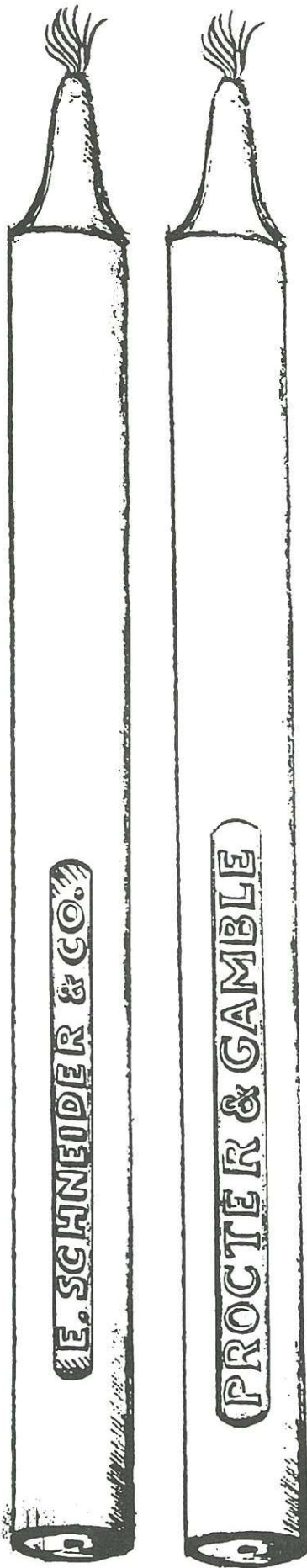


Mining Candles & Boxes

by Bob Schroth

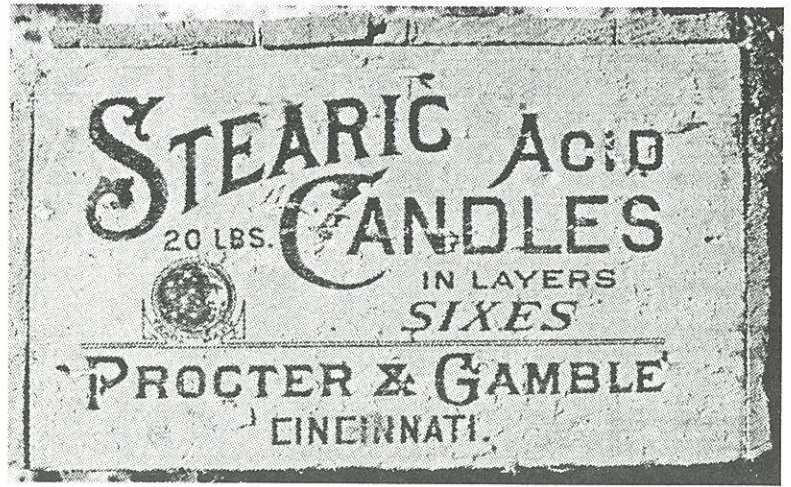


Finding anything to do with mining can be a real challenge.

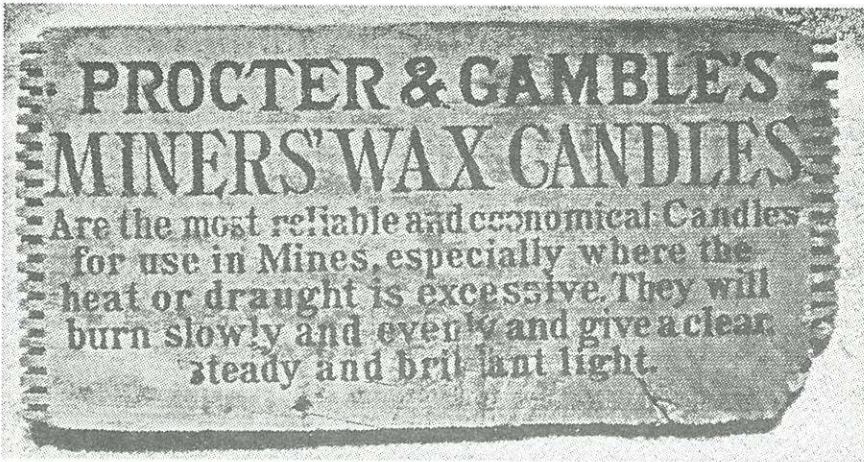
Collecting mining related candle sticks, candle boxes, mining candles and related items can even make your quest even more interesting. Most western and hard rock miners used mining candles to light their way underground until the early 1900's. They then gave way to the carbide lamp and the electric lamps. These candles came in packing boxes that have become very collectible today. Many companies made their boxes very attractive with colorful labels or fancy stenciling. The earliest Mining Candle Co's tried many variations of waxes to develop a hard and long burning candle. Mining candles are usually 3/4 inch diameter as are the thimbles of a standard miner's candle holder. Tallow waxes, to Bee's wax were tried and mixed with other additives. It seems the Steric Acid, Steric Wax and the Adamantine candles worked the best in the harsh mining environment. Candles were shipped in wooden boxes, usually with an interesting stenciled or lithographed label on the ends to describe the product and the contents.

