

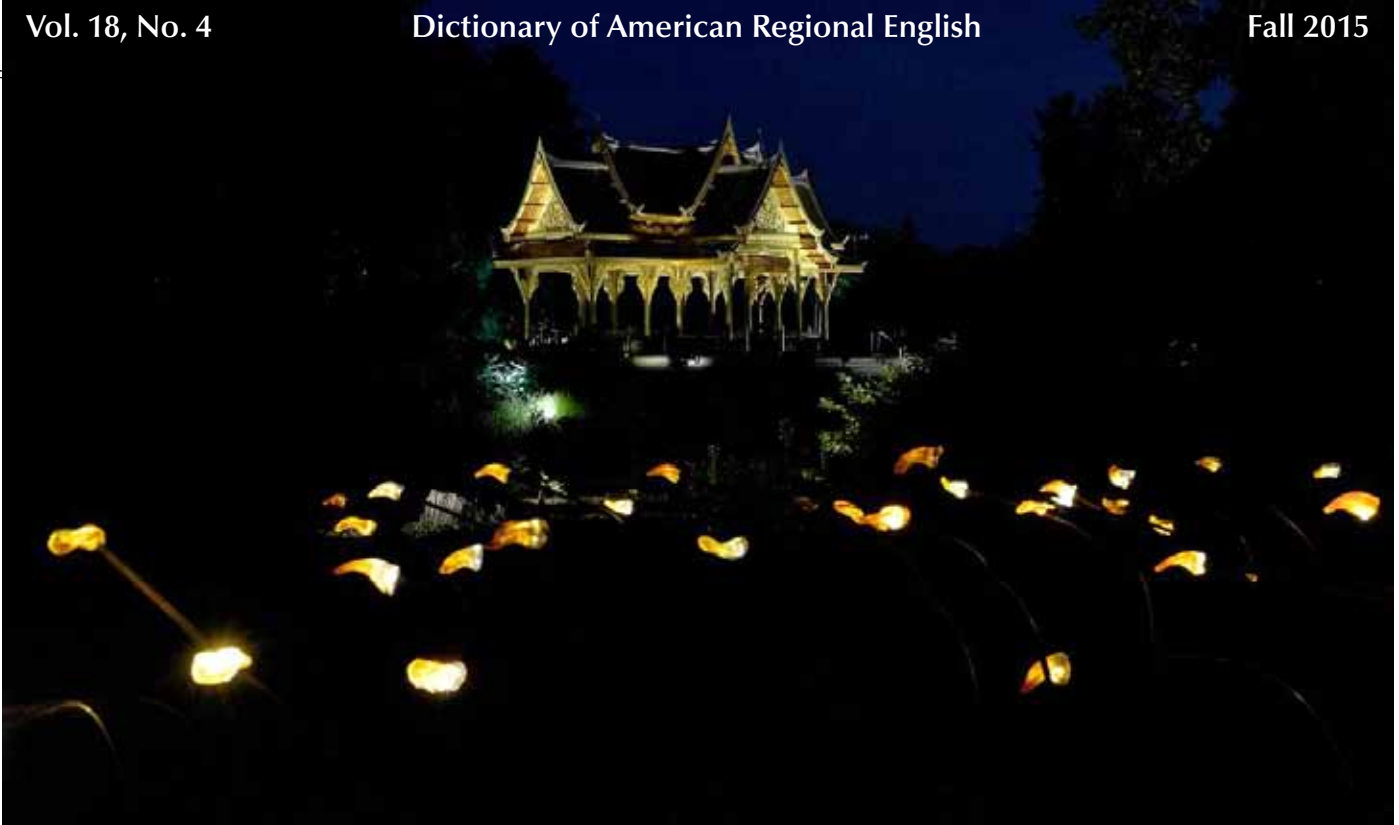
DARE *Newsletter*

Photo credit: George E. Hall

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Dictionary of American Regional English

Fall 2015



The fully-lit Voices installation in front of the Thai Pavilion at Olbrich Botanical Gardens. For more information and pictures of this installation, see “DARE After Dark,” page 6.

