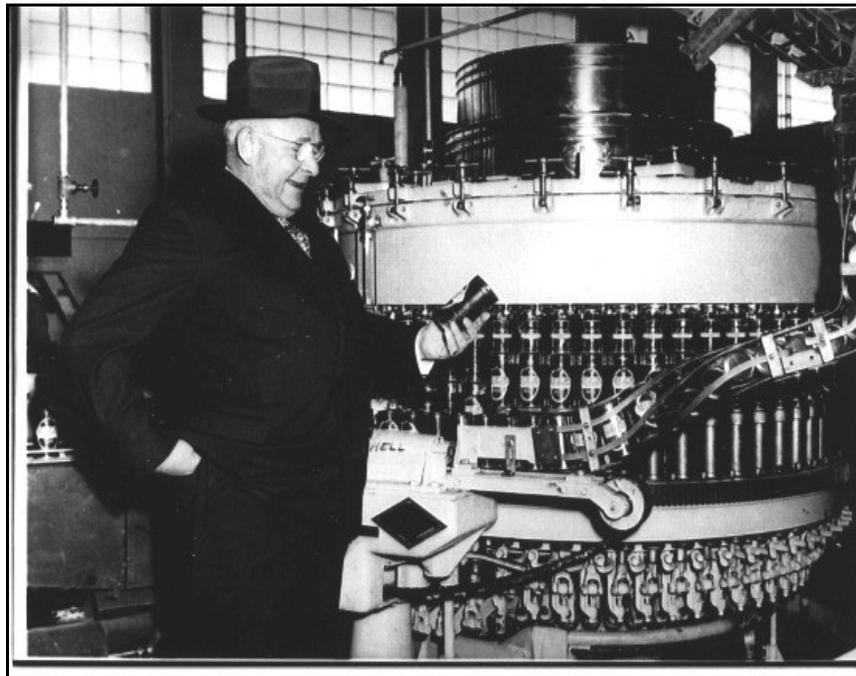


Breweries
and
Beer Bottles
at
El Paso, Texas



Bill Lockhart
2012

Chapter 7g
Harry Mitchell Beer Cans, Cases, Glasses, and Trays

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The Harry Mitchell Brewery

Chapter 7g – Harry Mitchell Beer Cans, Cases, Glasses, and Trays

[Much of this was originally published in the *Artifact* as “Dating El Paso Beer Bottles and Cans, Part 3: Harry Mitchell Cans, Glasses, and Other Items.” in 2008 – see Lockhart 2007]

Although a bit late, Mitchell followed the industry trend by adding a canning line in 1949. Like the bottles and labels discussed earlier, the cans may be classified by specific attributes and assigned date ranges for their use. In addition, the brewery offered advertising gimmicks to bars, restaurants, and stores. Most of these, including such diverse items as clocks, paper napkins, openers, paper cups, trays, signs, and matchbooks may be dated according to recognizable Mitchell lettering styles and logos.

Background, Beer Cans

History

The American Can Co. began exploring the possibility of creating a beer can prior to Prohibition. The major barrier to the design was the need for the can to withstand the 80-90 p.s.i. of pressure required by the Pasteurization process. Food cans, used during the period, demanded a much lower level. Of even more importance was the problem of “metal turbidity.” Beer had a strong affinity for metal, creating a foul taste and precipitation of salts. Union Carbide developed a product it called Vinylite that was used to line the cans (Johnson & Johnson 2004:1).

American Can began the development of what collectors call the flat-top can in 1931 and approached the Gottfried Krueger Brewery of Newark, New Jersey. Krueger ran a test run of 2,000 cans in 1933. American first used the Keglined trademark for the Vinylite lining on September 25, 1934 (Beer Can Collectors of America 2001; Martells 1976:6-7). For a thorough history of early beer can development, see *Beer Can Collectors News Report* (1985:2-11). For a complete history of the Krueger beer cans, see Christensen (1985:13-18).

The Krueger brewery ran a more serious test market for the cans on January 24, 1935, at Richmond, Virginia. Pabst followed with a tenuous entry of its Export label. By September,

however, Schlitz canned its top-of-the-line beer and was the first to offer the cone-top or crown-capped beer can. By the end of the year, 23 brewers had joined the can market. During World War II (on May 31, 1942), the U.S. curtailed beer can use for civilians, although the government shipped cans of beer overseas for military use. The civilian ban was lifted in 1947, and can use has continued to be used into the 21st century (Martells 1976:7-9; Maxwell 1993:95).

Dating

Although specific dating techniques are discussed below, two generally datable items need to be discussed here. First, on June 28, 1935, the federal government required that all beer containers be marked “Internal Revenue Tax Paid,” frequently called the IRTP requirement by collectors. Until the Bureau of Alcohol, Tobacco, and Firearms repealed the law on March 30, 1950, all beer cans and bottle labels carried the IRTP. A notable exception was beer cans used by the military during World War II. In place of the IRTP, these cans were marked “Withdrawn Free of Tax for Exportation.” Military cans were also olive drab or silver in color (Maxwell 1993:98, 102-103). An additional recent dating tool is the use of UPC computer codes that began to appear on beer cans during the 1970s. Cans with specialized shapes were first used in 1972 (Maxwell 1993:96).

Types

Beer cans fall into three major categories: 1) cone-tops; 2) flat-tops or punch-tops; and 3) pull tabs. There were also cans that did not quite fit into these categories, such as push-button tops used in 1974 (Martells 1976:18-19). Most, however fit into one of the three major groups, although each also has subgroups.

