

Oxford English Dictionary News

SERIES 2 NUMBER 33
JUNE 2005

Editorial

Many words and senses of North American origin are included in the June 2005 OED Online update, such as *pardner*, *Parker House roll*, *pat-down*, *pasta-fazool*, and *patootie*. North American English is one of the largest categories of World English covered by the *Oxford English Dictionary*.

As readers of *OED News* will be aware, this is reflected in the existence of a North American Editorial Unit, based in New York, and a North American Reading Programme, both of which seek to improve and increase the *OED*'s coverage of North American English. Less widely known is the existence of *OED* researchers scattered throughout the United States. Among their number is Pamela Roper Wagner, a library researcher in Washington, DC. In this issue, she writes

about how her search to find earlier examples of words sent to her by the *OED* editors leads her through characteristically American sources ranging from the letters of Benjamin Franklin to modern-day rap music. Alan Hartley, a researcher for the *OED* Reading Programmes, is based in Duluth, Minnesota. He describes the challenges and joys of his work for the *OED*.

Jemma Best, Newsletter Editor and Senior Assistant Editor, *OED*

Tracking down *tofu*: library research in the US

Washington, DC, is rich in libraries. The *Oxford English Dictionary* employs two full-time library researchers on staff and one part-time freelancer there, assigned to the Library of Congress, the Folger Shakespeare Memorial Library, the National Library of Medicine, and to other DC area libraries. My assignment requires that I spend approximately one day per week at the National Library of Medicine or the Folger, and the rest of my time in the many reading rooms scattered throughout the three buildings of the Library of Congress.

In much of my work, I use traditional book resources found in the general collections or in the Rare Book Division, but I also do quite a bit of searching in the Newspapers and Current Periodicals Reading Room, the Copyright Office, the Performing Arts Reading Room, the Motion Pictures and Recorded Sound Division, the Manuscripts Division, and the Law Library.

Shortly after beginning work for the *OED*, I was combing through a volume of Ralph Waldo Emerson's essays, trying to find quotations from a 'batch' I had been asked to verify. Emerson's discussion of language in his essay 'The Poet' struck me as especially pertinent to my daily treasure hunt for the 'first use' of words the *OED* editors assign to me for antedating:



Dictionary (n) A book dealing with a language (or certain types of words) as to set forth their origin, pronunciation, and use in history, or as to list words of a language.

...and of other words which may be used in the same sense, and which may be used in the same sense.

...Originally (in form intended for connecting a number of studies or networks connected by a shared network (called a *Resource*) operated via the Internet) the global of (PAnet) providing a variety of services, and consisting of a number of nodes which use standards...

CONTENTS

- 1. Tracking down *tofu*: library research in the US**
Pamela Roper Wagner describes her search for antedatings in the libraries of Washington, DC
- 2. Reading for the *OED***
Alan Hartley, a freelance researcher based in Minnesota, writes about his work for the *OED*
- 3. Project news**
Brief notes on some recent events
- 4. Appeals**
Can you help with these words?
- 5. Interesting antedatings**
More words that are older than you might think
- 6. Quotable quotes**
Another interesting selection of quotations from the *OED* and its files

The poet is the Namer, or Language-maker.. The poets made all the words, and therefore language is the archives of history.. For, though the origin of most of our words is forgotten, each word was at first a stroke of genius.. The etymologist finds the deadest word to have been once a brilliant picture. Language is fossil poetry.. Language is made up of images, or tropes, which now, in their secondary use, have long ceased to remind us of their poetic origin.

Suddenly I had a new reason to enjoy my work. I was discovering poems! Emerson said, 'Every word was once a poem. Every new relation is a new word.' Such an idea seemed to elevate my work beyond the mundane routine. Trust an American transcendentalist like Emerson to envision it in this new way! It is exciting to contemplate the possibility that in searching for new words, for the birth of a word, I am helping to clarify the original image or trope that has been obscured by time. It is easy to believe in the poetic origins of words as a reader at the Folger Shakespeare Library or while sitting in the Rare Book Room of the Library of Congress studying the writings of such elegant American word-crafters as Emerson and Thoreau, Walt Whitman, Frederick Douglass, Henry James, and Zora Neale Hurston. However, it is a little more difficult to view my work this way when searching patents and trademarks for words such as *biscuit cutter* and *pipe jack*!

