

Dictionary of American Regional English: Some Transposals

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When the American Dialect Society (ADS) was founded in 1889, one of the major goals of its charter members was to do for the United States what Joseph Wright was doing for England in compiling his *English Dialect Dictionary*. But of course the task of making a dictionary of the dialects of the United States was going to be a lot bigger because of the size of the country. So the Society began by publishing word lists made by professors who jotted down unfamiliar terms or expressions as they visited places new to them. For decades, lists were published in the ADS journals *Dialect Notes* (1890-1939) and *Publications of the American Dialect Society* (1944-).

But the First World War intervened, then came the Depression, then the Second World War, and no systematic plan had been made to carry out a dictionary project. Eventually, in 1962, a chief editor of the proposed dictionary was appointed (Fred Cassidy, a professor of English at the University of Wisconsin).

The various lists already collected were further supplemented by extensive fieldwork. Between 1965 and 1970, Cassidy arranged for 80 fieldworkers to visit 1002 communities across the US. The fieldworkers, armed with approximately 1600 questions about the local names for a variety of objects and activities, questioned almost 3000 people. The fieldworkers needed to capture as many of the old-fashioned words as possible. Those people had witnessed the rise of the automobile, the airplane, telephone, radio, television, general electrification, indoor plumbing, mechanization of farming—all tremendous changes in the way that US society works—and they would still have had the words for the objects and processes of bygone eras.

Editing of the Dictionary of American Regional English (*DARE*) began in 1975, with Volume I (Introduction and A–C) being published by Harvard University Press in the fall of 1985. Volume II (D–H) followed in 1991, Volume III (I–O) appeared in 1996, and Volume IV was published in 2002. Currently (September 2010), Volume V remains unpublished. On different webpages of the *DARE* website, it is noted that "Volume V will appear in 2010" and "Volume V is presently scheduled for publication in 2011".

From a logological perspective, there is a wealth of valuable material in the four *DARE* volumes so far published. I have spent a while turning the pages of *DARE* Volumes I-IV, looking for transposals of 10 or more letters. Following this work, I could have waited another year or two until Volume V has been published, but - as with most dictionary projects - dates tend to slip. I decided to share 100 of the best transposable words from *DARE* I-IV with readers of *Word Ways* now, rather than wait for Volume V.

I have checked the 100 DARE words against Webster's Third (W3) to ensure that none is already listed in that dictionary, thereby ensuring that the DARE words in this article are unlikely to have been "discovered" as transposable. By and large, the transposals of the DARE words are in W3, but I have included a few located in sources other than W3 - these are defined and identified here. I particularly wanted the transposal of PENNY SOCIAL (=NANCY PELOSI) to appear in print during 2010, just in case the House speaker is defeated in the 2010 US midterm elections.

DARE words / terms	Transposals
acting pole	optic angle
aldermites (plural of aldermite)	misaltered (W2), misrelated (W2)
ambleshoot	smoothable (W2)
antigoslin	insolating
ants-mashers	harassments
apple shiner	planisphere
apron strap	pro-Spartan (W2)
aquadiante	inadequate
blow adders (plural of blow adder)	sword blade (W2)
blue martins (plural of blue martin)	bus terminal (OED), subterminal
bottle-arsed (from bottle-arsed tupelo)	battledores
cactus rose	coruscates
careless pin	alpine cress
castermine	incremates (W2), metarsenic (W2), semitrance (a type of trance-like state (www.webster-dictionary.org))
charcoal pit	toparchical (W2)
China plant	plainchant
Chinese tag	escheating
clearstone	tolerances
coarse coin	occasioner, reoccasion (W2)
come-a-Christian	iatromechanics (OED), Neocharismatic (a reference to Christians who have received Pentecostal-like experiences; www.wordiq.com)
conniverate	noncreative (W2), nonreactive
constabule	locust bean
contrarisome	sermocinator (W2)
coral teeth	trochleate (W2)
cortenions (plural of cortenion)	consertion (Webster's Revised Unabridged Dictionary, 1998)
cream toast	macrostate (OED)
cream-shitters (plural of cream-shitter)	Christmas tree
Denver omelette	Love Me Tender (Elvis Presley film and song from 1956; www.imdb.com)
desert spoon	Prostenodes (a genus of moth in the family Geometridae, now

