

# The world of Jefferson R. Burdick, the Father of Card Collecting



*Central Square, New York, Jefferson Burdick's hometown, 2018 photo Central Square Community Historical Society, Heather Stevens, Village Historian*

## Research sheds light on some mysteries



By George Vrechek

Society for American Baseball Research (SABR) Director of Operations Jeff Schatzki contacted me recently to see if I knew of any Jefferson Burdick family members. SABR had awarded Burdick one of their annual Henry Chadwick Awards honoring baseball's great researchers.

In 2005, Burdick's great niece, Betty Clark, contacted me about visiting Burdick's 306,000-card collection which he donated to The New York Metropolitan Museum of Art. My efforts to contact her since had been unsuccessful. I recalled that she had never met Burdick, but had a photo of him and several postcards he created. Schatzki's inquiry challenged me to see what I could find about Burdick's personal life, and how his family and environment related to his collecting.

I have tried to read everything about or by Burdick, and I have written 13 articles for *SCD* on Burdick starting with my first Met visit in 2002. I interviewed three people who met Burdick - Lionel Carter, his wife Irma Carter and Bill MacKay. However, what I knew about Burdick's family and his life outside the hobby was little.



*Jefferson R. Burdick and his father William Henry Burdick, circa 1920 courtesy of Betty Clark*



*Irma and Lionel Carter 2003, photo G. Vrechek*

Some articles about Burdick, including some of my own, have either tried to fill in blanks about Burdick's life or have repeated information that wasn't exactly correct. He came from Syracuse (wrong). He graduated from Syracuse University (not quite right). He was a bachelor (correct) and had limited family (wrong). He was an electrician (wrong), had never attended a baseball game (wrong) and never drove a car (likely wrong). He was reclusive (more complicated than that). He collected cards continually since he was a kid (wrong). He lived frugally (correct). He had very little money during his life (wrong). He died penniless (probably correct) and was buried in an unmarked grave (unmarked for 30 years).

### **First impressions**

Collectors who had met Burdick praised his honesty, dedication and organization, but commented that first appearances were deceiving. MacKay described meeting Burdick in the late 1950s, "An elderly man appeared; tall, but spent by age; slender; and mentally alert....He had slender hands which he moved nervously." Lionel Carter wrote about his first meeting in 1952, "He was badly crippled and to walk proved an effort. His arms hung at odd angles from his body, he could not even straighten his neck." Irma Carter described him to me as "odd."

A *Syracuse Post-Standard* 1997 article by Sean Kirst included an interview with John DeFlores (1908-1998) who worked back to back on the same bench with Burdick at the huge Crouse-Hinds Company factory "piecing together detonators and intricate electrical parts." (They were not electricians.) DeFlores stated, "He was picked on his whole life....He always kept to himself." Kirst wrote, "Burdick was thin, quiet, meticulous. Gruff factory workers found him peculiar. But DeFlores liked him." DeFlores called him a very generous man. Burdick trusted DeFlores enough to show him the treasured cards that dominated his small apartment. Another retired worker, Milton Juengel, expressed similar feelings.

### **Checking the records**

By looking at census, selective service, marriage, death and property records, I was able to fill in some of the blanks I had about Burdick. Rereading his books, articles and letters filled in more. I contacted people in Burdick's home town of Central Square, New York, and tried to find his residences and any other relatives.

### **Town historian**

Heather Stevens is a central Wisconsin native who moved to Central Square years ago, served as a village trustee and got interested in local history. She became the historian for the Central Square Community Historical Society. I talked to her about what she knew about Burdick. She said much of what she knew came from reading my articles on him. Local knowledge about him was scarce even though there are still Burdicks in the village. She added, "His passion and determination are admirable especially due to the physical ailments he had. Yet, I think it is sad that he is such a mystery. There is so little I can find on him and his family. I know when I do talks about him, people, and even students, are so impressed that someone like that came from our area."

### **Finding relatives and the farmhouse**

In 2012, Ken Belson of *The New York Times* asked me about family members when writing an article on digitizing Burdick's collection at The Met. I had given him what information I had about Burdick's great niece, Betty Clark. Betty's grandmother, Beatrice G. Burdick (1893-1975), was Jefferson Burdick's sister. Thanks to Belson's efforts in April 2018, I found that 55-year old Betty Clark was now Elizabeth Taorima and living 56 miles west of Central Square. Unfortunately, she did not respond to phone calls.

