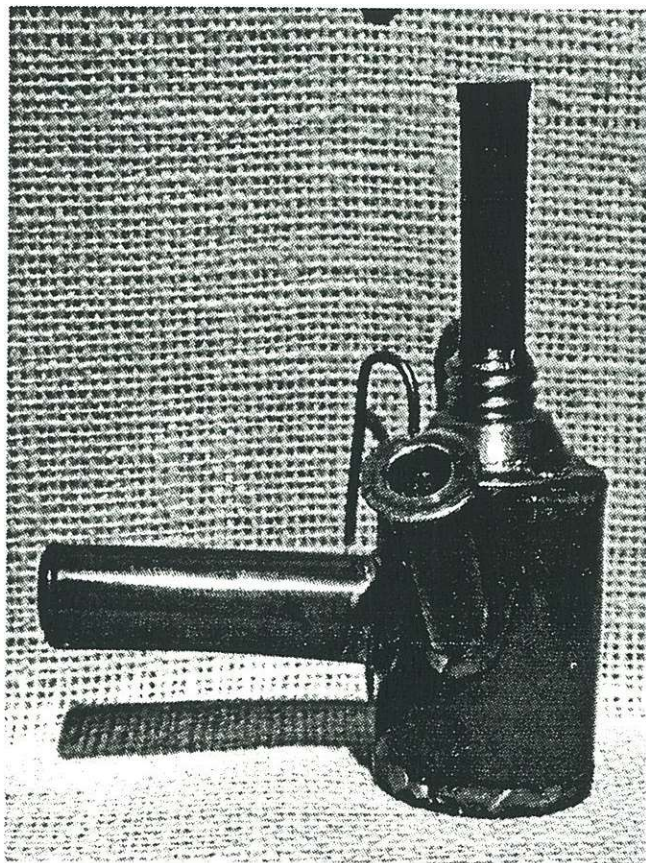


# Surveyor's Oil Wick Lamps: Debunking a Myth

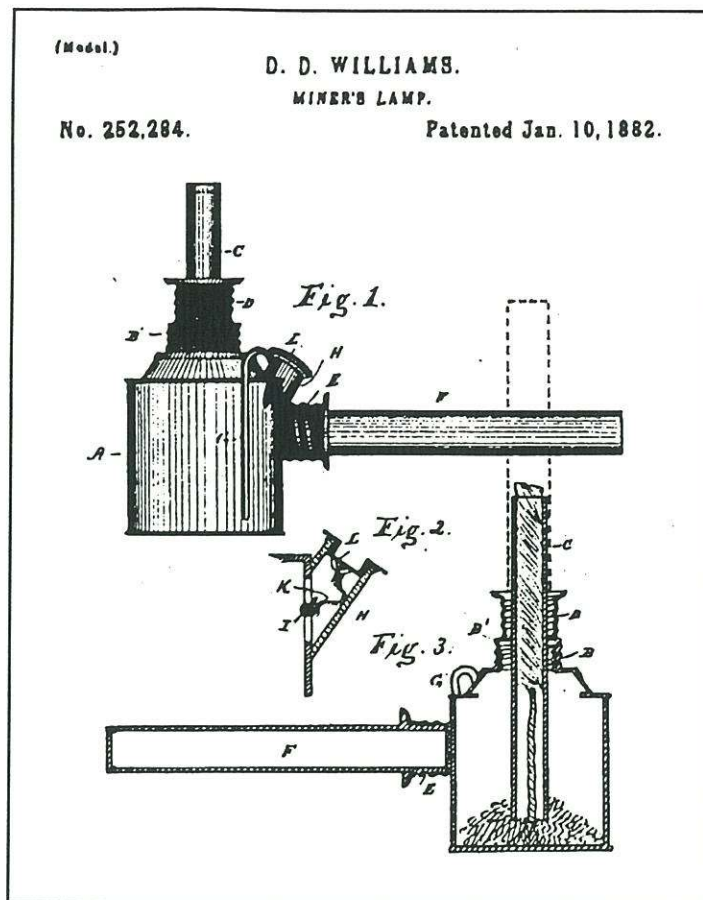
Dave Johnson

There is a unique variety of miner's cap and hand oil wick lamp which has erroneously been labeled by collectors and dealers as a surveyor's lamp. I have personally been guilty of utilizing this misnomer for more than 20 years. No one has ever been able to offer me an acceptable explanation of how this particular type of oil wick was used by mine surveyors.

