Heinrich Friemann 1809-1898

History of the German Lamp Maker Friemann & Wolf

Part I: 1861 - 1900

Manfred Stutzer

Carl Wolf 1838-1915

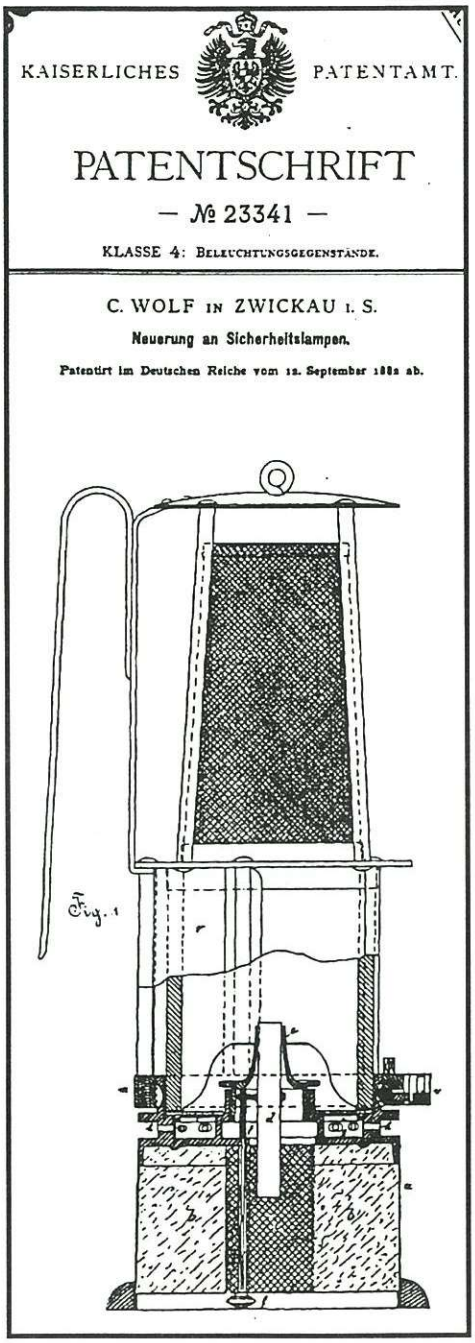
The firm of Friemann & Wolf is probably the best known producer of miners lamps in Europe. Friemann & Wolf have throughout their history produced safety, carbide and electric lamps for miners.

In 1838 Carl Heinrich Wolf was born in Oberhohndorf, near Zwickau, in Saxony, the son of a miner. Young Carl undoubtedly learned something of the dangers of mining from his father.

At age 23, in 1861, Carl Wolf founded his own small precision mechanical firm in Zwickau, located in a coal mining area.

Due to numerous firedamp explosions resulting in 89 deaths at coal mines near Brueckenbargschacht and Frietal in early 1879, the Saxon government established the Saxon Firedamp Commission to investigate the condition of mines and the reasons for the explosions.

With his father working in the mines throughout his youth and his proximity to gassy mines, Wolf had a personal interest in mine safety.



KAISERLICHES PATENTAMT.

PATENTSCHRIFT

— № 23341 —

KLASSE 4: BELEUCHTUNGSGEGENSTÄNDE.

C. WOLF IN ZWICKAU I. S.

Neuerung an Sicherheitslampen.

Patentirt im Deutschen Reiche vom 12. September 1882 ab.

Fig. 1

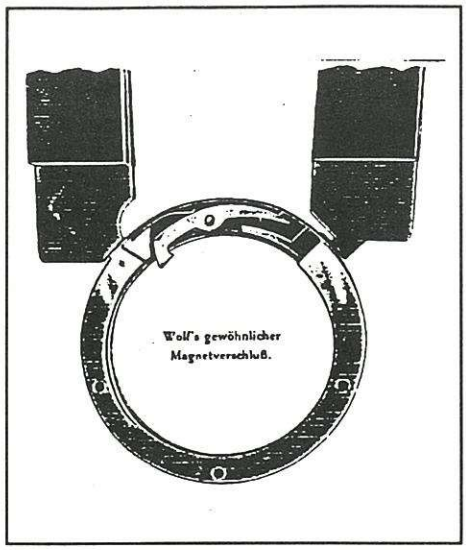
Carl Wolf's first patent for a flame safety lamp (1892).

