

# Dunlap Oil Wicks

*Dave Johnson*

One of the most commonly seen oilwick brands is Dunlap, manufactured by the firm of John Dunlap of Pittsburg, PA. John Dunlap was born in the North of Ireland in 1818, of Scottish ancestry. In 1826 he was brought to the United States by his widowed mother. They settled in Paterson, New Jersey, where John received his schooling before being apprenticed to the tinning trade. While an apprentice he kept the books for the firm for which he worked.

Upon completion of his apprenticeship John Dunlap moved to Pittsburg where he found employment in the tinning works of a Mr. Scaife. A few years later he began his own tinning firm on a small scale at the corner of Market Street and Second Avenue, a

site occupied by his firm until sometime after the turn of the century.

His business was burned out in the great fire of 1845, after which he purchased the land where his business had stood and began again. His business grew until he was one of the largest importers of block tin and tin plate in the Pittsburg area and the leading firm in the tinning trade.

At the time of his death, on June 6, 1893, John Dunlap was a director of the Tradesmen's National Bank and a director off the Artisan's Insurance Company. He had been the partner of William P. Townsend in the wire works at New Brighton. He was known as a generous supporter of several philanthropic institutions, as well as the Presbyterian Church. In

1850, John Dunlap had married Mary Duncan. They had five children, Ella, Emma, Anna, William and John. At the time of his death in 1893, William and John continued the business begun by their father.

\* \* \*

Dunlap produced two distinctive varieties of oilwick. The most common variety is the tin spelter coated lamp stamped "Dunlap's Pittsburg" that was manufactured as a small face lamp and a large driver's lamp. These lamps were very well made of heavier gauge metal than most other lamps and are seldom found dented or rusted to the extent of other brand name lamps.

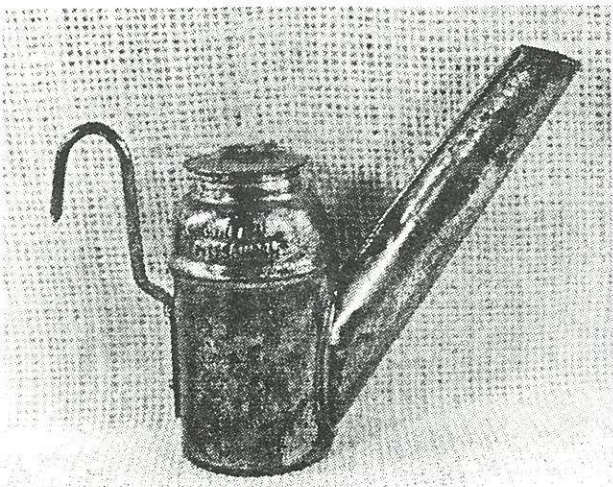
## Spelter-coated "Dunlap's Pittsburg" Lamps



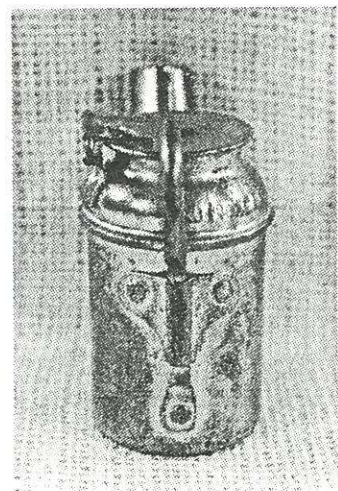
*Small and large spelter-coated lamps.*



The spelter coated lamp appears in an early version with a hook mounted with two rivets and a clearly stamped name in raised letters. The later version has a hook mounted with three rivets and a name less clearly stamped. The later the lamp was produced the less clear the stamping due to the wear on the die stamp. Both the face and driver's lamp were sold in fitted individual boxes.



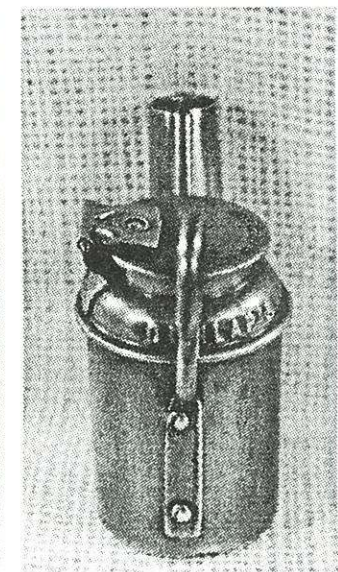
*Early spelter-coated lamps with two-rivet hook and more distinct stamping.*



*The three-rivet hook seen on later spelter-coated Dunlaps.*

While the spelter coated lamps are very common at least one copper face lamp is known to exist (see photo). This lamp is the earliest known Dunlap lamp. The cap is stamped "PAT. APL'D FOR," the hook is the early variety attached with 2 rivets and the Dunlap's stamping is clear and crisp.

