

Honus Wagner T206 Baseball Card to be auctioned

Often referred to as the holy grail of baseball cards, a Honus Wagner T206 Baseball Card will be will be auctioned live at the Showplace in Binghamton, NY as well as on the Internet on August 12th by Bob & Sallie Connelly. The opening bid is \$300,000. Bob Connelly estimates the card should sell in the range of \$750,000 to \$850,000.

For several reasons this particular card is probably the most controversial of all the Wagner T206 baseball cards known to exist. Almost all of the 50 to 60 known examples of the Honus Wagner T206 have an advertisement for Sweet Caporal Cigarettes on the reverse. Only a few have surfaced having a Piedmont back as this card does, making it perhaps the third known such specimen. The back of the card is printed in dark blue ink and at the bottom is Factory No. 25, 2^d Dist. VA.

The card is owned by John Cobb and Ray Edwards, both of Cincinnati Ohio and has a very sorted history. Cobb purchased the card over 20 years ago for \$1,800 from a broker. For the past 10 years, the cards' authenticity has been questioned. It is important to note that none of the accusers have ever actually seen or examined the card. The allegations have gone so far that the owners have even been accused of stealing the card.

In 2002 the owners' state they contacted Pro Sports Authenticators about having the card authenticated. Fearful of having the card out of their sight, the owners requested that PSA only authenticate and grade the card in their presence. PSA, sighting their standard inspection policies, declined to inspect the card under those conditions.

Eager at having the card authenticated and yet fearful of letting it out of their site, the owners began a search to find qualified experts who would be willing to examine the card in their presence. In February 2003, the owners had the paper tested by IPS (Integrated Paper Services Inc). of Appleton, Wisconsin. The 6-hour testing was conducted to verify that the paper the card was printed on was from the time period in question. IPS established that the card is from the early 1900's. In summary, IPS's analysis found no evidence of titanium dioxide which has been used from 1921 to present to whiten paper. Testing the card with UV light, the card tested negative for UV florescence, which is consistent with all paper produced before 1950. IPS further stated that the card had fiber components known to be used in papermaking in the early 1900s.

Continuing their quest for authentication, the owners then had the printing style authenticated in December 2003 by Arnie Schwed, of Cincinnati Ohio. Mr. Schwed stated ... *it is an authentic original from a printing source in the early 1900's and is original factory bonded one stock paper, and is not sandwiched.* In summary, Schwed wrote *During the 1900's there were several printing press operations around the country, which all would compete for the baseball card business, historically. It appears this card was manufactured for that purpose. Further, in order for a counterfeiter to produce a card that would look like The Card [Schwed's designation for the subject card] the skill of the printer would have to be of a master pressmen with 5-10 years experience, and would require a machine which would cost between \$500,000 and \$2,000,000. However, even with a skilled pressman and necessary equipment, the paper of The Card would not survive a printing press due to its age.*

In June 2005, the owners contacted Bob Connelly, a certified appraiser with expertise in appraising sports memorabilia, to evaluate their card. In the owner's presence, Connelly inspected the card and all the supporting documentation the owners had gathered about the card. After reviewing everything presented, Connelly appraised the card for \$850,000. Connelly based his appraisal solely upon the presumption of the evidence supplied by the owners. Connelly wrote *the card has some discoloration at the top and the corners show wear but overall the condition is very good.* Connelly stressed that he is not an authenticator; and that he is strictly being employed as an appraiser, relying upon the qualifications of others. Very few appraisers are also qualified to authenticate.

At a recent meeting conducted at the Appraisers Association of America headquarters in New York City, Connelly was interviewed about the card and it's history by both HBO and the New York Daily News. Connelly discussed the card and it's interesting history. Connelly was quoted as feeling the card would grade a '4', and added he was just stating his opinion, as he is not a grader. While Connelly would like to have the card independently graded, he has honored the owner's wishes. Connelly suggested that this particular card is so well known in the industry, that he felt it would be very difficult to have the card graded anonymously.

Early in 2006, the owners contacted the Connellys about the possibility of consigning the card for auction. As Bob Connelly told the owners, the card would make a wonderful headliner in an upcoming sports memorabilia Internet auction that they had scheduled for August. Consequently, you can watch history in the making as this card is put up for auction Saturday, August 12th live on the Internet at eBay Live and Live Auctioneers. Further information is available by contacting Bob Connelly, Binghamton, NY (607) 722-9593. Specifics about the auction can be found at their website: www.bobconnelly.com.