

THE ZAR AND HOLD-A-LITE CARBIDE LAMPS

by Mark Bohannon
 Star Route Box 107E
 Oro Grande, California 92368

Over the years, there has been considerable debate as to whether the Hold-A-Lite carbide lamp was manufactured before or after the Zar carbide lamp. Many collectors believed that the Hold-A-Lite lamp was in the initial stages of production when Baldwin left Simmons and took the Hold-A-Lite with him and redesigned it into the Zar. I do not believe that this is the case, and my interpretation of the information available is as follows.

After leaving the John Simmons Company in 1913, Frederic Baldwin formed the Zar Manufacturing Company. The Zar Manufacturing Company was established at 320 Broadway, New York City--which had been Baldwin's address for other business activities for more than a decade. As Baldwin manufactured and patented his new Zar lamp, the

John Simmons Company continued to manufacture and sell the earlier style "pinchwaist" Baldwin lamps.






It appears--according to ads--that sometime around 1914 or 1915, an arrangement between Frederic Baldwin and the John Simmons Company was reached for the later to market the Zar lamp.

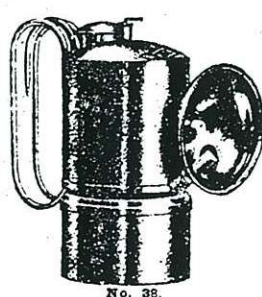
By around the end of 1917, the Zar Manufacturing Company was in the process of going out of business. This is probably what prompted Baldwin to sell seventeen of his patents to the John Simmons Company. Almost all of these patents related to the Zar lamp. Probably prior to the actual purchase of these patents, the John Simmons Company had acquired the rights to these patents.

JOHN SIMMONS COMPANY

Manufacturers
 Baldwin and Zar Carbide Lamp
 (The Miners' Lighting Bug)

San Francisco, Cal.
NEW YORK
Montreal, Can.



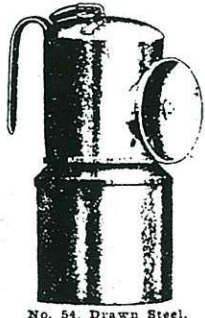
No. 38.

No. 29--38--39 are fitted with the Baldwin Patented Automatic Water feed, but have in addition a water cut-off operated by turning a screw at the top of the lamp. The No. 29 and 38 are nickel plated and are used by Superintendents, Engineers, Surveyors, Samplers, Foremen and Fire-bosses.

List prices--No. 29, \$1.50; No. 38, \$2.00; No. 39, \$1.00.

No. 32--This is the most generally used lamp made. It is equipped with the Patented Automatic Water feed and gives the most satisfactory service with least attention from the user.

List price--\$1.00.



No. 54, Drawn Steel.

No. 25A--71 Zar, these are unquestionably the most satisfactory valve controlled lamps made. The water feed and flame size are controlled by means of the lever at the top.

List price--\$1.00.

Drawn Steel Lamps--While these lamps are mostly used in Metal Mines, they are beginning to be used very generally in the coal fields. Many are now used as motor head lights and tail lights.

