

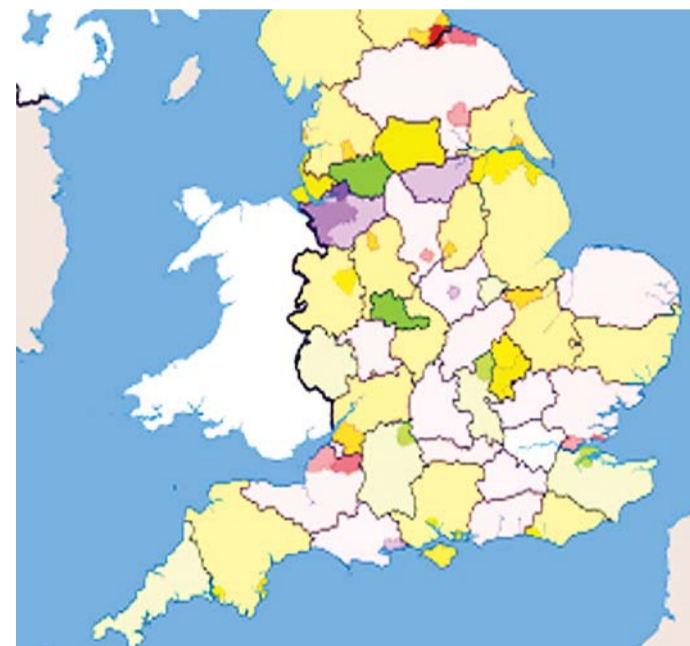
#NAME

From Londinium to London

Why Is London Called 'London?' Ancient Name Holds Layers of Mystery and History



Model of erstwhile Londinium.



United Kingdom, England Administrative Map.

London is one of the most recognized cities in the world, a global capital of finance, politics, and culture. Behind the towering skyscrapers and historic landmarks of London lies a simple question that has fascinated historians for centuries: Why is London called 'London'?

Despite the name being in use for over 2,000 years, its true origin remains a historical puzzle with roots in Roman conquests, Celtic tongues, and ancient myth.

From Londinium to London: A Roman Legacy

The first written reference to the city comes from the 1st century CE, when the Romans established a fortified trading post on the River Thames and called it Londinium. The city grew rapidly, becoming the administrative heart of Roman Britain.

But what did Londinium mean? Scholars believe the Romans didn't invent the name, but rather adopted and Latinized an existing Celtic place-name. That name likely came from the Brittonic language spoken by local tribes before Roman arrival.

Theories Abound: From Fierce Rivers to Legendary Kings

While there is no definitive answer, several leading theories have emerged:

- Celtic Roots:** One linguistic theory suggests that the name came from a Celtic personal name, Londinos, meaning something like 'the wild one' or 'fierce.' If true, London could originally have meant 'place of Londinos.'
- River Reference:**



Massacre at Londinium, 60 AD.

Believe It Or Not - by Ripley



Oldrieve's exploits, as featured in Ripley's Believe It or Not.

• Kshema Jatuhkarna

For the past 35 years, dozens of students have walked across Florida's Lake Okechobee every November as part of the school's Walk on Water contest, which is believed to be the largest and longest-running competition of its kind in the United States.

Architecture professor Jaime Canaves started the contest as a fun design challenge for students, who build their own floatable shoes, then race each other across the lake. (Though, the event won't take place this year, Canaves hopes to bring it back in 2026.) In the late 1800s and early 1900s, however, walking on water was a more serious enterprise. Large crowds gathered to watch performers who walked through knee-high waves and 'skipped about on the surface of the water with the ease of a ballet dancer,' in the words of one New York City newspaper.

Of these daredevils, arguably none was more successful or adventurous than Charles W. Oldrieve, a former tightrope walker from Boston. While other 'aquatic pedestrians,' as they were sometimes called, mostly gave short demon-

strations, Oldrieve used his oversized, wooden, canoe-shaped shoes to cover long distances. In November 1888, when he was 20 years old, he walked more than 150 miles down the Hudson River, from Albany, New York, to Manhattan. The journey lasted six days and involved water temperatures so cold that one night, when Oldrieve came ashore to sleep (he only walked during the day), his shoes were covered in ice.

