

THE TORCH

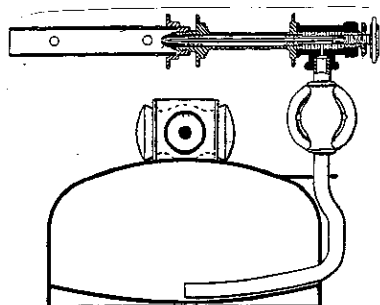
NEWSLETTER OF THE BLOW TORCH COLLECTORS ASSOCIATION

- THIRD EDITION 1996 -

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THIS NEWSLETTER MAY BE REPRODUCED WITH CREDIT GIVEN TO THE SOURCE

My wife, Janet, and I enjoyed another wonderful vacation in September when we traveled to Yellowstone National Park in Wyoming, Idaho, and Montana. It's definitely beautiful country and I can clearly see why they call Montana the Big Sky state with all of the wide open spaces and blue sky! We drove over 1700 miles and, as you can guess, antiqued all the way over and back. We must have stopped at every antique shop and mall in each little town and saw lots of torches, but only one of what I call a "best ever torch". On the last day of antique shopping, in the last shop, and 5 minutes to closing time, my wife pointed out one of those "best ever" torches. She actually has a better eye than I do and frequently spots the torches before me.



J.S. HULL BLOW PIPE
PATENTED JULY 9, 1878

The "best ever" turned out to be an Otto Bernz #30 torch. I have no information on the model #30, but I can guess that it is an alcohol torch with a relatively low temperature flame and was probably used in a lab or by an assayer, dentist, or hobbyist. It has a very small vertical burner head and is made entirely of brass including a cast brass base. It was an especially nice find since the price was only \$7.50 and no tax since the Big Sky state does not have a sales tax. Another torch to add to my growing collection!



NOTES FROM ALL OVER:

My condolences to the family of Ron Johnson Sr. who recently passed away. Ron was an avid torch collector with over 600 torches in his collection that was inherited by his son Ron Jr., another avid torch collector. Torch collecting must run in the Johnson genes.

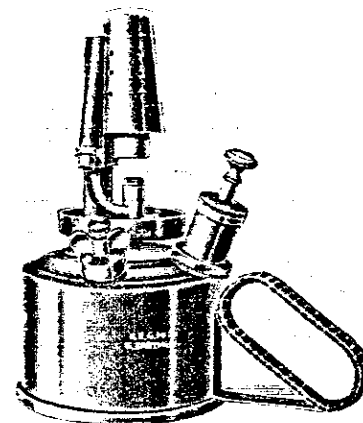
Mike Jones of Boise ID recently submitted a photo of an AE Lovett torch. At first glance, it appeared to be European, but after reading Mike's description, I realized it to be of US origin. This is one of the first US manufactured torches I have seen that very closely resembles European designs. I can't help but believe that many entrepreneurs came to the US with European torch designs, however, much of the European influence must have been lost somewhere on the boat over the "big pond". Mike's torch has a copper fuel tank, a vertical burner head, and a steel handle wrapped in leather.

We have added a few new members to our growing collectors group, **SUEZY PROCTOR** from Winthrop, WA, and **BILL COTTRILL** from Farmersville, NY. Suezy Proctor, while visiting Seattle, took the time to view my collection and brought along a few of her favorites. Welcome to the group!



I have enclosed a copy of the Blow Torch Collectors mailing list for your reference. The list includes all collectors, however, a few have not responded to the "dues" request and will probably not be listed in the future. Please use the member information only for blow torch correspondence. The list should not be circulated for any other purpose.

I have also enclosed an updated manufacturers list. In the future, I plan to incorporate into the manufacturers list, a sub-list of non US manufacturers and I would ask our non US collectors to supply as many names and information as possible. The list should prove helpful if you come in contact with an unknown torch manufacturer that is actually non US, such as the *Companion* and *Rega* brand from Australia.