Unfortunately not all companies marked the boxes with the word 'Mining'. This makes it a little difficult to tell a Mining Candle box from a household candle. Most Mining Candles were shipped in 20lb and 40lb boxes. Most had the word (SIXES) to denote that the candles were wrapped in bunches of six. Six candles burned long enough for an entire shift that the miner was expected to work, from 10 to 12 hours. Mining candles came in sizes from 12 oz's to 16 oz's that would make a candle range in length from 7 - 1/2" inches to 10" long depending on the manufacturer. Finding a mining candle is not easy, they were seldom left unburned underground and on a rare occasion they are found still in the box they came in. Many of these candles were marked with the maker's name or initial. These candles are more collectible than the unmarked ones but, still to even own a real miner's candle is owning a piece of mining history.

To find a stenciled or lithographed candle box is a collectors dream, The earliest boxes seem to be a stenciled 12 oz size packing box put together with square nails. It is not unusual to find candle boxes in nailed construction or finger jointed construction. After all, these were packing crates and they used what ever wood and construction methods that were cheapest at the time. Several companies are found with both construction methods.

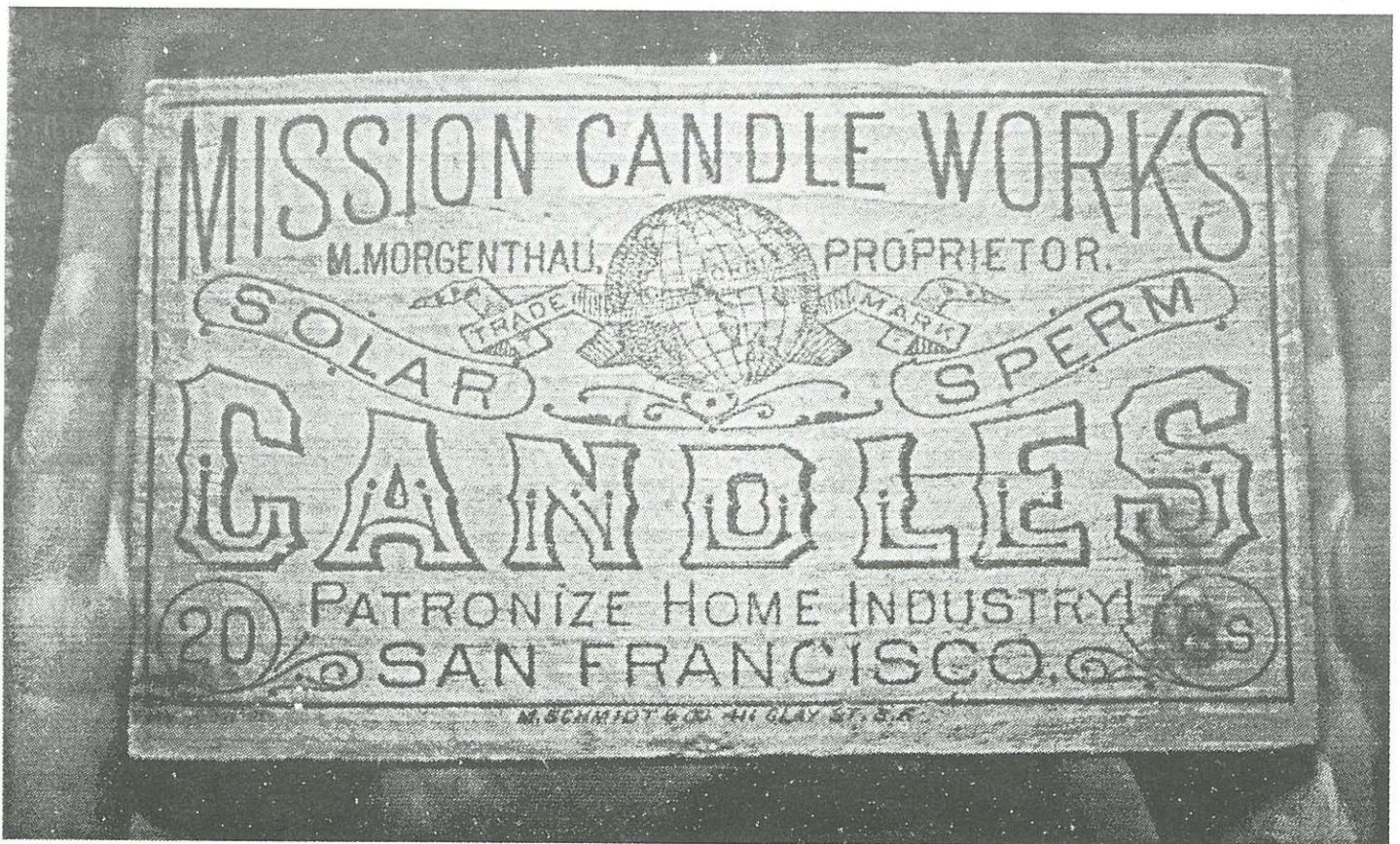


Late 1880's Procter & Gamble box found in Calico Mining District.