Cone-Top Cans

These cans had cone-shaped tops that terminated in a rolled lip to take a crown cap (Figure 7g-1). A Rolled seam characterized the shoulder of these cans. Charles E. McManus applied for three design patents – all for cans with crown caps – on August 6, 1935. He received two patents (No. D98,444 and D98,445) on February 4, 1936, and the



Figure 7g-1 – Cone-Top Can (eBay)

third (No. D99,407) on April 21, 1936 (Figure 7g-2). He filed for a fourth patent on August 30, 1935, and received Design Patent No. 99,093 on March 24, 1936. McManus assigned all four patents (and his subsequent ones) to the Continental Can Co.

They were initially marketed by the Continental Can Co. in September 1935 and were first offered to the public by the Schlitz Brewing Co. The style was completely phased out by 1960, although virtually identical cone-top cans continued to be used for motor oil and gasoline additives into the 1980s, eventually with screw caps instead of crowns. Continental marketed the beer cans in three sizes: 12-, 16-, and 32-ounces (Maxwell 1993:96, 98-99, 104).

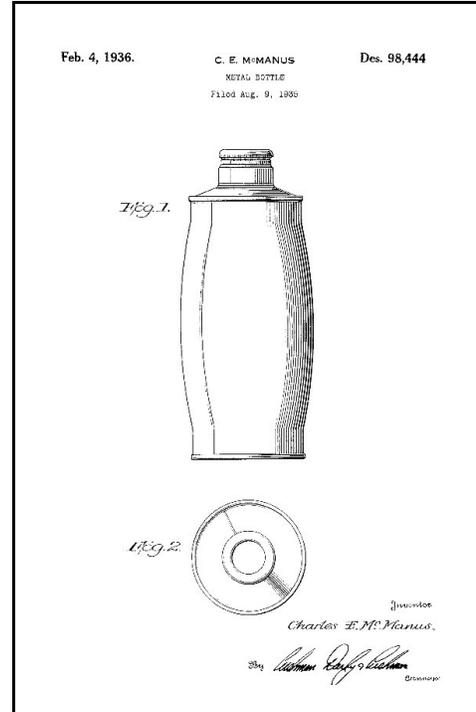


Figure 7g-2 – McManus 1936 patent

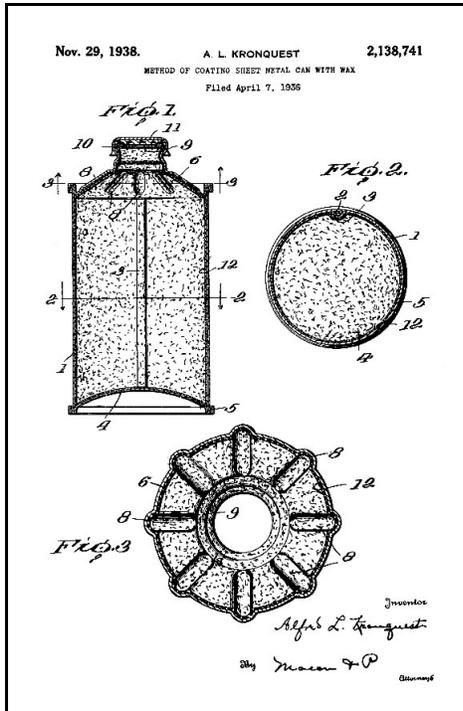


Figure 7g-3 – Kronquest 1938 patent (with concave base)

Prior to 1937, the bases of all cone-tops were flat; after that date, they were concave (Maxwell 1993:96, 98-99, 104). Alfred L. Kronquest applied for a patent for a “Method of Coating Sheet Metal Can with Wax” on April 7, 1936, and received Patent No. 2,138,741 on November 29, 1938. Kronquest noted that the base of his can was “curved inwardly to strengthen the same and also to provide a smooth continuous surface . . . to which the coating will adhere” (Figure 7g-3).

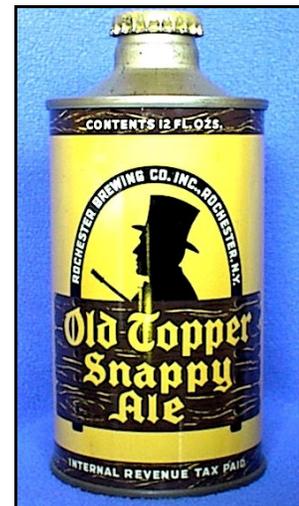


Figure 7g-4 – “J-Spout” can (Courtesy of Gary Gauger, Crowntainer Central)

The Crown Cork & Seal Co. manufactured a sub-variation, called the J-spout can (Figure 7g-4). These are characterized by a long, narrow neck that flares into a wide base or shoulder. J-spout cans were only made between 1937 and 1940. Prior to World War II, the cone was “low-profile” or shorter; postwar, the cones were “high-profile” or taller (Figure 7g-5 – Gauger 2012; Maxwell 1993:99-100).

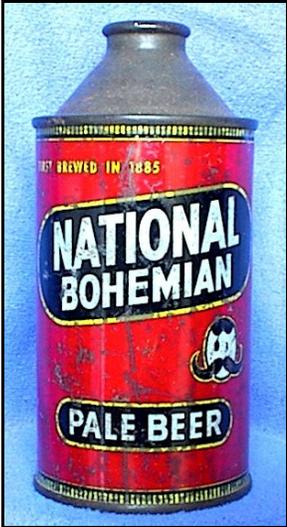


Figure 7g-5 – High Profile can (Courtesy of Gary Gauger, Crowntainer Central)



Figure 7g-6 – Crowntainer (eBay)

Another variation was the Crowntainer. Still a cone-top, the Crowntainer differs in the lack of the shoulder seam or any side seams (Figure 7g-6). With the exception of the base, the can was drawn out of a single thin steel plate. On June 27, 1937, Amos Calleson and Edgar A. Calleson applied for a “Design for a Metal Bottle” and received Design Patent No. 109,311 on April 19, 1938 (Figure 7g-7).