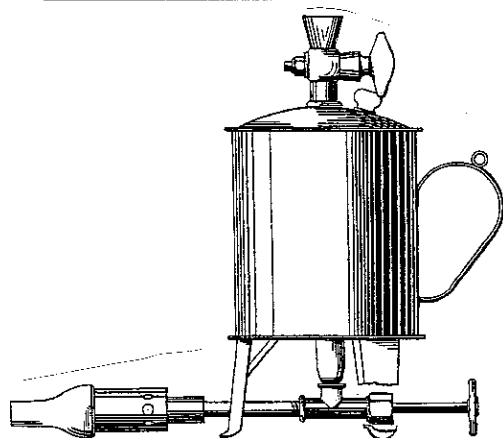
G. BARTHEL Circa 1911
EUROPEAN

Similar to an
AE LOVETT Torch
US Origin

Did you know that during W.W.II, US torch manufacturers were directed to change materials for the war effort? The following is taken from an Otto Bernz blow torch operating instruction card, Circa 1942:

During war when these torch directions went to press, Copper Conservation Order M-9-c required tank, fittings, filler plug, and other parts to be made of ferrous metals. Each time the torch is filled, be sure to put oil, red lead, or common laundry soap on threads of the steel filler plug to make a tight fit and

prevent loss of pressure. Steel tank torches are not guaranteed because of corrosive elements that cannot be avoided. Many gasoline companies do not now have clear white gasoline available, so that the user must be careful in his purchase of fuel or else the user will experience clogging difficulties, which should not be the cause of complaint to the manufacturer.



J. IRVING PAINT BURNER
Patented April 4, 1882
This is the patent referenced for the
ACME PAINT BURNER

While at the University of Washington Technical Library doing patent research, I uncovered an 1890 patent (patent copy enclosed) that describes a Jewelers/ Plumbers furnace. An unusual feature of the furnace is that it could be adapted by removing the upper "oven" fixture and used as a paint breamer. (More about breamers later.) The inventor's sketch was poorly drawn and makes it difficult to visually imagine its function. The fuel tank utilized a rubber squeeze bulb as the air pump along with a shutoff valve. Another unique feature includes the drip cup being cast as an integral part of the burner head. Shortly after the patent was issued, the Union Heater Co. started manufacturing a version of the Jewelers/Plumbers furnace as a simple paint burner. The Chas. A. Strelinger Co. tools catalog of 1895, as submitted by DAVE REES, lists the Union Heater Co. torch as the *favorite paint burner* with a price of \$5. Dick Sarpolus, NJ, has one of the Union Heater Co. paint burners and it references the furnace patent date. It is identical to the tool catalog picture, except that Dick's torch has been modified to include a conventional blow torch air pump mounted into the fuel tank.

Now, about breamers.....the origin of the term bream is unknown. To bream is to clean, such as a ship's wooden hull, by applying heat to soften the pitch and then scraping off the residue. Pitch, a

dark sticky substance obtained from the distillation residue of coal tar, wood tar, or petroleum, was used for waterproofing wooden surfaces such as a ship's hull.



Shortly after I began collecting blow torches, I started a list of torch users and applications. I have continued to add to the list and I have found that the list has become useful as I search for additional torch information and history. As an example, I have started to look for different types of hobbyist catalogs where small blow torches and low temperature alcohol torches are advertised.

The list is by no means a complete tabulation, and I would encourage you to send in any applications that you find missing or you believe should be added. Some applications have already been submitted by other collectors, such as the torches used by coopers in the manufacture of whiskey barrels. HARRY GOFF from Australia offered this application after visiting a distillery museum in Hobart, Tasmania, Australia.