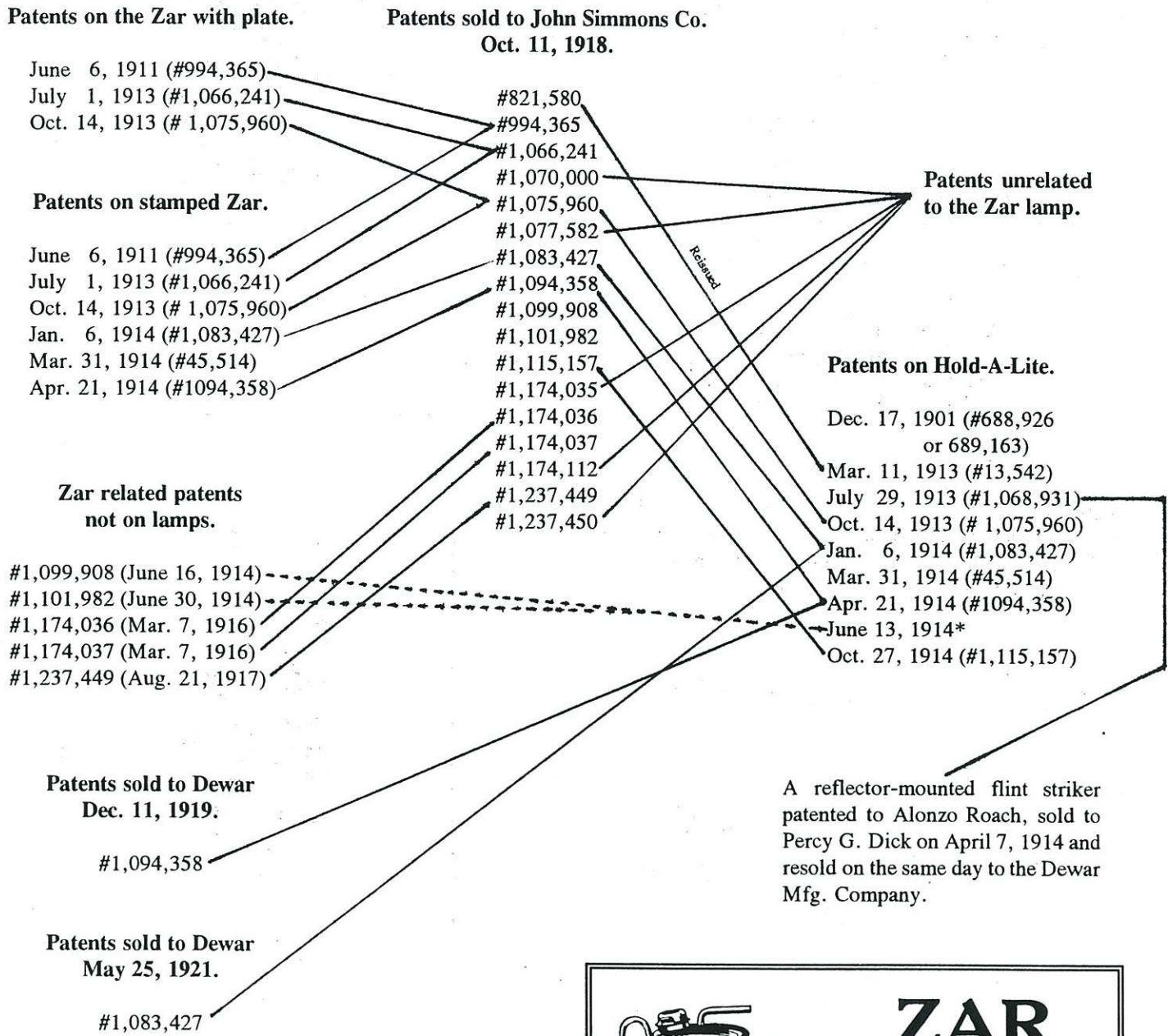
Made in two sizes with hand hooks or bail chains, and can be furnished with other attachments and special reflectors.

List prices range from \$2.40 to \$2.85.

There are but a few of the sizes and styles we manufacture. If further information is desired, kindly write us.

1915 MINING CATALOGUES

A PATENT CHART FOR THE ZAR/HOLD-A-LITE LAMPS



A reflector-mounted flint striker patented to Alonzo Roach, sold to Percy G. Dick on April 7, 1914 and resold on the same day to the Dewar Mfg. Company.

* This is a misprinted patent date. Patents were always granted on the Friday of each week. In June of 1914, patents were granted on the 2nd, 9th, 16th, 23rd and 30th. There were two Zar related patents granted in June of 1914, #1,099,908 on the 16th and #1,101,982 on the 30th. One of these is probably the intended patent date.



ZAR

**The Best Lamp Built.
Strongest in Construction.
Burners Never Clog.
18 Other Advantages.**

Zar Corporation
320 Broadway, N. Y.

