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## Studies in Slang, VII

Barry A. Popik

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## **STUDIES IN SLANG, VII**

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The first six volumes of *Studies in Slang* appeared in the *Forum Anglicum* monograph series edited by Otto Hietsch (University of Regensburg). Due to his retirement, *Forum Anglicum* has been discontinued, although it remains a monument of scholarship and inspiration.

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University of Missouri-Rolla  
Rolla, MO 65409

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Gerald Leonard Cohen  
Rolla, Missouri  
and  
Barry A. Popik  
New York City

After printing costs are met, Gerald Cohen will donate his share of any remaining funds to a scholarship fund for liberal arts students at the University of Missouri-Rolla.

## DEDICATION

Barry Popik: To Angie

Gerald Cohen: An Otto Hietsch in Achtung und Dankbarkeit





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## PREFACE BY GERALD COHEN

This volume continues the formal presentation of material that first appeared as working papers in *Comments on Etymology* and in so doing attempts to illustrate the wealth of information that has been appearing in the Internet messages of the American Dialect Society. Of particular interest is the extraordinary outpouring of material from independent scholar Barry Popik.

The raw ads-l material is preserved in an Internet archive, but several years ago that archive to date simply vanished. Before the enormous amount of material which has appeared since then also vanishes in some computer glitch, steps should be taken to preserve, develop and polish as much of that material as possible.

A full set of *Comments on Etymology* is preserved at the Library, University of Missouri-Rolla. Also, the American Dialect Society's Internet address is ads-l@listserv.uga.edu. And Barry Popik's website about lexical matters is at barrypopik@aol.com

## ACKNOWLEDGMENTS

Various acknowledgments are made throughout the book. Here now are a few of the many debts of gratitude I owe.

I am grateful to Otto Hietsch for his enthusiastic support of my work over the years. It has been a pleasure and honor to publish much of my material in his Forum Anglicum monograph series, now regretfully being discontinued due to his retirement. He has my abiding deep gratitude and warmest good wishes.

I also owe a deep debt of gratitude to Eric Hamp and the late Allen Walker Read for the encouragement and many insights they have provided me over the years; to the very knowledgeable ads-l members who have answered my queries on etymology/early attestations/etc.; to my teachers in graduate school (George Shevelov, Boris Unbegaun, Rado Lencek) who trained me for scholarship in Slavic linguistics and whose efforts

in this regard wound up bearing fruit elsewhere. My graduate school training was extraordinary, and I have tried to apply the principles of scholarship instilled in me there to the areas outside of Slavic linguistics that I have since treated. It goes without saying that whatever shortcomings my research may have are solely my own responsibility.

I am grateful too to my colleagues in Russia, who have been sharing their scholarly writings with me particularly as they relate to slang and the emotional element in language: Victor Shakhovskiy, Yuri Voloshin, and Vladimir A. Xomjakov.

My thanks go also to the outstanding staff at the Western Historical Manuscript Collection (Columbia, MO), home of the remarkable Peter Tamony Collection of Americanisms; and to the equally outstanding staff of my my campus' library:

Mary Aycock, Jane Allen, Mary Jo Babrush-Weiss, Minnie Breuer, Jane Driver, Marsha Fuller, Georgia Hall, Mary Haug, Annette Howard, Allison Holdaway, Chris, Jocius, Ben Lea, Sherry Mahnken, PJ McGinnis, Becky Merrell, Jim Morisaki, John Seguin, June Snell, Nena Thomas, Melody Warner; and to library director Andy Stewart.

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September 1, 2005

## MATERIAL FOR THE STUDY OF HASH-HOUSE LINGO

Barry Popik and Gerald Cohen

(Primarily from *Comments on Etymology*, April 2002, pp. 2-28; April 2003, pp. 33-40; October 2003, pp. 10-19, April 2004, pp.15-16.)

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## INTRODUCTION

G. Cohen: All research for this article was done by Barry Popik and presented in several messages to the American Dialect Society. My only contribution here is an organizational one: numbering the paragraphs, preparing the individual glossaries and then the compiled one at the end; I also prepared the

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bibliography and take sole responsibility for any shortcomings this co-authored treatment might have.

#### ANTEDATING TERM *HASH HOUSE* FROM 1869 TO 1861-1865

From a June 25 2003 ads-l message of Popik's:

'OED has 1869 for "hash house," but an earlier example turns up in a data base search for Civil War "hash."

(AMERICAN CIVIL WAR: LETTERS AND DIARIES)

Morgan, Julia, fl. 1861-1865. 'Memoir of Julia Morgan'

[Page 73]

...with gamblers and bad characters, drinking, carousing, coming and going. Food was getting scarcer and cooking worse. To sum it up, confusion reigned. One day Col. John Savage came to me and said they had changed the name of the hotel. I asked him the new name, and he said: "H--I and hash house, instead of Kennesaw Hotel." I told him that was a fearful name, but he went off laughing heartily. The time had come when we had to make a change. Houses were hard to get; we were in a sad dilemma; we did not know what to do. Fortunately, we heard of a house for sale, furnished complete ...

Morgan, Julia, fl. 1861-1865, Memoir of Julia Morgan, in *How It Was: Four Years Among the Rebels*. Nashville, TN: Privately published, 1892, pp. 204. S2002-D011 [Bibliographic Details] [Undated] Morgan: M2002-11.'

A search for articles on restaurant slang on ancestry.com has turned up the following two items:

#### 1883, IN *HAWK EYE* (BURLINGTON, IOWA NEWSPAPER)

8 November 1883, *Hawk Eye* (Burlington, Iowa), p. 3, col. 3:

"Sleeve buttons," according to the *Star*, is the New York restaurant waiters slang for codfish balls. "One summer," calls for oat meal and milk; "two on other," is legal tender for two fried eggs; "stars and stripes" means plate of pork and beans; "leather and bake" is liver and bacon and "diamonds" means meat pies.'

## GLOSSARY OF THE ABOVE ITEMS

*Diamonds* - meat pies  
*Leather and bake* - liver and bacon  
*One summer* - oat meal and milk  
*Sleeve buttons* - codfish balls  
*Stars and stripes* - plate of pork and beans  
*Two on other* - fried eggs

1886 CHICAGO HERALD ITEM REPRINTED IN MARION, OHIO

22 November 1886, *Marion Daily Star* (Marion, OH), pg. 3, col. 3:  
 LINGO OF A CHEAP RESTAURANT.  
 "Draw One," "Six on the Griddle,"  
 and Other Favorite Synonyms.

The waiters in one of Chicago's many cheap restaurants were astonished and nonplussed the other day when a stranger entered and called for "boot leg and sinkers." After repeating his order two or three times, and observing that none of the waiters could catch on, the stranger, a New Yorker, translated his language into plain "coffee and doughnuts." It is not often that the Chicago waiter can be knocked out on restaurant slang. He knows a trick or two of that sort himself. For instance, "Hard on the Injun!" bawled across the room, is a notification to the server that Indian pudding with hard sauce is wanted. "Draw one," heard every minute of the day, means "a cup of coffee." "Draw no," is coffee without milk. "Six on the griddle" is a fair abbreviation of half a dozen fried oysters. "Ham and turn 'em over," means that the customer wishes ham and eggs, and that the latter shall be fried on both sides. "Drop three" in the waiters' vocabulary indicates an order for poached eggs. A wag of a waiter in a South Clark street grub shop amuses customers who call for hard boiled eggs by shouting an order to the cook:

"Three--four fifty-nine!"

Which means that three eggs are to be boiled four minutes and fifty-nine seconds.

"One on," usually brings an oyster stew, while "s'line mejum"

is only "sirloin medium" slightly slurred in the pronunciation. "Buck up" is buckwheat cakes. "Three up and nine to come" is the lingo for batter cakes. "Brown the buck and a come along" means buckwheat cakes and coffee. "Bean in the bowl" is the alternative and rhythmic formula for bean soup. "Tommy in the bowl" means one bowl of tomato soup; "bull you, bowl up," is beef soup, while "P, yank one" is good for pea soup, and "somee" for vermicelli.

Pork and beans are sometimes called for as "stars and stripes," but the more common formula in Chicago is "mut, up one." In some of the restaurants on State street they call for pork and beans with "an Archer avenue comin' on the run." Corn bread is "Corn Johnny," or "brown the Jack." Plum pudding is "plum up," or "plum Jo." "T. O. K." is a sure call for tapioca pudding. "Cash on delivery," means codfish, and "corn for the neighbor" is corned beef. In the better class of restaurants "a brown stone front" means porterhouse steak, while "double brown stone" is porterhouse for two. -- Chicago Herald.'

#### DOUGLAS WILSON COMMENTS ON A FEW OF THE ABOVE ITEMS

I (Gerald Cohen) sent a query to the American Dialect Society, and Douglas G. Wilson (douglas@NB.NET) then replied (July 14, 2003):

Question #1: *bull you, bowl up* (beef soup)--I suppose that *bull you* derives from *bouillon*; but why *bowl up*?

Douglas Wilson: Maybe one could order different sizes, e.g., 'cup of soup' versus 'bowl'?

Question #2: *an Archer avenue comin' on the run* (pork and beans). Explanation: ?

Douglas Wilson: Archer Avenue was a major street in Chicago, a city known for many slaughterhouses: probably refers to pork.

Questions #3-4: *Corn Johnny* (corn bread). Why *Johnny*?  
*brown the Jack* (corn bread). Why *Jack*?

Douglas Wilson: *Johnnycake* in 'standard' English.

#### GLOSSARY OF THE ABOVE ITEMS IN 1886 CHICAGO HERALD ARTICLE

*an Archer avenue comin' on the run* - pork and beans. ('In some of the restaurants on State street [Chicago] they call for pork and beans with "an Archer avenue comin' on the run.") -- Douglas Wilson explains: Archer Avenue was a major street in Chicago, a city known for many slaughterhouses: probably refers to pork.

*Bean in the bowl* - bean soup.

*Boot leg and sinkers* - coffee and doughnuts

*Brown stone front* - porterhouse steak. --'In the better class of restaurants "a brown stone front" means porterhouse steak, while "double brown stone" is porterhouse for two' -- (Explanation: ?)

*Brown the buck and a come along* - buckwheat cakes and coffee.

*Brown the jack* - corn bread. ('Corn bread is "Corn Johnny," or "brown the jack.'). Douglas Wilson: derives from *Johnnycake* in 'standard' English.

*Buck up* - buckwheat cakes

*Bull you, bowl up* - beef soup--I suppose that *bull you* derives from *bouillon*, but why *bowl up*? Douglas Wilson: Maybe one could order different sizes, e.g., 'cup of soup' versus 'bowl'

*Cash on delivery* - codfish

*Corn for the neighbor* - corned beef. -- Why 'for the neighbor'?

*Corn Johnny* - ('Corn bread is "Corn Johnny," or "brown the Jack.")  
-- See *brown the jack*.

*Double brown stone* - porterhouse steak for two. (See above: *brown stone front*)

*Draw no* - coffee without milk

*Draw one* - a cup of coffee

*Drop three* - poached eggs

*Ham and turn 'em over* - ham and eggs, with eggs fried on both sides

*Hard on the Injun!* - Indian pudding with hard sauce.

*Mut, up one* - pork and beans. ('Pork and beans are sometimes called for as "stars and stripes," but the more common formula in Chicago is "mut, up one".')

*One on* - (usually) an oyster stew

*Plum Jo* - ('Plum pudding is "plum up," or "plum Jo."')

*Plum up* - plum pudding

*P, yank one* - pea soup

*Six on the griddle* - half a dozen fried oysters

*s'line mejum* - sirloin medium (slightly slurred in pronunciation)

*somee* - vermicelli

*Three--four fifty-nine!* - Three eggs are to be boiled four minutes and fifty-nine seconds (said by one waiting in South Clark street grub shop)

*Three up and nine to come* - batter cakes.

*T. O. K.* - tapioca pudding.

*Tommy in the bowl* - one bowl of tomato soup

1887 ARTICLE IN *BROOKLYN DAILY EAGLE*

3 July 1887, p. 13

Notice, incidentally, that *Adam and Eve on a raft* 'poached eggs on toast' is not here (we see it in the 1890s). The author of the article states that the language is 'going out of fashion,' but it certainly took a while. Here now is the article:

*'RESTAURANT CALLS.*

*Waiters' Economy of Time in Giving Orders.*

*Curious Phrases and Their Meaning--Dictionary of Diningroom Slang--A Quaint Custom Going Out of Fashion. ...*

"One," is an oyster stew.

"Three on," three butter cakes.

"Pair o' sleeve buttons," is two fish balls.

"White wings, ends up," are poached eggs.

"One slaughter on the pan," is a porter house steak.

"Coffee in the dark" and "slops in a cup with the light out" signify coffee without milk.

"Brown a plate o' wheat" and "stack o' whites" indicates that a customer wants wheat cakes.

"Tea separate," means that the milk for the tea is not to be poured into the cup, but served in a pitcher.

"Cannon balls," are crullers.

"Beef and" means beef and beans.

"Stars and stripes," are pork and beans. This term also applies to bacon.

"Brass band, without a leader," is a plate of beans without pork.

"Summer time," is bread and milk.

"Murphy with his coat on," is a boiled potato, unpeeled.

"White wings, sunny side up," are fried eggs.

"Rice both," "bread both," etc., means that rice, bread and other puddings are to be served with both wine sauce and butter sauce.

"Rice, hard only," means that rice pudding is to be served with butter sauce.

"Bale o' hay," is corned beef and cabbage.

"Let the blood follow the knife," is rare roast beef.

"Roly poly" is strawberry pudding.

"Solid shot" is apple dumpling.

"Mealy bustle" is mealy potato.

"Ham and" signifies ham and eggs.

"Shipwreck" is scrambled eggs.

"Hen fruit" is boiled eggs.

"Tea no" is tea without milk.

"Dyspepsia in a snow storm" is mince pie sprinkled with sugar.

"Hash no" is hash without onions.

"Mystery" is hash.

"Brown stone front" is another name for porter house steak.

"Chicken from on high" is the best cut of chicken.

"Cosmopolitan" is Neapolitan ice cream.

"Let the chicken wade through it" is chicken soup.

Some keepers of restaurants where these amusing orders have been in daily transmission for years have compelled their waiters to forego this style and to communicate orders to the cook in every day English. It is only the "What'll ye have, damyer," kind of servitor who persists in it. ---- S.'

#### GLOSSARY OF THE ABOVE ITEMS IN 1887 *BROOKLYN DAILY EAGLE*

"Bale o' hay" is corned beef and cabbage.

"Beef and" means beef and beans.

- “Brass band, without a leader,” is a plate of beans without pork.
- “Brown a plate o’ wheat” and “stack o’ whites” indicates that a customer wants wheat cakes.
- “Brown stone front” is another name for porter house steak.
- “Cannon balls” are crullers.
- “Chicken from on high” is the best cut of chicken.
- “Coffee in the dark” and “slops in a cup with the light out” signify coffee without milk.
- “Cosmopolitan” is Neapolitan ice cream.
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- “Let the blood follow the knife” is rare roast beef.
- “Let the chicken wade through it” is chicken soup.
- “Mealy bustle” is mealy potato.
- “Murphy with his coat on” is a boiled potato, unpeeled.
- “Mystery” is hash.
- “One,” is an oyster stew.
- “One slaughter on the pan” is a porter house steak.
- “Pair o’ sleeve buttons” is two fish balls.
- “Rice both,” “bread both,” etc., means that rice, bread and other puddings are to be served with both wine sauce and butter sauce.
- “Rice, hard only” means that rice pudding is to be served with butter sauce.
- “Roly poly” is strawberry pudding.
- “Shipwreck” is scrambled eggs.
- “Sleeve buttons” -- (See “pair o’ sleeve buttons”)
- “Solid shot” is apple dumpling.
- “Slops in a cup with the light out” -- coffee without milk. (See above, “coffee in the dark.”)
- “Stack o’ whites” -- (See “brown a plate o’ wheat.”)
- “Stars and stripes” are pork and beans. This term also applies to bacon.
- “Summer time” is bread and milk.
- “Sunny side up” -- (See “white wings, sunny side up”)

“Tea no” is tea without milk.

“Tea separate” means that the milk for the tea is not to be poured into the cup, but served in a pitcher.

“Three on” three butter cakes.

“Whites” -- (See “brown a plate o’ wheat.”)

“White wings, ends up” are poached eggs.

“White wings, sunny side up” are fried eggs.

#### 1888 ARTICLE IN THE *NEW YORK HERALD*

The *New York Herald* has an index, but it’s not complete and not very good. Nevertheless, it’s better than nothing...The bottom part of this copy has been torn, and words are missing.

From the *New York Herald*, 1 April 1888, p. 9, col. 6;  
[towards the end of the article the right column is partially missing, requiring some reconstructions]:

*‘VERY DEMOCRATIC HASH.*

*A Feast Fit for the Gods for*

*Twenty-five Cents.*

*AND LUNCH FOR A NICKEL*

*Scenes in a Restaurant Where a Curious*

*Volapuk Is Spoken ...*

‘Or they can get a cup of coffee and some cakes for ten cents. The facetious patrons of the restaurant call these cakes “sinkers,” because if they were thrown overboard they wouldn’t float. ...

*A VOLAPUK DIALECT.*

While the HERALD reporter sat in this restaurant the other day he remarked that the customers did not, as a rule, speak the English language. They had a dialect of their own, not very different from the Volapuk that has become such a fad in certain very high circles.

A young man with a very “tough” air threw himself in the chair at the opposite side of the table at which the reporter was sitting,



and when the waiter sidled up to him said, with a drawl:--

“Cup o’ cough an’ three off!”

The reporter wondered what he meant, but soon found out when he heard the waiter call to one of the cooks:

“A cup of coffee and three cakes off the griddle.”

Another young man called for “ham an’;” this meant ham and beans.

“Beef an’” meant corned beef and beans.

When a very hard looking man said he wanted “boot leg and chuck” the reporter expected to [see?] the waiter knock him down, but he didn’t. [He] turned on his heel and returned in about two-minutes with a cup of coffee and a hunk of bread.

Another young man sat at the table behind the reporter, and when the waiter asked, “What[’s the] order?” he replied very laconically, “Sh... chicken.” [G. Cohen: about five letters are missing; “shoot a chicken”?]

“Two fried eggs turned over!” cried the waiter to the cook.

During his stay in the restaurant the reporter learned several things he never knew bef[ore. Be]sides the above the following:--

That “pluck” meant beef stew.

That “cough in the dark” meant coffee [without] milk.

That “sleeve buttons” meant fish cakes.

That “pig iron” meant fried sausages.

That “quail” meant chicken stew.

That “heavy weights” and “sinkers” meant doughnuts

That “hot water” meant tea.

That “Stars and Stripes” meant pork and [beans].

That “dyspepsia in a snow storm” meant [mince] pie with powdered sugar.

That “Murphy with his coat off” meant [potato] peeled.

That “old friend and shamrock” meant [corned?] beef and cabbage.

That “pallbearers” meant crackers.

That “a tenement house in Greenwich [Village]” meant a plate of soup with plenty of greens in [it.]

And that “mystery” meant hash.’

GLOSSARY OF THE ABOVE ITEMS IN 1888 N.Y. *HERALD* ARTICLE

- “Beef an’” is corned beef and beans.  
 “Boot leg and chuck” is a cup of coffee and a hunk of bread.  
 “Chuck” is a hunk of break (See “Boot leg and chuck”)  
 “Cough in the dark” is coffee [without] milk.  
 “Cup o’ cough an’ three off!” is a cup of coffee and three cakes off the griddle.  
 “Dyspepsia in a snow storm” meant [mince] pie with powdered sugar.  
 “Ham an’” is ham and beans.  
 “Heavy weights” and “sinkers” meant [doughnuts]  
 “Hot water” is tea.  
 “Murphy with his coat off” meant [potato] peeled.  
 “Mystery” is hash.  
 “Old friend and shamrock” meant [corned?] beef and cabbage.  
 “Pallbearers” are crackers.  
 “Pig iron” is fried sausages.  
 “Pluck” is beef stew.  
 “Quail” is chicken stew.  
 “Sh[oot a?] chicken” is Two fried eggs turned over!  
 “Sinkers” are doughnuts (See “Heavy weights” and “sinkers.”).  
 Also: ‘Or they can get a cup of coffee and some cakes for ten cents. The facetious patrons of the restaurant call these cakes “sinkers, “because if they were thrown overboard they wouldn’t float.’  
 “Sleeve buttons” are fish cakes.  
 “Stars and Stripes” meant pork and [beans]  
 “A tenement house in Greenwich [Village]” is a plate of soup with plenty of greens in [it.]

9 April 1897, *LOS ANGELES TIMES*, p. 5:  
 (reprinted from *Kansas City Star*)

‘*SLANG OF THE RESTAURANTS.*  
 ‘Some of the Fancy Names Given to Common Dishes.

'(Kansas City Star:) The time when restaurant slang was considered the proper thing has almost passed and now there are few restaurants in the world where one can have his appetite tested by the mere act of the repetition of his order to the cook. Ten years ago, a man entering such restaurants on the Bowery as Boss Tweed's, Tom Fish's or "Beefsteak John's" and having any respect for his future appetite or "grub thirst," as it was called then, generally wore his ear muffs.

'This slang runs from "three links of the Atlantic cable" (meaning sausage,) to "San Francisco bay, one small boat half sunk (cocktail,) and back again," said a "traveling hash," who has been in the business about twelve years.

"I've been all over the country, and I knew Steve Brodie when he was a baby. This business ain't what it used to be, though. People are more particular nowadays. The old slang is passing away, and few even remember what it is."

'Just then a customer entered, sat down at the table and gave his order, which was repeated to the cook by this brawny Bowery lad.

"Wake up," he cried, "one brown stone front, side of a funeral; two Irish lemons with all clothes on; plate of punk; an easy smear of axle grease and draw one in the dark, cap it all off with a farmer's alliance."

'This was all said in one breath. After delivering himself of it, the waiter resumed his conversation:

"Do you know what he wanted?" he asked. "Well, I'll tell you. He wanted a piece of beefsteak, a small order of pork chops, two baked potatoes, a plate o' bread and butter, a cup o' coffee and a piece of pumpkin pie."

'This slang, he explained, was once very popular among a certain class of restaurants throughout the country, but since the Parkhurst society's work in the Bowery it has gone completely out of vogue, save in one or two cities in the mining regions in the West. Most of the slang phrases are appropriate to the dishes, yet many have little or no connection. A list of staple orders may prove of value in case one should want to know what one is getting:

"Red, white and blue"--corn beef hash.  
 "Summer time"--oat meal.  
 "Brass band with leader"--pork and beans.  
 "Sinkers"--doughnuts.  
 "A stack of browns"--hot cakes.  
 "Mid ocean"--boiled eggs.  
 "A mystery"--hash.  
 "White wings, sunny side up"--fried eggs.  
 "Packing-house quail"--spare ribs.  
 "Graveyard poultice"--milk toast.  
 "Three links of Atlantic cable"--link sausage.  
 "Shipwreck"--scrambled eggs.

GLOSSARY OF THE ABOVE ITEMS IN 1897 L. A. TIMES/K.C. STAR

*Atlantic cable* -- See below: *Three links of Atlantic cable*  
*Axle grease* - butter - (See below: *punk* item)  
*Brass band with leader* - pork and beans.  
*Brown stone front* (in: *one brown stone front*) - piece of  
 beefsteak  
*Draw one in the dark* - cup o' coffee  
*Farmer's alliance* - piece of pumpkin pie  
*Graveyard poultice* - milk toast.  
*Grub thirst* - appetite  
*Irish lemon with all clothes on* - baked potato  
*Mid ocean* - boiled eggs.  
*A mystery* - hash.  
*Packing-house quail* - spare ribs.  
*Punk* - bread. (in: 'plate of punk; easy smear of axle grease' =  
 plate of bread and butter  
*Red, white and blue* - corn beef hash.  
*San Francisco bay, one small boat half sunk* - cocktail  
*Shipwreck* - scrambled eggs.  
*Side of a funeral* - small order of pork chops  
*Sinkers* - doughnuts.  
*A stack of browns* - hot cakes.  
*Summer time* - oat meal.

*Three links of Atlantic cable* - link sausage.

*Traveling hash* --Exact meaning: ?--apparently: someone who has frequented numerous hashhouses or perhaps owned several of them in different places--The term appears in: '...said a "traveling hash," who has been in the business about twelve years.'

*White wings, sunny side up* - fried eggs.

### 1902 ARTICLE ON HASH HOUSE LINGO

[1] 'POOLE'S PLUS is a database I've been using recently [2001], checking for "restaurant" and "cookery" and "food." The two newspapers it has (citations only) are the *New York Times* and the *New York Tribune*.

[2] From the *New York Tribune*, section II, 27 July 1902, p. 2, col. 6; title:

'Quick Lunch Room Terms. Phrases Used Where Filling Food Is Dispensed With Little Ceremony.'

[3] "To you, the uninitiated, these ---"

[4] When the great majority of the quick lunch room proprietors of New York agreed last week to raise the price of "beef an'," also of "ham an'," from 10 to 15 cents, and their momentous decision was duly, if somewhat jocularly, recorded in the papers, the surprising fact developed that there are actually to be found men and women in this city who do not know what "beef an'" is.

[5] "Beef and what?" asked a downtown business man, as he read his paper going home on the L [B. Popik: i.e., the E; = the Elevated Train]

[6] "Well, you don't know beans, for a fact," his companion laughed.

[7] "That's it, eh?" said the first. "But how should I know whether it was beans or cabbage? I never go to that sort of a place to eat."

[8] 'And there are thousands more like this man, who never went to "that sort of place" to eat, or have carefully forgotten that they ever had to. How "the other half" eats is unknown to them. They enter a cafe where the linen is liberal and snowy, give their

order confidentially to a silent waiter, and by and by their food comes to them, under cover. There is something private, even intimate, about the whole process, however crowded the cafe. They do not know the strange sensation--strange at first--of having one's order "bellowed through the hall," of drinking coffee out of handleless cups so thick they stretch the mouth to rim them; and, greatest loss of all, they do not know the curious system of abbreviation that prevails in such places, abbreviations that are often metaphors in the rough, and of which "ham an'" is only a faint suggestion.

[9] If you are new to this style of a lunch room, you enter, sit down at a bare and not too clean table and wait quietly to be served. You are likely to wait some time, but while you wait you hear a bare armed waiter roar down a passage, "Send up the goat." That's easy. You know he wants more butter. Then he cries, "Beef an'" and you know that. "Plate o' Bostons" isn't hard, either. But "Make it two, sunny side up" is a staggerer. However, the solution is simple--two eggs fried on one side only.

[10] 'Finally, you get tired of waiting, and by pounding a glass with a spoon and sundry gesticulations you get a waiter to come to you. "Give me some poached eggs on toast," you say, "and a cup of coffee."

[11] 'The waiter turns toward the kitchen and shouts, "Noah on a raft!" Then he wheels toward the steaming, polished coffee tanks and cries, "Draw one!"

[12] "Say," you call, with an afterthought, "I guess I'll make that scrambled eggs on toast."

[13] "Wreck Noah," calls the waiter solemnly.

[14] 'The strange thing may well seem to be that you get what you ordered.

[15] 'There are many such phrases, some of them common to all the "grub-on-the-run" places, some of them local.

[16] "A little on the cow" is milk. "Draw one--black" is coffee, without milk. "One up" is not golf, but a symbol, meaning that the waiter who calls has another cup of coffee coming to him. "Off the griddle" means butter cakes, those deadly bullets or, rather, small cannon balls of dough, which are commonly known to the hardy

eaters thereof as “sinkers,” but which it is high treason to call by that name within the lunch room.

[17] “Put up the flag” means macaroni, just why, no one seems able to explain, though there is vaguely felt to be some subtle reference to Yankee Doodle and the Stars and Stripes. “Brown the wheats” means simply an order of buckwheat pancakes, while “two in three” signifies that somebody wants two eggs boiled three minutes. “Red, white and blue” is a plate of mixed ice cream.

[18] ‘The crown of the collection, however, is to be found on the Bowery, where there is much poetry in the block, anyway. There, if you should happen to have the sort of taste that demands mince pie with powdered sugar on top, you will hear shouted to the rear: “One indigestion in a snowstorm!”

[19] ‘One cannot well object that there is more truth than beauty in such a phrase, for it has been stated on eminent authority that truth is beauty. So one cannot shun these lunch rooms logically on aesthetic grounds. If you demand your coffee in a thin cup with a handle, “coffee in the shell,” as the waiter scornfully orders, you will be snubbed as a dude. But if you accept conditions as you find them, you will get food that is at least “filling,” as they say in New-England, and you will undoubtedly save money. Many a good man, indeed, has eaten there, not because he had to, nor because he thought he had to, but because he liked to. The penning of many a criticism of the Niebelungenlied, bristling with the vocabulary of aestheticism, has been followed by a plate of “beef an’,” and the phrases of culture, ping pong wise, have been tossed back and forth over the grease-polished tables. And surely it is better to wreck Noah when his son is so near, to render filial service.

#### GLOSSARY OF 1902 ARTICLE

*a little on the cow* -- [16] “A little on the cow” is milk.’

*beef an’* = ‘beef and beans’ -- [4-7] ‘When the great majority of the quick lunch room proprietors of New-York agreed last week to raise the price of “beef an’,” also of “ham an’,” from 10 to 15 cents, and their momentous decision was duly, if somewhat

jocularly, recorded in the papers, the surprising fact developed that there are actually to be found men and women in this city who do not know what "beef an'" is.

"Beef and what?" asked a downtown business man, as he read his paper going home on the L.

"Well, you don't know beans, for a fact," his companion laughed.

"That's it, eh?" said the first. "But how should I know whether it was beans or cabbage? I never go to that sort of a place to eat."

*Bostons 'beans'* -- [9] "'Plate o' Bostons" isn't hard [to figure out], either.'

*brown the wheats* -- [17] "'Brown the wheats" means simply an order of buckwheat pancakes,...'

*coffee in the shell* -- [19] 'If you demand your coffee in a thin cup with a handle, "coffee in the shell," as the waiter scornfully orders, you will be snubbed as a dude.'

*Draw one--black* -- [16] "'Draw one--black" is coffee, without milk.'

*goat 'butter'* [9] '...but while you wait you hear a bare armed waiter roar down a passage, "Send up the goat." That's easy. You know he wants more butter.'

*grub-on-the-run (place)* -- diner, small eatery -- [15] 'There are many such phrases, some of them common to all the "grub-on-the-run" places, some of them local.'

*ham an'* 'ham and beans' -- See *beef an'*.

*indigestion 'mince pie'* --[18] 'There [on the Bowery], if you should happen to have the sort of taste that demands mince pie with powdered sugar on top, you will hear shouted to the rear: "One indigestion in a snowstorm!"'

*Noah on a raft* 'poached eggs on toast' -- [10-13] '..."Give me some poached eggs on toast," you say, "and a cup of coffee." The waiter turns toward the kitchen and shouts, "Noah on a raft!" Then he wheels toward the steaming, polished coffee tanks and cries, "Draw one!"'

"Say," you call, with an afterthought, "I guess I'll make that scrambled eggs on toast."

"Wreck Noah," calls the waiter solemnly.'



*off the griddle* -- [16] “Off the griddle” means butter cakes, those deadly bullets or, rather, small cannon balls of dough, which are commonly known to the hardy eaters thereof as “sinkers,” but which it is high treason to call by that name within the lunch room.’

*One indigestion in a snowstorm* ‘mince pie with powdered sugar on top.’ -- See *indigestion*.

*One up* -- [16] “One up” is not golf, but a symbol, meaning that the waiter who calls has another cup of coffee coming to him.’

*Put up the flag* -- [17] “Put up the flag” means macaroni, just why, no one seems able to explain, though there is vaguely felt to be some subtle reference to Yankee Doodle and the Stars and Stripes.’

*red, white and blue* [17] “Red, white and blue” is a plate of mixed ice cream.’

*send up the goat* -- See *goat*.

*inker* -- usually a doughnut, but here (pejoratively): butter cakes. -- [16]: “Off the griddle” means butter cakes, those deadly bullets or, rather, small cannon balls of dough, which are commonly known to the hardy eaters thereof as “sinkers,” but which it is high treason to call by that name within the lunch room.’

*snowstorm, in a* ‘with powdered sugar’ -- [18] ‘There [on the Bowery], if you should happen to have the sort of taste that demands mince pie with powdered sugar on top, you will hear shouted to the rear: “One indigestion in a snowstorm!”’

*sunny side up* [9] ‘But “Make it two, sunny side up” is a staggerer. However, the solution is simple--two eggs fried on one side only.’

*two in three* -- [17] ‘...while “two in three” signifies that somebody wants two eggs boiled three minutes.’

*wheats* ‘buckwheat pancakes’ -- See *brown the wheats*.

*Wreck Noah* ‘Change the order of *Noah on a raft* “poached eggs on toast” to scrambled eggs -- [12-13] ‘...“Say,” you call, with an afterthought, “I guess I’ll make that scrambled eggs on toast [instead of *Noah on a raft*, i.e., poached eggs on toast].”’

"Wreck Noah," calls the waiter solemnly.' --- (For full quote see *Noah on a raft*)

[19] 'And surely it is better to wreck Noah when his son is so near, to render filial service.'

1905, *LADIES HOME JOURNAL*

From American Periodical Series Online, Article 8 -- No Title. *The Ladies Home Journal*, Philadelphia: Sept 1905. Vol. XXII,, Iss. no. 10; p. 8:

*'Not Beyond Him at All*

'IN A CERTAIN restaurant at one time customers' wants were looked after by a waiter who was renowned for the clever ways in which, when shooting down the dumb-waiter to the cook, he interpreted different dishes. For instance, if a customer ordered sausage and bread, he told the cook "a doorstep and a bag of mystery" were required. In consequence of this two city men had a wager, one of them saying he was sure he could give an order which the waiter would find it impossible to twist in his usual way.

'Accordingly they repaired to the restaurant and Mr. Brown gave his order:

"Waiter, bring me a couple of poached eggs on toast and the yolks broken."

'The waiter shouted down to the cook: "Adam and Eve on a raft and wreck 'em."

GLOSSARY OF 1905 LADIES HOME JOURNAL ARTICLE

*Adam and Eve on a raft and wreck 'em* -- two poached eggs on toast and the yolks broken

*bag of mystery* -- sausage

*doorstep* -- bread.

1908, HUMOR MAGAZINE *PUCK*

*Puck* New York: Aug 5, 1908. Vol. 64, Iss. 1640; p. 5:

(Dinner table illustration--B. Popik)

*'WORTH HUMORING.*

MR. SUBBERTON (*yelling to kitchen*).--Sawdust and milk crust! Adam and Eve on a raft and wreck 'em! On the cantaloupe! Draw one! Make it three all 'round!

MR. TOWNLEY.--Great,--e-e-r, how--pardon me, old chap, but what's it all about?

MR. SUBBERTON.--'Sh! We've got a former restaurant cook--*a peach!*--and we have to order that way to keep her on the job!

The above *Puck* item does not clarify the meanings of the hash-house lingo it presents, but two are fairly clear from other sources:

*Adam and Eve on a raft and wreck 'em* is either poached eggs on toast with the yolks broken or two scrambled eggs on toast; *Draw one* is a cup of coffee.

I sent a query to ads-l about the others, and Douglas Wilson replied with a few suggestions (12/21/2003)

'*Sawdust* was used in the early 20th century to refer to cold breakfast cereal (inter alia). ...

*Milk crust* -- maybe milk plus brown sugar (on the cereal).

Another plausible guess came 12/22/2003 from James Smith:  
'*Milk crust* = Cream?'

(*Make it*) *three all 'round* I think means "three for each person" and it might refer to pancakes or something like that.' -- [G. Cohen: How about just one order of 'three pancakes'?]

*On the cantaloupe* ... maybe it's just cantaloupe?' [G. Cohen: No, it must be hash-house lingo like all the other items shouted to the kitchen by Mr. Subberton. Translation: ? -- Maybe the term was simply made up humorously for the article without actually having been said in any eatery.]

#### 1909, *BAR & BUFFET*

[23 Jan. 2001 message ads-l message of Popik's. The article which Popik reprints from *Bar & Buffet* appears as a single paragraph, which I (G. Cohen) have artificially divided into numbered sections for purposes of preparing the glossary.]

I read through the entire run of *Bar & Buffet* in the Library of Congress, from 1906-1909. This publication is not properly indexed; it should turn up with *Bar Server* and *Mixer & Server*. But they're all under different subject heads! Here now is an item from *Bar & Buffet*, January 1909, p. 10, col. 2, titled 'A New Line of Talk':

[1] "Say," said the Quick-Lunch Sage, whom the Editor met in one of his philosophic moods, "the chair lunches have brought a new lingo into the language, have you noticed it? It would confuse a stranger to the vernacular. For instance, you hear the lunch clerk shout an order 'Egg with,' and you see a man get an egg with a big slice of Bermuda onion on top.

[2] Then you hear an order, 'Beans with,' and you would naturally expect to see the customer get onions with his beans, but he doesn't. 'With' means bread on a bean order, while it means onions on an egg order. Then you'll hear an order, 'One egg, lots of with,' that means an extra dose of onion.

[3] Then a fellow comes in and orders a [col. 3] 'double egg sandwich' and the innocent bystander looks to see two egg sandwiches served out, but he doesn't; he sees one sandwich with two eggs between the lids.

[4] A couple saunter up and order 'two clucks.' Is the lunch clerk fazed? He is not. He simply throws two chicken pies out of the warming oven.

[5] Then a couple more Smart Alecks come in and order 'two cackle-berries on bread.' They get two egg sandwiches on bread for, if you don't specify 'bread,' you get the regular roll instead of sliced bread.

[6] Then you hear the lunch clerk throw back an order, 'Ham-chopped-bread-with,' and you wonder, with a good deal of curiosity, what will come forth, and how the ham can be served on chopped bread. What you see come out is a chopped-ham sandwich on bread with onion. I tell you, it's a great language."

#### GLOSSARY OF 1909 ARTICLE

*beans with* -- [2] "Then you hear an order, 'Beans with,' and you

would naturally expect to see the customer get onions with his beans, but he doesn't. 'With' means bread on a bean order, while it means onions on an egg order. Then you'll hear an order, 'One egg, lots of with,' that means an extra dose of onion.'

*cackle-berry 'egg'*-- [5] "Then a couple more Smart Alecks come in and order 'two cackle-berries on bread.' They get two egg sandwiches on bread for, if you don't specify 'bread,' you get the regular roll instead of sliced bread."

*cluck 'chicken; chicken pie'* -- [4] "A couple saunter up and order 'two clucks.' Is the lunch clerk fazed? He is not. He simply throws two chicken pies out of the warming oven."

