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A Glossary of Spanish Mining Terms

The following glossary is based on terms used in the Mining Ordinances of New Spain and found compiled in a notebook which belonged to Francisco H. Delgado, a native of Santa Fe, New Mexico. Delgado served as the chief clerk of the Court of Private Land Claims from 1897 to 1904. President Woodrow Wilson appointed him register of the United States land office in 1913. The *New Mexico Historical Review* is indebted to his descendant, Edmundo Delgado, for permission to use Francisco Delgado's compilation. It was annotated by former miner Richard Landavazo, a graduate student at the University of New Mexico.

ABRAS (Clefts or fissures). Are fissures in the hills, demonstrating the force of some subterraneous expansion, which has turned them asunder. Indications of veins. 2. A fissure; a considerable opening or cavity in the mountain, rock, or lode.

ACHICAR (To diminish). Referring to the lowering of the water in any work or level. The workmen employed for this purpose are called *Achicadores*. To decrease or diminish; applied to the diminution of water in any of the workings, lowering the water in the shafts, etc.

ACHINCHIQUES. Workmen employed to collect water from lower springs in mines. 2. Workmen employed in removing the water in *botas*.

ADEMADORES. Liners. 2. A mining carpenter; a timberman; to timber.

ADEMES. Coverings or linings of timber. 2. Timber work for securing and supporting the works of the mine.

AFINACION (Refining). The separating from the plates or ingots of silver the drops always combined with after smelting.

ALCRIBIS O TOVERA (Turn or tuyere). A kind of funnel into which the nozzle of the bellows of smelting furnaces is fitted to conduct the blast. 2. The tuyere of a smelting furnace.

APAREJO (Tackle). A machine for raising the timber linings of pits when they give way or become loose. 2. A table, a block and fall, an apparatus; a set of harness for beasts of burden or draft; a pack-saddle.

APEROS (Implements). All the requisites for keeping in working order the pits and drag wells; for erecting shades and for the other matters pertaining to the underground work of the mine. 2. Utensils; also materials, such as gunpowder and paper for blasting, etc.

A PIQUE (Downward). To pique is to work by sinking downward in the perpendicular veins. 2. Digging downwards in a vertical direction.

APURADORES (Gleaners). Men or women who seek particles of metal in the refuse of the amalgamation works. 2. Men who re-wash the earth from the tinas.

ATACADOR (Rammer). A small cylindrical tool, more slender than a borer (*barrena*) for ramming in the cartridge with which the rock is blasted.

ATAJADOR (Interceptor). A boy who brings the mules or horses for the grinding mills. 2. A boy who attends the horses and mules.

ATECAS. Workman who bail the water from the lower levels of the mine into skins to be raised from the pits. 2. Laborers who collect the water in buckets from the planes of the mines, in order to pass it off by the shafts.

ATIERRAS (Rubbish). Earth which interferes with the work, and which should be removed to the rubbish heaps.

AVIADORES. Contractors for supplies. 2. He who lends funds for working mines.

AVIOS. Supplies. 2. Implements.

AZOGUERIA (From *azogue*, quicksilver). Used to express the reduction of gold and silver by quicksilver, and the establishment where it is effected. 2. The room in which quicksilver is kept in store.

BANCOS (Bank). Strong rock, which throws up and contracts the vein, or alters its direction. 2. Rocks which intercept the vein, or cause it to take a different direction.

BARRA (Crow). An iron tool tipped with steel. Also one of the twelve or twenty-four shares into which mines are divided.

BARRENA (Borer). A cylindrical iron tool, of the diameter of a two real piece, the lower end shaped like a chisel, or with four edges placed crosswise, the head and point tipped with steel, and about two-thirds or three-fourths of a *vara* in length. It is used for boring the rock preparatory for blasting.

BARRENO (Hole bored). The hole bored in the rock for the insertion of the cartridge; *Barreno* is also used to express a communication between two miners, which are said to *barrenarse* when they communicate underground.

BARRETERO A working miner who uses a crow bar (*barra*) wedge (*cuna*) or pick (*pica*).

BOCA (Mouth). The first opening made on the vein. 2. Mouth, entrance, or pit of a mine.

