A Dictionary of Old Hobo Slang

Stephen P. Alpert - March 31, 2004

Compiled from many books on hoboes, and also some original material supplied to the author.

~ A ~
accommodation - a local freight train
ace spot - one dollar
airdale - an extreme loner
alkee stiff - a tramp that consumed alcohol
alki - a) an alcoholic b) alcohol
alligator bait - fried or stewed liver
All Tramps Sent Free - Atchinson, Topeka and Santa Fe RR
anchor - a pick
angel - a person who gives more than you expect
angel food - a mission sermon
Angelina - a punk or road kid acting as a hobo's companion
Auntie - Angelina grown older
antique - an old-timer on the road
apple knocker - an apple picker
Apple Butter Route - Norfolk and Western RR (southern Ohio)
axle grease - butter
axle swinging - riding under a railroad car

~ B ~
badorder - a boxcar on its way to the repair yard
bad road - a railroad or division where trainmen are especially hard on hoboes
bakehead - a fool or idiot
baldy - an old man
bale of straw - a blonde woman
balling the Jack - speeding
ball lump - sandwiches or cake wrapped up and handed to a tramp
balloon - a pack or bedroll, carried over the back or shoulder
banjo - a short-handed shovel
baraby - a genteel, quiet, respectful tramp
barber - to talk, usually too much
barnacle - a fellow who sticks to one job a year or more
barrel house - a cheap, filthy lodging house
batter - to beg
batting - to wander aimlessly
battleship - a high-sided steel coal car usually with a hopper or dump bottom
bazoo - mouth
beagles - hot dogs
bedroom of stars - a city park
to beef on - to inform
beefee - a) one who whines b) an informer
belly of a drag - the underside of a slow freight train
belly robber - a boarding boss who tries to save money on food
ben - a vest
benny - an overcoat
biddies - hen's eggs
the Big Burg - New York City
big four - a duck egg omelet
Big "G" - Great Northern RR
big hook - a big steam crane
big house - the state penitentiary
big O - a train conductor
Big Ole - a fellow who tries to show the boss how strong he is
big school - the state penitentiary
the Big Smoke - Pittsburgh
Big Rock Candy Mountain - the hobo's paradise
the Big Town - a) New York City b) Chicago
bindle - a bundle, bag, bedroll, or backpack carried by a hobo
bindle stick - a stick used to carry a bindle over the shoulder
bindle stiff - a) a hobo who carries his gear in a sack or bundle b) a hobo who carries his bedding
biscuit - a silver dollar
biscuit shooter - camp waiter or hash slinger
bit - a term in prison
bitch - an improvised candle
Bitter Biscuit Line - Piedmont divisions of the Southern RR
black bottle - poison allegedly given to hoboes in hospitals
black strap - coffee
blanket stiff - a hobo who carries his bedding
blind - the space between the engine and the mail or baggage car
blind baggage - hoboes who ride the blind
blinky - a train rider who lost one or both eyes
blip - a nickel
blister - an old woman
blisters - beggars who put chemicals on their limbs to simulate ugly sores
Mr. Block - one who believes police mean well and sharks are good fellows
block scrapings - meat begged from a butcher
blowed in the glass - trustworthy
blowed-in-the-glass stiff - a) an upper-class tramp b) a true and trusted pal
blowing smoke - boasting
B.N. - Burlington Northern
bob tail - a short local freight train
bo-ette - a female hobo
Bohunk - A Polish or other Slavic laborer
boil up - to wash clothes and kill any vermin therein
bone orchard - a graveyard
bone polisher - a wicked dog
boodle - cheap grafting done by yeggs
boodle jail - a jail providing a good winter's lodging
boomer - a) a transient railroad worker b) a seasonal or migratory worker
booming - going from one job to another
booster - a chronic drunk
booze hoister - a heavy drinker
bossy in a bowl - beef stew
boston - a pool game
Boston bum - a highbrow poser
bottle wagon - an iron coal car
Bowery barometer - curbstone philosopher from the New York main stem
boxcar tramp - one who regularly rides boxcars
boxcar Willies - hoboes and tramps
bracers - legs
braky - a brakeman
Bread and Milk Route - Boston & Maine RR
breezer - a hobo
bridal chamber - a) a flop house where guests lie on the floor b) a miner's workplace
Bridgeport - any hick town
bridge snake - a structural iron worker
bridger - a train rider who has ridden both steam and diesel trains
Broken & Maimed - Boston & Maine RR
Browning Sisters - the Angelina sorority
Buck - a Catholic priest good for a dollar
budge - an upper front pocket
bug - a lamp in a hobo jungle
bull - railroad policeman
bull artist - a hobo with a gift of gab
bull cook - a) a camp flunky; b) a cook's helper
bullets - beans, when poorly cooked and hard
bull horrors - obsessive fear of the police
bull local - a freight which travels between divisions, often stopping at local yards
bum - a skid row alcoholic, infrequently found on freight trains, does not work
bumpers - couplings between freight cars where hoboes sometime ride
bums on the plush - the idle rich
The Bum's Own - Baltimore & Ohio RR
bundle tosser - a hobo harvest hand who pitches bundles
buttermilker - a hobo from Pittsburgh, PA
buzz - to beg

~ C ~
C. and A. pockets - huge pockets on the inside of a coat for carrying food
cackleberries - eggs
cacklers - white collar workers
cages - cubicule rooms in the cheap lodging houses
Cali - California
California blanket - newspapers, used to sleep under
call - a hobo dish of mashed potatoes, butter liverwurst and onions
calling in - a) using another's campfire to cook b) visiting
cally or callie - a police station (from calaboose)
camp eye - the hobo who looks after jungle while the others are away
candle eater - a Russian
candy job - a pleasant or "sweet" job

canned heater - one who drank a deadly potion of cheap alcohol and water

Canned Meat & Stale Punk - Chicago, Milwauk ee & St. Paul RR
cannonball - a) a fast freight train b) the mythical hobo's train which is fast and goes everywhere

