

Colonial Psalm Book Could Sell for \$30 Million at NY Auction

One of 11 surviving copies of the first book printed in America is hitting the auction block later this year and is expected to fetch as much as \$30 million, which would make it the most valuable book in history, Sotheby's said on Friday.

The Bay Psalm Book was printed in 1640 in Cambridge, Massachusetts. It is being sold from the collection of Boston's Old South Church to fund building repairs and sustain its ministry.

The church owns one other copy, and others are owned by Harvard and Yale universities and other institutions.

It is the first copy of the book to be offered for sale since 1947, when it achieved a record auction price for a book of \$151,000. Sotheby's estimated it will sell for \$15 million to \$30 million at its New York auction on November 26.

The current auction record for a printed book was set in December 2010 when Sotheby's sold John James Audubon's "Birds of America" for \$11,542,683 including commission.

"This little book of 1640 was precursor to Lexington and Concord, and, ultimately, to American political independence," said David Redden, chairman of Sotheby's books department.

Calling the book a "mythical rarity," Redden added that "it has become too rare to collect. Yet here it is today, this modest little book printed in the American wilderness but embodying the values that created our nation: political freedom and religious liberty."

Members of the church, a nonprofit organization dating back to

1669 that is a member of the Protestant denomination United Church of Christ, voted overwhelmingly in December to sell the rare tome.

Nancy Taylor, senior minister and chief executive of Old South Church, said in a statement: "We hope to increase our grants and outreach programs, as well as maintain our National Historic Landmark building" with the substantial proceeds.

The book will go on display in New York at Sotheby's from Friday through Sunday ahead of a traveling exhibition that will visit Philadelphia, Chicago, Los Angeles and Dallas in the coming months.