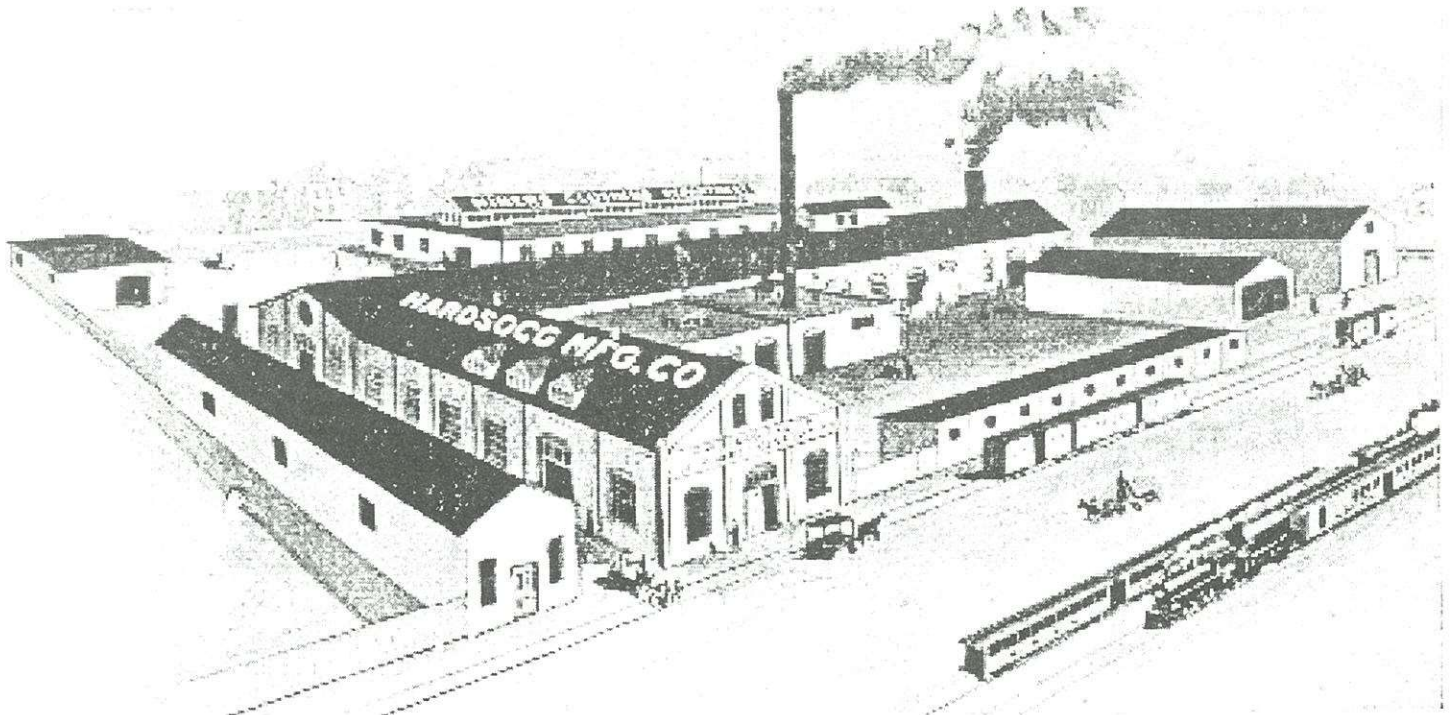


# Hardsocg

## Miners Tools And Supplies

by Dave Thorpe

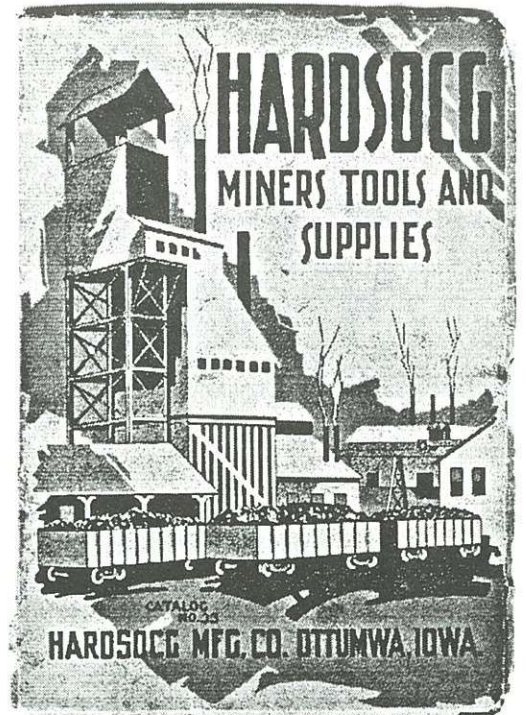
Information for the following article was obtained entirely from the 1922 Hardsocg catalog.



