

[Slate Quarry Terms]

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Vermont

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Subject——— Glossary of Slate Quarry Terms

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Note:

The following glossary of terms is by no means complete. Explanations have been attempted for geological formations to which the quarrymen have given special names. The usage employed by them is not that of the geologist. The writer has attempted to translate the terms in the more geological terminology; and thus, the explanations may be insufficient due to lack of geological knowledge on his part.

*Words having an “ing” ending; such as, “plugging,” or “splitting” are, of course, used without the “ing” ending also.

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I Terms indicating occupation of workers.

1. Slatemaker— one who makes slates from blocks, also known as a “splitter.”
2. Splitter— one who splits, or makes slates from blocks, also known as a “slatemaker.”

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3. Trimmer— one who trims slates to definite sizes, in the length and width. Operates a trimming machine.
4. Blocker, or Blockmaster, or Block-cutter— one who makes, or cuts blocks, from quarried rock, suitable for making slates.
5. Rockman— one who supervises, directs, and engages in the quarrying of the rock. He also designates where future quarrying will be done.
6. Pit-man— one who labors in the pit, or quarry-hole. Usually an unskilled laborer who clears out refuse, and assists skilled men.
7. Engineer— one who operates hoisting machinery.
8. Rigger— one who adjusts cables on quarry poles, or puts up cables.
9. Climber— one who climbs the stick, or quarry pole to repair cables.
10. Motion-Boy— a boy who relays signals from the pit to the engineer to hoist stone, etc.
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11. **Smegger— an apprentice slatemaker. (Not used much today).
12. Puncher— one who operates a punching machine to punch nail holes in slates.
13. Caffar— the “boss”; (rarely used today).
14. Boss— one who owns, or runs the quarry.
15. Yardman— one who handles slates, stacks them, or piles them. Unskilled.
16. Slater, or Roofer— one who lays slate roofs. Not a quarryman.

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17. Sawyer— one who saws slate; runs the saws. *Sawyer—" " " " " "

18. Quarryman— anyone working in the quarry.

19. Pit-Boss— another name for the “rock-man.”

*“Sawyer” is the more correct term.

**“Smegger” also designates one who performs all of the operations necessary to quarrying. He is one who runs a quarry alone.

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II Terms designating buildings at quarries.

1. *Shanty— a small building housing the splitter and trimmer, and the trimming machine. It has racks to hold slates made by the men.

2. *Splitting-shanty— See “Shanty”.

3. **Motion-shanty— a small building for the motion-boy.

4. Mill— a building where slate is made, or milled. Often one mill takes the place of many shanties.

5. Engine-house— a building containing hoisting machinery, and sometimes an air-compressor.

6. Shipping Sheds— storage houses for slate.

*Usually located on the dump to permit easy disposal of slate-waste.

**Located near the edge of the quarry to permit easy vision for signaling.

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III Terms indicating slate quarry machinery, and equipment.

1. Cableways— the system of cable running from the stick, or quarry pole, to the banks, on which the carriers run.
2. Carriers— the carriages which run on the cableways, and hold the hoisting rope. Used to raise blocks and the refuse box.
3. Refuse Box— a scoop-shaped metal box to hoist rubbish from the pit, and carry it to the dump.
4. Tramway— a system of cables arranged to support carrier baskets. Used to transport slate from the mill to the railroad. (One instance. Now out of use).
5. Derrick-hoist— a boom type hoist not commonly used in this region since the advent of the cableways.
6. Hoisting-engine— engine which operates the hoisting drum.
7. Hoisting-drum— the drum on which the cable winds and unwinds; the hoisting cable.
8. Saddle— the iron casting on top of the quarry stick through which the cable runs.
9. Guys— the wire ropes which support the stick.
10. Dead-log— the timber to which the guys are anchored.
11. Rope-carriers— the running block on the cable which supports the hoisting rope.
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12. Lazy-rope— the rope which carries the guide for the rope-carrier. See “rope-carrier.”
13. Monkey— an automatic-dumping arrangement on the carrier.

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14. Sheaves— the wheels through which the cables run. They are attached to the stick, or quarry pole.
15. Pumps— the machines used to keep the quarry pit free of water.
16. Blasting-machine— the instrument used to explode powder charges.
17. Signal-Bells— bells located in the engine-house which are operated from the pit to signal for hoisting.
18. Rubbers— long rubber tubing to hold powder when the drill-holes are wet.
19. Fuses— used in blasting.
20. Exploders— used in blasting.
21. Jaws— braces on the stick, or quarry-pole to strengthen it.
22. Splices— additions to the quarry stick to make it taller.
23. Quarry-hitch— a chain-hitch used on blocks.
24. Air-hoist— a compressed air hoist used to raise blocks onto, and from a saw-bed.
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25. Saws— rotary saws used in cutting blocks when the slate cannot be cross-fractured. Used on “unfading green slate.”
26. Saw-tables, or Saw-beds— the table on which the block lies while being sawed.
27. Planer, or Planing machine— a machine which smooths the surface of the slate.

