

THE UNDERGROUND LAMP POST

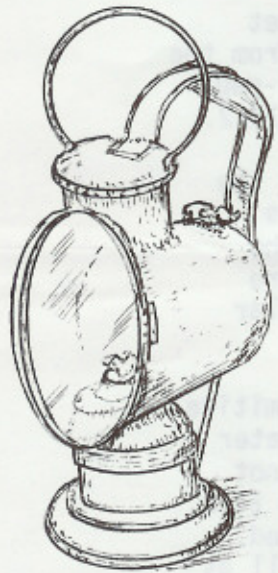


- MINERS WERE THE FIRST ECOLOGISTS -

Vol. IV, No. 9

Fall, 1987

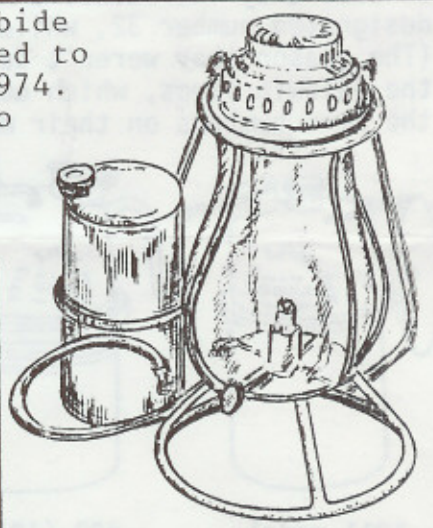
The Underground Lamp Post, devoted to old mine lamps, carbides, and candle-holders. Mini-editor: Henry Pohs, 4537 Quitman St., Denver, Colorado, 80212



Carbide Inspector's Lamp - The 11-1/2 in. (292.1 mm) tall tin carbide lamp illustrated at the left was found in a Spokane, Washington, junk (not an antique) shop some years ago and was added to your editor's collection with some misgivings. We have finally located U. S. Patent no. 925,916 issued August 3, 1909, to Jens C. Cliver of Ogden, Utah. It is identified as a "car inspector's lamp" with no specification for either railroad car, mine car or lift car use. The letters patent language is a pure generic-mechanical legalese description of the construction and the position of the lamp components with no reference to operation or use. Our lamp is of light tin construction with heavily soldered joints which suggest a hand-made origin rather than a quantity production. The base is 4-3/8 in. (111.125 mm) in diameter and the lens in a hinged cover is 5 in. (127.0 mm) in diameter. The design leaves much to be desired in the way of gas sealing surfaces at the burner tip mounting hole and at the threaded joint between the base and the upper chamber . . . both

have sharp metal edges rather than sealing surfaces. All this suggests that this lamp may have been a pilot model which never made it to the market despite patentable features. Our patent files are full of strange shapes and claims which never made it. Has anyone else ever seen one of these lamps?

Carbide Lantern - Several readers have reported a carbide lantern-generator unit as illustrated to the right; see Lamp Post, Vol. II, No. 3 for Fall, 1974. U. S. Patent no. 1,322,231 issued November 18, 1919, to John H. Dean of Toledo, Ohio, fits this lamp. The patent claims covered the design of the wire frame for the lantern. These cannot be too common and not many of the glass chimneys could have survived.



Looking - Our good correspondent Bob Henninger, 201 W. Hazard St., Summit Hill, Pennsylvania, 18250, 717-645-7422, writes that he is looking for the following items for his collection: old electric mining lamps, Wheat, Edison, Kohler and CAEG-RM7; hard-boiled, high-crown miner's caps made by MSA; carbide cans - National Carbide or Union Carbide (25 lbs., 10 lbs., or 2 lbs.).

For Sale - Ralph Blankenbecler, Route 3, Box 354, Coeburn, Virginia, 24230, 703-395-2229, writes that he has the following items for sale: Shanko carbide can; two Hughes Bros. safety lamps; one #10 Justrite lantern; several bottoms - three Simmons, one nickel Justrite, one Shanklin Mfg. Co., one Zar, one I T P and one Scranto . . . all of the bottoms are in very good condition. Ralph also says that his health is improving and that he can get up and around more now. We suggest that those who have corresponded with Ralph in the past could give him a call or drop a note to him. Thanks.

