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COURSE PAPER

Characteristic features of American English

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Introduction

American English (AmE, AE, AmEng, USEng, en-US), also known as United States English or U.S. English, is a set of dialects of the English language used mostly in the United States. Approximately two thirds of native speakers of English live in the United States. [4]

The variety of English spoken in the USA has received the name of American English. The term *variant* or *variety* appears most appropriate for several reasons. American English cannot be called a dialect although it is a regional variety, because it has a literary normalized form called Standard American, whereas by definition given above a dialect has no literary form. Neither is it a separate language, as some American authors, like H. L. Mencken, claimed, because it has neither grammar nor vocabulary of its own. From the lexical point of view one shall have to deal only with a heterogeneous set of Americanisms. [1]

An Americanism may be defined as a word or a set expression peculiar to the English language as spoken in the USA. E.g. cookie '*a biscuit*'; with boards or shingles laid on; '*frame-up*' a staged or preconcerted law case ; guess '*think*'; store '*shop*'. [4]

Topicality of the paper:

A general and comprehensive description of the American variant is given in Professor Schweitzer's monograph. An important aspect of his treatment is the distinction made between Americanisms belonging to the literary norm and those existing in low colloquial and slang. The difference between the American and British literary norm is not systematic. [6] Current Americanisms penetrate into Standard English. Cinema and TV are probably the most important channels for the passage of Americanisms into the language of Britain and other languages as well: the Germans adopted the word teenager and the French speak of automatisisation. The influence of American publicity is also a vehicle of Americanisms. This is how the British term wireless is replaced by the American radio. The jargon of American film-advertising makes its way into British usage;

i.e. *of all time* (in "the greatest film of all time"). The phrase is now firmly established as standard vocabulary and applied to subjects other than films. The personal visits of writers and scholars to the USA and all forms of other personal contacts bring back Americanisms. [5]

Cooperation between the USA and the other countries increases from day to day. American English integrates in every side of our life. USA presents us its culture through movies, music, advertisement, business. All these aspects are reflected in the language. Language is the mirror of the culture. American English has its own special peculiarities, which distinguish it from other variants of English language. It has its own historical, cultural background which is of certain interest for linguists and speakers of English in the whole world. [4]

The aim of this research is to study the origin of American English vocabulary. And it is supported with the following objectives:

1. To study the historical background of American English.
2. To define the dialects of American English.
3. To describe the difference between British English and American English.
4. To pick out 500 American English words from different sides of life and define main spheres of functioning of American English words.
5. To define the etymology of certain words.
6. To define the sources of borrowings in American English.
7. To make up a short dictionary of American English Words.

The hypothesis of this paper is following:

American English was formed in general under the influence of environment and with the help of borrowings.

Though the topic about peculiarities of American English were widely discussed among researchers, in this paper we want to emphasize especially the origin of American words, to investigate borrowings in American Language and to observe the way American English was formed in the sphere of vocabulary.

Problems of the work paper:

1. To define the specific spheres of vocabulary where American English

developed in its own way.

2. To investigate the etymology of the American English words from the specific spheres.

In this paper we used such **methods** as:

1. Descriptive method.
2. Comparative-historical method.
3. Contrastive method.

The scientific novelty of the paper:

We investigated certain spheres of American English vocabulary, picked out words connected with this spheres. We analyzed the etymology of these words. Also we studied the way borrowings penetrated into American English, investigated the sources of this borrowings. In our work paper we especially emphasized the origin of American English words and their cultural background.

The theoretical value of this work is following:

The given work can be used for the lectures on Lexicology, especially connected with the etymology of American English words.

The practical value of the given work is following:

The etymological dictionary can be used for the seminars and lectures on Lexicology and the History of American English variety.

The structure of my work is following:

The Theoretical part includes:

1. The historical background of American English where its described the appearance of American language, the history of the terms *American* and *Americanism* and other interesting facts about American English.

2. The description of dialects of American English. Especially the main dialects are described. There are three overall, major ones: the New England, the Southern, and the General American (sometimes erroneously called the Midwest or Western dialect).

3. The description of differences between British English and American English. The most obvious and representative differences between British English

and American English include three major ones:

1. Differences in American and English Vocabulary.
2. Differences in American and English Pronunciation.
3. Differences in American and English Spelling.

The Practical part includes:

1. Selected American English words were divided into definite groups with the common theme. Words were investigated in their origin and etymology. There we have presented the appearance of peculiarities in American English and the dates of recording of definite words.

2. Borrowings in American English. We have described the ways borrowings penetrated into American English. Three main borrowing recourses are touched: French borrowings, Spanish borrowings and Italian borrowings.

Also this work paper includes a short etymological dictionary of American English words and phrases with the dates of their recording.

Theoretical part

Chapter I. Characteristic features of American English

1.1 Historical background

Since *America* originally meant the continent, *American* was originally used (1578) to mean a native of it, an Indian. Many British writers, including essayist Joseph Addison, used *American* to mean Indian well into the 18th century, calling the colonists not Americans but transplanted Englishmen. Beginning in 1697, however, Cotton Mather popularized the word *American* to mean an English colonist in America. The language was called *American* by 1780; a citizen of the United States was called an *American* by 1782; and Thomas Jefferson used *Americanism* to mean United States patriotism in 1797. The name *the United States of America* is said to have been created by Tom Paine; it was first used officially in the Declaration of Independence, whose subtitle is "The Unanimous Declaration of the Thirteen United States of America". [9. p.6]

This distinction between colonies and states confused many people and throughout the Revolutionary War many called the new country *the United Colonies*. In 1776, too, the name *the United States of America* was already shortened to *the United States* (in the proceedings of the Continental Congress) and even to the shorter *the States*. George Washington wrote the abbreviation *U.S.* in 1791, and the abbreviation *U.S.A.* was recorded in 1795. Even though *the United States of America* appeared in the Declaration of Independence, the new government used the official title *the United States of North America* until 1778, when the "North" was dropped from the name by act of the Continental Congress.

When this new nation took its first census in 1790 there were four million Americans, 90% of them descendants of English colonists. Thus there was no question that English was the mother tongue and native language of the United States. By 1720, however, some English colonists in America had already begun to

notice that their language differed seriously from that spoken back home in England. Almost without being aware of it, they had:

- (1) coined some new words for themselves;
- (2) borrowed other words from the Indians, Dutch, French, and Spanish;
- (3) been using English dialect words in their general speech;
- (4) continued to use some English words that had now become obsolete in England;
- (5) evolved some peculiar uses, pronunciation, grammar, and syntax.

Many of the coinages and borrowings were for plants, animals, landscapes, living conditions, institutions, and attitudes which were seldom if ever encountered in England, so the English had no words for them. The widespread use of English dialect words was also natural: most of the Puritans came from England's southern and southeastern counties and spoke the East Anglia dialect, most of the Quakers spoke the midland dialect, and after 1720 many new colonists were Scots-Irish, speaking the Ulster dialect. The continuing use of words that had become obsolete in England, and of unusual usage, pronunciation, grammar, and syntax, was also natural for colonists isolated from the niceties of current English speech and English education. Thus, naturally, a hundred years after the Pilgrims landed, English as spoken in America differed from that spoken in England. [9. p.7]

In 1756, a year after he published his *Dictionary of the English Language*, "Doctor" Samuel Johnson was the first to refer to an *American dialect*. In 1780, soon after the American Revolution began, the word *American* was first used to refer to our language; in 1802 the term *the American Language* was first recorded, in the U.S. Congress; and in 1806 Noah Webster coined the more precise term *American English*.

Was American English good or bad? By 1735 the English began calling it "barbarous" and its native words *barbarisms*. When the anti-American Dr. Johnson used the term *American dialect* he meant it as an insult. Such English sneering at the language continued unabated for a hundred years after the Revolutionary War. The English found merely colorful or quaint such American terms as *ground hog* and *lightning rod* and such borrowings as *oppossum*, *tomahawk*, and *wampum* (from the

Indians), *boss* (Dutch), *levee* (French), and *ranch* (Spanish). They laughed at and condemned as unnecessary or illiterate hundreds of American terms and usages, such as:

Examples: *allow*, *guess*, *reckon*, meaning “to think”, which had all become obsolete in England.

bluff, used in the South since 1687, instead of the British river “bank.” This has the distinction of being the first word attacked as being a “barbarous” American term.

bureau, meaning “chest” of drawers, which was obsolete in England.

card, meaning a “person who likes to joke”, an American use since 1835.

clever, meaning “sharp witted”, an East Anglia dialect use common to all Americans.

fall, obsolete in England where “autumn” was now the preferred word.

fork, which the British ate with but which also drive or paddle on, using it since 1645 to mean the “branch of a road or river”. [9. p.8]

It wasn't only American words that the English disliked, but American pronunciation and grammar as well. They jeered when Americans said “missionary” instead of “mission'ry,” “shew” for “show,” and “whare” and “bhar” for “where” and “bear.” In 1822 visitor Charles Dickens said that outside of New York and Boston all Americans had a nasal drawl and used “doubtful” grammar. In 1832 Mrs. Trollop said that during her visit in America she seldom heard a correctly pronounced sentence. And in 1839 visitor Captain Frederick Marryat said it was remarkable how debased the English language had become in such a short time in America.

On the other hand, during and after the Revolutionary War Americans became proud of American language. It was a badge of independence. In 1778 the Continental Congress recommended that when the French minister visited “all replies or answers” to him should be made “in the language of the United States” (not only as opposed to French but also as opposed to English English). Americans were bound to continue to develop their own brand of English. What the English

called barbarisms Americans proudly called *Americanisms*. John Witherspoon coined this word in 1781, in a series of papers he wrote for the *Pennsylvania Journal and Weekly Advertiser*, and defined it as any word or usage peculiar to English as used in America.

