

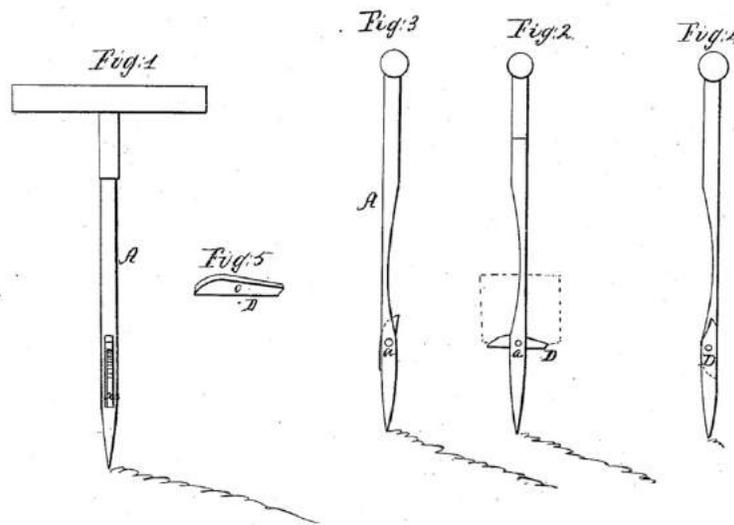
American Corkscrews with a Pivoted Lateral Projection

by

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As we are aware, the first two patents for corkscrews awarded in the United States were patented on the same day, March 27, 1860; the M.L. Byrn (patent # 27,615) and the Philo Blake (patent # 27,665). There was a third patent for a cork extractor awarded that year, and its functionality is most interesting.

The Charles Alexander patent (#29,539) was awarded on August 7, 1860, and consists of a rod/spike and tab that was mortised in the shank of the spike. With the Alexander patent, the point of the extractor was intended to be pushed through the center of the cork whereupon a lateral projection, Alexander in his patent description calls it a bar, was released as a result of the cork passing over the projection. With lateral projection now resting perpendicular to the bottom of the cork, the cork can be pulled with greater ease.



Charles Alexander's 1860 patent (# 29,539) drawing

Alexander's patent description reads:

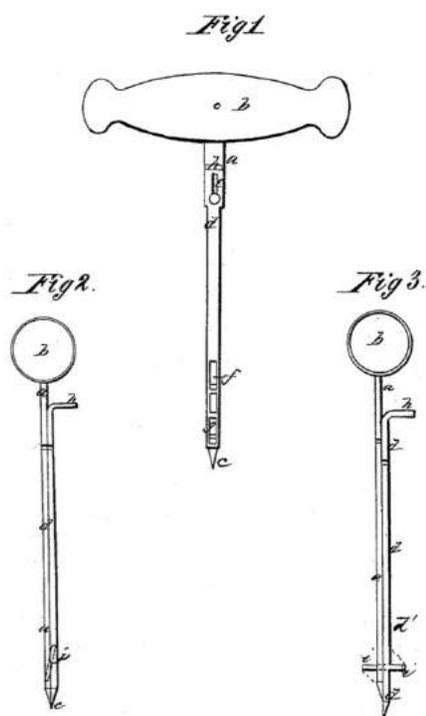
When a cork is to be removed with this drawer, the rod A, is thrust through the cork, with the bar D standing in the position seen in Fig. 3, the lower end of the bar being hid in the mortise so as not to catch upon the cork as it goes in; but the upper end, projecting slightly as seen, so that after the bar has passed through, it will catch as it returns, and assuming the position seen in Fig. 2, will draw the cork with it, without breaking or materially injuring it.

The 1860 Alexander patent makes for an interesting starting point, as amongst the myriad of patent drawings that appear in back pages of O’Leary’s tome on American corkscrews, there are eleven patented corkscrews and cork extractors have a similar functionality; each is designed where a spike or helix is inserted through the center of the cork, and after penetrating the appropriate distance, using the language from the patent descriptions, a lateral tab, a pivoting bridging bar, a pivoted bar or dog, a prong, spring-prong, spur, or a pivoted lateral projection, is released, thus providing additional grip allowing the cork to be withdrawn. After withdrawal, the projection goes back into place, allowing for the cork to be removed from the extractor.

Until recently, the only American patent that has been found within our respective collections that worked in this fashion is the 1909 Call’s Ideal Cork-Puller (patent # 911,922). Even as late as the publication of the *World Class Corkscrews* book, the only American patent pictured with this functionality, is the Call’s Ideal. And, while there are others of different national origins, the authors referring to this style as “flip-tip,” only eight in total are shown.