Crown Cork & Seal introduced the Crowntainers in late 1939 and produced them until the mid-1950s. The two Callesons applied for a much more involved patent for the same can on May 13, 1940, and received Patent No. 2,384,810 on September 18, 1945 (Figure 7g-8). The patent included four pages of drawings and a detailed explanation of how to make the cans (Gauger 2012; Maxwell 1993:100-101).

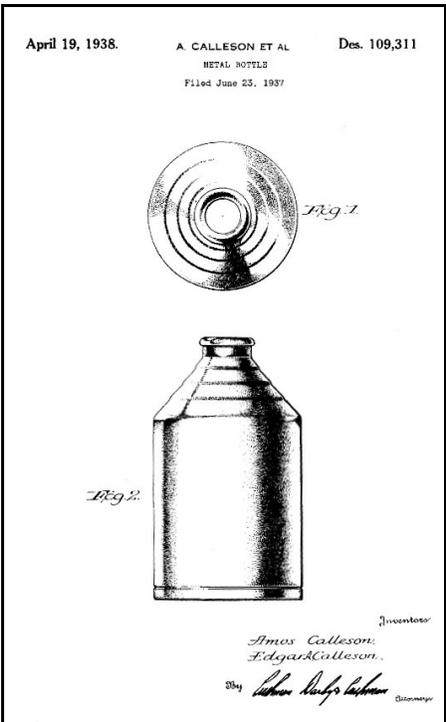


Figure 7g-7 – Calleson & Calleson 1938 design patent

Flat-Top Cans

Flat-top or punch-top cans were first made in 1935 (Figure 7g-9). Although I have not found a published end date for these cans, they were probably generally phased out by the late 1960s. These required the use of an opener of some sort to punch holes in the top of the can to allow

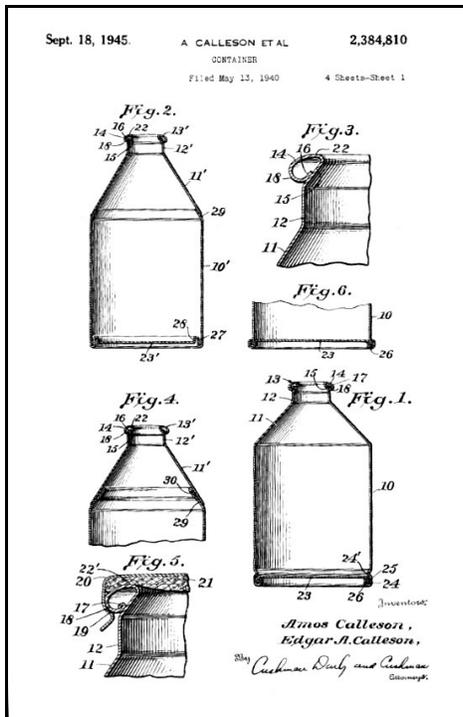


Figure 7g-8 – Calleson & Calleson 1945 patent

the pouring of its contents (Maxwell 1993:97-98). By far the most complete study of flat-top and cone-top beer cans was made by Beer Can Collectors of America (2001). The volume includes a complete listing with photos and descriptions of every brand of flat-top and cone-top beer can known by the group to have been manufactured in the United States. In addition, the Keglined web page (2011) had an excellent set of graphics and patent information.



Figure 7g-9 – Flat-top can (eBay)

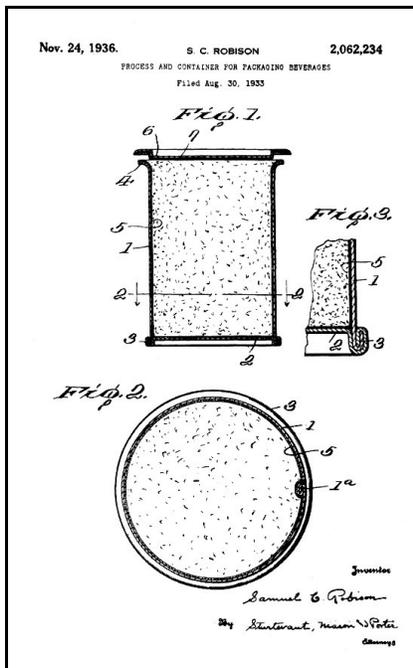


Figure 7g-11 – Robison 1936 patent

The basic idea for the cans was evident by 1925. On April 16 of that year, Charles Stollberg applied for a patent for a “Can Body and Method of Forming a Side Seam Thereof.” He received Patent No. 1,625,229 on April 19, 1927 (Figure 7g-10). Stollberg’s seams were the basis for later beer cans. He assigned the patent to the American Can Co. On August 30, 1933, Samuel C. Robison filed for a patent for a “Process and Container for Packaging Beverages” and received Patent No. 2,062,234 on November 24, 1936. Robison’s patent included both adding the flat top and an internal coating (Figure 7g-11).

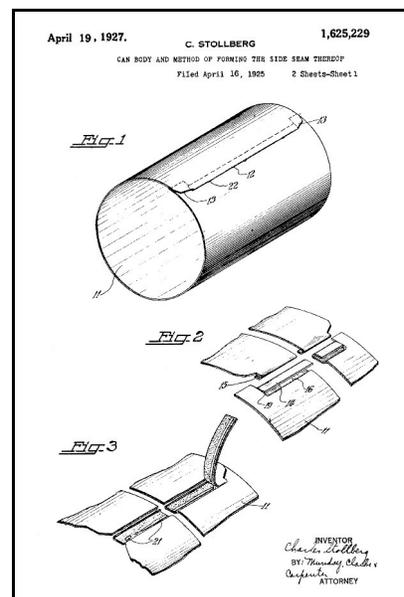


Figure 7g-10 – Stollberg 1927 patent

Later in 1933, John H. Murch devised another method of applying an internal coating, along with a different flat-top design. He applied on November 7, 1933, for a “Method of Lining the Inside of Cans” and received Patent No. 2,028,798 on January 28, 1936 (Figure 7g-12). He assigned the patent to the American Can Co. It is interesting that Robison applied for his patent two months earlier than Murch but received it ten months later.

