

The Other Springfield Reflector

by Dave Thorpe

The Springfield cap lamp, manufactured by Meyer Stein is generally found with a certain brass reflector that has an inner concave recess. The earlier version of this reflector had a sharp outer edge that was half-rolled back. On later lamps the reflector's outer edge was completely rolled leaving no sharp edge. The tank of the Springfield lamp was dimensionally identical to the early Auto-Lite. It is not certain whether one may have copied the other or whether Stein manufactured the tank for Jacob Sherman's AutoLite. A very early "S&S" lamp may suggest that some collaboration existed between the two men. Sherman, in later years, is known to have had a parent company (Chase Brass) manufacture the AutoLite entirely. It is not unreasonable to speculate that he had Stein handle the manufacture of his earlier pieces. On the other hand, Meyer Stein was no stranger to copying others' designs. The water dropper on his Springfield was a direct copy of neighbor Frank Guy's first patented valve which made the Guy's Dropper lamp famous. Stein renamed this, "The Button Dropper", and though a patent infringement suit was brought against him, he prevailed.¹ He also manufactured a lamp known as the Stein Dropper, that resembled the Guy's Dropper in both name and appearance (see photo next page). Stein bent the rules as he saw fit, for it is known that he manufactured moonshine stills as a sideline business.²

Stein's reflector, however, was his own work and design. Such reflectors with an inner concave recess are seen on The Springfield Lamp, the Stein Dropper, and two other lamps whose design he was involved with: Shanklin Metal Products and the Elkhorn.³



Early Springfield Lamp with sharp-edged reflector. This reflector belongs on water tanks with a sharp-edged skirt.



Late Springfield Lamp with rolled-edged reflector. Note the rolled edge on the skirt of the tank..

Some Stein Dropper lamps are found with a small 2-inch nearly flat steel reflector. I have seen two such lamps, and have heard of more.⁴ Al Quamen recently notified me that yet another reflector may be appropriate for The Springfield Lamp. This looks exactly like the small flat one seen on the Stein Dropper, but it is brass. A photo of Al's lamp is shown below. These reflectors have, so far, been seen only on Stein lamps.



(left) Stein Dropper lamp, an imitation of the Guy's Dropper is shown here with 2-inch steel reflector. (above) The rear view shows the reflector to be rolled flat back against itself.



Footnotes & References

1. Federal Reporter 239, Guy et. al. v. Stein, Circuit Court of Appeals, Seventh Circuit. December 7, 1916, pp. 729-734. See Eureka!, Jan 1994, Issue 9 for a more detailed description of the dropper.
2. Gregg Clemmer, personal communication with acquaintances of Meyer Stein.
3. Technically, some other lamps have inner recessed reflectors: the Justrite Driver's lamp (a horizontal brass lamp with a deep integral nickel reflector), early set-screw Guy's Droppers, and Arrow lamps. These recesses are much smaller than those of Stein lamps.
4. Dave Thorpe, Errol Christman collections.

(left) Al Quamen's Springfield lamp with 2-inch brass reflector. Photo by Al.