However, thanks to Stevens, I learned that Steven and Dawn Burdick live on the same street in Central Square where Burdick once lived. I talked to them and found that they had just recently learned that Steven Burdick is related to Jefferson Burdick. His grandfather, Myrl L. Burdick (1884-1959), was Jeff's half-brother.

What I found in my research is not likely to be 100% accurate, since records can be inconsistent or incorrect and memories can be inexact, but what I learned about Burdick's life helped me understand him more.



*Central Square in 1910, courtesy of CSCHS*

### **Central Square**

Jefferson R. Burdick was born in 1900, near Central Square, New York, a farm town 20 miles north of Syracuse. Central Square is a village within the town(ship) of Hastings, New York, one of 22 town(ships) in Oswego County. The village started in 1815 as a stagecoach stop and tavern built at the intersection of two roads. A store, hotel and blacksmith shop followed. Burdick's father was a dairy farmer and lived on what was known as Burdick Road 1.7 miles southwest of the center of the village of 364 people.

Central Square is still small with 1,800 people and sits at the junction of two old roads and railroads, and is three miles from Lake Oneida and the route of the New York State Canal System, successor to the Erie Canal. Interstate 81 passes to the east of town where there is a Walmart. Burdick is buried between his parents at the Hillside Cemetery just north of the stoplight in town.

### Extensive family tree

FamilySearch genealogy records have Robert Burdick (1630-1692) coming from England to Rhode Island in 1651. (The Mayflower arrived in 1620.) To give you an idea of the problems involved in tracing ancestors, just the name Robert Burdick was spelled Birdict, Berdick, Burdett, Burditt, Burdict, and Burdick in official records at the time.

Robert Burdick became a farmer and, like many early farmers in need of help, the larger the family the better. Robert and his American-born wife, Ruth Hubbard (1640-1691), were off and running populating the New World with 10 more Burdicks who slowly moved westward. Incredibly, each of Jefferson Burdick's seven American great-grandfathers had between eight and 10 children. Today there is a Burdick Family Association website run by Howard Burdick which has a data base of 86,846 Burdick descendants.

(E-77) 254

**Enumeration of the Inhabitants** living in Trill Election District, Town of Ala

Village of \_\_\_\_\_, County of Cayuga, State of NEW YORK, on June 1, 1905.

Name of Institution \_\_\_\_\_ Yerton & Taylor

| RESIDENCE    | NAME<br>of each person whose usual place of abode on June 1, 1905, was in this family.<br>Enter surname first, then the given name and middle initial, if any.<br>INCLUDE every person living on June 1, 1905. Omit children born since June 1, 1905. | RELATION<br>Relationship of each person to the head of the family. | COLOR, SEX AND AGE |     |               | NATIVITY<br>If born in this country, write United States; if of foreign birth, write the name of the country. | CITIZENSHIP |                   | OCCUPATION,<br>trade or profession of each person enumerated. |     |
|--------------|---|--|--------------------|-----|---------------|---|-------------|-------------------|---|-----|
|              |   |  | Color              | Sex | Age           |   | By birth    | By naturalization | Occupation  |     |
| Street       | House number  |  | 4                  | 5   | 6             | 7   | 8           | 9                 | 10  | 11  |
| Burdick Road |   | Burdick Russell  | Head               | M   | 42            | United States   | cit         |                   | Farmer  | emp |
|              |   | Eda  | Wife               | F   | 36            | United States   | cit         |                   | Housework   | X   |
|              |   | Floyd  | Son                | M   | 18            | United States   | cit         |                   | at Home   | X   |
| Burdick Road |   | Burdick Fred   | Son                | M   | 16            | United States   | cit         |                   | at Home   | X   |
|              |   | Burdick Wm   | Head               | M   | 79            | United States   | cit         |                   | Farmer  | emp |
|              |   | Margaret   | Wife               | F   | 64            | United States   | cit         |                   | Housework   | X   |
|              |   | Marj   | grandson           | M   | 20            | United States   | cit         |                   | Farm laborer  | W   |
|              |   | Yerton Jacob C   | Head               | M   | 62            | United States   | cit         |                   | Farmer  | emp |
|              |   | Arba   | Son                | M   | 33            | United States   | cit         |                   | Farm laborer  | W   |
|              |   | Grace M  | Son in law         | F   | 23            | United States   | cit         |                   | Housework   | X   |
|              |   | Leticia B  | Daughter           | F   | 28            | United States   | cit         |                   | at Home   | X   |
|              |   | Vern C   | son in law         | M   | 6             | United States   | cit         |                   | at school (7)   | X   |
|              |   | Jessie   | 7. Daughter        | F   | 4             | United States   | cit         |                   | X   | X   |
|              |   | Thurs G  | 4. Daughter        | F   | 2             | United States   | cit         |                   | X   | X   |
|              | Burdick Wm Jr   | Head   | M                  | 40  | United States | cit   |             | Farmer            | GA  |     |
|              | Mary L.   | Wife   | F                  | 71  | United States | cit   |             | Housework         | X   |     |
|              | Beatrice T  | Daughter   | F                  | 12  | United States | cit   |             | at school (6)     | X   |     |
|              | Jeffries  | Son  | M                  | 5   | United States | cit   |             | X                 | X   |     |
|              | Gordon Lorenzo  | Head   | M                  | 60  | United States | cit   |             | Farmer            | GA  |     |
|              | Jana  | Wife   | F                  | 59  | United States | cit   |             | Housework         | X   |     |

