

## NEW ORLEANS NOSTALGIA

*Remembering New Orleans History, Culture and Traditions*

*By Ned Hémard*

### Heavenly Hashtags

As a cultural and historical writer in these technologically changing times, it is expected that one be up-to-date on various aspects or terms concerning Social Media, such as “What is a hashtag?”

Hashtags are used on Twitter, Instagram and Facebook, but before August 23, 2007, there were no hashtags. It was on that date that Chris Messina (born January 7, 1981), at the time a developer and UX designer at Google, tweeted (something one does on Twitter) the following words: “how do you feel about using # (pound) for groups. As in #barcamp [msg]?” And with that simple tweet from one who refers to himself as the “hashtag godfather”, the hashtag was born.



*Chris Messina      the pound sign written by Isaac Newton*

The pound sign, or # symbol, is placed in front of a word or word grouping that tweet or post with other tweets or posts about the same topic in order for people to find certain topics or events or things that are popular.

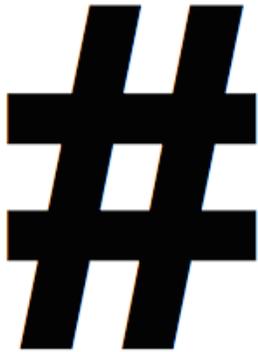
Messina later told the *Wall Street Journal* that Twitter at first rejected the whole idea:

“[Twitter] told me flat out, ‘These things are for nerds. They’re never

going to catch on.”

They were eminently wrong, and he could have charged them a lot for his idea. But Messina, a serious open source advocate, chose not to apply for a patent on his idea.

It is believed that the pound symbol started off as the symbol lb, an abbreviation of the Latin *libra pondo*, which translates as “pound weight”. This abbreviation evolved over time as the overlay of two horizontal strokes “=” crossing two forward-slash strokes “//”. By 1853, in a treatise on bookkeeping, the symbol was described as the “number” character, such as the reference to a #2 pencil or St. Louis Cemetery #2. In the United States, when the symbol follows a number, it indicates weight in pounds. In Canada the symbol is called both the “number sign” and the “pound sign,” but in the UK, it is generally called the “hash.” This ultimately comes from “hatch,” referring to cross-hatching, which means marking or drawing (something) with sets of lines that cross each other. It is never used to denote pounds weight (*lb* or *lbs* is used for this) nor pounds sterling (for which “£” is used).



*“number sign,” “pound sign,” “hash” or “hashtag”*

“Hash” or “hatch,” in this particular sense, is from the Middle English *hacche*; from Old (pre 7th century) English *hæcc*, meaning a grating, or lattice gate, especially one in or leading to a forest.

“Hash,” as a jumbled food dish (very often a dish of chopped meat, potatoes, and sometimes vegetables, usually browned), however, has an entirely different etymology. Plus, it can denote any jumbled mixture or hodgepodge. Hash browns, originally called “hashed browned potatoes,” can be shredded, julienned, diced or riced in their jumbled preparation. In this case, “hash” is a variant of Middle English *hache*, from the Old French, past participle of *hacher*, *hachier*, to chop up, from *hache*, battle-axe, of Germanic origin. The word “hatchet” comes from the same root words. Hash can also mean a restatement of something that is already known, i. e., the same old hash.

Not to “rehash” old New Orleans songs, but I previously informed my readers about “a pre-funk garage classic known as ‘Pass The Hatchet’, recorded in 1965 by Roger and the Gypsies (who were, in reality, Earl Stanley and the Stereos), with Eddie Bo spicing up the awesome instrumental with soulful grunts and whoops like ‘Let me chop it!’ and other tree-felling interjections.”

In addition, there’s the tiny town in Plaquemines Parish, Louisiana, known as Pointe à la Hache, located on the east bank of the Mississippi River below New Orleans. West Pointe à la Hache, on the west bank, is an unincorporated community in the same parish linked by the Pointe à la Hache Ferry. It is also home to Woodland Plantation, once depicted in an 1871 lithograph, an image later licensed for use on the label of Southern Comfort after the end of prohibition. Since 1998, the privately owned property has been listed on the National Register of Historic Places and is operated as a bed and breakfast.



*"Aww, pass off the hatchet, baby!"* Edwin J. "Eddie Bo" Bocage  
(1930 -2009)

Pointe à la Hache, recorded on the d’Anville map of 1732 and the Mitchell map of 1755, is one of the state’s oldest place names. *Pointe* is the “point” or “projection” of land into the river. *La Hache* in French is a hatchet, or axe. The name can therefore be translated as Hatchet Point, or Cape, resembling as it does the head of a hatchet. *La Hache* was also an early spelling of a well-known Louisiana family, Achee, but Joseph Francois Hache did not arrive in Louisiana until 1785.



