



# The <sup>nearly</sup> Complete Bottom-Guide for Carbide Cap Lamps

by Wendell E. Wilson

## INTRODUCTION

Pictured here are 99 lamp bottoms or carbide chambers for American-made carbide cap lamps. Because there has never been a detailed reference on carbide cap lamps, it has often been difficult to identify spare bottoms, to correctly match tops and bottoms, and to recognize mismatches. Perhaps these drawings will help.

This collection of drawings is not exhaustive. . . there are undoubtedly many other varieties out there which I have not seen. Furthermore, some drawings were made from photos of marginal quality, or from the drawings of other collectors, and so a few errors are likely. The reader should also bear in mind that these are sketches, not rigorously drafted engineering-quality drawings.

Every known brand of lamp is represented here by at least one drawing, except the following: belt-generator models (Columbia-C, Lunkenheimer, Justrite, Brilliant Searchlight), models without normal bottoms (S.E. Simmons, Standard), and models I have never actually seen (Pocahontas, Hardsocg, What Cheer). I would appreciate receiving any information on lamp bottoms.

The drawings show a side and a bottom view. A question mark on the bottom indicates that I have been unable to examine one and do not know if there are markings on the bottom face.

A number of people were kind enough to examine a preliminary draft of this booklet and to provide much additional information. I would particularly like to thank John Leahy, Henry Pohs, Chuck Young, Rich Finch and Ralph Blankenbecler.

## CLEANING

I would like to take this opportunity to say a few things about the practice of cleaning carbide cap lamps. Some collectors like to leave their lamps uncleaned and heavily tarnished. But I think the majority prefer clean lamps, restored as much to their like-new condition as possible, like antique automobiles. I have yet to see a properly cleaned lamp lose any of its value. It will look better as a display piece (though less like a "relic"), and will be more easily sold or traded. However, improper cleaning can do irreversible harm. If you can't or won't take the time to clean a lamp right, please don't clean it at all. . . its next owner will thank you.

The key to proper cleaning is to remove the tarnish without disturbing the surface underneath. Scraping with a blade or brushing with a stiff wire brush hopelessly ruins the surface underneath. Obviously a chemical rather than a physical approach is best, and also a lot less work. Very mild abrasives can be used in stubborn cases, and a polishing agent can bring up the luster a little when all cleaning is completed. Let's take these one at a time:

### ACIDS and BASES

Acids and bases are both corrosive and will remove tarnish. Acids are best for dissolving the lime

deposits and heavy black coatings on the insides of lamps, but should not be used on the outside of brass lamps because they tend to leave a pink copper residue. Bases, for some reason, are less likely to leave a copper coating. The copper can be scrubbed off with some difficulty because it is only a very thin layer, but one might as well use a base instead.

The best base compound for cleaning brass lamps is **Brass-O**, which contains anhydrous ammonia. Household ammonia (hydrous) works too, and just about as well. A container big enough to hold the lamps and its parts is filled with **Brass-O**, covered, and left to soak for from 1 to 2 hours to overnight. (The container should be covered or sealed somehow to prevent evaporation of the ammonia.) When the lamp is removed, the tarnish can be gently knocked off with a soft toothbrush.

The disadvantage of **Brass-O** is its cost, in view of its limited life. Any acid or base will become neutralized and lose its effectiveness after a certain amount of use. However, it does contain an excellent polishing ingredient as well (diatomaceous earth).

About the only other readily available base is lye (sodium hydroxide), which may be purchased as crystals (household lye, **Drain-O**) or as spray-on oven cleaner (**Easy-Off**). However, lye is very dangerous to skin and eyes, and I prefer to avoid it.

Among the acids, my favorite is **Lime A-Way** (phosphoric acid) because it is cheapest in large quantity. However, Naval Jelly (phosphoric too), Tarn-X (acidified thiourea), vinegar (acetic acid) and ordinary hydrochloric acid can be used as well. Nickel-plated lamps clean well in acid, though the worn spots may turn pink. Chrome or nickel-plated reflectors, too, are best cleaned in acid.

### ABRASIVES

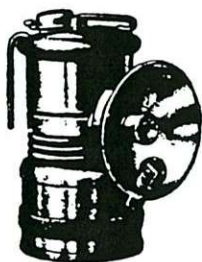
In difficult cases one may resort to abrasive bathroom cleansers such as **Ajax** or **Comet**. The gentlest and safest method of application is to rub the cleanser over the tarnish with your thumb, though this is tough on the thumb after a while. The use of steel wool is drastic and should be reserved for use on the inside of lamps only.

### POLISHING

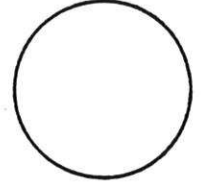
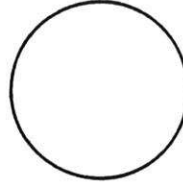
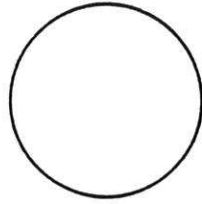
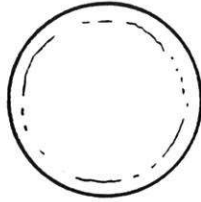
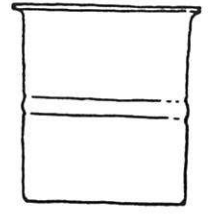
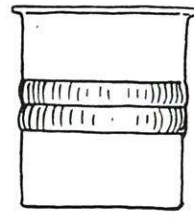
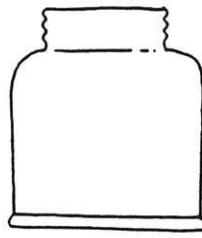
For some collectors, the dull luster obtained after soaking in **Brass-O** or rubbing with cleanser will do just fine. However, the lamp was brighter when it was new, and most collectors like a bit more shine. The best agent for this is again **Brass-O**. The depth of polish is optional, depending upon how hard one rubs. The oily **Brass-O** can then be quickly removed from lamp and hands by a quick spray of **Dow Bathroom Cleaner**.

