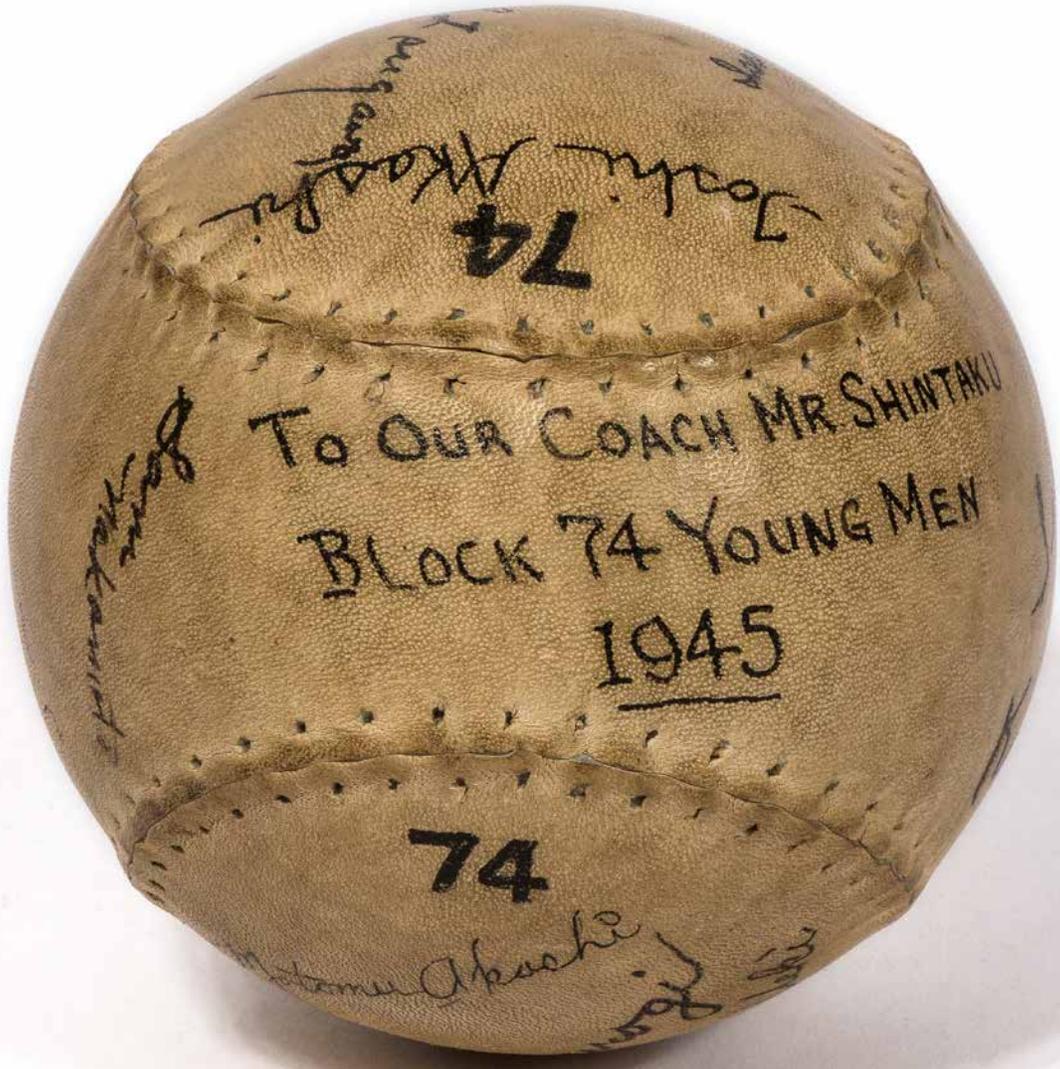


Softball Signed by Teammates at a Japanese American Internment Camp

Cincinnati: The P. Goldsmith Sons [1945]

\$2000



12-inch “Concealed Stitch” softball. Measuring 3½” in diameter. Near fine with some light toning. Housed in its original box with a printed label, very good with bumping, tears, and wear at the edges and lacking the top flap. A softball from the Tule Lake Internment Camp presented: “To Our Coach Mr. Shintaku Block 74 Young Men 1945,” along with the signatures of 13 of the players.

Tule Lake was the site of a Civilian Conservation Corp reclamation project to create farmland by draining Tule Lake, but following the Japanese attack on Pearl Harbor, the site was converted into one of 10 internment camps for persons of Japanese descent. The camp housed more than 18,000 internees on 7,400 acres of land, and was completely self-contained with a post office, hospital, high school, stores, sewage treatment plant, and factories. Sports played an important part in camp life as a way to engage youth and entertain internees. This softball represents one such effort by a team from Block 74. While not all the names on the baseball have been definitely identified through government records, we have positively identified Toshi Akashi, Stanford Tsugawa, George Kurashige, Hisaaski Ueki, and Motomu Akashi as being present at Tule Lake in 1945.

Tule Lake was unlike the other internment camps given its official designation as a “segregation center” by the War Relocation Authority. It was the place that housed those deemed “disloyal” due to their refusal to accept the denial of their civil liberties and swear allegiance to the U.S. or serve in the military. As such, the camp was a hotbed of political resistance that came to a head in the fall of 1943 when a truck carrying agricultural workers from the camp overturned, killing one internee and leading to protests. Martial law was declared and a stockade for “troublemakers” was constructed somewhat neutralizing further civil disobedience until the camp was final shuttered in March 1946.

A compelling artifact that shows the struggle to maintain a sense of normalcy during one of the nation’s most shameful periods. [BTC#424834]