The 1905 Census lists 11 Burdicks and 7 Yertons on Burdick Road or nearby. "Jeffries" is living with his parents and sister. Jefferson Burdick's grandfather, William, is down the road and married a Yerton daughter who died in 1891. New York State Census

Jefferson Burdick's great grandparents, Russell and Elizabeth Burdick, settled on a farm near Central Square around 1818. Jeff's grandparents, William (1824-1906) and Polly Catherine Yerton (1828-1891), took over the family farm. They had two sons who died in infancy, Emmett and Russell. Their oldest surviving son of nine children was William Henry Burdick (1861-1928), who took over the farm from his father. William Henry Burdick married Ida J. Hall (1861-1886) in 1879. In 1882 they had a girl, Alta, who died in 1888. Myrl L. (1884-1959) was their second child. Ida Hall died in 1886 and William remarried Mary Elizabeth Nann (or Naun) (1863-1929) in 1888. Elizabeth's ancestors came from Germany. Their first child was Beatrice G. (1893-1975). In the 1890s, it appears there were three generations of Burdicks all in the same farmhouse on Burdick Road. The old farmhouse still stands and its current address is 277 Dry Bridge Road.



*Jefferson Burdick's boyhood home is at 110 Mohawk, Central Square, NY, although the original front door faced another road to the rear. photo Central Square Community Historical Society, Heather Stevens, Village Historian*

### **Jefferson R. arrives**

Our best information is that sometime around 1900 or slightly before, Jeff's parents and his sister Beatrice moved to a new house a mile closer to town along Burdick Road; the current address is 110 Mohawk Ave. Jeff's half-brother Myrl stayed with his grandparents in the original farmhouse, continued working on the farm and eventually took over the farm, being the oldest son. Jefferson R. Burdick was born February 25, 1900, and was the last of William's four children. We don't know for sure what the R. stands for, but Stevens and I bet that it is Russell. Jeff's sister Beatrice married in 1909 and had a

daughter who died in 1910. The 1910 census shows Beatrice and her daughter living with Jeff and their parents. Beatrice remarried in 1916. Jeff remained with his parents and never married.

### Childhood memories

In the 1960 American Card Catalog, Burdick mentions the “quaint life of a small boy” and “the serenity of a quiet country life.” Burdick wrote, “Evenings and Sundays presented problems in unoccupied time, especially when winter weather kept everyone indoors.” (Central Square is 20 miles from the eastern edge of Lake Ontario. Snowfall in the area runs about 120 inches per year, on par with many Western ski areas.) It is unlikely Burdick’s home had electricity until about 1914.

