



PHOTO SUBMITTED BY YORK SLUMBERING GROUNDHOG LODGE

# If you know what a Grundslow Lodge is then you're Groundhog crazy, too!

Story By Randy Gross  
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If no one has said it yet, let it be stated for the first time here: Pennsylvania is groundhog crazy.

You would need all ten fingers and toes to count the number of *Grundslow Lodge* celebrations from Allentown to Stroudsburg, York to Philadelphia – so many celebrations, in fact, that Groundhog Day could very easily be considered the national holiday of the Pennsylvania Dutch. The three oldest Groundhog Lodges (Punxsatawney, Quarryville, and York) all call PA home; one of the most beloved big-screen comedies, “Groundhog Day” (though largely-filmed in Illinois) is set in the Keystone State; plus, everywhere you turn – from billboards to TV commercials – there’s a spokes groundhog named Gus proclaiming himself “the second most famous groundhog in Pennsylvania.”

Groundhog crazy, for sure. But while the word “crazy” may conjure up images of men and women wearing silly hats and costumes while partying from star-shine to sun-up, that’s not what groundhog lodges and Groundhog Day observances are all about. Okay, so maybe some lodges do actually do the costuming and party-all-night thing. When

seen in the right context, though, and with the addition of one small word, it’s actually “crazy fun” to be had by all who take part in one of Pennsylvania’s Groundhog Day celebrations – and nobody has more fun it would appear, than the York Slumbering Groundhog Lodge, where the most friendly, easy-going groundhog in the world, Poor Richard, has been pronouncing his prognostications from Elks Lodge #213 for 93 years.

Well, friendly and easy-going because ... well, Poor Richard is deceased. Not in a dead-and-buried in the ground kind of way. More like a stuffed and preserved way. Seriously, did you really think that Richard was more than nine decades old and still kicking?

### A Kinder, Gentler Groundhog (Day)

Just slightly-more than a 30-minute drive from Harrisburg, Elks Lodge #213, at 223 N. George Street in York, has been synonymous with York Slumbering Groundhog Lodge since there was a Poor Richard. Since Richard is taxidermied, there’s no need for a groundhog wrangler, or a

groundhog burrow; no risk of anyone receiving a groundhog bite for serving the wrong kind of groundhog chow; and no fear of a real-life Bill Murray kidnapping your star groundhog and letting him drive your pick-up truck. It all adds up to a very low-key kind of Groundhog Day observance; or perhaps “kinder, gentler” is a better way of summing things up.

The Slumbering Groundhog Lodge of York’s mission statement not only promotes “True Friendship” among men and women in the local community, but each lodge member lives by the creed of “sharing fellowship and good memories,” a creed which manifests itself in the Lodge’s yearly efforts to raise and donate monies to local charities. Plus, it should be no surprise that a brother (and sister) hood that thrives on predicting weather patterns takes pride in protecting “our lands, our resources, and each other.”

### Poetry In Motion

*The days are getting longer,  
and the nights are still very cold,  
But, as for Poor Richard and his prediction,  
he is not totally sold.*

*The winter storms are fierce and still a-brewin,  
But Poor Richard is not ready to get everybody stewin.  
For if he predicts an early spring,  
He may regret that he said anything.*

Prognostication by “Skip” Lehmann,  
Grand Communicator

It’s easy to think of George “Skip” Lehmann as York’s answer to Buster Green, the Brian Doyle-Murray character in “Groundhog Day” – only more poetical. For 39 years, he’s been coordinating and hosting the annual Groundhog Day ceremony, which always features “prognosticating” poems penned by himself. Lehmann outlines the typical February 2nd at Elks Lodge #213 thusly:

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"We meet at 6:45 (am), when we imbibe in beverages to get ready for the morning ... Coffee, of course," he says with a laugh. "At 7:14, we assemble outside the Elks Lodge 213, in an area designated as the Slumbering Groundhog Lodge meeting point. We have a prayer, and the Groundhog Pledge, and then we have a ceremony where we welcome the new Groundhog members, called Groundhog-ettes, who you'll see [in photos] wearing a baby cap and a bib." After taking an oath ("a rather long one," says Lehmann), those new members are installed – and then the real fun begins.

"Then," continues Lehmann, "they [the new members] have to kneel down and kiss the groundhog. Just as a gesture of friendship. Or they can pretend to kiss him."

Next are the reports – "the north, south, east and west prognostications" – communicated via a combination of séance and "G-mail" (groundhog mail) from Richard, but also culled from the yearly Farmer's Almanac – "each of which is read in a poetic style."

