

Meyer Stein's 1913 Patent ...and the Lamps that Followed

by Dave Thorpe

Patent Applied For

"I claim the ornamental design for a lamp, as shown", declared the Springfield, Illinois machinist ^{1,2} on July 2, 1913. ³ Six months and seven days later, the U.S. Patent was granted, and Meyer Stein's new career as designer and manufacturer of carbide lamps was formalized.

The patent was unique *only* for its tank design which tapered on an inward curve to a narrow waist. The compound curvature resulted in an exceptionally strong and functional chamber.

Prior to being officially patented (Dec. 9, 1913) two different lamps were produced, as indicated by the "Pat. Apl'd For" stamping. They were identical to the lamp shown in the patent design, and to each other, except for their top marks. (see below)

These pre-patent lamps incorporate features typical of other "early development" lamps. Their hooks penetrate the water tank and are soldered inside. They have simple indented waterdoors. The water control lever is straight and rides free of any notches. The unreinforced reflector is of tinned steel and simply pushes on (Baldwin-style) over a smooth gas tube. The tank flange comes to a sharp unrolled edge and the smooth sided bottom lacks any provision for gripping.

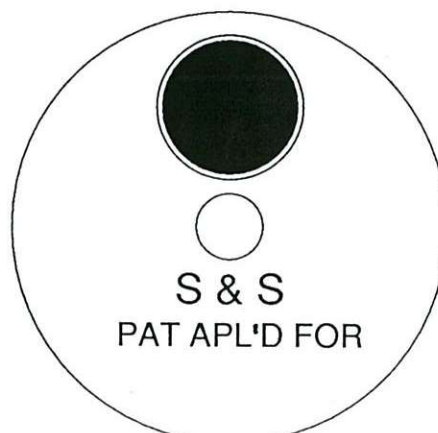


1913 Pre-patent Stein Lamp

As the two lamps would have been produced only in the six month period between July and December of 1913, they are understandably rare. The lamps were apparently manufactured by Meyer in his brother Philip's clothing store.⁴ Thus, the "S & S" lamp probably represents the initials of Stein and Stein.



"Pat. Apl'd For" top mark



"S & S" top mark

(exact scale as shown)

UNITED STATES PATENT OFFICE.

MEYER STEIN, OF SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS.

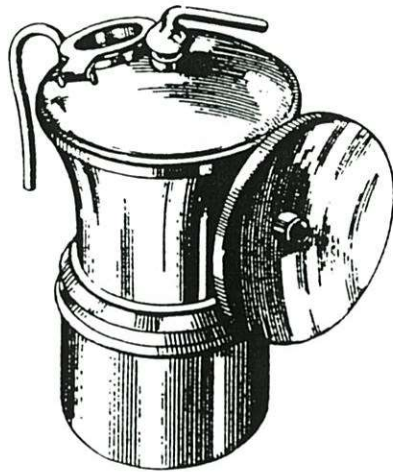
DESIGN FOR A LAMP.

45,028.

Specification for Design.

Patented Dec. 9, 1913.

Application filed July 2, 1913. Serial No. 777,090. Term of patent 7 years.



To all whom it may concern:

Be it known that I, MEYER STEIN, 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 a part thereof.

I claim:
The ornamental design for a lamp, as shown.

MEYER STEIN.

Witnesses:
ED EMSON,
JAMES REILLY.

Inventor

Meyer Stein,

Witnesses

George H. Harvey,
A. H. Hester

354 Victor J. Evans
Attorney

The Springfield Lamp

By 1915 Meyer Stein had established his own business location ⁵ and operated as the "Meyer Stein Manufacturing Co." Concurrently, the lamp was stamped and advertised as "The Springfield Lamp". It passed through various stages of refinement. The waterlever became bent under. Early models possessed unthreaded gas tubes, while later ones were threaded (the reflector being held against a collar by a large hex nut). Later yet, reflector braces were utilized. All reflectors were of the double concave style, with early ones being sharp edged, and later ones rolled. The hook became soldered to the exterior, the waterdoor changed to a double thickness dome, and the bottom developed an octagonal grip design.



Early Style Springfield Lamp



Late Style Springfield Lamp

Though the details are unclear, shortly after 1920, Meyer Stein began to revert to a primary role as designer and machinist, while brother Philip assumed business and manufacturing responsibilities.⁶ Meyer went on to develop two more patents which he sold to Ashmead Mfg. Co. (Ashland, Kentucky). At one point, he worked for them as design consultant.⁷



"The Springfield Lamp" top mark

The Early Auto-Lite

Not far away, in Staunton, Illinois, Jacob S. Sherman marketed a lamp very similar to "The Springfield Lamp". Like Meyer Stein, he began to manufacture lamps in 1913, and by 1915, had both a patent and a trademarked name for his product: the "Auto-Lite".

It is reported that Sherman assembled the lamps from parts made elsewhere, and that Chase Brass of Waterbury, Connecticut was a main supplier. Indeed, the early double-ringed Auto-Lite base is identical to that seen on the "Arrow", a lamp design patented by the Chase company.⁸

The Auto-Lite tank, however, is *identical* in dimension and form to the unique tank patented by Meyer Stein. There is little question that both were stamped from the same dies. Did Stein manufacture the tank for Sherman, or did both men obtain the tank from Chase brass?



Early Stein lamp and Auto-Lite compared

Footnotes and References

1. Circuit Court of Appeals, Dec 7, 1916. In a lawsuit of Guy v. Stein, it is disclosed that in 1908, Meyer Stein began repairing lamps for miners and inserting dropper mechanisms in lamps previously equipped only with raking wires.
2. 1914 Springfield city directory lists Meyer Stein as machinist, 1915 lists him as manufacturer of carbide lamps.
3. U. S. Patent Office, Design Patent # 45,028. Application filed July 2, 1913. Patented December 9, 1913.
4. 1914 Springfield city directory shows Meyer Stein's machinist listing to be at same location as brother Philip Stein's clothing store. Association of addresses noted by Paul Kouts in MCLR Volume IV, 1982.
5. 1915 Springfield city directory lists Meyer Stein at new address of 117-121 North 11th Street. Information supplied from Gregg Clemmer's American Miners' Carbide Lamps, 1987, p. 89.
6. See summary of City Directory title listings as summarized by Paul Kouts, MCLR Volume IV, 1982.
7. Patent # 1,376,654. Sold to Ben Williamson of Ashmead on August 15, 1922. Digest of Assignments - August, 1922. Original research done by Gregg Clemmer.
8. Auto-Lite history derived from: Gregg Clemmer, American Miners' Carbide Lamps, 1987, p. 90.