

## Do All Early Auto Torches Look Alike?

I used to think that they didn't look alike. I could never understand why my wife thought that they all looked the same. When I see an early auto torch for sale, I can immediately see whether it is different from the torches I already own. I was very happy last year when I saw a Detroit Manufacturing model 41 for sale on Ebay. Detroit model 42 torches are relatively common and always have a soldering iron hook. They are also stamped on the arm of the upper pump support with a "42". I had never seen a model 41 before. It had no soldering iron hook on the back of the burner, nor did it have a rest cast into the front of the burner. The burner was plain and the arm of the upper support was stamped with a "41". To me, it looked very different and I was excited. I purchased it for a relatively small amount of money. I'm not sure whether or not other potential bidders saw the differences I had seen.

Perhaps in my (obsessive) quest to find differences in torches, I overlooked their similarities. Early auto torches are all very similar. I didn't realize how similar they are until recently. Over the summer, I had purchased two early Norvell-Shapleigh auto torches. These torches were manufactured by Bernz somewhere between 1910 and 1916. After restoration, I put them on a shelf next to a Hibbard catalog number P47 auto torch. The Hibbard was manufactured by Clayton & Lambert and dates from right around 1913. The basis of this torch was a C&L model 47.

To my amazement, the burners of the three torches were almost exactly the same. The only difference was a small protrusion on the bottom of the rear portion of the burner. The measurements were all exactly the same as well as the placement of the holes in the burner.

I decided to track back to an original C&L 47 as well as the original Bernz model 5 and 6 torches that were the basis for the Hibbard and Norvell-Shapleigh torches. I found them all to be the same. This style burner showed up on torches around 1909 or 1910. They all have a preheater channel under the burner. The preheater channel on the burner was patented on February 23, 1909 under patent 913611. It was actually patented by Emil Beyer of Schaefer & Beyer. I'm not sure who copied from whom but on the pages that follow you will see how much these early auto torches from 1910 to 1916 look alike. I have to admit, I have to look very closely to see whether a specific torch was manufactured by Bernz or C&L. It's much easier when they are on different shelves.

I looked through *Vintage Blowtorches* and found many Bernz and C&L canister style torches that appeared to have this same burner. Most of them were catalog ads from 1913 and 1916.



The photos above and left are of a Clayton and Lambert model 47. This torch has the lower pump support threaded on the inside.



The photos above and left are of a C&L model 47 with minor variations from the torch above. On this torch, the lower pump support is threaded on the outside. This torch also has the C&L shield stamped on the front of the tank.



The photos left and above are of an early Bernz model 5. Note that it has a small protrusion at the rear of the burner. It is just below the intersection of the two clean out plugs. This is not always present on these Bernz torches.



The photos above and left are of a Bernz model 6. Notice that the small protrusion at the bottom of the rear of the burner is not present on this burner. This torch predates the Bernz torch above.



The torch above left is a Bernz model 5. It is slightly earlier than the model 5 on the previous page. The torch above right is a Hibbard catalog number P47.

The torches below are Norvell-Shapleigh. Both are identified as catalog No. NDA.

