

THE UNDERGROUND LAMP POST

- NOT A HIPPIE NEWSPAPER -

Vol. I, No. 5

Fall, 1970

The Underground Lamp Post, devoted to old mine lamps, carbides, and candleholders. Mini-editor: Henry Pohs, 4537 Quitman St., Denver, Colorado, 80212

FIRST GROUP MEETING

Begin with seven enthusiastic and interested individuals, mix them in the atmosphere of northwest Denver's Berkeley Park, garnish with several display tables of OLD MINE LAMPS and MINER'S CANDLEHOLDERS, stock with the inevitable boxes of spares, duplicates, traders, and parts, add old catalogs, photos, or museum references and you have the "makin's" for a delightful adventure.



Such was the recipe Saturday morning, September 12, 1970, when a group of "lamp Tramps" and their families met for an informal picnic and lamp show. We have assumed that it was the first and the largest gathering of pre-electric underground illumination devotees. If not a gourmet's delight, it was a fired up bunch of collectors who traded, compared, wished, envied, and even bragged a bit about the various lamps and candleholders on display.

The unseasonable cold weather depressed the kiddies' enthusiasm, but Mrs. Midge Leahy (who planned the affair), Dick Holmes, Walt Payne, all of Denver, George Eichler of Golden, Color., John Leahy of Leadville, Color., Donald Davis of Fairplay, Color., and this near-editor all enjoyed the occasion.

Many thanks, Mrs. Leahy. We wish to do it again sometime and will hope that other out-of-towners will be able to join us.

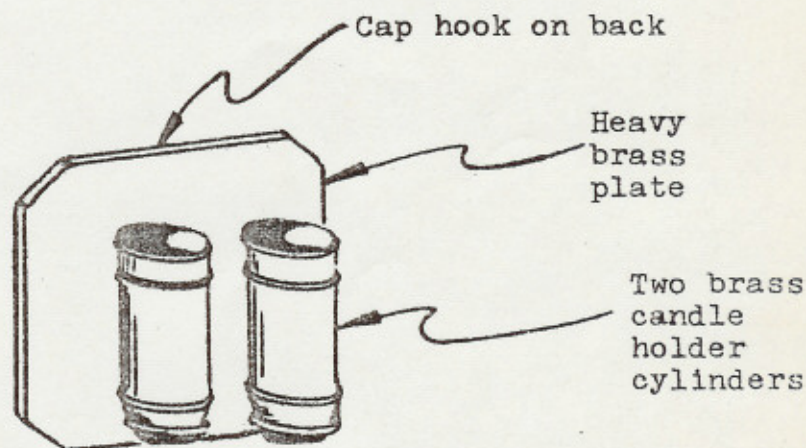
As often as possible, we list lamp identifications. Here are some more names to add to your own listings:

OIL WICK CAP LAMPS

Hunt & Connors
Gill
Bicket
Bertels
A. Roth
Felix
Highberger
Hoover Bros.
O'Keefe
Imperial
Highland
Keystone

CARBIDE CAP LAMPS

Anthracite
Buddy
Defender
Arrow
Scranto
Pathfinder
Shanklin
Elkhorn



John Leahy's "new" old miner's candleholder looks like this. Almost certainly hand-made, it had candle wax in the cylindrical holders when John acquired it. Who has seen anything similar?

CARBIDE LAMP COLLECTORS - Need parts? Need information or identification on odd, spare or repair parts items? Best bet we know of is Donald Davis. Drop him a line.

Donald Davis
% Jerry Davis
P. O. Box 25
Fairplay, Colorado
80440

CARBIDE LAMP HINT - REMOVING STUCK BOTTOMS

Have you ever wrestled for hours with a newly-acquired carbide lamp in a vain effort to remove the bottom? Perhaps you tried boiling the top and freezing the bottom in hopes that thermal expansion would separate the two components. You may have gone so far as to take a sharp instrument, such as an ice pick, and dig away the old gasket to relieve some of the friction. Doubtless you applied various solvents, lubricants, and penetrating fluids to the joint and ended up with most of it smeared on clothing and furniture. And you must have found it exasperating trying to grasp the top, with all of its delicate protuberances. Perhaps you finally placed it on the shelf without breaking the age-old bond of grime and corrosion, only to pick it up from time to time and curse softly.



All this is no longer necessary. Outlined here is a somewhat sloppy but fairly safe method of removing the bottom without risking damage to the lamp with channel-locks, strap wrenches, etc. Simply set the bottom in plaster of paris, thereby molding it into one huge bolt head, after which hand pressure is usually sufficient to separate the parts. A one-quart milk carton is a perfect size for a cap lamp. Cut about $1\frac{1}{2}$ inches off the bottom (of the carton) and mix up about an inch of plaster in it. Set the bottom of the lamp in it, all the way up to the gasket. If you smear a little vaseline on the bottom first, the plaster will come off more easily. Once the whole works has dried, you should be in business. If this does not work, then the top can be treated in the same manner. Clamp the bottom in a woodworking vise and use hand pressure on the top. If this doesn't work, then you must be trying to turn it the wrong way. Once the two ends are separated, a few discreet blows with a rock pick should free the components (and your temper) intact.

