

# REPORT ON THE IMA HOKES COLLECTION

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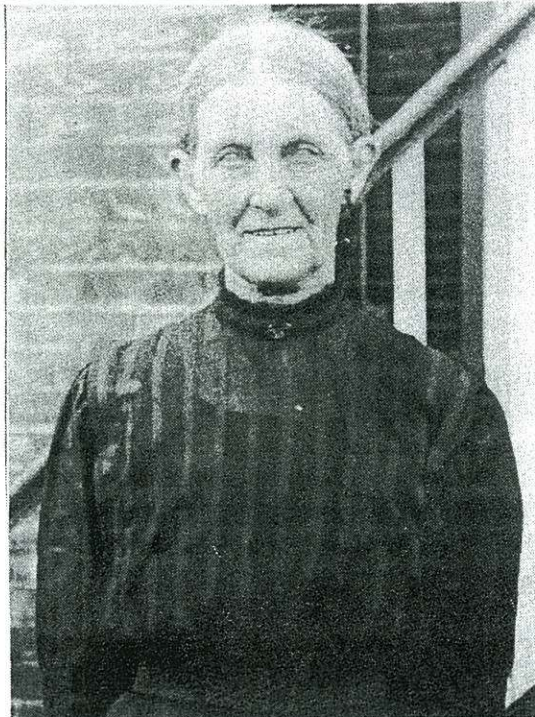
As mentioned in the editorial in an earlier issue of *Mining Artifact Collector*, the editors have harbored some doubts about artifacts in the collection of Ima Hokes of Goshen, Indiana. Suspicions were raised by the odd coincidences that (a) Ima's name sounds like "I'm a hoax," and (b) all of her patented items seem to have April 1st patent dates (April Fool's Day). Furthermore, no one can figure out how the square Blemus lamp from her collection (pictured in Issue #3, page 3) could have been screwed together. And doubts persist that her "droop-snoot" Trethaway lamp (Issue #7, page 31) and her Bodie 4-shot derringer/candlestick (Issue #11, page 13) might be fraudulent.

As a service to MAC readers, the editors dispatched me to Goshen, Indiana, at MAC expense, to check out Ima and her collection. Here is my report:

Flying first-class from Tucson to Indianapolis, I checked out my new camera equipment (purchased for this assignment) and composed in my mind a series of penetrating questions for Ima. The stewardess was kind enough to leave the bottle of Chivas on my tray table as I went through my arduous preparations. Deplaning at Indianapolis, I picked up my Mercedes 500 SL rental car, stopped on the way out of town for a quick dinner (I always like the prime rib and lobster combo, when in season), and drove out to Ima's sprawling farm in the country. Ima greeted me warmly and invited me in for cinnamon rolls and spiked lemonade, during which she told me something of her life.

Ima Ruth Hokes was born on April 1, 1899, of Albanian immigrant farmers, and was the eighth of eleven daughters, all given the middle name Ruth (after their mother). Ima always refused to use her middle name, however, and was unkindly referred to as the "Ruthless" Hokes.

She learned about mining by listening to stories at the knee of her two uncles, Irving



"Swiftly" Hokes and Psalter Hokes, who had worked their way through many early mining camps, along with their brothers, Security Hokes and Jim "Diamond" Hokes. Security was unfortunately shot over a matter of some counterfeit mining stock certificates, and Diamond was hanged in 1881 for claim-jumping. The surviving two Hokes uncles had many exciting tales to tell, and it is from them that Ima later inherited several dozen rare and fascinating mining artifacts with which she started her collection. In 1918 Ima married Charles Patterson, the local gunsmith; under his tutelage she learned the gunsmithing trade as well, and contributed greatly to the success of the family business. Charles died tragically in 1933 after selling some forged Medieval German flintlocks and wheel-locks to an Italian gun collector in Chicago. His body was never found. Ima retired on a handsome insurance policy, reverted to using her maiden name, and coincidentally took up residence in Chicago for a few years with the very same gun collector. He died in 1936, after a shooting accident in his own home, and Ima inherited his enormous gun collection (excepting some recent models that were still in service among the family).



Returning to the Hokes farm in Goshen, she evicted those of her sisters who were still unmarried and rented out her extensive farmlands to tenant farmers. Over the succeeding 54 years she has had plenty of spare time to build her various collections.

The mining collection is housed in a fine series of antique glass cabinets. Each piece is cataloged and its history or provenance recorded in ledgers shelved above her roll-top desk.

