

## **Possum Drop: New Year's Eve, Brasstown, North Carolina** <sup>[1]</sup>

### **Possum Drop: New Year's Eve Tradition, Brasstown, North Carolina**

By Kelly Agan, Government & Heritage Library, 2014

The local human inhabitants call Clay County's Brasstown the "Opossum Capital of the World." While this claim may be difficult to prove, the town has become known internationally from news coverage of the "Possum Drop," its offbeat approach to ringing in the New Year.

The tradition began at midnight on December 31, 1990 with the drop of a ceramic possum from the roof of the Clay's Corner convenience store by the store's owner Clay Logan. And it quickly became a community affair with the use of live specimens of North Carolina's official State Marsupial <sup>[2]</sup>. The possum portion of the event has typically featured a possum housed in a clear plastic box, lowered from a rope at midnight. Today the bash is billed as a community celebration, with music and a Miss Possum drag queen contest, and folks have reportedly traveled from other states for the experience.

Use of living critters for entertainments such as this has come under criticism by animal rights activists, resulting in the drop one year of a road kill possum and of a box covered with possum pictures in 2013. Controversy surrounding the event has involved lawsuits by the activist group PETA and passage of legislation by the General Assembly in 2013 allowing for lawful capture and release of possums, presumably to support possum drop activities. After further legal challenge by PETA, the 2014 General Assembly passed H.B. 1131 <sup>[3]</sup> allowing trapping of the critter only in Clay County each year from December 26 to 31. The fate of the use of a live possum for the annual event continues to be fought in North Carolina's courts.

#### **References:**

House Bill 1131, NC General Assembly Session 2013. [Clay County Opossum Exclusion/Wildlife Laws.] <https://www.ncleg.net/Sessions/2013/Bills/House/PDF/H1131v4.pdf> <sup>[4]</sup> (accessed December 8, 2014).

Senate Bill 60, NC General Assembly 2013-14 Session. [The Opposum Right to Work Act.] (accessed December 8, 2014). <https://www.ncleg.gov/BillLookUp/2013/S60> <sup>[5]</sup> (accessed December 8, 2014).

House Bill 66, NC General Assembly Session 2013. [Captivity License and Permit Amendments.] <https://www.ncleg.net/Sessions/2013/Bills/House/PDF/H66v5.pdf> <sup>[6]</sup> (accessed December 8, 2014).

Gettleman, Jeffrey. "A New Year's Tradition Lives, But the 4-Legged Star Doesn't." New York Times, January 2, 2004. <http://www.nytimes.com/2004/01/02/us/a-new-year-s-tradition-lives-but-the-4-legged-star-doesn-t.html> <sup>[7]</sup> (accessed December 8, 2014).

"Judge's ruling threatens New Year's Eve possum drop." WRAL.com. Nov 13, 2012. <https://www.wral.com/judge-s-ruling-threatens-new-year-s-eve-possum-drop/11767889/> <sup>[8]</sup> (accessed December 8, 2014).

#### **Video Credits:**

cutterwebcasts. "Possum Drop 2009-10 in Brasstown, NC." YouTube. [https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C\\_xw\\_ovdmwQ](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=C_xw_ovdmwQ) <sup>[9]</sup> (accessed December 8, 2014).

#### **Subjects:**

Events <sup>[10]</sup>

Popular Culture and Pop Culture <sup>[11]</sup>

Wildlife <sup>[12]</sup>

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Agan, Kelly <sup>[13]</sup>

#### **Origin - location:**

Clay County <sup>[14]</sup>

Brasstown <sup>[15]</sup>

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