

## INK BOTTLE PATENTS

Each of the American colonies had a method of granting patents as early as the 17th century, but it wasn't until 1790 that a uniform patent law was passed by the first Congress, creating a three man board headed by Thomas Jefferson. The law required the submission of a model along with the application, if feasible. This was stopped in 1870 because even with two fires which destroyed a lot of models, the government was running out of space to store them. In 1870 models could be submitted only if it was deemed necessary and in 1880 this requirement was eliminated altogether.

Because of difficulty in submitting patent applications and the time it took for them to be reviewed, only three patents were issued in 1790. The patent application had to be taken to New York, later Philadelphia, and given to the 3-man board. This board had to decide if a patent

was in order and do it when not tending to other government business.

Another patent act was enacted in 1793 that made it easier for patents to be issued and the number of patents being submitted increased. After a fire in 1836 that burned most of the applications and models previously submitted, another patent act was passed by Congress. This 1836 act numbered the patents and made keeping records easier. These three acts are the basis of the Patent Office as we know it today. I highly recommend the book listed in my reference for anyone interested in the entire history of the patent office.

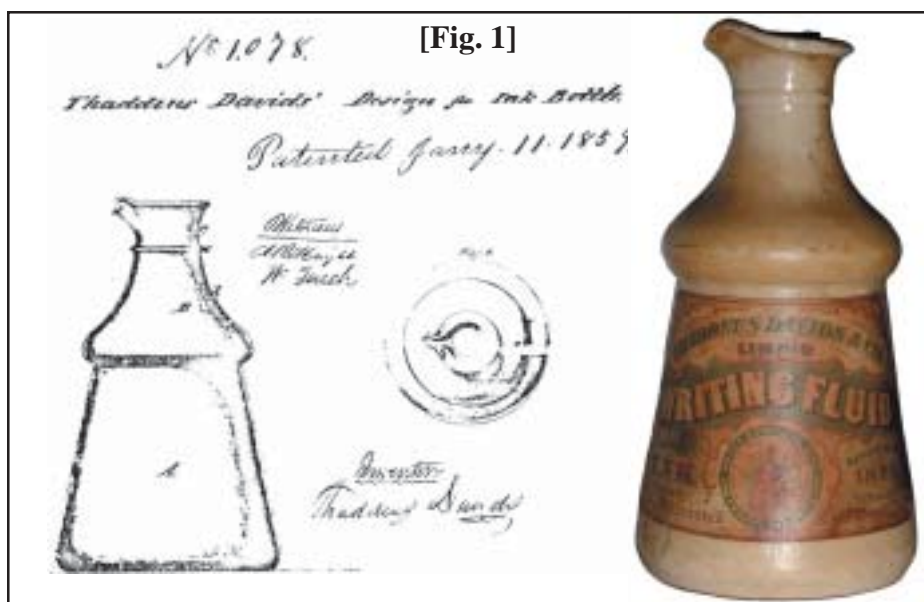
Today the patent office has its records online and anyone can access them. You must be able to read a Tiff formatted document to look at them. However, to look at a particular patent granted before 1976, you must know the exact number or search the entire date for which it was issued. A number of universities around

the country also have patent depositories for search purposes. This site is interesting not only for looking up bottle patents, but seeing all the unusual things for which patents were issued. Many companies wanted a bottle unique to them that would be instantly recognized, or in a shape that would appeal to buyers. The unique bottle was a form of advertising for the company.

Patents before 1843 were listed as inventions or utility patents. In 1842 a design patent category was created, but it was not until 1843 that the first design patent was issued. Bottles are listed as design patents, as well as inventions or utility patents. Some of these patents were registered by individuals and later transferred to companies, while others are patented by individual ink company owners, such as the John Moore "turtle" and the Thaddeus Davids ceramic bottle.

Thaddeus Davids patented his ceramic bottle in this country January 11, 1859 [Fig. 1] and takes one and a half handwritten pages to describe it. All records we have found indicate this is the first patented INK bottle in the US. He calls it a new design for an ink bottle and describes it as a "petticoat" bottle because of the flared bottom.

