

FROG LAMPS

PART V

by Wendell E. Wilson
4631 Paseo Tubutama
Tucson, Arizona 85715

FROG LAMPS FROM OTHER REGIONS

A number of frog lamps are known definitely to be from regions other than Saxony, Westphalia, Hessen, and Austria-Hungary. These regions are:

- (1) Bavaria
- (2) Tiffin, Ohio
- (3) Mexico City
- (4) New York
- (5) London
- (6) Poland
- (7) Russia

Though most of these have distinctive design aspects, it is conceivable that all but the British example were made in Germany and exported. The alternative for the Ohio example, however, is the Black Forest in Baden-Württemberg. No other frogs are known definitely to be from Baden-Württemberg, but the Ohio example is essentially indistinguishable from what is classified as a Westphalian frog, suggesting that the Westphalian design was produced over a larger area.

Figure 65. Ohio Frog. This lamp is clearly of rather common Westphalian design, except for the cartouch which encloses the "GLÜCK AUF" and the *Schlägel* and *Eisen*, . . . the only example I know of which is so marked. According to Mrs. Rhea Mansfield Knittle, "When German migrants settled in Seneca County, Ohio, in 1843-47, several blacksmiths came and settled in and near what is now Tiffin, Ohio. They came from the Black Forest, and they made these lamps, and other kinds of metalwork. The lamps burned bear grease,"* If this is true, it appears the blacksmiths of Baden-Württemberg made frog lamps in the Westphalian style. (Collection of Bertram K. Little)

* Letter in the possession of Bertram Little.

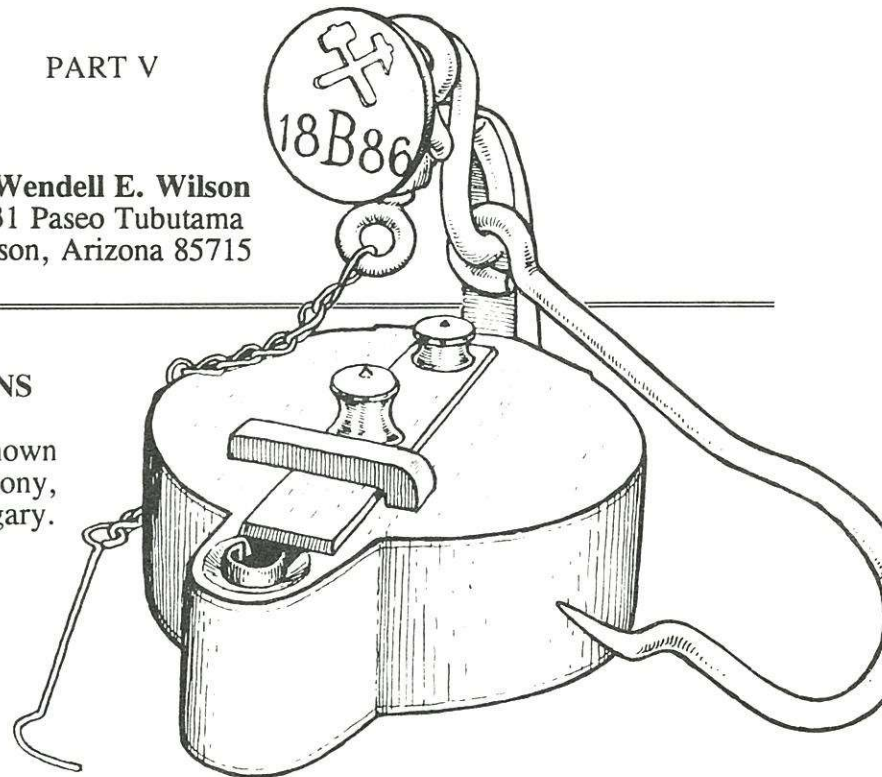
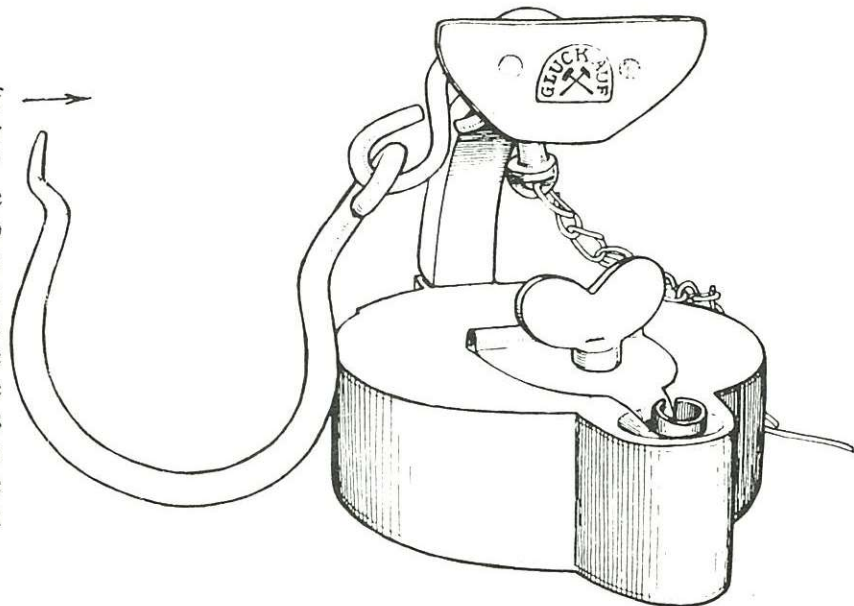


