



# McClave Patent Oil-wick Cap Lamp

*by Dave Johnson*



One of the earliest patents for a miners' oil-wick cap lamp was issued to William McClave of Hyde Park, Luzerne County, Pennsylvania. McClave received patent 49,477 on August 15, 1865. His design is unique among oil-wick cap lamps. Unlike the usual vertical straight-sided or tapered cylinder font, his design had a larger diameter font sitting horizontally on a flat foot. The neck below the lid, the lid and the hook are all like other oil-wick lamps.

This design had the advantage of not rocking from side to side as did most oil-wick lamps with a standard style font and wire hook, the flat back prevented such movement. This design kept the lamp closer to the miner's head than a regular style oil-wick lamp with the same size spout since it was not as deep in thickness.

This lamp measures 3 1/2" tall to the top of the lid and 4 3/8" tall to the top of the spout. The font is 2 7/8" in diameter and 1 3/16" in depth. The spout is of single wall construction. While not marked I am convinced that this lamp is an unmarked example of the McClave

W. McCLAVE.  
Miner's Lamp.

No. 49,477.

Patented Aug. 15, 1865.

FIG. 1.

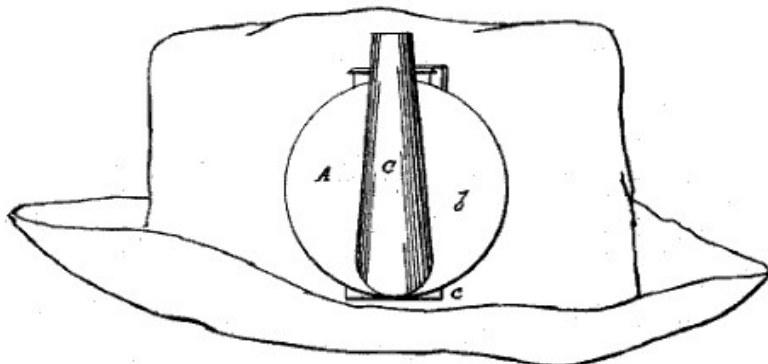
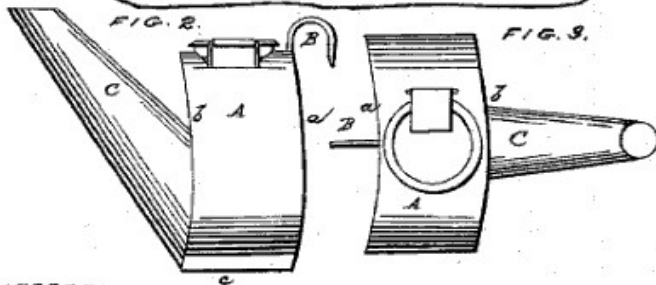
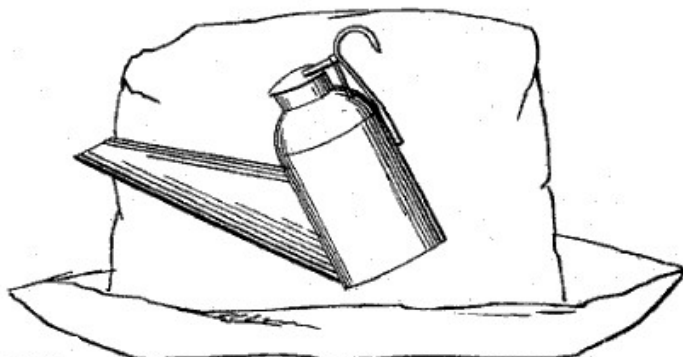


FIG. 4.



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*By [Signature]*

Patent oil-wick cap lamp. The original patent model for the McClave oil-wick lamp, with original Patent Office tag, was sold at a Christie's auction in 1996 that featured other patent models but only this single oil-wick lamp model. Thanks to Tony Moon for providing the photo from the Christie's auction catalog. My lamp does not incorporate the slightly concave front design shown in the patent. It is not unusual that the lamps that were actually produced do not exactly follow the patent drawing, many do not do so.

All we know of William McClave is that he was originally from Scotland and that he resided in Hyde Park, Pennsylvania at the time his patent was issued.

While I had earlier acquired a larger unmarked mule lamp of this design, with a harness bracket rather than a hanging hook, this was the first cap lamp of this design I had ever seen on the market when it recently appeared on eBay. This lamp is unfired and is a true rarity among oil-wick cap lamps.



Right: McClave patent model from a Christie's Auction catalog.