*The Hardsocg manufacturing plant at Ottumwa, Iowa.*

If you mention the Hardsocg name to a collector in our field, most think of oil wick lamps stamped with the Hardsocg name. Some are stamped with Ottumwa, Iowa and others with Pittsburgh, PA. Hardsocg had businesses in many US cities, but by the time of their 1922 catalog, the only locations mentioned, other than Ottumwa, were Evansville, Indiana and Pittsburg, *Kansas!* A detailed history of Hardsocg Mfg. Co. can be found in Dave Johnson's article in the first issue of EUREKA! (January, 1992).

Hardsocg Mfg. Co. was a major supplier of mining tools, with particular emphasis on coal mining. It was founded and owned by Martin Hardsocg. Born in Germany, Martin was brought to America in 1858 at six years of age. His father had been a farmer and had always preferred working for himself. In America, he was a well-digger, charging by the foot. Watching and helping his father dig, Martin thought it would be helpful to know ahead of time if there was water below. His first invention was a ground auger to test for water. His inherited instinct for self-employment along with an inventive mind laid the foundation for a successful industrial empire.



*A 1922 Hardsocg catalog.*



*Left:  
Pittsburg,  
Kansas branch.*



*Right:  
Evansville,  
Indiana branch.*

His family settled in Agency, Iowa where Martin learned the blacksmith trade, as an apprentice making \$50.00 a year and board. He then set out on his own to "paddle his own canoe". He hiked twenty miles to Happy Hollow, Iowa where he had heard that blacksmith George Thornton was in need of a helper. Thornton was a big Englishman, but was afraid to shoe his own mules for fear of being kicked. After Martin nailed one on, he was hired immediately. He was paid two dollars a day, but some was held back for the future. When it was time to move on, Martin was given a kit of tools to balance the account and allow him to begin a business of his own.

Martin moved a little farther away and took the Englishman's daughter along as his bride. It could be said that he wasted little time on social amenities while building his business. They settled near a mine, and there Martin made mining tools and ore cars. After developing a local reputation, the Ottumwa Chamber of Commerce offered him a substantial sum of cash to move to Ottumwa. Long years of struggles followed while he built his plant and developed a full line of miners' tools and supplies.

Hardsocg wrote: "I always made the best tools I knew how to make, and used the very best materials. I tried to keep ahead of the times too, and made quite a few inventions. Sometimes they couldn't see my new ideas at all, but I kept at it and finally had the satisfaction of seeing most of them adopted."

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He was the first to manufacture the detachable pick. The miners used to pack a load of ten picks on their backs into the mines, no two alike, and these had to be carefully sorted. Hardsocg "talked his head off" to the miners to get his device into common use, but it was difficult, as a standard pick could be bought for fifty cents, and Hardsocg "had to have a dollar and a half" for his. He promoted his tools as worth every cent, for he used nothing but the best materials. He gave away six picks as demos, and finally his detachable pick caught on. The same men who were given free picks came back time after time to buy more.

The introduction of the auger and the detachable pick were considered by some to be the two most important innovations of the time in coal mining, and Hardsocg pioneered the manufacture of both. He deplored the smelly lard oil wick lamps, though he sold thousands, and promoted carbide and electric lamps when they came to market. He contracted with Justrite, Auto-Lite (Universal), Guy's Dropper (Shanklin), and Grier Bros.

A special line of carbide lamps was stamped with the Hardsocg name. These have become highly collectible items. They were made by Grier Bros. and Justrite, but bear the **Hardsocg Premier** and **Hardsocg Imperial** names. To emphasize the pride he took in marketing his own name, all of these lamps were nickel-plated.

# HARDSOCC HANDLE



1st and Best Grade.



2nd Grade. Best Seller.

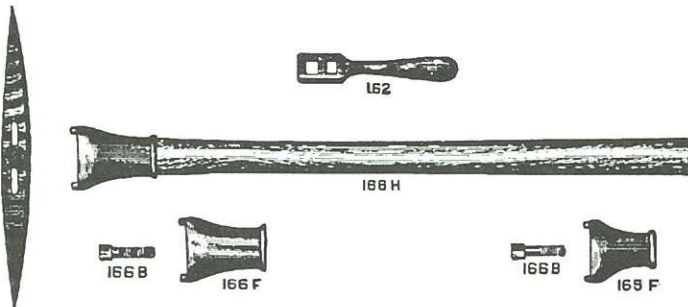


3rd Grade. An Excellent Handle.

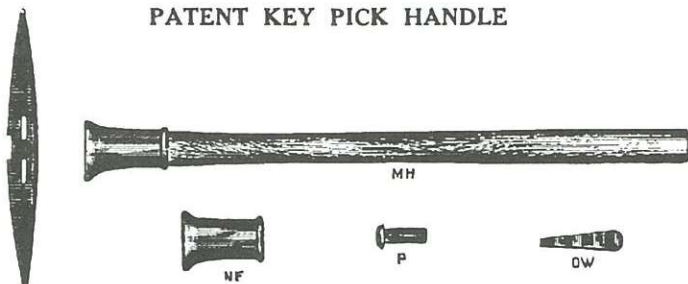
Names such as Imperial, Victor, Black Diamond, and Premier were applied to his picks and augers as well.

