During the meeting of the Modern Language Association in New Orleans in December 2001, I played tourist in my hometown. As I walked across Jackson Square, I saw a large banner stretched across the upper story of the Cabildo: “Louisiana Purchase Bicentennial 2003.” I was taken aback. Almost half a century had passed since, as a fifth-grader, I had crossed the same square with my mother and her eighth-grade Louisiana history students on a field trip occasioned by the sesquicentennial of the Louisiana Purchase territory, founded 1714.

DARE and the Louisiana Purchase
Connie Eble

The Dictionary of American Regional English is fortunate to have supporters all around the United States. Interest in the Dictionary extends literally from Maine to Florida, from Michigan to Texas, and from Washington to Arizona.

DARE has many different kinds of supporters. Many of you make financial gifts to the Dictionary, which enables our work to continue. Some people write a check each year to DARE. Other individu-
Louisiana Purchase  Continued from page 1

Purchase. On December 20, 1803, at this very place, then a muddy military parade ground called the Place d’Armes, the French flag had come down and the flag of the United States had gone up.

In 1953 the year-long commemoration of this event was thrilling to a child of romantic bent. The word sesquicentennial itself was a source of pride, as I mastered its pronunciation, meaning, spelling, and the explanation that it meant “a half of one hundred plus one hundred.” Editorial cartoonist John Chase doled out the history of Louisiana and of the Louisiana Purchase in the newspaper day after day, three or four frames at a time. From this comic strip I learned about James Monroe and Robert Livingston from the United States and Napoleon’s ministers with the grand-sounding names François Barbé-Marbois and Charles Maurice de Talleyrand-Périgord. At a book fair held in the gym of a local high school, I even met John Chase, who inscribed my mother’s copy of his book Frenchmen, Desire, Good Children and Other Streets of New Orleans with a small sketch. But at the time, I confess, I was more excited to meet the author of the book I chose, The Pirate Lafitte and the Battle of New Orleans, folklorist Robert Tallant. This was probably the first book event I ever attended, and the first authors I ever met.

This year’s bicentennial celebration of the Louisiana Purchase included the sumptuous exhibit Jefferson’s America and Napoleon’s France at the New Orleans Museum of Art, the ongoing publication of volumes in The Louisiana Purchase Bicentennial Series in Louisiana History by the Center for Louisiana Studies at the University of Louisiana at Lafayette, and many books reassessing the event, its causes and consequences, and its principal players. However, I have found little in the way of language study—though it was the Louisiana Purchase that guaranteed American English passage across the Mississippi River and eventually across the continent, making English the language of the United States from the Atlantic to the Pacific.

The territory that opened to English two hundred years ago was vast—827,192 square miles—covering now the entirety or major part of thirteen states. DARE is currently the best repository of the effects that the Louisiana Purchase had on the English language. The pages of DARE hold many regional expressions that were born in the westward trek of American English, and in some instances are still alive. Some regionalisms were transplanted to portions of the Louisiana Territory by English-speaking Americans from east of the Mississippi River. Others arose on site. Still others preserved vocabulary from Native American and previous European inhabitants of the areas. The indices compiled for the first three volumes of DARE by LuAnne von Schneidemesser and Allan Metcalf (Publication of the American Dialect Society 77 [1993] and 82 [1999]) list DARE entries by region and state, allowing users to pull together and study the vocabulary of a particular geographic area. I have done that elsewhere for the Louisiana terms in the first three volumes. In the Winter 2002 issue of American Speech dedicated to the memory of Frederic Cassidy, von Schneidemesser shows that DARE entries can also contribute to the understanding of settlement history, focusing her study on German-speaking immigrants. I take the opportunity here to use selected entries from the recently published Volume IV (P–Sk) of DARE to show how English adapted to life in the first state created from the Louisiana Purchase territory, Louisiana.

At the time of the Louisiana Purchase, inhabitants of European and African heritage were concentrated in the southernmost part of the colony, with the port city of New Orleans its economic and cultural center. Even though the colony had been under the rule of Spain for almost forty years, the language of the colonists, slaves, and free people of color was generally some form of French. Indeed, French remained the language of everyday life in the Acadian parishes of the southern part of the state until the middle of the twentieth century. It is not surprising, then, that the vocabulary of Louisiana documented in DARE shows the influence of French.

