

Ashmead's Buddy

by Jim Van Fleet

Inspired by the MAC carbide lamp survey, I recently undertook a survey of my own, gathering information from 14 collectors about their Buddy cap lamps. 27 lamps were examined or described for the survey; and while most were from large collections, I saw 7 lamps owned by new collectors, and 2 in museums.

One of the attractions of the Buddy is its availability; it is much more common than the Elkhorn cap lamp made by Ashmead, and a diligent collector will eventually find one in an antique shop, flea market, or collector's gathering.

This article will outline the design variations found in the Buddy, but I cannot assign absolute dates for each. As far as I know, there are no printed advertisements depicting Buddy lamps, which would aid in dating the different styles.

Ashmead Manufacturing Company was owned by Ben Williamson and Co. of Ashland, Kentucky. The 1922 city directory lists the parent company as providing mill and mine supplies from their address at 109 16th St. The 1933 directory lists the Ashmeade Mfg. Co. Inc. at 125 16th St.; "Ben Williamson pres, Chas W. Ashmeade v-pres, Davis E. Geiger sec-tres, miners lamps." The 1937 city directory shows 125 16th St. as vacant.¹

Buddys began production after May 3, 1921, as the lamp bears this patent date. Patent 1,376,654 by Meyer Stein is for the flat water feed lever and dropper mechanism found on Elkhorn lamps. Patent 1,716,809 filed by Ben Williamson in June of 1929 claims improvements in the Stein patent. The details of the lever mechanism shown in the second patent are those incorporated in the Buddy with a flat water feed lever. The general lamp outline shown in both patents is Meyer Stein's design patent of 1913, similar to the Elkhorn rather than the Buddy.

WHICH CAME FIRST? is an often debated question. Jim Lackey has published an informative article in the Underground Lamp Post, Fall 1977, based on an interview with Davis Geiger, president of Ashmead in 1925 (Geiger was Ben Williamson's son-in-law).² The interview provided details of the lamp's production and marketing and Geiger insisted that: 1) the Elkhorn was produced first, 2) the Buddy evolved from a design similar to the Elkhorn (rope ornamentation, bottom seam base), to a simpler model to produce, with smooth bottom and unornamented top.

This seems completely contrary to lamp collecting logic, which would have a lamp evolve and become more sophisticated, better made and ornamented. The patents, and some of the details of the lamps lend support to Geiger's assertions, but more information is needed. I hope this article will at least prompt a few letters to MAC.

I have tried to follow Paul Kouts method for designating lamp designs, but I have labeled the Buddy variations from simplest to most complex, regardless of date. A few generalizations can be made; style TA lamps are most common (14 of 27), and with only one exception in this

survey, have the flat water feed lever and the cut water door style WA to accommodate it. 13 of these have or had a wire brace. The exception has a wire water feed, full water door, and no evidence of a wire brace. A high percentage of Buddy lamps have the wire braces intact, and one possible explanation was given to Jim Lackey by Mr. Geiger; he demonstrated how the factory workers (and probably miners) would simply bend the braces straight up out of the way.³ 10 of these 14 lamps have the simple hooks WSWa, 4 have the crook hook WSWb. 5 have base style BA, with the unique bottom insert, 8 lamps have base style BB. All 14 lamps are brass.

Style TB lamps are rarest (3 reported), having a slightly taller tank and the taller base style BC. All have the wire water feed, but 2 still have the cut water door! All have a wire brace and a crook style hook, 2 are brass and 1 nickel-plated.

Style TC lamps account for the remaining 10 lamps in the survey, and 8 have the wire water feed, round water door, wire brace and crook hook. One lamp has hook style WSWa and no wire brace, one has the flat water feed and cut water door! All these lamps have base style BD, 9 are brass and 1 nickel-plated.

A nickel-plated cap lamp with superintendent's handles has been reported, and I have seen a brass model TC with super's handles, which could well have been an after-factory modification.

Reflectors and reflector braces are harder to assign with certainty, since they are so easily removed and replaced. Several collectors have Buddys with what appear to be an Auto-Lite reflector, reflector brace and wing nut. Most of the Buddys examined for this survey have one of the two reflectors and braces shown, held on by a plain nut. Style TA lamps most often have reflector RA, with a locating notch and the notched brace SA. Two of the style TB lamps have the notched reflector and brace. Style TC lamps generally have the plain reflector RB and brace SB. This configuration is easily recognized, as the reflector brace creates a noticeable gap between the brace and the lamp tank.