Research of any kind involves digging through written materials or significant objects to find an original moment that is sometimes arbitrary. It is this homing in on the bit of information we are seeking that makes the process of searching and finding so delightful. Like an athlete at the top of his or her game, a researcher on a good day knows what it is to be 'in the zone', and it is this aspect of the work that is so addictive. Research uses both sides of the brain, intuitive and analytical, depends both on acquired knowledge and sudden insights or spontaneously perceived connections, and is constantly changing.

At times a word is known to have a specific origin. Words such as *Ebonics* (1973) or *Pilates* (1934) have specific coinages, as do many medical, botanical, and other scientific words. Others, especially slang words, may have elusive origins. In such cases, the increasing availability of searchable online texts enables us to find earlier dates for a first use. Some words, especially

slang occurring in rap songs, prove almost impossible to find in print. Words that first occur in film scripts and television broadcasts are also difficult to pin down.

Depending on what materials are available at the Library of Congress, I may receive requests for research on words from English sources. I answer etymology requests using older rare sources in Latin, French, German, and Dutch, as well. However, many requests do involve words of known American origin. I often receive

requests having to do with baseball and other American sports, Native American words and tribal names, African American slang, words from the Wild West, and from the film and broadcasting industry and popular culture. I have worked on the history of such American words and phrases as *mind-meld* (*Star Trek*, 1968), *vavoom* (Art Carney's sheet music, 1954), *Little League* (1939), *bike path* (1894), *imagineer* (1942), *wildcrafting* (1969), *nature faking* and *nature fakers* (1907), *bandit country* (1907), *urban legend* (1968), and *duck tape* (1902). Some of these poetic words have been published online, while the editors are still considering others.

Suddenly I had a new reason to enjoy my work. I was discovering poems! Emerson said, 'Every word was once a poem. Every new relation is a new word.'

Obviously I cannot share all my favourite word stories, but one story involves an antedating I found by serendipity, while searching for the assigned word *garbanzo*. (All the library researchers seem to enjoy researching 'food words'. I have researched quite a number of Mexican food words, such as *huevos rancheros* (1901) and *guacamole* (1920), as well as terms from Italian, Chinese, and American cookery, but I can tell you that on days I'm working on food words, lunchtime can't arrive too soon!)

Searching for examples of *garbanzo* led me to a 1770 letter from Benjamin Franklin to the American botanist John Bartram, in which Franklin used the word *garavances*, possibly a variant of *garbanzos*. As it happened, the letter was about a new recipe that Franklin had acquired, for Chinese tau-fu. Both Bartram and Franklin were vegetarians, which explains their interest. Franklin wrote:

I send.. some Chinese Garavances, with Father Navaretta's account of the universal use of a cheese made of them, in China... Some runnings of salt (I suppose runnet) is put into water when the meal is in it, to turn it to curds. I think we have Garavances with us; but I know not whether they are same with these, which actually came from China, and are what the Tau-fu is made of.

The newsletter of the *Oxford English Dictionary*

The earliest example of *tofu* currently in the *OED* is 1880, so this is an antedating of more than one hundred years. The editors have not yet considered it for publication, and further research may be necessary.

Researching words seems to have a dusty glamour. I am always surprised at how many people, of a variety of backgrounds and professions, are fascinated by my work. In the old days when I returned my work by mail, the postman always asked what words I was sending to the Dictionary; the plumber who came to

fix my kitchen sink owned a copy of the tiny-print *OED*; a recorder in the Copyright Office always asks me for the word *du jour* when he greets me in the cafeteria; a neighbour who is a music teacher tells me that her class invented a new word when they were composing a song. People from all walks of life seem to own a dictionary, if no other book. But as Emerson said, 'Bare lists of words are found suggestive, to an imaginative and excited mind.'