I should add here, that there are similar functioning extractors that were designed to be inserted between the neck of the bottle and the cork, but this article focuses only on those that were intended to go through the center of the cork.

Due to the fact that examples of these patents have still yet to have been found, I am including the patent drawings for each patent, as well as a brief explanation of the functionality of each piece as described by the patentees.



James Van Zandt’s 1867 patent (# 67,234) drawing

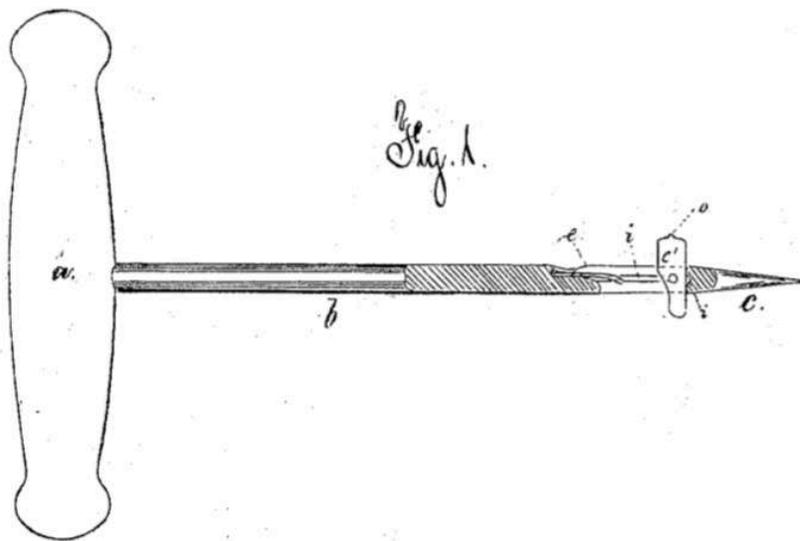
Seven years after the Alexander patent, on August 7, 1867, James Van Zandt was awarded patent # 67,234 for his Improved Cork-Pull.

In Van Zandt’s patent, he explains: *The cork-drawer being in the position indicated in Fig. 1, it is forced down into the centre of the cork until the swing-bar has been pushed beyond the bottom of the cork, when, on drawing up the cork-drawer, the friction of the cork on the sliding prong d causes it to descend, b which the swing-bar is placed in a right-angled position to the prongs, and the cork follows the instrument as it is drawn out of the bottle. The cork being drawn, it is easily*

disengaged from the prongs by sliding back the prong d by means of the thumb-piece and drawing it off, when the cork-drawer is again ready for use.

On February 25, 1868, David Williamson was granted patent # 74,966 for an Improved Cork-Pull. In his patent, it is described as follows:

The nature of my said invention consists in a cork-pull or drawer made, made with a mortise containing a sliding and pivoted cross-bar, having a catch at one end, and acted upon by a spring in said mortise, so that the cross-bar will be contained in the mortise, and pass freely through the cork, but the friction of the cork against its edges unlatches it, so that the spring can throw said bar crosswise to the pull after it has cleared the inner end of the cork; thereby said cross-bar is in a position for drawing the cork, after which the cross bar may be turned into its slot or mortise, latched, and then the cork is free to be drawn off the pull.

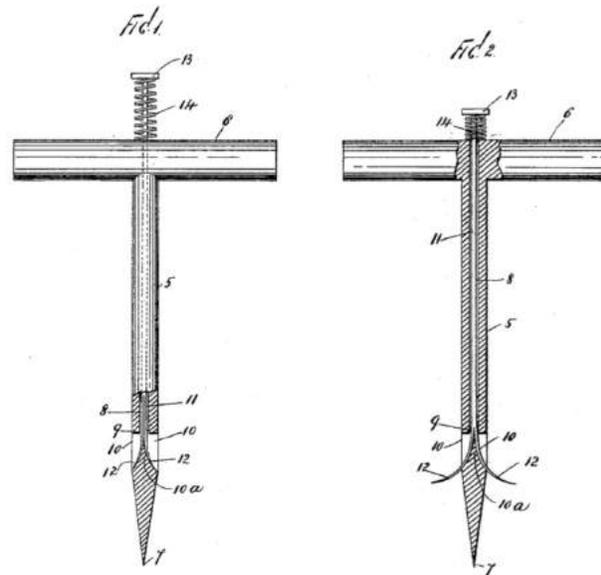


David Williamson's 1868 patent (# 74,966) drawing

On September 12, 1899, Henry E. Peterson was awarded patent # 632,742 for his "Device for Pulling Corks." In his patent, a spike is inserted into the cork, and once it is appropriately inserted, the button on the top is depressed, and two lateral spikes are extended. These "spring-prongs," unlike the previous patents listed above, were intended to be released into the interior of the cork, rather than below it.

