

Almanacs 'To Ben [Franklin]. Our benefactor'

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recently discovered.

Went fast

Stout and three other Berwickians had come to New York days earlier, and were safely inside Sotheby's yesterday morning.

For a time, they were afraid no one else would make it — not even the bidders. The auction room was almost empty at 9:55 a.m., Stout said.

But when the first lot of items came up for bid a little past 10 a.m., a dozen or so people were seated with paddles, along with several Sotheby's staffers who sat at a long, tall table on the side to take bids by phone.

It went fast. On average, Sotheby's goes through 80 to 100 lots an hour, said Kevin Doyle of the company's bid department. By 10:35 a.m., the auctioneer was up to Lot 45. Berwick's almanacs were Lot 68, and there was still no sign of the bus.

As the auctioneer announced Lot 66, Stout took out his camera to try to preserve the moment for the rest of the society members.

Normally, photos aren't allowed, but Stout hurriedly won permission from Sotheby's spokeswoman Susan Ollinick to take a single photo.

'Katie-bar-the-door'

The bidding for the almanacs began. The bids rose \$5,000 at a time, then went to \$10,000 increments. But they stalled at \$90,000.

Stout said he clasped his hands in front of him almost like he was praying.

"For a minute, I thought I'd be taking those books home with me," he said.

Society members had already decided they wouldn't accept less than \$100,000.

But then, someone bid \$100,000. And someone else answered with \$110,000.

■ **More clues on books' path to Berwick**
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It stalled again at \$200,000, said Joe Cappelloni, one of the Berwickians who had come early.

And then it resumed its climb. "It was Katie-bar-the-door, boom! Boom! Boom!" said society treasurer Robert Lindquist, another Berwick early bird.

The bids hit \$400,000. Ollinick whispered to Stout, "You can take another picture."

The last bidder

It was down to five bidders on the phones. The process had taken unusually long — about three minutes, Doyle said.

At the phone bank, Sotheby's employee Christy Hamilton waited for her client to speak. He was known to the auction company as a good bidder, Doyle said, but so far, he had not made a single offer.

Four more bidders dropped out. Hamilton said she asked the client, "Do you want to bid?"

"And he said yes," she remembered. "And he bid every time until he got it."

The hammer came down.

Hope fades

Back on the bus, about 10 blocks away, the passengers were still hoping they would make it in time for the bid. But they didn't have much hope.

The 14 society members had paid for the bus out of their own pockets, and had boarded clutching cups of coffee at 6:30 that morning in Berwick. They'd spent the first two hours laughing and speculating about what the almanacs might be worth, and who might buy them, as they passed around candy, nuts and a homemade nut roll baked by Crystal Canouse.

Now Canouse shouted toward the driver, Jerry Owens: "Jerry, it'd be nice if we'd only get green lights."



Press Enterprise/Tom Adams

BERWICK HISTORICAL SOCIETY MEMBERS, including Tom McLaughlin, and Bill Vezendy, right, use their cell phones to spread the news of the sale Tuesday morning. The group, delayed by traffic, was on the way to Sotheby's in New York City. See group celebrate hearing the news, page 6.

Adams put in a desperate call to Ollinick to see if the almanacs' sale could be delayed. He shook his head sadly. No luck.

Tom McLaughlin was uncharacteristically quiet. He had been up since 2:30 a.m., he said, too excited to sleep. For the past several months, he had shopped the almanacs around to various appraisers, then arranged for the sale.

The group grew more and more anxious as the bus was trapped repeatedly in stop-and-go traffic that began miles before the Lincoln Tunnel.

The tension was finally broken with Stout's last call, telling them about the sale.

They finally arrived at 1334 York Ave. around 11:30 a.m. McLaughlin led the way to the elevator, then punched the button for the fifth floor. As they rushed past the receptionists, Stout burst from the auction room and hugged McLaughlin and Commissioner David Kovach, who were in the lead.

"\$470,000!" he gasped. He held up his shaking hands. "I was like this!"