Figure 1. A circa 1914 Zar advertisement.

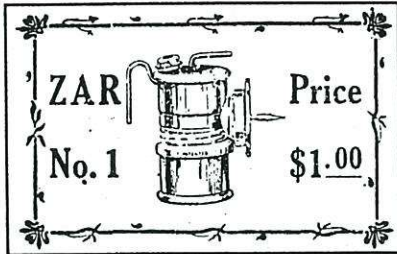


Figure 2. The top and one end flap of a Zar lamp box. The box is brown cardboard with black lettering and is 6 inches long by 3.25 inches wide by 2 inches high. (Bob Schroth collection)

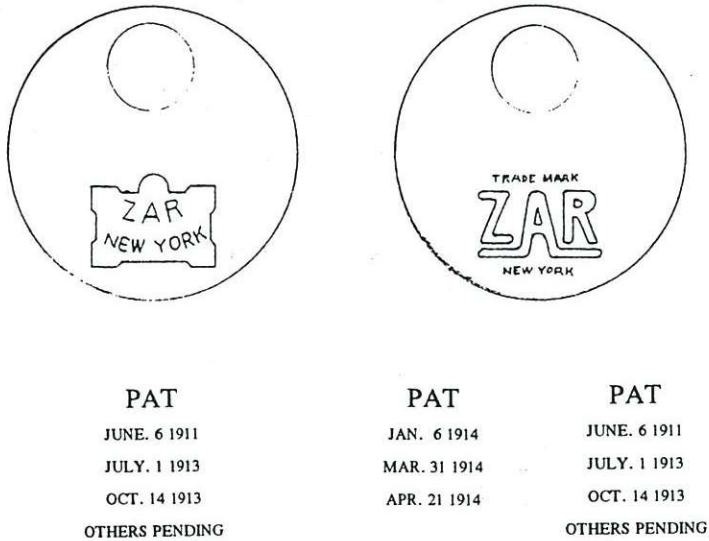


Figure 4. Drawings of the tops of the water tanks and the patent dates stamped on the side(s) of the lamps illustrating the two styles of Zar lamps. The style on the left is the earlier, yet more common style Zar lamp. (Drawings from Paul Kouts' *Miner's Carbide Lamp Reference*, Vol. V)

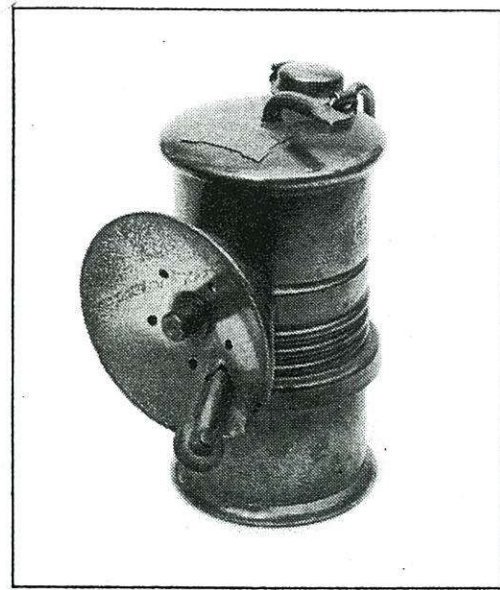


Figure 3. The Zar carbide lamp (3.875 inches tall). (Mark Bohannon collection)