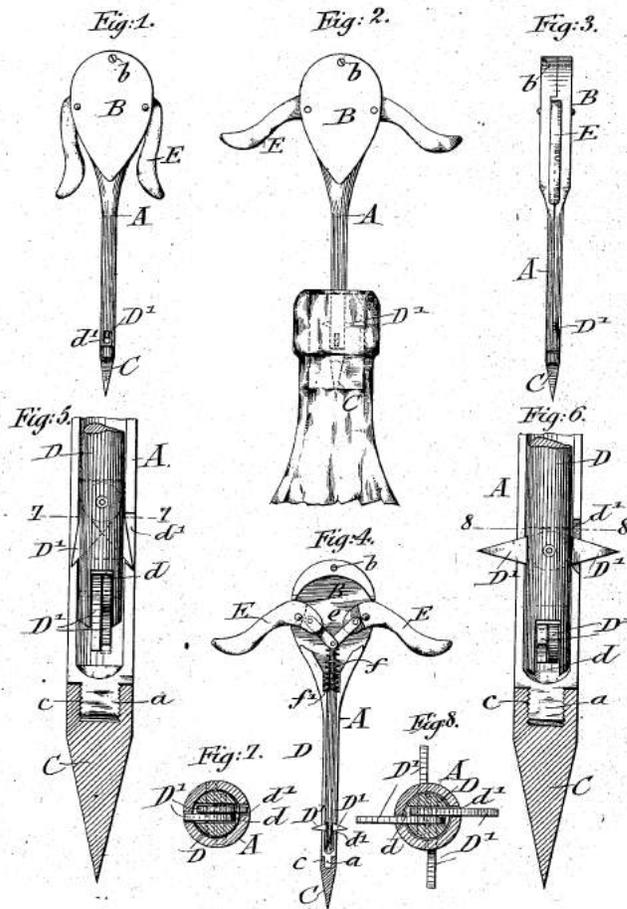
Peterson's patent description explains:

Whenever it is desired to withdraw a cork or stopper from a bottle or similar vessel, the point 7 of the shaft 5 is forced downwardly into



Henry E. Peterson's 1899 patent (# 632,742) drawing

said cork or stopper until the slots or openings 10 are concealed thereby. The rod 11 is then forced downwardly by pressure applied to the button or head 13. This operation forces the spring-prongs 12 outwardly into the stopper, and the stopper is removed by pulling on the cross-head or handle 6. When the pressure is removed from the button or head 13, the rod 11 is thrown upward, as shown in Fig. 1, by the spring 14, and the spring-prongs 12 are drawn into the position shown in said figure, and the cork or stopper may be removed from the shaft 5.



Rudolph Dressler's 1903 patent (# 730,007) drawing

Rudolph Dressler was awarded patent # 730,007 for his cork puller on June 2, 1903. In Dressler's patent, he also uses lateral projections. In his case, raising the arms of the handle releases lateral "spurs." As with the Peterson patent of 1899, the spurs are intended to be released into the interior of the cork, rather than below the cork.

Dressler's patent description, like his drawing, is very detailed, explaining:

