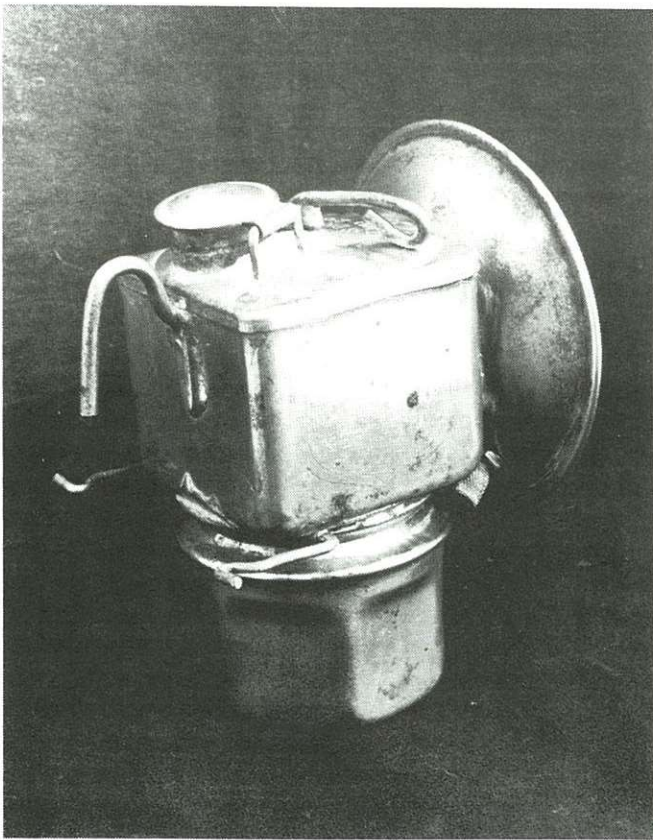


# The Guy's Dropper Squalelite

by Len Gaska

Collectors typically have a prevalent theme within their collections. Common themes among lamp collectors are brand names, varieties of a given brand, or simply the unusual. But common to virtually all collectors is the desire to acquire "key" lamps. Although there is some variation in the definition of what constitutes a "key" lamp, there is usually a common ground within the various definitions. Most collectors would consider the Guy's Dropper Squalelite to be a key lamp in any collection.

Although it is a Guy's Dropper made by the Shanklin Mfg. Co. of Springfield, IL, the Squalelite is generally considered to be a name unto itself. Beyond the name, the Squalelite shares prestigious company with other lamps of unusual and/or odd shapes. The water tank of the Squalelite is a cube as opposed to a cylinder which is the common shape of most carbide lamp water tanks. Only one other American made carbide miners' lamp is of the same basic shape: the square Anton which is sometimes mistakenly called a squalelite.



*Fig.1 This Squalelite cap lamp belonging to Rick Finch closely follows the original 1916 patent.*

The Squalelite is also unusual (in the author's opinion) as no other lamps of comparable rarity have been manufactured in so many varieties. The Squalelite appeared as a hanging or hand lamp (with hook and bale), a supervisor's lamp with hook and handles, and a cap lamp.

## The Cap Lamp Model

The Squalelite was patented in 1916 by George Shanklin and evidently did not enjoy a long production period. Squalelites have three patent dates stamped on them: May 26, 1914 on top, and September 19, 1916, and October 17, 1916 on the side. The October 17, 1916 patent is design patent number 49,892. Design patents cover a purely ornamental feature or "look" of a product and does not represent any technical innovation. The May 26, 1914 patent was issued to Frank Guy for an "acetylene lamp" which was one of the basic Guy's Dropper patents found on the more traditional one, two, and six date models. The September 19, 1916 patent was also issued to Frank Guy for an "acetylene lamp" the most important feature of which is the water dropper. This patent date is also found on the two and six date Guy's Dropper lamps.

Although the Squalelite patent drawing depicts an hexagonal base, *round* bases are more commonly seen. Some of the round-base models have two knurled bands stamped around the bottom. This is the same base that appeared on the Guy's Dropper "Tall Boy" and the base is taller (64 mm.) than a normal Guy's Dropper cap lamp base (51 mm.).

The hexagonal base has tall straight sides, and is not stamped with any logo on the bottom. It is distinctly different from the *standard* hex base, found on ordinary Guy's Dropper cap lamps, which is a bit shorter and tapers in around the bottom edge. A Squalelite with such a small base would be visually and functionally top-heavy.