The only patent that exists for this type of lamp is patent no. 252,284, granted to David D. Williams of Wilkes-Barre, Pennsylvania, January 10, 1882. The patent states: "This invention relates to certain improvements in lamps and is specially designed as a miner's lamp; and



Copper and brass D.D. Williams cap lamp following patent design. Smallest example in collection.



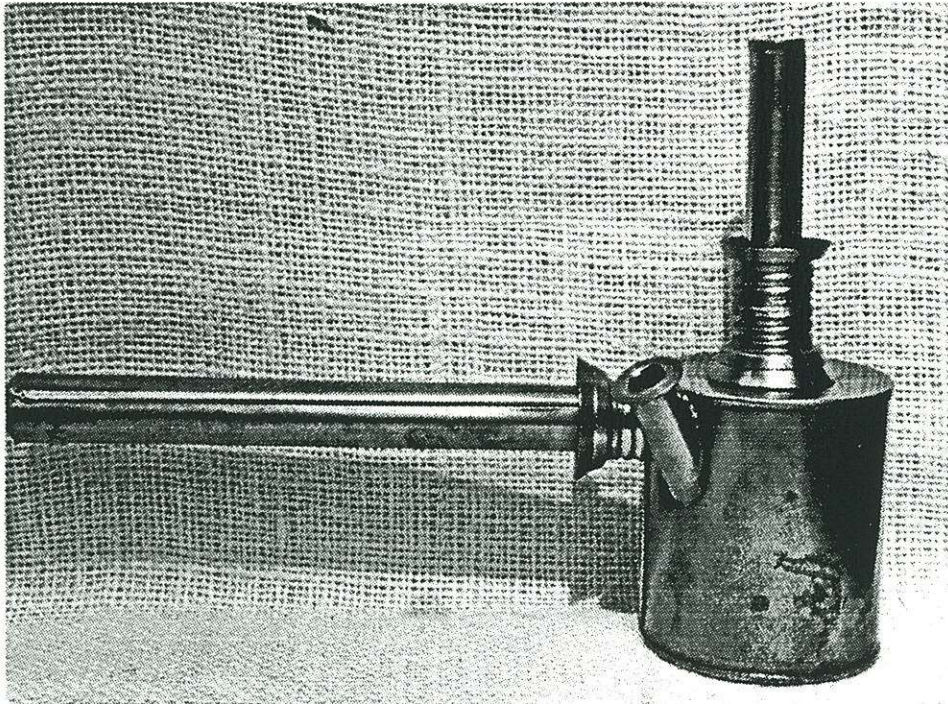
D.D. Williams patent.

it has as its object to produce a lamp that may be conveniently carried by hand or attached to the miner's hat, and when not in use carried in the pocket without danger of spilling." There is no mention of any surveying use in the patent.