*double egg sandwich* -- [3] "Then a fellow comes in and orders a [col. 3] 'double egg sandwich' and the innocent bystander looks to see two egg sandwiches served out, but he doesn't; he sees one sandwich with two eggs between the lids."

*egg with* -- [1] "It [the lingo] would confuse a stranger to the vernacular. For instance, you hear the lunch clerk shout an order 'Egg with,' and you see a man get an egg with a big slice of Bermuda onion on top."

*ham-chopped-bread-with* -- [6] "Then you hear the lunch clerk throw back an order, 'Ham-chopped-bread-with,' and you wonder, with a good deal of curiosity, what will come forth, and how the ham can be served on chopped bread. What you see come out is a chopped-ham sandwich on bread with onion.'

*lots of with* -- [2] "Then you'll hear an order, 'One egg, lots of with,' that means an extra dose of onion.'" -- (full quote at *beans with*.)

#### 1922 ARTICLE IN *THE STEWARD*

From *The Steward* April 1922, p. 34, col. 2; 'Restaurantese':

'Party of two order: Two fried eggs and cup of coffee.

Frogs legs, cup of coffee without cream, and doughnuts.

Waiter to chef--Pair of whitewings, sunny side up. Song and dance man without a body. Two--one in the dark. Pair of sinkers.'

## GLOSSARY OF 1922 ARTICLE

*sinker* -- doughnut

*song and dance man without a body* -- frogs legs

*two--one in the dark* -- two cups of coffee, one without cream

*whitewing* -- fried egg. in: 'pair of whitewings, sunny side up'

1929 ARTICLE IN *THE RESTAURANT MAN*

From *The Restaurant Man*, January 1929, p. 50, col. 3; title: 'Quick lunchplaces have own vernacular':

[1] 'CAFETERIAS and "coffee pots" have a language all their own, says a writer in *The New York Times*. An English visitor, for example, would experience great difficulty in understanding the patois in which the counterman shouts orders to the chef. To the busy New Yorker, however, for whom the cafeteria is almost a daily necessity, the [p. 51, col. 1] language of the short order is a living language.

[2] 'All the elements requisite to the definition of a language are present in modified form in the jargon of the quick lunch. It has nationality, since the argot is limited to the self-service restaurants of this country. It has universality, since the chef who learned the language in New York can readily understand a counterman's orders in San Francisco.

[3] 'It has age, traceable sources, and therefore tradition, since the cafeteria as an institution is about twenty years old. It has classicism, inasmuch as many of the terms have come down unchanged to the present. But cafeteria argot is, above all, alive, for it varies with the times and is constantly changing to keep step with modern verbal transmutations.

[4] 'When the customer perched on a stool before the cafeteria counter instructs the counterman to "draw one," he is simply asking for a cup of coffee. If he likes it black, he says, "Draw one dark." The early countermen had to be humorous as well as fast and deft to hold a job. They were the most prolific lexicographers of cafeteria language. Filling an order for black coffee, they "drew one in the dark."



[5] 'Light coffee is known as "drawing one pale." Coffee and cake are termed "coffee and!" Another call for coffee is "Java up."

[6; col. 2] 'Cake is still cake in coffee pots and there is no general nickname for pie, but crullers have lost their family name. A doughnut is a "sinker," a contorted cruller is a "pretzel," while the long, twisted bar of soggy dough, sprinkled with sugar, goes by the unsentimental name of "sashweight."

[7] "Poach two on," yells the counterman. "Poach two on," repeats the chef, as he drops two eggs for poaching upon a piece of toast. Those early countermen, with their efforts to make a cafeteria resemble a side-show, when relaying this order, called for "Adam and Eve on a raft." The word "eggs" is never used, as something superfluous. "Scramble two," "boil two," and "fry two" all mean eggs to the initiated.

[8] "Hash brown" does not refer to brown hash, but to an order of hashed brown potatoes. Early countermen, never noted for good taste, shouted for hashes as "Clean up the kitchen." "Home fry" is the way to designate German fried potatoes.

[9] "Bowl of veg" cries the counterman to the offstage chef when a customer has requested a bowl of vegetable soup. Late at night or very early in the morning the self-service restaurants get many calls for a "bowl of half and half" "Half and half" is a bowl of milk and cream in equal quantities, into which a [p. 54, col. 2] package of "breakfast food" is emptied.

[10] 'Sometimes a patron orders a steak and cautions the counterman to have it "well." He means, of course, he should like the meat well done. If he wants fried eggs and wants them fried on both sides, the servitor passes along his order as "fry two over." An order of fried eggs is regularly accompanied by French fried potatoes, but if the customer declines the vegetable he tells the man behind the counter to "hold the fried."

[11] 'A "stack o' wheats" is a group of flapjacks. Similarly, a "stack o' bucks" is an order of buckwheat cakes. The early countermen tersely commanded the cook to "stack 'em up."

[12] "Becky's eggs" is the way bacon and eggs are known in cafeterias. A Swiss cheese sandwich on toast is simply a "Swiss

on." Toast for sandwiches is "on" and nothing more. If two customers order loins of pork at the same time, the counterman calls, "Loin o'pork, two in."

[13] 'When service is unduly slow and the customer complains, the counterman will ring the bell at a little slide door behind the counter to attract the chef's attention and say, "I got a Hamburger workin'." The chef will reply, "Firin'," which signifies that the chopped meat is sizzling over the fire.

[14] 'A "blue plate" is the label given a special daily combination of meat or fish, potatoes and vegetables, sold at a special price, and is ordered with the words, "Blue plate." "Silver out" is the cry of the counterman for more clean tablewear from the kitchen where it has been washed.

[15] 'A veal cutlet is a "motorman's glove," "combo" is ham and eggs, "franks" are frankfurters, milk is "the cow's." The "bad news" is the check. There are many more expressions in the lingo of the cafeteria with the same strain of rough good humor, but its dictionary is yet to be written. The modern quick-lunch is a friendly place, with all the ready comradery of the defunct saloon and none of its vice.'

#### GLOSSARY OF 1929 ARTICLE

*Adam and Eve on a raft* -- [7]: Those early counter-men, with their efforts to make a cafeteria resemble a side-show, when relaying this order [poached eggs on toast], called for "Adam and Eve on a raft." -- Full quote at 'eggs'

*bad news, (the)* -- [15] 'The "bad news" is the check.'

*Becky's eggs* -- [12] "'Becky's eggs" is the way bacon and eggs are known in cafeterias.'

*blue plate* -- [14] 'A "blue plate" is the label given a special daily combination of meat or fish, potatoes and vegetables, sold at a special price, and is ordered with the word, "Blue plate." -- B. Popik: This antedates OED2's earliest attestation of 1945; OED2 presents:

1945 S. LEWIS C. Timberlane (1946) xix. 112 They were taking the \*Blue Plate Dinner.



1952 AUDEN Nones 27 Having finished the Blue-plate Special  
And reached the coffee stage.

1961 WEBSTER Blue Plate. 1. A restaurant dinner plate divid-  
ed into compartments for serving several kinds of food as  
a single order. 2. A main course (as of meat and veget-  
able) served as a single menu item. -----

(B. Popik): Here are two more 1929 mentions of 'Blue Plate':  
April 1929, *The Restaurant Man*, p. 19 photo caption--Blue  
Plate Restaurant at Wilkes-Barre, Pa.

April 1929, *The Restaurant Man*, p. 28, col. 2: "Blue Plate"  
Wins Popularity,' by John F. Toedtman  
'A PLEASING innovation in restaurant service which is meet-  
ing with popular approval is the self-serve "Blue Plate  
Luncheon" each noon and evening at the Y.M.C.A. Cafeter-  
ia, Dayton. ...'

*bowl of half and half* -- See *half and half*.

*bowl of veg* -- [9] "Bowl of veg" cries the counterman to the  
offstage chef when a customer has requested a bowl of  
vegetable soup.'

*breakfast food* -- evidently cereal such as corn flakes. See *half  
and half*.

*Clean up the kitchen.* -- [8]: 'Early countermen, never noted for  
good taste, shouted for hashes as "Clean up the kitchen."'

*coffee* -- [5] 'Light coffee is known as "drawing one pale." Coffee  
and cake are termed "coffee and!" Another call for coffee is  
"Java up."---And see *draw one/draw one dark/draw one in  
the dark*.

*Coffee and!* -- [5] 'Coffee and cake are termed "coffee and!"'

*coffee pot* -- evidently: a diner where one frequently orders  
coffee.

[1] 'CAFETERIAS and "coffee pots" have a language all their  
own, says a writer in The New York Times.

[6; col. 2] 'Cake is still cake in coffee pots and there is no  
general nickname for pie,...'

*combo* -- [15] '... "combo" is ham and eggs,...'

*cow's, the* [15] '...milk is "the cow's."'

*draw one/draw one dark/draw one in the dark* -- [4] When the

customer perched on a stool before the cafeteria counter instructs the counterman to “draw one,” he is simply asking for a cup of coffee. If he likes it black, he says, “Draw one dark.” The early countermen had to be humorous as well as fast and deft to hold a job. They were the most prolific lexicographers [G. Cohen: make them ‘wordsmiths’] of cafeteria language. Filling an order for black coffee, they “drew one in the dark.”

*draw one pale* -- [5] ‘Light coffee is known as “drawing one pale.”’  
*eggs* -- [7] “Poach two on,” yells the counterman. “Poach two on,” repeats the chef, as he drops two eggs for poaching upon a piece of toast. Those early countermen, with their efforts to make a cafeteria resemble a side-show, when relaying this order, called for “Adam and Eve on a raft.” The word “eggs” is never used, as something superfluous. “Scramble two,” “boil two,” and “fry two” all mean eggs to the initiated.’

ellipsis -- 1) [7] ‘The word “eggs” is never used, as something superfluous. “Scramble two,” “boil two,” and “fry two” all mean eggs to the initiated.’ -- full quote at ‘eggs.’

2) See *veg* (= vegetable soup)

3) See *cow’s*, *the*, evidently elliptical for *the cow’s milk*.

*Firin’* -- [13] ‘When service is unduly slow and the customer complains, the counterman will ring the bell at a little slide door behind the counter to attract the chef’s attention and say, “I got a Hamburger workin’.” The chef will reply, “Firin’,” which signifies that the chopped meat is sizzling over the fire.’

*franks* -- [15] ‘...“franks” are frankfurters,...

*fry two over* -- [10] ‘If he [a patron] wants fried eggs and wants them fried on both sides, the servitor passes along his order as “fry two over.”’

*half and half* -- [9] ‘Late at night or very early in the morning the self-service restaurants get many calls for a “bowl of half and half” “Half and half” is a bowl of milk and cream in equal quantities, into which a [p. 54, col. 2] package of “breakfast food” is emptied.’

*hash brown* -- [8] “Hash brown” does not refer to brown hash,

but to an order of hashed brown potatoes.'

*hashes* -- See *Clean up the kitchen*.

*hold the fried* -- [10] 'An order of fried eggs is regularly accompanied by French fried potatoes, but if the customer declines the vegetable he tells the man behind the counter to "hold the fried."'

*home fry* -- [8] "'Home fry" is the way to designate German fried potatoes.'

*Java up*. -- [5] 'Another call for coffee is "Java up."'

*Loin o' pork, two in*. --[12] 'If two customers order loins of pork at the same time, the counterman calls, "Loin o' pork, two in."'

*motorman's glove* -- [15] 'A veal cutlet is a "motorman's glove,"...'

*Poach two on* -- [7] "'Poach two on," yells the counterman. "Poach two on," repeats the chef, as he drops two eggs for poaching upon a piece of toast.' --- Full quote at 'eggs.'

*pretzel* --[6; col. 2] '...but crullers have lost their family name. A doughnut is a "sinker," a contorted cruller is a "pretzel,"...'

*sashweight* -- [6; col. 2] 'Cake is still cake in coffee pots and there is no general nickname for pie, but crullers have lost their family name. A doughnut is a "sinker," a contorted cruller is a "pretzel," while the long, twisted bar of soggy dough, sprinkled with sugar, goes by the unsentimental name of "sashweight."'

*Silver out!* -- [14] "'Silver out" is the cry of the counterman for more clean tablewear from the kitchen where it has been washed.'

*sinker* -- [6; col. 2] '... but crullers have lost their family name. A doughnut is a "sinker," a contorted cruller is a "pretzel,"...'

*stack o'wheats/bucks; stack 'em up* -- [11] 'A "stack o'wheats" is a group of flapjacks. Similarly, a "stack o'bucks" is an order of buckwheat cakes. The early countermen tersely commanded the cook to "stack 'em up."'

*Swiss on* -- [12] 'A Swiss cheese sandwich on toast is simply a "Swiss on." Toast for sandwiches is "on" and nothing more.'

*veg* = vegetable soup. For quote see *bowl of veg*.

*well* -- [10] 'Sometimes a patron orders a steak and cautions the counterman to have it "well." He means, of course, he should

like the meat well done.'

1932 ARTICLE IN *HOTEL INDUSTRY*

From *Hotel Industry*, August 1932, p. 14, col. 1 (taken from *World's Work*, February 1932; a larger article about the night lunch wagon surrounds this box); [G. Cohen: the article presents its items haphazardly; I have rearranged them alphabetically.]

'Lunch-Wagon Slanguage (Which Modern Proprietors Frown Upon)

<i>Adam and Eve on a raft</i>	Two poached eggs on toast
<i>Adam and Eve on a raft and wreck 'em</i>	Two scrambled eggs on toast
<i>Chewed fine, with a breath</i>	Hamburger steak with onions
<i>Couple of Hebrew enemies</i>	Two pork chops
<i>A cowboy</i>	Western sandwich
<i>Draw one in the dark</i>	Black coffee
<i>[Draw] one on the city</i>	Glass of water
<i>Fry two and flop 'em</i>	Eggs fried on both sides
<i>Graveyard stew</i>	Milk toast
<i>A guinea football</i>	Jelly doughnut
<i>A hasher</i>	Lunch-wagon counterman
<i>[Hebrew enemies]</i>	See <i>couple of Hebrew enemies.</i>
<i>Ice the rice</i>	Rice pudding with ice cream
<i>La Bullie Hibernian</i>	Corned beef and cabbage
<i>Million on a platter</i>	Baked beans
<i>Noah's boy, with Murphy carrying a wreath</i>	Ham, potato, and cabbage
<i>Red lead (or paint)</i>	Catsup
<i>The sand</i>	Sugar
<i>A stack</i>	Wheat cakes
<i>Sunnyside up</i>	Egg fried on one side only
<i>Team of grays</i>	Two crullers
<i>The Vermont</i>	Maple syrup
<i>Yesterday, today, and forever</i>	Hash

No source is attached to this list, but its seventeen items are all taken from the 23 items of the 1932 listing presented just above. -- From *The Caterer and Liquor Retailer*, March 1938, p. 22, col. 2 (here rearranged alphabetically):

'Quickie Lunch Slangues

*Adam and Eve on a raft*--Two poached eggs on toast.

*Adam and Eve on a raft and wreck 'em* --Two scrambled eggs on toast.

*Chewed fine, with a breath*--Hamburger steak with onions.

*A cowboy*--Western sandwich.

*Couple of Hebrew enemies*--Two pork chops.

*Draw one in the dark*--Black coffee.

*Draw one on the city*--Glass of water.

*Graveyard stew*--Milk toast.

*La Bullie Hibernian*--Corn beef and cabbage.

*Million on a platter*--Baked beans.

*Noah's boy, with Murphy carrying a wreath*--Ham, potatoes, and cabbage.

*The sand*--Sugar.

*A stack*--Wheat cakes.

*Red lead (or paint)*--Catsup.

*Team of grays*--Two crullers.

*Yesterday, today, and forever*--Hash.

EARLIER HASH-HOUSE LINGO MENTIONED IN 1939 *INNS AND OUTS*

From the book *Inns and Outs* (1939) by Julius Keller (an old-time NYC restaurant guy):

p. 21: 'Lunchroom slang had its origin in these two widely known beaneries [Boss Tweed and Jim Fisk hashhouses on Chatham Street]. Fish cakes were "fried sleeve buttons." Oatmeal was "a plate of summertime." When the waiter sang out, "coffee in the dark," it meant that a cup of black coffee was wanted. Pork and beans were known as "a band of music with the leader." They called pork chops without gravy "a sheeny funeral with the hearse.'

GLOSSARY OF 1939 ITEMS

*band of music with the leader* -- pork and beans  
*fried sleeve buttons* -- fish cakes  
*plate of summertime* -- oatmeal  
*sheeny funeral with the hearse* -- pork chops without gravy

#### COMPILED ITEMS OF THE ABOVE NEWSPAPER ARTICLES

I omitted only the items in the 1908 *Puck* article---they are not defined and may not be reliable. In the items below, the article date is indicated in parentheses at the end of each item. The number in brackets indicates the paragraph within that article. Also included in the list: a few terms from George Thompson's item in the bibliography and *Old Black Joe* 'coffee' from a 1911 cartoon.

*Adam and Eve on a raft* -- 'Those early counter-men, with their efforts to make a cafeteria resemble a side-show, when relaying this order [poached eggs on toast], called for "Adam and Eve on a raft."' -- Full quote at 'eggs' (1929: 7)

*Adam and Eve on a raft* -- Two poached eggs on toast (1932)

*Adam and Eve on a raft*--Two poached eggs on toast. (1938)

*Adam and Eve on a raft and wreck 'em* -- poached eggs on toast and the yolks broken: "Waiter, bring me a couple of poached eggs on toast and the yolks broken." 'The waiter shouted down to the cook: "Adam and Eve on a raft and wreck 'em.'" (1905)

*Adam and Eve on a raft and wreck 'em* - Two scrambled eggs on toast (1932, 1938)---or: Two scrambled eggs with the yolks broken (1905)

*a little on the cow* -- "A little on the cow" is milk.' (1902: 16)

*an Archer avenue comin' on the run* - pork and beans. ('In some of the restaurants on State street [Chicago] they call for pork and beans with "an Archer avenue comin' on the run."') (1886). --- Douglas Wilson explains: Archer Avenue was a major street in Chicago, a city known for many slaughterhouses; probably refers to pork.

*Atlantic cable* -- See below: *Three links of Atlantic cable* -- (1897)



*axle grease* - butter -- (See below: *punk* item)--(1897 *L.A. Times*)

*bad news, (the)* -- 'The "bad news" is the check.' (1929: 15)

*bag of mystery* - sausage (1905). --- *The Ladies Home Journal*, Philadelphia

'...For instance, if a customer ordered sausage and bread, he [the waiter] told the cook "a doorstep and a bag of mystery" were required. ...' ---And see below: *mystery*.

*bale o' hay* -- corned beef and cabbage (1887)

*band of music with the leader* -- pork and beans (1939)

*bean in the bowl* -- bean soup. (1886)

*beans with* -- "Then you hear an order, 'Beans with,' and you would naturally expect to see the customer get onions with his beans, but he doesn't. 'With' means bread on a bean order, while it means onions on an egg order. Then you'll hear an order, 'One egg, lots of with,' that means an extra dose of onion.' -- (1909: 2)

*Becky's eggs* -- "Becky's eggs" is the way bacon and eggs are known in cafeterias.' (1929: 12)

*beef an'* -- corned beef and beans. (1888)

*beef and* -- beef and beans (1887)

*beef an'* 'beef and beans' -- (1902: 4-7) 'When the great majority of the quick lunch room proprietors of New-York agreed last week to raise the price of "beef an'," also of "ham an'," from 10 to 15 cents, and their momentous decision was duly, if somewhat jocularly, recorded in the papers, the surprising fact developed that there are actually to be found men and women in this city who do not know what "beef an'" is.

"Beef and what?" asked a downtown business man, as he read his paper going home on the L.

"Well, you don't know beans, for a fact," his companion laughed.

"That's it, eh?" said the first. "But how should I know whether it was beans or cabbage? I never go to that sort of a place to eat."

*blue plate* -- [1929: 14) 'A "blue plate" is the label given a special daily combination of meat or fish, potatoes and vegetables,

sold at a special price, and is ordered with the word, "Blue plate!"-- B. Popik: This antedates OED2's earliest attestation of 1945; OED2 presents:

1945 S. LEWIS C. Timberlane (1946) xix. 112 They were taking the \*Blue Plate Dinner.

1952 AUDEN Nones 27 Having finished the Blue-plate Special  
And reached the coffee stage.

1961 WEBSTER Blue Plate. 1. A restaurant dinner plate divided into compartments for serving several kinds of food as a single order. 2. A main course (as of meat and vegetable) served as a single menu item.

[B. Popik]: Here are two more 1929 mentions of 'Blue Plate':  
April 1929, *The Restaurant Man*, p. 19 photo caption--Blue Plate Restaurant at Wilkes-Barre, Pa.

April 1929, *The Restaurant Man*, p. 28, col. 2: "Blue Plate" Wins Popularity,' by John F. Toedtman

'A PLEASING innovation in restaurant service which is meeting with popular approval is the self-serve "Blue Plate Luncheon" each noon and evening at the Y.M.C.A. Cafeteria, Dayton. ...'

*boot leg and chuck* -- a cup of coffee and a hunk of bread. (1888)

*boot leg and sinkers* - coffee and doughnuts (1886)

*Bostons* - 'beans' -- "Plate o' Bostons" isn't hard [to figure out], either.' (1902: 9)

*bowl of half and half* -- See *half and half*. (1929)

*bowl of veg* -- "Bowl of veg" cries the counterman to the offstage chef when a customer has requested a bowl of vegetable soup.' (1929: 9)

*brass band, without a leader* -- a plate of beans without pork (1887)

*breakfast food* -- evidently cereal such as corn flakes. See *half and half*. (1929)

*Brown a plate o' wheat and stack o' whites* indicates that a customer wants wheat cakes (1887)

*brown stone front* - porterhouse steak. --'In the better class of restaurants "a brown stone front" means porterhouse steak, while "double brown stone" is porterhouse for two' -- (Explanation: ?) -- (1886)



- brown stone front* -- porter house steak (1887).  
*brown stone front* (in: *one brown stone front*) -- piece of  
 beefsteak -- (1897 *L.A. Times*)
- Brown the buck and a come along* - buckwheat cakes and coffee.  
 (1886)
- Brown the jack* - corn bread. ('Corn bread is "Corn Johnny," or  
 "brown the Jack.") -- Douglas Wilson: derives from  
*Johnnycake* in 'standard' English. (1886)
- Brown the wheats* -- "Brown the wheats" means simply an order of  
 buckwheat pancakes,...' (1902: 17)
- buck up* - buckwheat cakes (1886)
- bull you, bowl up* - beef soup--I suppose that *bull you* derives from  
*bouillon*, but why *bowl up*? Douglas Wilson: Maybe one could  
 order different sizes, e.g., 'cup of soup' versus 'bowl' (1886)
- burn the British* -- toast an English muffin (1999; see bibliography:  
 George Thompson 1999)
- cackle-berry 'egg'* -- "Then a couple more Smart Alecks come in  
 and order 'two cackle-berries on bread.' They get two egg  
 sandwiches on bread for, if you don't specify 'bread,' you  
 get the regular roll instead of sliced bread." (1909: 5)
- Camouflage the calf* -- veal cutlet with tomato sauce. -- (1918;  
 maybe only humorous but not actually spoken; see bibliogra-  
 phy below; Rose, Edward D.)
- cannon balls* -- crullers (1887).
- cash on delivery* -- codfish (1886)
- chewed fine, with a breath* -- hamburger steak with onions (1932;  
 1938)
- chicken from on high* -- the best cut of chicken (1887).
- chuck* -- a hunk of break (See *boot leg and chuck*)--(1888).
- Clean up the kitchen.* -- 'Early counter men, never noted for good  
 taste, shouted for hashes as "Clean up the kitchen.'" (1929:  
 8)
- cluck 'chicken; chicken pie'* -- "A couple saunter up and order 'two  
 clucks.' Is the lunch clerk fazed? He is not. He simply throws  
 two chicken pies out of the warming oven.'" -- (1909: 4)
- coffee* -- 'Light coffee is known as "drawing one pale." Coffee and  
 cake are termed "coffee and!" Another call for coffee is

- "Java up." --- And see *Draw one/draw one dark/Draw one in the dark.* (1929: 5)
- coffee and!* -- 'Coffee and cake are termed "coffee and!"' (1929: 5)
- coffee in the dark and slops in a cup with the light out* signify coffee without milk (1887). ---- And cf. below: *Draw one/Draw one dark/Draw one in the dark.*
- coffee in the shell* -- 'If you demand your coffee in a thin cup with a handle, "coffee in the shell," as the waiter scornfully orders, you will be snubbed as a dude.' (1902: 19)
- coffee pot* -- evidently: a diner where one frequently orders coffee.
- [1] 'CAFETERIAS and "coffee pots" have a language all their own, says a writer in The New York Times. (1929)
- 'Cake is still cake in coffee pots and there is no general nickname for pie,...' (1929: 6, col. 2)
- combo* -- '... "combo" is ham and eggs,...' (1929: 15)
- corn for the neighbor* - corned beef. -- [Why 'for the neighbor?'] -- (1886)
- Corn Johnny* - ('Corn bread is "Corn Johnny," or "brown the Jack.") -- See *brown the jack.* (1886)
- cosmopolitan* is Neapolitan ice cream (1887).
- cough in the dark* coffee [without] milk. (1888)
- couple of Hebrew enemies* -- Two pork chops (1932)
- couple of Hebrew enemies* -- Two pork chops. (1938)
- a cowboy* -- Western sandwich (1932; 1938)
- cow's, the* '...milk is "the cow's."' (1929: 15)
- cup o' cough an' three off!* -- a cup of coffee and three cakes off the griddle. (1888)
- custard grenade* - a cream puff." (1918; maybe only humorous but not actually spoken; see references below: Rose, Edward D.)
- diamonds* - meat pies (1883)
- diamonds* - meat pies--(1883 Burlington, Iowa)
- doorstep* -- bread. (1905). --*The Ladies' Home Journal*, Philadelphia: '...For instance, if a customer ordered sausage and bread, he [the waiter] told the cook "a doorstep and a bag of mystery" were required. ...'

- double egg sandwich* -- "Then a fellow comes in and orders a [col. 3] 'double egg sandwich' and the innocent bystander looks to see two egg sandwiches served out, but he doesn't; he sees one sandwich with two eggs between the lids."  
(1909: 3)
- Draw one--black* -- "Draw one--black" is coffee, without milk.'  
(1902: 16)
- Draw one/Draw one dark/Draw one in the dark* -- When the customer perched on a stool before the cafeteria counter instructs the counterman to "draw one," he is simply asking for a cup of coffee. If he likes it black, he says, "Draw one dark." The early countermen had to be humorous as well as fast and deft to hold a job. They were the most prolific lexicographers [G. Cohen: Make that 'wordsmiths'] of cafeteria language. Filling an order for black coffee, they "drew one in the dark." (1929: 4)
- Draw one in the dark* - cup o' coffee -- (1897 *L.A. Times*)
- Draw one in the dark* -- black coffee (1932; 1938))
- [Draw] one on the city* -- Glass of water (1932)
- Draw one on the city* -- Glass of water. (1938)
- Draw one pale* -- 'Light coffee is known as "drawing one pale."  
(1929: 5)
- Drop three* - poached eggs -- (1886 *Chicago Herald*)
- Dyspepsia in a snow storm* -- mince pie sprinkled with sugar (1887).
- Dyspepsia in a snow storm* -- [mince] pie with powdered sugar. (1888)
- eggs* -- "Poach two on," yells the counterman. "Poach two on," repeats the chef, as he drops two eggs for poaching upon a piece of toast. Those early countermen, with their efforts to make a cafeteria resemble a side-show, when relaying this order, called for "Adam and Eve on a raft." The word "eggs" is never used, as something superfluous. "Scramble two," "boil two," and "fry two" all mean eggs to the initiated.'  
(1929: 7)
- egg with* -- "It [the lingo] would confuse a stranger to the vernacular. For instance, you hear the lunch clerk shout an order

'Egg with,' and you see a man get an egg with a big slice of Bermuda onion on top." (1909: 1)

ellips -- 'The word "eggs" is never used, as something superfluous. "Scramble two," "boil two," and "fry two" all mean eggs to the initiated.' -- full quote at 'eggs.' (1929: 7)

See *beef an'*; *beans with*; *cow's, the*; *ham an'*; *ham-chopped-bread-with*; *draw one*; *hash no*; *hold the fried*; *lots of with one on*; *one up*; *sunny side up*; *Swiss on*; *three on*; *three up and nine to come*; *two in three*; *two--one in the dark*; *veg*; *well*.

*farmer's alliance* - piece of pumpkin pie -- (1897 *L.A. Times*)

*Firin'* -- 'When service is unduly slow and the customer complains, the counterman will ring the bell at a little slide door behind the counter to attract the chef's attention and say, "I got a Hamburger workin'." The chef will reply, "Firin'," which signifies that the chopped meat is sizzling over the fire.' (1929: 13)

*franks* -- '..."franks" are frankfurters,...' (1929: 15)

*fried sleeve buttons* -- fish cakes (1939)

*Fry two and flop 'em* -- Eggs fried on both sides (1932)

*Fry two over* -- 'If he [a patron] wants fried eggs and wants them fried on both sides, the servitor passes along his order as "fry two over."' (1929: 10)

*goat 'butter'* -- '...but while you wait you hear a bare armed waiter roar down a passage, "Send up the goat." That's easy. You know he wants more butter.' (1902: 9)

*graveyard pultice* - milk toast.--(1897)

*graveyard stew* -- milk toast (1932; 1938)

*grays* -- See *team of grays* (1932)

*grub-on-the-run (place)*-- diner, small eatery -- 'There are many such phrases, some of them common to all the "grub-on-the-run" places, some of them local.' (1902: 15)

*grub thirst* - appetite (1897)

*a guinea football* -- jelly doughnut (1932)

*half and half* -- 'Late at night or very early in the morning the self-service restaurants get many calls for a "bowl of half and half" "Half and half" is a bowl of milk and cream in equal

- quantities, into which a [p. 54, col. 2] package of "breakfast food" is emptied.' (1929: 9)
- ham an'* -- ham and beans. (1888)
- Ham and* -- ham and eggs (1887).
- ham an'* 'ham and beans' -- See *beef an'*. (1902)
- Ham and turn 'em over* -- ham and eggs, with eggs fried on both sides (1886)
- ham-chopped-bread-with* -- "Then you hear the lunch clerk throw back an order, 'Ham-chopped-bread-with," and you wonder, with a good deal of curiosity, what will come forth, and how the ham can be served on chopped bread. What you see come out is a chopped-ham sandwich on bread with onion.' (1909: 6)
- Hard on the Injun!* -- Indian pudding with hard sauce. (1886)
- hash brown* -- "Hash brown" does not refer to brown hash, but to an order of hashed brown potatoes.' (1929: 8)
- a hasher* -- Lunch-wagon counter man (1932)
- hashes* -- See *Clean up the kitchen*. (1929)
- Hash no* -- hash without onions (1887).
- 'heavy weights and sinkers* meant doughnuts.' (1888)
- Hebrew enemies* -- pork chops; see *couple of Hebrew enemies* -- two pork chops (1932; 1938)
- hen fruit* -- boiled eggs (1887).
- hold the fried* -- 'An order of fried eggs is regularly accompanied by French fried potatoes, but if the customer declines the vegetable he tells the man behind the counter to "hold the fried."' (1929: 10)
- home fry* -- "Home fry" is the way to designate German fried potatoes.' (1929: 8)
- hot water* is tea. (1888)
- Ice the rice* -- Rice pudding with ice cream (1932)
- indigestion* 'mince pie' -- 'There [on the Bowery], if you should happen to have the sort of taste that demands mince pie with powdered sugar on top, you will hear shouted to the rear: "One indigestion in a snowstorm!"' (1902: 18)
- Irish lemon with all clothes on* -- baked potato (1897)
- Java up.* -- 'Another call for coffee is "Java up."' (1929: 5)

- La Bullie Hibernian* -- Corned beef and cabbage (1932)  
*La Bullie Hibernian*--Corn beef and cabbage. (1938)  
*leather and bake* -- liver and bacon (1883 Burlington, Iowa)  
*Let the blood follow the knife* -- rare roast beef (1887).  
*Let the chicken wade through it* -- chicken soup (1887).  
*Loin o' pork, two in.* -- 'If two customers order loins of pork at the same time, the counterman calls, "Loin o' pork, two in."' (1929: 12)  
*lots of with* -- "Then you'll hear an order, 'One egg, lots of with,' that means an extra dose of onion." -- Full quote at *beans with* -- (1909: 2)  
*mealy bustle* -- mealy potato (1887).  
*mid ocean* -- boiled eggs.--(1897)  
*million on a platter* -- Baked beans (1932; 1938)  
*motorman's glove* -- 'A veal cutlet is a "motorman's glove,"...' (1929: 15)  
*Murphy with his coat off* -- [potato] peeled. (1888)  
*Murphy with his coat on* -- a boiled potato, unpeeled (1887).  
*Mut, up one* - pork and beans. 'Pork and beans are sometimes called for as "stars and stripes," but the more common formula in Chicago is "mut, up one".' -- (1886)  
*mystery* -- 1) hash (1887; 1888)  
     *A mystery* - hash.--(1897)  
     2) in: *bag of mystery* (q.v.) - sausage.  
*Noah on a raft* 'poached eggs on toast' -- (1902: 10-13) '..."Give me some poached eggs on toast," you say, "and a cup of coffee."  
     'The waiter turns toward the kitchen and shouts, "Noah on a raft!" Then he wheels toward the steaming, polished coffee tanks and cries, "Draw one!"  
     "Say," you call, with an afterthought, "I guess I'll make that scrambled eggs on toast."  
     "Wreck Noah," calls the waiter solemnly.'  
*Noah's boy, with Murphy carrying a wreath* -- Ham, potato, and cabbage (1932; 1938)  
*off the griddle* -- "Off the griddle" means butter cakes, those deadly bullets or, rather, small cannon balls of dough, which



- are commonly known to the hardy eaters thereof as “sinkers,” but which it is high treason to call by that name within the lunch room.’ (1902: 16)
- Old Black Joe* ‘coffee’ -- (1911, in comic strip; was it actually spoken? --- See bibliography, Cohen/Popik/Shulman 2004)
- old friend and shamrock* meant [corned?] beef and cabbage. (1888)
- one* -- an oyster stew (1887).
- one indigestion in a snowstorm* ‘mince pie with powdered sugar on top.’ -- See *indigestion*. (1902)
- one on* -- (usually) an oyster stew -- (1886)
- [*Draw*] *one on the city* -- Glass of water (1932)
- one slaughter on the pan* -- a porter house steak (1887).
- one summer* -- oat meal and milk--(1883 Burlington, Iowa)
- one up* -- [16] “One up” is not golf, but a symbol, meaning that the waiter who calls has another cup of coffee coming to him.’ (1902: 16)
- packing-house quail* -- spare ribs.--(1897)
- pair o’ sleeve buttons* -- two fish balls (1887).
- pallbearers* -- crackers. (1888)
- pig iron* -- fried sausages. (1888)
- plate of summertime* -- oatmeal (1939)
- pluck* -- beef stew. (1888)
- plum Jo* - (‘Plum pudding is “plum up,” or “plum Jo.”’) -- (1886)
- plum up* -- plum pudding (1886)
- Poach two on* -- “Poach two on,” yells the counterman. “Poach two on,” repeats the chef, as he drops two eggs for poaching upon a piece of toast.’ -- Full quote at ‘eggs.’ (1929: 7)
- pretzel* -- ‘...but crullers have lost their family name. A doughnut is a “sinker,” a contorted cruller is a “pretzel,”...’ (1929; p. 6/2)
- punk* -- bread. (In: ‘plate of punk; easy smear of axle grease’ = plate of bread and butter (1897)
- Put up the flag* -- [17] “Put up the flag” means macaroni, just why, no one seems able to explain, though there is vaguely felt to be some subtle reference to Yankee Doodle and the Stars and Stripes.’ (1902: 16)
- P, yank one* - pea soup (1886)

*quail* -- chicken stew. (1888)

*rags and paint* -- sauerkraut and mustard (on a hot dog).

-- in a letter to the editor by W. E. Barnes, NY Herald Tribune, June 4, 1931, p. 26/5-6: 'For five cents one could buy a roll and "hot dogs" with "rags and paint" (sauerkraut and mustard) ...' --- See below, bibliography: Cohen/Popik/Shulman 2004, p. 155.

*red lead (or paint)* -- catsup (1932; 1938)

*red, white and blue* - corn beef hash.--(1897 *L.A. Times*)

*red, white and blue* "Red, white and blue" is a plate of mixed ice cream.' (1902: 17)

*rice both, bread both*, etc., means that rice, bread and other puddings are to be served with both wine sauce and butter sauce (1887).

*Rice, hard only* means that rice pudding is to be served with butter sauce (1887).

*roly poly* -- strawberry pudding (1887).

*the sand* -- sugar (1932; 1938)

*San Francisco bay, one small boat half sunk* - cocktail (1897)

*sashweight* -- 'Cake is still cake in coffee pots and there is no general nickname for pie, but crullers have lost their family name. A doughnut is a "sinker," a contorted cruller is a "pretzel," while the long, twisted bar of soggy dough, sprinkled with sugar, goes by the unsentimental name of "sashweight."' (1929: 6, col. 2)

*send up the goat* -- See *goat*. (1902)

*sheeny funeral with the hearse* -- pork chops without gravy (1939)

*shipwreck* - scrambled eggs.--(1887; 1897 *L.A. Times*)

*Sh[oot a?] chicken* -- two fried eggs turned over! (1888)

*Side of a funeral* -- small order of pork chops (1897)---See above: *sheeny funeral with the hearse*.

*Silver out!* -- "Silver out" is the cry of the counterman for more clean tablewear from the kitchen where it has been washed.' (1929: 14)

*sinker* -- doughnut. (1888): 'Heavy weights and sinkers meant doughnuts'. Also:

'Or they can get a cup of coffee and some cakes for ten



cents. The facetious patrons of the restaurant call these cakes "sinkers," because if they were thrown overboard they wouldn't float.' (1888)

*sinker* -- usually a doughnut, but here (pejoratively): butter cakes. -- "Off the griddle" means butter cakes, those deadly bullets or, rather, small cannon balls of dough, which are commonly known to the hardy eaters thereof as "sinkers," but which it is high treason to call by that name within the lunch room.' (1902: 16)

*sinker* -- doughnut (1897; 1922)

*sinker* -- '... but crullers have lost their family name. A doughnut is a "sinker," a contorted cruller is a "pretzel,"...' (1929: 6, col. 2)

*six on the griddle* -- half a dozen fried oysters (1886)

*sleeve buttons* -- fish cakes. (1888; and see *pair o' sleeve buttons*, 1887)

*sleeve buttons* - codfish balls (1883, Burlington, Iowa)

*s'line mejum* - sirloin medium (slightly slurred in pronunciation) -- (1886)

*slops in a cup with the light out* -- coffee in the dark and *slops in a cup with the light out* signify coffee without milk (1887).