Figure 64. Bavarian Frog. Frogs with a round shield are rare. This all-brass example was used in the silver mines near Bodenmais in Bayerischer Wald. The finely crafted quality, pivoting font lid, large embossed *Schlägel* and *Eisen*, and dated shield make this a very desirable lamp. (Bodenmais Museum collection)



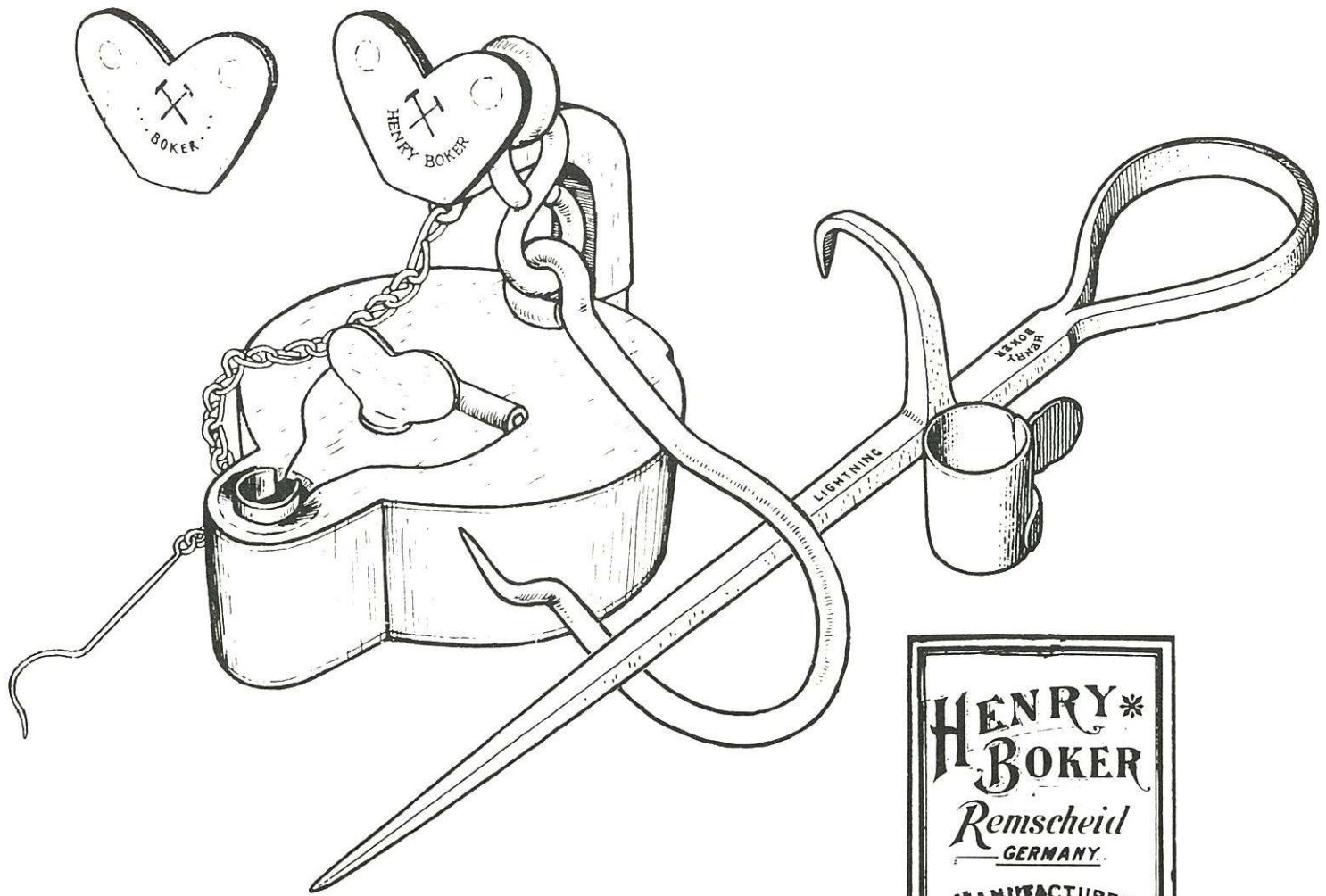


Figure 66. Henry Boker Frog. Heinrich Böker operated a hardware and cutlery company in Remscheid, Germany, in the early 1800's. In 1837, *Hermann* Böker moved from Solingen, where the family owned a cutlery factory, to New York City and there established the Henry Boker Company. (The H. Boker Company is still alive in Scarsdale, New York, but it is an inoperative holding company now.) Later, in 1867, another branch office was opened in Mexico City, a factor which no doubt accounts for the large number of Boker frogs found even today in Mexico. These American offices were apparently distribution centers only, for items manufactured in Remscheid and imported for sale here. The items stamped "Henry Boker" must have been made primarily for the American distributors, considering that "Henry" is an Americanization of "Heinrich." However, the company also sold miners' candlesticks (stamped "SUNSET," "LIGHTNING" and "HENRY BOKER"); the box for these states:

Label from box
of candlesticks.
Ramsdell collection.



"Well known throughout the world is the high standard of all articles bearing the name of Henry Boker."

So it is possible that "Henry Boker" items were marketed in other countries besides America.

Two types of shield stamping are known on the frog lamps. The one bearing only the last name, "...BOKER...", is by far the rarest of the two. (Collection of the author)

Figure 67. Wolf Spout Frog. The unusual feature of this frog is the spout and the cannister-like construction of the font. The shield plate, font cap and chain are brass; the rest is steel painted a metallic gray. Except, of course, for the brass name-plate which reads: "Wolf Safety Lamp Co of America Inc.: CRYSTAL BUILDING, 47/49 West Street, New York N. Y. U.S.A." . . .which leaves very little doubt about who the maker was. Lamps of exactly this design were also offered in the 1903 catalog of Friemann & Wolf, Zwickau in Saxony, the German Wolf company. (George Bayles collection)