BOCA MEJORA (Mouth, improved). Pit or mouth made to communicate with the fixed stake or principal pit in order to facilitate the underground working of mines. 2. A shaft or *boca* to communicate with the entrance of the vein to facilitate the workings.

BOCHORNO (Glow). Excessive heat caused by a lack of ventilation. 2. Vapor, or foul air; want of ventilation; suffocating heat.

BOLEO. Outcrop.

BONANZA (Fair weather). Is generally applied to a work when in rich ore.

BORRASCA (Foul weather). Adversity. A mine in *borrasca* is in an unproductive state.

BOTAS (Buckets). Made of the hide of an ox for drawing off the water by the pits. 2. A leather bag or sack, made of one or more skins, in which water is lifted in the mines.

BUSCONES (Searchers). Persons who search for ore in abandoned mines, either with a view to carry it off or to give information of the discovery for the sake of a reward. 2. Tributers, or miners who work on part proceeds.

CALENTADURA (From *calentar*, to heat). The first ingot reduced in a smelting furnace. 2. The first heating of the furnace, or putting the furnace into blast.

CAMINO (Road or way). Besides its usual sense, is applied in some places to the bags or sacks of ore.

CANONES (Levels). Narrow underground passages, or galleries, by means of which the mine is worked. 2. A level or horizontal gallery.

CAPELLINA (Hood). A vessel consisting of two pieces, employed in separating the quicksilver from the silver. 2. The iron bell under which the silver amalgam is distilled down.

CATA (Taste or trial). A mine of small depths; a prospect hole.

CATEADOR. Investigate. 2. To search for new mines.

CABALLO (Horse). A mass of firm and hard rock met within working a mine, or sinking a pit.

CEBAR (To feed). A mode of reducing rich ore in a furnace. 2. To add quicksilver to a mass of ores under amalgamation.

CENDRADA. The bottom of the smelting or refining furnace, which is made of fine earth or the ashes of plants. 2. Materials of which a cupelling test is made; the test itself.

CENDRADILLA OR GALEME. A small test or refining furnace for rich ore. 2. Cupelo.

CHARQUE INTERIOR. To clean off the water from the cisterns or pools by channels, so as to guide it into the pit.

CHIFLON. To work a *chiflon* is to extend the works, both in length and depth, at the same time.

CIELO (Sky). Working *de cielo* is when the workmen, either on foot or on his knees, works at the vault or roof of the work. 2. Roof of a work, an upward working; working at the top of the vein.

COHETAJO (Blast). A mode of breaking the rock, by wrapping up gunpowder in paper tied together with palm leaves or any other flexible vegetable and secured with sifted white earth. A small reed is left projecting out for the purpose of applying the match to ignite it. 2. A cartridge for blasting.

COLORES (colors). Colors with which the surface of the earth is tinged, showing a vermilion or yellow appearance in the sun, which is an indication of ore.

COMERSE LOS PILARES (To consume the pillars). To break down, pare away, or weaken the supports or pillars of a mine. 2. Figuratively, to abandon a mine.

CONTRACANON. Counter level.

CONTRAMINAR. Counter mine.

CONTRAMINAS. Levels. A work of communication between two or more miners. 2. A work of communication between two mines; also an adit.

CORNADILLAS DE COFRADIAS. Collective brotherhoods.

CORTAR PILLAR (To cut a pillar). To finish a pillar by making a cross-cut, and forming a landing place, also called *tapextle*.

CORTAR SOGAS (To cut away the ropes). To abandon a mine.

CRESTONES (crests). Ridges consisting of crude ore, spar or rocks on the surface, which have burst out from the pressure of the vein in the form of a cockscomb, so as to be visible at a league's distance. They are, as it were, the crust of the vein. 2. Out-cropping of a lode; the crest of a lode appearing above the surface of the ground.

CRIADERO. A kind of *cul de sac* or vault, in which the ore lies loose. It is also called *bohedal*.

CRUCERA (Cross-cut). Dar crucero, is to work horizontally or across the vein to give air to the works or to avoid some insuperable mass of rock. To drive in search of the vein, in which case the work is called a level (*canon*).

CUADRILLAS. Working companies.

CUNA (Wedge). An iron tool, usually of two pounds weight for soft ground, and one pound or under for hard ground, the edge of which is of steel and is struck with a pick.

DEMASIA. Space unappropriated between mines or otherwise.

