

Beall Bros.

Alton, Illinois

by Dave Johnson

Collectors of mining artifacts are undoubtedly familiar with the Beall Bros. name. Whether one collects oil-wick or carbide lamps, carbide cans, or a large variety of tools and equipment (drill steel, post drills, picks, shovels, hammers, etc.), a collection of any size or variety is sure to contain at least one item with the Beall Bros. name.

Of greatest interest to the majority of collectors are the varieties of oil-wick lamps marked with the Beall Bros. name. Strong design similarities suggest that these lamps were actually manufactured by Grier Bros. of Pittsburgh. Similarly, Beall Bros. marketed the Red Star carbide cap lamp, which is felt to have been made by Maple City of Monmouth, Illinois. There was a report recently of a collector sighting a carbide cap lamp marked with the Beall Bros. name, but this has yet to be confirmed by the appearance of the lamp.



Beall Bros. tin small face lamp



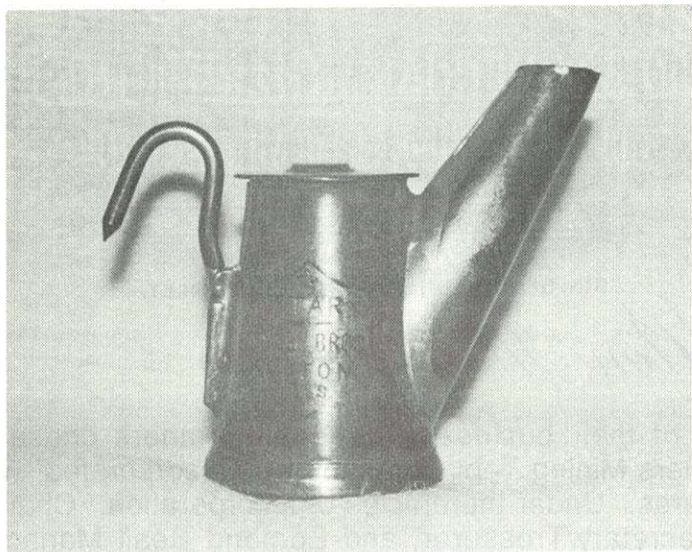
Beall Bros. mid-size face lamp

On the 12th of May, 1864, Edmond Beall enlisted in Company D, 133rd Illinois Volunteers, as the youngest Illinois combat volunteer at that time. After mustering out of the Union Army on the 24th of September, 1865, Edmond returned to his hometown of Alton, Illinois. At that time he began learning the trade of manufacturing mining tools from his step-father, John Millen, who was engaged in the manufacture of miner's picks.

In 1872, Edmond Beall joined with his brother Charles to open a modest firm engaged in the manufacture of miner's tools under the firm name of Beall Brothers. By 1884, Beall Brothers was shipping a wide variety of quality mining tools throughout the United States and Mexico. Among the tools manufactured were hand-powered coal drills, picks, shovels, pry bars, sledge hammers and a variety of railroad tools.

In 1898, Beall Brothers expanded the scope of their manufacturing facilities with the addition of major new manufacturing equipment. Further expansion followed with the acquisition of the site of the Garstang Foundry in 1899, on which a new manufacturing plant, offices and warehouse were built in 1900.

In June of 1907, Beall Bros., Inc. was selected by the Federal Government to supply a large number of shovels to be used in the construction of the Panama Canal. On November 9, 1909, the Beall Bros. shovel manufacturing plant was destroyed by fire. Misfortune struck again on April 10, 1910, when the Beall Bros. plant in East Alton burned with a loss of \$75,000.



Beall Bros. sm face lamp made of copper with a brass hook



Stamping of lamp (left)

Charles Beall again opened his own firm when on May 7, 1913, he incorporated the Beall Tool Co. of Alton. Incorporators were listed as Charles Beall, J. Montgomery Malcomb, and Henry S. Baker. This firm was to produce a varied line of mining and railroad tools.

In January of 1917, negotiations were begun for the sale of all Beall Bros. holdings to the mining tool manufacturing firm of Hubbard & Co. of Pittsburgh, PA. On February 15, 1917, negotiations concluded with the sale price reported to be in excess of 1/2 million dollars.



Beall Bros. tin driver's lamp



Stamping of lamp (left)

It was reported that Hubbard & Co. would retain the Beall Bros. trade name due to its reputation for producing quality tools. Hubbard immediately announced plans to enlarge the Alton plant and to devote its entire resources to the manufacture of shovels. In 1917, the Beall shovel plant was producing 1550 dozen shovels daily and Hubbard sought to double production.

J.W. Beall was retained to be in charge of the Alton plant and C.L. Beall at the East Alton plant. Edmond Beall, company founder, had no connection with the Hubbard operation having retired as company President in 1911, when he was replaced by J.W. Beall.

On December 10, 1918, E.H. Beall, J.F. McGinnis and C.O. Hartzell incorporated the Beall Mining Tool Co. of Alton, with the idea of expanding the product line of the firm purchased by Hubbard the previous year. The new firm would continue to produce shovels, mining and railroad tools, and add production facilities for the manufacture of automobile accessories and supplies.

August of 1922 saw Charles Beall open a new business under the name of the Union File Co., located in Alton.

On January 5, 1926, J. M. Malcomb resigned as President of the Beall Tool Co. and was succeeded by M.J. Konold of Warren, Ohio.

The Beall Tool Co. announced the suspension of all manufacturing operations on February 3, 1928, with the exception of lock washers used by several automobile manufacturers. This ended a 56 year tradition of manufacturing quality mining tools by one of the largest manufacturers of such tools in the Midwest.



Beall Bros. driver's lamp with shield

Sources

Centennial History of Madison County: 1812-1912
Alton Telegraph: 3/18/1884, 12/8/1898, 7/5/1900, 1/17/1905, 6/3/1907,
11/9/1909, 4/29/1910, 5/7/1913, 2/15/1917, 12/10/1918, 8/15/1922,
1/5/1926, 2/3/1928