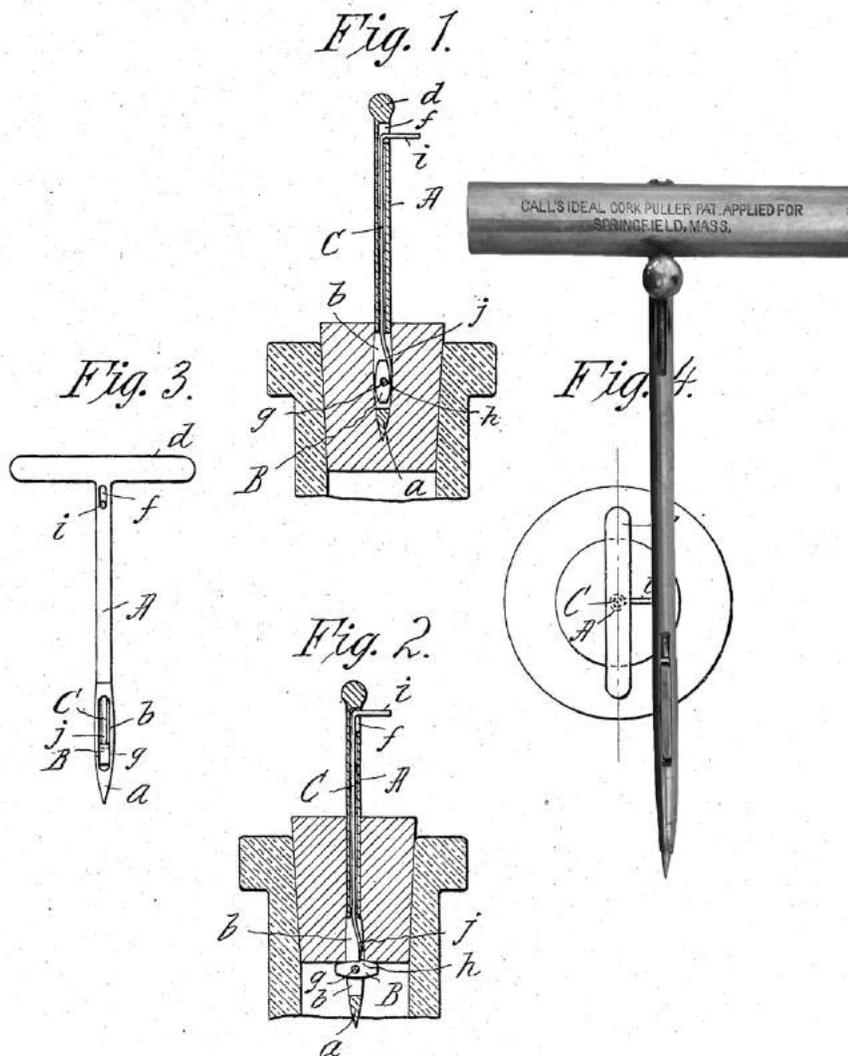
The operation of my improved cork-puller is as follows: The cork-puller is taken hold of between the fingers by placing the head of the same in the palm of the hand and the middle fingers below the outwardly-curved ends of the levers E. The tapering point C is then, together with the shank B, forcibly inserted into the cork to be pulled to sufficient depth so that the cork extends sufficiently above the uppermost pair of spurs b. Pressure is next exerted by the middle fingers on the lower ends of the levers E, so that they are spread apart, causing the depression of the rod D, which

produces the simultaneous outward motion of the spurs into position shown in Figs. 4 and 6, whereby both pairs of spurs extend in planes at right angles with each other and are embedded into the body of the cork, so that by an upward pull on the levers E the cork can be readily withdrawn from the mouth of the bottle. By then moving the levers down to the sides of the head of the cork-puller the rod D is retracted and the spurs are drawn back into the shank of the cork-puller, so that the cork can readily taken from the shank.

On February 2, 1909 Charles C. Call was awarded patent number 911,922 for his Cork-Pulling Device. The Call is indeed a rare piece, with only a few examples known.

Call's patent description explains:

