

## *Ask the Chief.....*

### **Where does the term “cop” often used to refer to a police officer come from ?**

There are many theories as to its origin. Some will tell you that it comes from the term “Constable on Patrol.” Others will tell you that it originated in New York referring to the copper buttons on police officer uniforms. But history tells us neither is true.

Although no one can say with absolute certainty, the word “cop” dates back to Anglo-Saxon times in the 1100’s, and was a verb meaning “catch or grab”. It first appears in writing around the 1700’s in England as a verb “cop”. In 1846 in the English novel it is used in Swell’s Night Guide where it reads *“they count on me the best flag pitcher of all the swallows; I never gets copped by the Bobbies”*. In 1859 the California Police Gazette states in an article on January 22<sup>nd</sup> *“He was at last ‘copped’ by officer Nickerson.”*

In short, the term “cop” comes from the verb form of “take or seize (i.e. arrest). However, the term “cop” was a derogatory term used for police officers in England. Petty street criminals referred to English Bobbies as “cops”, and police officers found this so derogatory that England made it illegal to use the term “cop” to speak of a police officer.

And now, as Paul Harvey once said, you know the rest of the story.

<https://www.quora.com/How-did-the-term-cop-start-to-become-a-synonym-for-police-officer>

<http://orvillejenkins.com/words/cops.html>

<http://www.lakecountyohio.gov/sheriffoffice/AsktheChief.aspx>