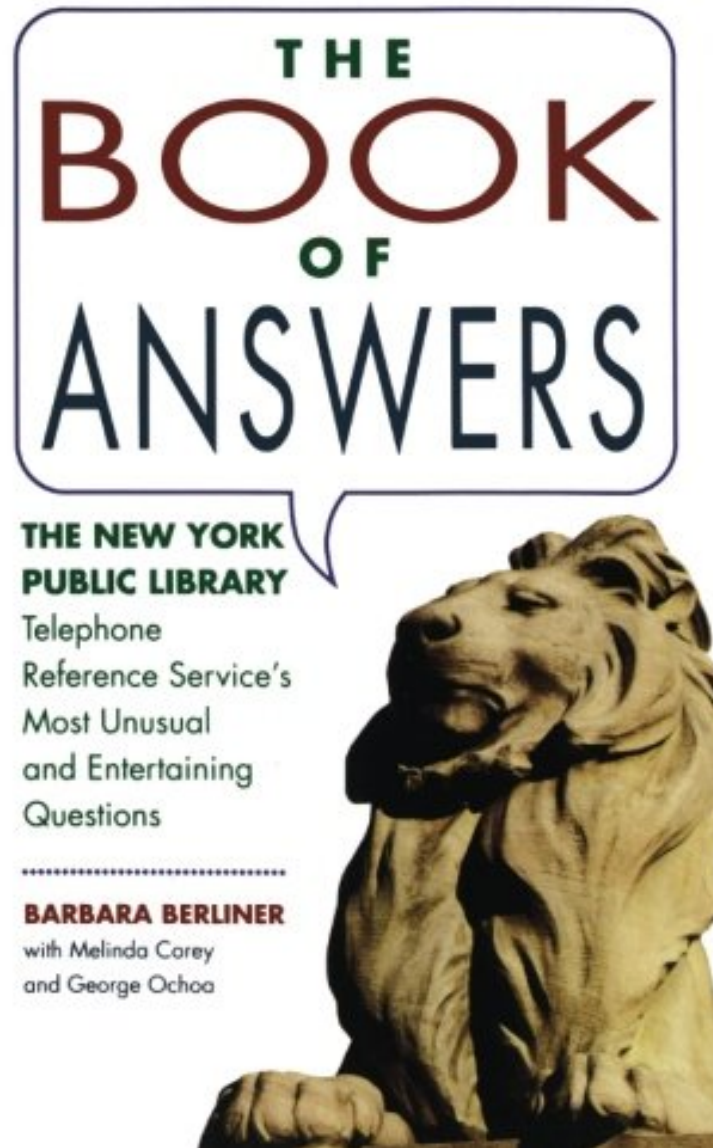


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## Book of Answers: The New York Public Library Telephone Reference Service's Most Unusual and Enter

Barbara Berliner

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## Book of Answers: The New York Public Library Telephone Reference Service's Most Unusual and Enter:

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Not bad but a little disappointed. By Eric T. Gorall received this book today and having purchased other books from the same 'The New York Public Library', expected more excellence. There certainly is a lot of fun and interesting information in it, to be sure. And perhaps I'm 'nitpicking', but when I looked through the American Statistics section, all the facts/reference were from the 80's and early 90's. It seemed most was from 1980-1988, and I wondered how they couldn't have more updated information than that which was almost 30 years old? It doesn't seem terribly informative when it's so out-dated. This is my major complaint. The rest was interesting and informative. My favorite section was the 'Trademark' section. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Knowledge is power! By Purple Passion Very interesting and informative book! It was the perfect book to keep me occupied while waiting in the car or reading on break at work. I would love to see a more updated version come out because some of the references (especially about the World Trade Center) were outdated. 0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Five Stars By johngreat

How many of these questions can you answer without calling the New York Public Library's Telephone Reference Service? Who really designed the American flag? How hot is the sun's surface? How does quicksand work? When was the Ark of the Covenant last seen? Who sat at the Algonquin Round Table? Where does the name "The Grateful Dead" come from? Why is Christmas abbreviated as Xmas? Can any creatures besides humans get a sunburn? How many muscles does it take to smile? To frown? Why are rabbits' feet considered good luck? You could, of course, do all the painstaking research yourself. Or you could pick up the phone and call the resourceful, erudite, quick-witted librarians of the New York Public Library's Telephone Reference Service, Tel Ref, for whom questions like these are all in a day's work. For the past twenty years, Tel Ref has met the information needs of a public as diverse as the subjects in the Library's catalog, and now they've compiled their most interesting, unusual, and most-often-asked queries into *The Book of Answers* -- a delight for browsers, a treasure trove of fascinating information, and the perfect companion to *The New York Public Library Desk Reference*.

