

## Reviews

**Dictionary of American Regional English. Volume v: Sl–Z.** JOAN HOUSTON HALL, Chief Editor. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press. 2012. Pp. 1 + 1244. \$130.00 (HB). ISBN: 9780674047358

**Dictionary of American Regional English. Volume vi: Contrastive Maps, Index of Entry Labels, Questionnaire, and Fieldwork Data.** JOAN HOUSTON HALL, Chief Editor, with Luanne von Schneidmessenger, Senior Editor. Cambridge, MA: Belknap Press of Harvard University Press. 2013. Pp. xiv + 1053. \$90.00 (HB). ISBN: 9780674066533<sup>1</sup>

With publication of Volume v, main entries from *Slab* ‘a road paved with concrete,’ first attested in 1921 and clustered in Indiana, Illinois, and Missouri, to *Zydeco* ‘a kind of dance party; a style of dance music,’ from Louisiana French *zarcot* ‘green beans,’ and an unexpected but most welcome companion Volume vi, the fifty-year journey of the *Dictionary of American Regional English* comes to an end — or rather to a promising new beginning, rich with possibilities now that the entire text is available online. The DARE team and Harvard University Press are to be commended for their generosity and foresight in making this magnificent resource digitally available to all lovers of language so soon after publication in hard copy of the final volumes. The more than 6000 pages of DARE can now be searched and the data sorted and manipulated in ways only imagined by the visionary Fred Cassidy when Volume 1 was published in 1985. Research possibilities into geographical, social, cultural, and linguistic relationships as evidenced by American speechways have expanded dramatically.<sup>2</sup>

This review of Volumes v and vi of the originally projected five volumes of DARE (the increasing availability of print and especially digital resources over the course of editing having increased the number of DARE pages and given users an additional volume, a *lagniappe* ‘a small gratuity,’ first attested in 1849, but here a significant rather than a trivial gift), will be descriptive rather than evaluative, since DARE has been widely celebrated, acclaimed, and honored since the publication of Volume 1. Little can be added to the accolades and honors which have been bestowed upon it. DARE has been called “a staggering work of collective scholarship,” “a monumental and impressive work,” “one of the glories of contemporary American scholarship,” “definitive and fascinating,” and “a national treasure.”<sup>3</sup>

The editors of Volume v justifiably go to great lengths to acknowledge the thousands of contributors who donated time, money, and energy to DARE over the past half-century. More than 500 “Staff, Students, and Volunteers” from 1965 through 2011 are recognized, as are more than 4000 “Contributors of Words and Wisdom, 1948–2011,” and more than 2000 “Financial Contributors to DARE.” Notably, the lists do not distinguish prestige, position, or level of financial support. As Adams so appropriately puts it, “everyone is alphabetically equal” (2013: 179). Chief Editors Frederic G. Cassidy and Joan Houston Hall are but two among the half thousand DARE “Staff, Students, and Volunteers,” among whom are many members of the American Name Society, including past presidents John Algeo, Lurline Coltharp, Audrey Duckert, Alleen Nilsen and Don Nilsen, Allen Walker Read, Fred Tarpley, and Francis Utley.

The list of financial supporters is followed by “The Anatomy of a DARE Entry,” which includes the now iconic DARE map on which states are sized according to population rather than acreage, a pronunciation guide with 26 consonant and 18 vowel symbols (compared to Volume 1, which had 25 consonant and 15 vowel symbols), and an updated list of abbreviations.

Following the dictionary proper is a massive bibliography, claimed to include some 13,000 entries. However, as Adams notes (2013: 183), this figure is deceptive because it undercounts the actual number of sources considerably since articles are not listed individually but by journal name alone, and anthologies are listed by editor and book title rather than by chapter author and title. Thus, dozens or even hundreds of entries from a single journal such as *American Speech* or a collection of essays will be listed only once, probably not a huge problem in these days of Google Chrome and JSTOR, but notable as a measure of change in referencing. By necessity, the triple-columned bibliography is set in greatly reduced type, so many of us over fifty will need to keep a magnifying glass close by.