Later, of course, Americans were to add more Indian and Spanish words to their language, borrow words and intonations from such immigrant groups as the Germans and Italians, and —like the English themselves —continue to coin new words and change the meanings of old ones, develop their own dialects and pronunciations, and evolve more of their own grammatical and syntactical uses and misuses. Since World War II, however, best-selling books, movies, TV shows, popular songs, and jet-propelled tourists have spread American English to England and English English to the U.S. Modern politics, pop culture, jet planes, and electronics seem to be bringing the two "languages" closer together again. [9. p.9]

1.2 Dialects of American English

Early Americans had more sharply differentiated dialects than they do today. The Puritans in New England spoke the English East Anglia dialect, the Quakers in Pennsylvania spoke the English midland dialect, the Scotch-Irish in the Blue Ridge Mountains spoke the Ulster dialect, etc.—and they and their speech patterns were separated by wilderness, bad roads, and lack of communications. Then geographical and social mobility began to homogenize the language, with people from all regions moving to all others, people from all walks of life mixing and mingling. Better roads and wagons, trains, cars, moving vans, high-speed printing presses, the telegraph, the typewriter and teletype, telephones, record players, duplicating machines, radios, movies, and TV mixed and melded American speech into a more and more uniform language. In addition, our dialects were smoothed out by generations of teachers and by two crucial series of elementary school books: the various editions of Noah Webster's *The American Spelling Book*, "the Blue-Backed Speller" that sold over 80 million copies and from

which generations of Americans from the 1780s to the 1880s learned to spell and pronounce the same words in the same way, and Professor William Holmes McGuffey's six series of *Eclectic Readers*, which sold over 122 million copies between 1836 and the 1920s, giving generations of Americans a shared vocabulary and literature. Thus American mobility, educational systems, and improved means of transportation and communications have given Americans an increasingly more standardized vocabulary and pronunciation. When we hear America talking today we usually hear only a touch of a regional "accent"; American dialects are fading away. [9. p.119]

Depending on how precise one need be, one can say that America has from three to a dozen dialects. There are three overall, major ones: the New England, the Southern, and the General American (sometimes erroneously called the Midwest or Western dialect). Here are brief descriptions of three major regional dialects: [9. p.120]

New England dialect is spoken from the Connecticut River north and eastward through Rhode Island, Massachusetts, Vermont, New Hampshire, and Maine. New England was not misnamed: between 1620 and 1640, 200 ships brought 15,000 English colonists to the region, two-thirds of them from East Anglia, the Puritan stronghold. Those colonists from East Anglia, and other parts of southern and southeastern England, gave New England its distinct dialect, first called the *New England dialect* in 1788. It is still closer to English English than any other dialect of American English. Some of its characteristics are:

(1) pronouncing the *a* in such words as *ask*, *brass*, *can't*, *class*, *fast*, *grass*, *half*, *last*, and *path* somewhat like the broad *a* in *father*, and lengthening the *a* sound in such words as *bar*, *dark*, *far*, *farm*, and *heart* to a sound somewhat between the sound the rest of us pronounce in *hat* and *father* (this last *a* sound is also found in eastern Virginia and elsewhere in the tidewater region). Thus we tease Bostonians for saying "ahnt" (*aunt*) and "vahz" (*vase*).

(2) pronouncing the *o* in such words as *box*, *hot*, *not*, *pot*, and *top* with

the lips rounded, forming an open *o* sound. The rest of us tend to pronounce this *o* more as the broad *a* sound of father.

(3) omitting, slighting, or shortening some *r* sounds, thus *car*, *dear*, and *door* sound like "cah," "deah," and "doah" to the rest of us. The broad *a* sound and the slighted *r* cause the rest of us to hear "pahk the cah in Hahvahd yahd" (park the car in Harvard yard).

Southern dialect could be divided into separate dialects for the upper and lower South or into several smaller dialects, such as the Virginia Tidewater, South Carolina Low Country, local dialects with Charleston and New Orleans as focal points, etc. In general, however, Southern dialect is used south and east of a line drawn along the northern boundary of Maryland and Virginia and the southern boundary of West Virginia, the southern part of Missouri and down through southeastern Oklahoma and eastern Texas. It is characterized by:

(1) the Southern drawl: a slower enunciation than used in the rest of the country, combined with a slow breaking, gliding, or diphthongization of stressed vowels. Thus to the rest of us the Southern *class* sounds like "clae-is"; *yes* like "yea-is" or "yea-yis"; *fine*, *I*, *ride*, and *time* like "fi-ahn," "I-ah," "ri-ahd," and "ti-ahm" (these all being long *i* sounds).

(2) some of this slow dwelling on the vowel sounds weakens the following final consonants, especially *d*'s, *V*'s, *r*'s, and *t*'s, giving southerners such pronunciations as *fin(d)*, *he(l)p*, *se(l)f*, *flo(or)*, *mo(re)*, *po(or)*, *yo(ur)*, *bes(t)*, *kep(t)*. (3) using such terms as the stereotyped Southern *honey-chil(d)* and *you all* as well as *bucket* (for pail), *heap* (for very), *raise* (for rear, children), *reckon* (think, judge), *right* (for very), *snap bean* (string bean), *spigot* (for faucet) and *tote* (for carry). [9. p.121]

General American dialect is spoken in 4/5ths of the nation's area and by 2/3rds of the population, but is still a dialect. It is not called General American because that is what Americans should speak but because it just happens to be the dialect heard in the general regions outside of New England

and the South. It is heard in the area which starts as a wedge between New England and the South, in western Connecticut, New York State, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania, then broadens out to include West Virginia, Ohio, Michigan, Indiana, Illinois, and Wisconsin, Minnesota, Iowa, northern Missouri, northwestern Oklahoma and west Texas, and finally encompasses the entire western half of the country. It actually includes at least four dialects: the North Central, the New York City Metropolitan Area dialect (including parts of Connecticut and New Jersey), the Middle Atlantic, and the Midlands dialect (Philadelphia to the Rockies and the Potomac to New Mexico, sometimes considered as separate Northern Midland and Southern Midland dialects). All these have more in common with each other than with the New England and Southern dialects, so can be grouped together as General American. It is characterized by:

(1) using the short flat *a* in such words as *ask*, *brass*, *can't*, *class*, *dance*, *fast*, *grass*, *half*, *last*, and *path*.

(2) sounding the unrounded *o* in such words as *box*, *hot*, *lot*, *not*, *pot*, and *top* almost as the broad *a* in *father*.

(3) the retention of a strong *r* sound in all positions, as *caR*, *haKd*, etc. [9. p.122]

Americans are still moving and communicating from one part of the country to another. As easterners and midwesterners continue to move to the *Sun Belt* (1950s) the local Florida and Texas speech patterns will be diluted; as people continue to leave large cities for small ones and for rural areas, pockets of local dialects will tend to weaken or disappear. Perhaps someday in the future regional dialects will be no more. Then we may have only two dialects, that of educated, urban Americans and that of rural and poor Americans. Such dialects already exist, heard mainly in grammar and usage. [9. p.123]

1.3. English vs American

- **American English (AmE)** is the form of English used in the United States. It includes all English dialects used within the United States of America.
- **British English (BrE)** is the form of English used in the United Kingdom. It includes all English dialects used within the United Kingdom. [3]

This subject could, and does, fill many volumes, but the most obvious and representative differences between English English and American English include:

[10. p.202]

1.4. Differences in American and English Vocabulary

It's easy to point out the differences between the American and the English vocabulary: the differences seem quaint and there are comparatively so few that Americans can easily spot them. Many of the differences are merely a matter of preference: Americans prefer *railroad* and *store* while the English prefer the synonyms *railway* and *shop*, but all four words are used in both England and America. In addition, Americans know or can easily guess what *braces*, *fishmonger's*, or *pram* means, just as the English know or can figure out what *innerspring* mattress, *jump rope*, and *ice water* mean. Finally, many of the words that once separated American English from English English no longer do: American *cocktail* (1806), *skyscraper* (1833), and *supermarket* (1920s) are now heard around the world, and the English increasingly use *radio*, *run* (in a stocking), and *Santa Claus* instead of *wireless*, *ladder*, and *Father Christmas*. The following list gives some of the most interesting and typical differences between the American and English vocabulary, differences that may especially interest tourists and those who enjoy both American and English books and movies.

Examples:

airfield—*aerodrome*.

apartment; apartment house, apartment building ; block of flats (to an Englishman an *apartment* means a room). Our *high-rise apartment* (building) is the English *tower block* (of flats).

barbershop—barber's shop. The English frequently use the possessive -V or -s' where we do not, as in *doct's house, ladies' room, and shop*.

can opener—tin opener, candy—sweets[10. p.203]

There are, of course, hundreds of more terms that differ in American English and British English. American use of prepositions sometimes also differs: Americans live *on* a street, the English live *in* it; Americans chat *with* people, the English chat *to* them; Americans speak of an increase *in* something, the English of an increase *on* it; Americans get snowed *in*, they get snowed *up*; Americans say something is different/row something else, the English say it is different *to* it.

[10. p.210]

1.5. Differences in American and English Pronunciation

The major difference in American and English pronunciation is in intonation and voice timbre. Americans speak with less variety of tone than the English. American voice timbre seems harsh or tinny to the English, their's gurgling or throaty to Americans. English conclusion: Americans speak shrilly, monotonously, and like a schoolboy reciting. American conclusion: the English speak too low, theatrically, and swallow their syllables. [2]

The more precise differences include:

Americans pronounce the *a* in such words as *ask, brass, can't, dance, fast, grass, half, last, and path* as a short, fiat [a]; the English pronounce it more as the broad [a:] in *father*. American shorter, flatter [a] is just a continuation of the way first colonists from Southern England pronounced it; the English dropped this pronunciation in the 18th century and began to use the broad [a:] (this same change took place in parts of New England and the South, giving some Americans the pronunciation of *aunt* as "ahnt" and *vase* as "vahz"). [10. p.210]

On the other hand, most Americans sound the short [o] in such words as *box, hot, lot, not, pot, and top* almost as the broad [a:] in *father*, while the English (and some New Englanders) give it a more open sound, with the lips rounded.

