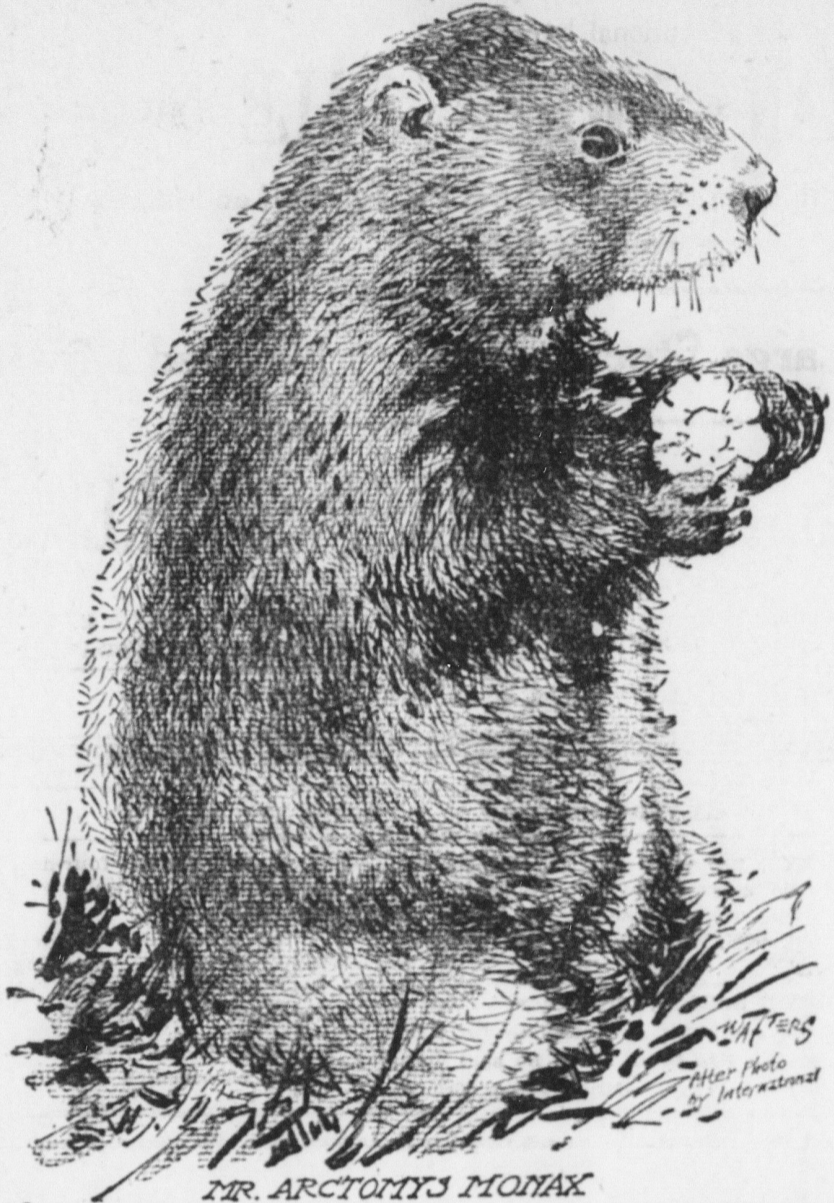


GROUNDHOG DAY



MR. ARCTOMYS MONAX

By ELMO SCOTT WATSON

IT'S almost time now for a little animal to decide for us if we are to have six weeks more of winter or if spring is near at hand. For February 2 is Groundhog day and, according to a belief held by many persons, what Mr. Arctomys Monax (that's what the scientists call the groundhog) does on that day will be prophetic of weather conditions for the next six weeks. If Mr. Monax comes out of his hole on that day and sees his shadow, then he will return to his hole and six weeks more of winter must be endured. If, however, the sun doesn't shine that day, we can expect an early spring.

Now, the joker in all this business is this: regardless of what the groundhog does on February 2 and whether the sun is shining or not when he comes out of his hole, we shall have six more weeks of winter, anyway. For officially winter does not end until the spring equinox on March 21 and from February 2 to March 21, it's all of six weeks—and then some. More than that, scientists tell us that there's no dependence to be placed upon the groundhog as a weather prophet. Government weather records for the last 50 years show that he has missed it much more frequently than he has hit it.

But regardless of what the scientists say, there are many people who more than half believe the truth of the Groundhog day superstition. The reason is that this superstition is rooted in traditions almost as old as the human race. Certainly it goes back before the beginning of the Christian era and the modern tradition is another of those queer combinations of heathen and Christian beliefs. One inspiration for it, probably, was the spring festival in honor of Ceres, the Roman earth goddess of abundant crops, who was known as Demeter by the Greeks.

