

FAIRY LAMPS AND MINI-OIL LAMPS by Bob

British glass manufacturers produced vast quantities of products in the three decades that fairy lamps were in vogue. One glass house alone produced 100 tons of product per week. If this were all fairy lamps, they would be as common today as nails. Obviously these factories made a wide variety of items using the same molds, techniques and patented forms. Many of these items could be utilized for multiple purposes.

Some of these purposes were fairy lamps and miniature oil lamps. This now raises the question of just what is the difference between these two lamps? If all the lamps pictured by Tibbetts¹, MacSwiggen², Anthony³ and Ruf⁴ are fairy lamps, then the definition of a fairy lamp is: "a burning device with an enclosed flame."

The definition using a squatty candle will cover +/- 98% of Clarke patent fairy lamps. The remaining +/- 2% are raisable wick kerosene lamps such as Ruf, Plate III, page 13⁴, Solverson, Plate 37, figures 183 & 185⁵ and Smith Book I, figure 149⁶. Solverson's lamp Figure 183 and the accompanying lamp could be classified as "cross-over" lamps since they could be used either way by substituting a lamp cup for the oil font.

This confusing conglomeration of lamps could be divided into six categories:

FAIRY LAMPS



- Lamp cup with open top dome burning a squatty candle. (R-4)

¹ *Clarke's Fairy Lamps*, Dorothy Tibbetts, Mission Press, 1951

² *Fairy Lamps - Evening's Glow of Yesteryear*, Amelia E. MacSwiggen, Bonanza Books, 1962

³ *19th Century Fairy Lamps*, T. Robert Anthony, Forward's Color Productions, Inc., 1969

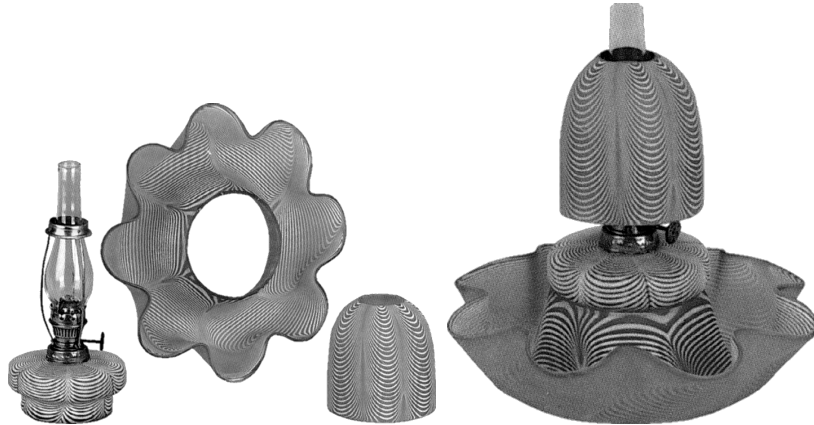
⁴ *Fairy Lamps - Elegance in Candle Lighting*, Bob & Pat Ruf, Schiffer Publishing Ltd., 1996

⁵ *Those Fascinating Little Lamps*, John F. Solverson, Antique Publications, 1988

⁶ *Miniature Lamps*, Frank R. & Ruth E. Smith, Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1968

- Single piece in the general shape of a cup, usually in a figural form, burning a squatty candle and frequently called a nursery lamp. (R-370)
- Single piece with an opening in the side at the base to receive a "godet" burning vegetable, fish or animal oil with a floating wick; or a squatty candle. (R-428)
- Lamp cup, with removable oil font having a raisable wick, covered by an open top dome. (Solverson, Plate 37/38, fig. 185)⁷

CROSS-OVER LAMPS



- Three piece lamp with a dish-like base having a central tubular post that holds either an oil font with raisable wick and chimney or a fairy lamp cup and covered by an open top dome. (Solverson Plate 37/38, Figure 183)

FAIRY STYLE MINI-OIL LAMPS



- Lamp with oil font base, burner with raisable wick and chimney, and covered by an open top dome. (Smith, Book I, Fig. 149)⁸

FOLLOW-UP TO "FAIRY LAMPS & MINI-OIL LAMPS"⁹

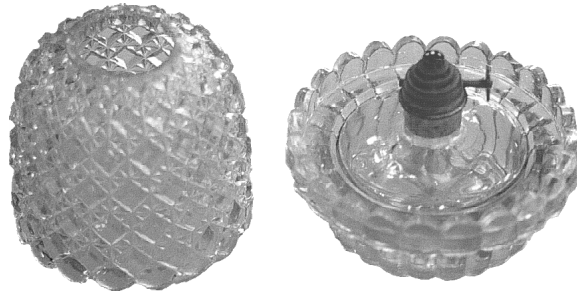
Gale & Tom provided an additional photograph of R-168 in a clear, fairy-size dome, with raised diamonds and impressed chevrons. However, this lamp is equipped with an oil

⁷ *Those Fascinating Little Lamps*, John F. Solverson, Antique Publications, 1988, ISBN 0-915 410-42-7

⁸ *Miniature Lamps*, Frank & Ruth E. Smith, Thomas Nelson & Sons, 1968, Library Congress 68-57930

⁹ Article "Fairy Lamps & Mini-Oil Lamps" by Bob, Issue V, November 1997

lamp with a raisable wick similar to Ruf Plate III. In addition to illustrating how nicely the oil lamp fits the lamp cup, it also illustrates the round wick design of the burner.



Although different bases, it would seem that Gail and Tom's's example of R-168 and the example illustrated in the Solverson book, figure 185,¹⁰ are by the same manufacturer.

¹⁰ *Those Fascinating Little Lamps*, John F. Solverson, Antique Publications, 1988, ISBN 0-915 410-42-7