

CAPITALIZING ON TABOOS IN ADVERTISING: THE CIGARETTE CARD SERIES OF W.
DUKE, SONS & COMPANY

by

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Abstract

This essay reveals the themes displayed in the cigarette card series produced at W. Duke, Sons & Co. from 1880 to 1900. The following mainly draws upon the cards themselves, the Duke family's and the business's correspondence, and other miscellaneous company notes. Topics covered include: a historiography, a family history, an overview of the cigarette and tobacco industries, late-eighteenth century capitalism and advertising methods, the interworking of the Duke company, and how the cigarette card series reflect all of these components. The overall argument is that the executives of this enterprise cashed in on the taboos of this time period while offering no new perspectives about the existing social hierarchy in the United States.

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Introduction

The Duke family of North Carolina combined religious piety, family loyalty, and a revolutionary business with a highly innovative approach to making and marketing cigarettes. This methodology included significant price cuts and cigarette card series, found in the cigarette boxes, containing a variety of themes. This study shows how James B. (Buck) Duke of W. Duke, Sons and Company pioneered mass cigarette sales from 1880 to 1900. With a dominantly male, rather than female, target market, the antithesis of the normal buyers of this period, Buck creatively differentiated his business from his competitors like Bull Durham through the primary promotion of a different tobacco product, cigarettes. To effectively distribute and sell the cigarettes, he collaborated with other professionals like traveling salesman, such as Edward Small, and his family members including his brothers. He reached a broad spectrum of male consumers by turning the blank card in cigarette boxes into a device for luring new customers and appealing to their desires. The cardboard stiffening became prime real estate, featuring a multitude of female characters, from flirtatious ladies to exoticized, scantily clad figures.

With the final approval of these products, Buck drew inspiration for these depictions from his personal romps like his time spent in Europe, splashing water on attractive women. While over half of the pictures feature a female, many portray exemplary males and jokes. These visualizations depicted how Buck, his executives, and similar men idealized some and judged others. James thought well of himself as evidenced by how he carried himself with such confidence. He appeals to the same fantasies that he lived out as a wealthy, white male. The themes explore, among other subjects, American excellence, racist humor, and the

objectification of women. These topics demonstrate that it is a white, rich man's world and he is king of tobacco.

Regardless of his national and international success, Buck marketed his products to secularized men and, consequently, met some disapproval. His father demonstrated the religious condemnation of the Protestant faith with his reference to a reverend's plea that Buck remove scandalously clad women from his cigarettes packages. The younger Duke disregarded this request, which shows that he placed sales above moral obligation. The sum of his actions demonstrates the extent to which Buck was willing to belittle others to ensure business success. Furthermore, the male executives' use of female characters reveals how women were seen as little more than a commodity for men to manipulate.

Buck epitomized and glorified the successful, white male and used contemporary, social stereotypes to his advantage. The President, i.e., James, and his associates maintained the status quo.¹ Racism, sexism, exoticism, and other stereotypes ensured a shock factor, which engaged and lured their clientele to seek their card series. Essentially, this study demonstrates how James and his company's executives cashed in on the taboos of the day while offering no new perspectives about the existing social hierarchy in the United States.

Historiography

Scholarship on the card series belongs to a broader literature about advertising, the beginning of the cigarette boom, and James B. Duke's involvement with W. Duke, Sons & Co. and the American Tobacco Company. The Duke's involvement with American tobacco is normally featured in texts concerning the industry at large. *North Carolina Tobacco: A*

¹ George W. Watts, Duke University, W. Duke, Sons & Co., board meeting minutes from W. Duke & Sons Collection, Box 11, 6.

History by Billy Yeargin provides a general sense of how the W. Duke, Sons and Co. fit within the landscape of tobacco. It is an edited work with a compilation of various authors with one chapter, “The Duke Homestead,” that focuses specifically on the family. Linda Funk, the author of this section, addresses all Duke men’s involvement in the beginnings of their tobacco company. She provides the clearest picture of how the family was intertwined. This author speaks specifically about the progression of tobacco leaves as well as the Duke men’s other strides with its business ventures.² Other, more general websites provide a quick glimpse into how the tobacco process functioned within this organization. These sites include: *Encyclopedia of North Carolina*, the Duke University’s Digital Collection overviews, an online exhibit supported by the MUSC: Hollings Cancer Center, and R.J. Reynolds’s bullet-pointed overview concerning the facts of their history. These previously mentioned websites approach the subject to highlight an organization’s accomplishments or to show the danger of tobacco. Broad discourses about tobacco now generally mention the health risks of this product. While these Internet sources contain unelaborated information, they provide a reliable foundation for further, historical interpretation concerning the Duke family and the past of this industry. These sources communicate the connection between the Dukes and the general tobacco industry of this period, but lack a detailed study about how these executives utilized advertising.

The Dukes fascinate many scholars who write biographies that subsequently address the family’s business ventures. For instance, John K. Winkler specifically speak to James B. Duke’s involvement with his tobacco businesses along with his subsequent legacy, especially

² Linda Funk, “The Duke Homestead,” in *North Carolina Tobacco: A History*, ed. Billy Yeargin (Charleston: The History Press, 2008), 39, 45.

at Duke University.³ Winkler's older audience ensures that some of his terminology is now outdated and, at times, offensive. Nevertheless, his book, *Tobacco Tycoon: The Story of James Buchanan Duke*, provides an excellent foundation concerning James's role as an entrepreneur. *The Dukes of Durham* by Robert F. Durden provides more insight about the Duke family's roles within the tobacco company as a whole. It specifically provides accounts concerning the networking necessary to launch cigarettes as a popular commodity.⁴ Roberts' and Knapp's article, "Paving the Way for the Tobacco Trust," shows how the family men (but especially Buck) made their business successful by focusing specifically on cigarette production.⁵ These biographers demonstrate how James's personal life ensured the success of cigarettes, but do not show how the advertising of that time influenced his tactics or an in-depth survey of his card series.

As the ultimate focus of this essay concerns the cigarette card series as a marketing tactic, Anne McClintock's *Imperial Leather* shows messaging concerning race and female characters that existed in the emerging commodity market during the Victorian era, which consequently relates to how Buck's advertising images fit within the historical timeframe.⁶ Juliann Sivulka provides insight about the overall advertising sphere during the late nineteenth-century and how it pertains to the Dukes specifically.⁷ She approaches her study

³ John Winkler, *Tobacco Tycoon: The Story of James B. Duke* (New York: Random House, 1942), 48, 307.

⁴ Robert Durden, "Chapter 2: Beginning Anew in 1865: The Early Phase of W. Duke, Sons and Company," *The Dukes of Durham, 1865-1929* (Durham: Duke University Press, 1975), 21.

⁵ B. W. W. Roberts and Richard F. Knapp, "Paving the Way for the Tobacco Trust: From Hand Rolling to Mechanized Cigarette Production by W. Duke, Sons and Company," *The North Carolina Historical Review* 69, no. 3 (July 1992): 258, 266, accessed April 5, 2018, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23519171>.

⁶ Anne McClintock, "Soft-Soaping Empire: Commodity Racism and Imperial Advertising," *Imperial Leather: Race, Gender and Sexuality in the Colonial Contest* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 209.

⁷ Juliann Sivulka, *Soap, Sex, and Cigarettes: A Cultural History of American Advertising* (Boston: Wadsworth, Cengage Learning, 2012), 42, 148-149.

as a survey of changes in the advertising industry with special attention to how the market incorporated women and people of color.⁸ Chen and Feng's book further explains how older cards made of glass enhanced the images due to their multidimensional appearance.⁹ "Victorian Era Esthetic and Restorative Dentistry: An Advertising Trade Card Gallery" by Croll and Swanson Jr. explores how cards displayed advertisements for dentistry within the late 1800s and beforehand on various mediums like woodcuts.¹⁰ These four authors show how the Duke card series mirrored longstanding mediums. "Newsboy Cabinets" by Mike Reeve shows how other, similar companies copied James's technique.¹¹ This author categorizes and painstakingly analyzes various aspects of these cards. These works contain loosely related topics from an overview of women's portrayal in nineteenth-century ads to specific instances of trade cards. However, none of them fully consider how Duke's card series utilized taboo subjects.

With an understanding of the past advertising tactics, one must also learn about how these methods fit within the context of economics, or more specifically capitalism. Daniel Bell's *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* demonstrates how this economic system pits two adversarial ideas against one another: that of restraint for business and pleasure seeking within the market.¹² Meanwhile, F. J. Chaloupka, *et al.* found that one of the most

⁸ Sivilka, *Soap, Sex, and Cigarettes*, 42, 44, 66.

⁹ Choanan Chen and Yiyou Feng, "Chapter 15: Form and Function of Cigarette Cards," in *Old Advertisements and Popular Culture: Posters, Calendars and Cigarettes, 1900-1950* (San Francisco: Long River press, 2004), Google Books, 78.

¹⁰ Theodore Croll and Ben Swanson Jr., "Victorian Era Esthetic and Restorative Dentistry: An Advertising Trade Card Gallery," *Journal of Esthetic and Restorative Dentistry* 18 iss. 5 (September/October 2016): 235, accessed April 18, 2018, <https://doi-org.proxy006.nclive.org/10.1111/j.1708-8240.2006.00031.x>.

¹¹ Mike Reeve, "Newsboy Cabinets," *Newsboys*, 1, accessed April 18, 2018, <http://www.newsboys.co.uk/Newsboy%20article.pdf>.

¹² Daniel Bell, "Introduction/ The Disjunction of Realms: A Statement of Themes," *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* (New York: Basic Books, Inc., Publishers, 1976), 21.

important tobacco marketing techniques is pricing.¹³ These works lack a portrayal of how these economic realities concerning profit margins would influence the messaging portrayed that the business moguls, like Buck, utilized.

