



Hillermann's
Kids' Club

History of Groundhog Day

February 2nd

(Adapted from "Groundhog Day: 1886 to 1992" by Bill Anderson)

Groundhog Day, February 2nd, is a popular tradition in the United States. It is also a legend that traverses centuries, its origins clouded in the mists of time with ethnic cultures and animals awakening on specific dates. Myths such as this tie our present to the distant past when nature did, indeed, influence our lives. It is the day that the Groundhog comes out of his hole after a long winter sleep to look for his shadow. If he sees it, he regards it as an omen of six more weeks of bad weather and returns to his hole. If the day is cloudy and, hence, shadowless, he takes it as a sign of spring and stays above ground.

The history of Groundhog Day stems back to European tradition. The idea and date came to the United States, because Pennsylvania's earliest settlers were Germans. They found groundhogs in great numbers in many parts of the state. They determined that the groundhog, resembling the European hedgehog, was a most intelligent and sensible animal and therefore decided that if the sun did appear on February 2nd, so wise an animal as the groundhog would see its shadow and hurry back into its underground home for another six weeks.

In Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania, early observances of Phil's predictions were conducted privately in the wooded areas that neighbor the town. In 1886, The Punxsutawney Spirit newspaper printed the news of the first Groundhog Day celebration. This was the start of the national holiday and the naming of Punxsutawney Phil, the famous groundhog that comes out of his hole each year! Today's celebration sees tens of thousands of visitors from all over the world reveler's await Phil's appearance.



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