Instead of drawing shakey conclusions, I hope this article will prompt some letters to the MAC and to me, with information on more Buddy variations, or agreement or disagreement with the information presented. The survey results have been helpful to me in completing a Buddy lamp as it might have come from the factory. The survey itself opened up new lamp collecting acquaintances and friendships, and I would like to especially thank Jim Lackey, Paul Kouts, and everyone who took the time to puzzle out my survey forms.

1. Paul Kouts, personal communication, Oct. 1988.
2. Jim Lackey, personal communication, Oct. 1989.
3. Jim Lackey, personal communication, Oct. 1989.

BUDDY

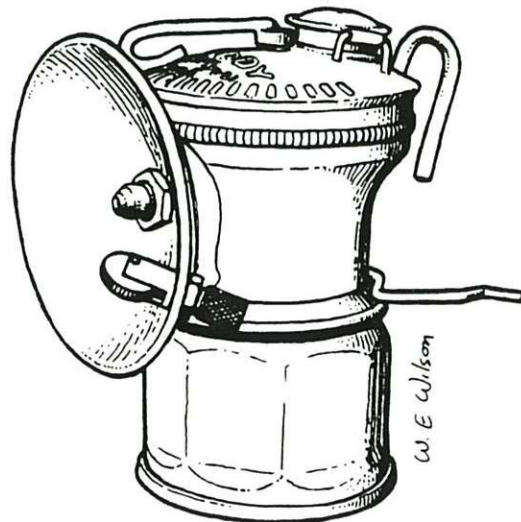
CATALOG OF KNOWN LAMPS

Lamp Tops

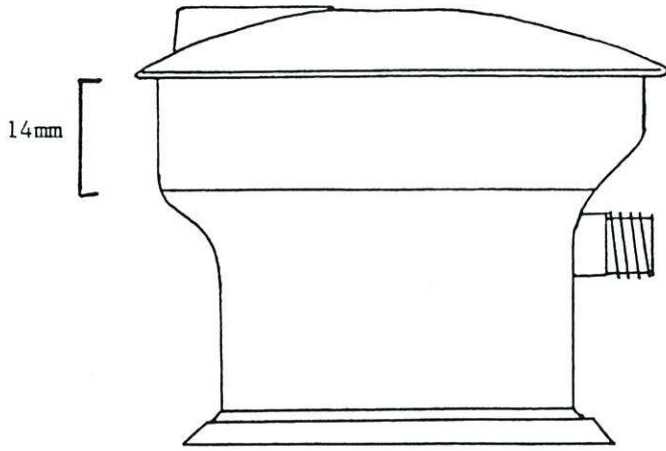
TA1a	B	WSWa	flat water feed, cut water door
TA1b	B	WSWb	flat water feed, cut water door
TA1c	B	WIOb	wire water feed, full water door
TB1a	B	WSWb	wire water feed, cut water door
TB1b	NP	WSWb	wire water feed, cut water door
TC1a	B	WSWb	wire water feed, full water door
TC1b	NP	WSWb	wire water feed, full water door
TC1c	B	WIOa	wire water feed, full water door
TC1d	B	WSWb	flat water feed, cut water door
TC1e	B	WSHb	superintendent's handles

Lamp Bases

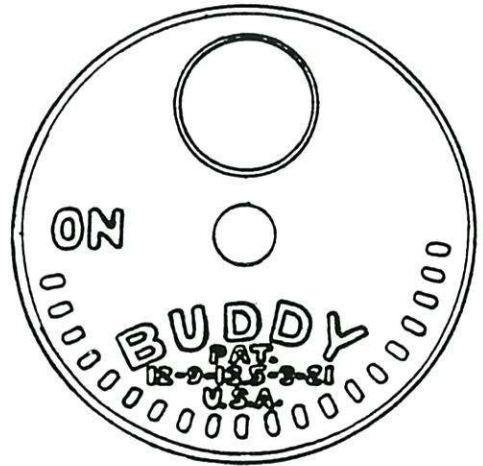
BA1	B	52 mm.
BB0	B	54 mm.
BB1	B	52-56 m., 54 mm. average
BC0	NP	56 mm.
BC1	B	56 mm.
BD1a	B	48-51 mm., 50 mm. average
BD1b	NP	50 mm.