The card series speak largely for themselves, but the historical events and viewpoints depicted on these items need contextualization in a wide array of subjects. These related sources provide nominal, but essential, pieces of the puzzle to decode the card series. For instance, the National Park Service's article about San Francisco Maritime provides an overview about women on ships and some exceptions about females aboard who were in power.¹⁴ This one example demonstrates broader opinions about the fairer sex during this time period. More notable sources concerning the card series include *Manliness and Civilization* by Gail Bederman and "The Modern Art Museum. It's a Man's World." by Carol Duncan. The former explores the defining qualities and variations of masculinity.¹⁵ Duncan provides insight about modern, male artists who are upheld as the dominant, "important" figures within art displays.¹⁶ Meanwhile, author Burnham shows the basis of Benjamin Newton's preaching.¹⁷ This provides some insight about Washington Duke's beliefs, as he named one of his sons after this pastor. The aforementioned writings help the audience to

¹³ Chaloupka, *et al.*, "Tax, Price and Cigarette Smoking: Evidence from the Tobacco Documents and Implications for Tobacco Company Marketing Strategies," *Tobacco Control* 11 (2002): i62, accessed April 18, 2018, http://tobaccocontrol.bmj.com/content/tobaccocontrol/11/suppl_1/i62.full.pdf.

¹⁴ "Women in Maritime History," *National Park Service*, accessed April 18, 2018, <https://www.nps.gov/safr/learn/historyculture/maritimewomenhistory.htm>.

¹⁵ Gail Bederman, "Chapter 1: Remaking Manhood through Race and 'Civilization,'" *Manliness & Civilization: A Cultural History of Gender and Race in the United States, 1880-1917* (Chicago: The University of Chicago Press, 1995), 15, 25.

¹⁶ Carol Duncan, "The Modern Art Museum: It's a Man's World," *Civilizing Rituals: Inside Public Art Museums* (New York: Routledge, 1995), 113.

¹⁷ Jonathan Burnham, Preface to *A Story of Conflict: The Controversial Relationship between Benjamin Willis Newton and John Nelson Darby*, (Eugene, OR: WIPF & Stock Publishers, 2004), xvii.

fully understand the general morals in James's family and the contextual allusions contained in the card series, yet none of them specifically address the card series.

While other sources raised major and relevant historical issues tied to the Duke company, none specifically address how Buck crafted his messaging within the card series. Patrick Porter's "Advertising in the Early Cigarette Industry: W. Duke, Sons & Company of Durham" comes close to doing so. He shows how Buck utilized prices and sexual advertising to maximize sales.¹⁸ His study provides a greater overview of the advertising, but includes discourse about the "cigarette cards."¹⁹ In reference to these primary artifacts, he surveys their themes and how James involved himself.²⁰ Nevertheless, Porter focuses on how the cards related to the business rather than a full analysis about the social implications of the items' messaging.²¹

Goldstein's writing comes even closer to the subsequent study. His first article, "Race in Early Tobacco Advertising: The Case of American Tobacco Cards 1880-1911," provides a quick address concerning how economics influenced the inclusion of various races with cards published 1880-1911.²² The next year, he published "Gender in American Tobacco Cards: 1880-1920: The Role Competition," which is more in depth. This article comes closest to the following topic as he analyzes a similar time period and the same primary sources, the published card series of the W. Duke, Sons and Company. He noted that the physical exploitation of female characters within the card series positively related to an increase in

¹⁸ Patrick Porter, "Advertising in the Early Cigarette Industry: W. Duke, Sons & Company of Durham," *North Carolina Office of Archives and History* 48, no. 1 (1971): 35, accessed December 13, 2017, <http://www.jstor.org/stable/23518222>.

¹⁹ Porter, "Advertising in the Early Cigarette Industry," 34.

²⁰ Porter, "Advertising in the Early Cigarette Industry," 35-41.

²¹ Porter, "Advertising in the Early Cigarette Industry," 42.

²² Jonathan Goldstein, "Race in Early Tobacco Advertising: The Case of American Tobacco Cards 1880-1911," *Review of Radical Political Economics* 43, iss. 3 (Summer 2011): 346, accessed April 5, 2018, <http://journals.sagepub.com/doi/pdf/10.1177/0486613411407720>.

competitive intensity among the tobacco companies.²³ Goldstein measures the intensity based on a comparison between competing or rival companies' respective market shares.²⁴ However, his approach is more concerned with the finances of the business rather than the advertisement motivations. While he studies how the economics correlated with the advertising of the company, this essay concerns itself with how the societal norms influenced themes contained within the cards of the late nineteenth century.

Family & Tobacco Background

Washington Duke left W. Duke, Sons & Company to two of his sons: James and his brother, Benjamin (Ben) N. Duke.²⁵ Washington began this business in Orange County soon after his conscripted service in the Civil War. Brodie, another son, initiated a plant in Durham, North Carolina in 1871, which Buck later established as the business's headquarters because of its more central location.²⁶ In 1884, Buck built another factory in New York City that assisted the organization to transform into a national business.²⁷ Brodie became a manufacturer in one wing of the Durham factory while Ben and Buck received "equal partnerships" with the tobacco trade.²⁸ Washington became somewhat of a traveling salesman to advertise the merchandise.²⁹ In 1878, George W. Watts joined the executives as a financial supporter, which helped the business remain competitive as it had more funding to

²³ Jonathan Goldstein, "Gender in American Tobacco Cards 1880-1920: The Role of Coercive Competition," *Review of Political Economy* 24, iss. 4 (October 2012): 602, accessed December 13, 2017, <http://www.tandfonline.com/loi/crpe20>.

²⁴ Goldstein, "Gender in American Tobacco Cards 1880-1920," 589.

²⁵ Porter, "Advertising in the Early Cigarette Industry," 32.

Linda Funk, "The Duke Homestead," 39.

²⁶ Porter, "Advertising in the Early Cigarette Industry," 32.

Funk, "The Duke Homestead," 44-45.

²⁷ Funk, "The Duke Homestead," 47.

²⁸ Funk, "The Duke Homestead," 45.

²⁹ Ibid.

pursue and maintain its projects.³⁰ At this time, the Dukes renamed the business, W. Duke, Sons and Company.³¹ The company rose through embodying the American dream, a focus on hard work, a family effort, and the cultivation of one's own land.

At the time, smoking tobacco and various other products were more popular to produce, sell, and use than cigarettes because the now standard product was difficult to manufacture and thus was not as cost effective. Instead, the business mainly sold smoking tobacco, a form of loose-leaf tobacco that buyers can apply to a multitude of ingestion methods such as dip or pipes.³² This item called for a broader market and required less manpower, time to create, and construction items. All things considered, the company experienced middling success in its early years.

While Ben partook in business and legal matters, Buck concentrated on a creative business plan to monopolize the cigarette industry. Due to Buck's insistence, the company began to sell cigarettes in 1881 to compete with Bull Durham, another smoking tobacco made by W.T. Blackwell and Company, which was also located in Durham.³³ To better match their world-famous competition, Duke made a risky business venture when he began to pay royalties in 1883 to the eighteen-year-old inventor, James Bonsack.³⁴ He designed and patented the Bonsack Machine (Image 5).³⁵ His invention was the best operational version of this mechanism due to his significant improvements. However, it was largely based on Albert

³⁰ Ibid.

³¹ Ibid.

³² Robert Durden, "W. Duke, Sons and Company," in *Encyclopedia of North Carolina*, ed. William Powell (Chapel Hill: The University of North Carolina Press, 2006), accessed April 18, 2018, <https://www.ncpedia.org/w-duke-sons-and-company>.

³³ Porter, "Advertising in the Early Cigarette Industry," 33.

Winkler, *Tobacco Tycoon*, 46.

³⁴ Winkler, *Tobacco Tycoon*, 55.

³⁵ Ibid.

Hook's design from 1872. The machine had a multifaceted function as it performed several steps in the process of creating a cigarette. All it needed was the proper materials. To begin:

A ribbon of paper, as it unwound from a spool passed over a gum wheel, ... placed a narrow streak of paste upon one edge of the lower side of the ribbon. Then the paper passed into a trough, which starting from a flat service, gradually curved more ... upward until it terminated in a tube form, ... which passed into and through a hollow cylinder in which the two edges of the tube were made to adhere. Before the ribbon was formed into a tube, a bucket wheel delivered tobacco upon the flat surface of the paper. The filler was thus made and the wrapper was rolled about the filler simultaneously in the same trough of tube forming die.³⁶

Other establishments forewent this investment because company leaders believed the public desired hand-rolled cigarettes.³⁷ Furthermore, Allen and Ginter Company discarded the machine after their initial investment due to repeated malfunctions.³⁸ Their rejection caused most other tobacco companies to follow suit.³⁹ Consequently, when Buck undertook the project, he brought in William T. O'Brein, a mechanic, to perfect the machine.⁴⁰ By the late 1880s, this invention ensured that W. Duke, Sons & Co. produced four million cigarettes per day.⁴¹ Beforehand, a worker produced four cigarettes per minute while this invention manufactured forty-seven times that amount per minute.⁴² The Bonsack Machine ensured that the Duke company saw its rise in national and, later, international success. It also allowed Buck to shift his focus to advertising to further convince the public that cigarettes were preferable to other tobacco products.

³⁶ Quoted In: State Archives of North Carolina, "History of the Bonsack Machine Company," *North Carolina Digital Collections*, accessed April 18, 2018, <http://digital.ncdcr.gov/cdm/ref/collection/p16062coll28/id/4409>.

³⁷ North Carolina Department of Cultural Resources, "The Bonsack Machine and Labor Unrest," *Learn NC*, accessed February 3, 2018, <http://www.learnnc.org/lp/editions/nchist-newsouth/4705>, website now archived.

³⁸ Funk, "The Duke Homestead," 47.

³⁹ *Ibid.*

⁴⁰ *Ibid.*

⁴¹ Lynn Pritcher, "More About Tobacco Advertising and the Tobacco Collections," *Digital Collections*, accessed April 18, 2018, <https://library.duke.edu/digitalcollections/ea/guide/tobacco/>.

⁴² Funk, "The Duke Homestead," 47.

Given what we now know about the addictive quality of cigarettes and other tobacco products, these items should have flown off the shelves. Prior to mounting health concerns in the 1940s, there was no reason buyers would inhibit their spending to avoid the tobacco's detrimental effect.⁴³ They should have a natural inclination to continue to purchase. However, one must begin to buy the cigarettes to continue their purchase. The lesser-known product caused suspicion among possible buyers. People want acceptance among their peers, which often implies that a public will conform to fads and this new item was not automatically popular. Furthermore, the tobacco itself was not quite as addictive. This invention came from R.J. Reynolds Tobacco, formerly a part of The American Tobacco Company, created 1890, under Buck until 1911.⁴⁴ In 1913, the Reynolds organization produced "the American blend," which increased the nicotine content.⁴⁵ The cigarettes from 1880 to 1900 had less sugar and experimental flavoring.⁴⁶ Hence, these little sticks were potent and less appetizing than those to come. This lack of an established market demonstrates that Buck faced a surmountable feat to properly popularize his mechanically rolled tobacco.