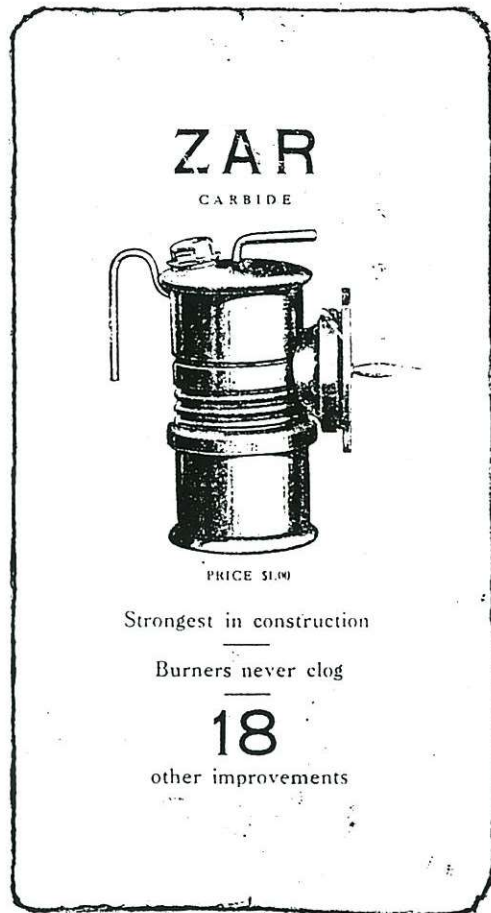


Figure 5. A four page, 3.25 inch by 6 inch pamphlet with blue-black printing describing the advantages of the Zar lamp that was enclosed in the lamp box in Figure 2. (Bob Schroth collection)

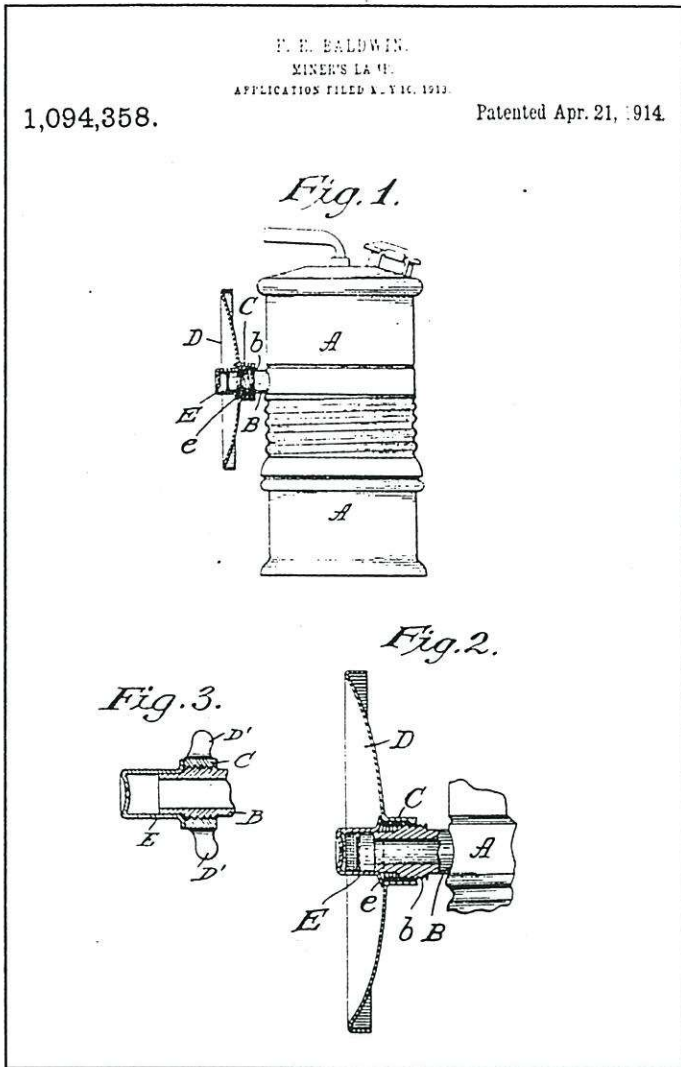


Figure 6. Zar patent filed May 16, 1913. This is the other major Zar patents Baldwin sold to Simmons on October 18, 1918, and was then sold to the Dewar Mfg. Company on December 11, 1919.