The letter P alone offers many obvious examples of direct borrowings from French. Paille-en-queue is a Louisiana name for a pintail duck, literally “straw-in-tail.” Paille fine, “fine straw,” is a grass that grows on the open plains of southwestern Louisiana. Le pape, “the pope,” applies to a variety of small, colorful birds; pied jaune to birds with long, yellow legs; pique bois, “stick wood,” to any kind of “woodpecker”; and plongeur, “diver,” to birds that dive. Pissenlit, “urinate in bed,” is the name of a common wildflower with a yellow center that looks like an aster. (Children were told not to pick it, or else they would wet the bed that night.)

Perhaps the most widely known French word referring to wildlife is poule d’eau, literally “water
hen,” commonly spelled *pullidoo* or *pooldoo* and pronounced to match one of those spellings. In Louisiana, pooldoo are lowly waterfowl and not prized game birds as ducks are. Pooldoo meat tastes fishy. In the past, pooldoo lived in great numbers on the borders of the marshes and would do for food when other wildlife was scarce. In hard times they were the most readily available source of protein, and many families depended on them. It is said that Catholics even had a dispensation to eat them on Fridays because pooldoo were as much fish as fowl.

The DARE entries for these and for other French borrowings into English that name plants and animals contain dated citations. *Pape*, for example, is first attested in a history of Louisiana written in French in 1758 and most recently in the Reinecke Collection of 1983. Most of the French borrowings above, however, carry no citations from after 1983. Recent popular lexicons of Cajun French and Cajun English in print or on the Web almost never include these examples culled from DARE, with the possible exception of *pooldoo*. The loss of these borrowings among current Louisianans reflects the fact that the younger generations do not fish, hunt, trap, and farm as a way of life and thus are not so attuned to nature as their forebears were. They are not opposed to using French words; they simply do not have specific vocabulary for these referents at all.

**Pecan** (with the stress on the open o sound of the second syllable, as in *lawn*) and **pirogue** are part of the English vocabulary of every Louisianan. Though filtered through French phonology in Louisiana, they both were early borrowings from indigenous North American languages and were widely disseminated. **Pecan** is originally from an Algonquian language. The second citation for **pecan** in DARE dates from 1772 and is a description in Spanish of the nut called “Pacanos” written by Antonio de Ulloa, Spanish governor of Louisiana from 1766 to 1768. Ulloa, an internationally known scientist who had spent most of his adult life in Spain’s colonies in the New World, was expelled from Louisiana by disgruntled French colonists. His written reports of his observations remain valuable to a wide range of scholars, including historians of language. The word **pirogue** came to Louisiana via Spanish *piragua*, originally from the language of the Caribans in the West Indies. DARE’s early citations of **pirogue**, the earliest dated 1810, come from the Upper Mississippi Valley. Most of the twentieth-century evidence, though, locates **pirogue** chiefly in Louisiana and Mississippi, where it refers to a canoe-shaped, flat-bottomed wooden boat used in shallow water. As the Louisiana saying goes, the pirogue can “float on the dew.”

Other French borrowings in the P’s show the persistence of French heritage in other spheres. **Parrain**, “godfather,” and **pépère**, “grandfather,” are still commonly used, even among families that have long abandoned the French language and families that have no French ancestry at all. **Passé**, from French *passez*, “pass,” is a game of “pitch and catch, often with an object, not a ball, owned or valued by the third person, from whom the other two try to withhold it.” **Pain perdu**, sometimes called by its English equivalent, *lost bread*, is the homely term for “French toast.” DARE’s report of the spelling **pan-pan-doux** suggests the kind of folk-etymology that occurs regularly with foreign borrowings and probably verifies that its originators know French imperfectly if at all. The *pièce de résistance* of Louisiana food with French names is, perhaps, the **praline**, “a patty of candy made usually with brown sugar and pecans,” first attested in 1893. Natives pronounce it with an open o or low back vowel in the first syllable, and it used to be common to hear a version with metathesis, as if spelled **plarine**. (That was my grandmother’s pronunciation.) DARE’s citation for **praline** from the March 15, 1997, issue of the New York Times even points to the reason for the robustness of this borrowing from French: “A recent health study ranked New Orleans as the most obese city in the United States. . . .”