And some are just unique pronunciations of individual words. Such miscellaneous differences in pronunciations include:

ate, Americans say "eight"—"et" is an accepted English pronunciation.

been, Americans say "bin"—the English say "bean."

clerks- "dark."

either, neither, most Americans say, "e-ther, ne-ther"—"I-ther, ni-ther" is the English pronunciation.

issue, Americans say "ish-you"—the English say "is-sue."

leisure, most Americans say "le-sure"—the English say "laysure."

lieutenant, Americans say "lew-tenant"—the English say "lef-tenant."

nephew, Americans say "nef-hew"—the English say "nev-hew."

schedule, Americans say "sked-ule"—the English say "shed-ule." [10. p.211

]

1.6. Differences in American and English Spelling

When the colonists came to America, spelling was not a problem—if a man could write at all he was lucky. English spelling was not yet rule-ridden: *i* and *y*, as well as *u* and *v*, were often used interchangeably. Not until 135 years after the Pilgrims landed did English spelling have a guide in Dr. Johnson's *Dictionary of the English Language*. This monumental work froze much of English spelling and, among other things, decreed that such words as *critick, loglck, musick, andpublick* end in a final *k* and such words as *colour, honour, etc.*, end in *-our*. [10. p.212]

England, including its colonies, began to follow Johnson's spelling; but, in 1758, three years after Johnson's dictionary was published, Noah Webster was born, in Hartford, Connecticut, and 21 years after Johnson's dictionary the American Revolution began—two events that were to help separate English

English and American English. After graduating in law from Yale, Webster couldn't make a living doing legal work, so he became a teacher. He then found English schoolbooks hard to obtain, and unsatisfactory, so he compiled his own three-part *Grammatical Institute of the English Language*, including an elementary spelling book (in 1783), a grammar (in 1784) and a reader (in 1785). Part I became the fantastically successful *The American Spelling Book*, which went through edition after edition and sold 80 million copies in its first hundred years, 1783-1883. It was one of the most influential books ever published in America: from the time America became a nation, past the Civil War, and almost into the 1990s, generations of Americans learned to spell and pronounce from it, spelling and pronouncing each syllable in every word over and over again under stern teachers. It was known to millions as *Webster's Speller*, the *Blue-Backed Spelling Book* (1853) and the *Blue-Backed Speller*. [10. p.213]

Americans are more scrupulous about clearly articulating certain unaccented syllables, especially *-ary*, *-ery*, and *-ory*, and certain *ds*, *gs*, *hs*, *Ps*, *rs* (following vowels) and *t's* than the English. Thus the English say *melanchy*, *monastery*, *necessary*, *preparatory*, *secretary*, etc, when Americans fully articulate the final syllables. Also, except in parts of New England and the South, Americans articulate the first *l* in *fulfill*, the *h* in *forehead*, the *r* in *lord* and *there*, and the final *t* in *trait*, rather than pronounce them as the English do: *fu'fill*, *for 'rid*, *laud*, *theh*, and *trai*. [10. p.214]

The English are also more conservative in using fewer abbreviations and more capital letters and commas than Americans do. They capitalize such words as the *Bar*, the *Church*, the *Government*, the *Press*, and *Society*. By doing away with such capital letters, Americans are closer to the fashion of the 18th century, when the months, the days of the week, and the names of religions were often not capitalized. [10. p.215]

Written forms of American English are fairly well standardized across the United States. An unofficial standard for spoken American English has developed because of mass media and of geographic and social mobility. This standard is

generally called a General American or Standard Midwestern accent and dialect, and it can typically be heard from network newscasters, although local newscasters tend toward more provincial forms of speech. Despite this unofficial standard, regional variations of American English have not only persisted, but have actually intensified, according to William Labov. [1]

Regional dialects in the United States typically reflect the elements of the language of the main immigrant groups in any particular region of the country, especially in terms of pronunciation and vernacular vocabulary. [5]

British and American English are the reference norms for English as spoken, written, and taught in the rest of the world. For instance, the English-speaking members of the Commonwealth often closely follow British English forms while many new American English forms quickly become familiar outside of the United States. [4]

Practical part.

Chapter II. Origin of American English words and their cultural background

2. 1. Glimpses of origin of American words

2.2. Animals

Foreigners are charmed with the vivid descriptive names Americans have given their native animals. American settlers combine descriptive words to give many vivid names for the mammals, reptiles, fish, birds, and insects—and Americans have continued to name animals by descriptive combinations ever since. [9. p.180]

Examples:

bald eagle, 1688, because its white neck and head make it look bald.

This bird was considered our national symbol before its picture was placed on the Great Seal of the United States in 1785; since then it has also been called the *American eagle*, 1798, and the *United States eagle*, 1847. *Baltimore oriole*, 1771, originally called the *Baltimore bird*, 1669, because its black and orange colors were those on the coat of arms of Lord Baltimore.

bullfrog, 1698, because it makes a roaring noise like a bull. *canvas back*, 1782, from the color of its back. [9. p.181]

catbird, 1709, because its call resembles the mewling of a cat. Like many words on this list it was originally spelled with a hyphen, *cat-bird*.

catfish, 1612, the name first recorded by John Smith in Virginia, because of the fish's facial resemblance to a cat, especially its whiskers.

grizzly bear, 1791, because some of the animals have a grizzly or gray color; in fact it's sometimes called the *white bear*, *silver-tipped bear*, etc. Shortened to *grizzly* by the early 1800s.

lightning bug, 1778. The English had called this beetle a *glow worm* since

the 16th century and *a firefly* since 1658. [9. p.182]

There some words denoting the famous American animal which enriches the American English very much. [9. p.66]

Buffalo (Portuguese and Spanish *bufalo* from Greek *boufdos*, “wild ox”) is, of course, a misnomer, a word Europeans had used for the smaller, weaker Indian and African ox. American buffalo is really the *American bison* (1796), but De Soto didn't know that when he first called it *bufalo* in 1544. The word appears in many American combinations, including:

buffalo beef, 1722, buffalo meat.

buffalo robe, 1723, also called *buffalo rug*, 1805. This Indian item was first described by Marquette and Joliet in 1681; it served many Indians and whites as robe, coat, blanket, and sleepingbag. *buffalo-headed duck*, 1731, now known as the *bufflehead* (1858), a small, widely distributed duck with a large, squarish head. *buffalo road*, 1750; *buffalo trace*, 1823; *buffalo trail*, 1834. These are all paths or trails worn by buffalo herds.

Buffalo Bill, William Frederick Cody (1846-1917), who had been a pony express rider and cavalry scout before earning this nickname as a buffalo hunter supplying large quantities of meat to Union Pacific Railroad construction crews in 1867-68. The name *Buffalo Bill* was given him by Ned Buntline (pen name of Edward Zane Carroll Judson, 1821 -86), a writer of adventure fiction and one of the first dime novelists. Cody himself gave us the term *Wild West Show*, opening Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show in Omaha, May 37, 1883. [9. p.67]

Such terms as *in the buff* (the skin, naked), the brownish yellow color called *buff*, and *to buff* (to polish as with an animal skin) do not come from our word *buffalo* but entered English in the 16th century via *buffle*, the French word for that Asiatic and African ox. [9. p.68]

2.3. Plants

Americans have given many of their native trees, grasses, flowers, and shrubs descriptive names, often by combining two old words. Thus they have:

bluegrass, 1751, being any of several American grasses of the for genus and having a bluish cast, earlier called *Dutch grass* (1671). *Kentucky bluegrass*, 1849, a type of bluegrass, *Poa pratensis* valuable as pasturage and hay; *Bluegrass region*, *Bluegrass country the Blue Grass*, a region in Kentucky, 1860s; *the Bluegrass Stof Kentucky*, 1886. [9. p.62]

butternut, 1741, or *white walnut* (1743), called *butternut* from the oiliness of the nut. By 1810 *butternut* also meant the brownish dye obtained from the tree's bark, its color, and fabric dyed with it. During the Civil War *Butternut* (1862) meant a Confederate soldier, from the butternut dye used on some homemade uniforms. *buttonwood*, 1674, because of its buttonlike burrs. This name was given the tree in New England; Southerners called it *sycameri* (1709), thinking it was that familiar English tree.

honey locust, 1743, because the pealike pods have a sweet taste.

Johnny-jump-up, 1842, from its quick growth. Also called *JoktM jumper*, *Johnny jump up and kiss me*, 1859; *johnny jump*, 1894. The English call this the *viola tricolor* or *heartsease* (we use these names for any of the various American violets and wild pansies).

live oak, 1610, because, being an evergreen oak, it is "alive" all year.

poison ivy, 1784, earlier *poison weed*. It got its name because, as Captain John Smith wrote in 1624, "The Poysoned weed is much in shape like our English ivy." Colonists, who had never seen or heard of it until they landed in America, had to learn to recognize and avoid it, and care for its effects, by trial and error. It was particularly rampant in Virginia, all the more troublesome because it could be mistaken by uninitiates for the local climbing vine the *Virginia creeper* (1670s).

poison oak, 1743, so called because its lobelike leaves resemble those of an oak tree. This plant also was troublesome in early Virginia where it seems to have gotten its name.