One day, so runs the myth, her daughter, Persephone, was plucking flowers when she saw a narcissus of great beauty. As she reached out her hand to touch it it sprang into life as Hades, King of the Dead, in a golden chariot.

The hated monarch bore her away, screaming, to his dark palace underground. The abduction was noted by Helios, the Sun, and by Hekate, who told the grief-stricken mother when she abandoned her duties and the society of the gods to look for Persephone. She refused to let the earth produce until her daughter returned unharmed. Barrenness and mildew wasted the fields.

At last Zeus, who had arranged for the wedding of Persephone to the powerful but unpopular Lord of the Dead, sent his messenger to return her to her mother. Because she had eaten a pomegranate seed given her by Hades she was doomed to spend the dark months of winter with him, but in planting and harvest time she belonged to the sunny fields and fruit-laden groves of her mother.

Somewhat the essential idea of this myth is found in the beliefs associated with Candlemas day, the name given

to February 2 in the early Christian era. Candlemas day commemorated the presentation of the Christ-child in the temple and the purification of the mother. The blessing of candles, to be carried in honor of the Virgin, became a rite of the early church. In ancient England the combination of the Christian and heathen belief was most strikingly shown by the fact that it meant the disappearance of every Christmas green. For every leaf of holly left by a careless maid, so it was believed, she would be sure to see some terrible goblin.

Just when weather prophecy became a part of the Candlemas day tradition is unknown, but all over Christendom there persisted a belief in February 2 as a time for weather forecast. Especially was it true that a fair day on that date portended much winter yet to come. One Scotch couplet says:

If Candlemas Day be dry and fair,
There'll be two winters in the year.
Another assures us:

If Candlemas Day be dry and fair,
The half o' Winter's to come and fair;
If Candlemas Day be wet and foul,
The half o' Winter's gone at Yule.

A more optimistic version had it thus:

When Candlemas Day is come and gone,
The snow lies on a hot stone.
German legend also chronicles that:

Far as the sun shines on Candlemas Day,
So far will the snow swirl until the May.

As for the association of the groundhog with the weather superstition, the origin of that, too, is wrapped in considerable mystery. So far as is known, the Germans originated that idea, only they made use of the badger as their weather prophet. In France and Switzerland it was the marmot and in England the hedgehog. Among the Scandinavians there is a legend of the bear waking up in his den after the winter hibernation, seeing the sun shine into it and turning over to sleep for six weeks more, knowing that winter is only half over.

Just why the early English settlers in America should have picked upon an animal similar to the French and Swiss marmot (for the groundhog is a species of the marmot family, one of his scientific names being *Marmota monax*) for their February 2 weather prophet is not clear. They found badgers on this continent, so why didn't they follow the German tradition and select the badger? Or, since they were English, why didn't they use the American counterpart of the European hedgehog, the porcupine, and have "Porky" do their weather predicting for them? But the fact remains that they didn't, and to the animal they did choose they gave two most inappropriate names—woodchuck and groundhog. Part of the former title is correct. He does live mainly in the woods, but where does the "chuck" part come in? Of course there's the old riddle about "How much wood could a woodchuck chuck, if a woodchuck would chuck wood?" to indicate a belief that this animal can "manipulate hypothetical quantities of timber," but that doesn't solve the question of this name for him.

said to myself, 'Johnston, you're a fool to smoke; throw away that cigar!' And I did, and I've never smoked since."
"Say, mister," interrupted a man who had just come in, "you haven't a mind to tell a fellow where you threw that cigar, have you?"—London Tit-Bits.

Early Currency Laws
The circulation of foreign money was so general throughout the United States for 25 years approximately after

Nor is groundhog more than half correct. It's true, also, that he lives for the most part in the ground but he is not a hog, nor remotely related to the hog. Like those other porcine misnamed animals, the porcupine and the guinea pig, he is a rodent and is related to the squirrels and the rabbits.

It is highly unlikely that whether the sky be bright or cloudy on Candlemas day the groundhog bothers to come up to look for his highly important shadow, at least north of the Mason-Dixon line. He is a very sound sleeper, and snoozes the winter away in his burrow, rolled up in a compact ball with his nose tucked into his tummy. If you find his home and dig him out he will not awaken, for the sleep of hibernation is much more deathlike than ordinary slumber, and a hibernating animal will stand the roughest kind of treatment without showing any signs of life.

