The word "Buncombe" has, along with its variations of "bunk" and "bunkum," entered American slang as a term synonymous with meaningless speech. The popular term for pretentious and nonsensical talk originated with Felix Walker, a U.S. congressman (1817-23) who represented a region in western North Carolina that included Buncombe County. Walker gave a high-sounding speech on a militia pension bill to a nearly empty congressional chamber. Afterward, when questioned about his reasons for the verbiage, he reportedly stated that he was "speaking . . . to Buncombe." This elicited the response: "And buncombe your talk certainly was." Thereafter the term was used to refer to insincere political speech but was later expanded to include any trivial and overblown application of language.

References:

Additional Resources:


Subjects:
Early Statehood (1789-1820)
Slogans, slang, and sayings

Authors:
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Origin - location:
Buncombe County

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