

A Collector's Glossary

Bob Schroth and Dave Thorpe

I had just finished a phone call with a fellow collector, and my wife said "you guys talk in a whole new language, what's a stress crack, who's got big ears, who's hammered." So I thought we might need a collectors glossary of words and phrases we use daily. This is by no means a complete listing and many of the words have more than one meaning. We welcome additions and suggestions for the second edition.

Adamantine: word commonly found on miners wax candle boxes. Having a diamond hardness" and or luster.

Adit: a horizontal tunnel, or the main haulage tunnel exiting a mine.

Amalgamation: a process using mercury to collect fine particles of gold or silver from pulverized ore.

Anthracite: "hard coal" found mainly in the Scranton, PA area. Also a term, coined by collectors, used as a name of a Maple City-like lamp, but which bears no stamped name.

Ben Dover: general term for a collector who repeatedly allows another individual to take advantage of him in negotiated deals.

Beaded: a raised row of dots stamped up from the surface of a lamp. Used for grip and decoration. Most commonly seen on Justrite lamps 1913-1919, but also on Britelites.

Big Ears: a fellow collector who seems to always be around when you're talking price or where you might find a rare mining artifact.

Bohannon brace: refers to the external metal brace of a Hansen cap lamp in which the rear cap braces have been broken off. A Bohannon brace generally changes hands many times before finding a home.

Bonneted Clanny: safety lamp with glass viewing section on bottom and sheet metal top.

Bulldog: A cap lamp made by Harker Mfg. Co. of Cincinnati. Resembles their "Britelite" but has waterlever on top instead of usual side position. Lamps are not stamped with the word Bulldog, but were advertised this way.

Burned: usually a novice collector who has been taken advantage of by a unscrupulous dealer or collector.

Candle Box: shipping container for miners wax candles.

Cauliflower Ear: This develops after talking to a long-winded collector on the phone. Hopefully on his dime.

Crimper: tool used for crimping the blasting cap to the fuse.

Cross-cut: a mine tunnel going across an ore vein, used for ventilation and communication between work areas.

Clanny: Safety lamp with glass viewing section on bottom and wire screen on top.

Davy: Safety lamp with no glass viewing area, just wire screen.

Ding: Small dent or dents in a carbide lamp or oil wick. 'A few dings': useless definition referring to supposedly minor denting. Major dents frequently are described euphemistically as "dings" by a seller. The actual size of a "ding" seems to mysteriously increase during shipping.

Desirable: just because a lamp is rare, it does not mean that it is wanted by other collectors. Example: the Milburn carbide area lamp is rare but most of us would rather have an EverReady.

Defender style Victor: A cap lamp with the "Victor" stamp on top, but with raised dots around the tank and base.

Defender style X-RAY: A cap lamp with the "X-RAY" stamp on top, with raised dots around the tank and base.

Double-bowl: (also double-concave) a reflector with an additional inner recessed concavity.

Dry Hole: an antique show that is devoid of mining artifacts, a mine shaft that is not wet but also has no mining antiques.

Embellish: to improve a story by adding details, often fictitious. Most collectors have been guilty of this.

Embossed: to decorate with raised out designs, to stamp outward.

Fat-bottom: referring to the flared out base of a particular early Grier cap lamp.

Fly spec variation: meaningless variations in a lamp's manufacture that some collectors prize highly.

Fired: a lamp that has been lit or used.

Fishing: some one who calls you up to ask what something is worth; putting a high price on a collectable to see if anyone bites on it.

Folder: a miner's folding candle stick.

Font: the body portion of an oil wick lamp where the fuel is contained.

Gang Stamped: name of the manufacturer stamped in the body of the lamp or candle stick all at the same time, not one letter at a time.

Gilted gold: a metallic gold-colored paint used on many early cap lamps.

Hat Brace: the wire or flat stock brace that in addition to the hat hook holds the lamp to the miners hat.

Hex-base: refers to the six-sided base seen on the Guy's Dropper lamp. Often used incorrectly to describe eight-sided bases on the AutoLite and Wolf cap lamps.

High Grader's: the handle on a candle stick that has a bulbous handle for secreting away high grade ore. A collector who takes only the best mining pieces out of a collection for sale.

Head Frame: the support structure located at the entrance of a mine over the shaft. Used for hoisting.