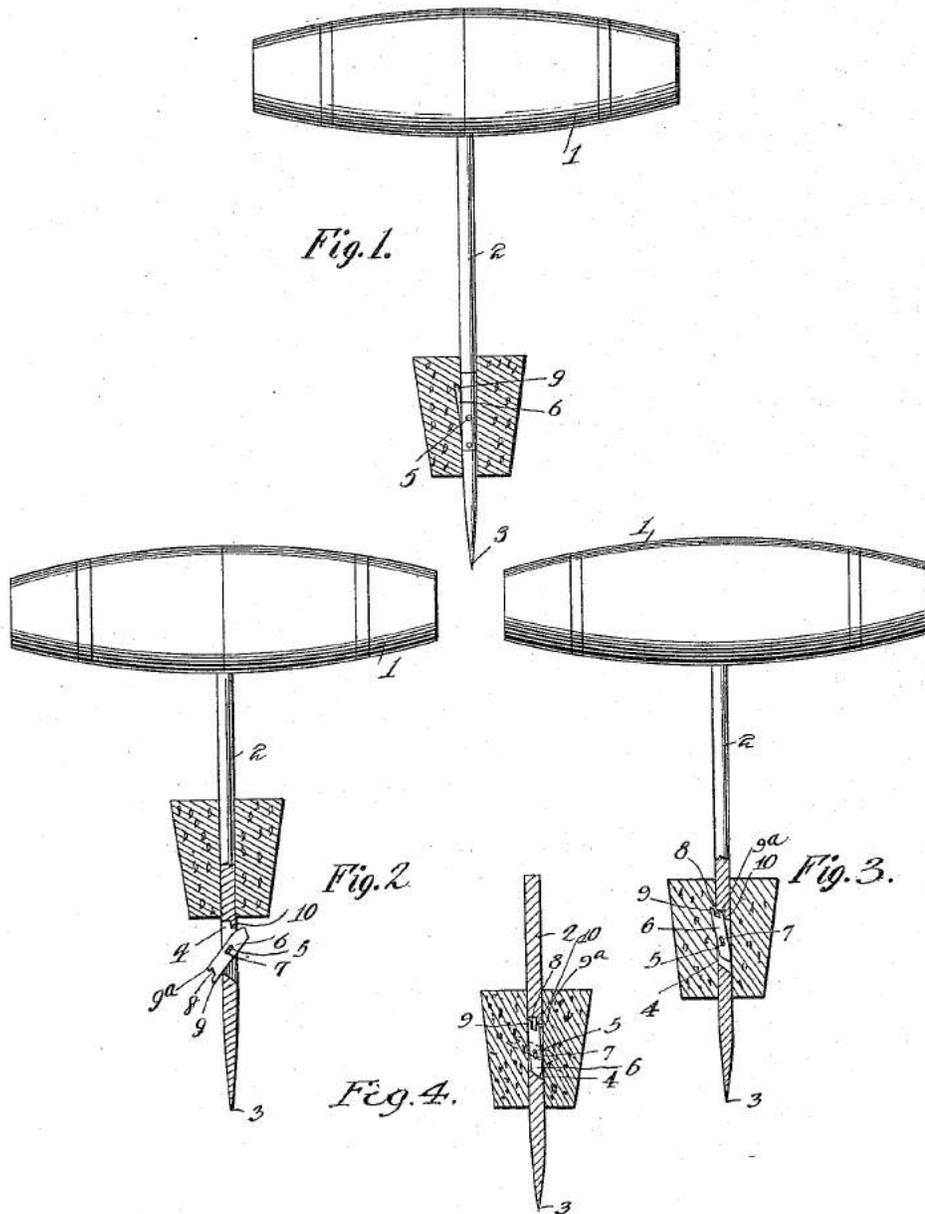
This invention relates to improvements in a device for pulling corks out from the necks of bottles, of a class which comprise a pointed stem for piercing the cork through from its upper to its lower end, and which stem carries at a power portion thereof, and slightly above the pointed end thereof, a pivoted bar or dog adapted to be normally positioned longitudinally relatively to the stem, within a slot in the stem therefor, and being carried with the stem through and beyond the lower end of the cork to be swung crosswise, with its opposite end portions extending beyond the sides of the stem for engagement against the cork for the extraction of the latter from the bottle upon an upward draft on the stem.



Charlie C. Call's
1909 patent (#
911,922) drawing
and Call's Ideal
Cork Puller

In doing research into Charlie Call, I ran into several references to him in Smith and Wesson literature. A long-time Smith and Wesson employee—some references explain he worked for them for 65 years—he was awarded several patents that related to firearms. Interestingly, in a recent conversation with a Smith and Wesson historian, the historian was quite aware of Charles C. Hall, however, however, he explained to me that he was unaware of Call's Ideal Cork-Puller.

On August 3, 1915 Harry Beckley was granted patent #1,149,112 for his Cork Extractor, following the same process, his patent consists of a spike with a, "pivoted bridging bar."

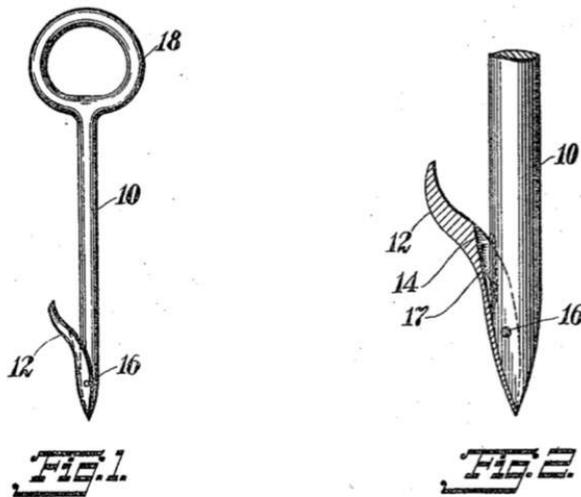


Harry Beckley's 1915 patent (#1,149,112) drawing

Beckley's patent description reads:

The invention relates to cork extractors and the principal object of the invention is to provide a device of this character having a pivoted bridging bar which is slidably mounted upon the shank and so constructed that it will be automatically thrown to operative, engaging position as an attempt is made to withdraw the pin or shank from the cork.

