

# THE TORCH

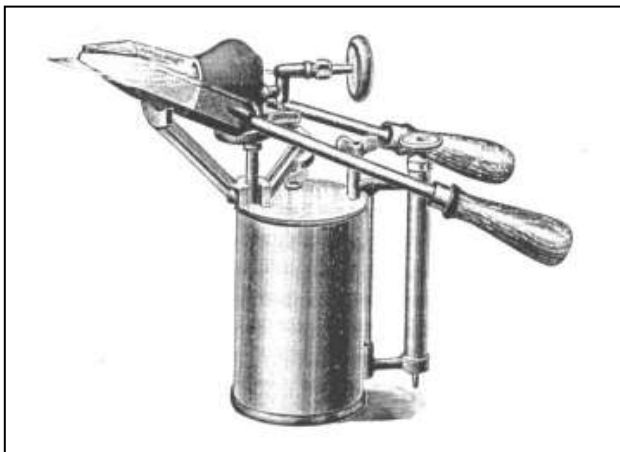
NEWSLETTER OF THE BLOW TORCH COLLECTORS ASSOCIATION

Issue #35

June 2006



Members of the French Lamptérofile Club at a June 10<sup>th</sup> meeting. From L to R; Guy Gerard, Jean Claude Demarteleire, Michel Duval, Jean Pierre Menard, Paul Whiddett, & Robert Langlois. Most are also BTCA members.



Invincible Mfg. Co. brazing torch with a soldering iron holder. See page 5.



A great illustration of a Union Heater Supply Co. Paint Burner from an 1895 trade journal.

# ∞ IN MEMORY ∞

## Mel Olson

November 13, 1918 – May 31, 2006

The Blow Torch Collectors Association lost a very avid member when **Mel Olson** recently passed away from cancer. He had collected over 1000 torches and they were all restored by him and neatly displayed. He relished telling how he went to farm auctions, antique malls, and most anywhere a torch could be hiding to find a new addition to his collection. His enthusiasm was wonderful and so contagious. He will be missed by all.



## NEW MEMBERS

**David Olson** of Fergus Falls, MN, the son of **Mel Olson**, is taking over his dad's BTCA membership. We understand that David will slowly liquidate Mel's blow torch and soldering iron collection, mostly on eBay, the auction website.



## ☰ NOTES FROM ALL OVER ☰

**Lloyd & Patti Weber** vacationed in the Pacific Northwest in late May and took the opportunity to visit **Mark Pedersen** in Mill City, OR. We know that Lloyd enjoyed viewing Mark's extensive torch collection, but we suspect that Lloyd was hoping to negotiate away a few of Mark's rare pieces....like his Straub blow torch.



Lloyd Weber & Mark Pedersen

**Michel Duval** sent in photos of the same unknown torch that **Graham Stubbs** submitted, see newsletter #34, page 4. Michel's torch is more complete and includes a small wood handle plus a tiny soldering iron...but still no idea regarding by whom or where the torch was manufactured. Can any member provide any additional information pertaining to this mystery torch?



Michel Duval mystery torch

We received a short note from **Gerry Shackley** regarding the A&A article in newsletter #34, page 3. The Shackley torch is not as complete as **John Tingle's** torch, but they were also wondering what that small filler cap looking thing is on top of John's fuel tank. John, can you please let us know if it is a fuel cap....or what? An interesting comment from Gerry suggests that they started their lamp collection by purchasing their first torch; a one-pint chrome plated Clayton & Lambert, during a scenic run in West Virginia.

On March 11<sup>th</sup> there was a blow lamp meeting in Belgium and **Marnik Van Insberghe** sent in a photo of two great looking lamps that he purchased at the meeting. The one with the three burner tubes is a Fouilloud; FG no. 4 and is very rare. The other lamp is a French Breuzin no. 4 with a wind protector.



**Marnik Van Insberghe's latest acquisitions**

We heard from **Brian Grainger** across the Big Pond in England. He sent in great photos of a Brand-It Self-Heating Soldering Iron/Blow Torch...trade name RED HOT, and a Wilcox Silver Plate Co. blow lamp. Brian is only one of two known owners of a Brand-It torch, and unfortunately we cannot determine the second owner. (If you are the member that previously sent us the Brand-It photo, then please contact us so we can update our file.)



