

**Stephens Corkscrew/Cigar Perforator 1908 Patent
By Mark Woodard, Don Bull and Josef L'Africain**

**New Extant American Patent Corkscrew Found
by Mark Woodard**

I was walking through my local antique mall recently and I spotted a Clough wire corkscrew with wooden sheath. The sheath advertised "Underhay Oil Co., / P.H. / Auto Oil / Boston." It was in nice condition and priced at a mere \$2.00, so I picked it up, paid for it, and stuck it in my coat pocket.



When I returned home, I took the item out of my pocket and was about to toss it into a drawer with a few dozen other Cloughs, but I decided to take another look at it. What I saw was quite surprising. The butt end of the wooden sheath was recessed, and in the recess was a small metal point, much like the tip of a nail.



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I had never seen a Clough corkscrew sheath like this before, so I grabbed my copy of Ron MacLean and Bob Nugent's book, *William Rockwell Clough, Inventor and Manufacturer of over a Billion Corkscrews*, to see what this strange spike was. Much to my surprise, I did not find any mention of this type of sheath in Ron's book. I emailed Ron some pictures and I expected the "Corkscrew Fountain of Knowledge" to tell me exactly what it was. He too was stumped. The only clue was a somewhat worn patent marking in small letters on the sheath. The best I could make out was "???G CO., WALTHAM, PAT. JUNE 2, ?90?"



I checked Fred O'Leary's invaluable book on American patents, *Corkscrews: 1000 Patented Ways to Open a Bottle*, and found this patent drawing on page 234. It matched my corkscrew and sheath exactly. Eureka!

On June 2, 1908, the USPTO issued utility patent # 889,556 for a "Cigar Tip Perforator". The inventor was not William R. Clough, but another familiar name - Augustus W. Stephens. He lived in Waltham, Massachusetts and it was there that he ran the Stephens Manufacturing Company. Stephens patented and manufactured a variety of bottle openers, corkscrews, and the like during the early part of the 20th century (see *Corkscrews* by Fred O'Leary and *Just For Openers* by Don Bull and John Stanley for patent references.) The sheath that I found shows the word "WALTHAM", suggesting that it was manufactured at the Waltham location. I now knew that I was holding an example of Augustus Stephens' patented variation of a Clough corkscrew sheath. Yet there is no photograph of an extant corkscrew of this type in Fred O'Leary's book, suggesting that it is a rare find. This gives all of you American patent corkscrew collectors something new and interesting to hunt for, or as Fred says, "It will also complicate life for collectors attending antique shows and flea markets. No longer will we be able to pass by a junk display case without looking at every sheath." In his patent specification, Stephens refers to the patent drawing and states "[item] f represents a perforating device or pin, the shank of which is firmly imbedded in the body a', the pointed outer end of the pin projecting into the cavity e, so that it is adapted to penetrate a cigar tip inserted in said cavity." He also describes the sheath as having "...a handle portion which enables it to be readily manipulated, and is at the same time adapted to serve as a storage receptacle for another article, such as a cork screw, the whole being adapted to be carried in the pocket of the user."

You can view the full online patent specification [here](#) .

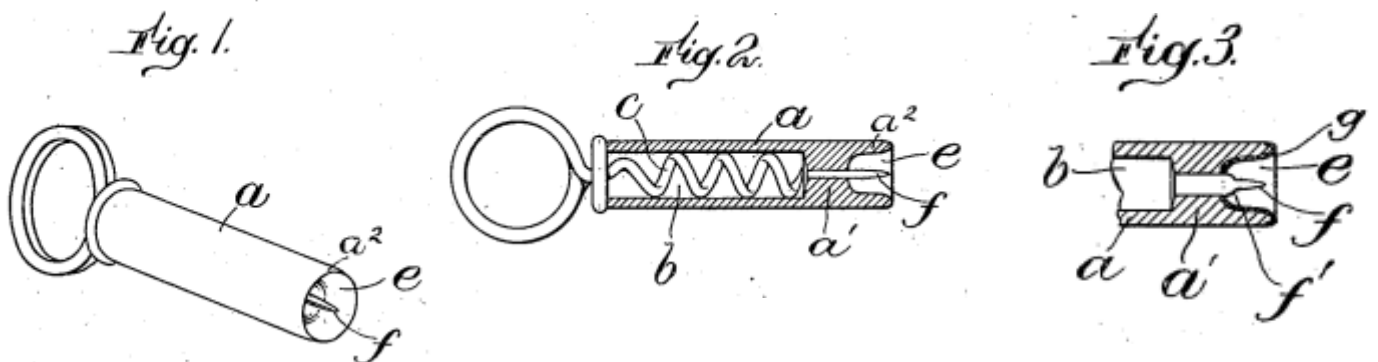
So I posed the question to Ron and Fred, "Would there have been a cooperative effort between Clough and Stephens to produce these special sheaths?"