The local expression **not worth a picayune**, “worthless,” preserves an approximation to French *picaillon*, a coin worth one-sixteenth of a Spanish silver dollar, in circulation in the early nineteenth century. **Picayune** is first attested in 1804 and today is best known as part of the name of the daily newspaper, the Times–Picayune.

The verb **pass** in Louisiana English is influenced by the use of **passer** in French. In Louisiana, someone who **passes** by your house stops, enters, and usually stays for a visit. The phrases **pass a mop**, **pass a broom**, and **pass a cloth** are common equivalents to “mop,” “sweep,” and “wipe with a cloth.” And a stereotypic expression in Cajun English is **pass a good time**.

Not all regionalisms from Louisiana have French in their history. For example, **poor boy**, “a long sandwich on French bread,” was apparently creat-
als send gifts of stock. In recent years, the Dictionary of American Regional English has received a growing number of estate gifts from people who want to see the Dictionary reach the letter Z.

Every gift to the Dictionary of American Regional English is very important. Each gift helps financially, of course. Your generosity is also a wonderful reminder of the value that you place on our work. We treasure that vote of confidence.

An estate gift is a special gift. In almost every case, I have had the opportunity to speak with the donor during his or her lifetime and learn why DARE has been selected as a recipient of the estate gift. Sometimes the individual expresses a special respect for Fred Cassidy, DARE’s founder. Other times it is the high quality of the work being done at the Dictionary of American Regional English that catches the donor’s eye. Or perhaps it is the ability to make a significant difference that attracts the person’s generosity. There have also been other reasons.

Every gift to DARE helps our work move toward completion. This notion is not taken lightly.

Connie Eble is a native of New Orleans, where she lived until she completed her B.A. at St. Mary’s Dominican College. She holds a Ph.D. in Linguistics from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and has taught there as the English Department’s linguist since 1971. She is Editor of American Speech.

Funding Update

Continued from page 1

Many expressions used in Louisiana are found in adjoining states as well. The verb peel, “to shell, hull, or husk,” is also found in Texas and along the Gulf Coast, as is pygmy rattler for a short rattlesnake native to the Southeast and elsewhere called a ground rattler. Puredee, “genuine, real,” as in “pure-d dumb,” occurs in Louisiana and throughout the South and South Midland.

This brief tribute to the bicentennial of the Louisiana Purchase, and to DARE, is limited to entries that begin with P, where words with Louisiana provenance tend to reflect the French heritage of the area. The remaining letters of Volume IV include other words, with their own stories, showing how American English developed in Louisiana after the Louisiana Purchase. Among them are racacha, redbone, redbug, roup-garou, second line, shell road, and shotgun house. The completion of DARE and its combined index will provide an incomparable resource to assess the linguistic consequences of important historic events like the Louisiana Purchase, the Civil War, and World War II.

Connie Eble is a native of New Orleans, where she lived until she completed her B.A. at St. Mary’s Dominican College. She holds a Ph.D. in Linguistics from the University of North Carolina at Chapel Hill and has taught there as the English Department’s linguist since 1971. She is Editor of American Speech.

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We very much appreciate your willingness to support our ongoing effort. 

I hope you will consider making a 2003 gift to the Dictionary of American Regional English. All gifts to DARE are tax-deductible and will be matched on a one-to-one basis by the National Endowment for the Humanities. That will double the value of your gift. You can make a cash or credit-card gift by filling out the form in the column to the left.

Thank you for your interest in the Dictionary of American Regional English. Please give me a call at (608) 263-5607 if you would like to discuss the easiest way to make a gift of stock or an estate gift. It is a very simple process. Or you can send me an e-mail at <david.simon@uwfoundation.wisc.edu>. Thank you for your consideration.

On to Z!

We are pleased to announce that Bruce Cole, Chairman of the National Endowment for the Humanities, has designated DARE as one of the Endowment’s “We the People” initiatives. Projects so designated are those that “explore significant events and themes in our nation’s history and culture and that advance knowledge of the principles that define America.”

