

Double Spout Oil Wick

by Dave Johnson

Most mining artifact collectors have seen what are known as single spout and double spout oilwick cap lamps. The single spout is just that, one spout with just an outer metal skin. The double spout lamp has an inner spout liner, many times made of copper, that is of a smaller diameter than the outer spout and through which the wick is threaded.



The oilwick pictured here gives new meaning to the term "double spout", it has two separate spouts (wick tubes), each of which is a copper lined double spout, thus we have a "double double spout" lamp. While larger than most oilwicks from the UK, measuring 2 1/2" to the top of the lid with a base diameter of 1 7/8", this lamp is no larger than the average U.S. face lamp. The obvious advantage of this design is the increased light output, however, this comes at the cost of twice the usual fuel consumption. This increased fuel consumption is compensated for by a larger font (fuel reservoir) than most other oilwick cap lamps from the UK (see photo for size comparison with typical "Scottish" oilwick). A unique feature of this lamp is the way in which the lid is hinged to open forward between the spouts while most oilwick lids open at a perpendicular angle to the spout or, in some cases, open back toward the hook, away from the spout.

Made and used primarily in the Newcastle and Durham areas of northern England, this style of lamp did not gain wide acceptance judging from the number of surviving specimens. I know of only one other example in the U.S. and the lamp is reportedly very rare in Europe. This lamp is another oddity among the many oddities found in oilwick cap lamps.