Tobacco was a giant in colonial and early America. Many introductory history classes mention how tobacco was a main means for income and one of the largest cash crops. While Virginia dominated the field during the U.S.'s first seventy-five years or so, North Carolina wrested the title as lead producer shortly after the Civil War—the same time Washington

⁴³ MUSC: Hollings Cancer Center, "The Evolving Cigarette," *Tobacco Exhibits*, 24, accessed April 18, 2018, <http://tobaccoexhibits.musc.edu/wp-content/uploads/2016/12/Evolving-Cigarette-1-1.pdf>.

⁴⁴ *Ibid.*

Duke University, W. Duke, Sons & Co., board meeting minutes, from W. Duke & Sons Collection, Box 11, 39.

⁴⁵ R.J. Reynolds, "A Look into Our Past," *Transforming Tobacco*, accessed April 18, 2018, <http://www.rjrt.com/transforming-tobacco/history/>.

"The Evolving Cigarette," *Tobacco Exhibits*, 2.

⁴⁶ "The Evolving Cigarette," *Tobacco Exhibits*, 4.

began the Duke company.⁴⁷ Before 1839, the tobacco market solely produced dark leaf, but “a slave on the Abisha farm in Caswell County, North Carolina,” Stephen, unveiled how to grow “yellow,” “bright” leaves, which effectively meant a milder taste.⁴⁸ Mild in comparison to dark leaf is, however, still a far cry from mild with today’s standard of heavily flavored and sugared products. Nevertheless, this shift in the market and the new invention set the background for Washington’s new business venture and the future success for Buck’s advertising initiatives.



Image 1
Washington Duke
<https://library.duke.edu/rubenstein/collections/creators/people/jbduke>.

⁴⁷ Funk, “The Duke Homestead,” 39.

⁴⁸ Ibid.



Image 2
Benjamin N. Duke
<https://library.duke.edu/rubenstein/collections/creators/people/bnduke>.



Image 3
James B. Duke.
Funk, "The Duke
Homestead," 49.



Image 4
James B. Duke
<https://library.duke.edu/rubenstein/collections/creators/people/jbduke>.

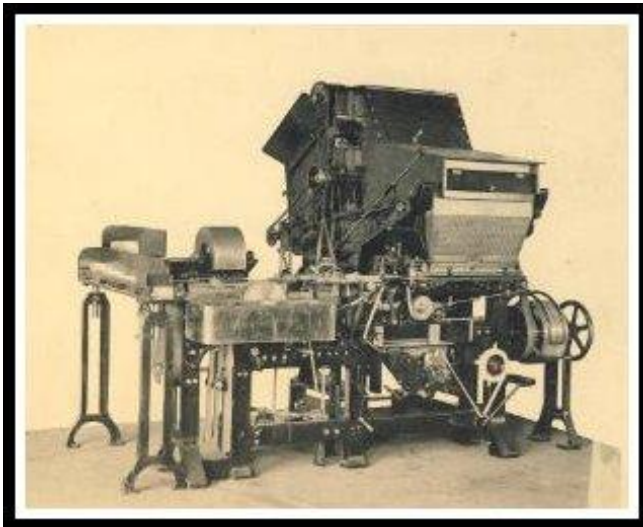


Image 5
Bonsack Machine.
<http://dukehomestead.org/a-new-product.php>.

Capitalism & W. Duke, Sons and Company

Within a capitalist world, Buck managed a thriving enterprise whose claim to fame was the exploitation of taboos. Contradictory to his secularized enterprise, his father raised him in a Protestant home and continued to refer to Biblical teachings throughout their business venture. Daniel Bell's theories in *The Cultural Contradictions of Capitalism* attempts to explain this apparent disaccord in modern capitalism between the restraint needed to run a successful business and the indulgence required for this economic system to prosper.⁴⁹ The U.S. first maintained the necessary limitations in business exchanges due to the Protestant ideology "to limit sumptuary [i.e., "to prevent extravagance and luxury"] ... accumulation."⁵⁰ As time progressed, these ethics in society fell to the wayside while pleasurable, selfish desires remained. For instance, a 1970s airline advertisement in the *New York Times* alludes to sex, wife swaps, and other titillating, guilt-inducing instances.⁵¹ Bell cites that this example is evidence of a lack of "Protestant ethic."⁵² Furthermore, it demonstrates the contradiction between this "delayed gratification" of the businessman who works at this airline and the "instant joy" in the ad.⁵³ As later explored, even Buck appears to submit to the temptation of demoralization through the promotion of indecent topics.⁵⁴

Bell shows that this modern capitalist society moves towards a more secularized, self-satisfying life due to: "institutionalized expectations of economic growth[,] ... a rising standard of living," a problem with ensuring one's wants match one's desires, the clash

⁴⁹ Bell, "Introduction," 21-22.

⁵⁰ Bell, "Introduction" 21.

Merriam-Webster Dictionary, s.v. "sumptuary," accessed April 18, 2018, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/sumptuary>.

⁵¹ Bell, "Introduction," 71.

⁵² *Ibid.*

⁵³ Bell, "Introduction," 71-72.

⁵⁴ Bell, "Introduction," 21.

between negative effects and booming economics, inflation due to a successful economy coupled with a fully employed population, and decisions by politicians about capitalist issues instead of by the market.⁵⁵ While some of these reasons do not ring true until further into the twentieth century, they show how this increasingly contradictory economy influenced Buck. For instance, as the middle class grew and the businesses expanded, the people became more entitled. Contrary to Bell's theory, the politicians in the late nineteenth century were far less involved with the economic issues compared to today. One instance of this difference is the lack of federally supported work projects before President Roosevelt in the 1930s. This context provides insight about outside factors that aided Buck in his moral shift and subsequent risky, successful advertising trials.

Advertising

The first tobacco ad in the United States appeared in 1789.⁵⁶ For the first seventy years, these premier commercials were normally found in local or regional newspapers with un-illustrated product descriptions.⁵⁷ Approximately fifty years after 1789, more and more products and services became available through a commodity, world market.⁵⁸ By the Victorian era, beginning approximately 1837, homes filled with "bric-a-brac," including tobacco tins.⁵⁹ With a world market easily accessible to individuals at large, merchandise moved to glorify imperialism and generalized slaves and workers.⁶⁰ W. Duke, Sons and Company propagated these scenes currently popular. Furthermore, companies of household

⁵⁵ Bell, "Introduction," 23-24.

⁵⁶ Pritcher, "More About Tobacco Advertising."

⁵⁷ Ibid.

⁵⁸ McClintock, "Soft-Soaping Empire," 219.

⁵⁹ Ibid.

⁶⁰ McClintock, "Soft-Soaping Empire," 208-209.

products promoted their items through domestic images, like women putting on their corsets, which were normally prohibited from the public eye.⁶¹ However, these scenes were practical and needed to demonstrate the products in question while the women featured later to sell Buck's tobacco were entirely unnecessary. Thus the Victorian, commodity advertisements used similar scenes about race and women, but James implemented these images for cigarette sales, which did not require such intimate settings. This appropriation pushed the boundaries of promiscuity that these female characters exhibited.

Roughly one hundred years time and Buck's tactics revolutionized tobacco marketing, mainly through his promos for cigarettes. The Bonsack Machine enabled him to cut the prices as the technology lowered the cost of labor.⁶² It reduced the cost of manufacturing by half.⁶³ By 1888, this new equipment made it possible to lay off workers, which allowed him to have less expenditure.⁶⁴ He initially cut the prices because a congressional bill in 1883 reduced excise taxes (a tax on a specific good or activities) on cigarettes, which helped to increase his sales.⁶⁵ For instance, from 1883 to 1884, they increased by seventy million cigarettes.⁶⁶ The pricing forced many competitors to either lower their cost too or go out of business.⁶⁷ However, the executives indicated that they did so reluctantly. An 1885 letter from the company states, "We suppose some few jobber and retailers want low priced Cigarettes regardless of quality or the opinion of the smoker. So we

⁶¹ McClintock, "Soft-Soaping Empire," 209.

⁶² Chaloupka, et. al., "Tax, Price and Cigarette Smoking," i62.

⁶³ Funk, "The Duke Homestead," 47.

⁶⁴ "The Bonsack Machine and Labor Unrest," <http://www.learnnc.org/lp/editions/nchist-newsouth/4705>, website now archived.

⁶⁵ Porter, "Advertising in the Early Cigarette Industry," 33.

IRS, "Excise Tax," *Small Business and Self-Employed*, accessed April 18, 2018, <https://www.irs.gov/businesses/small-businesses-self-employed/excise-tax>.

⁶⁶ Porter, "Advertising in the Early Cigarette Industry," 33.

⁶⁷ Chaloupka, et. al., "Tax, Price and Cigarette Smoking," i62.

have concluded to accommodate all such parties and meet competition.”⁶⁸ This quote demonstrates that the directors wanted higher pricing to denote greater value, but others’ costs forced them to set competitive rates. As a result, the American Tobacco Company, created and managed by James Duke, monopolized over 90% of the cigarette market by the late 1800s.⁶⁹

One journalist from *Collier’s: The National Weekly*, said: “always an aggressive advertiser, [Buck] devis[ed] new and startling methods which dismayed his competitors.”⁷⁰ This quote shows how Buck’s business savvy included greater risks and, consequently, larger rewards. While some of his letters reveal his sense of responsibility to the company, James B. Duke refused to shy away from a challenge. Consequently, he produced another revolutionary marketing tactic, which involved advertisements in the cigarette boxes called “cigarette cards.” The new advertisement campaign was cost effective as well, because the images were placed on an existing component of the box—a cardboard insert—within the box that ensured the package kept its shape and the products protected.⁷¹ Buck patented a sliding box in 1886 (Image 6), which allowed customers to take a cigarette from inside without crushing the others alongside.⁷² Pictures continued to appear within the boxes long after this invention.

