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# Pennsylvania German Groundhog Lodges

## The Origin of Pennsylvania German Groundhog Lodges



**STRANGE AS IT MAY SEEM, THE  
GROUNDHOG LODGE AS A  
PENNSYLVANIA GERMAN INSTITUTION  
IS A BY-PRODUCT OF WAR!**

## About the Pennsylvania German Grundsau Lodges

In the aftermath of World War I, American society was quite resentful of German Culture, traditions, and language. Especially, the use of the German language was sharply curtailed with churches and schools leading the way. Such negativism proved to be a harsh and painful blow to ethnic pride, especially in the Pennsylvania German communities of eastern Pennsylvania. The people were not only concerned about attacks on their German heritage, but also about the threat to the Pennsylvania German culture, traditions and the dialect.

It was with a great sense of pride, foresightedness and perseverance that several men from the farm, business and professional communities in both Lehigh and Northampton Counties gathered at the home of William (Pumpernickel Bill) Troxell on March 13, 1933. Joining Troxell, a Pennsylvania German columnist for Morning Call, were Rev. Thomas Brendel, Dr. Edgar Balliet, and Harry Spannuth.

This group, in search of ways to honor, preserve, protect, and perpetuate their besieged ethnic heritage, decided that a ground hog lodge would be a marvelous instrument to help them meet their goals.

The groundhog, an indigenous creature of North America, has been associated for centuries with Pennsylvania German tradition of weather prognostication. In fact, the tradition of using an animal for weather prognostication was introduced here in America by the first German immigrants who had participated in a similar European tradition for centuries. However, since ground hogs did not exist in a European environment, the badger was the chosen creature.

Plans for the first groundhog lodge were finalized at a private fersommling (Gathering) on April 3, 1933, at the Keystone Trail Inn in Allentown. The lodge, Grundsow Lodge Nummer Ains an Da Lechaw, was to meet annually on Groundhog Day, February 2. Pennsylvania German men were to gather on this date, not only to hear the groundhog make its annual weather prognostication, but also to enjoy an evening of dialect fellowship aimed at

instilling pride in their ethnic inheritance.

Besides Pennsylvania German Food, there were dialect songs, stories, speeches, skits and reminiscing with regard to ethnic traditions and customs

At the Keystone Trail Inn meeting, the first board of directors was elected. Thirteen men were selected. Since Pennsylvania Germans are extremely superstitious in their beliefs and ways, the number thirteen seemed ideally suited for the number of men who serve as members of the Rawd (Board). This number has never been changed.

Today all 17 groundhog lodges adhere to this tradition. As soon as there is a vacancy on the board, it is filled immediately.

The first public meeting of the groundhog lodge was held February 2, 1934. Grundsau Lodge Nummer Ains an Da Lechaw played host to 300 Pennsylvania German men at the Republican Club in Northampton, PA.

The success of the groundhog lodge can be attested to the fact that seventeen other lodges and numerous fersommlings have seen fit to follow in the path of Grundsau Lodge Nummer Ains an Da Lechaw during the past seventy-two years.

In 1987, a Grossdaadi (Grandfather) Grundsau Lodge was established. It is an affiliation of the seventeen groundhog lodges throughout eastern Pennsylvania and its purpose is to organize and carry out various programs and activities that it considers beneficial for the preservation and perpetuation of the Pennsylvania German culture and dialect.

Since its inception, the Grossdaadi Grundsow Lodge has created a Pennsylvania German flag, conducted classes for the Learning of the Pennsylvania German dialect, and is currently assisting, in cooperation with numerous fersommlings, the development of the Pennsylvania German Cultural Heritage Center and Museum on the campus of Kutztown University.

Written by Richard K. Miller

## The Pennsylvania German Flag SYMBOLISM



A Pennsylvania German Flag is an object of symbolism displayed as a reminder of the deeds, the accomplishments, and contributions representing an ethnic group whose accomplishments and contributions have played a loyal and honorable role in the development and the success of our great state and nation. Examination of the flag reveals the following symbolism.

**Colors:** It is not just coincidence that the Pennsylvania German flag uses the red, white and blue colors. They are to remind one that, in spite of our ethnic backgrounds, we are first and foremost loyal and devoted Americans.

**Sailing Ship Concord:** Commemorate the journey from Krefeld to Germantown in 1683. The start of a great migration of German speaking people in search of greater religious freedom and better social and economic conditions in a new area of the world.

**Keystone:** the symbol of Pennsylvania - the principal and permanent settlement of for the majority of migrants.

**Dialect Expression:** "Dear God in Heaven, Leave Us Germans What We Are," implying "Let us keep our traditional ways." This dialect expression symbolizes the main instrument of communication used by the Pennsylvania Germans in their everyday social and economic associations.

**Church:** indicative of the devoutness of the Pennsylvania Germans whose religious convictions were a strong motivating force in their daily lives.

**Plow:** symbolizes probably the most predominant of Pennsylvania German professions, the farmer. The plow further symbolizes the Pennsylvania German farm as a source of food for state and nation.

**Heart and Tulip:** represents the great skills and contributions of the Pennsylvania Germans in the fields of Arts and Crafts.

**Conestoga Wagon:** symbolizes the Pennsylvania German's contribution to the need for transportation. The "Ship of Inland Commerce", played a very important role in the Revolutionary War under the guidance of the Pennsylvania Teamsters, and in the westward expansion of our nation.