Even when he does come out, with the real return of spring and plenty of green stuff to eat, the groundhog is still a sleepy-head. He has no other waking occupation except eating, fighting occasionally, and taking care of his family during the breeding period, so that he has plenty of leisure time on his hands in summer. He spends that in sleep, too.

The groundhog is not a beauty. He is from 15 to 18 inches tall and his coat is blackish or grizzled above and chestnut-red below. His form is thick and his head broad and flat. He has a bushy tail and his legs are too short to make him handsome.

The groundhog digs burrows deep into the ground when on the plains, or when he can find a hill he will burrow into the side of it. He also views as a favorable site for his home a large rock under which he may dig. His burrow slants upward to keep out water.

The groundhog is a vegetarian with a strong preference for alfalfa and clover. That does much to damage his reputation with farmers, who annually lose thousands of dollars because of his taste.

In the southern mountains, where he is known as the whistle-pig, he is all the more resented when on February 2 sleet falls and the unstopped cracks in a log cabin and unseasonable chill penetrates the cornhusk bed with its scant covers. But the violence that overtakes him there is due to his liking for the bark of tender young apple trees and garden stuff.

However, despite all that the scientists may say about Mr. Arctomys Monax—that he is not really the animal that his common names indicate and that he has nothing whatever to do with deciding the question of "Can spring be far behind?"—the belief in the Groundhog day tradition is pretty likely to persist indefinitely and on or about February 2 we can expect to see such newspaper stories as the following:

Dodge City, Kan.—I give up. There must be something to it. So declared J. L. Hayes, Dodge City, as he wonderingly watched his groundhog playing about his yard in the bright sunlight this morning. The little animal had dug his way from his den, where he had remained since November 27 last, and was roaming about. "I never believed in that gar," he said, "but what in thunder is a man to think now? I hid all my calendars, and that groundhog hadn't seen them. How did he know this was the second of February? This is the first day he has been out since November 27, when he holed up."
"You can't blame it on me; that groundhog dug out on his own initiative. Look at him. It is six weeks more of winter, sure. That groundhog has convinced me there is something in the old superstition."

Or it may be a "believe it or not" item such as the following:

Mr. Hayes brought the groundhog to Dodge City from Saguache Park, Colo., two years ago, to test the old superstition. Last February 2 the animal emerged from his hole at 4 o'clock in the afternoon, remained in the sunlight about twenty minutes and then re-entered his den, piling dirt in the opening until it was completely closed. Frank Noller tells this one: A man back in Iowa says he is a firm believer in the groundhog theory. The man was out cutting wood on groundhog day and took off his coat and put it on a log. When he came to get his coat it was gone. He looked everywhere, but could not find it. Six weeks later he was cutting wood in the same place. He happened to look around and saw a groundhog come out of his hole and put his coat on the log where he had found it six weeks previous. Now you tell me.—Glen Elder (Kan.) Sentinel.

That invitation is repeated by the writer of this article, and if you can tell a better one, he will incorporate it in his Groundhog day article next year!

the adoption of the dollar as our unit of exchange that it was a vital element in the circulation. Congress recognized this great need by enacting a number of laws regulating foreign coins and making them legal tender. Finally congress on February 21, 1850, enacted a law repealing former acts which had made foreign money a currency or legal tender.

Fewer hairpins and combs were manufactured in the United States in 1927 than in 1925.

Community Building

Important for House to Fit Neighborhood

Dwellings well suited to their sites and to the neighborhood will have a market value corresponding to their original cost, contends the latest of a series of articles on "Looking Into Real Estate," published by the National Association of Real Estate Boards.

"Houses should fit the neighborhood in which they are built if maximum values are to be secured from residential real estate sites," the article reads in part. "The home builder will do well to look over the other homes in the neighborhood in which he is contemplating construction, and see that his home conforms to the general cost level of the other structures if he wishes to make best use of his land."

"In determining what in technical language is called the highest and best use for commercial property, consideration is given to the kind of structure that will produce the largest income. In general this rule holds true for residential property also; but in the case of a dwelling this income is figured in terms of satisfaction and enjoyment and not in money, unless or until the home owner thinks about reselling. Then the kind of a house that has been put on the land from the point of view of the other fellow becomes very important."

Court Ruling of More Than Usual Interest

An interesting case which has occurred recently is that of a Baltimore ordinance, which has been upheld by the Maryland Court of Appeals. This ordinance differs from most others in that it aims not merely to protect the property of householders, but to aid in preserving their health and in beautifying residence districts. It provides that homes shall not be placed closer together than a certain number of feet, thus insuring better ventilation than is now possible in many residence sections, and compelling builders to place houses in such a way as to present a well-balanced appearance.