*snowstorm, in a* 'with powdered sugar' -- 'There [on the Bowery], if you should happen to have the sort of taste that demands mince pie with powdered sugar on top, you will hear shouted to the rear: "One indigestion in a snowstorm!"' (1902: 18)

*slops in a cup with the light out* -- coffee without milk. (See above, *coffee in the dark*)--(1887).

*solid shot* -- apple dumpling (1887).

*somee* -- vermicelli (1886)

*song and dance man without a body* -- frogs legs (1922)

*a stack* -- Wheat cakes (1932; 1938)

*a stack of browns* -- hot cakes. (1897 *L.A. Times*)

*stack o' wheats/bucks; stack 'em up* -- 'A "stack o' wheats" is a group of flapjacks. Similarly, a "stack o' bucks" is an order of buckwheat cakes. The early counter men tersely commanded the cook to "stack 'em up.'" (1929: 11)

- stack o' whites* -- (See *brown a plate o' wheat*. 1887)
- Stars and stripes* - plate of pork and beans--(1883 Burlington, Iowa) ----- 'This term also applies to bacon.' (1887).  
*Stars and Stripes* meant pork and [beans] -- (1888)  
*Stars and stripes* - plate of pork and beans (1883)  
 (And see above: *Mut, up one*, 1886, Chicago)
- submarines, bowl of* -- Noodle soup (1918; maybe only humorous but not actually spoken; see references below; Rose, Edward D.)
- summer time* -- bread and milk (1887).  
*summer time* -- oat meal. (1897)  
*plate of summertime* -- oatmeal (1939)
- sunny side up* - (See *white wings, sunny side up*. 1887)  
 'But "Make it two, sunny side up" is a staggerer. However, the solution is simple--two eggs fried on one side only.' (1902: 9)  
*Sunnyside up* -- Egg fried on one side only (1932)
- Swiss on* -- 'A Swiss cheese sandwich on toast is simply a "Swiss on." Toast for sandwiches is "on" and nothing more.' (1929: 12)
- Team of grays* -- Two crullers (1932; 1938)
- Tea no* -- tea without milk (1887).
- Tea separate* means that the milk for the tea is not to be poured into the cup, but served in a pitcher (1887).
- A tenement house in Greenwich [Village]* -- a plate of soup with plenty of greens in [it] (1888)
- Three--four fifty-nine!* -- Three eggs are to be boiled four minutes and fifty-nine seconds (said by one waiting in South Clark street grub shop) -- (1886)
- Three links of Atlantic cable* -- link sausage.--(1897)
- Three on* -- three butter cakes (1887).
- Three up and nine to come* -- batter cakes. (1886)
- T. O. K.* - tapioca pudding. (1886)
- Tommy in the bowl* - one bowl of tomato soup (1886)
- Traveling hash* --Exact meaning: ?--apparently: someone who has frequented numerous hashhouses or perhaps owned several of them in different places -- The term appears in: '...said a

"traveling hash," who has been in the business about twelve years.' (1897)

*two in three* -- '...while "two in three" signifies that somebody wants two eggs boiled three minutes.' (1902: 17)

*two--one in the dark* -- two cups of coffee, one without cream (1922)

*Two on other* - fried eggs -- (1883)

*veg* = vegetable soup. For quote see *bowl of veg.* (1929)

*The Vermont* -- Maple syrup (1932)

*well* -- 'Sometimes a patron orders a steak and cautions the counterman to have it "well." He means, of course, he should like the meat well done.' 1929: 10)

*wheats* 'buckwheat pancakes' -- 1902-- See *brown the wheats.*

*Whisky, down* -- 'rye bread toasted, because in a busy kitchen the cook may not hear correctly the difference between "rye bread" and "white bread". ("down" refers to the act of pushing down the toaster handle.)...' -- See bibliography, George Thompson 1999.

*Whites* - (See *brown a plate o' wheat.* 1887)

*White wings, ends up* -- poached eggs (1887).

*White wings, sunny side up* -- fried eggs (1887; 1897)

*whitewing* - fried egg -- 'pair of whitewings, sunny side up' = two fried eggs. (1922) -- And see above: *sunny side up.*

*Wreck Noah* 'Change the order of *Noah on a raft* 'poached eggs on toast' to scrambled eggs -- [1902: 12-13] '..."Say," you call, with an afterthought, "I guess I'll make that scrambled eggs on toast [instead of *Noah on a raft*, i.e., poached eggs on toast]."

"Wreck Noah," calls the waiter solemnly.' --- (For more complete quote see *Noah on a raft*) ---A bit later the author comments: (1902: 19): 'And surely it is better to wreck Noah when his son [Ham] is so near, to render filial service.'

(And cf. above: *Adam and Eve on a raft and wreck 'em.*)

*Yesterday, today, and forever* -- Hash (1932; 1938)

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- pp. 105 -106: 1911 -- 'Osgar und Adolf' cartoon, by Condo; title: 'Every Little Melody Has Meaning of It's [apostrophe: sic] Own'; *The Tacoma Times*, Feb. 27, 1911, p.4. (G. Cohen: misspellings below: sic).
- First frame, Osgar to Adolf: 'Diss moosik box shoult make you der orders plain, Adolf. For instance ven id plays "Old Black Joe" id means coffee mitoudt cream. [G. Cohen: This may explain how *joe* 'coffee' arose!]. "Bring me a rose" means Limberger cheece--und "Come under my plaidie" means oatmeal porridge.'
- Adolf replies: 'So?'
- Second frame, music box sings out: 'Hush-a-bye, baby, don't you cry' and 'Daddy buy me a bow-wow'
- Adolf says: "I see, "Don'd you cry" means peeled onions and "bow-wow" means sissage.'
- [G. Cohen: Four more frames follow.]

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LANGUAGE AWARENESS (p. 56). It first appeared in the New York Times, September 5, 1971.'

Professor Alfred Rosa, Department of English, University of Vermont, Burlington VT 05405-0114; e-mail: arosa@zoo.uvm.edu

Rose, Edward D. 1918. Khaki Komedie. Chicago: Howell. Pg. 19:  
'WANTED: AN INTERPRETER

'A guest ordering his dinner at a fashionable hotel.

"Noodle soup, veal cutlet with tomato sauce and a cream puff."

"Bowl of submarines, camouflage the calf and a custard grenade."

[G. Cohen]: Were these three hash-house lingo terms actually used or were they perhaps simply created by the author for humorous effect? Would a waiter or waitress at a fashionable hotel really bellow out hash-house lingo?

Shapiro, Norman 1999. -- 8/8/1997 letter from Norman Shapiro on a 1908 Boston Herald article about Parisian slang. In: Studies in Slang, part 6, (edited by Gerald Leonard Cohen and Barry A. Popik). Frankfurt a. M.: Peter Lang, pp. 81-86. -- Shapiro's item provides a parallel to the restaurant slang item 'bad news, the,' (= the check) cited in the 1929 hash-house lingo article above. Shapiro writes (p. 85):

'That you should be perplexed by the use of *la douloureuse* for "the mill" is likewise understandable, since it was the result of a misprint. Not on Marchand's part--he spells it correctly as "the bill"--but that of the Herald. author. Today one still very commonly refers to a restaurant check, for example, as *la douloureuse* "the painful one" for obvious reasons. --- In a footnote I [G. Cohen] then wrote: 'Antonio Lillo (Universidad de Alicante, Spain) adds in a 6/3/97 letter to me:

"I did not know that this word was used in French slang; its Spanish equivalent *la dolorosa*, has long been a common slang synonym for "bill" (at least in European Spanish). As far as I know, *la dolorosa* is commonly found in the context of restaurants, pubs,

etc., the implication being that paying the bill is always “painful” (e.g. *¿Nos trae la dolorosa?* = ‘What’s the damage?’ The question remains if this is an instance of lexical polygenesis in French and Spanish or, on the contrary, one language borrowed from the other.”

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Thompson, George 1999. Jan. 8, 1999 message to American Dialect Society, titled ‘Re: hash house slang.’

‘Today’s issue of *The Daily News* (New York, January 10, p. 25; [G. Cohen: Thompson’s message was sent Jan 8, and so ‘January 10’ is probably a typo]) has an article on hash house slang, referring to a lunchcounter in northern Manhattan where it still survives and is spoken by the customers as well as by the countermen and short-order cooks. In addition to a vocabulary of 12 or 15 terms (“burn the British” = “toast an English muffin”) the article offers a rationale for at least one term, other than the desire to put on a show for the customers. “Whisky, down” = “rye bread toasted” because in a busy kitchen the cook may not hear correctly the difference between “rye bread” and “white bread”. (“down” refers to the act of pushing down the toaster handle.) The article further notes that this sort of short-hand (short-tongue?) has a long history, noting a vocabulary printed in a Detroit newspaper in 1852. I have an instance in my notes from 1845.

1845: “The Eating Houses. -- One great source of convenience and accomodation to strangers visiting New York, are the eating houses, which are now scattered about the city. At any time of the day a meal, chosen from a great variety, can be obtained without delay, and at little expense. ... These houses are usually well furnished with marble tables, polite and attentive waiters, who are flying about in all directions, giving orders, which, to the uninitiated, sound even more unintelligible than Greek or Dutch. For instance, the waiter calls out to the cutter and carver

for 'plumb, wine,' -- while another cries out at the top of his voice for 'dumplings on a large -- suet without' -- or 'rice, hard' -- mingled with sounds of 'veal cul'et' -- 'clam pie' and 'roast beef' are cutting and crossing each other, that the visitor is lost in wonder, that the person receiving the orders does not go mad, and abdicate. ...

*NY Herald*, August 10, 1845, p. 2, col. 5."

I have cut out several sentences from the *Herald's* article, but it does not explain the meaning of the phrases it quotes.

George A. Thompson.'

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COINAGE OF 'THE WINDY CITY' IS OFTEN INCORRECTLY ATTRIBUTED TO NYC EDITOR CHARLES DANA, WHO--IN THE 1889-1890 COMPETITION FOR THE 1893 WORLD'S FAIR--ALLEGEDLY SPOKE OF CHICAGO'S 'WINDY POLITICIANS'

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[G. Cohen: This item is taken primarily from Popik's working paper in *Comments on Etymology*, Dec. 2004, vol. 34, no. 3. I compiled that article from numerous messages he sent to the American Dialect Society, some material he sent me in the 1990s, and a few late-2004 responses he gave to the inquiries of Chicago Tribune reporter Nathan Bierma. Included too is the 1880 attestation given by Popik in his April 2005 working paper.]

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#### OVERALL VIEW OF THE SUBJECT

In a remarkably persistent error, various newspapers have attributed the coinage of 'The Windy City' to Charles A. Dana, editor of the *NY Sun*, in 1889 or 1890, although I note with deep appreciation Nathan Bierma's article pointing out its inaccuracy (*Chicago Tribune*, Dec. 7, 2004, Tempo section, pp.1,5) and for drawing attention to my work on the term. New York was competing with Chicago for what would be the 1893 Columbian

Exposition, and, according to the myth, Dana coined the sobriquet when he wrote that the “Windy City” couldn’t hold the fair even if it won it.

But the story that Dana originated or perhaps merely popularized ‘The Windy City’ does not withstand scrutiny. ‘The Windy City’ is well attested prior to the 1889-1890 competition for the World’s Fair. Also, I checked the *NY Sun* for 1886 (I had noticed ‘The Windy City’ in the *Louisville Courier-Journal* for that year) and could not find a single ‘Windy City’ there. Then I checked the *NY Sun* for 1889, when the World’s Fair fight started and still could not find a single “Windy City”! Then I checked the *NY Sun* for 1890, when the World’s Fair fight was decided, specifically looking for the ‘famous’ Windy City editorial, but could not find it. Significantly, too, no Chicago source gives a citation.

So the sobriquet was already well established by the time of the 1889-1890 competition for the World’s Fair, Dana evidently used the sobriquet very little if at all, his famous editorial seems unlocatable, and this is the person who is supposed to have played the key role in the origin or popularization of ‘The Windy City’? Not very likely.

As for what really happened, the early attestations of the ‘The Windy City’ indicate the sobriquet originated in the 1870s in the *Cincinnati Enquirer* with the original reference being to meteorological winds. My best guess is that two specific windy events in Chicago led the *Cincinnati Enquirer* to produce the sobriquet:

1) Feb. 6, 1875 *Cincinnati Enquirer* headline (p.4, col. 5):

‘Chicago Blowing’

subitle: “The Wind-Swept, Fire-Scorched and Frozen City--  
Nice Place to Live.’

A month later the March 8, 1875 *Cincinnati Enquirer*’s ‘Municipality of Wind’ headline appeared, not quite ‘The Windy City’ but not far removed from it.

2) May 8, 1876 *Cincinnati Enquirer* story (p. 4, col. 1):

‘THERE was a little tornado in Chicago on Saturday, but it spent itself mostly on churches. All the other buildings in

Chicago were so heavily weighed down with mortgages that no whirlwind could affect them.'

-----The next day--the very next day--the *Cincinnati Enquirer* ran a headline 'THAT WINDY CITY' (subtle: 'Some of the Freaks of the Last Chicago Tornado'). Just a week later the same newspaper (May 13, 1876) was speaking of 'a journey to the Windy City.' The sobriquet was now born!

#### SAMPLES OF THE INCORRECT CHARLES A. DANA 'WINDY POLITICIANS' INTERPRETATION

The first examples of this incorrect interpretation come from the 1930's and continue to the present:

1) *Reno Evening Gazette* (Reno, Nevada) April 20, 1934, p. 1, col. 6 (from Newspaperarchive):

'WINDIEST CITY NOT CHICAGO IS EXPERT'S CLAIM

CHICAGO, April 20--(AP)--Chicago is called the "Windy City" but the man who first termed it that referred to the kind of wind some use to sell soap and get votes.

'A survey conducted yesterday by Frederick Rex, municipal librarian, revealed that last year in twenty-four cities in the United States, having in excess of 30,000 population, Chicago ranked fourteenth in average wind velocity.

'The nickname was one of derision, arising from a battle between four cities for the Columbian exposition of 1893. "Don't pay any attention," wrote Charles A. Dana in the *New York Sun*, to the nonsensical claims of that windy city.'

'The name has persisted through the years.

'New York tied with Buffalo for being the windiest cities in 1933.'

2) *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Apr 20, 1935. p. 23:

'EARLIER CHICAGO.

'DEAR WAKE:

'Chicago's nickname of "Windy City" is supposed by most people to refer to the blasts which at times form in the north and sweep down over Lake Michigan. That is not the origin as I

remember it.

'The term was first applied more than 40 years ago by Editor Charles Dana of the New York Sun. At that time New York, Washington, St. Louis, and Chicago were bidders and competitors for holding the World's Columbian exposition, later commonly called the World's Fair.

'Rivalry was keen and prolonged. Chicago's claims were presented in such strong and glamorous terms as to cause Mr. Dana's "Windy City" appellation. At any rate, Chicago secured the honor.

Dorothy E. Ballantine.'

3) *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Jan 21, 1939. p. 8:

'*The Great Gray City.*

'It is in winter that Chicago merits most fully its appropriate title as "The Great Gray City." The late Henry Justin Smith is believed to have been the first to apply this apt description. It is far more accurate than the more familiar reference, "The Windy City"--a misleading designation, for the wind blows more frequently and more strongly in New York and in many other cities than it does in Chicago. The "Windy City" label, by the way, was pasted on the town because of the enthusiasm some of its supporters indulged in while winning the grant for the World's Columbian Exposition of 1893. ...'

4) *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 26, 1939. p. 14:

'In a dim recess of my mind stirs a faint recollection that Charles Dana Gibson, the artist, [B. Popik: Make that CHARLES ANDERSON DANA, the editor of the New York Sun!] gave Chicago its nickname of "Windy City" after a visit here. He had been subjected to much bragging about the city, and said that Chicago people were very "windy."

Edna J. Salmen.

'[The Linemaster will settle this argument: Chicago has been called the Windy City because it is windy. Its low rating in windiness by the weather bureau doesn't mean a thing. Such statistics seldom do. It may be only seventeenth in the windy catalog, but its winds are more gusty, nagging, and vexatious

than those of any other large city in the world.]’

5) *Chicago Daily Tribune*, May 27, 1939. p. 10:

“*Windy City*” Traced Back to the ‘70s.

‘I have been a reader of THE TRIBUNE since the seventies, and am familiar with the origin of the term, “Windy City.” About the middle of the seventies, Chicago began to be called the Windy City, without arousing the ire of the citizenry. This was long before the erection of the Masonic Temple.

‘The appellation came from the boastful volubility of Chicagoans, Chicago was the biggest, largest, widest, deepest, richest city in the world, etc.

‘When Chicago, by hook and by crook, got the world’s Columbian Exposition away from New York, trouble arose. Dana of the New York Sun, who used vitriol instead of ink, excoriated Chicago and all her works. He referred to the Windy City as “a dingy aggregation of disgraceful hovels situated in a dank and foul morass, disgracing a noble sheet of water; the air polluted not only by natural decay but also by the dense effluvia arising from Chicago’s crude and filthy habits.”

‘Tradition says that the most frothy of the Chicago boosters were finally shipped to what B.L.T. called “Loz Anglaize.” C. M. Conradson.’

6) *Chicago Daily Tribune*, Jun 7, 1939. p. 18:

‘*Schools of Thought About “Windy City.”*’

‘Please allow me to “settle this argument” anent the origin of Chicago’s nickname, the Windy City. I was city editor of the old United Press in 1892-’93 and wrote the news of the Columbian Exposition. During the battle royal between the Chicago and New York newspapers for the prize of housing the great and only World’s Fair the Gotham press, led by Charles A. Dana in his Sun, scoffed, ridiculed and jibed at the superior claims of Chicago, dubbing it the Windy City on that score. But our wind won.

‘Greetings from one who sat at the “feet of Gamaliel” [B. L. T.] at THE TRIBUNE’S Sunday desk alongside him. Arthur W. O’Neill.’

7) June 2, 2000, *Chicago Tribune*, section 4, p. 1, col. 2, by Leslie Mann----'New York Sun editor Charles A. Dana coined the term "Windy City" while describing the competition between New York City, Chicago, Washington, D. C. and St. Louis for the right to host the fair.'

8) June 10 2001, *Chicago Tribune*, section 15, p. 2/3, by Leslie Hindman---'In fact, it was during this competition [1893 World's Columbian Exposition] that Chicago earned its Windy City nickname.'

9) August 5 2001, *Chicago Tribune*, section 4, p. 8, col. 1, 'Ask Tom Why' by meteorologist Tom Skilling

'Hi Tom,

'How did Chicago get its name "The Windy City"?

'Suleman Suleman, Chicago

'Dear Suleman,

'The wind does blow in Chicago, but not enough to earn it the nickname of the "Windy City." That moniker was bestowed on the city by the New York press in the late 1800s. According to the Chicago Public Library, Chicago and New York were competing to host the 1893 Columbian Exposition, and the Chicago politicians were loudly boasting their city's virtues. Charles Dana, of the New York Sun, wrote an editorial against Chicago hosting the fair by advising against the "nonsensical claims of that *windy city*." This editorial is credited as the origin of Chicago's famous nickname.

'Chicago's average annual wind speed of 10.4 m.p.h., while respectable, only places it about 15th in the national ranking. The windiest city in the U.S. is Blue Hill, Massachusetts (10 miles south of Boston) at 15.5 m.p.h.

10) August 23 2001, *Chicago Tribune*, section 2, p. 10, col. 1: 'WEATHER WORD---*Windy City*: In 1893, New York Sun editor Charles Dana, tired of hearing Chicagoans boasting of the huge success of Chicago's 1893 World's Columbian Exposition, dubbed Chicago the "Windy City."'

ATTESTATIONS OF 'THE WINDY CITY' PRE-DATING  
DANA'S 1889-1890 SUPPOSED COINING OF THE TERM

Here are various relevant items I have spotted.

1) February 25 1875, *Cincinnati Enquirer*, p. 2, col. 1:

*'INDIANAPOLIS LETTER.*

'...They read the Chicago papers; are proud of Chicago's prosperity; believe in Chicago wind; trust in Chicago; and swear by Chicago; but when it comes to cutting up the glorious State of Indiana to accommodate Chicago they will rebel.'

2) March 8, 1875---for 'Municipality of Wind' (= Chicago): ---

. 8 March 1875, *Cincinnati Enquirer*, p. 4, col. 5:

*'The Mayor's Movements.*

'Mayor Johnston and his "next friend," Quinn, the Roofer, returned from Chicago yesterday morning. The train was due here early, but was detained by the trifling circumstances of a "jump off" two hours this side of the City of the Lakes, and a much more emphatic adventure on a bridge near Richmond. ...

'In Chicago both gentlemen met,...

'What they didn't see, we venture to wager, in that five hours wasn't worth seeing in the Municipality of Wind.'

3) May 8, 1876, *Cincinnati Enquirer*, p. 4, col. 1:

'THERE was a little tornado in Chicago on Saturday, but it spent itself mostly on churches. All the other buildings in Chicago were so heavily weighed down with mortgages that no whirlwind could affect them.' --- (B. Popik: No 'Windy City' here; I present this item because of its relevance to the following one.)

4) May 9, 1876, *Cincinnati Enquirer*, p. 2, col. 4:

*'THAT WINDY CITY.*

*'Some of the Freaks of the Last Chicago Tornado.*

*'[From Yesterday's Times.]*

'The traditional fickleness of the wind was shown in strange objects on which it exerted its force.' ----- (B. Popik: It is not clear from this item what 'Yesterday's Times' is, but column six has a story from 'New York Correspondence Chicago Times')

5) May 13, 1876, *Cincinnati Enquirer*, p. 2, col. 1 [See last three words of this article]

*'CHICAGO LETTER.*

*'The Sad Story of a Base-Ball Tour--How the "Cincinnati" Took their Punishment.*

'Special Correspondence of the Enquirer.

'CHICAGO, May 11, 1876.

'When the Red Stockings left Cincinnati for Chicago Tuesday morning they never dreamed they were going three hundred miles to get "skunked." ...'

[col. 2] 'The trouble was not with the boys, but with the chairs. The latter had been cut out for slimmer people than base-ball men, and fit too tightly. There was no time to lose, however, in prying off chairs, and the boys all started trainward, chairs and all. Only the plucky nerve of the eating-house keeper rescued the useful seats from a journey to the Windy City.'

(B. Popik: I was told that the Library of Congress is missing the 1876 *Cincinnati Enquirer* volume before this one)

6) July 2, 1876, *Chicago Daily Tribune*, p. 3;

'At Blue Island.; *The Championship. Notes of the Game*':

'The *Cincinnati Enquirer*, in common with other papers, has been waiting with great anxiety for the fulfillment of its prophecy: that the Chicago papers would call the Whites hard names when they lost. Witness these scraps the day after the Whites lost to the Athletics: ...

'There comes a wail to us from the Windy City. People up there are disgusted with their pet White Legs. Louisville is disgusted, too, with its club. ...'

7) Feb. 12, 1877, *Cincinnati (Daily) Enquirer*, p. 5, col. 2. (For 'Windy City' see first subtitle):

'CHICAGO LETTER.

'*Gossip and Impressions of the Windy City.*

'*Special Correspondence of the Enquirer.*

'CHICAGO, February 10, 1877.

'What this city was before the fire I know not. What it was after the fire I should like to forget. But what it is to-day is remarkable. Verily it might be called the Phoenix City, so striking is its resurrection from its own ashes. Europeans look upon it as the coming city of America, and it is no wonder when we take even a casual glimpse at its resources and progressive prosperity. ...

[col. 3] MARIE T. COURCELLES.'



8) Dec. 29, 1878, *Cincinnati Enquirer*, p. 4, col. 1---(No specific mention of 'Windy City' here, but the article does make the connection of Chicago and wind.):

'CHICAGO is going to build herself a Music Hall--on wind, of course. After that is done she will have to go to work and blow up another THEODORE THOMAS just to keep even with Cincinnati. The organ will be driven by a windmill.'

9) March 5, 1879, *Puck*, p. 12, col. 3 (taken from *Cincinnati Enquirer*; cited at the very end of this item:

'THERE was a young man from Chicago,  
It was strange how he did make his jaw go,  
One nice day he did to his pa go,  
Saying, "Really, father, does ma know  
If for crime and deceit  
Any city can beat  
This windy old town of Chicago?

"If you know, dear father, now tell me,  
Your own son, William--you well may.  
Don't be an old fogy, and "sell" me,  
Or get on your ear and assail me."

But his father was tight,  
And puffed at his pipe,  
Articulating "Wilhelmj."

-- *Cincinnati Enquirer*.'

10) Nov. 13, 1879, *Cincinnati Enquirer*, p. 1, col. 1:  
'GRANT.

*His Big Boom at Chicago.*

*A Warm and Wet Welcome to the Windy City.'*

11) July 4, 1880, *Cincinnati Enquirer*, p. 1, col. 2.

[B. Popik: 'The little "Windy City" here refers to Degraff, Ohio, NOT Chicago. But note the unambiguous connection here of the sobriquet 'Windy City' with the winds of nature: '...to be classed as the little "Windy City," a name not inappropriate, as every now and then a cyclone or tornado strikes and almost annihilates it.']

'LOUIE'S LOVE.

*'Strange Attempt to Elope With a School-Girl.*

*'A Social Sensation Which Agitates the Town of Degraff, Ohio.*

*'SPECIAL DISPATCH TO THE ENQUIRER.*

*'BELLEFONTAINE, OHIO, July 3.--This little Village of Degraff is situated in the beautiful Valley of the Miami, ten miles west of Bellefontaine, and, while it only has a population a little less than one thousand, according to the veracious Census Enumerator, it certainly can develop enough pure cussedness within its limits to entitle it to be classed as the little "Windy City," a name not inappropriate, as every now and then a cyclone or tornado strikes and almost annihilates it.'*

(B. Popik: The item just above was in the 17 July 1880 *National Police Gazette*, and was found on the *American Periodical Series Online*. It does come from the *Cincinnati Enquirer* after all.)  
12) July 17, 1880, *Cincinnati Enquirer*, p. 4, col. 5. [See last three words of the item]:

*'Off for Chicago.*

*Maud S and Dream were shipped to Chicago last night in a special car, the property of W. H. Vanderbilt. Both nags were in apple-pie condition, and will give a good account of themselves in the Windy City.'*

13) August 23, 1880, *Chicago Daily Tribune*, p. 7, reprinted from the *Cincinnati Commercial*:

*'Yesterday afternoon a reporter noticed half a dozen numbers of Miami (Lebanon, O.) Commandory standing outside of the Gibson House. They had just arrived from the windy city of the lake.*

*"So you've just got back?" remarked the reporter.*

*"Got back from where?" was the retort, in feigned surprise.*

*"Why, from Chicago, of course!"*

14) February 25, 1881, *Cincinnati Enquirer*, p. 8, col. 1 [See third line of the text]:

*'Chicago Coppers. ...*

*Correspondence of the Enquirer.*

*CHICAGO, February 24, 1881.*

*'Owing to pernicious political influences the police system*

of Chicago is far from being as good as its Fire Department. The ~~v~~ard statesmen of the Windy City know full well that the experience of the past will not permit the wealthy and influential classes (or even small house-holders) to allow much tampering with the Fire Department, for on its efficiency the very existence of the city depends.'

15) July 22, 1881 (from Newspaperarchive) -- *Fort Wayne Daily Gazette* (Fort Wayne, Indiana): '...between the town aforesaid and WINDY CITY yclept Chicago.'

16) November 8, 1881, *Cincinnati Enquirer* (Ohio), p. 5, col. 1:

[For 'Windy City see line 5 of the title/subtitles. In this particular article the sobriquet is ambiguous; it could refer to Chicago or Buffalo. But the article presented immediately below this one clarifies that the reference is to Chicago.]

'MORE RAILROADS,

'Which Are to Cross the Continent,

'Thus Making a Through and Independent Line From Ocean to Ocean.

'Vanderbilt Fires Off His First Fast Train Along the Borders of the Lakes Toward the Windy City. ...

'Miscellaneous Notes and Personals About Railroad Matters.

'FROM OCEAN TO OCEAN.

'Two years hence, says the New York Times, an entirely new system of railroads from ocean to ocean will be in operation, and already the better part of the great chain is completed. The terminal will be New York and San Francisco. The roads forming the route will be the New York, West Shore and Buffalo, the New York, Buffalo and Chicago, the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul, the Northern Pacific and the Oregon Navigation Company's lines. The system will be in direct opposition to the Vanderbilt lines and the Union Pacific Railroad, and it is claimed for it that it will run through the part of the country that supplies the greatest amount of travel and freight business. The Eastern line will be the New York, West Shore and Buffalo Railroad, extending from New York to Buffalo. The West Shore, as it is called, will be a powerful rival of the New York Central

and Hudson River Railroad. The length of the road will be 425 miles, some sixteen miles shorter than the Central. No grades will exceed twenty feet to the mile eastward and thirty feet to the mile westward, and no curves will be over four degrees. One grade on the Central at Albany is said to be at the rate of seventy feet to the mile. The road is to be straighter than the Central, and the projectors assert that the running time will be decreased at least one hour between New York and Buffalo.

The second link in the system will be the New York, Chicago and St. Louis Railroad, divided into two divisions, one of which extends from Buffalo to Chicago, and the other from Fort Wayne to St. Louis. Although the surveys have been made and some of the grading done, it is not likely that the Fort Wayne and St. Louis Division will be built. Arrangements have been made by which the business of the Company will be performed by the Wabash, St. Louis and Pacific Railroad.

17) November 8, 1881, *Cincinnati Enquirer* (Ohio), p. 5, col. 1:

[B. Popik: This article does not mention 'the Windy City' but is important for clarifying that the reference of the sobriquet in the article I presented just above is to Chicago, not Buffalo.]

*Vanderbilt's First Fast Train.*

Special Dispatch to the Enquirer.

NEW YORK, November 7.--The New York Central's first twenty-five-hour train to Chicago started punctually at eight o'clock this morning from the Grand Central Depot. It was made up of a baggage car, a coach, two sleepers and a drawing-room car, with Henry Mulligan's engine 52. Few passengers had taken seats for intermediate stations. Tickets to Chicago are only sold unless there are seats. Five minutes before the train started a few seats were left. Up to late this afternoon the train was running on time. From Buffalo the train carries mail matter which leaves New York with the 4:45 a. m. train. The fast train from Chicago is slower.'

18) November 13, 1881, *Cincinnati Enquirer*, p. 1, col. 7:

*GRAIN GOSSIP.*

'Wafted Last Night From the Windy City.

19) Sept. 11, 1882, *Cincinnati Enquirer*, p. 1, col. 2:

'CHICAGO'S RECORD.

'Crimes of a Day In the Windy City.

20) October 7, 1882 -- *Cincinnati Enquirer*, p. 2, col. 4; see last line:

'OUCH!

'Remarked the Chicagos Yesterday

'Ya-ha! Yi Ki, Rip, Rah, Shouted the Cincinnati's In Return.

'As They Fled Around the Bases, Greatly to the Disgust of the Discomfited Leaguers.

'The Red-Legs--Ripped Goldsmith, the White Legs Didn't White--Magnificent Fielding on Both Sides.

'We Will Try It Again To-day, and Will Perhaps be Generous to the Chaps From the Windy City--Perhaps Not.

'... All talk that the triumph was secured through the generosity of the chaps from the Windy City is buncombe of the worst sort. ...'

21) January 16, 1883, *Cincinnati Enquirer*, p. 4, col. 1; (for 'the windy city' see the second sentence.)

'THE Chicago papers are quick to "catch on" to a fire sensation and make the most of it. The Milwaukee calamity was almost at Chicago's doors, and put the people of the windy city on the alert. The first news received in Cincinnati of the fire in the Planters' House in St. Louis Sunday morning came from Chicago. They know how to appreciate a fire item up that way.'

----- (B. Popik: Notice the lack of caps. Also, I did NOT see the sobriquet in very long Chicago articles in the *Louisville Courier Journal* in 1882. Also, the *Cincinnati Enquirer* had a good chance to use it about two weeks earlier in 1883, but didn't.)

22) Feb. 8, 1883, *Cincinnati Enquirer*, p. 2, col. 7:

'CHICAGO LETTER

'The Police, Fire and Signal System of the Windy City.'

23) June 17, 1883, *Cincinnati Enquirer*, p. 4, col. 2:

'WHILE the failure of McGeoch in Chicago yesterday created something of a panic in the Windy City by the lake and other speculative villages, all was serene in Cincinnati.'

24) October 20, 1883, *National Police Gazette*, p. 11:

'It was here that the late lamented Hulbert, president of the Chicagos, saw him and signed him for the Windy City club, where he has been playing ever since. -- *Cincinnati Enquirer*.'

25) May 3, 1884, *The Quincy Daily Whig* (Quincy, Illinois) p. 7

[B. Popik: My thanks to Bill Mullins for providing this example in a Dec. 7, 2004 ads-l message. For 'windy city,' see first paragraph, third line from bottom.]

title: 'She Won't be Interviewed'

[*Cincinnati Times-Star*.]

'As is well known in newspaper circles, Mrs. Langtry this year has not allowed herself to be interviewed. She has even refrained from seeing reporters, and all their cards have been returned with the frigidly polite notice that the Lily was engaged. It now appears that a Chicago journalist is to blame for this condition of affairs. A year ago, when she was in the windy city, she was called upon by one of the young men on The Inter Ocean, who chatted very pleasantly with her. All at once he startled her by the request:

"Mrs. Langtry, will you be kind enough to show me your feet?"

'She was so utterly taken aback that she meekly complied with the odd request -- which is not so odd for Chicago -- but she was shocked and horrified. In her opinion all newspaper men at once became boors and rough creatures who were seeking to say evil things about her, and this explains her positive refusal to be interviewed.'

26) June 14, 1884, *National Police Gazette*, p. 11:

'Several members of the Chicago team indulged in stimulants to an excess, and Al Spaulding let out his indignation in a letter to Babe Anson the other day. In it he says he is tired of making excuses for the team's poor showing, and directs Anson to assess a heavy fine on any player for the slightest infraction of a rule. The Windy City crew will now have to conduct themselves very straight, or pay for their fa...[illegible; failing?] in the shape of fines.' -- *Philadelphia Item*.

27) August 19, 1885 -- (Philadelphia's) *Sporting Life*, p.1, col. 2:  
 'From Chicago

'...But say, I must quit this thing, or there will be a mad base ball reporter in the "city of winds" before sundown.'

28) September 19, 1885 -- *Cleveland Gazette*: 'From the Windy City: Judge Foote's Civil Right decision.'

[B. Popik: This quote is from Library of Congress's American Memory database. They keep adding to it, so it's a good idea to check it regularly, which can be done at home through any search engine. The Library of Congress American Memory source is the Ohio Historical Society, The African American Experience in Ohio, 1850-1920.]

29) October 10, 1885 -- (NYC's) *National Police Gazette*, p. 2/3:

'THE Chicago *News* has a four-column paragraph on the wickedness of that city, the sum and substance of which is that it is a more sinful city than Babylon. When a Windy City scribe starts out to knock out the Biblical writers, he stops at nothing.'

29) October 17, 1885 -- *National Police Gazette*, p. 2, col. 3:

'THE League championship colors fly never so proudly as in Chicago. It is natural for the Windy City to be "the tenant of the pennant," as a Chicago Vassar girl would express it. Why a Chicago girl should use sesquipedalian words her detractors must explain.'

30) January 10, 1886 -- *Louisville Courier-Journal* (Ky.), p. 4, col. 5: 'The Windy City'

'All kinds of Weather Render Life Disagreeable in Chicago

'CHICAGO, Jan. 9.--A strong wind is blowing throughout Northern Illinois, drifting the snow badly, but the cold is not so intense as that which has prevailed West and North ....'

31) April 20, 1886 --*Detroit Free Press*, p. 8, col. 2 (quoting from Philadelphia's *Sporting Life*):

'Those seven left-handed Detroit sluggers will, no doubt, take a leaf from the Chicago book when they size up that right field fence in the Windy City--*Sporting Life*.' ----- [B. Popik: The *Sporting Life* was dated 21 April 1886. Explanation: ?]

32) May 8, 1886 -- *Courier-Journal* (Louisville, Ky.), p. 1, col. 2:

'Peace and Police' -- subtitle: 'Reign Supreme in the Windy

## City on the Edge of the Big Lake'

- 33) May 10, 1886, *Courier-Journal* (Louisville, Ky.):  
 'FOUR MORE SACRIFICED.' -- subtitles: 'Two Officers and Two  
 Communists Added to the List of Slain in the Chicago Riot  
 'The Lesson Drawn From the Outbreak by the Pulpits of the  
 Windy City.'
- 34) June 18, 1886 (from Newspaperarchive) -- *Massillon  
 Independent* (Massillon, Ohio): '...of a flourishing livery stable in  
 the windy city and his many Massillon...'
- 35) July 10, 1886 (from Newspaperarchive) -- *Daily News* (Fred-  
 erick, Maryland): '...Chicago with the greatness of their windy  
 city at heart, met and discussed...' -- (repeated three times just  
 below)
- 36) July 11, 1886 (from Newspaperarchive) -- *Davenport Gaz-  
 ette* (Davenport, Iowa): '...Chicago with the greatness of their  
 windy city at heart met and discussed...' -- (repeated just be-  
 low)
- 37) July 15, 1886 (from Newspaperarchive) -- *Olean Democrat*  
 (Olean, New York): '...of gentlemen, with greatness of their  
 windy city at heart, met and discussed...a racing club house in  
 the breezy city...' -- (repeated just below)
- 38) July 20, 1886 (from Newspaperarchive) -- *Newark Daily  
 Advocate* (Newark, Ohio): '...Chicago with the greatness of their  
 windy city at heart met and discussed for a...racing club house  
 in the breezy city.'
- 39) August 27, 1886 (from Newspaperarchive) -- *Newark Daily  
 Advocate* (Newark, Ohio): '...two weeks ago. He then went to  
 the windy city to look for...'
- 40) Sept. 11, 1886, *Chicago Tribune*, p. 4, col. 6:  
 'The name of "Windy City," which is sometimes used by  
 village papers in New York and Michigan to designate Chicago, is  
 intended as a tribute to the refreshing lake breezes of the  
 great summer-resort of the West, but is an awkward and rather  
 ill-chosen expression and is doubtless misunderstood. Hence  
 this explanation.'

[B. Popik: I looked at the *Detroit Free Press* and *Detroit  
 News* in the Library of Congress. While in the Detroit Public



Library, I rechecked these and also went through the *Detroit Post*, *Detroit Evening Journal*, *Detroit Evening Tribune*, and *Michigan Catholic*. 'Garden City' is used in 1885 and for much of 1886 in almost all of these newspapers.]

