

Just For Openers January-December 2025 1

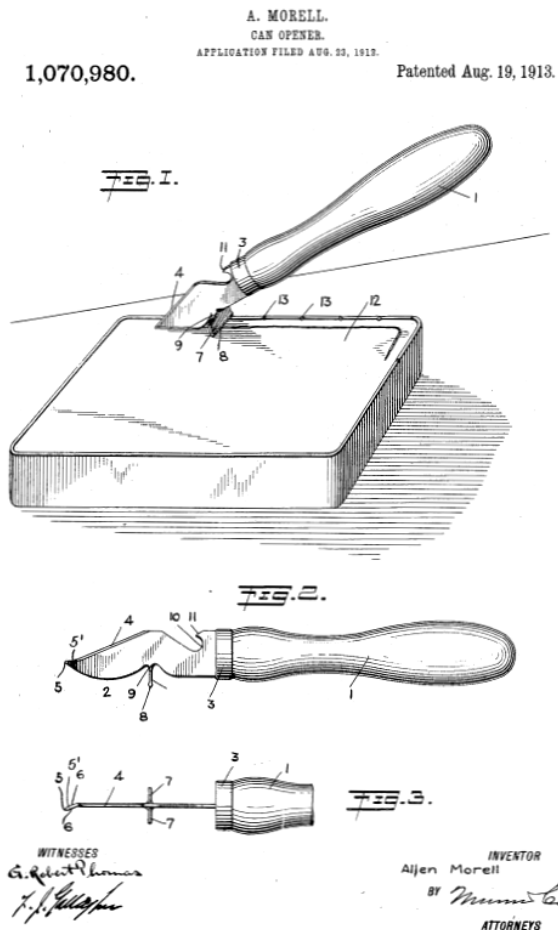
Adios Bottle Opener

Gustav A. Carlson Can Opener By Don Thornton

This is the case of the missing bottle opener. It is a curious tale involving Gustav A. Carlson, his employer, the Boye Needle Company founded by James H. Boye, and a one-time inventor from Denver, Colorado.

At first glance, it appears Carlson and Boye Needle didn't like bottle openers, but there is much more to the story.

Chicago-based Boye manufactured a combination bottle and can opener shortly after obtaining the rights to its 1913 patent by Allen Morell of Denver. The opener was, as far as can be determined, Morell's only invention.



The curved blade can opener with a cutout hook for removing bottle caps was branded "BOYE" NEEDLE CO. CHICAGO PAT. AUG 19, 1913. It matched the patent exactly except for the reversed hook cutout.



This is where Carlson enters the picture. A Swedish emigrant, he was a longtime Boye employee who worked his way up to superintendent before his retirement. He had at least seven patents he assigned to the Boye company.

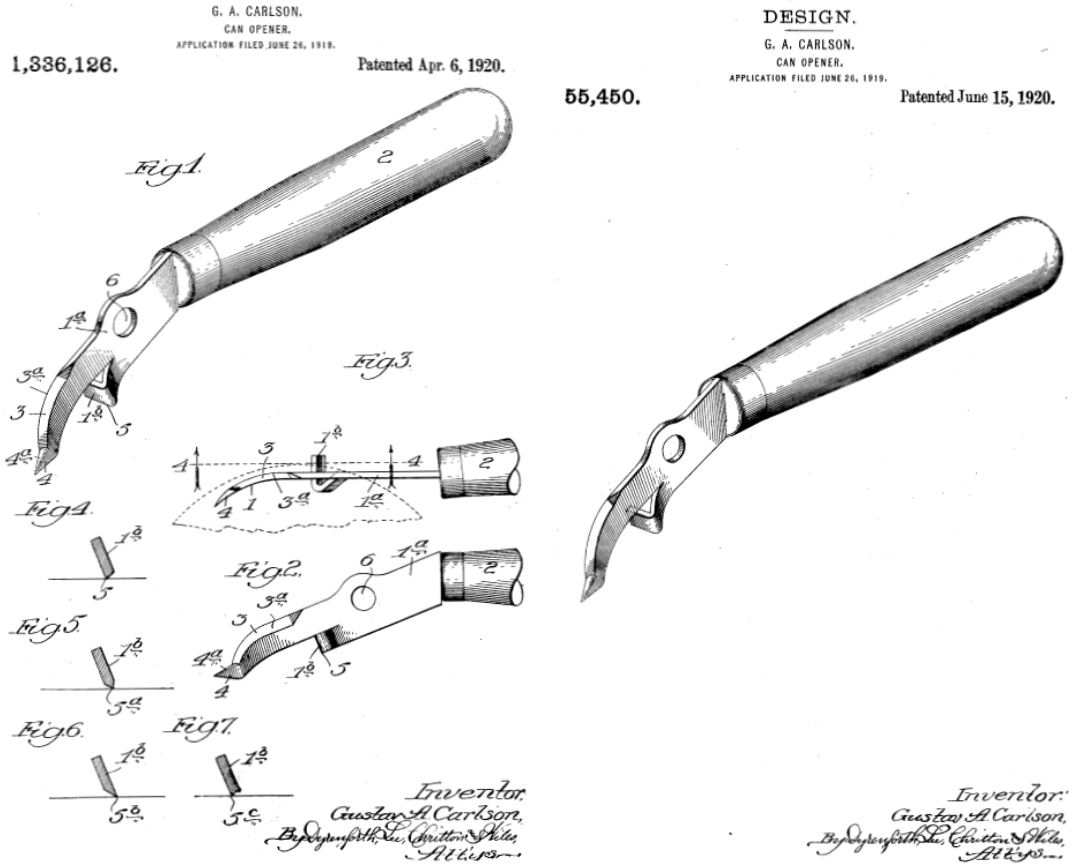
For reasons unknown, he applied for and was granted a patent on April 6, 1920 that was a near exact copy of Morell's patent – but without the bottle opener. In addition to the utility patent, he was also awarded a design patent dated June 15, 1920. Carlson did not acknowledge or credit Morell in his patent papers.