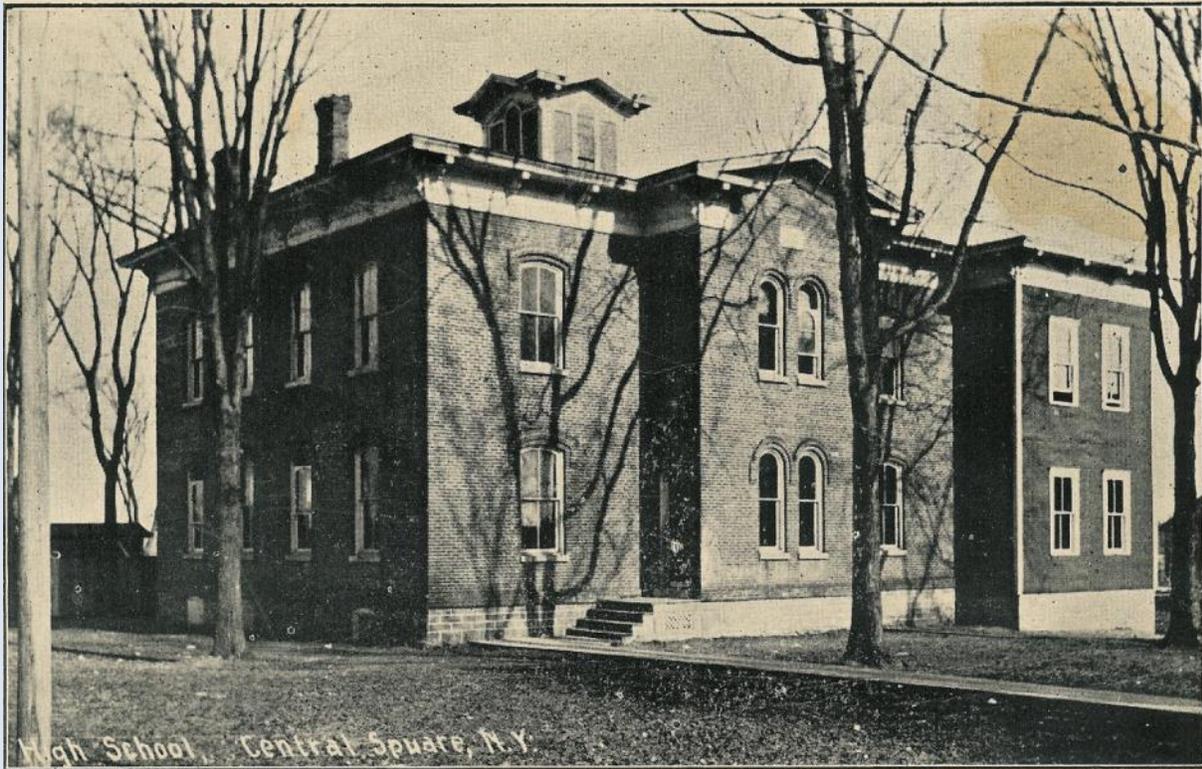


*Three “real photo” postcards created by Jefferson Burdick showed Central Square and the nearby railroad tracks. His hometown averaged 10 feet of snow per year, courtesy of Betty Clark*



Burdick wrote, “From somewhere I inherited a love of pictures.” People hungered for pictures, a window to the past. As they became more available, “Every succeeding generation became more forgetful and the old pictures lost their sentimental value.” He retained about 100 each of post cards, tobacco cards, soda cards and a few advertising issues in 1910, which coincided with the American Tobacco Company’s return to insert cards. According to a 1955 Burdick interview in *The Syracuse Herald-American*, “He asked his father to smoke different brands of cigarettes so he could get different cards.”





*Burdick's high school building is still standing, 1910 photo courtesy of CSCHS*

Burdick attended a “little red school house about a mile away at a fork in the road” according to postcard collector David Keever in 1963. Burdick graduated in 1918 from Central Square High School, a mile from his home. The school building is still standing and his “permanent record” is on file in the school office.

Burdick likely had knowledge that his family had been farmers in the Northeast since the 1600s. Family traditions and American history were integral to his background.

### **Off to Syracuse**

In September 1918, Burdick registered for the draft and was listed as medium height, slender build, blue eyes, dark brown hair, no excluding conditions. His occupation was auto mechanic for Wightman & Penoyer, a Ford dealership in the little town. Interestingly, it has been reported that he never drove. The 1920 census showed him still at home as a farm laborer, likely helping his father or half-brother milking cows by hand every day. My grandfather had a similar option on a dairy farm in Europe. He chose to come to the United States instead. Burdick chose to head to Syracuse that fall.



*Burdick's farm was just southwest of Central Square. Syracuse University is 20 miles south, 1895 map from New York Public Library available under Creative Commons*

The *New York Times* found that Burdick earned a two-year general business certificate from Syracuse University in 1922. He was a member of Psi Upsilon fraternity and lived at 848 Livingston and 1203 Harrison near campus. I didn't find any record of college attendance by others in his immediate family.

The 1925 census had Burdick living with both parents in a new location near the center of town, 628 S. Main Street, Central Square. Burdick's occupation was listed as newspaper advertising solicitor for the *Syracuse Herald*, 20 miles away. According to Keverer he worked at advertising there only four years.