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No. 889,556.

PATENTED JUNE 2, 1908.

A. W. STEPHENS.
CIGAR TIP PERFORATOR.
APPLICATION FILED NOV. 8, 1907.



Witnesses:
Forrest Rouletore.
E. Batchelder

Inventor:
A. W. Stephens
by *Wright, Brown, Quincy & May*
Attorneys.

Ron replied, "I agree there may have been some connection between Stephens & Clough who certainly manufactured the corkscrew and could have made the sheath perforator as well? I wish I had known before as it really belonged in the Clough book. It will be interesting to discover who else/how many who have found the same item. I was not aware of its existence, surprised that Bob Nugent had not found one, perhaps it was not manufactured in great numbers."

Fred replied, "I found no examples in my travels to photograph for the book. At least I found the patent, which is a good example of why I researched ALL patents, rather than just those classified as corkscrews. I surely would have missed it (and many others) had I stuck to the classification system."

"As to the Clough-Stephens connection, or lack thereof... What I know from the patents and tools themselves -- not recorded history -- is that Clough marked his plain wood sheath corkscrew with the 1900 patent, which was for his corkscrew making machine. There was no mention of a sheath in the drawings or specifications -- all 12 pages of them. Clough's 1910 patent talks only of a bottle cap lifter (the 'Decapitator') as an attachment to or modification of a wood sheath, much as Stephens' cigar perforator is also an adaptation of a generic wood sheath. Clough's was intended to hold a corkscrew. Stephens was not committed to a corkscrew -- it could be "another article". Both had dif-

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ferent mind sets and both piggybacked on the wood sheath, which was considered a given.

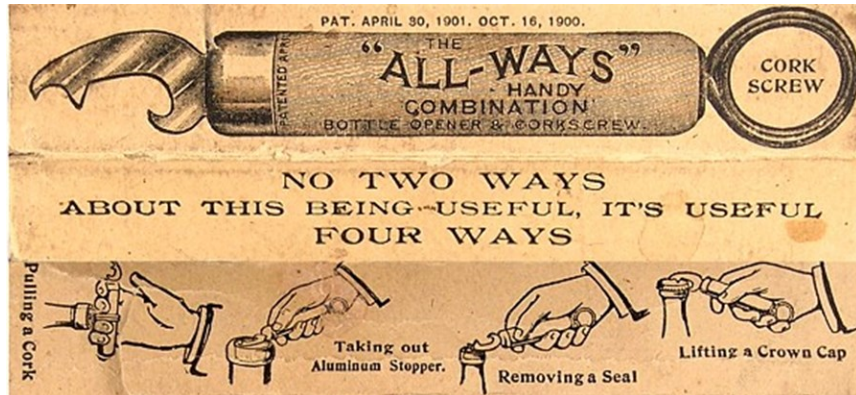
"Both Stephens and the 1910 Clough patent applications overlapped. Clough applied Oct. 16, 1907; Stephens less than a month later on Nov 8. Stephens, however, got to the finish line in less than 7 months; Clough's relatively equally simple concept took over two years. There could be a simple explanation for this -- application technicalities, reviewer backlog, illness, vacations, etc., so no great meaning should be attached to the disparity in approval time.

"If one concludes there is no connection to be found in the patent documentation or process or in the marking of the sheaths, on the other hand, the similarities and short distance between Waltham, Mass and Alton, N. H. cannot be overlooked. Surely these two guys had to know what the other was up to vis a vis the patent office, and especially with Stephens using the Clough corkscrew. It is no stretch to surmise they got together on making sheaths. There just isn't any evidence of it... yet."