*Pointe à la Hache Plantation on the Southern Comfort label*

Irish American bartender Martin Wilkes Heron (1850 –1920), who worked in New Orleans, was the creator of the whiskey-flavored liqueur known as Southern Comfort. The product, originally known as “Cuffs and Buttons,” was created in 1874 while Heron was working at Arthur McCauley’s saloon in the Lower Garden District of New Orleans.

And what about that wonderful New Orleans confection, produced by the Elmer Candy Company from chocolate, marshmallow and pecans, known as Heavenly Hash? I’m so glad you “axed.” #BadEnglish

**ADVERTISING VALUE SHOWN.**  
**Originality and Modern Methods**  
**Put Heavenly Hash Over Big.**

*Times-Picayune headline dated August 20, 1922*

The experiences of Mr. S. J. Wilson, then president and manager of the A. G. Williams Home-made Candy Company at 513-17 Baronne Street in New Orleans, were reported in a 1922 *Times-Picayune* article explaining the origin of the chocolate treat’s celestial moniker. Wilson “saw the possibilities in the name now known to every flapper,” said the paper:

“One day early in 1921 Mr. Wilson was in the store when a large tray full of a popular confection made from milk chocolate, marshmallows

and assorted nuts was laid on the counter. He asked what it was called, and the name 'heavenly hash' was laughingly suggested. It made such an impression on him that he had it registered immediately in spite of an attorney's smiles and advice that it was an unnecessary expenditure, and started an advertising campaign."

He was no "open source" Chris Messina.

*Submitted by Miss Bertha Drennan, 4619 Perrier Street*

### Our Newest Confection

We call it Heavenly Hash because—well, just taste it and you will see why. Its immediate and steadily increasing popularity is proof of its goodness—and also the assiduity with which it has been imitated!

But no one else can equal A. G. Williams' genuine, delicious, inimitable Heavenly Hash. It is the product of twenty-eight years' experience in candy making and success in pleasing the public.

And our forty-six other varieties of home-made candy are all just as good.

## A. G. WILLIAMS HOME-MADE CANDY CO.

513-17 Baronne St. Main 9533  
*S. J. Wilson, Mgr.*

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A \$5.00 box of our choice candies given away each week during contest for best advertisement, and besides, you may win the Grand Prize of \$150.00.

Wilson bought the store and business from Mr. Williams, who had died in 1920. Wilson claimed the divine concoction "became nationally known within thirty days," not by his but "Shakespeare's contention that a good name is without price" and that modern advertising could work wonders.

Soon the name of the company, founded in 1894, was changed to Heavenly Hash, Inc. According to Elmer CEO Roy Nelson, the Elmer Candy Company acquired the "Heavenly Hash" recipe in 1923, but according to a notice in the *New Orleans States*, the "Receivership Sale" of the "assets of Heavenly Hash, incorporated" was not held until June 21, 1927. Nelson became a partner in the Elmer enterprise in the 1960s. The company was established in 1855 in New Orleans,

when pastry chef Christopher Henry Miller turned his experience into the Miller Candy Corporation. Elmer Candy Company became the name of the company in 1917, named for Miller's son-in-law, Augustus Elmer, according to an announcement in the *Times-Picayune* on February 11, 1917. And there were five Elmer brothers in the family to run the various aspects of the business.



*Heavenly Hash in popular egg form*

"Hash" is also a shortened form of "hashish," which is an extracted product from the cannabis plant, made up of compressed or purified preparations of stalked resin glands, known as trichomes. Many of you may be aware that the word "Assassin" is often said to derive from the Arabic word *Hashishin*, meaning "users of hashish".

A more sociable form of light-headedness can be acquired by being a member of the "Hash House Harriers," who have elevated the art of hashing to a higher level. Hashing had its origins in 1938 in Selayang Quarry, Selangor, then the Federated Malay States (modern-day Malaysia), when some British colonial officers and expats got together on Monday evenings to run in a manner patterned after the traditional British "paper chase" or "hare and hounds," to work off the excesses of the previous weekend. The name "Hash House Harriers" was suggested after the Selangor Club Annex, where several of the original hashers frequently dined, known affectionately as the "Hash House". Today the Harriers are an international group of non-competitive running social clubs, with a New Orleans chapter (aka NOH3), which began in 1988 and is still going strong.

Members often describe their group as "a drinking club with a running problem," indicating that the social element of each event (usually accompanied by beer) is as important, if not more so, than any exercise involved.

Each year individual chapters hold an annual "Red Dress Run," which originated in Southern California in 1987. There a woman named Donna Rhinehart, ran into history sporting her red dress and heels. "Hash House" males and females around the globe, dressed accordingly, have done the same ever since (and in the process) raised millions of dollars for a wide variety of local charities. Donna Rhinehart, the original "Lady in Red," died in April 2013.



The New Orleans chapter, which hosts the largest "Red Dress" event in the world every August, attracted 7,000 participants to their Run in 2010, raising more than \$200,000 for fifty local charities. For 2015, \$169,000 was given to even more charities.

The 2016 New Orleans "Red Dress Run" will be held August 13th.

## **NED HÉMARD**

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