

Patent Pending Can Opener Corkscrew Find

By John Stanley

When you work hard in life sometimes you get a good break. Eight months ago at a Raleigh Bottle Club Meeting at Hill Ridge Farms in Youngsville NC, I was told you need to go to the country store at the Farm as the owner had a large selection of can openers on display. Well I went over (a couple hundred yards from the show building) and Mr. John Hill (the owner) probably has 100-125 can openers on display and hidden on the bottom of a stack of three can openers was the rare "Pat. Pend" piece which is similar to the 1890 Wood patent but as of now a patent has not been found that shows this version.

It was 11AM and I headed back to the show to talk to Mr. Hill. At first he said he might sell it as he was nearing 80 and knows at some point he needs to start selling stuff. He asked if I could stay until 1PM when the show was over. My problem was we were leaving for the JFO Convention the next day and I needed to get back home. After some more talking he said he would contact me if he wanted to sell the piece.

So I left and found out later he closes the store during the winter months from Christmas through April. The next Bottle Club meeting in January I asked Mr. Hill again but the store was closed and to check back in May when the Bottle Club would meet again at his Farm.

Today (May 14th) was the next meeting and after David Tingen gave a very interesting demonstration on cleaning bottles by the tumbling process, the meeting ended at 11:15. Mr. Hill kept talking to members and finally at noon he told me to go to the store and he would come over soon. I went and first had to make sure the Pat. Pend piece was still there and it was. About 12:30 Mr. Hill arrived and I was actually waiting in my car and followed him in.

We went back to the L-Shaped display three level case and I told him the one I wanted and he got it out. As before he again mentioned he did not need the money (he is a very successful business man). He owns 60 acres of land surrounding his farm and it is going for \$65,000/acre but he does not want to sell. He has been offered \$1,000,000 just for the land the store building sits on by Kangaroo Express. He has two daughters and one likes running the Farm but the other one could care less (just wants to live at the beach).

We talked about the Pat. Pend piece and he figured he had owned it 40 years. Then it got real interesting as I got a 45 minute tour of the store and attached restaurant with lots of older American tools and machines and many with patent dates. He was full of stories and it was very interesting to hear the background. He did mention he had a barn full of the same kind of stuff. He most likely will have a big auction someday.

He had been carrying the piece in his pocket and it was near 1:30 when he pulled it out. After some more small talk and again reminding me that he rarely sells anything out of the store. He said he figured \$100 was cheap, but sold me the Pat. Pend. Wood cousin. Norm Jay had told me the "when you work hard" saying but this time I just had to listen and watch. Mr. Hill has some great stuff in the store but one less good one in the can opener category. I did tell Mr. Hill it was going into my collection and thanked him for being generous.

Right: The Store display as the Pat. Pend piece was found.

Below: Front and back of Pat. Pend. Can opener, Corkscrew, Hammer and Screwdriver Tip.

Final two pages show Wood patent can opener variations. Elgin Edgar Wood of Toronto Ontario Canada was issued Patent #434,818 on August 19, 1890. The actual Wood can openers have a butt hammer so not sure if this is really a variation.