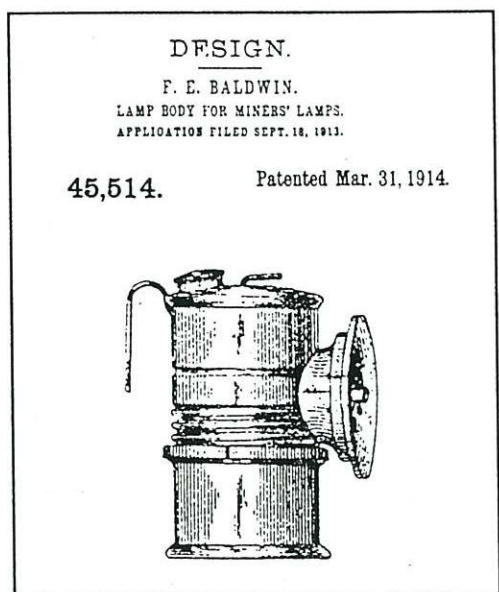


Figure 8. Design patent filed on September 18, 1913, by Frederic Baldwin for the "Zar" carbide lamp.

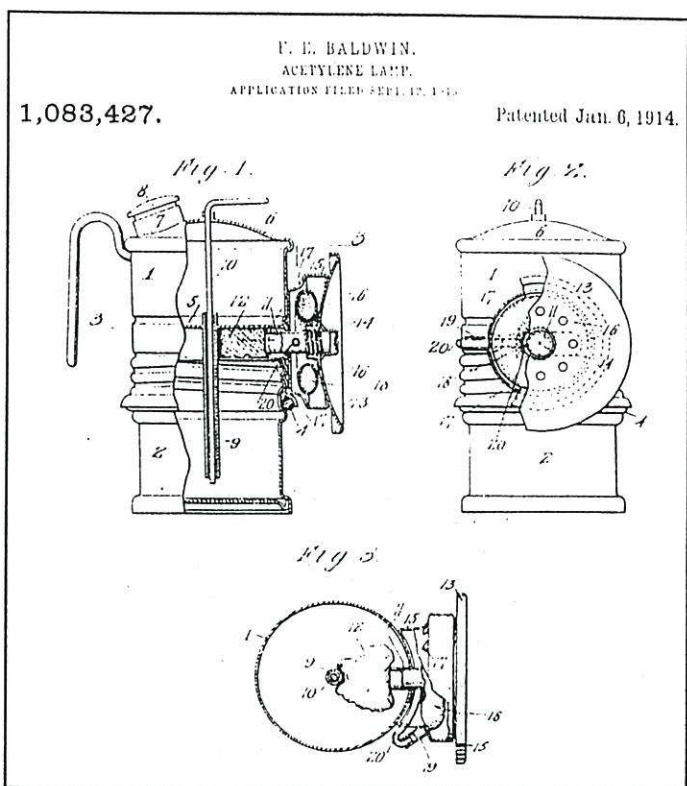


Figure 7. Zar patent filed September 12, 1913. This is the other major Zar patents Baldwin sold to Simmons on October 18, 1918, and was then sold to the Dewar Mfg. Company on May 25, 1921.

DIRECTIONS FOR OPERATING The ZAR Lamp

ONLY carbide called granulated, or 1/4 inch, should be used in this lamp. Larger sizes are liable to break the water tube.

The lamp is perfect and can be operated in any position.

Fill the carbide container half full of carbide.

The lamp is perfect and can be operated in any position.

DIRECTIONS FOR OPERATING THE SPARKER

When the lamp is making plenty of gas, the palm of the hand is laid almost flat against the reflector with the lower part of the hand resting on the sparker wheel. The palm of the hand is held in this position momentarily, in order to collect the gas between the reflector and the palm of the hand, then by a rapid motion downward of the hand the wheel is rotated by the palm, and the lamp never fails to light. We would also state that these wheels have teeth like those of a circular saw, and operate only when turning in the proper direction. The part of the sparker carrying the wheel is flattened on one side. This flattened portion should rest on the reflector support, and when in this position the wheel is operating as required.

Should it be impossible to light the lamp, owing to water on the burner, heat the burner with a lighted match until it ignites.

burners are easily cleaned by a fine needle or pin.