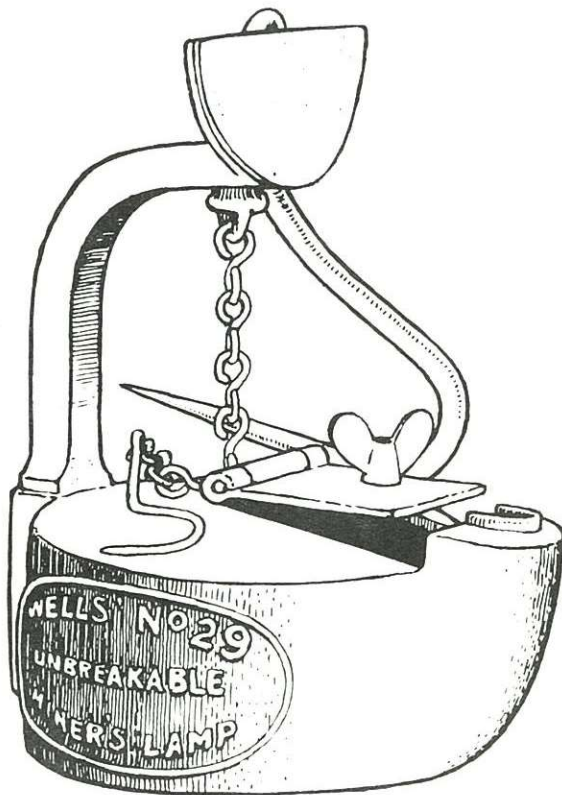
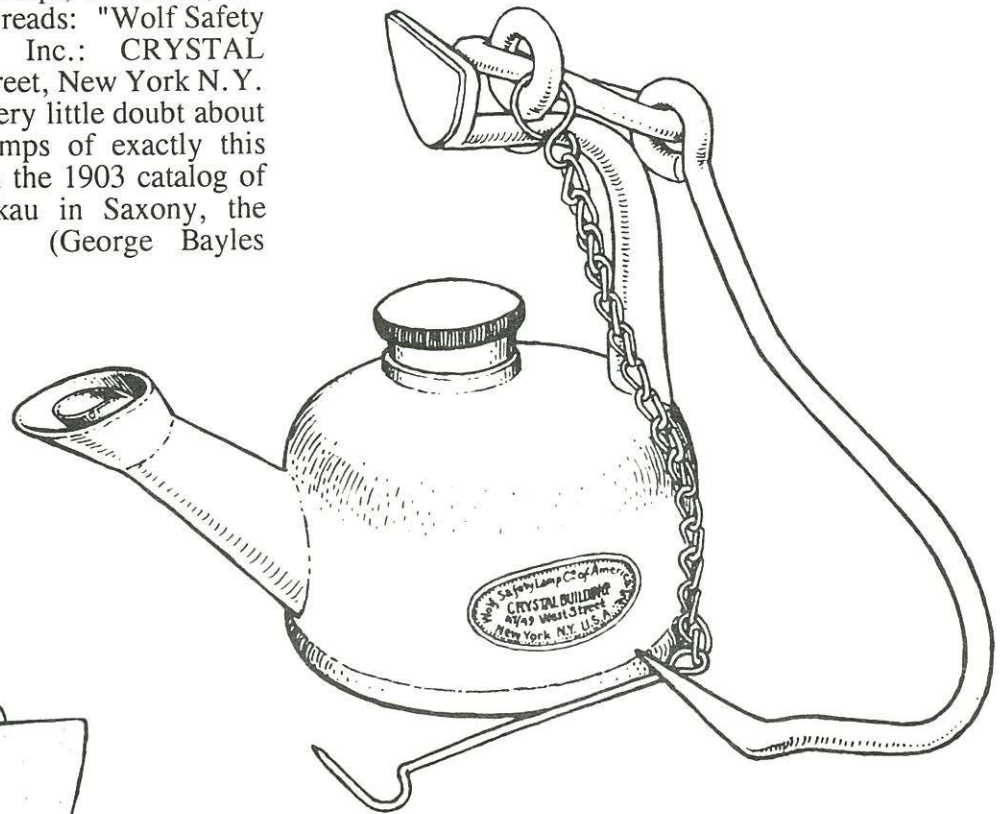


