

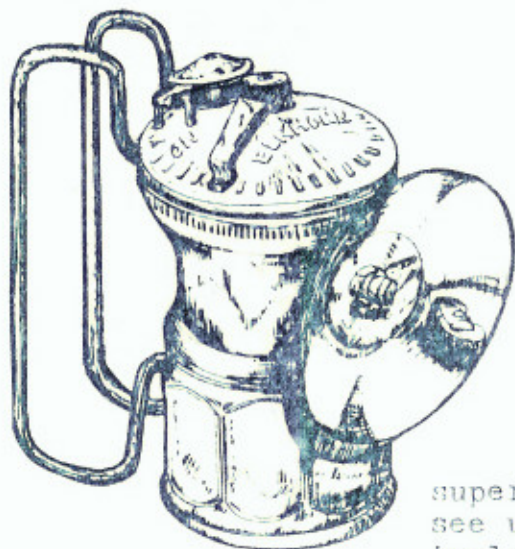
THE UNDERGROUND LAMP POST

- MINERS WERE THE FIRST ENVIRONMENTALISTS -

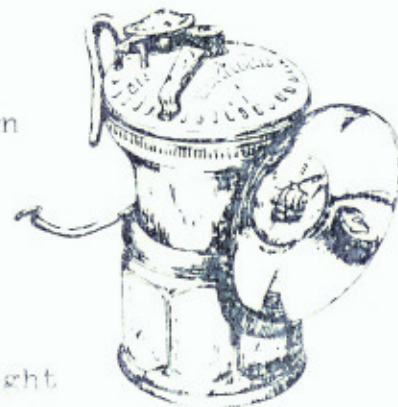
Vol. III, No. 4

Spring, 1980

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



ELKHORN - Another new style of an older known carbide cap lamp brand has surfaced. Several dedicated eastern collectors have had a brass Elkhorn cap lamp in their collections for some time . . . a standard cap hook and almost identical to a Buddy carbide cap lamp as shown in the upper right sketch.



Now we have found a brass Elkhorn with superintendent-type handles instead of the cap hook; see upper left drawing. Same size, shape, and seemingly identical in all details . . . it's a cap lamp with handles. Yes, it is securely in our collection now. The two sketches are not intended to show a difference in size; the "new" lamp is apparently made from the same dies as a cap lamp. Strange, indeed. Just about the time we think we know almost all about these lamps, something new turns up. Those old-time manufacturers probably made more styles and variations than we will ever catch up with.

Next, Errol Christman in California reports that he has a nickel-plated Elkhorn hook cap lamp - that's how fast our information accumulates.



CARTOON - Long-time correspondent Bob Liebman in West Va. used this cartoon in his speleological ads and we thought it neat enough to reproduce here.

B & B Enterprises, at P. O. Box 441 in Lewisburg, West Virginia, 24901 sells caving gear and carbide lamp parts. Give them a call at (304)772-5049 for more information.