Captain - a head man or big shot
card man - a union man or hobo with a red I.W.W. card
car knocker - a yard man who works assembling trains
The Carry All - Chicago & Alton RR
carry the banner - to walk the streets all night, not having a place to sleep
case dough - the last of your bankroll
Casey - Kansas City, MO
cat - a young tramp or hobo, new to the roads
cat wagon - a brothel on wheels
catch - to board a train
catch back - to ride the way you have come on a freight
catch him on the run - to board a train while it is moving
catting in - using another's campfire to cook
cattle stiff - a cowboy
chaw - an Irishman
checkerboard crew - mixed crew of white and black workers
cheesy - to be filthy with dirt
chicken in the clay - a fowl rolled in mud and then roasted
chuck-a-dummy - to fake a fainting fit in order to get sympathy
chronicker - a hobo who carried his cooking utensils
Cincie - Cincinnati, OH
cinder dick - a railway policeman who rode the trains
cinder sifter - tramping along the railroad tracks
the City - New York City
clam - one dollar
clay on the shuck - ears of corn rolled in clay and put to roast
clover kicker - farmer
collar pass er - fireman
coffee bag - the coat pocket (where the coffee is carried)
Cold, Hungry & Damp - Cincinnati, Hamilton & Dayton RR
collar and shoulder style - everything is put on the table and the hobo guest helps himself
combination stew - a jungle dish of vegetables and meat
combination train - a mixed passenger and freight local train
comet - a) hobo new to the road b) a high-class hobo or tramp who only rides fast trains
con (or connie) - a) conductor b) a tubercular person
convention - any impromptu gathering of hoboes
coop - jail
Cough and Snort - Colorado and Southern RR
Cousin Jack - a Englishman
cover with the moon - to sleep in the open
cozzy - a men's public lavatory
cramps - rheumatism
croaker or crocus - a doctor, especially a quack
crotch crickets - crabs (lice)
crowbar hotels - local police stations
crumb boss - a janitor or porter for western construction-camp bunkhouses
crumbs - lice
crummy - a) the caboose b) to be lousy
crum roll - a bed roll

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crums - lice
culls - hash, inferior
cushions - a passenger train or car
cut out - to drop off one or more freight cars on a siding or in a freight yard

~ D ~
dace - a two-cent piece
daddy - a Cadillac auto
dago red - a cheap wine
Damn Rotten Grub - Denver, Rio Grande RR
damper - cash register
de - the
deadhead - an empty car in back of the engine tender
dead one - a) a retired hobo b) a drunken hobo c) a hobo who just spent all his money
dead picker - a yegg who robs a drunk
dead soldier - an empty whiskey bottle lying beside the road
death wood - plank above the coupling of boxcars
deck address - a secret address
deck 'em - to ride the top of a passenger train
deck hand - a domestic, who does ordinary work around the house
decorate the mahogany - to buy the drinks
deece - a dime
deep-sea chef - a dishwasher
dehorn - denatured alcohol
deer - the
dog house - caboose
dog robber - a boarding house keeper
The Dope - Baltimore & Ohio RR
double-ender - a train with two engines and two cabooses
doughhead - a baker
doughnut philosopher - a hobo who is satisfied with coffee and feed
drag - a) a slow freight train b) the main street of a town c) a homosexual party
drag, on the - on the road or on the street of a town
drag line - track onto which a train is pulled when being passed on the main line
Dr. Hall - alcohol, liquor
drill - a) to walk or hike b) a switch engine
dry combo - a meal that needed no cooking
ducket - a ticket or card good for a feed or a flop
duffer - bread and coffee
duke player - a person who cheats at cards or checkers
dukie - anything to eat
dummy - a tramp that pretends to be deaf and dumb
dump - a meeting place, a rendezvous
dynamiter - one who sponged food off fellow hoboes
dyno - a) a tramp who follows the highway instead of the railroad b) a tramp who begs off other tramps c) a rock man who handles dynamite

eagle eye - locomotive engineer
eat snowballs - to stay north on the road in the winter
empty - an empty boxcar, without a load of freight
Espee - Southern Pacific RR
exhibition meal - a meal eaten at the doorstep (so neighbors can witness madam's generosity)
extra gang - a crew that works on the railroad track
eye opener - an early morning drink

faded bogey - a Negro acting as an informer
fag - a) a cigarette butt b) a road kid with homosexual tendencies
fakir - a bum or tramp pretending to be a hobo
faith man - a mission stiff
fanner - being hit on the soles while sleeping on a park bench
fielder - a brakeman
fin - five dollars
fingy or fingers - a train rider who lost one or more fingers
fish - jail term for new prisoners
fisheries - missions along the main stem
First of May - an new, inexperienced hobo
five-hundred milers - through freights that stop only at divisions
flannel mouth - an Irishman
flat - a flat car
flat-wheeler - a bad-riding car
fleabag - a bedroll or sleeping bag
flacker - to faint or simulate fainting
flim-joint - a bank
flip - to hop a moving train
flop - to sleep, or a place to sleep
flopper - a tramp that squats on the sidewalk in business thoroughfares; may fake being crippled
flying light - a) hungry b) traveling without a bindle
fly-away - a military deserter
flyer - an express train
fly light - to miss a meal
fly mugs - private police
forty-fives - navy beans
Foul Water & Dirty Cars - Fort Worth & Denver City RR
freezer - a refrigerator car
Frenchy - a French-Canadian hobo
fresno - a roadbed scraper drawn by horses
frisk a drag - to search a freight for a suitable riding place
frog (or frog eater) - a Frenchman
fusee - a warning device to place on the track
fuzzy tail - a dreg of vagrantdom b) a tramp in bad humor

