



OBJECT ID	2011.7.207
OBJECT NAME	Opener, Bottle
OBJECT COLLECTION	Alex's Candy Shop (is part of)
DATE CREATED	1920 – 1930
MATERIAL	Metal
OBJECT ENTITIES	Rassogianis/Franks families, By (owned by) Franks, Rassogianis; (is related to)

OBJECT DESCRIPTION

This bottle opener is made of a heavy, solid metal and has a 45 degree bend about halfway down its length. The metal itself is a dark silver but due to rust and age it has become darker and more brown in some areas. The object is entirely smooth. The handle is rounded for an easier grip and it has a serial number imprinted on it which reads "9993416" with a circle after the last number.

The bend in the metal is not as wide or large as the handle. It has extra supports on the sides which are a little thinner than the main piece of metal it is made of. This stem is connected to the actual opener component. The opener is completely flat and boxy on the longer end except for the very tip which is curved down to provide a clamp. The little piece is not as long as the clamp side and is completely flat on the edge that's closer to the other protrusion, yet rounded on the opposite side. The entire thing is plain with no color or ornamentation.

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.

Bottle openers only became common kitchen items after the crown top (also called the crown cork) was invented by a Baltimore bottler named William Painter in 1892. Prior to that, Hutchinson and other types of beer and soft-drink bottles came with attached stoppers. This was convenient for consumers, but the stoppers did a poor job of keeping the contents of the bottle fresh. So William Painter used a bit of tin with corrugated rim and a single round disc of cork to form a new cap. The bottle cap not only launched the Crown Cork and Seal Company of Baltimore, Md., but a whole new vista of opening bottles, too.

Crown-top bottles were a huge improvement from a health standpoint, but they required a tool to be opened. While most openers were made to do only one thing well (i.e., to open a bottle), others were produced as multifunctional devices, with folding knives, corkscrews, button hooks, cigar cutters, and, eventually, can openers incorporated into their designs. The earliest bottle openers were small and shaped somewhat like keys, with a round hole in one end so it could be attached to a keychain, and the opener itself at the other. By 1903, Michael Owens had patented a machine that manufactured evenly sized bottles which in turn would allow for mass-production stamping of bottle caps.

They were made of iron, brass, steel, nickel, aluminum and chrome. Sometimes the various metals were painted over with various colors or plated with another material. The malleability of cast iron led to a variety of designs. Major figural bottle opener makers included John L. Wright, Inc., and Wilton Products. Others included Gadzik Sales and L & L Favors.

There are several distinct designs of these openers. Wall mounted openers are typically found behind bars in pubs, whilst hand-tool bottle openers tend to be found and used in domestic environments. Since prior to 1920 the openers were usually stamped with the maker, this one is most likely from after that because it doesn't have that mark.

True bottle openers gradually became obsolete in the later 20th century as society progressed to zip-tab type openers on many beverage containers and screw lids on various other containers. After Prohibition was repealed in 1933, brewers began to experiment with packaging their products in cans. This was the wave of the future so many companies began producing openers with a piercing triangle at one end, so that beverages in either cans or bottles could be opened with the same tool. This opener does not have this aspect either so it was most likely made before 1935.

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This one is made of a heavier metal and was most likely used to open larger bottles such as candy syrup and other larger quantities. The opener part is set a little wider than most and the 45 degree angle would help with leverage to open larger items.

CITATION

Opener, Bottle, 1920 – 1930, Alex's Candy Shop, *National Hellenic Museum*, <https://collections.nationalhellenicmuseum.org/Detail/objects/>. Accessed 05/03/24.
