

The Chunk Stove

On 19th February 1839 Richard Prosser was granted Patent No 7969 for his invention that he called "Certain Improvements In Apparatus for Generating Steam, Consuming Smoke, and Heating Apartments". The grant was conditional on his filing a full specification within 6 months, which he did on 17th August. The duration of the Patent would have been 14 years.

The Patent's first 2 pages describe his invention for generating steam using vertical tubes attached to the bottom of ordinary boilers and a further invention for consuming smoke produced by a boiler. This is the first evidence of his experimenting with tubes for use under pressure. No further reference has been discovered to these inventions.

The Patent's next 3 pages describe the invention for "heating apartments, [*which*] consists in a peculiarly constructed stove, which is denominated for the sake of distinction "the Chunk Patent Stove" ".

The reason he felt it necessary to ascribe a brand name to the stove is made clear in an article in the Mechanic's Magazine dated 30 November 1839, which with reference to the approaching winter, describes the "*announcement of a multitude of devices for the alleviation of its attendant discomforts*". At least 6 new stoves had been advertised in a recent edition of one provincial paper including the Chunk Stove. The MM article is in fact headed "Prosser's Patent Chunk Stove" and two and a half of the three pages describe it in detail and laud its superiority and advantages over its rivals. Richard is described as "a gentleman well known in the mechanical world for his talent and ingenuity".

The stove is coal burning and is perhaps best described as a parlour stove but, in addition to being suitable for all household and office rooms, could also be used to warm greenhouses, churches, schools and even ships cabins, in fact "*all situations requiring warmth with perfect safety and cleanliness*" according to an article in The Mirror dated 4th January 1840.

The design was admitted to be very simple, essentially a removable bucket or fire pail within a cylindrical outer case, a valve to regulate the air intake and a bedding of sand to prevent noxious fumes escaping

other than through the flue. If used correctly a filled fire pail should last 24 hours.

The question is why did Richard choose to call his invention the "Chunk Stove"? Why not name it "Prosser's Stove"? Other stoves mentioned in the MM article are named after their maker.

By 1839 Richard had acquired his own workshops in Watery Lane, Birmingham. Could the Chunk Stove be named after the Chunk Engine Works, in Coventry Road, Birmingham where it may have been originally developed. It might also be an acknowledgement of this type of stove having originated in America, perhaps communicated to Richard by Mr Thomas Morton Jones. Mr Jones was an American businessman and Richard had been working for him at these Works and also at the Chunk Nail Company based at the Britannia Nail Manufactory in nearby Aston, probably as his chief engineer. "Chunk" is a word of American origin and reference is made to Chunk Stoves on American websites. American stove technology was well advanced by this time and it would be interesting to learn whether Richard had based his stove on an American pattern.

The Mechanics Magazine in January 1841 records that it had received over 2000 favourable testimonials from purchasers of the Chunk Stove, several fully endorsing the Magazine's self confessed hyperbole and "high encomiums" in the earlier issue. Presumably there were far more purchasers of the stoves than the 2000 who bothered to write in to voice their satisfaction. This begs the question as to where the stoves were manufactured.

Searches in the British Newspaper Archive have revealed that the Chunk Stove Patent must have been sold to Messrs Rippon & Burton Ironmongers of Wells Street, just off London's Oxford Street. In London press adverts they claim to be the sole owners of the Patent and also the sole manufacturers of the stove. Commencing October 1839 adverts appeared in papers nationwide placed by retailers acting as agents authorised to sell Chunk Stoves. Many were in the south-east of England, but adverts also appeared in newspapers for cities and towns as far a-field as Kendal, York, Manchester, Hereford, Taunton, High Wycombe, Norwich and Chelmsford. Surprisingly none appeared in the Birmingham newspapers.

Extract of the Rippon & Burton Chunk stove leaflet

BY HER MAJESTY'S ROYAL LETTERS PATENT.

THE CHUNK STOVE,
INVENTED BY MR. RICHARD PROSSER, CIVIL ENGINEER.

RIPPON & BURTON,
SOLE PROPRIETORS
AND MANUFACTURERS.

Price in London:
Plain £3. *Fluted*, £3. 10s. *Package*, 2s. 6d.

If bought of Country Agents:
Plain, £3. 5s. *Fluted*, £3s. 15s.

View of Stove as in use. Sectional View of Stove.

THE peculiar advantages of the CHUNK PATENT STOVE are—its entire freedom from dust or smoke; its very great economy of fuel; and its perfect safety from fire. It has no door, and does not

