J.A. Williams Oil Wick Lamp

by Dave Johnson

While I have known of the existence of the J.A. Williams oilwick lamp for many years from another single example, it was only recently that I was able to add this very rare oilwick to my collection. I have been unable to find any information concerning a J.A. Williams in Pittsburgh anytime between 1880 and 1915. The lamp is stamped J.A. WILLIAMS & CO. PITTSBURGH, PA. in large letters and above this is PAT. APD. FOR in smaller letters. In all my patent research I have not come across any oilwick lamp patents for J.A. Williams even though the lamp says a patent was applied for.

The unusual feature found on this lamp is the cap hinge. The wire hinge is attached to the font by having the top edge of the font rolled over the wire half way around the opening (see photos). This same type of hinge is found on several different Trethaway Bros. oilwicks (see photo). Trethaway used the ideas of several other patented lamps in their own production, such as the T.A. Black breather tube patent, the Felix patent, and the O'Keefe spout brace patent.

This Williams lamp measures 2 1/8" tall to the top of the cap. The lamp has a full copper lining - spout and font. It has a concave base similar but distinctly different from the one found on Trethaway Bros. lamps. The piece soldered over the hook to brace it on the font is different than those found on Trethaway Bros. lamps as well. While the lamp has some Trethaway Bros. traits I am certain that this is not a Trethaway Bros. product but rather that Trethaway Bros. copied the hinge for their own use. Until some information on J.A. Williams is uncovered this lamp will remain somewhat of a mystery to collectors.

(above) Detail of hinge on Williams lamp.

Photo legends:

(left)
Williams lamp stamping.

(below left)
Inside the Williams lamp showing copper liner.

(below right)
Trethaway lamp with Williams style hinge.