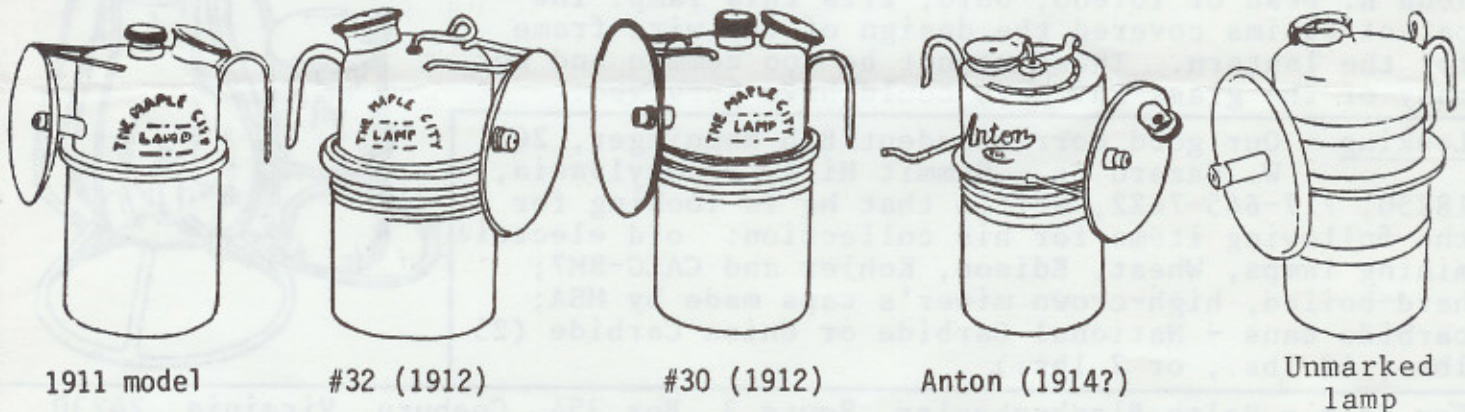
Maple City Carbide Lamps - by Bill Spence and Dave Thorpe.

The Maple City Manufacturing Company has been known for some years among lamp collectors as the maker of some of the most prized miners' carbide lamps of all. The company was founded in 1904 and set up shop in a large building on South First Street in Monmouth, Illinois, that had previously been the home of the Maple City Soap Works. The company's principal product was always oilers, in particular the "Howland Pump Oiler" which was supplied as original equipment with Packard automobiles circa 1911-12. In addition it made miners' carbide lamps, the "Illinois" carbide feed acetylene generator for home lighting and miscellaneous other tinware. The factory burned to the ground in November, 1917, and was apparently never re-opened.

Maple City made carbide miners' lamps from mid-1911 until some as-yet undetermined date. The earliest journal ad known to the authors comes from the July 1, 1911, Mining & Engineering World. Maple City ran half- and full-page ads in Mines & Minerals from at least October, 1911, through the end of 1912. The company's activities from 1913 through 1917 are not well documented, however, and it is not certain that it was still making carbide lamps at the time of the fire. The similarity of the Maple City lamps to other miners' lamps suggest that the company made lamps for other concerns, although the time of such relationships is speculative. In 1916 the Shapleigh Hardware Company in St. Louis advertised a Union Carbide Lamp with generally similar features which might represent a late version of the company's product. Other similar lamps would appear to have been made at an earlier date.

Not surprisingly, the original 1911 Maple City lamp is the most primitive. It features a simple dish reflector soldered at some distance from the water tank and machined threads connecting top and bottom, making the threads not externally visible. It was available only with the regulated water feed (i.e. with a knurled knob and shutoff valve). The water door was screw-threaded. Versions of this lamp have been found without markings of any kind as well as with the Maple City logo.

In early 1912 the body design was modified to incorporate rolled, externally visible threads and to bring the reflector closer to the water tank. The reflector itself was more sophisticated, having a turned edge. In the spring of 1912 they introduced a new version without the shutoff valve which was designated number 32, while the regulator model was designated number 30. (The reason they weren't designated #1 and #2 probably lies in the fact that the Baldwin lamps, which outsold all other brands by 4 to 1 combined in 1912, used the same numbers on their most popular models.)



