

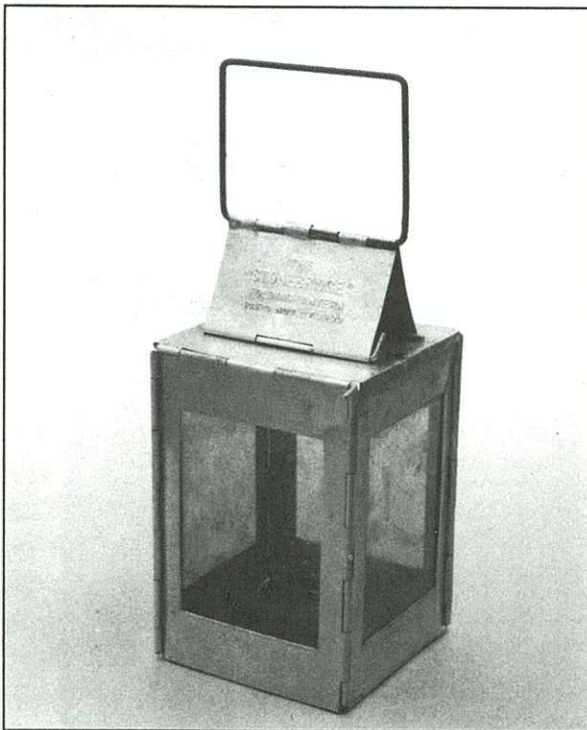
THE STONEBRIDGE FOLDING CANDLE LANTERN

By Robert A. Kraft

The Stonebridge folding candle lantern, an ingenious early twentieth century lighting device, familiar to all serious antique shop visitors, was not intended for mining use. We know, nonetheless, that these lanterns found their way into American mines to a limited degree. The purpose of this paper is to help the collector in his understanding of these fascinating devices. Because of their portable and collapsible nature and excellent resistance to wind flame extinction, they would have lent themselves well to both coal and hardrock mining except that they appeared on the scene too

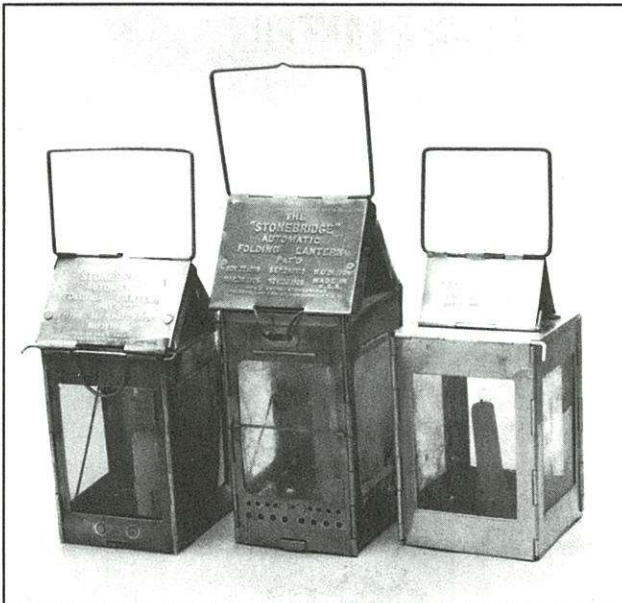
late. The development of this lamp chronologically paralleled the appearance of the carbide lamp and the disappearance of candle lighting. The Stonebridge was designed for the outdoorsman but also became useful to others including the United States Army Medical Corp and the United States Army Commissary. Other major users, unknown to the author, may have existed. The Caduceus emblem, found on some later lanterns, designated Army Medical Corp use including hospitals in WWI, and the CusC emblem, that of the United States Army Commissary.