Though the main manufacturing plant was in Ottumwa, Hardsocg had major branches in Pittsburg, Kansas, Pittsburg, PA, and Evansville, Indiana,

## HARDSOCC PATENT BLACK DIAMOND HANDLE



## PATENT KEY PICK HANDLE



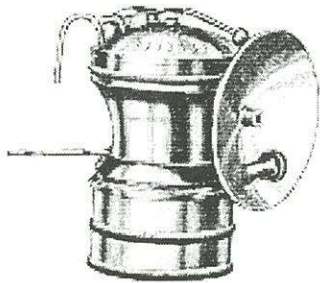
After amassing a fortune by age 55, he tried to lead a more leisurely life, but found that "retirement was killing" him. He returned to work, feeling happier and healthier. He remained worked in the Ottumwa plant until well into his seventies.

His lifestyle can be viewed as a recipe for success: a desire for self-employment coupled with an inventive mind; learning the basic skills needed and applying them rapidly; settling for nothing but the best in his products and doggedly promoting them.

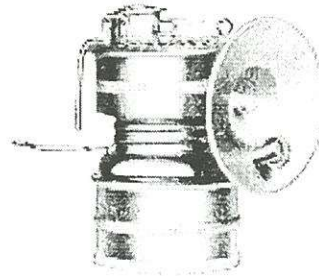


Martin Hardsocg

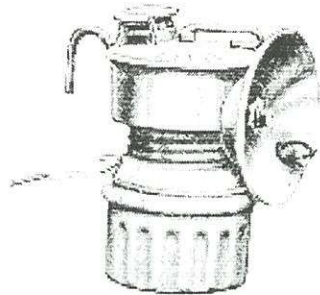
MINERS' CARBIDE LAMPS



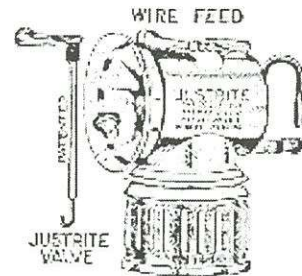
Auto-Lite  
No. 102X, Brass. No. 302X, Nickel.  
2 1/2 inch silver nickeled reflector with  
self lighter.



Arrow  
No. 10, Brass, No. 30, Nickel.  
2 3/4 inch wind-proof reflector with self  
lighter.



Guy's Dropper  
No. 5 Lamp, Bright Brass Finish. 2 1/2  
inch Brass Self-lighter Reflector. Round  
or hexagon bottom.  
No. 28 Lamp, Bright Brass Finish. 2 1/2  
inch deep Brass Reflector, which protects  
the burner tip from dripping water.  
Round or hexagon bottom.



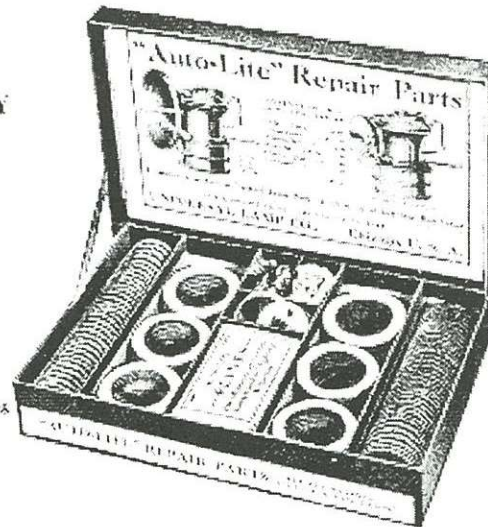
WIRE FEED  
Justrite  
No. 407, Polished Brass.

NO. 24 THE AUTO-LITE SUPPLY  
BOX

PACKED IN A HANDY SHELF-BOX

What the box contains:

- 6 dozen felts
- 6 dozen flat rubber gaskets
- 3 dozen lava tips
- 2 dozen flints
- 5 complete lighters
- 6 brass felt holders



Fifty-six

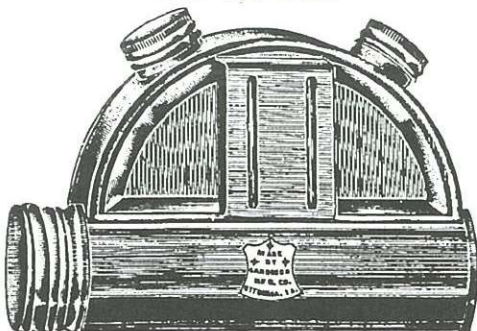
A page from the 1922 Hardsocg catalog.



The Hardsocg Imperial cap lamp, nickel-plated. Made by Justrite (Dave Thorpe collection).



HARDSOCCO PATENT COMPARTMENT  
CANTEEN FOR CARBIDE, WATER  
AND MATCHES



Left: Premier carbide lamp  
made by Grier Bros. (Errol  
Christman collection).

Below: Imperial Cap  
lamp made by Grier Bros.  
(Mike Puhl collection).



Left: The patented three  
compartment flask, by  
Hardsocg.