

**St. Paul Pioneer Press (MN)** July 11, 2011

Treasures, near misses: thrift shops see them all

Salvation Army lands both in recent weeks and hires dealers to handle them

Author: Richard Chin [rchin@pioneerpress.com](mailto:rchin@pioneerpress.com)

The baseball card turned out to be a fake, but the painting was real.

Of the thousands and thousands of pounds of materials anonymously donated to Salvation Army each week in the Twin Cities, two items - a Mickey Mantle baseball card and an oil painting of a Southern landscape - were recently plucked out of the pile and set aside by sharp-eyed employees who thought they might be a little too valuable to put on the Salvation Army's thrift store shelves.

The 1951 Bowman-brand #253 Mickey Mantle baseball card was unearthed from boxes and boxes of baseball cards and sports memorabilia donated last year at a Salvation Army store in Minneapolis.

"It was just dropped off," said Bill Price, administrator of the Salvation Army's adult rehabilitation center, which is funded by thrift shop revenues. "It's unusual for us to receive a big donation like that anonymously."

According to an account in a Salvation Army publication, a Salvation Army truck driver picked up the cards and alerted the organization about the find.

"Someone said they might have something special," Price said.

Shannon Law, a local personal-property appraiser, was brought in to evaluate the collection, which she said included about 100 boxes of memorabilia including index cards signed by baseball greats such as Ernie Banks, Willie Mays and Hank Aaron and a menu from a restaurant owned by Joe DiMaggio's brother.

"Thousands, hundreds of thousands" of items were in the collection, Law said. "They simply dumped box after box."

"I just think it's some frustrated people who had to sell their house and it was their dad's or their uncle's collection and they just pitched it" into the Salvation Army collection box, Law said.

Out of all that material, Salvation Army officials were most excited about the Mickey Mantle card from his rookie year with the New York Yankees.

Depending on the condition, an authentic card of that type could be worth up to \$30,000, Law said. Alas, when the card was sent to a sports card authentication company in California, the verdict came back "questionable authenticity," Law said.

"I don't know if the card as a fake has some merit," Law said. But she said she's selling the rest of the collection piece by piece for the Salvation Army on eBay. She said she hopes it might net a few thousand dollars.

But if Mickey Mantle struck out for the Salvation Army, Alfred Hutty hit a homer.

Hutty (1877-1954) was a painter who worked in Woodstock, N.Y., and Charleston, S.C., and it was his name on the bottom of a 32-by-34-inch oil painting that also recently turned up in a Salvation Army store. Denni Borgheiinck, a thrift store manager, said she was working at the Salvation Army's collection center in downtown Minneapolis when another employee showed her the painting.

"They knew I was into antiques," she said. "I just recognized the last name. I just love old paintings, and the name Hutty just rang a bell."

Another clue that the painting was not just another thrift store castaway was what appeared to be an original label on the back, which included a title "At Noon," and a price: \$750.

"I didn't have any doubt. You could tell it was hand-painted. The signature in the bottom was very readable," Borgheiinck said.

If the painting hadn't been set aside, "they probably would've sold it for a couple hundred dollars in one of the stores," Law said.

Borgheiinck, however, said she thought the painting was worth at least a few thousand dollars. "It was just pretty," she said. "It was nice."

Law acted as a broker for the painting and placed it with a North Carolina auction company, Brunk Auctions, which put an estimated price of \$5,000 to \$10,000 on it when it went up for auction on March 12.

Laura Crockett, a fine-arts specialist with Brunk, said estimating the sales price was difficult because most Hutty paintings of Southern gardens are in museums and don't come to auction.

Still, it was a surprise when a private collector paid \$67,200 for "At Noon," which Crockett believes was painted in the 1920s.

After expenses and commission fees, the Salvation Army ended up with \$49,400, Law said.

"That was a big surprise. It was much better than anticipated," Borgheiinck said.

As with the baseball cards, the Salvation Army doesn't know who donated the painting.

"That's what's so mysterious," Law said.

"My guess is someone didn't know what they had. They thought it was just an old picture and just sent it," Borgheiinck said.

"This actually happens more often than we know, and we don't catch it," Price said. He said donations in the past have included real diamonds and sterling silver. "This is why collectors visit our thrift stores - because they're looking for our mistakes."

Southern landscape artist Alfred Hutty's painting "At Noon" appeared anonymously at a Salvation Army

store in Minneapolis and recently sold to a private collector at auction for \$67,000.

Copyright 2011 Saint Paul Pioneer Press  
Article Purchased from the Pioneer Press  
Record Number: 11071016465241