41) Oct. 8, 1886 (from Newspaperarchive) -- *Newark Daily Advocate* (Newark, Ohio): '...of the Meeting Now Being Held in the windy city.'

42) Oct. 26, 1886 (from Newspaperarchive) -- *Trenton Times* (Trenton, New Jersey): '...and refuses to be comforted. The windy city thinks it rather rough to be...'

43) Dec. 19, 1886 (from ProQuest Historical Newspapers), *NY Times*, p. 1: 'THE WINDY CITY HARD HIT; BULLS IN A BIG MAJORITY WHEN THE DECLINE CAME. THEIR LOSSES ESTIMATED AT \$3,000,000--IT MIGHT HAVE BEEN WORSE--PEACE ONCE MORE ON 'CHANGE.'

44) Jan. 31, 1887 -- *Courier Journal* (Louisville, Ky.) p. 5, col. 1: 'A Gauzy Story of an Alleged Dynamite Plot from the Windy City.'

[B. Popik: This quote is cited in Craigie-Hulbert's *Dictionary of American English on Historical Principles*, vol. 4, 1944) and led to my checking the *Courier-Journal* for the 1886 attestations.]

45) May 18, 1887 (from ProQuest Historical Newspapers) -- *The Washington*, p. 2: 'CHICAGO AGAIN BEATEN; ONE MORE VICTORY TO THE CREDIT OF THE HOME NINE. The Men from the Windy City Only Make Six Runs, While the Washingtons Score Fourteen. ...'

46) July 31, 1887 (from ProQuest Historical Newspapers) -- *Los Angeles Times*, p. 9: 'VAN TALKS; THE GREAT BALL-TOSSER INTERVIEWED IN CHICAGO. He Is Well Pleased With His Eastern Trip, but Is Glad to Get Back to the Windy City. ...'

47) Feb. 12, 1888 (from ProQuest Historical Newspapers) -- *NY Times*, p. 2: 'THE WINDY CITY ON ITS KNEES.'

INCIDENTALLY: A FEW 1885-1886 EXAMPLES OF CHICAGO AS 'THE GARDEN CITY'; FOR A WHILE 'THE WINDY CITY' HAD COMPETITION

1) August 26 1885, *Sporting Life*, p. 4, col. 5:

'FROM CHICAGO.

'The White Stockings Once More at Home--

The Base Ball Poet at Large in the Garden City.

... "I will gather around me a choice quartette of the crowd  
I used to train with,

And we'll take the cars for Michigan's wilds and the lakes  
where the bass obtaineth.

On shady shores where the gentle breeze from the pine  
woods loves to loiter,

I'll pitch my tent for a fortnight's stay to woo the game of  
the water."

Thus spoke the chief of the base ball nine that hails from the  
Garden City...'

2) October 14 1885, *Sporting Life*, p. 1, col. 5:

'FROM CHICAGO.

Close of the League Season at The Garden City.'

3) April 26 1886, *Detroit Free Press*, p. 5, col. 1:

'In the Centennial year he with Spalding, Barnes and McVey  
went to Chicago, remained in the Garden City that season...'

4) April 28 1886, *Detroit Free Press*, p. 8, col. 1:

'On April 24, the Windsor Foot Ball Team went to Chicago  
and tackled the Garden City kickers.'

## REFERENCES

ads-l = American Dialect Society Internet discussion group.

(ads-l@listserv.uga.edu)

Bierma, Nathan 2004. Windy City: Where did it come from? (sub-  
title): Did New York Sun editor Charles A. Dana coin the  
phrase, or is that legend just full of hot air? -- Chicago  
Tribune, Dec. 7, 2004, Tempo section, pp. 1, 5. --- [ed., G.  
Cohen: Bierma deserves great credit for being the first  
Chicago journalist to make a serious effort to get to the  
bottom of the 'Windy City' story. He contacted Barry Popik,  
a step that other Chicago journalists should have take long

before, then consulted several other scholars (myself included) about the evidence and asked various probing questions. Further research may bring additional insight to the subject, but Bierma's article represents the state of the art.]

Chicago Tribune, 'Ask Tom Why,' May 17, 2003, p. 26:

'Chicago's appellation "the Windy City" has non-meteorological origins. In 1893, New York Sun editor Charles Dana, weary of hearing Chicagoans boast of the success of Chicago's 1893 World's Columbian Exposition, dubbed Chicago the "Windy City"--and the nickname stuck.'

Comments on Etymology -- a series of working papers published by Gerald Cohen, 1971ff. The most relevant issues for 'The Windy City' are vol. 34, no. 3, Dec. 2004 (25 pp.) and vol. 34, no. 7, April 2005, pp. 15-16.

Craigie, William and James Hulbert 1944. Dictionary of American English on Historical Principles. U of Chicago Pr., vol. 4: '1887 [Louisville] *Courier-Journal* 31 Jan. 5/1: "A Gauzy Story of an Alleged Dynamite Plot from the Windy City".' [G. Cohen: Prior to Popik's research, this was the earliest attestation noticed for *The Windy City*.]

Encyclopedia of Chicago History 2004. (U of Chicago Press) -- [G. Cohen: Popik received a very cordial letter from the managing editor of the Encyclopedia, which says in part: 'Thanks for your interest in the Encyclopedia of Chicago History. We are essentially done with the preparation of the A-Z entries for the Encyclopedia. Our entry entitled "Windy City" was assigned and completed several years ago, and our editors are satisfied with its contents.

'No one here was aware of your work when the entry was assigned, but had that not been the case, you certainly would have been a likely person to approach.

'I believe your work may be the basis for a reference in our entry to an early use of the term "Windy City" in 1885. The online discussions that I find to your research cite an 1885 *Cleveland Gazette* headline. ...

Best wishes in all your researches,

Douglas Knox/Managing Editor/Encyclopedia of Chicago History/The Newberry Library/60 West Walton Street/Chicago, IL 60610/(312) 255-3642]

<http://www.jonboyd.org/news/000046.php>

Popik, Barry 1997. 'Chicago's nickname, *The Windy City*--its 1836 origin in the Louisville *Courier-Journal*, in: *Comments on Etymology*, vol. 26, no. 4, Jan. 1997, pp. 2-6. --- G. Cohen: Popik here antedates Craigie-Hulbert's 1887 first attestation of *The Windy City* and interprets the 1886 attestations as indicating that *The Windy City* arose in connection with 1886 labor violence in Chicago.

The Louisville *Courier-Journal* clearly drew upon the biblical quote (Hosea 8: 5-7: 'For they have sown the wind, and they shall reap the whirlwind'), writing on May 5, 1886: '...and the Chicago people, who stood idly by and saw the winds sown are now reaping the whirlwind's bitter fruits.' Then, on May 8, 1886, *The Windy City* appears in the headline 'Peace and Police Reign Supreme in the Windy City on the edge of the Big Lake.' All this is interesting, but Popik now sees that it is irrelevant to the origin of *The Windy City*, having since found attestations of this sobriquet pre-dating the 1886 labor-violence incident.

\_\_\_\_\_2001. NY *Sun* editor Charles Dana neither originated nor popularized Chicago's nickname 'The Windy City.' *Comments on Etymology*, vol. 31, no. 3, Dec. 2001, pp. 2-11. -- This item is a preliminary version of Popik 2004.

\_\_\_\_\_2004. Coinage of 'The Windy City' is often incorrectly attributed to NYC editor Charles Dana, who--in the 1889-1890 competition for the 1893 World's Fair--allegedly spoke of Chicago's 'windy politicians.' -- in: *Comments on Etymology*, Dec. 2004, vol. 34, no. 3, pp. 2-19. --- This item is a preliminary version of the present article.

\_\_\_\_\_2005. Two more (1876, 1880) attestations of 'windy city,' reinforcing my suggestion that Chicago's sobriquet originated in Cincinnati. *Comments on Etymology*, April 2005, vol. 34, no. 7, pp. 15-16.--[ed., G. Cohen: The title on

evidence on 'Windy City,' and this journalistic task was first carried out by Nathan Bierma, who learned of Popik's work from Zotti. My deep thanks go to both journalists.]

the title page is slightly different from the (correct) title on the first page of the article. My fault.]

Sporting Life (Philadelphia) and The Sporting News (St. Louis) -- These publications used 'Windy City' in nearly every Chicago baseball story, from 1886 onward...

St. Louis Post Dispatch (August 24, 1897, p. 4, col. 2):

'The Inter-Ocean of Chicago resents the sincere sympathy expressed by the Post-Dispatch for the Windy City's business distresses. "The great lake city," says the Inter-Ocean, "is doing pretty well now and will be carrying on business at the old stand when the Lilliputian river town has gone into hopeless bankruptcy."

'We are really sorry for the Chicagoans, because two scientists agree that "the old stand" will soon be under the waters of Lake Michigan, and while Chicago uses a good deal of water in carrying on her business she chiefly depends on wind.' -----

[This item is an extension of the incorrect 'windy politician' derivation of 'The Windy City' to include windy businessmen. Note too the rivalry between St. Louis and Chicago. Such rivalry between Cincinnati and Chicago is what led to the Cincinnati Enquirer's less-than-sympathetic coining of the sobriquet 'The Windy City.']

Wilton, Dave 2004. Word Myths: Debunking Linguistic Urban Legends. Oxford U. Pr., 2004. -- Quoted in Nathan Bierma's Chicago Tribune article; see below: pp. 72ff.

Zotti, Ed 2001. Hot dog! 'Big Apple' explained. Wall Street Journal, January 2, 2001, sec. A, p. 20, cols. 1-3. --- [ed., G. Cohen: Zotti's excellent article is about Barry Popik's research, including 'Windy City.' Zotti correctly notes that Popik rejects the standard etymology of the sobriquet, viz. the Charles Dana story, and reports Popik's conclusion that the sobriquet derives from the idea of actual winds.

But 'Windy City' is of secondary interest to Zotti in this article, with 'hot dog' and 'The Big Apple' being the focus of his attention. Zotti therefore does not present Popik's

REPRINT OF NATHAN BIERMA'S *CHICAGO-TRIBUNE*  
ARTICLE ON THE ORIGIN OF 'THE WINDY CITY'

(Dec. 7, 2004, Tempo section, pp. 1,5; reprinted with permission, both here and earlier in *Comments on Etymology*, Dec. 2004, vol. 34, no. 3, pp. 20-25)

Article title: 'WINDY CITY: Where did it come from?'

Subtitle: 'Did New York Sun editor Charles A. Dana coin the phrase, or is that legend just full of hot air?'

By Nathan Bierma

Special to the Tribune

"They don't call it the Windy City for nothing," said an ESPN announcer during a recent Northwestern football game, as the camera showed the wind whipping the flags atop Ryan Field.

But consult most tour books or talk to city history buffs, and they'll gleefully point out that the nickname Windy City originally referred not to lake breezes but to Chicago's long-winded politicians.

The Chicago Public Library supports this definition. "In the early part of the nineteenth century, Chicago promoters went up and down the East Coast loudly promoting Chicago as an excellent place to invest. Detractors claimed they were full of wind," the library says on its Web site.

"Later, Chicago and New York were competing to hold the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition. Charles A. Dana, editor of the New York Sun, wrote an editorial advising against the 'nonsensical claims of that windy city. Its people could not hold a world's fair even if they won it.' This editorial is widely credited with popularizing the Windy City' nickname."

The Chicago Historical Society's Web site agrees that Dana "dubbed" Chicago the Windy City. So do at least three pictorial guides to Chicago displayed at area bookstores, as well as Joel Greenberg's "A Natural History of the Chicago Region" (University of Chicago Press, 2002) and Erik Larson's recent best seller set in Chicago at the time of the Columbian Exhibition, "The Devil

in the White City" (Crown, 2003). The Dana explanation has been printed over and over in the Tribune, the Sun-Times and The New York Times. There's just one problem. The Dana editorial is nowhere to be found, and no one can prove it was ever written. Etymologists say it's just a myth.

In his new book "Word Myths: Debunking Linguistic Urban Legends" (Oxford University Press, 2004), etymologist Dave Wilton takes the city of Chicago -- and, yes, the Tribune -- to task for buying into the Dana story.

"It illustrates a very important point about urban legends: If they are repeated enough, they become accepted unconditionally as truth," Wilton writes.

Wilton points out that no one has ever provided a date for the supposed editorial or supplied any other convincing evidence that Dana coined the nickname. Wilton adds that Mitford M. Mathews' "Dictionary of Americanisms on Historical Principles," (University of Chicago Press, 1951) cited a "Windy City" reference to Chicago in the Louisville Courier-Journal from 1887, before the lobbying for the Columbian Exposition began. The Oxford English Dictionary cites the same article. Neither mentions Dana. Tim Samuelson, Chicago's cultural historian, has doubts about Dana's role too.

Though he hasn't specifically investigated the term, he says he has come across uses of the nickname "Windy City" for Chicago as early as the 1880s.

"Based on things I've seen in the course of other research, the concept predates Dana," he says.

Author Larson says he knows there are various theories on where "Windy City" got its start, but he supports the idea of editor Dana's influence during the rancorous exchanges between New York and Chicago over the world's fair.

"Even if you're finding a reference from 1886 to 'Windy City,' you have to think, when did it become the name that everybody knew?" Larson says. "It's not just when something first became a name that people heard, but when it became a name that stuck."

Donald Miller, author of the landmark "City of the Century:



The Epic of Chicago and the Making of America” (Simon & Schuster, 1996), says he deliberately avoided getting tangled up in the nickname debate.

“I stayed away from this business because I could find no proof for the Dana story,” he says. “I checked it out and found nothing I could go with as a reliable source.”

In response to a Tribune inquiry, the librarians at the Chicago Public Library compiled Tribune articles, letters and editorials that mention Dana and the Windy City nickname.

Several Tribune news clippings from the 1890s discuss Dana’s belly-aching about Chicago’s bid to host the fair. But the first direct link they could find between Dana and the nickname is a June 11, 1933, article in the Tribune titled “Chicago Dubbed ‘Windy’ In Fight For Fair of ‘93.”

The article says Dana “fixed on us” the label by writing “day in and day out in his New York Sun” about “the nonsensical claims of that windy city,” but there is no specific text or date for the fabled Dana editorial coining the nickname.

No one has found any example of Dana using that term for Chicago in the pages of his newspaper. There are, however, numerous Tribune responses in the 1890s to Dana’s regular disparagement of the city.

#### Popularized term

The Chicago Public Library stands by the assertion on its Web site that Dana popularized the term “Windy City,” even if he didn’t coin it.

“A lot of these articles indicate that Dana was a ringleader in questioning Chicago’s ability to host the fair,” says Margaret Killackey, the library’s press secretary. “‘Windy City’ didn’t become a household name until after the Dana references. There had been isolated references to the Windy City, but a flurry of references in print show it was used repeatedly in many parts of the country around the time of the world’s fair.”

Killackey adds, “Should something new be unearthed, we would look at that information. As of now, we feel confident that

the phrase was popularized after the Dana editorial.”

The Encyclopedia of Chicago, published in October, isn't so sure Dana should get even that much credit. Its entry for “Windy City” was written by Jonathan Boyd, an independent historian and lifelong Chicagoan.

“Chicago's exposed location between the Great Plains and the Great Lakes -- and the wind swirling amid the city's early skyscrapers -- lend credence to the literal application” of the nickname, even though the city “is not distinctively windy,” the entry reads. It goes on to say that the city's bloviating boosters of the 19th Century have historically given “metaphorical . . . power” to the name “Windy City.”

The encyclopedia includes a picture of a newspaper clipping from the Sept. 19, 1885, edition of the Cleveland Gazette, provided by the Ohio Historical Society, in which a roundup of news briefs from Chicago is introduced by the headline “From The Windy City.”

Boyd says he was trying to capture the cultural significance of the term, rather than settle the nearly impossible question of who coined it and when.

But he says the 1885 article was the earliest available example of its use when the encyclopedia went to press.

The closest anyone has gotten to the truth about the “Windy City” nickname seems to be the research of etymologist Barry Popik. He says the earliest examples of the moniker for Chicago meant both wind and windbags, and Dana had nothing to do with it. And he's sick of people who can't get it straight.

Popik, a consultant to the Oxford English Dictionary, spends his days working as a judge in New York City's bureau of parking violations. He spends his nights in libraries looking at old newspapers, microfiche and digital data-bases, hunting for early examples of famous nicknames and slang. Then he embarks on vigorous letter-writing campaigns to let everyone know what he has found.

In the mid-1990s, Popik set his sights on “Windy City,” and started scanning hundreds of editions of the New York Sun -- a newspaper that was published from 1833 to 1950 -- in the New

York Public Library.

He couldn't find a single instance of Dana using the name "Windy City."

Then Popik started looking further back, and in other newspapers, traveling to the Library of Congress to search through them.

He found a Louisville Courier-Journal reference to "Windy City" in 1886 -- one year before the Oxford English Dictionary's first citing. He found the 1885 article from the Cleveland Gazette. He came across several examples from the early 1880s in newspapers such as the Fort Wayne Daily Gazette, the Indiana Progress and the Decatur Daily Republican.

#### Cincinnati connection

Finally, Popik isolated a single source. "Windy City," he says, may have been coined by -- drum roll, please -- Cincinnati.

Popik found numerous references to Chicago as the "Windy City" in the Cincinnati Enquirer in the late 1870s and early 1880s. The oldest instance Popik has found is in the May 9, 1876, edition of the Enquirer, in a report about a tornado that hit Chicago on May 6. The headline read, "That Windy City."

The Cincinnati Historical Society confirms his findings.

Popik says the Enquirer headline had a double meaning in its era of civic name-calling, for Chicago, Cincinnati and St. Louis all vociferously claimed the right to be called the greatest city of the Midwest.

"The Cincinnati Enquirer's use is clearly double-edged," Popik says. "They used the term for windy speakers who were full of wind, and there was a wind-storm in Chicago. It's both at once."

The May 6 tornado may have provided a physical reason to use a figurative analogy. In its first report about the tornado on May 8, the Enquirer tastelessly quipped that the twister failed to damage the buildings in Chicago that "were so heavily

weighed down with mortgages that no whirlwind could affect them.”

Popik says the Enquirer also printed several jokes that said Chicago women had big feet (if you don't find that hilarious, maybe you had to be there).

“The regional cities in the period leading up to the Civil War and afterward are constantly poking each other in the eye,” says Boyd of the Encyclopedia of Chicago. “They need to build themselves up and tear others down.

Boosterism is the rhetorical mode of rivalry. It's trash talk.”

Popik's findings have been available for years, posted at the American Dialect Society and his Web site ([www.barrypopik.com](http://www.barrypopik.com)), published in the journal *Comments on Etymology*, and reported by the “Straight Dope” column of the *Chicago Reader*. Yet, to Popik's exasperation, the myth that Dana coined the name “Windy City” circa 1890 goes on and on.

“These stories, you have to kill them,” he says. “Not only kill them, but put a stake in their heart. You have to go to each individual source and say, ‘That's not true.’”

Popik says if he were a history professor instead of a parking ticket judge, he would be taken more seriously, and this Windy City matter might have been settled by now.

“He's completely right. There's no question about it,” says Jesse Sheidlower, North American editor of the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

“Mr. Popik's references solidly establish that ‘Windy City’ was a Chicago nickname that preceded Dana and the fight to secure the world's fair,” says Samuelson, Chicago's cultural historian.

“I wouldn't be surprised if the Dana quote does indeed exist,” he says, but adds, “Even if we had a specific reference to a Dana quotation, it's questionable what kind of role it would have played in giving ‘popularity’ to the term, since it was already in circulation as a Chicago-related reference.”

TIN PAN ALLEY ORIGIN IS EXPLAINED  
IN A 1903 NEWSPAPER ARTICLE

Barry Popik  
225 E. 57 St., Apt. 7P  
New York, NY 10022

[ed., G. Cohen: Popik first presented this in a 6/28/2003  
ads-l message and then as a working paper in *Comments on  
Etymology*, vol. 34, no. 5, Feb. 2005, pp. 4-5.]

\* \* \*

I received another request for my 'Tin Pan Alley' citation,  
so here it is. ... Don't forget to check the NEW YORK TIMES and  
BROOKLYN EAGLE databases for the similar and earlier 'Ten Pin  
Alley.' ----

3 May 1903, THE WORLD (NY), p. 4M (Metropolitan section on  
Sunday): *A Visit to "Tin Pan Alley," Where the Popular Songs  
Come From.*

*"Tin Pan Alley?"--It's Twenty-eighth Street Between Broad-  
way and Sixth Avenue, the Centre of the Song Publishing  
Business in This Country, and it Gets Its Name from the Jangling  
of Pianos That Are Banged and Rattled There Day and Night as  
New Songs Are Being "Tried On."*

*'Every Day You'll See Noted People in the Musical Comedy  
World Hunting in the "Alley" for Songs That Will Add to Their  
Fame*

*-- Paula Edwardes, Marie Cahill, Blanche Ring, Dan Daly, Marie  
Dressler and Lew Dockstader Active in the Hunt.*

'STRANGE are the ways of Tin Pan Alley. Great is the in-  
fluence of Tin Pan Alley upon our country's songs. For here they  
are conceived, originated, brought forth and spread broadcast  
[sic: spread broadcast]

'Tin Pan Alley is that part of Twenty-eighth street that lies  
between Broadway and Sixth avenue. Here centre the song-  
publishing houses of New York.

'It gets its name from the tin-panny sounds of pianos that are banged and rattled there by night and day as new songs and old are played over and over into the ears of singing comedians, comic-opera prima donnas and single soubrettes and "sister teams" from vaudeville.

'Now, "Tin Pan Alley" is considered a term of reproach by the Tin Pan Alleyites. They prefer to designate it as "Melody Lane." But that is a poetic fancy that those who go down that way to hear the "new, big, screaming hits" do not indulge in.

'Tin Pan Alley contains all the music publishing houses of note save four--Joseph W. Stern & Co., in East Twenty-first street; Whitmark & Sons, on Twenty-ninth street, off Broadway; Howley, Haviland & Dresser, on Broadway at Thirty-first street, and Sol Bloom, in the New Zealand Building, a little higher up. These act as outposts for Tin Pan Alley. ...'

#### REFERENCE

ads-l = ads-l@listserv.uga.edu (American Dialect Society, Internet discussion group)

*TO NEED HAIR OF THE DOG THAT BIT YOU*  
 'NEED A BIT MORE BOOZE TO GET OVER A HANGOVER'

Gerald Cohen

[This article, now slightly revised, first appeared in *Comments on Etymology*, Feb. 1999, vol. 28, no. 5, pp. 14-15.]

English has an odd expression *need hair of the dog that bit you* 'need a little more booze to get over a hangover.' I had never heard the expression until recently, but a check of my Midwestern colleagues shows that about half are familiar with it.

One of these colleagues, Jonathan Finch [1999; lecturer in Philosophy, University of Missouri-Rolla] kindly gave me the following illustration of its use.

A fellow wakes up with a terrible hangover and says: 'I'm really hung' (= I feel real bad) while looking for an aspirin, Tylenol, or something else to alleviate his suffering. His roommate, trying to be helpful, might suggest: 'You need some of the hair of the dog that bit you.'

Normally this would refer to the same kind of booze he drank the night before, but it can also refer to any kind of alcoholic beverage--so I'm told.

ORIGIN OF THE EXPRESSION IS SPOTTED IMMEDIATELY BY ELLARD MALINDI (NATIVE OF THE AFRICAN COUNTRY MALAWI): IN HIS VILLAGE, A PERSON BITTEN BY A DOG TAKES HAIR FROM THAT DOG AND RUBS IT ON THE WOUND; THIS SUPPOSEDLY HEALS THE WOUND MORE QUICKLY.

A former student of mine, Kay Henry, sent me a May 4, 1999 e-mail message, of which I now present excerpts:

'...Last Saturday, I was sitting in the back seat of a rickety bus going over pot-hole-ridden roads in rural Kenya on my way to a game park. My seatmate was Dr. Ellard Malindi, the Principal Secretary of Malawi's Ministry of Agriculture, an erudite man with a terrific sense of humor and a Ph.D. from the University of

Illinois. We were all up by 5:00 that morning and ready to go on safari, despite a late night the night before dancing and singing and drinking enough beer to fuel the dancing and singing.

'At around 8:30 a.m., one of our colleagues on the bus popped open a can of Castle beer from South Africa. I remarked to Dr. Malindi that Alexander apparently needed some hair of the dog that bit him. Once I had explained the meaning of the expression (Dr. Malindi is something of a word buff himself when he's not running his country's agricultural industry), he told me that it made perfect sense to him, although he had never heard the expression used in the context of hangovers and alcohol consumption. Apparently, in his village in Malawi, when you get bitten by a dog, you literally take some hair from the dog that bit you and rub it on the wound. This supposedly heals the wound more quickly.

'Whaddaya know? Who would have thought?... By the way, I waited until lunchtime for my "hair of the dog," but I didn't need it as badly as some of the others!...'

KAY HENRY/Director, MBA for Executives/Jones Graduate School of Management/Rice University/Houston, TX 77005-18929.'

It now seems clear that a hangover was likened to a dog bite, with hair from the dog (i.e., more alcohol) required to help cure the hangover. Incidentally, how widespread is the belief in the use of dog-hair to help cure a dog bite?

#### REFERENCES

- Begley, Sharon 2003. Science may discover the hair of the dog for pollution binge. Wall Street Journal. July 25, 2003, sec. B, p. 1/1. -- (of interest only because of the expression 'hair of the dog' in the article's title)
- Dear Abby syndicated newspaper column, Rolla Daily News, June 8, 2005, p. 7A/4. --- A woman has written that she and her husband separated recently, which is okay with her since they were definitely not meant to be together. BUT,



'What's tearing me up is the fact that he's dating already. Should I start? What can I do to clear my head?'

Abby responded: 'A divorce isn't like a hangover. "Hair of the dog" won't make the ache go away. Because your about-to-be-ex is dating doesn't mean you should be. ...'

HDAS -- Historical Dictionary of American Slang. 1994ff. Editor: Jonathan E. Lighter, vol. 1: A-G, vol. 2: H-O. NY: Random House. Publication will be continued by Oxford U. Press. ---- HDAS treats the expression (*need*) *hair of the dog that bit one* only tangentially:

(1) '*dog hair* suggested by phrase hair of the dog [that bit one] an alcoholic drink, usu. whiskey, taken as a supposed remedy for a hangover.' --- (The first citation is from 'ca. 1940')

(2) *hair* n. meaning #2: [sugg. by prov. phrase *hair of the dog (that bit one)* "liquor taken as a supposed curative for a hangover"] liquor, esp. whiskey, usually added to a nonalcoholic drink.

1848 in J.Q. Anderson *Bark On* 119: "Having taken a couple of fingers of 'har,' he departed to see his friend Mr. B."

*LOSE ONE'S MARBLES*--JONATHAN LIGHTER'S 1902 ATTESTATION  
REFUTES MY SUGGESTION OF A 1920s MISSOURI ORIGIN OF THE EX-  
PRESSION

Gerald Cohen

[This item first appeared in *Comments on Etymology*,  
May 2001, vol. 30, no. 8, pp. 2-3]

You win some, you lose some. I now withdraw my earlier suggestion that *lose one's marbles* 'be a bit crazy' may derive from 1920s Newburg, Missouri. I had first advanced this suggestion in a 1992 *Com. on Et.* working paper and then formally in 1995. All along I was aware that the suggestion could be refuted if attestations prior to 1918 or so turned up. Sam Root, the boy who picked up the marbles lost by his slightly older friends while fighting, was born in 1911 and remembers that the fighting incidents occurred when he was 10-12 years old. The earliest attestation had previously been 1927, reconstructible back to 1925, and I had been growing increasingly confident that no earlier attestations would surface.

However, one did surface. Jonathan Lighter's second volume of *HDAS* appeared in 1997, two years after my 1995 article. Recently I checked this work for *marbles*, and lo and behold, there was an attestation from 1902:

'*marbles*,...meaning #2. "one's sanity or good sense, esp. in phrase *lose one's marbles*. ---1902 Hobart *Up to You* 64: "I saw-sawed back and forth between Clara J. and the smoke-holder like a man who is shy some of his marbles.'

I checked this work by George Vere Hobart (aka Hugh McHugh), and Lighter's information pans out. The 1920s marbles losing incidents in Newburg, Missouri may have given some impetus to the use of *lose one's marbles*; but there is now no doubt that the Missouri incidents were not the source of the expression.

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Cohen, Gerald 1992, 1994. (Working papers of 1995 item just

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CAKEWALK--1897 NEW-ORLEANS TIMES-DEMOCRAT ARTICLE  
EXPLAINS IT WAS ORIGINALLY A MARRIAGE CEREMONY  
AMONG FRENCH BLACKS IN LOUISIANA

Barry Popik  
225 E. 57 St., Apt. 7P  
New York, NY 10022

[G. Cohen: Popik first presented this item in *Comments on Etymology*, February 2003, vol. 32, no. 5, pp. 13-16. The cakewalk dance/walk underlies the slang use of the term as in 'A war with North Korea will not be a cakewalk.']

BACKGROUND INFORMATION IN *OED2*

First, for easy reference, here is the treatment of *cakewalk* in *OED2*:

1. a. 'A walking competition among negroes, in which the couple who put on most style "take the cake"' (Thornton). b. A dance modelled on this.

It originated among the Negroes of the southern United States.

1879 Harper's Mag. Oct. 799/1 Reader, didst ever attend a cake walk given by the colored folks?

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attrib. 1898 F. H. SMITH C. West 314 A certain--to him--cake-walk cut to the coat and white duck trousers.



1901 Westm. Gaz. 3 June 3/1 Although there is a painful amount of cake-walk music.

1903 Daily Chron. 21 Apr. 7/3 The closing number in the bill will be a grand cake-walk promenade.

c. transf. and fig. in quotes. 1916, 1966 = 'something easy'.

1863 H. EDGAR Jrnl. in Montana Hist. Soc. Contrib. (1900) III. 133 Around and around that bush we went... We had a good laugh over our cake walk.

1894 'M. TWAIN' in Critic 7 July 8/1 This Shelley biography..is a literary cake-walk.

1916 J. B. COOPER Coo-oo-ee xi. 153 Whether they would give him victory in a fight that would not be a cake-walk, he did not know.

1966 J. M. BRETT Cargo of Spent Evil x. 87 This should be a cakewalk for you.

2. A form of entertainment consisting of a promenade moved by machinery on which people walk to the accompaniment of music.

1909 Oxford Times 11 Sept. 9/5 In dealing with the fair itself there were really no new features..except that of the Brooklyn cake-walk, an ingenious rocking platform which gave those who patronised it the sensation of a cake-walk dance...The novelty was in operation at the White City last year.

1914 Ibid. 12 Sept. 10/3 The absence of the popular joy-wheel, the cake-walk [etc.].

1968 D. BRAITHWAITE Fairground Archit. p. ix, The boneshaking old Cake-walk changes its name to suit the fashion of the day, becoming at one time the Jolly Jersey Bounce and more recently the Rock an' Roll.

Hence cake-walk v. intr., to walk or dance in the manner of a cake-walk (sense 1); also transf. and fig. So cake-walker; cake-walking vbl. n. and ppl. a.

1898 WILLIAMS & WALKER Let. 16 Jan. in J. W. Johnson Black Manhattan (1930) x. 105 We, the undersigned world-renowned

cake-walkers..hereby challenge you to compete with us in a cake-walking match.

1898 Daily Tel. 14 Mar., Cake-walking is, in fact, a graceful motion, conducted upon the toes and ball of the foot.

1898 Westm. Gaz. 3 Dec. 7/7 The cake walkers at Covent Garden.

1904 Daily Chron. 22 Mar. 4/7 The genuinely tip-top men Were those who never cake-walked.

1904 'SAKI' Reginald 90 A mouse used to cake-walk about my room.

1905 Westm. Gaz. 17 Aug. 8/1 French singers, cake-walking coons, and fifth-rate English dancers.

1927 Melody Maker Sept. 931/2 The syndicate..cake-walks to prosperity.

1958 BLESSE & JANIS They all played Ragtime 3. Soon the French were cakewalking in the streets of Paris to le temps du chiffon. Ibid. v. 99 Cakewalking developed into a real art.

1967 V. NABOKOV Speak, Memory (ed. 2) xv. 309 Pale-blue and pink underwear cakewalking on a clothesline.

ANTEDATING OED2 WITH MATERIAL FROM POOLE'S PLUS;  
THIRD ITEM (1897) GIVES ORIGIN OF THE CAKEWALK

In a Feb. 11, 2002 ads-l message I drew attention to some interesting hits on *cakewalk* from Poole's Plus:

1) 13 December 1874, *New York Times*, p. 4, col. 6:

title: 'A Mystery Explained.

subtitle: 'What A Cake Walk And Live Pigeon Pie Really Are --Social Enjoyments In Pottsville.

*From the Pottsville (Penn.) Miners' Journal.*

'...The entrance fees over, eight couples were found ready to walk for the cakes to be given to those who promenaded with the most grace and the most in accord with the spirit of this enlightened age. They marched to the tune of "John Brown," played on the organ and sung by the audience.'

2) 23 December 1877, *New York Times*, p. 2, col. 5:

'Walking For The Cake.

"Ole Virginny" Entertainment.

The Great Trial Of Grace And Agility In  
The London Circus--Beaux And Belles  
In Lively Competition.'

[Another article is also December 30, 1877, p. 2, col. 2]

3) 25 October 1897, *New York Daily Tribune*, p. 10, col. 2:

'Origin Of The Cake-Walk. Formerly A Marriage Ceremony, But  
Its Significance Now Lost.

'From the New-Orleans Times-Democrat.

'The cake-walk proper had its origin among the French negroes of Louisiana more than a century ago. There is little doubt that it is an offshoot of some of the old French country dances. It resembles several of them in form. From New-Orleans it spread over the entire South, and thence North. It was found of convenience to the plantation negroes. They were not wedded by license, and it was seldom that the services of a preacher were called in. At a cake-walk a man might legitimately show his preference for a woman, and thus publicly claim her for a wife. In effect the cake-walk was not different from the old Scotch marriage, which required only public-acknowledgment from the contracting parties. So this festival became in some sense a wooing, an acceptance or rejection and a ceremony. This explains its popularity with the blacks, outside of its beauties, with the accompaniment of music, which is competent at all times to command negro support. Cake-walking has improved, as do most things that are constantly practised. It has lost its old significance in the South. Negroes now get married, when they marry at all, in white folks' fashion. It has become, however, a pantomime dance. Properly performed, it is a beautiful one. The cake is not much of a prize, though the negro has a sweet tooth.'

#### SELECTED REFERENCES

ads-l - American Dialect Society, Internet discussion group  
(ads-l@listserv.uga.edu)

Baker John (JMB@STRADLEY.COM) 2002. 17 Sept. 2002 ads-l message:

'Barry's 1874 citation is from The New York Times. Safire also missed an 1863 citation from the OED:

1863 H. EDGAR Jrnl. in Montana Hist. Soc. Contrib. (1900) III. 133 Around and around that bush we went... We had a good laugh over our cake walk.'

HDAS = Historical Dictionary of American Slang. edited by Jonathan E. Lighter. 1994ff. Volumes A-G and H-O. Publication will be continued by Oxford U. Press. -- Lighter says of *cakewalk*: 'Orig. [in] Boxing: an easy victory; (hence) an easy task' and gives as the first implied attestation: 1877 D, Braham *Walking for dat Cake* (pop. song title). The first actual attestation he cites is from 1897: "Siler and Houseman *Fight of the Century* 46: It's a cake-walk for Jim...Fitz hasn't a chance.'

OED2 - Oxford English Dictionary, 2nd edition.

Safire, William 2002. On Language: Perp Walk. NY Times Magazine, Sept. 15, 2002, p. 30: "'Perp walk was not coined on the analogy of *cakewalk*. That was first noted in the 1877 song title "Walking for dat Cake," about a strutting style in a walking competition conducted among blacks, the winner of which would "take the cake." The cool elegance of those adept at *cakewalking* led to its sense of "something easy to do." ...'

Thornton, Richard 1912. An American glossary. Philadelphia: Lippincott. Later reprinted.

SLANG *POOF* 'EFFEMINATE MAN, MALE HOMOSEXUAL'

Gerald Cohen

[This article compiles several treatments of *poof* and its related forms. The compiled version first appeared in *Comments on Etymology*, Jan. 2000, vol. 29, no. 4, pp. 6-14.]

TREATMENTS IN *OED2* CONNECT SLANG *POOF*  
AND *PUFF* BUT DO NOT GIVE THE ETYMOLOGY

1) '*POOF* ...sb., slang. Also *pooff*, *pouf*, etc. Probably a corruption of *puff* sb. 8 d. An effeminate man, a male homosexual; a man who acts or speaks in an affected manner...Often considered offensive.

c. 1855-1860 in G. Taylor, *Angel-Makers* (1958) iv. 80. These monsters in the shape of men, commonly designated Margeries, Pooffs, etc.

1932 AUDEN *Orators* III.98 Poofs and ponces, all of them dunces.'

[Then various additional examples]

2) '*PUFF* (See also *POOF* sb.) ...An effeminate man; a male homosexual.

1902 FARMER & HENLEY *Slang* V 313/1 *Puff*...3 (tramps') a sodomist.'

[Then various additional examples, 1937 - 1974]

WORKS REFERRED TO BY *OED2*

1. (c. 1855-1860) GORDON RATTRAY  
TAYLOR'S *THE ANGEL MAKERS*

(1973 edition, pp. 98-99, part of a discussion on homosexuality in 19th century London): 'By the middle of the nineteenth century things are so bad that "it is not long since that, in the neighborhood of Charing Cross, they posted bills in the windows of several respectable public houses, cautioning the public to

'Beware of Sods'." *The Yokel's Preceptor* says it is necessary to warn its readers to be careful, owing to the "increase of these monsters in the shape of men, commonly designated Margeries, Pooffs, etc., of later years in the great metropolis...the Quadrant, Fleet Steet, Holborn, the Strand, etc., are actually thronged with them!" There are many in the theatrical profession, it adds, and goes on to describe the signs by which they make themselves known--precisely the same as Parker had described in the previous century.' [fn. 59 appears here: *Yokel's Preceptor*, pp. 5f. , Parker, *A View of Society*, pp.85f.]

## 2. PASSAGE FROM *THE YOKEL'S PRECEPTOR* (prior to ca. 1855-1860 *The Angel-Makers*)

(pp. 5-7; G. Cohen: This passage is referred to in *Angel-Makers*. *Pooffs* appears in the first paragraph and *poof* in the third from the last.)

