

German Plummet Lamps

by Tony Moon

One of the earliest uses of a hanging oil lamp for underground surveying was reported by Weisbach in 1859 (figure 1). The lamp's function was similar to the plummet lamp developed by Eckley Coxe in 1870 and later manufactured by Heller and Brightley (MAC issue Number 8, Summer 1990, Page 18, Figure 1). It is likely that Coxe developed his plummet lamp while he was a student at the school of mines in Freiberg, Germany. The author knows of one example of the Weisbach lamp that was found in the United States.

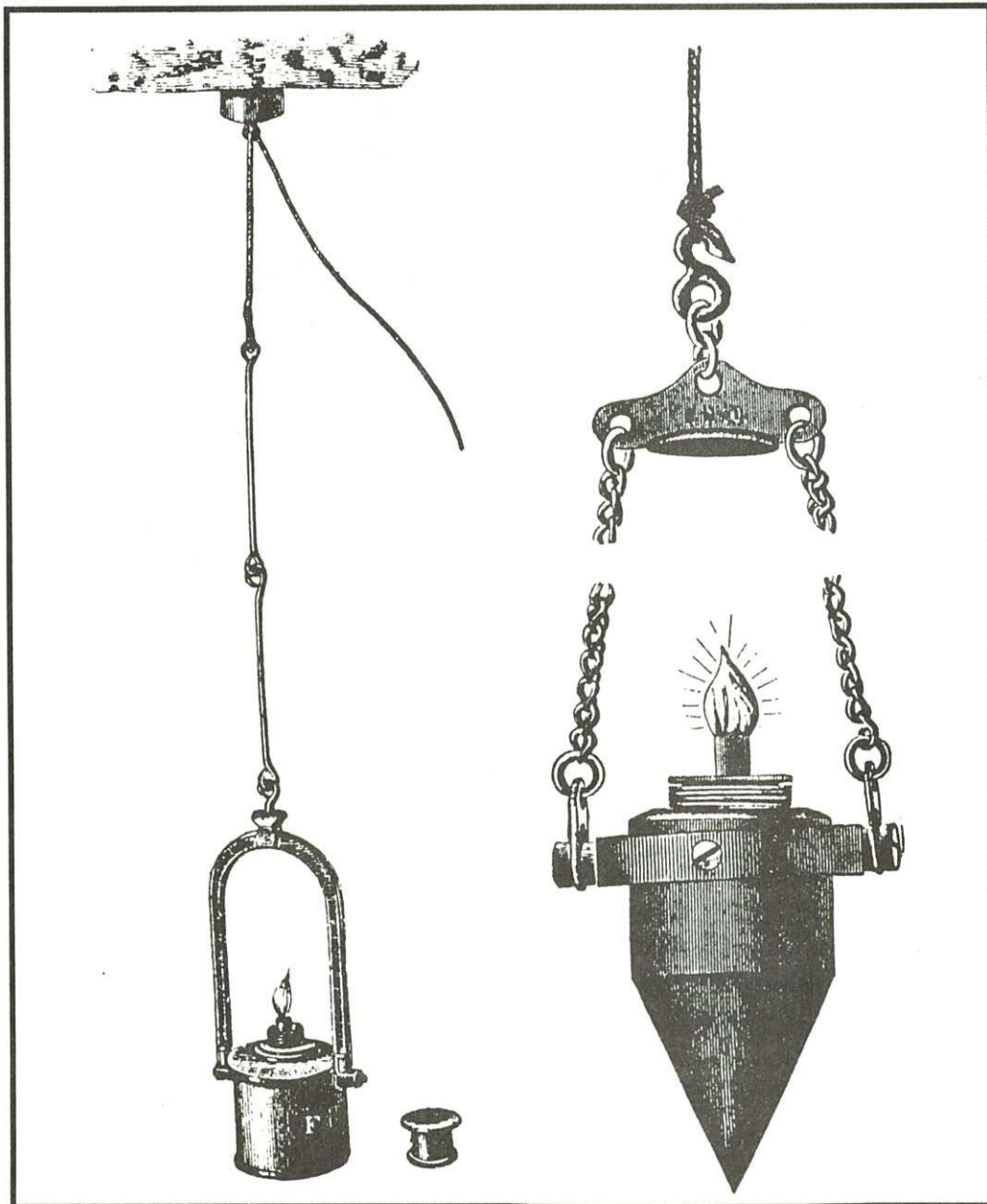


Figure 1

Wiesbach's hanging lamp, 1850 (left) compared to the more recent Coxe lamp, 1870 (right)

Wolf produced a safety lamp that, in general form, looks very similar to the Weisbach lamp. The lamp was produced in two versions, with and without a bonnet, and both are shown in Figure 2 which is reproduced from the 1914 Wolf safety lamp catalog. The catalog describes the lamp as an "Engineer's Signal Lamp, free from iron parts. Flame will always be vertical under the point from which it is suspended, including chain, single gauze, and Paraffin Igniter Mod. 1914, without lock". The example in the author's collection is all brass, 10 inches high to the suspension ring and 3 1/4 inches in diameter at the base. It has a small 1/8 inch diameter round wick which is typical for plummet lamps or surveying lamps specifically designed for serial numbers, which is common for early models of Wolf lamps.