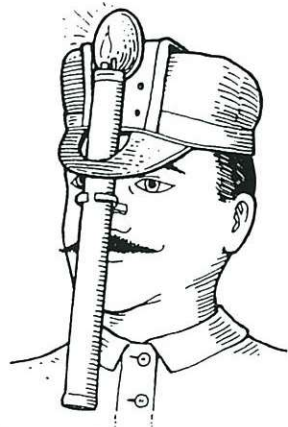
I first examined the "droop-snoot" Trethaway oil-wick lamp. Ima says it's the sole surviving example, which she bought in 1931 from Arlo Trethaway (son of the manufacturer). Arlo had kept it, against his father's wishes, as a humor item. Apparently the elder Trethaway had destroyed all the others, in embarrassment, after someone mentioned what they reminded him of. They never sold but a few examples anyway. In any case it's a beauty, and Ima says she paid \$1,800 for it (in 1931!), so if anyone expects to buy it off of her they'd better be prepared to pay heavy money.

The Blemus lamp came next to hand, and I must admit I've never seen a miner's lamp made from bismuth before. Ima said it does screw together, despite being square, but only with great difficulty, and she preferred not to demonstrate because it is so old and brittle.

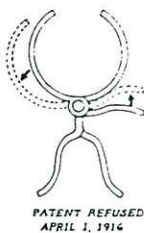
The magnificent Bodie 4-shot derringer/candlestick is an item she inherited from uncle Swifty, who worked claims in Bodie until things there got too hot for him. Why it bears the initials "T.B.," she doesn't know, but uncle Swifty may have obtained it from "T.B.," and always warned her something about never challenging someone to draw when your gun is stuck tight in a mine timber.

Having carefully examined the previously published artifacts and found them all unquestionably genuine, I moved on to the many other items, and found treasures galore. Among my favorites were a solid gold Varney candlestick marked "John A. Sutter, 1848"; a "Copper Queen" carbide lamp made of copper; a Maumee Triplex carbide cap lamp (a very strange looking thing); a Jewish Hanukkah candlestick with no less than nine thimbles; stock certificates from a number of unknown mines on the Comstock Lode (and I thought I knew them all); Adolf Sutro's personal miner's pick; three odd prototype carbide lamps stamped "Guy's Dribbler," "Guy's Sprinkler" and "Guy's Piddler"; and many many others.

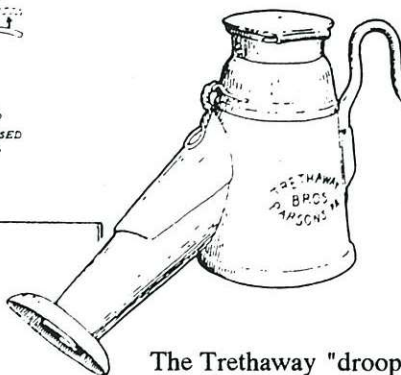
In future issues I'll be illustrating some of the many lamps I photographed while at the "Hokes Museum." Ima cordially invites any other collectors to stop by as well. If any of the MAC readers happen to pay her a visit and have a favorite lamp of hers they'd like to see illustrated, I invite them to write to me. I probably have a photo of it and will expedite a drawing for publication.



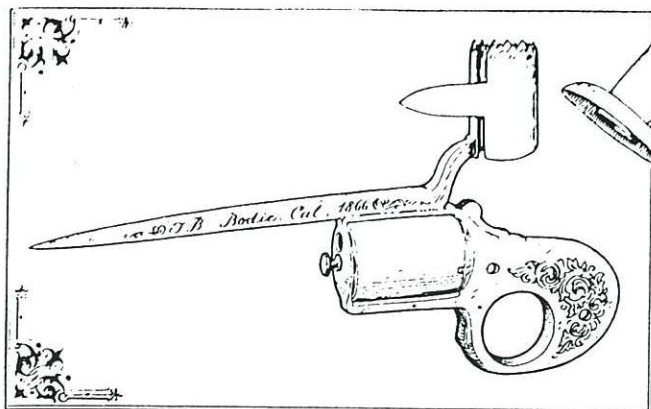
The Arnold Carbide Candle cap.



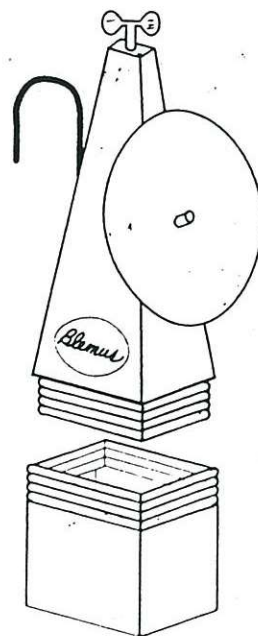
PATENT REFUSED  
APRIL 1, 1914



The Trethaway "droop-snoot"



Items from the  
Ima Hokes collection



The Blemus lamp.