⁶⁸ Typescript based on: W. Duke, Sons & Co. to Edward Small, Feb. 6, 1885.

⁶⁹ Chaloupka, et. al., “Tax, Price and Cigarette Smoking,” i62.

⁷⁰ Funk, “The Duke Homestead,” 47.

Porter, “Advertising in the Early Cigarette Industry,” 33.

⁷¹ Winkler, *Tobacco Tycoon*, 54.

⁷² Roberts and Knapp, “Paving the Way for the Tobacco Trust,” 262.

Charles Lilley, L. S. Hardin, Thomas Delano, and Wilfred Pocklington Pond, ed., “Evolution of the Cigarette Box,” *Tobacco: An Illustrated Weekly Journal for Wholesale and Retail Dealers in Cigars, Manufactured Tobacco and Smokers’ Articles* 8, no. 16 (21 February 1890): 1, accessed April 18, 2018, <https://books.google.com/books?id=qRVJAQAAMAAJ>.

Individual cards were part of a major theme, such as ships or actresses. These appeared often in color, a relatively new invention from the 1870s.⁷³ The tobacco industry pioneered branding their boxes and adopting innovative names as a means to increase sales.⁷⁴ These series furthered this idea of using box space to attract more buyers. Meanwhile, James improved a new technique within this industry, with other companies following his example, even with cards for other tobacco products. For instance, Newsboy Plug Tobacco published cards that featured attractive, refined women, destinations, and men's activities.⁷⁵ With the logistics decided of this future success, Buck and his associates shifted their focus to messaging.

In an emerging consumer society, various companies sought to set themselves apart.⁷⁶ To do so, the Dukes' executives placed women on most cards, with many embodying sex appeal.⁷⁷ Buck and other instrumental designers showcased this overtly through ample cleavage or bare legs and subtly through downcast eyes that allowed male viewers to peruse the female bodies freely. According to Jonathan Goldstein's economic study about how the cards affected the buyers, approximately 60% of his sample featured a female regardless of the theme.⁷⁸ Among the cards with human subjects, women characters comprised approximately 94%.⁷⁹ In the commercial goods' market at large, most target buyers were female as the woman was responsible for the household and, consequently, most often decided what was necessary to purchase.⁸⁰ However, the general public widely recognized

⁷³ Pritcher, "More About Tobacco Advertising."

⁷⁴ Sivulka, *Soap, Sex, and Cigarettes*, 46-47.

⁷⁵ Reeve, "Newsboy Cabinets," 27.

⁷⁶ Sivulka, *Soap, Sex, and Cigarettes*, 42.

⁷⁷ Goldstein, "Gender in American Tobacco Cards 1880-1920," 578, 585.

⁷⁸ Goldstein, "Gender in American Tobacco Cards 1880-1920," 585.

⁷⁹ *Ibid.*

⁸⁰ Sivulka, *Soap, Sex, and Cigarettes*, 43.

cigarettes as a male pastime, which meant that this product was shaped for men's tastes.⁸¹ In fact, the tobacco manufactures overlooked the idea of females as buyers until the 1920s largely due to the previous social disapproval of women smoking.⁸² For instance, some colleges and railcars prohibited females from engaging in this habit.⁸³ Because smoking was distinctly gendered, scandalous material printed on the newly invented card series was more acceptable, regardless of whether women were largely unaware of the contents or adopted an "out of sight, out of mind" mentality. With the antithesis of a typical target market, W. Duke, Sons & Company required innovative executives who were unafraid to think outside the box.

As a result of these general impressions about male buyers, many companies were reluctant to handle cigarettes. The tobacco storefront dealers thought: "Only flossy, high-society dudes would smoke cigarettes."⁸⁴ At first, only two salesmen who regularly kept Duke tobacco products in stock would carry this item.⁸⁵ The jobbers, "wholesalers," feared that they would not make a sufficient profit from their ventures, while companies could better afford to test the diversification of their tobacco products, especially if they had previous financial success.⁸⁶ Consequently, Buck hired Edward Small as a traveling salesman to handle his cigarettes, creating a booming business.⁸⁷ In reality, Buck's buyers were more average than prim and proper gentlemen as evidenced by his placing packs at immigration stations.⁸⁸ His card series reflects how he wished to target a variety of men. For instance, he included a wide range of "exotic" women, which would appeal to those immigrants and

⁸¹ Porter, "Advertising in the Early Cigarette Industry," 35.

⁸² Sivulka, *Soap, Sex, and Cigarettes*, 149.

⁸³ *Ibid.*

⁸⁴ Winkler, *Tobacco Tycoon*, 48.

⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

⁸⁶ *Merriam-Webster Dictionary*, s.v. "jobber," accessed April 30, 2018, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/jobber>.

⁸⁷ *Ibid.*

⁸⁸ Winkler, *Tobacco Tycoon*, 66.

white males whose curiosity partially drove their purchasing decisions. Contrary to mainstream, professional expectations, Buck ensured that the target buyers included the greatest number of men possible instead of solely the expected high-class men.

Trading cards become commonly used during the Victorian era for various types of markets, such as dentistry.⁸⁹ In fact, it was the chief means of advertising for general goods.⁹⁰ These items came in a variety of forms as well. The Duke company mainly used the cardboard inserts inside the cigarette boxes, but it distributed glass cards as well.⁹¹ These items gave the images the appearance of being three-dimensional and thus made them seem more realistic.⁹² A company executive denoted their superior value when he told Mr. Small: “Please use them as carefully as possible, as we have but a few more of them left.”⁹³ This statement reveals that they were precious, as they required careful treatment due to their rarity. It also demonstrates that while glass cards were common in other spheres, they were somewhat of a novelty when the Duke executives used them for their cigarettes advertising. Though cardboard pictures were more common, the Dukes sought to diversify and maximize the effects of these enrapturing pictures.

⁸⁹ Croll and Swanson, “Victorian Era Esthetic and Restorative Dentistry,” 235.

⁹⁰ Ibid.

⁹¹ Typescript based on: W. Duke, Sons & Co. to Edward Small, Feb. 6, 1885.

⁹² Chen and Feng, “Form and Function of Cigarette Cards,” 78.

⁹³ Typescript based on: W. Duke, Sons & Co. to Edward Small, Feb. 6, 1885.



Image 6
Sliding Cigarette Box
From Duke Homestead Tobacco
Museum in Roberts and Knapp,
“Paving the Way for the
Tobacco Trust,” 279.

The Reflection of Duke’s Personal Life within the Card Series

Buck’s personal life reflects the type of gentleman he wished to attract. He was a fun-loving man with an appetite for the luxurious life and beautiful women. In his letter to his brother and Ben’s wife, Sallie, Buck recounted a snippet of his life as a rich business mogul. As a fashionable entrepreneur, he went to Europe, specifically Milan, over the summer of 1880, just as the W. Duke, Sons & Co. launched their major initiative for cigarettes and trading cards.⁹⁴ He was there visiting family, including a few male cousins and his Uncle John. As Europe was often regarded as a refined area with culture and history, James demonstrates that he is a member of the distinguished, wealthy class despite his father’s humble beginnings.

Regardless of his familial attachments, he mostly focused on his ventures with two female cousins, Mattie Patton and Lida. While Buck was romantically interested in Mattie, Lida, who he previously knew, desired James’s affections as well. In fact, he said that Mattie

⁹⁴ Typescript based on: James B. Duke to Benjamin and Sallie Duke, 18 August 1880.

was “the liveliest girl I think God ever put breath in.”⁹⁵ Here he demonstrates that an ideal woman possessed more than beauty, but the ability to entertain as well. She should have enough intelligence to engage a man’s attentions, while lacking a superior wit. The leading Duke reveals his roguish tendencies when he stated: “I romped & played with the girls so much I declare I was so tired at night I could not sleep.”⁹⁶ His description shows that Buck’s greatest desire was to have a good time without any serious attachments and to make the most of present opportunities. The female characters on the following card series, like “Daisy Murdock,” normally possess similar qualities.⁹⁷ They are women whose various contexts tease a man’s interest and allude to a playful fantasy while avoiding serious commitments.

James’s correspondence reveals what he considered a good time and his view of women’s qualities. “Fun” meant admiring women, drinking, and entertainment. His Uncle John amused Buck because the elder was “stued” (sic), i.e., drunk, most of the time.⁹⁸ The younger Duke goaded his uncle and cousin to smoke “cigarettes” (sic) for the first time as well, adding to the entrepreneur’s fascination.⁹⁹ His writing shows that a late nineteenth-century, American man, whether young or old, first valued a woman’s physicality. For instance, his Uncle John wished to marry “an old gal to hug up.”¹⁰⁰ Washington Duke said, “Sometimes, I go around among the young women, but it does not amount to much.”¹⁰¹ Buck’s somewhat prudish father noted here that women were best for a distraction,

⁹⁵ Ibid.

⁹⁶ Ibid.

⁹⁷ Duke University, “No. 217 – Daisy Murdock,” *Digital Repository* (1880-1890), accessed April 18, 2018, <https://repository.duke.edu/dc/wdukesons/dscsi01109>.

⁹⁸ Ibid.

Merriam-Webster Dictionary, s.v. “stewed,” accessed April 18, 2018, <https://www.merriam-webster.com/dictionary/stewed>.

⁹⁹ Typescript based on: James B. Duke to Benjamin and Sallie Duke, 18 August 1880.

¹⁰⁰ Ibid.

¹⁰¹ Typescript based on: Washington Duke to James B. Duke, 9 December 1896.

presumably due to their looks. At this point, Washington was elderly with less than ten years to live and health issues. Thus he noted that the levity of female company amounted to little, implying that men's company held more worth. James also expressed his enjoyment concerning the adoration of Lida and Mattie. He told Ben and Sallie, "I told Lida I had fallen in love with her cousin & I don't think she liked it very much."¹⁰² Buck relished women who vied for his sole affection. This idea of women-as-entertainment can be seen in his description of an incident near an unspecified body of water. Instead of lounging leisurely, he and the other women splashed each other with the water in a flirtatious manner. These three aspects—ladies, illicit materials, and amusement—were also represented in the card series. Once more, Buck's personal preferences bled into his business creations.

