

The “Intermediate” Simmons Lamp

by Dave Thorpe

In 1981 I used to make regular visits to the Fairfax, Virginia home of my original lamp mentor Chuck Young. Chuck's long white hair was pulled back in a pony-tail, but he spoke with the air of a history professor as he showed me his vast collection of miner's cap lamps. The Simmons brand was of great interest to Chuck. It was here that I first saw the lamp that is the subject of this article. Pointing it out, he said: "...and this is what I call the intermediate Simmons lamp". Demonstrating my poor skills as a student, I failed to ask why, but nodded a dumb "uh, huh", and simply registered the name and the appearance of the lamp in my mind.

Years later, after, comparing the “intermediate” Simmons with many other models, I've learned a bit more about this style, but have found even more questions.

The first thing one notices about the “intermediate”, is that the tank differs from its more common cousin, the Simmons Pioneer. The lamp seems somewhat transitional between the Pioneer and its later relatives, the Sun Ray and ITP. Hence, Chuck Young's designation: “intermediate”. (ITP and SunRay were produced by Dewar, a company formed by ex-Simmons Co. designers around 1919). Many have wondered about the origins of the name Dewar. To date, no one by that name has been identified. The two Simmons designers, Brock and Cochrane both lived in New York, but after leaving Simmons, formed an alliance, the “Brock-Cochrane Company, A Corporation of Delaware”. Drop three letters from Delaware and you have Dewar.

A more striking design feature of the “intermediate” is the lamp's near identical tank



From left to right: Simmons Pioneer, “Intermediate” Simmons, and ITP by Dewar. A transition from one to another is believed to exist by some, but this may not be the case.

shape to the AutoLite lamps of the same era. Clemmer has noted that the parts for the AutoLite were manufactured by Chase Brass and Copper Co. of Waterbury, Connecticut. A review of U.S. patents reveals that designer Henry T. Sperry had assigned the rights to Chase Brass for two interesting lamp styles. They are very similar to the Simmons Pioneer brand *and* the "intermediate" Simmons...even more so than to the AutoLite! These two patent designs have led to the belief that Chase Brass also manufactured lamps for Simmons.

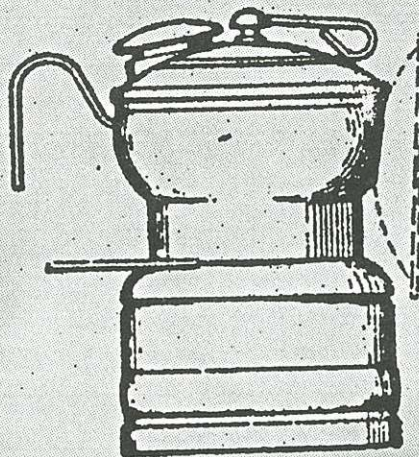
John T. Sperry is known only for one other patent that I am aware of: a gas burner tip (1916). And what could have been the purpose for his tank design that Chase marketed concurrently with the Autolite and Simmons? Both Simmons and Universal (AutoLite) would have done so with Chase's legal consent, if not encouragement, for the same company would have profited from the increased marketing by both companies. One might more logically call this odd Simmons lamp the "AutoLite-style" Simmons, but the name "intermediate" has stuck, and is a recognized term among most collectors. It reminds me of my friend Chuck Young.

The "intermediate" Simmons lamp is found in at least four variations, the major differ-

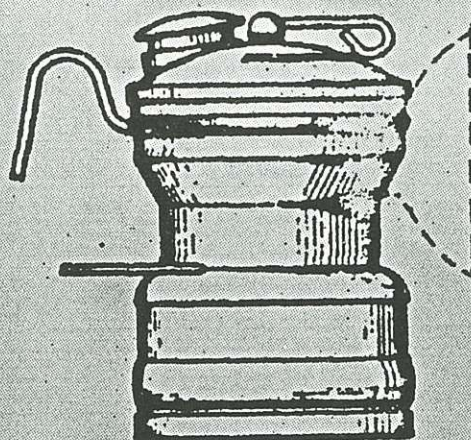


The tank of the "Intermediate" Simmons has more in common with Universal's AutoLite than with its own relatives. An illegitimate son?

Design Patent 54,786



Design Patent 54,787



Patents by Henry T. Sperry

Both patents shown here were filed Oct. 10, 1919 and granted March 23, 1920. Both models show the classic Simmons style base. The top model's tank is similar to the Pioneer while the bottom model is more like the "intermediate" Simmons. Both show a wire cap brace that is common to the "intermediate" Simmons and the AutoLite.

ence being in the water feed levers. All have screw-on reflectors. The shallow reflectors are tinned steel and the deep-dish is nickel-plated brass. The following photos represent a comparison of the four in my collection.

References:

1. Paul Kouts, Miner's Carbide Lamp Reference, Vol. IX., Simmons, 1983.
2. Gregg S. Clemmer, American Miners' Carbide Lamps, 1987.



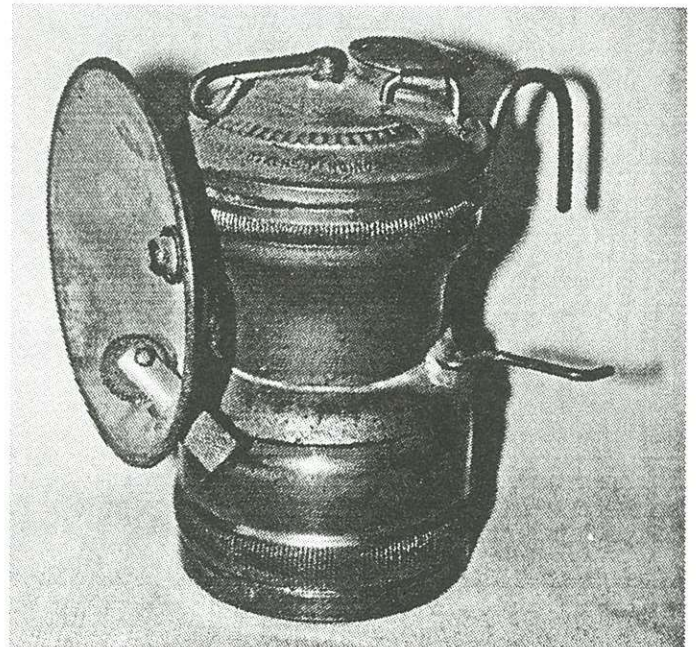
Most basic model with heavy bent raking wire, no tank notches. Brass.



Straight raking wire, no notches on tank. Brass.



Nickel-plated model with conventional lever, deep reflector, and notched tank.



Brass model with conventional lever and notched tank.