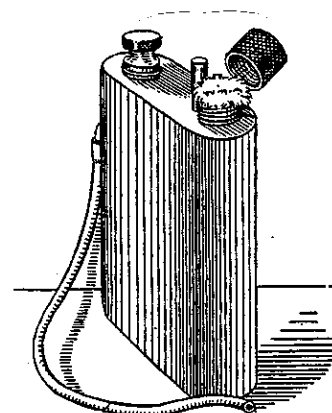
The following list refers to many of the potential users of torches:

- Assayers
- Chauffeurs
- Chemists
- Dentists
- Electricians
- Farmers
- Gas fitters
- Glass blowers
- Hobbyists
- Jewelers
- Laboratory workers
- Linesmen
- Loggers
- Mechanics
- Opticians
- Painters
- Plumbers
- Public utility workers
- Radio workers
- Ranchers
- Repairmen
- Roofers
- Sheet metal workers

The following lists many of the torch applications that I have seen referenced in torch ads, patents, and sales catalogs/brochures. There were numerous other applications in the industrial world, but I have only touched on those that were familiar to the average person. A number of older dated applications are no longer

with us, even with today's more modern and efficient propane torches,.....like starting hard coal in a furnace, or installing or repairing rain gutters.

- Asphalt floor laying, softening asphalt
- Babbitting bearings
- Barrel making
- Bending rod, pipe
- Branding cattle
- Branding logs
- Branding telephone, power poles
- Brazing bicycle frames
- Brazing various fixtures
- Browning meringue, restaurants
- Burning off unwanted brush
- Burning off paint, AKA paint breamer
- Destroying yellow jackets, hornets
- Emergency lighting
- Heating liquids, materials in lab
- Heating rivets
- Heating soldering irons
- Heating water-jacketed glue pots
- Heating wax, tree grafting
- Lighting off larger brazing torches
- Loosening rusted bolts, nuts, or parts
- Melting lead, bullet casting
- Melting metals
- Preheating engine cylinders
- Preheating items to be soldered
- Rain gutter installation, repair
- Refrigerant gas leak detector
- Repairing jewelry
- Shrinking collars onto shafts
- Singing off cattle hair
- Softening glass for blowing
- Soldering wire, cable, connectors
- Soldering pipes
- Soldering spokes of bicycles
- Starting back fires, forest service
- Starting crude oil & kerosene engines
- Starting hard coal
- Straightening auto parts while in place
- Tempering tools
- Thawing pipes
- Thawing RR switches
- Welding
- Wood finishing, charring
- Thawing or warming engine blocks



A.J. EDDY BLOWPIPE
Patented November 12, 1912

Some torches were supplied with a separate nozzle attachment as an optional item from the manufacturer. The nozzle would produce a fine stream of gasoline or kerosene that was propelled quite a long distance as a result of the pressure in the fuel tank. Some of the uses of the fuel spray were cleaning machinery, destroying many types of vermin and exterminating bugs, insects, etc.



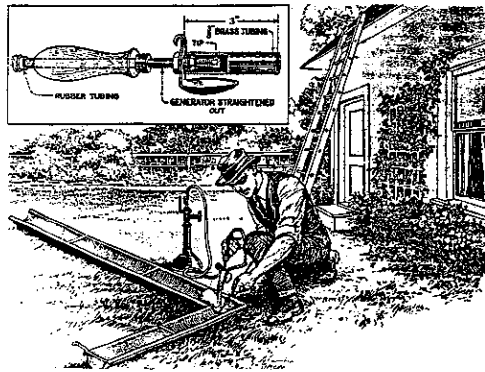
Blowtorch Made from Gasoline Lamp

By L. B. ROBBINS

MANY modern gasoline and kerosene lamps operate on the principle of the burner's blowtorch. The gasoline in the burner is projected into the burner in the form of vapor, where it is ignited and consumed in flame. A lamp of this type can be converted into a useful soldering outfit as shown in the illustrations. As the mount holds 1½ qt. of gasoline and

the burner is small, one filling of fuel will last a long time.