Over the years there have been a number of articles on Smith's Perpetual Calendar ink bottle [Fig. 2]. It had numbers on the body of the bottle, and months on the bottom. There was an adjustable band on the neck with days of the week. It was designed to be turned to bring the proper day of the week to the first day of month. The base had a covering to allow one (embossed) month to show through. This was patented by J. G. Smith of Cleveland, Ohio, on April 11, 1882 as a utility patent. It is known only in aqua and is considered uncommon, although it shows up on ebay about once or twice a year. However, with the complete bands and label, it is considered rare. This was probably an expensive bottle to make, thus making the ink more expensive, and not competitive with other inks during this time period. It is also interesting to note that he had previously patented another calendar inkstand in 1881 that was entirely different. If anyone is interested, it is utility patent number 239,867. We have never seen this bottle, so don't know if it was ever used.



(No Model.)

J. G. SMITH.  
CALENDAR INKSTAND.

[Fig. 2]

No. 256,396.

Patented Apr. 11, 1882.

Fig. 1.

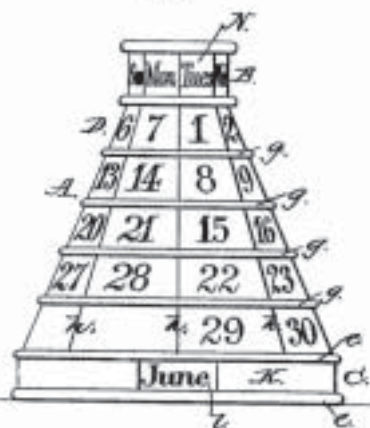
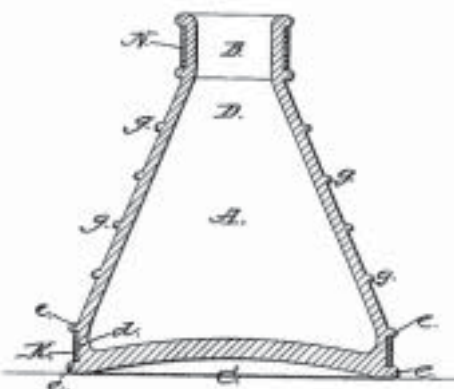


Fig. 2.

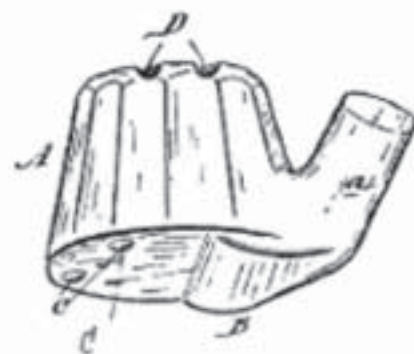


[Fig. 3]

DESIGN.  
M. H. HAGERTY.  
Fountain Bottle.

Patented July 13, 1880

No. 11,868.



John Moore's Design, for an Ink-Stand.

0002211 Patented Octo. 31. 1865.

Fig. 2.

