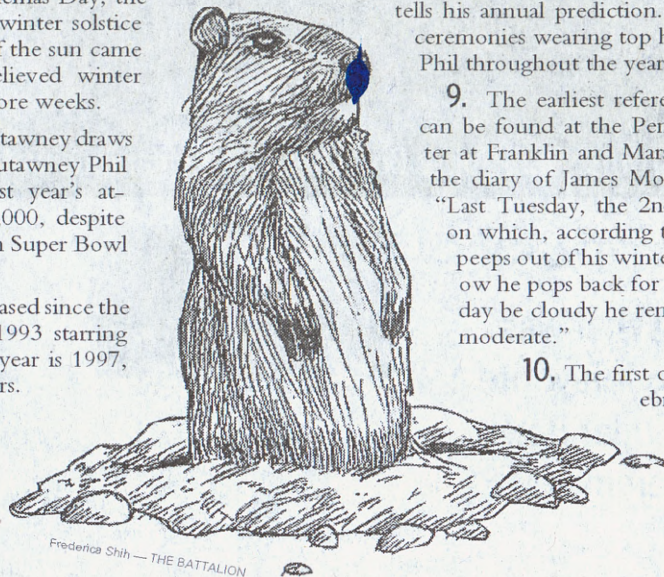


# Groundhog Day: 10 groundbreaking facts

By Lindsey Gawlik

▷ Once a year, people wait anxiously to see if one furry little friend, a groundhog, will see his shadow. If he does, legend claims there will be six more weeks of winter. In honor of Monday's Groundhog Day, here are 10 fun facts about the day.

1. Groundhog Day, although celebrating its 129th official year in its founding town of Punxsutawney, Pennsylvania, is believed to be around 300 years old.
2. The tradition originated from a German holiday called Candlemas Day, the day exactly between the winter solstice and the spring equinox. If the sun came out that day, it was believed winter would continue for six more weeks.
3. The town of Punxsutawney draws thousands to see if Punxsutawney Phil will see his shadow. Last year's attendance was around 18,000, despite Groundhog Day falling on Super Bowl Sunday.
4. Attendance has increased since the famous movie made in 1993 starring Bill Murray. The record year is 1997, with around 35,000 visitors.
5. Last year, New York City's Mayor Bill de Blasio dropped the groundhog



- used for the New York Groundhog Day ceremony. The groundhog, named Charlotte, died a week later of internal injuries.
6. In the 128 years the tradition has been celebrated, Phil has seen his shadow 102 times. Only 17 years show Phil did not see his shadow. Nine years have no record.
  7. According to legend, the current Phil is 123 years old. He is said to have been born in 1887, although most groundhogs only live for 10 years. The supposed reason for his longevity is because he is fed an elixir called "groundhog punch" every summer that guarantees another seven years of life.
  8. Phil has a posse called the "inner circle," to whom he tells his annual prediction. Phil's inner circle is seen at all ceremonies wearing top hats and is in charge of caring for Phil throughout the year.
  9. The earliest reference to Groundhog Day in text can be found at the Pennsylvania Dutch Folklore Center at Franklin and Marshall College. The excerpt from the diary of James Morris reads: February 4, 1841 — "Last Tuesday, the 2nd, was Candlemas day, the day on which, according to the Germans, the Groundhog peeps out of his winter quarters and if he sees his shadow he pops back for another six weeks nap, but if the day be cloudy he remains out, as the weather is to be moderate."
  10. The first official Groundhog Day was celebrated Feb. 2, 1886. The groundhog, as reported by The Punxsutawney Spirit, did not see his shadow that year.

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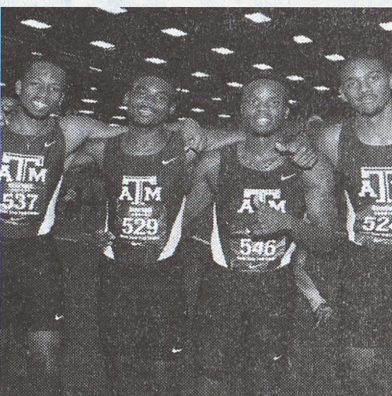
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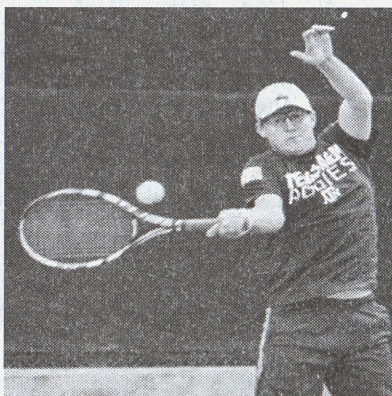
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### RAILWAY CONTINUED

between Dallas and Houston in less than 90 minutes. The technology has been used to great success in Japan, where high-speed rail connects several important cities.