R.E. Whittemore

The following items are available for trade from: R. E. Whittemore
Route 4
Johnson City, Tenn., 37601

- * 6 Auto Lite cap lamps, in various conditions.
- * U. S. Eagle oil wick lamp, brass except for spout which has rust pits.
- * STAR oil wick lamp, (Monongahela City, Washington Co., Pa.) very good condition.
- * 2 horizontal Justrite cap lamps, minor parts missing.

Desire other lamps, especially carbide cap lamps. Any offer considered.

TRADING LIST - Dennis D. Seekins
8217 Roanoke Ave.
Takoma Park, Md. 20012

1. Hundreds of reamers.
2. Dozens of brand new Universal Company Autolite and Guy's Dropper bases. These bases come with the bumper grip.
3. Three strikers (Guy's Droppers).
4. Ten tips which resemble the modern Justrite but are nickle plated.
5. 50 plain clay tips.
6. Ten vented clay tips (Might be Justrite tip #66).
7. Five water doors (Guy's Droppers).
8. Six felt plates (Guy's Droppers).
9. Six felt holders (Guy's Droppers).
10. 50 or so assorted gaskets.
11. One felt holder, probably late model Baldwin.
12. Original cartons to hold one dozen Guy's Dropper bases.
13. Two brand new 2-1/2" Autolite reflectors.

MINER'S CANDLEHOLDER LISTING

This listing represents most of the known commercial trade names and manufacturers of miner's candleholders. Who will add to this list?

TRADE NAME	MANUFACTURER	REMARKS
VARNEY	Varney Mfg. Co. Denver, Colorado	
VARNEY	Varney Mfg. Co. Topeka, Kansas	
VARNEY	L. A. Sayer & Son Newark, New Jersey	
VARNEY	Varney Mfg. Co. Denver, Colorado	Folding
DENVER	Varney Mfg. Co. Denver, Colorado	
WELSH		
LINDAHL	Lindahl Mfg. Co. Denver, Colorado	Hollow handle with match holder
LAKE SUPERIOR		
IRON RANGE		
HUSSON	Knippenberg Mfg. Co. Oshkosh, Wisconsin	Removable spike
HUSSON #22	Knippenberg Mfg. Co. Oshkosh, Wisconsin	For "Peg" lamps
HUSSON "XL"	Knippenberg Mfg. CO. Oshkosh, Wisconsin	
RICE		Folding
COLORADO PATTERN	L. A. Sayer & Son Newark, New Jersey	
ALASKA STYLE		
JUSTRITE (2 styles)	Justrite Mfg. Co. Chicago, Illinois	Candlestick-type holder for carbide lamps
(none)	Norvell-Shapleigh Wholesale Hardware Co. St. Louis, Mo.	
SIERRA UH & CO.		
L. D. G. M. CO.		

MINER'S CANDLEHOLDER LISTING (Cont'd.)

TRADE NAME	MANUFACTURER	REMARKS
CRESCENT		
BONANZA		
IMPERIAL		
COPPER QUEEN		
TRIUMPH		
ROYAL		
VICTOR		
JAMES		
ARGAUNAUT		
CLEAN CUT		



One of the unique candleholders in Victor Verity's collection in Tucson is a cast iron scounce-type as illustrated to the left. These were used in the southwest United States and in Mexico in the 19th century. We saw several of these in museums in Arizona last summer - but none available for collectors. They make good bookends.

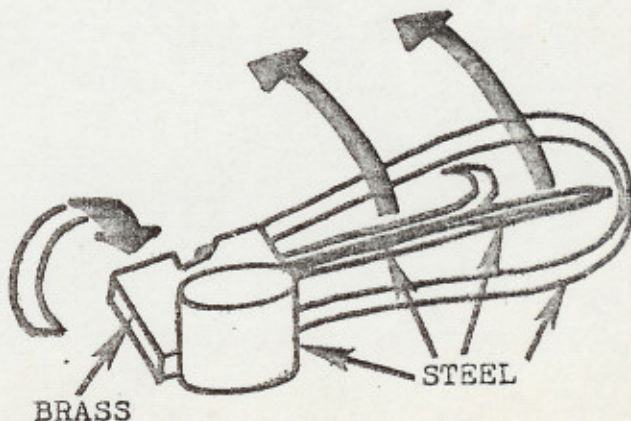


Mrs. Midge Leahy of Denver calls a hand-made folding candleholder from Mexico one of her favorites. It is illustrated below. The brass centerpiece rotates just enough to allow the hook and the spike to swing into position. The hook angles into the slot and then is held upright.

Your mini-editor found an old hand-made glass bottle last summer half filled with powdered carbide. The interesting tag says:

S 247

Rock acid
used in miners
Lamp



Here's How to Tell a Fake Miner's Candlestick

By GENE LINDBERG
Denver Post Staff Writer

The miner's candlestick—indispensable to pioneer western mining — has found a champion in George R. Eichler of 2162 Beech Court, Golden.

