By Nancy Whitaker

WHERE DID THAT WORD COME FROM?

Have you ever wondered where some of our old beloved sayings originated? For instance when someone says, “God willing and the Creek don’t rise,” I always thought a creek to be a body of water.

However, that is not what the writer was referring to. The story goes, that the saying “God willing and the Creek don’t rise” was in reference to the Creek Indians. It was written by Benjamin Hawkins who was a politician and an Indian diplomat in the late 18th century.

While living in the south, Hawkins was requested by the President of the U.S. to return to Washington. In his response, he wrote, “God willing and the Creek don’t rise.”

Because he capitalized the word “Creek” it is believed that he was referring to the Creek Indian tribe and not a creek.

Another old quote is, “That will cost you an arm and a leg.” Of course when we say that it generally means that something is going to cost you a lot of money. But why an arm and a leg?

This is why. In George Washington’s day, there were no cameras. One’s image was either sculpted or painted. Some paintings of George Washington showed him standing behind a desk with one arm behind his back, while others showed both legs and both arms.

Prices charged by painters were not based on how many people were to be painted, but by

how many limbs were to be painted. Arms and legs are limbs, therefore painting them would cost the buyer more. Hence the expression, “Okay, but it’ll cost you an arm and a leg.”

There is another old saying that has historical beginnings. The story goes, as incredible as it sounds, that men and women took baths only twice a year, in May and October.

Women kept their hair covered, while men shaved their heads (because of lice and bugs) and wore wigs. Wealthy men could afford good wigs made from wool. They couldn’t wash the wigs, so to clean them they would carve out a loaf of bread, put the wig in the shell, and bake it for 30 minutes.

The heat would make the wig big and fluffy, hence the term “big wig.” Today we often use the term “here comes the Big Wig,” because someone appears to be or is powerful and wealthy. Now who would have thought it?

Personal hygiene left much room for improvement. As a result, many women and men had developed acne scars by adulthood.

The women would spread bee’s wax over their facial skin to smooth out their complexions. When they were speaking to each other, if a woman began to stare at

another woman's face she was told, “mind your own bee’s wax.” Should the woman smile, the wax would crack, hence the term “crack a smile.”

In addition, when they sat too close to the fire, the wax would melt, therefore, the expression “losing face.”

Ladies used to wear corsets, which would lace up the front. A proper and dignified woman, as in straight-laced, usually wore a tightly tied lace.

Common entertainment included playing cards. However, there was a tax levied when purchasing playing cards, which was only applicable to the Ace of Spades.

To avoid paying the tax, people would purchase 51 cards instead. Yet, since games require 52 cards, these people were thought to be stupid or dumb because they weren't playing with a full deck.

These are a few origins of our old quotes. Have you ever heard any of these old sayings? What do you think they mean? Let me know and I'll give you a Penny for Your Thoughts.