

THE TORCH

NEWSLETTER OF THE BLOW TORCH COLLECTORS ASSOCIATION

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This is the front illustration from a Wellington advertising trade card, circa late 1800's. The Wellington torch shown in the illustration closely resembles the 1883 Wellington patent.

NEW MEMBERS

Ron Hartse, is a twenty-year collector from Dalbo, Minnesota. Ron has over 140 torches, about one third are restored and displayed in his home and the balance is on racks in his shop. *"I purchased my first few torches twenty years ago. I remember my dad using blow torches on various projects. Eight years ago I saw my first display of polished torches and I was "hooked"! I purchased the "VINTAGE BLOWTORCHES" book two years ago and realized that there were many more torches that I needed to find."* Ron also collects unusual soldering irons, hose nozzles and sprinklers, and any odd old tools.

John Treese of Radford, Virginia is a relatively new collector. He actually purchased a couple of torches about three years ago, but did not continue his collection until 3 months ago when he was "bitten" by the torch bug again. John recently purchased the "VINTAGE BLOWTORCHES" book that should provide him with a guide for future purchases.

WELCOME ABOARD!



NOTES FROM ALL OVER



John Jaress recently sent in a photo of an early Hull Paint Burner. →→→→

We believe that the original rubber flex handle was replaced by the air pump in the photo. The original rubber handle was squeezed to generate tank pressure. Unfortunately the rubber handles didn't last long and it wasn't too many years before Hull converted to a squeeze bulb and "bicycle-type" pumps.

Dave Kolb sent in an email regarding an interesting DVD that he recently purchased on eBay. *"I don't know if our members are aware of a DVD titled "BLOWTORCHES AND HAMMER" that was released by the A&E History Channel. The DVD is being sold on eBay for anywhere from \$1.00 on up. It is a very interesting story about the development of blow torches and includes segments with BTCA members **Dick Sarpolus** and **Bob Scheiderman**. It is well worth the money and I would encourage all BTCA members to purchase one."*



This year's European Blow Lamp Rally was hosted by **Marnik** and **Katy Van Insberghe** in Belgium. (See the follow up story below by **Graham Stubbs**.) It was such a success, with 37 collectors in attendance that Marnik plans on hosting the event in 2011. Marnik acquired a Clayton & Lambert No. 65 blow torch → → that was displayed at his table. We will add this photo to the upcoming supplement book.

The five-pint kerosene torch appears to be in excellent condition and even the pressure gauge survived.

We continue to hear from collectors, as we did recently from **Stan Olson**, asking about the availability of replacement decals and blow torch parts.

At one time we did offer replacement decals, but due to the poor quality we discontinued the offering. Some members have in the past manufactured torch parts for sale....an example was the small wood knobs that **Mark Pedersen** made for a short period. This is to let you fabricators know that there is a market for your items if you wish to get back into the process. Let us know what you have to offer and we'll be happy to advertise your items for sale.



Blowlamps Collectors Meeting Langemark, Belgium March 20th, 2010

By Graham Stubbs

This year I was fortunate to be able to attend the annual one-day meeting of European collectors of blowlamps, held on this occasion in Langemark, Belgium.



L to R, Ray Hyland, Paul Whiddett, & Graham Stubbs

This gathering, organized by BTCA member **Marnik Van Insberge** and his wife **Katy**, had more than three-dozen attendees drawn from France, Belgium, Holland, Germany, and the United Kingdom... plus me from the USA!

I traveled from England courtesy of **Ray Hyland**, editor of the British publication "Blowlamp News" who drove a minibus carrying, in addition to the two of us, UK BTCA members **John Tingle** and **Paul Whiddett**... and a lot of blowlamps. Traveling through the Channel Tunnel was an altogether new experience, as was going to the region of Flanders around Ypres, the site of many World War One battles.



The photograph above shows a typical table covered with European blowlamps for sale or trade.

To the eyes of an American blowtorch collector, the many European blowlamps on display looked quite exotic, many of them with preheating coils wrapped around the burners. The larger French and Swedish lamps, in particular, are quite extraordinary. They are also rare and command high prices when sold or traded. For many of the collectors, the event is at least as much about buying, selling and trading as it is about simply displaying, and to this extent differs from the annual USA events hosted in the past by BTCA.

There is much interest in American blowtorches among the European collectors, many of whom are quite knowledgeable, possibly because of the success in selling our book "Vintage Blowtorches". After lunch, which was catered in the same hall as the display tables, I took the opportunity to thank the collectors for their support of the original book, and to announce "More Vintage Blowtorches" to be published later this year. Many of the attendees inspected the sample copy that I brought with me.