*Burdick lived with his parents at 628 S. Main Street, Central Square, NY. - above and middle building on second photo. He sold the home in 1942. photos Central Square Community Historical Society, Heather Stevens, Village Historian*



### **Death of parents**

In 1928, Burdick's father died, and his mother moved to Syracuse with Jeff. Public records indicate that the bulk of the estate of \$14,000 (\$200,000 in today's dollars) as well as the Main Street home went to Jeff and his mother. His mother died in Syracuse in 1929. Burdick sold his parents' house in 1942. It appears that Burdick inherited a significant nest egg. His half-brother Myrl wound up with the farm and the home at 110 Mohawk, an arrangement apparently excluded from the estate. Beatrice Burdick Watkins, Jeff's sister, received \$600 from her father's estate.

### **Collecting resumes**

Burdick gives 1933 as the time when he got back into collecting in earnest (American Card Catalog, 1960). The Depression was well underway and Burdick may not have been employed. Burdick learned that he suffered from a severe form of arthritis which was slowly crippling him. Perhaps his inheritance helped him through difficult times and enabled him to start buying some collections. In addition to trading cards, he collected stamps and postcards.

In a 1961 letter to long-time *CCB* subscriber Carter, he wrote he had worked for Crouse-Hinds for over 23 years before retiring in 1959, which would mean he didn't start there until 1935 at the earliest. Burdick may have had plenty of time for card collecting between 1933 and 1935, when it appears that he amassed a good portion of his collection. His first well-written article on collecting appeared in the December 1935 *Hobbies* magazine. Readers were encouraged to contact him at 417 S. Crouse Ave, a few blocks from his last college residence and three miles south of the Crouse-Hinds plant.

### **Articles and newsletter**

Burdick wrote six articles for *Hobbies* between 1935 and 1937. He published his own *Card Collectors Bulletin (CCB)* in January 1937 for a handful of subscribers and cranked out eight bulletins by 1939. In 1938 he moved 1.5 miles away to 328 W. Willow St. and then back to Crouse Ave., explaining, "Present conditions do not seem to favor certainty in many things." He stopped the *CCBs* momentarily to devote his efforts to the first catalog in 1939, The United States Card Collectors Bulletin. This catalog, which introduced the card identification system still used today, was incredibly detailed and professionally typeset; 500 loose-leaf copies were printed with 100 copies reserved for *CCB* subscribers. In late 1939, he resumed publishing *CCB* bi-monthly with his own printing equipment. Based on his recent experiences, he advised collectors to run ads, tell friends about wanting cards, visit antique shops and correspond with other collectors, but not to waste much effort contacting manufacturers.

From the research, a picture formed in my mind that Burdick was highly intelligent. A grammatical error in something written by Burdick was rarer than a Wagner. He enjoyed being organized and, perhaps excessively, focused. His day job was spent doing dull, repetitive tasks. In the evenings he would do interesting, to him, repetitive tasks. He could relate easily to other collectors, but others might have viewed him as peculiar.

### **Burdick's job**

In 1940 Burdick was a lodger living with a family of three at 417 S. Crouse Ave. The 1940 census asked for annual income and other information. Burdick was an assembler for Crouse-Hinds Company with two years of college and an annual income of \$1,065. That's right, Burdick had been collecting plenty of cards on an income of \$1,065 per year. After deducting room, meals, taxes and transportation, his weekly disposable income was likely under \$10. No wonder he debated whether a card was worth 1 cent or 2 cents. Perhaps, the inheritance helped him accumulate the cards. (The median annual income

for a man in the U.S. in 1940 was only \$956. Adjusting Burdick's 1940 wages for inflation would get you to a current equivalent of \$19,000 per year.)

In a 1961 letter to Carter reflecting on the past 25 years and his declining health, Burdick wrote, "I worked a lot of 45 or 50 hour weeks....All that time I was doing a lot of card work, too, and it meant a tight schedule as I couldn't work late hours at night as most do. I have to get a full 9 hours sleep. At that time, I went to bed at 8 PM, read the paper for an hour and slept from 9 to 5:30 or 6 AM." Burdick wrote long letters to many *CCB* subscribers. Telephone calls were rare. Cards and wantlists would be sent through the mail, sometimes with "Jeff B" stamped on the back of cards sent for possible trades. Burdick wrote others to get information for his catalog. What he charged for the publications was meant to just cover costs.