Eichler, Denver-area public relations man, former Denver Post reporter and western history buff, for years has made a hobby of collecting the daggerlike candleholders that made early-day hardrock mining possible.

Recently he acquired one of these pre-electric underground lighting fixtures that looked authentic, yet aroused his suspicion. It had never been used. The tapered steel point, which miners would thrust into a rock crack underground to support their working light, was unscratched.

The "thimble" for holding a stump of tallow candle showed no sign of drippings, and was attached to the main shank by a rivet, rather than an oldtime blacksmith's weld. Was it genuine, or a modern replica?

Eichler found out. He'd read in The Post about moon rock analysis performed here at the Denver Federal Center.

If this Magic of modern metallurgy could reveal the age

of a speck of moon dust, could it also tell the age of a steel gadget, supposedly forged before the era of carbide lamps and electric torches?

It could, and it did.

Eichler consulted The Post. His question was put to George A. Desborough, metallurgist and electron beam analyst in the laboratory of the U.S. Geological Survey at the Federal Center.

The notion of applying moon-rock science to hardrock mining tools of early-day Colorado fascinated Desborough, and he ran some tests.

Tiny specks of steel filed from the point and the rivet on the suspected candlestick were analyzed.

"A clean bill of health," said Desborough. "No tungsten. No chromium, molybdenum or other new-fangled alloy hardeners betray the steel as of modern vintage. Just manganese and of course, carbon. Manganese came in more than 100 years ago, when the Bessemer steel process was introduced into this country."

To double-check, Desborough ran a similar test on filings from a genuine Varney candleholder, stamped with the name of Nathan E. Varney of Denver, who patented a model Dec. 11, 1911.

In the old days, Varney did a brisk business here, making and selling the holders. The Varney sample likewise proved to be plain manganese steel in a parts-per-million X-ray analysis.

Eichler's aim is to write a full illustrated book on the heritage of the hardrock miners' candlesticks, their evolution, manufacture and use. To date, his years of research have failed to find such a book, anywhere.

The old candleholders were used in nongaseous mines until the era of popular acceptance of carbide lamps around 1910.

Eichler says he needs all the information he can find on candlestick manufacture. They normally were sold through hardware of miner supply firms. Often they bear names, patent dates, type numbers.

Local smithies and mine-owned shops sometime forged the holders as a sideline. Miners often made their own, usually from stout bent wire.

But now, after half a century and more, information is sketchy and scarce. Yet there were several dozen patents of special variations. The basic type, of course, included the straight point, and the hook at right angles, when hanging up was preferable.

All hardrock miners used the holders in early days, but almost all the patents were filed from western states. Colorado leads with 17 patents, hailing from Denver, Colorado Springs, Cripple Creek, Leadville and Ouray, for the most part.



Denver Post Photo by Bill Peters

GEORGE EICHLER INSPECTS "SUSPECT" CANDLESTICK
It was proved authentic by moon-rock metallurgy. Other examples from his collection include German made one, front; Denver-made Varney, vintage 1900-14, next; a hand-bent, homemade wire model and one with water-tight handle patented in 1905 by Colorado Springs resident.

The adjacent article appeared in the Denver Post (no relation to The Lamp Post) last summer. It should be interesting to those who haven't yet read it.

Here is a listing of three known miner's candle manufacturers. Who can add to this list?

TRADE NAME	MANUFACTURER
Granite	E. Schneider & Co. San Francisco, Cal.
	Goodwin Mfg. Co.

F-L-A-S-H Just received at press time!

All of my parts are from old hardware stores in the northern W. Va. area. As far as I know eastern Pa. Pittsburg, western Md. and the northern parts of W. Va. have been combed fairly well. I would be happy to let anybody know exactly where I've been since there's no point in retracing each others routes.

Does anybody have a Grier generator they'll trade? Or a nickle plated Arrow generator? Or a nickle plated water feed for the very early Baldwin?

In general I am interested in cap and small hand lamps other than Justrite, Auto and Dropper.

Here's what I have to trade. All parts are new.

Autos-whatever kind or condition you want.

- 1 4-hr Justrite, hor, #39, excellent shape
- 1 Baldwin, next-to-earliest style, new, no bottom
- 1 " , earliest style, nickle plated, new but in poor shape
- 2 Leader carbide and parts flasks, new, perfect
- 11 Univ. Dropper bases, new, with bumper grip
- 6 " Auto " " " " "
- 6 2 1/2" reflectors, nickle plated
- 6 Univ Auto felt holders
- 20 " felt plates, 3-hole
- 6 " " " 2 "
- 20 Dropper felt holders
- 6 Shanklin Dropper water doors
- 2 Univ " " "
- 15 Shanklin Dropper tips, nickle plated
- 100 vented clay tips
- 24 plain " "
- 18 reeded rim, nickle plated tips, unknown
- 50 brass "Diamond" tips, Auto, in boxes of 12
- 6 Auto wing nuts
- 100 Univ. gaskets
- 6 brass hexnuts, Univ?
- misc flints, screw caps, springs for strikers

Dennis Seekins

Dennis Seekins

8217 Roanoke Ave.,
Takoma Park, Md.
20012