**Brian Grainger's Brand-It RED HOT torch**

What's so unusual about the Wilcox blow lamp is its size...a very large fuel tank relative to its suspected function as a jeweler's lamp. Brian estimates the fuel tank capacity at over ½ pint that would allow the device to burn for numerous hours without refilling. The lamp is fully silver plated and all parts appear original and in excellent condition.



**Brian Grainger's Wilcox jewelers lamp**

There was a 3<sup>rd</sup> photo that Brian sent in along with an interesting story that we thought everyone would find amusing:

*"The third torch is a strange item in many ways. As you can see, the fuel tank is made from copper, comprising four sections, top, corrugated side, inner base, and outer base rim...all neatly brazed together. The fuel tank is huge, with a total capacity of six pints, giving a working capacity of about 4½ pints. There are no identifying marks of any type, apart from the air pump cap which is stamped 'PAT. MARCH 18 1902.'" (Editor's note: the 1902 US patent was assigned to Clayton & Lambert for an air pump design.)*



**Brian Grainger's mystery blow torch**

*“The history of this torch may be of some interest to you. When I acquired it, the entire fuel tank was completely covered in a thick black bituminous-type substance that had aged to a rock-hard finish. None of my normal cleaning solutions would touch it, so I had to resort to chipping it away. This took several days of hard work, and not knowing what was underneath, I had to be extremely careful.”*

*“Having removed the black substance, I was then amazed to find that every brazed joint (top to side joint, both bottom joints, and the vertical side joint) were covered in a thick layer of solder. I was reluctant to use any form of heat to remove the excess solder, fearing that the whole thing might fall to pieces! So, another long period of time was spent gently removing the solder with a small sharp chisel. The presence of so much solder suggests joint failure in many places, and I wonder whether the pure size and pressure in the fuel tank, coupled with the soft copper material, resulted in it being a non-starter? In any event...I think this torch qualifies for the longest restoration time I have ever taken on any torch!”*

**Tim Szabo** sent in a CD of many torch photos...one in particular that we've not seen before is a torch from the American Hardware & Supply Co. of Pittsburgh, PA. American Hardware was one of many distributors of Clayton & Lambert blow torches. The model shown is a C&L no. 800, but with an American Hardware decal, plus the company's name was also stamped into the fuel tank on the opposite side. I guess they did not want any question as to what company distributed the torch!



Tim Szabo's American Hardware blow torch

Tim's 80-year old stepfather took the photos since Tim doesn't own a camera...nor does Tim have a cell phone, no computer, gets only 2 TV channels, and heats with firewood. But he does have a well-equipped machine shop, owns motorcycles, is building a 7½ gauge railroad, and a live steam locomotive!

Our sister group, the French Lamptérophile Club, had a meeting on June 10<sup>th</sup> in Nevers, France....260K south of Paris. Thirty members gathered to display their collections with many lamps sold and exchanged. **Guy Gerard** sent in photos, including one of the French Club members; most are BTCA members.



. From L to R; Guy Gerard, Jean Claude Demarteire, Michel Duval, Jean Pierre Menard, Paul Whiddett, & Robert Langlois.



We're not sure if the blow lamp on the cake was edible!

We heard from **Vicky Teeters** regarding a Lenk no. 50 Master blow torch that she acquired not long ago. What's so interesting is the torch has a complete label with all patent information and operating instructions.



Vicky Teeters'  
Lenk no. 50  
Master  
Blow Torch

Vicky also mentioned that she recently burned her arm on a defective steam cleaner. Since everyone at her work knows she collects blow torches....they all assumed that she burned herself with a blow torch!

**Dave Kolb** responded to the CEDARBERG article in issue no. 34, page 11, with photos of his own Cedarberg Mfg. Co. firepot. The firepot looks a bit different from the one in the previous article, and may be a later version of the same product. Note the air pump stowed in clips on the handle.



Dave Kolb's Cedarberg firepot

The instructions in Dave's firepot indicate that kerosene is the fuel of choice. We suspect that this firepot was used to heat crucibles of solder or other materials.

Of greater interest is a photo Dave also sent in of a Clayton & Lambert no. 15 firepot. It appears to be in excellent condition and has been nicely refinished.



Dave Kolb's C&L no. 15 firepot

The firepot has patented dual burners and each could be used as a blow torch.

