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## Athletics in accountancy

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## ( ATHLETICS IN ) ACCOUNTANCY

Scarcely twenty years had passed since mighty Casey had "Struck Out," and there was still no joy in Mudville, when an extraordinary aggregation of middle-aged and eye-weary accountants took the field, wearing grey baseball uniforms with "H&S" in blue on their shirts and blazers, and won 8 of its 11 games against outside competition. The year was 1907.

Every fair Saturday after work that summer and the next, the crack of the bat and the entreaties of loyal fans could be heard at Williamsbridge, a few miles north of where John J. McGraw's Giants were playing in the Polo Grounds. By the end of the first season, interest in athletics was running so high that the 13-year-old accounting firm had built its own diamond, two tennis courts and a croquet ground. The new Haskins & Sells Athletic Association, with Mr. E. W. Sells as president, held its first winter reunion in

Healy's African Jungle Room on December 30, 1907.

The exploits of the first year of this organization, and particularly of the H&S baseball team, were recorded in a volume, *Athletics in Accountancy*, privately printed by Mr. Sells and written at his request by an unidentified friend, described simply as "an enthusiastic follower of out-door sports, and an occasional contributor to its literature."

"It is only within the last generation that Americans have begun to learn how to play," begins the author. "It is only within the past ten years or so that we have really discovered the country. The country clubs and golf courses which now surround every large city—which every little freshwater town must needs lay out, in some deserted cow-pasture or across the cornfields where houses stop and the prairie begins—are all of the most recent history."

The chronicle continues: "Of the various sorts of workers in this sophisticated modern Babel [New York City] few, certainly, more acutely need the rest and refreshment that comes from

enjoyable out-of-door exercise than those engaged in the profession of accountancy. This work requires intense concentration, it has few of the alleviating distractions of many other occupations—the physician's, the journalist's, the lawyer's, for instance—it is essentially impersonal, dispassionate and precise."

The volume then proceeds to reproduce the text of Athletic Bulletin No. 1, which was tacked up on the office bulletin-board early in the month of June. This bulletin, "now possessing something of the prestige and dignity of a Magna Charta or a Declaration of Independence," lists those members of the staff of Haskins & Sells who had organized a baseball team. Among the 33 names listed appear those of Mr. Sells, to whose umpiring there were no objections, and two of his three partners: C. S. Ludlam, who played first base, and D. S. Fero, one of four or five pitchers for the H&S nine. Four others whose names appear on the list subsequently became partners of the Firm.

Mr. Sells promptly expressed his interest in the budding movement with a

Mascot of the Team—Dorothy Sells, daughter of Mr. Sells, who with her sister, Marjorie (now wife of General Arthur H. Carter, former managing partner of the Firm), kept score of the games.





substantial contribution toward the team's expenses and gave assurances of similar contributions from his partners.

For the first few Saturdays, leaving out June 29th, "being one of those days on which securities are counted," the members were organized into two teams, The Lemons and The Blues. Bulletins followed one another in rapid succession: each member was asked to contribute \$1.00; each was to provide his own shoes; "Bring your own wives and other fellows' sisters." One bulletin announced that "Regular League rules will prevail. If, however, either team should score 100 runs prior to the ninth inning, the game shall be considered a tie game to be played off the next Saturday following."

Bulletin No. 3 "conveyed the exhilarating information that a challenge had been received from the Accounting Department of the Royal Baking Powder Company," a client of the Firm. The game was to be the first of eleven played over the ensuing two months with outside teams. Four of the opponents were teams of client organizations. One was the Columbia Oval

Cricket Club trying its hand at the American sport. Four of the games were return engagements, usually against teams to be disappointed again after their first loss.