Towards the beginning of Duke's cigarette initiative, he made the case that advertisements were especially strategic for the company, since it was unable to publicize each brand. For instance, at the end of James's trip abroad, he guiltily wrote a paragraph concerning his contribution to the business or, rather, the lack thereof. Buck wrote that he intended to reenter the field quickly through his provision of new ideas for their tobacco production. He knew that the "Old Judge Long Cut" would lack a recognizable brand. Instead, the line required a popular taste to ensure the public would promote the brand through word of mouth.¹⁰³ Consequently, with flavoring tobacco in its experimental stage, he wished to implement a technique to provide an upper hand against competitors. This new methodology was boiling some of their product in rum, which "ha[d] never been put to a test."¹⁰⁴ He anticipated that the cigarettes would have "a pleasant flavor & make it smoke

¹⁰² Typescript based on James B. Duke to Benjamin and Sallie Duke, 18 August 1880.

¹⁰³ James B. Duke to Benjamin and Sallie Duke, 18 August 1880.

¹⁰⁴ Ibid.

sweet & uniform.”¹⁰⁵ James’s innovative mind demonstrates that he was not only wealthy and administratively powerful, but that he was also a visionary in regards to advertisement and production.

The combination of Buck’s actions over the course of his European vacation reveals how he wished to embody the quintessential, professional white mogul. While James achieved a portion of his wealth by this time, he was still relatively new to this upper-class lifestyle. This businessman knew how to sell to other white men because he understood their dreams. The roguish, wealthy members of the “stronger” sex wanted beautiful, entertaining women, like Mattie and Lida, who enticed their curiosity without claiming a superior position. They wished for reputable social positioning interspersed with some “harmless” episodes of drunkenness like Uncle John. Meanwhile, Buck came from a lower class, which motivated him to maintain his status as a shrewd businessman, coming up with new techniques like flavoring, regardless of his personal ventures. His upbringing ensured that he enjoyed these opportunities to the fullest extent, like a poor man accidentally admitted to an exclusive club. Buck featured each of these aforementioned, desirable effects within his card series because he did not need to gain access to the perspectives of the lower or higher classes, as James understood both through personal experience.

How Buck Worked with Others

While James Duke collaborated with a multitude of professionals, he remained heavily involved with these card series and advertisements. In fact, he aspired to control each stage of production. The sheer size of his business, however, demanded outsiders’ input. Furthermore, the shrewd businessman that he embodied would petition for a plethora of

¹⁰⁵ Ibid.

opinions to ensure fresh ideas to preserve public interest. He undertook to maintain full power over this area in a variety of ways such as a “job-printing office” in the new Durham office.¹⁰⁶ Another article reinforces this idea of an in-house advertising center citing that Duke dedicated the fourth floor of the five-story Durham building to printing ads.¹⁰⁷ Duke planned the posters and advertisements himself while artists with the G. Houghtaling & Company rendered the images.¹⁰⁸ The executives then circulated the products among the factory from workers to desk lackeys with Buck giving the final word as to whether the company would distribute the product.¹⁰⁹ This tycoon ensured his company’s profitability through supreme power over advertising decisions, especially print ads, including the card series.

While Buck maintained a dictatorial status over the commercial displays, who initially began the sexually charged sales tactic at W. Duke, Sons & Co. is unclear. The aforementioned traveling salesman’s, Edward Small, received word from headquarters to boost sales in Savannah, Georgia.¹¹⁰ As a result, in May 1884, he cast an alluring, legitimate actress, Madame Rhea, to appear as a “life-size lithograph ... with a package of Duke cigarettes in her hand and the caption ‘Atlanta’s Favorite’ printed beneath.”¹¹¹ A lithograph is “the art or process of producing a picture ... on a flat, specially prepared stone ... and of taking ink impressions from this as in ordinary printing.”¹¹² Small acted independently and,

¹⁰⁶ Winkler, *Tobacco Tycoon*, 54.

¹⁰⁷ Porter, “Advertising in the Early Cigarette Industry,” 34.

¹⁰⁸ Winkler, *Tobacco Tycoon*, 62.

¹⁰⁹ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁰ Durden, “Beginning Anew in 1865,” 21.

¹¹¹ *Ibid.*

¹¹² *Dictionary.com*, s.v. “lithography,” accessed April 18, 2018, <http://www.dictionary.com/browse/lithography>.

consequently, was perhaps the individual in the company who launched the sales tactic of featuring illustrious women.

Allen and Ginter, a competing tobacco company, began the “picture inserts,” but W. Duke, Sons and Company experienced much more success.¹¹³ The card series within the Duke online repository dates over 200 cards of the “Actors & Actress” series as early as 1880.¹¹⁴ This vague approximation sheds little light as to who initiated the method. Indeed, it raises more questions than answers. Meanwhile, there was a poster for Cross-Cut Cigarettes published in 1884 to suggest Buck originally launched this initiative.¹¹⁵ A female character lies at the center of attention displaying a precocious smile, and with a finger to her lips. The accompanying catchphrase “pure and sweet” could be understood as applying both to the cigarette and the woman.¹¹⁶ With the publication the same year as Small’s letter to Mme. Rhea, the poster presumably began the creative process the previous year, which would thus make Buck the originator. There is a question as to whether it was Small or Buck who first used women as an object to market the cigarettes, but the facts, particularly the aforementioned poster, favor James.

Collecting a series of cards was as exciting as a child today who collects each type of toy in a cereal box promo. However, the presence of a card in each box was not guaranteed. Buck told Small he was sending “17,500 Cameo Photographs [to Cleveland] to be placed in the small boxes.”¹¹⁷ This number seems staggering at first, but when placed in context with

¹¹³ Roberts and Knapp, “Paving the Way for the Tobacco Trust” 264, 266.

¹¹⁴ Duke University, “W. Duke, Sons & Co. Advertising Materials, 1880-1910,” *Digital Repository*, accessed April 18, 2018, <https://repository.duke.edu/dc/wdukesons>.

¹¹⁵ University of North Carolina, “Cross-Cut Cigarettes Poster,” *Virtual Tobacco Heritage Trail* (1884), accessed April 18, 2018, http://mainstreet.lib.unc.edu/projects/tobacco_durham/index.php/images/view/136.

¹¹⁶ *Ibid.*

¹¹⁷ Typescript based on: James B. Duke to Edward Small, May 6, 1887.

the four million cigarettes produced daily, the total number of pictures is less impressive.¹¹⁸ At the time, the U.S. had thirty-eight states and sold to various other countries. With this in mind, the ratio of these photographs to probable number of cigarettes in the area shows that the location of a card was thrilling in and of itself. Buck also relayed to Small that he would send more if his employee, as a jobber, should assess the demand for these photographs.¹¹⁹ Buck wished to do whatever was in the best interest of the company.¹²⁰ Furthermore, the mogul told him: “Where you find retailers with a large stock of cigarettes without photographs, you may have the photographs placed in them.”¹²¹ This telling statement reveals a movement to implement this advertising tactic nation-wide. Buck meant for these cards to give the Duke company an edge over the others with his warning to Small to guard their trade from competitors.¹²² His intentions proved fruitful: Asa Lemlein, a Harlem merchant in New York, stated that his customers increased due to the pictures of “famous actresses or athlete or the flags of all nations.”¹²³ These mandates reveal the extent to which James controlled the distribution of the cards in addition to their design.

Not only did James network with jobbers, sellers, and corresponding companies like advertisers, he worked in the political realm as well. As aforementioned, Duke remained attuned to the frustrating luxury taxes and other corresponding laws due to the impact on pricing and, consequently, the company’s revenue. He maintained a close relationship with individuals who possessed political sway. One such man, J.R. Hutchings, revealed that he would act on the company’s behalf and meet with congressmen concerning a coming tax

¹¹⁸ Pritcher, “More About Tobacco Advertising.”

¹¹⁹ Typescript based on: James B. Duke to Edward Small, May 6, 1887.

¹²⁰ Ibid.

¹²¹ Ibid.

¹²² Ibid.

¹²³ Quoted in: Winkler, *Tobacco Tycoon*, 61.

law.¹²⁴ Buck was a ruthless businessman who was not afraid to undermine his opponents. However, this letter shows that he was potentially willing to commission others, cunningly, to weaken his opposition. Hutchings recommends himself due to his experience with politicians and his knowledge of North Carolina and Virginia, the prominent tobacco producers of the south.¹²⁵ He says, “[I] am willing to [do] all I can to defeat it [i.e., the tax law].”¹²⁶ This sentence implies that this colleague would go beyond ethical bounds with these congressmen. Hutchings also implies that secrecy is necessary stating, “I will do the work quietly and in a business ... [that] no one but myself would know it.”¹²⁷ He thus implicates the need for discretion due to unscrupulous tactics. Buck’s reply is not available, yet the mere offer coupled with the mogul’s cutthroat tactics and illegal monopoly suggests the likelihood of deception.

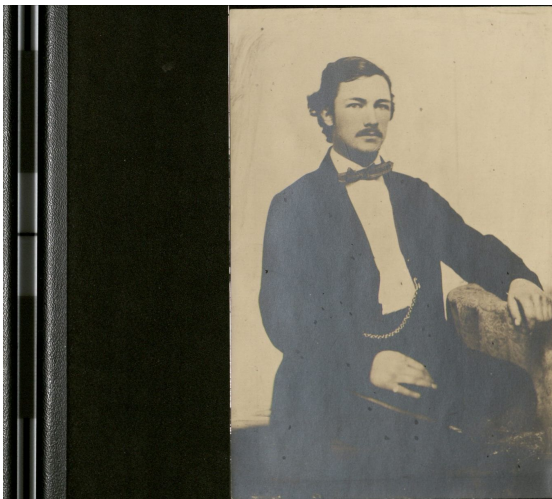


Image 7
Edward Small
Duke University Collection:
Guide to the Edward
Featherston Small Papers, 1884-
1921, Box 1.

¹²⁴ J.R. Hutchings to James B. Duke. 9 July 1894.

¹²⁵ Ibid.

¹²⁶ Ibid.

¹²⁷ Ibid.

The Card Series

The characters on these cards represented a variety of cultural ideals. The series featured many different themes from “Great Americans” to “Actors and Actresses.” All the pictures in the former consist of men while the latter has only one male. The company published the previous series in 1888 with a total of fifty cards. Most of the images represented founding fathers, past presidents, artists, explorers, and others. Given that one figure included is Francis Scott Key, the author of the national anthem, people today should expect to see, at the very least, Betsy Ross who first designed the American flag and embodies patriotism. The absence of women indicates the executives’ assumptions about the opposite sex. It shows that they did not associate women with leadership and great intellect.