The News from *DARE*

George Goebel
Chief Editor

In the last issue of the *Newsletter* I announced that we had just posted the first of our planned series of Quarterly Updates on our website, and explained some of the background to this new undertaking. Now it really is a series; just a few weeks ago we posted the second Quarterly Update. Much like the first, it comprises 62 entries—24 entirely new and 38 substantially expand-

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ed and revised entries—and you can see it here: <http://dare.wisc.edu/words/quarterly-updates/QU2>. (The first set remains available, and there is also a cumulative list that will be updated as new Quarterly Updates are posted.) Once again, I think these entries demonstrate that there is still a great deal to be added to our knowledge of the regional vocabulary of this country.

There is other new material on our website, and I hope you will check it out as well. There are new maps from the 2013–14 Online Survey of Wisconsin English, most of them paired with maps of comparable data from the original 1965–70 DARE survey results from Wisconsin (<http://dare.wisc.edu/surveys/OSWE-maps>). The full audio of the Online Survey of Wisconsin English telephone interviews is also now available. These interviews consisted of readings of “The Story of Arthur the Rat” and a 100-word pronunciation list, and fifteen minutes of free conversation. In all, 43 Wisconsinites from 24 different communities participated. All 43 interviews, plus transcripts of the free conversations, are now available on our website for anyone who is interested (<http://dare.wisc.edu/audio/OSWE-telephone-interviews>). (For now, the recordings are in .mp3 format due to size, but .wav formats will eventually be available at the UW Digital Collections website.)

Progress is also being made on the “bleeping project”—deleting personal data from the audio recordings made as part of the original DARE fieldwork, so that they can be made publicly accessible. As I noted in the last *Newsletter*, we were not able to extend the position of the Project Assistant who was working on this through the summer, but in the fall we recruited three student interns who have committed ten hours a week each to this project and have been working enthusiastically all semester.

Your generous contributions in the past have helped to make these things possible, and we are very grateful for your support. We hope that you will consider continuing that support by making a year-end contribution to DARE. Please use the coupon on the back page of this *Newsletter* to make a tax-deductible donation. ♦



Notes on Words—Some Loan Translations

George Goebel

[Note: All the boldfaced words here are new or revised entries that can be seen on the DARE website at <http://dare.wisc.edu/words/quarterly-updates/all-updated-entries>. The etymology of *evener* was treated earlier in more detail in a note in *American Speech*, a preprint version of which can be seen at <http://dare.wisc.edu/content/george-goebel/evener>.]

English is notoriously a language rich in borrowings from other languages. Many, of course, have been around so long and become so thoroughly naturalized that we are normally unaware of their origin. More recent borrowings, however, are usually more obvious. They have not been so thoroughly assimilated into English; they still sound foreign. There are two obvious examples in DARE’s most recent set of updates: **balkenbry** ‘a dish similar to scrapple’ and **cavarango** ‘a ranch hand who takes care of saddle horses and sometimes performs other menial tasks.’ No one would be likely to take these for native English words, and it comes as no surprise, given the contexts from which they are attested, to learn that *balkenbry* is the Dutch name for the foodstuff in question, and that *caballerango* is Mexican Spanish for ‘groom, stable boy.’ (Obviously the latter has gotten a bit banged up in the borrowing process, but it’s still recognizable.)

But there is one type of borrowing that is easy to overlook, and that is what is called a *loan translation* or a *calque*. *Calque* is a loan from French, in which its basic meaning is ‘tracing’; if we called a loan translation a *tracing*, then it would be an example of what it names, that is, a case of a foreign word which has not been borrowed as is, but rather translated literally into English. Loan translations usually don’t call attention to themselves; they sound like familiar English words, or normal derivatives or compounds of familiar English words, because that is just what they are. And words are developing new meanings and being joined into new compounds all the time; how is one to detect which ones have done so under the influence of a foreign language?