Final figures

The historical society would get \$441,800 — it had to pay the auction house 6 percent, a big break from the usual 10 percent Sotheby's usually charges sellers, said McLaughlin.

Sotheby's got to keep \$124,700, between the buyers' and sellers' fees.

That made the auction house happy enough that, when society member Lauren Gromel asked to buy the \$30 catalog listing

the almanacs, a staff member gave it to her for free, then threw in another 13 — one for everyone on the bus.

Selby Kiffer, Sotheby's documents expert, even autographed some copies.

"A great day for Berwick and Sotheby's!" he wrote in Canouse's.

George Washington's copy of the Federalist Papers — sold for \$1.4 million in 1990 — is the only American manuscript or book to sell for more, Sotheby's told the Associated Press.

Celebration

Society members celebrated at Swifty's, a fancy restaurant a few blocks away. Lindquist treated them to the \$25-a-plate meal — they didn't want to use the society money.

Then the group got back on the bus.

McLaughlin took a few calls from Pennsylvania television stations and the Associated Press on his cell phone as Anne McKiniry opened two bottles of champagne Canouse and Lucy Szabo had brought along.

McLaughlin raised his glass. "To Ben," he said. "Our benefactor."

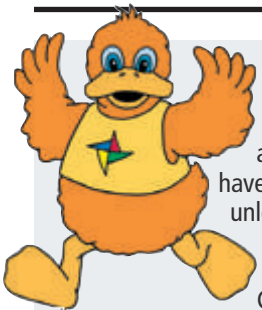
It took the bus under three hours to get back to Berwick.

Stout was still at the Delaware Water Gap when the group unloaded. He was stuck in traffic.

You can call reporter Susan Schwartz at 752-3646 or e-mail her at Susan.S@pressenterprise.net.

THE WEATHER

TODAY	TONIGHT	THURSDAY	FRIDAY	SATURDAY
76° Partly sunny 0% chance precip. Winds NE 5-10 50% sunshine Heat index 76°	62° Mostly cloudy 50% chance precip. Winds SE 5-10	78°/60° Showers, humid 60% chance precip. Winds SW 5-15	77°/57° Partly cloudy 10% chance precip. Winds NW 10-15	79°/55° Partly cloudy 0% chance precip. Winds W 5-15



Thaddeus says:

"In some years, summer conditions can arrive during the second half of spring, but we have had only one really warm spell this year. And unless weather patterns change drastically, it will be quite a while until things heat up. This cannot happen until the jet stream moves into Canada, where it belongs in June. This would

allow the Bermuda High to grow and pump hot air from the South into Pennsylvania. Today will be partly sunny and mild. Tonight will be variably cloudy and mild, with a number of showers and storms.

"It is only a possibility, but there are indications an El Nino is developing off the west coast of South America. In the past when this has happened, the Atlantic hurricane season has not been a bad one.

"The comfort index for today is a 10 and for tomorrow will be an 8."

Thaddeus Quackus
PE Weatherbird



By Erica Yodock, 6, Bloomsburg

■ **It could be worse...** The storms that developed in central Pennsylvania early Tuesday and rumbled through the area around 5 a.m. reached their peak in the Philadelphia area, generating 1,000 lightning strikes in an hour.

■ **Into the books...** With tropical air over the area, yesterday was variably cloudy, very warm and muggy. Showers and storms wet the area down early in the day and again in the afternoon. One storm dropped .43 inch in 4 minutes.

■ **Weather watch...** Enjoy today's partly sunny, dry, mild conditions. Showers and storms will return tonight and continue off and on tomorrow.