October 12, 1926 Honorius Gagne was awarded patent 1,602,406 for his Cork and Stopper Puller:



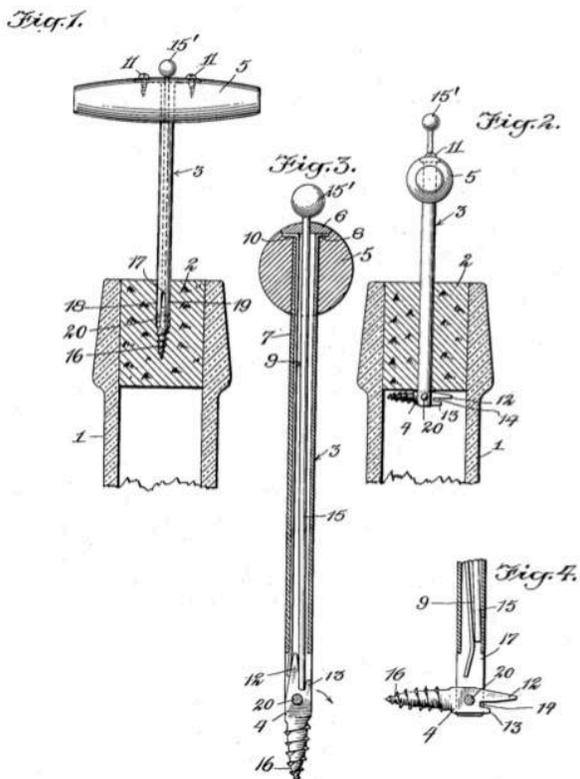
Honorius Gagne's patent (# 1,602,406) drawing

Gagne's patent description explains, ...the extractor comprises a straight shank which may be of circular cross section, and which is of a size to enable it to be readily pressed through the stopper or cork. Secured to the front end of this shank, that is the end which is designed to pierce the stopper, is a back-turned prong which projects laterally from the shank, between its ends and has a pointed rear end extending in a general direction parallel to the shank. This prong is hollowed out in its main length as...to partially straddle the shank, both the prong and the shank being pivoted at their lower ends. The prong is pivoted to the shank a short distance from its

lower end....when the point of the device is being inserted through the cork or stopper the pressure developed keeps the points of the prong together. Upon further movement of the device through the cork or stopper, the pressure tends to move the rear end of the prong toward the shank permitting it to more readily be pressed through the stopper. When the prong has completely passed through the stopper, the spring...throws it laterally to operative position to engage the stopper when the handle is pulled.

On November 20, 1934 Emery R. Collette, was awarded patent 1,981,781 for his “Cork Pulling Device”

In Collette’s version of the lateral projection extractor, “as soon as it passes through the cork and projects there beyond a short distance, the knob...is pulled upwardly a short distance, in actual use, for instance, about half an inch...” The raising of the knob then engages a spring which, “...throw[s] the abutment to one side, whereupon the cork may be readily pulled from the neck of the bottle.”