Figure 9. Instruction sheets enclosed in the bottom of the Zar lamp. The instruction sheets are printed in black and are shown at 64% actual size. (Bob Schroth collection)

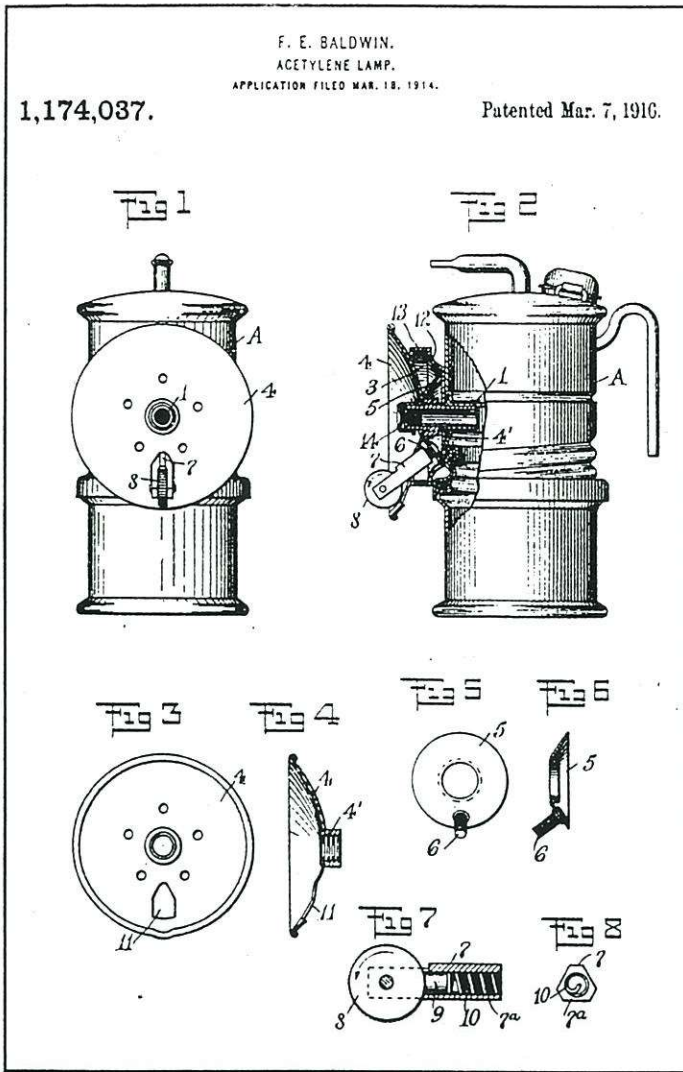


Figure 10. Zar patent filed March 18, 1914, detailing the unique Zar reflector and striker.

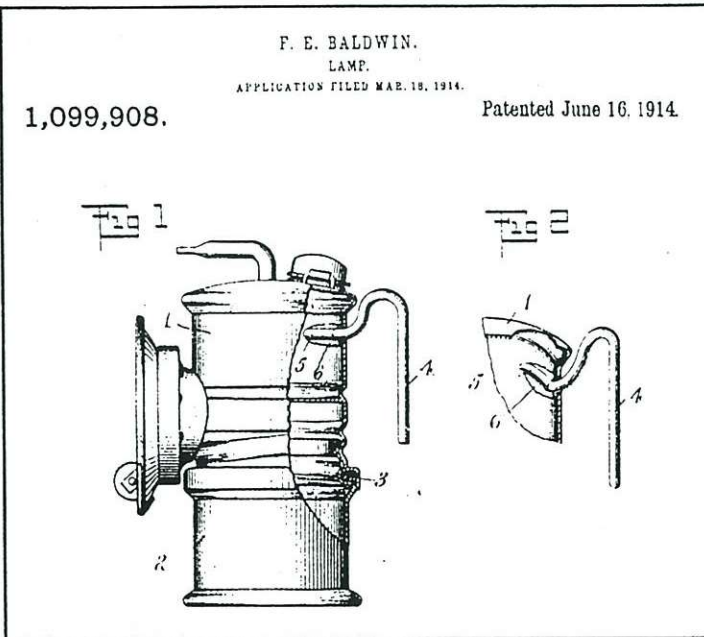


Figure 12. Zar patent filed March 18, 1914, detailing the attachment of the cap hook to the inside of the water tank.

