



PIERCED TIN LANTERNS

Imagine that you have a lit candle in a candleholder. You take the lit candle outside and the wind is blowing. What might happen? You may have to relight the candle. What if you didn't have a lighter or matches? Then, you would be like pioneers.

Because pioneers didn't have lighters and matches were rare, they had to figure out a way to protect the candle. They used lanterns.

A lantern is a metal box or tube with side panels that you can see through. It also has a hole in the cover or top to let a little air in. This way the candle is protected and the candlelight can pass through the side panels. The side panels needed to be made out of something you could see through. What do you suppose they used? What if a pioneer couldn't afford glass or couldn't find it? People used what they had and created what they needed.

Pioneers solved the problem by using tin instead of glass for the side panels on the lantern. Tin was cheap and easy to find. Tin could be worked into different shapes. They cut a door in the lantern and punched holes in the tin panels. Why do you suppose they did that?

The door and the tin sides of the lantern made the light really bright. It wasn't bright enough to light the whole room. It was bright enough to light a small work space.

Homesteaders and miners turned tin cans into punched tin lanterns. Miners called their lanterns "shadowgees."

Many times Towle's Log Cabin Syrup cans were used by miners. They were shaped like log cabins. The miners placed a handle over the top of the can. Then, they removed one end of the can so that they could get the candle in and out. This also helped focus the light so it shone brighter. Punched holes in the sides made sure the candle didn't get too hot and the candle flame had plenty of oxygen.