Pamela Roper Wagner, US Library Researcher, *OED*

Reading for the *OED*

As a reader of historical and scholarly texts for the *Oxford English Dictionary*, I am always alert to materials that promise to yield quotations or other information useful to the editors. (I carry on my work for the *OED* and for Oxford's U.S. Dictionaries Program from my small home-office in Duluth, at the western end of Lake Superior.)



Such materials may be useful for revising pronunciation, etymology, or definitions, for extending or filling in the chronological range of examples in existing entries, or for drafting entirely new entries or senses. Especially productive are sources that document the expansion of English speakers into new lands or new forms of endeavour (for example, technological, political), and those, like letters and journals, that record the details of daily life in colloquial and unpretentious English.

The informal papers of the US ambassador and president Thomas Jefferson qualify under both criteria. His agricultural and architectural studies give us early examples of *thrashing-machine* and *rafter-level*, and his oenological pursuits enable us to antedate the nouns *rouge* and *vin rouge* in English from 1957 and 1917 to 1786 (please note that the examples in this article have yet to be reviewed by the *OED* editors). Jefferson also had experience of humbler vintages: 'Mr. Ramsay got drunk with the sacrament wine going to Clairmont church.' Jefferson thought energetically about many things over many years, and his vast vocabulary will have a significant place in the *OED*.

Lists of all sorts are productive. Among my recent readings are inventories of ship-rigging from Henry VII's

Benjamin Franklin's *Drinker's Dictionary*, a treasury of hundreds of synonyms for 'drunk' (*biggy*, *bewitched*, *bows'd*, *been at Barbados*, *burdocked*, *busky*, *buzzy*)

naval bureaucracy (antedating *foremast* from 1582 to 1485); Benjamin Franklin's *Drinker's Dictionary*, a treasury of hundreds of synonyms for 'drunk' (*biggy*, *bewitched*, *bows'd*, *been at Barbados*, *burdocked*, *busky*, *buzzy*); a catalogue of North American trees and shrubs by the eighteenth-century botanist John Bartram, hiding in a collection of the papers of Colonel Henry Bouquet (*marah rose* and *mountain hazel* are among names new to the *OED*). Bills of lading, packing-lists, appraisals of household goods for the probating of estates, and lists of arms and accoutrements, camping supplies, and Indian trade goods have all proven rich resources.

After consulting with my supervisor on the choice of a text, I begin the reading itself, a process which, after almost ten years, I still find difficult to explain. One learns to tell at a glance what parts of a document will be productive. In Franklin's *Papers*, for example, one page on printing or on the physics of electricity will probably yield more than will ten pages on the politics of parliament or Pennsylvania, and an article in the *Mariner's Mirror* on sea-stones and killicks in west Cornwall is a cinch. Reading (mine, at least) consists primarily of examining the text for promising candidates—the most obvious

Words and phrases covered in the June 2005 *OED Online* update could help you to...

...pardon a paranoid paramour with passion... ...parent a parading Parisian papyrologist...

parodize a passionate parakeet in paradise... ...park near a paradisaal perfumerie in Passion Week...

...paraglide passionately with a parsimonious patriot...

being compound words, italic font, and list items. One's eye is drawn also to the initial capital letters that often flag nouns in early modern English, a form of discrimination that may contribute a little to the roughly six-fold preponderance of nouns over verbs in the *OED*. One's ability to pick out productive words grows with experience and with knowledge of a subject, and each promising word demands a quick decision whether it is a good enough prospect to be taken to the next stage.

I then consult *OED Online* to determine whether the word or phrase is in the Dictionary: if it is not, I submit it as a 'not-in', and if it is, I decide whether its

form or context is important enough to warrant its submission. If it does qualify, I enter the information into tagged fields in an electronic file that has been set up in a standard format. When I have finished the reading, I submit the file to Oxford or New York, where the records are incorporated into *OED*'s working database for consideration by the editors, along with thousands of paper citation slips, as they proceed through the current revision. Yes, some of my finds are still submitted as paper slips—a reminder of *OED*'s long heritage—but, electronic or paper, I can hardly imagine a better job.