About the Author Barbara Beruner has headed the New York Public Library's Telephone Reference Service since 1986. She and her staff of ten reference librarians are based in the Library's Mid-Manhattan Branch. Meunda Corey and George Ochoa are the authors of *The Man in Lincoln's Nose: Funny, Profound, and Quotable Quotes of Screenwriters, Movie Stars, and Moguls* and several other books. Ms. Corey is the coauthor of *The Official Couch Potato Cookbook*. Excerpt. Reprinted by permission. All rights reserved. Chapter 1 American History Who was the first American-born child of English settlers? Virginia Dare, born in 1587 to English settlers of the "lost colony" of Roanoke Island. The entire colony disappeared; Dare's death date is unknown. Did the pilgrims eat turkey at the first Thanksgiving celebration at Plymouth Rock? At the three-day festivities celebrating survival through the winter, many foods were served, but turkey was not one of them. The menu included: venison, duck, goose, seafood, eels, white bread, corn bread, leeks, watercress and various other greens, wild plums, dried berries, and wine. Is it true that Manhattan Island was bought from the Indians for \$24? What Peter Minuit gave the Manhattoe tribe was a package of trinkets and cloth valued at 60 guilders -- roughly equivalent to \$24. Who founded the city of Chicago? A black man from Haiti named Jean Baptiste Pointe Du Sable (1745-1818). In 1772, Du Sable founded a settlement called Eschikagou on the north bank of the Chicago River. However, he was not officially recognized as the city's founder until 1968. Who was the founder of Detroit? Antoine de la Mothe Cadillac, a French explorer and administrator, founded Fort Pontchartrain du Detroit in 1701. The Cadillac automobile is named for him. Was Pittsburgh named after someone named Pitt? If so, what did he have to do with Pennsylvania? Pittsburgh was named for William Pitt -- even though Pitt never set foot in Pennsylvania. Pitt's actions as a British war minister during the French and Indian War led to the city's founding. He committed money and troops to the war; he mapped out a strategy that included the capture of Fort Duquesne, located where the Allegheny and Monongahela rivers combine to form the Ohio. After this French fort fell in November 1758, a British one was built -- Fort Pitt, or Pittsburgh. The city of Pittsburgh still stands on that spot. What is the oldest existing hospital in America? Bellevue, on New York City's East Side, is the oldest general hospital in North America. Plans for the hospital date back to 1736, although at that time the building was meant to be only a "Publick Workhouse and House of Correction" near City Hall (located on the site of present-day City Hall Park). In 1816, a larger space was needed and construction began at Belle Vue Farm, on the hospital's present site. When were the first African slaves brought to the United States? In 1619, a Dutch ship brought the first 20 slaves to the English colony of Virginia. How many slaves were freed after the American Civil War? About 4 million. In total, how many Africans were brought to the United States as slaves? Approximately 15 million. How many Liberty Bells have there been? Two. The first was cast in England in 1752 for the Pennsylvania State House, which later became Independence Hall. The second was cast in Philadelphia and inscribed, "Proclaim liberty throughout all the land unto all the inhabitants thereof" (Leviticus 25:10). The bell cracked on July 8, 1835, as it tolled the passing of Chief Justice John Marshall. In the song "Yankee Doodle," why did Yankee Doodle stick a feather in his cap and call it