Hammered: a lamp that looks like it was used for a hammer; a drunk mining lamp collector.

Horizontal: the water chamber on a carbide lamp that is mounted on its side, or horizontally.

Incused: the name on the lamp that is stamped inward.

Intermediate: term used to describe a transitional change in a lamp, most likely it is a lamp with wrong parts.

Known: a vague term used to describe how many examples of a lamp or artifact are known to the collecting community.

Madder than a red-assed spider: a well known collectors term for someone who is upset over a deal, or when you miss a nice mining piece at a show. State of mind a buyer is in when he receives a lamp with "a few dings."

Manway: the shaft compartment next to the haul shaft used by workers to enter or leave a vertical mine.

Mayor of Bodie's Wife: fictitious person.

Mint: the highest grade used to describe the condition of a mining artifact. Indicates that the piece was never used, is complete, and in perfect condition. (Note: in certain areas of the U.S.A., "mint" indicates that lamp has been extensively repaired well enough to fool a beginning collector as being in original or excellent condition.)

Mucker: the miner who shovels the blasted material into the ore car, the trammer then pushes the car to the haulage shaft.

Ninetyfive percent: a useless and often misleading description of the condition of a lamp.

Nut brown: term coined by Steve Loftin to refer to the most desired finish of a brass lamp. This color requires decades of aging to achieve, and should be even over the entire surface of the lamp.

Path-a-finder: misnomer for Pathfinder cap lamp.

Patina: the oxidation of the finish of a lamp.

Pioneer: cap lamp made by Baldwin-Simmons, but with larger more curved dimension that the standard Baldwin "pinchwaist" lamps. Lamps are not stamped with the Pioneer name, but were advertised this way.

Preferred: a mining collectible may have come with different parts; bases, reflectors, braces, hooks. The 'preferred' parts are the ones most often found on the lamps. Occasionally an individual may knowingly or unknowingly attempt to pass off a lamp with the wrong base or reflector. In so doing he may state that the bogus piece is the "intermediate-style" or "alternate-version." A tactful response is to note that such a lamp does not have the "preferred reflector", or "preferred base."

Pre-Justrite Victor: the name of an early unmarked Scranton-style carbide cap lamp which is unmarked. Probably made by Hughes Bros. Name is derived from the box which contains the lamp.

Pinch Waist: the tapered reduction in size between the water tank and the carbide chamber.

Pistol grip: down-turned handle of a style of candlestick designed to resemble the handle of a pistol. '*Pistol-grip ears*': vulgar term.

Raking wire: pertains to an early water feed mechanism, in which a straight "raking wire" fits snugly in a tube. The wire can be easily pulled out. Mechanism is gravity feed and not adjustable. Many were advertised as "self-regulating."

Scoop: when you are the lucky one that beats your fellow collectors to the rare piece at a show or swap meet.

Shines like a dime in a goat's ass: the repugnant appearance of a brass lamp that has been heavily buffed on a rouge wheel.

Side-swingers: rear cap braces on a miners cap lamp (see hat braces, also cap braces.)

Sticking Tommy: misnomer for a miner's candle holder.

Stope: large room dug out by miners.

Stress Crack: as a brass lamp ages, it may develop hair-line cracks. Generally these cracks are not large enough to admit light, but may open to do so. Rarely seen on lamps made after 1915.

Supervisor's or superintendent's lamp: Similar to carbide cap lamp, but with two hand handles at rear, and generally slightly taller dimensions. Usually nickel-plated.

Unfired: a lamp that has never been lit or used.

Vertical: the shape of the water chamber on a carbide lamp that resembles a vertical cylinder.

Vignette: an ornamental design or picture used as a border, or inset on a letterhead, or stock certificate.

Victor style Defender: a cap lamp with the "Defender" stamp on top, but with vertical ribs around the tank and base.

Victor style XRAY: a cap lamp with the "XRAY" stamp on top, with vertical ribs around the tank and base.

Water feed: this controls the water entering the carbide chamber. Over the years hundreds of designs were tried, some much more desirable to the collector.

Wet-mine (lamp or reflector): A miner's lamp in which the reflector has an overhanging portion or umbrella to protect the flame from dripping ceiling water.

"What's a _____ worth?": "I have acquired such a piece, are you interested in beginning a bidding war for the express purpose of making me wealthy?"