

The MAC Carbide Cap Lamp Survey

by Len Gaska

By all indications, the MAC carbide cap lamp survey is the largest and most complete cap lamp survey ever done. The results were from 73 collectors with a total of 3369 lamps in their collections. We present the results on the next page without any interpretation and just a few comments and observations. The old saying about surveys is so true: "If you torture statistics long enough, they will confess to what you want them to say."

First of all, although the survey represents more collectors and lamps than previous surveys, it has a higher percentage of new collectors. A significant number of major collections were not surveyed because the collectors are now inactive, or they just declined to participate. For those who declined to participate, we hope it was merely an oversight and we would still love to hear from you. Any significant change in the survey results will be reported in a future issue.

What, besides curiosity, is the primary purpose of the survey? It is to discourage you from collecting cap lamps so I can have less competition!! No, not really. In fact, the survey results should be a relief to most collectors. If you don't have many (or any) of the really rare lamps, take heart. Most other collectors don't have them either.

The survey results should be invaluable when buying, selling, or trading rare carbide cap lamps. It is a guide to relative value, although rarity is not the only consideration leading to desirability. See the article by Dave Thorpe on the next page. If someone suggests trading a Hansen for your Union Carbide, a simple check of the survey will point out that it would be a very bad deal in terms of comparative rarity.

A few further comments on the results. The Daylight, Demon Strike Light, and Ni-Ba are of questionable American ancestry. A few knowledgeable collectors are quite sure that the Daylight is of English origin. The Demon Strike Light presents more of a problem. Most of them have been found in Australia, but myself and at least one other collector feel that they were American made. But that is only theory and it is likely that the manufacturer will never be known. Virtually nothing is known about the Ni-Ba and only one example is known to the author.

There are a few areas where I believe there was confusion regarding the terminology we used, and that confusion led to incorrect reporting. The difference between a "pinchwaist" Grier and a "vertical style" Grier was one area in which we felt that lamps were incorrectly reported. The "pinchwaist" Grier has a shape similar to a Baldwin and is very rare. The number for "vertical style" Justrites is probably too high as we felt there was confusion with the Streamlined style. Therefore, in a few cases we "fudged" the data to more accurately reflect what we felt were more realistic numbers.

Personally, there were not many surprises in the survey results. "The Buddy," vertical Justrites, and Brite-Lites were more common than I would have guessed. But in most cases, the numbers reflect general knowledge in the advanced collecting community.

As an aside, a survey like this always makes me wonder what happened to all those lamps where there are only one or two known examples. Are there still many others yet to be found? Are many of them still lying dormant in garages and attics? Or are most of them buried in dumps to be discovered by future archaeologists? Your guess is as good as mine, but if you have any opinions, I would love to hear them.

Standard.....	0	X-Ray (Defender style).....	6
Anton (cubic top).....	1	Anthracite.....	7
Anton (cylindrical top).....	1	The Buddy (Justrite).....	7
Belcro.....	1	Arnold's carbide candle.....	9
Black Diamond.....	1	Brite-Lite (top water feed).....	10
Funk Bros.....	1	Squarelite (Guy's Dropper).....	10
Klun.....	1	Hansen.....	11
Ni-Ba.....	1	Maple City.....	11
Norleigh Diamond.....	1	Victor (Pre-Justrite).....	11
Oshkosh.....	1	Copper Queen hand lamp.....	11
Red Star.....	1	Defender (Justrite).....	12
S & S.....	1	Gee Bee.....	12
Schneiders.....	1	Scranto.....	12
Snell.....	1	Ever-Ready.....	13
Steindropper.....	1	Force Feed.....	13
American.....	2	Demon Strike Light.....	14
Dry-Lite.....	2	Gem.....	16
Fulton.....	2	Zar.....	16
Grier Bros. (octagonal style)....	2	Brite-Lite (side water feed)....	19
Imperial Hardsocg (X-Ray style)..	2	Pathfinder by Hughes Bros.....	19
Imperial Hardsocg (Grier style)..	2	Shanklin Metal Products.....	25
No. 50.....	2	Springfield.....	25
Pocahontas.....	2	Elkhorn.....	29
S.E. Simmons.....	2	Arrow.....	30
Sure Light.....	2	X-Ray (Fulton-Imperial style)...	32
Wolf (early).....	2	ITP Float Feed.....	41
Justrite No. 77 stick lamp.....	2	Grier Bros. (horizontal style)..	42
Hold-A-Lite (J. Simmons).....	3	Buddy (Ashmead Mfg.).....	50
Milburn.....	3	Wolf (dome top).....	50
Premier by Hardsocg.....	3	Lu-Mi-Num.....	54
Union Carbide.....	3	Sun Ray.....	63
Victor (Defender style).....	3	Victor (Justrite).....	65
What Cheer.....	3	John Simmons (Pioneer).....	73
X-Ray (Victor style).....	3	Grier Bros. (vertical style)....	75
Abercrombie & Fitch.....	4	Justrite (vertical style).....	96
Daylight.....	4	Baldwin.....	140
Grier Bros. (pinchwaist style)...	4	Justrite (Streamlined style)...	332
Shanklin Mfg.....	4	Guy's Dropper.....	518
Maumee.....	5	Auto-Lite.....	624
Scoby.....	5	Justrite (horizontal style)....	670
Scranton.....	5		
Wolf (flat top).....	6		