~ G ~
galway - a priest
gandy dancer - a) a railroad worker b) a hobo shovel stiff
gandy stiff - one who occasionally labored, a day or two at the most
gas - wood alcohol or doped cider or ether
gat - a gun
gate - a railway switch
gay cat - a) a tenderfoot hobo b) someone employed as a scout by criminal tramps
George - a) one who is shrewd, alert, and well informed b) everything is fine
get a fanner - to be moved on by the police
ghosts - beggars who simulate pallor, haggardness, or disease
ghost story - plausible tale told to the housewife
giggle - a gumbo made by gandy dancers
Gila-monster route - part of the Southern Pacific running through Arizona
gink - a poor unfortunate

gink stiff - same as gandy stiff
gin mill - a) a speakeasy b) a leather wallet
Give Tie Passes - Grand Trunk Pacific RR
glauming - gathering or stealing
glims - spectacles
glomming the grapevine - stealing clothes from a clothesline
G.N. - Great Northern
goat - a yard locomotive

going by hand - walking

going on the farm - a train going on a side track

grab - a dreg of vagrantdom

grab an armful of boxcars - catch a freight train

grabbing scenery - an inexperienced hobo easily spotted as he watches the scenery

grab iron - a bar welded onto a boxcar and held onto when jumping over the couplings

grainer - a freight car for carrying heavy loads that need protection from the elements

groundhog - brakeman
growler - a can of beer
gummy - a hobo who goes along with the crowd but never contributes

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gut plunge - a trip to the butcher to beg for meat for the Mulligan
  guts - meat, usually sausage
  gyp - a sub-contractor with poor equipment

H
  half a yard - fifty dollars
  halfy - train rider who lost both legs above the knees
  ham - to walk about the country
  hand the match - giving an intruder a match to make his own fire, indicating he is not welcome
  hard oil - butter
  hard tails - old mules
  harness bulls - uniformed policemen
  harvest buzzard - a hobo who works in the harvest
  hasher - a female cookhouse helper
  hay bag - a female hobo or stew bum
  head end - the front section of a train (locomotive and water tender)
  headlights - eggs
  heifer - any young woman
  helpers - extra engines attached to a train to pull it over an upgrade
  hidden hands - beggars who hide or bind their hands
  hieser - tramp
  highball - a) to go full speed b) two whistle toots signaling that a train is about to move
  highball whistle - one short and one long whistle signaling a train is about to leave
  high diver - a yegg who picks pockets
  high fence - a man's white neck collar
  high heels - a woman hobo, or women hoboes collectively
  high iron - the main line of the railroad
  high jacket - a yegg who robs hoboes
  High Line - the old Great Northern route through the Dakotas, Montana, Idaho, Washington
  high-roller - a hustling tramp
  High Yaller Line - Savannah & Atlanta RR
  hiker - town Marshall
  the Hill - the Sierra Nevadas
  His Nibs - police court judge
  hit a lick - make a score
  hit the ball - to speed up on the job
  hitting grounders - picking up cigarette butts
  hitting a New Yorker - finding a long cigarette butt
  hitting the grit - a) walking along tracks b) being forces off a fast moving train
  hobo belt - the citrus belt of California (a favorite wintering place)
  Hoboehemia - the universe of the hobo
  hobo nighthawk - a railroad policeman disguised as a hobo
  hobo special - a freight train of empty cars
  hog - a locomotive
  hogger (or hog mauler or hoghead) - engineer
  hogleg - a long-barreled gun
  holding the lady (or her) down - riding the rods under a train car
  home guard - a native, non-migrating worker
  honey dipping - working as a shovel stiff in a sewer, or any unpleasant shovel work
  hoop chisler - a peddler of worthless rings and watches
  hoosier - the natives, generally simple fellows (rubes, hicks, yaps)
  hooty - angry
Hoover blankets - see California blankets
hoppins - ingredients
the Horn - the triangular extension of the Chicago, Burlington and Quincy RR
Horned Toad - the Albuquerque-Deming stem of the Santa Fe
horstile - a town unfriendly to hoboes
hot - a) illegal and dangerous b) fast c) wanted by the law
hot boxes - old-style lubrication on boxcar axles that created a rough ride
hot shot (or hotshot) - a freight train that goes cross country without breaking up
hot stuff - stolen goods
hot yard - a freight yard where hoboes are arrested for riding
house dog - someone who cleans windows, beats carpets, does other housework
how strong are you? - how much money do you have
hump - a) a small hill in a freight yard over which uncoupled cars are pushed b) the continental divide
hundred on a plate - a can of beans
hunger lane - a railroad that passes through country hostile to hoboes
hunt a wampus - a wild goose chase
hustle buggy - police vehicle

~ I ~

ice palace - a high class saloon or brothel (with many mirrors)
ink - cheap red wine
Irish turkey - corned beef and cabbage
iron man - a silver dollar
irons - rails

~ J ~

Jack - a generic term for any hobo or man
jack - money
jack-roller - one who robs a drunken person
Jake - everything is fine
jake leg - a chronic drunk
Jane - any woman or girl
java - coffee
jawbone - credit in the company store
The Jawbone - the Montana RR
J.B. - a Stetson hat
jerk town or jerkwater town - a small village or town
jerries - section hands
jerry gang - a railroad construction crew
Jesus guy - a mission stiff
jiggers - pretending affection to elicit sympathy while begging
jitney or jit - a nickel
jocker - a) an experienced hobo who taught minors that way of life b) the relationship was often sexual
Joe - coffee
John Brown Division - Harper's Ferry division of the B & O RR
John Family - farmers, police, or yeggs
John Hollow Legs - a hungry stiff
Johnny O'Brien - a boxcar
John O'Brien - a freight train
Johnson Family - the yegg community
join out - to hire out in order to gain transportation
jolt - a jail sentence
jolt wagon - a rough riding farm wagon
juble joo - yegg term for riding on top of a train
jug - a jail or prison
jug heister - a chronic drunk
jump the blind - ride on the platform of a baggage car
jungle - a) a hobo camp b) a social group that occupies a camp c) to camp together
jungle buzzard - a dreg of vagrants; one who begs around hobo jungles
jungle up - to rest, wash, and eat in a jungle
junk - drugs
junker (or junky) - a) fellow who uses drugs; b) a local work train