While these images often contain an abundance of details and sometimes sensuous themes, the cards themselves are small (Image 18). While the following explores the various facets within the images, there is a necessary awareness that nineteenth-century customers needed wonderful eyesight and an abundance of time to see and understand all the visual representations that online programs now make easily observable. Instead, these mostly male viewers likely enjoyed the overall silhouettes on cards. With the tactic’s success, there was no reason that the company should enlarge the existing piece of cardboard in the cigarette boxes. This material was already required and, thus, to change the sizing would add to costs rather than boost revenue. Nevertheless, the final rendering does not undermine the detail Duke professionals put into these advertisements. Their wish to build personas and include background settings demonstrates their possible dedication to their craft.

The first card of the “Great Americans” series features Edwin Booth, the brother of John Wilkes Booth, the assassin who killed President Abraham Lincoln (Image 8). Edwin

was an American actor most known for his performance in *Hamlet*.¹²⁸ In 1888, he opened a successful club in New York City called Players where actors and other men met.¹²⁹ Beginning in 1884, James B. Duke resided there as well and likely knew or heard of this man.¹³⁰ This gentleman potentially represents what Buck saw as a great man. The company incorporated Booth due to his artistic achievement. However, his monetary success was probably a factor as well. The general public likely forgave his forbidden and taboo association with President Lincoln's assassin due to his celebrity just as most Americans today forgive Andrew Jackson for the Trail of Tears. Booth's portrait is serious with barely tamed, curly black hair, a fashionable suit, and a loose, yellow cravat.¹³¹ There is a stage behind him with a priest-like man on an ancient, European cityscape.¹³² The scene intimates that Booth is in charge as the director of the play and owner of the theater. Furthermore, the audience knows that he is a wonderful actor as well. Thus he possesses multiple talents. Even among the featured American artists, Duke and his co-workers ensured that their male figures possessed an abundance of masculinity through a display of activity and initiative.

Another featured gentleman is Sir Henry Morton Stanley, a native Welshman who resided in America and was later knighted in Britain.¹³³ Once more, there is a question concerning how these Duke executives decided who was a "Great American." In this case, Stanley ventured into parts of central Africa previously unexplored by westerners. Colonists thought of this place as one of mystery and in need of a savior as seen with their reverence

¹²⁸ Daniel J. Watermeier, *Between Actor and Critic: Selected Letters of Edwin Booth and William Winter* (Princeton: Princeton University Press, 1971), 51.

¹²⁹ "History," *The Players*, accessed April 18, 2018, <http://www.theplayersnyc.org/history>.

¹³⁰ Winkler, *Tobacco Tycoon*, 59.

¹³¹ Duke University, "Edwin Booth," *Digital Repository* (1888), accessed April 18, 2018, <https://idn.duke.edu/ark:/87924/r3xp6vd8x>.

¹³² Ibid.

¹³³ Duke University, "Henry M. Stanley. Africa.," *Digital Repository* (1888), accessed April 18, 2018, <https://idn.duke.edu/ark:/87924/r3wh2dr13>.

towards Stanley's famous rescue of a Scottish missionary. On the card, he is in deep thought, which showed his pensive and academic nature.¹³⁴ There is a jungle in the distance with a small community of basic, charming huts and an African man directing a canoe in the river.¹³⁵ The patronizing depiction entrances the audience with the depiction of the "exotic." This period made money from the discovery of the "unknown" as evidenced with shows like Barnum and Bailey's in New York where audiences subjected unique individuals to ridicule and morbid fascination.¹³⁶ While this series contained many traditional figures of American patriotism like George Washington and Daniel Webster, the selection of Sir Stanley shows that James B. Duke and his company also chose characters whose loose ties to their theme justified their usage.



Image 8
 "Henry M. Stanley,"
<https://idn.duke.edu/ark:/87924/r3wh2dr13>.

¹³⁴ Ibid.

¹³⁵ Ibid.

¹³⁶ Jackie Mansky, "P.T. Barnum Isn't the Hero the 'Greatest Showman' Wants You to Think," *Smithsonian Magazine*, December 22, 2017, <https://www.smithsonianmag.com/history/true-story-pt-barnum-greatest-humbug-them-all-180967634/>.

As evidenced by the card series, while women lacked appeal as patriotic figures, they were found on every card in the “Holiday” series from 1890. These cards feature celebrations predominantly from the U.S., European countries, and East Asia. Despite the varying nationalities, all of them have remarkably pale skin. Those whose nationality requires a darker complexion have the bare minimum. For example, the card presenting “Parliament Day” in Japan features a regal, wealthy woman with olive tones and rosy lips (Image 9). There is no evidence that this holiday genuinely existed, especially since Japan did not have a Parliament. The country established a legislative body, the Imperial Diet, the previous year in 1889. This body comprised of men who passed bills while the executive introduced bills. Based on this information, the woman on the card peers into the legislative body from a balcony where non-descript men listen to a speaker at a podium.¹³⁷ She appears as a pleasant, regal individual who benefits from these men’s decisions and service.¹³⁸ It appears that the Dukes attempted to celebrate the more European governmental aspects in an eastern nation. “Civilized women were womanly—delicate, spiritual, dedicated to the home.”¹³⁹ This Japanese woman is the antithesis of the men shown in this picture and the aforementioned “Great Americans” series. She is an ornament that adorns men’s pertinent acts to ensure she assumes the proper role of a lady despite her appearance in a politicized, public sphere.

In the same series, Duke and other executives continued to exploit women through exoticism. From genteel beauty in Japan, white men in the States acknowledged women’s sexual desirability with their representation of the “Shah’s [i.e., the king] Birthday - Persia”

¹³⁷ Duke University, “Parliament Day - Japan,” *Digital Repository* (1890), accessed April 18, 2018, <https://idn.duke.edu/ark:/87924/r3rv0db15>.

¹³⁸ Ibid.

¹³⁹ Bederman, “Remaking Manhood,” 25.

(Image 10).¹⁴⁰ The visual representation features a dancing woman in front of an elaborately decorated wall and a colorful rug.¹⁴¹ Her eyes are closed with a gentle smile gracing her face and curly hair peeking out of her headdress.¹⁴² While she is from an “uncivilized” sphere, she lacks “savage” characteristics like “aggressiveness, heavily burdened, and all sorts of ‘masculine’ ... labor.”¹⁴³ She is meant to contain a wisp of otherworldliness, while appealing to Buck’s American men. Though she is amply covered from the waist up, the sheer, partial veil and rosy cheeks makes her a forbidden beauty.¹⁴⁴ Her flirtatious, scandalous attire appears from the thigh down where her skirt becomes sheer.¹⁴⁵ During this period, American women may reveal their shoulder or bust during evening parties, but their ankles much rather any part of their leg should remain covered.¹⁴⁶ If one of their legs happened to show, she would don stockings.¹⁴⁷ A bare leg tantalized the cigarette purchasers and likely incited immoral, racy thoughts. She echoes the artistic representation of Salome’s sensuality, who famously danced for Herod Antipas and demanded John the Baptist’s head in exchange for her entertainment. This shift to clear sexual references reveals that the cigarette company valued the number of sales over any adherence to traditional Christian morals.

¹⁴⁰ Edward Granville Browne, “Chapter 4: The Granting of the Constitution by Muzaffru’ d-dín Sháh,” *The Persian Revolution of 1905-1909* (Cambridge: Cambridge University, 1910), 142.

¹⁴¹ Duke University, “Shah’s Birthday - Persia,” *Digital Repository* (1890), accessed April 18, 2018, <https://idn.duke.edu/ark:/87924/r3qr4p17h>.

¹⁴² Ibid.

¹⁴³ Bederman, “Remaking Manhood,” 25.

¹⁴⁴ Duke University, “Shah’s Birthday - Persia,” *Digital Repository* (1890).

¹⁴⁵ Ibid.

¹⁴⁶ Mitzi Cook, interview by author, November 1, 2017.

¹⁴⁷ Ibid.



Image 9
"Parliament Day – Japan,"
<https://idn.duke.edu/ark:/87924/r3rv0db15>.



Image 10
"Shah's Birthday – Persia,"
<https://idn.duke.edu/ark:/87924/r3qr4p17h>.

The 1890 card series, “Jokes,” contains an assortment of individuals. There are men, women, animals, and various races featured. Each of these characters speaks primarily to a white, male audience. Gendering in modern art, beginning in the mid-nineteenth century and ending in the late 1960s, is largely due to the abundance of female art subjects.¹⁴⁸ This “gendering” refers to viewpoint that modern art is usually a male endeavor.¹⁴⁹ George Dickie’s Institutional Theory contends that a “work of art ... is: an artifact [that has] a set of aspects ... for appreciation by some person ... acting on behalf of a certain social institution.”¹⁵⁰ Thus while these card series are a form of advertisement, the product also comes under the umbrella of “art.” Thus these suppositions, i.e., the art reflected modern male artists’ accomplishments through the objectification of women, are present within these series. For instance, the titled “Putting on Airs,” features a female character while she plays the piano and sings (Image 11).¹⁵¹ She has her chest thrust out and her bottom perched backwards to sexualize this mocked character.¹⁵² With her hair back and her bangs primped, her rosy nose, wide-open mouth, and eyes rolled back, her appearance demonstrates how she works too hard to garner men’s attention and women’s respect.¹⁵³ Both men and women recognize this type of woman, but the pronunciation of her body parts predominately targets a male audience rather than children or women.

While the last card displays how women physically appeal to men, the “Jokes” card series portrays physical comedy, which includes African American characters. Individuals

¹⁴⁸ Duncan, “The Modern Art Museum: It’s a Man’s World,” 113.

¹⁴⁹ Ibid.

¹⁵⁰ Quoted in: Martin Irvine, “The Institutional Theory of Art and the Art World,” *Georgetown Faculty: Martin Irvine*, accessed April 18, 2018, <https://faculty.georgetown.edu/irvinem/visualarts/Institutional-theory-artworld.html>.