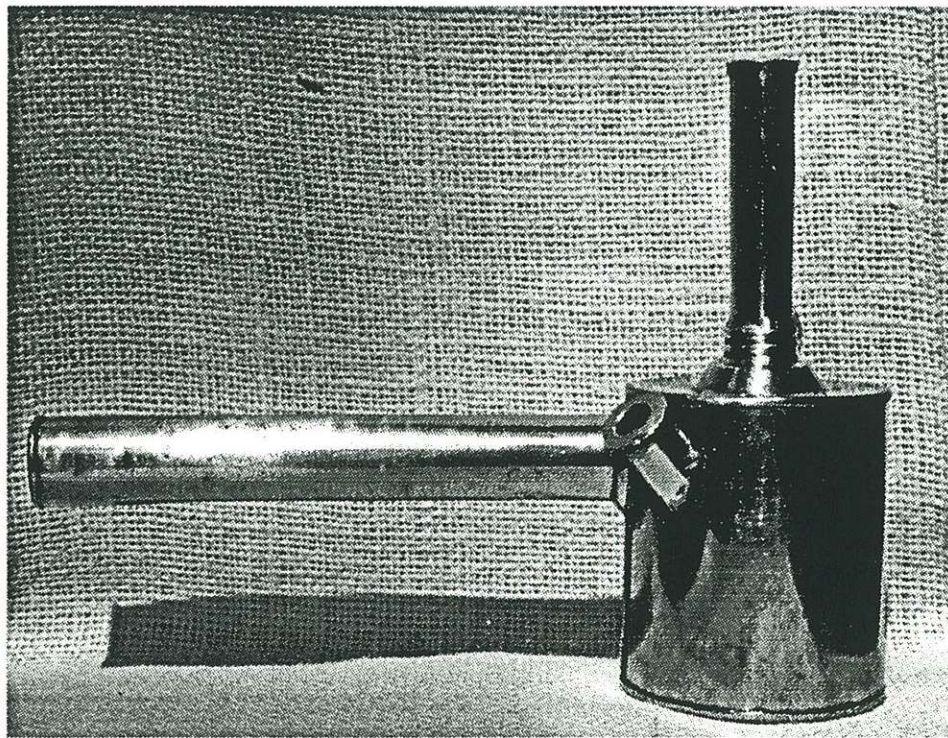
While the patent indicates that these lamps were originally intended to be cap lamps, the majority of the lamps found today are too large to be worn on the cap or helmet, even though most have cap hooks. Of the 5 D.D. Williams lamps in my collection, two are cap size, while 3 are hand size. One Williams cap size lamp follows the patent drawing but the other deviates in that it was not made with the combination spout cap/handle, having only the vertical wick tube and threaded cap angled filler tube.

Other marked examples of this type of lamp come to us from Crown, Trethaway Bros., and T.B. Bickerton. Both Crown and Trethaway offered this style lamp in cap and hand sizes. Numerous unmarked examples also exist,

some attributable to Crown or Trethaway, and some from unknown manufacturers. Examples of Trethaway Bros. lamps of this type have been found in a variety of materials - all tin; tin-brass; tin-copper-brass; and brass-copper. Crown lamps of this style are found in trimetal (copper-brass-tin); brass-copper; as well as all brass. The only



*Copper and brass D.D. Williams hand lamp.*



*Copper and brass D.D. Williams hand lamp w/ hook (largest example in collection).*



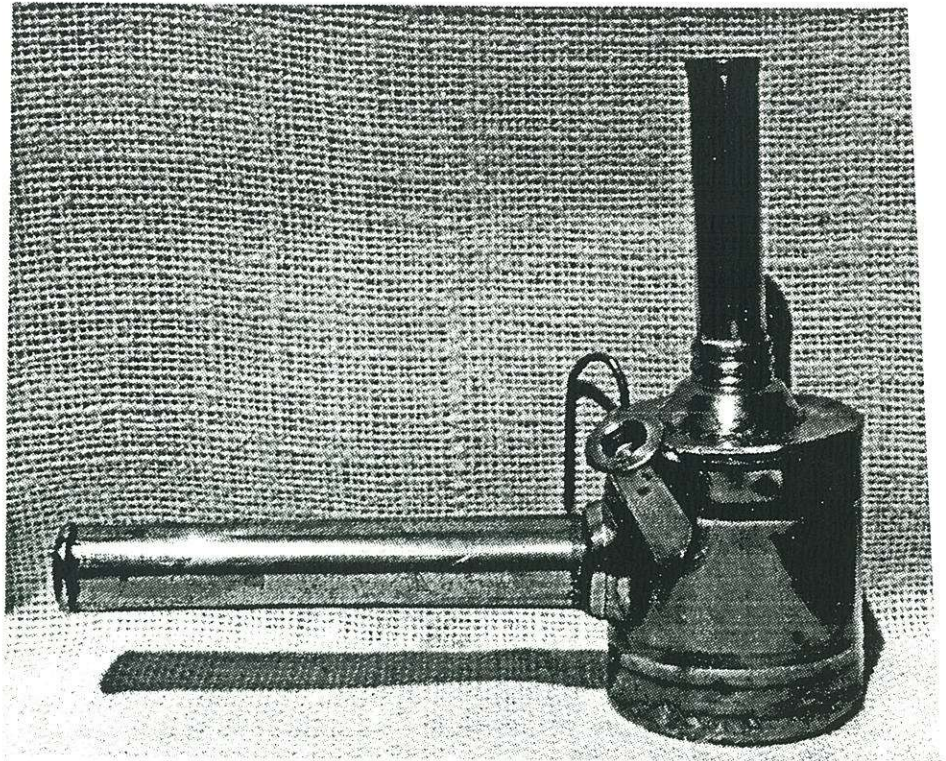
*Brass and tin D.D. Williams cap lamp w/o handle/spout-cover.*