The early settlers and frontiersmen also borrowed many plant names from the Indians, French, and Spanish. Other plants and trees are named after people, as the *Douglas fir* (1884, for the Scottish botanist David Douglas who discovered it while collecting and exploring in the Northwest in 1825) and the *poinsettia* (named in 1836 for Joel Poinsett, who collected and sent back many rare plants, including this one, while serving as the first U.S. minister to Mexico in 1825-29). Other native American plants were misnamed, merely because the settlers who first saw them thought they were identical to those back home in England when they weren't. Thus our *beech*, *hemlock*, *laurel*, and *walnut* are not the same as the English trees of the same names and our *bay trees* and *bay bushes* also differ from the English ones. [9. p.63]

2.4. Banknotes and coins

The word *dollar* comes from the German *t(h)aler*, a word the Germans got from shortening *Joachinstaler*, a silver coin first minted in Joachimstal, Bohemia, in 1519 (*Joachinstaler* itself literally means "of the Saint Joachim valley," *t(h)akr* meaning "of the valley"). This original *t(h)aler* became such a common European coin that *t(h)aler* or *da(h)ler* soon became the general name for any large silver coin in various German states and the name of the basic coins of Denmark and Sweden, with the word being spelled *dollar* in England by 1581.

The first *dollar* widely circulated in America was a Dutch coin bearing the likeness of a lion. Brought here by the original Dutch settlers around 1620, it was a favorite of European merchants and sailors and continued to be brought to America and to circulate widely long after the English took over the Dutch lands in 1664 and turned the Dutch colony of *New Netherland* (so named by the Dutch in 1621)

into *New York* and *New Jersey*. We called this Dutch dollar a *lion dollar* or *lion* by 1725. This Dutch dollar was not the only dollar the colonists had. The Spanish peso was also in wide use in all the American colonies and called a *Spanish dollar* from at least 1684. By the early 1750s any peso, whether from Spain or Spanish America, was called a *Spanish dollar*, *Spanish mill(ed) dollar*, or simply a *dollar*. [10. p.181]

With English money in short supply and colonial money uncertain, the most prized and trusted money was often gold and silver coins from Spain, France, Holland, Mexico, Portugal, Brazil— from just about every European country, possession, island, and even mission (the Spanish Jesuits in Tuban, Arizona, minted coins as early as 1707). Such gold and silver coins were brought to America by its original Dutch, French, Spanish, and German settlers and continued to come in through merchants, sailors, and pirates from the entire Western world. Besides British guineas, pounds, shillings, and pence, Dutch and Spanish dollars, and colonial bills and coins, early Americans used and talked about such coins as the:

peso. The Spanish *peso* (literally weight, from Latin *pensum*, something weighted) was worth eight Spanish *reals* (see below) and marked with a figure 8. We called this Spanish coin and its value *peso*, *eight reals*, *piece of eight*, and, of course, *dollar*.

picayune. This French coin (from French *picailon*, a small copper coin) was widely circulated in Louisiana and Florida in the late 18th century and was still in wide use at the time of the Louisiana Purchase in 1803. By 1855 we used *picayune* to mean trifling, of small value.

pistole. The Spanish *gold pistole* (from Middle French *pistolet*, coin) was worth 2¹/₂ pesos. It also circulated freely in the colonies and was associated not only with Spain but with pirates, who seemed to prefer it for its gold content, size, and weight—and for use as an earring.

real or *bit*. The small silver Spanish *real* (Spanish for "royal," from Latin *regal*, regal) was worth one-eighth of a peso or 12¹/₂ cents. By 1683 we also called

it a *bit* (from Old English *bite*, bit, morsel), which was an English term for any small piece of money, as in "six-penny bit," though this monetary use of the word *bit* was reinforced in America by the Spanish word *pieca*, piece, bit, which sounded like "bika" to many colonists. [10. p.184]

New United States currency was called *federal money* (1806), *lawful money* (1809), and *specie dollars* (1821) to distinguish it from the foreign coins still in circulation. [10. p.185]

From 1865 until 1933 the U.S. issued not only gold coins but paper *gold certificates* (an 1863 term, the year Congress first authorized them) which certified that the U.S. Treasury had deposited gold for their redemption. In 1933, when the U.S. was taken off the gold standard, gold coins were removed from circulation, gold certificates were called in, and our coins and paper money were declared legal tender. From 1878 until 1963 the government also issued *silver certificates*, paper money backed by silver dollars. Today, about 90 percent of our paper money is in *Federal Reserve Notes* issued through the twelve *Federal Reserve Banks* or "bankers' banks" created by the Federal Reserve Act of 1913 to establish a unified banking system. [10. p.187]

Some General Terms:

banknote, 1695 in England, originally as made out by a specific bank to a specific person. The shortened form, *note*, was first recorded in 1696.

bean, any coin, 1810. It came to mean specifically a \$5 gold piece in 1859, then meant \$1 by 1905.

bill meant a letter or a legal document in English by the 15th century (from Latin *bull*a, official seal, then a document bearing such a seal, which we still use in the term *papal bull*). By the late 16th century in England this "official document" meaning led to *bill*, which was used as a word for paper money.

cash, 1596 in England, when it also still meant money box, case (via French *caisse*, Italian *cassa*, cash box, merchant's case, from Latin *capsa*, box). *Cash article*, valuable or worth an amount of money, 1835; *cash crop*, 1868.

currency, 1699 as money in England, because it is the current, generally accepted medium of exchange (from Latin *currential currere*, to run).[10. p.192]

Since 1969 all U.S. currency in denominations over one hundred dollars has been withdrawn from circulation as the bills have come in to Federal Reserve Banks. A thousand dollars has been called a *thou* since 1869, a *grand* since 1900 (which was sometimes shortened to *G* by 1920), and a *big one* by the 1950s. The \$10,000 Federal Reserve Notes were the highest currency ever in general circulation and, although the last ones were printed in 1944, about four hundred are still in private hands. The \$100,000 gold certificates, with President Woodrow Wilson's likeness, were first issued in 1934 and were the highest denomination ever authorized in the world; however, they were never in general circulation, being for official transactions only (twelve of these are still in Federal Reserve Banks). Although U.S. currency has never come in larger denominations than this, it is, of course, possible to amass and talk about still larger amounts.

[10. p.202]

2.5. Mail

The British still speak of *the post* and of *posting* a letter while Americans are more apt to talk about *the mail* and *mailing* a letter (*post* came into English via the 15th-century French *poste*, station, from Latin *positum*, positioned, placed; *mail* has been in English since the 13th century, from Old High German *malha*, satchel, bag). Our use of *post* and *postal* thus goes back to our British colonial days; *mail* came later, with *mail carrier* in 1790, *mail boat* in 1796, *mail pouch*, and *the mail*, the *U.S. Mail* in the 1840s, and *mail bag* in 1867. Here are the dates of the first American colonial use of some British postal terms:

postal system, 1639, in Massachusetts. This first system was simple: incoming overseas mail was to be left at the home of Richard Fairbanks in Boston and he transmitted it for a penny a letter.

postal service, 1672, when a monthly service was started between New York and Boston, over what in 1692 became the Boston *Post Road* (a road for transporting mail). By 1790 the U.S. had 20,000 miles of post roads.

post office, 1683, when the first American one was established in Philadelphia. It gave us our first colonial use of the word *postmaster*, being one Henry Waldy, whose main duty was to supply horses and riders.

postmaster general, 1694, when the British crown appointed Andrew Hamilton postmaster general of all the colonies, to establish intercolonial service. People were soon talking about his *post riders* and *post walkers* (poor roads made them faster than wagons or carriages). [10. p.533]

These were the major British contributions to postal language. Benjamin Franklin was appointed postmaster of Philadelphia in 1737 and served as "co-deputy postmaster general" of the colonies from 1753 to 1774, when he was dismissed by the crown for being too pro-American. He got even with the British by being appointed the first postmaster general of the *American postal system* by the Continental Congress in 1775. Now American mail terms slowly began to take over:

mail coach, late 1780s (a British term); *mail stage*, from 1792.

Post Office Department, Americans used this term from its beginnings in 1782 until 1971, when it became the *U.S. Postal Service*, an independent agency.

U.S. Postmaster General, 1789, when President Washington appointed Samuel Osgood as the first one, overseeing the nation's 75 post offices.

star route, 1820s, the route of a private contractor carrying mail for the post office where its own service didn't go (so called for the stars or asterisks printed next to such routes on the Post Office Department list).

post office box, 1833; *general delivery*, late 1830's.

Before 1847, U.S. postmasters printed their own postage stamps and supplied glue pots—the adhesive stamp wasn't invented until 1840, in England (the famous *penny black* being the first issue). Then on July 1, 1847, Congress authorized the first *U.S. Postage stamps*: a 5¢ *Franklin* and a 10¢ *Washington*.

Within fifteen years all Americans were simply calling them *stamps* and calling their value *postage*. At first, some Americans humorously called such an adhesive stamp a *lick-and-stick*. Postage still covered only the carrying of mail from post office to post office; there was not free home delivery.

overland mail, 1848, when the post office first started talking about a stagecoach mail service from Missouri to California, which *overland stage* service was begun in 1858.

registered mail', 1855, when the service began.

mail boy, 1862, to distribute and collect mail in offices, which were now growing rapidly in size and number.

In 1863, when many families were writing to and receiving letters from their men who were fighting the Civil War, there were two big innovations in the Union's mail service: (1) mail was divided into classes and postage was based on the class rather than the distance it was carried; (2) mail service now began to include free home delivery in cities. Before this everyone had to pick up and deposit his own mail at the post office (or in a primitive letter box) or pay a *letter carrier* (an 1825 term) a 2-cent fee for each letter he delivered or picked up. [10. p.534]

Now Americans began to use the new terms:

first class (letters), *second class* (newspapers), *third class* (magazines and circulars), 1863. *Fourth class* (merchandise) wasn't added until 1879.

city delivery service, *free city delivery*, *free delivery*, 1863.

mailman soon became a common word after 1863, when he was employed and paid by the post office for free delivery. By the 1880s mailmen delivered as many as five times a day in commercial areas of New York and other major cities.

postal money order, 1864, originally created so Union soldiers could send money home safely during the Civil War.

postal card, *post card*, 1871, when the U.S. Post Office first issued a plain penny one, called a *penny post card* by 1873 (post cards had first been used by the Austrian post office in 1860).

branch post office, 1871.

mail box, 1872, two years after it was patented. Since the late 1850s people had been calling primitive types *letter boxes*, *street letter boxes*, and *street boxes*, but these were usually the brightly painted receiving boxes for independent carriers and express agencies. The patented U.S. *mailbox* did a lot to give the U.S. Post Office Department control of the business. They were also often called *letter drops* in the 1890s.

