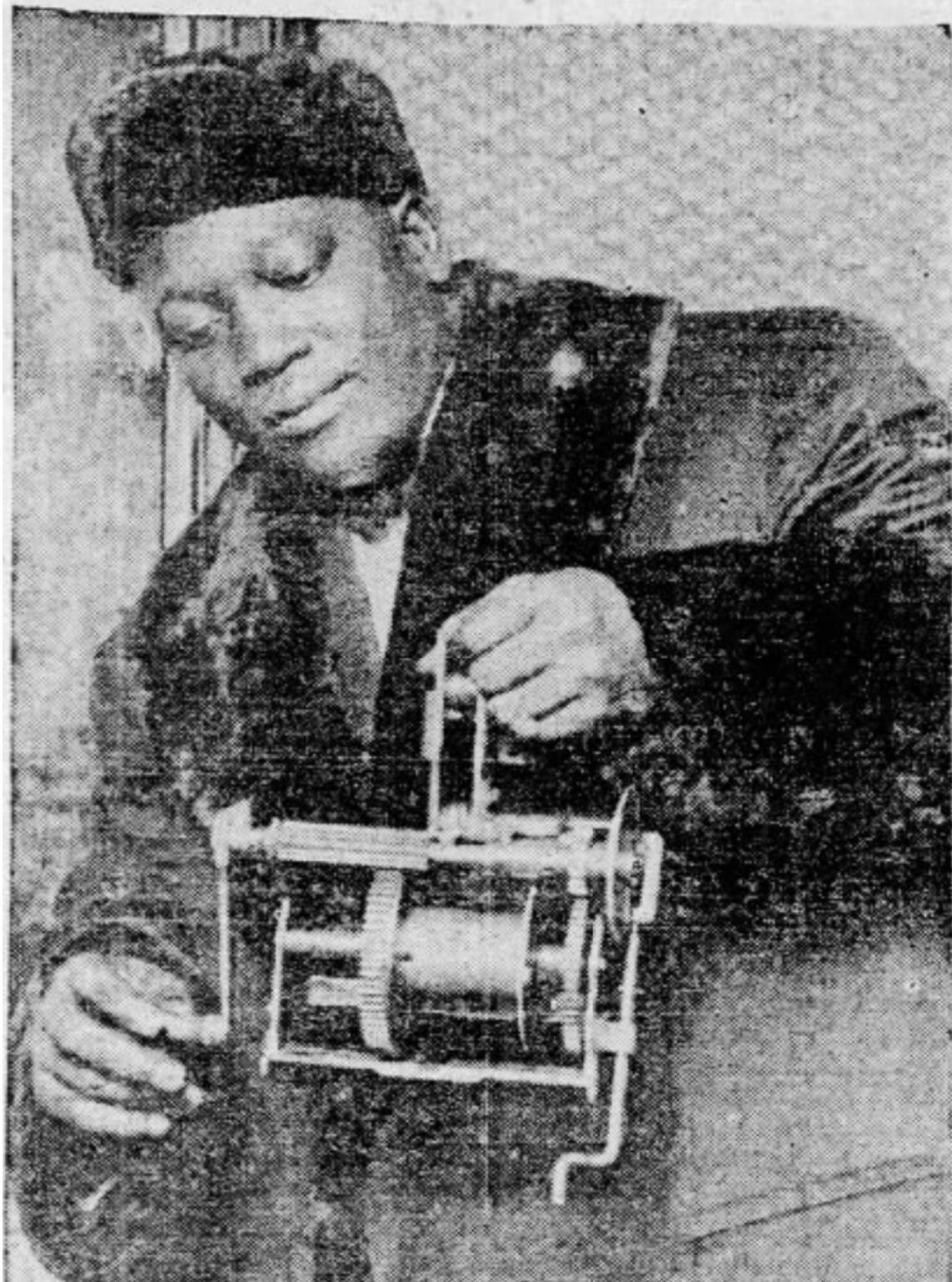


Jack Johnson with Model of New Lifter.



The Chicago Tribune on December 10, 1910 at page 8 featured a story title "Negro Champion A Real Inventor Johnson Designs Hydraulic Lift Able to Hoist Ever So Many Pounds. Secures Patent On It. Fighter Will Show Friends Today Working Principles of Product of Mind" "Johnson in talking of his invention last night said that he had played the part of wisdom for a long time and he has kept his invention well covered so that no one could steal it from him." "'You see,' said the fighter-actor, etc., 'I didn't let any one know about the hydraulic lifter until I had it patented. I secured the patent a week ago and now am ready to show it.'" "How did you get on to it?" was asked. "Well, you see," replied Jack, "I just stumbled on it like a person does stumble on things once in a while."

