

# ***Just For Openers January-December 2026 1*** **A Ballplayer, A Revenuer And No Headaches** **Harry Noyes Corkscrew by Don Thornton**

It was big news in Connecticut when it was disclosed by the *Hartford Courant* newspaper on July 6, 1905 – a local ball player could be leaving the ballpark behind. The headline read:

## **NOYES AN INVENTOR.**

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### **Hartford's Infielder Has An Improved Corkscrew.**

“Harry W. Noyes, the third baseman of the Hartfords, will probably not be seen on the diamond after this season, as he has invented a corkscrew which is expected to make him independent of ball magnates and umpires,” the lede said.



**Harry W. Noyes**

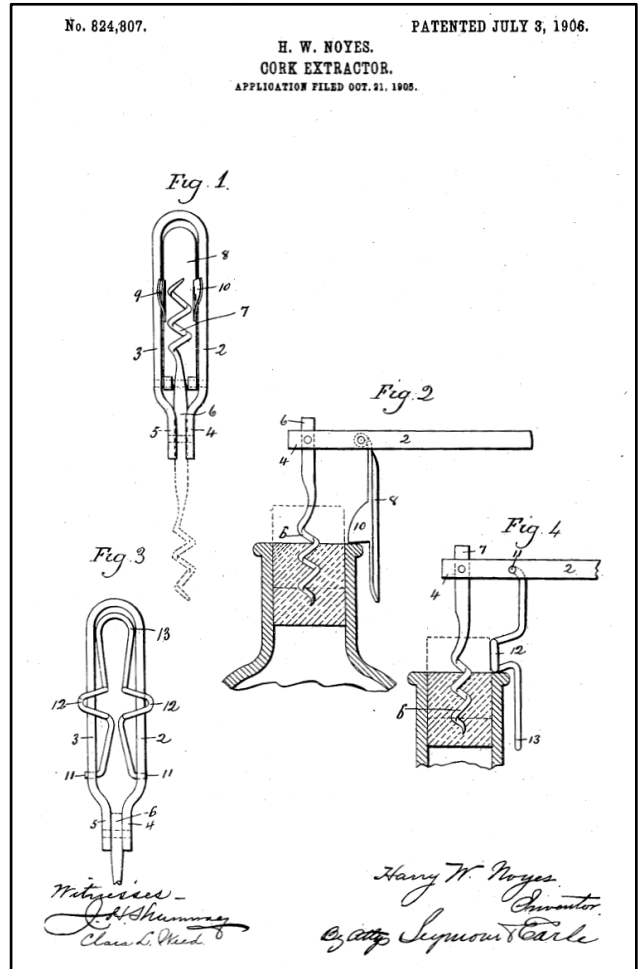
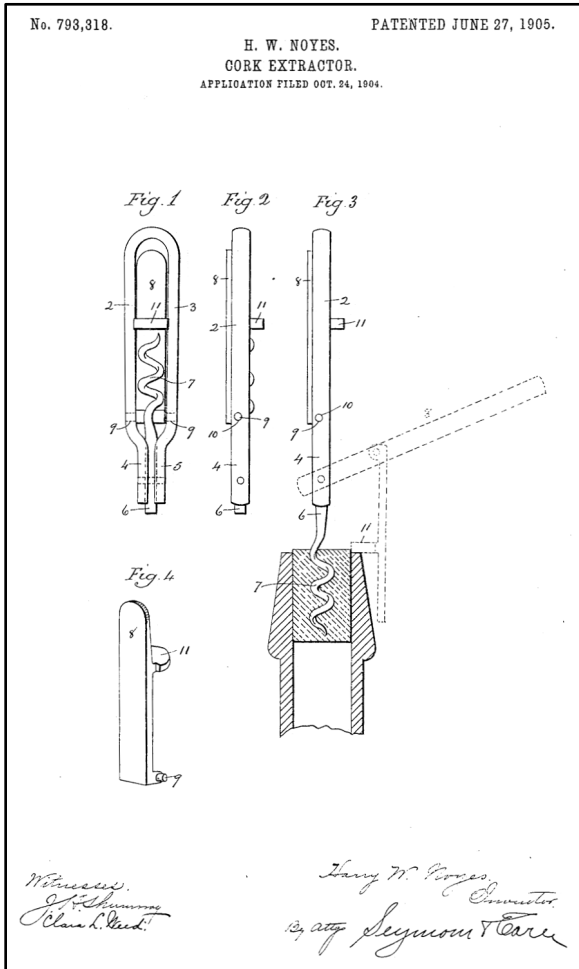
Noyes, the story continued, became frustrated when traveling with his team when he tried to open different bottles of “ink, capsup, mucilage, etc.” (it did not mention wine) with ordinary kinds of corkscrews. “After ruining a few suits of clothes by spilling ink on them when the corkscrew worked badly, Mr. Noyes decided to try and improve upon the old-fashioned kind.”