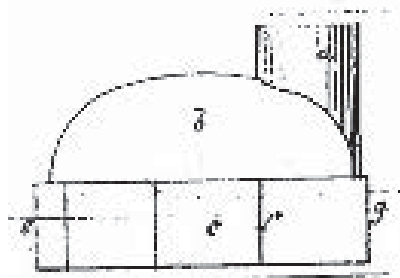
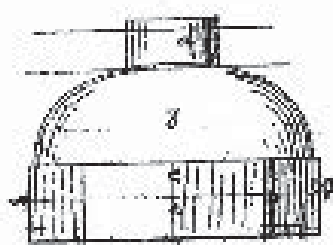
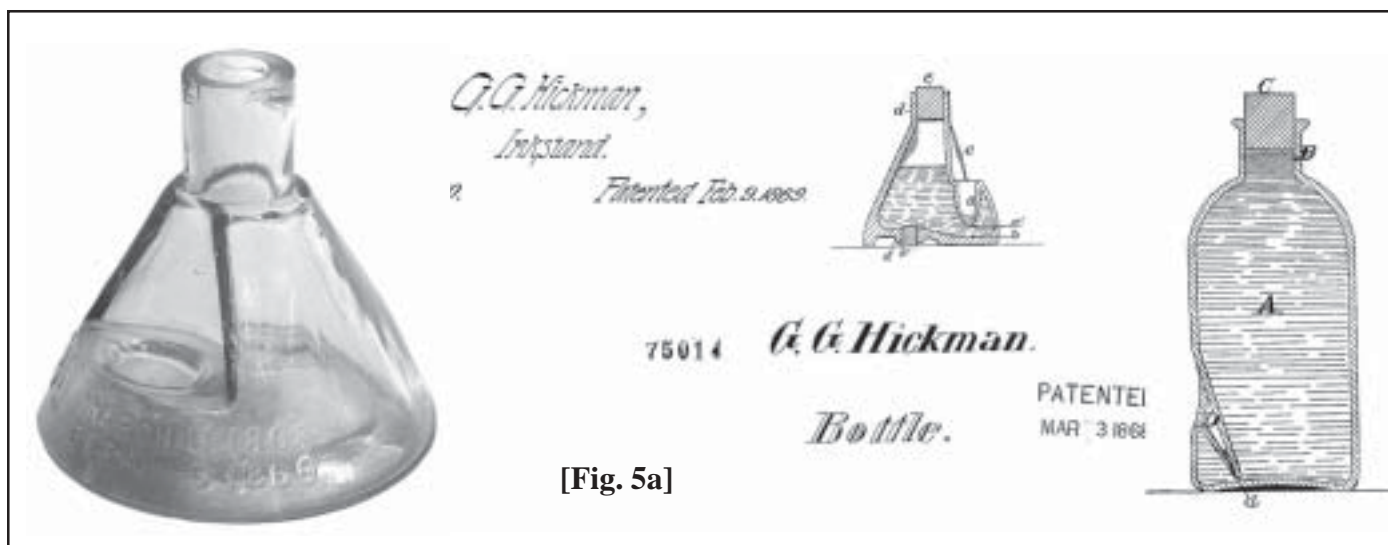


Fig. 4.



[Fig. 4]





[Fig. 5a]

M. H. Hagerty of New York, NY, was issued design patent number 11,868 for what he calls a "Fountain Bottle." [Fig. 3] We call these "teakettles" today. It has pen rests on the top. There are two known aqua versions of this. One has Patent Applied For on the bottom and the other gives the actual patent date. The only label we have ever seen on one of these is for Stafford's Ink.

The John Moore "turtle" inkstand [Fig. 4] was patented October 31, 1865 and the patent date is embossed on some of them. It is design patent number 2211 and gives his address as Warren, Massachusetts. In a handwritten one page description, he states he has invented a new and useful design for an ink bottle. This

design proved to be very popular as most large companies used a similar version of this type bottle.

G.G. Hickman, of Coatesville, Pennsylvania, invented a unique bottle that was apparently not very popular. The only record of the master ink size that we can find being used was made in a square shape [Fig. 5a] and used by Williams Ink Works, NY, according to Covill in his book (C. 924). The small cone shape [Fig. 5b] we have not been able to find with a company name. It only has two patent dates on it. Both were made so that if the bottle was filled with ink and corked, the external pressure of the atmosphere would prevent the escape of liquid through the hole in the side of the bottle and the pen could be inserted here for ink. Patent dates for these are March 3, 1868 and Feb. 9, 1869. Both are listed as inventions or utility patents.

But perhaps the most unusual patent we came across was utility patent number 586,143 by W. B. North, of Sikeston, Missouri, on July 13, 1897 [Fig. 6]. A rubber tube was attached to the ink bottle and also to the pen and you would never run out of ink or have to keep dipping the pen in ink. We can't imagine this would have worked very well and would very much like to see an example of this if one were ever manufactured. With dip pens, one had to be constantly dipping in the ink, so perhaps this was invented out of his own frustration.

Another unusual bottle we have never seen an example of is utility patent 562,856 by E. Shafer, of Tekama, Nebraska, on June

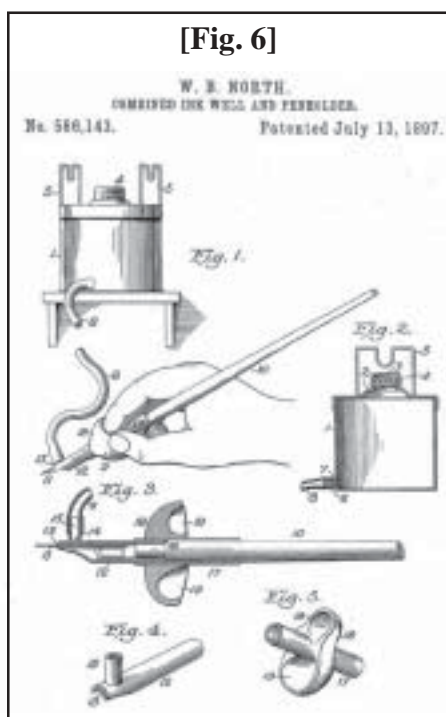
[Fig. 5b]