Fred Cassidy on Wall of Fame
Joan H. Hall

Fred Cassidy always enjoyed good company, so I’m sure he would be pleased to know that his name is now in the company of Frederick Jackson Turner, Aldo Leopold, John Muir, Carl Sandburg, and Thornton Wilder. On September 25, the names of Frederic Cassidy and Stephen Ambrose were added to the aforementioned names and twelve others on the Wisconsin Writers Wall of Fame at the Milwaukee Public Library.

In a ceremony that included the awarding of a handsome plaque to family members of the honorees, each man was remembered by two speakers. For Stephen Ambrose, who grew up in Whitewater, Wisconsin, a childhood friend and the writer’s eldest daughter provided remarks. For Fred, who was born in Jamaica but lived in Madison from 1939 until 2000, reminiscences were offered by Martine Meyer and me. Martine, who recently retired as Professor of French at the UW–Milwaukee, told of coming to Madison in 1949 and being required to take a course in Anglo-Saxon. Although she had dreaded the thought of learning such an ancient language, she soon discovered that Fred’s lively teaching style and his keen interest in each of his students made the course one of her favorites. And because she wrote her dissertation with Fred’s wife, Hélène, she was among those students who found a second home with the Cassidys. She recalled with amusement being assigned the job of standing by with a bucket of water as the candles were lit on the Christmas tree; the ancient tradition had to be upheld, but prudence accompanied nostalgia!

My remarks provided a quick history of Fred’s life and career, from his early childhood in Kingston and his move to Akron, Ohio, at age eleven, through Oberlin College to the University of Michigan for graduate work, and ultimately to the University of Wisconsin–Madison, where he spent the sixty-one years of his academic career. I hit the highlights of Jamaica Talk and the Dictionary of Jamaican English, and of course described and displayed the Dictionary of American Regional English. Because many members of the audience were not familiar with Fred’s work, it was particularly satisfying to introduce to them the man DARE readers knew as a charismatic champion of American English diversity and the person who was teacher, mentor, and friend to so many of us. For you, Fred, it’s “On to Z!”
Volunteer Profile

In this continuing series of profiles of the people who make DARE a reality, Joan Hall interviews Judith A. Taylor, a language lover who has been a volunteer for the project for more than sixteen years.

Q: We first met in an organization called Women in Communications, Inc., so I know that your career involved working with language. What kinds of writing or editing did you do?

A: In my twenty-six years of working for UW–Madison and UW System Administration, I did a variety of writing and editing. I started out in 1961 editing the course catalog for the College of Letters and Science—this was before the use of computers and automated typesetting—and worked my way through all the schools and colleges. I gained considerable knowledge of the variety of courses taught on the campus.

“Thanks again for the wonderful presentation [about DARE] to my class; you may find half of them beseeching employment with DARE! You did make a number of converts who up to then thought that dialect study was trivial and dilettantish, fit only for retired gentlemen and ladies in sensible shoes.”

Edward Callary
Northern Illinois University

Notes and Quotes

Here are some samples from our recent mail. If you’d like to describe your experiences with this wonderfully varied language of ours, feel free to get in touch with us at the addresses listed on the mailing page of this Newsletter.

“I loved the article by Richard Davis [in the Spring/Summer 2003 issue]. . . . Just as with Richard Davis, many of my students are confessing that they have learned not to judge others based on their speech. . . . When they surveyed people for lexical variation, many were frustrated and rather saddened by how sensitive people are about their dialects. Now that they feel themselves enlightened dialectologists, I hope many will become champions of regional variation. I’m encouraging those who are going into teaching to consider letting their pupils conduct surveys of their own. Long live DARE and may it continue to inspire!”

Stephanie Hysmith
Ohio University

“DARE has become my favorite reading and has helped me in the Blue Ridge Mountains section of the novel I’m now working on.”

Tom Wolfe
New York

“In the late 90’s when I was at U. Va., I discovered the DARE at the main library. . . . I took it upon myself to try to answer the fundamental, burning question, ‘Where do people say pop and where do people say soda?’ There were only three volumes, the ones from A to O. Opening one up, I found exactly what I was looking for—wonderful little demographic maps, state by state, showing the places where different colloquial terms are used. ‘This is wonderful!’ I thought. ‘Someone in the reference reading room here must have the other volume.’ . . . Hearing the story [about DARE on National Public Radio] today, I figured there must be a new volume! . . . It has P but only goes to Sk. And thus ‘pop’ must be covered, but ‘soda’ must once again be left in the dust. Can you help a guy out?”