macaroni?The line refers not to the pasta but to the Macaroni Club, a mid-eighteenth-century English social club of dandyish young men who wanted to bring the influences of the Continent to bear on their home country. Thus the line was originally intended to discredit American revolutionaries. Did Betsy Ross design the American flag?No, it was designed by Francis Hopkinson, a naval flag designer, who was never reimbursed for his services by the U.S. government. And there is no record of Betsy Ross's commission to sew the flag. In the American Revolution, how many men were required for a regiment in the Continental army?In November 1775, the Continental Congress advised that a regiment have eight companies of 91 officers and men apiece, for a total of 728. The actual size of the regiments varied per state. How many American casualties were suffered in the American Revolution?Unofficial studies of field reports indicate that about 4,500 men died in battle and over 6,000 were wounded. Illness also took a large but indeterminate number. At Valley Forge, for example, illness claimed over 3,000 lives. How many Americans fought for the British in the American Revolution?Approximately 50,000 Americans were part of the Loyalist military support for the king. Few joined the British army and navy, but thousands served in provincial regiments under Loyalist officers. American Indians -- mainly in Canada, on the frontier, and in the South -- also fought for Britain. How much was Benedict Arnold given to be a traitor?Benedict Arnold (1741-1801) demanded 20,000 from the British but received only 6,315. In exchange, he revealed American battle plans, tried (but failed) to deliver West Point, and crossed over to the British army. Although Arnold was given 13,400 acres of land in Canada after the war, he lived the rest of his life in England. When was the first U.S. census taken?In 1790. It included six questions and recorded a population of 3,929,214 persons, of whom 3,172,006 were white and 757,208 were black. The white population was evenly divided between males and females -- 1,615,434 males, 1,556,572 females. Virginia was the most populous state, with 747,610 inhabitants. When did the first strike in the United States take place?In 1776, in New York, when members of the Journeymen Printers Union struck against their local shops. Where and when was the greatest earthquake in American history?It took place in Missouri on December 16, 1811, at about 2:00 P.M. It is estimated that the quake would have measured 8.7 on the Richter scale, compared with only 8.3 for the 1906 San Francisco earthquake. However, the Missouri area was sparsely populated in 1811, so the San Francisco quake took more lives and damaged more property. How did American currency come to be called dollars and cents?Dollar was the English spelling of the German Taler (a silver coin first issued in 1519). American colonists used the word dollar to describe the Spanish peso circulating from South America, and when it came time to devise a system of currency (in 1792), the United States government adopted the dollar as its basic monetary unit. The word cent meant one-hundredth of a dollar -- following the decimal system of coinage first proposed by Gouverneur Morris (1752-1816). Morris was a New York-born statesman who served as assistant to the superintendent of finance under the Articles of Confederation, from 1781 to 1785. When did the motto In God We Trust start appearing on U.S. coins?It has appeared on most American coins since about 1864. During the Civil War, rising popular religious sentiment prompted Secretary of the Treasury Salmon P. Chase to put the country's faith where its money was. Other slogans suggested were God Our Trust and God and Our Country. The motto is not required by law. How many females have appeared on U.S. currency?Aside from the female representations of Justice and Liberty, only three women have been so commemorated: Martha Washington, on the face of the 1886 and 1891 \$1 silver certificates and on the reverse of the 1896 silver certificate; Pocahontas, on the back of the 1875 \$20 bill; and women's suffrage leader Susan B. Anthony, on the 1979 \$1 coin. When was the U.S. Navy established?An American "Continental Navy" was established by the Second Continental Congress on October 13, 1775. It was disbanded after the War of Independence, in 1784. The first U.S. Navy was not established until April 30, 1798. How did the elephant and donkey come to be the symbols for the Republican and Democratic parties?Cartoonist and illustrator Thomas Nast (1840-1902) popularized both symbols but invented only one of them. Democrat Andrew Jackson first used the donkey as a symbol for his party after his opponents in the 1828 presidential election called him a "jackass"; Nast's cartoons later helped to make the symbol famous. Nast himself introduced the Republican elephant in an 1874 cartoon. At first, the elephant was only meant to symbolize the overwhelming strength of "the Republican Vote"; it soon came to stand for the Republican party as a whole. Has the U.S. Supreme Court ever had more (or fewer) than nine members?Yes. Originated by the Constitution, the Court has been regulated in size by Congress. The number of justices varied -- from six to ten -- until 1869, when Congress voted to set the membership at nine. What was the first chartered railroad in the United States?The Granite Railway, which began running from Quincy, Massachusetts, to the Neponset River -- a distance of three miles -- on October 7, 1826. Its principal cargo consisted of blocks of granite for use in building the Bunker Hill Monument in Charlestown. The railway later became part of the New York, New Haven, and Hartford Railroad. How long did the Pony Express last?The system of mail delivery by horse-and-rider relays lasted only 18 months, from April 1860 to October 1861. It connected Saint Joseph, Missouri, with Sacramento, California -- a distance of 1,800 miles. The completion of the transcontinental telegraph system brought the Pony Express to an end. Is it true that Robert E. Lee was offered command of both sides in the Civil War?Yes. Within the span of a few days in April 1861, Lee was offered command of both the Union and Confederate forces. Although he opposed slavery and secession and believed the South could not win, his loyalty to his home state of Virginia led him to accept the Confederate command. How many people were present at Lincoln's Gettysburg Address?Approximately 5,000 people appeared at the dedication of

