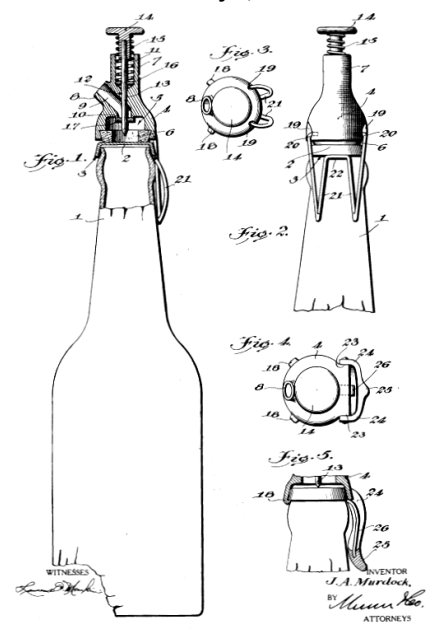


Just For Openers January-December 2025 1

Murdock's Pocket Opener, A Court Case & A Bull-Dog By Don Thornton

Inventor James A. Murdock's career with the Vaughan Novelty Manufacturing Company was short-lived but profitable, at least for Harry Vaughan. Murdock was a resident of Tulsa, Oklahoma in 1927 when he applied for his first patent for a "dispensing top for bottled carbonated liquids." Granted three years later on May 20, 1930, it was one of at least 18 patents Murdock was awarded over the years.

May 20, 1930. J. A. Murdock 1,759,459
DISPENSING TOP
FOR BOTTLED CARBONATED LIQUIDS
Filed May 2, 1927



Murdock said in his dispenser patent papers that "it is well known that once the 'charge' of a carbonated beverage is dissipated, its value as a refreshing beverage is lost." But "use of my dispensing top," he added, will retain "the potency of the beverage."



A MARVELOUS INVENTION!

Vaughan's
Perfo-Siphon
"IT PERFORATES THE CAP"

Here's the perfect mixer for gingerales and carbonated beverages. The slickest thing you ever saw. The Perfo-Siphon is the only device that perforates the cap and retains all the gas to the last drop. All others are nothing more than stoppers.

No bottle opener required. Cap is never removed. Mixes as it pours. Fits any bottle cap. On or off in a second. Saves its cost many times by preserving the unused portions for future use. A home and office necessity. Get a kick out of serving your drinks. Watch 'em gasp.

Pin a dollar bill, M. O. or check to this advertisement and we'll mail Vaughan's Perfo-Siphon to you postpaid.

VAUGHAN NOVELTY MFG. CO.
Dept. J-21
3219 Carroll Ave.
Chicago, Ill.

The patent presumably was what brought Murdock and Chicago-based Vaughan together -- apparently the basis for "Vaughan's Perfo-Siphon."

Murdock, a member of a pioneer Tulsa oil family, and his wife, Iris, moved to Chicago in the early 1930s. He went to work for Vaughan, assigning his next patent to the company. Murdock applied for that "bottle-cap remover" patent in 1934 and it was granted October 22, 1935.



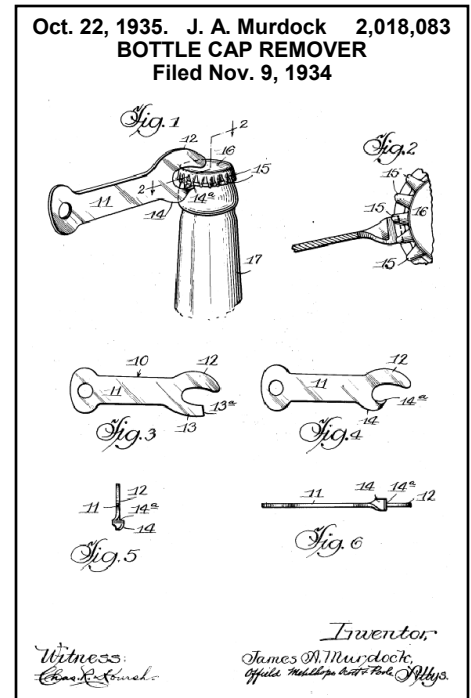
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Murdock's Pocket Opener, A Court Case & A Bull-Dog By Don Thornton



What distinguished his opener from all the others on the market, Murdock said, was the “short prong” on the opening hook that engages “at least two of the duplex ribs on the flange of the bottle cap” resulting in “instant and complete removal of the cap.”

An example of the 3-inch opener is marked **BURGERMEISTER BEER** on both sides of the handle. Most versions of this opener are also marked at the rounded end **VAUGHAN CHICAGO**. Some also have **PAT. 2,018,083**.



The so-called “pocket opener” was an instant success. It became a very, very profitable mainstay for Vaughan for at least a decade. Vaughan offered the opener by the gross to companies with their brand names embossed on the handle. Beer and soda bottlers responded positively. (See *The King of Novelty Branding* JFO News 2025.)