After having been discussed for several years, free delivery was extended to rural areas in 1896. Free rural delivery brought newspapers, magazines, and mail-order catalogs to farm families, breaking their isolation and "urbanizing" the outlook of rural America.

Rural Free Delivery, RFD, 1892; used in discussions four years before it went into effect. *mail order business*, 1875; *mail order catalog*, 1883; *mail order house*, 1906. The mail order business mushroomed after RFD was introduced; Sears Roebuck entered the mail order business in 1895.

And last, but not least, people have been playing and giggling about the kissing game *post office* since 1851, just four years after they began "kissing" those new lick-and-stick adhesive stamps. [10. p.535]

2.6. Indians

The word *Indian* comes from the most celebrated mistake in history. When Columbus discovered the Western Hemisphere he thought he had reached the Indies of Asia; hence the Caribbean Islands were called the *West Indies* and their inhabitants *Indians*. The word then spread to include all the aboriginal peoples of the Americas. [9. p.195]

The Indian words Americans still use include: (1) thousands of place names; (2) scores of words about Indians used in our history and mythology; and (3) hundreds of names of plants, animals, and landscapes which have become part of American everyday speech. [9. p.196]

The words Americans use in talking about Indians include some real Indian words plus others from our conceptions and misconceptions of Indians, words from American history and from American fiction:

brave (the French word for an Indian warrior), has had wide American use since 1819. Before then we usually used the term *Indian warrior*.

firewater, 1817 is the earliest recorded use of this "Indian talk" word for whiskey. It may be a translation of the Algonquian *scoutiouabou*, "fire water."

Honest Indian?, "is it true?" 1851; *Honest Injun* "on my honor," 1892, originally sarcastic use, because Indians were considered dishonest.

Indian country, 1664; *Indian land*, 1658; *Indian territory*, 1677; *Indian Territory*, 1828, the territory, now Oklahoma, set aside by the government for the Five Civilized Tribes.

Indian nation, a tribe, 1622. *Tribe* is a 13th century English word, used to refer to the tribes of Israel and to Roman tribes long before it was used to refer to aboriginal groups in Africa and the Americas. The earliest settlers usually spoke of an Indian *nation* rather than an Indian *tribe*.

paleface, 1822. James Fenimore Cooper put this term for White man into the mouths of his Indian characters. He probably invented it.

papoose (Algonquian for baby, child). Colonists were calling Indian babies this by 1633.

peace pipe, 1760; earlier it was called a *pipe of peace*, 1705. This long, decorated ceremonial pipe was first called a *calumet*, in 1678 (via Canadian French from French *calumeau*, reed, any plant with straw suitable for a pipe stem). *Calumet* is also a place name for a river, county, village, etc., in Illinois, Indiana, and Michigan, indicating places where such reeds grew. [9. p.197]

Indian words for plants, animals, and landscapes began to appear in American language as soon as the colonists landed and began to ask the Indians "What's that?" Most answers were in Algonquian, the most widespread family of Indian languages, spoken by most Indians of the eastern

half of the U.S. Since the Indians hadn't yet invented writing, and since each local tribe might have its own pronunciation of any given word, the colonists had a hard time trying to spell and pronounce Indian words. Often they shortened the Indian word or phrase (*as quatas quash* became "squash"), tried to pronounce the parts of the word like familiar English words (a process called folk etymology, making *wejack* or *otchig* into "woodchuck"), or took a whole Indian sentence or clause and made one word out of it. Virginia's Captain John Smith introduced many such words into English, beginning with his written description of Virginia in 1608. If you had been in Jamestown, Plymouth, or on the Kentucky frontier, or had crossed the prairie in a covered wagon, you would have heard your fellow Americans using a good many Indian words. Today about 130 Algonquian words, mainly for plants and animals, are still in use, plus a sprinkling of words from other Indian language families. [9. p.201]

The most frequently heard include:

bayou (via French from Choctaw *bayuk*, stream, creek), 1766

caribou (via Canadian French from Micmae *khalibu* or something that sounded like *maccaribpoo*, "he who paws the snow"), 1610.

catalpa tree (Creek *kutuhpa*, "winged head," referring to the flowers), 1730; shortened to *catalpa*, 1785.

hickory (Algonquian *pawcohiccora*, a dish of pounded hickory nuts and water), as *pocketxhichory*, *pokahickory*, 1618, modern spelling, 1670. *Hickory nut*, 1670. *Hickory switch*, 1734, for whipping children, later called a *hickory stick*. *Hickory* was used to mean firm, unyielding by 1800, giving us such nicknames as "Old Hickory" for Andrew Jackson and such terms as *hickory cloth* and *hickory shirt* in the 1840s, referring to a strong cotton fabric. By 1848 *hickory* also meant a hickory walking stick and by 1900 was used to mean a baseball bat.

hominy, 1629; *pone*, 1612; *samp*, 1643; *succotash*, 1751. Many of our "corn" words come from the Indians; these words are discussed in detail at the entry

CORN.

poke means several different plants to us because it is our final pronunciation of several different Indian words. *Poke* originally was a name for the tobacco plant (from Algonquian *uppoivoc*) which we spelled *apooke* in 1618. Other *poke* plants get their name from a Virginian Indian word *puccoon*, a plant they used for dyeing. Thus we have *pokeroot* by 1687; *pokeweed*, 1751; *pokeberr*.. By 1778 *poke* also meant the skunk cabbage. *Poke greens* was first recorded in 1848 and *poke salad* in 1880.

skunk (Algonquian *skekakwa*, *squack*, "mammal who urinates" or sprays), 1588 by explorers, 1634 by colonists. It has also been called a *polecats* in America since the 1600s, after a related European animal. *Skunk cabbage*, 1751. *Skunk* was used to mean a contemptible person by 1840. *To skunk*, to defeat completely, keep an opponent from scoring, appeared in 1843.

squash (Narragansett *asquatasquash*, "eaten raw"), 1642. *Winter squash*, *summer squash*, 1750s; *crook-neck squash*, 1818, from its shape; *Hubbard squash*, late 1860s, from Mrs. Elizabeth Hubbard of Massachusetts, who first cultivated it; *zucchini squashy*

toboggan (via Canadian French from Algonquian *tabakun*, drag, hand sled), 1829; *tobogganing*, as a sport, 1855; *toboggan slide*, a playground slide for children, 1890s; *toboggan cap*, a stocking cap, especially with ends to wrap around the neck as a muffler, 1902.

wapiti, the North American elk, named in 1806 by the American physician and naturalist Benjamin Barton (using the Shawnee word for the animal, literally meaning "white rump"). This word never replaced the less precise word *elk*, which had been used in America since 1635.

whiskey-jack (Cree *wisketjan*), the Canadian jay. This name was first recorded by John J. Audubon, in 1839.

woodchuck (Algonquian *wejack*, Chippewa *otchig*, Cree *otchek*, the fisher), 1674. This is a prime example of folk etymology, of pronouncing strange words to resemble familiar words or word elements; it has nothing to do with "wood" or

"chuck" except in sound. [9. p.202]

In addition to the above, most Americans know about 50 names for Indian tribes from *Algonquin* to *Zuni*, plus such Indian words or words associated with Indians as *caucus* (1773, probably from Algonquian *caucauas*, counselor), *mackinaw* (1820s as a blanket, 1902 as a jacket, from Ojibway *mitchimakinak*, "great turtle," which became the name of the strait between Lake Michigan and Lake Huron, an island on this strait, and a trading post where this heavy wool, plaid blanket, was common), *pemmican* (1791, Cree *pimikkan* from *pimii*, fat, grease), and *podunk* (Mohegan for "neck of land," used as a place name by Indians in Connecticut and Massachusetts, as recorded in 1666, then used by Whites to mean a small or insignificant town or rural region by 1841). Such words as *potato* and *tobacco* are West Indies Indian words and *tomato* and *chocolate* are Aztec Indian words. [9. p.203]

2.7. Car

Americans thank Julius Caesar for the word *car*. He personally borrowed a Celtic word sounding something like "karra" to name his chariots, and from that and its Latinized *carrus/carra*, which came to mean wagon, cart, Americans get the English words *chariot*, *carriage*, and *car*. The colonists knew *car* only as a poetic word meaning chariot, as in the "Cars of the Gods." It wasn't until the 1820s and 30s that common people talked much about cars, by which they then meant *railroad cars*, *horsecars* and, by the 1860s, *streetcars*. Since about 1900, however, *car* has had one chief meaning to most Americans: an automobile.

The word *automobile* (Greek *auto-*, self + *mobile*, moving) arrived in the 1870s with the appearance of the *steam automobile*, also called a *steamer* (the British had called it a *steam carriage* since its beginnings in the 1830s). The *Stanley Steamer*, also known as *the flying teapot*, was manufactured from 1896 to 1925 by the Stanley twins, Francis and Freelan, and was the most talked-about automobile of the late 1890s. Various *electric automobiles*, going 25-40 miles at 15 mph on a battery charge,

were also widely talked about at the time, but the *gasoline automobile*, first successfully built in the U.S. by the Duryea brothers in 1893, had few supporters—most people remembered that the famous *Electrobat* had beaten a Duryea gasoline automobile in a much-discussed 1895 race. But be it driven by electricity, steam, or gasoline, *automobile* was the word generally used in the late 1890s, and was already shortened to *auto*. Some of the over 50 inventors-designers-manufacturers of automobiles in 1898 were, however, using other terms, including

autopher, autovic, autobat, automotive, diamote, motorfly, self motor, and locomotive car. [9. p.75]

The first definition of *motor-car* appeared in the 1890 edition of the *Century Dictionary*: "*Motor-car* ... a car which carries its own propelling mechanism, as an electric motor. . . ." *Motor-car* was soon shortened to *car* and by 1910 *car* had replaced *automobile* as the more common word, though *automobile*, *motorcar*, and another early word for it, *machine*, were favored by some people well into the 1930s.