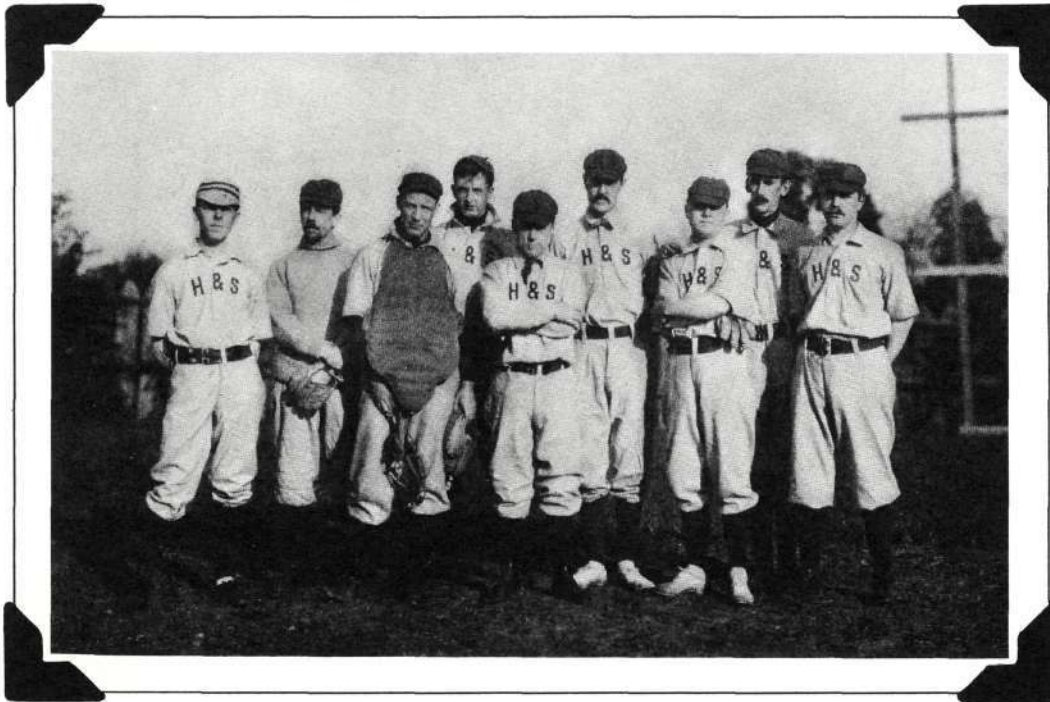
Interest ran high for the game with the Royal Baking Powder nine. A bulletin exhorted all members of the staff to be present "for the purpose of rooting and to substitute in place of any injured or tired player." Non-players were appealed to professionally: "We desire to make a careful analysis of their pitcher's curves, segregated as to home runs, three-baggers, two-base hits and safeties only." Wives and sisters were invited, and directions to the field of combat by train read: "Turn to the right after alighting, walk about two blocks, and there you both are." The serving of refreshments after the game was deftly rumored. Haskins & Sells won the game by a score of 24-13 and was on its way to considerable reputation. Royal Baking Powder tried twice again during the summer and was defeated 17-14 both times. (The audit engagement was retained.)

The H&S team stumbled only once

until toward the end of the season, when it lost 5-7 to the Mutual Life Insurance Company, a team of players so much younger and more experienced that the defeat was considered no disgrace. However, a sobering jolt was visited upon the team in its second game at the hand of the founding partner. On August 10th, Mr. Sells confronted his office nine with a team made up of "farmers" employed on his North Castle farm near Mount Kisco, N. Y. Bent on chastening the H&S team, flushed with its first victory, he had recruited to The Farmers four or five crack young ball players, friends of the family from the nearby village, but not, however, until he had in fact hired them as farm hands and they had done a stint behind the plow. He insisted there would be no out-and-out ringers.

They came "arrayed in blue jeans and farmer's straw hats and wrapped in that external assumption of bucolic awkwardness which would have done credit to a troupe of experienced actors. During the preliminary practice, they fell all over themselves, threw wildly, called each other 'Si' and other names

"A team of winners"—the H & S Nine of 1907.