One major variation in Squalelite cap lamps is the presence of strengthening braces soldered to the sides of the water tank. Earlier models do not have the side braces and the entire side logo (a shield with the name and two patent dates) is visible. Later models appeared with the side braces which obscured a good portion of the logo (fig. 2). As a mechanical engineer can attest, a round cylinder is inherently stronger than a square box. A square shape is weaker due to the bends at the corner and because a force on the side is entirely

DESIGN.

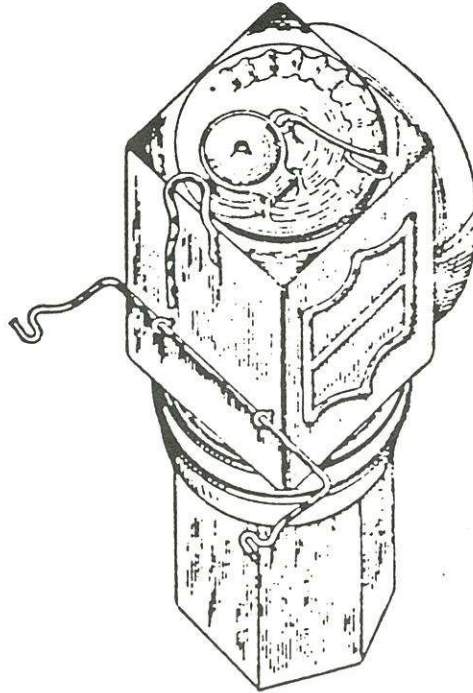
G. R. SHANKLIN.

LAMP.

APPLICATION FILED SEPT. 9, 1916.

49,782.

Patented Oct. 17, 1916.



*Witnesses.*  
*Roy S. Traxell.*  
*W. D. Du Bois.*

*Inventor.*  
 GEORGE R. SHANKLIN.  
*By Ally N. Du Bois.*

UNITED STATES PATENT OFFICE.

GEORGE R. SHANKLIN, OF SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS.

DESIGN FOR A LAMP.

49,782.

Specification for Design.

Patented Oct. 17, 1916.

Application filed September 9, 1916. Serial No. 119,209. Term of patent 7 years.

*To all whom it may concern:*

Be it known that I, GEORGE R. SHANKLIN, a citizen of the United States, residing at Springfield, in the county of Sangamon and State of Illinois, have invented a new, original, and ornamental Design for Lamps, of which the following is a specification, reference being had to the accompanying drawing, forming part thereof.

The drawing is a perspective view of a lamp embodying my invention.

I claim as my invention:

The ornamental design for a lamp, as shown.

GEORGE R. SHANKLIN.

Witnesses:

Roy G. TRAXELL,  
 R. W. TRAXELL.

directed inward. A round cylinder does not suffer from the weaker metal found at right angle bends and side forces are dissipated somewhat in other directions. Thus the author believes the side braces were a correction of an inherent design flaw of the Squarelite.

The cap lamp model has four basic variations:

1. Presence or absence of side bracing.
2. Round or hexagonal base.
3. Nickel-plated or brass (most brass).
4. Presence or absence of wire cap brace.

## Supervisor's Lamps



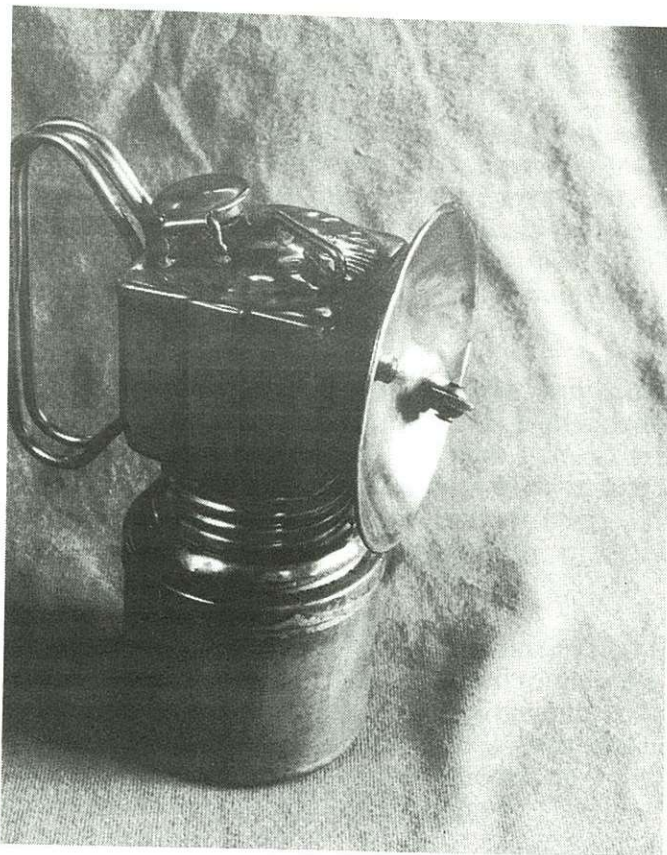
*Fig. 2 Nickel-plated supervisor's lamp, (smaller variety).*