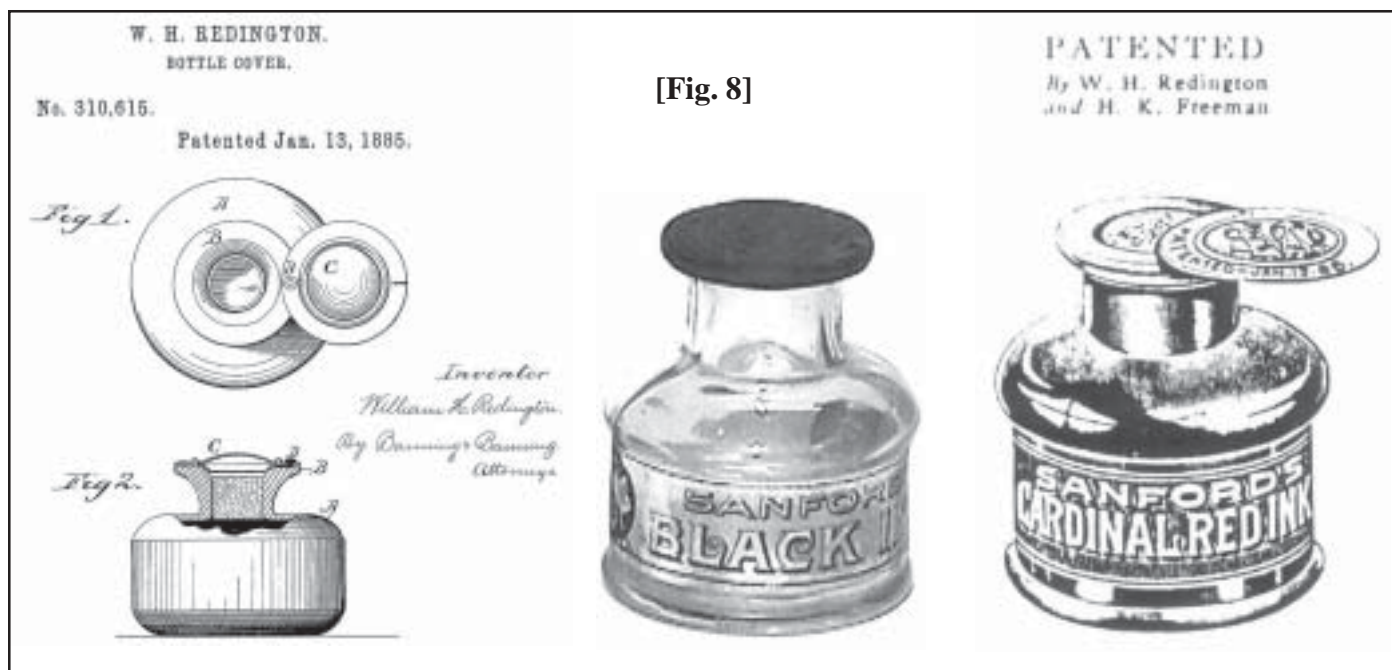
30, 1896 [Fig. 7 at the top of the article]. It worked on the principal of a ball shaped object made of cork, wood, or rubber with a weight attached would prevent ink from spilling. The weight would pull the ball to top of the bottle. If anyone has ever seen it, or has one, we would love to know.

Figure 8 shows a patent for a metal cover that could be used on an ink bottle. The cork would be taken out of the bottle and the lid would swing out and in to close the top securely. The Sanford Ink Co. obtained patent rights for this and called it their Universal Ink Stand. In advertising, Sanford said it was the only practical stand with a permanent cover that met the demand for a five or ten cent ink. The patent date was Jan. 13, 1885.

In 1925, the government sold at







[Fig. 8]

at auction (because of lack of space) the 19th century patent models that had been stored. The most important ones were kept and sent to the Smithsonian and others given to schools or family members of the inventor. These models have been sold several times since then. About five years ago, we had the opportunity to buy an 1871 inkwell model that was one of many offered to the general public at antique shows. It was made to sit in a hole in the desk and the teacher had a handle that

could lock it in, thus assuring that the students could not spill the ink [Fig. 9] James Bowen of Boston called his invention "An Improvement in Inkstands." We thought this was an interesting piece of Americana to go with our bottle collection.