DEMASIAS. Unappropriated ground.

DENUNCIO (Denouncement). The giving information that the mine has been insufficiently worked more than four months in order that it may be adjudged to the denouncer, with the due solemnities of proclamation and summons. 2. *Denunciación*; Denouncement; a formal application to the court of mines of the district to have a mine adjudged to the applicant, the workings of which have been abandoned or inefficiently carried on during the period fixed by the ordinance, or which has never been worked at all. A person has the power of denouncing a mine which has been unworked, or inefficiently worked, or depopulated for more than four months.

DERRUMBE OR DERRUMBAMIENTO (A falling down). The falling in of a mine. Also called *nundido* (a sinking in).

DESCAGÜE (Discharge). The last and the largest ingot reduced in a smelting furnace. To *descargar* the furnace is to demolish it. 2. Drawing out the last contents of the furnace; blowing out the furnace.

DESAGÜES (Draining). The drawing off water from the lower works of the mine by the pits, or by means of adits. 2. Outlets of every description by which water is discharged

DESMONTE (That which has been cut away). All the barren rock removed from the sides and roof of the vein, which when the rubbish rock and barren ground are removed is left clear.

DESPENSA (Pantry). A safe room for storing up the rich ores; the shed (*galera*) serving for the common ores. 2. A store-room for materials and tools.

DESPUEBLE (Dispeopling). Abandoning the mine; neglecting to employ four laborers about some external or internal work agreeable to the ordinance.

ECHADERO (Resting place). Platform on the hill for the mules, for spreading out, cleaning, and weighing the ore.

ECHADO (Inclination). Lateral inclination of the vein. 2. Inclination or dip of the slope.

EMBORRASCARCE LA MINA (from *borrasca*). Applied to a vein which has become barren.

EMBIJA DE ORO. A lake of gold.

ENSAYES (Assays). Trial of a small quantity of ore by fire or quicksilver, in order to ascertain its standard, and whether it will pay to work it. It is also said when the assayer determines the standard of gold or silver, marking each piece.

ESCALERAS (Ladders). Round pieces of 8 or 10 yards in length, with notches which serve for stairs in ascending the pits. The landing places between, enable the workman to descend without interfering with each other.

FAENAS (*Fatigues*). Dead work not carried on in ore, but in barren ground, which tends to bring the mine into a working state, such as driving an air hole, adit, level, or work of drainage. To work a *faena* is to pay less wages to the barman, sharing the ore equally with him.

FAENAS MUERTAS. Dead work.

FIERROS (Irons). Dross removed from the ingots after letting off the lead into the float or from the ore first smelted.

FRONTON (Wall). A work which the laborers carry on standing, proceeding onwards, or straight forward.

FUELLES (Bellows). Applied to those used for the forges (above ground or beneath) where the bars and picks are sharpened and to those used in the smelting furnaces

GALENA. See *cendradilla*.

GALERA. A large shed; a millhouse or grinding mill; a large building, on the floor of which the treading in of quicksilver in amalgamation takes place.

GALLOS (Cocks). Rich ore, with threads and grains of gold and silver. 2. Small particles of silver, which appear in the shape of spherules on the surface of certain ores after they have been strongly heated; more generally, however, applied to the spurting out of the silver from the assay button on cooling; also, fine specimens of native silver, or other rich ores.

GOLPEADOR (Striker). The person who strikes the head of the borer with the pick, to bore the rock for the insertion of the cartridge. 2. A miner who works with the mallet or hammer in blasting.

GRASAS (Grease). Scum or scoriae removed from the metal, when it runs out of the smelting furnace into the float. From this scum the *plomillos* are detached.

GRASERO OR ESCONIAL (Slag heap). Where the scoriae are thrown out.

GUARDA-MINA. Mine watcher.

GUARDA RAYA (Limit or boundary mark). A mark or boundary of stone and mortar, or stone and mud, erected at a spot where a communication has occurred between two mines, the boundary being first ascertained. 2. Marks or limits of the boring, measurement of the work done in a mine; limit or boundary line.

GUARDAS (Guards). Rock at the sides of the vein, and roof of the work. 2. A rib of different substance from the rock or lode, which generally, is upon the sides of the vein; called in Cornwall cupels of a lode, or backs.