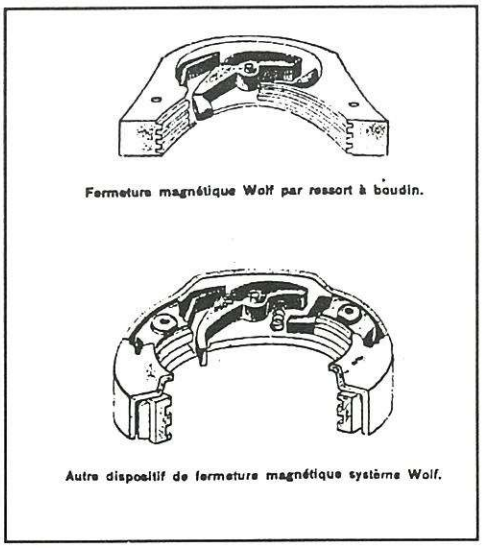
In 1881, at the age of 43, Carl Wolf developed the first benzene fueled safety lamp. This lamp burned brighter than earlier safety lamps and was virtually smokeless. His lamp featured a bottom filled with cotton wool to absorb the benzene, like the old Zippo cigarette lighters absorbed lighter fluid.

On September 12, 1882 his benzene safety lamp received patent No. 23341. That same year Wolf met Heinrich Friemann, a brewer in Eisleben. Friemann would be the one to provide the funds to enable Wolf to commercially produce his new lamp.

In 1883, Wolf's benzene safety lamp was fitted with the first internal igniter. This igniter was of the percussion variety. A total of 450 lamps were manufactured that year by Wolf with magnetic locks and percussion igniters.

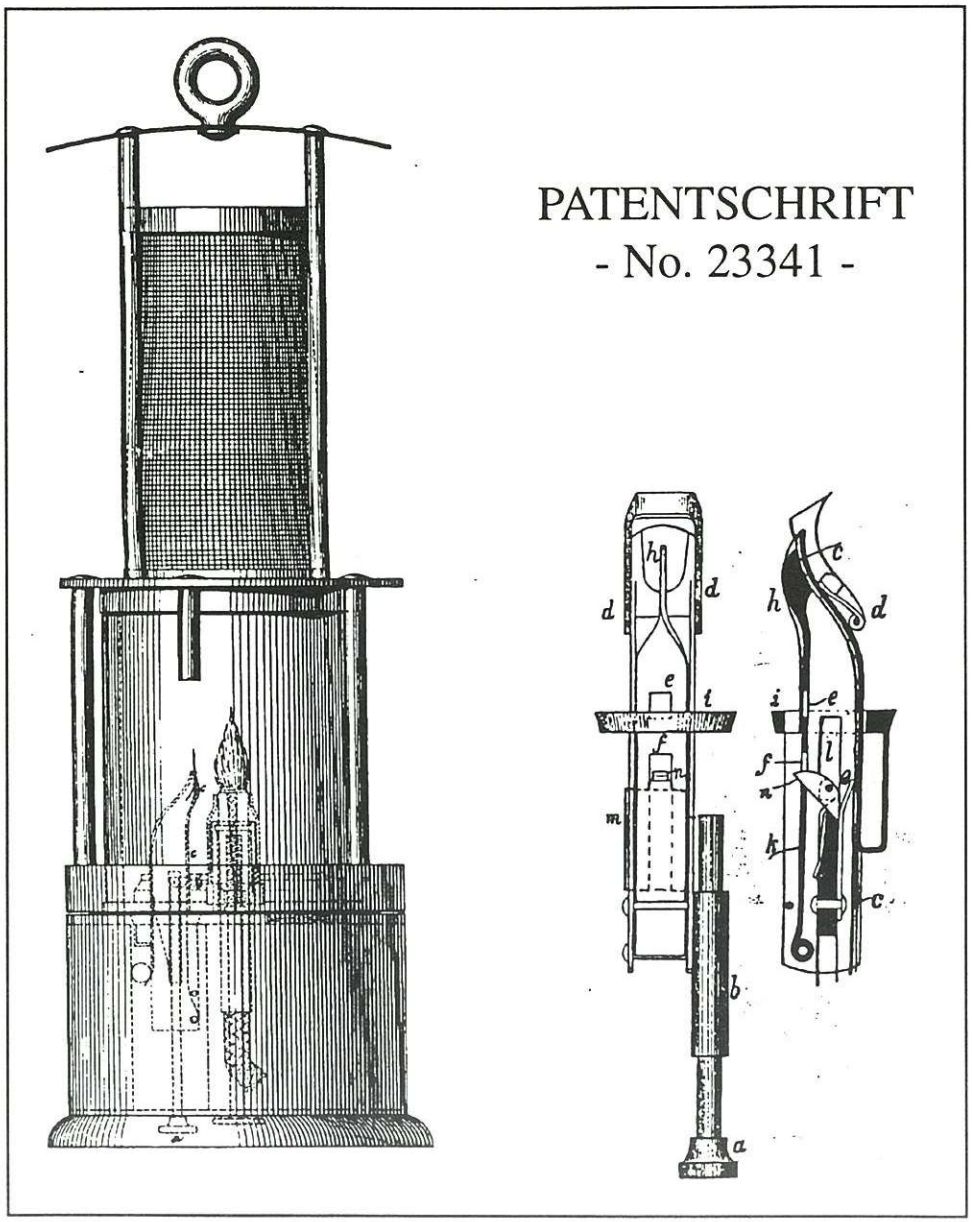
August 1, 1884 saw the founding and commercial registration of the firm of Friemann & Wolf, Maschinen-und Grubenlampenfabrik, Zwickau i. Sachsen.