There is a wealth of information available, so check out the patent web site if you have Tiff viewing capability.

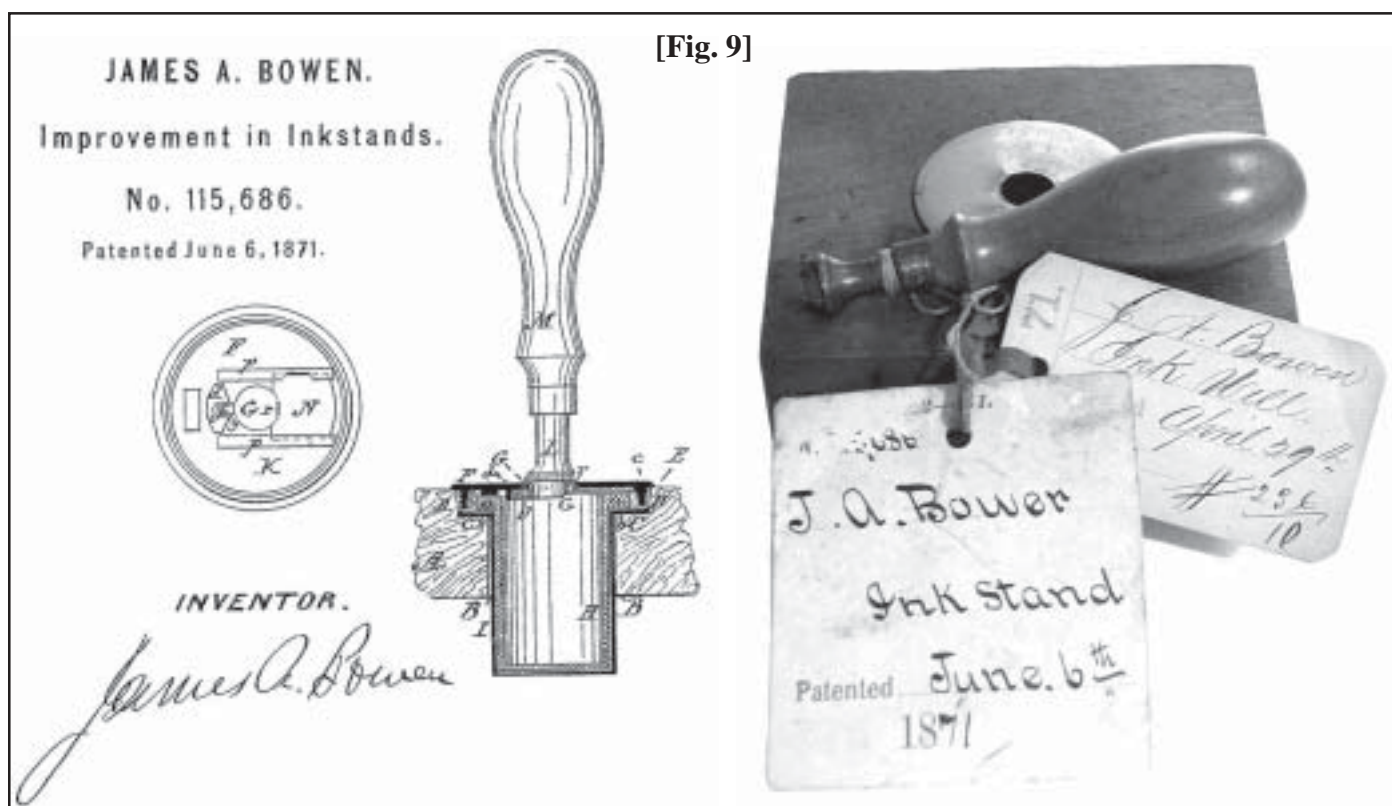
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<http://www.uspto.gov/patft/>

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*The Patent Office Pony: A History of the Early Patent Office*, Kenneth W. Dobyns, 1997. Published by: Sergeant Kirkland's Museum and Historical Society, Inc. Fredericksburg, VA 22401

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[Fig. 9]