## Athletics in Accountancy

dear to the rural drama and, in every way, did their best to put a vein of confidence into the minds of the city men. The H&S team marched on the field with the air of saying that it was a shame to take the money. The score at the end of the game was 17-2 in favor of The Farmers, who returned to Mr. Sells' North Castle farm like a conquering army."

In a return engagement on September 28, the office team, with five victories and a tie under its belt, defeated The Farmers 7-4. The rural nine declared afterward that "only a conspiracy and the most abandoned behavior on the part of Umpire, audience and opponents were responsible for the result."

On into the autumn, the early Saturday afternoon train to Williamsbridge carried out to the country this big fam-

ily party. "The young women stenographers employed in the office came along, too, and four or five automobiles bringing members of the firm and their families generally arrived before the teams began to play." Mr. Sells' own family were consistent fans, and his daughters were customarily the score keepers. After the games were over, tea and sandwiches and other refreshments were served in the clubhouse, thanks primarily to the efforts and culinary ability of Miss Bolles of the office, "and it was generally close to sundown before the party broke up and returned to town."

Out of the more than one hundred persons employed by the Firm in New York (offices had already been opened in Chicago, London, Cleveland, St. Louis, and Pittsburgh) about a third actually played in the games. "The fact

that the average age of the players was about thirty-five, and that most of them had not touched the ball or bat for something like a decade, suggests how much the organization of the team had to do with getting men interested in sport who otherwise might never have thought of it. . . . In this sense, athletics had really entered into the profession of accountancy and baseball became an important part of the week's work. It had made the latter more human and enjoyable, given health and pleasure, and added practically to each one's capabilities in the art of living."



## THE HASKINS & SELLS FOUNDATION

Practitioners and educators in any profession traditionally are bound closely together by their common interest in supplying the profession with young people of ability, training, and vision. Mr. Haskins appreciated this tradition, and in 1900 was one of the pioneers founding New York University's School of Commerce, Accounts and Finance. He served the school for a number of years as its first dean.

Today, individual members of the Firm give tangible evidence of their continuing interest in accounting education and research through the Haskins & Sells Foundation, a non-profit organization begun in 1928 by five of our earlier partners. In the past ten years alone, nearly one-half million dollars has been allocated by the Foundation to support projects, scholastic awards, and faculty grants.

One of the Foundation's earliest research projects was to sponsor a study of accounting principles in 1937. This study, by Messrs. Sanders, Hatfield, and Moore, was published by the Amer-

ican Institute in 1938 as "A Statement of Accounting Principles." It was a forerunner of the familiar "Accounting Research Bulletins." This study and the Bulletins are an important part of the literature now being reviewed by the Institute's Accounting Principles Board in an effort better to delineate generally accepted accounting principles.

In 1956, the Foundation established at 38 colleges and universities the Haskins & Sells Foundation Scholastic Award for Excellence in Accounting. This \$500 award is given annually to an outstanding student of accounting at each participating school. Selection is made by a faculty committee on the basis of factors that make for future success in public accounting. Today, 75 colleges and universities are included in the program—almost double the number of seven years ago. Since 1956, nearly 400 college seniors have received the award. This past year, four universities were added to the program: DePaul University (Illinois),

Montana State University, Niagara University (New York), and Villanova University (Pennsylvania).

Aware of the critical role of accounting professors in accountancy's growth, the Foundation also established in 1956, an annual faculty assistance grant of \$1,000 in each of five universities. This program assists accounting teachers studying for advanced degrees. At present, 27 universities annually select recipients for the \$1,000 grant. To date, 112 faculty members throughout the country have benefited from these grants. It is gratifying to note that all but five of them have chosen to stay in teaching and accounting research.

In 1958, a grant of \$25,000 was made to the American Accounting Association for a faculty fellowship program to be set up and administered by the Association. More recently, other CPA firms have contributed to this fellowship fund. With this help, many more teachers in our accounting schools are better able financially to pursue their doctoral studies.