In addition to producing the Maple City marked lamps, there can be little doubt that the company manufactured custom-marked (or perhaps unmarked) lamps to customer order. Obvious examples of this are the Norleigh Diamond and Red Star lamps previously featured in the Lamp Post. The Norleigh trademark belonged to the Norvell-Shapleigh Hardware Company of St. Louis, which certainly was not in the lamp manufacturing business, so it is plausible that Maple City made the lamps to their order. All external features of the lamp are identical to the Maple City #30 except for the curvature of the shoulder of the water tank.

The Norleigh features a rounded shoulder not typical of known Maple Citys, but such a round shoulder is suggested in some Maple City ads. Tops and bottoms are fully interchangeable between the two. Similarly, the Red Star logo belonged to Beall Bros of Alton, Illinois, but Beall's manufacturing facilities were

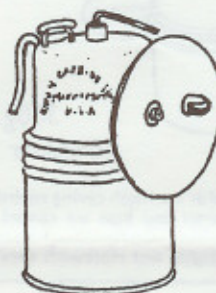
There was apparently also a Maple City hand lamp, as reported in a previous edition of the Lamp Post. The authors have not examined this lamp, but the sketch in the article bears a remarkable similarity to certain of the Maple City oilers. It is hard to resist the conclusion that the hand lamp was created from parts already available from production of the oilers and the cap lamps. Judge for yourself from the sketch and catalog illustration.



Norleigh Diamond



Red Star



Union Carbide

Maple City
hand lampMaple City
oiler
(1912 catalog)

devoted primarily to hand tools, not brassware, so purchasing custom-made lamps would have been plausible. No examples of the Red Star lamp are known to the authors, but the features portrayed in the known catalog illustration closely resemble the Maple City #32. The vintage of both brands coincides with the known existence and activities of Maple City. That together with the physical similarity of the lamps and the geographical proximity of the three businesses makes the connection hard to refute.

Another lamp previously featured in the Lamp Post is the cylindrical Anton carbide. This lamp is generally similar to the Maple Citys in that it has a wide mouth bottom, soldered-on reflector and generally similar size and appearance. However, it does have some distinguishing features not found on marked Maple City lamps, such as a striker, a backbrace and distinctly different water lever and water door. Based on knowledge of the vintage of the Anton "squaretop" and of striker mechanisms, this lamp probably dates from 1914. It is a reasonable hypothesis that the Antons had some of these made up by Maple City pending the introduction of their "squaretop" but admittedly circumstantial. (This Anton top was rectangular. Ed.)

Of all the possible lamps connected to Maple City, the Union Carbide Lamp is the least similar to the 1911-12 Maple Citys. The most notable physical similarity is the wide mouth bottom, but more importantly "Monmouth, Illinois" is stamped on the side of the lamp. The striker suggests it was available no sooner than 1914, and it is known to have been included in the 1916 Shapleigh catalog--prior to the Maple City fire. In addition sources in Monmouth believe that there was a connection of some sort between the Maple City Mfg Co. and Union Carbide Corporation (which is known to have had a sales office in Monmouth), although this is thought to have been primarily in connection with the Illinois carbide feed generator. Was Maple City the manufacturer of the Union Carbide Lamp? It is certainly possible that this is how the Maple City lamp evolved, but more evidence is needed to firmly establish a connection.

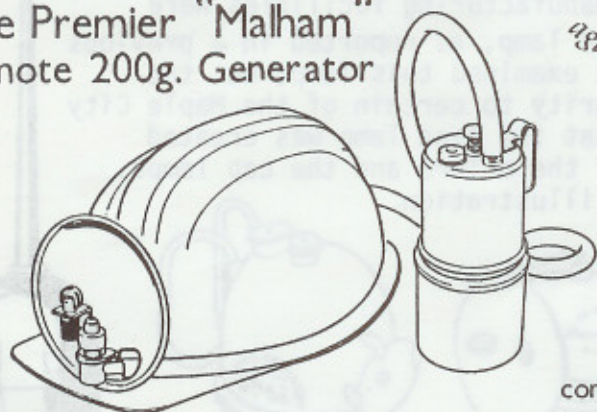
Obviously there is much to be learned about Maple City and all of the lamps discussed above. The authors solicit any and all information that Lamp Post readers may have about them, particularly data on the Maple City lamps after 1912; the origins of the Union Carbide Lamp; the Anton cylindrical lamp; any relationship between Union Carbide Corp and Maple City; and any advertising featuring any of the above lamps.