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28. Rubbing-bed— a devise for smoothing, and polishing the slate. A large grinder, or polishing stone.
29. Jack-hammer— a compressed air hammer. Used with an automatic-rotation drill.
30. Pit-hammer— a heavy jack-hammer used in quarrying.
31. Shanty-hammer— a lighter jack-hammer used in reducing blocks.
32. Block-cars— samll flat cars, running on narrow gauge tracks, which carry blocks to the mill.
33. Slate-cars— small cars, running on narrow gauge tracks, and having racks to hold slates, which carry the slates from the mill to the yard.
34. Compressor— an air-compressing machine and tank usually in the engine-house.
33. Trimmer, or Trimming machine— a rotating blade, somewhat like the curved blade of a lawn mower, 8 operated by a foot-treadle to trim light slates, and by power for heavier slates.
36. Plug-drills—drills used in making plug-holes.
37. Plug—a type of wedge used in plug-holes.
38. Feathers—always used with a “plug.” To add extra pressure. A supplementary wedge,
39. Wedge— tool used in quarrying rock to split rock.
40. Gouge—a type of chisel for sculping.
41. Splitter, or Splitter's chisel, or Splitting chisel—a thin-bladed chisel used to split blocks into slates.

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42. Lump-chisel—a tool to remove lumps from slate-surfaces.
43. Jumper—a long hand-drill used in the pit.
44. Splitter's mallet—a small wooden mallet used with a splitting chisel.
45. Marker—a tool used to score the plug-hole, and direct the line of fracture.
46. Sculpting-chisel—a tool used to sculp the rock.
47. Beetle—a large, long-handled, wooden-mallet used in reducing blocks.
48. Sledge-hammer—a maul used to drive plugs.
49. Stick, or Quarry-pole—a tall mast which supports the system of cables. Usually set on the dump, since refuse is deposited at its base.

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IV Terms associated with quarrying slate.

1. Quarry—the entire plant necessary to mine and finish slate; including quarry-hole, mill, machinery and yard.
2. Quarry-hold—excavation for removing slate.
3. Pit—quarry-hole.
4. Opening—quarry-hole.
5. Dump—refuse pile of waste slate.
6. Yard—storage space for finished stock.

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7. Banks—edges of quarry covered with top-soil.
8. Vein—directional deposit of slate. (Not Geological term).
9. Beds, or Bedding—distinct layers of slate rock.
10. Slant—dip of rock-face.
11. Free-side—exposed lateral side of rock.
12. Free-end—exposed frontal side of rock.
13. Joint—parallel systems of cracks, or fractures existing in rock.
14. Butt-joint, or Butt—a joint at base of dip, a bottom strike-joint.
15. Head-joint—a top joint, a strike-joint.
16. Side-joint—a dip-joint, or diagonal-joint.
17. Bottom-joint, or Flat-joint—a horizontal-joint.
18. Freak—slate of irregular color and texture, of some architectural value.
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19. Flagging—irregular pieces of slate-rock of regular thickness, one inch or over.
20. Slate (Roofing slate)—rectangular pieces of slate rock of regular size and thickness (3/16" - 1").
21. Roofing Slate—same as "Slate."

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22. School Slates—rectangular pieces of slate rock of regular sizes and thicknesses, which have been milled, and are used as tablets to be marked with chalk.
23. Grain—secondary direction of splitting, usually at right angles to the cleave of the rock.
24. Cleave, or Cleavage—structure of the rock which permits splitting it into thin sheets.
25. Flint—quartz veins in slate rock which render it worthless.
26. Clip—false cleavage.
27. Quarry-sap—moisture in the rock which permits easier splitting.
28. Pit-water—water in the pit from seepage.
29. Stripping—removing top-soil to reach the rock-surface.
30. Taking off Top—stripping.
31. Top—over-burden of soil on rock surface.
32. Quarrying—removing suitable slate.
33. Mill-stock—large slabs of quarried rock suitable for milling.
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34. Pest—rock with closely spaced joints, unsuitable for quarrying, a waste rock.
35. Header—a head-joint.
36. Foot-joint—a strike-joint at foot of block.
37. Blasting—blowing slate-rock loose.

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38. Wedging—splitting blocks loose in quarry-hole by wedge pressure.
39. Plugging—a type of wedging used to make cross-fractures.
40. Plug-hole—a hole drilled in a slab of rock to permit use of a plug and feathers.
41. Slab—a large mass of quarried rock as it comes from the pit.
42. Block-cutting—reducing slabs into blocks suitable for splitting into slates.
43. Blocks—chunks of rock small enough to be split into slates. Also used in the sense of “slab”.
44. Splitting—leafing slates from blocks in line of the slaty-cleavage.
45. Sculpting—scoring rock with a chisel across, or with the grain to cause fracture into blocks.
46. Trimming—chopping off edges to make slates rectangular in shape.
47. Punching—punching nail-holes in roofing slate.
48. Drill-holes—holes drilled in rock to facilitate quarrying rock by blasting.
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49. Marking—scoring the plug-hole to direct line of fracture of rock.
50. Split-hole—plug-hole.
51. Sawing—cutting slabs of unfading green slate; across the grain, into blocks. (Unfading green slate cannot be plugged).
52. Robbing a joint—undermining a butt-joint to work lower beds.

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53. Hogback—two angular bends in opposite directions and near each other, traversing a mass of slate. A type of fracture.
54. Square—the amount of slate necessary to cover one hundred square feet of roof area. The term is always used for roofing slate.
55. Over the Dump—an expression sometimes used to indicate bad-slate.