### 'A FEW WORDS ABOUT MARGERIES--THE WAY TO KNOW THE BEASTS--THEIR HAUNTS, ETC.

'The increase of these monsters in the shape of men, commonly designated *Margeries*, *Pooffs*, etc., of late years, in the great metropolis, renders it necessary for the safety of the public, that they should be made known. The punishment generally awarded to such miscreants is not half severe enough, and till the law is more frequently carried to the fullest extent against them, there can be no [p.6] hope of crushing the bestiality. The wretches are too well paid--they being principally, it is well known, supported by their rich companions--to care a jot about a few months' imprisonment. Why has the pillory been abolished? Would it not be found very salutary for such beasts as these? For can they be too much held up to public degradation and public punishment? Will the reader credit it, but such is nevertheless the fact, that these monsters actually walk the streets the same as whores, looking out for a chance!

'Yes, the Quadrant, Fleet-street, Holborn, the Strand, etc.

are actually thronged with them! Nay, it is not long since, in the neighbourhood of Charing Cross, they posted bills in the windows of several respectable public houses, cautioning the public to "Beware of Sods!"

'They generally congregate around the picture shops, and are to be known by their effeminate air, their fashionable dress, etc. When they see what they imagine to be a chance, they place their fingers in a peculiar manner underneath the tails of their coats, and wag them about--their method of giving the office. [G. Cohen: 'office' is cant for 'sign, signal.']

'A great many of them flock the saloons and boxes of the theatres, coffee-houses, etc.

'We could relate many instances of the gross bestiality of the practices of these wretches, but think it would be occupying too much of the reader's time on so disgusting a subject. One or two anecdotes of them we cannot, however, resist the temptation of relating.

'The Quadrant is thronged by a number of the most notorious Margeries, who turn out daily and nightly to look for their living the same as the blowens [G. Cohen: i.e., whores]. One of these is nicknamed "Fair Eliza." This fellow lives in Westminster, and keeps his fancy woman, who does not scruple to live upon the fruits of his monstrous avocation. Another fellow, called Betsy H\_\_\_\_\_, who walks the Strand, Fleet-street, and St. Martin's-court, is a most notorious and shameless POOF [G. Cohen: capitals added]. He is not unfrequently to be found at free-and-easys, where he spouts smutty [p.7] recitations. His father was a notorious cock-bawd, and when he died, he bequeathed his two sons a bawdyken each. One of the sons got a *situation*, we believe, for *borrowing* something--the other soon floored his knocking shop, and then took to the streets. He has been imprisoned several times, but yet he persists in following his beastly pursuits.

'There have been also many fellows of this description in the theatrical profession, who have yet been considered respectable members of society. We could mention the names of several, but will, out of compassion only, withhold them. A

certain wealthy showman, it was suspected, did not so well respect a certain "purty" actor of his, without good reasons for so doing; and it is well known that a wretch, who was in the habit of perpetrating the French characters at a theatre notorious for its horses and asses, over the water, was one of the same disgusting and most abominable fraternity.

'But we will leave this disgusting subject, again cautioning the respectable portion of the human race to beware of these wholesale abominable traders in this bestiality.'

PASSAGE FROM G. PARKER'S 1781 *A VIEW OF  
SOCIETY AND MANNERS IN HIGH AND LOW LIFE...*

(pp.85-88; G. Cohen: This passage is referred to by *Angel-Makers* but does not refer specifically to 'poof(f)s'; the term used here is 'madge culls.')

*'MADGE CULLS*

'This is one of the most abandoned and infamous characters that disgrace Society; as their passion counteracts the prospects of futurity, and deprives the most beautiful part of the Community of their rights.

'The name of the vice which is here intended, is better omitted than expressed; it is sufficient to say, that it is happy for this country that its growth is exotic, and that no culture will bring it into fashion, nor no name give it a sanction.

[p.86] 'It is said to have been imported into this country from Italy. If such are the refinements of foreign travel, it had been better that England had ever retained her native roughness, than to have imported those vices which CHURCHILL says are

"Sins, if such sins can be, which shut out grace,  
 "Which for the guilty have no hope no place  
 "Ev'n in God's mercy. Sins 'gainst nature's plan  
 "Possess the land at large, and man for man  
 "Burns in these fires which hell alone could raise,  
 "To make him more than damn'd; which in the days



“Of punishment, when guilt becomes her prey,  
 “With all her tortures fire can fearce [sic; G. Cohen]  
 repay.”

‘These wretches have many ways and means of conveying intelligence, and many signals by which they discover themselves to each other; they have likewise [p.87] several houses of rendezvous, whither they resort; but their chief place of meeting is the Bird-cage Walk, in St. James’s Park, whither they resort about twilight.

‘They are easily discovered by their signals, which are pretty nearly as follow: If one of them sits on a bench, he pats the backs of his hands; if you follow them, they put a white handkerchief thro’ the skirts of their coat, and wave it to and fro; but if they are met by you, their thumbs are stuck in the armpits of their waistcoats, and they play their fingers upon their breasts.

‘By means of these signals they retire to satisfy a passion too horrible for description, too detestable for language; a passion which deserves the punishment not of the law only, but an exclusion from [p.88] Society on the most light glance of just suspicion of it.’

1913 USE OF *POUF* BY A U.S. BOXER WAS UNFAMILIAR TO SPORTSWRITER. WHAT EXACTLY DID THE TERM MEAN IN THIS CONTEXT?

While researching the term *jazz* I came across the following passage in the newspaper *San Francisco Bulletin* (April 19, 1913, p.13/1-3; ‘City Fans Witness Awful Bouts At Pavilion Park’; subtitle: ‘Boxers on Last Night’s Card Show Little Class and Card Proved Worst Staged Here in Years,’ by T. P. Magilligan):

[col. 2] ‘Antone LaGrave and Eddie Burns boxed a four-round bout. They showed a willingness and spirit that was surprising in view of some of the bouts that preceded their contest. LaGrave scored one knockdown in this bout and this earned for him a draw, though Burns did have a slight shade.

‘LaGrave was peeved when Schuler handed Burns a draw.

He uttered the word “P-o-u-f” right in Referee Schuler’s ear when Frank gave the decision. We are not quite Jerome to [G. Cohen: aware of] this “pouf” thing, but we’ll bet if Antone had “poufed” Burns twice over he would have won. “Pouf” is a good word, but it failed to get Antone the decision. If Antone is a wise bird he will “pouf” the referee at the start of his bouts in the future instead of at the finish. ...’

There is a problem in determining the meaning of the ‘pouf’ which boxer LaGrave whispered in the referee’s ear. LaGrave might have been insulting him as a homosexual, or ‘pouf’ might have simply been an expression of disgust, spelled ‘poof’ in the OED2 examples (see below). I am unable to resolve this problem.

#### SAME 1913 SPORTSWRITER CREDITS LAGRAVE WITH CREATION OF THE TERM

A week later (April 26, 1913, p.12/3) sportswriter T. P. Magilligan clarified that he regarded LaGrave as the creator of the term *pouf*. Magilligan also extended the meaning of *pouf* to ‘strike, hit.’ He did so based on his April 19 article, which said:

‘...we’ll bet if Antone had “poufed” Burns twice over he would have won. “Pouf” is a good word, but it failed to get Antone the decision. If Antone is a wise bird he will “pouf” the referee at the start of his bouts in the future instead of at the finish.’

In this context, ‘pouf’ means merely ‘to say “pouf” to.’ But LaGrave had spoken the term aggressively, and from aggressive speaking to aggressive action (especially in regard to a boxer) is a small semantic step.

Here is Magilligan’s relevant April 26 passage; the article is entitled ‘Former Amateur Is Great Boxer, But Very Light Hitter,’ and the specific heading under which ‘pouf’ appears twice is ‘Jimmy Howard Views “Movies” In Bout With Al Herman’:

‘...Anton LaGrave, the well known and justly celebrated author of the word “pouf,” scored a knockout in the fourth round

over Jimmy Tollen of Oakland. Anton "poufed" Tollen early and often and as a result he had that young man's goat thoroughly fastened. In the opening spasm LaGrave sent Tollen to the floor with a left swing. In the final round Anton sprawled Tollen on the ropes with another left, and while Tollen was hanging on the top rope like a sheet hung out to dry on a clothesline, Referee Bert McCullough stopped the bout and awarded the verdict to Anton.'

NOV. 1999 LETTER FROM LEONARD R. N. ASHLEY

(G. Cohen: Leonard Ashley--Professor Emeritus, Brooklyn College, CUNY--has long been interested in the terminology of gays and lesbians. When I asked him about *poof*, he referred me to his 1979 article and added a few comments:)

'In the U.K. I have heard *pouf about* (meaning 'to act as or like a homosexual, with some suggestion of promiscuity,' the British slang creating a number of such verbs from nouns, the commonest in this 'gay' area being *perve* (meaning 'to act like a pervert').

'I have heard (incredible) derivations of *pouf*, such as the (Turkish origin) 'seat' or 'footstool,' so called in French. I have never seen any convincing etymology. Nor do I understand why the U.K. needs both *pouf* (also spelled *poof* and *poufe*) and also *poufter* (which seems more condemnatory somehow in use, perhaps because it is preferred by the more violent opposition to homosexuality, which...may be practiced legally in the U.K. but which cannot by law be encouraged or recommended or (I suppose) commended.

"Someone must settle the etymologies of *fag*, *pouf*, *felch*, etc. etc.", I wrote (p.254) in my [1979] article. I'm delighted to see you are tackling it now, 20 years later.'

POUF AND ITS VARIANTS PROBABY DERIVE  
FROM POOF AS AN EXCLAMATION OF DISGUST

Besides *poof* 'effeminate man, male homosexual,' *OED2* presents the following item:

'*POOF*...int. and sb. Also *pouf*, *pouff*. [Etymology: A natural utterance, Cf. French *pouf*]. a. Interjection. A sound imitating a short sharp puff of the breath as in blowing something from the mouth, or blowing out a candle; HENCE AN EXPRESSION OF CONTEMPTUOUS REJECTION [G. Cohen: capitals added]. Cf. *POOH* interjection.

1824 J. MORIER *Adventures Hajji Baba* II. I. 39: Putting up her five fingers to his face, she said, "Poof! I spit on such a face!"

1829 G. GRIFFIN *Collegians* I. viii. 159. Gi' me the hat, sir, an' I'll hang it up--poof, it's full of dust.

1857 W. COLLINS *Dead Secret* II. iii, Pouf! The very anticipation of them [clouds of dust] chokes me already.

1862 H. MARRYAT *Year in Sweden* II. 55 As for the others, poof!

1865 DICKENS *Mut. Fr.* III. ii, Call that a quantity...Poof! What do you say to the rest of it?

(Additional examples are then presented.)

The passages quoted earlier from *Angel Makers*, Parker 1781, and *Yokel's Preceptor* show clearly that male homosexuality was regarded with disgust in eighteenth and nineteenth century England. Meanwhile, *OED2* shows that by 1824 *poof* existed in English as an interjection of disgust, and the first attestation of *poof* 'male homosexual' comes some thirty years later. The derivation of the latter term from the interjection seems obvious, although the dictionaries have apparently not yet made the specific connection.

#### REFERENCES

Ashley, Leonard R.N. 1979. Kinks and queens: linguistic and cultural aspects of the terminology of gays. *Maledicta*, vol. 3, no. 1, pp. 215-256; p.219: '*pouf* or *poufter*, unheard on these [U.S.] shores.'

English dialect dictionary -- See Wright, Joseph.

- Farmer, John S. and W.E. Henley 1902. Slang and its analogues. NY: Kraus Reprint (1965).
- OED2 - Oxford English Dictionary, 2nd ed.
- Parker, G. 1781. A view of society and manners in high and low life, being the adventures of...Mr. G. Parker. London.
- Partridge, Eric 1968. A dictionary of the underworld. London: Routledge. 3rd edition. -- incorrectly states that 'Any attempt at an etymology must proceed from the starting point of *puff*, the earliest form...' Partridge here regards Farmer & Henley's 1902 *puff* as the earliest attestation. Partridge then continues unconvincingly: '*Puff*, "a pathic," almost certainly derives--one contempt being substituted for, or rather being a natural successor to, the other--ex *puff* "an informer to the police".'
- Stewart, William 1995. Cassell's queer companion: a dictionary of lesbian and gay life and culture. London: New York--p.197: '*poof/pouf*: British term for a gay man which was first recorded in the mid-nineteenth century, and originally referred to men who pick up male SEX-WORKERS. While generally used as a pejorative, it has been adopted by some gay men as an affectionate epithet for others. The longer version, *poofter*, which became rare in the UK until it was reintroduced from Australia in the 1960s, is used to describe any man who does not live up to the rugby-playing male stereotype, gay or not.'
- Taylor, Gordon Rattray ca. 1855-1860. The angel makers. A study in the psychological origins of historical change 1750-1850. NY: Dutton, 1958, 1973.---p.99 quotes The Yokel's Preceptor, with 'pooffs' included.
- Wright, Joseph 1905. The English dialect dictionary. Reprinted 1970, Oxford University Press--- '*Pouff*,...Bnff., [meaning #1:] A dull, heavy blow or fall; the sound caused by such a blow or fall; [meaning #3:] A big, stupid person.' -- This dialectal *pouff* has no connection with *pouf*[f] 'effeminate man, male homosexual.' One might possibly suspect the dialectal term as giving rise to *pouf* 'strike, hit' as used by sportswriter Magilligan in his April 26, 1913 newspaper

article (see above, pp.10-11). But it is clear that Magilligan's starting point for *pouf* was the insult spoken by boxer LaGrave into the ear of the referee a week earlier. And that insult had nothing to do with dialectal *poof* 'blow, sound of a blow.'

The Yokel's preceptor: or More sprees in London. Being a regular and curious show-up of all the rigs and doings of the flash cribs in this great metropolis, and it may be fairly styled every swankey's book. To which is added a joskin's vocabulary of the various slang words now in constant use. --- London: H. Smith, 18\_\_\_. [G. Cohen: Exact date is not given]. 31 pp.

MICHAEL JACKSON'S CHILDISH BUT DEROGATORY  
TERM SPABOOKS 'SPOOKS' (BLACK PEOPLE)

Gerald Cohen, compiler

(This article first appeared in *Comments on  
Etymology*, April 2003, vol. 32, no. 7, pp. 26-28.)

In a March 4, 2003 ads-l message, James A. Landau  
(JJJRLandau@AOL.COM) wrote:

'From a Reuters article, available from America On-Line  
News this afternoon:

"*Vanity Fair*, in an article for its March 11 edition, also  
reports that Jackson bleaches his skin white because he does  
not like being black. The 44-year-old singer sometimes refers to  
black people as 'spabooks,' the magazine said."

Landau concluded quizzically: 'Spabooks?'

REPLY FROM BEVERLY FLANIGAN

An initial clarifying reply came from Beverly Flanigan  
(flanigan@OHIOU.EDU), March 4, 2003:

"'Spooks' with an infix??? Ugh.'

REPLIES FROM RICHARD A. SPEARS

On March 5, 2003, slang lexicologist Richard A. Spears  
(RASpears.pipo@XEMAPS.COM) seconded Flanigan's suggestion:  
'I think it's a disguise of *spooks*,' and two days later clarified:  
'ADD: It's a piglatinish kind of wordplay called ubby-dubby, e.g.,  
Pabig Labatabun.'

I then asked whether there might be any scholarly litera-  
ture about this ubby-dubby wordplay, and Spears replied:

'Ubbby dubbby is from ZOOM, a children's television program  
of the 1970s, PBS, I think. I do not recall ever seeing any-  
thing but mention in academic writing.'

## REPLY FROM TOM DALZELL

Slang researcher Tom Dalzell (slangman@pacbell.net) added a bit more detail to the reply just above:

'Not hardly scholarly, but, a little more:

Ubbi-Dubbi - Secret language spoken by a group of pre-teens youngsters called "Zoomers" who hosted the PBS children's program ZOOM/PBS/1972-77 produced by WGBH-TV in Boston. Amidst the songs, dances, jokes, stories and tips sent in by the young viewers, these ZOOMERS spoke a language similar to Pig Latin. The following is an example of the language's structure: T-ub-o sp-ub-eak ub-it, Ub-add-"UB" b-ub-ef-ub-ore Ub-each v-ub-ow-ub-el s-ub-ound ub-in ub-ev-ub-er-ub-y w-ub-ord. G-ub-ood l-ub-uck! (Note: Always put the accent on the "ub" each time you say it). A new version of the ZOOM series returned to PBS-TV in January of 1999.

[http://www.tvacres.com/languages\\_phrases.htm](http://www.tvacres.com/languages_phrases.htm)

## GENERAL OBSERVATIONS

I see a parallel here between Jackson's serious use of a childish feature of speech and Mezz Mezzrow's heavy use of black jazz-slang. Mezzrow, a white jazz musician, identified strongly with blacks, considering himself black in all respects except skin color; (the term he used was 'Negro,' which in his day was acceptable).

In reality, though, Mezzrow could no more be really black than the 44-year old Michael Jackson could be a child. And yet both used features of speech to identify themselves as members of the group to which they unrealistically yearn(ed) to belong. If scholars seek examples of language being used not merely to communicate information but as a tool to identify oneself as a member of a group (whether one really belongs to it or not), Jackson's *spabooks* and Mezzrow's abundant jazz-slang should be listed.



Incidentally, I had never heard or seen *spook* as meaning anything other than a specter or a CIA-type operative.

## REFERENCES

- ads-l = ads-l@listserv.uga.edu (American Dialect Society's Internet discussion group)
- Gray, Wilson 2005. Feb. 15, 2006 ads-l message on slang he (an African-American) heard in the military. Last paragraph: 'Oddly enough, being stationed in Vietnam was considered to be a far better deal than being stationed in Germany, in my day. At least it was supposed to be better if you were in the Security Agency and, therefore, a spook. (Being referred to as as "spook" by white people took some getting used to, since, theretofore, the only slang meaning that I knew for "spook" was as a milder but just as annoying replacement for "nigger.") ....'
- Major, Clarence 1994. *From Juba to Jive: A Dictionary of African-American Slang*. (First printed: 1970). NY: Viking. p.440: '*Spook* n. (1800s-1960s) originally used by black slaves as a reference to ghosts, and later as a reference to white people as "ghost-like" A black person; a "Negro"; picked up from derogatory white use and used ironically...' [then: references].
- Mezzrow, Milton 'Mezz' and Bernard Wolfe 1946. *Really the Blues*. NY: Random House. -- (no *spook* in the glossary)
- Wentworth, Harold and Stuart Berg Flexner 1967. *Dictionary of American Slang*. NY: Crowell. p. 510: '*spook* n. 1 [derog.] A Negro. *White man use*. 2 [derog.] A white man. 1947: [Spoken by a Negro]: What would I want an oil-hair spook for?" N. Algren, "The Face." *Negro use*. *Although the term has been said to have orig. with Negro jazz it is much older*. 3. A girl, esp. an ugly or shy girl. c.1942: "Are you having a spook for the Yale mingle?" *Princeton Alumni Weekly*. ...' [G. Cohen: Wentworth-Flexner then present another four meanings.]

PAUL JOHNSON: MORSE CODE TL (FOR *TOILET LID*) WAS USED TO INSULT RADIO OPERATORS WITH A HEAVY HAND; HENCE *LID* 'INCOMPETENT OPERATOR'

Gerald Cohen, with information also from Rick Kennerly.

(This article first appeared in *Comments on Etymology*, May 2002, vol. 31, no. 8, pp. 6-8.)

I had never heard of pejorative *lid* or *toilet lid*, but two ads-l messages mention it, and with permission I reproduce them below. First, though, here is what *HDAS* has to say about *lid* #3:

'Esp. *Army*. A novice or incompetent telegrapher or radio operator.

1941. *Newsweek* (Mar. 10) 39: The Signal Corps maintains a big school for Army "lids"--so called because they "talk through their hats"...at Fort Monmouth, NJ.

1941 *American Speech* (Oct.) 166: *Lid*. Apprentice, operator. An incompetent operator. (Signal Corps).

1954-60 *Dictionary of American Slang*: *Lid*...An unskillful telegrapher.

1977 *American Dictionary of CB Slang* 44: *Lid*--Name given to an inept CB radio operator.'

Meanwhile, *OED2* does not seem to list radio operators' *lid* but does mention it under *ham*<sup>1</sup>, #6:

1929 *American Speech* IV. 288 At either end of a wire an unskillful operator is a 'lid', 'ham', 'bum' or 'plug'.

11 MAY 2002 ADS-L MESSAGE OF PAUL JOHNSON  
(paulzjoh@MTHOME.COM)

'Used to be a radioman in the service (back during the Punic wars it seems, if I remember correctly never heard of a sender's hand, it was always a "fist" Am I wrong?)

'By the way, a great insult among operators, was to break

Incidentally, I had never heard or seen *spook* as meaning anything other than a specter or a CIA-type operative.

#### REFERENCES

ads-l = ads-l@listserv.uga.edu (American Dialect Society's Internet discussion group)

Gray, Wilson 2005. Feb. 15, 2006 ads-l message on slang he (an African-American) heard in the military. Last paragraph: 'Oddly enough, being stationed in Vietnam was considered to be a far better deal than being stationed in Germany, in my day. At least it was supposed to be better if you were in the Security Agency and, therefore, a spook. (Being referred to as as "spook" by white people took some getting used to, since, theretofore, the only slang meaning that I knew for "spook" was as a milder but just as annoying replacement for "nigger.") ....'

Major, Clarence 1994. From *Juba to Jive: A Dictionary of African-American Slang*. (First printed: 1970). NY: Viking. p.440: '*Spook* n. (1800s-1960s) originally used by black slaves as a reference to ghosts, and later as a reference to white people as "ghost-like" A black person; a "Negro"; picked up from derogatory white use and used ironically...' [then: references].

Mezzrow, Milton 'Mezz' and Bernard Wolfe 1946. *Really the Blues*. NY: Random House. -- (no *spook* in the glossary)

Wentworth, Harold and Stuart Berg Flexner 1967. *Dictionary of American Slang*. NY: Crowell. p. 510: '*spook* n. 1 [derog.] A Negro. *White man use*. 2 [derog.] A white man. 1947: [Spoken by a Negro]: What would I want an oil-hair spook for?" N. Algren, "The Face." *Negro use*. *Although the term has been said to have orig. with Negro jazz it is much older*. 3. A girl, esp. an ugly or shy girl. c.1942: "Are you having a spook for the Yale mingle?" *Princeton Alumni Weekly*. ...' [G. Cohen: Wentworth-Flexner then present another four meanings.]

PAUL JOHNSON: MORSE CODE TL (FOR TOILET LID) WAS USED TO INSULT RADIO OPERATORS WITH A HEAVY HAND; HENCE LID 'INCOMPETENT OPERATOR'

Gerald Cohen, with information also from Rick Kennerly.

(This article first appeared in *Comments on Etymology*, May 2002, vol. 31, no. 8, pp. 6-8.)

I had never heard of pejorative *lid* or *toilet lid*, but two ads-l messages mention it, and with permission I reproduce them below. First, though, here is what *HDAS* has to say about *lid* #3:

'Esp. *Army*. A novice or incompetent telegrapher or radio operator.

1941. *Newsweek* (Mar. 10) 39: The Signal Corps maintains a big school for Army "lids"--so called because they "talk through their hats"...at Fort Monmouth, NJ.

1941 *American Speech* (Oct.) 166: *Lid*. Apprentice, operator. An incompetent operator. (Signal Corps).

1954-60 *Dictionary of American Slang*: *Lid*...An unskillful telegrapher.

1977 *American Dictionary of CB Slang* 44: *Lid*--Name given to an inept CB radio operator.'

Meanwhile, *OED2* does not seem to list radio operators' *lid* but does mention it under *ham*<sup>1</sup>, #6:

1929 *American Speech* IV. 288 At either end of a wire an unskillful operator is a 'lid', 'ham', 'bum' or 'plug'.

11 MAY 2002 ADS-L MESSAGE OF PAUL JOHNSON  
(paulzjoh@MTNHOME.COM)

'Used to be a radioman in the service (back during the Punic wars it seems, if I remember correctly never heard of a sender's hand, it was always a "fist" Am I wrong?)

'By the way, a great insult among operators, was to break

in while someone was sending by sending repeated TL,TL-- meaning that it sounds as if you're sending with a Toilet Lid.'

11 May 2002 MESSAGE FROM RICK KENNERLY RESPONDING TO PAUL JOHNSON (rick@MOUSEHERDER.COM)

'Small world. I think I remember you. I was Themistocles' signal officer at the battle of Salamis Island and then I was a Morse intercept op flying RDF missions over the trail for the Army. Because we were intercept ops and not code senders, we never fell in with the Signal Corps and had a different lingo.

'In our unit we talked a lot about hand because one of the tricks of our trade (absent regular call signs, freqs, locations or sked times from the VC) was identifying VC operators by the peculiarities of the operator's technique, her hand--almost all VC operators were women--and then associating that operator with a particular supply or combat unit. The other trick was calling in an air strike in such a way so as to do some damage along the trail yet avoid picking off your operator (it sometimes took weeks to identify the hand of a replacement operator). Being careful and trying not to hit my ops, I probably spent a hundred million dollars in bombs and Thud time making swimming pools for water buffalo. I've always had a soft spot for women and buffaloes.

'Hand may be more British, but in the Ham world I've heard fist and hand used more or less interchangeably at times. Of course, who talks about Morse at all any more?

'Never knew the origins of Lid before, thanks. ---- Rick NH2F'

#### ADDENDUM FROM RICK KENNERLY

(responding to my request to reprint his TL item for *Com. on Et.*)

'TL ( \_ .\_. or dah ditdahdidit, if you want to sound it out properly) was sent in Morse code as a slam (interesting play on words: one op could Slam the Lid on a crummy, ham-fisted operator--just occurred to me anyway...)

'But in spoken language, a bad Morse operator is actually

referred to, among other operators, as a Lid, e.g. "Listen to this guy, will you? Gee, what a ham-fisted Lid." As amateur radio has drifted away from Morse code, Lid has come to mean any new or incompetent radio operator.

'To clear up a few of the acronyms I used:

RDF - radio direction finding

OPS - operators

VC - Viet Cong (although my use was inaccurate as North Vietnamese Regular Army folks did most of the transportation along the Ho Chi Minh trail. So VC should really be NVR).

Freqs - frequencies

Skeds- schedules

Thud - nickname for the F-105 Thunderchief (a two-seat, single engined, fighter-bomber)

<http://www.geocities.com/Pentagon/7002/photo1.html>

NH2F--is my Ham Radio call sign, I'm an Extra class. The call sign series is from Guam.

'...Of uncertain origin, btw, and a matter of some debate in the Ham world (aka the Amateur Radio Service) is the origin of HAM itself when referring to an amateur radio operator. There are two major competing strains of speculation and several minor ones. One of the major lines holds that radio operators like to talk so much that they're natural born HAMS. The other says that it springs from ham-fisted, a Lid. Something you might want to investigate some day.

Rick Kennerly, NH2F/Westsail 32, Xapic/Cabo San Juan, Puerto Rico'

#### REFERENCES

ads-l = ads-l@listserv.uga.edu (American Dialectal Society, Internet discussion group)

Dictionary of American Slang -- See Wentworth-Flexner.

Dickson, Paul 1994. War Slang. NY: Pocket Books. -- no radio operators' *lid*; only *lid* 'helmet' (p.78)

HDAS -- Random House Historical Dictionary of American Slang. Editor: Jonathan E. Lighter. NY: Random House. 1994ff., vol. 1: A-G, vol. 2: H-O. To be continued by Oxford U. Pr.

OED2 -- Oxford English Dictionary, 2nd ed.  
Wentworth, Harold and Stuart Berg Flexner 1960. Dictionary of  
American Slang. NY: Crowell. (Reprinted: 1967)

## JOB LOT (A DEROGATORY TERM)

Gerald Cohen

(This article first appeared in *Comments on Etymology*, May 2002, vol. 31, no. 8, pp. 9-10)

This is a contribution to a compiled treatment of derogatory terms and their origins. *Job lot* is overlooked by *HDAS* and *Cassell's Dictionary of Slang* but does appear in *OED2* (*job*, noun #2):

'*job lot*--a lot or parcel of goods, of sundry kinds or qualities, bought as a speculation with a view to profit; hence applied depreciatively to any miscellaneous lot of things, persons, etc.'

The examples given in *OED2* all pertain to objects:

1851 MAYHEW Lond. Labour I. 272 Some few of them [pocket-books] may, however, have been damaged, and these are bought by the street-people as a 'job lot', and at a lower price.

1864 Reader 3 Dec. 707/3 Called 'job lots', because the articles included in them are not resold in the state in which they were purchased, but jobbed away, or, in other words, sold to different customers, as opportunity may offer.

1879 Print. Trades Jrnl. No. 26. 16 Job lots of paper and job lots of leather and sometimes old covers.

1891 Law Times XC. 395/1 Defendant..saw two cows belonging to Kidd among a job lot of cattle.

Here now is one example (presented already in Cohen (1989: 51), where the term is applied to people:

*The World* (NYC newspaper), July 25, 1890, p.3, col. 3: 'Around the Bases': 'For indomitable pluck and earnest work no team in either League can compare with Capt. Ward's Brooklyn Club. At the beginning of the season the players were called "job lots," and other pet names. To-day they stand second in



the Players' League race and have won game after game which other teams would have abandoned in despair.'

And here is a 10/27/2001 message I received from Skip McAfee, assistant to baseball lexicographer Paul Dickson: 'I came across this term ["job lots"] in a 1938 manual published by the Burnham District of the Chicago Park District System. It merely gives the following: "Percentage, Job Lots:--A Jewish player." This seems to be an odd entry,....'

#### REFERENCES

- Cassell's Dictionary of Slang. (editor: Jonathon Green) London: Cassell. 1998, reprinted in 2000.
- Cohen, Gerald 1989. Old baseball columns as a repository of slang: reading through *The World*. In: *Studies in Slang* (by Gerald Leonard Cohen), part 2, pp.11-84. For *job lots* (p. 51) I wrote: 'meaning: ?'
- Dickson. Paul 1999. *The New Dickson Baseball Dictionary*. NY: Harcourt. -- Skip McAfee is assisting Dickson in the preparation of a new (the third) edition of this dictionary. But *job lot* is not listed here.
- HDAS = *Historical Dictionary of American Slang*. (Editor: Jonathan Lighter). Vols. A-G (1994) and H-O (1997). NY: Random House. Publication will be continued by Oxford U. Pr.

LOOSE AS A GOOSE -- ORIGINAL REFERENCE IS TO LOOSE BOWELS

Gerald Cohen

(This article first appeared in *Comments on Etymology*, May 2002, vol. 31, no. 8, pp. 11-12).

On January 19, 2002. I sent the following ads-l query:

'My colleague, Lyle Pursell (Professor Emeritus, of Mathematics, University of Missouri-Rolla) passed along the suggestion below about "loose as a goose." First, though, *HDAS* says 'extremely loose (in any sense),' -- earliest attestation: 1930 (Botkin, *Folk-Say*, 106: "There, she's loose as a goose"). But nothing is said about the origin of the expression.

'So the question arises: In what way is a goose loose? Here is Pursell's suggestion:

"In the New York Times Crossword no. 1203 (*St. Louis Post-Dispatch* 1-14-02), 'loose as a goose' is the answer to the clue, 'completely relaxed'. When I was a boy in the 1930's, my father used the phrase, 'loose as a goose,' in a different way. He meant, 'having loose bowels.'

"I raised geese for several years while I was growing up. From my observations of them I believe that 'loose as a goose' was first used the way that my father did. When geese walk about they generally move in a slow, stately manner. They don't dart about chasing insects like chickens, ducks, or turkeys do, and when they are resting they do not appear any more relaxed than other poultry. On the other hand, they tend to have much looser stools than other domestic fowls."

Confirming statements soon came from several ads-l members:

1) Douglas G. Wilson (douglas@NB.NET):

'Cf. "like shit through a goose" = "rapidly, without any obstruction" or so, e.g. "Now if Ike stops holding Monty's hand and gives me the supplies, I'll go through the Siegfried Line like shit through a goose." -- attributed to Gen. George Patton.

'The perception is that the goose has rapid intestinal

the Players' League race and have won game after game which other teams would have abandoned in despair.'

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'The perception is that the goose has rapid intestinal

passage. (Thus it's not "loose as a moose.")

'On the other hand, "loose as a goose" is clearly favored by its rhyme: cf. "snug as a bug in a rug." (Thus it's not "loose as a duck.")

2) Dennis Preston (preston@pilot.msu.edu; Dept. of Linguistics and Languages, Michigan State U.):

'The "on the other hand" was always my childhood folk (and not necessarily false) etymology. Loose as a goose was first applied to the runs. ... Later I heard it to mean other "looses" (relaxed, for example), but that was not my earliest encounter.'

3) Ron Butters (RonButters@AOL.COM):

'My father always said, "Loose as a moose" ...'

4) Carl J. Weber (carljweber@MSN.COM): 'I've heard "loose as a goose in a noose".'

5) Mark A. Mandel (mam@THEWORLD.COM): 'I've sometimes heard/seen "loose as a goose on grass." Does that clarify or confuse?'

#### REFERENCES

ads-l = ads-l@listserv.uga.edu (American Dialect Society, Internet discussion group)

Botkin, B.A. (editor) 1930. Folk-say: A Regional Miscellany. Norman, OK: U of Oklahoma Press.

Garrison, Daniel M. (date: ?). A song of the pipeline. in: Botkin 1930, pp. 105-111. -- p.106: 'There, she's loose as a goose, Jack [a wooden support with pins, used to hold up the joint]. Roll.'

HDAS = Historical Dictionary of American Slang. (Editor: Jonathan Lighter). Vols. A-G (1994) and H-O (1997). NY: Random House. Publication will be continued by Oxford U. Pr. --- Incidentally, HDAS presents *loosey-goosey*, with the first attestation being 1967. But I specifically remember hearing it in 1958, the year I finished high school. After graduation I went to a baseball camp in Tampa Florida, and I specifically remember one of the two men who ran it. He was older (about 38) than the rest of us but liked to pitch batting

practice. He once told me that he loved the hot weather, because he then felt 'loosey-goosey.' i.e., all his muscles were loosened up and he could pitch more easily. I think that was the first time I heard the expression used--in fact, I'm not sure I've heard it used since then.

SLANG *APPLESAUCE* (SPOKEN DISMISSIVELY) DERIVES FROM A  
ONCE POPULAR BUT CORNY JOKE, POSSIBLY IN A MINSTREL  
CONTEXT

Barry Popik  
225 East 57th Street, Apt. 7P  
New York, NY 10022

[ed. G. Cohen: The following item is compiled and revised slightly from several messages sent June 29ff. and Oct. 19, 2000 to the American Dialect Society. In its revised form it first appeared in *Comments on Etymology*, vol. 30, no. 5, Feb. 2001, pp. 12-14.]

*HDAS* has *applesauce* from 1918, but without a hint of its origin--a gap that can now be filled. The expression derives from a once very popular but corny joke. Through overuse of the joke, the last word of the punchline (*applesauce*) came to refer to something trite and hence not to be taken seriously. Presented below are two examples of the applesauce joke that I located.

This corny applesauce joke was the 'Why did the chicken cross the road?' joke of its time.

APPLESAUCE JOKE IN *THE GIRL FROM RECTOR'S*, 1927

This is from *The Girl From Rector's* (Doubleday, Page & Co., Garden City, NY, 1927) by George Rector, pp. 133-137

'*THAT APPLE-SAUCE JOKE*

'There is an expression sweeping America to-day which I heard Corse Payton use twenty-five years ago. Chauffeurs toss it at traffic policemen, traffic policemen catch it in mid-air and hurl it back, bad boys shout it at truant officers, and good little girls shrill it to their fond parents. Each granny tells it to grandpa and there isn't much doubt that grandpa has mumbled it to the manicurist in the barber shop. That expression is "apple sauce." You possibly have used it yourself without knowing how it originated. It started with Thatcher, Primrose, and West, who had one of the greatest minstrel organizations ever assembled.

The expression "apple sauce" means anything that is old, trite, and out-of-date. This was the routine of the applesauce gag:

"THATCHER: Mr. Interlocutor, a teacher has twelve pupils and only eleven apples.

"WEST: Yes, Mr. Tambo, a teacher has twelve pupils and only eleven apples.

"THATCHER: That's right. Now she wants to give each pupil an equal share of the apples without cutting the apples. How does she do it?

"WEST: Let me see. A teacher has twelve pupils and only eleven apples. She wants to give each pupil an equal share of the apples without applying a knife to the fruit. How does she do it? I must confess my ignorance. How does she do it, Mr. Tambo?

"THATCHER: She made apple sauce."

'Thatcher used to get a huge laugh from this joke. Naturally, all the other rival minstrels grabbed it, used it, and finally hammered it into an early grave by too much repetition. Audiences refused to laugh at it any more and it was discarded. So any other joke which is old and no good is also called apple sauce. There is something about this expression which is very satisfying. When a motorcycle cop tells you that he is going to give you a ticket, not knowing that you are the mayor's friend, you tell him, "Apple sauce." When he hands you the ticket, you tell him, "Apple sauce." When you tell the judge you were going only two miles an hour, the judge hands down the verdict of, "Apple sauce." And when you fork over fifteen dollars and bounce out of the court room, the little birdies in the trees seem to be chirping it. I have never seen anything, outside of a sneak thief's skeleton key, which seemed to fit so many situations.'

#### WALTER WINCHELL'S 'APPLESAUCE' JOKE

The Walter Winchell 'applesauce' joke finally turned up in my paper search (for 'subway series'), so here goes.

From the *Evening Graphic*, 'Your BROADWAY And Mine' by Walter Winchell, 21 April 1928, p. 21:



*'The Wisecrack and the Gag*  
(From the *October Bookman*)

'When big time vaudeville was downtown or where Mr. Keith's Union Square Theater used to be in New York, no bill was complete without that pair who swapped this one: "If you had eleven apples and twelve horses, how would you evenly divide the apples among the twelve horses?" To which the "straight man," or the comedian's partner, would respond: "I don't know, Ignatz. How would you evenly divide eleven apples among twelve horses?"

"Why, you simply make applesauce!" was the answer and if the auditors didn't fall right out of their chairs at that joke, then the next generation employed the tag line of the old reliable to squelch a braggart or an opinion with which they didn't concur.

'So great an army of entertainers employed the applesauce gag that it became the butt for derisive comment. It was in a class with "Who was that lady I seen you with last night?" or "Why does a chicken, etc.?" ...

"Applesauce!" said some one in the gathering and another wisecrack was born. The flapper incorporated it into her routine of sassy answers, the collegiate passed it along to his town-fellows via letters and even the small-time and the big-time players "laughed off" a joke that failed to receive warm response from audiences by twitting themselves with "So we made applesauce!" ....'