A year later, Oldrieve announced plans to walk across the English Channel, and in 1888, he said that he was going to walk across the Atlantic Ocean. Neither plan came to fruition, but Oldrieve completed other feats, including walking across waterfalls and to islands off the Boston coast. His tightrope balancing skills likely gave him an advantage, but his assured, steady gait probably helped him the most. "Usually, floating is fairly easy," says Canaves, who has watched hundreds of students learn to walk on water shoes over the years. "The biggest problem is to go forward. If you do not do something to create traction, you're moving back and forth but staying in place."

Oldrieve's shoes had fins, or flappers, on the bottom. "When the foot is brought forward and the shoe forced through the water, the fins

Although one Henderson resident was allegedly disappointed that Oldrieve wasn't taller, he was at most 5-foot-3, the vast majority were excited to see him. After coming ashore to receive a telegram and 'take a glass of stimulant,' Oldrieve showed the crowd his shoes, which, like his hair and mustache, were 'red almost to scorching,' according to the local newspaper. He always acknowledged spectators in some way as he walked past, either by waving or smoking a cigar, and no one wanted to miss him. "At every town or city along the river, the wave walking party is being greeted by crowds which increase from day to day, as interest in the feat is awakened," another newspaper reported.

Walking on Water 150 Miles In 40 Days

#FEATS

lay flat up against the bottom of the shoe until the step is taken, when they drop down and present a surface to press against the water," the Boston Globe reported in 1889. "By their aid, the walker is able to move forward, for without these little flappers, he could not make a step."

Oldrieve's shoes were similar to those worn by other water walkers, but he experimented with different designs over time and continually worked on his technique. By the early 1890s, he could not only walk forward and backward in his shoes, but also turn around in a circle, a maneuver that he said took him five years to master.

In January 1907, Oldrieve embarked on his most ambitious and journey yet: walking down the Ohio and Mississippi Rivers, from Cincinnati to New Orleans. He began the nearly 1,600-mile trip on New Year's Day, accompanied by a small gas-powered support boat and his wife, Caroline Oldrieve, who rowed alongside him in a skiff. His goal was to reach New Orleans in 40 days. If he succeeded, he told reporters, he would win a \$5,000 wager.

Oldrieve could travel up to five miles an hour, depending on the river conditions, though he estimated his average speed was closer to two miles an hour. His shoes, which measured about four and a half feet long and weighed around 20 pounds each, generally required a slow pace. He also had to stop periodically to dump water out of his shoes despite wearing thigh-high rubber boots to keep them as dry as possible. When Oldrieve arrived in Henderson, Kentucky, on January 12, he was two days behind schedule. He didn't seem bothered by the delay, however, and happily greeted the thousands of people waiting for him on the riverbank.

Oldrieve still wanted to walk across the English Channel and planned to do so that August, but his wife hoped he would quit after that. "I think my husband will retire after he has walked the English Channel," she told the press. "That is the last thing I want him to do, and I would

rather wait he did not do that." In the meantime, the couple went back to performing, which was their main occupation when they weren't attempting long-distance feats. Each show took place on the water and featured Oldrieve walking around on his shoes and setting off explosives to create "water geysers" and re-enact naval battles. Oldrieve had been starring in these types of performances since the 1880s, and Caroline had been assisting him with them for several years. In 1893, the pair got into trouble with Massachusetts fish and game officials when their explosions sent scores of fish flying into the air, but their performances were otherwise well received.

Oldrieve had allegedly won \$5,000, the equivalent of more than \$170,000 today, for completing the New Orleans walk, but he and Caroline seemed to be in no hurry to collect the sum, which was said to be waiting for them in a Boston bank. Later, Oldrieve claimed that his manager had swindled him out of the money, but it's also possible that the water wasn't real. Wagers were a common feature of circus and vaudeville performances in the early 1900s, says Andrea Ringer, a labor historian at Tennessee State University and the author of *Circus World: Roustabouts, Animals and the Work of Putting on the Big Show*.