Sometimes the geographical and social context gives one a pretty broad hint. Consider the case of **hand cheese** ‘a cheese made by forming soured skim milk curds into small cakes that are then aged.’ As with *balkenbry*, this is clearly an ethnic food—in this case German—and the name is at-

tested from areas densely settled by German immigrants, especially Wisconsin. The compound *hand cheese* for a cheese molded in the hand certainly *could* have been coined in English, but it was not; as our etymology says, it is obviously a calque of German *Handkäse*. Those great German lexicographers, Jacob and Wilhelm Grimm—better known to English speakers for their collection of fairy tales—print a quotation that refers to the “*eigenthümliche pikante Geschmack*” (“peculiar piquant taste”) of some *Handkäse*, presumably the same “pungent scent” that one of our quotations remarks on with some feeling. Some of the quotations at the synonym [ball cheese](#) are even more outspoken about the smell.

Sometimes the indications are less clear, as in the case of the new entry [barn bridge](#) ‘a wooden ramp or bridge leading to the upper floor of a barn; this ramp or bridge together with the solid embankment with which it is often associated.’ Once again, this is a transparent compound that seems like a perfectly natural term for the thing in question. Nevertheless, a concentration of evidence in Pennsylvania should always make one think of the possibility of a Pennsylvania German connection. So I checked a couple of Pennsylvania German dictionaries and found what I suspected might be there: the word *scheierbrick*. The elements, in their standard German forms, are *Scheuer* ‘barn’ and *Brücke* ‘bridge,’ but the compound does not appear in standard German dictionaries. The regional distribution of the English word certainly suggests that it is a translation of the Pennsylvania German, but one does have to keep in mind that English and German have coexisted for a long time in south-eastern Pennsylvania, and a lot of borrowing has taken place in *both* directions. This called for a little more research, to see if the word was attested in German dialect. Here, too, a bit of searching paid off; the word is attested in the very similar form *Scheierbréck* from the dialect of Luxembourg. Thus it is fairly certain that *scheierbrick* is a word that the Pennsylvania Germans inherited from their European ancestors, and that *barn bridge* is indeed a literal translation of it.

And sometimes only sheer luck brings a loan translation to light. This was the case with [evener n 1](#). This is an obsolescent thing, so a bit of explanation is in order. When two horses are harnessed abreast to a plow, for instance, each pulls on one end of a stout wooden bar, the center of which is connected to the plow with a ring and shackle. This bar has many traditional names, but in the U.S. it is—or was, when people still had a call to

talk about it—most often called a *doubletree* or, especially in the northern tier of states from western New England to the Dakotas, an *evener*. Until recently, the earliest known example of *evener* was in Knight’s *American Mechanical Dictionary* (1872), where it is explained that the function of the evener is to “‘even’ or divide the work of pulling upon the respective horses.” Subsequent dictionaries have been almost unanimous in defining *evener* in a way that embodies this apparently self-evident etymology, including Volume II of *DARE* (1991), where it is defined “a pivoting bar or set of bars used to equalize the force from two or more single-trees.”