The strong turn-out and number of young faces were encouraging indications that the hobby is alive and well!



UNKNOWN TORCH

By Charles Smith

I recently acquired an unidentified Self-Heated Soldering Iron with no markings on the tool. It's obviously a manufactured item although I've not seen it in any trade literature. I've also looked through our list of patents and can find nothing that I think applies to this tool.



The torch is made of brass except for the iron needle valve, red plastic control knob, and wooden handle. It is eighteen inches in total length with the tank being 3½inches in length by 2⅝inches in diameter. I have been unable to remove the handle, thus I believe the tank was filled by removing the winged apparatus from the rear of the handle. With that wing nut removed, there is a small opening (hole) which leads into the tank. I feel certain that tank pressure was obtained by unscrewing the wing nut two-three turns and pumping air through a rubber bulb. Once pressure was attained, the wing nut was closed sealing the tank from the air source. There is a small hole to the left of the threads, and the hole is the outlet for air from the bulb. The flange to the left of the hole seals the opening into the tank, so, with the wing nut tight, the tank is sealed. With the nut opened slightly (not removed), additional pressure can be applied or released from the tank.

The soldering tip unscrews from the burner tube converting the soldering iron into a blowtorch. Also, the little "feet" beneath the rear of the burner are hinged and rotate ninety degrees to lie horizontally beneath the feed tube. It would be great to be able to identify this torch. Please contact us if you have any information.



LIFE IN THE 1500'S (A small bit of trivia)

The next time you wash your hands and complain because the water temperature isn't just how you like it, think about how things used to be in the 1500's.

Most people got married in June because they took their yearly bath in May, and still smelled fairly good by June. However, they were starting to smell, so brides carried a bouquet of flowers to hide the body odor. Hence the custom of carrying a bouquet of flowers when getting married.

Decker Mfg. Co.

The Decker Mfg. Co. made three numbered models of blowtorches, Nos. 2, 3, and 4. This article provides detailed information on each of the three models for easier identification.

The control knob, made of pressed fiber material, is stamped "DECKER MFG. CO. NEWARK, NJ PAT PHOENIX JULY 19.10".



The fuel tanks of the Decker torches, constructed of cast and machined aluminum, were designed to be filled from the bottom. The base is hollowed out and a filler hole is located centrally; in some instances the plug is provided with a lateral hole. A small nail or metal pin would be inserted into the hole to provide leverage when loosening or tightening the filler plug.



A wire soldering iron support is believed to have been a factory-supplied accessory; its threaded end screws into the top of the burner.



Decker No. 2 torches have a fuel capacity of a half pint, and an external diameter at the base of the circular tank body of approximately 3¼ inches. Five variations of the No. 2 torch have been reported.

The earliest version made by Decker is believed to be that which most closely resembles the illustrations in the ads of the predecessor company, Decker & Gries. The burner has raised lips at both ends, and the lower handle support handle is secured to the outside of the fuel tank. Strips of leather, believed to protect the user's fingers from hot metal, are applied to the upper side of the lower handle support, and to the lower side of the upper support.



The second and third versions uses a burner with smooth sides, and the lower handle mount is secured to the bottom of the fuel tank. What is believed to be the later variation has raised lettering atop the fuel tank spelling out "THE PHOENIX No. 2".



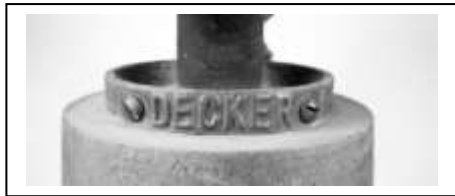
The fourth variation employs a burner with a hexagonal cross section for part of its length. The handle supports are shorter than the other three versions. This version also has the raised lettering spelling "THE PHOENIX No. 2".



Photos provided by BTCA member **Charles Smith**

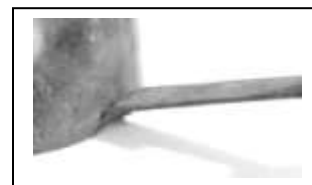
The fifth version of the No. 2 torch is similar to the fourth version, with the following differences:

- (1) The control knob is pierced with six holes and has no marking.
- (2) The burner has two holes rather than one forward of each large hole piercing the vertical faces of the rear hexagonal portion of the burner.
- (3) A brass tag reading "DECKER" is attached by screws to the front of the drip cup.
- (4) The bottom filler plug is stamped "DECKER".
- (5) The bottom right rim of the tank is stamped "DECKER MFG CO".
- (6) The bottom front rim of the tank is stamped "PAT. APL'D. FOR".

