

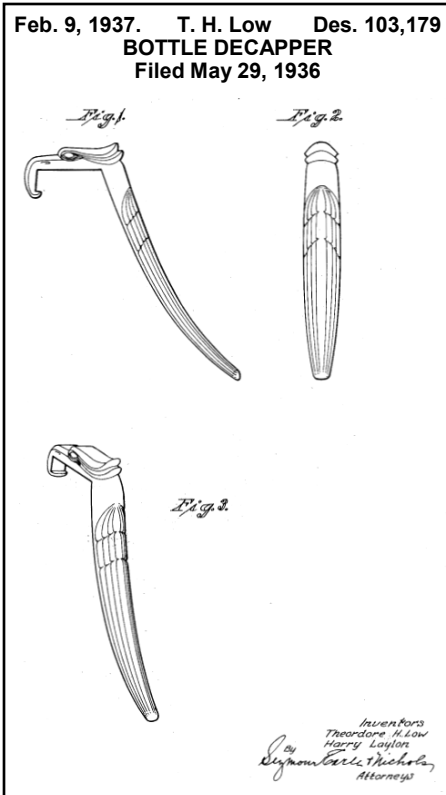
Just For Openers January-December 2025 1

Low's Eagle Head & Headless

Art Deco Bottle Openers By Don Thornton

Inventor Theodore H. Low teamed up with designer Harry Layton in the 1930s to produce the Art Deco eagle head "Squeezit" bottle opener. Low then went out on his own and eliminated the head, but more on that later.

The two Connecticut men, Low of New Haven, and Layton of Waterbury were granted Design Patent No. 103,179 on February 9, 1937 for a "bottle decapper" with a distinct, streamlined eagle head. This is how they described it in Art Deco terms in the patent papers: "The design is characterized by a hooked top or head portion having a downwardly-extending bowed arm of gracefully-tapering form, the front and rear surfaces of said arm being respectively convexly curved and concavely curved."



Logo Mark
CHASE BRASS

71307307
29 Oct 1930

50c



Squeezit Bottle Opener

This new patented bottle opener is what your friends have been looking for . . . it can't slip and cut your finger.

The heavy-duty (4 ounce), over-the-top style tool was advertised as the "Squeezit Bottle Opener" and retailed for 50 cents. The 5-inch opener was initially marked on the inside, under the head,

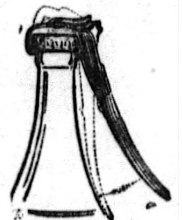


PAT. APPLIED FOR (logo) **CHASE**. Later versions were marked: **PAT. D-103179** (logo) **CHASE** and **PAT. 2155947** (logo) **Chase**. (This patent was issued in 1939 to Low). The manufacturer was the Chase Brass & Copper Co. of Waterbury, famous for its line of 1930s Art Deco houseware items. The company's distinctive logo was of a centaur drawing a bow. During its Art Deco line, Layton was the in-house designer for Chase.

"SQUEEZIT" BOTTLE OPENER

You'll want this for home and picnic use . . . it can't slip and cut your finger. Both bottle and opener can be held in one hand . . . AND you can replace the cap neatly and firmly.

50c



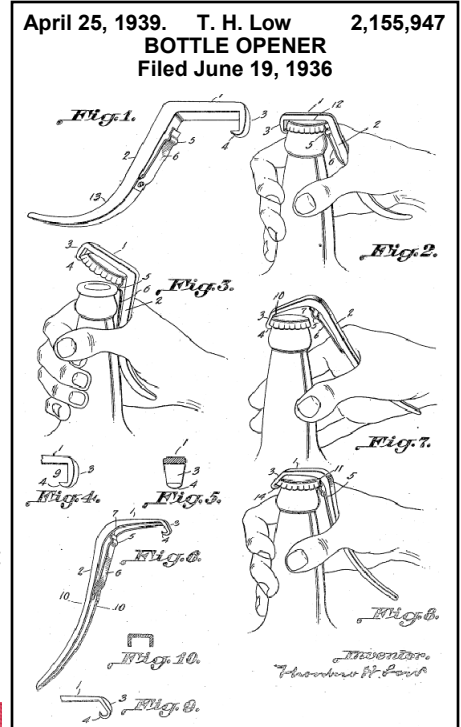
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Patent No. 2,155,947 was awarded to Low on April 25, 1939. It was basically the same as the earlier Low/Layton patent but without the eagle head. This patent is noteworthy for two reasons:

- There is no mention of Layton. Common patent courtesy dictates that when a utility patent is issued following a design patent for the same invention, the design patent is acknowledged. In this case the courtesy was ignored.
- The Low patent is an astounding six pages long, compared to just two, or occasionally three, pages for similar inventions.*

At some point, for reasons unknown, the J. E. Mergott Company of Newark, New Jersey entered the picture. The company, established in 1878, initially was known for producing pocketbooks and purses but in the 1930s initiated a line of metal specialties, including a folding corkscrew and combo bottle opener. (See *William C. Hering's Two Patents* JFO News 2025.) And that line included Low's opener without eagle head but a distinct Art Deco design on the handle. The light weight (1.3 ounces), 5-inch opener is marked in tiny type: **HOLD-A-CAP JEMCO** (logo). Jemco was Mergott's brand logo. The eagle head was gone but not the Art Deco vibe -- the handle has cool geometric designs emphasizing symmetry and clean lines.



***SIDEBAR:** An example of the overblown *patentesque* language of the Low's patent: "I have invented a non-slip opener of the 1st class of levers which provides free outward movement of the nib and the crimped flange, sufficient to enable

them to easily slip by the bead but insufficient to render the nib liable to slip clear of the flange. Thus, by regulating the outward movement of the flange and nib, my opener lifts the cap with one hand easily without slipping or chipping the bead or breaking the bottle mouth."

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From an Art Deco Website: <https://drivingfordeco.com/tag/chase-speciality-line/>

This very clever bottle opener, designed by Harry Layton and Theodore Low, works differently from other bottle openers. Standard bottle openers pull the ridge edge out and dent the top of the bottle cap, the Squeezit removes the cap without denting it, making it possible to reuse it. To use it, place the eagle head down over the cap with the beak over one end, then as the name implies, squeeze the handle towards the bottle, the cap lifts off, intact.

Selling for \$0.50 in 1936 (\$10.85 in 2023) the Squeezit was a bargain. Chase produced this bottle opener for approximately five years, so it must have sold reasonably well, yet it is not an easy piece to find today. But when it does turn up on the collector's market, it is just as reasonably price now as it was in the 1930s. One can expect to pay in the \$10.00 – \$25.00 dollar range for it.