Some time ago I was trying to make my way through the *Beschryvinge van Nieuw-Nederlant*—“Description of New Netherland”—of Adriaen van der Donck. (Van der Donck was a notable early settler in what was later to be New York—the name of Yonkers is derived from his nickname *Jonkheer* ‘Squire’—and he published his famous *Beschryvinge* in 1655.) And there, in the middle of a chapter on the trees of New Netherland, I came upon the statement that the settlers used the wood of the black walnut to make “flail-swingles and *evenaers* for field work.” Did this mean what I thought it did? Checking the great Dutch historical dictionary, the *Woordenboek der Nederlandsche Taal*, confirmed that it did. (In current Dutch, *evenaar*, to use the current spelling, usually means ‘equator’—where it is a loan translation of the Latin term, literally ‘that which makes equal!’) Subsequent research turned up some earlier quotations for the English *evener*, significantly from Albany, New York—the “Beavertown” (Beverwijck) of the Dutch—and nearby Pittsfield, Massachusetts, and an even earlier one for the Dutch form in the probate inventory of a Dutch-speaking farmer in Ulster County, New York. Clearly the English term was simply a literal translation of the Dutch. In itself, of course, this doesn’t invalidate the accepted etymological explanation; it just pushes it back to a much earlier period, and another language. However, the Dutch term itself almost certainly did not come from the idea that the doubletree “makes even” the pull of the two horses; rather it came from the physical analogy between the double-tree and the beam of a balance, which is another, earlier, sense of the Dutch word *evenaar*. This is a semantic development that can be precisely paralleled both in German and in English dialect.

What is the moral of this story? Broadly, of course, that one should never take what seems self-evident for granted. But is there anything specific

in this case that should have triggered suspicion? In the clarity of hindsight, I think the questions that might have been asked about the accepted etymology are why anyone would have felt the need to create, out of whole cloth, as it were, a new term for a very old implement already richly endowed with names, and if they did, why they would have created such an apparently colorless and abstract term. But these are hardly fatal objections, and contemplating them would not have helped much in finding the true explanation. Sometimes discovery just depends on luck. ♦

Discount on Digital *DARE*

Wondering what to get the language lovers on your holiday gift list? Wishing you had full access to the digital version of *DARE*? Harvard University Press has a great deal for word enthusiasts everywhere! One-year individual subscriptions to Digital *DARE* are available at a 50% discount through January 3, 2016. Current subscribers can use this offer to extend their subscriptions by twelve months. To take advantage of this holiday special, go to <http://www.hup.harvard.edu/about/dare-digital-special-offer>. ♦

DARE Helps NEH Celebrate Fifty Years

September 2015 marked the fiftieth anniversary of the creation of the National Endowment for the Humanities. To commemorate this milestone, the Endowment created a special anniversary website spotlighting some of the projects it has sponsored over the years, including *DARE*. In a letter informing us of this honor, NEH's Rachel Poor wrote, "Each of these stories is about a grant that changed the landscape of the humanities, and collectively, these grants represent the best of the work the NEH has funded. . . . Congratulations for making the cut!" To read the feature on *DARE*, go to <http://50.neh.gov/projects/dictionary-of-american-regional-english>.

On September 29, current and former *DARE* staffers participated in a digital event on Twitter to kick off a yearlong celebration of NEH's semi-centennial. Posing with signs showing why we love the humanities are (from left to right) Christopher Font-Santiago, Julie Schnebly, George Goebel, Trevor Wells Fraser, Beth Gardner, and Joan Hall. ♦





Staff Member Profile

In this ongoing series, Beth Gardner interviews Project Assistant and UW–Madison grad student Trevor Wells Fraser, who joined the DARE staff in the fall of 2015.

Q: What is your field of study, and what are your primary research interests?

A: I am working on a Ph.D. in Linguistics. I haven't settled on a research focus yet, as this is my first semester, but I am currently looking into lexical semantics. Before I came back to UW–Madison, I taught English as a Foreign Language (EFL) classes abroad for many years in South Korea, mainly at Hongik University.

Q: How did you first become aware of the *Dictionary of American Regional English*?

A: The first time I heard about *DARE* was ten years ago when I was working on my M.A. and had a phonetics class with Tom Purnell. He mentioned in passing that some of his students were working on class projects involving a dialectal dictionary, and that piqued my curiosity. I thought it was a really interesting idea, and I was pleasantly surprised at how many Wisconsinisms were captured by *DARE*. It wasn't until recently, however, that Eric Raimy told me I should be looking into working for the project.

Q: What are your primary job responsibilities at *DARE*?