#### REFERENCES

- HDAS = Historical Dictionary of American Slang. (Editor: Jonathan Lighter). Vols. A-G (1994) and H-O (1997). NY: Random House. Publication will be continued by Oxford U. Pr.
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CON-MEN'S LINGO *THE BIG STORE* 'A FALSE-FRONT OPERATION  
SET UP FOR THE PURPOSE OF SEPARATING A WEALTHY VICTIM  
FROM A LOT OF CASH'

Mike Salovesh  
1401 North First Street  
DeKalb, IL 60115

[ed., G. Cohen: This item first appeared in *Comments on Etymology*, vol. 30, no. 5, Feb. 2001, pp. 15-17]

In a June 29, 2000 message to the American Dialect Society, Barry Popik selected several interesting quotes from *The Girl From Rector's*, 1927. Supposedly true to life, the quoted passages included the following (pp. 68-69):

'In this case, "tub worker" did not mean bending over the week's wash in the back of a Chinese laundry. This group of tourists worked the tubs. The tubs were ocean liners. Their polish was as false as the sheen on an oiled apple. It could be dropped readily, and in passing their tables I often overheard such sinister words as "the mouthpiece," "the big store," "the mob," "the iron theatre," and "the rap."

'This may mean nothing to you unless I explain that the mouthpiece was a lawyer, the big store was the district attorney's office, the mob was a gang of crooks, the iron theatre was a jail, and the rap was either an accusation or a term in jail. They were not nice lads, but there was no way of excluding them provided they behaved themselves. And they always acted very well in Rector's.'

RECTOR ERRED; 'THE BIG STORE' WAS NOT THE D.A.'S OFFICE

'The big store' was a term of art among con men, but it did NOT mean 'the D.A.'s office.' My published authority is David Maurer, in his *The Big Con*. In this case, I can claim unpublished verification direct from my own interviews.

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As it happens, I used to hang out in a bar a few oldtime con men used for a home base when they were in Chicago. At various times, one or another of them would try to rope me into some kind of short con. I would turn off their approaches with phrases I had learned from con men and carnies when I was a kid. They finally accepted me into their conversations when I mentioned my father's Depression-era tire store. It was across Western Avenue from Chicago's old Riverview Park, and they remembered the place well. The game concessions at Riverview were all run by carnies who were taking a rest from the rigors of road travel. To keep their cars running, they would buy used tires from my father, who always gave them good deals because they provided a steady source of customers.

Concession games at Riverview, and at traveling carnivals, were all rigged. Running those games was a way of breaking into the world of con men. Even the game boys who ran the tents in the afternoons, when business was slow, quickly learned how to size up a mark and fleece him for enough to make a difference but not so much as to trigger a complaint or a call for the cops. Running a game tent was a good deal for a con man who had to lay low after a good score. Several of the con men at my old hangout had worked at Riverview during the Depression. A couple of them even remembered me, back when I was six or seven.

When dad took me to his store for a visit, he'd take me across the street and let me wander all over Riverview. The guys at the game tents never let me use my own money to pay for a game. They'd slip me some change, and I would 'spend' it all on the game whose operator gave me the money. Then they'd let me win -- and give me the big prizes, not the flash. (I knew I was supposed to get those prizes back to the guys who gave them to me, without being obvious about it.) They used my wins as bait for their victims. I couldn't have told you what a 'shill' was back then, but I played the role without understanding the implications.

When the con men at my favorite bar loosened up while I was around, they would tell each other -- and me -- stories

about some of their old scores, and about some of the great con men of the past. That's how I learned about 'the big store': a false-front operation set up for the purpose of separating a wealthy victim from a lot of cash.

One form of the big store would be set up to look like a bookie parlor. The mark would meet someone claiming to be a clerk in that bookie joint who was mad at his boss. The supposed disgruntled employee would say that he saw a chance to pay back his boss by hitting him with an unbeatable bet. Then he would feed the mark a story about his friend, a Western Union employee. The mark would then be set up to meet the supposed Western Union guy. The second con man would propose to pass the telegraphed results of a race to the mark, but delay delivery of those results to the bookies. The mark would then be able to make a bet that couldn't lose. The con men would let the mark win a series of these sure bets to convince him that the fix was in. Then they'd send him to fetch a big chunk of his own cash, thinking he could bet it and make a killing. Once the mark's big money was on the table, there would be some kind of 'error' in transmission, and the mark would lose the big bet he thought was going to make him rich.

What kind of error would lead to that? Maurer cites a classic. The mark is told 'Place the money on horse number 5 in the fourth race.' The mark would bet his wad on the horse to win; the results would announce that his horse came in third. In race results, the first horse wins, the second 'shows,' and the third 'places.'

Those of you who remember 'The Sting,' the Robert Redford movie, saw how a big store is set up, complete with a cast of actors (i.e., characters in the film who take on roles to play in the fake betting parlor) playing bettors, clerks, and all the others who might be seen in a real bookie joint. I remember the first time I saw that film, too. I recognized that great chunks of the screenplay had been plagiarized from David Maurer's *The Big Con*, and it was a lot of fun to 'predict' the next turn in the story for the folks I was with.

Barry, the quotes from THE GIRL FROM RECTOR'S were a lot

of fun to read. I'm glad you sent them. The miss on 'the big store,' however, suggests that Mr. Rector's ability to tell his stories well may not necessarily say much about how well those stories mirror the reality they're supposed to represent.

#### A BIBLIOGRAPHIC NOTE

Maurer's *The Big Con: the Story of the Confidence Man and the Confidence Game* was originally published in 1940 by Bobbs-Merrill (Indianapolis). Pocket Books brought it out in paperback in 1949, and Anchor Books republished it in 1999. I suspect that the same material was published in 1974 by Thomas (Springfield, Ill.) as *The American Confidence Man*, but I haven't had a chance to compare that edition with the others.

MATERIAL FOR THE STUDY OF *EAT CROW*: THREE VERSIONS OF  
HUMOROUS STORY AGREE THAT SCOTCH SNUFF MADE THE BOILED  
CROW PARTICULARLY UNAPPETIZING

Barry Popik  
225 E. 57 St., Apt. 7P  
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[ed., G. Cohen: This item is reprinted from *Comments on Etymology*, Oct. 2003, vol. 33, no. 1, pp. 7-9, which in turn is an expansion of a June 22, 2003 message sent by Popik to the American Dialect Society; title: 'Eating Crow (1850, 1880).' He adds two versions of the story to the similar one mentioned in *OED2*, with all three being in basic agreement: A cantankerous old 'Rube'-type farmer is outwitted by his (presumably urban) boarders and winds up 'eating crow,' made particularly unappetizing by the addition of Scotch snuff. The punch line 'I kin eat a crow, but I'll be darned if I hanker after/arter it' now produces at most a wan smile but was probably hilarious in the 19th century. The punch line guaranteed the retelling of the story, and so *eat crow* is one of numerous words/expressions which owe their origin at least partly to humor.]

TREATMENT IN *OED2*

*OED2*, *crow*, n. #1

...3. a. In phrases and proverbial sayings, as... to eat (boiled) crow (U.S. colloq.): to be forced to do something extremely disagreeable and humiliating.

... [1851 San Francisco Picayune 3 Dec. 1/6, I kin eat a crow, but I'll be darned if I hanker after it.]

1872 Daily News 31 July, Both [are]..in the curious slang of American politics, 'boiled crow' to their adherents.

1877 N. & Q. 5th Ser. VIII. 186/1 A newspaper editor, who is obliged..to advocate 'principles' different from those which he supported a short time before, is said to 'eat boiled crow'.



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- 1884 'MARK TWAIN' Lett. (1917) II. 443 Warner and Clark are eating their daily crow in the paper.
- 1885 Mag. Amer. Hist. XIII. 199 'To eat crow' means to recant, or to humiliate oneself.
- 1930 'E. QUEEN' French Powder Myst. xxiv. 196, I should merely be making an ass of myself if I accused someone and then had to eat crow.
- 1970 New Yorker 17 Oct. 39/1, I was going to apologize, eat crow, offer to kiss and make up.

STORY PRESENTED IN THE 1851 REFERENCE CITED BY OED2

OED2 refers to the *San Francisco Picayune*; specifically, it is the *Daily Evening Picayune* (San Francisco, Cal.), Dec. 3, 1851, p. 1, col. 6:

'EATING A CROW.---A worthy old farmer residing in the vicinity of Lake Mahopack, was worried to death last summer by boarders. They found fault with his table, and said he had nothing fit to eat. "Darn it," said Isaac, one day, "wat a fuss you are making. I can eat anything." "Can you eat a crow?" said one of the boarders. "Yes, I kin eat a crow." Bet you a hat," said the guest. The bet was made, the crow was caught and nicely roasted, but, before serving it up, they contrived to season it with a good dose of Scotch snuff. Isaac sat down to the crow, he took a good bite, and began to chew away. "Yes I kin eat a crow! (Another bite and an awful face,) *I kin eat a crow, but I'll be darned if I hanker after it.*"

VERSION IN *CHICAGO TRIBUNE*, 1880

I've found notes about *eat crow* in several 1880 newspapers, e.g. *Chicago Tribune*, 8 June 1880, p. 4, col. 5:

*'EATING CROW*

'The politics of "eating crow" is in the application of the original story to people who swallow a disagreeable candidate of their own party rather than vote for the candidate of their opponent. ...The following story explains how that peculiar diet

came into vogue:

'The first allusion to "eating crow" was made in the *Knickerbocker Magazine* a little more than a quarter of a century ago. It was a story of a summer boarding-house-keeper on the Hudson and of an indignant patron. Whenever the latter ventured to suggest that the spring chicken was rather tough, or that the roast beef must have been cut from the cow's beefs, he was directly told that he was entirely "too perticeler," and that the autocrat of the table and the house could eat anything, even a crow. This settled the matter for the time being, but the boarder convinced against his will was of the same opinion, still, at all events, in regard to the quality of the edibles placed before him. So often was the remark, "I kin eat anything; I kin eat a crow," brought down on his devoted head that he finally resolved to try the old man. He went out gunning one day and succeeded in bagging a very fine, fat, old black crow. He went into the kitchen, and, by dint of soft words and filthy lucre, induced the cook to allow him to prepare the crow for the table.

He boiled it nicely, and it wasn't such a bad-looking dish after all. His heart misgave him; the flinty old cuss would eat it after all. The cook was a Scotch woman, and used snuff. He borrowed all she had and sprinkled it liberally over the crow, gave her another simmer, and then, taking it on a salver, brought it before his host, saying as he set it down, "Now, my dear sir, you have said a thousand times, if you have said it once, that you can eat crow. Here is one very carefully cooked." It is said the old man turned pale for a moment, but braced himself against the back of his chair, and with "I kin eat crow," he began, cutting a good mouthful. He swallowed it, and then, preparing for a second onslaught, he looked his boarder straight in the eye, while he ejaculated, "I've eaten crow," and took his second portion. He lifted his hands mechanically, as if for a third onslaught, but dropped them quickly over the region of his stomach, and, rising hurriedly and unsteadily, retreated for the door, muttering as he went, "but dang me if I hanker arter it."

The American Periodical Series Online doesn't have it in *The Knickerbocker*, but has it here; this version is very close to the 1851 one cited by OED2 (from *Daily Evening Picayune*, San Francisco), presented above in full.

*Saturday Evening Post* (1839-1885), Philadelphia; Nov 2, 1850; Vol. XXX., Iss. 0, Article 15 -- No Title; page 4:

CAN YOU EAT CROW?--Lake Mahopac was so much crowded, the past season, or, rather, the hotels in its immediate vicinity were, that the farm-houses were filled with visitors. One of the worthy farmers residing there, it appears, was especially worried to death by boreders.--They found fault with his table--this thing was bad and wasn't fit to eat--and at last the old fellow got so tired of trying to please them, that he undertook as the last resource to reason the matter with them.

"Darn it," said old Isaac, one day, "what a fuss you're making; I can eat anything."

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"Bet you a hat," said his guest.

The bet was made, a crow caught and nicely roasted, but before serving up, they contrived to season it with a good dose of Scotch snuff.

Isaac sat down to the crow. He took a good bite, and began to chew away. "Yes," he said, "I kin eat crow (*another bite and awful face*,) I kin eat crow, (*symptoms of nausea*,) I kin eat crow; but I'll be darned if I hanker arter it." -- Isaac bolted.'

## 1935 NEW YORK SUN ARTICLE ON RACKET SLANG

Barry Popik  
 225 E. 57 St., Suite 7P  
 New York, NY 10022

[G. Cohen: Barry Popik spotted this *NY Sun* item and drew it to the attention of the American Dialect Society, Sept. 24, 2001. I then numbered the paragraphs, compiled the slang items in alphabetical order, and added a few comments and minor revisions. The resulting article was first presented in *Comments on Etymology*, vol. 31, no. 2, Nov. 2001, pp. 2-9.]

From the *New York Sun*, 19 February 1935, p. 28, col. 1:  
 title: 'Racket Slang Explains Itself'  
 subtitle: 'Odd Phrases That Are Ingeniously Devised to  
 Trap the Unwary Customer'

[1] 'The slang of gangsters is treated more with amusement than personal interest by the average man, who sees in it no practical application to his own affairs. The chance that he will ever be taken for a ride is remote. But the commercial underworld has a language of its own that is worth learning. The man who understands it has some insurance against the risks of losing his money on bad merchandise or financial rackets.

[2] 'Living on the fringe of legitimate trade are merchants and salesmen who find profit in ignoring copybook ethics. With special words and phrases they can even discuss the details of the crime in the presence of a sucker without alarming him.

[3] 'To the prospective buyer of an automobile from a disreputable second-hand dealer there might seem to be nothing sinister in a remark about "bushing him \$100 on the smacko," but this should be the signal to leave in a hurry. A smacko is a badly wrecked car that has been rebuilt. The process of bushing is to get the customer "in the bag for a d. p." (signing up with a down payment), and then, when the final contract is to be signed, to raise the price above that which was set originally.

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[4] 'The price-raising is not disclosed until after the dealer has



picked up the original receipt, leaving the buyer with no evidence of either the agreed price or more important, the down payment. The chances of getting the \$100 back therefore, are negligible, and the car at the new price is obviously no bargain.

[5] "Iron" is the dealer's name for an obsolete model. "Cuffing" or "macing" a car is the term for a purchase by the dealer from an individual upon a small cash payment and a series of notes which he has no intention of meeting.

[6] Better Business Bureaus have developed their own slang for some common rackets. The "residence dealer" is a retailer who pretends to be selling his personal goods from his home, which would be a "stuffed flat."

[7] "Hearse chasers" are vultures who prey on the estate or relatives of dead men by presenting false claims or selling biographies at exorbitant prices or in dozens of other ways.

[8] 'A "pass-the-hat society" is an insurance company that collects death benefits for members by assessment of survivors.

[9] "Puff sheets" are magazines generally having a name closely resembling some reputable publication but depending upon the sale of extra copies to gullible business men who are written up in extravagant phrases or praise. "Mug books" serve a similar function but specialize in photographs.

[10] "Charity rackets" are merchandizing or soliciting schemes depending upon an appeal to the pity of the customers, whether they are buying goods supposed to be for the benefit of an orphanage or contributing to a fake synagogue.

[11] 'The sucker has many names among the crooks. "Lily," "mug," "pushover," and "mooch" are the most common. After a "pushover" has been sold he is a "wrap-up."

[12] 'Real estate developers use the "lunch and lecture" system, carrying the prospects by bus or train to the property, feeding them and subjecting them to a talk by a "spieler."

[13] 'Checks are "maps."

[14] 'Financial racketeers have been less active since the securities act of 1933 and securities exchange act of 1934 were passed, but plenty of "dynamiters" (high pressure salesmen of stock) are still out of jail.

[15] 'The "dynamiter" may use a "bird dog," a tout who furnishes [col. 2] prospects and talks up the securities among his acquaintances; a "coxy," an inexperienced salesman good for small sales; a "boiler room," in which a group of salesmen work by telephone, disregarding [the] expense of long distance talks and probably settling bills every day; a "tip sheet," a phony financial publication to boost stock issues, and a "reloader," who can sell more stock to a sucker who already has made a small investment.

[16] 'In the "one-call racket" a prospect is dropped unless he can be sold on the first visit.

[17] The "dynamiter" may be a "hundred percenter" or a "converter," one who trades something worthless for a marketable security previously owned by the sucker. To establish confidence the racketeer may sell a good stock first and induce an exchange for worthless paper. This is the "sell-and-switch" method.

[18] The "razz" is the selling talk.

[19] 'An "advance fee" operator is an underwriter who gets money from the issuer of securities before he sells them. "Front money" is advance commission to a salesman.

[20] "Hot stuff" is the literature effective in selling. A "kit" is a fancy portfolio to help the salesman. It may include a letter purporting to be from bankers approving the deal or the sponsors.

[21] "Scenery," a board of directors with impressive names, is helpful. The "reloader" uses the same term for dividend checks to be waved under the eyes of prospective victims.

[22] 'Complaints that stir up the "three B's" (Better Business Bureau), or the "P. O." (post office inspectors), or "Sec" [=Securities and Exchange Commission--B. Popik] are "squawks."

[23] 'The most important interruption to the activity of financial racketeers is "tagging," or indictment.'

#### GLOSSARY OF TERMS IN THE ABOVE ARTICLE

Numbers in brackets indicate the paragraph above in which the term appears.

**ADVANCE FEE** - [19] 'An "advance fee" operator is an underwriter who gets money from the issuer of securities before he sells them. "Front money" is advance commission to a salesman.'

**BIRD DOG** - [15] 'The "dynamiter" may use a "bird dog," a tout who furnishes prospects and talks up the securities among his acquaintances; a "coxy," an inexperienced salesman good for small sales; a "boiler room," in which a group of salesmen work by telephone, disregarding [the] expense of long distance talks and probably settling bills every day; a "tip sheet," a phony financial publication to boost stock issues, and a "reloader," who can sell more stock to a sucker who already has made a small investment.'

**BOILER ROOM** - [15] 'The "dynamiter" may use a "bird dog," a tout who furnishes prospects and talks up the securities among his acquaintances; a "coxy," an inexperienced salesman good for small sales; a "boiler room," in which a group of salesmen work by telephone, disregarding [the] expense of long distance talks and probably settling bills every day;....'

**BUSHING HIM \$100 ON THE SMACKO** - [3]: 'To the prospective buyer of an automobile from a disreputable second-hand dealer there might seem to be nothing sinister in a remark about "bushing him \$100 on the smacko," but this should be the signal to leave in a hurry. A smacko is a badly wrecked car that has been rebuilt. The process of bushing is to get the customer "in the bag for a d. p." (signing up with a down payment), and then, when the final contract is to be signed, to raise the price above that which was set originally.' ---

Slang *bush* ('to ambush') appears in *HDAS* with a first dating of 1947, and that meaning seems to fit here. Incidentally, Popik presented the term as 'hushing' in his 9/24/2001 message to the Am. Dial. Society, but he later informed me that the probable spelling is 'bushing'; (his copy is not completely clear).

**CHARITY RACKET** - [10] "'Charity rackets" are merchandizing or soliciting schemes depending upon an appeal to the pity of the customers, whether they are buying goods supposed to be for the benefit of an orphanage or contributing to a fake synagogue.'

**CONVERTER** - [17] 'The "dynamiter" may be a "hundred percenter" or a "converter," one who trades something worthless for a marketable security previously owned by the sucker. To establish confidence the racketeer may sell a good stock first and induce an exchange for worthless paper. This is the "sell-and-switch" method.'

**COXY** - [15] 'The "dynamiter" may use a "bird dog," a tout who furnishes prospects and talks up the securities among his acquaintances; a "coxy," an inexperienced salesman good for small sales; ...' --- *HDAS* has only *coxy* 'coxswain,' with 1966 as the date of the first example.

**CUFF (A CAR)** - [5]: "'Cuffing" or "macing" a car is the term for a purchase by the dealer from an individual upon a small cash payment and a series of notes which he has no intention of meeting.'--*HDAS*: cuff 'extend credit to,' with first example from 1939. Cf. *on the cuff* 'on credit.'

**d.p.** - down payment. [3]: '...The process of bushing is to get the customer "in the bag for a d. p." (signing up with a down payment), and then, when the final contract is to be signed, to raise the price above that which was set originally.'--Full quote at *bushing him \$100 on the smacko*.

**DYNAMITER** - high pressure salesman of stock. - [14] 'Financial racketeers have been less active since the securities act of 1933 and securities exchange act of 1934 were passed, but plenty of "dynamiters" (high pressure salesmen of stock) are still out of jail.' [15] 'The "dynamiter" may use a "bird dog," a tout who furnishes prospects and talks up the securities among his acquaintances; a "coxy," an inexperienced salesman good for small sales; a "boiler room," in which a group of salesmen work by telephone, disregarding [the] expense of long distance talks and probably settling bills every day; a "tip sheet," a phony financial publication to boost stock issues, and a "re-loader," who can sell more stock to a sucker who already has made a small investment.'

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*LUNCH AND LECTURE* - [12] 'Real estate developers use the "lunch and lecture" system, carrying the prospects by bus or train to the property, feeding them and subjecting them to a talk by a "spieler."

*MACE* (a car) [5] - See above, *cuff* (a car). Also, *HDAS* presents 'mace. Underworld: to swindle; now usually to obtain (an automobile) by swindling.'

MAP - [13] 'Checks are "maps." -- HDAS says of *map*, #2a: 'Underworld: a bank check, especially if fraudulent.'

MOOCH - [11] 'The sucker has many names among the crooks. "Lily," "mug," "pushover," and "mooch" are the most common. After a "pushover" has been sold he is a "wrap-up."

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MUG BOOK - See PUFF SHEET.

ONE-CALL RACKET - [16] 'In the "one-call racket" a prospect is dropped unless he can be sold on the first visit.'--(i.e., in the sale of worthless securities; see parag. 15 for context)

PASS-THE-HAT SOCIETY - [8] 'A "pass-the-hat society" is an insurance company that collects death benefits for members by assessment of survivors.'

P. O. - post-office inspectors. --[22] 'Complaints that stir up the "three B's" (Better Business Bureau), or the "P. O." (post office inspectors), or "Sec" [=Securities and Exchange Commission--B. Popik] are "squawks."

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RAZZ - [18] 'The "razz" is the selling talk.' -- (i.e., in selling worthless securities; see parag. 17 for context)

RELOADER - [15] 'The "dynamiter" may use ...a "reloader," who can sell more stock to a sucker who already has made a small investment. -- (Full quote at *dynamiter*)

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RESIDENCE DEALER - [6] 'Better Business Bureaus have developed their own slang for some common rackets. The "residence

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**SCENERY** -- [21] “Scenery,” a board of directors with impressive names, is helpful. The “reloader” uses the same term for dividend checks to be waved under the eyes of prospective victims.’

**SEC** -- Securities and Exchange Commission -- [22] ‘Complaints that stir up the “three B’s” (Better Business Bureau), or the “P. O.” (post office inspectors), or “Sec” are “squawks.”

**SELL-AND-SWITCH** - [17] ‘The “dynamiter” may be a “hundred percenter” or a “converter,” one who trades something worthless for a marketable security previously owned by the sucker. To establish confidence the racketeer may sell a good stock first and induce an exchange for worthless paper. This is the “sell-and-switch” method.’

**SMACKO** - ‘a badly wrecked car that has been rebuilt.’ [3]-- See *bushing him \$100 on the smacko*.

**SPIELER** - delivers the pitch at a ‘lunch-and-lecture’. [12] ‘Real estate developers use the “lunch and lecture” system, carrying the prospects by bus or train to the property, feeding them and subjecting them to a talk by a “spieler.”’

**SQUAWK** - [22] ‘Complaints that stir up the “three B’s” (Better Business Bureau), or the “P. O.” (post office inspectors), or “Sec” are “squawks.”

**STUFFED FLAT** [6] -- home from which a residence dealer pretends to be selling his personal goods. See *residence dealer*.

Sucker, terms for - [11] ‘The sucker has many names among the crooks. “Lily,” “mug,” “pushover,” and “mooch” are the most common. After a “pushover” has been sold he is a “wrap-up.”’

**TAGGING** -[23] ‘The most important interruption to the activity of financial racketeers is “tagging,” or indictment.’

**THREE B’S** - [22] ‘Complaints that stir up the “three B’s” (Better Business Bureau), or the “P. O.” (post office inspectors), or “Sec” [=Securities and Exchange Commission--B. Popik] are “squawks.”

*TIP SHEET* - [15] 'The "dynamiter" may use a... "tip sheet," a phony financial publication to boost stock issues,....' -- (Full quote at *dynamiter*)

*WRAP-UP* - [11] 'The sucker has many names among the crooks. "Lily," "mug," "pushover," and "mooch" are the most common. After a "pushover" has been sold he is a "wrap-up."

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- HDAS = *Historical Dictionary of American Slang*, editor: Jonathan E. Lighter. 2 vols. thus far, A-G (1994), H-O. (1997). NY: Random House. Publication will be continued by Oxford U. Press.



1885 NEWSPAPER ARTICLE ON THE SLANG RESPONSE 'I SHOULD SMILE' AND THE GREETING 'WELL, WHAT DO YOU KNOW?'

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[ed., G. Cohen: Popik first presented this item in a July 25, 2000 message to the American Dialect Society. I added the references, and the resulting item first appeared in *Comments on Etymology*, Jan. 2002, vol. 31, no. 4, pp. 2-3.]

I noticed the following item while reading through the *Mail and Express* (NY; later titled *Evening Mail*), 17 September 1885, p. 4/5:

*'PROGRESS OF SLANG.*

*'A Pacific Slope Editor Who Takes Exception to the Latest Curbstone Greeting.*

'From the San Francisco Bulletin.

'It used to be, not many months ago, "Jacob, have you dined yet?" "I should smile." Or, "Adolphus, have you read the news?" "I should smile." Or, "That was a bad break in stocks yesterday." "I should smile." Men of brains and men of sprightly wit alike fell into the passing habit. Men without either, with the mental vacancy of a Touchstone, whose brains were as dry as the remainder biscuit after a voyage, assumed a sudden quick intelligence in the use of the slang response. If one of these were asked if he had studied the Darwinian theory as to the descent of man, he would gravely answer, "I should smile;" and if another were asked if he believed in the permanency of republican institutions, his serious answer would still be, "I should smile." What was the slang expression of intelligence on the part of some, was a slang expression on the part of others devoid of even common intelligence. Yet the questions in both cases might have been the same, and the replies to them would have been identical.

'The latest expression of slang, succeeding "I should smile," is "Well, what do you know?" This, too, has come into a rather general prevalence. One broker asks another, "Well, what do you know?" A lawyer asks his client, "Well, what do you know?" Meet an acquaintance casually on the street and the salutation is, "What do you know?" This is a fresh plum for the many of limited intellectual and conversational faculties. It places them on an assured standing again in their intercourse with their fellow-beings, especially with those possessing somewhat of linguistic accomplishments. They can now again stop one of these on the street and confidently ask, "Well, what do you know?" They can approach a group in conversation on the sidewalk, and with the utmost assurance ask, "Well, gentlemen, what do you know?" If one of these should be asked in return what he knows he can complacently answer still, "I should smile," and nonchalantly walk away. So, in his own estimation, his importance is triumphantly sustained. He may vaguely ask himself, "What is the use of slang if it is of no use?" and may take his own time in pondering over an answer to the question so momentous to him.'

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- Gore, Willard C. 1896. Student slang. Gore comments in his fn. #1 that this work is reprinted, with some changes and additions, from *The Inlander* for Nov. and Dec. 1895. G. Cohen: also: Jan. 1896; and I have reprinted this work in my *Studies in Slang*, V, (Frankfurt am Main: Peter Lang), 1997, pp. 1-50 and added an index of the slang items. On p.29 of Gore's work the following item appears:  
*'I should remark, I should say, I should smile, I should smile to remark, I should smile a little smirk, I should snicker*  
 -- Expressions denoting emphasis, affirmation, or agreement.'
- Popik, Barry 2004. Slang items in an 1898 baseball article. *Comments on Etymology*, vol. 34, no. 1, Oct. 2004, pp. 20-22. (G. Cohen: *I should smile* is used here sarcastically and therefore seems to have the opposite meaning of

affirmation or agreement; a naive child is asking his father various questions about baseball; here is the end of the conversation:

“And do the magnate’s friends, the newspaper men, believe the magnate when he says he will have a pennant-winning team?”

“Of course they do, my child. That is they do--*nit*. But they will write whole columns about the great club that Manager Foultip is going to have next year, and before the birdies begin to twitter next spring the newspaper men will have Manager Foultip and his players winning the pennant in a walk.”

“But can they win pennants before the season opens, papa?”

“Well, *I should smile*.”

“Oh.”

Popik, Barry and Gerald Cohen 2000a. Slang items in an 1886 newspaper article. Comments on Etymology, vol. 29, no. 7, April 2000, pp.17-18. The reprinted item is from Milwaukee Journal, July 1, 1886, p.2/3, in turn reprinted from Norristown Herald. The item includes the speech of two grammar-school girls:

“...What’s the subject [of your essay]?”

“The Curse of Slang.”

‘Gracious! Isn’t that a difficult subject to write up?’

“Difficult! Well I should giggle! I’ll have to hump myself [=exert myself] to get it finished in time for the commencement, and I’ve a good notion to let it slide. ...”

---(G. Cohen: ‘I should giggle’ is evidently an expression agreeing forcefully with the preceding statement; roughly: ‘I should say so!’)

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2000b. 1885 high-school slang. Comments on Etymology, Oct. 2000, vol. 30, no. 1, pp. 11-14; from New York Dispatch, 31 May 1885, p. 7, col. 6:

“My though, don’t he think he’s an awful swell?”

“Well, I should smile--he takes the belt,”

“I wish you wouldn’t say “takes the belt,” Floy”

“Don’t you know that’s a regular chestnut, and none of the girls in our gang use it any more?” ---

ALSO: “We had a jim-dandy time at the party last night, didn’t we?”

“Well I should snicker to smile!”

## 1874 ARTICLE ABOUT CURRENT SLANG

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[G. Cohen: Popik first presented the 1874 item below in a Feb. 14, 2002 ads-l message. The original article is one long paragraph, but I have arranged its material as numbered sentences or clauses for easy reference in the glossary. This item of Popik's first appeared in *Comments on Etymology*, March 2002, vol. 31, no. 6, pp. 20-24.]

From *The Cultivator & Country Gentleman*, 10 December 1874, p. 799, col. 1; article title: 'SLANG.' --

[1] We allow ourselves to say of a rich man that he has got "stamps;"

[2] of the drunken man that he is "tight," or "boozy;"

[3] of anything that pleases us or is satisfactory that it is "stunning;"

[4] "awful" is considered a better word than very, and we are awful cold, or hot, or sick, or jolly, as the case may be;

[5] it is finer to say "you bet," than to answer a simple yes;

[6] everything that annoys us is "infernal" or "beastly;"

[7] bank bills are "greenbacks."

[8] I heard a lady in a good society say recently that her dressmaker had disappointed her, and that in consequence she was "regularly up a tree;"

[9] we threaten not to humiliate or mortify a man, but to "take the starch out of him;"

[10] we rack our brain to invent slang words for various drinks, and bring out such names as "forty-rod," "tangle-foot," "rot-gut," "blue run" and "Jersey lightning," words that would puzzle a foreigner;

[11] a man is not cheated, but "done brown," or "bamboozled;"

[12] railroad conductors do not steal (in fact we are getting a little sensitive about using the word), but "knock down;"

- [13] bank cashiers do not swindle and steal, but commit “irregularities;”
- [14] we hear of a house being “burgled,” and that two foot-pads “went through” a belated traveler;
- [15] a fair dealer is spoken of as “a square man,” a most wonderful *lusus naturae*;
- [16] a substantial dinner is spoken of as a “square meal;”
- [17] we hear invitations given, not to take a drink, but to “hoist in some poison;”
- [18] anything antiquated or exhausted [col. 2] is “played out;”
- [19] an insufficient excuse is said to be “too thin,” or we are told that it “will not wash;”
- [20] we buy stocks on a “margin,” or sell them “short,” or “bull” the market; or “take a flyer,” or “scoop in a long line of stocks;” we do not stake a sum of money, but “bet our pile;”
- [21] after a convivial party we next morning find ourselves “precious seedy;”
- [22] our railroad trains “telescope,” or a “Pullman” breaks a wheel;
- [23] a party of rowdies “clean out” a drinking-saloon;
- [24] a big man threatens to “wipe out” a little one;
- [25] we do not outwit or circumvent another, but “euchre” him;
- [26] we “take the shine out of” a rival, and “fix his flint” for him;
- [27] a carpenter “runs up” a cheap house in a week;
- [28] an investigating committee in Congress “whitewashes” the character of some defaulter, and so on and so forth in all the departments of business and trade and social intercourse we permit ourselves to use words and phrases which are of no authority, often vulgar and always needless. -- *American Homes.*’

#### GLOSSARY OF ITEMS IN THE ABOVE ARTICLE

- awful* ‘very’ [4] “‘awful’ is considered a better word than very, and we are awful cold, or hot, or sick, or jolly, as the case may be;”
- bamboozled* ‘cheated’ [11] ‘a man is not cheated, but “done brown,” or “bamboozled;”’

*beastly* 'annoying' [6] 'everything that annoys us is "infernal" or "beastly;"'

*bet* -- in *you bet* (q.v.)

*bet our pile* 'bet a large sum of money' we do not stake a sum of money, but "bet our pile;" - (See below: stock market terminology)

*blue ruin* 'liquor' [10] 'we rack our brain to invent slang words for various drinks, and bring out such names as "forty-rod," "tangle-foot," "rot-gut," "blue ruin" and "Jersey lightning," words that would puzzle a foreigner'

*boozy* 'drunk' [2] 'We allow ourselves to say...of the drunken man that he is "tight," or "boozy;"'

*brown in down brown* (q.v.) 'cheated'

*bull (the market)* -- (See below: stock market terminology)

*burgle* 'rob (a house)' [14] 'we hear of a house being "burgled," and that two foot-pads "went through" a belated traveler;'

*clean out* 'drub, vanquish' [23] 'a party of rowdies "clean out" a drinking-saloon;'

*done brown* 'cheated' [11] 'a man is not cheated, but "done brown," or "bamboozled;"'

*drinking* -- (See *blue ruin*, *hoist in some poison*)

*euchre* 'outwit, cheat' [25] 'we do not outwit or circumvent another, but "euchre" him;'

*fix his flint for him* 'take a rival down a peg or two' [26] we "take the shine out of" a rival, and "fix his flint" for him;'

*flyer* in *take a flyer* (q.v.)

*forty-rod* 'liquor' (For quote see *blue ruin*)

*go through* 'rob (s.o.)' [14] 'we hear of a house being "burgled," and that two foot-pads "went through" a belated traveler;'

*greenbacks* 'bank bills' [7] 'bank bills are "greenbacks."'

*hoist in some poison* 'have a drink' [17] 'we hear invitations given, not to take a drink, but to "hoist in some poison;"'

*infernal* 'annoying' [6] 'everything that annoys us is "infernal" or "beastly;"'

*irregularities* 'stealing/swindling' (by bank cashiers). [G. Cohen: This is not really slang but euphemism]. [13] 'bank cashiers

do not swindle and steal, but commit “irregularities;”

*Jersey lightning* ‘liquor’ (For quote see *blue ruin*)

*knock down* ‘steal’ [12] ‘railroad conductors do not steal (in fact we are getting a little sensitive about using the word), but “knock down;”’

*margin, (buy stocks on)* (See below: stock market terminology)

*pile* ‘large sum of money’ in *bet our pile* (q.v.)

*played out* ‘antiquated, exhausted’ [18] ‘anything antiquated or exhausted [col. 2] is “played out;”’

*poison in hoist in some poison* (q.v.)

*precious seedy* [21] ‘after a convivial party we next morning find ourselves “precious seedy;”’

*Pullman* ‘passenger train-car’ [22] ‘our railroad trains “telescope,” or a “Pullman” breaks a wheel;’

*regularly up a tree* - See *up a tree, be*

*rot-gut* ‘liquor’ (For quote see *blue ruin*)

*run up* ‘build’ [27] ‘a carpenter “runs up” a cheap house in a week;’

*scoop in a long line of stocks* - (See below: stock market terminology)

*seedy in precious seedy* (q.v.)

*shine -- in: take the shine out of* (q.v.)

*short, (sell stocks)* - (See below: stock market terminology)

*square man* ‘honest in commercial dealings’ [15] ‘a fair dealer is spoken of as “a square man,” a most wonderful *lusus naturae*’

*square meal* ‘substantial dinner [16] ‘a substantial dinner is spoken of as a “square meal;”’

*stamps, have* - be wealthy. [1] ‘We allow ourselves to say of a rich man that he has got “stamps;”’

*starch in take the starch out of s.o.* (q.v.)

stock-market terminology [20] ‘we buy stocks on a “margin,” or sell them “short,” or “bull” the market; or “take a flyer,” or “scoop in a long line of stocks;” we do not stake a sum of money, but “bet our pile;”’

*stunning* ‘pleasing, satisfactory’ [3] “We allow ourselves to say...of anything that pleases us or is satisfactory that it is



- “stunning;”
- take a flyer* ‘take a chance’ (See above: stock market terminology)
- take the shine out* (of a rival) ‘take (a rival) down a peg or two’ [26] ‘we “take the shine out of” a rival, and “fix his flint” for him;’
- take the starch out of s.o.* ‘take s.o. down a peg’ [9] ‘we threaten not to humiliate or mortify a man, but to “take the starch out of him:”’
- tangle-foot* ‘liquor’ (For quote see *blue ruin*)
- telescope* (vb.) ‘[22] ‘our railroad trains “telescope,” or a “Pullman” breaks a wheel;’
- thin in too thin* (q.v.)
- tight* ‘drunk’ [2] ‘We allow ourselves to say...of the drunken man that he is “tight,” or “boozy;”’
- too thin* ‘insufficient (of an excuse) [19] ‘an insufficient excuse is said to be “too thin,” or we are told that it “will not wash;”’
- tree in regularly up a tree; see up a tree.*
- up a tree, be* ‘be helpless, unable to do something’ [8] ‘I heard a lady in a good society say recently that her dressmaker had disappointed her, and that in consequence she was “regularly up a tree;”’
- wash in will not wash* (q.v.)
- went through* ‘robbed’ (See *go through*)
- whitewash* [28] ‘an investigating committee in Congress “whitewashes” the character of some defaulter,’
- will not wash* ‘excuse is insufficient’ [19] ‘an insufficient excuse is said to be “too thin,” or we are told that it “will not wash;”’
- wipe out* ‘drub, demolish’ [24] ‘a big man threatens to “wipe out” a little one;’
- you bet* ‘yes’ [5] ‘it is finer to say “you bet,” than to answer a simple yes; ‘

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ads-l = ads-l@listserv.uga.edu - American Dialect Society, Internet discussion group

Burnham, Capt. George Pickering 1872. *Memoirs of the United States Secret Service, With Accurate Portraits of Prominent Members of the Detective Force. Some of Their Most Notable Captures and a Brief Account of the Life of Col. H. C. Whitley, Chef of the Division.* Boston: Lee and Shepard: p. vi. JERSEY LIGHTNING - a peculiar New Jersey drink; "blue ruin."

p. 401 (for '*blue ruin*'): 'An instance of deeper interest, perhaps, as a "coney" case is that of Patrick Kelley, the oldest and most successful *retail* dealer in "queer" in the United States. For more than thirty years, Kelley had pursued his business, undetected. He had a regular list of patrons, such as Dutch corner-grocery men, and keepers of small porter-houses in the vilest quarters of New York city, proprietors of sailor dance-house, and underground "diving-bells," where women and whiskey were the marketable wares, and fractional currency (if ever looked at by the customers) was seen with eyes blinded by the "blue ruin" of those depraved districts.'