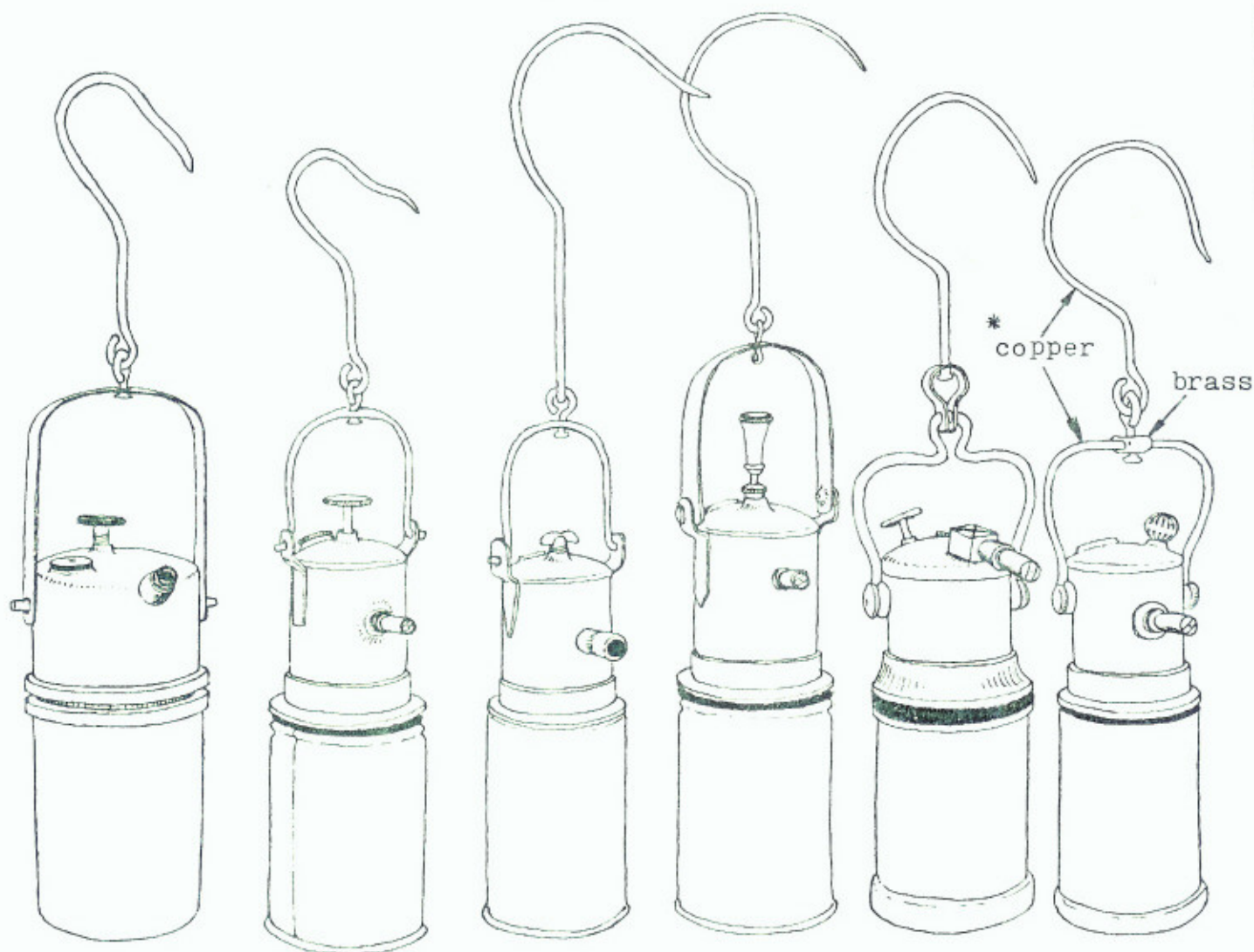
POSTAGE - We like to thank our postage benefactors on the front page whenever possible. We can't emphasize too much how kind these people have been and how much it means to the Lamp Post. This time we acknowledge Maryland, Georgia, Canada, Wyoming, Texas, Iowa, Germany, California, Utah, Louisiana, and Kentucky. Every one says that they enjoy our work and look forward to each issue. That's why we encourage our readers to send in their bits and pieces of information. Everything seems to fit into the big picture.

More foreign lamps - Dr. Wendell E. Wilson continues his narrative from last issue. Many thanks to Dr. Wilson for the well-prepared and beautifully-illustrated material.

I recently acquired a batch of lamps (16 in all) from a dealer who said he bought them in Fundao, Portugal. He couldn't say exactly where they had been used or how old they were, but they appear to have been left abandoned in the mine(s) for many years. Six different types are represented in the batch. None have reflectors, and some seem to have no provision for the attachment of a reflector. It's well known that miners often preferred to use such lamps without the reflector.