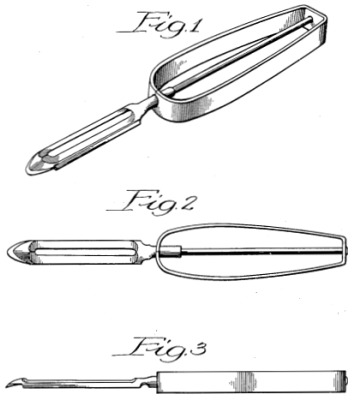


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Murdock's Pocket Opener, A Court Case & A Bull-Dog By Don Thornton

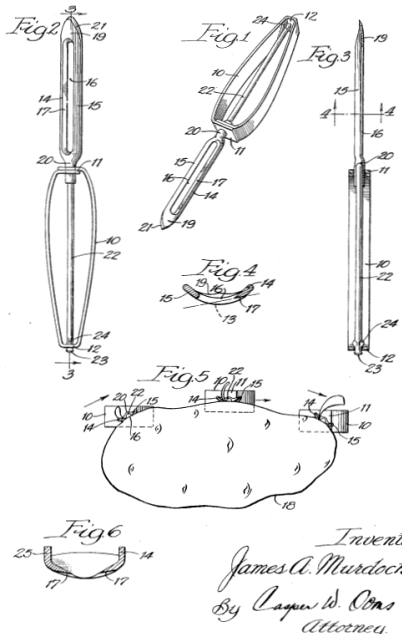
At some point Murdock left Vaughan (circumstances unknown, but probably negative) and he and Iris launched the M&M Manufacturing Company of Chicago, turning out items based on Murdock's patents, including a grater, combination peeler and coring/paring knife. One of the products, a combo peeler, ended up at the center of a major federal court case against Vaughan closely watched by all the kitchenware manufacturers then headquartered in Chicago.

April 9, 1940. J. A. Murdock DES. 119,867
PARING AND CORING TOOL
Filed Feb. 12, 1940



Inventor:
James A. Murdock,
By Casper W. Ooms
Attorney.

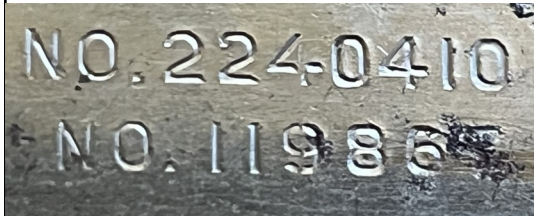
April 29, 1941. J. A. Murdock 2,240,410
PARING KNIFE
Filed June 18, 1938



Inventor:
James A. Murdock,
By Casper W. Ooms
Attorney.

The case was centered on two of Murdock's patents, No. 119,867 (design patent) dated April 9, 1940 for a "paring and coring tool," and No. 2,240,410 (utility patent) dated April 29, 1941 for the same device.

The peeler in question is 6-inches long and is marked **M&M CHICAGO PAT. 2,240,410 PAT. 119867.**



The Murdocks filed suit against the Vaughan Novelty Manufacturing Company and its president Harry L. Vaughan on November 13, 1940 in U.S. District Court in Illinois charging infringement of the two patents. Vaughan countersued, asserting, among other things, ownership of the patents because of Murdock's former employment at Vaughan. After much legal wrangling, Judge John F. Barnes dismissed both claims. However, both Murdock and Vaughan appealed the decision. Following even more legal wrangling, Judge Major Sparks on November 12, 1942 upheld the original dismissal of both claims.

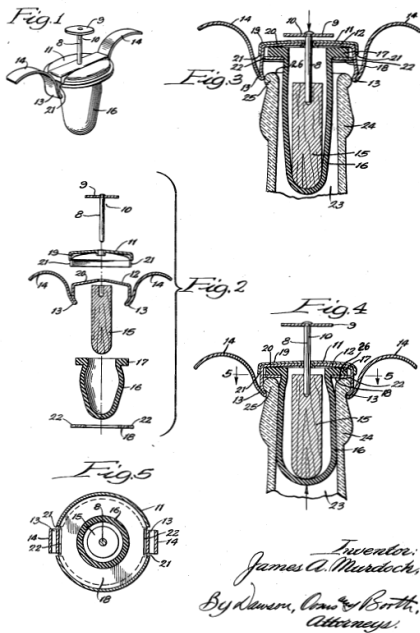


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Murdock's Pocket Opener, A Court Case & A Bull-Dog By Don Thornton

James Andrew Murdock died at his home in Chicago in 1945 at the age of 49. His body was returned to Tulsa for services. But his death did not end his inventions story. A year earlier Murdock had applied for a "bottle stopper" patent on November 11, 1944. Despite his death, his widow, Iris, pressed forward and Patent No. 2,446,661 was granted August 10, 1948 to her as executrix of Murdock's estate.

Aug. 10, 1948. J. A. Murdock 2,446,661
BOTTLE STOPPER
Filed Nov. 11, 1944



UNITED STATES PATENT OFFICE

2,446,661

BOTTLE STOPPER

James A. Murdock, Chicago, Ill.; Iris M. Murdock, executrix of said James A. Murdock, deceased, assignor to Iris M. Murdock, individually

Application November 11, 1944, Serial No. 562,931

5 Claims. (Cl. 215—52)

The patent application said the small device was "a new type of bottle closure in which an expansible stopper is combined with a clasp device to mechanically lock the expansible member within the bottle mouth." Iris branded the device the "BULL-DOG STOPPER." The giant Chicago kitchenware manufacturer EKCO licensed the patent in the late 1950s and kept the "BULL-DOG" name. Its success was immediate and hundreds of thousands were sold through the late 1960s.

The stopper is marked on the top round button **PRESS HERE**. The round main center piece is marked **BULL-DOG PAT. NO. 2,446,661 EKCO U.S.A.** The stopper is just over 2-inches high with a wing span of just under 3-inches.