### **A boarder near the university**

How did Burdick have time to do all this? One observation is that he was likely a boarder which meant a room and meals; he didn't have to worry about a kitchen to supply or clean. In August 1943, Burdick moved to 420 S. Crouse. You get the impression that Burdick enjoyed living near the Syracuse University campus. He could have likely made use of their library facilities, yet I found no mention of such. While Burdick appears to have been on Crouse Ave during this time, the property tax bills for his inherited home in Central Square were sent to a modest residence near the Crouse-Hinds plant at 904 LeMoyne Ave, Syracuse, from 1937 to 1942.

Burdick reported that his free time had been greatly reduced, yet the *CCB* was loaded with information and news all by Burdick, all for 30 cents annually for six issues. In 1942 he sold his extensive stamp collection. In 1946 he published his second card catalog, now titled the American Card Catalog (ACC).

### **Met donation and family**

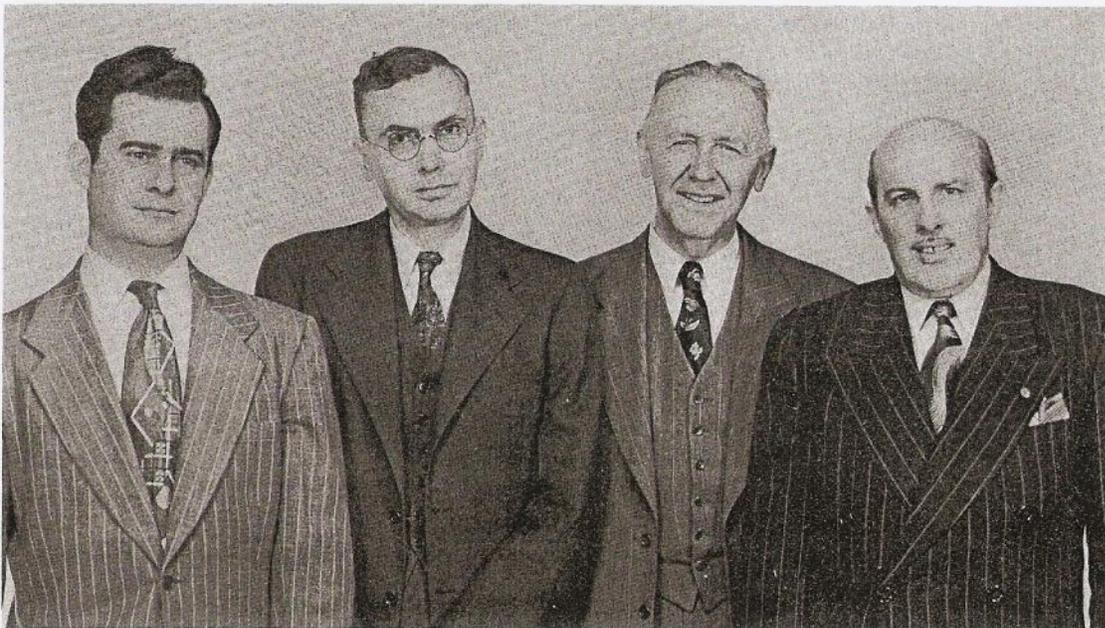
In December 1947, Burdick announced in *CCB* that he was donating his collection to The New York Metropolitan Museum of Art. He wrote that he had "no immediate survivors qualified to carry out my wishes," yet his half-brother Myrl, sister Beatrice and two nephews were nearby at the time. There were dozens of other more distant relatives as well, given the size of the families of Burdick's ancestors. Jeff may never have lived under the same roof as his half-brother Myrl and his sister Beatrice had married by the time Jeff was nine.

I found no reference by Burdick to any of his siblings or their families, but he included minimal personal information in even his letters. His "qualified to carry out my wishes" comment may have been short for, none of my family members are collectors and I'm not sure what they would do with the stuff after I am gone.

### **Family tree of siblings**

Myrl and his wife Edith adopted a young boy who was known as Joseph Burdick (1910-2004) and then had their own son, Ward Burdick (1920-2002). Ward Burdick and his wife Thelma had two sons: Scott (1957-2008) and Steven (1955-). Steven and his wife, Dawn, have two children, Kyle and Kristin, and live near Jeff's boyhood home.