~ K ~
kale - money
The Katy - Missouri Kansas & Texas RR
Kay See - Kansas City, MO
keister - suitcase
kelly - a hat
kelly stick - a device to aid in washing clothes and boiling up
key men - skilled workers
kick - a pocket in trousers
kicks - shoes
kip - a) to sleep b) a bed
kip house - a tramps or vagrants lodging house
kip jack or dough - money for a bed or lodging
knobhead - a mule
knob-knocker - safe-cracker
knowledge box - schoolhouse where hoboes sometimes sleep
ky wah - a hobo pitchman selling jewelry, pens, novelties

~ L ~
lace curtains - whiskers
the Lake - Salt Lake City
lakers - hoboes who work on the Great Lakes and go south for the winter
lamb - a boy tramp or road kid
lambing - to heard sheep
Land of Manna - State of Utah
Land of Milk and Honey - State of Utah
leather poke - wallet
lee of a reefer - icebox on a refrigerator car, a potential place to ride
lefty - a train rider who lost left arm and leg
Less Sleep and More Speed - Lake Shore and Michigan Southern RR
library birds - unemployed men who lounge in libraries for shelter
lid - a cap or hat
lighthouse - a) one who can recognize plainclothes detectives b) a stingy person
light pieces - small gifts of money
limpy - a cripple
line - the underworld
little red wagon - a dump wagon
little school - reform school or house of correction
lizzie moocher - a tramp who panhandles food and gas in a car
load of culls - a plate of hash
Long Island peek - a sly glance from the corner of the eye
louse cage - a hat
Lousy Anna - Louisiana
lump - a handout (a sack or package of food)
lump oil - coal

~ M ~
Ma and Pa RR - Maryland & Pennsylvania RR
made - the assembling of a train
main line - the track in the yard on which the through trains run
main stem - main street of a city or neighborhood
make a hole in the water - suicide by drowning
making a riffle - begging money
makins - tobacco; cigarette tobacco and papers
manifest - a fast train
mark - a hobo sign relaying information to other hoboes
meg - a penny
mess moll - a woman cook
Mickeyville - Mechanicsville, NY
milestone inspector - a professional; tramp
mill - a locomotive
Milk and Honey route - railroads through Mormon territory
minister's face - pig's head server in cheap restaurants
mission squawker - an evangelist
mission stiff - a tramp who lives in a mission
mitts - a train rider who lost one or both hands
mix me a hike - Pay me off! Give it to me!
moll-buzzers - women who pickpockets or begs from other women
mongee - money
moniker - a nickname
monitor - a long cigar butt
monkey chasers - West Indians or other Negroes from the tropics
mooch - to beg, usually at back doors
moocher - a professional beggar
Mop - Missouri Pacific RR
Mop Mary - a scrubwoman
moper - a bum who is even lower than a moocher
Mop Mary - a scrub woman
mop stick - barfly in a cheap saloon
muck stick - a long-handled shovel
mud - a) coffee b) strong coffee mixed with weak milk
mule - corn alcohol
The Mullet Line - Atlantic & East Carolina RR
Mulligan stew - hobo stew
mumbly pegs - a woman's legs
munies - municipal lodging houses
mushfaker - an umbrella mender or other repairman
mush rigger - an umbrella mender
mush talk - flattery

~ N ~
nail a rattler - catch a train
Nat Wills - an old suit
navy - a long cigar butt
Never Come, Never Go - Nevada County Narrow Gauge RR (Calif.)
nickel flop - an all-night movie house
nickel note - a five dollar bill
noch - a Hebrew shelter for homeless men
nose bag - lunch handed out in a paper sack
nose diver - a tramp who lives in a mission
N.P. - Northern Pacific
nuttery - hospital for the insane

~ O ~
obie - post office
Octopus - the Southern Pacific Railroad
odd fellows - three doughnuts and coffee
oil of joy - any strong drink
O’Leary - to walk
Oliver - the moon
One-Eyed Connolly - a gate crasher
one of the burlap sisters - a prostitute
one thousand miles - a dark or black shirt
on the hog - having no money
on the hummer - being on the bum but not down and out
on the plush - well off financially
on the uppers - being on the bum and nearly down and out
O.P.C - other people’s cigarettes, recycled
open road - a railroad or division easy to travel (opposite of bad road)
Original Ham and Egg Route - Oberlin, Hampton and Eastern RR
outfit - a number of hoboes traveling in company (term later adopted by military in WWI)
outside ’bo - a hobo who winters outside
outside ride - riding a freight car exposed to the elements