### SOLVENTS

Solvents have no effect on tarnish, but some lamps may still retain some of their original lacquer coating which was applied to prevent tarnish. The lacquer is unsightly in patches and can be removed with paint remover, as can paint or other markings applied by the miner. This should be done before cleaning in **Brass-O**. Nail-polish remover (acetone) will work just as well, and is not so painful on the skin.







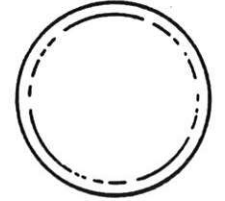
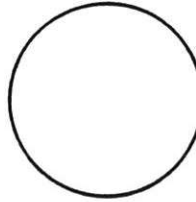
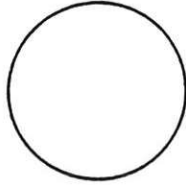
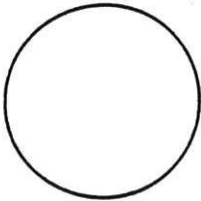
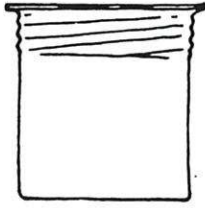
ABERCROMBIE & FITCH

AMERICAN

"ANTHRACITE"

"ANTHRACITE"

"ANTHRACITE"



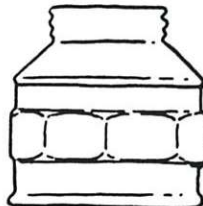
ANTON CUBIC TOP (or only a Justrite?)

ANTON (cylindrical)

ARROW (and) AUTO-LITE

early AUTO-LITE

early AUTO-LITE



AUTO-LITE

AUTO-LITE

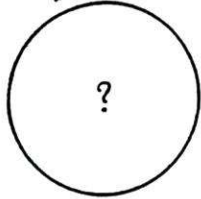
AUTO-LITE

AUTO-LITE

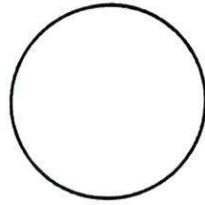
BALDWIN



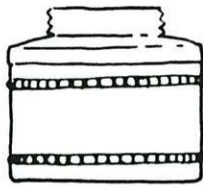
(Known only from an advertisement)



BLACK DIAMOND



BRITE-LITE  
(Hoppe Mfg. Co.)



BRITE-LITE  
(Harker Mfg. Co.)



BUDDY



BUDDY

Some Bottoms Unmarked



BUDDY

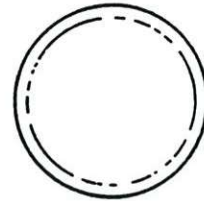
Some Bottoms Unmarked



DEFENDER



DRYLITE



DAYLIGHT  
(American-made)



ELKHORN

Some Bottoms Unmarked



ELKHORN



ELKHORN



height varies



EVER-READY



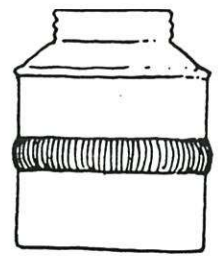
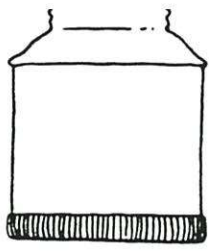
FORCE FEED



FULTON



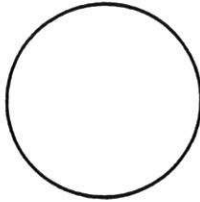
height varies



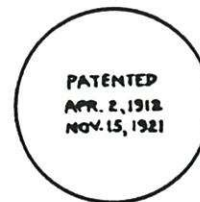
FUNK BROS.



GEM and GEE-BEE hand-cap lamps



GEM



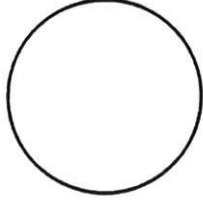
GRIER BROS. horizontal (and Gee-Bee?)



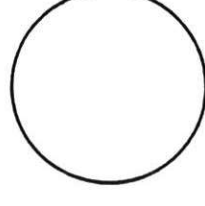
GRIER BROTHERS superintendent's lamp



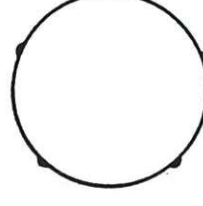
GRIER BROS.



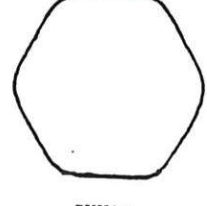
GRIER BROS. (horizontal)



GRIER BROS.



earliest GUY'S DROPPER



GUY'S DROPPER (and Squarelite?)



GUY'S DROPPER "Tall Boy" (and) SQUARELITE



early GUY'S DROPPER



GUY'S DROPPER



GUY'S DROPPER



GUY'S DROPPER

(to be continued in the next issue)