

Uncommon Grier Bros. Oil Wicks

Dave Johnson

Grier Bros. of Pittsburgh, PA, is a name well known to collection of oil wick and carbide lamps. They produced more than 20 varieties of miner's oil wick lamps under their own label as well as producing some of the same lamps under several distributor's labels. As a major oil wick and carbide lamp manufacturer many examples of Grier Bros. lamps have survived due to the number produced. Apparently several varieties of Grier Bros. lamps saw very limited production. Lamps in this category include Dave Thorpe's unique octagonal pinch waist carbide cap lamp, the very rare Baldwin-style pinch waist carbide cap lamp, and Tony Moon's brass oil wick with threaded caps on the font and wick tube.

Six other uncommon or rare oil wicks manufactured by Grier Bros. are pictured and described here. The first of these is the smallest size commonly seen Grier Bros. STAR in shield logo tin face lamp. This lamp measures 1 7/8" tall to the top



Small tin face lamp with shield.

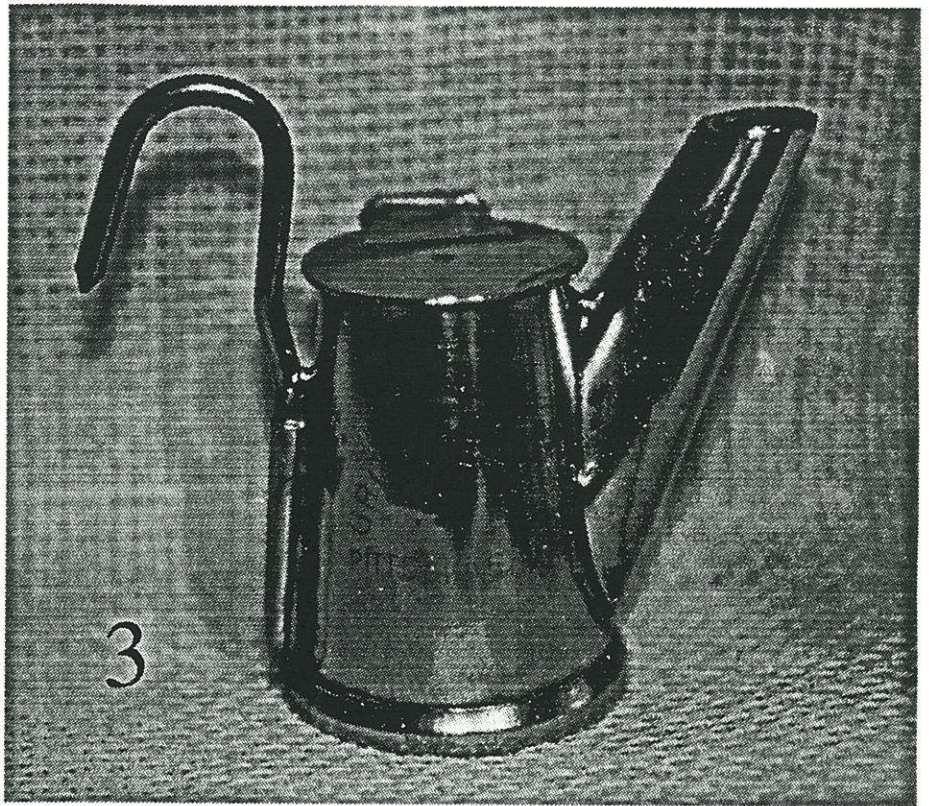


Tri-metal driver's lamp.

of the font cap. What makes this lamp both rare and unique is the spout shield attached to the end of the spout. This lamp is pictured on page 237 of Henry Pohn's recently published book. Henry erroneously identifies this lamp as an "unmarked" lamp belong to Clyde Mayes, while it clearly bears the Grier Bros. name. This lamp went from Clyde Mayes to Manfred Stutzer in a trade. I recently acquired the lamp in trade with Manfred. The shield is very small yet functional and protects the flame to a greater degree than most larger clumsier shields.

The second lamp in a tri-metal driver's lamp that measures 2 1/2" tall

to the top of the font cap. Two features set this lamp apart from other Grier Bros. products. First, tri-metal Grier Bros. oil wicks are very rare. This example has a copper font and inner spout, a brass bottom and a tin outer spout and font cap, and a steel hook. The second unusual feature is the wire spout guard on the underside of the spout, identical to the one patented by William Tunnessen on April 20, 1909 (see Eureka 17, p. 2) and found on most CROWN brand oil wicks. Grier Bros., like Trethaway Bros., is known to have infringed on other manufacturers' patents, as in the case of their pinch waist Baldwin-style carbide cap lamp. This oil wick appears to be another example of such infringement. Like the carbide lamp, production appears to have been quite limited, judging from the number of surviving examples. I have seen only one other Grier Bros. oil wick with this spout guard, on a tin mid-size face lamp.



