

One Good Wick: The Miner's Oil Wick Lamp of Peter & Adam Good

by Paul and Nancy Hyatt



Leanback lamp found by the authors.

Leanback style miner's oil wick lamps are relatively uncommon, so the one in the display case is front of us promised to be a good find even before a closer look could tell us if it was marked. The lamp turned out to be more "Good" than we could have imagined with that first glimpse. But, let us start at the real beginning of this story and you'll see why the previous sentence isn't as grammatically incorrect as it appears to be now.

At the October, 1997 Mining Artifact Collector Reunion in Ogdensburg, New Jersey, Ron and Bunny Thomas showed us an oil wick they had recently acquired and we discussed its probable maker's identity. It was a leanback style, made of tin and stamped Pat'D May 30, 1893. All of the examples of that design we were aware of at the time were manufactured in Pennsylvania, either by Trethaway Bros. of Parsons, or Charles Felix from Shamokin. While the Felix lamps we had seen before were stamped "Felix Lamp" Shamokin, Pa." in addition to a patent date, it isn't unusual to observe stamping changes on the same lamp over time. Since this lamp's unique feature was its orientation, and Felix had been granted design patent #23,526 for his leanback concept,

coupled with the presence of a patent date stamp, we concluded the lamp had to be a Felix manufacture. Knowing we had a copy of the Felix patent in our files, we promised Ron and Bunny a copy to go with their new find.

(left) Leanback lamp found by the authors.

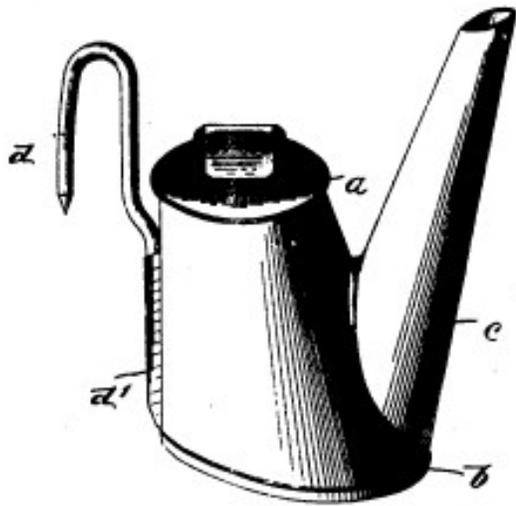
A surprise greeted us when we pulled the patent to copy. The lamp's stamping and the patent document dates didn't match! Charles D. Felix hadn't even filed the application for his design patent until May 15, 1894, almost a full year after the date on the wick we were dealing with. Searching through the rest of our files and notes also failed to turn up any date matches.

DESIGN.

**C. D. FELIX.
MINER'S LAMP.**

No. 23,526.

Patented July 31, 1894.

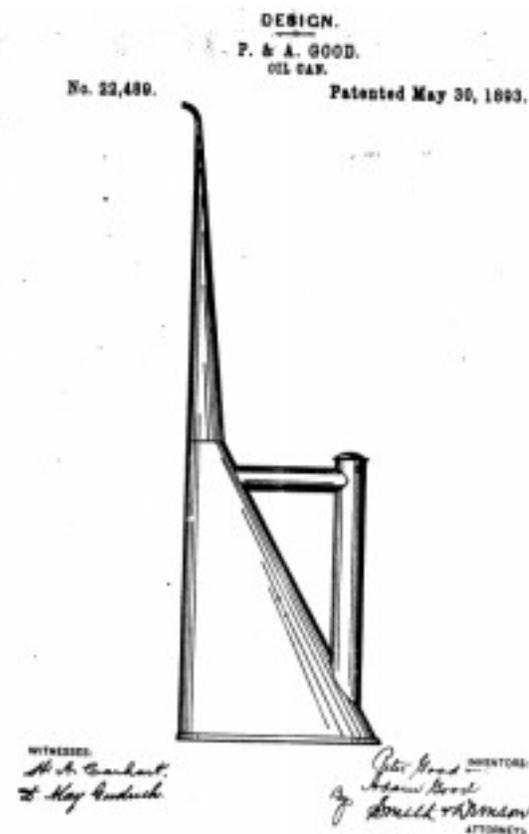


Reluctantly, we contacted Ron and Bunny and shared our disappointment over our lack of success and promised to top-list the date for future patent repository searches. Ron's enthusiasm for solving the mystery of the manufacturer of the lamp sent him almost immediately to his nearest patent repository. Intense research on his part, including a couple of "what next" conversations between us produced no resolution. Further efforts over time by both parties turned up only the fact that at least one other identical lamp was owned by another collector, and the trail ended. Time passed, expeditions occurred, and this trail stayed cold...until the road trip that uncovered the focus of this article.

Felix's patent drawing.

Examining the lamp retrieved from the case mentioned at the beginning of this tale, the eyes of a couple of hopeful collectors beheld the following stamping:





Peter & Adam Good oil can patent.

Standing there then, we weren't 100% sure this was the same date as the one on Ron and Bunny's enigma, but we were positively happy with that lamp, and we were gonna find out that and more! It was, and we did. Carving out the first week-day available to us on our return home, we headed for our particular user-unfriendly, not-open-on-Saturday patent library in Albany, the state capital. Especially considering what we found, having a name to combine with a date made our sleuthing infinitely easier than previous attempts. Although they are both vessels for the same substance, as you can see by the patent granted to Peter and Adam Good, they ain't the same dog! Someone looking for a lamp connection is going to pass right by.

Sporadic forays to try and glean just a little more info on Peter and Adam's enterprise have kept us from putting this out until now, when we figured it was time to go with what we had. Hopefully we have helped a few people with the information and mabe entertained a few others with recounting the process. Often, discovery generates fertile ground for more speculation and this situation seems to beg the question...where did Charles D. Felix get the idea for his design??? Hmmm.



Tipsy trio: Trethaway Bros. on the left, Felix lamp on the right, P. & A. Good lamp in the middle.