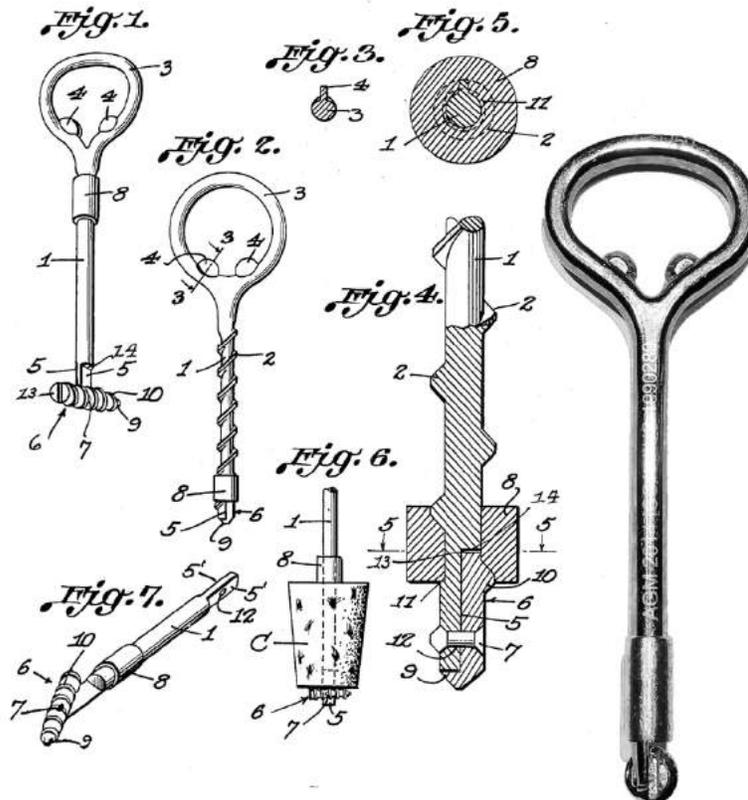


Emery Collette’s 1934 patent (#1,981,781) drawing

Collette’s patent description explains:

Referring to the accompanying drawing by numerals, 1 indicates the neck of a bottle or other container, and 2 a stopper arranged therein. This stopper is shown as a cork but it could be made from any kind of material which can be readily pierced by a screw or similar piercing member. As shown in Fig. 1, there is provided a pulling device 3 which has been screwed partly into the stopper 2. In Fig. 3 the same structure is shown except that the pulling device has been passed entirely through the stopper 2 and the abutment 4 released so that it will assume a right angled position. When in the position shown in Fig. 4 the person using the device may merely pull upon the knob or handle 5 and the stopper 2 will be easily removed.

Herman S. Krueger was awarded his patent # 1,990,289 for his Corkscrew on February 5, 1935. While an original example of the Krueger has yet to have been found, at the 2014 ICCA AGM, hosted by Joe and Monika Paradi and John and Martha Morris, a reproduction of the Krueger was given to attendees, as the Krueger was from Niagara Falls, the location of our meeting.



Herman Krueger's 1935 Patent(#1,990,289) drawing and Krueger reproduction from the 2014 ICCA AGM

In Krueger's patent, his lateral projection is released via gravity. His patent explains: *A corkscrew, the combination of a shank, a handle, a sleeve slidably mounted on the shank, a reduced lower end, a threaded screw section pivotally mounted on the reduced end of the shank at a point offset from the center of gravity of said section whereby the section will automatically swing to a horizontal position when this section of the corkscrew has passed through the cork to engage the bottom of the cork and facilitate the removal of same.*

On October 3, 1950 Harold E. Jacobsen was awarded patent no. 2,524,595. And, it is from Jacobson where we get a pretty accurate description for this mechanism, and it is from his patent that the title of this article comes; “Corkscrew with Pivoted Lateral Projection.” Jacobson references the following previous patents; Williamson 1886, Keith (2/24/1920 inserted at the side of the cork rather than in the center), and Cappel (misspelled as Coppel in the Jacobsen’s patent description) patent of 1883. This too was to be inserted along the side of the cork, and serves as a hook the way a Greeley patented would be utilized.

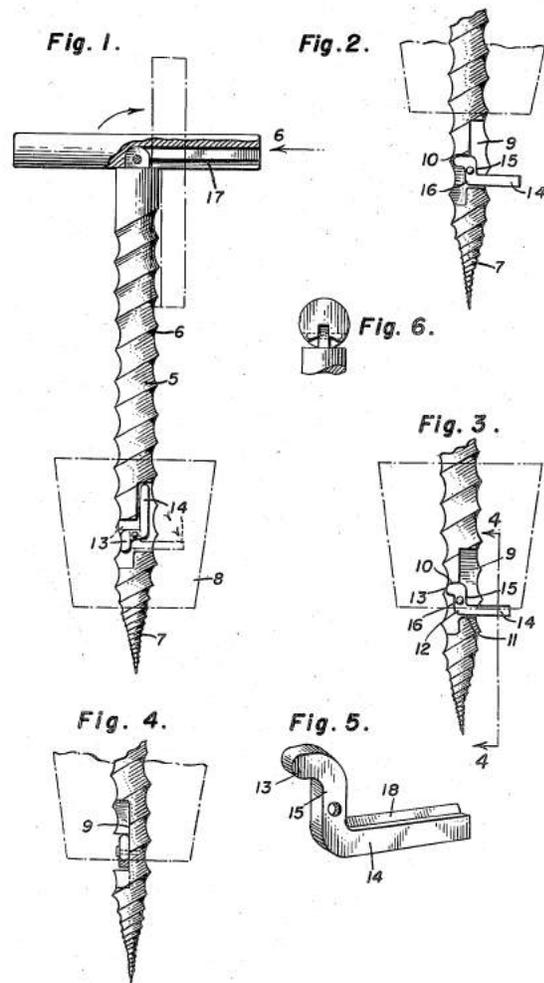
Still, Corkscrew with a Pivoted Lateral Projection is a fairly accurate description, although most of the earlier patents utilize a spike or single prong to be inserted into the cork.

