

F. W. Watson Oil Wick Lamps

by Dave Johnson

The name F. W. Watson appears on at least two distinctly different oil wick lamps. Watson appears in the 1875-77 Scranton City Directories as a gas fitter and plumber doing business at 207 Lackawanna in Scranton. In the 1879 directory, F. W. Watson and Son (John) are listed as gas fitters, tinware manufacturers and hardware (dealer or manufacturer not specified) at 511 Lackawanna. By 1880 they had moved their business a few doors down to 431 Lackawanna. In the 1881 directory the listing was changed to F. W. Watson and Co. The firm was listed under hardware and tinware at 120 Pennsylvania St.

Apparently in 1882 Watson formed a partnership for he was listed in the City Directory as Watson and Dimmick Hardware at 120 Pennsylvania. Son John was listed as a plumber. This partnership was apparently short-lived since in 1883 Watson was listed under Watson and Baker Hardware at the same address. This partnership also appears to have been short-lived, as in 1884 Watson does not appear in the directory and Baker appears alone as Baker Hardware. This is where the story ends as I was unable to find any further information on F.W. Watson after this date.



The Scranton Lamp pictured on this page was produced by F. W. Watson. It was well made and bears the following stampings.



Stamping on the sloped shoulder.

F.W. WATSON & SON
MAKERS
SCRANTON PA.

Stamping on the font.



This lamp has two unusual features. First, it is one of the small percentage of oil wicks with a screw cap. The second feature is truly unique in the form of a removable fuel reservoir that fits into an outer shell. The lamp uses a two wick system. The first wick is the traditional wick for the spout. A second smaller wick goes through the hole in the brass screw cap at the base of the removable fuel reservoir to feed the larger spout wick.

This lamp is $2 \frac{13}{16}$ " tall to the cap top with a $1 \frac{9}{16}$ " diameter base and a $3 \frac{11}{16}$ " spout. The screw cap on the top of the lamp is tin whereas the cap and threads on the base of the fuel reservoir are brass. The reservoir measures $2 \frac{5}{8}$ " in height.

This lamp was apparently manufactured in 1879 or 1880, when the firm's name was F.W. Watson & Son. The pictured lamp (opposite page) measures $2 \frac{3}{8}$ " tall to the top of the cap, with a spout that is 3" long from the front. The bottom is $1 \frac{9}{16}$ " in diameter. The cap hinge is similar to the Trethaway Bros. wire variety.

The Davis and Magee label is strange in that the patent name is *John O. Davies*, not Davis as stamped on the lamp. Where is the mistake, on the patent or on the lamp? I know of at least one other example of this rare lamp. Until the lamp is actually disassembled one has no idea of its unique features.

The second lamp, shown above, is the Watson lamp. It is a hybrid based upon a patent filed by John O. Davies, John O. Jones and Timothy Thomas, all of Plymouth, Pennsylvania. Jones is listed as assignor to Davies, and Thomas as assignor to one H. C. Magee, also of Plymouth. The lamp has two labels, one on each side of the front (see below).

Sources:

Scranton City Directory, 1875-1884.

U. S. Patent 220,582, October 19, 1878.

DAVIS & MAGEE
PAT'D. OCT 14, 1879

F.W. WATSON & SON
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