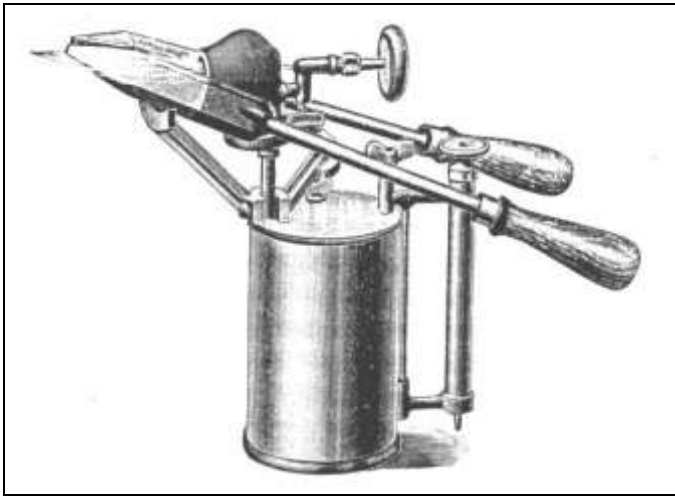


## INVINCIBLE REVISITED

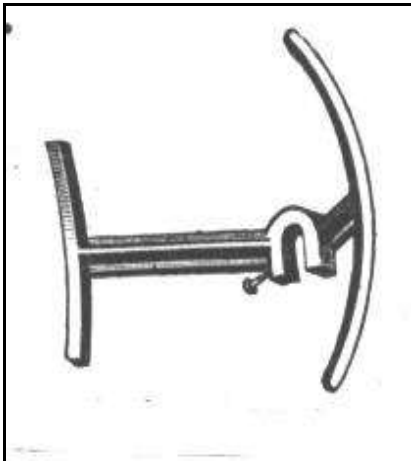
Thanks to **Charles'** continued research effort additional information has surfaced on the Invincible Mfg. Co. of Wilmington, IL. We ran a complete story on the company and its many torch related products in issue no. 33, page 11. In the previous article there was a soldering iron holder illustration shown, however, there were no illustrations showing how the iron holder was utilized, nor were there any torch illustrations with the iron holder mounted.

While perusing through American Artisan trade journals from 1896 & 1897, Charles uncovered just what we've been looking for....a mounted soldering iron holder!

The holder appears to be a cast metal piece that is attached to the lower portion of the fuel tube, and provides forward and rear support for one or two soldering irons.



Invincible blow torch with mounted soldering iron holder.  
Illustration from American Artisan trade journal



Invincible  
soldering iron  
holder

Other interesting information in the articles includes a listing of the trades that utilized the Invincible blow torch. The list includes who you would expect...plumbers, linemen, machinists, and tanners. However, dentists and jewelers are also listed....somewhat of a surprise considering the size of the torch and the amount of heat generated by the burner that could easily fuse brass or copper.



## Victor and Robert's Patented Alcohol Torches

Thanks to **Graham Stubbs'** recent observations while working on "The Book", another torch mystery may have been solved.

The Roberts patented alcohol torch, shown in the photo on the left, closely resembles the "Victor" torch shown to its right. The fuel tanks are the same size, and the wick holders, wick snuffer-caps, chains and chain holders are almost identical.



Roberts on the left, Victor on the right  
Photo by Graham Stubbs

The Roberts torch carries the marking "ROBERTS PATENT JUNE 13, 1899 and the torch incorporates the improvements claimed in the patent no. 626,723.

The Victor torch is marked only "VICTOR ALCOHOL TORCH PATENTED". The "Victor" torch appears to be based on the Taylor brothers' patent of 1895, no. 542,451, differing from the patented torch only in the means of stabilizing the upper part of the air tube.

Both Roberts and the Taylor are shown on the patents as living in Philadelphia at the time the patents were issued. It appears that both torches were made in the same shop, the Roberts torch being an improvement and simplification over the "Victor" torch.



# Blowtorch

Flame in a can  
can unsettle.  
It lights with a pop,  
rifles the air  
with its colors.  
A frayed and  
withering exhalation  
to melt apart  
and meld. To scarify,  
form a harsh repellent  
surface: ridges, pocks, tiny  
moonscapes, gullies  
for solder. To seal  
the conduit—gas line,  
water line—  
one smooth  
jointed tube directing  
the flow. You can  
hold this conduit  
in your hand, feel  
its pressured hiss.  
If a tool  
is a limb extended,  
this one sets fire  
at your fingertips.  
Its promise  
is destruction  
focused. It mars  
to build or mend.  
Fit into your plans  
it waits on the workbench  
like a humming  
kettle. Tipped over  
it will sing.  
From the mouth,  
tongues flared and  
brilliant as the insides  
of lilies. Behind them  
a wafer  
of invisible gas.

