

THE HOPPE BRITE-LITE

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Charles Hoppe of Cincinnati is best known as the designer and original manufacturer of the *Ever-Ready* and the *Brite-Lite* carbide cap lamps.

The Charles Hoppe Company dates back to 1899 when (according to the *Cincinnati City Directory*) they were engaged in the manufacture of "metal goods." According to Clemmer (*American Miners' Carbide Cap Lamps*, 1987), the company began to make *Ever-Ready* carbide cap lamps in 1913, utilizing a design Hoppe had invented which was granted a patent on April 28 of the following year. Advertisements for the Hoppe *Ever-Ready* appeared in the *Engineering and Mining Journal* in 1914.

By 1915 Charles Hoppe had joined the Harker Manufacturing Company, where he worked on developing the Hoppe *Brite-Lite* carbide lamp. This lamp utilized the same patent of April 28, 1914. It was first introduced for sale in 1916 (Clemmer, 1987). Unlike the brass *Ever-Ready*, the *Brite-Lite* was made of steel, heavily tinned inside and painted flat black outside. The reflector was constructed of a nickel-plated brass. A few all-brass lamps are also known.

A number of variations in the *Brite-Lite* are known to exist. The **water doors** may be circular and screw-in (as on the *Ever-Ready*), or oval and hinged. The **hook** may be a flat spade mount or a round wire hook. The hook may be augmented by a lateral **brace** with a pivoting end, or by double **hand-loop** grips as on a superintendent's lamp. The standard reflector may also have a "**motorman's hood**" and glass lens which attaches by a bayonet mount. The **water feed** may be top-mounted as on a *Justrite*, or side-mounted as on an *Ever-Ready*. The **carbide chamber** may be smooth, or it may have a double row of raised dots; it may or may not have the Harker Brite-Lite name stamped on the bottom. Some models have an incorrect **patent date** (April 24 instead of 28) stamped on the top of the water chamber. There will be other variations; but these are all I have seen.

Production of the *Brite-Lite* continued into the 1920's.

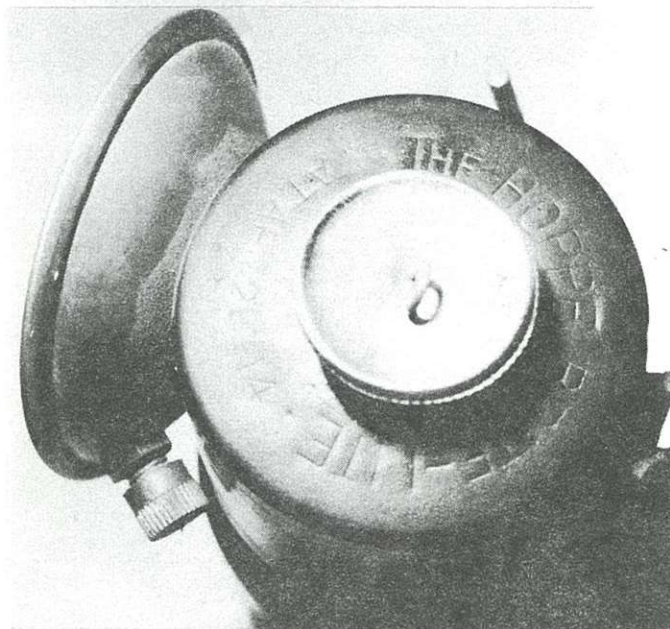


Figure 1. "The Hoppe Brite-Lite" superintendent's lamp.



Figure 3. All brass Harker Brothers Brite-Lite with oval water door, knurled base and top mounted lever-feed. (ex Henry Pohs collection)



Figure 2. "The Hoppe Brite-Lite" motorman's lamp.



Figure 4. "The Hoppe Brite-Lite" with wire cap hook and flat brace. (Mike Puhl collection; photos courtesy of Dave Thorpe.)



Figure 5. Harker Brothers "Brite-Lite" with oval water door, wire cap hook and hinged brace, and side-mounted water feed. (Dave Johnson collection)



Figure 6. "The Hoppe Brite-Lite" with oval water door, side-mounted water feed, spade mount and incorrect patent date. Brass water chamber with steel skirt and carbide chamber. (Dave Johnson collection; photos courtesy of Dave Thorpe)

