

Justrite Acme Hand Lamps

by Len Gaska

As with the cap lamps of that period, Justrite hand lamps produced from 1913 to about 1921 were the most interesting in terms of variations, features, and styles. By 1921, the constant experimentation and sometimes oddball designs of the earlier years had disappeared. Primary to this change in company philosophy was the departure of Augie Hansen from Justrite in 1920.

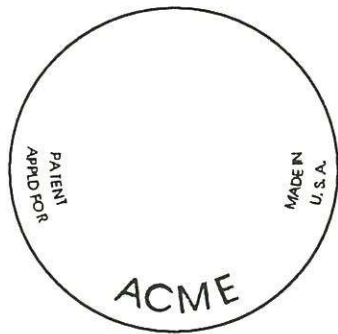


Fig.1



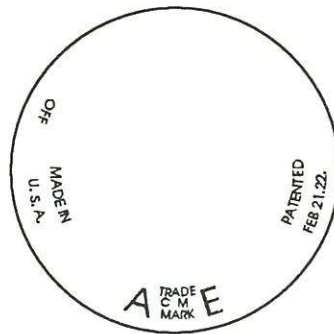
Fig. 2

The Acme (Justrite model Nos. 50, 50A, 56, 56A, and 80) hand lamps first appeared in Justrite Catalog No. 5 (circa 1922). Also first appearing in that catalog was the Victor cap lamp. I consider the Acme to be the “big brother” of the Victor since they share some design similarities. The Acme was a fairly radical departure from earlier Justrite hand lamps as it had a much more modern appearance and employed a round water door and either a wire feed or a polygon feed. Those features had been largely standardized in Justrite’s cap lamps by 1922. The Acme was also Justrite’s first steel hand lamp. Tony Moon wrote the definitive article on the Acme lamp in the *Underground Lamp Post* and much of the information in this article was first reported by Tony.



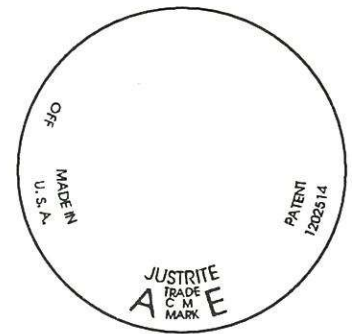
Type I

Fig. 3



Type II

Fig. 4



Type III

Fig. 5

The Acme was made in three basic styles. The No. 50 hand lamp (fig. 1) has a hook and bale and has a tinned finish. The No. 56 (fig. 2) has the same finish but has folding handles instead of a hook and bale. Finally, the No. 80 model is similar to the No. 56, but has a nickel-plated finish and was advertised as a superintendent's lamp.

The Acme was produced in three basic variations as described below.

Type I - This variation was produced from 1921 to 1925 and is marked on the top as shown in fig. 3. It was equipped with a 3 inch reflector and the Polygon water feed. The markings on the water lever are shown in fig. 7. Reflectors are marked "PATENT APPLD FOR - MADE IN USA" around the lighter hole.

Type II - This variation was produced after 1925. The top markings are shown in fig. 4. Reflector sizes of 3 and 4 inches were available. The height of the water tank is increased by 1/2 inch over Type I. A sub-variety with an unmarked 4 inch reflector was also produced.

Type III - This variation was also produced after 1925. Top markings are shown in fig. 5. Only 4 inch deep-dish unmarked reflectors are found on this variety. The height of the water tank is increased by 1/4 inch over Type II. It has a wire water feed marked as shown in fig. 6.

Other variations and characteristics observed are as follows.

1. Reflectors. Another variation in the reflector is the presence or ab-

sence of an indentation to prevent rotation found on Type III.

2. Water door. The Acme is found only with round water doors as seen on the cap lamps of that era. The major variation is in whether the water door is ridged with concentric rings on top or not. All the Acme water doors I have seen are nickel-plated brass. There were also two variations in how the water door was attached to the lamp body.

3. Finish. Although the tinned and nickel-plated finishes are standard, I have observed several models with painted finishes, although it is unknown if the paint was applied at the factory. One painted model in my collection has a black finish and the other is olive drab which might indicate it was used by the military. The olive drab example also has a flat strap fixed handle.

4. Size of water chamber. The water chamber was increased in height and diameter over time to increase the burning capacity from 5 to 8 hours.

Reference:

Development of the ACME carbide lamp. Tony Moon, *Underground Lamp Post*, Volume 2, Number 8 (Spring 1977).



Type I



Types I and II



Types II and III

Fig. 6