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1876 Founding Documents and Original Constitution of Major League Baseball Go Up for Auction May 24

Newly discovered 74-page volume could fetch record price

Laguna Niguel, Calif. (April 20, 2017) – In the wake of its record-breaking \$3.26 million sale last April of the 1857 “Laws of Base Ball” documents, SCP Auctions now unveils the recently discovered and never-before-offered 1876 “Founding Documents and Original Constitution of Major League Baseball,” a handwritten, 74-page sports artifact of unprecedented historical significance.

“This, the founding document of Major League Baseball, is a central piece of Americana, inaugurating an institution that would come to be a defining aspect of American culture,” says Dan Imler, vice president of SCP Auctions.

Baseball first became an occupational endeavor in 1869, when the Cincinnati Red Stockings became the first team to pay its players a salary. The dawn of professional baseball, however, was plagued by a lack of governance that seeded corruption and instability. Teams folded regularly due to the unregulated and often crooked practices of players and owners alike. By the end of the 1875 season, the future of professional baseball was in peril. In 1876, its saviors emerged and Major League Baseball was born.

In a meeting held on Feb. 2, 1876, at the Grand Central Hotel in New York City, Chicago White Stockings owner William Hulbert persuaded a carefully assembled group of baseball luminaries to join his effort to bring order, dignity and profitability to the fledgling sport. Supported by fellow visionaries such as Albert Spalding, Harry Wright, Nicholas Young, Morgan Bulkeley and others Hulbert set forth his blueprint for the destiny of professional baseball.

Offered here are those very pages, the central handwritten documents crafted by Hulbert and his supporters in 1875-76 that established what endures today as America’s oldest professional sports league. The groundbreaking documents go up for auction on May 24th at www.scpauctions.com. The new association was called “The National League of Professional Base Ball Clubs” and consisted of just eight teams: the Boston Red Stockings, Chicago White Stockings, Cincinnati Reds, Hartford Dark Blues, Louisville Grays, New York Mutuals, Philadelphia Athletics and the St. Louis Brown Stockings. The first page of the original handwritten Constitution states the new league’s objectives as follows:

- to encourage, foster and elevate the game of base-ball;
- to enact and enforce proper rules for the exhibition and conduct of the game;
- to make base-ball playing respectable and honorable;

- to protect and promote the mutual interests of professional base-ball clubs and professional baseball players; and
- to establish and regulate the “Base-Ball Championship of the United States.”

“Nearly 150 years ago William Hulbert saw the future of what baseball could be,” says Imler. “He set a new standard for the game and created a professional baseball league that has not only lasted, but has blossomed into a global institution. The forum he created fostered legends from Cap Anson to Babe Ruth to Mike Trout and all the superstars of today. These men owe their identities to Major League Baseball and Major League Baseball owes its existence to Hulbert and this foundational set of documents.”

The documents have never been offered publicly. The sports world has known very few transcendent foundational documents that have surfaced in original form for public offering. In addition to the aforementioned 1857 “Laws of Base Ball” sold by SCP Auctions (\$3.26 million), there are James Naismith’s “1891 Original Rules of Basketball” (sold for \$4.3 million) and “The 1859 Original Rules of Soccer” (sold for \$1.4 million).

Adds Imler: “We’ve sold some incredible baseball artifacts before – from Babe Ruth’s 1920 Yankees jersey for \$4.4 million to Kirk Gibson’s 1988 World Series home run bat for \$575,000 – but this artifact trumps them all. Without these documents, such objects would not exist.”

Bidding is open to registered bidders only at www.scpauctions.com beginning on Wed., May 24, and closing on Sat., June 10. For more information on how to participate and take part in the bidding, please call 949-831-3700 or visit www.scpauctions.com.

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