So did Clough manufacture the Cigar Tip Perforator sheaths, was it a cooperative effort, or did Stephens simply purchase the wire corkscrews from Clough and make the sheaths himself? It is unclear, but the circumstantial evidence seems to point to the latter - that the sheaths were made solely by Stephens. I'll present the evidence below and let you be the judge.



The most significant piece of circumstantial evidence is Stephens' "All-Ways" combination opener. The All-Ways included a sheathed Clough wire corkscrew and the handle of the All-Ways is typically marked "A. W. Stephens Mfg. Waltham Mass." This suggests that Stephens had the capability to manufacture wooden sheaths in his Waltham factory, perhaps as early as 1901. So when it came time to make the Cigar Tip Perforators, it seems only logical that Stephens would have manufactured them in-house also.



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The Cigar Tip Perforator sheath is marked with the Stephens' factory location of Waltham - another strong indication that it was made in Waltham, not Alton.

The Stephens patent states that the sheath may be used to keep "other articles" besides a corkscrew, and he specifically mentions that *"The extension a may be used for holding toothpicks or other articles usually carried in the pocket, a suitable stopper being provided for closing the mouth of the cavity b."* There may be examples of Stephens toothpick cases out there as well (I don't know of any toothpick case collectors to ask!) If Stephens did make sheaths for other purposes, he certainly would have done it in-house as well. I'm sure that Clough had no interest in producing toothpick cases and the like.

There are dramatically fewer Cigar Tip Perforators than Decapitators extant, suggesting that Clough had no vested interest in making the Cigar Tip Perforators, else we surely would have found many more of them. It seems that production of the Stephens sheath must have been very brief. Unless some contrary evidence comes to light, I think we must conclude that Clough's only involvement was to provide the corkscrews for the Cigar Tip Perforator, much as he supplied Stephens with the corkscrews for the All-Ways.

To complete this story, I need your help. Please take a look at every one of your wooden sheathed corkscrews and check to see if any of them include the Cigar Tip Perforator. If you find any, email me (mark22gg@yahoo.com) and describe any markings on the sheath. Look for an update in a future edition of *The Weekly Screw*.

Author's Note: I would very much like to thank Fred O'Leary, Ron MacLean, Josef L'Africain, and Don Bull for their assistance in preparing this article.

**Underhay Oil...
by Josef L'Africain**

Ten years ago, Don Bull published a story from Mark Woodard about his new discovery; that of a Underhay Oil corkscrew, which was a new discovery from the back of O'Leary (or BOO as we affectionally refer to it). The patent was an A.W. Stephens patent for a cigar perforator. You can read about [Mark's discovery here](#).

Now, the Stephens is definitely rare. Shortly after Mark's piece was published on Don's site. Barry Taylor submitted a photo of his Stephens. And, beyond those two, no others had turned up. And, not for a lack of trying to find them. Whenever a Clough sheath turns up on eBay, I give it a second look. And, whenever I see them laying at a booth whilst hunting, I am sure to check.

That constant checking finally paid off a few years ago, when I managed to find a Stephens patent at Brimfield. This one is an advertisement for John the Shoeman...for those that missed that blog, you can [read it here](#).

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The Stephens made my best 6 for that year! (see last page)

Still, I keep looking at each Clough when I am out hunting. And on occasion, when the sheath looks correct* on an online listing, I will message the seller and ask if there is a little spike in the hollowed out end opposite where the corkscrew is inserted.

I will add here, that regardless of how I try to word that question about the would-be-Stephens, it is usually met with a little confusion on what I am asking about.

And, the fact is that for all of the asking, not that there is a lot of asking, no one to this point has said, "Yes."

Recently however, a seller on eBay listed a wooden sheath corkscrew that looked more than correct. In fact, it had the marking of Underhay Oil on the sheath. Well, more accurately, the seller said it was marked Underhay Oil as the images didn't really show any markings. And, they were blurry at that.

With a buy it now of a pretty *fair* price, was it worth taking a chance? Would a company that advertised on a Stephens patent also advertising on a Clough?

Fortunately, the seller also referenced that it read A.W. Stephens...

Okay...all these things would suggest that it is the Cigar Perforator patent with corkscrew...except, the year the seller was giving wasn't correct; mentioning 1906.

Now it is entirely possible that the right date of 1908 was just hard to make out, but as one would see above, the pictures weren't really clear. Given that everything else looked correct, I went for it. It arrived on the island today.