Self-Opening Cans

With the invention of the “pop-top” in 1962, self-opening cans became a reality. These are described in detail in the “Pull Tabs” section below. The initial wave of these containers used removable tab lifters. These gave way to ring-pull openers and eventually to tab lifters that remained on the can.

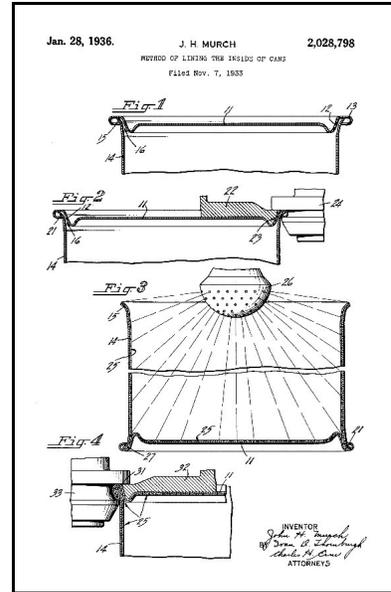


Figure 7g-12 – Murch 1936 patent

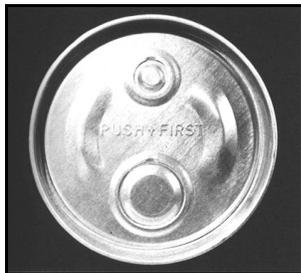


Figure 7g-13 – Coors Punch-Top Can (Martells 1976:19)

An unusual variation was the Coors, all-aluminum punch-top can (Figure 7g-13), used for just 40 months in the mid-1970s (Rathje 1991:131). According to Maxwell (1993:109), the Coors can was invented in 1972 and continued in use until 1977. This top used two stamped circles that were depressed with a finger and remained attached to the top on the inside of the can. The larger of these was for drinking; the smaller hole provide a vent to allow a smooth flow. Bill Coors encouraged the development of the “Press Tab” in an effort to combat beer-related litter. He had reluctantly adopted the pull tab (see below) long after it was the industry standard because of a concern about the pop-tops that were becoming part of the landscape (Baum 2000:114).

An interesting variation in all-aluminum cans was introduced in 1966. Called “neck-in-chime” cans, these had a smaller top than the body (Figure 7g-14). This created a short “neck” between the actual body and the seam around the can top (Maxwell 1993:96).

Pull Tabs

The first pull tab was patented by the Alcoa Aluminum Co. in 1962 and was initially used by the Pittsburgh Brewing Co. on Iron City Beer (Maxwell 1993:105). Trade names include zip top, pull tab, tab top, tap top, pop top, snap top and ring top. According to Martells (1978:14), the design had gone through seven major changes and up to 80 minor changes in a decade and a half of existence. Although most were on aluminum tops, at least two were made into steel tops.

Guest (2004:41) told a story (possibly apocryphal) of the reason for the development of the pull tab:

The “Pull Tab” can owes it (*sic*) true beginnings to an Ohio tool and the designer named Ermal Frazee. As the story goes, he was once at an outdoor picnic in the summer of 1959 with friends, when to everyone’s surprise it was discovered that no one had brought a can opener for the beer.

Although the legend has it that Frazee got the cans opened with the aid of a car’s bumper, he reasoned that there had to be a better way of opening the cans without the aid of an opener.

Essentially, this is virgin territory – and an area that needs study. Martells (1976:14-19) illustrated 21 pull-tab variations that were in use by 1976. At this point, I have found no more recent studies. Each can manufacturer had its own ideas about style and shape. Tabs fit into three basic categories: 1) pull tabs or lift tabs; 2) ring tabs; and 3) stay tabs.



Figure 7g-14 – Neck-in-Chime Can (eBay)

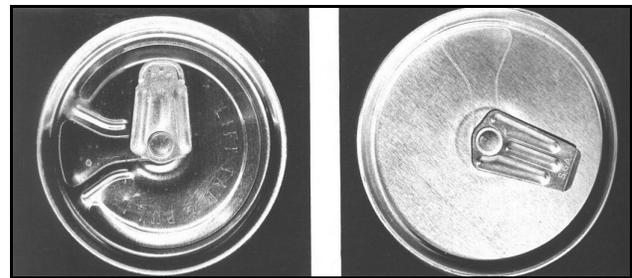


Figure 7g-15 – Pull Tabs (Martells 1976:15)

Pull Tabs or Lift Tabs

Can manufacturers used both terms (and more), and a clear terminology has yet to be established. The actual tabs consisted of two parts joined by an aluminum rivet (Figure 7g-15). The lower segment was an integral part of the aluminum top of the can, stamped into the top so that the outline protruded most of the way through the metal. The second part was an aluminum tab in a rectangular shape, sometimes with a rounded end. The earliest ones of these tended to be sharp, cutting the pulling appendage and creating a condition known as “pop-top thumb.” Martells (1976:15-16, 19) illustrated and dated six variations of the pull tab.

The tabs, themselves, assumed a variety of shapes, although most were of the “keyhole” variety. These were used during the 1962-1965 period, although commercial use did not begin until 1963. According to Baum (2000:97), the Coors family had such an intense dislike for “ring-pull litter,” that the company refused to use any form of opening device (except the punch-top can described above) until late in the 1970s. In conjunction with can improvements, the plastic six-pack holder (a six-ring yoke) was introduced by Anheuser Busch in 1963. In 1964, both American and Continental Can introduced “smile beads,” small, embossed ribs along the sides of the opening to reduce spillage (Maxwell 1993:107-108).

