

Weather superstitions tied to history of Groundhog Day

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weather would soon give way to balmy spring days. Naturally the farmers preferred unpleasant weather on Candlemas (or Groundhog Day). The English and Scots referred to the prevailing weather beliefs in such rhymes as these:

If Candlemas be fair and bright,
Winter will have another flight;
But if it is dark with clouds and rain,
Winter is gone and will not come again.

Used clothing stores on rise

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flea market, including used clothing, for years, according to Nellie Schmidlin, center member. Center spokespersons admit that they are losing some money. "We get just as many donations, but less business, even though we sell for less," said Gurtie Schalock, Senior Chairman. "We can't run without our flea market, it pays for our lights, heat and other things," she added.

"The way I look at it, businesses come and go, and when they go, we'll still be here," commented a member who chose not to give his name.

Earlene Kelley of Vernonia Variety does not feel competition from the used clothing stores. "It's not hurting us," she added. "If people want new clothes, they'll get new clothes," she said. She added that while January is always a slow business month, the store does not believe there will be any difference in sales.

The hind would as lief see
His wife on the bier
As that Candlemas Day
Should be pleasant and clear.

This superstition about the hedgehog was brought to America by early settlers from Germany, where many farmers planted their crops in accordance with this belief. Since the newcomers did not find the true animal here, they transferred the idea to the groundhog (marmot, or woodchuck).

Pennsylvania is the home of the "groundhog fables"; and several groups of fun makers in this state have organized clubs to observe groundhog movements on February 2, and to engage in the fine art of weather forecasting. There is much rivalry between the different organizations; and they challenge each other's predictions and activities.

In northeastern Pennsylvania is the Punxutawney Ground-Hog Club, which boasts that it has been in business since 1898; and it "looks down" on later groups. They declare their town is the home of "traditional weather forecasting groundhogs." Each year since 1898, on the second day of February, members have trudged up to Gobbler's Knob in the Allegheny foothills to observe and record the behavior of the groundhog. In 1952 this group mourned the death of Dr. Frank Lorenzo, who had been the head of their internationally known club for thirty years.

The scornful rival of the Punxutawney Club is found in Lancaster County; it is the Slumbering Groundhog Lodge of Quarryville, Pennsylvania, and was started in 1908. The older group sneers at this one and calls the members upstarts. In return the Quarryville people dub the Punxutawney organization "The upstart gang of Gobbler's Knob" and declare it is just a "paper" group, to promote the sale of cookbooks on how to cook and serve groundhog meat!

The members of the Quarryville Lodge have a creed concerning their faith in the groundhog, which contains these statements:

We believe in the wisdom of the groundhogs,
We declare his intelligence to be of a higher order than that of any other animal....
We rejoice that he can, and does, foretell with absolute accuracy the weather conditions for the six weeks following each second day of February....

We believe in the wisdom of the groundhog.
We declare his intelligence to be of a higher order than that of any other animal....
We rejoice that he can, and does, foretell with absolute accuracy the weather conditions for the six weeks following each second day of February....

Because of this faith in the animal.

the members solemnly pledge to defend him with all their powers.

Each year the Quarryville Lodge elects an outstanding person as an honorary member in their unique club. In addition, they "go all out" in their fancy dress when they observe groundhogs along Octoraro Creek; for they don top hats, swallowtail coats, white togas, or long fur coats.

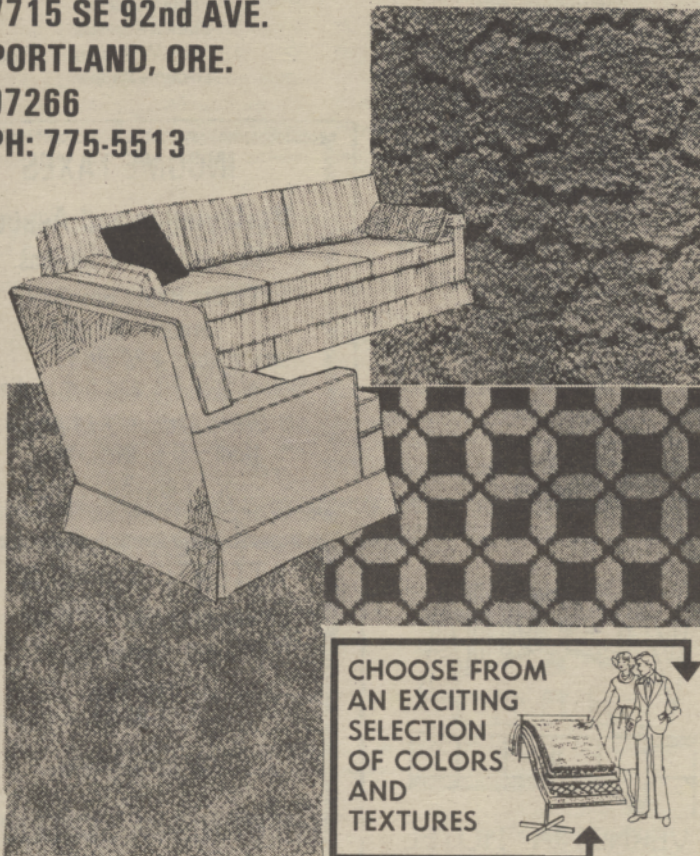
That evening the "brethren" assembled at 6 pm and marched "in their unique cadence" behind the Groundhog Band to the Spanish Tavern, there "to sup and discuss the profundity of the day's message, as delivered by the sage groundhog." At this annual meeting, they conduct business, take in new members, and sing their club ong, to the tune of "John Brown's Body." Here is the first stanza:

Let the Scientific fakirs gnash their teeth
and stamp with rage—
Let astrologers with crystals wipe such
nonsense from the page—
We hail the King of Prophets, who's the
world's outstanding Sage—
Using temperature and
precipitation figures for the past 60
years, we found that Mr. Groundhog
would have done very much better by
remaining in his burrow and not
bothering us civilized folks.
Groundhog was right only 28 percent
of the time.

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