DARE Volume VI, *Contrastive Maps, Index of Entry Labels, Questionnaire, and Fieldwork Data*, is a remarkable reference, a brilliant addition to the series, and an indispensable source that I will most likely turn to first since it acts as both a guide to and a summary of much of the geographical and social material in the preceding five volumes and allows immediate comparisons and contrasts which would be awkward if not impossible to otherwise assemble. The first section, just under 340 pages of “Contrastive Maps: Geographical and Social,” consists of some 1600 maps which bring together geographical or social distributions of lexical variants (along with some pronunciations) which, due to the alphabetic entry system, are scattered through the first five volumes or, as with many social variables, not mapped at all. The maps are accessed through the second section, an “Index to Geographic and Social Maps,” which lists the individual items found in the map section. For example, if I want to see the geographical distribution of responses to DARE question H42 “a sandwich in a long bun that’s a meal in itself,” but I can remember only “poor boy,” I can turn to the index and look up “poor boy,” which directs me to page 62, on which are six maps showing the distribution not only of “poor boy” (primarily Gulf Coast), but of “grinder” (New England), “hoagie” (Pennsylvania and New Jersey), “hero” (primarily New York City), and two variants which are new to me: “Italian sandwich” (Maine and Vermont) and “Cuban sandwich” (Florida). Two additional maps on the following page add to the mix “submarine sandwich” (Northeast, Middle Atlantic, and Midwest) and “torpedo sandwich” (scattered, but no record in Maryland, where I remember from my college days in Baltimore in the 1960s the student union serving both “submarine sandwiches” and “torpedos,” reportedly so-called because they were “shaped like a submarine but smaller.”

The maps provide information on DARE’s five social categories (gender, age, race, community type, and education) which are usually discussed but rarely mapped in the texts. Women, for instance, were more likely to offer “duck bumps” for “gooseflesh” and “icky” for “unpleasant,” while “hooker” for a “drink of liquor” and “G.I.’s” for “diarrhea” were used primarily by men. A raucous party was called a “blast” largely by middle-aged and younger speakers, but “the devil” was known as “Old Harry” only to those over sixty-five. “[l]gg” “to snub” was offered solely by Blacks, but “keeping your cool” primarily by Whites. By level of education, “rest room” was more likely to be offered for “toilet” by those with grade school educations, but “upchuck” for “vomit” was the choice of high school and college graduates. Responses among the categories often overlap. The maps show, for instance, that *putz* “to waste time, to loaf” is largely confined to Michigan and Minnesota and used overwhelmingly by females, while men, especially non-Northern men, were more likely to use the expression “doesn’t have sense enough to pour piss out of a boot.”

The map section is followed by “An Index by Region, Usage, and Etymology to DARE, Volumes I–V,” an interesting mixture of entries, some identified by region (e.g., New England, New Mexico), others by language (e.g., Iroquian, Fox), others by process of formation (e.g., clipping, metanalysis), and social acceptance (e.g., taboo, informal). A 300-page sub-dictionary with entries from Volumes I–V with brief explanations follows. This is an eclectic but informative and useful section where one can easily locate entries relating to geographical, social, and linguistic populations such as Gullah, German, Germanic, German Swiss, and Great Lakes, Younger Speakers, Mormons, and Women.

Volume VI concludes with a copy of the DARE questionnaire, noting changes over the several decades of its administration, and a statistical summary of the more than two million responses collected at DARE's 1002 interview sites. The statistical summary, which must be used with caution since it lists spelling variants as different responses and the list is in numerical rather than alphabetical order, is highly instructive. For example, the DARE worksheets record more than 1000 responses for various states of intoxication, from moderate "tipsy" to full-blown "dog drunk," more than 900 "Names and nicknames for people of foreign background," and more than 200 names of games played with marbles.