Ring Tabs

Ring tabs were an improved version of the pull tabs, replacing the rectangular “pull” with a ring (Figure 7g-16). These rings could be round, oval, or rectangular and served to protect the thumb or finger used to remove the tab. As with the pull tabs, the tabs, themselves, varied from “keyhole” to “pendulum” shapes. These were used from 1965 to ca. 1974.¹ Martells (1976:16-19) illustrated 12 variations.



Figure 7g-16 – Ring Tabs (Martells 1976:17)

¹ Maxwell (1993:96) placed the end of ring pulls at 1983. Although this date is undoubtedly correct, the Martells date of 1974 is a more practical date to use in most cases.

Stay Tabs

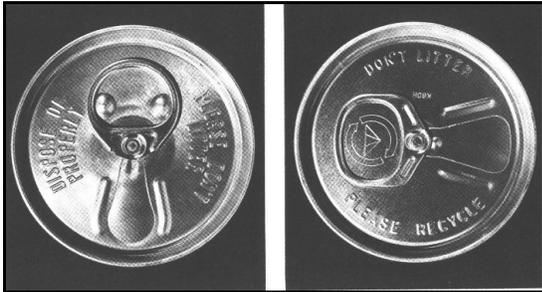


Figure 7b-17 – Stay Tabs (Martells 1976:18)

Martells (1976:18) called these “stay-with-the-can tabs.” The essential difference with stay tabs is that when the lifter is pulled, it depresses the outlined segment into the can (Figure 7g-17).

The tab, usually oval or round, remains with the can. These were developed in 1974 (marketed the following year) and are still in use in the early 21st century.

As time passed, each manufacturer developed various styles, all available to soda, beer, and other beverage bottlers. Rathje (1991:131) devised a chart that showed ring pulls for different brands in the mid-1970s (Figure 7g-18). It should be noted that Rathje’s shapes are not applicable to any other temporal period. Canners changed suppliers according to sales, personal preferences, and many other variables. The style of the tab depended on what was offered by the manufacturer – not solely the selection of the canning company.

Can Manufacturers & Marks

Martells (1976:33-36) listed eight can manufacturers in business by 1976 (Figure 7g-19) and the marks they had used up to that time (Table 7g-1). He followed the list with three pages of illustrations. Essentially the same information was presented by Beer Can Collectors of America (2001:18).

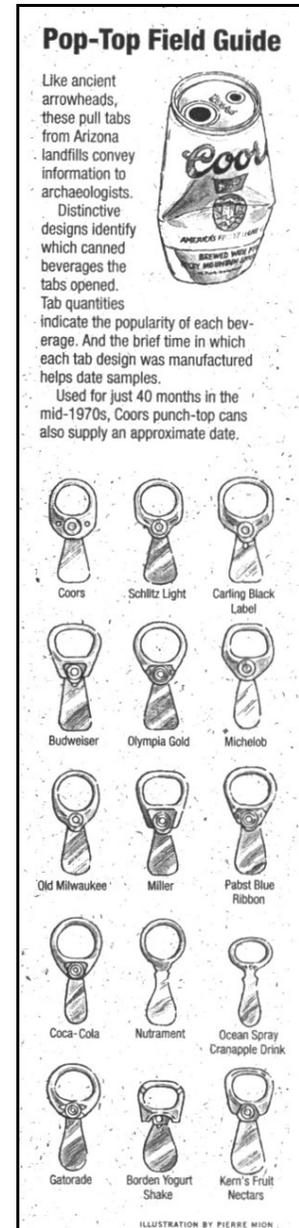


Figure 7g-18 – Ring Tabs Used in the Mid-1970s (Rathje 1991:131)

Table 7g-1 – Dates of Manufacturer’s Marks (after Martells 1976:33)

Company	Mark	Dates
American Can Co.	“Keglined Patent Pending” or “Patents Pending”	1935 to 1938
	“Keglined Pats., 1,625,229-2,064,537 others pending”	1938 to mid-late 1940s
	“Keglined Pats., 2,064,537, 2,259,498 - 2,178,618” (printed across a full-length vertical panel)	1947 to early-mid-1950s
	“Keglined Pats., 2,064,537, 2,259,498 - 2,178,618” (printed in small letters near seam)	mid-1950s to late 1950s
	“Keglined” (appears in small oval)	late 1950s to mid-1960s
	“A” and other symbols (soldered seam)	mid-1960s on*
	“A” and other symbols (“Mira-Seam” can with cemented seam)	mid- to late 1960s on*
Continental Can Co.	Three large C’s (flat top)	ca. 1950
	Three small C’s (flat top)	early 1950s on*
	“Conoweld” (welded seam)	late 1960s on*
Crown Cork & Seal, Inc.	“Crown Can” (flat top)	usually pre-WW II
	“Crown” (flat top with “Crown” in crown-shaped box)	late 1940s to 1950s
	“Crown” (seamless steel cans)	1970s
National Can Co.	“Patents Pending National Can” (flat top)	1935 to early 1940s
	“National” (in outlined US map – flat top)	1950s on*
	Flying “N” symbol (flat top)	1974 on*
Pacific Can Co.**	“Keglet” (flat top)	mid- to late 1930s
	“Pacific Can” (flat top)	late 1930s to 1955

	“Kan Keg” (flat top)	1950s
Cans, Inc.†	“Cans Inc.” (flat top)	early 1950s
Heekin Can Co.††	“H” or “H” in a small circle	1960s
Reynolds Aluminum	“R” or others (all-aluminum can)	1963 on*

* “on” = 1976 (date of Martells’ publication) or later

** merged with National Can in 1955

† merged with National Can in 1953

†† division of Diamond International, Cincinnati, Ohio



Figure 7g-19 – Examples of Continental Can Co. and American Can Co. Marks (Martells 1976:36)

Seams

Seams on the back of the cans also changed through time.

