

The "Squat Variety" Britelite: A Study of Variations

by Dave Thorpe

The Harker Britelite cap lamp is found in two basic sizes: tall and...squat. The following article examines the developmental variations of the smaller version.

While the tall style (3 3/4") is found in both supervisor's and in hook/brace styles, all of this variety really resemble a supervisor's lamp in overall form and stature. All of the tall lamps possess a forward canted reflector with a low positioned burner. The smaller Britelite, designated "squat" by some, is a bona fide cap lamp. It stands a mere 3 1/4 " tall, and is never found with handles. Its reflector is always mounted dead vertical. The variety of known styles of this smaller lamp demonstrates the chronologic progression from a very "different lamp" to one that was quite conventional for its day.

The Harker Britelite cap lamp was available to the miner in either bare brass or black enamel painted steel. (An exception is known: a tall version of *nickle plated* steel construction exists in the Ted Bobrink collection). The lamp was offered in the "American Bulldog" style (equipped with top-mounted water lever), or with the Hoppe designed side-mounted lever identical to that of the EverReady cap lamp.

Looking over the table of variations, it is evident that the earliest Britelites utilized the side-mount lever and possessed smooth sided bottoms with no bottom stamp. Later, square bead knurling was added, and later yet, the bottoms were stamped with the sunburst "Britelite" logo.

Most of the side-lever lamps found today are stamped on top with this logo. The earliest of all though is not stamped at all. Coincident with the introduction of the top-lever, the stamping was relocated to the bottom of the lamp so as not to disrupt the logo. Instead, "ON" and "OFF" are stamped on either side of the top. The later model side-lever lamps were stamped "Britelite" on both top and bottom.

The burner emerges from the lower portion of the reflector on all earlier models. A late change in design saw a threaded gas tube in the center of the reflector. All central burners are associated with the Bulldog models, yet some earlier Bulldogs exist with the burner in the low position.

Inside the lamp there are differences too. The dropper tip seen on the early lamps is a screwed on knurled hood. The most recent Bulldogs, however, have a more conventional soldered on brass button.

Even the hook varies. The steel body lamps all have the classic steel hook with swivel-sided cross brace, whereas none of the brass lamps in this survey had cross-braces. The hook is simply soldered to the lamp on all early models. Only on the most recent (central burning Bulldog) lamp, is the hook doubly riveted to the tank.

Though the lamps were advertised in steel or brass, the table demonstrates that the steel version is more prevalent in the early models, and a transition to brass is seen as the lamp modernized. The modern Bulldog with centrally located burner was probably never made in steel.

When the Harker company first looked at Mr. Hoppe's designs for his EverReady and the Hoppe Britelite, they certainly recognized these to be quite different from other carbide cap lamps. They were constructed of steel, had water levers on the side, low position burners, and swivel jointed cross braces. Hence the phrase "Britelite A Different Lamp" was incorporated into Harker's trademark and logo. Yet with time, the lamp became much more like the competitions' and not so different after all. The changes occurred little by little: bottoms developed knurling like the Justrite, steel was phased out and brass phased in, the gas tube moved up to a central location and became threaded for a hex nut, the unique side lever gave way to a garden variety top lever, even the dropper mechanism became generic. Advertisements no longer emphasized "A Different Lamp", but instead christened the lamp with a new term suggesting strength and utility: "The American Bulldog". It is unlikely that conformity *caused* the demise of Harker's cap lamps, but rather represented the the company's last competitive gasps in a dying market.

AMERICAN BULL DOG No. 150
The Very Last Word in Miners' Carbide Lamps



PATENTED

Made with Top or Side Water Control
Made with or without Cap Clamp Bar
Made with or without Self-Lighter
Furnished with any size Reflector
Lamps are made of brass if desired

Candlestick Attachment
also if desired.

Saves Time and Money

REASONS WHY—

Burns 20% less carbide.
Has "Brite-Lite" perfect water feed that will not clog. No pounding or jiggling.
Has detachable reflector, easily cleaned.
Burner tube perfectly straight; tip easily removed.
Carbide container has knurled beads, making it easily unscrewed. Will not stick.
Light in weight, weighing only 4¾ ounces.
Compact and sturdy; height over all, 3⅝ inches.

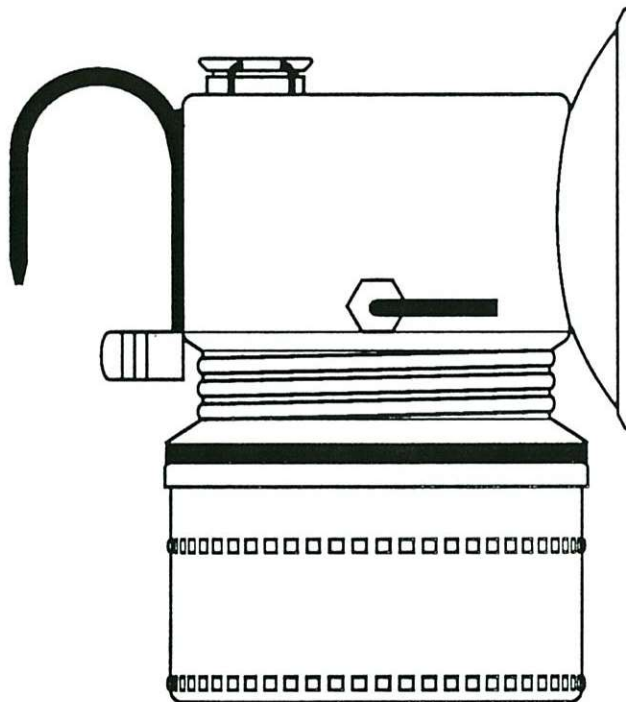
BRITE-LITE

WRITE FOR BULLETIN
HARKER MFG. COMPANY
410-412 E. Pearl Street CINCINNATI, OH

1918

Chronology of Changes

	# Known	Metal	Lever	Top Stamp	Bottom Stamp	Bottom Type	Dropper	Burner	Brc	Hook Rivets
Lamp is unstamped	1	Brass	Side	None	None	Smooth	Screw	Bottom	No	None
Completely unstamped lamp becomes stamped on top only with "Britelite" sunburst logo	4	Steel	Side	Britelite	None	Smooth	Screw	Bottom	Yes	None
Side mount water-lever becomes available as top-mount Bulldog lever	1	Brass	Top	ON OFF	None	Smooth	Screw	Bottom	No	None
Smooth bottom changes to beaded bottom	2 1	Steel Steel	Side Top	Britelite ON OFF	None None	Bead Bead	Screw Screw	Bottom Bottom	Yes Yes	None None
Unstamped bottom becomes stamped with "Britelite" sunburst logo	2	Steel	Side	Britelite	Britelite	Bead	Screw	Bottom	Yes	None
Screw-cap dropper becomes conventional soldered on button	1	Brass	Top	ON OFF	Britelite	Bead	Button	Bottom	No	None
Hook becomes double riveted. Burner changes from low-position to center of reflector.	4	Brass	Top	ON OFF	Britelite	Bead	Button	Center	No	Two



Britelite cap lamps in the above table exist in the collections of:

Dave Thorpe
 Errol Christman
 David Johnson
 Len Gaska
 Rick Finch
 Charles Frase
 Bill Blake
 Ken Allen
 Jim Lackey
 Henry Pohs