

IMA HOKES COLLECTION: THE MAUMEE MULTIPLEX LAMPS

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Around the first of each April we like to feature a lamp from the collection of Mrs. Ima Hokes (see MAC Number 16, p. 26-27!). As mentioned in the earlier article, I visited her and photographed many oddities and rarities, not to say some items previously considered mythological, and have enough data now for quite a few installments.

This time we shall report on the Maumee multiplex lamps, including some background data passed on to me personally by Ima.

Every collector worth his carbide knows about the rare and famous Maumee Duplex lamp. Several examples are known in collections around the country. These lamps, each consisting of two separate carbide chambers, water valves, and burner tips, were made by the Maumee Manufacturing Company of Pittsburgh from 1914 to 1915. Frank W. Law patented the design on May 12, 1914.



A photograph of the infamous Ima Hokes.

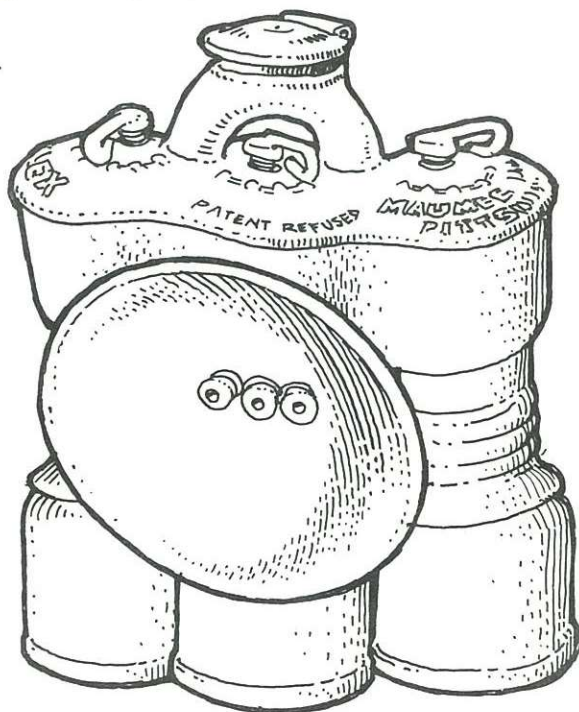


Figure 1. Maumee Triplex (all brass).

What has remained generally unknown is that Frank Law continued with a series of additional innovative designs along the same line. In 1916 he submitted a patent for the three-burner "Maumee Triplex" and, although the patent was refused, he made a few examples including the Ima Hokes specimen.

Frank liked the Triplex so much that he next developed the Maumee Quadriplex (4 burners), then the Quintiplex (5 burners), and the Hexiplex (6 burners). Ultimately he created one of the most remarkable miners' lamps ever developed: the Maumee Multiplex, consisting of a continuous ring of 12 burners around the miner's helmet, shining brilliantly in all directions to illuminate an entire stope or working face area. The beauty of this idea was that no other miners in the immediate area would need to wear hardhat lights at all!

Sadly, the Multiplex lamp did not catch on, perhaps because it weighed about ten pounds when fully charged, and took thirty minutes to refill, every hour and a half. Of course, it would run for 18 hours without a refill if the burners were used only one at a time, but apparently that advantage was not enough to overcome the weight problem. (And anyway, not many miners wanted to work 18-hour shifts.)

At least, this is what Ima tells me. The illustrations shown here are based on examples in her collection.

There is a *rumor* of another unusual Maumee lamp, the Polyplex, but I don't have any idea what it looked like. If any readers know I hope they will share the information with us.

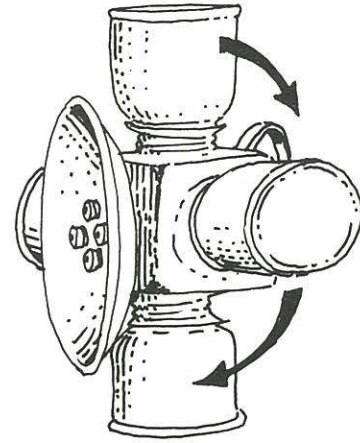


Figure 2. Maumee Quadriplex (all brass). Note that the lamp must be rotated 90° before lighting each successive burner, so that gravity-feed will operate.

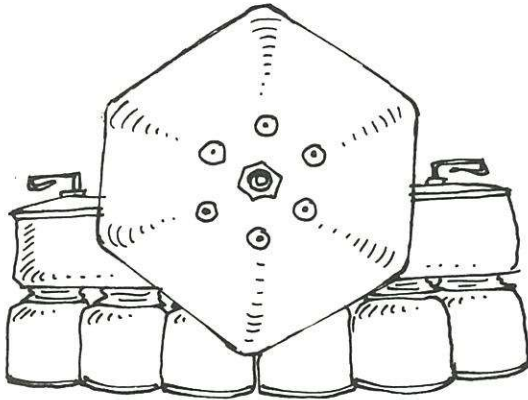


Figure 3. Maumee Hexi-plex (jappaned steel).

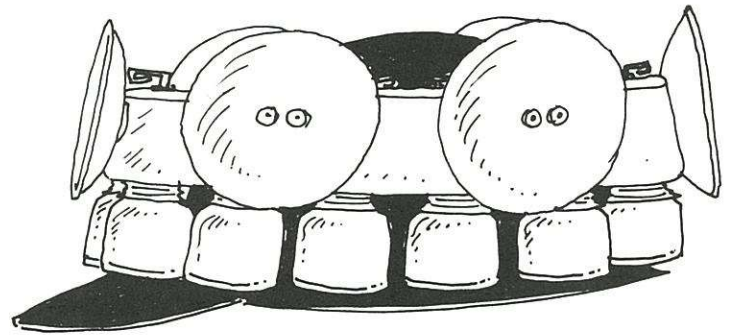


Figure 4. Maumee Multi-plex (jappaned steel).



A photograph supposedly of (from left to right) Irving "Swifty" Hokes, Security Hokes, Jim "Diamond" Hokes, Charles Patterson and Psalter Hokes during one of the rare times that they were all working together.