Boles also said such an accessible route would solidify Texas A&M in the nation's consciousness.

"This route would provide service from two huge international airports — DFW and George Bush Intercontinental," Boles said. "Visiting professors, world leaders and prospective students will have unprecedented access to Texas A&M like no other university has in the U.S."

The B-CS station currently planned would lie approximately 15 miles outside College Station. Rebecca Cowle, Class of 2012 and outreach coordinator for the Texas Central Railway, said this station would provide a safe trip to and from the station for students and others in the community.

"Texas Central Railway has been working with Texas A&M and elected leaders in B-CS for years," Cowle said. "We have identified some ways to provide a safe alternative mode of travel for students while staying true to our private-led model."

Allan Rutter, research scientist at the Texas A&M Transportation Institute, said the developers have not finalized a precise station location until a proper cost-benefit analysis has been conducted. A final verdict is still far ahead in the future.

"[Developers] need to decide if putting a station in our area increases their chances to maximize revenue," Rutter

said. "Given this rail project is privately funded, the decision of where stops go and how many there are is a matter of whether it makes financial sense or not."

In addition to financial matters, developers are paying careful attention to how building a through-route and station would affect people residing on or close to the desired property.

Blanche Brick, College Station City Council mayor pro tem, said while public interest in the high-speed rail is strong, no one wants their land to be taken.

"Not many people are excited at the prospects of a route going through their property," Brick said. "Everybody recognizes the advantages, and ultimately private investors need to consider the needs of the community and their best interests in location."

According to information provided by Texas Central Railway, the Federal Railroad Administration and Texas Department of Transportation held in late October and early December a series of 12 public meetings along the Dallas-Houston corridor to solicit initial public feedback. Representatives of TCR attended the meetings in order to hear firsthand the concerns of the public and to answer questions informally.

The Environmental Impact Statement process, led by the Federal Railroad Administration with the help of TxDot, is estimated to be completed in 18 to 24 months.

The Environmental Impact Statement will also help determine the overall cost of the entire project. If all goes to plan, the rail service is expected to begin in 2021.

**"[Developers] need to decide if putting a station in our area increases their chances to maximize revenue."**

Allan Rutter, research scientist at the Texas A&M Transportation Institute

### VOTE CONTINUED

will fill student senator and yell leader positions, as well as next year's student body president.

"This election is setting the atmosphere for the 2015-2016 SGA," Douglas said. "This election season especially we want everyone to be educated and aware of what's going on."

Douglas said SGA has experienced a voter participation decline over the past few years. 2012 voter turnout was more than 15,000 participants, but by last year's election it had dropped to about 11,000. Douglas said while 2012's numbers might be due to the higher candidate numbers — there were six SBP candidates instead of the two to three candidates since — the participation drop nonetheless requires a rethinking of the way SGA generates voter interest.

Jeff Claybrook, communication executive vice president and political science senior, said SGA hopes to have 15,000 to 20,000 students vote in this election, or approximately 30 percent of the student body population.

Wimberly said students don't realize the policy influence that elected members of SGA have.

"Whenever there's a search team that needs to come up for a dean, president or vice president, administration automatically turns to SGA because they have been elected by the students and are representative of the student voice," Wimberly said.

Douglas said there are plenty of opportunities for students to become informed for election season. A candidate meet-and-greet is planned for Feb. 15 in the MSC, and SGA hopes to interact with students through Facebook, Twitter and social media. Douglas also said a debate between student body president candidates will be held for students to better understand the candidates' positions.

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**THE BATTALION** is published daily, Monday through Friday during the fall and spring semesters and Tuesday and Thursday during the summer session (except University holidays and exam periods) at Texas A&M University, College Station, TX 77843. Offices are in Suite L400 of the Memorial Student Center.

**News:** The *Battalion* news department is managed by students at Texas A&M University in Student Media, a unit of the Division of Student Affairs. Newsroom phone: 979-845-3315; E-mail: editor@thebatt.com; website: http://www.thebatt.com.

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