Jacobson’s patent description explains:

An important object of the present invention is to provide an automatic locking bar carried by the cork screw and movable into a position against the bottom of the cork to prevent withdrawal of the cork screw from the cork during removal of the latter.

A further object of the invention is to provide a device of this character of simple and practical construction, which is efficient and reliable in operation, and relatively inexpensive to manufacture and otherwise well adapted for the purposes for which the same is intended.

Given the design and functionality of the pivoted lateral projection patents, it occurs to me that if these were to turn up, they might find their way into the “whatsit” category rather than someone knowing their intended purpose. That is with the exception of the Call’s Ideal, as the handle is clearly marked with “CALL’S IDEAL CORK PULLER, SPRINGFIELD, ILL, PATENTED APPLIED FOR.” For someone coming across this extractor, it is clear what its intended purpose would be.

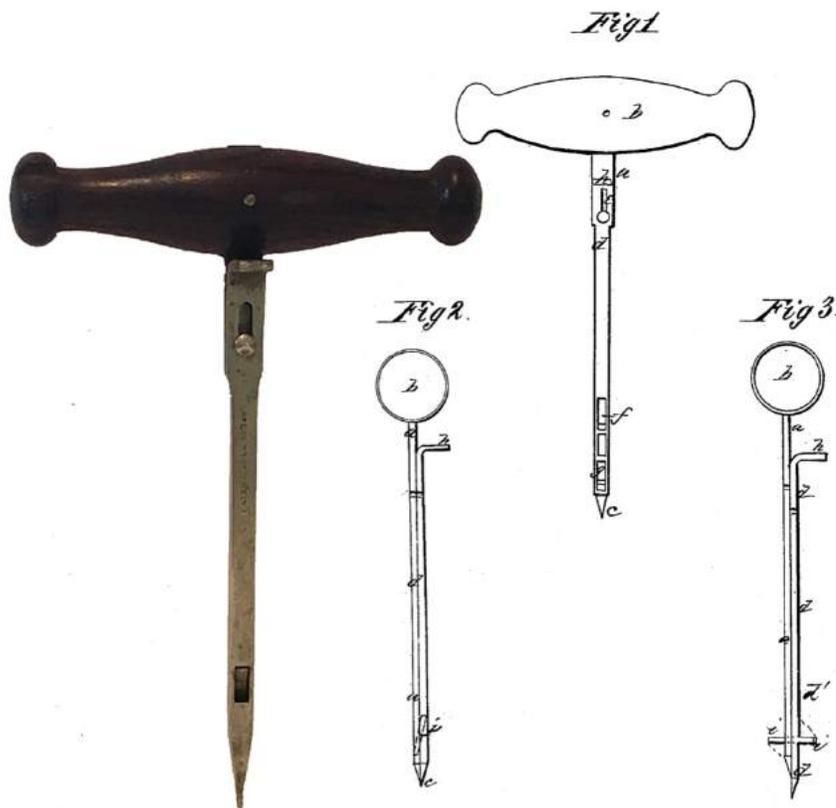


Harold E. Jacobsen’s 1950 Patent(# 2,524,595) drawing

With the Alexander, Van Zandt, Williamson, Peterson, Dressler, Beckley, and Gagne, the intended purpose of these devices (if not marked) would be less apparent. With the Krueger, Collette, and Jacobson with their screw-like tips, that *might* give someone a clue.

Which leads me to a “whatsit,” that has recently come into our collection. And, the subject of my Show and Tell at the Annual General Meeting this year in Maine.

Apparently a few years ago, on an antiques/collectibles website, a member posted a picture asking for help identifying an unknown tool. The tool did have a patent date.



With no response to their request for information, the person who posted the pictures initially, apparently did a little researching on their own, and several months later, identified and responded to their own previously unknown “whatsit” post, explaining that it is an 1867 Cork Pull. For two years, this post seemingly went unnoticed...until, well...I noticed.

Sending them an email through the website, I inquired to see if they still owned the Cork Pull, and if they were interested in selling. The response was in the affirmative to both.

And, after a price was agreed upon, the 1867 Van Zandt patented Cork Pull, was on its way to Vinalhaven.



It is clearly marked on the shaft
“PATENT JULY 30, 1867.”

We are two out of eleven. Can we find the other nine corkscrews with pivoted lateral projections?