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TUNGSTEN LAMPS OF HIGH EFFICIENCY—II. NITROGEN-FILLED LAMPS

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The first part of this paper outlined principles upon which radical improvements in the efficiency of tungsten lamps may be based.

It was shown that the desired improvement can be obtained by preventing evaporation of the filament or by preventing blackening of the bulb. By the introduction of considerable pressures of such gases as nitrogen or mercury vapor into the lamp the blackening can be practically avoided and the evaporation of the filament reduced very considerably.

By making use of these principles we have been able to construct practical tungsten lamps which, starting at an efficiency of about 0.40 watt per candle, have run over two thousand hours, the average efficiency during life being better than 0.5 watt per candle. It should be pointed out at the outset, however, that such a degree of improvement as this has been reached only in lamps taking large currents.

In this second part of the paper we will describe the methods by which these results have been attained.

The early experiments with lamps containing nitrogen at atmospheric pressure were made with ordinary single loop filaments of 0.005 and 0.010 inch diameter placed in long heater lamp bulbs. These lamps were set up on life test at such a voltage that the temperature of the filament was 2850 deg. K.

In order to compare these with ordinary lamps, similar lamps with evacuated bulbs were set up on life test with the filaments at the same temperature.

The nitrogen-filled lamps with the filaments 0.005 inch dia-

meter gave an efficiency of 0.65 watts per candle and had a life of about 90 hours, whereas those with the larger filaments (0.010 inch diameter) gave an efficiency of 0.56 watts per candle and a life of about 300 hours. The bulbs opposite the filaments remained clear, although a slight brown deposit of tungsten nitride collected in the upper part of the bulbs. The candle power of these lamps remained above 80 per cent during their entire life, failure being due in every case to breakage of the filament after this had decreased considerably in diameter.

The vacuum lamps, on the other hand, gave an efficiency of 0.41 watt per candle, but the bulbs blackened rapidly, the candle power falling to 80 per cent in about 40 minutes. Since the filaments of the vacuum lamps burnt out after 2 to 5 hours whereas those of the nitrogen lamps lasted 50 to 100 times as long, it is evident that the rate of evaporation of the tungsten is materially reduced by the presence of the nitrogen.

These results indicated clearly the desirability of using a filament of large diameter. The larger filaments gave not only a better efficiency at any definite temperature, but also a much longer life. Thus doubling the diameter increased the efficiency from 0.65 to 0.56 and increased the life from 90 to 300 hours. The improvement in the efficiency, as was pointed out in the first part of this paper, is due to the relatively greater heat loss by convection from small wires. The life of the filament is determined largely by the loss of tungsten from the filament by evaporation and has been found to be dependent on the *relative* decrease in diameter caused by this evaporation. If the rate of evaporation per unit area from large and small wires were the same, the lives of various filaments run at a given temperature would be roughly proportional to their diameters. However, as the evaporation of tungsten in nitrogen is largely a diffusion process, it probably obeys laws similar to those of conduction or convection of heat from a wire; that is, for wires of small diameter, the actual amount of tungsten evaporated would be nearly independent of the size of the wire. The rate of evaporation *per unit area* would thus be approximately inversely proportional to the diameter. The relative lives of very small wires in nitrogen are therefore nearly proportional to the squares of their diameters.

DESIGN OF FILAMENT

These results were decidedly encouraging, for both the efficiency and the life of the lamps can be improved by increasing the diameter of the filament.

It is, however, not desirable to use filaments of very large diameter if similar results can be obtained with smaller ones. The current taken by a filament increases approximately with the three-halves power of the diameter. Thus, for wires of the sizes used in the preceding experiments, the currents needed to maintain a temperature of 2850 deg. were approximately:

Diameter		Current
inches	mm.	amps.
0.005	0.127	3.0
0.010	0.254	8.5
0.020	0.508	24.0

Unless very low voltages are used, the power consumed with the larger wires is so great that only very high candle power lamps can be made.