After all that, it's time, of course, for the moment that everyone in attendance has been eagerly awaiting: Lehmann's centerpiece poem, with a prediction for either "an early spring" or "six more weeks of winter." With a roughly-estimated 94 percent level of accuracy, it can be said that Poor Richard is just as much of a "prognosticator of prognosticators" as Punxatawney Phil – if not more so.

But, cautions, Lehmann, "there always will be six more weeks of dated winter on the calendar." (laughs) "So, you can have all the early spring you want, but only the weather will be different, not the necessary date."

#### Poor Petey

Returning to Poor Richard, apparently he hasn't always been a Richard.

"Back in the 1920's," says Lehmann, "there was a live groundhog whose name was Petey. The story goes, they felt so bad when the groundhog died, they wanted to always keep him perpetually around. So,

they had him taxidermied, and he became Poor Richard." (laughs) "He's actually got gray hairs, and he still smells okay."

While the Lodge could have gone the same route as several other groups, they didn't have access to the kind of facilities which Punxatawney and Quarryville have for housing. Therefore, taxidermy was the best option.

Have there ever been any "kidnapping" attempts on Poor Richard, similar to the Bill Murray kidnapping of Phil in "Groundhog Day"? Lehmann responds with a stifled guffaw: "No. He is systematically stored, emphatically and tenaciously held in the back area of the York benevolent protective order of Elks Lodge ... where he is hibernating now."

#### YORK SLUMBERING GROUNDHOG LODGE

2022 Groundhog Day Observance  
When: Wednesday, February 2  
Where: Elks Lodge #213

223 N. George St. (rear), York, PA  
Formal ceremony begins at 7:15 a.m.  
More information at: 717-577-0418

#### Other Groundhog Day Observances in Central PA

##### LANCASTER

Poppy the Groundhog's 2nd Annual Groundhog Day Scavenger Hunt  
When: Wednesday, February 2  
Where: Ville & Rue  
8 W. King Street, Lancaster, PA

Acorn Acres Wildlife Rehabilitation is pleased to bring real-life groundhog Poppy back for a new live prognostication. Event starts on Feb. 2 and will run through the close of business on Saturday, Feb. 5, with Poppy visiting participating businesses (schedule TBA) as a way of promoting and supporting local commerce. The public will be invited to purchase Poppy related items at each business, and Acorn Acres hopes to offer an educational presentation about groundhogs (day/time TBD).

Keep up to date on all the details at: <https://www.facebook.com/PoppytheGroundhog>



PHOTO BY STEVE PROCEZINSKI  
Poppy the Groundhog

**Fun fact:** Poppy shared the screen with Bill Murray in an Emmy-nominated 2020 Jeep ad reprising the famous kidnapping scene from "Groundhog Day." Watch it here: [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xxe\\_HLbs1Q](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=Xxe_HLbs1Q)

#### QUARRYVILLE

Octoraro Orphie Groundhog Day Event  
When: Wednesday, February 2  
Where: Chateau at White Rock Slumbering Groundhog Lodge  
248 White Rock Road, Quarryville, PA

Octoraro Orphie, the resident prognosticator for the Slumbering Groundhog Lodge of Quarryville, will once again make his prediction after a full morning of ceremonies that will begin around 7 a.m. A parade and the introduction of new lodge members (including the ceremonial dunking of one lucky recipient) will be followed by Orphie's prediction.

For more information, contact the lodge at 717-529-2770.

#### MT. JOY

Mt. Joy Minnie Ground Hog Day Event  
When: Wednesday, February 2  
Where: Rotary Clock  
Corner of Marietta Ave. & E. Main St., Mt. Joy, PA

Mt. Joy Minnie (a stuffed groundhog) will make her prediction at a ceremony beginning at 7 a.m. There will also be a crazy hat contest. Sponsored by Keystone Lawn Company.

More information at: [www.mountjoychamber.com](http://www.mountjoychamber.com).

#### HARRISBURG

The capital city's Shipoke neighborhood has prided itself as being home to Pennsylvania's one and only weather prognosticating dog – Shipoke Sheena – for many years. But that came to a halt in 2021 when Sheena's owner, Joanne Kaldy relocated to New Orleans. The Shipoke Neighborhood Association is hoping that the Groundhog Day baton will be passed onto another dog (or cat, or <insert pet of your choice here>), but at press time details were still sketchy.

Keep your eyes open for potential updates here: <https://www.facebook.com/ShipokeUSA>

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