"Acts also became stale really quickly," she adds, leading performers to come up with different ways to sustain audience interest. Most of Oldrieve's earlier stunts, including the Hudson River walk, had involved wagers, too. Yet, he never had much money, and he lived at his mother's house in Boston even after he was married. Moreover, one of the men who supposedly owed Oldrieve \$5,000 for completing the New Orleans walk on time, Edward Williams of Boston, had the same name as his stepfather. Regardless, Oldrieve seemed to enjoy performing and might have continued putting on shows no matter how much money he earned. Oldrieve and Caroline spent the spring and early

summer of 1907 performing in towns along the Mississippi River. The couple promoted themselves heavily. Caroline was billed as a "champion oarswoman," though it was unclear which races she'd won, while Oldrieve called himself "the world's champion water walker." He also used titles, such as professor and captain, that he likely didn't hold. An advertisement for the couple's July 4, 1907 performance in Greenwood, Mississippi, promised "the greatest sensational attraction of the 20th century."

Sadly, that July 4 show wound up being the Oldrieves' last. Caroline was badly burned while setting off explosives during the act and died from her injuries a few days later. Oldrieve, having been told that she would recover, was on his way to perform in Kentucky when he got the news. Devastated, he killed himself by drinking chloroform. He died penniless, according to the owner of the Memphis boarding house where he had been staying, and was buried in an unmarked grave at one of the city's Catholic cemeteries.

Many members of the public found the circumstances of the Oldrieves' deaths upsetting. "The lives of these two good people, and their unfortunate ending, afford food for thought and reflection,"



Charles Oldrieve dreamed of one day walking across the English Channel, and perhaps, even the Atlantic Ocean.



A map of Charles Oldrieve's route from Cincinnati to New Orleans.

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National Scrabble Day: Celebrating The Power Of Words

Observed every year on April 13, National Scrabble Day honours the beloved word game that has entertained and challenged language enthusiasts for decades. Created by American architect Alfred Mosher Butts in the 1930s, Scrabble combines vocabulary, strategy, and creativity on a simple board filled with letter tiles. The game encourages players to expand their linguistic skills while sharpening their problem-solving abilities. Today, Scrabble is played in homes, schools, and competitive tournaments across the world. National Scrabble Day celebrates not just the game itself, but also the joy of language, learning, and friendly competition that brings people together.

#MARY ELLEN PLEASANT

'The mother of civil rights in California'

Working as a cook and housekeeper for wealthy families gave her access to influential individuals

Mary Ellen Pleasant (1814-1904) is often referred to as 'the mother of civil rights in California,' though her legacy has remained largely obscured for many years. Born into a life of enslavement, Pleasant's journey from captivity to becoming one of the wealthiest and most influential black women of the 19th century is a story of courage, resourcefulness, and unwavering commitment to social justice.

Though her name may not be as widely known as other historical figures of the time, Mary Ellen Pleasant played a significant role in shaping the fight for racial equality, freedom, and empowerment for African Americans during a pivotal time in U.S. history.

Early Life: Born Into Slavery

Mary Ellen Pleasant was born in 1814 in Philadelphia, Pennsylvania, to an enslaved mother and a free father. Little is known about her early years, but it is believed that her mother was of African descent, while her father was likely a White man, a factor that would influence her life's trajectory. Pleasant's early life was marked by hardship. Her mother died when she was very young, and Pleasant was sent to live with a free Black woman who was an entrepreneur in the hospitable industry. During her time in the household, Pleasant was exposed to the business world, and this experience would later help her in her own entrepreneurial ventures. Her exposure to this woman's business practices may have also influenced her later involvement in financial success and activism.

At around the age of 20, Mary Ellen Pleasant left the Eastern United States, likely escaping the constant threat of being sold back into slavery, and eventually made her way to San Francisco during the California Gold Rush. It was there that she would begin her journey towards empowerment and activism.

Entrepreneurship and Financial Success in California

In the early 1850s, California's Gold Rush presented immense economic opportunities, and Mary Ellen Pleasant seized upon them. She became involved in a number of successful business ventures, including working as a cook and housekeeper for wealthy families, which gave her access to influential individuals. Over time, Pleasant used her skills and connections to build a thriving real estate business and invest in several profitable enterprises.