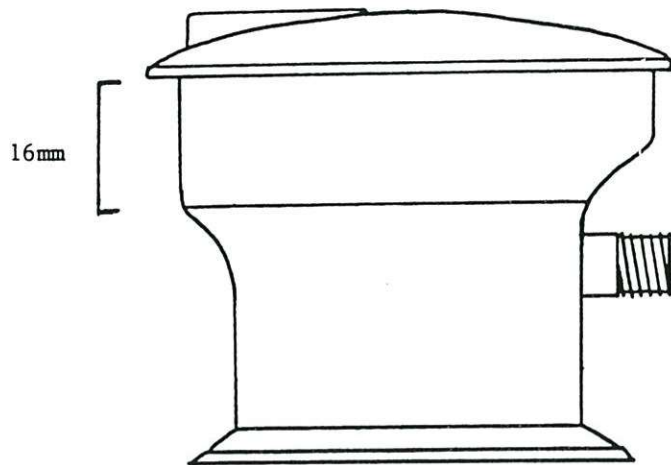
The Buddy



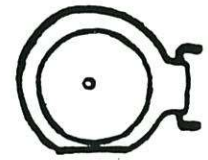
Top style TA



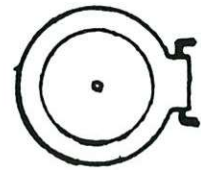
Top Mark 1



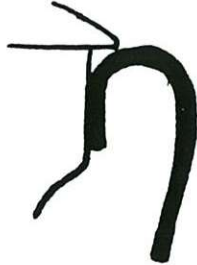
Top Style TB



cut door style WA



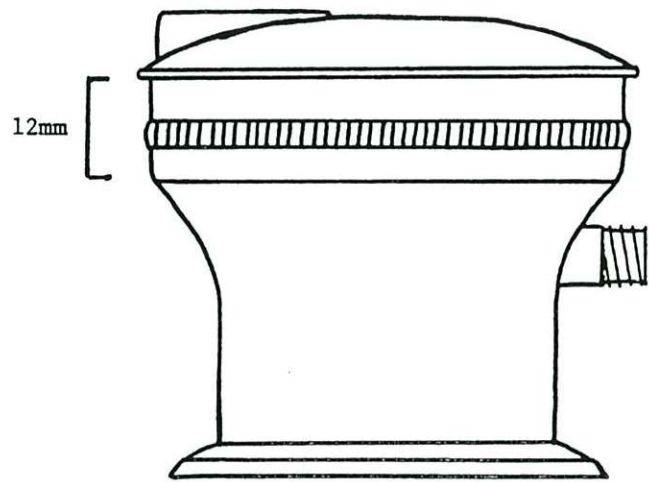
full door style WB



hook WSWa



hook WSWb



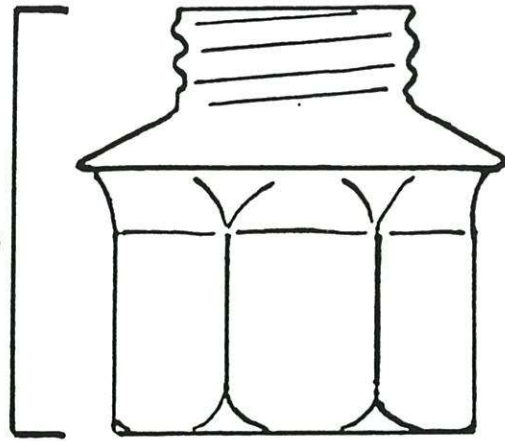
Top style TC



Bottom view,
base style BA
with bottom insert



52-56mm
(54 avg)

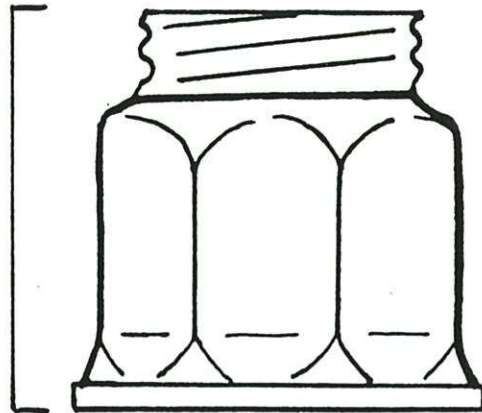


Base style BA and BB



Bottom view, base style BB
(Some bottoms unmarked)