Martells (1976:44) illustrated and dated five seam variations

(Figure 7g-20 and Table 7g-2). Maxwell (1993:96) noted that the welded seam began use in 1966. Henderson (n.d.:4; 1976:3) added that can bodies were made in three major variations, mostly defined by the seams. Each variation had several sub-variations:

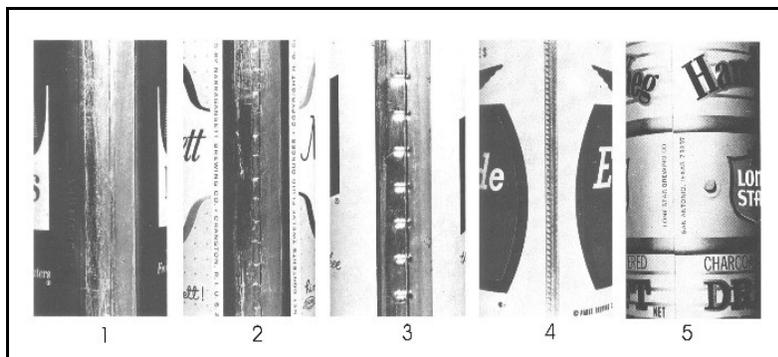


Figure 7g-20 – Beer Can Seams – 1) no notches, 1935-late 1950s; 2) notched, 1960s-1976+; 3) notched, 1960s-1976+; 4) welded, 1965-1976+; 5) Mira Seam, 1965-1976+ (Martells 1976:44-45)

Straight edge – including straight side, tin straight, and straight steel (see Figure 7g-10)

Seamless – including two-piece aluminum and two-piece extruded or drawn and ironed steel

Leo M. Harvey applied for a patent for a “One-Piece Extruded Container for Canning” on July 22, 1963, and reapplied on July 8, 1965. He received Patent No. 3,272,383 on September 13, 1966 (Figure 7g-21). Harvey noted that “the one-piece container of the present invention is worked from a single piece of material as distinguished from the prior art containers that are fabricated of multi-pieces.” Paul Glenn Stephan applied for a patent for a beer can (or other)

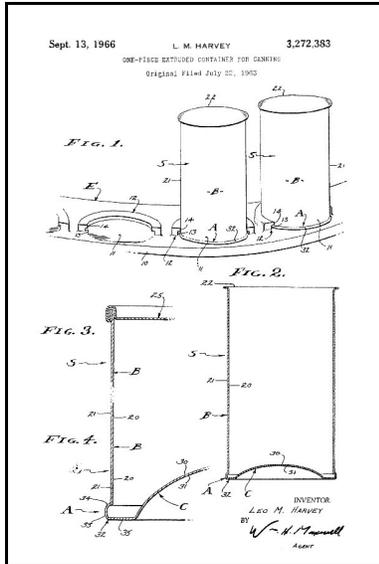


Figure 7g-21 – Harvey’s 1966 extruded aluminum can patent

base that would stack easily on July 9, 1965, and received Patent No. 3,349,956 on October 31, 1967 (Figure 7g-22). Raymond H.P. Kneusel and Vinson S. Potts adapted the seamless process to steel cans with his application on July 22, 1970. He received Patent No. 3,693,828 on September 26, 1972 (Figure 7g-23). Aluminum beer cans, however, became the standard.

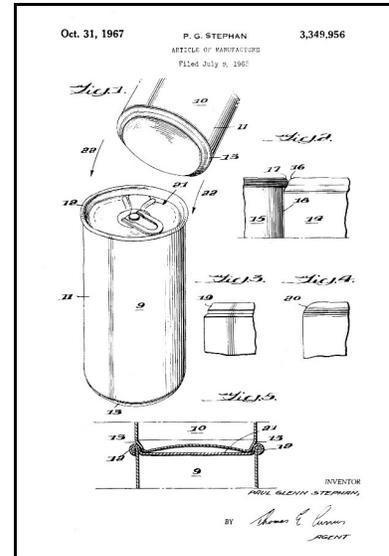


Figure 7g-22 – Stephan’s 1967 aluminum can patent

Crimped – including double crimped, necked in, tin crimped, three-piece aluminum, and two-piece aluminum

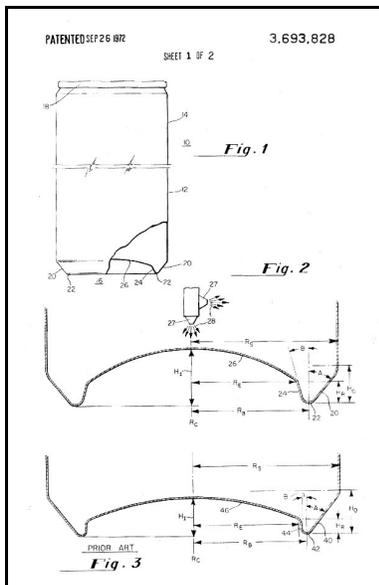


Figure 7g-23 – Kneusel and Potts’s 1972 extruded steel can patent

On November 23, 1933, Walter E. Groenke applied for a patent for a “Can Body” with interlocking seams that formed a “notched” pattern. He received Patent No. 2,046,537 on December 15, 1936, and assigned the patent to the American Can Co. (Figure 7g-24). Russel C. Taylor filed on October 14, 1937, of an improvement on the notched seam idea. He received Patent No. 2,259,498 on October 21, 1941, and also assigned the patent to the American Can Co. (Figure 7g-25).