¹⁵¹ Duke University, “Putting on Airs,” *Digital Repository* (1890), accessed April 18, 2018, <https://idn.duke.edu/ark:/87924/r3280586q>.

¹⁵² Ibid.

¹⁵³ Ibid.

with darker skin often experienced stereotyping and racism in this post-Reconstruction south and the following card makes no exception.¹⁵⁴ In “The Colored Race,” two African American men lumber through a trail in a rural setting (Image 12).¹⁵⁵ The features of both men are depicted according to racist typecasts, including inky skin with large, rouge lips, big ears, and oversized hands and feet.¹⁵⁶ Their clothing is also cliché with large straw hats and overalls with knee patches.¹⁵⁷ One man is in the background carrying an ax with mostly indiscernible features, save his smile.¹⁵⁸ Meanwhile, the other character is in the forefront with a terrified expression seen by his large eyes and parted lips.¹⁵⁹ He carries a knife while his other hand is outstretched as if to ward off any remaining trouble.¹⁶⁰ He takes another path at a fork in the road as if to escape his pursuer.¹⁶¹ The card provides no clue as to why the men resort to such a violent frenzy. However, general characterizations provide simple laughs due to their base needs and animalistic qualities. Once more, like the prior example, the card’s name (“The Colored Race”) ensures the audience understands the joke. This competitive, twisted depiction ensures the title is a play on words. These simplistic cards purchase a cheap laugh from male customers who are more likely to enjoy this slapstick humor as society often considered women of the time above reproach.

¹⁵⁴ Goldstein, “Race in Early Tobacco Advertising,” 340.

¹⁵⁵ Duke University, “The Colored Race,” *Digital Repository* (1890), accessed April 18, 2018, <https://idn.duke.edu/ark:/87924/r30r9mf3h>.

¹⁵⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁵⁹ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁰ *Ibid.*

¹⁶¹ *Ibid.*



Image 11
"Putting on Airs,"
<https://idn.duke.edu/ark:/87924/r3280586q>.



Image 12
"The Colored Race,"
<https://idn.duke.edu/ark:/87924/r30r9mf3h>.

While the aforementioned cards lack imagination and rely on stock characters, one more elusive series entitled, “Shadows,” hints at the Duke company’s knowledge of subversive culture. This parody features a couple strolling alongside (Image 13).¹⁶² The woman looks regal and modest with a comely face and large bones.¹⁶³ The smoking male has a disproportionately small head, long body, and somewhat boyish, pre-pubescent face.¹⁶⁴ This character is a far cry from the middle-class man’s ideal body type in the 1890s. Men of this period wished “physical bulk and well-defined muscles” like a prizefighter.¹⁶⁵ Many individuals wish to see themselves, or their aspirations, reflected in advertisements. Yet this character is the antithesis. Due to this couple’s close proximity, their shadow appears as a refined lady smoking a cigarette.¹⁶⁶ The accompanying text says, “Things are seldom as they seem.”¹⁶⁷ This text implies that the shadow reveals these characters’ true nature. A smoking lady may have an illicit, subcultural allure, but, overall, was not a desirable trait in a “legitimate” woman. This image alludes to a secret deviance as many smoking areas barred women’s presence much less encouraged participation.¹⁶⁸ With these seemingly adversarial ideas between the subpar representations and the target market, Buck and these artists demonstrated that smoking cigarettes evokes individuals’ true nature, which is greater aligned with the buyers’ desires.

¹⁶² Duke University, “Things are Seldom What They Seem,” *Digital Repository* (1889-1891), accessed April 18, 2018, <https://idn.duke.edu/ark:/87924/r3vh5cw76>.

Note: The cards in this series are unnamed. The accompanying text is thus the chosen title.

¹⁶³ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁴ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁵ Bederman, “Remaking Manhood,” 15.

¹⁶⁶ Duke University, “Things are Seldom What They Seem,” *Digital Repository* (1889-1891).

¹⁶⁷ *Ibid.*

¹⁶⁸ Sivulka, *Soap, Sex, and Cigarettes*, 149.



Image 13
 “Things are Seldom What They Seem,”
<https://idn.duke.edu/ark:/87924/r3vh5cw76>.

As women are naturally popular as sex objects or, at the least, physically appealing, Goldstein discusses the female characters as “alluring” individuals.¹⁶⁹ However, there are many representations that focus on other traditional spheres for women that do not primarily concern their role between the sheets. For instance, the “Ocean and River Steamers” series from 1887 represents ships with female figureheads on each card, despite the fact that women were often forbidden on such vessels. “Figurehead” is the technical term for the representations of women on a ship’s bow. During the nineteenth century, maritime steamships banned women aboard unless they were the wife or child of the captain.¹⁷⁰ When a girl reached her teen years, the law banned her from partaking in ship duties.¹⁷¹ There were exceptions, like Eliza Thorrold who operated a tugboat after her husband’s death in 1893.¹⁷² For years, she needed a licensed male on board for transactions, but acquired her own license

¹⁶⁹ Goldstein, “Gender in American Tobacco Cards 1880-1920,” 587.

¹⁷⁰ “Women in Maritime History,” *National Park Service*.

¹⁷¹ *Ibid.*

¹⁷² *Ibid.*

and was one of the first females to do so.¹⁷³ Still, she sold her ship by 1900, after a short-lived sea career.¹⁷⁴ With this information, the women representatives on the cards likely reflected figures that males aboard would miss or were metaphors for the corresponding foreign land.

The N83 Ocean and River Steamers series demonstrate how many of the female characters embodied more than just sex appeal. In fact, there is only one woman in this series that was presented in purely sexualized terms. The STR Taurus card is one ad that features prior intimations concerning females within the context of historic steamships. This ship was with the Iron Steamboat Co. in 1881 with an owner based in New York.¹⁷⁵ The location corresponds to Buck's contribution to the card's creation as he resided there. This woman possesses a graceful beauty with curling, brown hair piled up and a silk scarf to accentuate her primping.¹⁷⁶ She has luminous eyes gazing to the left rather than straight ahead, signaling her submissive nature.¹⁷⁷ With rosy lips, an expensive locket, and a v-neck, expensive dress, she presents a potential romantic partner.¹⁷⁸ This character is attractive and somewhat flirtatious, but avoids a sensual air.

As aforementioned, these women of the N83 series potentially embody figureheads, "a religious symbol, a national emblem, or a figure symbolizing the ship's name."¹⁷⁹ The women capture typical facets of the steamboats' destinations or originating locations. All of

¹⁷³ Ibid.

¹⁷⁴ Ibid.

¹⁷⁵ Duke University, "STR Taurus, Iron Steamboat Co.," *Digital Repository* (1887), accessed April 18, 2018, <https://idn.duke.edu/ark:/87924/r3bn9xd3v>.

Blue Book of American Shipping: Marine and Naval Directory of The United States; Statistics of Shipping and Shipbuilding in America Volume 15, (Marine Review Publishing Company, 1910), 67.

¹⁷⁶ Duke University, "STR Taurus, Iron Steamboat Co.," *Digital Repository* (1887).

¹⁷⁷ Ibid.

¹⁷⁸ Ibid.

¹⁷⁹ *Encyclopedia Britannica*, s.v. "figurehead," accessed April 18, 2018, <https://www.britannica.com/art/figurehead>.

the characters are references to physical sites except “Taurus” and “Pilgrim,” which denote some of the first American settlers and those with a certain astronomical sign. “S.S. Atlas, Atlas S.S. Co.” best captures this idea of a figurehead as the woman is placed properly and viewers see this character from her profile as is standard with these items.¹⁸⁰ For other cards, the illustrator denotes the proposed individual by other means such as a reproduction of the steam pipes as seen in “America, National Line,” (Image 14).¹⁸¹ This aforementioned card also demonstrates the destination through clothing as this woman’s attire is like that of a middle-class, British female colonizer with her chemise and grand hat with a feather.¹⁸² These examples demonstrate how Duke industry men envisioned great women, worthy of praise while mostly avoiding clear references to their immeasurable value in the bedroom.



Image 14
 “America, National Line,”
<https://idn.duke.edu/ark:/87924/r3pv6bj06>.

¹⁸⁰ Duke University, “S.S. Atlas, Atlas S.S. Co.,” *Digital Repository* (1887), accessed April 18, 2018, <https://idn.duke.edu/ark:/87924/r3r49gm27>.

¹⁸¹ Duke University, “America, National Line,” *Digital Repository* (1887), accessed April 18, 2018, <https://idn.duke.edu/ark:/87924/r3pv6bj06>.

¹⁸² *Ibid.*

The crème de la crème of these card series is the “Actors and Actresses” series.¹⁸³ Among these characters, only one is a male while the rest are female. Many of these named women were not yet famous, but sought celebrity status.¹⁸⁴ Meanwhile, some were fairly well known like burlesque actress Daisy Murdoch who was a “one-hit wonder.”¹⁸⁵ However, the company often misspelled her name (and others) because these women’s identities were of lesser interest while their poses captured the most attention.¹⁸⁶ These characters represent the core of Buck’s advertisement campaign, as they are the utmost sexualized. Of the 288 cards, approximately one-third (exactly eighty-seven cards) of them have a female with seemingly bare legs. Many more have exposed legs with stockings clearly covering them. This nakedness includes everything from tops of the thighs, the ankle and lower calf, and full leg exposure. With just an exclusive evaluation of the legs, it is evident that Buck ensured male viewers received everything from a teasing image to an outright sensual representation.

As a character, “Julia Miner” demonstrates how Buck built images around leggy women (Image 15). This character stands as if she is about to launch herself with her arms spread wide.¹⁸⁷ Her stance imitates the bird on the wall behind her.¹⁸⁸ As a bonus, her wavy hair flows freely as if she just removed her braid.¹⁸⁹ Her waist-long hair, starry eyes drawn to the right, and a nature scene in the background signifies a reference to the movement of

¹⁸³ Note: this is N145 series, not to be confused with other series with the same name

¹⁸⁴ Rebekah Burgess Abramovich, “Becoming the Advertisement: Daisy Murdoch as ‘Cupid’ on 1880s Tobacco Cards,” *Now at The Met (blog)*, July 29, 2014, <https://www.metmuseum.org/blogs/now-at-the-met/2014/becoming-the-advertisement-daisy-murdoch>.

