GRANT COUNTY, INDIANA, SPEECH AND SONG

By W. L. McAtee

Supplement 1
(Folk Speech)

Items recalled since the 1942 paper,* and in a few cases additional comment, are here included. The plan of presentation remains the same.

GLOSSARY

back teeth are floating,” “I feel like my, saying when the bladder is very full. In extreme cases the sensation is anything but pleasant, simulating tooth-ache.

bare as a baby’s ass, simile.

beat hell (or the livin’ hell) out of, v. phr., punish severely.

break leg above knee, v. phr. Additional comment: Grose, 1785 (p. 103) gives “break a leg,” to have a bastard. The form I cite is in a song in “The Loyal Subject” (c. 1679) by Beaumont and Fletcher (T. R. Smith, Poetica Erotica, 1927, p. 201).

bung-hole, n., ass-hole.

burnt, adj., afflicted by a venereal disease. Grose, 1785; OED gives an example dated 1693. T.

cheesy, adj., having an accumulation of smegma under the prepuce back of the glans penis.

colder than Billy be damned, simile.

come, v., experience orgasm. A venerable acquaintance on Church’s Island, North Carolina, illustrated this meaning in conversation with me. Said he, “People ask me how I can keep my young wife satisfied and I say, just by takin’ it easy. That way while I’m a-comin’ once, she comes two or three times.”


do a job, phr., defecate.

fart, n., a small consideration, “not worth a ————.”

fart, n., a worthless person.

fart, v., speak in a bombastic manner, “sich fartin’.”

fart around, v. phr., work ineffectively, waste time.

foot slipped, v. phr., in explanation of a wife’s new pregnancy; “My ———— at just the wrong time.”

fuck, interj., usually preceded by “an”, expressive of impatience, disgust, disappointment.

*Supplement to Rural Dialect of Grant County, Indiana, in the ’Nineties, 10 pp.
fucking, adj., in derogatory, or from habit, in quite neutral senses.

go off, v. phr., ejaculate semen.

gut, n., stomach. A common greeting to a fisherman was “What luck?”, and a frequent reply, “A wet ass and a hungry gut.”

hang (someone’s) picture in the privy to scare the rats away. Said of someone disliked or, perhaps, merely thought ugly. Benjamin Franklin reported an even more satisfying French custom of having the portrait painted on the interior bottom of a shit-pot.

hard up, adj phr., short on sexual indulgence. “You wouldn’t screw an old woman like her?” “That’d depend on how ——— I was.”

horny, adj., amorous (Va.) If this is the source of the colloquial “onry,” we can see why that word has in many places an immoral significance.

hot-damn, interj., euphemism for God-damn. T.

leak, n. and v., piss; “take a leak.”

like a dose of salts,” “go through,” v. phr., accomplish expeditiously, said of tasks quickly done.

looking-glass, n., ass. In skating, a familiar warning was “Watch out or you’ll break your ———.”

pain, n., in derogatory comment; “That gives (or you give) me a ——— in the ass.” (or guts, nads, or elsewhere).

piss and vinegar, n., phr., life, spirit, “full of ———.”

piss hard-on, n., phr., an erection due to the irritation of a full bladder.

piss-pot, n., chamber pot.

pull one’s pud, phr., masturbate (Va., N. C., S. C.) T.

red as a baby’s ass, simile; “She blushed ———.”

regular as clockwork, adj. phr., descriptive of satisfactory action of the bowels. (Va.)

roselle, n., the evacuated rectum of a horse as seen during defecation.

rub his nose in it, phr.; part of the process of house-breaking an animal; also on fitting occasions recommended for people.

scare the piss (or shit) out of, phr., frighten badly. I have heard my grandfather say that when going into battle in the Civil War, men could be seen in all directions taking down their pants and shitting. Nevertheless, we also said “scared pissless”, that is presumably until urination is impossible.

shit, n., a contemptible person. In an office building in Washington a watchman (I believe he came from Virginia) remarked, “There’s a lot of nice people here, but there’s also a lot of damned shits.”

shit-pot, n., chamber pot or “thunder-mug.”

shot-gun wedding, n. phr., one forced by the irate father of a pregnant girl. B.

signs. Tickling the palm of a girl’s hand with one’s forefinger was an invitation to copulation. Additional comment: This was also known in France as Honore de Balzac wrote (Droll Stories from the Abbess of Touraine, transl. London, 1874, p. 104), “put your soft hands into the ladies’ hands and tickle them in the middle—of the hand, of course.”

son of a bitch, n. One definition was: A man who can count the hairs on a cunt without getting a hard-on. T.

swimming-hole customs. —It was a practice of boys to piss on the legs, before entering the water, to “prevent” cramps. A somewhat allied action—spitting upon one’s self as a guard against bad omens—prevailed among the Romans (Tibullus, Elegy V, first century B. C.) By thrusting a hand between the legs from behind and drawing the penis down tight over the scrotum, an imitation of the female pudendum was produced; this was called “making a cunt.”

they’re off, said the monkey as he set down on a steel-trap. A Well- erism.

tired, adj., in expressions of disgust: “That makes (or you make) my as tired.”

CORRECTIONS TO THE 1942 SUPPLEMENT

Page
1. Boccaccio (6th paragraph) should have had two double “c”s as here.

3. Under “bitch,” vilification should have been spelled with only one “I”.

Under “caught with,” etc., disadvantage should have had an “a” in the last syllable.

4. Under “dirty,” the abbreviation in parentheses should have been Va.

5. Horsey should have been labelled adj.

8. Under sarchin, “plumbed” should be “plumped.”

Privately printed 1946