All have steel carbide chambers and water chambers except for #6 (shown below with the other five types) which has a brass water chamber, bail and hook.* All have a brass base on the water chamber, brass water doors (except types #3 and #4 for which the water doors are missing), brass water valves, and brass burner-tip sockets.

The burner-tips are interesting. The imprinting on them reads: "21 LITER" (on the type #2), "BRAY 31 OGETO 14 LITRES ENGLAND" (type #4), and "14 LITROS N A P" (type #6)...Liter spelled three different ways: German(?), British, and Spanish-Portuguese. Of course the tips could have been purchased separately by the miners. When unprotected by a reflector the tips are very vulnerable to damage and probably needed replacing often.



#1
Gilbert
6 "

#2
M.O.&R.LDA
7 $\frac{1}{4}$ "

#3
6 $\frac{1}{4}$ "

#4
8 $\frac{1}{2}$ "

#5
6 $\frac{1}{2}$ "

#6
6 $\frac{1}{4}$ "

ANPARA PARA MINAS
"GILBERT"
CERO EMBUTIDO



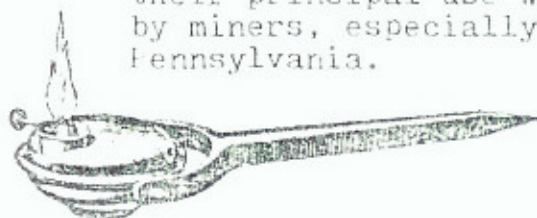
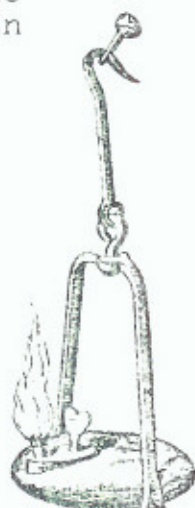
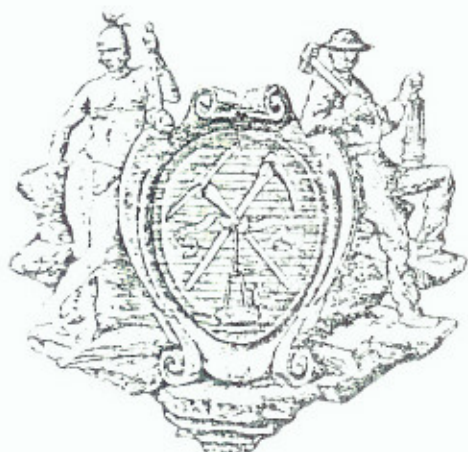
Only types #1 and #2 have a manufacturer's imprint. On type #1 the "GILBERT" imprint at left is stamped into the top of the water chamber. It translates roughly as "Aid for miners ... Steel lined," or something similar.

Type #2, an "M.O. & R.LDA," carries its imprint on the top of the water valve wheel, looking almost like a zodiac, as shown below left. The LDA stands for Limitada (Inc.).

The measurements given below the drawings on the previous page are measured from the bottom of the carbide chamber to the top of the water valve.

I haven't seen anything previously in the Underground Lamp Post regarding these lenticular oil-wick lamps with horseshoe-shaped bail. They go by many names, including "French lamp," "Tunnel lamp," and "Sicilian lamp." Most of the examples I have seen which carry a maker's mark were made in France, but that could just be a sampling accident on my part. Louis Simonin, in his book Life Underground or Mines and Miners (1867) pictures miner's lamps from many countries and calls these lenticular lamps "French lamps." Certainly they were extensively used in France during the 1800's. I have an old mining photo of a shift of French miners in 1865 all carrying these lamps. The lamps were also used by the tunnelers working on tunnels through the Alps, such as the Prejus, Gotthard and Simplon tunnels. Gösta Sandström, in his History of Tunnelling (1963) shows a couple of drawings of tunnelers carrying lenticular lamps. I can't say why the lamps have been called "Sicilian lamps" (although a good guess would be that they were extensively used in Sicily), but they have also been variously attributed to Austria, Spain, Brazil and Greece. Rather than use a name for them which implies a country of origin or type of useage not proven, I prefer to call them simply by the lenticular shape of the font. Below are illustrations from Simonin. The emblem at left is from the title page and shows a lenticular lamp in the center. The lamp below in the middle is labeled a "French lamp" by Simonin, and the lamp on the right a "modified French lamp." The lamps shown in Simonin do not have the heavy trunnions for attachment of the bail as do those shown in