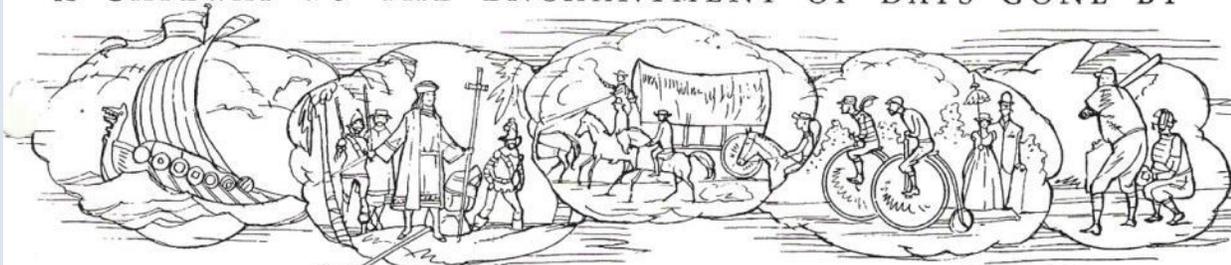
Beatrice Burdick married Neal Watkins (1893-1935) and had a son, William Burdick Watkins (1920-1998). William Burdick Watkins had two children: William Burdick Watkins, Jr. (perhaps, adopted, 1948-2006) and Betty Watkins (Betty Clark/Elizabeth Taorima, 1955-). The closest living known blood relatives of Jefferson Burdick and his siblings are therefore Elizabeth Taorima and Steven Burdick.



At their meeting last May, the catalog editors, in a weak moment, paused before a camera with this result. From left to right its Woody, Jeff, Charlie, and Gene.

Rare photo of Woody Gelman, Jeff Burdick, Charles Bray and Gene DeNardo, 1952 CCB

A GATEWAY TO THE ENCHANTMENT OF DAYS GONE BY—



## The 1953 American Card Catalog

*The Standard Guide on all collected cards and their values*

Compiled from the latest data by

J. R. BURDICK, 420 So. Crouse Ave., Syracuse 10, N. Y., *Managing Editor*

CHARLES R. BRAY, East Bangor, Pa., *Associate Editor in charge of Prices*

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THE CARD COLLECTOR'S BUREAU

VOLUME XLII

JUNE 1 1952

NUMBER 73

A GATEWAY TO THE PAST.

The hobby of card collecting in this country received its greatest

Letterhead used by ACC publishers from CCB

### **1111 Wolf St.**

In 1949 Burdick turned over publishing *CCB* to Charles Bray. In the 1950s, unable to drive and with arthritis crippling him and cortisone treatments producing side effects, Burdick still managed to write many letters and *CCB articles*. He spent vacations visiting museums, dealers and collectors as far away as Chicago and Boston. He visited Bray in Pennsylvania several times. His move around 1953 to 1111 Wolf Street in Syracuse as a lodger enabled him to get to and from work just at the end of the block more easily. He published the 1953 ACC and a 1956 update. He also published catalogs and updates to Detroit Publishing and Pioneer Era postcards in his spare time. Woody Gelman of Topps and John B. Wagner likely contributed artwork for the ACC. The heading on stationery touting the 1953 ACC is "A Gateway to Enchantment of Days Gone By." That wording had to have come from Burdick.

Carter visited Burdick on Wolf Street. He remembered Burdick living in a very small, bare room and that most of the cards had been shipped to The Met. DeFlores also visited Burdick and helped him mail cards. Unlike the Crouse Ave. residences, the 2,600 foot Wolf St. house still stands and sold for \$68,500 in 2011. Apparently there have been no cards found under any floorboards.

Yes, Burdick made a few thousand dollars a year and lived in a small apartment with cards now likely worth tens of millions. Burdick's lifetime wages probably wouldn't buy him more than a few of his own better cards today.

### **Burdick and baseball**

Some Burdick stories mention that he never attended a baseball game. However hobby writer Troy Kirk was in contact with noted British collector Edward Wharton-Tigar in 1990, who wrote Kirk, "I knew Jeff Burdick quite well and once took him to a World Series baseball game at the Yankee Stadium in New York with Charlie Bray!"

Although, Burdick may be viewed as collecting primarily non-sport sets, his letters to Carter showed an enthusiasm for figuring out the different baseball issues and backs. He frequently complained about how much people were willing to pay for a T206 Wagner and was reluctant to raise its value in his catalog. He wrote Carter in 1962, "I am more concerned about the card collecting angle (than the baseball season). Looks to me like there are too many long sets being issued. Also a lot of prices being paid are too high. I may be wrong but that's the way it looks from here. I personally discontinued collecting all the sport sets about ten years ago, also the funny ? jokes and horror monster stuff. I have most of the others and even a token lot of the sports and monsters but nowhere near completion, and I'm not trying to fill them in in anyway."