~ P ~
P.A. - Pennsylvania
pack of butts - a package of cigarettes
padding the hoof - going by foot
pale Vienna - coffee made with cream instead of water
palooka - a riving fighter who lives in the past
papa - a Lincoln automobile
park ape - a tramp who suns himself in city parks
Paul Bunyan - a chronic but interesting liar
pay station - a social welfare agency that gives out money
pay streak - a job that pays well
pearl diver - a dishwasher
peanut farm - workhouse where the inmates crack stones
pea soup - a French Canadian, often a lumberjack
peatman (or peterman) - a safe-blower
peddler - a local or slow freight
peg - a train rider who lost a foot
the Peg - Winnipeg, Canada
pennies - money, cash
pennsy - a coal car
Pennsy - Pennsylvania RR
Pennsylvania feathers - soft coal or coke
Pennsylvania salve - apple butter
Peoria - thin soup, generally potato water with salt
pershin - see prushun
pette man - a safe cracker or burglar
phony crip - self-mutilated or simulating a deformity
phony stiff (or phony man) - one who sells fraudulent or cheap jewelry
pickets - teeth
pie card - one who hangs around someone with money
pig - a box car or other train car
piggyback - a flat car on which a truck-trailer is bolted
pig's vest with buttons - sow belly, or any fat bacon
pile driver - good strong coffee
pill roller (or pill peddler) - a doctor
Pitsy - Pittsburgh, PA
Peoria (or Peory water) - a thin soup, usually potato water with salt
pickets - teeth
pig - a locomotive
pig iron dump - a hardware store
pig's vest with buttons - sow belly, fat bacon
pile driver - good strong coffee
pill peddler - a physician
pimp's turban - a bowler hat
pin grease - butter
pipe - to mooch or beg
piping the stem - begging on the streets
P.K. - the principal keeper of the little school
plainer - a hobo walking or riding through the Great Plains
plaster - butter
pling - to beg
plinger - a tramp that solicits alms at stores, offices, and residences
plinging - walking fast
plough jockey - a farmer
pogey (or pogie) - an almshouse or workhouse or poorhouse
poke - a wallet
pokeout - handout
pokey stiff - one who subsists on handouts solely
polish the mug - wash one's face and hands
poodle - town Marshal
possesh - a road kid
possish - one's position in the tramp's social scale
possum belly - riding atop or the deck under a passenger coach
postman - a hobo who goes fast and far
pot gang - a cluster of hoboes around a pot in a hobo jungle
pot wallop - a dish and pot washer
pound the ear - to sleep
power - engines
preshun - punk
privates - private dwellings
profesh - an experienced hobo, sometimes a criminal
prone the body - to lie down and rest
proper stiff - a tramp who considered manual toil the acme of disgrace
prushun or prushin - a) a young boy on the road b) a boy held in bondage by a jocker
pull a pin (or pull the pin) - to quit
punk - a) a boy discarded by a jocker b) a young hobo c) bread
punk and gut - bread and sausage
punk and plaster - bread and butter
punk and plaster route - traveling among the Pennsylvania Dutch
push - a road gang
pusher - the person in charge of the job

~ Q ~
Q or The Que - Chicago, Burlington & Quincy RR

~ R ~
Rabbi - a frequent moniker of a Jewish hobo
raghead - an oriental, from the turban some wear
rag(s) - a) a book or paper b) clothing c) paper money
railroad bull - a railroad policeman
railroad dick - a railroad policeman
rambler - a high class hobo who rides only fast passenger trains for long distances
rank cats - the lowest form of bum
rattler - a fast train
razor back - a circus roustabout
read your shirt - examine your clothes for lice
ready-mades - store-bought cigarettes
redball - a) a through freight train b) a fast fruit train
red eye - whiskey
red lead - catsup
reefer - refrigerator car
relievers - good shoes
remittance man - a hobo paid by his family to stay away from home
reuban - a small town inhabitant
ride the cushions - a) to live in luxury b) to pay for and ride in the passenger coach
ride the velvet - see ride the cushions
riding bulls - railroad police who ride the trains to arrest or chase off hoboes aboard
righty - a train rider who lost right arm and leg
rip-rapping - reinforcing the sides of a railroad cutting with stones
road hog - a hobo or tramp who is always on the move
road kid - a) a young hobo b) a boy held in bondage by a jocker
road sister - a female hobo
robbing the mail - snatching food and milk delivered at doorsteps early in the morning
Rodney - a tramp or hobo (from rod of a RR car?)
rods - bars beneath a freight car
roll - to rob a sleeping drunk
roundhead - a Swede
rubberglue - a plainclothes cop
rubber tramp - a tramp who lives and travels in an old automobile
rubbydub - denatured alcohol
ruff - a quarter (coin)
rummy stiff - a tramp with deranged intellect from habitual use of raw rum