By **Don Bogen**

From The Courtland Review,  
Issue 5, November 1998

**Pat Smith, Charles'** wife, was messing around on the computer and for some unknown reason typed in the Google search engine "blowtorch poem". Can you believe, up popped a actual blow torch poem! If you go to <http://www.cortlandreview.com/issuefive/bogen5.htm> and click on the little "real audio" icon just to the

right of the title, you can follow along as the author, Don Bogen, reads his poem. Charles contacted Don and he is thrilled that we are sharing his poem with our members. Don asked that we retain the format; the short 3-4 word sentences in a long column, commonly referred to as free verse. And remember...not all poems rhyme.

He is published extensively; Don Bogen's *The Known World*, appeared from Wesleyan in 1997, and recently, he has been published in *Slate*, *Salmagundi* and *DoubleTake*. His recent success was a book of poems titled *LUSTER*, and was published by Wesleyan in 2003. Don is an English Professor at the University of Cincinnati.



## "THE BOOK"

The staff at BTCA, including **Graham Stubbs**, **Charles Smith**, and **Ron Carr** is moving along well with the task of creating a comprehensive reference book covering all known US & Canadian manufacturers of blow torches and blow torch-related items. Included will be blow and brazing torches, self-heating soldering irons, firepots and furnaces, and a few illumination torches.

The book will be similar in style to the many indexes that Graham has created in the past for the major US manufacturers...such as Turner, Otto Bernz, and Clayton & Lambert. We intend to provide illustrations, extracted from catalogs and industry trade periodicals, for all known torches and related items, supplemented with photos from BTCA members. Included with each manufacturer or distributor will be historical information which we have accumulated. A comprehensive index will list and cross reference all known makers, brands, model numbers and trade names and a rating system will help the reader to determine the rarity of most torches.

The publication will extend to more than four hundred pages, covering more than three hundred makers and/or brand names, and it will include illustrations of over a thousand torches and more than two hundred and fifty firepots or furnaces.

We will have a rough draft ready for review at the BTCA September 30<sup>th</sup> meeting in Brooks, OR, and attendees will have time to look it over and are welcome to provide comments. We will most likely self-publish the book and plan to have it available for sale in late 2006 or early 2007. Many thanks to those members that have already submitted requested torch photos.



A rare Decker & Gries aluminum blow torch  
 This is one of the many photos that were sent in by BTCA members  
 Photo courtesy of George Murray



## **Jim Dandy Brand**

The “Jim Dandy” brand name is most closely identified with Modern Metal Products Inc. of Cambridge, MA. However, the “Jim Dandy” name was also used by at least two other companies for small alcohol torches.

Modern Metal Products offered at least six models of “Jim Dandy” alcohol torches. Model nos. 80, 675-B, 250-B and 300-B are shown in the photo.



Modern Metal Products alcohol torches  
 From L to R, model nos. 80, 675-B, 250-B, and 300-B  
 Photo by Graham Stubbs



Modern Metal Products  
 Alcohol torch  
 Model no. 124-B  
 This model is about the same size as model no. 675-B shown above.  
 Photo by Graham Stubbs

The name Reco Mfg. Co. of New Britain, CT appears on the two “Jim Dandy” alcohol torches pictured below. The first one is a Reco Co. no. 80, and other than the printed name, is identical to the no. 80 torch from Modern Metal Products in every respect including the cardboard container and the operating instructions. The second photo is a flat tank alcohol torch with a lime green handle, and the fuel tank is stamped “Jim Dandy”, Mfg’d by Reco Mfg. Co.



Reco Mfg. Co.  
 Alcohol torch no. 80  
 Photo by Graham Stubbs





Reco Mfg. Co.  
"Jim Dandy"  
alcohol torch with  
lime green handle  
Photo by Graham Stubbs

The name Lasher-Weeber Co. appears on the flat alcohol torch pictured below. This has a black handle, together with the trade name "Jim Dandy". You'll note the many similarities to the Reco torch pictured above.