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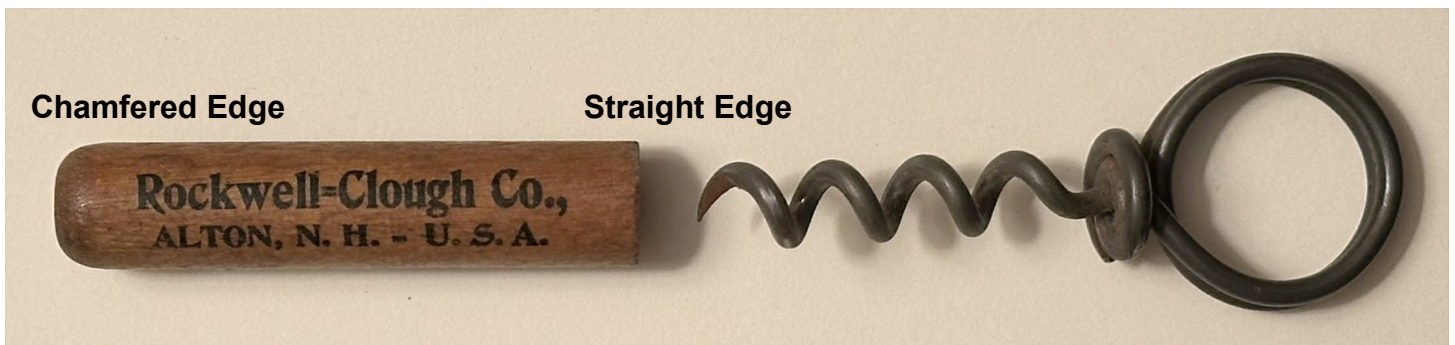
And, wouldn't you know it, there is a little spike in the hollowed out end opposite where the corkscrew is inserted. And, there is indeed the correct patent date...

A nice addition to the collection!

*But, what do you mean by looking correct Josef?

For those of you wondering, if you have a Clough corkscrew with wooden sheath, when you look at the piece in profile, you will note that the end (opposite where the corkscrew is inserted) is usually chamfered; having a slightly rounded edge before coming to the end, whereas the corkscrew side does not have that chamfer.

On the Stephens, it lacks that chamfer on the end of the sheath, with both ends of the sheath being at a right angle. Lacking that chamfer doesn't mean it is going to definitely be the Stephens patent, but it is something to look for...before you ask, "Is there is a little spike in the hollowed out end opposite where the corkscrew is inserted."



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Josef L'Africain "Best 6" 2013

1. Nickel-plated example of the 1870 Dickson patent; marked on the shaft with the patent date of "PAT AUG. 2, 1870" (see O'Leary, 1996, p. 36).
2. Hiram Codd's 1881 patent, marked "CODD'S PATENT" and "G.F.HIPKINS" (see O'Leary, 1996, p. 62).
3. James D. Frary features a Hercules-type frame, hammer, spike, and solid decorative cast handle.
4. Several years ago, Mark Woodard—through Don Bull's website—published an article about a newly discovered patent. The A.W. Stephens Cigar Perforator with corkscrew of 1908. After reading the story, the hunt began. Shortly thereafter, Barry Taylor had reported that he too had one, and the hunt continued. I can't honestly say how many Clough sheath corkscrews I have picked up hoping that I would find an A.W. Stephens, but this year at the September Brimfield Antiques Show, amongst a dozen Cloughs, I finally found one. And, it is in fantastic shape. With advertising for "John the Shoeman, 184 Mathewson St., PROVIDENCE R.I.," and on the reverse side of the sheath, "ADVERTISERS, SUPPLY CO. PROVIDENCE R.I.," it also carries the patent date for A.W. Stephens' cigar tip perforator (patent number 889,556) "PAT. JUNE 02, 1908" (see O'Leary, 1996, p. 234).
5. Wilbur Woodman's 1884 patent for a combined corkscrew and key-ring —unmarked as shown in O'Leary page 66 (see O'Leary, 1996 p. 66) (Note split finger ring allows for keys to be added)
6. Puddefoot, "THE WELCH GRAPE JUICE CO. WATKINS, N.Y. and THE DETROIT PAT'D JULY 10, '94." The 19th variation of the corkscrews of the Detroit Cork Screw Company in my collection.