¹⁸⁵ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁶ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁷ Duke University, “No. 373 – Julia Miner,” *Digital Repository (1885-1900)*, accessed April 18, 2018, <https://idn.duke.edu/ark:/87924/r39z90p6h>.

¹⁸⁸ *Ibid.*

¹⁸⁹ *Ibid.*

Romanticism with truth located in nature.¹⁹⁰ As the outdoors is often referenced as Mother Nature, the female form is synonymous with the outdoors. Thus the Romantic truth implies that Miner holds the same purity regardless of her tantalizing positioning. Her raised arms denote submissiveness and sensuality while her avoidance of eye contact invites male viewers to envision her as they please. Her outfit accentuates her bare legs, as it appears she draped the window treatments around her like a towel. It is sleeveless, cinched at the waist, and has fringe around the bottom with a side bustle.¹⁹¹ It has a high-low length where the front is shorter than the back.¹⁹² This photograph only features this design element to ensure both her backside and groin are covered, but the hem is still as short as possible. The length of her dress also maximizes the amount of bare leg shown. Her high heels accentuate the length of her lower limbs as well. This image demonstrates that Buck and the other executives wished to push the boundaries of what nude body parts were acceptable to show, as this character's ensemble covered as little as possible without revealing private areas.

Other female characters embody male fantasies concerning a multitude of role-play fantasies. "Lulu Beza" is one photographed woman who also shows off her legs, but has a more forceful tone than the romanticized Julia Miner (Image 16).¹⁹³ Beza wears a military style top with a belt that has a sword sheath attached running down the length of her legs.¹⁹⁴ Leather covers her bottom while she holds a sword across her upper thighs.¹⁹⁵ If a returning soldier had a desire for an attractive woman in his uniform, this "Lulu" fit the idealized imagination and came with a whimsical name and stylized outfit. While less Romantic,

¹⁹⁰ Ibid.

¹⁹¹ Ibid.

¹⁹² Ibid.

¹⁹³ Duke University, "No. 212 – Lulu Beza," *Digital Repository* (1880-1890), accessed April 18, 2018, <https://idn.duke.edu/ark:/87924/r3862bn74>.

¹⁹⁴ Ibid.

¹⁹⁵ Ibid.

mountains are in the background while she stands on a cliff.¹⁹⁶ This setting is somewhat realistic as a soldier may travel through the outdoors. It is aesthetically pleasing as well with a scenic view. Her surroundings are a reference to how Mother Nature gives birth to new fauna just as a sexualized female may bear a child as evidence of a physical union. Beza demonstrates how Buck and other executives used multiple metaphorical props to stimulate further the male viewer.

“Daisy Murdock” represents a fantasy as she dons a fairy outfit (Image 17). An individual in New York City took this picture in 1883 for the promotion of a successful play, “Cupid.”¹⁹⁷ After James’ launch of these card series, he and other tobacco companies took this photograph to use for their own advertising aims.¹⁹⁸ The background is blank, ensuring the viewer focuses solely on her figure and costume.¹⁹⁹ Nevertheless, her name is whimsical and references a flower. Daisy’s name becomes a metaphor for the relationship between the birds or bees and flowers. The male viewer represents the bee who will initiate the fertilization process.²⁰⁰ Her coy gaze and smirk convey her promiscuous thoughts while the wings and Hermes-styled cap give her an otherworldly, goddess status. Daisy’s revealing attire invites the male viewer to control the character while her intelligent eyes demonstrate that she is knowledgeable enough to properly engage his attention. Like Buck’s female friends, Mattie and Lida, in Europe, this character is a physical adornment, a male pastime, and competent while also ensuring she does not overpower the men’s stature.

¹⁹⁶ Ibid.

¹⁹⁷ Abramovich, “Becoming the Advertisement.”

¹⁹⁸ Ibid.

¹⁹⁹ Duke University, “No. 217 – Daisy Murdock,” *Digital Repository* (1880-1890).

²⁰⁰ U.S. Department of Agriculture, “What Is Pollination?,” *U.S. Forest Service*, accessed April 18, 2018, https://www.fs.fed.us/wildflowers/pollinators/What_is_Pollination/.



Image 15
"No. 373 – Julia Miner,"
<https://idn.duke.edu/ark:/87924/r39z90p6h>.



Image 16
"Lulu Beza,"
<https://idn.duke.edu/ark:/87924/r3862bn74>.



Image 17
 “No. 217 – Daisy
 Murdock,”
<https://idn.duke.edu/ark:/87924/r3zw1933b>.

The card series’ themes provide commentary on the stature of moguls and their monopolies. Their superiority renders other individuals helpless to such objectification. African Americans, women, and the poor in general were subject to others’ interpretation. The “others” are privileged, white males whose entitlement ensured a sweeping brush to paint others as two-dimensional characters. The sexualized women demonstrate the extent of these leaders’ willingness to exploit others. While these actresses’ identities are largely unknown—and their opinions and motivations even less so—Buck’s background and commentary about women coupled with his position within the company reveals the likelihood of his vision dominating these advertisements. Having the final say, James must take responsibility for the messaging of these cards because he approved or, at the very least deigned them acceptable, in the name of cigarette sales. The card series show that the executives and collaborators of W. Duke, Sons and Company were willing to perpetuate,

rather than question, the normal American dream with its moral flaws and failures that served the wishes of the white gentlemen.



Image 18
Duke University Collection:
Tobacco Collection, Box 5.

His Family's Reaction

While Buck steered the company, his brother and father had equal power, but lacked James' enthusiasm for advertising. Ben handled the finances, the types of tobacco collected, and the process of the product. Their father was vital during the company's beginning as he was the creator. However, he became sick in his old age and unable to participate to the degree he had previously. Even before his illness, he allowed his sons to take more and more power. For instance, Washington wrote Buck urging him to cease "circulating lascivious photographs with cigarettes."²⁰¹ The adjective "lascivious" means "characterized by or

²⁰¹ Washington Duke to James B. Duke, 17 October 1894, in "Tobacco Advertising Letter Transcript," *Digital Collections*, accessed April 18, 2018, <https://library.duke.edu/digitalcollections/eaa/guide/tobacco/duke-doc/>.

expressing lust or lewdness; wanton.”²⁰² His father’s accusatory tone insinuates that Buck abandoned morality and his religious duty as seen when Washington legitimizes his statements through reference to Rev. John C. Hocutt.²⁰³ While Buck acknowledged the presence of God and “his maker,” his lavish, impish lifestyle demonstrates his lack of strict adherence to Christian restraint.²⁰⁴ This written rebuke reveals that Buck received some backlash for his card series while his sales records are proof of their ultimate success. This product possessed a shocking factor and thus was a new, effective technique.

Washington’s criticism was likely anticipated as the father demonstrated his dedication to religious rituals through something as simple as his son’s name. Benjamin Newton, the namesake of Benjamin N. Duke, was a famous nineteenth-century theologian who examined the “unfulfilled biblical prophecies.”²⁰⁵ Washington mirrors the many Americans, as a nation founded on Protestant principles, who identified with and adhered to Christian morals. Consequently, Buck’s business venture could have easily gone south as his father implied. The elder Duke had an emotional, visceral reaction to the new female figures depicted and wished to discontinue this practice. This reaction reflects what many others probably felt. However, for every complaint about scantily clad women, the cigarette business would gain further public recognition and draw more men who ignored or never held such moral values. As mentioned previously, many of these beautiful female characters captured physical attention without revealing much of their bodies. Regardless, the mere presence of some salacious images incensed conservatives and continued to capture the attention of the majority. Essentially, Buck discovered that sex, even through implicit

²⁰² *Webster’s New World College Dictionary*, 4th ed. rev., s.v. “lascivious,” accessed April 18, 2018, <https://www.collinsdictionary.com/us/dictionary/english/lascivious>.

²⁰³ Washington Duke to James B. Duke, 17 October 1894.

²⁰⁴ James B. Duke to Benjamin and Sallie Duke, 18 August 1880.

²⁰⁵ Burnham, preface to *A Story of Conflict*, xvii.

allusions, sells and, ultimately, the number of individuals who wish to view these intimations outweigh those who were offended.

Conclusion

From late-eighteenth century jingles for tobacco to the cigarette cards that appeared approximately one hundred years later, advertising became more and more visual and refined. James B. Duke was a giant within the industry who represented the fulfillment of the American dream. His life experiences fueled his vision for the visuals associated with W. Duke, Sons and Company. In his business, James maintained the idealization of superior whites while embodying the picturesque version of a risky mogul, undertaking the implementation of a new tobacco product, a revolutionary Bonsack machine, a publication venture, and shockingly low prices. Buck was a forward-thinking businessman, but an old-fashioned visualizer. For each step towards progress, he and his associates reinforced the social structure that ensured they remained at the summit. Nevertheless, this entrepreneur represented a variety of exciting projects that drew others to his success. He often reproduced versions of his fascinating life in the cards. If not, he represented some slapstick humor common among lower-class individuals as seen through his racist joke about the “race.” He ensured that he offered messages that applied to an array of social classes.

Buck’s perpetuated support and instigation of immoral card series shows how his outlook became secularized. James’s upbringing centered on Protestant beliefs, including restraint and a measure of physical purity. However, his rise to the upper class granted him greater influence over others and access to new avenues. This newfound freedom paired with the general shift in modern capitalism made Buck’s radical cards easier to justify. The buyers

in this system increasingly arrived to an outlook where ethics lost foothold and self-gratification took precedence.

This Duke son pushed the envelope with messaging in regards to what extent men could exploit women, but otherwise refined and built off existing ideas in the commodity market and society of late-nineteenth century America. The Bonsack Machine needed refinement. Glass cards existed in other markets like dentistry and other tobacco companies attempted to implement a paper version of them to promote their products. Imperialism ensured that non-white individuals became second-class citizens. People at large considered women as a host of the family and teacher of religious, or at least moral, ideals. Their value normally originated from the work they did for others, becoming more and more like a commodity or item. From business to ideals, Buck picked and chose what items to appropriate for his benefit, and, with his magic touch, he conducted a booming business with the scrapped ideas and objects of others. In regards to the cigarette cards, he and his cohorts exploited the scandalous and reiterated the familiar where the U.S. reined king with James as the top business mogul. No need to reinvent the wheel. Buck located the inventions and polished them through risk and hard work.

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