known example of a Bickerton lamp is made of brass.

With the exception of the Bickerton lamp (see Eureka No. 15), all known examples of this type of lamp have cylindrical fonts. Most have a threaded cap filling tube that is angled from the upper side of the font, while a few have the filler cap in the flat top of the font. The largest D. D. Williams lamp measures 6 1/2" tall to the top of the spout, with a handle that extends 6 1/8" from the side of the font which is 2 13/16" in diameter. The smallest D.D. Williams lamp measures 4 15/16" tall to the top of the spout, with a handle that extends 2 3/8" from the side of the font which is 1 5/8" in diameter. All of the other

16 examples of this style lamp by various makers in my collection fall somewhere between these two extremes in size.

I do not suggest that collectors drop the surveyor label so long attached to these lamps. This would be something akin to getting collectors to drop the name "anthracite" so long attached to that unmarked carbide lamp. It is enough for collectors to know that what for so long has been referred to as a mine surveyor's lamp really isn't. The true mine surveyor's lamps are the plummet lamps and bull's-eye safety lamps, but those are other and future articles.



*Copper and brass D.D. Williams hand lamp.*

## Trethaway Bros. Oil Wick Lamps



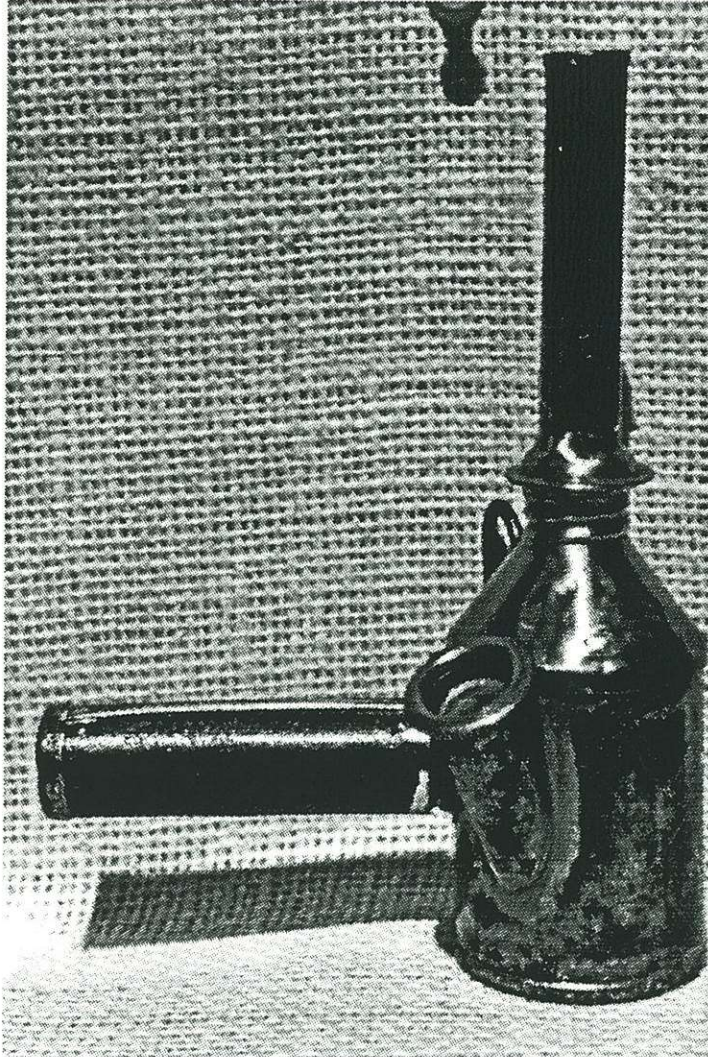
*Tin Trethaway Bros. lamp w/o handle/spout-cover*