Therefore it was of vital importance to increase the effective diameter of the filament without decreasing its resistance, and various methods of doing this were tried.

This result may, for example, be obtained by using a tubular filament. The method which has thus far proved most satisfactory, however, is to wind the filament into the form of a tightly coiled helix.

The use of a helically wound filament presents several very interesting features. The life of ordinary single loop filaments is limited by the irregularities in diameter which develop after a considerable amount of tungsten has evaporated. These irregularities, after they first appear, tend to magnify themselves very rapidly, on account of the tendency for the current to overheat any spot which becomes thinner than the rest of the filament. The overheating increases the rate of evaporation and rapidly causes failure.

In the gas-filled lamps, however, when helically wound filaments are employed, a new factor is introduced which entirely counteracts this tendency to overheat in spots. In designing the filaments of these lamps, it is evidently desirable to wind the filament on as large a mandrel as possible, in order to obtain the advantage of the large diameter. Since tungsten is a relatively soft material at the operating temperature of these lamps, too large a mandrel should not be used, as otherwise the weight of the filament pulls out the helix very materially in a few

hours, and the heat lost by convection may thus become greater than if a helix of smaller diameter had been used. In actual practise the filament is designed so that the amount of sagging during life will be perceptible, but not enough to cause too great a change in the characteristics of the lamp.

If, during the life of the lamp, any part of the filament should, for any reason, evaporate more rapidly than the rest, so that the filament becomes somewhat thinner, this portion will have less mechanical strength than the rest and will therefore sag more rapidly. The helix will therefore open out wherever the filament becomes thin or becomes overheated. This will cause increased heat loss both by convection and radiation, and thus prevent local overheating or spotting.

The use of helically wound filaments increases the life of the lamp many times beyond the life that would be obtained with a straight filament running at the same efficiency. This is especially true of the smaller sizes of wire.

Besides the helically wound filament, various other forms have been tried, and, for special purposes, many of these have decided advantages.

DESIGN OF BULBS AND LOCATION OF FILAMENTS

In the ordinary evacuated lamp, the choice of a suitable bulb is a comparatively simple matter. It must be of convenient size and shape, and provide sufficient room for the proper mounting of the filament. Furthermore, it must have as large an inside surface as possible, so that the density of the deposit of evaporated tungsten will be small. It is also desirable to have the bulb at a sufficient distance from the filament and so related to the power input into the lamp that the bulb does not become overheated. This latter is not only desirable from the view point of safety (in case of lamps for domestic service), but because it is difficult to remove water vapor so thoroughly from the bulbs that the life of the lamps will not be greatly shortened by an overheating of the glass.

In the nitrogen-filled lamps, however, several other factors must be considered, especially in the lamps of high candle power.

In ordinary lamps about 20 per cent of the energy radiated from the filament is intercepted by the glass and causes heating of the bulb. In the nitrogen lamp, beside this radiated heat, there is an additional amount of heat carried to the bulb by convection—an amount varying with the type of lamp and

ranging from 6 to 40 per cent of the total input. The convection currents carrying this relatively large amount of heat travel vertically upwards from the filament and strike a relatively small area of the bulb, which thus tends to become greatly overheated. Unless special precautions are taken, this overheating will cause the liberation of enough water vapor to cause attack of the filament and consequent blackening of the bulb. It is thus highly desirable, in ordinary cases, if small bulbs are to be used, that the filament should be placed in the lower part of the bulb. This has the further advantage that it allows sufficient surface of glass in the upper part for the deposition of the tungsten nitride.

For a similar reason it is generally desirable, although not necessary, to make the bulbs with their height considerably greater than their horizontal diameter.