Left: First magnetic lock No. 2000.

Right: Magnetic locks 2025 and No 2075.

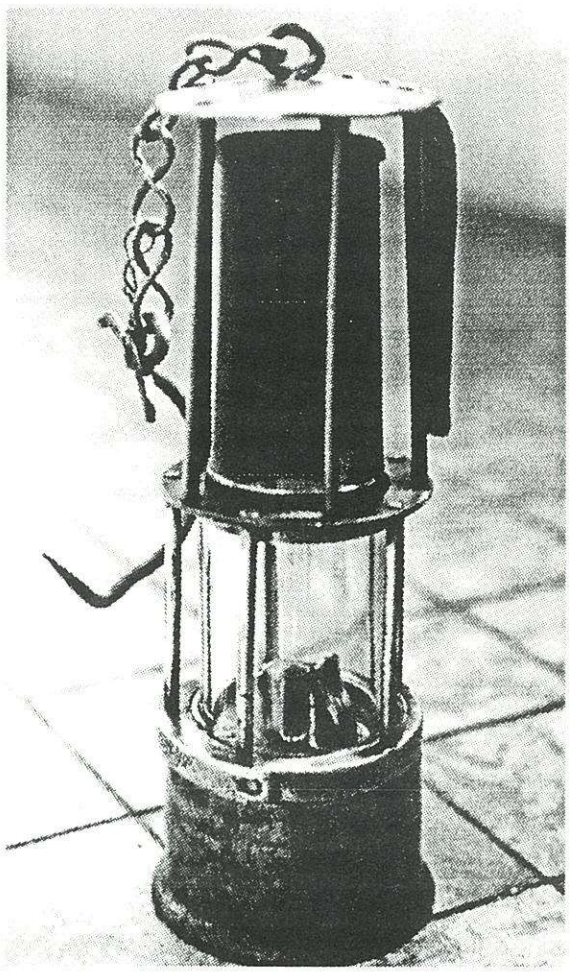


Wolf's first patent included the first internal igniter.

After some initial problems introducing the benzene safety lamp into a market dominated by oil safety lamps, Wolf saw his lamp gain rapid acceptance in Saxony, Prussia, and Austria-Hungary. Wolf's lamp had the advantages of producing a brighter light and of detecting firedamp at lower levels than previous lamps. Such was the success of his lamp that by the end of 1884 more than 7,500 Wolf benzene safety lamps had been produced.

Wolf introduced a rotary igniter for his lamps in 1888. By 1890 Wolf had introduced his lamps worldwide and the firm was producing 100 safety lamps per day.