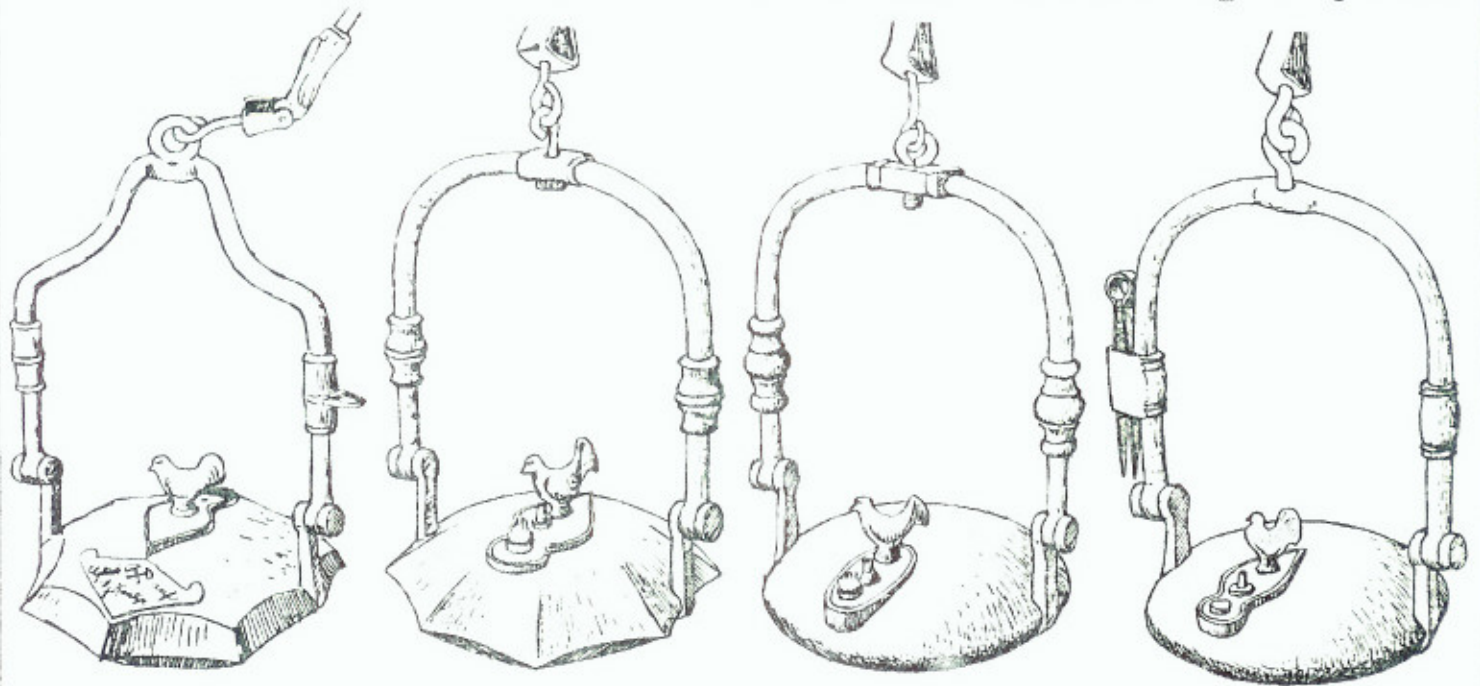
Henry's book and on the following page. I've seen perhaps half a dozen for sale in Maryland and Pennsylvania in the last few months. A few people refer to them as "loom lamps," apparently because in America they were sometimes used by weavers. But their principal use was by miners, especially in Pennsylvania.



