

250 Years in the Making: How well do you know your city? Take our quiz and find out. (Who knows!? You just might learn something.)

Answer Key

1. In what year was slavery outlawed in Pennsylvania? *Surprisingly, it was in a), 1780, when the state assembly passed the Act for the Gradual Abolition of Slavery into law. The legislation established that “every Negro and Mulatto child born within the state would be free upon reaching age twenty-eight” and required enslavers to register the names of those they enslaved within six months; otherwise, the enslaved persons would be freed. Perhaps unsurprisingly, the latter requirement was frequently ignored, resulting in several landmark legal cases. The act was also the impetus for President George Washington to rotate enslaved people between Mount Vernon and his residence in the then-capital of Philadelphia to thwart the six-month requirement.*

2. In what year did the United States declare war on the Confederacy? *Trick question, friends; it’s d), none of the above. The U.S. never did declare war on the Confederacy, because President Lincoln considered the opposition to be separate states in rebellion against the federal government, rather than a cohesive foreign entity. Most historians date the start of the conflict to the shots fired by the Southern states against Charleston, South Carolina’s Fort Sumter in April of 1861.*

3. What Civil War battle was fought closest to Philadelphia’s City Hall? *It’s b), the Battle of Gettysburg—though there were skirmishes and other martial encounters closer to home. The Battle of Trenton was a Revolutionary War encounter, as was the Battle of Germantown. There has never been a Battle of Manayunk, if you discount the bike race reinstated this year.*

4. Which of these is NOT one of the various sites where artist John A. Wilson’s bronze memorial statue to Philly’s famed Washington Grays Civil War artillery corps once stood? *Ha, another trick question—sort of. The answer is c), at Broad and Girard; that’s where the monument’s base was unveiled, in 1872. But the statue itself wasn’t added until 1908, after the base had been moved to Washington Square. It was later reinstalled at Lemon Hill, in 1954, and finally came to rest outside the Union League in 1991. That soldier got around.*

5. What percentage of Philadelphia’s male population served in the Civil War? *Estimates say d), three-quarters of the city’s men saw active service—an almost unimaginable number, when you think about it. That totaled about 100,000 men. Though a number of Black Philadelphians sought to volunteer, they were initially denied the opportunity, as were Black volunteers from all the Union states. Eventually, many thousands did serve.*

6. Camp William Penn, the largest training camp for Black soldiers during the war, was open from 1863 to 1865 in which Montco township? *We salute you if you chose c), Cheltenham Township—specifically, in the area on Cheltenham Avenue now called La Mott, named, appropriately, for abolitionist Lucretia Mott, whose home there was a stop on the Underground Railroad. Before its rechristening, the training area was known as Camptown; some 11,000 volunteer free men and escaped enslaved men underwent training for the Union Army there.*

7. How many wounded Union soldiers were brought to Philadelphia hospitals for treatment during the course of the war? *At least c) 157,000 Union soldiers were treated here during the war; hospitals in the city at the time included Pennsylvania Hospital, founded in 1751, and the almshouse known as Old Blockley, in West Philly. In 1864, the U.S. Sanitary Commission put on a fair to solicit money for the veterans’ care in an area next to the Cathedral Basilica of Saints Peter and Paul; it raised more than a million dollars and was attended by, among many others, President Lincoln, his wife, Mary, and their son Tad.*

8. What was the name of Union General George Meade’s famed horse, who was wounded multiple times in battle? *It’s a neigh if you answered anything other than c), Old Baldy, who despite his battle wounds outlived the general by 10 years and served as the “riderless horse” in his funeral procession.*

9. What happened to said horse after he finally died in 1882? *We’re sorry to say the answer is b), he was buried, was dug up, had his head cut off, etc. In fact, Old Baldy’s noggin is still on display—following some legal tussles—at the Grand Army of the Republic Museum and Library in Holmesburg.*

10. After General Robert E. Lee’s surrender at Appomattox Court House in April 1865 and President Abraham Lincoln’s subsequent assassination, Philadelphia newspapers reported on a widespread rumor swirling through the populace about a plot by disgruntled Southern soldiers to do what? *Hope you made a match (get it?) with a), burn the city to the ground. There were, understandably, plenty of retaliation rumors, but this was the most credible, or at least the most combustible. Per reports in a number of city newspapers, the plot was uncovered when a policeman found a letter with details of the operation that had been dropped by a conspirator. One paper did assert that the supposed plot had been cooked up by prizefighters who wanted the police more occupied with guarding the city than with sussing out their illegal bouts.*