Lasher-Weeber Co.  
"Jim Dandy"  
alcohol torch with  
black handle  
Photo by Graham Stubbs



## BTCA 9<sup>TH</sup> ANNUAL MEETING

We're off and running for the 9<sup>th</sup> Annual BTCA meeting in Brooks, Oregon. **Mark Pedersen** has made arrangements at the Antique Powerland Museum in Brooks for Saturday, September 30<sup>th</sup>, and **Noma Jernstedt** is arranging the caterer.

We held our meeting twice before at the same facility, however, we'll be located in the Hiland Bldg. on this occasion. The Hiland Bldg. houses many vintage "one-lung" engines...an appropriate location for our torch displays since many of the one-cycle engines utilized blow torches for starting.

Motor homes are allowed on the grounds for all of you motor-homers, and ample parking is available just adjacent to the Hiland Bldg. Mark has suggested that members bring any spare parts they may want to trade, sell, or give away. Also, a few torches will be given away in a fun free raffle.

See the attached details and entry forms for attendance. Please be prompt in returning your form and payment so we can make the appropriate arrangements for attendance. We hope to see many of you at our meeting as we have in the past.



## ILLINOIS STREET GAS CO.

A single article in the American Artisan trade journal uncovered by **Charles** gives us another new name in the US blow torch world. A September 1886 article was in response to a reader that asked where they could purchase a paint burner in Chicago. The response was the Illinois Street Gas Co. of Chicago, IL.

The company supplied a no. 26 blow pipe for burning paint, and the device could also be used for soldering, brazing, and other shop uses. It was made of brass, weighed three pounds, and was listed at \$8. Unfortunately there was no illustration of the torch. There's no indication that the company was a manufacturer, or was merely a distributor for others. Anyone owning an Illinois Co. torch will have a real winner since we would consider it quite rare.



## Scovill

Thanks to **Graham Stubbs**, another blow torch mystery has been solved.

The unknown torch pictured on page 3 of issue number 34 of "The Torch" is almost certainly a Scovill torch.



Scovill blow torch  
Photo by  
Graham Stubbs

The clean-out wire in the base is identical to that found in other known Scovill torches. The use of a small sheet metal pre-heating cup closely resembles those found on Scovill torches.



# The Turner Model T-15 T Blow Torch

By **Graham Stubbs**

*“According to the sales slip, the Turner Co. of Sycamore, IL sold the brass torch featured in the photo on September 10th, 1980. At first glance, this seemed to me to be unlikely, because I thought that Turner stopped making and selling liquid fueled blow torches in the 1960s. What’s more, the style of this brass torch looked more like the 1920s. With the torch was a sales slip, its original box, an instruction brochure describing the T-15 as a CHAMPION BRAND product, a page from a Turner catalog, and a spare burner orifice with the necessary tools for changing it. By 1980, Turner Brass Works had become the Turner Co., Division of Cleanweld Products Inc., still located in Sycamore, IL.”*

*“A closer look at the torch revealed a plastic pump knob, and then it clicked! I had seen this torch before. On a shelf in my garage was an almost identical torch, which I purchased, brand new, in a hardware store in Taiwan, about 1984.”*



Turner Brass Works 1980's torch  
Photo by Graham Stubbs

*“Even the valve knobs are exactly the same, as are most of the other details. The basic difference was that my Taiwanese torch has a metallic logo all in Chinese characters. It was obvious that both torches came from the same place.”*



Blow torch from Taiwan, circa 1984  
Photo by Graham Stubbs

*“My best guess is that Turner, having stopped making torches in the 1960s, found that there was a continuing local demand for them, and that Turner looked for a source in a country in which they were still being made and used”.*

*“From my own knowledge, blow torches were still being sold in the Far East into the 1980s. The designs, for which there was still a demand in Taiwan, were the type with brass tanks and external pumps, but with minor updates such as the plastic pump handle.”*

*“There is one more difference between the Turner T-15T torch and the Taiwanese torch. The burner on the Turner torch is embossed with the word “BUJI”. The Taiwanese torch has Chinese characters engraved on the burner. I know I’ve seen torches with the name “BUJI” on the burner; could they have been late model Turner torches missing their labels? Does anyone else have one of these torches with “BUJI” embossed on the burner? If yes, then please let us know.”*