56mm

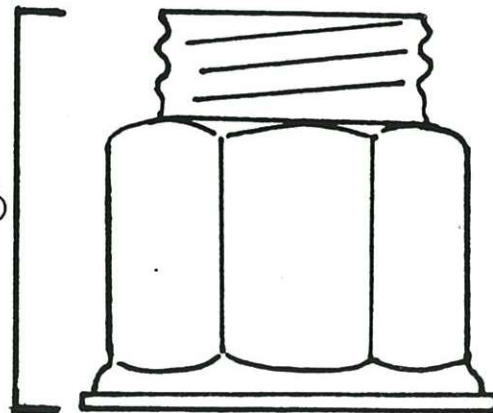


Base style BC

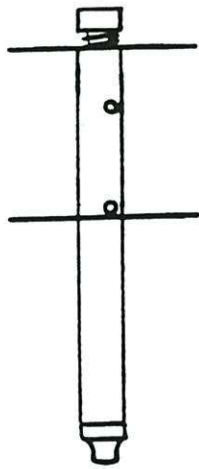


Bottom view, base style BC and BD
(Some bottoms unmarked)

48-52mm
(50 avg)



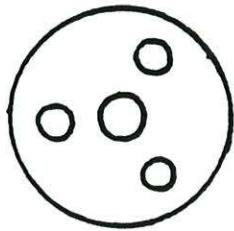
Base style BD



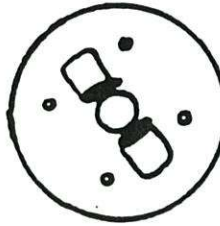
lever style VA



lever style VB



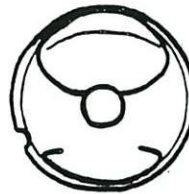
felt plate and holder



reflector
brace SB



reflector
brace SA



reflector RB, rear view

reflector RA, rear view

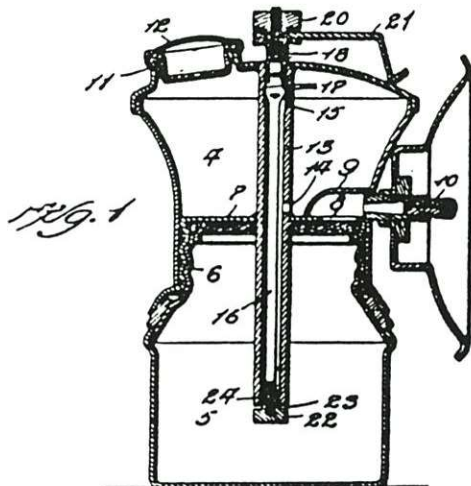
Meyer Stein's Design Patent, granted 12-9-13, and the patents for the water feed mechanism found on the Elkhorn and Buddy.

45,028. LAMP. MEYER STEIN, Springfield, Ill. Filed July 2, 1913. Serial No. 777,090. Term of patent 7 years.



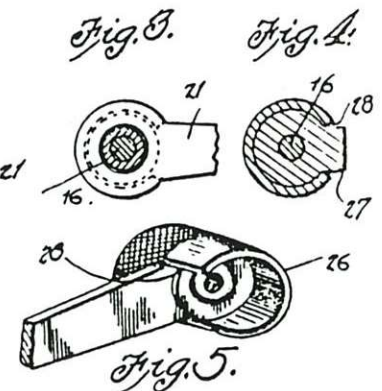
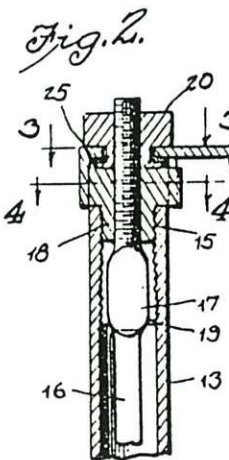
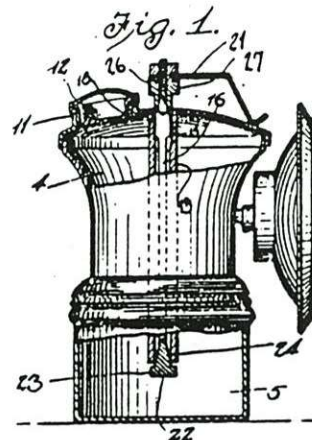
The ornamental design for a lamp, as shown.

1,376,654. M. STEIN. ACETYLENE LAMP. APPLICATION FILED OCT. 14, 1919. Patented May 3, 1921.



INVENTOR
MEYER STEIN,
BY James L. Hartline Attorney

June 11, 1929. B. WILLIAMSON ACETYLENE LAMP Filed April 13, 1928 1,716,809



INVENTOR
Ben Williamson
BY J. G. Boylston
JERSEY.