GUIA (Guide). An indication guiding or conducting to the rock part of a vein, or to the discovery of a new vein. Also applied to the ingredients added to the piles of ore, when mixed for reduction, to ascertain their state. 2. A mark directing to the richest part of the vein.

GUIJA (Spar or gravel). A hard flint of a dusky color, or a more crystalline substance of not very fine texture, which breaks to pieces with a slight blow. It varies in color, and affords the best indication of ore when black.

GUIJO. Iron spike on which the mortar rests. 2. The iron spindle of the shaft of machinery.

HACIENDA DE BENEFICIO. Establishment for reducing ores.

HUECO (Hollow). A hollow place.

HUNDIDO (Sinking in). See *derrumbe*. Sunk in.

INCORPORADERA (Mixing place). A place, court yard, or shed, where the quicksilver and other ingredients are mixed with the ore in the process of reduction by amalgamation. 2. In amalgamation, to add the first charge of quicksilver. The term *cebar* is applied to adding the subsequent charges.

INTERMEDIOS. Crossbeams.

INTERVENTOR. Inspector representing the interests of the proprietors or of the *aviador*.

JABONCILLOS (Diminutive of *jabon*, soap). Whitish, unctious ore, which is an indication or forerunner of treasure.

JALONTLES. Portions of ore not properly ground, which have to be re-ground.

LABOR (Working). Generally, all mining labor.

LAMAS (Slime). The earthly matter taken from vats in the amalgamation works.

LAMERO. A place in the amalgamation establishments for the slime and ore after grinding.

LAMEROS. Refuse. 2. Lama pits.

LAMPAZO (Mop). An instrument formed of green boughs, fixed to the end of a long pole, which is used to moderate the heat of the smelting furnaces when excessive. (New Mexico, *barredero*).

LAVADERO (Washing place). A large wooden vat, in the middle of which is a contrivance for stirring. The ore is washed in this vat, and the earthly matter is carried off through a channel with the water, the silver remaining at the bottom. 2. Gold washings; washings vats or tubs for separating the amalgam from the slime.

LLAVES (Keys). Supports of oak, with notches and circular joints, which extend to the four corners of the pit and support the lining or timber covering. Also the two timbers that support the shed for draining.

LAZADORES (Persons who use a *lazo* or noose). Persons employed to collect hands for working the mines, in case of scarcity of workmen; so called for their remarkable dexterity in throwing a *lazo*.

LENADOR (Woodman). Woodman employed in carrying or supplying wood for the smelting furnaces.

LIMADURA (Filings). A film with which the metal becomes coated in the small assays made for the purpose of ascertaining the state of the ore and what addition of quicksilver and other ingredients it may require. 2. An appearance put on by the quicksilver in certain stages of the process of amalgamation, which is noticed at the edges of the amalgam washed in the bowl for making *tentadura*, or trial.

LIS. The silver is said to form *lis*, when the quicksilver is resolved into almost imperceptible particles, which occasions the loss and consumption in washing and stirring the ore in the course of reduction by amalgamation. 2. A particular state of the amalgam, observed by means of the *tentaduras* or trials in the bowl.

LUMBRERAS (Sky-lights). Communication between two works, for the sake of ventilation, and to make the lights burn. 2. An air shaft; an adit shaft.

MANDON. Overseer. 2. Master miner.

MALACATE (Whim). A machine moved by mules or horses. It consists of a wheel, a cage or drum, and an axle (*exe*). It is used for winding the ropes, so as to raise and let down the bags of ore or skins of water by the pit.

MANTAS (Blankets). Sacks made of the thread of the aloe and filled with ore or rubbish. 2. A blanket, or horse cloth, used to contain ores or tools to be brought up by the *malcates*, now replaced generally by sacks made of the fibers of the agave, or ox-hides.

MANTOS (Cloaks). Veins of ore spreading horizontally through the mountain, but of no depth.

MARCA (Mark). The royal arms stamped on a piece of assayed silver as token of its having paid the duties to the crown.

MECHA (fuse-match). A twist of cotton and grease made by a workman called a *cohetero* or *golpeador*, usually from his drawers or shirt, and used for firing the cartridge.