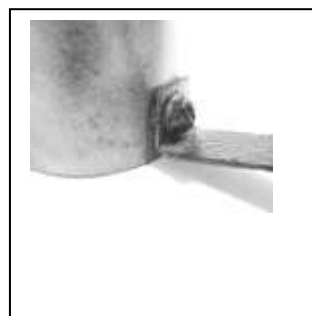


The Decker No. 3 torch has a fuel capacity of three quarters of a pint, with an external diameter at the base of the circular tank body of approximately four inches.

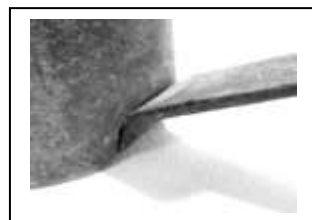
The only known version of the Decker No. 3 torch uses the smooth sided burner, secures the lower handle support to the bottom of the fuel tank, and has raised lettering spelling out "THE PHOENIX No. 3".



The Decker No. 4 torch has a flattened auto-style tank with fuel capacity of a half pint. Two variations of Decker No. 4 torches have been reported. What is believed to be the earlier variation has no raised lettering and the lower handle support is secured to the outside of the fuel tank.



The later version of the No. 4 torch has raised lettering below the front of the burner spelling "THE PHOENIX No. 4". The lower handle support is attached to the bottom of the fuel tank.



Photos provided by BTCA member **Charles Smith**

This detailed information should provide for a more accurate identification of your model No. 2, 3, and 4 Decker blow torches.



Eureka Copper Co.

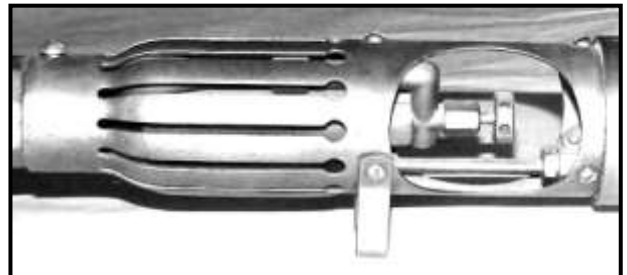
A new torch manufacturer has been discovered...based on the marking on the copper-soldering tip, the Eureka Copper Co. of North East, PA is believed to be the supplier of this self-heated soldering iron (SHSI). Eureka Electrical Products, Inc., the successor company, is still in business distributing copper components.

Overall, the torch is twenty-two inches long, and it has the following distinctive features:

- The fuel valve adjustment knob is accessible through the side of the burner, and a small tool, which engages in holes in the circumference of the valve knob, is used to turn the knob. A clip to hold this adjustment tool is provided on the outside of the fuel tank.
- As fuel passes to the burner, it is fed through a preheating loop that is positioned close to the torch flame inside the outer housing.



Of the two known examples of this rare SHSI, one is provided with feet made from two screws, and the other, at right from BTCA member **Robert Fitchhorn**, has feet fabricated from sheet metal.

