



## The history of Groundhog Day

### Interesting facts about Punxsutawney Phil

Author: [Paul Gross](#), Local 4 Meteorologist, @PaulGrossLocal4

Published On: Feb 02 2014 04:27:44 AM EST



#### DETROIT -

So, how did Groundhog Day get started? Here's what the Pennsylvania Tourism Board has to say about it:

The story of Groundhog Day begins with Candlemas, an early Christian holiday where candles were blessed and distributed. Celebrators of the holiday eventually declared clear skies on Candlemas meant a longer winter. The Roman legions, during the conquest of the northern country, brought this tradition to the Germans, who concluded that if the sun made an appearance on Candlemas Day, a hedgehog would cast a shadow, thus predicting six more weeks of bad weather or "Second Winter." German immigrants brought the tradition to Pennsylvania, but how did Punxsutawney Phil emerge?

In 1887, a spirited group of groundhog hunters from Punxsutawney dubbed themselves "The Punxsutawney Groundhog Club." One member was an editor of Punxsutawney's newspaper. Using his ink, he proclaimed Punxsutawney Phil, the local groundhog, to be the one and only weather prognosticating groundhog. He issued this proclamation on Candlemas, and yes, Groundhog Day. Phil's fame spread, and newspapers from around the globe began to report his Gobbler's Knob prediction. Today you will find 20,000+ in attendance and millions watching on television or via the web.

And here are some Punxsutawney Phil FAQs, provided by Punxsutawney.com. Of course, this is THEIR take on things. We, of course, have our own Groundhog in Howell...his name is Woody, and I'll wager that Woody is much tougher than Phil and, since Woody probably watches the Local4Casters, his forecasts are probably much better.

- 1.** Yes, Punxsutawney Phil is the only true weather forecasting groundhog. The others are just imposters.
- 2.** There has been only one Punxsutawney Phil. Punxsutawney Phil gets his longevity from drinking "groundhog punch" (a secret recipe). One sip, which is administered every summer at the Groundhog Picnic, gives him seven more years of life.
- 3.** On February 2nd, Phil comes out of his burrow on Gobbler's Knob, in front of thousands of faithful followers from all over the world, to predict the weather for the rest of the winter.
- 4.** According to legend, if Punxsutawney Phil sees his shadow, there will be six more weeks of winter weather. If he does not see his shadow, there will be an early spring.

No, Punxsutawney Phil's forecasts are not made in advance by the Inner Circle. After Phil emerges from his burrow on February 2nd, he speaks to the Groundhog Club President in Groundhogese. His proclamation is then translated for the world.

**6.** The celebration of Groundhog Day began with the Germans, Pennsylvania's earliest settlers. They brought with them the legend of Candlemas Day, which states "For as the sun shines on Candlemas day, so far will the snow swirl in May...". The settlers found that groundhogs were plentiful and were the most intelligent and sensible animal to carry on the legend of Candlemas Day.

**7.** Punxsutawney held its first Groundhog Day in the 1800's. The first official trek to Gobbler's Knob made on February 2nd, 1887. In 2008 it will be the 122nd prediction.

**8.** So the story goes, Punxsutawney Phil was named after King Phillip. Prior to being called Phil, he was called Br'er Groundhog.



*Copyright 2014 by ClickOnDetroit.com. All rights reserved. This material may not be published, broadcast, rewritten or redistributed.*