Cultivator & Country Gentleman, The. 10 December 1874, p. 799, col. 1; article title: 'Slang.'

HDAS = Historical Dictionary of American Slang. editor: Jonathan Evan Lighter. NY: Random House. 1994ff.; vol. 1: A-G; vol. 2: H-O. Publication will be continued by Oxford U. Pr. -- HDAS has attestations of *blue ruin* dating back to 1811, including Burnham 1872.

## 1933 HIGH-SCHOOL SLANG

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[G. Cohen: This item first appeared as an ads-l message, Nov. 23, 2002 and then in *Comments on Etymology*, October 2003, vol. 32, no. 1, pp. 5-6.]

From the Temple University clippings files, *Philadelphia Daily Bulletin*, February 1, 1933, p. 6:

*“GET OFF MY EAR” MAKES ‘EM SCRAM*

‘...Just in case--here’s a brief vocabulary of high school slang:  
*All creped up* -- All dressed up.  
*Get off my ear*; get out of my hair -- Stop annoying me.  
*Well, pick me for a sweet pea* --Expression of surprise or shock.  
*They’re blowing it* -- Teachers are trying to see who can give out the most homework.  
*Didn’t make the climb; slipped*--Left down, not promoted.  
*Shut your garage* -- Close your mouth.  
*You don’t know from nothing* -- You’re not very bright. [HDAS has 1934--B. Popik]  
*Yowza* -- Yes, sir.  
*Yea man* --Yes man.  
*I beg your stuff* --I beg your pardon.  
*Hot farina!* --1933 version of “hot dog!”  
*Put me in the jigger for a bum* -- Expression of lament after saying something one shouldn’t.  
*She’s on the hike*--Girl is making eyes at a boy (or teacher is making eyes at a teacher).  
*He’s hitch-hiking it* -- A boy is “strutting his stuff” for a girl’s admiration (or a teacher for a teacher’s).  
*They’re ripe* --Teachers are ready to spring a test.

*Skeedaddle; skiddle-skaddle* --1933 version of *scram*.  
*On the beat* --Teacher patrolling hall for truants.  
*Rub it on for me* --Let me copy your homework.  
*Palooka* --1933 for "sap."  
*Fire* -- Very strict teacher.  
*Airplane sandwich* -- Too much bread, too little filler.

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 (ads-l@listserv.uga.edu)
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THEATER/VARIETIES/CIRCUS SLANG:  
1879 ARTICLE IN *CINCINNATI ENQUIRER*

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[G. Cohen: Popik presented this in an ads-l message, June 28, 2003 and then in *Comments on Etymology*, Oct. 2003, vol. 32, no. 1, pp. 20-27, where I numbered each paragraph and prepared a glossary. I also highlighted the vernacular terms.]

Found in the *Cincinnati Enquirer*, 7 September 1879, p. 10, col. 7:

1) 'PROFESSIONAL SLANG

*Of Ye Dramatic Artist, Ye Variety Performer and Ye Circus Man.  
How Any One Can Get Up in the Vernacular.  
And Patter Flash Like a Real Call*

2) 'There are many of those who patronize the theater, the circus or the varieties, who, were they to overhear two members of the "profession" conversing and interlarding their speech with the peculiar technical names and phrases of either of the above branches of the profession, would be greatly at a loss to understand what they were talking about. For the benefit of those not up in the vernacular we give the following, beginning with the

3) Immense--Any thing or any body that is good is immense, as well as a big house or a large person.

4) Great--Qualifies the "goodness" in a still larger degree, and is accepted as the adjective of the profession.

5) Nibs, Cully, Pard, Rocks, Rocksy--All are endearing or friendly titles, but are mainly used by the circus and variety performers, while shaking hands with or addressing those with whom they are, or wish to be, familiar.

6) Tumble, Drop and Fall, are salutations which greet the person who fails to please the professional whom he is addressing, or when an improbable and unbelievable story is told, as well as

to check a bore when the hearer's tympanum is endangered or a limb about to be sacrificed.

7) Nixey means "no" or "don't," and very frequently is the prefix of Cully, Pard, &c. and is considered as strong as the most emphatic "no." Cheese it; Stop it--Quit.

8) Stow it and stack it, means the same as the above.

9) Lush, Budge, Bilge-water, Tamarack, Fire-water, Tangle-foot, Elixir, Dew-bowl, and various other terms denote whisky.

[G. Cohen: American Dialect Society member Douglas Wilson commented: 'Tamarack (or larch) bark was used as a bronchitis remedy, I believe. This was often taken as a tincture, apparently, sometimes composed predominantly of whiskey.'

10) Slush and German Decoction--Greet the ears of our Teutonic saloon-keepers when any of the "profesh" call for beer.

11) Wealth, Ore, Dust, Rocks, Spondulicks, Shekels, Ducats, Nicks, Flimsies, Filthy Lucre, Trash, Shiners, Shinnies--Are the synonyms of money, and all who know them will surely say "the boys" have given some appropriate names (as concerns them) to the "lever of the world," for they spend it as though it were so much trash and filthy lucre. No matter how famous and how prosperous they are, or have been, the greater majority of them go to the grave leaving very little for their relatives or friends to quarrel over.

12) Croaked, Handed in His Checks, Gone to That Bourne, Given His Last Show, Skipped the Earth, Flying Above--That one more has gone to his final rest. The above may sound as harsh terms for the conqueror of all, Death, but we have heard them given in as sympathetic tones as e'er one relative mourned another's loss.

13) Croak also means to speak forebodingly of some coming disastrous event, or the non-success of any thing before it has been tried and found wanted.

14) Back-cap, Blast--Is to speak ill of a person or play, the former being the term most generally used, and we regret to say with much cause, for among no other class of people does the tendency to back-cap exist. 'Tis true, each and every

person in the business has a great opinion of his or her own merits, and through jealousy caused by their confidence in their own ability to do this or that better than another, back-capping is very general.

15) Beat--Is used as both a noun and verb, the former meaning a person who does not pay his just debts, or one who, on account of some former connection with the profession, still clings like a parasite to them, begging and borrowing (and sometimes stealing) all he can from them; as a verb it expresses the desire or declaration that the speaker will accomplish or attempt the above.

16) Mace, Bilk, Give, Roast, Skin--Are all synonymous to the verb "to beat," and are terms that have been felt by many hotel-keepers, saloonists, boarding houses, &c., as they are about the only terms they could ever get out of some of the graceless scamps of the profession, who "flew" without liquidating the claims against them.

17) Fly, Cute, Up to Snuff--Denotes smartness in the ways of the world, and that no one can get the best of them, although they sometimes run across one who is flyer or cuter.

18) Fakir--Is a very general term, and means street-corner peddlers, who gull the people with great bargains at small figures. This class is divided into jewelry peddlers, cement sellers, medicine quacks with long hair, stationers, &c.; also a country showman or a country actor; an actor who, when imperfect in his lines, has the ability to substitute language, and one who, with a very small wardrobe, dresses by some hook or crook every thing he is cast for--all are fakirs.

19) Fake, Filch, Cheese--Are to steal in a small way. The word Fake also means a predicament, an article or thing, as well as to scheme.

20) Skates--Shoes.

21) Kicks--Pants.

22) Wipe--Handkerchief.

23) Tile, Cady--A silk hat.

24) Drum--Any other kind of hat, but generally spoken of "A straw drum," "A stiff drum," &c.

- 25) Smish [See below, p. 152: Wilson 2006] -- Shirt
- 26) Shield, Breast-plate--A tie that serves to cover the breast and hides a dirty shirt.
- 27) Peck, Chuck--Food.
- 28) Peckish--Hungry, and very many of the fakirs know what the word means.
- 29) Togs, Raiment--Clothes, of which they possess a great amount, when in an engagement, as most managers require them to dress well. But when the tide of ill luck strikes them, all their best togs soon reach the mawleys of their
- 30) Uncle or Old Sol--The Pawnbroker.
- 31) Wardrobe--Stage clothing.
- 32) Pedestriante--Counting ties, plodding the weary way, measuring telegraph poles, hoofing it--Mean to walk, and many is the uncarpeted tie that has been trod by the weary but not heart-broken actor, who has had to foot it all the way home.
- 33) Going In Style--On the cars, with a reserved berth in the sleeper.
- 34) Optics--The eyes.
- 35) Oliver--The nose.
- 36) Lugs--The ears.
- 37) Gash--A large mouth.
- 38) Molars--The teeth.
- 39) Hooks--The hands.
- 40) Ham--Is the most derisive word in the professional vocabulary, and if you wish to lose the friendship of any one in the business call him a "ham," and that settles it. A person who can do nothing at all, can not speak his lines properly, or is very bad in any way in his calling, is denominated a "ham."
- 41) Jonah ranks next to him, but is more generally used in derision of the person so called. The difference between the two is, that a good performer or a clever actor may become a Jonah and yet not be called a ham. The Bible tells how Jonah took passage in the good ship --. When midway through the voyage a fearful storm arose, the sailors, superstitious beings as they were, declared the presence of some one on board who was



the cause of all this commotion of Neptune's breast, and demanded that he be cast overboard to appease the enraged sea god. Straws were cut, lots were drawn, and Jonah drew the shortest straw. With a hearty "Heave-yo!" Jonah was heaved over and landed in the belly of a whale (not a white one, science has since proved). The waters calmed down, the sailors drank their grog with thanks that the sacrifice was accepted. But the whale didn't think he could stomach Jonah either, and so heaved him out onto the land, where we must leave him. Since that day every misfortune, mishap, accident or failure has been attributed to the presence of a Jonah in the venture or in the party. As the Biblical Jonah was the cause of such ill-luck, so now is dubbed by the name Jonah the person who is suspected of being the harbinger or producer of misfortune to the profession. Bad business comes to a heretofore successful party, and some one is selected as being the Jonah, and is immediately hustled out of the gang. Cross eyes, blindness, lameness, deformity of any kind, is considered the sure sign of a Jonah, and as such he eventually becomes known. In our own city there are at least a dozen persons who are called Jonahs, and who have become known to the entire profession as an unfortunate.

42) Paper--Printing.

43) Papered--When the house contains a large number of persons who have come in on complimentary tickets.

44) Bloke--A person not liked by the speaker.

45) Kid--A child.

46) Kidding, Coddling, Guying--Making fun of; telling in all seriousness what is intended for sarcasm; praising when the opposite is meant.

47) Gaff, Taffy--Almost similar to the above, but in milder form.

48) Puff--Favorable newspaper criticism for which they strive manfully, and maketh their heart glad when it is attained.

49) Blast--Adverse newspaper criticism, for which they threaten to kill the editor.

50) Guys--Young men who "set 'em up" for the "profesh."

51) Snap--A traveling party comprised of persons whose talent

is more often below than above mediocrity, and who generally "bust up" in a few days.

52) Gill--The man who backs the "snaps"--a party with a few dollars, no brains and less experience in the show business. He always returns a sadder, wiser, broke-up man, his shekels gone, and the only satisfaction left of being added as one to the number of gills.

53) Snide--Very bad, and we may remark by way of parenthesis, that more snide actors infest our sacred corporation, and more snide shows leave it, than of any city three times its size on either hemisphere.

54) Tart--Pretty bad, but a little better than snide.

55) Fired, Banged, Shot Out--When a performer is discharged he is one of the above.

56) Dates--Engagements to open at a stated time.

57) Serio-comic Balladist--Females who most generally possess more legs than musical ability.

58) Pasteboards--Tickets, playing cards, and they all know how to handle the latter pretty well.

59) Sucker--A person caught for money or drinks. Vide several of our variety shows, where the sucker most doth seek the wine-room, there to be played by the female talent.

60) Jump--Distance to travel; to leave without paying a bill--a thing seldom heard of, because the parties losing the money don't like to acknowledge their failure to judge human nature.

61) Masher, Mash, Mashing--This is the order in which they should be classed. The masher can be either male or female, traveling on their beauty, shape or talent, and sometimes on all three. The mash is the party willing to be mashed, and who is generally made to pay for the pleasure of the mash in a good round sum. Mashing is the attempt of both to succeed in their object. The female masher monopolizes the most of the mashes. The process can be witnessed in its most bald-headed form almost any night over the Rhine.

62) "Hey! Rube!"--The circus-man's shout, which has been heard from Maine to Oregon and from Hudson's Bay to Brazil. When the countrymen get too fresh and too full of fight, they

generally get it. The first performer attacked sends forth the thrilling war cry, and every man and boy connected with the show arm themselves with some weapon, and sally to the aid of their brother. Swarming from all quarters, they soon conquer the countrymen, and after hustling out the disturbers, [col. 8] who have gained several broken hands, the shows go on, the weapons are laid aside, and all is serene until the next war-cry assails their ears. The above constitutes a great many of the slang terms used by the profession, but to enumerate all would occupy more space than we are permitted to use.'

ALPHABETICAL LIST OF ITEMS IN THE ABOVE ARTICLE,  
(with number in parentheses indicating the paragraph in  
which the item is mentioned)

*back-cap* (14)---*banged* (55)---*bilge-water* (9)---*budge* (9)---*beat* (15-16) beer, expressions for (10)---*bilk* (16)---*blast* (14, 49)---*bloke* (44)---*bourne, gone to that* (12)---*boys, the 'fellows in theater/variety shows/circus'*---*breast-plate* (26)---*bust up* (51)---*cady* (23)---*call* (1) must be typo for 'cull' (= fellow)---*cap* (See *back-cap*)---*checks, hand in one's* (12)---*cheese* (19)---*chuck* (26)---*codding* (46)---*count ties* (32)---*croak* (12-13)---*cull* (see *call*); *cully* (5, 7)---*cute* (17)---*dates* (56)---*dew-bowl* (9)---*died, expressions for* (12)---*drum* (24)---*drop* (6)---*ducats* (11)---*dust* (11)---*elixir* (9)---*fake* (19)---*fakir* (18, 27)---*fall* (6)---*fire-water* (9)---*filch* (19)---*fired* (55)--(B. Popik: HDAS has 1882 for fire 'discharge or dismiss from employment')---*flimsies* (11)---*filthy lucre* (11)---*flash* (1) 'cant'---*fly* (adj.) (17)---*fly* (vb.) (16)---*flying above* (12)---*foot it* (31)---*gaff* (47)---*gash* (37)---*German Decoction* (10)---*gill* (52)---*give* (16)---*given his last show* (12)---*going in style* (33)---*gone to that bourne* (12)---*great* (4)---*guying* (46)---*guys* (50)---*ham* (30-41)---*hand in his checks* (12)---*Hey! Rube!* (62)---*hoof it* (32)---*hooks* (39)---*immense, the* (3)---*Jonah* (41)---*jump* (60)---*kicks* (21)---*kid* (nn.) (45)---*kidding* (46)---*lever of the world* (= money) (11)---*lugs* (36)---*lush* (9)---*mace* (16)---*masher, mash, mashing* (61)---*mawleys* (= hands)--(29)---*measure telegraph poles* (32)---*molars* (38) ---*money, terms for*

(11)---*nibs* (5)---*nicks* (11)---*nixey* (7)---*Oliver* (35)---*optics* (34)  
 ---*ore* (11)---*paper* (41)---*papered* (43)---*pard* (5, 7)---*paste-*  
*boards* (58)---*patter* (1)---'talk' (in cant)---*peck* (27)---*peckish*  
 (28)---*plod the weary way* (32)---*rocks* (11)---*profesh, the* (10,  
 50; 'members of the theater/varieties/circus profession')---  
*profession, the* (2; 'members of the theater/varieties/circus  
 profession')---*puff* (48)---*raiment* (29)---*roast* (16)---*rocksy* (5)---  
*Rube* -- (See *Hey! Rube!*)---*serio-comic balladist* (57)---*set 'em up*  
 (50)---*shekels* (11)---*shield* (26)---*shiners* (11)---*shinnies* (11)---  
*shot out* (55)---*show, given his last* (12)---*skates* (21)---*skin*  
 (16)---*skipped the earth* (12)---*slush* (10)---*smish* (25)---*snap*  
 (51-52)---*snide* (53)---*snuff, up to* (17)---*spondulicks* (11)---  
*stack it* (8)---*stiff drum, a* (24)---*stow it* (8)---*straw drum, a* (24)-  
 ---*sucker* (59)---*taffy* (47)---*tamarack* (9)---*tanglefoot* (9)---*tart*  
 (54)---*tile* (23)---*togs* (29)---*trash* (11)---(one of the terms for  
 'money.' Might it derive from Shakespeare's play *Othello*, in  
 which Iago at one point says: "Who steals my purse steals  
 trash?")---*tumble* (6) *Uncle Sol/Old Sol* (30)---*up to snuff* (17)---  
*walk, words for* (32)---*wardrobe* (31)---*wealth* (11)---*whisky,*  
*words for* (9)---*wipe* (22)

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 'Short Sixes: Stories To Be Read While The Candle Burns, by H. C. Bunner, Puck, Keppler & Schwarzmann, NY, 1891  
 H. C. Bunner was an editor of the humor magazine PUCK. His novels are on microfilm in an American Fiction series. One source said that he's noted for slang, so I'm giving him a read. OED already cites some terms from this book of short stories, but not these phrases.  
 FWIW: Candles were sold six to a pound.  
 Pages 163-178: 'HECTOR'  
 Pg. 170: 'In conclave assembled, the Misses Pellicoe decided to name the dog Hector.'  
 (Ah! Probably the first "Since Hector was a pup" is to be found in the pages of PUCK! Unfortunately, it's not online in the Making of America database -- B. Popik)  
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CIRCUS SLANG: 1919 ITEM IN *LOS ANGELES TIMES*

Barry Popik  
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[G. Cohen: Popik shared this item in an 8/3/2003 ads-l message and in *Comments on Etymology*, Oct. 2003, vol. 32, no. 2, p. 2. He found the item on the *Los Angeles Times* database and wondered whether the article was somehow cut off at the end. He then checked the actual *Los Angeles Times* reel for this circus slang article and notified me that the article ends abruptly there as well.]

From the *Los Angeles Times*, March 2, 1919, section III, p. 24; title: 'Circus Slang':

'In the vernacular of the circus the show grounds are always the "lot;" the main tent is the "big top." the one containing the sideshows, "kid top;" the sawdust covered ring, the "tan bark;" and the dressing-rooms, "pad rooms."

"Joe Doakes" is the ringmaster, "jovies" or "joys" are clowns; a "kinker" is any one who performs but has no feature act. Men working on the seats work "in the lumber camp."

'The band is the "big noise" or "horn gang," the band wagon "flash;" concert, "blower;" animal wagon, "den;" elephants, "bulls," animals such as lions, tigers, leap.'

## GLOSSARY OF ITEMS IN THE ABOVE ARTICLE

*big noise* - band (And see: *horn gang*)

*big top* - main tent

*blower* - concert

*bulls* - elephants

*den* - animal wagon

*flash* - band wagon

*horn gang* - band (And see: *big noise*)

*Joe Doakes* - ringmaster

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## GLOSSARY OF ITEMS IN THE ABOVE ARTICLE

*big noise* - band (And see: *horn gang*)

*big top* - main tent

*blower* - concert

*bulls* - elephants

*den* - animal wagon

*flash* - band wagon

*horn gang* - band (And see: *big noise*)

*Joe Doakes* - ringmaster



*jovies* - clowns

*joys* - clowns

*kid top* - tent containing the sideshows

*kinker* - anyone who performs but has no feature act

*leap* - animals such as lions, tigers

*lot* -- show grounds

*lumber camp* - 'Men working on the seats work "in the lumber camp."

*pad room* - dressing room

*tan bark* - sawdust covered ring

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1913 FORT WAYNE SENTINEL ARTICLE ON SLANG: ARE YOU JERRY TO THE OLD JAZZ? (SAN FRANCISCO); HOD DICKETY DOG (INDIANAPOLIS); GAZIPE (ST. LOUIS); IT'S MUSH TO ME (DENVER); I'LL MAKE A LITTLE DODO (NEW ORLEANS); I SHOULD WORRY (ALMOST EVERY CITY, ESP. BOSTON, NEW YORK)

Barry Popik  
225 E. 57 St., Apt. 7P  
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[G. Cohen: Reprinted from *Comments on Etymology*, March 2004, vol. 33, no. 6, pp. 6-9. Popik first shared this item as a Dec. 25, 2003 ads-l message, although I here omit his preliminary remarks.]

4 June 1913, *Fort Wayne Sentinel*, pg. 8?, col. 5:

[1] 'GOES BACK HOME WITH NEW SLANG

[2] "Hod Dickety-Dog" is a New One That Comes from Indiana.

[3] IS MAKING A BIG HIT

[Start of boxed item--B. Popik]

[4] "BEST SELLERS" IN CITY SLANG

Indianapolis--"Hod dickety dog!" ---[B. Popik: sic: "hod" (not "hot" throughout article]

Boston--"I should worry."

San Francisco--"Are you jerry to the old jazz?"

Denver--"It's mush to me."

St. Louis--"Gazipe!"

New Orleans--"Make a little dodo!"

[End of box--B. Popik]

[5] 'Milroy, Ind., June 4--George Stoner came back from his week's visit to Indianapolis with some new bits of slang, which already have swept Rush and Shelby counties and are the most popular things known here since "The Banks of the Wabash" first saw the light.

[6] "I suppose those city fellows kidded the life out of you, hey, George?" asked Henry Tolliff, who met Stoner at the inter-urban station.

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[7] "Hod dickety dog," said Stoner.

"What's that?" asked Tolliff. "Didn't they get any change out of you?"

[8] "Didn't you hear me say 'hod dickety dog?'" asked the traveler. "What's the matter with you rubes, anyway. Everybody who is anybody knows that that means I'm jerry; I'm hep; I connect. [col. six] When you try to kid a fellow and he says 'hod dickety dog!' that means that the bunk bounces off of him. Are you next?"

"I get you," said Tolliff thoughtfully.

[9] "Lemme tell you something here: 'Hod dickety dog' will be all the rage in New York before winter. All good slang, like everything else, comes from Indiana, and travels east, and this is going fast. 'Round the Stanton House there in Indianapolis there was a bunch of traveling men and they gave me a line on the correct slang in various parts of the country; it's different in different cities. F'rinstance, 'I should worry' has the call in almost every city. It's especially popular in Boston, and in New York they don't know anything else. It isn't very old. It's a Jewish expression and was born about the same time as [the] Talmud. A fellow who sells bunion plasters for a Denver house was telling me that out his way, if a person doesn't care about the subject under discussion he says, "It's mush to me."

[10] "Now, out in San Francisco the most popular word is 'the old jazz.' It means anything you may happen to want it to. There was a St. Louis man there who thought that he was real cute. He was trying to kid me, and just to show him I was wise I said 'Hod dickety-dog.' 'I see you're there with the gazipe,' he says. Get it?"

[11] "Hod dickety-dog," said Tolliff nodding.

[12] "Down in New Orleans they say 'I think I'll take a little dodo,' meaning they're going to hunt the hay or go to sleep. I got a lot more that I'll tell you some other time." [B. Popik: 'take a little dodo': sic; the start of the article has 'make a little dodo'; and 'hunt the hay': sic, not 'hit the hay']

[13] "Getting into any gambling houses, George?" asked his friend.

Stoner winked.

“Lose much?”

“Me? Hod dickety-dog.”

#### GLOSSARY OF ITEMS IN THE ABOVE ARTICLE

*DODO* in: ‘I’ll make a little dodo’ [4]

[12] “Down in New Orleans they say ‘I think I’ll take [sic: ‘take’] a little dodo,’ meaning they’re going to hunt the hay or go to sleep.’

*GAZIPE* (St. Louis) -- [4]--And see below: [10-11]; meaning: ? It does not seem to mean the same as in the St. Louis newspaper article (spotted by Douglas Wilson) reprinted below.

*HOD DICKETY DOG* -- [2]: “*Hod Dickety-Dog*” is a New One That Comes from Indiana, [4]

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*JERRY* 'aware' -- 'Are you jerry to the old jazz?' [4]

*MUSH* in: 'It's mush to me' [4]

[9] 'A fellow who sells bunion plasters for a Denver house was telling me that out his way, if a person doesn't care about the subject under discussion he says, "It's mush to me."'

*WORRY* -- See *I should worry* [4, 9]

1913 GAZIPE (ST. LOUIS SLANG OF CA. 1913  
IS DISCUSSED IN A 1913 NEWSPAPER ARTICLE

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[ed., G. Cohen: Reprinted from *Comments on Etymology*, March 2004, vol. 33, no. 6, pp. 10-11. *Gazipe* (neither in *HDAS* nor *Cassell's Dictionary of Slang*) appears in the reprinted 1913 article just previous to this one, first in the boxed items at the beginning, then towards the end of the article:

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The meaning of ‘gazipe’ here (repartee? latest slang?) is not entirely clear and may reflect what is said earlier in the paragraph about ‘the old jazz’: ‘It means anything you may happen to want it to.’

Also, a 1913 newspaper article specifically on the term ‘gazipe’ was drawn to scholarly attention by ads-l member Douglas Wilson. Available on newspaperarchive.com, it is in *Sheboygan Press*, Wisconsin, 3/25/1913, p. 4/2-3 (a few days earlier: *Stevens Point Daily Journal*, Wisconsin, 3/20/1913, p. ?; cols. 2-3) and is now reprinted in full.]

\* \* \*

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[col. 2--cartoon shows 4 men, one sitting down and peering towards a document that a second is holding up for view while pointing to a word or line on the document and saying: “THERE’S



[13] "Getting into any gambling houses, George?" asked his friend.

Stoner winked.

"Lose much?"

"Me? Hod dickety-dog."

*HUNT THE HAY* -- [12] "Down in New Orleans they say 'I think I'll take a little dodo,' meaning they're going to hunt the hay or go to sleep.'

*I SHOULD WORRY.* -- [4]

[9] 'Round the Stanton House there in Indianapolis there was a bunch of traveling men and they gave me a line on the correct slang in various parts of the country; it's different in different cities. F'rinstance, 'I should worry' has the call in almost every city. It's especially popular in Boston, and in New York they don't know anything else. It isn't very old. It's a Jewish expression and was born about the same time as [the] Talmud.'

*JAZZ* in: 'Are you jerry to the old jazz?'--[4]

[10] "Now, out in San Francisco the most popular word is 'the old jazz.' It means anything you may happen to want it to. There was a St. Louis man there who thought that he was real cute.'

*JERRY* 'aware' -- 'Are you jerry to the old jazz?' [4]

*MUSH* in: 'It's mush to me' [4]

[9] 'A fellow who sells bunion plasters for a Denver house was telling me that out his way, if a person doesn't care about the subject under discussion he says, "It's mush to me."'

*WORRY* -- See *I should worry* [4, 9]

1913 GAZIPE (ST. LOUIS SLANG OF CA. 1913  
IS DISCUSSED IN A 1913 NEWSPAPER ARTICLE

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TH' GAZIPE. SEE IT?" Two other men are looking on with a concerned intent look, clearly trying to spot or understand what their colleague is pointing to]

'St. Louis, Mo. -- Gazipe!

'There it is! Look out for it! It will get you if you don't. Let no guilty gazipe escape.

'The gazipe made its debut at a special performance with the legislative committee of the city council for an audience. It was presented by a theatrical manager, Frank R. Tate. The appearance of the gazipe was unannounced and it created a sensation.

'Discussing the pending bill which would require all St. Louis theaters to comply with the building and fire protection laws as amended in 1907, Manager Tate said:

"I can point out the gazipe in that bill."

'The committeemen were astounded. The gazipe came like a bolt out of a clear sky. [col. 3] 'With difficulty restraining his emotion, Councilman Leahy asked:

"What is--what is this--ah-hum--this, ah--?"

"Gazipe?" snapped Tate.

"Yes. What is a gazipe?"

"Well, I don't know that I can explain it to you clearly."

"How do you spell it?"

"You don't spell it. You look for it. I don't know that it has ever been spelled, but it has been pronounced a million times," said Tate.

"Well," said Leahy, "in order that it may be placed on the official records and in the files of the municipal library we will spell it g-a-z-i-p-e. Now what is it?"

"Well," said Tate, "I have heard theatrical people use it very often, but I don't think it is known outside of the profession. When an actor signs a contract with a manager he always reads it over several times to look for the gazipe, the little thing which, if left in there, will cause the actor to get the worst of it."

'One of the committeemen suggested that gazipe was something like "a nigger in a woodpile."

"Very much like it," said Tate.

“Oh, I see,” said Leahy. “It’s a ‘joker,’ a ‘stinger.’”

## REFERENCES

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- Popik, Barry. 2004. 1913 *Fort Wayne Sentinel* article on slang: ...*gazipe* (St. Louis);... -- Comments on Etymology, March 2004, vol. 33, no. 6, pp. 6-9. Reprinted above, pp. 155-158.

1931 L.A. TIMES ARTICLE 'UNDERWORLD "LINGO"  
BROUGHT UP-TO-DATE', BY BEN KENDALL

Barry Popik  
225 E. 57 St., Apt. 7P  
New York, NY 10022

[G. Cohen: Popik located this item--evidently overlooked by lexicographers--on an update of the ProQuest database and drew it to the attention of ads-l on Oct. 2, 2003. It was then reprinted in *Comments on Etymology*, March 2004, vol. 33, no. 6, pp. 12-26.]

'UNDERWORLD "LINGO" BROUGHT UP-TO-DATE'  
subtitle: '*Gangsters have an Esperanto all their own*'  
by Ben Kendall  
*Los Angeles Times*, Nov 8, 1931. pp. K3, 16.

'Every business and game has its own peculiar vernacular. None is more colorful, and sometimes as ludicrous as it is incongruous, than the slang of the gangster. That it often creeps into the vocabulary of policemen and newspaper men is not strange. Frequently one word expresses an entire chapter, while at other times an entire phrase in slang is needed where one good English word would suffice. An attempt to trace the origin of many of the slang words that have been in constant use for decades is an almost hopeless undertaking.

'Any gangster with a proper respect for his calling would deeply resent being called murderer, but his chest would swell mightily if he was referred to as a "torpedo." or a "dropper." A similar situation would result if you failed to refer to a man who lives off the earnings of street women as a "McGimper," instead of using an uglier word designating his true character.

'In this glossary many words will be found that have been used both in parlor games and wholesale murder undertakings for generations. Some of them are comparatively new, but all of them are universally used and understood in our one big family of racketeers.'

## A

AIREDALE: A special guard. -- "If you get past the airedale that job is easy."

[B. Popik: Also in example under TAKE: "Hey, you mugs, ain't I in on a take? Didn't I give the airedale a run-around?"]

ALKY: Straight alcohol. -- "That mug was nothing but a McGimper before he muscled in on the alky racket."

[B. Popik: also under

1) APPLE-KNOCKER: "That big apple-knocker slipped on the top step with a five gallon can of alky."

2) MUSCLE IN: "That mug was a McGimper until he muscled in on the alky racket, then he took a powder on his twist."

ALLEY CAT: A private watchman. -- "We haven't got a chance to make that warehouse, too many alley cats."

ANGLE: A plan; a lead. -- "He got an angle on the mob from a stoolie."

APPLE-KNOCKER: A yokel; a blunderer. -- "That big apple-knocker slipped on the top step with a five gallon can of alky."

## B

BANG: A tip off; information. -- "He got a bang on the knock-over and took a scam."

BAT: A woman of the streets. -- "Never take the word of a bat, she may cross you."

BEEF: Complaint. -- "It was the third beef on the sergeant so he got a transfer."

[B. Popik: and in the examples:

1) under BLOW DOWN: "He tried to blow down the beef, but the chief wouldn't cool."

2) PAY-OFF: "There was a pay-off after the job and the beef was blown down."]

BENDER: A thief; cheater; petty. -- "Never leave nothing around loose when that bender is in the joint, he'd glom an anvil."

BIG HOUSE, THE: penitentiary. [B. Popik: not listed in the glossary but is in the example under TOPPED: "I see by the papers that they topped him up at the big house this

morning.”]

BIRD: guy. [B. Popik: not listed in glossary but is in examples under:

1) JIGGABOO: “That bird’s in the bucks and how! He’s got a jalopy all fitted up with gold gear teeth, steam heated door knobs and a jigaboo chauffeur.”

2) KICK: “I didn’t have a dimmer in my kick when this bird hands me a fin.”

3) NANCY: “That bird’s screwy; every time he takes a drink he acts like a Nancy.”]

BIT: A share. -- “She got her bit out of the reward for tipping the cops.”

BLISTER: Same as *bat*.

BLOW DOWN: To modify; to soften; to quash. -- “He tried to blow down the beef, but the chief wouldn’t cool.”

[B. Popik: also in example under PAY-OFF: “There was a pay-off after the job and the beef was blown down.”]

BOILER: Moonshine still. -- “After the raid they found the boiler in a copper’s cellar.”

BOOSTER: A shoplifter.

BREEZE: To depart. -- “We better breeze out of town because they are putting on the heat.”

BROTHER-IN-LAW: A man who has two women of the street working for him. -- “That McGimper is up in the bucks now, he’s a brother-in-law.”

BUG: A burglar alarm. -- “Make sure the joint hasn’t been wired for a bug.”

BUILD: To work up a confidence, or a pretended friendship. -- “I tried to build him for an in but he wouldn’t tumble.”

BUZZER: A badge. -- “I saw his buzzer when he got out of the car so I took a powder.”

## C

CANNON: A pickpocket. -- “That cannon was the wire for one of the best gun mobs in town.”

CASES: The last few dollars. -- “When that dough came I was down to cases.”

CONNECTION: An understanding; an agreement. -- “I tried to

- get an in with the big boy, but couldn't make a connection."
- CHIV: A knife. -- "The gig went for a chiv but I had my roscoe and I fogged him." [sic: *roscoe*, with -e; the glossary below presents the spelling *rosco*.]
- CHISELER: A petty grafter; a borrower; a price cutter. -- "The bail bond business ain't what it used to be, there's too many chisellers in the racket."
- COOKER: Moonshiner. -- "The cooker got swacked on his own dope and let the boiler blow up."
- CRACK WISE: talk with supposed sophistication about. [B. Popik: not listed in the glossary but is in the example under OFFICE: "He was cracking wise about the cops when I gave him the office that one of the guys listening to him was a dick." ---- ed., G. Cohen: *Cassell's Dictionary of Slang* says: 'crack wise v. (1940's+, Orig. U.S. Black) to make a "clever" comment that impresses no one, to pose as more sophisticated than one actually is.' This meaning fits the 1931 example here very well, although we now see that the date is earlier than the 1940's, and the original context seems to be cant rather than the speech of Blacks.]
- CUT: Same as bit.
- CREEPER (creep joint:) A bawdy house. --- "Them McGimpers around those creepers will take you every time."

## D

- DICK: detective. [B. Popik: not listed in the glossary but is in the example under:
- 1) NAILED: "He reached his car but the dicks nailed him before he got it started."
  - 2) OFFICE: "He was cracking wise about the cops when I gave him the office that one of the guys listening to him was a dick."
  - 3) SPILL: "And who do I meet at the spill but a flock of dicks."
- DIMMER: a dime. [B. Popik: not listed in the glossary but is in example under KICK: "I didn't have a dimmer in my kick when this bird hands me a fin."]



DING-DING: [probably 'streetcar, trolley'; my thanks to lexicographer Erin McKean for this suggestion] -- under WIRE [nn.]: "That guy is one of the best wires that ever worked a ding ding in this town."

DO A SCRAM: scam, skedaddle. -- [B. Popik: not listed in the glossary but is in the example under RUN-AROUND: "I didn't figure she was giving me the run-around until she did a scam with my dough."]

DOG-HOUSE: In disfavor. -- "My wife caught me trying to make that twist, so I'm in the dog-house now."

DOUGH: money. [B. Popik: not listed in the glossary but is in the examples under

1) CASES: "When that dough came I was down to cases."

2) RUN-AROUND: "I didn't figure she was giving me the run-around until she did a scam with my dough."]

DROPPER: Professional killer; machine gunner: a sure-shot gunman.--"We got a Chicago dropper to handle the tommy." [B. Popik: also in example under ON THE SPOT: "Tony didn't know he was on the spot until the dropper reached for the rosco and let him have it." -- And cf. Kendall's introduction, or below at TORPEDO.]

## F

FAN: To search. -- "Gee, I was lucky! I had my heater in my kick but the cops didn't fan me."

[B. Popik: also in examples under:

1) KEESTER: "He gives the keester a once over, but he don't fan it."

2) PROWLER: "Some prowler fanned the joint but he didn't find a thing."]

FIN: A five dollar bill. -- "Imagine that guy wanting a fin for a short pint."

[B. Popik: also in the example under GRAND: "The mouth-piece offered to spring him for a grand, but he couldn't even raise a fin."]

FINGER: To accuse. -- "The gang couldn't put the finger on the monkey who was stooling on 'em."

FOG: To shoot. -- "We didn't want to fog the driver, but he got

too tough.” ---- [B. Popik: also in examples under:

1) CHIV: “The gig went for a chiv but I had my roscoe and I fogged him.”

2) GO: “I told him I’d go for a heist if there was no fogging.”]

FRONT: To lead the way; to assume blame. -- “He wouldn’t front for his own mob when they got jammed.”

FRITZED: Out of business; ruined. -- “His joint was fritzed when he wouldn’t kick in.”--[B. Popik: Also: *put on the fritz*, under SHAKE: Extortion; forced tribute.--“The big boy wouldn’t stand for the shake, so they put his joint on the fritz.”]

## G

GEETUS: Money, bankroll. -- “Friendship might get you by if you’re on the up and up, but you gotta have the geetus in a racket.”

[B. Popik: also in examples under:

1) KNOCK-OVER: “The joint laid the geetus on the line and agreed to one knock-over a month.”

