

A Labeled Miniature Oil Wick Lamp by Jim Steinberg

The oil wick type lamp shown here is actually a miniature. There is speculation among collectors that these were actually salesman's samples. Although I do not intend to settle the issue, questions do arise regarding these speculations. If these type of lamps are true samples as opposed to manufacturer promotions, are there any full size versions of the miniatures that are identical in construction? Additional evidence suggests that the miniature oil wicks were used as promotional items and possibly used as parts of badges and ribbons at mining related events. I would appreciate any further information or photos that readers might provide for future articles. The lamp shown here was found with the label as shown.

Through the gracious assistance of Nancy Smink and Jonelle Miller of the Pottsville Free Public Library, a great deal of information was provided to the editors.

For the week of September 2-8, 1906, much of Pottsville's business and industry (including the coal mines) closed for "Old Home Week." This was a celebration of the history and accomplishments of Pottsville and the surrounding region. Pottsville was a major center for anthracite coal mining as well as other industries.

During "Old Home Week," a number of events were held. There were parades of military units, fraternal societies, trade unions, and even entries from the local mines. Other events included contests and generally boisterous festivities. The Pottsville miniature oil lamp was apparently a promotional item provided by L. C. Thompson for the event. Lewis C. Thompson (Nov. 7, 1835 - ?) was a very prominent resident of Pottsville and the owner of its oldest hardware store, "L. C. Thompson Hardware."

The illustration and measurements are based on the Pottsville C. George miniature oil lamp in the collection of Ted Bobrink.