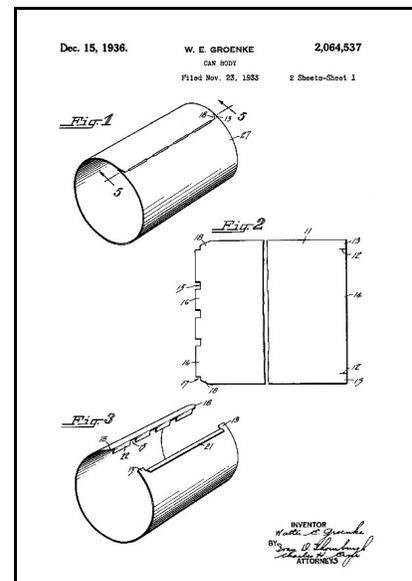


Figure 7g-24 – Groenke’s 1936 “notched” seam patent

Henderson (n.d.:4-5; 1976:4) further divided seams according to soldered, epoxied or glued, and welded seams. He also defined bases as flat bottom, concave bottom, ringed bottom, ringed concave bottom, and doughnut bottom. Unfortunately, he did not create chronologies for these distinctions. This is another area that could use more research.

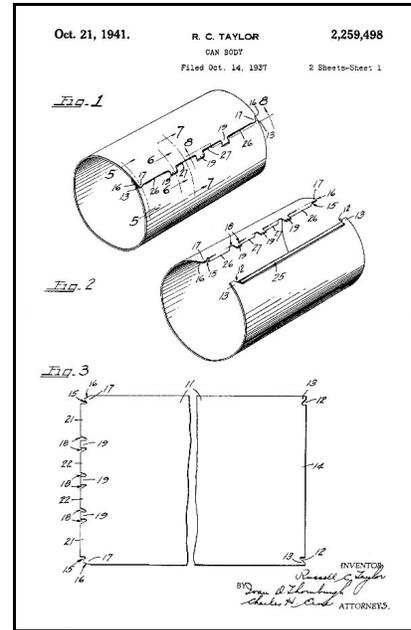


Figure 7g-25 – Taylor’s 1941 “notched” seam patent

Table 7g-2 – Seams and Dates of Use (Martells 1976:44-45)

#	Seam Type	Company	Dates
1	Straight soldered, no notches	All	1935-late 1950s
2	Soldered with Notches	American Can Co.	1960s-date*
3	Soldered with Notches	Continental Can & National Can	1960s-date*
4	Welded Seam	Continental Can Co.	1965-date*
5	Mira Seam	American Can Co.	1965-date*

* “date” = 1976, when the Martells book was written

Weight

According to Martells (1976:43), the weight of cans decreased over time. Although rust accumulated during the deposition process might distort the weight of excavated cans, this might still be a useful tool in some instances (Table 7g-3).

Table 7g-3 – Can Weights, 1935-1976 (after Martells 1976:43)

Period or Type	Weight
Kruger's (first can)	3 ¾ oz.
Early to mid-1940s	3 ½ oz.
Early to mid-1950s	3 ¼ oz.
Late 1950s to early 1960s	2 ¼ oz.
Straight soldered with aluminum tab	2 ¼ oz.
Crimped can with aluminum tab	2 oz.
Seamless steel (drawn and ironed)	1 ¾ oz.
American's Mira Form II	1 ½ oz.
All aluminum	1 oz.

Sizes

Beer cans were made in a variety of sizes. Initially, cone-tops were made in 12-, 16-, and 32-ounce sizes. Flat-tops came in 7-, 8-, 10-, 11-, 12-, 14-, 15, and 16-ounce sizes; even gallon cans were introduced in 1964. Schlitz marketed the first 16-ounce, flat-top can in 1954. An all-aluminum 11-ounce can hit the market in 1958 and was followed the next year by the Coors, 7-ounce aluminum can. It was not until 1963, however, that the first 12-ounce, all-aluminum can was offered. The 11- and 15-ounce cans were removed from the market in the 1970s (Maxwell 1993:96). Coors was a leader in the adoption of all-aluminum cans as a way to prevent beer-related litter. Bill Coors was concerned about government regulations being implemented to combat the litter problem and wanted to side-step the issue by encouraging recycling (Baum 2000:114).

Openers

D.F. Sampson, an employee of American Can Co., invented the “church key” beer can opener. The Vaughn Novelty Mfg. Co. marketed the invention and called it the “Quick ‘n Easy” opener. The five-inch-long device had a punch opener on one end and a bottle opener (for crown

caps) on the other (*Beer Can Collectors News Report* 1985:3). It was thus ideal for opening both flat-top and cone-top cans. Initially, brewers packaged an opener in each case of beer. As beer cans became lighter, openers correspondingly lost weight, becoming shorter, thinner, and punching smaller holes (*Beer Can Collectors of America* 2001:9; Martells 1976:45).

These openers are known to collectors of such items as combination cap lifters and can piercers. These were invented in 1932 for use on other can types but came to be considered a necessity by drinkers of canned beer. The American Can Co. originally made the openers in Newark, New Jersey, but the firm licensed the Vaughn Mfg. Co. to make them in 1935 and 1936 as well. Soon, other companies joined in (Bull & Stanley 1999:54).

