

Restoration of Miner's Candlesticks

by Al Winters

Several collectors have written articles on their efforts to repair, restore and preserve both oil and carbide lamps. The techniques developed were largely by trial and error and most likely involved many failures and I might add tears before their techniques were successful. Excellent work has been documented and shared by several of our present day collectors and our hats are off and thanks given to these craftsmen. Fewer collectors have probably attempted to repair candlesticks but excellent work has been achieved and noted. Roger Peterson, undoubtedly the most talented of today's craftsmen, has developed the techniques and experience to tackle the most difficult of repairs. Roger published an article in the spring issue of *The Mining Review* in 1997 called *Restoring Mining Artifacts* and discussed several of his projects, the rewards of preservation of these beautiful and rare artifacts and his ideals regarding marking and restoration.

Repair or restoration of artifacts will always be controversial and collectors will have to judge for themselves what their personal thoughts are regarding the subject. I have personally made a few repairs and believe that restoration is of great benefit in certain cases and not in others. I have also purchased a couple of replacement parts such as the wind shield for the Kelly candlestick and spare reflectors for a few carbide lamps used for my personal display purposes. The following three examples of candlestick restoration are illustrated for your review and thoughts. I chose to have these three patented candlesticks restored as the damage was severe and I felt strongly that these patented sticks because of their rarity, should be restored to near their original design or construction. Great effort went into the design, manufacture and patenting of these candlesticks and I felt restoration would honor those efforts. Two of the candlesticks are the only examples known and only a couple examples of the third may actually exist.



Viera Candlestick

This first candlestick surfaced a few years back and was patented November 1, 1910 by Antonio Viera of Ray, Arizona Territory. The stick has a unique locking system employing a steel spring attached from the handle which forces both the hook and thimble to remain in the upright or folded position. The stick does not exactly follow the patent design but the locking

mechanism is so unique as to verify its authenticity. The stick as found had the handle broken off. As this is the only known example of the Viera patent and one of the few (if not the only) surviving patented examples from Arizona, I asked Roger Peterson if he felt it could be repaired. The challenge proved too much for Roger and he accepted. He later termed the artifact as the

“Candlestick From Hell” because of the difficulty in the repair and welding. The metal at the handle break was comprised of two layers of steel brazed together which of course presented all kinds of problems in attaching the new handle. The following pictures illustrate the before and after as well as Roger's talent.



Viera stick repaired.

Huuskanen Combined Lamp-Holder and Candlestick

This second example was Patented December 4, 1917 by William Huuskanen of Butte, Montana. This was the last patented candlestick and incorporated a lamp holder as well. I purchased the candlestick years ago. It was painted gold and eventually the candle holder and hook broke at the sharp bend of the metal strap following the lamp ring. I simply bent the strap outward and showed the holder as a lamp stick for several years. Later, after obtaining a copy of Wilson's patent book, I realized what the artifact actually was and contacted Peterson who just happened to have the other known



example. Again I called on Roger to make the repairs and an excellent job was completed. To my knowledge only two exact examples of the patent are known with a third variation in existence. As this was a machine stamped product, there likely will exist additional examples.



Huuskanen stick repaired.

The timing of the patent however, would have limited the numbers as the carbide lighting in the Butte mines had become standard prior to the patent date. One can just imagine an old time Finnish miner who had reluctantly changed to a carbide lamp but still hesitated to trust it enough to go without his candle. The following pictures show the artifact before, after and fully loaded with candle and lamp.

Cox Candlestick



This third example was patented August 17, 1886 by Thomas Cox of Gloster, Montana Territory. The stick was purchased from an e-bay dealer a year ago and was recently the subject

of discussion in the Eureka Forum. I decided to try and restore this stick as it is the only known example of the Cox Patent with the patented outside spring and candle lock. The handle was broken and the stick severely rusted. Most people, without knowledge of what the item was, would have thrown it out as a piece of rusted junk. Liquid Wrench and a lot of elbow grease, wire brushing and some sanding took care of most of the rust and I was able to weld on a new handle after cutting the broken ends off square. The following pictures show the artifact before and after the restoration.



Thomas Cox stick after repair.

Again, restoration is up to the collector and repairs should always be documented. Most importantly, major candlestick restoration should only be attempted by a qualified craftsman who appreciates the significance of the artifact and its historical value.

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