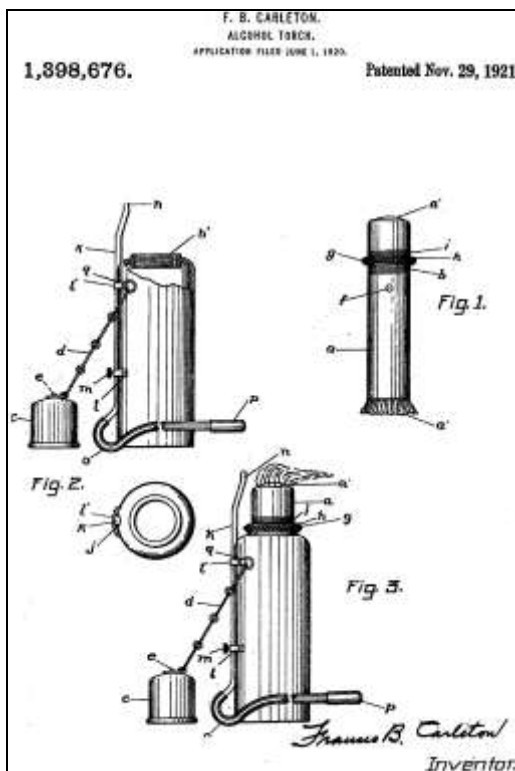
◆ ◆ ◆ ◆



Two examples of Unique Mfg. Co. blow torches  
Photo by Tim Szabo

# Carleton “Spartan” and L.S. Brach “Solderall” Torches

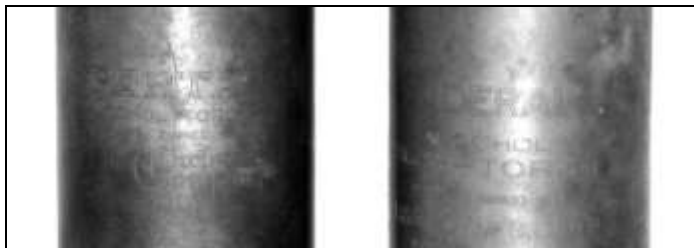
In 1921, Francis B. Carleton of Boston, MA, was awarded U.S. patent no. 1,398,676 for an improvement to an alcohol torch.



Francis B. Carleton's 1921 patent

His idea was to position a rectangular air tube close to the fuel reservoir by placing its broad dimension flat to the tank, and by positioning it in a groove running part of the way along the tank. As compared with the earlier Victor and Roberts torches, the result was a more compact tool, with better protection of the fragile air tube.

The Carleton Co. manufactured the torch as the “Spartan” alcohol torch, with an inscription “PAT APPL'D FOR”. The L.S. Brach Mfg. Corp. of Newark, NJ marketed the same torch, with the name the “Solderall” alcohol-blow torch, and with the Carleton’s patent no. 1,398,676 clearly marked.



The Carleton Company and L.S. Brach torches are shown above side by side, with the Carleton at left.

Photo by Graham Stubbs



## Classified Ads

**For Sale....Andre LeFrancois** has 38 completely restored blow torches available, mostly US, but some European as well. Included are 5 un-restored torches and many miscellaneous parts. For those that are not familiar with Andre's refinished torches...they are highly polished and in pristine condition. It appears that Andre is getting out of blow torches and is now building and selling customized Segways. He would prefer to sell his torch collection to one buyer....if interested, you can reach him at 510-886-1478.

**For Sale....Mark Pedersen** has approximately 100 torches for sale of different sizes and styles. Mark is downsizing his collection and would prefer to liquidate his duplicates. Contact Mark for specific details on available torches at 503-897-3101, or email to [pedrleen@webtv.net](mailto:pedrleen@webtv.net).

**Mike Jones** is liquidating his entire collection, and he is in the process of cataloging about 200 torches that he would prefer to sell as one lot. If you're interested in receiving a copy of the catalog, please drop him a line at [idahojones@spro.net](mailto:idahojones@spro.net)

---

---

# THE TORCH

Official publication of the Blow Torch Collectors Association and is published three times per year; March, June, & December

*Editor*  
*Contributing Editor*  
*Contributing Editor*

**Ronald M. Carr**  
**Graham Stubbs**  
**Dr. Charles Smith**

**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: Ron Carr, 6908 April Wind Avenue, Las Vegas, NV 89131-0119, email to: [RMCarr1@cox.net](mailto:RMCarr1@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.

**No part of THE TORCH may be copied or reproduced without the written consent of BTCA.**

**COPYRIGHT JUNE 2006**