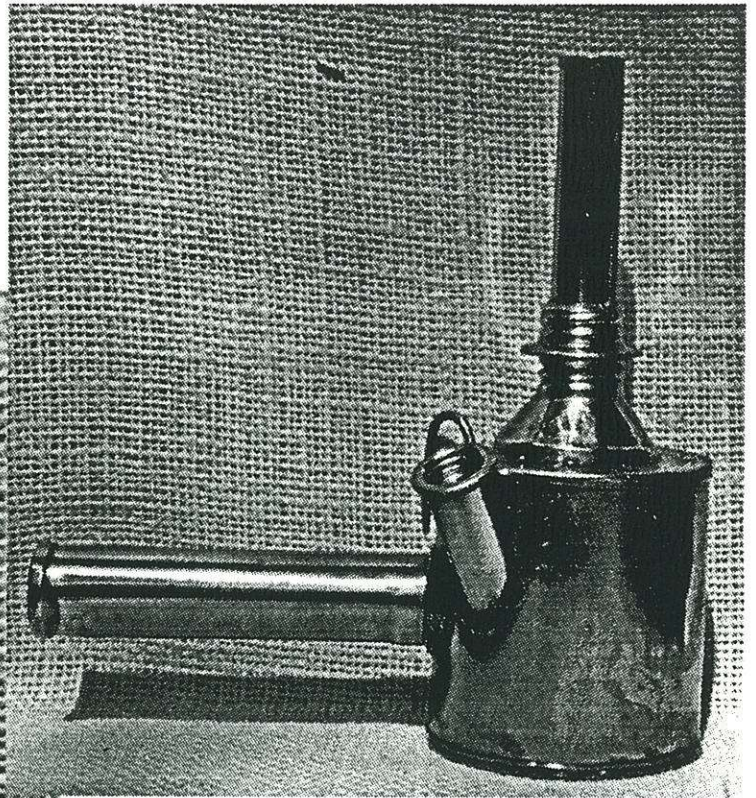
*Tin Trethaway Bros. hand lamp.*

# Trethaway

(right) Copper and brass  
Trethaway  
Bros. hand  
lamp.