Bill Spence, 2381 Homewood Drive, San Jose, California, 95128, 408-247-4816.
David H. Thorpe, 16646 North 30th Avenue, Phoenix, Arizona, 85023, 602-993-1310.

PREMIER

MANUFACTURERS AND DISTRIBUTORS
OF
ACETYLENE LAMPS AND ASSOCIATED PRODUCTS.

The Premier "Malham" Remote 200g. Generator



*3 yr. Guarantee
against manufacturing defects*

300g. carbide
container also available

The Premier "Malham" remote generator has been developed with the harsh caving environment firmly in mind. Only the best materials are used throughout, and the container and base are coated with a tough carbide resistant finish. The generator is fully compatible with all remote carbide headlights and represents excellent value for money.

What Ever Happened To Premier? - An answer to this query has been provided by: Tony Oldham Rhychydwr Crymych Dyfed SA41 3RB United Kingdom. Tony has sent the re-production advertisement shown to the left. Many thanks.

John Coons' Lamp - The big question posed in the last Lamp Post about a strange frame instead of a reflector on a hand carbide lamp has not yet been answered. Only Len Gaska has said that he has a similar item, and no one has offered an explanation.

OTT or OTTO? - The Fall, 1981, Vol. III, No. 7, issue of the Lamp Post showed a hand carbide lamp marked "William H. Ott". Correspondent John Higgins in Ireland now has re-examined the lamp and finds that the "J" in "Jersey City, N _" is missing. This could mean that the final "O" in "Ott_" is also missing. Thus the lamp indeed may be an OTTO rather than an OTT lamp.

PREMIER

The story so far :-

The Premier Lamp & Engineering Company Limited ran into financial difficulties in 1984 and the business was taken over by Metec Leeds Limited.

In 1986 Metec's largest customer on the metal pressings side of the business went into liquidation taking Metec with them.

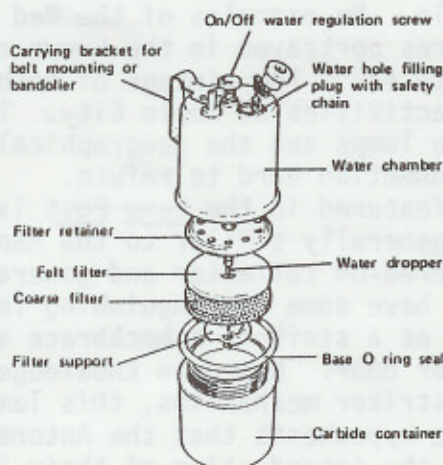
Caving Supplies have now taken over the manufacture of the acetylene lamps which will ensure continuity of manufacture and development of the lamps.

Caving Supplies have thoroughly researched the causes of various technical problems with the Premier lamps and are now producing lamps of consistently good quality. Furthermore, the remote generators are now more economical on carbide than before and will provide longer burning times with a good steady controllable flame.

If you purchased a remote generator from Caving Supplies prior to the take over and it is not working properly, please return it for Free modification on a service exchange basis.

"Malham"

Exploded View - Spares Detail



N.B. The felt filter and the coarse filter is now replaced with a single dual purpose filter.

Wanted - Bill Spence, 2381 Homewood Drive, San Jose, California, 95128, 408-247-4816, pleads that he badly needs a steel Brite-Lite bottom.

For Trade - Robert H. Fox, Box 343, Coulterville, Illinois, 62237, 618-758-2414, writes that he has some parts to trade for both Koehler (old tall lights) and Wolf (Jr. model) safety lights. He had a big box of parts given to him.

More For Trade - Ted Bobrink, 12851 Kendall Way, Redlands, California, 92373, writes that he has the following for trade all in excellent condition: 1, Lindahl match-safe candleholder; 2, Fielding and Peterson folding candleholder; 3, Colorado candleholder made by Ludlow-Saylor #32 (Wilson-Bobrink book); 3A, many other sticks for sale or trade; 4, Unfired Ever-Ready carbide cap lamp with unique hat brace; 5, Near-mint Squarelite by Guy's Dropper - brass with round bottom; 6, Unfired Gee-Bee nickel-plated carbide cap lamp with tip cleaner; 7, Beard-Mackie sight indicator; 8, Other lamps, blasting cap tins and photos all in good condition and for sale or trade.



