

# T. A. Black Oil Wick Lamp Patent

*Dave Johnson*

Trethaway Bros. of Parsons, PA, produced lamps based on the patents of many inventors, among them O'Keefe, Rollins, Richards, Felix and Black. On December 21, 1909 Thomas A. Black, of Shamokin, Northumberland County, Pennsylvania, received Patent No. 944,171 for new and useful improvements in miners lamps. The Shamokin City Directory of 1913-15 lists Thomas A. Black as a miner residing at 239 S. 6th St.

The object of Black's invention "is to provide a lamp having a ventilating tube of novel form to afford perfect ventilation, while preventing the escape of the oil therethrough, under all conditions of service." A further object was "to provide a ventilating tube which braces and reinforces the lamp supporting hook and is so arranged that it cannot be heated from the flame and impair the draft, while it will more effectually serve to prevent escape and waste of the oil and the dangers resulting therefrom."

According to the patent, "said tube is disposed at the highest and rearmost portion of the lamp, so that, irrespective of other considerations, the miner may incline his head forward to a greater degree with less liability of causing escape of oil through the tube than if the tube were arranged further forward, as in constructions commonly in use." Also, "the offset coil, worm, trap, or obstructing device (11) retains and prevents the escape of any oil which may, through any violent motion of the miner, find its way into the tube, so it will run back into the lamp and waste be thus prevented."



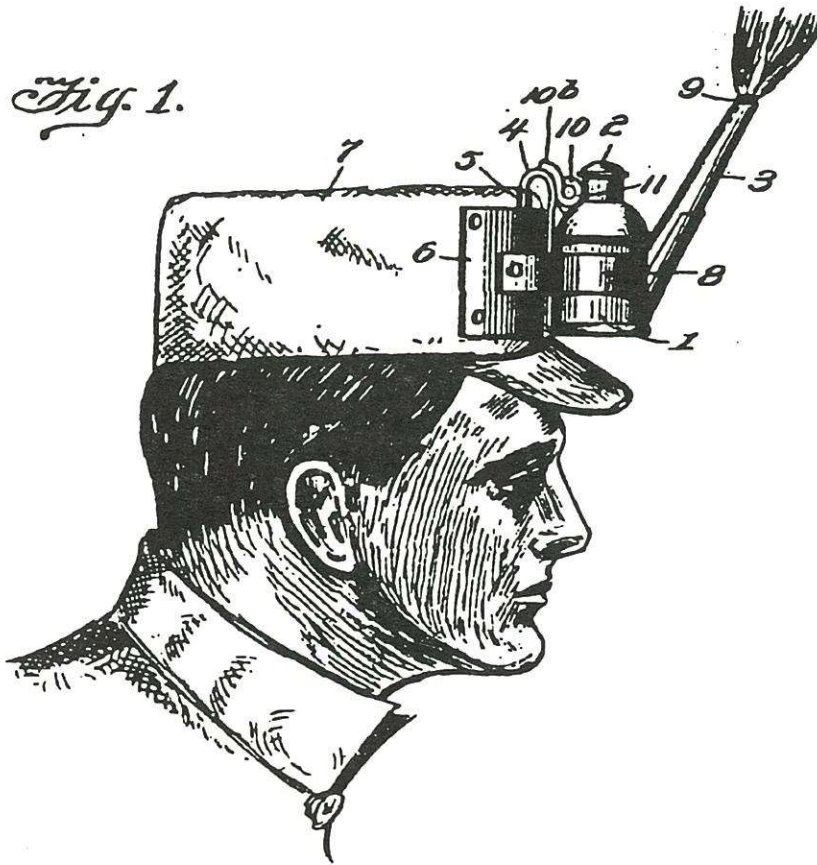
*Trethaway Bros. oil wick lamp with the T.A. Black vent tube.*

The lamp as manufactured is faithful to the patent drawing. The Trethaway Bros. lamp pictured here has the domed cap, separate collar, wire hook, spout brace and brass coiled vent tube illustrated in the patent drawing. This lamp is marked TRETHAWAY BROS., PARSONS, PA on one side of the font and PAT. APD. FOR on the other side. This would date the manufacture of this lamp sometime between April 2, 1909, when the patent was applied for, and December 21, 1909, when the patent was granted. This is the only example of this lamp that this author is aware of. I doubt it sold well for the reason that one of its alleged features, the coil in the vent tube, was also the reason it would not function properly. The smallest amount of fuel getting into the coil would settle to the bottom and effectively cut the air supply through the vent tube since there was no way for the fuel to escape once settling in the coil.

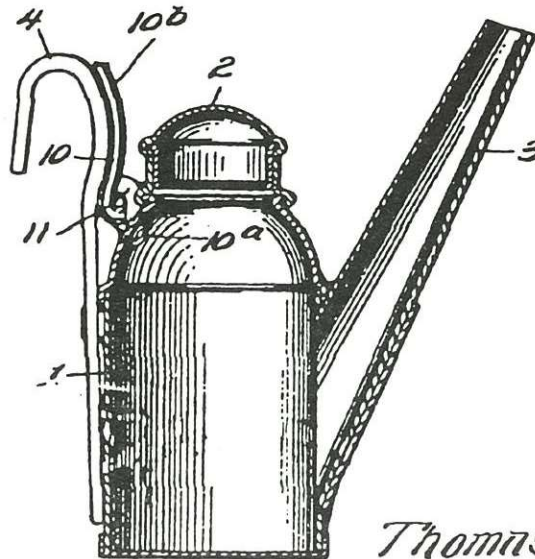


944,171.

Patented Dec. 21, 1909.



*Fig. 2*



Inventor  
*Thomas A. Black.*

Witnesses  
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*C. C. Jones.*

By *Victor J. Evans*

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