

A Science Service Feature

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? WHY THE WEATHER ? Mailed October 31, 1927

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THE PENNSYLVANIA GERMANS SAY:

If the oak trees shed their leaves from below up, the winter will be long and cold.

If the leaves of the trees and grapevines do not fall before St. Martin's Day (November 11), a cold winter may be expected.

A heavy crop of persimmons indicates a severe winter.

Long bristles on hogs as well as long and shaggy hair on horses and cattle in the fall indicate a long winter.

If the spleen of hogs is short and thick, the winter will be short.

If in the fall it is found that the hair on the squirrels' feet extends down over the claws, or that the feathers on the legs of partridges extend almost to the claws, we may expect a severe winter.

If caterpillars are found in November, we are sure to have a mild winter.

If on St. Martin's Day the weather is fair, cold and dry, the cold in winter will not last long.

At the first snowfall of the season take a pint of snow, put it in a tin vessel then place the vessel on a hot stove, and count the number of bubbles that rise while the snow is melting. This will indicate the number of snowfalls for the season.

The number of snowfalls for the winter is indicated by the number of days from the first snowfall until Christmas.

These and several other winter portents figure in the picturesque folklore of the Pennsylvania Germans, who are likewise supposed to hold the "goosebone" in high honor as an indicator of winter weather. But the Reverend John Baer Stoult, an authority on the traditions of these people, writes me under recent date: "The old beliefs are dying out. The goosebone story has always been treated as a joke, and the same is true of the groundhog. Very few people ever took any of the weather prophecies seriously."

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