Then on December 12, 1910 the Chicago Tribune at page 13 ran a story titled "Negro Jubilant Over Invention Jack Johnson Explains How New Hydraulic Lifter Surpasses Others. Will Not Sell "Find" Champion Says He Will Manufacture Machine and Earn Money to Retire" "Jack declared he expected to reap enough money from the sale of the machine to keep him out of the boxing ring.... [and]... said there is not enough money in the world to purchase his holding." He was working on making improvements and intended to build a factory on the south side of Chicago. "The invention, which works on gears made of the best quality bronze, can be run by hand, steam, electricity, or water power,

Melville Butler

Not long after Johnson got to Leavenworth, he welcomed an old acquaintance to the prison. Melville Butler was a jug-eared stickup man and former cheese salesman from Indiana who, like the ex-champion, was beginning a one-year sentence for white slavery.\* The two men had met somewhere in Mexico, where Johnson had told so many gaudy stories about himself that Butler asked why he hadn't published an autobiography for American readers. Never had the time, the ex-champion had answered then. They had nothing but time now, Butler said. Why didn't they try to produce a book together? Johnson liked the idea and began jotting down in pencil in his big self-confident scrawl what he remembered best about his boyhood and early

ring career. Butler corrected his sometimes wayward grammar and spelling but was careful not to alter Johnson's distinctive voice. "I have used his expressions," Butler wrote. "The prize ring is not an elocution contest. . . . My story is [meant] for the virile, the red-blooded." The little heap of pages in Butler's cell grew slowly, but Johnson lost interest once he had described in loving detail just how he'd beaten Tommy Burns, and the manuscript was never finished.†

Johnson had plenty of other things to do to fill the time. Over the years, nothing had amused skeptical white reporters more than his occasional claims that he was an inventor as well as an athlete; the idea of a negro inventor—especially one who was also a prizefighter—struck white newspapermen and a good many of their readers as inherently ludicrous. At various times, he said he'd been working on a new kind of coupler for railroad cars, a flying machine, even a treatment for tuberculosis. Johnson was not above exaggerating his accomplishments, and no evidence survives for any of those claims, but in the spring of 1921 "JOHN ARTHUR JOHNSON, a citizen of the United States, and a resident of Leavenworth, in the county of Leavenworth and State of Kansas," applied for two patents—for an improved automobile wrench and a "theft-preventing device for vehicles"—and was awarded them: Nos. 1,413,121 and 1,438,709.\*

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\*A fellow inmate named James Pearl Thompson shared the second patent with Johnson. He worked in the prison automobile repair shop and was a member of the Industrial Workers of the World from Chicago, imprisoned for "conspiracy." Johnson had quietly obtained still another patent—for a "hydraulic lift"—back in 1910. (Chicago *Tribune*, December 10, 1910.)

†When Butler left prison in the summer of 1921, he unaccountably left the manuscript in the care of a thief named Bernard A. Muckerman. When he wrote to the warden, asking that he be allowed to contact Muckerman to tell him where to send it, the warden refused to help: ex-convicts were not allowed to communicate with one another, and no one had given either him or Jack Johnson permission to write anything for publication while in prison. The fragmentary manuscript languished, unread, in the Leavenworth files for some eighty years. Excerpts from it appear throughout the first half of this book, attributed as "Prison Memoir."

Application filed March 23, 1921

Inventor

[Johnson John Arthur](#)

Original Assignee

[Johnson John Arthur](#)

Priority date

[1921-03-23](#)

## The Invention of the Wrench

In 1920, Johnson decided to return to the U.S. to serve his sentence. It was during this time that he invented the wrench. He needed a tool that would tighten or loosen nuts and bolts. There wasn't one at the time so he made his own and received a patent for it in 1922.

Johnson's wrench was unique in that it could be easily taken apart for cleaning or repair and its gripping action was superior to other tools on the market at the time. Johnson is credited with coining the term "wrench."

<https://www.thoughtco.com/jack-johnson-inventor-4078001>

While in prison, Johnson needed a specialized tool for a job he was doing so he modified a wrench. He would patent his idea.