Charles H. Stonebridge was listed in 1895 as superintendent of his company in New York. The Stonebridge Folding Lantern Co. was listed separately from 1906 through 1915. In 1915 (in the Trow's New York City Directory) a separate listing appeared for the C. H. Stonebridge Manufacturing Co. as camping outfitters. Both listings also appeared in the 1920 and 1925 directories. One of the author's lanterns includes a leather case with the markings of Abercrombie and Fitch Co. of New York who appears to have marketed these lanterns. The earliest patent date marked on Stonebridge lanterns appears to be 1900 and the last 1908. All of the lanterns after 1908 are marked as C. H. Stonebridge Mfg. Co. Those from 1906 and earlier are marked The Stonebridge Folding Lantern Co. It would appear that the name of the company changed from The Stonebridge Folding Lantern Co. to C. H. Stonebridge Mfg. Co. (approximately 1906-1908) because the



One date, 1900, aluminum Stonebridge with removable hinge pins. This is the earliest Stonebridge known to the author. Photos by Robert Cross.

Stonebridge Folding Candle Lantern

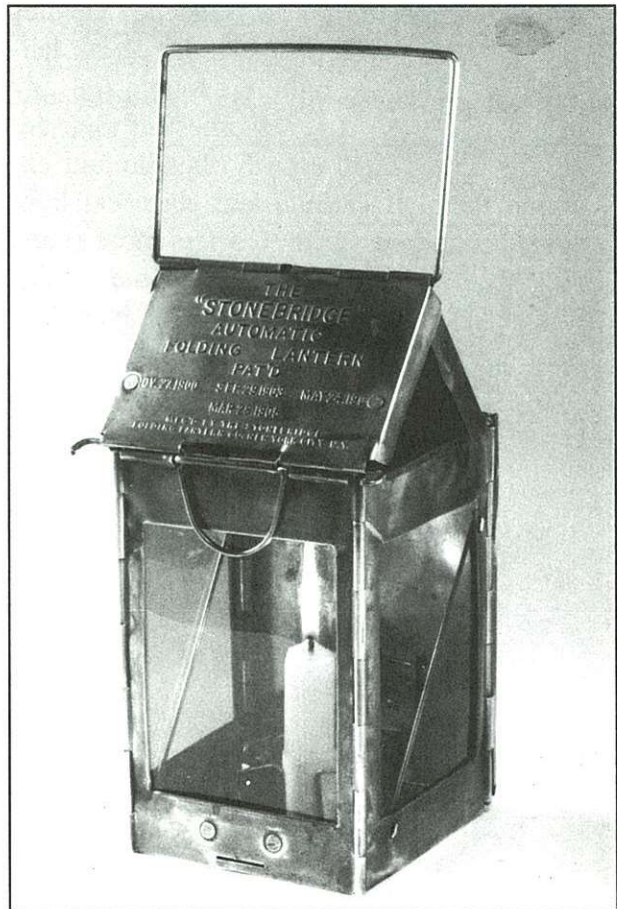


Comparison of intermediate short, early tall and early short models (left to right).

company had expanded its product line to other camping outfitter supplies. The word "automatic" did not appear on the 1900 lamp but came into use when the hinges of the lamp were changed to allow the user to fold or unfold the lamp in a matter of seconds. The 1900 lantern was cumbersome to fold. The word "automatic" disappeared from the definitive tall lantern at the same time the name C. H. Stonebridge Mfg. Co. appeared.

The lanterns can be divided into early short types (approximately nine inches tall) and later tall types (approximately ten inches tall). The first short lantern, marked with a 1900 patent, was quite different from subsequent lanterns. It had four windows instead of the later three and more important, capable of folding only after four long hinge pins were removed. All later lanterns could fold without removal of these pins. Several features of the lanterns changed with the evolutionary design modifications.

The lamps were made taller in 1906 and a gradual increase of air to the bottom of the lantern was provided with adjustable air intake to later models. Better wire protection of the mica windows and installation of triangular air baffles to protect against wind were added. The candle holders in later lamps were made in steel, galvanized steel, brass and aluminum. The aluminum and brass lanterns cost \$2.50 each and the galvanized steel \$1.50. Four inch, 7/8 inch diameter candles were \$0.20 per dozen and 1 1/8 inch diameter candles, \$0.35 per dozen. Extra mica windows were \$0.10. The lanterns