## GROUND HOG LODGES

<b>Die Grossdaadi Grundsow Lodge</b>	Lee W. Haas, Haaptmann (610) 767-5878
<b>#1—Nummer Ains On Da Lechaw</b>	William J. Schaffer, Haaptmann, (610) 799-2459
<b>#2—Nummer Tzuae On Da Schibbach</b>	Clarence Heffendrager, Haaptmann, (215) 257-9510
<b>#3—Nummer Drei On Temple University</b>	Defunct
<b>#4—Nummer Fiere On Da Doheck</b>	James Mohr, Haaptmann, (215) 536-2324
<b>#5—Nummer Finfa On Da Schwador Im Beind Bush</b>	Donald Potts, Haaptmann, (570) 345-4994
<b>#6—Nummer Sexa On Da Pohopoco</b>	Lee W. Haas, Haaptmann (610) 767-5878
<b>#7—Nummer Siva G'Schwishich Da Barioma Un Da Magowi</b>	Leroy Heffentrager, Haaptmann, (215) 679-7581
<b>#8—Nummer Ochda On Da Lizzard Grick</b>	Robert Nestor, Haaptmann, (717) 386-5545
<b>#9—Nummer Neine On Da Deef Runn</b>	MonroeHunsberger, Haaptmann, (215) 257-3276
<b>#10—Nummer Tzae On Da Braidkeppicha Grick</b>	Wil Hahn, Haaptmann, (610) 837-7140
<b>#11—Nummer Elfa On Da Fireline</b>	Wilbert Zacharias, Haaptmann, (610) 681-4562
<b>#12—Nummer Zwelfe On Da Dulpehockae Pawd</b>	Roger Hamm, Haaptmann, (610) 488-6026
<b>#13—Nummer Dretzeh On Da Inche Grick</b>	Mark Kistler, Haaptmann, (610) 967-3584
<b>#14—Nummer Fartzeh On Da Saakna Grick</b>	Ronald Hallowell, Haaptmann, (215) 282-3850
<b>#15—Nummer Fuftzeh Fon Barricks Kounty</b>	Donald W. Reinert, Haaptmann, (610) 756-6141
<b>#16—Nummer Sechtzeh Om Yahden</b>	Carson Frey, Haaptmann, (610) 760-9745
<b>#17—Nummer Siwwezeh Om Union Kanal</b>	Robert Kline, Haaptmann, (717) 949-2714
<b>#18—Nummer Achtzeh On Da Gross Ferelle Grick</b>	Raymond "Jack" Follweiler, Haaptmann, (610) 767-5785

## OTHER INDEPENDENT PENNSYLVANIA GERMAN FERSOMMLINGS & SOCIETIES

<b>The Pennsylvania German Society</b>	David L. Valuska, Kutztown, (484) 646-4227
<b>Pennsylvania Deitsch Fersommling Fon Baerricks Kounty</b>	
<b>Die Pennsylvawnish Deitsch Fersommling-Bedlahem</b>	Richard E. Hoffman
<b>Unner Mahonay Un Nochberschaft Fersommling</b>	N. Daniel Schwalm, Shamokin, (570) 648-4095
<b>Fersommler Fescht Ow Der Bushkill</b>	Carl T. Remel, Nazareth, (610) 759-2396
<b>Lechaw Dahl Deitschie Fersommling</b>	Ralph Zettlemoyer, Fogelsville, (610) 285-4020
<b>Pennsylvania German Cultural Heritage Center</b>	Robert Reynolds, Kutztown, (610) 683-1589
<b>Fereincht Pennsylvawnish Deitch Fulk, Inc</b>	Reynold Reinert, Fogelsville, (610) 285-6262
<b>Pennsylvawnish Deitsch Dialect und Kultur Society</b>	Herbert Zechman, Richland, (717) 933-4637
<b>Die Heidelberg Deitsch Fersommling</b>	Robert M. Kline, Lebanon, (717) 949-2714
<b>Die Deitsch Fersommling Fon Lodge #15</b>	Donald W. Reinert, Lenhartsville, (610) 756-6141
<b>Die Weibslait Grundsow Lodge Fon Da Baryomadahl</b>	Lucy Kern, East Greenville, (215) 679-6724
<b>Oley Daal Pennsylvawnish Deitsch Tzommalauf</b>	Richard C. Wolf, Fleetwood, (610) 944-6029
<b>West Baerricks Fersommling</b>	Francis Kline, Robesonia, (610) 693-6204
<b>Die Pennsylvawnish Deitsch Tzommalauf</b>	Howard Snyder, Germansville, (610) 767-5045
<b>Huffa Karrich</b>	Carl J. Arner, Macungie, (610) 678-2668

## Pennsylvania German WORD OF HONOR

I am proud of our Pennsylvania German Flag; and also the Mother Tongue, of the Ship, that brought our Forefathers here; the Church, that keeps us on the right path; of the Plow, that helped us on the Land; of the Arts, that give us time to do the things we enjoy; of the Wagon, that took us across this large land, the Colors, red, white and blue, that show we are first of all Americans, and of the Keystone, that keeps us Pennsylvania Germans together for Posterity.

*Iwwersetzt Beim  
Will Warrkelholtz*