Figure 68. Wells Frog. The firm of A. C. Wells & Co. in London (with works in Cheetham, Manchester) made the only known British frog lamp. The lamp is cast iron for the most part, and has text cast prominently into both sides. One side reads: "WELLS' N°29 UNBREAKABLE MINER'S LAMP," and the other side reads: "A. C. WELLS & CO./ STRENGTH & DURABILITY." Wells also made a Giesser lamp, similarly stamped. Their advertisement in the September 19, 1902, edition of *Engineering* said this lamp was made to burn "Colza and other heavy Oils for use in Miner, &c. Price 3/- each. Fitted with an oil Save-all, Hook, Pricker and Chain, and Malleable Faceplate for stamping owners' name or number on. Burns 12 hours. Holds half-a-pint." In the only example I have actually seen, the shield looked like iron, definitely not brass, though perhaps it was purposely softened iron. (David Crawford collection)

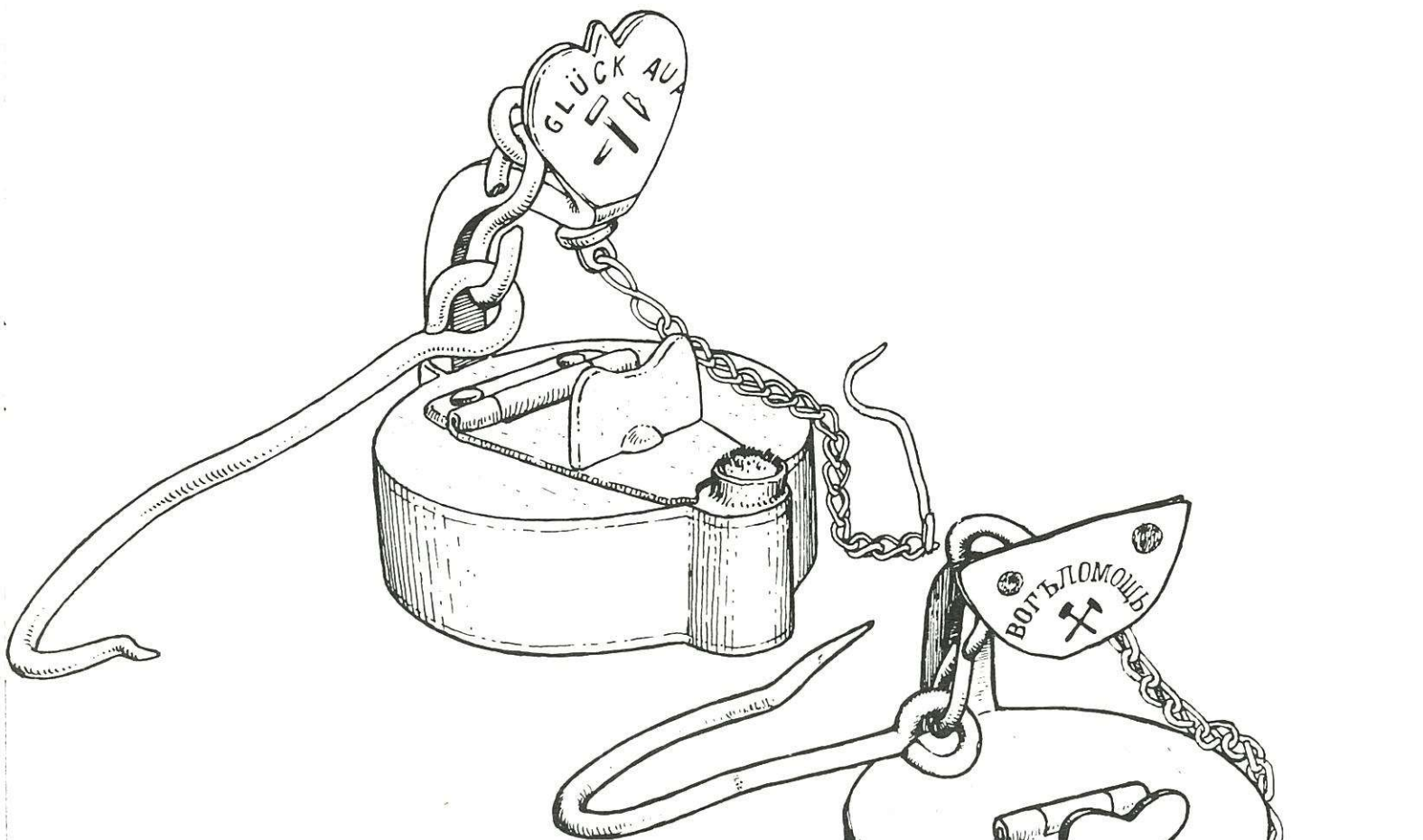


Figure 69. Polish Frog. There are a number of unusual features about this frog from Poland: (1) "GLÜCK AUF" is written in German, instead of Polish, possibly suggesting German manufacture or use in a German-speaking part of Poland. On the other hand, perhaps the phrase was so universal among miners that it crossed language barriers. (2) The "spiked