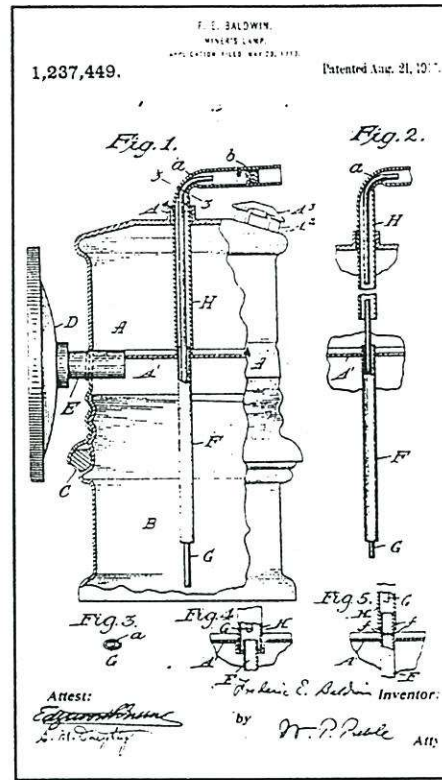


Figure 11. Zar patent filed May 20, 1913, detailing the Zar water control valve mechanism.

Again, according to ads, 1917 seems to mark the introduction of the Hold-A-Lite lamp by the John Simmons Company. This lamp is very similar in appearance to the Zar lamp. The water tank design is identical to the Zar except that the Hold-A-Lite tank had water lever notches added to the top of the tank. The base of the Hold-A-Lite was changed to resemble the base of the Simmons "Pioneer" lamp which had just begun to be manufactured. The Zar reflector was also replaced with a modified deep dished Simmons Pioneer reflector. The bottom of the Hold-A-Lite lamp is marked with the Simmons name and logo (Figure 14).

At the same time that the John Simmons Company bought the seventeen patents from Baldwin, they were also beginning to phase out the manufacturing of their carbide lamps. For this reason--and the scarcity of the Hold-A-Lite lamp--it appears that the lamp was manufactured for a very short time.

This is further illustrated by the fact that the John Simmons Company sold one of the major Zar patents (No. 1,094,358) to the Dewar Manufacturing Company on December 11, 1919. Then, on May 25, 1921, they sold a second major Zar patent (No. 1,083,427) to Dewar.

Even though in the 1921 Thomas' Register, there is listed in the section of leading trade names, "ZAR - DEWAR MFG. CO.," it appears that the Dewar Manufacturing Company never manufactured a Zar/Hold-A-Lite style lamp.



Figure 13. The Hold-A-Lite carbide lamp (3.75 inches tall). (Mark Bohannan collection)

One final comment, there is some evidence that when Frederic Baldwin began to manufacture his new lamp, the name "Zar" was not going to be the name of the lamp. According to a correspondence from Errol Christman to the *Lamp Post* in 1980, Errol had removed the Zar name plate on one of his lamps and discovered that under the plate the lamp was stamped:

BALCO
NEW YORK

The name "Balco" probably stood for Baldwin Company, in which a 1918-1924 New York Business Directory lists the "Frederic Baldwin Manufacturing Company" until at least 1924. Could these be the same companies? This is further exemplified by the fact that most of the Zar patents were filed for in the middle of 1913, yet the Zar trademark was not applied for until April 10, 1915, and then its usage date was stated as not being until January 1, 1914.

There are two styles of the Zar Lamps as shown in Figure 4, while only one style of Hold-A-Lite lamp known at this time.

References:

Clemmer, Gregg s., *American Miners' Carbide Lamps: A Collector's Guide to American Carbide Mine Lighting*, Westernlore Press; Tucson, Arizona, 1987.

