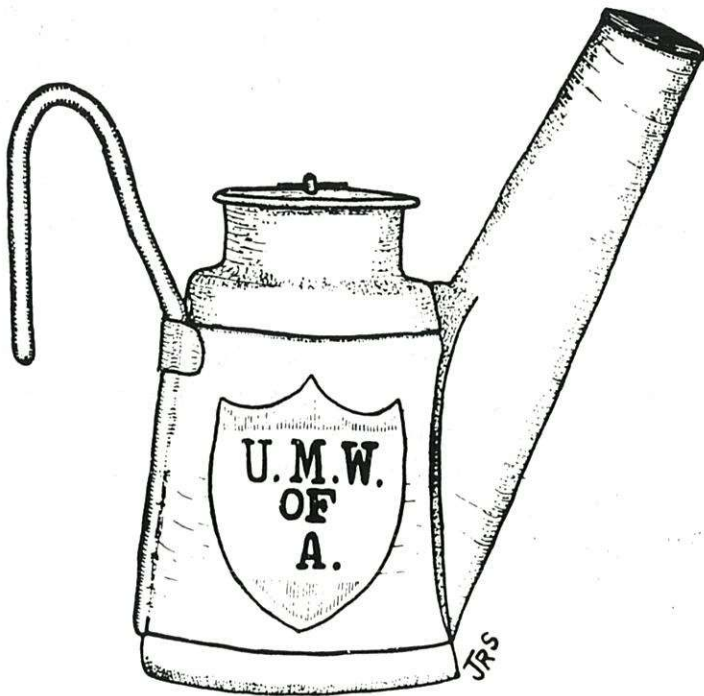


U. M. W. A. Miner's Cap Lamps by Mark Ballard and John Podgurski



Style: Oil Cap Lamp
Material: Tin & Brass
Maker: Trethaway Bros.
Height: 3.5"
Owner: Jim Steinberg

The collector of mine lighting recognizes the oil wick lamp as the first method of cap illumination used in mining. While candle holders predominated in metal mining, oil wick cap lamps were used extensively in the coal mining fields.

While early literature simply refers to them as miner's lamps, many names are used to describe them across the country. Some of these names were derived from the fuels used to fire the lamps. Examples begin "Sunshine," "whale oil," "sperm oil," "lard oil," and "oil wick." Only Sunshine fuel came in a solid form while other fuels were liquid in nature. Many of these fuels were expensive to the miners of the period causing cheaper fuels such as kerosene to be used. A common distinction also existed based on the size of the cap lamp. "MINER'S" lamps tended to be smaller in size while "DRIVERS" lamps were larger. Drivers lamps were more commonly used by machine operators and mule boys. The wick tube of the lamp or spout, was also available with a reflector to keep the mule or driver from getting burned by the open flame in the ventilation currents of the mines haulageway. Miner's lamps sold as Sunshine lamps contained a copper lining inside the wick tube and lamp reservoir to conduct the heat needed to melt the solid fuel.

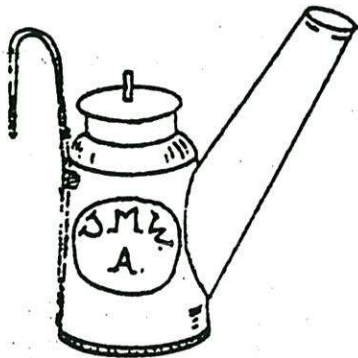
Multiple varieties of oil wick lamps exist, with advanced collections containing over 400 different lamps. One of the most sought after varieties are those containing the United Mine Workers of American logo, usually identified by the abbreviations U.M.W.A. or U.M.W. of A. This article is dedicated to the identification of some of the miner's lamps in this series known to exist in collections. Other varieties unknown to the authors most likely exist. We would appreciate hearing about any varieties not listed in this article.

Most of the oil wick cap lamps in this series were made by the Trethaway Bros. of Parsons, Pa., although the earlier vintage lamps did not have the company name on the lamp. The style and construction methods are similar on all the varieties seen by the authors.

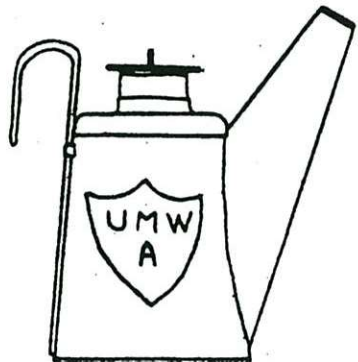
The original lamps were made at the request of John L. Lewis to be suspended from post drill bits in the redecoration of the U.M.W.A. headquarters in Washington, D.C. These lamps were not intended for "in mine" use, and the actual number of lamps originally manufactured is not known. Several of these original lamps were taken from the office over the years and some actually used in mining. The manufacturer however, did produce an unknown quantity of other lamps after the original order. This would explain the variations in lamps found by collectors over the years. Most of these lamps found their way into the mines, and they were used throughout the coal fields.

With the exception of one all brass lamp I've seen, all other lamps in this series are constructed of both tin and brass. All these lamps I've seen use brass for the logo which is soldered to the reservoir. All the logos are positioned as if the letters are read with the wick tube facing to the right. The transfer section from the lid to the reservoir is brass on all the lamps described in this article.