Some more examples - illustrated on next page:

(Left) This German lamp is the more aberrant with regard to form of any lamp that I would still classify as a lenticular lamp. The font is beveled into an octagonal outline, with the trunnions attached at opposite octagonal points. The bail curves inward on both sides. The bail rings, rooster and inscription plate as well as the connecting end of the hook bar are brass; the rest is iron. Collection of the Bergbau (Mining) Museums in Bochum, West Germany.

(Center-left) Another octagonal lenticular lamp, this one from an illustration in Early Lighting, a Pictorial Guide (1972) by the Rushlight Society. I suspect the stamp may not have been correctly read...there is no town "Giettienne" in Loire, and Loire is misspelled. It's probably St. Etienne like the next lamp. Trunnions attached between octagonal points.



*Glück auf
H. Kantzer*

(OLLAGNO-A.
GIETIENNE LOIRS)

LE VERRIER
A CLOZET SEUR
ST ETIENNE LOIRE

TF-1 T
*Rushlight Society
Early Lighting
Pictorial Guide
1972*

(Center-right) This one is from my own collection. The dotted letters are not legible but I think "St. Etienne" is the best guess. "Verrier" is a glass blower; perhaps these iron lamps were made in a shop specializing in glass lamps? Brass rooster and bail rings.

(Right) This one is also from my collection. I especially like the little pocket for the tweezers. Most of the stamp is illegible, but perhaps some reader can fill in the missing letters for me? All iron.

I also have one stamped "★ CANONI," although some letters may be missing from the end.

Three lenticular lamps are illustrated (though not very clearly) in Flickering Flames (1958) by Leroy Thwing (Figures 7 and 15). The ones in Figure 7 are notable for their extremely long hooks, one three times the height of the lamp-plus-bail and the other $3\frac{1}{2}$ times that height. The roosters also look interesting, and it would be a treat sometime to see a collection of sketches of the roosters on lenticular lamps. Does anyone know how roosters came to represent good luck on these lamps?

I asked Karsten Porezag that question and he had a couple of ideas. He has seen a Roman sculpture of a rooster in northern Italy; it carried symbols representing uprightiness, honesty and vigilance, so perhaps that is the source. On the other hand, a rooster is a French national symbol, according to Porezag, and may have found its way onto lamps for that reason. He mentions, incidentally, that lenticular lamps are called "Sicilian" lamps only in Germany and Austria because around 1850 many Italian miners worked in German mines and had brought lenticular lamps with them.

FOR TRADE - Michael W. Wessel, 1715 Williams Ave., Iowa City, Iowa, 52240, has just after, Iowa Brokers, Dulce, mining artifacts, and a bicycle carbide lamp for trade. To trade an arrow holder, a reflector mount for a Guze burner, a reflector mount for an 8-hour hand-held Justrite, and lamps as you can't have. Give Michael a query.

DAVY LAMP - H. S. Stephens, P. O. Box 494, Canmore, Alberta, T0L 0K6, Canada, will exchange in all "practically" breathing apparatus in good condition for a Davy lamp. Write about other items and for more information about trading for needed items.

MINE LAMP BOOK - Our good friend Karsten Forezar in Germany has advised us that his book on mining lamps with many illustrations is now available. We have filled out what appeared to be an order form, but have only a German language letter in return yet. Since Karsten does well with English and we do not do at all with German, we have asked him to elaborate more on costs and how to obtain the book. When we hear we will let everyone know. Meanwhile, anyone interested can write him at: Mr. Karsten Forezar, Bezirksdirektor, D-633 Wetzlar, Gellersberg 13, West Germany.

FROZEN LAMPS - We may have mentioned something like this before, but many new readers will be interested . . . and Dick Sears writes so much better than we do that it is worth telling again.