By 1900 the car was replacing the bicycle as a fad, and enthusiasts willingly donned *veils* and the clothes-protecting driving smocks called *dusters* (words used with a special meaning by automobile buffs since the 1870s) and *goggles* (which came in the 1890s). Since before 1890 *driver* had become the accepted word for one who could manipulate a car, although *chauffeur* was also in use (from French *chauffer*, to heat, originally meaning a stoker and then humorously applied to the driver of a steam automobile). By the end of the 1890s new names and words having to do with cars came thick and fast, and talking about cars became one of America's favorite pastimes—today new "car" words still appear every year and we still talk about cars avidly. It's been a long love affair. A sampling of some car names heard over and over in America includes:

Packard. In 1898 James Ward Packard was so disgusted when the new car he purchased from Alexander Winton, "bicycle and automobile manufacturer," broke down as he drove it home, that he decided to build his own. His 1899 car was a

buggy-type, one-cylinder, 12-horsepower single-seater with a steering tiller.

Buick, famous since 1902 when bathtub maker David Dunbar Buick built the first car having a water-cooled, valve-in-head engine.

Cadillac, first built in 1902 by perfectionist Henry M, Leland and named after the French explorer.

Studebaker, first appeared in 1904, when only one of the five famous Studebaker brothers was still living. They had built a blacksmith shop into one of the country's largest wagon and harness businesses, which had been a major supplier of the Union army during the Civil War.

General Motors, established by William C. Durant around 1909 from Oldsmobile, Buick, Cadillac, and many smaller companies.

The Model T, introduced as Henry Ford's ninth model in 1909 (the first *Ford* was built in 1903), it sold for \$850 "In any color you choose as long as it's black." In 1914 Ford introduced the electric conveyor belt for the assembly of cars, and by 1926 mass production had lowered the price of a Model T to \$350. Over 15 million Model Ts had been sold by 1927, when the *Model A* replaced it.

Chevrolet, introduced in 1911 as the first *six-cylinder* touring car, both the car and the Chevrolet Motor Company being named after and designed by former racing car driver Louis Chevrolet.

Cord. E. L. Cord produced his *L-29* in 1929 and the classic[^] *810* in 1937, introducing new designs, superchargers, and the disappearance of the running board.

Tucker. In 1947 the Tucker Corporation displayed pilot models of its rear-engine, three-headlight (the middle one turned with the steering wheel) *Tucker Torpedo*, later called the *Tucker 48*, Due to legal involvements, widely thought to have been initiated by "the big three" car manufacturers (Ford, GM, and Chrysler) supported by some government agencies, the car was never sold.

Edsel, introduced with much fanfare by the Ford Motor Company in 1957, it was one of the most talked-about, joked-about flops in automobile history. Named after Edsel Ford, 1893-1943, son of Henry. [9. p.76]

In addition to talking about specific cars, Americans have constantly talked about parts of cars, types and styles of cars, and words for things associated with cars, using terms such as:

automobile tire, 1877 (wagon tires date from the 15th century); *jack*, 1877; *tread*, 1877, *retread*, 1890; *blowout*, 1915; *balloon tire*, early 1920s; *tubeless tire*, introduced by B. F. Goodrich, 1948; *radial ply tire*, 1967.

automobile accident, 1882; *car crash*, 1915; *hit-and-run*, 1920s.

fender, 1883; *hood*, 1906; *running board*, 1923; *rumble seat*, 1931.

crank, 1883; *self-starter*, 1894.

runabout, 1891; *touring car*, 1903; *station wagon*, 1904; *roadster*, 1908; *coupe*, 1918; *sedan*, 1920; *sports car*, 1925.

American Automobile Association, AAA, 1900.

license plate, 1901, when they were first issued by New York State.

garage, for housing an automobile, 1902. [9. p.77]

road hog, early 1900s, had been applied first to bicyclists in the 1890s.

gas, 1905, from the 1865 word *gasoline*, which was originally considered merely a dangerous by-product in the making of kerosene.

spark plug, 1908, used to mean an energetic leader by the 1930s.

give her the gas, 1912; *step on the gas*, *tramp on the gas*, 1916; *step on it*, 1922; *give it the gas*, 1942. These replaced the older "don't spare the horses."

motorcade, 1912.

flivver, 1914 (the word originally meant a failure in the 1900s); *heap*, 1915; *tin lizzie*, 1915, originally meant only the Model T (*Lizzie* is from the common name for a Black maid who, like the car, worked hard all week and prettied up on Sundays); *crate*, 1920, following the World War I use for an airplane; *jalopy*, 1924; *gas buggy*, 1925; *rattletrap*, 1929.

traffic cop, 1915; *ticket*, 1930.

filling station, 1915; *service station*, 1922.

tourist camp, *tourist court*, 1916;

The list goes on and on, for the car completely changed American life and

language. The car created the gasoline industry and all its words reshaped the family vacation and resort industry and spawned many of travel and recreational terms. [9. p.78]^Б

2.8. American English Idioms.

It's Raining Cats and Dogs seems to be a good old-fashioned American expression. Here are some others heard over and over;

The *sight* of you is good *for sore eyes*.

She's no chicken, she's on the wrong side of thirty, if she's a day.

Fingers were made before forks.

I thought you and he were *hand-in-glove*.

She has more goodness in her little finger than he has in his whole body.

[10. p.464]

These are all familiar expressions, but none was originally American. They are all listed in English satirist Jonathan Swift's 1738 *Polite Conversations*—as examples of the banalities and clichés of polite British conversation! Swift also used another popular "American" expression in *Hail fellow, well met, All dirty and wet; Find out if you can, Who's master, who's man. "My Lady's Lamentation,"* 1765. It just goes to show that all American popular expressions don't originate in America.

During the last 200 years it seems it has almost literally been raining cats and dogs in America. Although American Indians kept pets, with dogs and beavers being the most common ones, the early colonists believed that keeping pets was a sign of witchcraft (two dogs were executed as witches in Salem, Massachusetts, in 1692). Keeping pets did become acceptable, however, during the mid 18th century, the habit spreading from European palaces and manor houses into the average home. Today there are at least 100 million cats and dogs in the United States—and each year more than a million people are bitten by dogs. Cats and dogs have given us such terms as:

to bark up the wrong tree, 1832, probably from hunting dogs thinking they had treed a raccoon.

cat burglar, 1907, when it first appeared in English.

eatery, a shout of displeasure or good-humored ridicule, 1898.

catfit, *catnip fit*, a fit of anger or frenzied excitement, 1905. If the original form was *catnip fit* it may have come into being merely as a corruption of or by confusion with *conniption fit*.

cat food, 1907.

cat nap, *cat's nap*, a short nap, 1820s.

catnip, 1712, often called *cat mint* in bygone days; *catnip tea*, 1837. This aromatic mint plant, *Napeta cataria*, was named because of its attraction for cats; it has been widely used in cooking. *catty*, given to spiteful remarks, around 1885.

dog, an unsuccessful, ugly, or disliked person or thing, early 1930s.

dogcatcher, 1835, also euphemistically called a *humane officer*, 1939, and bureaucratically called a *canine control officer*, 1942.

dog eat dog, everyone for himself, 1834. *dog it*, to shirk, 1920.

dog my cats!, an exclamation of surprise, 1839.

dog paddle, as a way to stay afloat or swim, 1904. *dog pound*, 1875. Many pounds are now under the auspices of the *American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA)*, founded by Henry Bergh in 1866, when horses were often

underfed, overworked, and cruelly treated.

look like the cat after it had eaten the canary, look guilty, 1871; *look like something the cat brought/dragged/drug in*, look bedraggled, late 1920s.

put on the dog, put on a display, dress up, etc., 1871.

see a man about a dog, to leave abruptly, especially in order to urinate, 1867 in English use.

The older English *it's raining cats and dogs* was joined by our *to rain pitchforks* in 1844, with the expression *right as rain*, meaning perfect, well, absolutely right, appearing in 1894. [10. p.465]

Another old English expression dealing with a rainstorm is *to steal one's thunder*. The story behind this expression is that in 1709 English playwright John Dennis invented a new way to produce stage thunder for his play *Appius and Virginia*. Few people liked his tragedy and it soon closed, but not long after, Dennis was watching a new production of *Macbeth* and heard his thunder being used. He angrily got up from his theater seat and shouted to all the audience, "See how the rascals use me! They will not let my play run, and yet they steal my thunder!" So was born another popular American expression—in England. [10. p.466]

Conclusion

In this work paper we investigated the peculiarities of American English emphasizing especially the etymology of American English words.

So in the research it was proved that:

North America has given the English lexicon many thousands of words, meanings, and phrases. Several thousand are now used in English as spoken internationally; others, however, died within a few years of their creation. The process of coining new lexical items started as soon as the colonists began borrowing names for unfamiliar flora, fauna, and topography from the Native American languages. Among the earliest and most notable regular "English" additions to the American vocabulary, dating from the early days of colonization through the early 19th century, are terms describing the features of the North American landscape.

American settlers combine descriptive words to give many vivid names for the mammals, reptiles, fish, birds, and insects—and Americans have continued to name animals by descriptive combinations ever since.

Americans have given many of their native trees, grasses, flowers, and shrubs descriptive names, often by combining two old words.