I would be remiss in my duty to *Names* readers if I neglected to mention some of the many contributions of onomastics to the American lexicon. The pages of DARE are replete with loans, descriptions, compounds, and idioms taken directly or modified from proper names, from *Aaron's rod* in Volume I to *Zaccheus tree* in Volume v. More than seventy entries begin with *Texas*. Books and theses can and should be written on the subject. It was my original intention to approach this review onomastically but, as my writing progressed, it became apparent that a wider, more general description of the contents of DARE's final volumes would be of greater interest and of more use to readers than a narrow focus on the onomastic content of individual volumes or even of the entire series. I would, though, point out as a sample of what we find in DARE Volume v such direct onomastic compounds as *Tennessee chicken* 'salt pork,' *Texas tortoise* 'gopher,' *Utah mile* 'an indeterminate but long distance,' *Yankee rain* 'snow,' and *Spanish hamburger* 'sloppy Joe,' and metaphorical constructions such as *Slabtown* for a poorer section of a community, and *Snakes navel*, an imaginary, remote community, reported variously to be located in Wyoming, Idaho, and Montana.

## Notes

<sup>1</sup> I am indebted to Michael Adams' review article "The Lexical Ride of a Lifetime" (2013).

<sup>2</sup> There are obvious advantages to digitalization. While digital DARE contains essentially the information found in Volumes I–v, one can manipulate this information in such a way as to create an untold number of unique maps, widely drawn by region or narrowly drawn by the interaction of social or geographical factors. Unique to digital DARE as well is the opportunity to access clips from the recordings made by DARE researchers now fifty years past. A preview of digital DARE is available at <[www.hup.harvard.edu/features/dare/digital](http://www.hup.harvard.edu/features/dare/digital)>. In addition, one hundred DARE entries, a generous sample of the maps from Volume VI, and other

materials are free online and can be accessed at <[www.daredictionary.com](http://www.daredictionary.com)>. A fun tutorial, "Digital DARE Quiz: A Scavenger Hunt," demonstrating what digital DARE can do, was prepared by Julie Schnebly and appeared in the Winter 2014 issue of the DARE Newsletter. Subscriptions granting full access to the database are currently available to institutions for \$1200 and to individuals for \$150 per annum, quite a bargain considering that, as of early June 2014, Amazon was selling Volume v for \$123.50 and Volume VI for \$68.95.

<sup>3</sup> Citations for these and additional reviews of the first five volumes of DARE can be found at the Harvard University Press website, <[www.hup.harvard.edu](http://www.hup.harvard.edu)>.

## Bibliography

Adams, Michael. 2013. "The Lexical Ride of a Lifetime." *American Speech* 88: 168–195.

*Northern Illinois University*

EDWARD CALLARY

**The Post Offices of the Kentucky River's Upper North Fork Valley: A Survey of the 459 Post Offices of Perry, Breathitt, Letcher, Leslie and Knott Counties.** By ROBERT M. RENNICK. Oregon: The Depot. 2007. Pp. 184. Maps, photographs, postmark reproductions. PB. ISBN: 0-943645-48-4

Robert M. Rennick, who died in 2010 at the age of seventy-eight, was a native of Brooklyn, NY who moved to Kentucky in 1970 to assume a position at Prestonburg Community College.

In 1984 he published *Kentucky Place Names*, and then, in an effort to expand the entries of that work and to make amends for errors that had crept into it, he undertook to survey the post offices of his adopted state. This is his sixth volume of that massive and arduous endeavor.

An introductory map of the 120 counties of Kentucky highlights in different shades both the counties covered in this volume and the counties covered in his earlier volumes. The five counties under study here of the Upper North Fork Valleys of the Kentucky River are in the southeastern corner of the state, although Letcher County is the only one that actually extends to the Virginia border. As Rennick informs us, four (Breathitt, Letcher, Leslie, and Knott) of the five counties were named for Kentucky governors, while the fifth, Perry, was named for Oliver Hazard Perry, the hero of the Battle of Lake Erie, with whom many Eastern Kentuckians had fought.

As in his previous volumes, Rennick devotes a chapter to each county and begins each with a map that locates that county's post offices in relation to railroad tracks or contemporary highways. While most of the 459 sites in this volume served specific communities, a few offices were set up to serve a strictly rural area and lasted only until the advent of Rural Free Delivery or until a road was constructed connecting them to a larger community. Most of the Upper Kentucky River offices, like those of most of the state, were casualties of insufficient patronage and have been closed.

