



Horse & Plow

Published by the Salem County Clerk's Office
SalemCountyClerk.org



Spring 2014

Clerk's Corner

Spring Fever in Salem County

As we publish this Spring edition of our newsletter, we are anticipating the end of a difficult winter season with much snow, ice and cold temperatures. Everyone is looking forward to the early indications of spring weather. We will soon be seeing little buds appearing on trees and in flower gardens. The birds will be flying back into our area and the new season begins. Additionally, many county residents are planning trips to distant places during this upcoming year. During this time, we see an increase in the number of persons coming to our office to process passport applications.

The Salem County Clerk office processes passports throughout the year and features a special "Passport Day" in March to promote the importance of passports. We also take the required photograph at a \$10 fee.

Passports are the most valuable form of identification which are accepted both in and out of the country. The requirements are a birth certificate with parents names, driver license or other specific identification, a passport photograph (must be a specific size and background), and correct fees. All persons applying for a passport must appear in person at our office. Call for further details.

Happy Spring!! Happy Traveling!!

Gilda T. Gill
Salem County Clerk

Okay, so enough with the winter already. It looks and feels more like Sochi than Salem. Admittedly, I'm not a big groundhog fan, but it appears that this year, the rodent was right.

Punxsutawney, Pa. is the small, mystical town where weather is predicted by a groundhog which goes by the name of "Phil". On February 2, 2014, the famous critter once again saw his shadow.

Here are some interesting facts about Phil:

1. Punxsutawney Phil has been in charge of telling us how long winter will wear on (and, conversely, when spring will finally bloom) since 1886, all based on whether or not he sees his



shadow on the morning of February 2nd. If he sees his shadow, we're in for six more weeks of winter, if he doesn't, spring will come early. Yes, that means that Phil is a sprightly 124 years old and, no, there are no other Phils. *Really.*

2. Phil stays so young by way of a magical "Groundhog Punch" that he's fed every summer at the annual

Groundhog Picnic (just a sip) that apparently extends his life for another seven years. So even if Phil misses out on six annual sips, he's still good to go with his weather reporting.

3. When Phil is not busy predicting the weather at Gobbler's Knob, a rural area about two miles outside of Punxsutawney proper, he lives in the town library.

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The First Day of Spring



The first day of Spring is the Vernal Equinox. So what exactly is the vernal equinox? The word equinox is derived from the Latin words meaning "equal night." Days and nights are approximately equal everywhere and the Sun rises and sets due east and west. In 2014, spring begins with the vernal equinox on March 20 at 12:57 P.M. EDT.

You may ask yourself, why doesn't the vernal equinox (equal night) on March 20 have the same number of

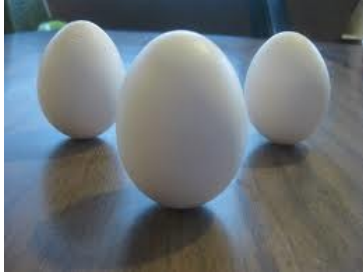
hours for day and night?

According to George Greenstein, from the Old Farmers Almanac, "There are two reasons. First, light rays from the Sun are bent by the Earth's atmosphere. (This is why the Sun appears squashed when it sets.) They are bent in such a way that we are actually able to see the Sun before it rises and after it sets. The second reason is that daytime begins the moment any part of the Sun is over the horizon, and it is not over

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Can You Balance an Egg or a Broom on the Vernal Equinox?

We hear about a magical property of this day that allows eggs to be balanced on end. The Chinese are thought to have originated the practice of standing eggs on end during the equinox. Just as the equinox symbolically restores balance to the world by signaling its rebirth after a season of darkness, the equinox literally balances the day by dividing it into equal portions of darkness and light. If the symbol of fertility, eggs, could be balanced on end during a day equally divided between day and night, this was a sign that all of nature was in harmony.



Nonetheless, the vernal equinox brings no special egg-balancing properties with it. Standing an egg on its end is something just about anyone can do any day of the year; the feat simply takes the right egg and a little trial and practice.

February 2012 saw the widespread promotion of a new addition to the legend: pictures of brooms standing on end circulated via social media, accompanied by claims that the arrival of the equinox also brought special broom-balancing properties with it. This feat actually works best with newer brooms which have uniform, evenly cut bristles, with the angle of the bristle cut offsetting the lean angle of the broom. Like eggs, though, many brooms can be stood on their ends any old day of the year.



"The groundhog is like most other prophets; it delivers its prediction and then disappears." ~Bill Vaughn



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Salem County Clerk's Office

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4. Punxsutawney Phil has his own little groundhog wife, and her name is Phyllis.



5. Despite enjoying life in the library and doing other groundhog-appropriate things, Phil has done his fair share

of traveling over the course of his career. In recent years, he has met big celebrities and public figures like Oprah and President Ronald Reagan.

6. Punxsutawney Phil was apparently named after King Phillip. Before that naming took place, he was called "Br'er Groundhog," which doesn't quite have the same ring to it.

7. Phil speaks a special language—it's called Groundhogese—which is what he uses to communicate his shadow-finding to the Inner Circle President, who then announces it to the world.

8. Phil apparently likes more than just his Groundhog Punch: The groundhog quite memorably announced during Prohibition that, if he were kept from drinking the hard stuff, there would be sixty weeks of winter!

9. Phil's batting average for his predictions isn't exactly the greatest: A record of his findings shows that his shadow-based predictions have only been right 39 percent of the time.

"Spring is when you feel like whistling even with a shoe full of slush."

~ Doug Larson



The First Day of Spring

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until the last part of the Sun has set. If the Sun were to shrink to a starlike point and we lived in a world without air, the spring and fall equinoxes would truly have 'equal nights.'

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