

Who Invented the Fleaker?

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Wikipedia defines a “fleaker” (figure 1) as a cross between an Erlenmeyer flask and a Griffin beaker – its name being an obvious hybridization of the words flask and beaker. The brainchild of Roy Eddleman, the founder of Spectrum Medical Industries, the name fleaker is now a registered trademark of Spectrum Laboratories and has been licensed for manufacture to Corning Glass. As such, the fleaker is of interest to the historian as one of the few recent attempts to add to the chemist’s traditional workaday repertoire of laboratory glassware.



Figure 1. Typical modern-day fleakers with their patented caps.

However, as every historian knows, very few innovations are without partial anticipations of one sort or another, and consultation of our historical collections quickly reveals that the idea of combining the merits of both the laboratory flask and the laboratory beaker into one ubiquitous piece of laboratory glassware actually has a long history. Thus our collection of laboratory apparatus catalogs shows that, as early as 1894, some apparatus dealers were offering for sale a piece of laboratory glassware known as a “beaker flask” (figure 2) and our museum collections own not only examples of the modern fleaker, but also varia-

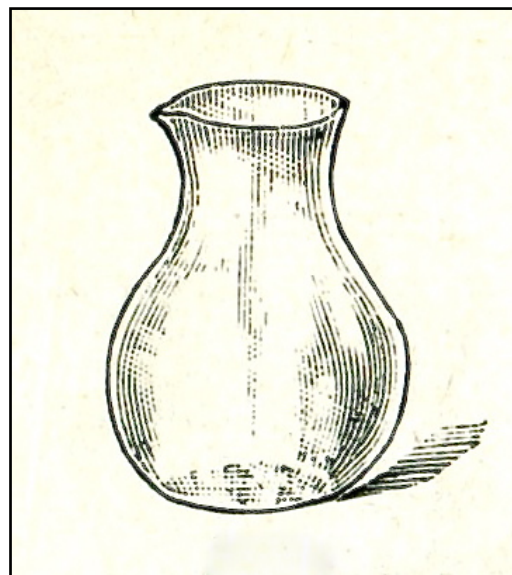


Figure 2. A “beaker flask” as depicted in the 1894 catalog of the Townson & Mercer company of London.



Figure 3. Typical “fleakers,” both old (left) and new (right) from the Jensen-Thomas Apparatus Collection.

tions of this older precursor as well (figure 3).

Closer comparison of the beaker flask with the fleaker reveals that, whereas the former was roughly 90% flask and 10% beaker, the latter is roughly 90% beaker and only 10% flask. In addition, the fleaker's utility in the laboratory probably owes as much to its easy seal cap as to its overall shape.

References and Notes

1. *Townson & Mercer's Catalogue of Chemical and Physical Apparatus and Chemicals*, London, March 1894, p. 86. The beaker flask came in six sizes, ranging from 100 mL to 1000 mL.