Alan Hartley, freelance researcher, *OED*

Project news

Richard Palmer (1935–2005)

When editorial work on the *Oxford Latin Dictionary* came to an end in 1981, Bob Burchfield, then Chief Editor of the Oxford English Dictionaries, called his senior staff together and asked us whether we felt that Richard could transfer to work on the *Supplement to the OED*. Of course we had heard of Richard through his work on the *OLD*—indeed he was a well-known figure in Oxford at the time—and we knew that as a powerful classicist and botanist he would bring immense learning to the *OED*. We agreed with Bob's proposal *nem. con.* and soon Richard was ensconced in 37a St Giles', the Dictionary's offices in Oxford.

We had known Richard as a scholar, but not as a person. What soon emerged was a quiet and kind man, thoroughly conscientious, careful, loyal, and humorous. Each summer Richard would set off from Oxford on his botanical field-work, which resulted in 1987 in his book *The Flowering Plants and Ferns of the Shetland Islands* (co-written with Walter Scott), still the standard work on the subject.

In 1984 Richard joined the staff of the *Shorter OED*, and then in 1993, as editorial work on the *Shorter* drew to a close, he transferred to the revision of the full *OED*, where he remained until his retirement in 2000, after forty-two years' work on Oxford dictionaries.

It would be true to say that Richard never mastered computers. His interests lay in the information he was

able to communicate in his entries, and the style by which they were graced. His advice was sought by colleagues both on his own specialist areas and much more generally, for he was a thoughtful commentator on so many aspects of life.

A story about Richard aptly illustrates his quiet single-mindedness. One day a group of his Dorset relatives was waiting for him to arrive by train at Dorchester station. The train arrived, and its passengers streamed off past his family. Gradually the train pulled out of the station with no sign of Richard. After a few minutes a lone figure was spotted at the end of the platform beaming broadly. It was, of course, Richard, who had spotted a rare dandelion from the train as it edged into the station and had left the train not for his family but for the adjacent fields to spend some time examining the specimen.

In his retirement Richard continued as an external botany consultant for the *OED*, as well as pursuing his other interests—his family (to whom he was devoted), his charitable work, his letter-writing, his local church—until illness overcame him. We will miss his enthusiasm, his scholarship, his kindness, and his courtesy. He was an old-style lexicographer much loved and respected in the modern age.

John Simpson, Chief Editor, *OED*

Appeals

Words or phrases which appear on the Appeals List are those currently being drafted or revised for the *OED* for which the documentary evidence is incomplete. Often these are slang or colloquial items which cannot be researched in specialist texts and are most likely to be found by a general reader in non-specialized or popular literature.

Usually the appeal is for an earlier example than our current earliest (e.g. 'antedate 1970' for a word for which our earliest example comes from 1970), but sometimes the appeal is for an interdating where there is a large gap in the *OED*'s quotation evidence (e.g. 'interdate 1589-1910'). Occasionally we ask for a post-dating (e.g. 'post-date 1875'), if an editor feels that an item being revised is still current but has failed to find any recent examples through the usual avenues of research.

Please note: it is generally safe to assume that examples found by searching the Web, using search engines such as Google, will have already been considered by *OED* editors.

