

35. erased in original. E. H. B."
 36. Ord. reads "gives."
 37. Ord. reads "carries."
 38. Ord. reads "their."
 39. Ord. reads "their."
 40. Ord. reads "bothe."
 41. Ord. reads "now." In Binney's copy "/sic/" is written under "no."
 42. Ord. reads "out."
 43. Ord. omits.

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TWO PHRASAL FOLK VERBS: TO POSSUM OFF AND TO CABBAGE ON TO

Verbs with folk etymologies (and especially those derived from the generic plant and animal names) form a sizable lexicon: to skunk, to buffalo, to crawfish, to parrot, to bug, to badger, and so on. The folk verb lexicon grows considerably with the addition of phrasal verbs with a single particle: to weasel out, to tomcat around, to snake out (logs), to louse up, to rat on, to cotton to, to horse around, and so on. The lexicon is further lengthened with the addition of folk verbs compounded with multiple particles: to weasel out of, to worm out of, to cotton up to, and so on.

Both to possum off and to cabbage on to are folk verbs occurring in southern Indiana agrarian dialects. To possum off occurs in the dialect of older members of established farming families in an area near the Wabash River in southwestern Posey County. To cabbage on to occurs in northwestern Floyd County and northeastern Harrison County in the dialect of some established farming families.

To possum off seems a kind of semantic extension of the better known to play possum, which makes use of the inherent attribute of the opossum to feign death when threatened with bodily harm. To play possum makes use of an attributive feature substitution that substitutes sleep for death. The phrasal verb to possum off has the feature feign deleted and assumes the meaning of to go to sleep.

To possum off is rarely used in the first person ("I think I'll go possum off"); rather, it most characteristically occurs in the third person past tense form, frequently in response to a question:

Q: Where's John, Sam?

A: He possumed off a while back.

On occasion, to possum off is expanded to include a second particle, on, and the new phrasal verb assumes the meaning of to go to sleep on:

Q: What happened to John, Sam?

A: He possumed off on me.

To cabbage on to, however, is of an obscure etymology, for there seems to be no real transfer of attributive features from the noun cabbage to the phrasal verb.

Whereas to possum off has a singular meaning and seemingly no imperative form (though such is a possibility), to cabbage on to does have an imperative form and is used in a number of semantic variants.

The basic meaning of to cabbage on to is that of to secure, but the context of the usage produces several semantic variants:

- (1) to secure, in much the same manner as the verb to latch onto occurs in other dialects. It is in this meaning that the verb occurs most frequently as an imperative. The imperative, as in "Cabbage on to that apple," produces one of two meanings: to secure in the simplest sense of the word; or to secure quickly before someone else does--the latter meaning being the most prevalent.
- (2) to secure, in the sense of purchasing at a bargain price; "Look at this dress I cabbaged on to last Saturday."
- (3) to secure, in the sense of securing something that has been discarded or that has no apparent owner: "We cabbaged on to these bottles down in Rolta's trash heap."
- (4) to secure, in the sense of securing tentatively with the possible intent to purchase: "Cabbage on to that skirt while I look for a blouse."
- (5) to secure, in the sense of securing legally, but without payment: "I cabbaged on to this dish when Aunt Belle died."
- (6) to secure, in the sense of illegal procurement; i.e. to steal: "Somebody cabbaged on to ten of Woody's best hogs last night."

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THE FOLKLOLIST IN A FEED LOT COMMUNITY: A Personal Excursion Into the Vagaries of the Role

For the city dwellers among you, I should perhaps explain that the purpose of the feed lot is to keep the cattle in a confined area while they are fattened for slaughter. I now reside in a community of approximately 40,000 that is almost surrounded by feed lots. While there have been recent experiments to change the situation, it is still true on certain warm, breezy days that in this community "you can smell your money." I still prefer the smell of good clean manure to factory smoke, and to living among wall to wall people. Being identified as a folklorist in such a community does have its drawbacks, however. Co-workers query, "You're studying what?" and curriculum planners, "You want to add a course in FOLKLORE!" said with an inflection that indicates you might have said underwater basketweaving.

The local newspaper has been the most receptive. One of the reporters discussed with me his investigation of reports of a ghost in the balcony of a theater that was about to be closed. He quoted me in the article and Pandora's box was opened. First my students seemed amazed that one of their teachers could get her name on the front page of the paper and not even be in trouble. Other teachers accused me of being the ghost. My doctor, after tossing out the titles gynecologist and urologist, wanted to know what to call an expert on ghosts.