The *supervisor's* Squarelite appeared most commonly in a nickel-plated finish, though brass models are seen. There were two basic models: one based on the cap lamp and another based on the larger hanging lamp. The supervisor's model shown above is based on the cap lamp. Note that the screw threads are not visible, but are tucked up inside the square water chamber.

The *larger* supervisor's models are shown in Figs. 3 and 4. Note that the screw threads are plainly visible *below* the tank where they accommodate a larger sized base. Although the square tank is the same size in all supervisor's models, the larger lamp is almost an inch taller due to the larger base and the way it screws into the tank.



*Fig. 3 Nickel plated supervisor's model (large variety), note deep reflector.*



*Fig. 4 Brass supervisor's model (large variety). Errol Christman collection.*

## Hanging Lamps

Finally, the hanging lamp is known to the author in two varieties. Both models display a large pivoting hook attached to a rigid bale that also functions as the side bracing to strengthen the lamp. The two hanging models shown on this page are gilt painted brass. I have not seen a nickel-plated hanging model.

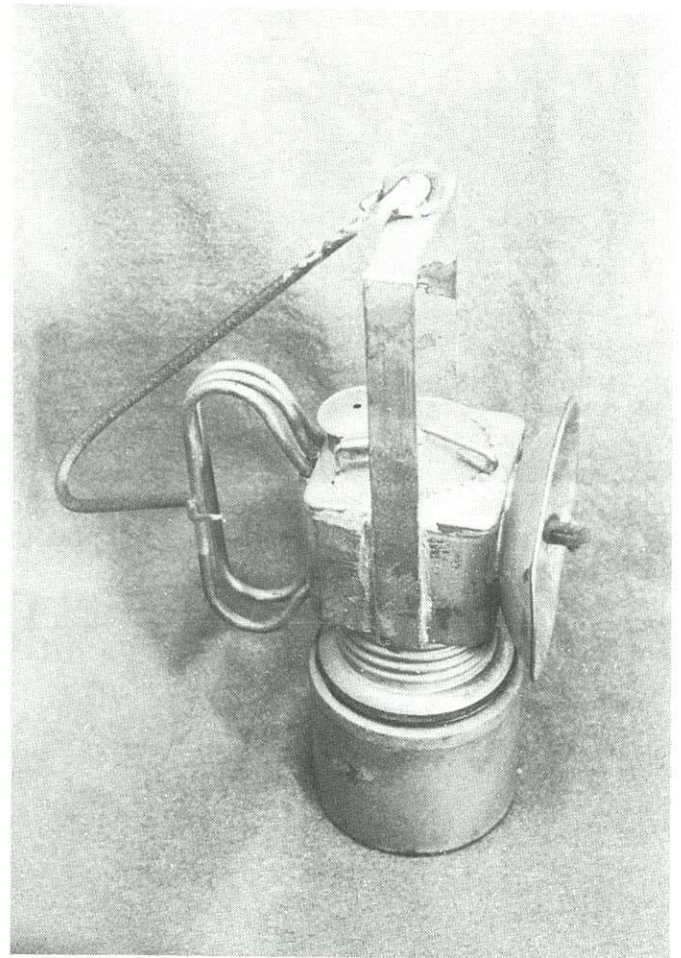


*Hanging lamp without handles. Errol Christman collection.*

**\* Lamps pictured in this article are from the author's collection, unless otherwise noted.**

All Squarelites known to the author have the traditional "dropper" found on all Guy's Dropper of that vintage. Although the Squarelite reflectors come in different shapes and sizes, they are all permanently soldered to the water tank.

The Squarelite did not undergo nearly the radical changes in design that the standard Guy's Dropper cap lamp did, for it was probably made for only a few years after 1916, compared to over two decades of production for the standard Dropper. Nonetheless, minor new variations of the Squarelite will undoubtedly become known. We invite collectors with varieties other than the ones illustrated in this article to submit photos and information to *EUREKA!*



*Hanging lamp with handles.*