The early settlers and frontiersmen also borrowed many plant names from the Indians, French, and Spanish. Other plants and trees are named after people. Other native American plants were misnamed, merely because the settlers who first saw them thought they were identical to those back home in England when they weren't.

Americans borrowed the names for their money generally from such languages as Dutch, Spanish, Portuguese, German and French. Or they merely used the money from some foreign country such as Spain, Italy or France.

As for Mailing system Americans generally took the names of Mail sphere from British English. So British contribution to postal language was

major. Then with the development of this industry Americans began to use new terms invented with the help of Postal business.

Indians greatly influenced American English vocabulary. The Indian words Americans still use include: (1) thousands of place names; (2) scores of words about Indians used in our history and mythology; and (3) hundreds of names of plants, animals, and landscapes which have become part of American everyday speech. The words Americans use in talking about Indians include some real Indian words plus others from our conceptions and misconceptions of Indians, words from American history and from American fiction.

As for the automobile it completely changed American life and language. The car created the gasoline industry and all its words reshaped the family vacation and resort industry and spawned many of travel and recreational terms.

Also appearance of the car greatly influenced the names of roads and everything connected with the traffic. The rise of capitalism, the development of industry and material innovations throughout the 19th and 20th centuries were the source of a massive stock of distinctive new words, phrases and idioms.

Most of American English Idioms are not purely American. Almost all of them were borrowed from British English. Also many proverbs came from Indians.

Many of the Italian words in English entered the language during the Renaissance when Italian culture was very much in vogue. Most Italian borrowings are only partially naturalized, still being associated mainly with Italians or things Italian which includes dozens of Italian food terms.

French has had a direct influence on American English: via French explorers, trappers, and fur traders. The French have also given many place names, especially along the Canadian border, around the Great Lakes, down the Mississippi, throughout the old French Louisiana Territory, and in the plains and mountain regions of the West.

American English has borrowed more words from Spanish than from any other language, and is still borrowing them— there are hundreds of thousands of

Mexicans living in the Southwest; 650,000 Puerto Ricans in New York City; and 100,000 Cubans in New Orleans, plus several hundred thousand more in the Miami area. Spanish has also given many American place names, including the names of six states, over 2,000 names of U.S. cities and towns, and thousands of names of rivers, mountains, valleys, etc.

So in the end of our work paper we can assume that American English vocabulary was formed in general under the influence of environment and with the help of borrowings.

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[The dates in vocabulary indicate the year of recording of the word or phrase]

Appendix

1. *Alabama*, 1819, 22nd state—from Choctaw *alba ayamule*, "I open the thicket," literally one who clears the land and gathers food from it. Previously *Alabama Territory*; also called *the Cotton State*, *the Heart of Dixie*.
2. *Alaska*, 1959, 49th state—the Russian version of the Eskimo *Alakshak* or *Alayeksa*, "great land, mainland." Previously called *Russian America*; also called *the Last Frontier*.
3. *Arizona*, 1912, 48th state—from Papago *Arizonac*, "place of the small spring." Also called *the Grand Canyon State*.
4. *Arkansas*, 1836, 25th state—Sioux for "south wind people, land of the south wind people." Previously spelled *Arkansaw*; also called *the Wonder State*, *the Land of Opportunity*.
5. *allow*, *guess*, *reckon*, meaning to think, which had all become obsolete in England.
6. *automobile tire*, 1877 (wagon tires date from the 15th century); *jack*, 1877; *tread*, 1877, *retread*, 1890; *blowout*, 1915; *balloon tire*, early 1920s; *tubeless tire*, introduced by B. F. Goodrich, 1948; *radial ply tire*, 1967.
7. *automobile accident*, 1882; *car crash*, 1915; *hit-and-run*, 1920s.
8. *bluegrass*, 1751, being any of several American grasses of the for genus and having a bluish cast, earlier called *Dutch grass* (1671). *Kentucky bluegrass*, 1849, a type of bluegrass, *Poa pratensis* valuable as pasturage and hay; *Bluegrass region*, *Bluegrass country* *the Blue Grass*, a region in Kentucky, 1860s; *the Bluegrass Stof Kentucky*, 1886.
9. *butternut*, 1741, or *white walnut* (1743), called *butternut* from the oiliness of the nut. By 1810 *butternut* also meant the brownish dye obtained from the tree's bark, its color, and fabric dyed with it. During the Civil War *Butternut* (1862) meant a Confederate soldier, from the butternut dye used on some homemade uniforms. *The Butternut State*, Missouri, 1863.

10. *buttonwood*, 1674, because of its buttonlike burrs. This name was given the tree in New England; Southerners called it *sycameri* (1709), thinking it was that familiar English tree.

11. *to bark up the wrong tree*, 1832, probably from hunting dogs thinking they had treed a raccoon.

12. *cat burglar*, 1907, when it first appeared in English.

13. *catfit*, *catnip fit*, a fit of anger or frenzied excitement, 1905. If the original form was *catnip fit* it may have come into being merely as a corruption of or by confusion with *conniption fit*.

14. *cat nap*, *cat's nap*, a short nap, 1820s.

15. *catnip*, 1712, often called *cat mint* in bygone days; *catnip tea*, 1837.

This aromatic mint plant, *Napeta cataria*, was named because of its attraction for cats; it has been widely used in cooking. *catty*, given to spiteful remarks, around 1885. *copycat*, 1915 as a noun, 1942 as a verb.

16. *belittle*, coined by Thomas Jefferson in 1787.

17. *bluff*, used in the South since 1687, instead of the British river "bank." This has the distinction of being the first word attacked as being a "barbarous" American term.

18. *bureau*, meaning chest of drawers, which was obsolete in England.

19. *buffalo beef*, 1722, buffalo meat.

20. *buffalo robe*, 1723, also called *buffalo rug*, 1805. This Indian item

21. was first described by Marquette and Joliet in 1681; it served

22. many Indians and whites as robe, coat, blanket, and sleepingbag.

buffalo-headed duck, 1731, now known as the *bufflehead* (1858), a

small, widely distributed duck with a large, squarish head. *buffalo road*, 1750; *buffalo trace*, 1823; *buffalo trail*, 1834. These are all paths or trails worn by buffalo herds.

23. *buffalo fish*, 1768, various fish of the sucker family, especially along the Mississippi and Ohio Rivers.

24. *buffalo grass*, 1784, a low-growing perennial grass common to the buffalo ranges.

25. *buffalo dance*, 1805, an Indian ritual dance, often performed in a buffalo skin and mask.
26. *buffalo horse*, 1827, a horse used in buffalo hunts.
27. *buffalo wallow*, 1834. These hollow places made by buffaloes rolling in the dirt sometimes filled with water, preventing many a horse and rider from suffering from thirst.
28. *buffalo chips*, 1840, dried buffalo dung, the common fuel of the prairie, also called *buffalo wood*, 1855.
29. *buffalo boat*, 1844, made by stretching buffalo skins over a wooden frame.
30. *Buffalo Bill*, William Frederick Cody (1846-1917), who had been a pony express rider and cavalry scout before earning this nickname as a buffalo hunter supplying large quantities of meat to Union Pacific Railroad construction crews in 1867-68. The name *Buffalo Bill* was given him by Ned Buntline (pen name of Edward Zane Carroll Judson, 1821 -86), a writer of adventure fiction and one of the first dime novelists. Cody himself gave us the term *Wild West Show*, opening Buffalo Bill's Wild West Show in Omaha, May 37, 1883.
31. *buffalo soldier*, 1873, a Black soldier, so called by Indians because the soldiers' short, tightly curled hair resembled that of buffalo (there were two Black infantry and two Black cavalry regiments serving permanently in the West for 30 years following the Civil War). White soldiers called these Black soldiers *brunets*. *to buffalo someone*, 1870s, to cheat or intimidate someone. *buffalo gun*, 1907, a large-caliber rifle, as for shooting buffalo.
32. *bald eagle*, 1688, because its white neck and head make it look bald. This bird was considered our national symbol before its picture was placed on the Great Seal of the United States in 1785; since then it has also been called the *American eagle*, 1798, and the *United States eagle*, 1847. *Baltimore oriole*, 1771, originally called the *Baltimore bird*, 1669, because its black and orange colors were those on the

coat of arms of Lord Baltimore. *barn swallow*, 1790, because it often builds its nests in the eaves of barns.

33. *blue jay*, 1709. Colors often appear in our descriptive names: we also have the *bluefish*, 1622; *blue heron*, 1781; and *blue gill*, 1881. *Blue point oysters* get their name because they are found off Blue Point, Great South Bay, Long Island, New York.

34. *bobcat*, 1711, because of its stubby or "bobbed" tail (originally this name was given to the bay lynx).

35. *bullfrog*, 1698, because it makes a roaring noise like a bull. *canvas back*, 1782, from the color of its back.

36. *catbird*, 1709, because its call resembles the mewling of a cat. Like many words on this list it was originally spelled with a hyphen, *cat-bird*.

37. *catfish*, 1612, the name first recorded by John Smith in Virginia, because of the fish's facial resemblance to a cat, especially its whiskers.

38. *copperhead*, 1775, because of its coppery brown color, on which are dark markings.

39. *cottontail*, 1869, because the underside of its tail has a white tuft, like a ball of cotton.

40. *card*, meaning a person who likes to joke, an American use since 1835.

41. *currency*, 1699 as money in England, because it is the current, generally accepted medium of exchange (from Latin *currential currere*, to run).

42. *clever*, meaning sharp witted, an East Anglia dialect use common to all Americans.

43. *crank*, 1883; *self-starter*, 1894.

44. *California*, 1850, 31st state— Spanish name for "an earthly paradise," an imaginary island in Spanish lore. Previously called *Alta California* (Upper California, in opposition to *Baja California*); also called *the Golden State*.

