

# Glow Lamps

By Bill Banks

I was digging through some old photos I had from back in the early 1990's, and thought that an article was needed to explain what these things are and what they were used for. They were used in hospitals and sick rooms back in the 1890's. These are what collectors today call Glow Lamps. On the original box it said they were made by H.G. McFaddin Manufacturing Company, New York. Pressed in the glass on the bases, is the phrase **Pat'd 1895**.

On the box, these were advertised as **Penny Lamps** or **1¢ lamp**. These are about 4" in diameter at the base, and without the globe, they were about 2 to 2 ½" tall. They were called Penny Lamps because they could burn up to 200 hours on one penny's worth of Kerosene, and burn very clean and smokeless since they were to be used in hospitals and sick rooms. As you can see in the photos, the tiny glass burner allowed for a very small flame so doctors and nurses could check on patients at night without disturbing them. There is also a metal clip that would allow the user to adjust the wick height for smokeless burning. Today, when we find these items, they most always are missing the burners and metal wick clips. These photos show what those parts look like. The globes are about 3" tall and have two or three tiny protruding dimples on the interior of the base of the globe. These allow the user to twist the globe and lock it in place on the base.

I have seen these Lamps in many colors. The base colors are Amber (as shown), dark Blue, Ruby (as shown), Clear Crystal, dark Green, and Milk Glass. The globes were also made in the same colors. The Clear Crystal ones are almost always found with a satin or frosted finish. This was done to diffuse the glare of the light.

If these were sold commercially in general stores at the time, we would find more of them today. I often thought about why so few of exist. As they were advertised for use in hospitals and sick rooms, when electricity became available, hospitals were one of the first places to have it installed, and the Glow Lamps were no longer needed. Maybe the reason why some have survived and are found in old estates would be because a family member may have been in the hospital, and when they left to return home, they brought the Glow Lamp with them. In any case, they are a small piece of history that has been forgotten about. Hopefully this article will keep the memory alive.