That a court would support such an ordinance shows how rapidly the cause of zoning is advancing. We are awakening to some of the possibilities of this procedure, in beautifying our cities and making them healthful, as well as in preserving property values against the inroads of unscrupulous speculators and other mercenary interests.—St. Louis Post-Dispatch.

"Frame" House Properly

In planning the planting for the new home it is well to remember that shrubs and trees perform the same function for the home that a frame does for a picture.

It frequently happens that instead of serving as a frame, the planting arrangement will, when the trees get a few years' growth, act as a screen, hiding the charm of the home's outlines and cutting off too much sunlight. Some shade is desirable, it is true, but modern hygienists have discovered the human body needs plenty of sunlight, not alone the direct rays, but also the germ-sterilizing and body-building action of the invisible ultraviolet rays on foods, on growing plants in the home and on the home interior and its furnishings.

As Men See Trees

A small boy looks on a tree as a challenge to his anthropoid inheritance and the endurance of his trousers or as a standing invitation to build therein a tree house at the risk of his young neck. A tree surgeon estimates it in terms of cavities and vegetable calamities. A lumberman looks out over an ancient forest and is busy with calculations of timber lengths and sizes.

But plain people who must live and work in cities do greater honor to the friendly trees and regard them, care for them and preserve them for their varied beauty, infinite capacity for refreshment to eyes and ears wearied with the sharp edges of city life.—Philadelphia Public Ledger.

Need for Widened Roads

A future trend of road building will be toward the construction of wider highways in addition to more highways. For a good many years now the roads have been extended rapidly, but they are not wide enough. An excursion into the more heavily traveled portions of the state amply emphasizes this fact. Many accidents might well be avoided if the highways were a few feet wider.—Tillamook (Ore.) Headlight.

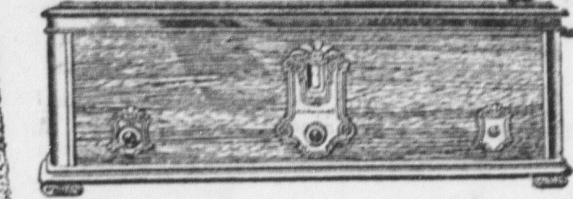
Best Garden Plan

Concerning the general shape of a garden, Sir William Temple long ago declared, "The best figure of a garden is either square or an oblong, and either upon a flat or a descent; they all have their beauties, but the best I esteem an oblong upon a descent."

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Ancient Norse Poets

The word "skald" (one of the Norse poets who in primitive times recited long compositions in verse, usually in honor of the great and famous) comes from the old Norse "Skald," meaning "poet." They were minstrels of a high order, often attached to the court. The earliest of these skalds was the mythical "Starkadh, the old." The following are among the most famous of his successors: Thjodolf, author of "Ynglingatal," and Thorbjorn, the minstrel and author of "Haraldsmal." Both of these flourished at the end of the Ninth century at the court of Harold of the Bright Hair. In the Tenth century lived the Norwegian skald Eyvind, who sang the exploits of the famous Hakenarmal, and the Icelandic Egill, who gave his name to the Egils Saga. The last of the skalds was Skurfa, who died in 1284.

Hen Hatches 'Gators

Henry Crawford, a negro at Kinston, N. C., is exhibiting four baby alligators which he said were hatched by a hen on a farm near there. The "gators" are about five inches long. Crawford said he found an alligator's nest in Pamlico county several weeks ago. He brought a number of the eggs home with him and placed them, together with chicken eggs, under the hen. The chicken eggs failed to hatch, but the little "gators" seemed to appease the hen.

A school to train teachers in primary schools in the making of textiles has been established at Leskovits, Yugo-Slavia.

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"There is something rotten in Denmark." is said of a concealed evil. Thousands of persons use this saying continually without having the least suspicion as to its source. It is based on a passage in Shakespeare's "Hamlet." In the fourth scene of the first act of that play Marcellus, an officer of the watch, says to Hamlet's friend Horatio: "Something is rotten in the state of Denmark." The remark was made after Hamlet followed the ghost of his father from the platform before the castle.

The man who rides a hobby is likely to deride the hobbies of others.



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Wasted

It was near the end of a long story. The burdfaced man was giving them gems of wisdom picked from the ample experiences of his own hectic life.

"Free yourselves," he said, "from the vile clutches of the tobacco habit. It is easily done. Well I remember the day I gave up smoking. I was standing at a street corner, just about to light a Perfecto, when I