45. *Colorado*, 1876, 38th state—Spanish word for "red," literally "red land, red earth." Previously *Colorado Territory*; also called *the Centennial State*, because of the year it entered the Union.
46. *Connecticut*, 1788, 5th state— from Mohican *quinnitukqut*, "at the long tidal river," referring to the Connecticut River. Also called *the Nutmeg State*, *the Constitution State*.
47. *dog*, an unsuccessful, ugly, or disliked person or thing, early 1930s. *dogcatcher*, 1835, also euphemistically called a *humane officer*, 1939, and bureaucratically called a *canine control officer*, 1942. *dog eat dog*, everyone for himself, 1834. *dog it*, to shirk, 1920.
48. *dog my cats!*, an exclamation of surprise, 1839. *dognapper*, 1940.
49. *dog paddle*, as a way to stay afloat or swim, 1904. *dog pound*, 1875. Many pounds are now under the auspices of the *American Society for the Prevention of Cruelty to Animals (ASPCA)*, founded by Henry Bergh in 1866, when horses were often underfed, overworked, and cruelly treated.
50. *look like the cat after it had eaten the canary*, look guilty, 1871;
51. *look like something the cat brought/dragged/drug in*, look bedraggled, late 1920s.
52. *drive-in*, 1931 (referring to a filling station), first popularly applied to movies and restaurants in the mid 1940s.
53. *dinero*, late 19th century, the Spanish word for money. We have also taken many other foreign words for money or monetary units to use as slang words for money, as *gelt* (see below), *ruble*, *yen*, etc.
54. *dough*, 1840, almost certainly from considering bread dough as the necessary, basic staff of life. *Do-re-mi*, as a pun on *dough* and the musical *do*, 1925; *oday*, Pig Latin for *dough*, 1926.
55. *easy money*, easily obtained money, 1836; *easy dollars*, 1890s. *For my money*, as far as I'm concerned, 1840. *To pay one's money and take one's choice*, 1864. *Money talks*, money has influence, 1910. *Money from home*, easily obtained money, 1913.

56. *fall*, obsolete in England where "autumn" was now the preferred word.
57. *fork*, which the British ate with but which we also drove or paddled on, using it since 1645 to mean the branch of a road or river.
58. *fender*, 1883; *hood*, 1906; *running board*, 1923; *rumble seat*, 1931.
59. *flivver*, 1914 (the word originally meant a failure in the 1900s); *heap*, 1915; *tin lizzie*, 1915, originally meant only the Model T (*Lizzie* is from the common name for a Black maid who, like the car, worked hard all week and prettied up on Sundays); *crate*, 1920, following the World War I use for an airplane; *jalopy*, 1924; *gas buggy*, 1925; *rattletrap*, 1929.
60. *filling station*, 1915; *service station*, 1922.
61. *French boot*, a lightweight dress shoe, 1850.
62. *French church*, a French Protestant or Huguenot church, 1694.
63. *French (salad) dressing*, 1884. Incidentally, *thousand island dressing* dates from the 1920s.
64. *Frencher*, a Frenchman, 1826; *Frenchy*, a Frenchman, 1883, and used after 1904 to mean capricious.
65. *French flat*, a sublet floor in a private townhouse, one of our first terms for an apartment, 1879.
66. *French fried potatoes*, 1902; *French frieds*, 1920s; *French fries*, 1930s.
67. *French harp*, a harmonica, 1883. *French monte*, a popular form of the gambling card game, 1851. *French toast*, 1870s.
68. *Frog*, a Frenchman, was common in England by 1870 but became well known in the U.S. only during World War I. It is probably from the French relishing frogs as a delicacy, reinforced by the toads on the coat of arms of the city of Paris.
69. *gas*, 1905, from the 1865 word *gasoline*, which was originally considered merely a dangerous by-product in the making of kerosene.
70. *garage*, for housing an automobile, 1902.
71. *give her the gas*, 1912; *step on the gas*, *tramp on the gas*, 1916; *step on it*,

1922; *give it the gas*, 1942. These replaced the older "don't spare the horses."

72. *gotten*, obsolete in England where "got" was being used as the past participle of *get*.

73. *gringo* (American Spanish for "gibberish," from Spanish *griego*, Greek, literally one whose language is "all Greek to me"), first used by Mexicans during THE MEXICAN WAR, now common throughout Latin America.

74. *help*, meaning servants, an American use since 1630.

75. *how?*, which only Americans used as an interrogation, since 1815.

76. *Hugers*, our 17th century term for the French Huguenots, who also gave us the place name *Huguenot* on Staten Island and *New Rochelle* in Westchester County, N.Y., and such names as New Yorker John Jay, the famous Virginia Dabney (d'Aubigny) family, Boston's Peter Faneuil and *Faneuil Hall*, and Charles Guiteau, who assassinated President Garfield.

77. *license plate*, 1901, when they were first issued by New York State.

78. *loan*, which only Americans used as a verb meaning "to lend."

79. *mail box*, 1872, two years after it was patented. Since the late 1850s people had been calling primitive types *letter boxes*, *street letter boxes*, and *street boxes*, but these were usually the brightly painted receiving boxes for independent carriers and express agencies. The patented U.S. *mailbox* did a lot to give the U.S. Post Office Department control of the business. They were also often called *letter drops* in the 1890s.

80. *mailman* soon became a common word after 1863, when he was employed and paid by the post office for free delivery. By the 1880s mailmen delivered as many as five times a day in commercial areas of New York and other major cities.

81. *menhaden* (Algonquian *munnoquohcttean*, "that which enriches the soil"), the fish Massachusetts Indians used to fertilize their corn crops and which they taught the Pilgrims to use, spelled *mun-nawhatteang* by the

colonists in 1643.

82. *moose* (Passamaquoddy *moosu*, "he trims smoothly," referring to the bark moose strip and eat from trees), spelled *mus*, 1613, present spelling by 1673. *The Loyal Order of the Moose*, a charitable secret fraternal order, was founded in Louisville, Kentucky in 1888, its members called *Moose* since then.

83. *muskellunge* (Ojibwa *mashkinoje*), a variety of Great Lakes pike, 1789.

84. *motor court*, 1936; *motor hotel*, mid 1940s; *motel* (from *motor* + *hotel*), late 1940s.

85. *pecan* (Algonquian *pakan*, *pagan*, nut, the word may have come directly to us from the Indians or via earlier Spanish explorers and settlers), spelled *paccan*, 1773.

86. *persimmon* (Cree *pasiminan*, "dried fruit"), as *putchamin*, 1612, as *persimon*, 1635, present spelling by 1709. In the 1850s and 60s Americans used such expressions as *bringing down the persimmons*, and *walking off with the persimmons*, meaning to succeed or win the prize.

87. *poke* means several different plants to us because it is our final pronunciation of several different Indian words. *Poke* originally was a name for the tobacco plant (from Algonquian *uppoivoc*) which we spelled *apooke* in 1618. Other *poke* plants get their name from a Virginian Indian word *puccoon*, a plant they used for dyeing. Thus we have *pokeroot* by 1687; *pokeweed*, 1751; *pokeberry*, \11\. By 1778 *poke* also meant the skunk cabbage. *Poke greens* was first recorded in 1848 and *poke salad* in 1880.

88. *raccoon* (Algonquian *arakunen*, scraper, scratcher) was first recorded in 1608, in Virginia, though early spellings included *arocoun* and *raugrougheun*. *Raccoon coat*, 1649. *Raccoon* was shortened to *coon* as early as 1742, though most "coon" words and meanings appeared in the 1830s and 40s, when *coon hunts* became popular and *coon* was first used to mean a rustic frontiersman (1832) and then a Black (1837). In the presidential election year of 1840 the

Whig party used a raccoon as its symbol and *coon* came to mean a Whig, including the presidential candidate William Henry Harrison and such men as Henry Clay, Daniel Webster, and John Calhoun; a *coon song* then meant not a Black minstrel song but a Whig political song (for more on the racial use of *coon* see THE BLACKS).

89. *parking, parking space, parking lot*, 1924; *parking meter*, 1935, the first ones installed in Oklahoma City.

90. *runabout*, 1891; *touring car*, 1903; *station wagon*, 1904; *roadster*, 1908; *coupe*, 1918; *sedan*, 1920; *sports car*, 1925.

91. *road hog*, early 1900s, had been applied first to bicyclists in the 1890s.

92. *seaboard*, an American coinage for "shore," used since 1788.

93. *spell*, which we have used to mean a period of time, a while, since 1705.

94. *scuppernong* (Algonquian *askuponong*, "place of the magnolias," the Scuppernong River valley in North Carolina, where this variety of grape grows), 1811.

95. *Sequoia* is named after the Cherokee Indian Sikwayi (1770-1843) who invented an 85-syllable "alphabet" for recording the Cherokee language, which was adopted by the Cherokee council in 1821. Born in Tennessee, Sikwayi (sometimes spelled *Sequoya*) took the name George Guess when he grew up, from an American trader he believed to be his father. *Sequoia* was first used as a genus name of a tree, which includes the giant California redwoods, by Hungarian botanist Stephen Endlicher in 1847.

96. *skunk* (Algonquian *skekakwa, squnck*, "mammal who urinates" or sprays), 1588 by explorers, 1634 by colonists. It has also been called a *polecat* in America since the 1600s, after a related European animal. *Skunk cabbage*, 1751. *Skunk* was used to mean a contemptible person by 1840. *To skunk*, to defeat completely, keep an opponent from scoring, appeared in 1843.

97. *squash* (Narragansett *asquatasquash*, "eaten raw"), 1642. *Winter squash, summer squash*, 1750s; *crook-neck squash*, 1818, from its shape; *Hubbard*

squash, late 1860s, from Mrs. Elizabeth Hubbard of Massachusetts, who first cultivated it; *zucchini squashy*

98. *spark plug*, 1908, used to mean an energetic leader by the 1930s.

99. *tourist camp*, tourist court, 1916;

100. *streamlining*, 1934, with the disappearance or covering of the square radiator.