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Boye Needle threw out the combo opener and began making Carlson's model, which was branded: "BOYE" NEEDLE CO. CHICAGO PAT. AUG. 19.13 APR. 6.20 JUNE 15.20. (Morell's original patent was credited obviously to protect against infringement action).



The story doesn't end here. At some point, Boye switched from a wood handle to a metal loop and added a worm in the loop in what is now a very rare can opener/corkscrew combination. It is not known if Carlson played a role in the worm addition.

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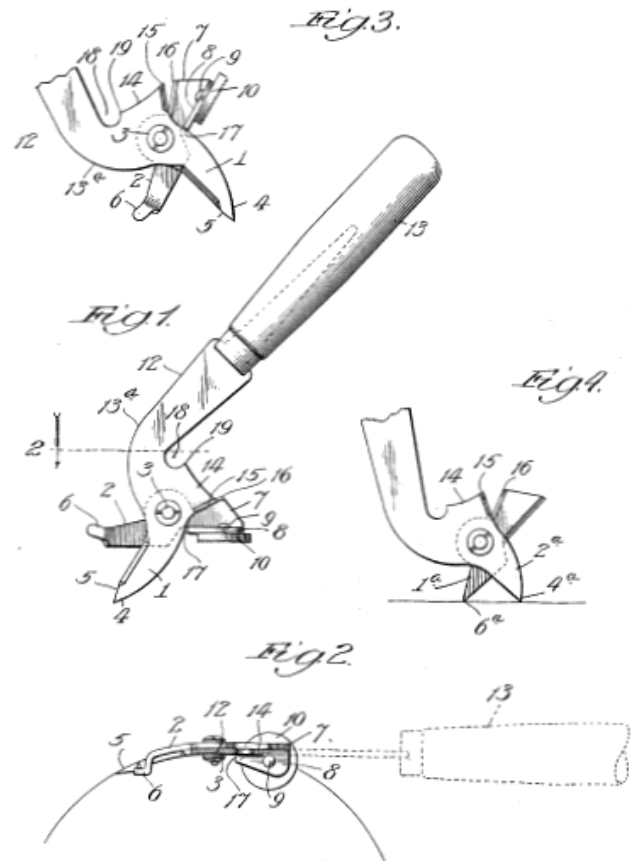


James H. Boye, who launched the Boye Needle Company in Chicago in 1906 with two partners, did not play a role in missing bottle opener. Boye served as the first president of the company, overseeing the manufacturing of an extensive line of needles and sewing products, many based on patents awarded to Boye.

He reportedly left the company five years later to concentrate on his inventions, which included a pencil sharpener, curtain rods and fixtures, a screen door check, a window cornice and a golf club, among other things.

According to one report, he sold his interest in the company in 1916 and launched the Chicago-based James H. Boye Manufacturing Company, which specialized in

J. H. BOYE.
KNIFE SHARPENER.
APPLICATION FILED FEB. 21, 1912.
1,038,484. Patented Sept. 10, 1912.



Witnesses:
Ed. [unclear]
Chas. H. Buell

Inventor:
James H. Boye
By [unclear], [unclear], [unclear]
Att'ys.

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curtain rods, widow locks and sash holders. Boye was no longer at his old company when the bottle opener went missing in 1920. However, it's obvious he would not have approved, based on his own combination "knife sharpener" patent awarded September 10, 1912.

Boye said his invention was for a "combination implement, adapted to serve as an improved can-opener, adapted to serve as a knife-sharpener and adapted to serve also to remove bottle seals, of the crown type." Yes, a bottle opener.

