

From the Museum Collections



AVM #1973.90.1

Candles were made mainly from tallow or bees wax in the early days. Recently they are made from spermaceti (from an organ in a sperm whale's head), stearin (purified animal fat) and paraffin wax (from petroleum, coal or shale oil). This candle holder was used in many of the mines in the Alberni Valley and throughout Vancouver Island. It would have been standard equipment for miners around the world. This holder would have been placed in the seam of a timber or crack in the mine wall to provide light to the immediate area as well smaller versions were made to attach to the miners cap. This artefact is on display in the Power and Light case in the Alberni Valley Museum.

When oil lamps became available candles were not used as much. Oil lamps provided a better light and lasted longer than candles. You could also control the amount of light you wanted by increasing or decreasing the wick length. The base of this oil lamp has a covering of Nuu-Chah-Nulth basket weaving and is on display in the Alberni Valley Museum's renowned basketry collection.

People have used electric lights since the early days of electricity. They provide a continuous and steady light source. Lights were turned on for the first time in Port Alberni on July 22, 1913. In August 1913 Alberni also had lights. This lamp was made by Peter Szachiv a well known artist in the Alberni Valley. This artefact is one of a large collection of Peter's work that he left to the museum and forms an interesting display in the centre of the museum.



AVM #1970.55.1



AVM #1988.23.16a

Today when the power goes out a lot of people turn to candles to light their way. These bees wax candles will make a special gift for mom or someone else special in your life or you can keep them and enjoy them yourself.