Within each chapter, post offices are discussed chronologically, although those serving the same areas or neighborhoods are usually grouped together under a subheading, as for example "Post Offices on Perry County's Lost Creek of Troublesome," which accounts for the offices of *Engle* (in operation 1915–1980 and named after postmaster James B. Engle) and *Dice* (origin unknown), near the mouth of Sixteenmile Creek, some six miles up Lost Creek from the Breathitt County line, which was first authorized on May 9, 1903 and, remarkably, still operates.

Whenever a name may not be familiar to non-residents, Rennick spells it out phonetically according to a pronunciation key given on page 7. While it is helpful to have a table describing the phonetic symbols that he uses, this reviewer heartily seconds Michael F. McGoff's suggestion, expressed in his 2004 review of Rennick's earlier volume *The Post Offices of Kentucky's Big Sandy Valley* (2002) in *Names* (52.2: 146) that onomastic scholars should agree on a single standardized system to represent pronunciation and stick to it.

Rennick is cautious not to assume anything from the names themselves until he evaluates other possibilities. "The meaning or origin of a name is not inherent in it," he writes. Even an office bearing the name of the first postmaster or petitioner is not a certainty, because in some cases it honors an earlier bearer of the same name, perhaps a father or a grandfather of the community's founder (just as Pennsylvania was not named after William Penn but in honor of the founder's father, Sir William Penn).

Postmaster designates or persons petitioning for the establishment of the new post office were usually given the right to choose its name, although their first choice was not necessarily accepted by the US Post Office (and, to his credit, Rennick includes and explains the rejected names). Family names of early settlers for offices include *Cody*, *Colson*, *Napier*, *Polly*, *Profitt*, and first names such as *Betty*, *Della*, *Ermine*, and *Jesse*. For the mysterious case of *Luna* in Letcher County, Rennick suggests as a clue the existence of a county resident in the 1900 census named Susan Moon. Acronyms show up occasionally, such as *Anco* for postmaster Anderson Combs, *Whitco* for the Whitesburg Coal Company, and *Wisco* for the Wisconsin Coal Company.

Sometimes post offices bear the name of a distinctive feature of the terrain (*High Rock*, *Clayhole*, *Frozen Creek*, and *Ice*), or animals (*Crow*, *Gander*, *Redfox*, *Partridge*, but not *Wolverine*, named instead for the Wolverine Coal Company of Flint, Michigan), or trees (*Beech*, *Peartree*, *Pinetop*, *Sassafras*). Others honor famous Americans (*Garner* for Vice President John Nance Garner, *Theodore* for President Theodore Roosevelt, *Vilas* for Cleveland's

first postmaster general, William Freeman Vilas?) or exotic places, such as the Sudanese city of *Dongola* on the Nile, that were in the news at the time their names were applied. A few names may depend upon the namer's sense of humor (such as *Busy* and *Typo*) or his literary preferences (*Valjean?*) or his hopes for the community that would grow up around his post office. But many of these, as Rennick warns us, may disguise a more complicated derivation, now lost.

In this part of Kentucky there is an interesting paucity of Native American names (e.g., *Chenowee*, *Oscalooza*, *Saluda*), and even *Elkatawa*, which sounds more Native American than the very name of *Kentucky* (which is), could instead be contracted from the name of Ellen Katherine Walsh, daughter of one the area's original surveyors. Avawam is, Rennick suggests, either a mispronunciation of the name of the Massachusetts town Agawam or an extreme mispronunciation of "wigwam." For these Native American names, Rennick resorts to John Rydjord's *Indian Place Names* (Norman, OK, 1968).

*Oscalooza*, which also appears on maps of Illinois, Iowa, Kansas and Missouri, raises the complicating issue of a post office serving a community with a different name (in this case, *Kingdom Come*, as in the 1903 novel and 1961 movie, *The Little Shepherd of Kingdom Come*). Rennick speculates that the confusing situation of a double name arose because at that time the US Post Office insisted upon single-word names.