Please send submissions to oed3@oup.com

to piss on from a great height (v.: to humiliate utterly) antedate 1992
pocket-burner (n.: something expensive) antedate 2001
polygraph (n.: an instrument, operating on the principle of the pantograph, for simultaneously producing two or more identical copies of a drawing, document, etc.) antedate 1803
pony (n.: an act of defecation; faeces; nonsense) antedate 1958
pony (a.: worthless, useless) antedate 1964
pony and trap (n.: an act of defecation; faeces; nonsense) any non-glossarial evidence
poo(h) (n.: faeces, as a count noun) antedate 1981
poo(h) (v.: to defecate) antedate 1975
poorness (n.: poverty, indigence) interdate 1797-1932
pop-gun (v.: to shoot a popgun at) any evidence of literal sense
pop sock (n.) antedate 1972
popstrel (n.: a young pop musician) antedate 1989
popular beat combo (n.) antedate 1990
pork scratchings (n.) antedate 1982
to make a porridge (v.: to make a mess) antedate 1969
portrayment (n.) post-date 1891
postless (a.: without a postal service) post-date 1934
postlike (a.: resembling a wooden post) interdate 1617-1976
post-maritally (adv.) antedate 1952

Interesting antedatings

Revision of the entries in the June 2005 *OED Online* update has revealed an earlier origin than previously known for many words, including:

paradisial (antedated to 1776 from 1800)
paradosis (antedated to 1853 from 1950)
patio (antedated to 1764 from 1828)

pat-a-cake (antedated to 1838 from 1897)
pastry-cook (antedated to 1656 from 1712)
password (antedated to 1799 from c1817)
passional (antedated to OE from 1650)
passionately (antedated to c1487 from 1590)
parrotwise (antedated to 1795 from 1856)
parrotism (antedated to 1613 from 1773)
pard (antedated to OE from a1300)

Quotable quotes

Thought-provoking snippets from the *OED* quotation files:

a cure for insomnia...

1934 *Lima News*, Make Elk's Brew Beer a going-to-bed habit every night.. Order a case or pony keg today.

...a painful education...

1871 *Cornhill Mag.*, He remained a Polytechnician two years, and during that time had conic sections hammered into him by one professor.

...and care in the community?...

1845 S. Judd *Margaret*, A Pock House was established,..and a general beating up for patients was had throughout the town.

This year Oxford University Press is celebrating the

16th birthday of the Oxford English Dictionary (2nd edition)

by reducing its price from
£2000 to only **£850**

The Oxford English Dictionary

SECOND EDITION
 Volume XX
 Wave-Zyzz
 HILICRAPHY

**Order direct from OUP
 or via your local bookseller**

CLARENDON PRESS · OXFORD

Addresses and contacts

EDITOR, OED NEWS

Jemma Best
 (jemma.best@oup.com)
 A full list of OED staff can be found at www.oed.com

OED APPEALS AND SUBMISSIONS

Oxford English Dictionary
 Oxford University Press
 Great Clarendon Street
 Oxford OX2 6DP, UK
 Tel: +44 (0) 1865 353660
 Fax: +44 (0) 1865 353811
 E-mail: oed3@oup.com

OXFORD DICTIONARY RESEARCH CENTRES

United Kingdom and Europe

Oxford English Dictionary
 Oxford University Press
 Great Clarendon Street
 Oxford OX2 6DP, UK
 Tel: +44 (0) 1865 556767
 Fax: +44 (0) 1865 556646
 E-mail: oed3@oup.com

United States

Oxford English Dictionary
 North American Editorial Unit
 Oxford University Press
 198 Madison Avenue, New York
 N.Y. 10016, USA
 Tel: +1 212 726 6215

Australia

Australian National Dictionary
 Centre
 Linnaeus Cottage
 Australian National University
 Canberra, ACT 0200, Australia
 Fax: +61 (0) 2 6249 0475
 E-mail: ANDC@anu.edu.au

Canada

Canadian Oxford Dictionary
 Oxford University Press
 70 Wynford Drive, Don Mills
 Ontario M3C 1J9, Canada
 Tel: +1 (416) 441 2941

New Zealand

New Zealand Dictionary Centre
 Victoria University of Wellington
 PO Box 600
 Wellington, New Zealand
 Tel: +64 (0) 4 463 5634/5644
 Fax: +64 (0) 4 463 5604
 E-mail: nzdc@vuw.ac.nz