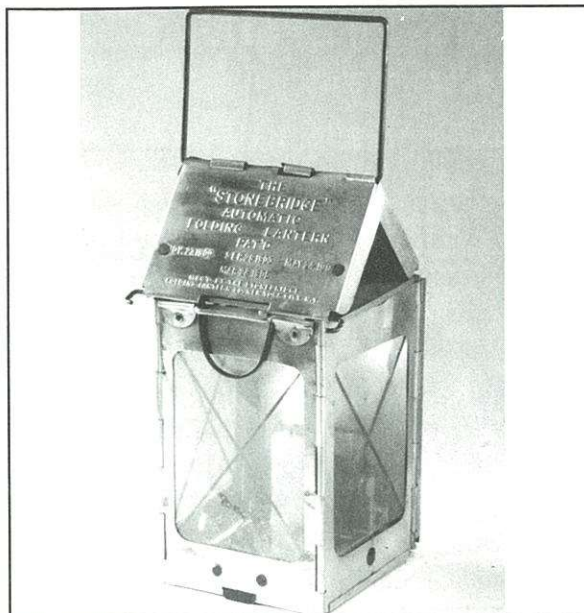
Four date, 1905, brass intermediate short model with squeeze lid closure and spring loaded bottom. The first of the 'Automatics'.

Stonebridge Folding Candle Lantern

would all fold into a flat packet that could be stored in one's pocket. Some had leather cases.

During the photo session of lanterns described in this article, it became apparent after only a few minutes that a lighted candle soon makes the lantern too hot to touch except by the handle. This may have been a reason to make the early lamps taller, Brass, aluminum and steel lanterns are all plagued with this problem. The lanterns are still less fire threatening than an open candle flame. Mica, a mineral, is fireproof.

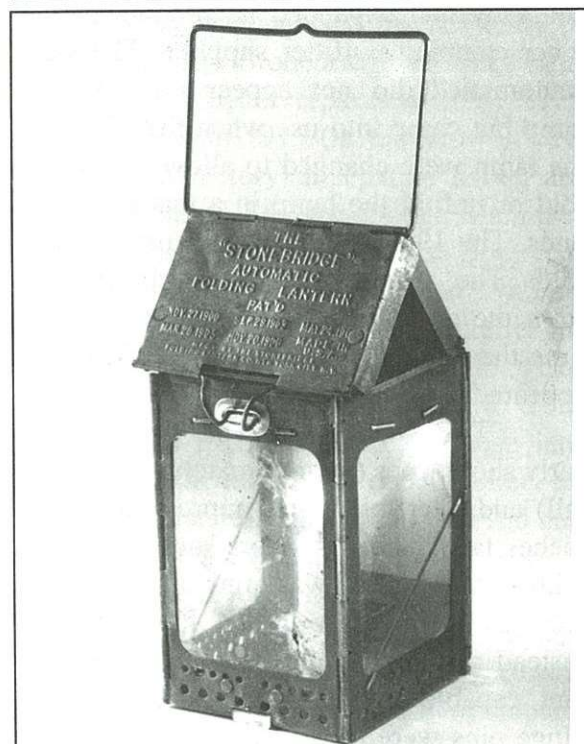
The beauty of construction, portability, wind resistance, firmly attached candles and efficient light escape made these lanterns a valuable lighting source in any primitive setting. The cleverness of their design is apparent to all who handle and examine them. If carbide and electrical light sources had been delayed a few more years, the Stonebridge would have become a ubiquitous household, mining and industrial item.



Four date, 1905, aluminum intermediate short with unusual six wire mica protection.