### **Totally disabled and move to NYC**

Burdick retired from Crouse-Hinds in 1959. He wrote Carter that doctors gave him a "totally disabled" rating. He moved to New York City to work frantically on mounting the 306,000 cards (including 30,000 baseball cards) which he had shipped there but were not yet in albums. In 1960 he was also managing editor of the American Card Catalog. (If you haven't had the opportunity, read the first few pages of the 1960 ACC and compare Burdick's enthusiasm and depth to what you might find on the first few pages of a card price guide today. I think you will become a Burdick fan.) He took a room at 35 Madison Avenue three miles from The Met, living there until he was admitted to Bellevue Hospital in 1962.

In 1961, Burdick wrote Carter, "It wouldn't take too much to put me out of commission.... I am getting pretty badly bent and twisted out of shape and my clothes, for example, just don't drape around me gracefully any more. Some might say I look like something the cat dragged in."

In another 1961 letter to Carter, Burdick wrote, "I made arrangements for my cards in 1948 (actually it was 1947, Jeff) when I was only 48 years old, as at the time I was getting rather poor physically and I didn't know how long. However, the miracle drugs (cortisone) came on in 1950 and allowed me to work until 1959 and in the meanwhile to sort out from 2 to 6 cartons of cards each year and ship them on. Now I'm finishing the job here (The Met). Another full year before I can scrape bottom."



**THE 1960 AMERICAN CARD CATALOG**  
The Standard Guide on all Collected Cards and their Value.

Published by:

J. R. BURDICK, Managing Editor      WOODY GELMAN, 254-26th Street, Brooklyn 22, N.Y.  
CHARLES R. BRAY, East Bangor, Pa.      CHARLES C. BARKER, 206 Runyon Avenue, St. Louis 25, Mo.  
PRESTON D. OREM, 341 E. Calaveras Street, Altadena, Calif.

*Lionel -*      *May 12, 1960*

Got the card and glad to know we passed the test by you. But that isn't what we're worrying about. What we want to know is: what does Luma say? If she approves - we're made. Otherwise we might better not started.

I guess there are a few errors scattered about but what the heck - who is 100% perfect? Not me, or anything I'm likely to make - even if I have a bunch of fiscal gypsies helping on the job.

The printer who set the type was only a little one horse outfit but he did pretty good. For the actual printing and the binding he turned it over to a real high class place. Somebody said it was the third largest in the world. I don't know. Only I could see they do plenty work and the best. Finished books come off on a conveyor belt faster



*Burdick writes to Carter about the printing of the 1960 ACC, "I guess there are a few errors scattered about, but what the heck - who is 100% perfect." The stationery was likely designed by Woody Gelman of Topps (Gelman's son, Richard, couldn't tell for sure.)*

Burdick finished pasting his cards in the last of 394 albums at The Met on January 10, 1963, entered University Hospital in New York the next day and died there March 13, 1963. According to Gelman in 1963, Burdick established a fund at The Met to further expand the collection. I found no mention of how that fund was ultimately used. It is possible that medical bills ate up whatever savings remained.



*Jefferson Burdick's headstone at Hillside Cemetery, Central Square, New York*

### **Eulogies**

Burdick was eulogized in the next CCB by many. They saw Burdick not as badly crippled but as “a remarkable man with deep courage and determination (Gelman)” who could “talk interestingly and capably on any number of subjects, yet made no effort to dominate the conversation (Carter).”

The director of The Met's Department of Drawings and Prints, Hyatt Mayor, wrote, “Early in life arthritis began to stiffen his joints and warp his fingers until finally so simple an act as putting on his hat cost him a painful minute to contrive. Living in meager lodgings and spending little on himself, he threw his earnings as well as his energy into publishing books and acquiring the finest collection of American cards and ephemera.”

Collectors contributed \$318 to pay for a brass plaque for Burdick which was given to The Met in 1964. Burdick was buried in Central Square, without a headstone. In 1997, Burdick's friend DeFlores learned that his grave was unmarked and paid \$500 to have Burdick's name placed on a stone to fit between those of his parents.

Growing up in the country outside a small farm town had a lasting impact on Burdick. His family had been farmers and their ancestors had been in the U.S. since 1651. Isolation and physical limitations had a role in his interest in collecting pictures of the past and his sentimentality. He inherited some money, but lived frugally. He developed an enthusiasm for his hobby and for communicating through his articles and letters. The first impression of a frail, bent man was not reflective of his intellect and the generous spirit within.



Center of Central Square, 2018, photo Heather Stevens

