

# THE SIMMONS "PIONEER" LAMP

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A wide variety of lamps were manufactured by the John Simmons Company, such as the "Baldwin" pinch-waist lamp, the "Miner's Lighting Bug" lamp, the "Pioneer" lamp, and the "Hold-A-Lite" lamp.

The Simmons Pioneer lamps consist of three basic variations as shown below. The lamps are, for the most part, fairly common. In the results of the carbide cap lamp survey conducted in 1989 by the Mining Artifact Collector, (Issue 5 Fall 1989, p.4) the John Simmons lamps were the third most common lamps--excluding the Justrite, Auto-Lite and Guy's Dropper lamps.

The history of the John Simmons Company's roll in the miner's carbide lamp business is still rather vague. Most of the history that is known has been researched by Gregg Clemmer.

The John Simmons Company was formed around 1870, and became a large manufacturer

and distributor of plumbing fixtures, gas and steam pipe fittings, machinery and tools. The company seems to have prospered up until the 1930's, but the company's main lamp production was probably limited to the years 1906 to 1921.

In 1906, the John Simmons Company began to manufacture and market the lamps that Frederic Baldwin had invented in 1900. These lamps were the Baldwin "pinch-waist" style lamps.

In 1913, Frederic Baldwin left the John Simmons Company to form the Zapp Manufacturing Company.

Probably around 1914 or 1915, the John Simmons Company started to market the "Pioneer" style miner's carbide lamp, since the first advertisements showing these lamps appeared in 1915.


In 1918, the John Simmons Company bought 17 patents from Frederic Baldwin, even though they were in the process of shutting down

**JOHN SIMMONS COMPANY** 1917

San Francisco, Cal.NEW YORKMontreal, Can.

Manufacturers

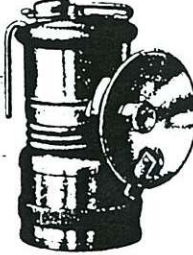
Pioneer Carbide Lamps for Mine Use



No. 125

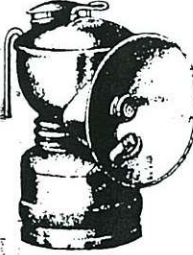
No. 125—Bottom valve feed—Weight, 5½ ounces; Height, 4 inches. Burns 3 hours on one charge. Notches on top of lamp holds lever in position. Lamp equipped with spark lighter. Price, complete .....\$1.25

Hold-A-Lite—Bottom valve feed—Weight, 5¾ ounces; Height, 3¾ inches. Burns 2½ hours on one charge. Notches on top of lamp holds lever in position. This lamp equipped with spark lighter, wind shield and carbide container. Price, complete .....\$1.25



No. 130

No. 130—Automatic water feed—Weight, 5½ ounces; Height, 4 inches. Burns 3 hours on one charge. This lamp operates similar to the No. 132 but is equipped with a water shut-off. The valve on this lamp is constructed so that the light is not effected by the swing of the miners head as are other lever feed valve lamps. Price, complete, \$1.25



No. 132

No. 132—Automatic water feed—Weight, 5 ounces; Height, 4 inches. Burns 3 hours on one charge. The No. 132 is fitted with the patented Automatic Water Feed. The automatic regulation of the water makes hand regulation unnecessary. Lamp equipped with spark lighter. Price, complete .....\$1.25



Figure 1. Standard Simmons Pioneer without notches on top of water tank (4" Tall).



Figure 2. Standard Simmons Pioneer with notches on top of water tank (4" Tall).

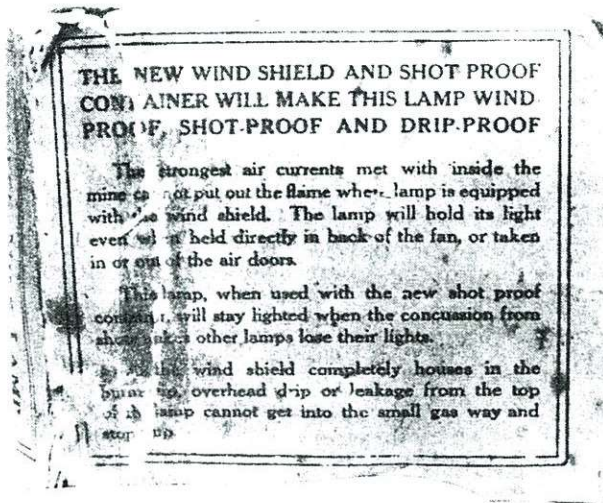


Figure 3. Front and back views of a Simmons Pioneer Lamp box (4.25" x 3.75" x 2.5") with blue lettering that held a standard Pioneer lamp with notches. (Mark Bohannan collection)