Headlamps that Last a Lifetime

Your ordinary tin headlamp doesn't last very long. In fact, in a very short time, it is pretty well worn out, leaky and unreliable.

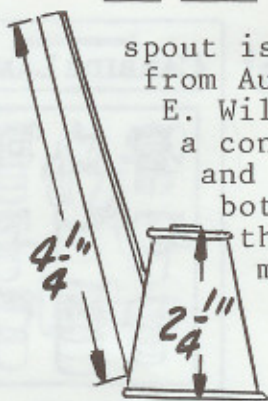
The "Indestructible" is all that its name implies—it cannot be broken, barring accidents, the spout and hook cannot be melted off, and it never leaks.

It is made from aluminum, holds the heat well and burns solid and semi-solid illuminants as well as ordinary oils.

The price is 50c each, postpaid—higher than tin lamps, of course—but then, they last a lifetime!

American Safety Lamp and Mine Supply Co.
SCRANTON, PA.

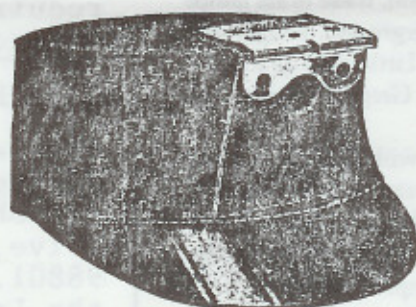
Oil Wick Cap Lamp - This somewhat different shape spout is on an oil wick cap lamp from Australia provided by L. & E. Wilson. It is all brass with a conventional hinge and lid and is marked "R A" on the bottom. The Wilsons advise that this style of lamp was manufactured by Robert Anderson in a room behind Smith's Hardware Shop in Wallsend, near Newcastle Australia, ca. 1910.



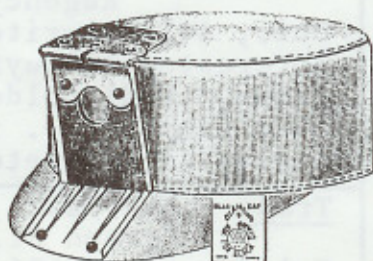
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COAL FIELD DIRECTORY, 1911

BLACK DIAMOND Miner's CAPS and LAMPS



We Would be pleased to hear from you when in the market



... FOR ...
MINER'S SUPPLIES

We also make
SUN-SHINE LAMPS

and one of the finest

Carbide Lamps



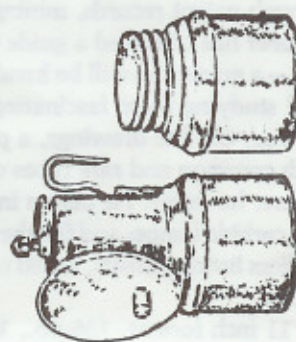
All of Our Lamps are Made With an INDESTRUCTIBLE LID. You Cannot MELT it OFF.

T. R. JONES COMPANY,

WILKESBARRE, PENNA., U. S. A.

When Writing to Advertisers, Please Mention Coal Field Directory.

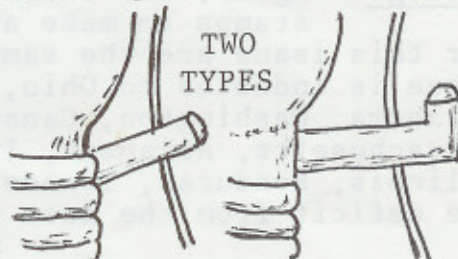
This is our Miners' Carbide Lamp made **SEAMLESS** with Screw or Slide Pin Water Valve. Guaranteed to Give Perfect Light. \$7.50 per dozen lots. \$7.00 per doz. in 12 doz. lots. Specify in order whether Screw or Slide Valve Wanted.



H. Jones Company,
Successors to The Miners' Supply Co.
24 Custer Street, Wilkes-Barre, Pa.

Jones? - Has anyone ever seen a Jones lamp?

Ever-Ready - David Johnson, 2415 S. Villa, Indianapolis, Ind., 46203, needs information on gas tube tips on Ever-Ready.