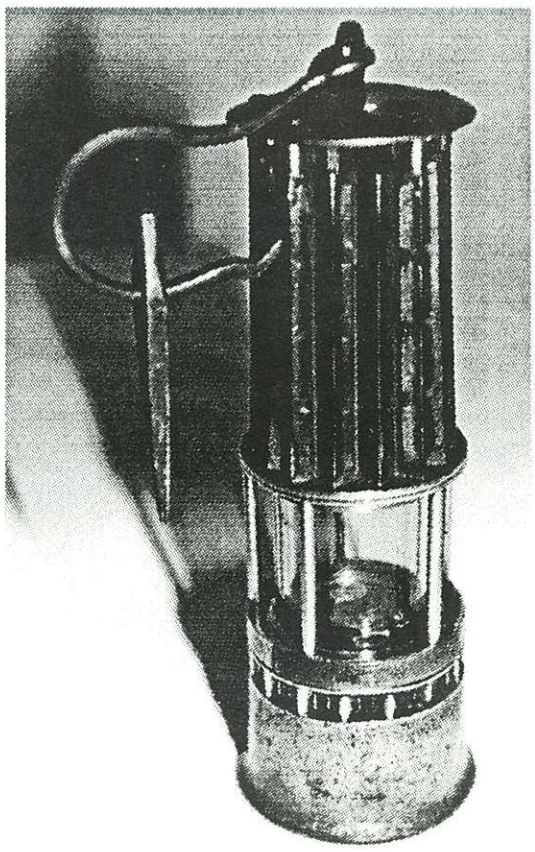
Wolf's partner, Heinrich Friemann died in 1898, leaving Wolf in control of the firm. At this time Hubert Joris was the exclusive agent for Friemann & Wolf products in Belgium, headquartered in Liege. The agent for Wolf in Great Britain was Fr. Richter and Co. of Newcastle-on-Tyne. In the U.S. all Wolf lamps were marketed through the Fidelity International Agency of 621 Broadway in New York City.

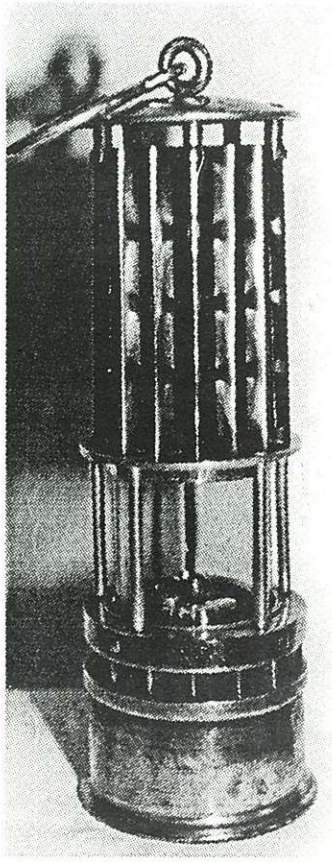


Above and right: Wolf percussion igniter lamp.

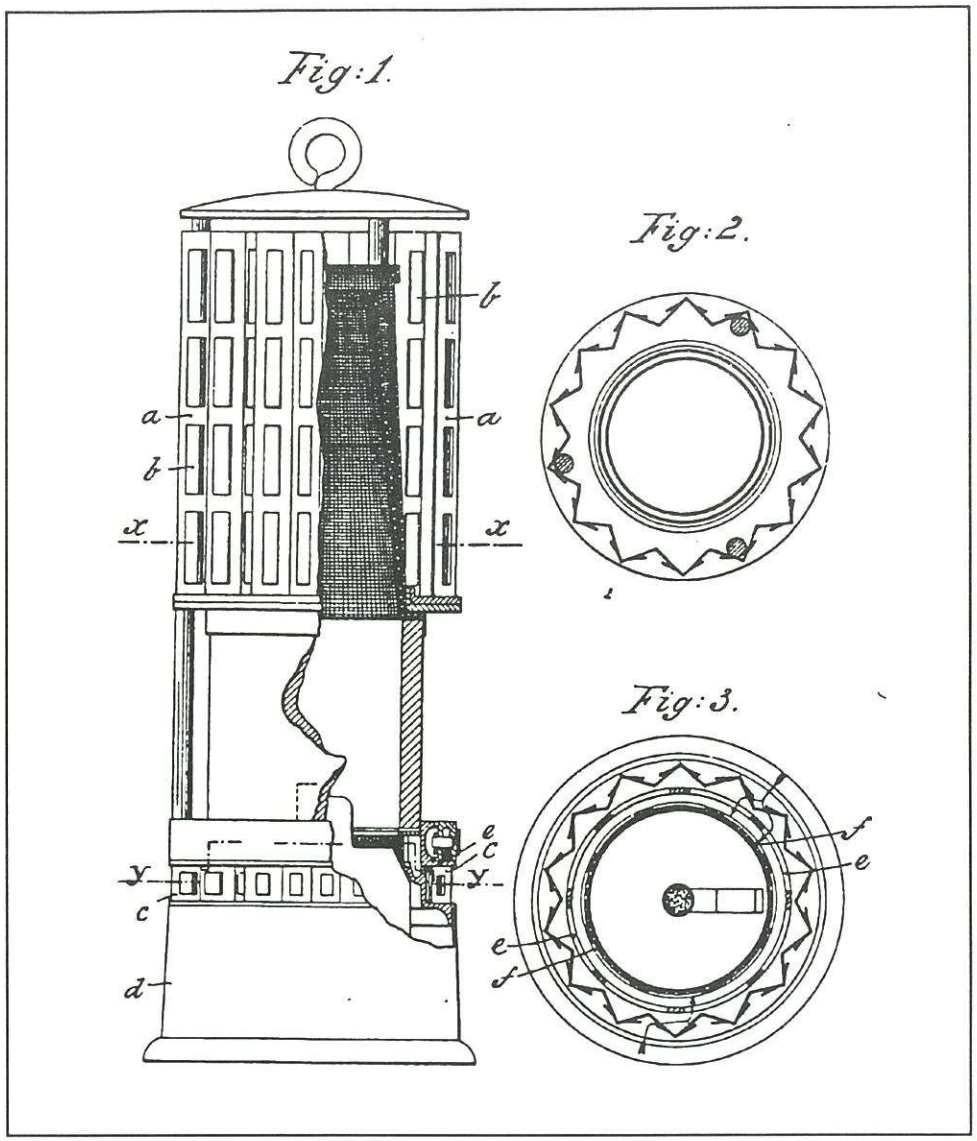
By 1900 Wolf had subsidiaries in Duisburg and Dortmund Germany and in Waldenburg Silesia. Lamps were also being produced and repaired in the Belgian facility in Loncin-lez-Liege.