By special design of the bulb, satisfactory lamps have been made with bulbs of only one-half to one-third as large a volume as that of evacuated lamps of the same wattage. This means that for bulbs of the same volume the nitrogen lamps give roughly from five to ten times the candle power of evacuated lamps. The bulbs of such lamps naturally run much hotter than those of ordinary lamps. The upper parts of the bulbs are often 100 to 200 deg. cent. or more, while the lower parts are sometimes much cooler than this, although closer to the filament.

Several special varieties of heat-resistant glass have been used for the bulbs, making considerably smaller ones possible, as well as rendering it easier to get rid of water vapor. Transparent quartz bulbs have been tried, but do not seem to have sufficient advantage over some of the special glasses to offset their present high cost.

LEAD-IN WIRES AND SUPPORTS

For some of the larger size lamps which take heavy currents (20-30 amperes) it has been necessary to devise special types of lead-in wires. Platinum has been discarded entirely, even in the smaller sizes. Several types of heavy current leads have been successfully used. Most depend on the use of special alloys which have the same coefficient of expansion as the glass. Bulbs of special glasses into which tungsten or molybdenum wire can be sealed directly, have also been used.

In many of the larger lamps the lead-in wires pass through the lower end of the lamp. In this case they can be made

short. In others, however, the leads are brought in from the top. This requires more care in the construction of the seal if it is exposed to the heat from the convection currents. Screens are sometimes used to protect the seal or other glass parts from direct contact with the convection currents, and to reduce convection.

VARIOUS TYPES OF NITROGEN-FILLED LAMPS

We have seen that at constant temperature, both the efficiency and the life improve as the diameter of the wire is increased. With very large wires (0.020 to 0.040 inch diameter) which take 20-60 amperes, the efficiency may reach 0.40 watt per candle and probably even better, and yet give a life over a thousand hours. It will probably be worth while, in some cases, to use nitrogen in low-current lamps, even if an efficiency no better than that of vacuum lamps is obtained, in order to gain certain other advantages of the nitrogen-filled lamps, such as better color of the light, higher intrinsic brilliancy, etc.

The principal limitation of the new type is therefore that of current. There is no practical upper limit to the current, provided the voltage is not lowered to keep constant power consumption.* With increasing current, larger and larger filaments are used and the efficiency that may be practically reached, increases towards the limit of 0.20 watt per candle, which is fixed by the melting-point of tungsten. Unless special expedients are employed, the cooling effect of the leads lowers the efficiency of the lamps by an amount that is inversely proportional to the voltage and nearly independent of the size of the wire or the current strength.

With voltages of 20 volts or more, this effect is not serious, but for voltages as low or lower than 10 volts, it may become very important.

For the particular type of nitrogen-filled lamp which has at present been furthest developed, it may be said that a life of over 1500 hours is obtained at efficiencies better than 0.50 watt per candle only in large units taking over ten amperes. Lamps running at 0.6 to 0.7 watt per candle have been made in units taking at least 5 amperes.

No serious difficulty has been met in making high-voltage

*As an example, a lamp taking 60 amperes and giving 6600 candle power at 0.40 watt per candle has been successfully run.

lamps. In nitrogen at atmospheric pressure there is no tendency toward arcing, even at 250 volts. Many lamps taking 6 or 7 amperes at 110 volts have been made up and run at 0.6 to 0.7 watts per candle, with a life of over 1000 hours.

A number of special types of nitrogen-filled lamps have been made and tested. Among these the most interesting, for the present, are perhaps the following:

1. *Large Units of Very High Efficiency* (0.4 to 0.5 watt per candle with a life of 1500 hours or more). These take currents of 20 to 30 amperes and (except in units over 4000 candle power) are therefore best run from a-c. circuits by means of small transformers or auto-transformers giving a voltage depending on the size of unit desired. Thus, with 30 volts and 25 amperes, the power would be 750 watts and this, in a lamp of say 0.45 watt per candle, would give 1670 candle power. Higher or lower candle power may be obtained by using other voltages. Typical lamps of this kind are shown in Figs. 1 and 2.