The result: Noyes was granted Patent No. 793,318 on June 27, 1905 for a “cork extractor.” This is how the newspaper said it worked: “The corkscrew has a flange that rests upon the neck of a bottle when the screw is turned through the cork and this provides a leverage so that the cork can be raised out of the bottle without much effort ... A man will not have to hold a bottle between his knees to get the cork out with the flange corkscrew, and he can sit down and take the cork out just as easily.”

# Just For Openers January-December 2026 2

## A Ballplayer, A Revenuer And No Headaches

### Harry Noyes Corkscrew by Don Thornton



Noyes was granted a second corkscrew patent on July 3, 1906, No. 824,807, an improvement on his first, and both dates were marked on his corkscrew when it came on the market in 1907. Manufactured by the Universal Metal Specialty Company of New York City, it was advertised as the "Universal Lever Cork Extractor" and retailed for 19 cents. The opener, 3 1/2-inches folded, 5 1/2-inches with worm extended, is marked on the inside of the lever: **PAT. JUNE 27, '05 JULY 3, '06.**

**Note: Early Universal examples have a 3-hole corkscrew shaft (page 3). Later made corkscrews have a solid corkscrew shaft (page 4). The 3-hole is harder to find.**



**Just For Openers January-December 2026 3**  
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It also removes crown caps and breaks wires. It sells itself at 25 cents each.

**UNIVERSAL LEVER CORK EXTRACTOR**  
**PRESS DOWN. DON'T PULL.**

**Extracting Cork**  
 Throw the plate and worm into its most open position by pressing upon back of plate, turn the worm into cork until shoulder of plate touches top of bottle, hold plate against neck of bottle and press handle down as illustrated: The powerful lever action raises cork with ease.

**THIS TRIPLE SERVICE CORK SCREW**

is so ingenious and practical that a housewife who sees it will not buy any other. A little pressure removes the most stubborn cork. We guarantee them.  
 Send \$2.00 for a sample dozen delivered at your post office address.

**UNIVERSAL METAL SPECIALTY CO., 21 PARK ROW NEW YORK CITY**

**Universal Lever Cork Extractor.**  
**OPENS ALL BOTTLES.**  
 A revolution in cork extraction. Press down, don't pull: makes uncorking easy and removes crown caps and cuts wire. Convenient for the pocket.

**SPECIAL PRICE on lot of 500 only . . . . . 19c**

Noyes, a popular and well-traveled ball player, went professional shortly after high school, joining the Pawtucket, Rhode Island team of the New England League in 1899. He played for Worcester, Newark, Bristol and New London before landing in Hartford in early 1905. He stayed in the baseball game for years, serving as a playing manager in Hartford and later as manager of the New Haven team. He also was a lifelong inventor, being awarded a total of nine patents. In addition to his first two corkscrews he was awarded a third with more improvements, a baseball throwing machine, a rocking chair for kids, a table game, a vanity case, a sound operated toy and a walking doll and carriage toy. But he still had a day job, going to work for the West Haven parks department in 1926 and retiring as superintendent in 1956.