"As a lamp collector, I see about 10% locked up - cemented tight with a crust of spent carbide and corroded brass. It never happens to my "users" - I try to keep the threads clean, and I always unscrew and usually clean my lamps when I get home. Spent carbide contains slacked lime, calcite, and other junk. Slacked lime absorbs atmospheric carbon dioxide and is slowly converted to a crust of calcite. It also corrodes brass and solder.

"If your lamp is frozen, strip off all removable parts. Plug the burner tip seat hole with tape, and thoroughly grease up both top and bottom. Cast first one end, then the other, in plaster of Paris in a pair of plastic freezer containers - those flexible polyethylene or propylene things with a waxy feel. The containers will slip off the wet plaster. Grip one block of plaster in a vise, strip the other, set aside. Use a chisel to remove the plaster of Paris from the top parts. Don't forget that grease, though!

"Sometimes the main thread will simply tear off at the bottom. Carefully worry the pieces of thread out of the top, using long-nosed pliers and / or a knife blade. At least the top can be salvaged. Of the 10% I mentioned, about 5% are salvaged complete. Of the other 5%, something goes wrong - the threads tear, a hook rips off . . . but the top is almost always repairable. My candles may have been cementing tight for 5, 10, or 50 years. Yours should be a cinch to save, complete."

Thanks to Dick for an interesting bit of guidance. His new address is: 163 Victoria Court, Grand Forks, North Dakota, 58201.

DOMESTIC LAMPS - Dealers are always trying to sell us domestic lamps as mine lamps . . . and often they even don't know the correct identifications of the three basic wick pan lamps. Here they are:

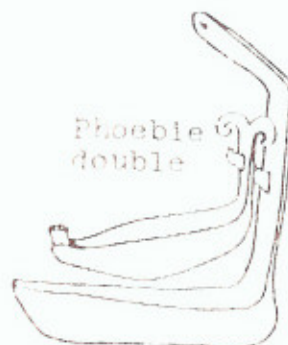
Betty
covered (from
the German
'besser')



Crusie
open



Phoebie
double



Cap Lamp—Round Hook



Specifications
Small Lamp

Height, 3½ inches.
Diameter, 2½ inches.
Capacity, 2 hours.

Special
Cap Clasp
Included.

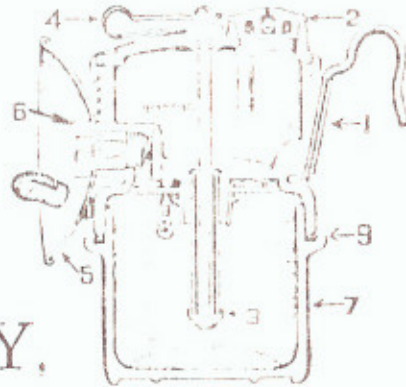
Aluminum Reflector
2½-inch Diameter.

Pat. Feb. 5, 1924—Others Pending
No. 4 with Round Hook.
No. 4-P with Flat Hook.
No. 4-H with Fibre Handle.

Equipped With
Locking Device

FRED R.
BELT
COMPANY,
Inc.