Douglas Blair
Germantown, Maryland

Continued on page 7
Over the years I produced a couple of newsletters, which taught me to write concisely to fit a limited space. I also wrote or edited a variety of informational and promotional publications for students and the general public, and I answered inquiries from the Board of Regents, system administrators, legislators, and the general public. One question that remained constant throughout the years was “Why can’t I get better football tickets?”

Q: How did you first become aware of the DARE project?

A: I was aware of Prof. Cassidy and his dictionary throughout the years I worked at the UW because he had a worldwide reputation. When I “retired” to keep my husband company in his retirement, I looked around for something worthwhile to do, and I came across an article that noted DARE was looking for volunteers. That was in 1987.

Q: What kinds of tasks has our volunteer coordinator asked you to do for DARE?

A: At first I did a lot of filing of paper quote slips; then I progressed to using the computer to transfer quotes and information into the central database. I spent quite a while going through DARE’s cookbook collection, indexing recipes for DARE and indulging in periodic in-depth research for myself. I’ve read assigned books and selected words I thought would be of interest, and now I’m putting new bibliographic references into a special computer database.

Q: I know that you travel quite a bit; do you find that you listen to people’s speech more intently now that you’ve been immersed in the study of language variation?

A: The first time I was aware of different terms being used in different parts of the country was when as a teenager I went to New York City from Madison. I asked someone where I could find a bubbler. He said he’d never heard of such a thing. I felt like a real rube, but did get it straightened out that I was looking for a drinking fountain. Now when I travel I like to make note of the different terminology. I even find myself writing down new usage when I’m reading novels.

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**Coming in Volume V**

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Word</th>
<th>Definition</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>slash</td>
<td>A low, swampy area; a shallow, marshy pool. (Chiefly Sth, S Midl)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>slippy</td>
<td>Slippery. (Chiefly PA; also Sth)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>slough pumper</td>
<td>A bittern (<em>Botaurus lentiginosus</em>). (Chiefly Upper Missip Valley, esp MN)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>smurry</td>
<td>Hazy, overcast. (Chiefly eNEng)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>snake feeder</td>
<td>Dragonfly. (Chiefly Midl)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>some kind of</td>
<td>Extremely. (Chiefly VA, S Atl)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>spatzie</td>
<td>A sparrow. (Chiefly Missip-Ohio Valleys, PA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>splunge</td>
<td>To plunge; a plunge. (Sth, S Midl, esp sAppalachians)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>spoon meat</td>
<td>The meat of an immature coconut. (HI)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>spoon wood</td>
<td>The mountain laurel (<em>Kalmia latifolia</em>). (NEast, esp MA, NH)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>spung</td>
<td>An area of low, swampy ground. (Chiefly sNJ)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>squat</td>
<td>To pinch, crush, squeeze. (Esp ME)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>squin</td>
<td>Some or all of the edible viscera of a pig. (Esp RI)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>squinch</td>
<td>To draw up one’s face; esp, to squint. (Chiefly Sth, S Midl, SW)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tabby</td>
<td>A concrete made of lime, sand, and oyster shells. (SE)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tag-tail</td>
<td>A tagalong. (Chiefly Nth, N Midl)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>take in</td>
<td>Of a church service, session of school, etc: to begin. (Chiefly Sth, S Midl)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>take one to do</td>
<td>To criticize one, take one to task. (NEast)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>thunderwood</td>
<td>Poison sumac (<em>Toxicodendron vernix</em>). (Sth, esp GA)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>torup</td>
<td>A snapping turtle (<em>Chelydra serpentina</em>). (Long Island NY)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tulip poplar</td>
<td>The tulip tree (<em>Liriodendron tulipifera</em>). (Chiefly Midl, C Atl)</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>tush hog</td>
<td>A tough, aggressive person. (Sth, S Midl)</td>
</tr>
</tbody>
</table>
DARE Newsletter

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