heart" shape of the shield. (3) The crossed hammers punched in one part at a time instead of by a single punch. Also, the letters appear to have been punched individually, since they do not all line up. (Some collectors would consider this as evidence of possible forgery of the shield markings, because a lamp-maker would be expected to have his own single stamp for "GLÜCK AUF" and the crossed hammers.) (4) The unique shape of the latch handle. (5) The very round shape of the font. (Karsten Porezag collection)

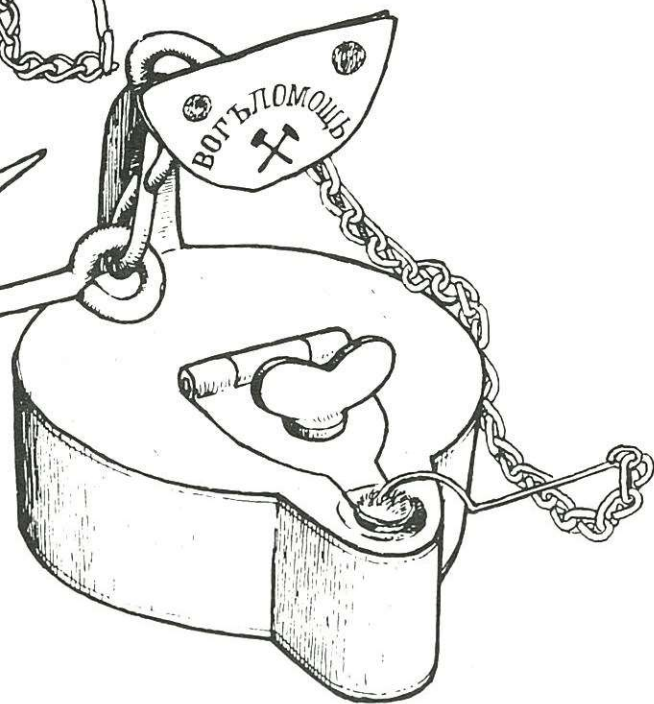


Figure 70. Russian Frog. Probably made in Germany on a special order, this frog carries a cyrillic inscription meaning "God Protect Us." It was used in the nickel mines near Karel'skaya, Yakutsk, U.S.S.R., and is presently the only known example. (Karsten Porezag collection)

CONCLUSION

This concludes our series on frog lamps. Obviously there is a tremendous variety of devices in this category, a fact which makes the collecting of frog lamps a richly historical and fascinating endeavor. There are doubtlessly many other interesting examples beyond those illustrated in this series, and we'll be happy to illustrate them in future articles if readers can provide photos.

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