The First and Only
Die-Cast Aluminum
Lamps



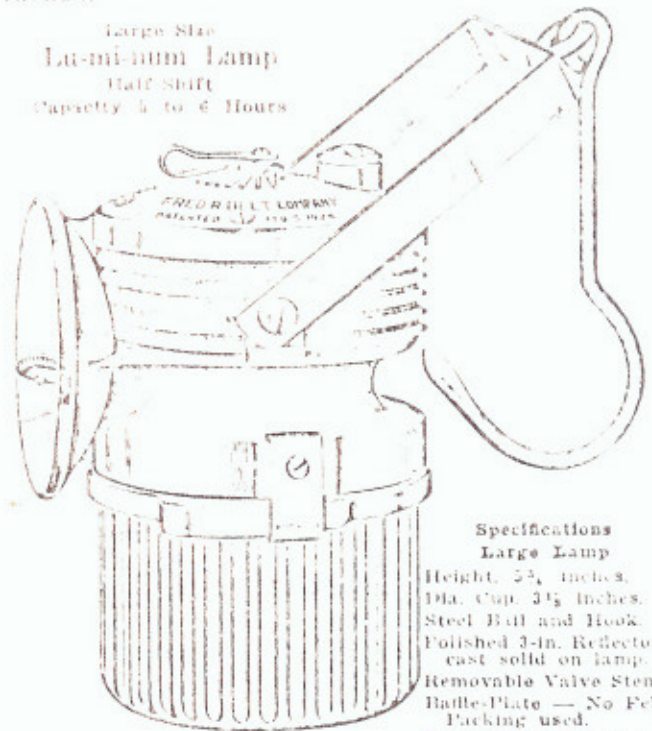
1. Hook, fits in slot cast on lamp.
2. Water-Cap with ball check valve.
3. Valve Stem, removable for cleaning.
4. Valve Lever, adjustable.
5. Reflector held rigid with 2 braces.
6. Tip-Holder, unscrews with a coin.
7. Carbide Cup, seamless — straight sides.
8. Balls-Plate, no felt packing used.
9. Rubber Gasket, fits in groove.

Locking Device

The Locking Device is the greatest improvement ever made on a miner's lamp. Screw-threads have always been a source of trouble with carbide lamps, due to the action of used carbide on metal threads. The double cam lock is very simple and strong and locks the cup on tight with a slight turn. It will not fall off or come loose—must be turned.

ca. 1925

Large Size
Lu-mi-num Lamp
Half shaft
Capacity 4 to 6 Hours



Specifications
Large Lamp

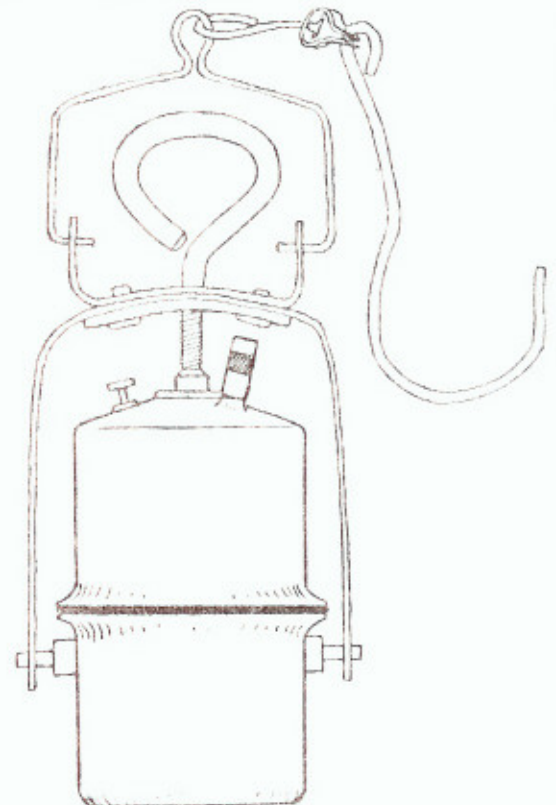
Height, 5½ inches.
Dia. Cup, 3½ inches.
Steel Ball and Hook.
Polished 3-in. Reflector,
cast solid on lamp.
Removable Valve Stem.
Balls-Plate — No Felt
Packing used.
Tip-Holder unscrews.

No. 7
Equipped with Locking Device

FROM THE VANADINITE MINES OF MOROCCO

The lamp at right was brought back by a mineral dealer from the vanadium fields around Mibladen and Midelt, Morocco. It is 9 inches tall, to the top of the loop (hook and bail excluded), and is made of steel and galvanized steel. Only the burner tip, tip guard and water valve are brass. The water door is white plastic.

It appears not to be very old, and the mineral dealer said lamps of this exact type are in very common use in Morocco. Unfortunately it carries no manufacturer's name. Does anyone know who the manufacturer might be?



Wendell E. Wilson, 1550 Bandury St.
Crofton, Maryland 21114