## ***Just For Openers January-December 2026 4*** **A Ballplayer, A Revenuer And No Headaches** **Harry Noyes Corkscrew by Don Thornton**

The Universal was sold separately (marked only with the patent dates) and was offered for branding. Examples of branding include BROTHERHOOD WINES CO. 328-334 SPRING ST.; WM. MENSTELL 465 LENOX AVE. N.Y.; OLD JERSEY WHISKEY, WILLIAM FRIES; OLYMPIA YES! IT'S THE WATER. However, there is one brand name that far outnumbered all the others: **GREEN RIVER, THE WHISKEY WITHOUT A HEADACHE**. It was marked as such on the top of the lever and **PAT. JUNE 27, '05 JULY 3, '06** on the underside. So many were produced over the years for promotional giveaways the Universal became known as the Green River corkscrew.



James W. McCulloch founded the Green River Distilling Company in 1885 in Owensboro, Kentucky, becoming the tenth oldest licensed distillery in the famous whiskey state. It should be noted McCulloch was a revenue agent for the U.S. Treasury Department collecting whiskey industry taxes in the region before launching Green River.

The *Owensboro Daily Inquirer* in a story on McCulloch June 4, 1903, described him as a local lad who had made good. McCulloch, the newspaper said, "was educated for a lawyer, but afterward entered the revenue service, where he made a capable officer. During his career in that service he made a study of whisky distilling and the result of this study and practical experience was his famous Green River brand."

McCulloch advertised extensively with print ads and promotions. In an 1898 newspaper ad Green River was described as "absolutely pure" and "for medicinal use." Other ads promoted the slogan "The Whiskey (also spelled whisky) Without A Headache."



# Just For Openers January-December 2026 5

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### Harry Noyes Corkscrew by Don Thornton

# "GREEN RIVER" WHISKY

The Whisky Without a Headache.

HIGHEST GRADE MADE IN THE UNITED STATES.

J. W. McCULLOCH, Distiller,

OWENSBORO, KENTUCKY.

IF YOU USE WHISKEY AT ALL  
AVOID ADULTERATED  
**COMPOUNDS**  
AND USE ONLY THE

## Green River Whiskey

WHICH IS ABSOLUTELY PURE  
Especially made so  
**FOR MEDICINAL USE.**  
IT RESTORES LOST STRENGTH

Cures Colds, Wards Off Grip, and  
Prevents Pneumonia and Consumption.

### Green River Whiskey

Is distilled and matured in bond, and bottled under the direct supervision of the officers of the Revenue Department. The U. S. Government stamp covers every bottle, guaranteeing its genuineness, natural condition, age and proof. Be sure, therefore, that you get **Green River Whiskey**. Don't accept any other.



HIGHEST AWARDS, Paris Exposition 1900; St. Louis Exposition 1904; Portland, 1905; Liege, Belgium, 1905, and Milan, Italy, 1906.

# Green River Distilling Company

OWENSBORO, KENTUCKY

The  
Whiskey  
Without a  
Headache



McCulloch-  
The  
Distiller-  
Owensboro,  
Kentucky.

THE OFFICIAL WHISKEY, U. S. NAVY HOSPITALS; ISTHMIAN CANAL HOSPITALS.

Production and sales boomed until 1918 when wartime Prohibition went into effect and a fire destroyed warehouses of aging barrels of whiskey. Green River was on life support and then out of business after full Prohibition hit in 1920. Following Prohibition in 1933, the brand changed hands, being taken over by Oldetyme Distillers of New York City. And changes in federal regulations made medical claims in advertising whiskey illegal resulting in the slogan, "The Whiskey Without A Headache" being changed to "The Whiskey Without Regrets." Oldetyme did not bring back the corkscrew but did introduce a "good luck" token with the slogan, "The Whiskey Without Regrets."

There are two versions of the 1 ¼-inch coin. One is marked: **GREEN RIVER WHISKIES** on the front and on the back in small type: **OLDTYME DISTILLERS INC. N.Y.C.** The other, more common, version is marked: **GREEN RIVER WHISKEY** on the front without the Oldetyme mark on the back.



# Just For Openers January-December 2026 6

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Over the next several decades, Green River changed hands numerous times before being mothballed. In 2014, the abandoned distillery was reconstructed and production resumed with a new slogan: "Raise Your Spirits."