While incarcerated, Johnson found need for a tool that would help tighten loosened fastening devices, and modified a wrench for the task. He patented his improvements on April 18, 1922, as US Patent 1,413,121.[29][30]He was released on July 9, 1921.[1]

***JACK JOHNSON IS NO. 15,461.; Former  
Champion Is Taken to Leavenworth to Serve  
His Term.***

***September 21, 1920 – “Johnson had been made orderly of the prison baseball park. His duties are to keep the athletic grounds in good condition. Later on, according to the Warden, he will be made director of athletics.”***

<https://timesmachine.nytimes.com/timesmachine/1920/09/21/100985256.pdf>

[B25B13/16](#) Spanners; Wrenches with adjustable jaws the jaws being slidable by screw or nut

"george c. myers" w.j. buckley witness "jack johnson"

<https://www.archives.gov/publications/prologue/2010/summer/leavenworth.html>

Be it known that I, JOHN ARTHUR JOHNSON, a citizen of the United States, and a resident of Leavenworth, in the county of Leavenworth and State of Kansas, have invented certain new and useful Improvements in Wrenches, of which the following is a specification. 1

My invention relates to improvements in wrenches and has for its object to provide an improved wrench which is of simple and durable construction, reliable in operation and easy and inexpensive to manufacture, which may be easily and readily adjusted and which is adapted to exert a powerful gripping action upon the work.

Another object is to provide an improved wrench of this character which in assembly presents a substantially unitary structure and which may be easily disassembled for purposes of replacement or repair.

The patent issued on April 18, 1922 and the location stated in the patent is Leavenworth, Kansas:

<https://patentimages.storage.googleapis.com/51/97/c1/816d3376f83da8/US1413121.pdf>

Leavenworth is also where Johnson served prison time in the United States Penitentiary from September 1920 to July 9, 1921.

There was some media attention in 2015 for Johnson and his patent. Apparently a hoax tried to tie the term "monkey" to Johnson in a derogatory way for his patent which was about improvements to the

wrench. The term monkey wrench apparently started 50 years before Johnson's invention.

Do you want to send a brief article idea to Gene Quinn at IPWatchDog?

The National Archives at Kansas City maintains Inmate Case Files from Leavenworth Federal Penitentiary covering the time period 1895-1957. Content can vary widely from file to file. Most files include a mugshot. When requesting a copy of a case file from the National Archives at Kansas City, please include the full inmate name and corresponding inmate number. Contact staff regarding inmate files of persons who entered Leavenworth ca. 1932-1957.

<https://www.archives.gov/kansas-city/finding-aids/leavenworth-penitentiary/inmates-i-j-k.html#j>

Johnson was a man of enormous courage and surprising range. He played several musical instruments, applied for and received two patents.

<https://www.nytimes.com/2004/11/07/books/review/unforgivable-blackness-the-great-black-hope.html>

It is hard to explain why Arthur John Johnson, born to two ex-slaves in Galveston, Tex., in March 1878, turned out as extraordinary as he did. Ward attributes it to a strong mother and the relatively tolerant racial attitudes of his seaport hometown. He describes Johnson's early years as a prizefighter, when many of his trademarks appeared: his talent (more as a defensive counterpuncher than a free swinger), his extravagance, his in-your-face self-confidence.

Johnson announces he has got the recipe for a wonderful **patent** medicine that will remake his fortune, but at the same time tries to borrow money, explaining that his agents in America are holding up his money and says he still owns Chicago tenements. . . .

page 393

1,438,709

April 4, 1921 applied

December 12, 1922 granted

Classifications

B60R25/04 Fittings or systems for preventing or indicating unauthorised use or theft of vehicles operating on vehicle systems or fittings, e.g. on doors, seats or windscreens operating on the propulsion system, e.g. engine or drive motor

The present invention relates to theft preventing devices for vehicles and is especially adapted for use with vehicles having a power plant of the internal combustion type.

The object of the invention is to provide a theft preventing device of this character which is associated with the fuel supply and which may be locked to shut off the fuel supply and preclude operation of the engine by an unauthorized person, which may be easily released by an authorized person to permit the free flow of fuel and operation of the vehicle, and which is of simple and durable construction, reliable in operation and easy and inexpensive to manufacture and apply.

Another object is to provide a theft preventing device of this character which is especially adapted for use with internal combustion engines of automobiles, trucks, tractors, boats, aeroplanes and the like, and which it is desired may be utilized as a throttle for controlling the flow of the fuel to the engine.