2) McGIMPER: “She would go straight if it wasn’t for that McGimper who knocks her for a loop when she don’t bring in the geetus.”

3) NUT: “I would’ve done the job only he wanted to put me on the nut, so I says ixnay, gimme the geetus now.”

4) PAT POKE: “He had the geetus in a pat poke and a gun mob wired it.”

5) SPRING: “The gang promised to raise the geetus to spring him.”

6) STASH: “He’s got all the geetus stashed for the day he’s sprung.”

GIG: A dance hall sheik. -- “The McGimper got all burned up when his blond fell for a gig.”

[B. Popik: also in example under CHIV: “The gig went for a chiv but I had my roscoe and I fogged him.”]

GLOM: Steal; to take. -- “That guy was always on the glom, he’d go for a hot stove.” ---- [B. Popik: also under BENDER: “Never leave nothing around loose when that bender is in the joint, he’d glom an anvil.”]

**GO:** To come to terms; to agree. -- "I told him I'd go for a heist if there was no fogging."

**GOLDFISH:** Third degree; a police beating. -- "They took him up and showed him the goldfish, but he never squawked."

[ed., G. Cohen: also in example under **WORKS:** "If he won't squawk take him to the goldfish room and give him the works."]

**GOW:** To catch; to jail. -- "Be careful when you drive because they gow you in this town if you have booze on your breath."

**GRAND:** One thousand dollars. -- "The mouthpiece offered to spring him for a grand, but he couldn't even raise a fin."

**GREASE:** Trouble, blame. -- "Boy am I in the grease? The old lady saw that blond driving my car with me sitting beside her, lit up like a Belgian cathedral."

[B. Popik: also in example under **IN:** "He had an in with the boss, but he got put in the grease anyway."]

**GUN MOB:** A pickpocket trio. -- "He's the wire and his brother is a stall in a gun mob."

[B. Popik: also in examples under:

1) **CANNON:** "That cannon was the wire for one of the best gun mobs in town."

2) **PAT POKE:** "He had the geetus in a pat poke and a gun mob wired it."

3) **UP AND UP:** "Don't try to deal with that guy because he's on the up and up and a wrong bird to monkey with, but his brother's a wire in a gun mob and a right guy."

## H

**HAYWIRE:** Mental aberration. [B. Popik: Example is given under **HEIST:** "Izzy went haywire and tried to heist his own truck."]

**HEAT:** Same as grease.

**HEATER:** A gun.--"If I'd a had my heater I'd a smoked up the joint." ---- [B. Popik: and in example under:

1) **FAN:** "Gee, I was lucky! I had my heater in my kick but the cops didn't fan me."

2) **LEAN:** "If that guy gets tough lean on him, but don't pull

a heater.”]

HEIST: To hijack; to rob a liquor shipment. -- “Izzy went haywire and tried to heist his own truck.”

[B. Popik: and in example under GO: “I told him I’d go for a heist if there was no fogging.”]

HOOD: Hoodlum; a petty gangster. -- “Abe once had a high-power mob until he began trailing with that gang of hoods on the east side.”

HOT: Wanted by the police; stolen goods; watched. -- “I gets snozzled and breezes into the joint just when it’s hot and I get jammed in a knockover.”

[B. Popik: also in examples under:

1) SHAG: “You’d better shag for the spill, you’re hot.”

2) TUMBLE: “I took a tumble that the joint was hot when the lights went out.”]

I

IN: On the inside of a deal; influence. -- “He had an in with the boss, but he got put in the grease anyway.”

[B. Popik: also in example under BUILD: “I tried to build him for an in but he wouldn’t tumble.”]

IT: Death. -- “That mug did me dirt so I gave him it.”

IXNAY: No! (emphatic); Pig Latin for ‘Nix.’ [B. Popik: not listed in the glossary but is in the example under NUT: “I would’ve done the job only he wanted to put me on the nut, so I says ixnay, gimme the geetus now.”]

J

JACK-ROLL: To rob a drunk, or sleeping man. -- “Around some of those flop joints they’ll jack-roll you for your socks.”

JALOPPY: Automobile. -- “I’m rolling along in my jalopy when the cops run me to the curb.”

[Popik: also in example under JIGGABOO: “That bird’s in the bucks and how! He’s got a jalopy all fitted up with gold gear teeth, steam heated door knobs and a jiggaboo chauffeur.”]

JAM: Same as grease; trouble. -- “Every time he gets snozzled he lands in a jam.”

JAMMED, GET: get in a jam. [B. Popik: not listed in the glossary

but is in the examples under:

1) FRONT: "He wouldn't front for his own mob when they got jammed."

2) HOT: "I gets snozzled and breezes into the joint just when it's hot and I get jammed in a knockover."]

JIGGABOO: Negro. -- "That bird's in the bucks and how! He's got a jalopy all fitted up with gold gear teeth, steam heated door knobs and a jiggaboo chauffeur."

JUG (nn.): jail. [B. Popik: not listed in the glossary but is in the example under STIR: "He's been in all the jugs in the country but never the stir."]

JUG [vb.]: put in the 'jug' (jail)--[B. Popik: not listed in the glossary but is in the example under OUT: "He didn't have an out when they nailed him with the rocks, so they jugged him."]

## K

KEESTER: A traveling bag. -- "He gives the keester a once over, but he don't fan it."

KICK: Pockets. [ed., G. Cohen: should really be 'pocket' (singular), although the plural works for the first example.] -- "I didn't have a dimmer in my kick when this bird hands me a fin."

[B. Popik: and in examples under:

1) FAN: "Gee, I was lucky! I had my heater in my kick but the cops didn't fan me."

2) STALL: "The stall steps on my feet and pokes a newspaper in my eye just as the wire gets his hand in my kick, but I grabs him and hollers."]

KICK-BACK: A return of money; a boomerang. -- "They raided the boss' pet joint, but he made them kick back all the booze."

KLINK: To hit with a black jack, or butt of a gun. -- "He didn't klink him till he hollered for help."

KLUCK: A boob; a no-good. -- "She had a chance to string with a high power, but she got married to a kluck from the pool hall."

**KNOCK-OVER:** A raid. -- "The joint laid the geetus on the line and agreed to one knock-over a month."

[B. Popik: also under

1) **BANG:** "He got a bang on the knock-over and took a scam."

2) **HOT:** "I gets snozzled and breezes into the joint just when it's hot and I get jammed in a knockover."]

3) **LAM:** "He made bail after the knock-over and then took it on the lam."

### L

**LAM:** To flee. -- "He made bail after the knock-over and then took it on the lam."

**LAY (S.O.) DOWN:** kill. [B. Popik: not listed in the glossary but is in the example under **TORPEDO:** "That guy always travels with a torpedo but Spike's mob will lay him down yet."]

**LEAN:** To strike with the fist. -- "If that guy gets tough lean on him, but don't pull a heater."

**LEFT-TURN:** A blunderer. -- "That guy'll go to the wrong gate on Judgment Day; he's a left-turn."

**LOOGAN:** A minor hoodlum; a satelite; a helper. -- "He always carries his election precinct with a last hour rush of loogans."

**LUG:** A stupid fellow; a hanger-on. -- "Don't waste time on that lug, give him the air."

### M

**MAKE:** To obtain; covetous; to seek unethically. -- "I wouldn't mind working with that guy if he wasn't always on the make."

[B. Popik: also in example under **DOG-HOUSE:** "My wife caught me trying to make that twist, so I'm in the dog-house now." And with meaning 'to rob'; under **ALLEY-CAT:** "We haven't got a chance to make that warehouse, too many alley cats."

**McCOY:** Real Bourbon whisky. -- "You can get anything you want at that joint from white mule to the McCoy."

**McGIMPER:** A man who lives on the earnings of a woman of the streets. - "She would go straight if it wasn't for that

McGimper who knocks her for a loop when she don't bring in the geetus." ---

[B. Popik: Other examples of *McGimper* in this article are: 1) under ALKY: "That mug was nothing but a McGimper before he muscled in on the alky racket."

2) under BROTHER-IN-LAW: "That McGimper is up in the bucks now, he's a brother-in-law."

3) under CREEPER "Them McGimpers around those creepers will take you every time." ---

And cf. Kendall's introduction, or below at TORPEDO.]

MEAT-WAGON: Ambulance. -- "If any of those mugs get tough in my joint they'll take a trip in the meat-wagon."

MICKEY FINN: Knock-out powders. -- "The first time I ate in the joint I didn't tip the waiter, so the next time I goes in he slips me a Mickey Finn."

MIDDLE: A compromising position; holding the bag.--"He tries to put me in the middle with the boss, but I won't stay put."

MITT: hand. -- [B. Popik: not listed in the glossary but is in the example under ROCKS: "That twist wears so many rocks that it would take a derrick to lift one of her mitts."]

MOUTHPIECE: lawyer. [B. Popik: not listed in the glossary but is in the example under GRAND: "The mouthpiece offered to spring him for a grand, but he couldn't even raise a fin."]

MUG: fool, guy. [B. Popik: not listed in the glossary but appears in the following examples under:

1) ALKY: "That mug was nothing but a McGimper before he muscled in on the alky racket."

2) IT: "That mug did me dirt so I gave him it."

3) MEAT-WAGON: "If any of those mugs get tough in my joint they'll take a trip in the meat-wagon."

4) MUSCLE IN: "That mug was a McGimper until he muscled in on the alky racket, then he took a powder on his twist."

5) TAKE: "Hey, you mugs, ain't I in on a take? Didn't I give the airedale a run-around?"]

MUSCLE IN: To force one's way in for a cut on the profits of a venture. -- "That mug was a McGimper until he muscled in on the alky racket, then he took a powder on his twist."

[B. Popik: also under ALKY: "That mug was nothing but a McGimper before he muscled in on the alky racket."]  
*(Continued on Page Sixteen)*

## N

NAILED: Caught, trapped; arrested. -- "He reached his car but the dicks nailed him before he got it started."

[B. Popik: also in example under OUT: "He didn't have an out when they nailed him with the rocks, so they jugged him."]

NANCY: An effeminate fellow. -- "That bird's screwy; every time he takes a drink he acts like a Nancy."

NEEDED: Near beer, or a beverage into which alcohol or ether has been injected. -- "The booze tastes like the quill, all right, but the beer has been needed."

NUT: A debt; the cost; credit. -- "I would've done the job only he wanted to put me on the nut, so I says ixnay, gimme the geetus now."

## O

OFFICE: Signal. -- "He was cracking wise about the cops when I gave him the office that one of the guys listening to him was a dick."

ON THE SPOT: Marked for death, or vengeance. -- "Tony didn't know he was on the spot until the dropper reached for the rosko and let him have it."

OUT: An excuse; an alibi. -- "He didn't have an out when they nailed him with the rocks, so they jugged him."

## P

PAT POKE: A wallet carried in the hip pocket. -- "He had the geetus in a pat poke and a gun mob wired it."

PAY-OFF: Protection money; monetary tribute. -- "There was a pay-off after the job and the beef was blown down."

PLANT: To produce fraudulent evidence. -- "The bottle of booze they found in the preacher's car was a plant."

POWDER: To depart; to flee. -- "If the boss acts ugly don't argue but powder."

[B. Popik: also 'take a powder' in examples under:

1) BUZZER: "I saw his buzzer when he got out of the car



so I took a powder.”

2) **MUSCLE IN:** “That mug was a McGimper until he muscled in on the alky racket, then he took a powder on his twist.”

**PROWLER:** A burglar; one who searches stealthily. -- “Some prowler fanned the joint but he didn’t find a thing.”

[PUT ON THE FRITZ -- see FRITZED or SHAKE.]

### Q

**QUILL:** Genuine whisky. -- “I only paid \$8 a quart, but it’s the quill.” [B. Popik: and in example under **NEEDED:** “The booze tastes like the quill, all right, but the beer has been needed.”]

**QUIM:** Anybody's sweetheart. -- “He was good until he let that quim give him the run-around.”

### R

**RACKET:** Any questionable business, or undertaking. -- “Don’t kid me mister, some of them reformers make more at their racket than we do in the bootleg racket.”

[B. Popik: also in examples under:

1) **CHISELER:** “The bail bond business ain’t what it used to be, there’s too many chiselers in the racket.”

2) **GEETUS:** “Friendship might get you by if you’re on the up and up, but you gotta have the geetus in a racket.”]

3) **MUSCLE IN:** “That mug was a McGimper until he muscled in on the alky racket, then he took a powder on his twist.”

4) **YENTZ:** “He had a good racket but the gang would yentz him shooting craps.”

**RAP:** An accusation. -- “They got him on a bum rap, but he got settled anyhow.”

**RIB:** To influence; to goad. -- “They ribbed him to take one drink after another until he passed out.”

**RIDE:** The fatal journey. -- “He didn’t know he was on a ride until he felt a roscos prodding his ribs.”

**ROCKS:** Diamonds. -- “That twist wears so many rocks that it would take a derrick to lift one of her mitts.”

[B. Popik: also in example under **OUT:** “He didn’t have an out when they nailed him with the rocks, so they jugged

him.”]

ROSCO: A pistol. -- “He acted like he had a rosco, but it was only a cigarette lighter.”

[B. Popik: also in examples under:

1) CHIV: “The gig went for a chiv but I had my roscoe and I fogged him.”

2) ON THE SPOT: “Tony didn’t know he was on the spot until the dropper reached for the rosco and let him have it.”

3) RIDE: “He didn’t know he was on a ride until he felt a rosco prodding his ribs.”]

RUN-AROUND: Deceit; double-cross. -- “I didn’t figure she was giving me the run-around until she did a scam with my dough.”

[B. Popik: also in examples under:

1) QUIM: “He was good until he let that quim give him the run-around.”

2) SCREWY: “That guy’s screwy if he thinks I’ll fall for that kind of a run-around.”

3) TAKE: “Hey, you mugs, ain’t I in on a take? Didn’t I give the airedale a run-around?”

## S

SAP: A black-jack. -- “I tried to reach his button, but he got me with a sap.”

SCREWY: Crazy. -- “That guy’s screwy if he thinks I’ll fall for that kind of a run-around.”

SCRAM: Leave; get away; move. -- “Scram, says I, scam before I leans one on you.”

[B. Popik: also under BANG: “He got a bang on the knock-over and took a scam.” --- and see above: DO A SCRAM.]

SETTLED: Imprisoned in the penitentiary. -- “He beat a dozen raps before they settled him.”

SHAKE: Extortion; forced tribute. -- “The big boy wouldn’t stand for the shake, so they put his joint on the fritz.”

SHAG: Hurry; hustle. -- “You’d better shag for the spill, you’re hot.”

SNOZZLED: drunk. [B. Popik: not in the glossary but is in the examples under:

- 1) HOT: "I gets snozzled and breezes into the joint just when it's hot and I get jammed in a knockover."
- 2) JAM: "Every time he gets snozzled he lands in a jam."]
- SPILL: Railroad station. -- "And who do I meet at the spill but a flock of dicks." ----- [B. Popik: also in example under SHAG: "You'd better shag for the spill, you're hot."]
- SPRING: To release from jail. -- "The gang promised to raise the geetus to spring him."  
[B. Popik: also in example under STASH: "He's got all the geetus stashed for the day he's sprung."]
- SQUAWK: [B. Popik: = provide information to the police under questioning. Not listed in the glossary but is in the examples under:  
1) GOLDFISH: "They took him up and showed him the goldfish, but he never squawked."  
2) WORKS: "If he won't squawk take him to the goldfish room and give him the works."]
- STALL: Pickpocket who distracts victim's attention while confederate works. -- "The stall steps on my feet and pokes a newspaper in my eye just as the wire gets his hand in my kick, but I grabs him and hollers."  
[B. Popik: also in example under GUN MOB: "He's the wire and his brother is a stall in a gun mob."]
- STASH: A hiding place for loot. -- "He's got all the geetus stashed for the day he's sprung."
- STIR: Penitentiary. -- "He's been in all the jugs in the country but never the stir."
- STOOLIE: [B. Popik: = informant. Not listed in the glossary but appears in an example under ANGLE: "He got an angle on the mob from a stoolie."]
- STOOL ON: [B. Popik: = inform on. Not listed in the glossary but is in the example under FINGER: "The gang couldn't put the finger on the monkey who was stooling on 'em."]
- STRING WITH: [B. Popik: = marry. Not listed in glossary but is in example under KLUCK: "She had a chance to string with a high power, but she got married to a kluck from the pool hall."]

SWACKED: [B. Popik: = drunk. Not listed in the glossary but is in the example under COOKER: "The cooker got swacked on his own dope and let the boiler blow up."]

## T

TAKE: Share. -- "Hey, you mugs, ain't I in on a take? Didn't give the airedale a run-around?"

TIP: [B. Popik: = tip off, inform. Not listed in glossary but is in the example under BIT: "She got her bit out of the reward for tipping the cops."]

TOMMY: A hand machine gun. -- "That Chicago torpedo sure knew how to play a tune on a tommy and his favorite piece was 'The End of a Perfect Day.'"

[B. Popik: and in example under DROPPER: "We got a Chicago dropper to handle the tommy."]

TORPEDO: A machine gunner; a gangster bodyguard. -- "That guy always travels with a torpedo but Spike's mob will lay him down yet."

[B. Popik: also in example under TOMMY: "That Chicago torpedo sure knew how to play a tune on a tommy and his favorite piece was 'The End of a Perfect Day.'"

--- And note Kendall's introduction to his article: 'Any gangster with a proper respect for his calling would deeply resent being called a murderer, but his chest would swell mightily if he was referred to as a "torpedo" or a "dropper." A similar situation would result if you failed to refer to a man who lives off the earnings of street women as a "McGimper," instead of using an uglier word designating his true character.']

TOPPED: Hanged. -- "I see by the papers that they topped him up at the big house this morning."

TRAIL: [B. Popik: To keep company with. Not listed in the glossary but is in the example under HOOD: "Abe once had a high-power mob until he began trailing with that gang of hoods on the east side."]

TUMBLE: To get wise; understand. -- "I took a tumble that the joint was hot when the lights went out."

[B. Popik: also means 'give (sth.) a try, fall for (sth.)' in the

example under BUILD: "I tried to build him for an in but he wouldn't tumble."]

TWIST: A girl. [B. Popik: No example cited here, although two appear under:

1) MUSCLE IN: "That mug was a McGimper until he muscled in on the alky racket, then he took a powder on his twist."

2) ROCKS: "That twist wears so many rocks that it would take a derrick to lift one of her mitts."

[G. Cohen: Cf. Cockney rhyming slang *twist and twirl* 'girl.']

## U

UP AND UP: Square; legitimate. -- "Don't try to deal with that guy because he's on the up and up and a wrong bird to monkey with, but his brother's a wire in a gun mob and a right guy."

[B. Popik: and in example under GEETUS: "Friendship might get you by if you're on the up and up, but you gotta have the geetus in a racket."]

UP IN THE BUCKS: [B. Popik: = very wealthy, rolling in dough. Not listed in the glossary but is in the example under BROTHER-IN-LAW: "That McGimper is up in the bucks now, he's a brother-in-law."]

## W

WHITE: Gin; alcohol. -- "He wants as much for a gallon of white as he does the McCoy."

WHITE MULE: [G. Cohen: Not listed in the glossary, but there is an example under McCOY: "You can get anything you want at that joint from white mule to the McCoy."

'White mule' is evidently synonymous with 'moonshine'. Cf. The e-book *The Trail of the White Mule*, by B.M. Bower, chapter VI:

'...For such is the way of moonshine when fusel oil abounds, as it does invariably in new whisky distilled by furtive amateurs working in secret and with neither the facilities nor the knowledge for its scientific manufacture. There is grim significance in the sardonic humor of the man who first named it White Mule. The kick is certain and terrific; frequently it is fatal as well. The worst of it is, you never know

what the effect will be until you have drunk the stuff; and after you have drunk it, you are in no condition to resist the effect or to refrain from courting further disaster.

'That is what happened to Casey. The poison in the first half-pint, swallowed under the eye of Joe's six-shooter, upset his judgment. The poison in his further potations made a wholly different man of Casey Ryan; and the after effect was so terrific that he would have swallowed cyanide if it promised relief.

'He gritted his teeth and suffered tortures until Joe returned and gave him a drink of whisky in a chipped granite cup. Almost immediately he felt better. ...']

**WING-DING:** A fit; berserk. -- "The sailor pulled a wing ding after the first drink and they called the meat-wagon."

**WIRE** [nn.]: The skilled pickpocket who actually extracts the money. -- "That guy is one of the best wires that ever worked a ding ding in this town."

[B. Popik: also in examples under:

1) **CANNON:** "That cannon was the wire for one of the best gun mobs in town."

2) **GUN MOB:** "He's the wire and his brother is a stall in a gun mob."

3) **STALL:** "The stall steps on my feet and pokes a newspaper in my eye just as the wire gets his hand in my kick, but I grabs him and hollers."

4) **UP AND UP:** "Don't try to deal with that guy because he's on the up and up and a wrong bird to monkey with, but his brother's a wire in a gun mob and a right guy."]

**WIRE** [vb.]: to pick s.o.'s pocket/purse/etc.--[B. Popik: not listed in the glossary but is in the example under **PAT POKE:** "He had the geetus in a pat poke and a gun mob wired it."]

**WISE** -- [B. Popik: See above: **CRACK WISE**]

**WORKS:** A beating; third degree; rough treatment. -- "If he won't squawk take him to the goldfish room and give him the works."

**WRONG:** One who will not confederate. -- "That guy's wrong so

lay off him; he's honest."

[B. Popik: also in example under UP AND UP: "Don't try to deal with that guy because he's on the up and up and a wrong bird to monkey with, but his brother's a wire in a gun mob and a right guy."]

Y

YEN: Desire. -- "He had a yen for poker but the boys always took him for a yentzing."

YENTZ: Outsmart; defeat. -- "He had a good racket but the gang would yentz him shooting craps."

[B. Popik: also in example under YEN: "He had a yen for poker but the boys always took him for a yentzing."]

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- Cohen, Gerald 1982. Origin of criminal slang *wire* 'pickpocket.' *General Linguistics*, vol. 7, no. 3, pp. 23-24.
- HDAS = Historical Dictionary of American Slang. (Editor: Jonathan Lighter). Vols. A-G (1994) and H-O (1997). NY: Random House. Publication will be continued by Oxford U. Pr.
- Partridge, Eric 1968. *Dictionary of the Underworld*. London: Routledge. 3rd ed.

## MATERIAL FOR THE STUDY OF JAZZ AX(E) 'MUSICAL INSTRUMENT'

Gerald Cohen

(compiler, with due credit given--This article was first presented in *Comments on Etymology*, Feb. 2003, vol. 32, no. 5, pp. 17-25)

\* \* \*

One of the oddest semantic developments in English is ax(e) 'tool for chopping' to 'musical instrument.' Presented below is a compilation of material on this latter meaning.

## TREATMENTS IN A FEW STANDARD DICTIONARIES

1. *HISTORICAL DICTIONARY OF AMERICAN SLANG*

HDAS presents: *axe*, nn. meaning #4:

'(sense development unkn.; perh. orig. sugg. by *sax*; perh. infl. by *swing*) *Jazz*. A musical instrument, esp. one on which jazz or rock music is played, as a saxophone, trumpet, or guitar.

1955 in *Tenn. Folk. Soc. Bull.* XXI (1956) 22 Ax--saxophone.

1956 Hunter *Second Ending* 132: I picked up my ax and almost brained the son-of-a-bitch.

1956 in Gold *Jazz Lexicon*: You want make it with me tonight? Bring your ax.

1956 Blake *Joint* 143: He bring his axe into the club often..and we gas one another

1958-59 Lipton *Barbarians* 85: Any jazz instrument is an "ax"--in Phil's case, the bass.

1961 J. Williams *Night Song* 44: Eagle, the last year, had been sounding plaintive, almost whiny on his ax.

1968 *Rolling Stone Interviews* 140: His axe was trombone.

1971 Wells & Dance *Night People* 72: I dig you man, but it's funny how my old lady would rather me starve than put my axe down.

1980 N.C. Man age 29: My guitar is my ax, man.



lay off him; he's honest."

[B. Popik: also in example under UP AND UP: "Don't try to deal with that guy because he's on the up and up and a wrong bird to monkey with, but his brother's a wire in a gun mob and a right guy."]

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YEN: Desire. -- "He had a yen for poker but the boys always took him for a yentzing."

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1980 N.C. Man age 29: My guitar is my ax, man.

## 2. OXFORD ENGLISH DICTIONARY, 2nd edition

*OED2* presents:

- ax, axe, n.<sup>1</sup> #5. A musical instrument; formerly esp. a saxophone, now usu. a guitar. slang (chiefly Jazz and Rock Music).
- 1955 L. FEATHER *Encycl. Jazz* (1956) 345 Ax, axe, horn, instrument (usually saxophone).
- 1956 O. DUKE *Sideman* ii. 25 You wanta make it with me tonight? Bring your ax, man, blow some.
- 1962 'E. MCBAIN' *Like Love* vii. 100 The musical jargon of Hip.. 'he peddled the ax to buy the junk, so now he can't blow anyway.'
- 1967 *Melody Maker* 23 Dec. 8/5 'For Pete's sake Ali you're on now, this minute...' 'Listen, man. Don't have my axe, man.'
- 1969 *Rolling Stone* 17 May 8/4 While Keith bashes madly on the drums,..Pete Townsend disposes of his axe with good natured dispatch.
- 1976 *New Musical Express* 12 Feb. 37/3 There's not the slightest hint of killer axe interplay or dazzling musical cut and thrust.
- 1982 *Sounds* 11 Dec., As a flashing axe, it takes some beating.

## 3. ROBERT GOLD'S JAZZ TALK

Gold's *Jazz Talk* presents:

- ax, axe, n. (See 1958 quot. for semantic explanation; current since c. 1950)
- 1956 *Sideman*, p. 25. You wanta make it with me tonight? Bring your ax.
- 1957 *N.Y. Times Magazine*, 18 Aug. p. 26. Axe: any musical instrument, even a piano
- 1958 *Publications of the American Dialect Society*, Nov. p. 43. Ax: any of the solo reed or (less commonly) brass instruments. Orig. a saxophone. From fancied resemblance in shape plus the abbr. sax.
- 1959 *Esquire*, Nov. p.70H. Ax: instrument, horn. Extended to

mean any tool of work. Example: Hemingway's ax is his typewriter.

1960 *Jazz: A Quarterly of American Music*, Winter, p. 20. I am digging a recorded group from Canada though, with four axes.

#### 4. PETER TAMONY COLLECTION OF AMERICANISMS

From the late 1920s until his death in 1985 San Franciscan Peter Tamony clipped and filed tens of thousands of newspaper and magazine articles, and popular entertainment was one of his main interests. I therefore contacted the Western Historical Manuscript Collection, which houses his material and was soon notified that Tamony's files contain three references to *ax(e)* as a musical instrument:

1956 *Down Beat*, 2 May (Chicago, Illinois, vol. 23, no. 9, p. 13, col. 3): 'A New Axe

'New York--For Carmen Cavallaro's current engagement at the Embers, the management has installed "a new \$7,000 Steinway grand piano of Carnegie Hall stature," says club's press agent. A clause in Cavallaro's contract stipulates furthermore that his piano must be tuned daily. Cavallaro came to the Embers after completing the piano track for the film of the Eddy Duchin Story. At the Embers he is premiering his first "jazz quartet."

1957 *San Francisco Chronicle*, June 11, p. 21, cols. 1-3; 'A Bundle of Ginsburg Sets Up a Real Howl,' by Ralph J. Gleason; cols. 2-3; 9; 'ax' comes in the next to last paragraph:

'... "Why are you glad you're a jazz man, Shorty," I asked, intrigued by the switch because he's usually complaining.

"Well, man, like when you're a musician and you blow and like tell your story, maybe the people will pick up on it, you know. But you can be sure the fuzz won't. I can be standin' there and I'm wailin' the end, and I'm tellin' that old fuzz in the back of the room all about it, like how he killed

them, him in his blue serge suit, and what I think of him and him and everything and the beauty part of it is he doesn't know I'm saying anything! It's the coolest!

"Man, I'm sure glad I'm a jazz musician and not a poet. Like I can say a lot of things with my ax, man, that ain't for kids, but nobody knows it! We're gonna really have a bad time if the cops ever start readin' jazz. Wow! But I don't think they'll make it. They'll never have time if they look up all the words in those poems to see what they mean.'

'You know, I think Shorty is right.'

1978 *San Francisco Examiner*, March 22, p. 62, cols. 1-2; 'Concert Fiddler A Real Yawner,' by Philip Elwood:

'On the top of the bill is New Englander Marie Rhines, who insists on calling herself a "concert fiddler"...Rhines, who looks like a determined Julie Nixon in a granny dress, sawing away on her ax, has enough violin talent (and classic folk music understanding) to lay low almost anyone.

...But Rhines, with all her academic background and folk music dedication, technique and social awareness, is mostly a musical bore....'

-----[G. Cohen: My thanks for this Tamony information go to William T. Stolz, Manuscript Specialist, WHMC, 23 Ellis Library, Columbia, MO--stolzw@umsystem.edu]

## 5. AMERICAN DIALECT SOCIETY DISCUSSION

Here are some messages sent to the ads-l discussion group in response to the query: 'When and by whom was the term "axe" first used for a guitar? Was it (and is it) used specifically for an electric guitar? Which make/model inspired it?'

(1) Nancy Elliott (Southern Oregon University; nellott1@earthlink.net), 20 April 2000:

'The professional (instrumentalist) musicians I know and/or perform with on the West Coast refer to ANY of their instruments as an "axe." This can include bowed & plucked strings,

wood-winds, brass, percussion instruments, and keyboards. There is a sense that it still basically means a guitar and that the extension to other instrument families is playful. A similar thing is the use of "horn" for non-brass instruments, which I have heard frequently in the West and the Midwest for a long time.'

(2) (Ms.) Jimmie C Ellis (msjce1@juno.com), 20 April 2000:

'Chambers 21st Century Dictionary has the slang term listed as a) a guitar, b) formerly a saxophone. This volume was published in 1996 but gives no first use date.

'Personally, growing up in southern California, I started going to coffee houses (non-alcohol night clubs) in the 1960s where many folk singers referred to their acoustic guitars as their axe.'

(3) Chuck Borsos (Santa Cruz, CA; squeezbox@cruzio.com), 21 April 2000:

'My understanding of the usage of "axe" is that it can refer to any instrument commonly used in the contexts in which you will hear it, (not likely that someone would call a brac or zurna or bagpipe an axe), and that it will refer to the main instrument that a person plays. Non-musicians often think that it means just a guitar. But if someone plays mostly sax and he's carrying a sax and guitar, the sax is going to be his axe, not the guitar. So it means an instrument that the musician has a relationship of sorts with. A guitar player's number one out of the twelve guitars she owns. An accordion player's main squeeze.

'I occasionally hear musicians refer to their instruments as if weapons as well. Such as, "Did you come armed?" for "Did you bring an instrument?"

(4) George Thompson (thompsng@elmer4.bobst.nyu.edu)--NYU librarian--added, 1 May 2000:

'My recollection as a jazz listener, not a player, from Boston in the early-mid 1960s, was that the word "axe" was used to refer to any instrument, and certainly not just guitar, which at that time wasn't a prominent jazz instrument. All axes

were blown, including the piano. As a speculation regarding the origin, I would suggest that a lumberman swings his axe.

'Chuck Borsos says that it is "not likely that someone would call a brac or zurna or bagpipe an axe." At some point in the 1960s, Rufus Harley, a musician whose main axe was a saxophone, released at least one LP on which he was featured as a bagpiper. Would he have called his bagpipes an axe?'

(5) Joseph Carson (San Francisco, CA, 21 April 2000):

'When I played in bands (from 1970-90, in upper Mid-western states and Northern California,) the term "axe" would be used in the way Chuck describes, but more often in rock, blues, funk and jazz lineups than country, top 40, show standards, adult contempo acts, etc. in connection with the reference to instruments as weapons, there were also times when articles of street drug paraphernalia would be used for purposes of comparison, as for instance, when one would be asked, "Is your 'rig' ready?" (a 'rig' minimally consisted of the needle a junkie would use to inject his drugs, but could also include the spoon his dope was cooked in, the belt used as a tourniquet to bring patent veins to the surface, even the candle and matches or zippo used to melt the mix before loading the syringe,) so that one could hear variants like, "Are you rigged for the gig?" (i.e., a 'gig' being the job the group was going to play,) or "Are you holding?" (as in carrying, holding, or being in possession of one's drugs or instruments,) or, for a drummer, "You've got your spikes?" (as in 'drumsticks.')

or in a retro hicago gangster and current Compton crack dealer argot carry-over into the musical context, "You got your gat?" (as in "Gatling gun" or Thompson or Mac-10, etc., for one's instrument, and often also including the P.A. system, amps, and so on,) or "Are you strapped?" (as a detective or hit man has a holster for his weapon, to ask if a musician has similarly prepared himself for the show by 'strapping' his instrument on, or having it ready at hand.)

The lead guitarist for Bachman-Turner Overdrive, Randy Bachman, put out a solo LP in the late 1970s entitled "Ax" (with

no “e” at the end of the word, if I recall correctly---confirm or contest this claim, if you please---I’m not sure of that terminal “e,”) that was meant to be a reference to his rock guitar prowess. Guitar (and musical instrument) nomenclature is an infinitely varied subject to pursue, because so many of the comparative references are so contextual or idiosyncratic in character as to be practically impenetrable. I knew individual bands that had devised shorthand for the styles they wanted one other to use by telling a bass player, for instance, to “shovel harder” [...message interrupted, continued right below]

(6) Joseph Carson (21 April 2000, continued):

‘Hello again!

‘Excuse me, guys, but I got cut off in my penultimate sentence for some odd reason (an “illegal operation [had] been performed,” evidently---thank you, Mr. Gates!) so by His gracious leave, let me conclude here, now, and fast!--before it happens again. So, as I was saying, a bass player would want to “hoist some hod” to lay the solid brick wall undergirding his repetitive low-register ostinati that keyboard, horn or guitar soloists would use as a basis for their stylistic flourishes, or a drummer would strive to “make some fresh kindling” by pounding his trap set into pieces like a caveman would use mastodon bones to smash hollow logs of wood into splinters, and so on. Guitars are called “git-boxes” or “ukes” or by countless other names too numerous to recount here, just as a singer has his “pipes,” a drummer his “kit,” a pianist his “ivories” and so on and on and on. I hope we can follow this thread for a while longer, for it will weave a marvelous coat of many colors if we give it chance!’

(7) Grant Barrett (gbarrett@americandialect.org), 21 April 2000:

‘On April 21, 2000, Nancy Elliott (nellott1@EARTHLINK.NET) wrote: “The professional (instrumentalist) musicians I know and/or perform with on the West Coast refer to ANY of their instruments as an ‘axe.’”

‘Not only that, I have heard users refer to their computers as axes.’



Andrea Vine (avine@ENG.SUN.COM) then wrote:

'Were they musicians? [G. Cohen: Grant Barrett then replied: 'No, copy writers and art directors.']

'I often refer to computers as "boxes." but usually in the commodity sense, e.g. "How many boxes did she order for the development group?"'

Jesse Sheidlower (*OED2* editor; 23 April 2000) added:

'Apropos the recent discussion of "axe" referring to computers or other "instruments" on which people "perform" I was just flipping through my trusty Lester Bangs' *Psychotic Reactions* and came across this, from *Creem* in 1974:

"I lugged my axe--Smith-Corona, Mr. Advertiser!--into the dressing room."

(8) David Marc (davemarc@panix.com), 21 April 2000:

'For what it's worth, rehearsing by oneself has been referred to as "doing some woodchopping."

In reply, Jesse Sheidlower (jester@panix.com; 21 April 2000) wrote: 'In my experience "woodshedding" (or sometimes just "shedding") is the usual term for this.

"woodshedding" predates "ax" for 'instrument' by two decades, but I'm not sure there's a connection.'

In a second reply, Victoria Neufeldt (vneufeldt@m-w.com; April 21, 2000), wrote:

'Our church choir director uses the "woodshedding" term too, for nitty-gritty learning of a piece by going over small sections several times, isolating the voices, etc.'

Thirdly, Grant Barrett added parenthetically, 27 April 2000:

'...a story about the synthesizer guy Moog on NPR yesterday used the term "woodshedding," mentioned here previously.'

(9) Barry Popik (Bapopik@aol.com), 21 April 2000, while traveling:

'Re: axe = guitar. There are plenty of guitar magazines to

check this. Is it in *HDAS*? Can it wait until I return?

'A quick check of Amazon.com's song titles shows "Small Axe" by Bob Marley. An old Pink Floyd favorite title came up: "Careful with that axe, Eugene." Ry Cooder did "Ax Sweet Mama."

(10) second message from Barry Popik, 27 Apr 2000; title: "Axe" in *Circus*, October 1974':

'The New York Public Library unfortunately doesn't have a full run of *Circus*. The article in October 1974, pp. 52-53, is "How To Select Your Guitar."

a) Pg. 52, col. 1: "Interest in guitars and guitar-playing continues to proliferate and manufacturers like Gibson and Fender claim the demand is so great that they can just barely make enough axes to satisfy the throngs longing to play them."

b) Pg. 53, col. 2: "A somewhat less expensive, but equally popular solid body model is the Gibson SG, which was the guitar Clapton used in the early Cream days; these days it's used by Black Sabbath's Tony Iommi. It's lighter and produces a harsher, more brittle tone than most other guitars, making it the ideal aggressive heavy-metal axe."

c) Pg. 53, col. 3 (bold-face head): "Testing the axe."

#### FINAL THOUGHTS

The origin of jazz *ax(e)* 'instrument' is still at least somewhat unclear. The best guess may be that it derives from *woodshedding* 'rehearsing by oneself.' Presumably the rehearser went outside, in or near the woodshed, to practice. The usual instrument for activity around the woodshed is an ax, and so the rehearsing musician might liken his musical instrument to an ax when 'woodshedding.'

If this suggestion is correct, credit Dave Marc, Jesse Sheidlower, Victoria Neufeldt, and Grant Barrett (responses in #8 above).

Apparently an interesting coincidence arises in *ax(e)* 'musical instrument' and *chops* 'jazz term denoting musical ability or

skill.' This *chops* seems readily derivable from jazz *chops* '(a trumpet player's strength of embouchure'--HDAS), which in turn derives from *chops* 'mouth or lips'. *Chops* 'musical ability or skill' evidently does not derive from the chopping of wood. Still, a 'woodshedding' jazz musician might be forgiven for thinking that if his instrument is an ax, his excellent handling of this instrument would result in good chops. I am tempted to make this connection myself, but the evidence thus far points to a coincidence.

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Cool Cats and Far-Out Chicks. -- Far out and beat use; not common.'

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