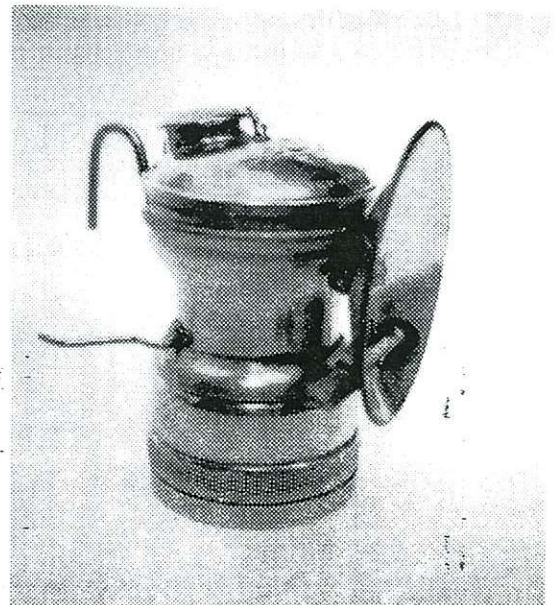


Figure 4. Intermediate Simmons Pioneer without notches (3.625" Tall).



**Figure 5.** Simmons Pioneer superintendent's lamp (4.25" Tall).

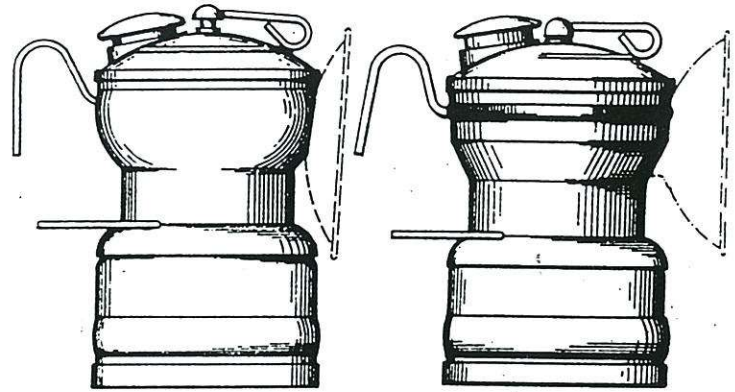
**DESIGN.**

H. T. SPERRY.

MINER'S LAMP.

APPLICATION FILED OCT. 10, 1919.

Patented Mar. 23, 1920.



54,786.

54,787.

**Figure 7.** Design patent number 54,787 was patented on March 23, 1920 by Henry T. Sperry of Waterbury, Connecticut. The patent was assigned to the Chase Companies Inc. of Waterbury, Connecticut, who probably manufactured the lamps for the John Simmons Company. This design patent looks very similar to the intermediate style Pioneer lamp. If so, it would mean that the intermediate Simmons Pioneer lamps were produced towards the end of the John Simmons Company's carbide lamp operations. This would explain why this lamp is the rarer of the Simmons Pioneer lamps.

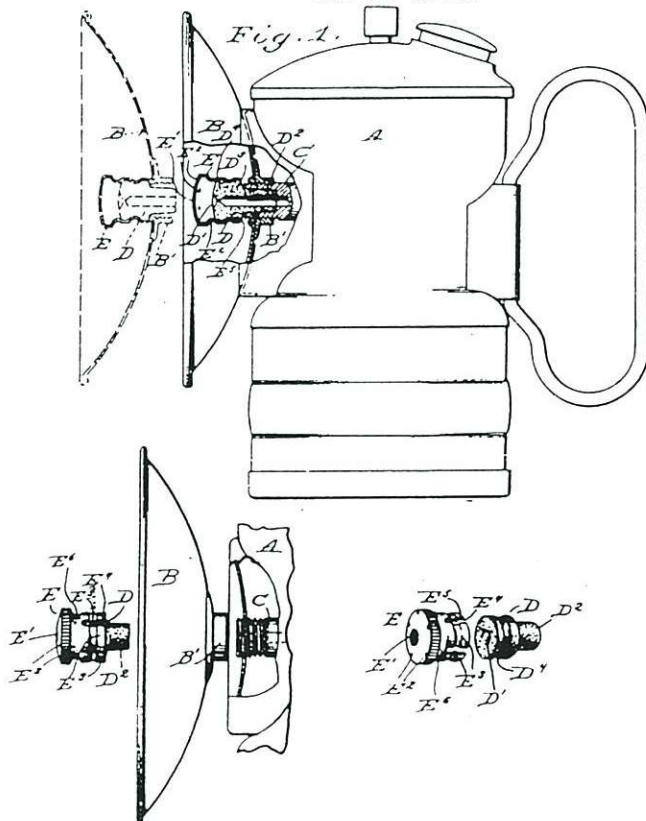
July 10, 1923.