South Africa

Oxford University Press
 P.O. Box 12119, N1 City,
 Goodwood 7460, South Africa
 Tel: +27 21 595 4400
 Fax: +27 21 595 4430

OED CD-ROM TECHNICAL SUPPORT

For assistance with the OED on CD-ROM, please contact:

Canada

OUP Technical Support
 Tel: +1 (416) 441 2941
 Tel: +1 (416) 441 0345

United States

OUP Technical Support
 Toll free: +1 877 773 4325
 Fax: +1 914 747 3590
 E-mail: techsupport@oup-usa.org

United Kingdom, Europe, and Rest of World

OUP Technical Support
 Tel: +44 (0) 1865 353534
 Fax: +44 (0) 1865 353990
 E-mail: ep.help@oup.com

OED ONLINE TECHNICAL SUPPORT

For assistance with OED Online, please contact support@oed.com. Alternatively, if you are in the United States or Canada, you may telephone +1 877 304 3221.

ASK OXFORD

A wide range of queries about English words and the English language can be answered by consulting the AskOxford web site. This includes advice on Better Writing, and answers a selection of Frequently Asked Questions under the heading 'Ask the Experts'.

www.AskOxford.com — the web site for all English language-related queries

OED SALES AND MARKETING CONTACTS

North and South America

Sales and Marketing Director,
 Reference: Rebecca Seger
 Associate Sales and Marketing Director, Online Products:
 Lisa Nachtigall
 Online Subscriptions Manager,
 Online Products: Steve Aaronson
 Oxford University Press Inc., USA
 198 Madison Avenue, New York
 N.Y. 10016, USA
 Tel: +1 212 726 6484 or 800 334 4249 ext. 6484
 Fax: +1 212 726 6476
 E-mail: onlinesubscriptions@oup-usa.org

United Kingdom, Europe, and Rest of World

Sales and Marketing Director,
 Online Products: Susanna Lob
 Oxford University Press
 Great Clarendon Street
 Oxford OX2 6DP, UK
 Fax: +44 (0) 1865 353308
 E-mail: worldinfo@oed.com

Head of Publicity, Academic Division: Kate Farquhar-Thomson
 Tel: +44 (0) 1865 353423
 Fax: +44 (0) 1865 353457
 E-mail: askthepressoffice@oup.com

Would you like us to send you future issues of OED News?

OED News is available free of charge. If you're reading someone else's copy, we'd be delighted to add you to our mailing list. Please contact:

Margot Charlton
 Oxford English Dictionary
 Oxford University Press
 Great Clarendon Street
 Oxford OX2 6DP, UK
 Fax: +44 (0) 1865 353811
 E-mail: oednews@oed.com

Would you like us to notify you when future issues of OED News are available on our web site?

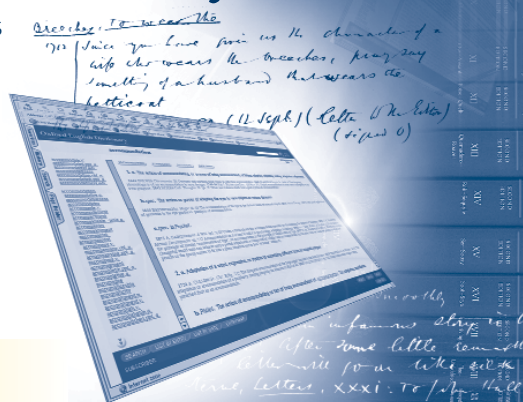
If so, please sign up at www.oed.com/news or send an e-mail to: listserv@oed.com with a message consisting of the line `subscribe oednews-l`

© Oxford University Press 2005

Oxford English Dictionary Online

"The ultimate authority on the English language..." THE TIMES

- Sign up for a 3-month or annual subscription to OED Online at: www.oxfordonline.com/online/subscribe
- Sign up to receive the OED Word of the Day by email at: www.oed.com/cgi/display/wotd
- For both future and back issues of OED News go to: www.oed.com/news
- Take a FREE tour of OED Online at: www.oed.com/tour



www.oed.com