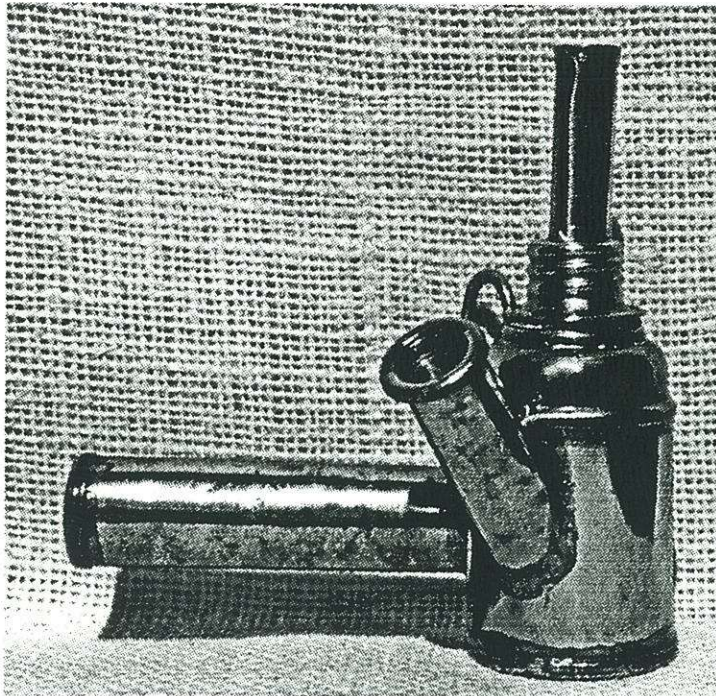


(above) Brass and tin Trethaway Bros. cap lamp.

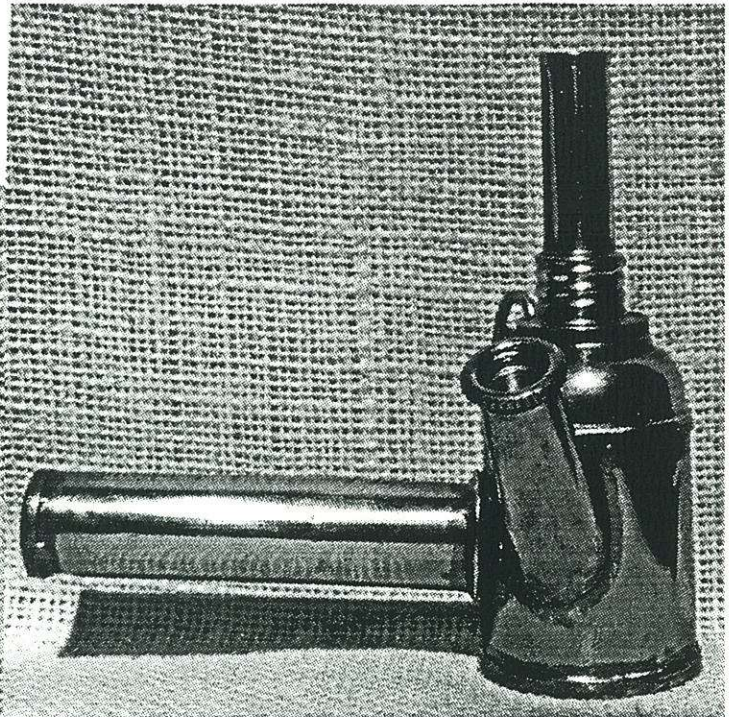


(right) Tin Trethaway Bros. hand lamp  
(largest Trethaway Bros. in collection).