(Left) Box side of Procter & Gamble Miners' Wax Candles.

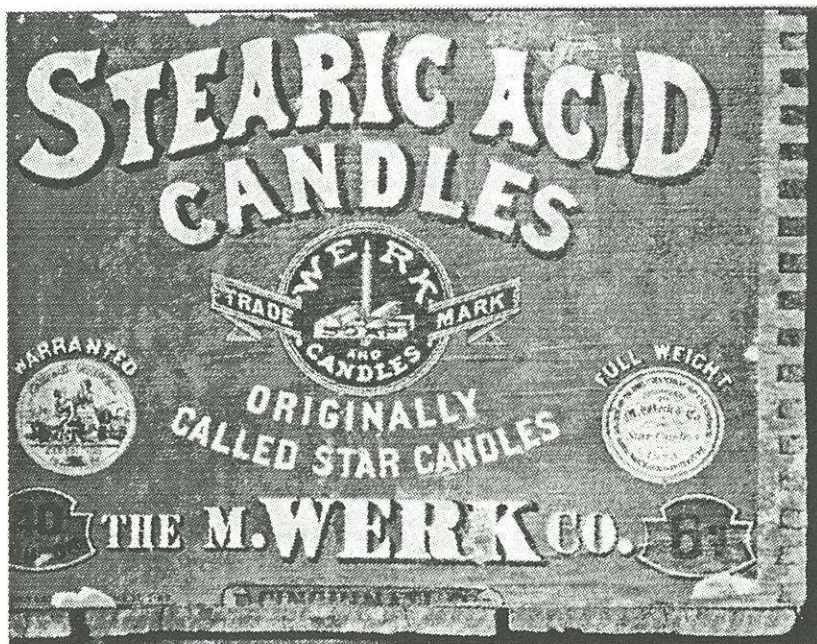
(Below) Small sized stenciled box. A real find.



The majority of mining candle boxes are found preserved underground in the dry climate area's of the Western United States and Australia. Brave underground explorers work their way through dangerous mines to find these and other elusive artifacts. (It is not recommended that you try this activity.)

On rare occasions they may find a candle stub, or candle wrapper. These wrappers held the bunch of six candles together, and they make a nice display with a candle box end or mining candle stub or whole. It is very hard to find these items in excellent condition, packing boxes were trash to the miner, and they were treated as such, they used hammers or picks to open the boxes and used little care in opening them. This is one area of collecting you cannot be too picky about the condition of the item.

Note: many packing boxes have a place name or shipping address marked somewhere on the box. This is a valuable marking. The place name may be one of the last reminders of a old town that has vanished.



Finger jointed construction. Most Werk boxes are found nailed.



Nailed construction.



**BONANZA MINING
WAX CANDLES**

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 20 SETS SAN FRANCISCO, CAL. 5000

MINERS'
WAX
Candles
 120 CANDLES.
PROCTER & GAMBLE
 CINCINNATI