

LEAN-BACK OIL-WICK LAMPS

by Ted Bobrink
12851 Kendall Way
Redlands, California 92373

Among the more interesting of the oil-wick cap lamps is the "lean-back" design, sometimes also called the "drunken" lamp. These lamps, although having a conical body like most models, have the cone axis tipped backward so as to make the rearward face of the cone vertical, that is, at 90° to the bottom. This results in a slant on the forward-facing side which is twice the usual; the caps (probably for simplicity of manufacture) are usually still perpendicular to the cone axis, and therefore not parallel with the bottom face.

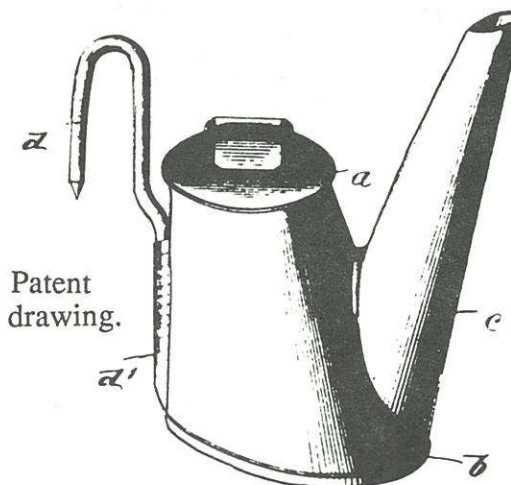
Keith Williams of Idaho Springs has provided a copy of the design patent, no. 23,526 granted on July 31, 1894, to Charles D. Felix of Shamokin, Pennsylvania. Felix was a well-established tinsmith, and produced a number of lamp varieties stamped with his name.

The patent papers do not explain the reason behind the odd design, though it must have had to do with improving the angle at which the lamp sits when attached to the miner's cap. Whether this adjustment had much practical benefit is difficult to say, but the design patent expired in 1901, and few other manufacturers are known to have taken it up. On the other hand, the fact that so many of the lean-back lamps have survived suggests that they sold well in Pennsylvania.

DESIGN

C. D. FELIX.
MINER'S LAMP.

No. 23,526. Patented July 31, 1894.



Pictured here are three lean-back lamps manufactured by the Trethaway Bros. in Parsons, Pennsylvania. (Dave Johnson collection) ↓