# Crown Lamps



*(above) Brass Crown cap lamp.*



*Small brass Crown hand lamp.*

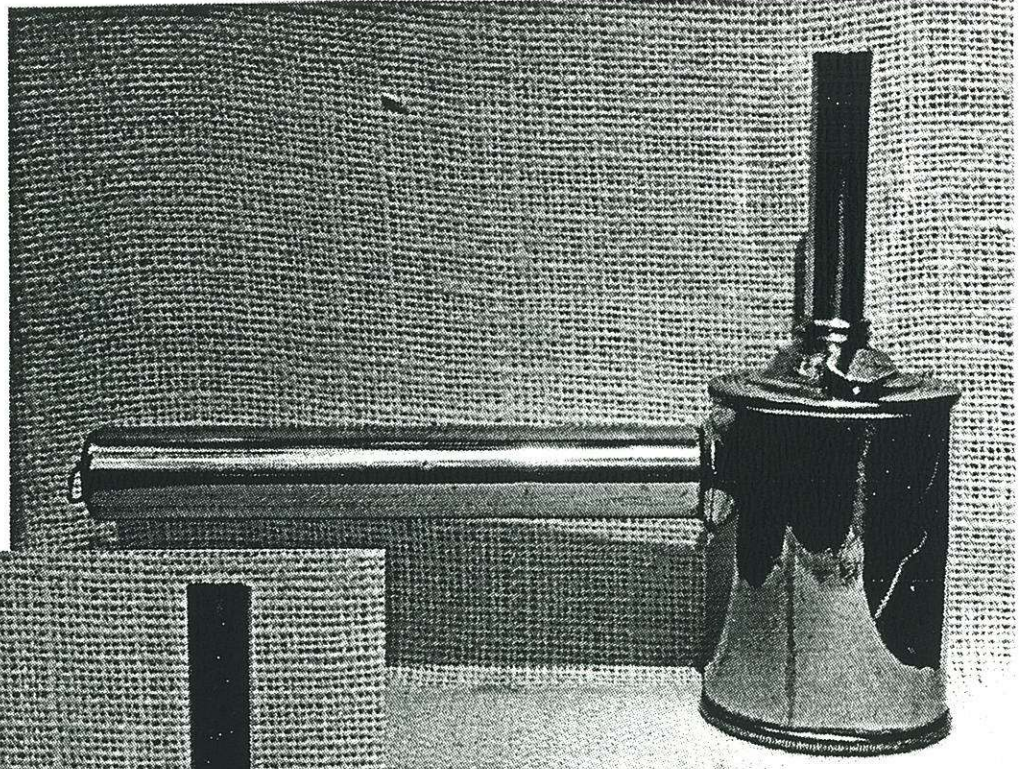


*(above) Copper and brass Crown hand lamp w/ hook.*

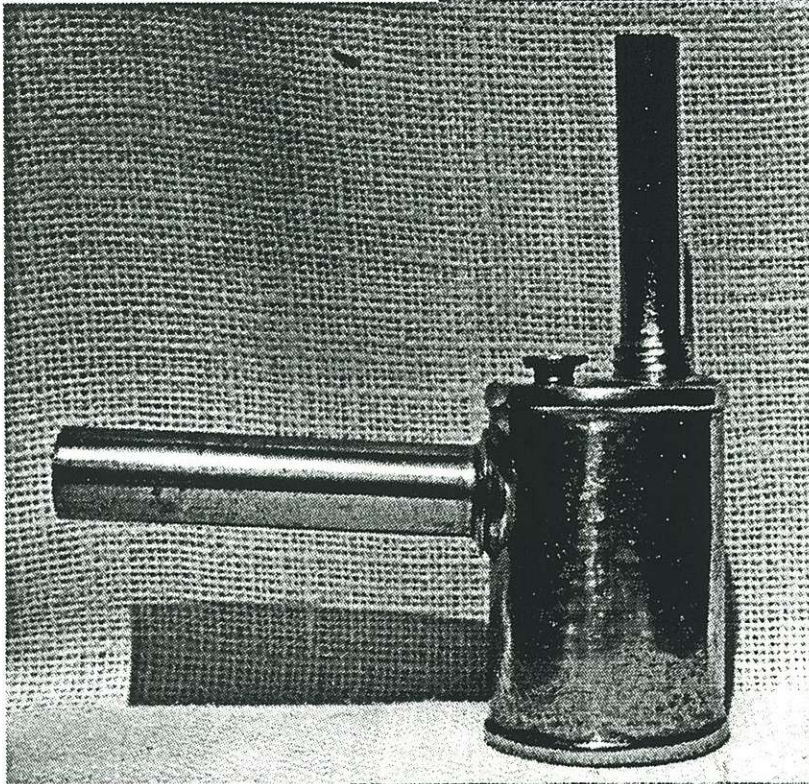
*(left) Brass and tin Crown hand lamp w/ hook.*

## Unmarked Lamps

*Unmarked brass hand lamp w/ hex filler cap and match safe in handle/spout-cover. No hook.*



*Unmarked brass hand lamp w/o hook.*



*Unmarked brass hand lamp with two types of hooks.*