~ S ~
saddle blankets - hot cakes
sack of weeds - bag of tobacco
Sacred Tract Road - Boston & Albany RR
sagebrush philosopher - a gabby fellow from the west
sales lady - a prostitute
Sally, Sally Ann - Salvation Army
salve - a bribe given to a trainman for a ride
salve eater - a snuff chewing Swede
sand - sugar
sand hog - where sand is kept dry, for use on icy track
Santa Fe Town - San Bernardino, CA
sap - a policeman's club
sawbuck - ten dollars
scatter - a speakeasy
scenery bum - a young tramp on the move for the pleasure of it
scissorbill - a) one who doesn't want to join a labor union b) an ignorant person c) a farmer
scoffing - eating
scrape a mug - shave one's face
scrape the pavement - shave one's face
scrapers school - a barber school where hoboes could get a free haircut and shave
scratch - money or other assets
scratches - trousers
screw your nut - get wise to yourself
seam squirrels - body lice
sea food - a sailor
sea stiff - a sailor tramp
seed - a dollar
set down (or sit down) - having a full meal inside someone's house
set off - leave part of the train behind
sewer hog - a ditch digger
shack - a brakeman
shackle-up - to cook one's stew, especially in a jungle
shack fever - a) tired, sleepy, dopey feeling b) desire to hit the road and travel
shanny - shanty
shanty queen - any woman around a camp
shark - employment agent who sells jobs to hoboes
shatting on the uppers - to be broke
shavetails - a) young mules b) a young army officer of low rank
sheets - newspapers for a bed
shicer or sheister - swindler, shyster
shill through - to get in for free or bluff one's way
shine - a colored vagabond
shiner - a dime
shirt rabbits - lice
shiv (or shive) - a razor
shoo fly - a) a detour track built around a temporary obstacle b) avoid passing through a hobo-hostile town
shoot snipes - to collect discarded cigar and cigarette butts
short staker - a hobo who stays on the job long enough to amass traveling money
shroud - a suit of clothes
shuffler - a jobless worker
Shy - Chicago
side-door pullman - a boxcar
single O - working alone by preference
sinker - a) a dollar b) a donut
sit down - see set down
sizzler - a) a cook b) a stove
skating on the uppers - dead broke
skee - whiskey
skin - a shirt or blouse
skin hustling - selling fake furs
skinner - a mule driver
skipper - the conductor
skoff - to eat
skuds - lots, plenty
sky blue - vegetable soup with little ingredients
sky piece - a hat
sky pilot - a mission-house or highbrow preacher
slamming a gate - to go to a private house and beg
slave market - employment agency
sleep - a short prison term
slides - shoes
slob sister - a moocher who weeps to his clients
sloughed - to be arrested (pronounced "slowed")
Slow Town - Detroit, MI
slum-gullion - stew, usually uninviting
slum hustling - selling fake jewelry
sly hay bag - a woman hobo who crafted items for sale
smacker - a dollar
smoke - strong liquor
smoke wagon - a pistol
snail - cinnamon roll
snake - switchman
Snakey Route - Oregon & California RR
snapper rig - second-hand suit of clothes
sneaky Pete - cheap wine
snipe - section hand
snipes - gathered-up cigarette or cigar butts
sniping - stealing
Sonora Town - a section of Los Angeles where hoboes wintered
snowball - morphine
snowbird - a person who uses drugs
snow-flier - a tramp that gets himself into jail for winter lodging and shelter
soft shoe - a railroad detective
son of Adam - a tramp willing to work for a snack or a meal
soogan (or sugan) - a blanket or comforter carried by a hobo
sop - gravy
Sow Belly Hack Line - a railroad division in central Tennessee
S.P. - Southern Pacific
spear - a success in mooching or begging
spear biscuits - to retrieve food from garbage cans
speck bum - a stew bum
speed balls - wine
spider - a) a small frying pan with a long handle b) a Ford car
spike pitcher - a harvest field worker
splinter belly - a) a carpenter b) a man who works on bridges and trestles
Spud Route - Bangor & Aroostook RR in Maine
square - a good meal
stable dog - a man who looks after the camp stables
stampers - tramps and hoboes in general
stack of bones - a cheap hash house dish, mostly boiled spare ribs
stake - money in pocket after leaving a job
star routes - country roads where food could be obtained
steam hog - a coal-burning engine
stem - street
stemming - panhandling in cities
sterno - wax soaked with alcohol
stew builder - a hobo camp cook
stew bum - a) a dreg of vagrancy b) an old hobo wasted by alcohol
Stew Junction - Puyallup, WA
stickers - a) disguised begging by selling court plaster b) postage stamps
sticks - a train rider who lost a leg
stiff - any kind of hobo worker
stiffly - a tramp that simulates being paralyzed
straight rip - one actually crippled or otherwise afflicted
streamlined - traveling with little gear
Studebaker Town - South Bend, IN
student - a youngster on the road
stye bum - a) a dreg of vagrancy b) an old hobo wasted by alcohol
Stew Junction - Puyallup, WA
submarines - doughnuts
substantials - meat and potatoes, and bread and butter
sugan - see soogan
summer birds - tramps and hoboes who go south for the winter
swamper - fellow who cleans out the bar room
sweat board - concrete mixing by hand
sweet back - someone only sampling hobo life

T

Tail end - the end of a train
tailor's helper - a vicious dog
tailor's measure - a $50 bill
tails - tram stops
Take Patience and Walk - Toledo Peoria & Western RR
take the westbound - to die
Take Your Parcels and Walk - Texas Pacific & Western RR
taking the whiskers off - harvesting
talk west - to speak the hobo lingo	tallowpot - the fireman on a train
tally! - I understand, keep me in on it
tank town - a small town where trains stop to take on water
tap city - broke	tar pit - a derby hat
tepot - a locomotive
tear baby - one who bums women or men with women
thick - rich
thick one - a nickel
thin ones - small coins (pennies, nickels, dimes)
thin piece - a dime
third rail - whiskey
thousand-mile paper - thick brown paper used in freight cars for packing
thousand miler - a hobo's dark shirt that doesn't show dirt
through freight - a freight that goes from division to division without breaking up
throw - spend freely
throw my feet - to walk
throw the feet - to beg
throw the guts - to talk freely or too much; to squeal
ticket - a piece of wood placed over the rods for hoboes to sit on

http://www.hobonickels.org/alpert04.htm
tie pass - a fictitious permit from a RR president to walk along the track
timbers - disguised begging by selling pencils
timber beast - woodsman, logger
timber stiff - itinerant lumberjack
time freight - same as a through freight
tin roof - a free drink (it's "on the house")
tip the office - to warn a fellow hobo with some signal
toby - an English hobo
To Hell and Back - Toronto Hamilton & Buffalo RR
tomato can - can carried by hoboes for heating food, boiling water, etc., often tied to the waist
tooting ringers - ringing house doorbells
toppings - a) dessert at a meal; b) pastry
tossouts - beggars who distort and throw their joints out of order
tourist - general term for all hoboes, tramps, bums and vagrants
town clowns - town police
tramping - traveling on foot
trapeze artist - a rider of the rods
trombenick - a Jewish hobo
trombo - a hobo boxer, or one who hopes to be
turkey - a) a canvas bag for carrying possessions b) a half dollar
Tweetsy - East Tennessee & Western North Carolina RR
twist - a woman or girl
twist a dream - roll a cigarette