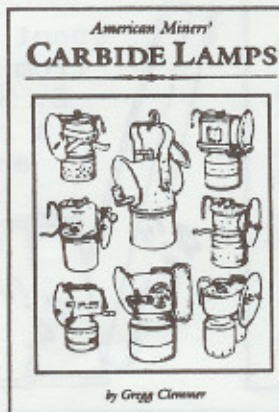
Indispensable to the collector of mining and caving memorabilia!

American Miners' Carbide Lamps

A COLLECTOR'S GUIDE TO AMERICAN CARBIDE MINE LIGHTING

By GREGG S. CLEMMER

Illustrations by WENDELL E. WILSON



Every man who has labored in the twilight world beneath the earth's surface remembers the carbide lamp as a sooty, stinky device—the sole light source, besides candles, in mines and caves worldwide for over a generation. Replaced by electric illumination, these brass lamps have become a symbol of the rigors of the underground, sought and coveted by both historians and collectors alike. Little data as to their history and evolution has been published, but Gregg Clemmer has remedied that deficiency.

Combining a detailed and documented text with illustrations, he meticulously delves into the history of the discovery and development of calcium carbide and its application as an underground illuminant. He examines the designs and inadequacies of the first lamps, relates the history of their inventors, and highlights the improvements in lamp design which ultimately made them useful tools, not only to miners but to spelunkers, sportsmen, and railroad workers.

Combing through patent records, mining literature, and city directories, Mr. Clemmer has compiled a guide to scores of manufacturers of carbide lamps—a guide that will be invaluable to anyone interested in collecting and studying these fascinating devices. With the aid of Wendell Wilson's superb line drawings, a practical reference has been produced to both common and rare types of carbide lamps. Clemmer does not stop there, however. He delves into the tactics and psychology of collecting carbide lamps; and for the dedicated collector, he has provided appendices listing patents, based on chronology, technology, design, and rarity.

Large 8½ by 11 inch format, 136 pp., 120 illustrations, notes, appendices, bibliography, index. Hard cover, with dust jacket.

Price: \$22 postpaid.

Order from: Mineralogical Record Book Dept.
P.O. Box 1656, Carson City, NV 89702

Prepaid orders only except by previous arrangement. Allow 4-6 weeks for delivery.

rare than most lamps, but he just doesn't hear of many collectors that specialize in those items. Perhaps he could do some trading if he could locate some of those collectors. Len also needs a Demon Strike Light bottom.

Postage - Again, our thanks to all who have offered postage funds and stamps to make another issue of the Lamp Post possible. Costs for this issue are the same as last, including commercial printing. This issue is indebted to Ohio, New Jersey, Missouri, Idaho, California, Oklahoma, Washington, Canada, Colorado, Arizona, New Hampshire, Michigan, Massachusetts, Arkansas, Ireland, Germany, Virginia, Texas, Florida, Illinois, Honduras, Tennessee, Indiana, Nevada, Pennsylvania and Kentucky. The deficit from the last issue has been covered. Thank you.

Lamp Post © Copyright, Henry A. Pohn, 1987

New Book - We have a courtesy copy of a new carbide lamp book, American Miners' Carbide Lamps by Gregg Clemmer and amply illustrated by Wendell Wilson. The reproduction to the left gives the best possible description of this powerful book. It includes details of many carbide lamps, beautiful illustrations, some individual manufacturing company histories with their dates of existence, addresses, and listings of executive officers. Detailed designs of many lamps are examined and many bizarre patents are shown. There is a lot of carbide lamp history in this required reading for any serious collector.

Mining Stickers - Several correspondents have expressed an interest in mining hard hat stickers. One is John Baz-Dresch, 912 Highland Drive, Wenatchee, Washington, 98801. Write to John, not to the Lamp Post.

Purchase - Ray Setteur, 6917 Regency Dr., Parma, Ohio, 44129, writes that he is interested in buying oil wick lamps, candleholders, and carbide lamps . . . individual pieces to complete collections.

Trade - Len Gaska, 1688 E. Carson St., Pasadena, California, 91106, writes that he has been picking up all sorts of mining items other than lamps lately including assaying equipment, blasting cap tins, and even some mining related paper. Some of the assaying equipment seems to be much more