2. *Small Units of Low Voltage*. These take currents of ten amperes or less and voltages as low as four or five volts. The efficiencies with 1000-hour life range from 0.6 to 1.0, or even 1.25 watt per candle, according to the current used.

These lamps are adapted for series street lighting on 6.6-ampere circuits (at 0.6 to 0.7 watt per candle), for stereopticon lamps, automobile headlights and in general wherever a source of high intrinsic brilliancy, steadiness and white color is needed.

3. *Lamps to Run on Standard Lighting Circuits* (110 volts). Large units of this type (several thousand candle power) have efficiencies of 0.5 watt per candle or better. With smaller units the efficiency is ordinarily not so high.

A lamp of this type is illustrated in Fig. 3. The leads may be brought in from the top, in which case they are preferably made longer so that the filament remains in the lower part of the bulb.

SPECIAL ADVANTAGES OF THE NITROGEN-FILLED LAMPS

Besides its high efficiency, the features of the new lamps which may, at least for certain purposes, prove of advantage, are:

1. *Color of the Light*. The temperature of the filament being 400 to 600 deg. higher than that of ordinary lamps, causes the light to be of a very much whiter color, so that it comes closer to daylight than any other form of artificial illuminant except the d-c. arc and the special Moore tube containing carbon dioxide.

The color is almost exactly like that which can be had for a few minutes by running an ordinary tungsten lamp at double its rated voltage.

Work is at present under way to develop special color screens

FIG. 1—HIGH EFFICIENCY NITROGEN-FILLED LAMP FOR LOW-VOLTAGE CIRCUIT

FIG. 2—HIGH EFFICIENCY NITROGEN-FILLED LAMP FOR LOW-VOLTAGE CIRCUIT

which, when used with this light, will give a true daylight color (corresponding to the radiation from a black body at 5000 deg. cent.). From measurements with the spectrophotometer, it can be calculated that the screens which will accomplish this

purpose will absorb from 65 to 75 per cent of the light, so that the net efficiency will be about 2.0 watts per candle for a pure daylight color. At present, to accomplish this purpose with ordinary tungsten lamps, screens must be used which absorb so much light that the net efficiency is between 10 and 12 watts per candle.

2. *High Intrinsic Brilliancy of the Filament.* At the operating temperature of the nitrogen-filled lamps the intrinsic brilliancy

FIG. 3—NITROGEN-FILLED LAMP
FOR 110-VOLT CIRCUIT

FIG. 4—LAMP AND SCREEN USED
FOR CALIBRATION OF BLUE GLASS

of the filament is about 1200 candle power per sq. cm. In ordinary tungsten lamps, on the other hand, running at about 1.25 watts per candle, the filaments have a brilliancy of only about 150 candle power per sq. cm. The brilliancy of the filament of the nitrogen lamp is thus about eight times that of the ordinary lamp.

This feature, combined with the high degree of concentration preferably used, renders these lamps particularly useful for

projection work, such as for headlights or for stereopticons.

3. *Constancy of Characteristics During Life.* It is often possible to so design these lamps that their ampere-, volt-, candle power characteristics remain practically fixed during the greater part of their life. In any case, however, since there is no deposit on the bulb to cut off the light, the candle power practically never falls below 75 per cent (this decrease sometimes being due to sagging). The lamp usually fails by the breakage of the filament with the candle power well above 80 per cent of its original value.

APPENDIX I

Light Distribution of Nitrogen-Filled Lamps. In the preceding paper, wherever efficiencies of lamps have been given, they are expressed in watts per horizontal (international) candles measured in the direction perpendicular to the plane of the filament if this is in the form of a single loop.

Careful measurements have shown that with helically wound filaments the distribution of light in a horizontal plane is almost perfectly uniform, therefore the efficiencies that have been given may be considered to represent also watts per mean horizontal candle.