*Right: Very early copper Dunlap's Pittsburg with two-rivet hook. It most closely follows the patent drawing (next page).*



The spelter coated driver's lamp was also manufactured with a large shield (see photo left). This shield is heavier and better braced than those found on most shielded lamps. The shield braces have been found produced in steel as well as a few in copper.

*Left: Shielded spelter-coated lamp.*



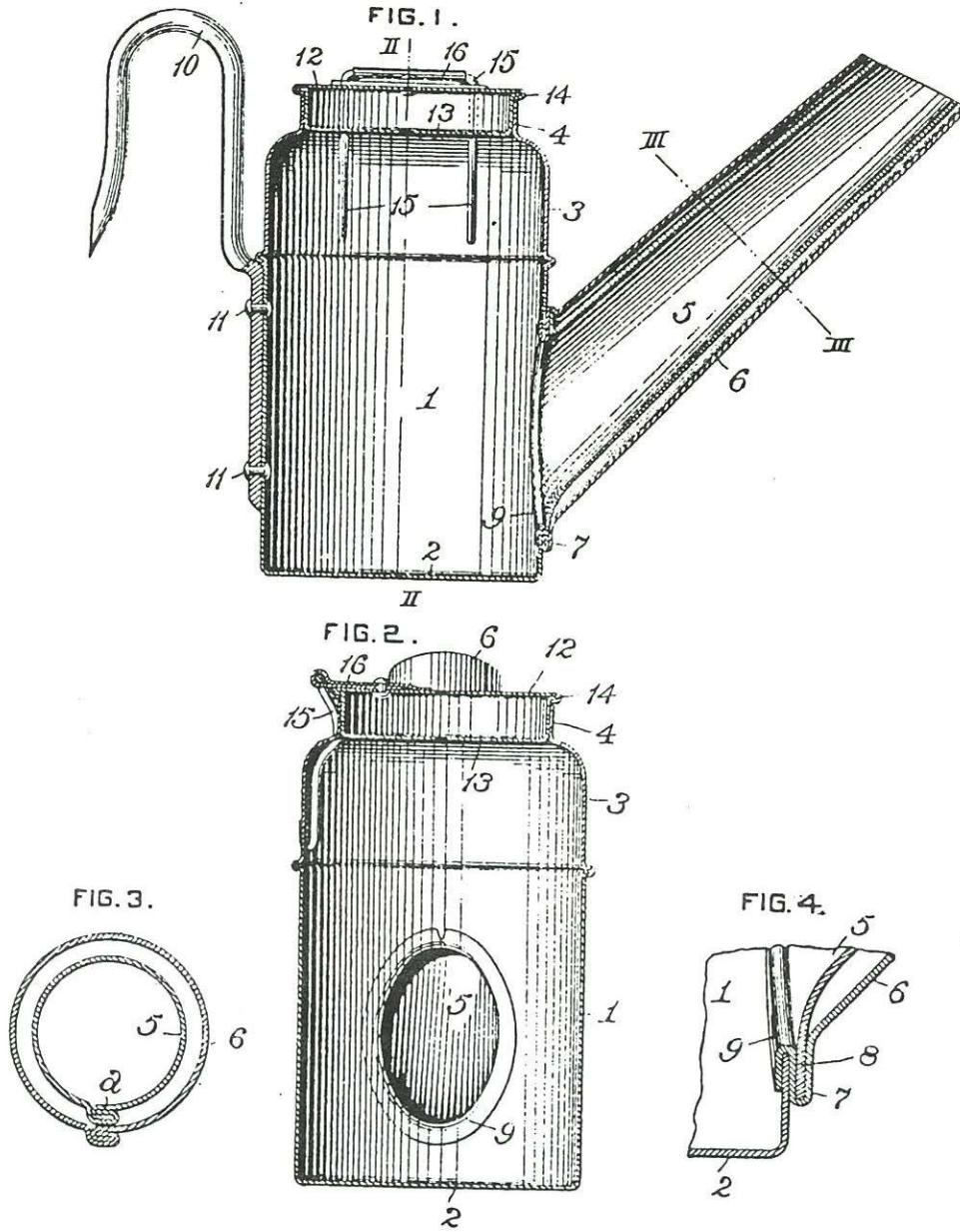
No. 628,653.

Patented July 11, 1899.

W. A. DUNLAP.  
MINER'S LAMP.

(Application filed June 26, 1897. Renewed June 8, 1899.)

(No Model.)



WITNESSES:

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Att'y.

A less common variety is the John Dunlap Monongahela Valley lamp which has been found in at least four varieties and closely resembles other brand name lamps.

The Monongahela Valley lamp has been found with three different stampings on the four varieties known to me. The Monongahela Valley brand name was sold through several mine supply firm catalogs throughout the Eastern coal region.

**SOURCES:**

Biographical Review Publishing Co. 1897.

Biographical Review of Pittsburg.

U.S. Patent Office.

Author's collection.

**Dunlap "Monongahela Valley" Lamps**



*Four varieties of the Dunlap Monongahela Valley lamps are known to the author. They have been found with the three stampings below. The lamp shown directly right is the only one stamped "John Dunlap."*

