



OBJECT ID	2011.7.199
OBJECT NAME	Corkscrew
OBJECT COLLECTION	Alex's Candy Shop (is part of)
DATE CREATED	1920 – 1940
MATERIAL	Metal; Wood
OBJECT ENTITIES	Rassogianis/Franks families, By (owned by) Franks, Rassogianis; (is related to)

OBJECT DESCRIPTION

This corkscrew is a bell shaped one with a wooden handle. The wood is smooth and rounded, but also worn down on the flat sides. The entire shape is tapered at the ends which are darker in color because of the wear. On the underside of the wood is the faintly legible carving denoting "Walker" as the manufacturer. The metal that is the actual screw part connects in the middle of the wood.

The metal is a straight cylinder all the way to the bell which stops the cork from rising too much. It is open on one side with a little lip to open bottles. On the other side the bell shape has a protrusion that points away from the wood. Below the bell is the actual corkscrew part of the object. Plain metal it is a helix shape in order to grab the cork. It is now rusted and more of a brown color due to age.

ORIGIN

Paulina Franks' grandfather, John Rassogianis, came to Chicago in the 1890s. He began his life in the new city by peddling fruits and later, with the help of his sons Alex and George, would open a candy store. In the 1920s Paulina Franks' father Constantine became a part of the family business and the store was able to prosper. When the second business closed Paulina Rassogianis chose to hold as many of the candy store's items as possible and, later, donate them to the National Hellenic Museum.

The Rassogianis family began their candy business in Chicago proper, working out of their own shop named "St. Louis Ice Cream Parlor." Eventually, the shop was closed and the Rassogianis' chose to continue their candy store venture in Berwyn, Illinois. The new shop they chose to open was named Alex's Sweet Shop.

Paulina Franks' father was a key contributor to the success of the Rassogianis candy stores. While Constantine Rassogianis was a noteworthy entrepreneur, he also had many other accomplishments. Among these was his four years of involvement in the Greek national military during World War I wherein he obtained the rank of sergeant. Also, he was a published author and poet, an experienced mandolin player, a church officer and had extensive knowledge of psalti.

A corkscrew is a kitchen tool for drawing corks from wine bottles. Generally, a corkscrew consists of a pointed metallic helix (often called the "worm") attached to a handle. The user grips the handle and screws the metal point into the cork, until the helix is firmly embedded, then a vertical pull on the corkscrew extracts the cork from the bottle. The handle of the corkscrew, often a horizontal bar of wood attached to the screw, allows for a commanding grip to ease removal of the cork. Corkscrew handles may incorporate levers that further increase the amount of force that can be applied outwards upon the cork. Its design may have derived from the gun worm which was a device used by musketeers to remove unspent charges from a musket's barrel in a similar fashion, from at least the early 1630s.

The corkscrew is possibly an English invention, due to the tradition of beer and cider. In 1795, the first corkscrew patent was granted to the Reverend Samuel Henshall, in England. The clergyman affixed a simple disk, now known as the Henshall Button, between the worm and the shank. The disk prevents the worm from going too deep into the cork, forces the cork to turn with the turning of the crosspiece, and thus breaks the adhesion between the cork and the neck of the bottle. The disk is designed and manufactured slightly concave on the underside, which compresses the top of the cork and helps keep it from breaking apart. The diameter of the coil also needs to be wide enough so that it will grip the entire cork, not just the center, and long enough to penetrate the entire depth of the cork.

Bell type corkscrews, like this one, have a large handle on top that you turn sideways. Lower on the Corkscrew, there's a bell shape that rests on top of the mouth of the bottle. As you turn, the bell shape holds the bottle down while the screw pulls the cork up. The design was patented in America in 1893 by an American designer named Edwin Walker.

Walker made many different corkscrews, and while most are marked, the easiest way to recognize a Walker from his prolific counterpart Williamson is in the means by which the handle is attached to the corkscrew; Walker's will have a pin in the end of the handle. Since this one does not have the pin it was most likely made after Walker's company was bought by Williamson.

A simple self-pulling corkscrew that incorporated a bell shape, the Walker Bell was often used for promotional messages. The bell shape rested on the bottle top and as the corkscrew was turned the cork was pulled inside the bell. Edwin Walker's first bells were manufactured by E.S.M. Co. of Erie, Pennsylvania in the early 1890's. Walker also patented a method for making corkscrews in 1912. In 1918 Williamson's took over the corkscrew operations of Walker's Erie Specialty Co. shortly after Edwin Walker's death on September 21, 1917.

CITATION

Corkscrew, 1920 – 1940, Alex's Candy Shop, *National Hellenic Museum*, <https://collections.nationalhellenicmuseum.org/Detail/objects/>. Accessed 04/19/24.