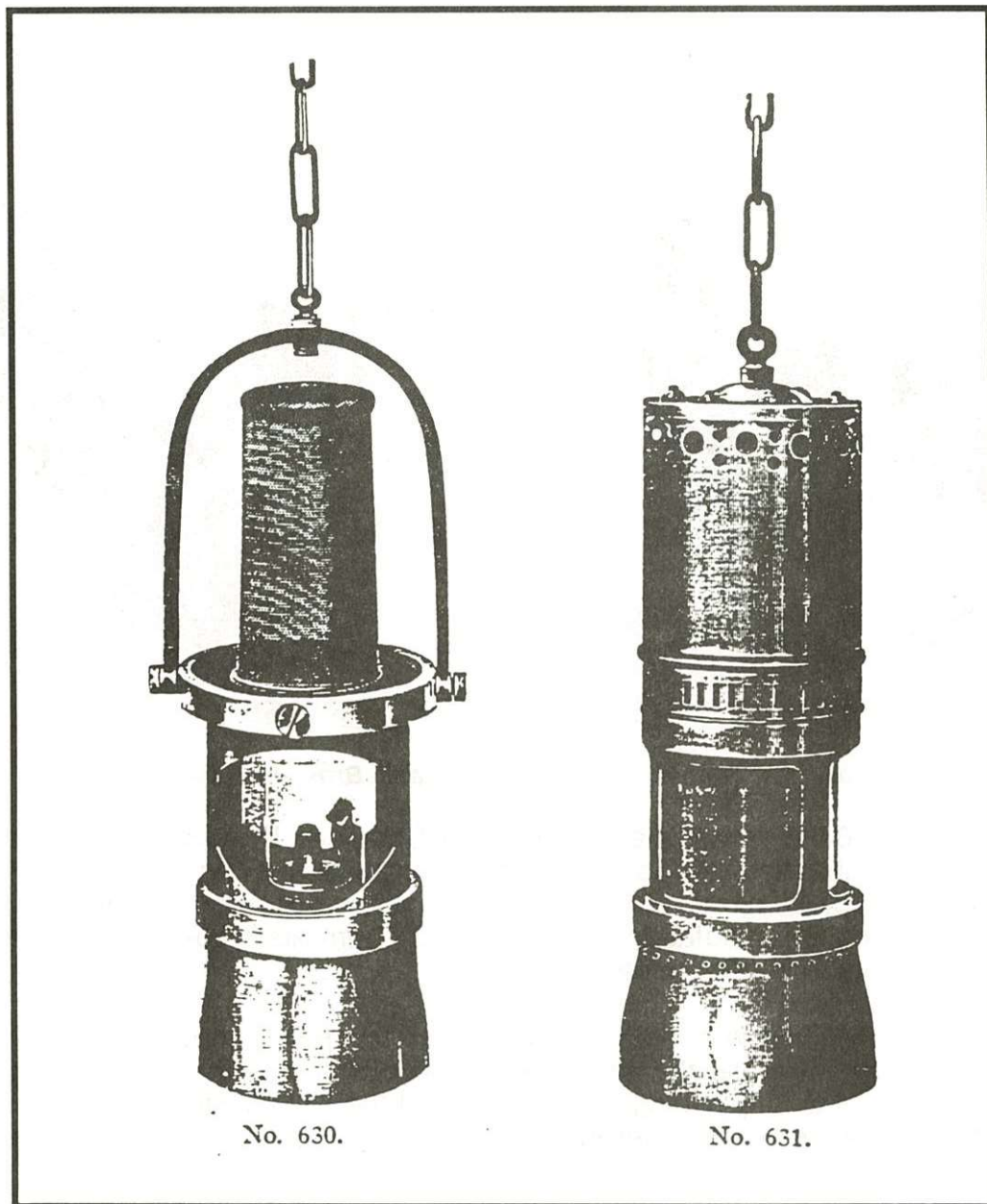


Figure 2
Wolf Hanging Safety Lamps without & with detachable bonnet.