

Kutztown University's William W. Donner, Ph.D. to discuss curious PA German cultural practices

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Lancaster County's Historical Society & President James Buchanan's Wheatland

## For Immediate Release

*All events are camera friendly, and principals will be available for interviews.*

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## History of PA German groundhog lodges to be focus of free February lecture

*Kutztown University's William W. Donner, Ph.D. to discuss curious PA German cultural practices*

*Lancaster, PA (January 21, 2019)* – On Thursday, February 7, 2019, Dr. William W. Donner will join LancasterHistory.org to discuss Pennsylvania German cultural practices that tourists rarely see and that outsiders, including most scholars, rarely learn about.

Versammlinge—community events filled with songs, performances, speeches, and skits that celebrate Pennsylvania German heritage and culture—are held entirely in the Pennsylvania German Deutsch language. Some, the “groundhog lodges,” feature a ceremony honoring the groundhog, while others do not. These unique meetings, expressions of a distinctive ethnic identity in the context of a rapidly changing society, have become a traditional mainstay among Pennsylvania Germans who have worked to preserve their language and culture into the twenty-first century.

*Serious Nonsense* explores the origins of the versammlinge and details the practice's significance since the 1930s, when the first meetings of the Pennsylvania German groundhog lodges were held. Much as they did then, versammlinge today follow a pattern of prayers, patriotism, and speeches extolling values associated with Pennsylvania German identity, as well

as theatrical and oral events that humorously contrast a simpler past with a more complex and confusing present. And the groundhog lodges feature one Pennsylvania German tradition that has become familiar in popular culture: groundhog weather prognostication.

**William W. Donner, Ph.D.** is Professor of Anthropology at Kutztown University.

**About The Event:** The Regional History Colloquium is a series of lectures and presentations hosted by LancasterHistory.org throughout the year. Presenters at the Colloquium are historians and scholars who are in the midst of a work-in-progress or who have recently completed a publication. Topics focus on historical issues relating to southeastern Pennsylvania and its wider borders.

**Tickets:** The event *Serious Nonsense* will take place on Thursday, February 7, 2019 in Ryder Hall at LancasterHistory.org, 230 N. President Avenue in Lancaster. A speaker's reception and book signing take place at 4pm, followed by the main presentation at 4:30pm. The event is free and open to the public. Due to the popularity of the Regional History Colloquium series, **advance registration is required to guarantee a seat at the presentation.** Visit [www.lancasterhistory.org/lectures](http://www.lancasterhistory.org/lectures) to register online or call (717) 392-4633. Questions and accessibility requests may be directed to [info@lancasterhistory.org](mailto:info@lancasterhistory.org) or (717) 392-4633.

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