■ **Waterways...** River at Bloomsburg: 2.55 feet (up .02), at Danville: 4.05 feet (down .04); Fishing Creek: 2.79 feet (up .01)

ON THE ROAD

City	Hi	Lo	Otlk
Anchorage	62	41	Clr
Atlanta	87	69	PCldy
Atlantic City	74	64	Rain
Baltimore	86	69	Cldy
Boston	59	59	Cldy
Charlotte, N.C.	89	68	PCldy
Chicago	67	57	Rain
Cincinnati	85	67	Rain
Cleveland	77	68	Rain
Dallas-Ft Worth	93	75	Cldy
Denver	75	50	Rain
Detroit	74	59	Rain
Greensboro, N.C.	89	67	PCldy
Honolulu	89	76	Clr
Houston	95	73	PCldy
Indianapolis	81	68	Rain
Kansas City	65	56	Cldy
Las Vegas	86	72	PCldy
Los Angeles	71	61	PCldy
Memphis	90	72	Cldy
Miami Beach	89	74	PCldy
Milwaukee	65	56	Cldy
Mpls-St Paul	65	46	Cldy
New Orleans	90	74	Clr
New York City	71	60	Cldy
Orlando	91	70	PCldy
Philadelphia	79	66	Rain
Phoenix	96	75	PCldy
Pittsburgh	84	68	Cldy
St Louis	76	62	Rain
San Antonio	96	73	Cldy
San Diego	70	63	Cldy
San Francisco	66	57	Cldy
San Juan, P.R.	89	76	Cldy
Seattle	79	56	Cldy
Tampa	90	72	PCldy
Washington, D.C.	85	68	Cldy

EXTREMES

High 102 at Altus, Okla.
Low 25 at Stanley, Idaho

THE RECORD

Yesterday:
High: 86°
Record: 98° in 1933
Low: 66°
Record: 44° in 1957
Rainfall:
0.99 (to 6 p.m.)
For month: 2.44
For year: 16.16
Heating degrees:
This year: 5807
Normal: 6044

SKYWATCH

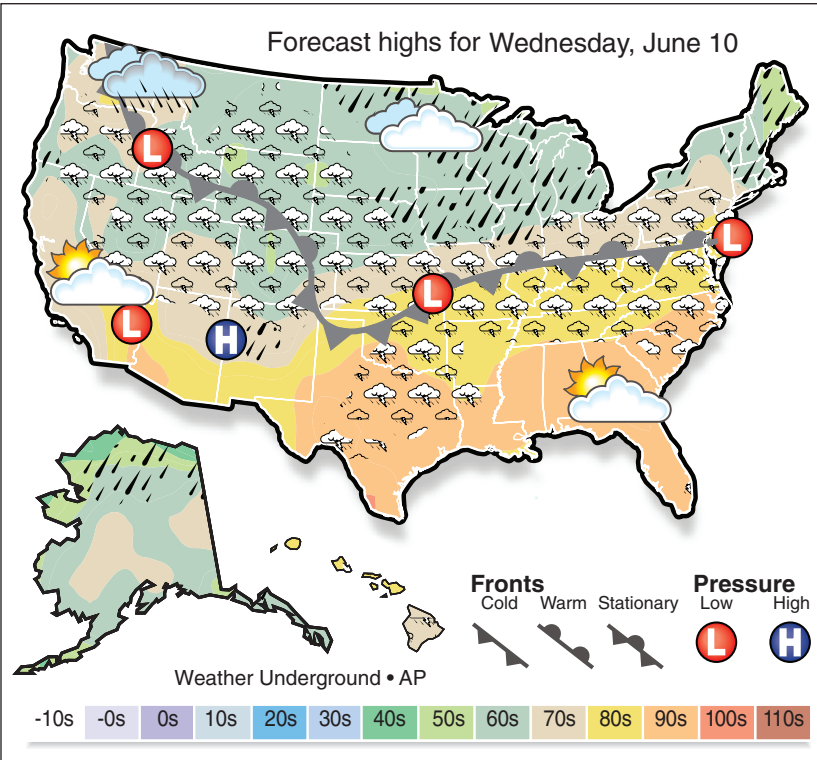
Sunset . 8:38 p.m.
Sunrise . 5:33 a.m.

BY THE MOON

First quarter/June 29
Full moon/July 7
Last quarter/June 15
New moon/June 22

POLLEN COUNT

Low
1.4 out of 12



Money Nest egg will maintain museum dream

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income to pay to maintain the building.

At 3 percent interest, they had needed at least \$400,000 in an endowment to make that, Vezendy said.

