instead it may be that a single collector decided to house his set in a scrapbook, and at some point these were removed and brought into the hobby for dissemination. If so, it remains even more remarkable that so few of these can be found today; i.e., that but for this one collection, they would practically not be seen at all. This is strange in that they were advertised somewhat prominently in popular newspapers (Washington Times and Washington Herald), in a city with a major league team and fan base. For now, there have been no variations seen for this advertiser’s card back, whether in typeset or orientation. The three short-printed m101-5s of Becker, Cady and Wallace have not appeared with this back.

16. Successful Farming

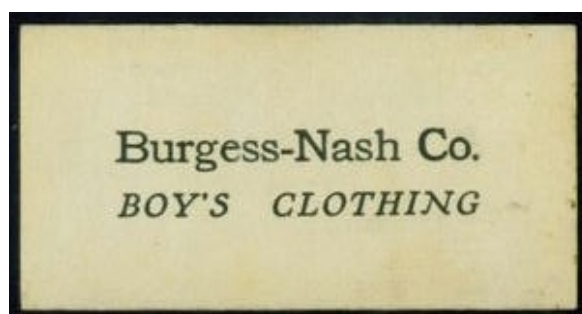


Successful Farming’s 1916 magazines boasted a circulation of 700,000 right on the cover. Whether or not the number was exaggerated, the periodical no doubt was widely read and reached a national subscription base. It is therefore somewhat surprising that only about four dozen of these cards have been confirmed, with one of those dozen or so as duplicates. It is all the more puzzling because publisher E.T. Meredith was the consummate salesman who pitched his publication at every opportunity. In the Spring of 1916, Meredith issued a large premium catalogue containing hundreds of household and sporting goods and offered cash prizes of up to \$500.00 to those who chased down new subscriptions for Successful Farming. Notably, no mention was

made of any baseball cards; however, the May, 1916 issue of Successful Farming made a direct offer to youngsters for “Photos of 6 Baseball Stars FREE”, and explained how they could obtain 194 other player photos, as well as “a long line of gloves, mitts, balls, etc.”, as rewards for helping find new subscribers. The cards were available at levels of 50, 100, 150 and 200 different, depending on the number of subscriptions obtained and their length. Perhaps the earlier contests exhausted interest in magazine hawkers, because few of these cards are found today.

Meredith did not run the May, 1916 ad again. However, its one placement is helpful in explaining why six of the Successful Farming cards can be found without numbers, as the six listed freebies (Alexander, Baker, Evers, Jackson, Lajoie, and Zimmerman) are the only subjects found lacking this card feature. A lower grade Alexander was the sole unnumbered example known until 2012, but since then two full “sets” of six have surfaced, one which was auctioned together as a lot and the other as singles. An Alexander with a number also has been confirmed, so the six promotional cards might be considered separate from the regular set, although all are quite scarce. It is not known whether the short-print cards of Becker, Cady and Wallace exist with this ad back, and no font variations have been observed. One card, Zach Wheat, has been seen with reverse orientation, i.e., an upside-down back.

17. **Burgess-Nash**



Fewer than three dozen cards from this Omaha department store have been confirmed, making it the second scarcest of the m101 advertising backs. Moreover, these also display the pressure marks that adversely affect condition, and no Burgess-Nash card has attained even vg-ex status from third-party graders. The initial Omaha World-Herald ad of April 28, 1916 sought 500 boys to begin their collections the following day—a significant number because 500 was the minimum number of sets Mendelsohn’s mailer agreed to print for those who took him up on his promotion. Given the few specimens extant, it is unlikely that the store ordered anything over the minimum.

As occurred with several of the other department stores, Burgess-Nash cards were issued in series of twenty. Not all series are represented among the known examples; in fact, all confirmed cards are numbered under 56 and then again 161-180. This latter group corresponds with what would have been series 9, and more than a third of all known Burgess-Nash cards are found here, suggesting that they may have come from one collector’s experience. Unfortunately, although it is part of that series the Stanage card is not among those known. Still, it is unlikely that the short-printed portrait to waist variation is found in this set, as the few confirmed of that card with printed backs all come from blended set advertisers, and Burgess-Nash distributed only m101-4.

18. Mall Theatre



The most difficult ad back for collectors to locate was issued by a Cleveland movie house known as the Mall Theatre. This m101-4 affiliated set may not be the scarcest, however, as two or three dozen were believed sold in the mid to late 1980's by well-known and respected dealer Mark Macrae. If so they have not re-circulated, at least not in that number, nor has anyone come forward to claim such holdings. Instead I have confirmed only eighteen cards with this advertising, exactly half of which were sold through a catalogue by East Coast coin and card dealer Dick Dolloff in August, 2004. Although a few were known prior to that, the checklist of confirmed subjects has moved only slightly since.

The cards apparently were meted out one at a time with the purchase of a movie ticket, at least if the ad back is believed. The location of the theatre itself, with its generic name and non-descript address (“Opposite Post Office”), was a mystery to the hobby until uncovered by collector Paul Kaufman around 2008. Building owner L. H. Becht proclaimed the theatre as a unique duplex, housing two movie auditoria on separate stories that were accessible from either of two streets, one actually at higher elevation than the other. The entire project was not undertaken until 1916, although Becht’s smaller theatre of the same name had been operating at the location for nearly six years, and construction of the upper auditorium was not complete until the beginning of 1917. The card advertising does not appear to have been very successful, perhaps due to the fact that they were allocated so miserly and the inconvenience of ongoing construction.

Like many other m101-4 and m101-5 sets, those with Mall Theatre ad backs are found in no better than vg-ex condition. There are no known variations, either in typeset or orientation, and the short printed Stanage card #168 is likely not part of the set.

Conclusion.

As stated at the outset, I believe it worthwhile to memorialize as much as possible the hobby’s knowledge of m101-4 and m101-5 advertising backs as it exists at present, and to use this as a marker of what is known now so that growth can be tracked—kind of like those pencil marks that parents make on the wall or door to measure their children’s height over time. Disagreements and corrections are welcome, particularly if they stimulate further research and the sharing of information on these sets, which is far from well developed. Finally, I give thanks to the many who provided me with information on their cards, thereby affirming again why this is such a great hobby.