[Editor's note: Manfred Stutzer's exceptional history of the Wolf Company will continue in our July issue.]

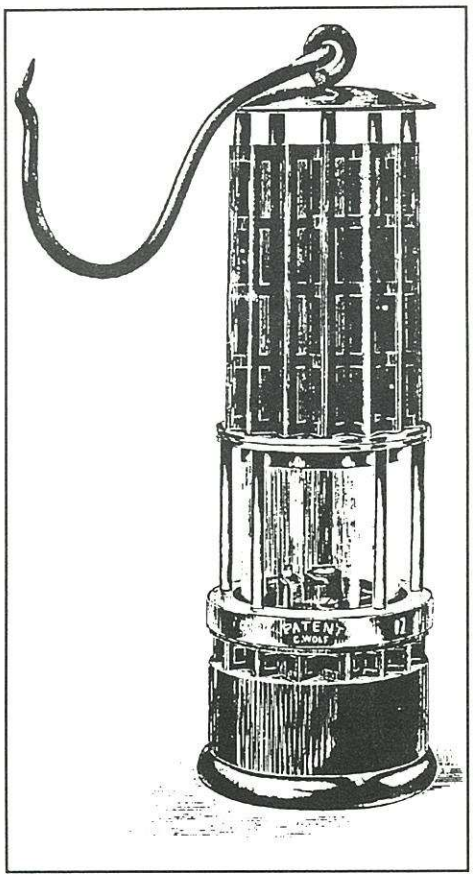




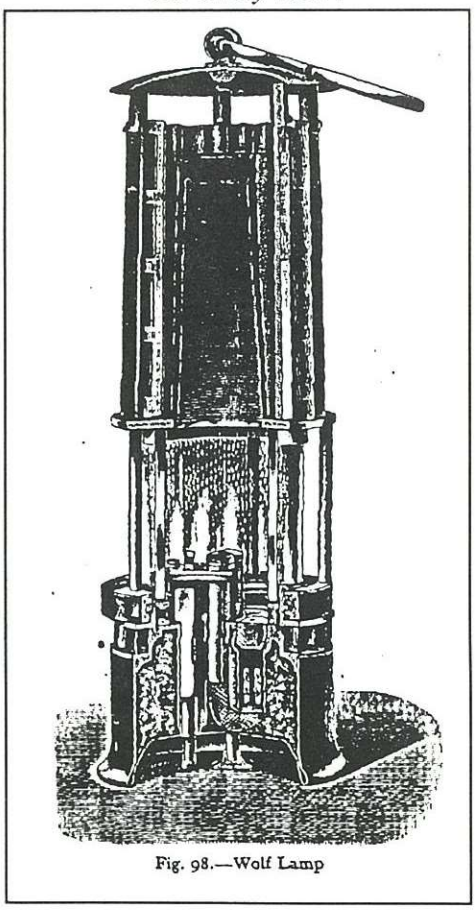
Right: Two different Wolf safety lamps with air inlets on top of the base.