A: While working at *DARE* I mostly enter new quotations for existing headwords, although I sometimes enter new headwords or do “look-up work” to verify existing quotations that we have in the database. If I'm really lucky, I get to do some digging through archives, whether the physical variety at libraries—my favorite being the Wisconsin Historical Society—or Internet archives of various sorts.

Q: What is the most enjoyable aspect of your work at *DARE*, and what do you find most challenging?

A: I'd say the best parts of my job are digging through old tomes that have seen decades, or even centuries, since publication. I feel a little like a librarian archaeologist at times. There are times when the monotony of data entry or clerical corrections can be a bit dull, but there are always a variety of projects to do, so I try to take a break when I feel my eyes glazing over.

Q: What aspect of working on the *DARE* project has been the most surprising to you?

A: As a first-time lexicographer, the job and its requirements have come with too many surprises to list here, but two things in particular will stay with me: first, the sheer amount of labor it takes to source, document, and verify a lexical entry is enormous—and even more impressive is past work, which had to be done without the benefit of search engines or the Internet. Second, I find there's something humbling and encouraging in knowing that many of the sources we use are not necessarily famous literary works; many of the quotations come from interviews or journals of relatively obscure everyday people and authors. (Perhaps it would be encouraging for young writers to know that if they just publish enough, they may find their work quoted in a dictionary someday in centuries to come.)

Q: What sort of employment do you plan to seek after finishing your graduate program?

A: Graduation seems a long way off at the moment, but I love teaching, and would love to become a professor. I don't have a particular university or research program in mind right now, although I'm sure that will change as I approach dissertation.

Q: When you have a rare moment of spare time away from your studies and your work, what are your interests?

A: In the few minutes each week when I'm not studying, working, or sleeping, I try to read, play video games, or occasionally exercise to keep my body from completely falling apart. ♦



Artist Keven Brunett and Editor Emerita Joan Hall interact with the Voices installation at twilight.

DARE After Dark

Olbrich Botanical Gardens in Madison recently presented its first nighttime art exhibit, and one of the installations was inspired by *DARE*. Two of the artists who helped to create “GLEAM: Art in a New Light” were Keven Brunett and Kristin Thielking. Their contribution was a reworking of *Voices: A Sculptural Book* (see the Fall 2014 *DARE Newsletter* for photos), which featured over 400 brass and bronze tongues, each sandblasted with a *DARE* headword and definition. For the Olbrich exhibit, Brunett and Thielking recreated 100 tongues in glass, collaborating with lighting designers to create pieces that would look beautiful by day and glow by night.

We are pleased to share some splendid photos of the exhibit, which was on display from September 2 through October 30. ♦





“Words Count” Exhibition

Those of you who were unable to visit the recent exhibit at Olbrich Botanical Gardens have another chance to see art inspired by *DARE*, this time on the UW–Madison campus. “Words Count: A Rantum Scoot through *DARE*” is an exhibition exploring vocabularies, statistics, and text in the *Dictionary of American Regional English* by artist and text analyst Carrie Roy with assistance from *DARE*’s Julie Schnebly and Joan Hall.

Informed by her background in digital humanities research, Roy’s artwork invites viewers to consider the transformation of data into objects. Pieces displayed include sculptures, prints, and a rug (visual pun intended) made of 1,275 wool balls illustrating the number of responses to the *DARE* Survey question asking about names for false hair worn by men. The exhibition commemorates the fiftieth anniversary of the start of the original *DARE* fieldwork and the thirtieth anniversary of the publication of Volume I of *DARE*. It can be viewed online at <http://darewordscount.com/> and will be on display in the lobby of the Memorial Library through December 30, 2015. ♦

Seventy terms given in DARE for bittern appear on this birds’s-eye maple sculpture entitled Bittern 70.

Rug 1275 illustrates the 1,275 responses to an original DARE Survey question (“Names used around here for false hair, worn by men”).





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