The spherical candle power of many of the lamps has been measured. The ratio of mean spherical to maximum horizontal (practically mean horizontal also) candle power has been found to average about 84 per cent for the lamps made with single loops of helically wound wire.

It is possible to design the filaments of nitrogen-filled lamps so as to give a maximum of candle power in a given direction. This is being done in stereopticon lamps.

APPENDIX II

Method of Photometry for Nitrogen-Filled Lamps. The usual practise in dealing with incandescent lamps is to determine volts, amperes and candle power either at a predetermined value of one of these quantities or else at a predetermined efficiency by the "cut and try" method. In the case of a lamp which presents so many variables as does the nitrogen-filled lamp, however, it is more systematic to regard temperature as the fundamental variable.

The method that has been adopted for these lamps is not essentially novel, although it does not appear to be as well known as it deserves to be.

First: The temperature has been defined by the equation

$$T = \frac{11230}{7.029 - \log H}$$

where T is the absolute temperature and H is the intrinsic brilliancy of the filament in international candle power per sq. cm. (projected area).*

Second: A most useful criterion in practise for equality of temperature of tungsten filament is that of color-match.

A little practise with the Lummer-Brodhun photometer enables one to judge equality within about 5 deg. if the illumination is good. The most convenient way of setting up temperature standards is to select a number of well-seasoned lamps of high-voltage type in which the anchors are tightly pinched onto the filaments so as to prevent variable cooling effects at the contact. It is best to standardize these, not on a basis of candle power and filament dimensions, but by the aid of a special lamp and diaphragm as shown in Fig. 4. This lamp is arranged at one end of the photometer with the diaphragm in front of and at a known short distance from it. The filament is preferably stout (say 10-mil or 0.025-cm.) so as to admit of good micrometer measurements.

The diaphragm enables one to disregard the end portions of the filament and select a known length of the part which is at uniform temperature. Of course a simple geometrical correction based on the position of the screen is necessary.

It is thus possible to set up the special lamp at any temperature desired by getting the appropriate candle power per sq. cm. from the filament. The standard lamps are brought to color-match with this arrangement and in this way a set of lamps with known relation between voltage and effective temperature is obtained. The life of the ordinary standard lamps would be very short indeed if they were run at the same temperature as nitrogen-filled lamps. For this work, therefore, the standards cannot be used directly as color-standards. For this reason a most important accessory is introduced in the form of a set of special blue glasses. It is not easy to get a blue screen which will perfectly facilitate color-match of tungsten filaments at dif-

*(The derivation of this formula together with a description of other methods of obtaining the temperature of filaments will soon be published, probably in the *Physical Review*.)

ferent temperatures, but a special blue glass has finally been obtained which answers exceedingly well.

Four distinct screens of different intensity are used, each carefully finished as a uniform plate, and any or all of these may be combined with a tungsten filament run at any temperature and the result will color-match correctly against another tungsten filament at a higher temperature.

It may be shown theoretically and experiment confirms that the following relation holds:

If T is the temperature of a filament which is viewed through screens A , B , C , etc.,

T_1 is the temperature of a filament which matches the above.

$$\text{Then } \frac{1}{T} - \frac{1}{T_1} = a + b + c \text{ etc.}$$

where a , b , c etc. are constants for the screens A , B , C , etc. Thus one only needs to maintain one standard temperature by means of standard lamps and that temperature can be so low that great permanence is insured.

The constants for the four glasses once determined, there are available a number of standard temperatures ranging from 2250 deg. to 3600 deg. K.

By the use of these screens it is an easy matter to set a lamp up at a voltage such that the filament has a standard temperature, say 2850 deg. To do this it is simply necessary to adjust the voltage so that the color of the light from the lamp is the same as that which comes from the standard lamp when viewed through one of the special blue screens.

Since the efficiency in vacuum is very simply related to the color of the light, this method of photometry gives a very simple and direct way of knowing the exact effect which the nitrogen has on the efficiency of the lamp.