First remove the air chamber at the top of the lamp, the mantle and the generator. Leave the vertical air-intake tube standing. Saw off the generator about 3 in. above the locknut and force the shredded asbestos out of the tube. Then replace it and attach a length of thick-walled rub-



POPULAR MECHANICS ARTICLE 1926
REPAIRING RAIN GUTTERS WITH
HOMEMADE TORCH

I would like to share with you information sent in by **HARRY GOFF** from Australia that I received some time ago. By the way, for those of you that surf on the Internet, Harry can be reached at his email address of colyton@iinet.com.au. Harry's story on how he got started on torches:

I now remember a story my father told me about myself. Apparently, he caught me at the tender young age of four playing with matches. Instead of punishing me, he taught me to light the Primus stove and make my mother and him a cup of tea in the morning. No problems any more with me and matches and dad didn't have to get up to make the first cup of tea. I still like to build a good fire in the barbecue though. Perhaps that explains my interest in torches.

Harry also sent in information on another dipping solution for pre-cleaning torches. The formulation is:

390 g/l sodium dichromate
110 g/l nitric acid
48 g/l sulfuric acid

(Sorry, you'll have to do the conversion from metric.)

This solution is in fact a commercial

aluminum and alloy restorer. Harry indicated that the solution works well, leaves the brass looking dull, however, it polishes up well with the application of any available brass cleaner. To achieve the final high polish, you still need the old fashioned elbow grease.

Speaking of torch cleaning methods, materials, etc., I also heard from **MARK PEDERSEN** from Oregon. He offers a suggestion for those hard to reach spots during torch cleaning. They're great for removing that messy solder so often found on torches. Mark uses **CRATEX** wheels on his flex shaft "Foredom" tool, but indicated that a Dremel tool would also work well. The CRATEX wheels are rubber with grit embedded throughout and are available in fine and extra fine finish. They can be ordered from:

Greigers
PO Box 93070
Pasadena, CA 91109

1-800-423-4181

Regarding **MARK PEDERSEN**, I believe that he has one of the oldest known US manufactured torch with a verified and stamped patent date of October 3, 1882. His torch is actually an **Acme Paint burner** that has the same general characteristics as the paint burner featured in the patent submitted with the last newsletter. I actually saw Mark's Acme Paint burner last year when he brought it, along with a few of his other favorite and rare torches, to Issaquah. It is in excellent condition and I would consider it to be quite rare. Does anyone else out there have one?



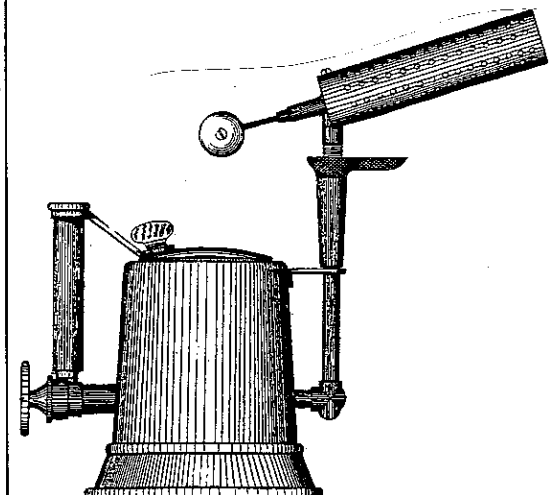
Our "French connection", **PHILIPPE TOUILLET**, has contacted a number of you and, as I understand, has conducted successful torch trades. I know there was a 13 torch deal with **CHUCK TOBIN**, an equally large deal with **DICK SARPOLUS**, plus deals with **HARRY GOFF** and **MARK PEDERSEN**. I can only hope that when Philippe and I get to our trade, he'll have torches left to trade! Philippe submitted a number of European patents, both in French and German with one in particular that dates back to 1791. I have enclosed a copy, however it did not reproduce well due to the poor condition of the original sent.