Special thanks are in order to Tony Moon and Elwood Maples for supporting information and to David Ballard for the artwork. Jim Steinberg drew the lamp at the beginning of the article.



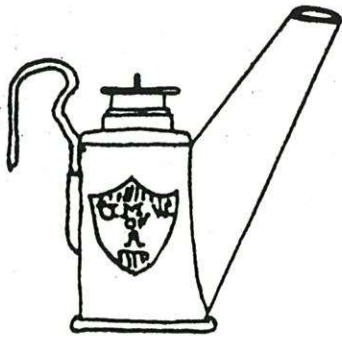
This lamp's construction is slightly different than the others in this article. The reservoir section is straight (vertical) while the reservoirs on the others are tapered. It has a single wick tube and only the logo and neck are brass. It is a named lamp.



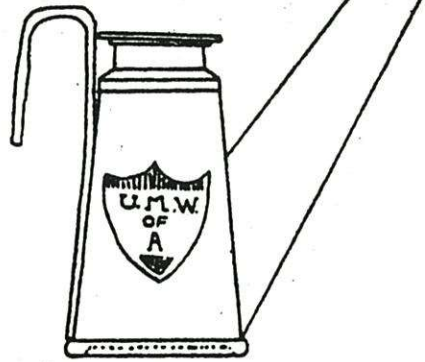
This lamp appears to be of the earliest vintage by its construction and simplicity. The brass shield contains only the U.M.W.A letters without the added details of the following lamps. The bottom of the reservoir is brass. This lamp has no name.



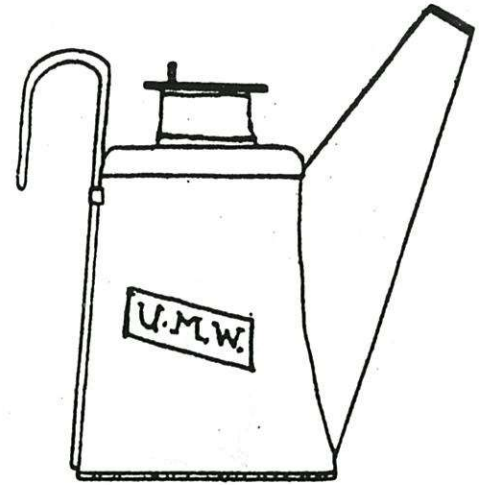
This lamp is the first to use a double wick tube construction. The tip of the wick tube is approximately 1/2" above the lid versus a full inch on previous lamps. The lower lid section is brass as if the bottom of the reservoir. Vertical lines are used to accent the U.M.W. of A. lettering. The lamp is named.



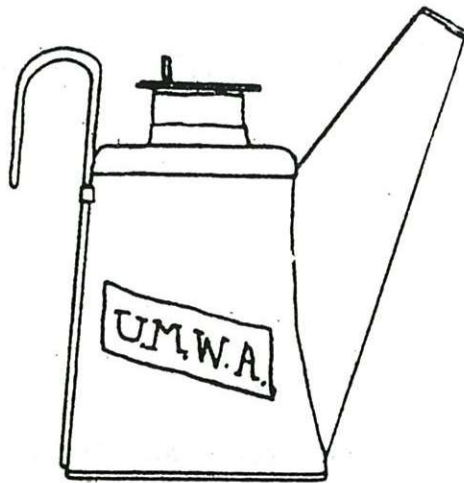
This lamp also employs the double wick tube. The bottom is entirely tin and has a domed recess extending into the reservoir. A different style hook and mounting is used on this lamp. Its shape is different and is secured to the lamp by much larger overlapped pieces of tin at a higher location on the reservoir.



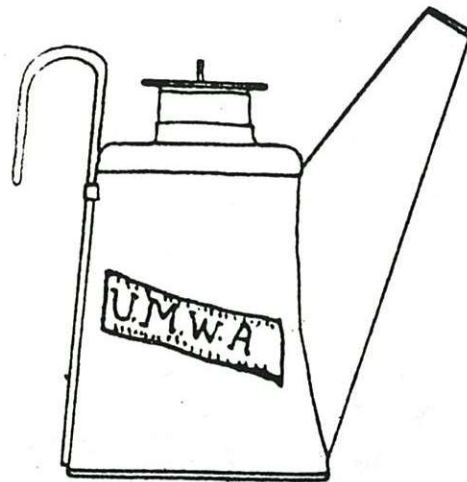
This lamp reverts to a single wick tube with a crimp at the end. It is, however, smaller in diameter and is soldered to the reservoir at a lower position than the other lamps. The very bottom is also recessed, but is vertical instead of dome shaped. The lamp is named.



This lamp has a single wick tube with a crimp at the end. The breather tube in the lid is offset to the rear. Only the logo and neck are brass.



This lamp has a single wick tube with a crimp at the end. The breather tube in the lid is offset to the rear. The logo has the letter "A" added and the brass neck is slightly higher. The lamp has no name.



This lamp has a single wick tube with a crimp at the end. The breather tube is centered on the lid. The logo contains a series of vertical lines above and below the U.M.W.A. The lamp has no name.