~ U ~
units - engines
U.P. - Union Pacific
up on top ride - riding on top of a boxcar
upper deck - the top of a train

~ V ~
vag - a) a vagabond b) to arrest for vagrancy
varnish - passenger train

~ W ~
wagon tramps - families who travel in covered wagons
walking dandruff - head lice
wallie - a town bum who never loses sight of the town's walls
wally - a small town sport or gambler
wandering Willy's - hoboes and tramps
wangy - disguised begging by selling shoestrings
warthogs - a trainmaster
way freight - local freight train
Weary Willies - hoboes in general
weave hustling - selling spurious cloth
weeds - hobo jungle
weigh in - to meet
West Bound - what a hobo catches when he passes away
whale belly - a steel coal car
wheel - a leg
Whiskey Railroad - Frankfort & Cincinnati RR
whistle stop - a stop in a division to change crews
white line stiff - a tramp that consumed alcohol
white mule - uncolored moonshine whiskey
white one - a silver watch
Willy or the Willies - Goodwill Industries
windcheater - a burlap bag, feed sack, etc., worn for protection against the elements
wind pudding - air (having nothing to eat is living on wind pudding)
wingy - a train rider who lost one or both arms
wires - a tramp that peddles articles made of stolen telegraph wire
wobs - Wobblies, members of the I.W.W.
wolf - an older hobo who preys on young hoboes
wood butcher - a carpenter
woodhead - a lumberjack
woolies - sheep
working for Jesus - being a mission stiff
working stiff - a tramp or hobo who regularly works
wye - a railroad junction for trains

~ X ~

~ Y ~
yank - to arrest
yap - a) a hick, farmer b) a tenderfoot hobo
yard - $100
yard bull - railroad police who stay in the yards
yard donkey - yard engine used to push segments of trains from one track to another
yard goat - same at yard donkey
yard master - railroad employee who supervises the yard activity
yegg - a roving criminal
yellow one - a gold watch
York - New York City

~ Z ~

zoo - a brothel
zook - a worn out old prostitute

ABCDEFGHIJKLMNOPQRSTUVWXYZ

Webpages designed for screen resolutions of 800x600 or 1024x768.
Use (Largest_Larger_Medium_Smaller_Smallest) font size for best results.
In Microsoft's Internet Explorer the [F11] key toggles a NICE! full screen view.
Webpage last updated: Wednesday, March 31, 2004
Thunderbird
17.5% alc. by vol.

As pictured to the left, look for the pigeon feces and you'll find this old bird. As soon as you taste this swill, it will be obvious that its makers cut every corner possible in its production to make it cheap. Self-proclaimed as "The American Classic," Thunderbird is vinted and bottled by E&J Gallo Winery, in Modesto, CA. Disguised like Night Train, the label says that it is made by "Thunderbird, Ltd." If your taste buds are shot, and you need to get trashed with a quickness, then "T-bird" is the drink for you. Or, if you like to smell your hand after pumping gas, look no further than Thunderbird. As you drink on, the bird soars higher while you sink lower. The undisputed leader of the five in foulness of flavor, we highly discourage drinking this ghastly mixture of unknown chemicals unless you really are a bum. A convenience store clerk in Show Low, AZ once told me that only the oldest of stumbling indian drunks from the reservation buy Thunderbird. Available in 750 mL and a devastating 50 oz jug.

The history of Thunderbird is as interesting as the drunken effects the one

http://www.bumwine.com/tbird.html
of becoming the "Campbell's Soup Company of the wine industry," decided to fortify and sweeten an existing product and came up with the name "Thunderbird." Launched in the mid-1950s, the Gallos blitzed the country with one of the more famous ad campaigns.

"What's the word?" "Thunderbird!" "What's the price?" "A dollar twice."

Thunderbird had an alcohol content of 21% and it became the brand for America's slums, as it turned out; forging an unsavory image in the consumer psyche ever since.

The Gallos sold other downmarket wines including Spanada, Boone's Farm and Bartles & Jaymes. And the brothers, particularly Ernest, the brains behind the operation (Julio was the wine expert), were aggressive, with early salesmen for the company being taught the "three Rs": rigorousness, relentlessness and ruthlessness. It was said, "If you turn your back on a Gallo salesman, he'll turn the place into a Gallo outlet," one liquor store manager told Time magazine in 1986.

But while the lower quality brands were big sellers, the Gallos did branch out into more upscale fare such as Turning Leaf and Gossamer Bay and even into the $30 market.

Ernest wasn't afraid of a fight, such as his battle with Cesar Chavez's United Farm Workers who launched a national boycott that lasted around five years in the 1970s. The UFW was upset they lost out to the Teamsters and as Ernest said, "We believe we have turned the other cheek too long," even as his sales temporarily declined 30%. Chavez called off the boycott in 1978.

Ernest Gallo was very tough on his own employees as well. In 1986, he learned two longtime executives were secretly planning on buying a winery of their own. Gallo fired them on the spot.

Ernest and his brother put California on the map for wine growing, and then the world through their aggressive exporting. By most estimates, today E. & J. Gallo Winery is one of the largest privately owned businesses in the country, producing anywhere from 70-80 million cases a year, or in excess of 2.5 million bottles per day. Ernest's own net worth was last judged by Forbes to be in the neighborhood of $1.3 billion. The company employs 4,600 with Ernest's son, Joseph, CEO. It's now up to him to protect his father's wish that the company continue to remain private.

The Gallo brothers were very secretive but one thing they did was foster some rather key political relationships with the likes of Senators Alan Cranston and Bob Dole. Thanks to pressure from Ernest and Julio, wealthy families today can spread their estate-tax payments over a decade (dubbed the "Gallo amendment").