In addition to her entrepreneurial success, Pleasant became known as an astute

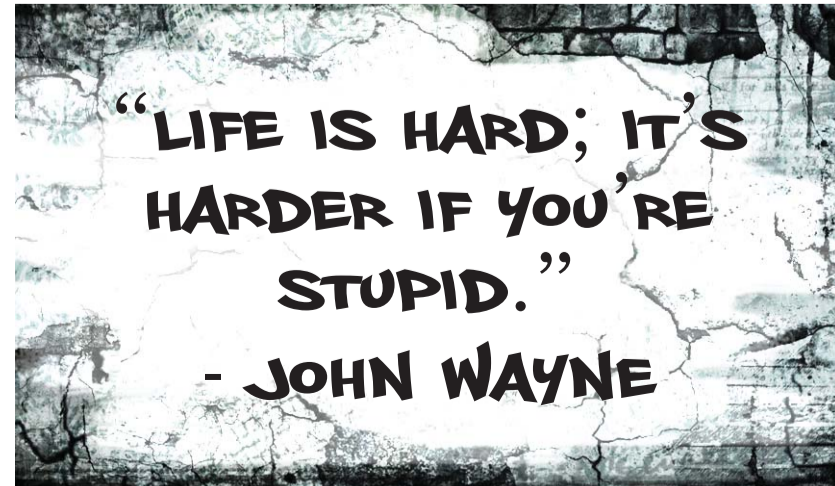


investor and financier, accumulating significant wealth. She is believed to have been one of the wealthiest women in California by the mid-19th century, but her financial success was not just for personal gain. Pleasant used her wealth to further her humanitarian goals, particularly her commitment to the abolition of slavery and racial equality. Pleasant became deeply involved in the abolitionist movement, using her resources to fund and support underground railroad operations and to assist formerly enslaved people in escaping to freedom. She was known to assist and hide fugitive slaves, providing them with safe passage to freedom in the North. Her own life, built on a foundation of resilience and resistance to oppression, gave her the courage to stand up for others who faced the same injustices she once endured.

Legacy of Mary Ellen Pleasant

Despite her significant contributions to the abolitionist movement, civil rights, and her success as a businesswoman, Mary Ellen Pleasant's life was often overshadowed by the broader narratives of the time. Her name was excluded from many historical accounts, and for many years, she was overlooked in the annals of American history. However, in recent decades, historians have begun to reassess her role, and today, her legacy as a pioneering African American woman is increasingly being recognized. Pleasant's impact is felt today in the continued fight for racial justice, equality, and empowerment. Her story is a powerful reminder of the vital role that African American women played in shaping the future of the United States, both through their personal triumphs and their relentless advocacy for social change.

THE WALL



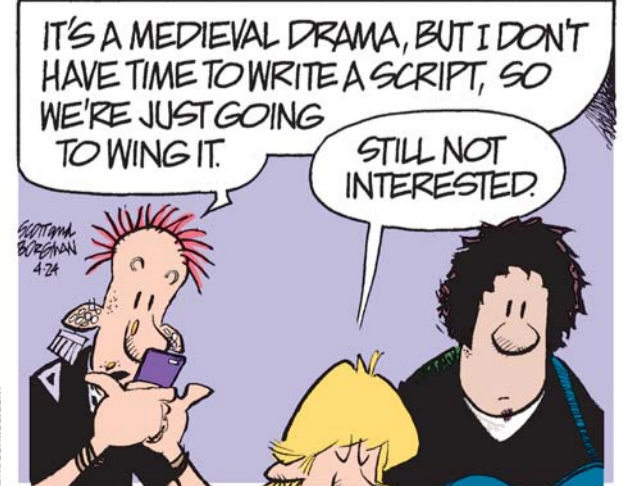
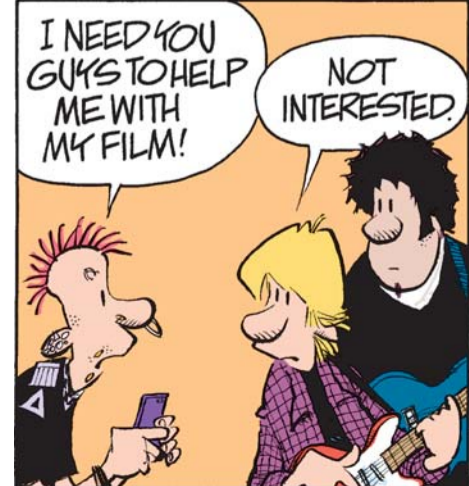
BABY BLUES



By Rick Kirkman & Jerry Scott



ZITS



By Jerry Scott & Jim Borgman