	considered a synonym of Anisodes; en.wikipedia.org)
desert straw	streetwards (OED)
dingnation	innodating (W2)
don't-care-ish	achondrites
easing powder	spear widgeon (W2)
Easter fire	fire-eaters
eddication	dedication
engine tamer	engerminate (W2)
English rail	hell-raising (W3), narghillies (OED), raising hell (OED)
false heart	heartleafs
farmer's oil	Miraflores (an upscale district of Lima, Peru; en.wikipedia.org)
farmer's oil	formaliser (OED quote)
frolicated (from frolicate)	tolfraedic (W2)
frolicates (from frolicate)	fortalices
gala-nipper	appareling
gallinapper	apparelling
garde-soleil	allegorised (The Chambers Dictionary, 2008)
German goiter	George Martin (record producer, especially of the Beatles; en.wikipedia.org)
ginger-tailed	trailing edge
glacier pine	recipiangle (W2)
glummerins (from glummerin)	summerling (W2)
go in halvers	overlashing (W2)
golondrina	lion dragon (W2)
grab dinner	brandering, rebranding (W2), ring bander (W2)
great doin's	designator
green strip	perstringe
grind organ	ranging-rod (OED)
ground tea	outranged
groundswine	undersowing
hame string	nightmares
hare tangle	Earth Angel (US doowop song by the Penguins from 1954; en.wikipedia.org)
hendersome	shoe mender (W2)
herricanes	rancheries (OED)
horse ball tree	helleboraster (W2)
horse scoop	horoscopes
horse smelt	motherless
horsepital	hospitaler, trophesial (W2)
hot regions	reshooting (W2), soothing
hotel prime	thermopile
hurtingest	reshutting (W2), shuttering
languister	granulites, resaluting

leader horse	horse dealer (W2)
leather bat	earth table
leingister	leistering
maniportia	María Pinto (one of various fashion designers used by Michelle Obama; www.huffingtonpost.com)
nature-course	turneraceous
nigger flea	gingerleaf (W2)
nigger hater	regathering
night pasture	straighten up
no'theaster	earth tones
oatsmobile	maltobiose (OED)
Oregon mist	ergonomist
penetentir	terpentine (OED)
penny social	Nancy Pelosi (US congresswoman and Speaker of the House of Representatives; pelosi.house.gov)
pestle-tail	paillettes, stipellate
poison cedar	scorpaenoid
polecat sumac	Saccopetalum (a genus of plants in family Annonaceae; en.wikipedia.org)
possum hair	aphorismus (a figure of speech that calls into question the meaning of a word; en.wikipedia.org)
presmutterian	serpentarium
rain go-devils	devalorising (OED quote)
redhead teal	death-dealer (OED)
redtop cane	coparented (Random House Dictionary; 2010)
roving Charley	overarchingly (American Heritage Dictionary of the English Language, Fourth Edition, 2000)
sacred harp	sharp cedar
salvagerous	sugarloaves
sand shiner	sanhedrins
sangre de cristo	Castres-Gironde (a commune in the Gironde department in Aquitaine in south-western France; en.wikipedia.org)
saterfaction	fractionates
scoot train	cartoonist, ostracient (OED), scortation (W2)
second line	declension, indolences
short sauce	out-crashes (OED)
sidegodlin	disloigned (W2)

I hope to be able to add a further selection of transposals once DARE Volume V is published.

Much of the introductory text in this article is taken from the DARE website (dare.wisc.edu), which I gratefully acknowledge.