During the middle of writing this newsletter, I had to travel to Cincinnati, OH and Fairfield, CT on a

business trip. During the trip, I had the occasion to visit my home town of Syracuse, New York for a family reunion. While in Syracuse, I took a Saturday morning and visited **RON JOHNSON** and his lovely new bride, **TRACIE**. Ron, as I previously mentioned, recently inherited his Dad's 600+ torch collection, and what a collection!!! I spent most of the morning drooling over the many unusual and rare torches. Ron's collection includes: an **Acme Paint Burner**, a **Wellington**, a **Dangler Paint Burner**, and an **ML Hull**, just to name a few. He also has at least five torches with US manufacturers that are not included in the latest manufacturer's list. I am currently digesting all of the data and I hope to have all of the new information, from Ron's collection, incorporated into the next newsletter along with an updated manufacturer's list. There are also a few new patent dates that will certainly add to the growing data base on torches.

Ron must have taken pity on me as he extended an invitation to buy three of his duplicate torches. Included in the three is a torch that is identical to that torch my wife picked out as the "best ever torch" from Montana, the **Otto Bernz No. 30**. The big difference is that the torch purchased from Ron includes the burner head. Not having much information on the O. Bernz #30 torch and because of the unusual configuration, I never realized that the torch I purchased in Montana was missing its slip on burner head. Another mystery solved!!



H. WELLINGTON TORCH
Patented September 4, 1883

The best to all of you and your families for the holidays and I will "see" you in '97. As always, happy and successful torch hunting!!

2 Sheets—Sheet 1.

B. REIN & A. W. STRAIGHT.
PLUMBER'S OR JEWELER'S FURNACE.

Patented June 17, 1890.

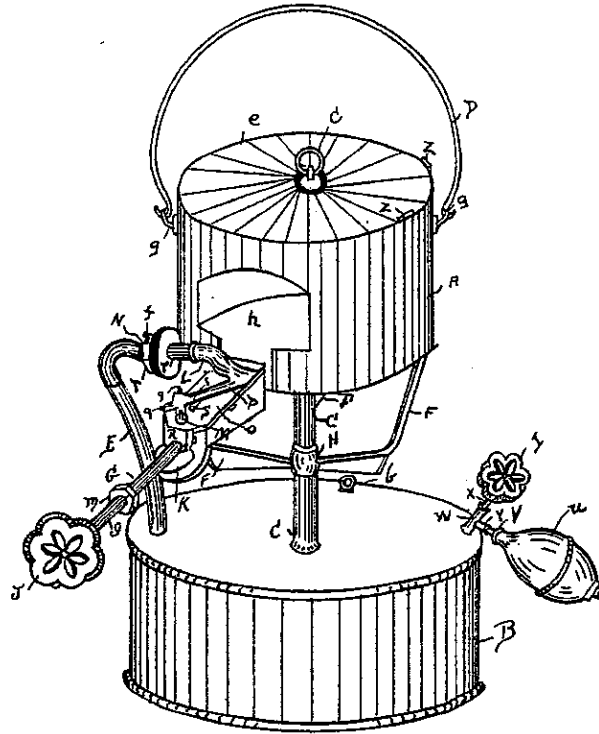


Fig - 1.

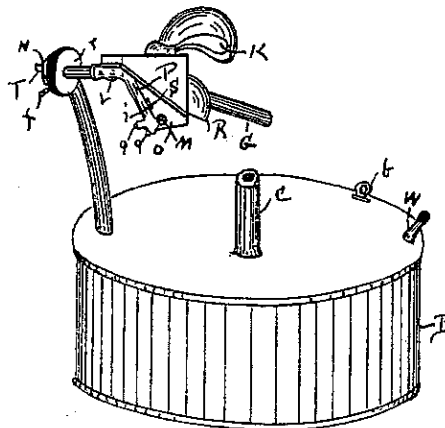


Fig - 2.

Witness
W. B. Rains
J. W. Poole

Inventors
Bernard Rein and
Asa W. Straight
By E. W. Holt atty