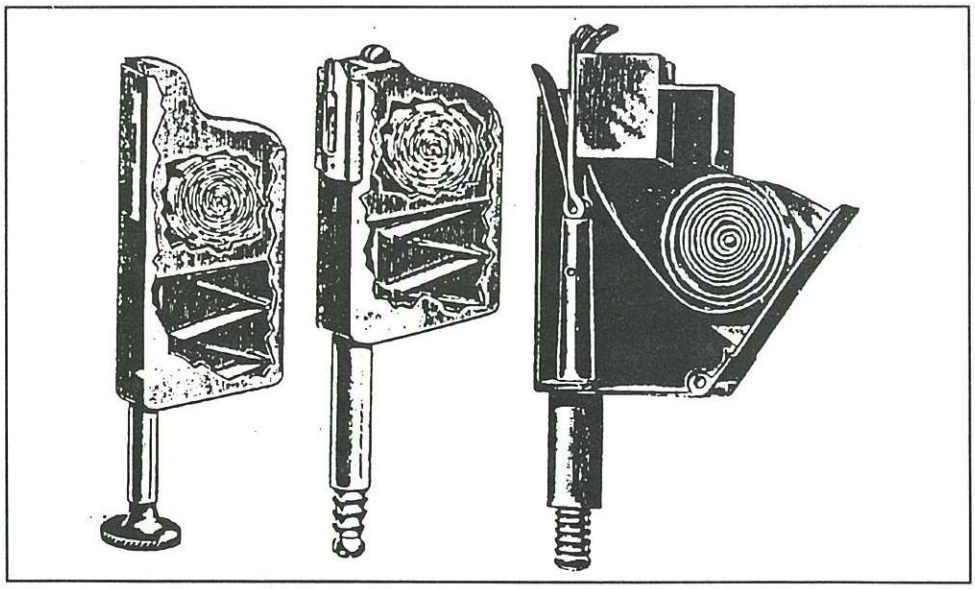


Wolf's 1892 patent No. 69118 for a lamp bonnet.

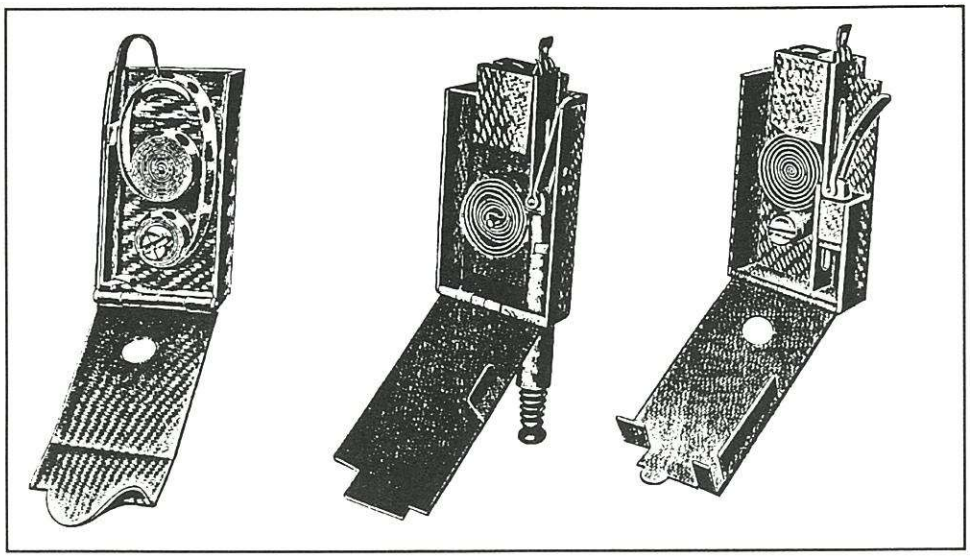


Above: Wolf's lamp No. 101. Below: The No. 101 lamp with cut-away view.





Three different models of wax friction igniters. No. 1000 (left) ca. 1893, No. 1025 (center) ca. 1896, and No. 1050 (right) ca. 1897.