'God knows'

Meanwhile, keeping the almanacs would be a liability, he said.

Insuring them would cost \$3,000 to \$4,000 a year, said Vezendy. To display them, they'd need a nitrogen-filled case. Plus a security system.

"God knows what that would cost," he said.

"And then we could only put it in a box and let people look at them through glass. What would we gain?"

The almanacs survived this long because no one realized their value, he said. They had sat virtually untouched for decades. But now that people knew, more would want to see them. And that meant they now needed protection Berwick couldn't provide.

"We're the Berwick Historical Society, not the keepers of American history," he said.

By Susan Schwartz

Beating

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month.

But police note that Litwhiler is still receiving medical treatment a year later for the injuries he sustained that night.

'Skinny guy'

Here's what happened, according to court papers:

Elizardo's wife and another woman had invited Litwhiler and his friend, Todd McCarthy, to a party at 377 Orchard Drive here, where the two Gearharts reside.

But the elder Gearhart was concerned with their arrival, since McCarthy had previously dated Mrs. Elizardo.

William Gearhart Jr. started to intimidate McCarthy, asking him if he wanted "a piece of the skinny guy," and pointing to his son, Benjamin.

That's when Benjamin launched himself at Litwhiler, who was standing nearby, punching Litwhiler repeatedly after the two hit the ground.

When Benjamin got off Litwhiler to go after McCarthy, Litwhiler started to push himself off the ground.

That's when Juan Elizardo, 298 N. Burger Ave., kicked Litwhiler in the face. Blood flew over Litwhiler's head and he fell to the ground.

Then Elizardo stood over him and stomped on his face.

As Litwhiler lay there, the elder Gearhart screamed at him to get up and leave before police arrived, a witness told authorities, then turned to start another fight with McCarthy just as Litwhiler began to move.

'No big deal'

At some point, the two victims got away and McCarthy called for help.

When police found Litwhiler, his eyes were almost swollen shut and blood was flowing from his nose and mouth.

He couldn't remember what had happened to him or who had done it, authorities report.

Police say McCarthy was also assaulted, but do not list the extent of his injuries.

Both men were taken to Geisinger Medical Center.

But even from his hospital bed, Litwhiler's memories were unclear.

Meanwhile, Locust Township Police returned to the scene of the alleged assault.

At first, William Gearhart denied that anything had happened at his home, later admitting to the fight but calling it "no big deal," papers say.

He later told police he was thinking about calling for an ambulance just as Litwhiler started to move again.

But a witness contends that all Gearhart did during the ruckus was stand by and watch, then yell for Litwhiler and McCarthy to get off his property when the beating was finished, papers say.

'Acted out'

Benjamin Gearhart said he jumped on Litwhiler because he thought the guest

was going to attack his father.

The two toppled to the ground, he said, but he claimed his memory was fuzzy after that because the adrenaline kicked in and he "just acted out."

And Elizardo said he joined in because he saw Litwhiler getting up and thought he might go after his cousin, Benjamin.

He only kicked Litwhiler in the face once, he told officers.

But witnesses say Litwhiler wasn't causing any problems at the gathering, according to court papers. Before the beating, he was seen just laughing and having a good time, police say.

Both Gearharts and Elizardo face charges of recklessly endangering another person.

Both Gearharts are also charged with criminal conspiracy.

Benjamin Gearhart faces an additional count of simple assault, while Elizardo is charged with aggravated and simple assault.

Benjamin Gearhart hung up on a reporter calling his home for comment.

The other two defendants could not be reached.

The three men face a preliminary hearing at District Judge Craig Long's on Friday. They are all free on \$10,000 unsecured bail each, court officials note.

Biker taken to hospital after Route 339 wreck

MIFFLIN TWP. — A man crashed a motorcycle down an embankment while riding west on Route 339 between Westcopeck and Mifflinville about 9:30 p.m. Tuesday.

The rider crashed down the embankment after traveling an estimated 300 yards

along the side of the road, police estimated.

He was transported to a hospital for treatment.

Police said injuries were not believed to be serious.

Police could not be reached for the name of the driver before press time.