Kouts, Paul L., *Miner's Carbide Lamp Reference*, Volume V; Published July 1982.

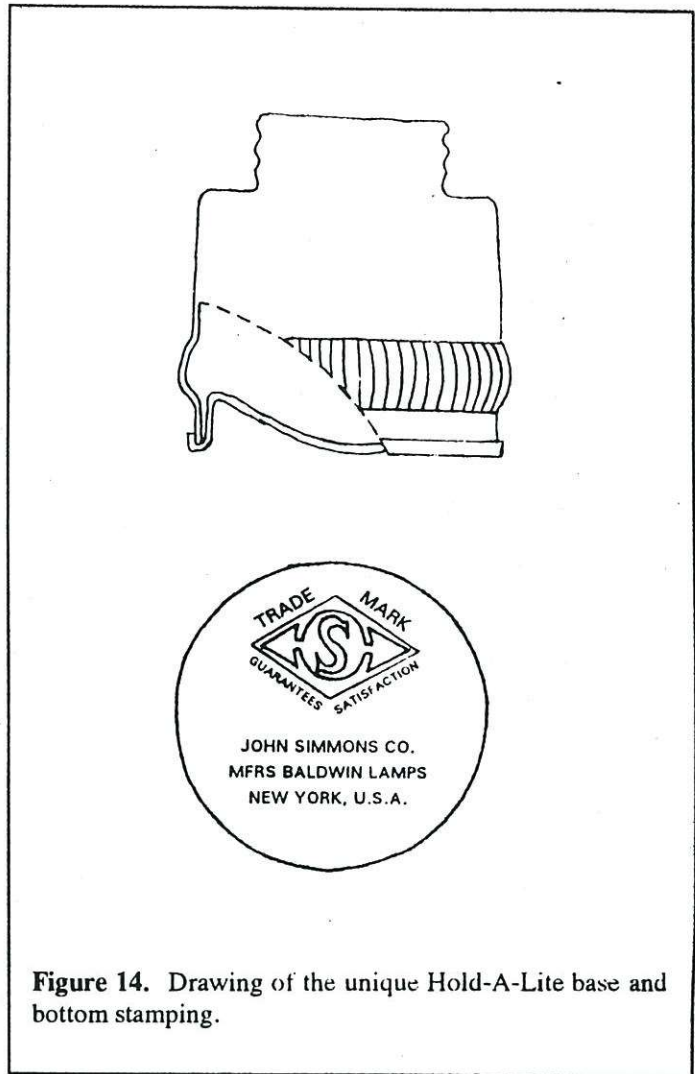


Figure 14. Drawing of the unique Hold-A-Lite base and bottom stamping.

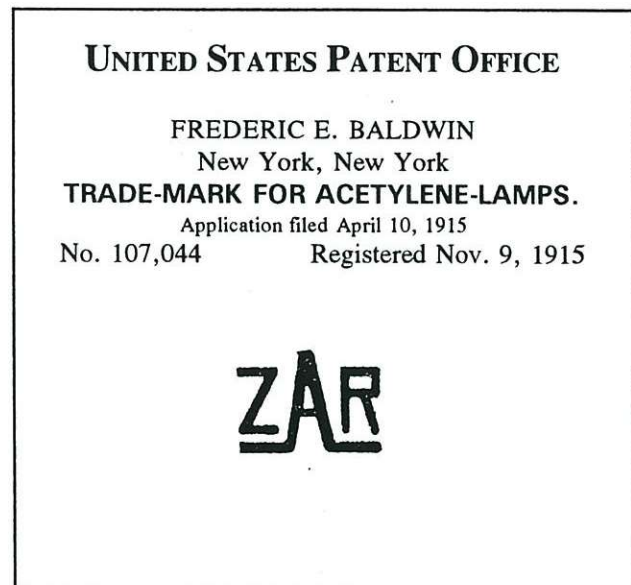


Figure 15. On November 9, 1915, the trademark ZAR was registered by the Frederic E. Baldwin. Prior to being registered, this trademark had been used by Baldwin since January 1, 1914.