MEDIDAS DE MINA (Dimensions or boundaries of a mine). When applied a silver mine it form a parallelogram of 160 *varas* in length and 80 in width in the discover's, and 120 and 60 in an ordinary mine. As to gold mines, the discover's is 100 *varas* in length and 50 in width and an ordinary mine, 80 in length, and 40 in width. The internal dimensions should correspond with the external.

METAL DE AYUDA (Assisting ore). Ore used to assist the smelting of another ore and to temper it. 2. Metal or ores added in smelting, to assist in the reduction of the silver ores, lead, or galena, for example.

METAL DE CEBO. Very rich ore, which is smelted in refining tests.

METAL PEPENA. Rich picked gold or silver ore. The common ore is called *ordinario*.

MINA (Mine). The *descubridora* is the first mine discovered on the vein, or in a new vein in the same hill. All others are called ordinary mines.

MOGROLLO. The same as *metal de cebo*.

MOLONQUE. A piece of ore of uniform richness, containing more silver than extraneous matter or, at any rate, equal parts. 2. Crystallization of very rich silver ores.

NATAS O ESCORIAS (Scum or scoriae). Dross thrown off in the smelting furnace; in which case the furnace is said to *lexean* well. 2. slags.

OPERARIOS RAYADOS. Paid workmen.

PERITO FACULTATIVO. Mining expert.

PICO (Pick). A kind of iron hammer tipped with steel at both ends of 8 or 12 pounds in weight and longer or shorter, according to the fancy of each barman. 2. A miner's pick.

PIEDRAS DE MANO (Stone carried by hand). Ore of good quality, which the miners usually set apart for various purposes, which is called giving a *pedra de mano*.

PILAR (Pillar). Part of the substance of the hill, left between the excavations made cross-wise upon the vein, in other words, a support for the roof or back of the work, being the intermediate ground left between the winzes, cross-cuts, and levels. It ought to be lined with timber, and should not be worked into or weakened.

PILETA (Cistern). In which the waters within the mine, are collected, to prevent them from pouring down and inundating the lower works. In a smelting furnace, the breast-pan or vessel into which the melted metal flows down from the bottom stone.

PINA. The amalgam of silver and quicksilver, before the latter is driven off. 2. The cake of silver after the quicksilver has been distilled off.

PINTA (Spot or mark). An indication of this or that ore, by which its degree of richness is estimated, according to the color, grain, weight, or lightness. Amongst the good indications are the gallos, or threads of gold and silver in the ore, the ores called *polvorilla*, *jaboncillos*, *ayenado*, *apericado*, *cardenillo*, *arenillas*, copper and lead. And amongst the bad ones, are the mundic and antimony. But it is always necessary to prove the ore by an assay, as these indications are sometimes fallacious.

PLAN (Floor). To work *de plan* is to work either perpendicular, downwards, or a *chiflon*, that is to say, extending both forward and downward.

PLANES. The floor or deepest part of the mine.

PLANCHERA. A place or float made of white earth, connected with the smelting furnace, in which the ingots are formed.

VAPOR. Rather worse than *bochorno*, for besides putting out the lights, it is noxious. It proceeds from something in the nature of the ground, combined with the want of ventilation in the cavities of the mine.

VELADORES. Superintendents. 2. A watchman who takes care of the mine day and night; an under miner.

VENA (Vein). Is applied to the branches or small veins, two or one finger in breadth, or not wider than the back of a knife.

VETA (Lode or vein). A vein of metallic ore intersecting the ground. It is called a *manto* (bed), when it spreads horizontally through the hill; *clavadan* (perpendicular), when it proceeds perpendicularly, downwards; *echada* (underlying or inclined), when it extends sideways in length and

depth; *obliqua* (oblique), when it crosses the hill; *serpenteada* (tortuous), when it winds; *socia* (combined), when it unites with another; *rama* (branch), when it branches off from the primary lode.

VUELTA (Turn). The silver in the refining furnaces is said to *dar vuelta* (turn over). When after all the dross is driven off, the ingot remains of a red color.

XACAL. A hut, either covered with straw or roofed with shingles or squares of deal in which the tools are kept and, likewise, the ore until removed to the amalgamation or smelting works. The places where ore is kept are also called *galeras* or *despensas*. A *xacal*, that is to say, a hut or covering, is also erected over the pits, to keep off the rain and to shelter the workmen.