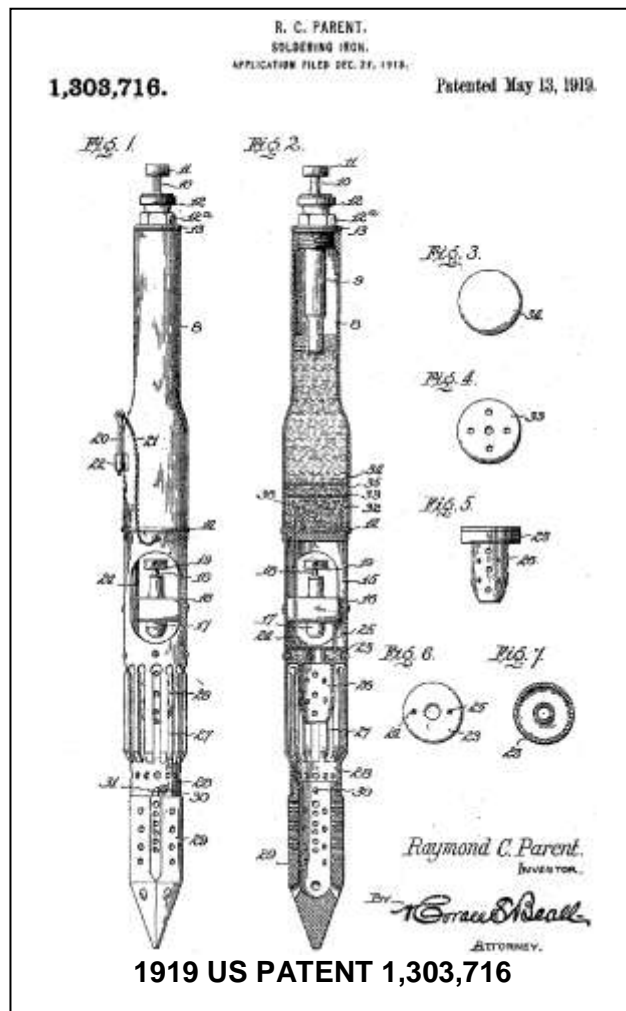


The torch incorporates features from two separate patents. US patent 1,303,716 was awarded in 1919 to Raymond C. Parent of Crawfordville, Indiana. US patent 1,487,864, an improvement over the 1919 patent, was awarded in 1924 to Jay F. Lawrence of Chicago, Illinois. Unfortunately, neither patent lists a company to which it was assigned.

Only two examples of this SHSI have been reported, and the reason for the comparative rarity probably lies in the dates of the patents, 1919 and 1924.

In 1919, the Peterson Plummer Mfg. Co. introduced the EVER HOT SHSI, based on US patent 1,333,590. Through acquisitions the patent rights became the property of the Everhot Mfg. Corp. of Maywood, IL. By 1925 Everhot was merged with the Combination Blow Torch Mfg. Co. of Chicago, IL which also had a powerful patent portfolio. In this way Everhot Mfg. became a dominant supplier of self-heated soldering irons and branders.

Thus the Eureka SHSI, which was based on the 1919 Parent and 1924 Lawrence patents, was competing in exactly the same time frame with products from a powerful competitor. By comparison with the Eureka SHSI, the Everhot products were simpler and more robust in construction, and dozens of examples have been reported.



Dave Kolb sent in close to fifty photos of his large firepot collection. We are just starting to learn about some of the extensive firepot collections from BTCA members. The photo on the right is a never before seen Clayton & Lambert No. 91 firepot. We'll be adding this firepot and others that Dave sent to us to the upcoming supplement book.

The supplement book is in the final stages of proof reading. We're still adding items to the listing as is in the case of Dave's No. 91 firepot, and we hope to finalize the supplement sometime in April. We're shooting for a May printing and out for sale in June.



CLASSIFIED ADS

FOR SALE: Here is a deal for all of the Tilley Lamp collectors; during a weak moment and for some unknown reason **Dave Schulte** recently purchased a Tilley Lamp, and now he would like to offer it for sale. See your membership listing for his contact information.

FOR SALE: Almost all of the blowtorches pictured in the book "Collectible Blowtorches" are now up for sale by the book's author, **Dick Sarpolus**. For sale as one lot, total price, \$2000 or best offer.

The 200 + total pieces are made up of all those pictured in the book EXCEPT for 14 items (please ask, I'll email a list of those pieces not included to anyone interested, yes those 14 were pretty rare)

A rough breakdown, approximate quantities, of the types/sub-groups included is as follows

35 - Mini/alcohol/two-tube/blowpipe/jewelers/hobbyists

20 - Pint-size tank

14 - Flat tank/auto

20 - Foreign/English/French/etc.

9 - Self-heating soldering irons/guns

7 - Without pumps

Approximately 100 - all the other torches, including many unusual pieces

The collection is located in central NJ, USA, and is available here for pickup, or some way of shipping, at the buyer's expense.

Offers/Bids will be welcomed. Offers for the sub-groups will be welcomed; the collection could be sold as separate sub-groups, if most of the sub-groups are sold.

Dick Sarpolus 32 Alameda Ct. Shrewsbury NJ 07702 rsarpolus2@comcast.net

Terry Foutch will be auctioning off most of his torch collection at a Pacific Northwest auction facility that accepts Internet bids. Go to WWW.WESTSOUNDAUCTIONS.COM for more details. His first torch offerings will go on the auction block on April 9th, with more to follow each week. Here is your chance to bid on some rare blow torches without the entire world involved in the bidding as they are on eBay.

THE TORCH

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THE PURPOSE of BTCA is to preserve the history of blow torches and related equipment, to encourage the identification, classification, and exhibiting of such equipment, also to promote the study and better understanding of operation, purpose, and application.

Membership in BTCA is open to any person sharing its interests and purposes. For membership information, write to: Blow Torch Collectors Association, 6908 April Wind Avenue, Las Vegas, NV 89131-0119, email to: RONLV@cox.net, or by phone: (702) 395-3114.

THE TORCH encourages contributions from anyone interested in our purpose. Articles can be submitted in any format and should include supportive literature whenever possible. All submittals should be sent to Ron Carr at the above address.

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