But what of brother Joseph, who died in February, you might be asking? It was said that Ernest and Julio were always jealous of little bro Joseph because their father never forced him to do the hard labor the older brothers had to.

When the father killed their mother and himself in '33, Joseph was just 13 but he did help his brothers establish the winery during high school and while attending Modesto Junior College (it's not known for sure whether Ernest and Julio even graduated from high school, at least from everything I read). Then when World War II hit, Joseph served in the Philippines and Korea. [One of his three sons
experiences from the wine. When Prohibition ended, Ernest Gallo and his brothers Julio and Joe wanted to corner the young wine market. Earnest wanted the company to become "the Campbell Soup company of the wine industry" so he started selling Thunderbird in the ghettos around the country. Their radio adds featured a song that sang, "What's the word? / Thunderbird / How's it sold? / Good and cold / What's the jive? / Bird's alive / What's the price? / Thirty twice." It is said that Ernest once drove through a tough, inner city neighborhood and pulled over when he saw a bum. When Gallo rolled down his window and called out, "What's the word?" the immediate answer from the bum was, "Thunderbird."

WARNING: This light yellow liquid turns your lips and mouth black! A mysterious chemical reaction similar to disappearing-reappearing ink makes you look like you've been chewing on hearty clumps of charcoal.

http://www.bumwine.com/tbird.html
The Creators of Thunderbird
Brian Trumbore
President/Editor, StocksandNews.com

In the past few weeks, two of the three Gallo brothers of winery fame passed away; Ernest, 97, and kid brother Joseph, 87. The third, Julio, died in a car crash back in 1993. Oh, what an interesting story this family was.

The three boys were the sons of Joseph and Susie Gallo who lived in the Modesto, Calif., area. The elder Joseph, along with his brother Michael, purchased wine from smaller wineries and then resold it in bars in Oakland and San Francisco, operating as the Gallo Wine Company by 1906. Susie's family, the Biancos, were already successful winemakers.

In the 1920s, Joseph and Susie bought a farm near Modesto and like everyone else in the area began growing grapes. As the New York Times' Frank Prial writes:

"Their fruit was loaded on railcars and shipped east (private winemaking was still allowed during Prohibition). The railheads in Eastern cities, from Boston to the Carolinas, from Pittsburgh to Cleveland and Buffalo, were dominated by thugs who took a cut of whatever was sold. By the time he was 17, Ernest was traveling with the grapes to ensure the family received top dollar."

But the Depression slammed the Gallos and the debt piled up. On June 21, 1933, Joseph Gallo shot and killed his wife and then himself, leaving Ernest, now 24, Julio, 23, and Joseph, 13.

Two months later, Ernest and Julio started their own winery with $5,900; $5,000 of which was a loan from Ernest's mother-in-law. But while they had a rudimentary knowledge of the business, they didn't know how to grow grapes so they studied pre-Prohibition pamphlets on the topic that they found in the Modesto Public Library. Soon the two were making ordinary wine for 50 cents per gallon, half the market price at that time. In just their first year, working 18 hours a day, they made 177,847 gallons and $30,000 in profits.

The Gallos focused on making a quality product at a good price, starting with everyday wines such as Hearty Burgundy and Carlo Rossi. They then evolved into specialty and fortified beverages like Night Train Express, Thunderbird and Ripple.

Ah yes, Thunderbird. For years Gallo wines were known for their screw-caps and marketed to the bottom end of the American market. But what they began to notice was that folks in the minority communities were dumping concentrated lemon juice in a bottle of Gallo's wine port. So the Gallos, who long had the goal...
Wild Irish Rose

18% alc. by vol.

The thorn in your hangover is a wild rose from Ireland. Bottled by Canandaigua Wine in Canandaigua, NY, the same company as Cisco. Like its brother Cisco, "Wild I" definitely has some secret additives that go straight to the cranium. Another web page claims that this foul beverage is a conspiracy by the republicans to kill the homeless. Bums ask a liquor store clerk for Wild Irish rose by saying, "gimme a pint of rosie with a skirt," a skirt being a paper bag. Some don't want it cold either. It's called "wild" for a good reason, and bystanders should beware. Wild Irish Rose is sure to light a fire of drunken rage in your soul. A guy named "Richards" is mentioned on the label.

A helpful viewer named Carl wrote an email directing our attention [this web page](http://www.bumwine.com/wildirishrose.html) that claims that "Richard's Wild Irish Rose (named after his son, Canandaigua's current president Richard Sands)." The "White Label" variety of this beverage is definitely a hard wine to come to terms with. "White Label" smells like rubbing
alcohol, and has no added flavoring to mask its pungent taste and noxious odors. Available in 375 ml, 750 ml, and a 50 oz jug.

Field reporter "Greyham" brings us this report: Here is Wild I's devastating new addition, "Wild Fruit with Ginseng". I'll be honest with you: the normal Wild I has turned into some sort of fierce energy drink gone wrong mixed with the original to create a bumworthy migraine-inducing concoction. I purchased a 750 ml which goes for 3.99 and a 375 ml which goes for 2.59 (at least here in FL). Word on the streets here is that the bums are wary of it. I talked to a couple that said they'd prefer to "stick with what's tried and true". Apparently they haven't accepted it yet as the real deal. As for me, I drank the 375ml on a semi-full stomach and was just ruined by the stuff. The flavor retains it's same potent Wild I nastiness but has a whole new bouquet of fruity flavor added as well (potentially aimed at bums of the female persuasion). Upon completion of the 375, I was thoroughly inebriated and found myself honestly wondering where my next fix of the stuff was going to come from. This scared me so I immediately started drinking water....here's the best part. After that relatively small bottle, I didn't piss until the next evening despite drinking copious amounts of water. There is DEFINITELY something in this stuff that dehydrates you...possibly the "ginseng" or whatever it is that they added to this already foul stuff.