Neither are Biblical names particularly common (e.g., *Uz* pronounced *yulzee*, named for the difficulties of Job, which resembled the difficulties of an engineering project in that stretch of the North Fork Valley). *Kingdom Come* is probably from the Lord's Prayer, although it is popularly explained as the name of an early settler named King who "done come." *Saul* and *Hosea* are unexplained, and *Jeptha* is from the name of the first postmaster's grandson. *Jeremiah* was named for its first postmaster whose nickname was "The Prophet." On the negative side of religion, there is *Hell for Certain Creek*, whose name was disallowed by the US Post Office, whereupon its only postmaster gave it the name of his daughter *Osha*; and *Witch*, said to be named for the historical witches of Salem, Massachusetts.

In this corpus there is a smattering of names that are obviously of Irish, Scottish, and Welsh origin (*Farraday*, *McConnell*, *McQuinn*, *Douglas*, *McPherson*, *Morgan*) but hardly enough to lend support to the "Celtic theory" of Appalachian and Southern culture advanced by Grady McWhiney and Forest McDonald, based in part on an alleged preponderance of Celtic place names in those regions.

Probably the most familiar name of these five Upper North Fork Valley counties to readers at large is *Pippa Passes*, the site of Alice Lloyd College, brainchild of Boston native Alice Spencer Geddes Lloyd, who envisioned a school to train future leaders of Appalachia. When in 1917 a post office was built to serve the campus, the Robert Browning Societies of New England, who were major contributors to the effort, suggested it be named for the devout and simple mill girl Pippa who innocently touches the lives of her neighbors as she merely passes by. Because the US Post Office had a preference for single-word names, they created the meaningless compound *Pippapass*, retained until 1955 when Congressman Carl Perkins, a graduate of the college, lobbied successfully to restore the intended two-word spelling.

Because the primary purpose for this work is as an exhaustive survey of post offices, it necessarily does not provide the onomastic content of an etymological dictionary of names. Nonetheless, Rennick obviously enjoys delving into the names that appear on his maps and, because so many of these names seem to be personal names, he regularly consults census records and family biographies.

The same scholarly commitment is true of names that are clearly European in origin. In the first chapter on Perry County, a mining camp that had a post office from 1915 to 1957 was named *Lothair* for unknown reasons, so Rennick suggests a relationship to Charlemagne's grandson Lothair, who inherited what became known as the Franco-Prussian province of Lorraine. Sometimes he plumbs remoter origins of European names in footnotes, where, for example, the French place name *Carcassonne* is taken back to its pre-Latin roots "in some

early local tongue,” *kar* ‘stone’ and *kasser* ‘oak,’ and *Profitt* is traced back to the medieval mystery plays and associated with its French and Italian surname cognates. Occasionally and uncharacteristically, Rennick chooses not to pursue the historical thread, as happens with *Cromona* (not from Cremona, Italy?), *Milan* (not from Milan, Italy?), *Mozelle* (not from the river Moselle?), and *Seco* (considering *Dry Creek*, why not from Spanish *seco* ‘dry’?).

The book features arresting, but clearly amateur, black-and-white photographs of some of the post offices, as well as a variety of postmarks, and ends with an alphabetical list of the post offices followed by an alphabetical list of individuals cited, both identified by county, but, strangely, not by page references. Headers would help to separate the two indices, just as headers would have served to distinguish one chapter from another. It is sad that such a valuable piece of scholarship is marred by poor editing. For example, the very first county map on page 9, which is supposed to be that of Perry County, is actually Breathitt County, which duly reappears on page 39, where it belongs. With this in mind, we cannot feel completely confident that the post office named *Guage* is not an error for the more customary spelling *Gauge*.

But, in conclusion, Rennick has amassed and preserved a wealth of information just as it was about to pass irretrievably into oblivion, so for that alone his efforts are noteworthy. His dedication to scholarly detail marks his contribution as an incalculable legacy and serves to reaffirm not only Kelsie Harder’s 1994 judgment in *Names* (43.3: 236) that “Rennick has become the nation’s expert on postal history,” but also my own that he has joined the ranks of first-rate scholarly researchers, without whom our world would be a far less interesting place.

*Allegany College of Maryland*

JACK SHREVE