

# The Unusual Harrison Patent Oil Wick Lamp

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The oil wick lamp pictured here has a unique patented feature, apparently a shielded wick tube. The shield is soldered at the base of the wick tube or spout, and consists of five bars, interconnected in a zig-zag pattern. Each bar is approximately 3/16 inch wide sheet steel stock, with rounded edges. Secured to the top or fifth bar are two brass pivot bars hinged on each side with knurled brass screws. The two brass bars can move independently of each other at the pivots. The shield bears the lettering "Patented Mar 15th 1895" on the second bar from the bottom of the shield. There are no other markings on the lamp.

This clue proved to be enough to track down the patent for this lamp, and its maker. The device was patented by William Murray Harrison of Williamsport, Pennsylvania, a city bordering on the northern central bituminous coal regions. The claim is actually for "Improvements in Flame-Controlling Devices for Miners' and other Lamps," and the patent is worth quoting from:

*"The object of this invention is to lessen the smoking of lamps by applying governing devices to opposite sides of the flame, whereby the latter is compressed into a flatter form . . . but the air is not cut off from the edges of the flame. This compressing action secures for the flame its maximum candle power without smoking; an important consideration in miners' lamps especially, as miners' oil, though nominally vegetable, is habitually adulterated with smoke-evolving petroleum."*

This last comment refers to the fact that miners would often mix their oil with grease or kerosene to make it last, saving a few pennies, but making for a poor, smoky light. The patent goes on to explain the elaborate spout shield:

*"A pair of bails [is] mounted on pivots . . . turning up against opposite sides of the flame to regulate it. When such bails are pivoted directly to the wick-tube they heat the lamp too much. Therefore it is found best to make use of intervening supports or means of attachment which by their construction or material*

*reduce the heat thus transmitted . . . The flame controlling device also protects the flame somewhat against currents of air; and makes combustion more perfect by reason of its heat acquired from the said flame."*



*Note how rear bail has been bent to act as a wick snuffer.*

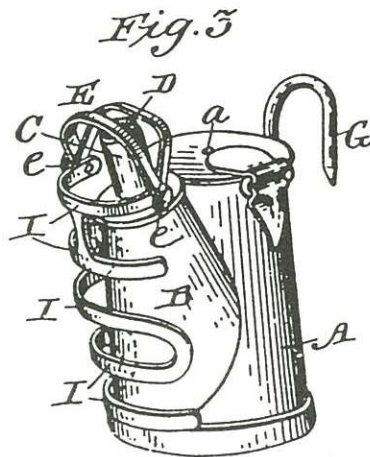
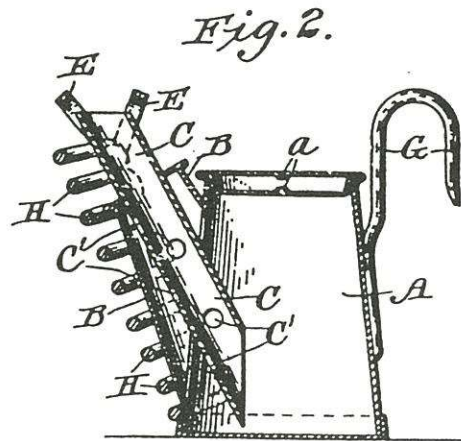
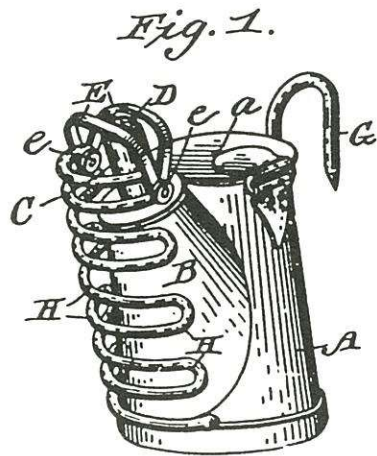
Whether or not the patented feature had the desired effects is not certain. On the example pictured here, the rear brass bail has been bent so that it conforms closely to the end of the wick-tube, and may have been modified to serve as a wick snuffer! A rare and interesting oil wick lamp.

(No Model.)

W. M. HARRISON.  
LAMP.

No. 535,135.

Patented Mar. 5, 1895.



WITNESSES

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