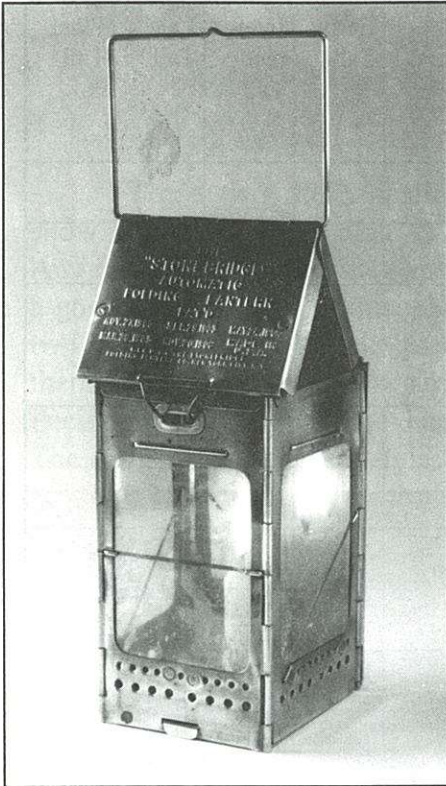


Five date, 1906, brass tall with leather Abercrombie and Fitch carrying case.



Five date, 1906, steel late short model with first snap lid closure and increased bottom ventilation.

Stonebridge Folding Candle Lantern



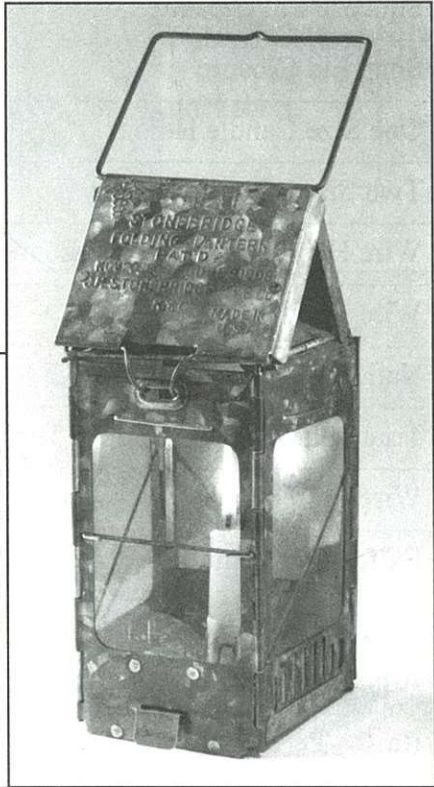
Five date, 1906, brass early tall model with aluminum reflector and extra mica behind reflector. Aluminum lamps did not have extra mica.



Five date, 1906, galvanized steel intermediate tall with symbol of United States Army Commissary. Unusual extra ventilation holes.



Two date, 1908, brass late tall with caduceus symbol of the Army Medical Corp. (WWI) and extra ventilation holes at bottom.



Two date, 1908, galvanized steel final tall with caduceus symbol of Army Medical Corp and definitive adjustable ventilation at bottom. Spring loaded wind triangles at top. Aluminum reflector with extra mica window.

Stonebridge Folding Candle Lantern

Stonebridge Lantern Evolution 1900-1908	Early Short	Inter-med. Short	Late Short	Early Tall	Inter-med. Tall	Late Tall	Final Tall
One Date, Nov. 27, 1900	X						
Four Dates, 1900, 1903, 1904, 1905		X					
Five Dates, 1900, 1903, 1904, 1905, 1906			X	X	X	X	
Two Dates, 1906, 1908						X	X
Automatic Folding Lantern		X	X	X	X		
Folding Lantern	X					X	X
C.H. Stonebridge Mfg. Co.						X	X
Spring Loaded Bottom		X					
Permanent Hinge Pins		X	X	X	X	X	X
Removable Hinge Pins	X						
Squeeze Lid Closure		X					
Snap Lid Closure			X	X	X	X	X
One Size Candle Holder	X	X	X				
Two Sizes Candle Holder				X	X	X	X
Wire Handle Extends into Lantern		X					
Wire Handle to Ridge Line	X		X	X	X	X	X
Nail Notch in Wire Handle			X	X	X	X	X
Triangular Wind Shields at Top							X
Wire Protection of Mica Windows	0	2 or 6	2	3	3	3	3
Extra Mica behind Reflector			X	X	X	X	X
Extra Bottom Air Holes		Rare	X	X	XX	XXX	XXXX
Adjustable Side Ventilation						X	X
Raised Perforated Bottom							X