1,461,572

J. M. BROCK

ACETYLENE LAMP

Filed June 23, 1920



**Figure 6.** Patent number 1,461,572 was patented by John M. Brock of Brooklyn, New York, on July 10, 1923. This patent dealt mainly with an improvement in the burner tip of the lamp.



**Figure 8.** Simmons Hold-A-Lit

J. M. BROCK  
ACETYLENE LAMP

Filed Oct. 8, 1919.

2 Sheets-Sheet 1

J. M. BROCK  
ACETYLENE LAMP

Filed Oct. 8, 1919

2 Sheets-Sheet 2

Fig. 1.

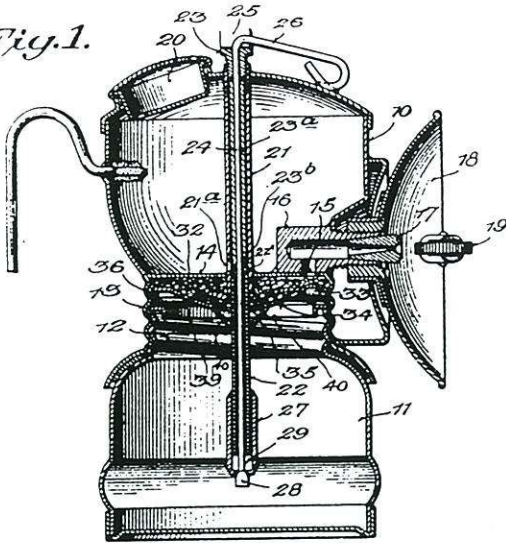


Fig. 5.

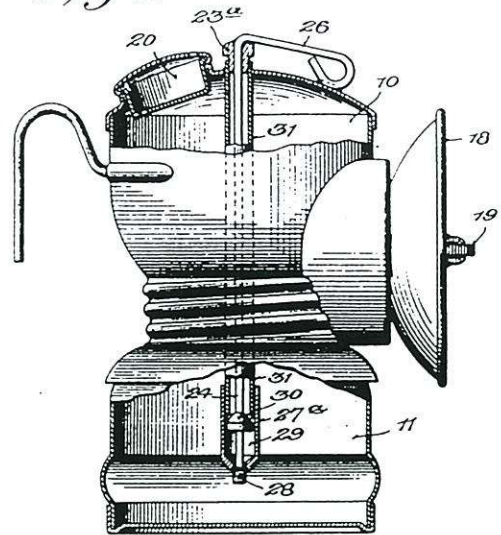


Fig. 2.

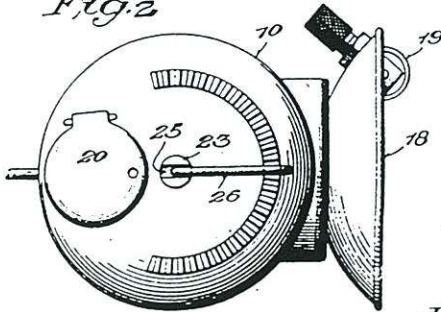


Fig. 3.

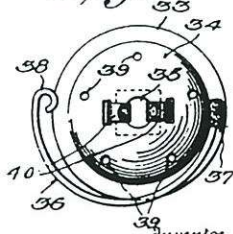
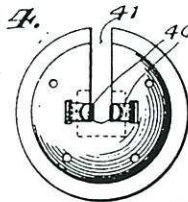


Fig. 4.



Witness  
Chas. L. Gristauer

John M. Brock,  
Inventor  
By At. Stewart  
his attorney

Witness  
Chas. L. Gristauer

Inventor  
John M. Brock,  
By At. Stewart  
his attorney

Figure 9. Patent number 1,493,802 was patented by John M. Brock on May 13, 1924. This patent was filed on October 8, 1919 towards the end of the John Simmons Company's carbide lamp operations. This patent dealt with improvements in the water feed and felt holder.

their carbide lamp operations. By 1921, the John Simmons Company had almost completely exited from the carbide lamp market.<sup>1</sup>

The Simmons Pioneer lamp was manufactured in two distinct styles, the Standard style (Figs. 1 and 2) and a shorter Intermediate style (Fig. 4). Each style was also manufactured with the top water tank markings as shown in Figures 1 & 2.

The Simmons Pioneer lamps were

produced in both brass and nickel-plated brass. They came with (1) a wire hook soldered to the interior of the water tank with a fixed wire hat brace--and sometimes with no hat brace, or (2) a wire hook with superintendent's hand handles, or (3) with a narrow spade mount. None of the Pioneer lamp bottoms are known to be marked. All of the Pioneer lamp reflectors are of the screw-on type and range from the deep-dish type to a flatter, standard type reflector.

1. Gregg S. Clemmer, American Miners' Carbide Lamps, (Tucson, Arizona: Westernlore Press, 1987), pp. 63-65.