Copper face lamp. Stamping: GRIER BROS., PITTSBURG, PA.

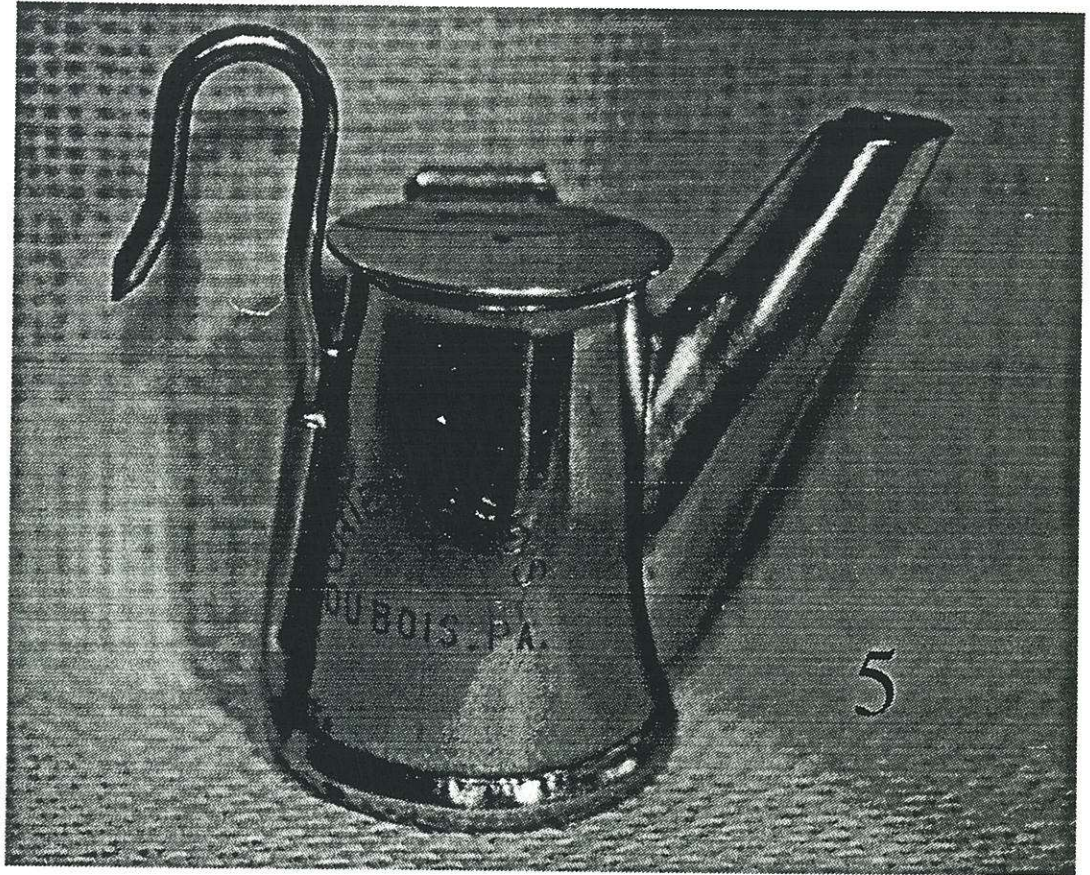
The third lamp is an all copper, with brass hook, mid-size face lamp measuring 2" tall to the top of the font cap. The double spout is 2 1/4" long. This lamp carries the simple GRIER BROS. PITTSBURG, PA stamping rather than the more common GRIER BROS. STAR in a shield stamping. As with all manufacturers, copper lamps were produced in much smaller numbers due to the higher selling cost associated with the higher material cost. Copper and brass lamps are more coveted by collectors due to both their rarity and their aesthetic appeal.



Copper face lamp with STAR stamping.

The fifth lamp is a brass face lamp with a copper inner spout. It measures 2 1/8" tall to the top of the font cap. The spout is 2 1/2" long. This lamp has the seldom seen GRIER BROS. DUBOIS, PA stamping.

The sixth lamp shown below is tin with a brass collar and brass wick tube reinforcement. It is stamped with both the U.S. TOOL CO. and GRIER BROS. logos. Stamped into the brass portion of the wick tube is a large star inside a circle.



Brass face lamp. Stamping: GRIER BROS., DUBOIS, PA.



Collecting Grier oil wicks is like collecting Justrites: while most models are common, there are exceptions like Justrite's "THE BUDDY" and the rare smooth-base "THE JUSTRITE" marked PAT. APLD. FOR. Like the rare Justrites, Grier oil wicks as those shown here are rare gems in a sea of costume jewelry.

Driver's lamp. Stamped U.S. TOOL CO. and GRIER BROS.