

Expect the Unexpected

If you have lived very long on this earth, it wouldn't be surprising to hear that life is full of surprises. Consider ...

- A sailor trying to find a new trade route to the Orient stumbled upon a new (to him) continent.
- Alexander Fleming inadvertently left a culture dish on a window sill and discovered penicillin.
- Another scientist discovered saccharin when he noticed a strange, sugary taste in his sandwich.

And get this one. In 1989, an unidentified “middle-aged financial analyst” from Philadelphia paid \$4 for a painting at a flea market in Adamstown, Pennsylvania, because he was interested in the frame. When he got home, he said, he removed the painting – a dismal country scene – and concluded the frame could not be salvaged. Inside, however, he discovered a first printing of the Declaration of Independence, folded and hidden in the backing.



The purchaser thought it might be an early 19th century printing and worth keeping as a curiosity. A few years later, he showed it to a friend, who suspected it might be valuable, and encouraged him to look into it.

He did, and learned that only hours after finishing work on the Declaration in 1776, the Continental Congress delivered the handwritten draft to a printer with orders to send copies of the Declaration to “the several

Assemblies, Conventions and Councils of Safety and to the Commanding Officers of the Continental troops, that it be proclaimed in each of the United States and at the head of the Army.”

This was one of those original copies. No one is sure how many were printed that night, but today only 24 survive, and most are in poor condition. This one in the picture frame, however, was in excellent shape, having spent the better part of two centuries undisturbed.

In 1991, it sold at auction by Sotheby's for \$2.4 million. The buyer was Donald J. Scheer of Atlanta, president of Visual Equities Inc., a fine-arts investment firm.

(more)

Life is full of surprises ... good things that come our way. While most are not nearly as dramatic as this one, it's all too easy to miss good things. They are all around us:

- Random kindnesses from a stranger.
- Would-be tragic accidents narrowly avoided.
- A loved one who survives cancer.
- An unexpected check in the mail.
- A note from a close friend who understands the crisis in front of you.
- A confirmation of a pregnancy for a couple who had lost hope of childbearing.
- An emotional reconciliation with longtime friend separated because of a silly argument years ago.
- A blackberry cobbler delivered to new neighbors on moving day.
- A hug from the director of nursing to a certified nursing assistant at the close of a busy day.

Yes, unexpected and pleasant surprises occur every day. We just need to notice them.

And thank God for them.

A faithful man will abound with blessings (Proverbs 28:20 NKJV).

– Beecher Hunter