the Civil War battlefield cemetery on November 19, 1863. How many people died at the infamous Andersonville Prison? More than 13,000 Union prisoners died at Andersonville, the largest Confederate military prison. Most died of neglect. The prison's commandant, Captain Henry Wirz, was the only Civil War soldier executed for war crimes. When was the Gilded Age? It was during and just after the administration of President Ulysses S. Grant (1869-1871). So called for its materialism and political corruption, the period was given its name in a satirical novel, *The Gilded Age* (1873), written by Mark Twain with Charles Dudley Warner. Did a cow really start the great Chicago fire of October 8, 1871? While the fire did begin in a cow barn behind the cottage of Patrick O'Leary, there is no evidence that a cow was responsible. In fact, a reporter, Michael Ahem, later admitted he created the legend in order to make a better story. The fire lasted 27 hours, killing 250 people and destroying 17,450 buildings. For how long were there stockyards in Chicago? For 107 years, beginning in 1864, the mile-square Union Stock Yards stood at Halsted Street and Exchange Avenue. The Swift, Armour, and Wilson companies had plants there. The yards closed on July 31, 1971, and were demolished. Only the Union Stock Yards' gate was preserved; it was named a Chicago landmark on February 24, 1972. Where did the Chisholm Trail run? Named for trader Jesse Chisholm, this nineteenth-century cattle route started south of San Antonio, Texas, passed through Oklahoma, and ended at Abilene, Kansas. In 1871 -- the trail's busiest year -- 700,000 cattle were driven along the route by 5,000 cowboys. Where did the Hatfields and McCoys live? The families lived on opposite sides of a stream called Tug Fork in the Appalachian Mountains. The McCoys resided in Pike County, Kentucky, and the Hatfields in Logan County, West Virginia. How the feud got started is not known, but it got under way in earnest with the killing of a Hatfield in 1882. The fighting went on intermittently into the 1890s and was not completely over until after 1910. In what town did the gunfight at the O.K. Corral take place, and who was shot? The famous shootout on October 26, 1881, happened in Tombstone, Arizona Territory, at a photographer's studio just to the east of the O.K. Corral -- Camillus Fly's studio. The Earp brothers -- Wyatt, Virgil, Morgan -- and friend Doc Holliday shot Billy Clanton and neighbors Tom and Frank McLauray. Although there was bad blood between the Earps, the Clantons, and the McLaurays, the Earps shot the three without provocation. The Earps and Holliday were legally cleared of any crime. What was the Haymarket incident? It took place on May 4, 1886, at Chicago's Haymarket Square during a peaceful rally to protest the killing three days earlier of six workers striking for the eight-hour day. Two hundred policemen were sent in to break up the rally. Before they could, a dynamite bomb of unknown origin exploded, killing 8 policemen and wounding 65 others, and also killing an undetermined number of civilians. Seven labor leaders were held responsible and condemned to death. Two had their sentences commuted to life; four were hanged; one killed himself. When was the U.S. government given the right to tax its citizens? It happened in 1913 by way of the 16th Amendment to the Constitution: The Congress shall have power to lay and collect taxes, from whatever source derived, without apportionment among the several States, and without regard to any census or enumeration. What was the first minimum wage? When it was instituted in 1938, the minimum wage was 25 cents per hour. When did "The Star-Spangled Banner" become the national anthem? The four-stanza song was adopted as the national anthem by the U.S. Congress in 1931. Francis Scott Key wrote the lyrics in 1814, taking the melody from an eighteenth-century drinking song called "To Anacreon in Heaven" by British composer John Stafford Smith. (Anacreon was a Greek lyric poet [563-478 B.C.] associated with love and wine.) Who wrote the Pledge of Allegiance? It was written by Francis Bellamy, editor of the children's magazine *The Youth's Companion*, for its September 8, 1892, issue, to commemorate Columbus Day. It originally read: "I pledge allegiance to my Flag and the Republic for which it stands -- one nation indivisible -- with liberty and justice for all." The verse became a popular Columbus Day tradition and, later, a daily school recitation. In 1923, the U.S. Flag Association replaced "my flag" with "the flag of the United States of America," and in 1954, Congress added "under God." Did the United States have warning of the attack on Pearl Harbor? Ten hours before the surprise attack on December 7, 1941, Americans intercepted a 14-part Japanese message. They deciphered it at 4:37 A.M., Washington time, just hours before the attack, but the message remained in the code room; not until three hours later was it delivered to President Roosevelt. By 11:00 A.M., the U.S. chief of naval operations and the army chief of staff received the deciphered message, which was then transmitted to all areas of the Pacific except Hawaii, where the receiver was not working. The message did not reach Pearl Harbor until nearly three hours after the attack, which took 3,000 lives. Who wrote the U.S. Supreme Court decision outlawing school segregation? *Brown v. Board of Education of Topeka, Kansas*, was written by U.S. Supreme Court Chief Justice Earl Warren (1891-1974). Delivered on May 17, 1954, it was one of the first of several major decisions of the Warren Court, which lasted from 1953 to 1969. When did the last Americans leave Vietnam? When did the government of South Vietnam surrender? The last Americans -- about 1,000 -- were evacuated from Saigon on April 29, 1975. The Saigon government surrendered a few hours later. How many Americans died in the Vietnam War? According to the U.S. Department of Defense, 58,135 Americans were killed and 153,303 wounded. It is estimated that 1.3 million Vietnamese lost their lives. During Gerald R. Ford's presidency, what did the WIN buttons stand for? Whip Inflation Now. How long were the 52 American hostages held in Teheran, Iran? They were held for 444 days, from November 4, 1979, to January 20, 1981, the day Ronald Reagan was inaugurated president. How much has the U.S. national debt increased over the nation's history? In 1800, the national debt was \$83

million. In 1988, it was \$2.6 trillion. Copyright 1990 by The New York Public Library