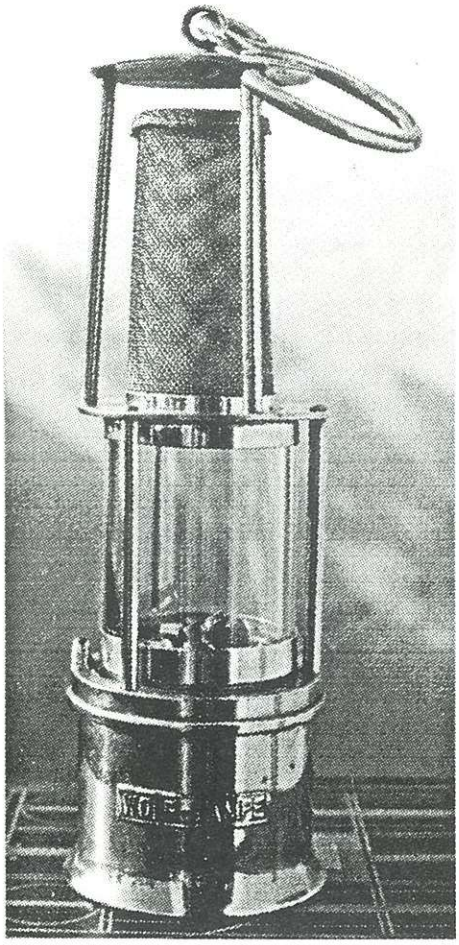


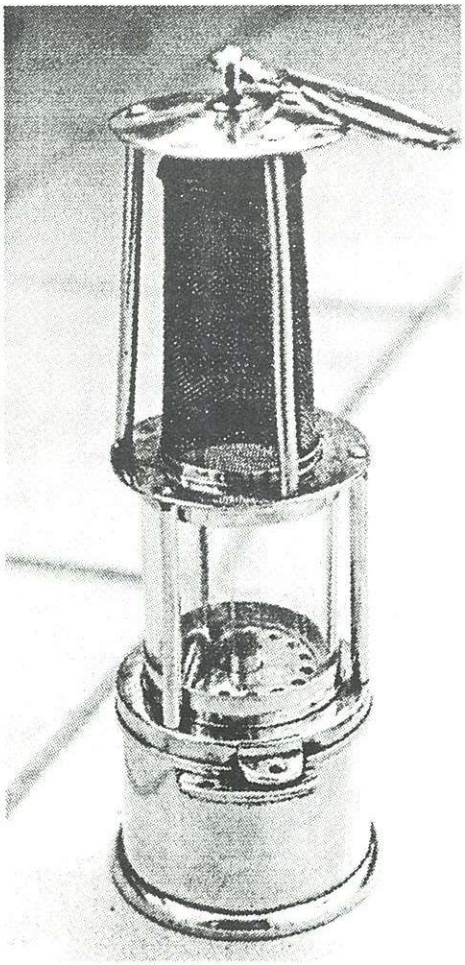
Left: Three different paper strip igniters.

No. 1200 (left).

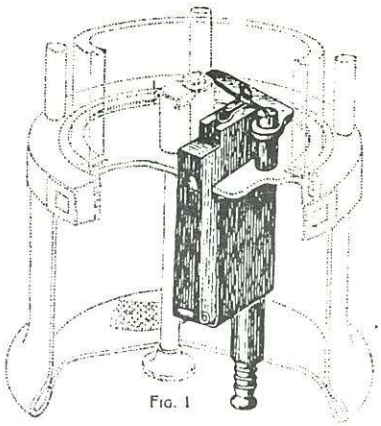
No. 1150 (center), ca. 1907.

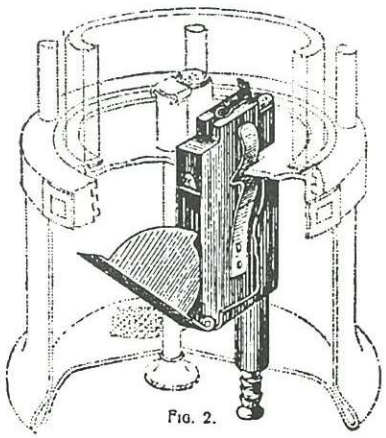
100 N.P.A igniter (right).





Two small brass Wolf benzene lamps with different igniters and locks.





Above: Igniters shown installed in lamp bottoms. Fig. 1. is the No. 1050, ca. 1897. Fig. 2. is the No. 1100, ca 1905.