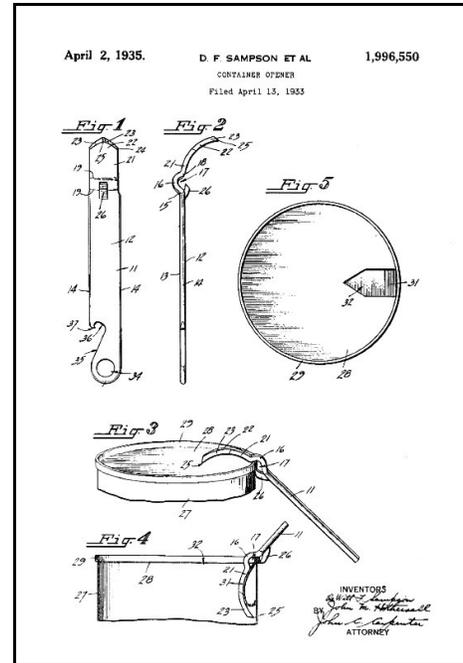


Figure 7g-26 – Sampson and Hothersall’s 1935 opener patent

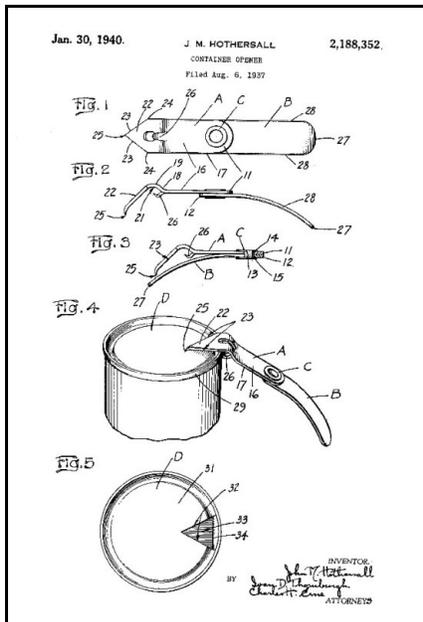


Figure 7g-27 – Hothersall’s 1940 opener patent

Dewitt F. Sampson and John M. Hothersall applied for a patent for a “Container Opener” on April 13, 1932. They received Patent No. 1,996,550 on April 2, 1935, and assigned the device to the American Can Co. (Figure 7g-26). They noted that “the principle object of the invention is to provide a container opener which at one stroke or turning movement produces a substantial pouring opening in a wall of a container.” The device succeeded, probably beyond the inventors’ wildest dreams. The opener was simple, made of a “single plate of tooled steel” with a “rocker punch” (can piercer) at one end and a cap lifter stamped or cut into the other (also see Bull & Stanley 1999:54-55).

Hothersall applied for another “Container Opener” patent on August 6, 1937 – this time for a very similar device with a swivel in the center, allowing the two ends to be revolved so that one was over the other – reducing the overall

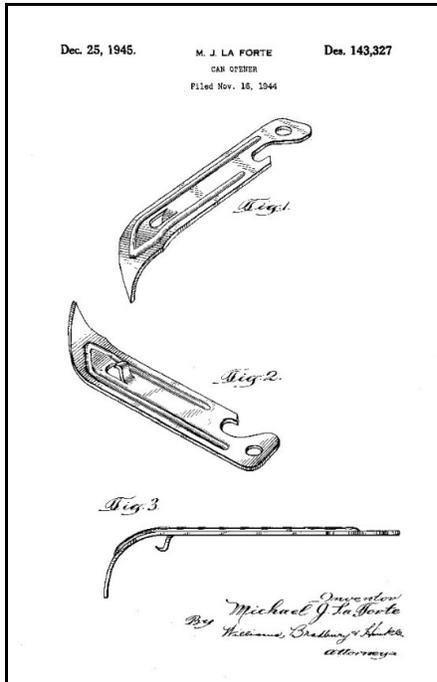


Figure 7g-28 – La Forte’s 1945 opener patent

openers (Bull & Stanley 1999:54-55).

Joseph G. Pessina applied for a “Design for a Can Top Piercer” on October 30, 1947, and received Design Patent No. 155,314 on September 20, 1949. These were rounded in cross-section, apparently to increase the strength of opener. George R. Harrah applied for a patent for a “Combination Cap and Bottle Opener” on April 5, 1950. The opener was also rounded, although much less so than the Pessina patent. Harrah’s device used the same can piercer as a cap lifter. Harrah received Patent No. 2,773,272 on December 11, 1956 (Figure 7g-29).

length by 50% when folded. He received Patent No. 2,188,352 on January 30, 1940, and assigned it to the American Can Co. (see Bull & Stanley 1999:56). Its main utility, of course, was that it could be “carried compactly in a small space” (Figure 7g-27).

On November 16, 1944, Michael J. La Forte filed for a “Design for a Can Opener” and received Design Patent No. 143,327 on December 25, 1945. He assigned the patent to the Vaughn Novelty Mfg. Co. of Chicago. La Forte’s design centered around “a rib comprising two spaced-apart parallel portions of different length converging and united at one end” (Figure 7g-28). The ribs soon became a standard feature on most

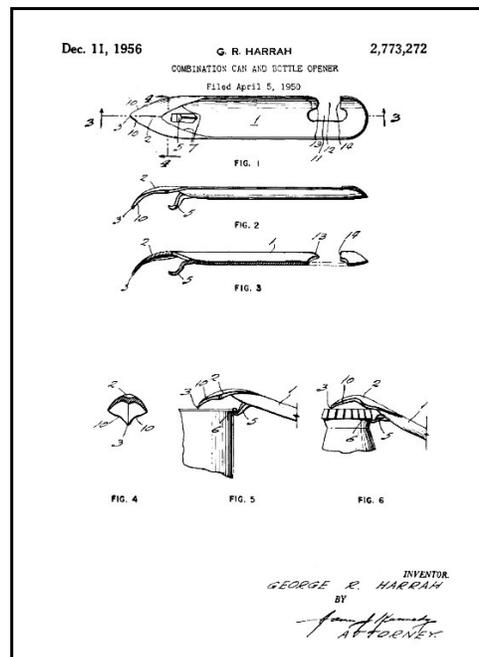


Figure 7g-29 – Harrah’s 1956 opener patent

Harry Mitchell Beer Cans

Harry Mitchell decided to expand his brewery to include cans and began production in December 1949. The *El Paso Times* (12/19/1949) devoted seven pages to the new line,

including photos of Mitchell, himself, watching the first filled cans roll off the conveyer belt (Figure 7g-30). Cans were only used to contain Premium beer (and, later, the Golden Grain brand), and they remained an important element in the Mitchell output until end of the company in 1956.

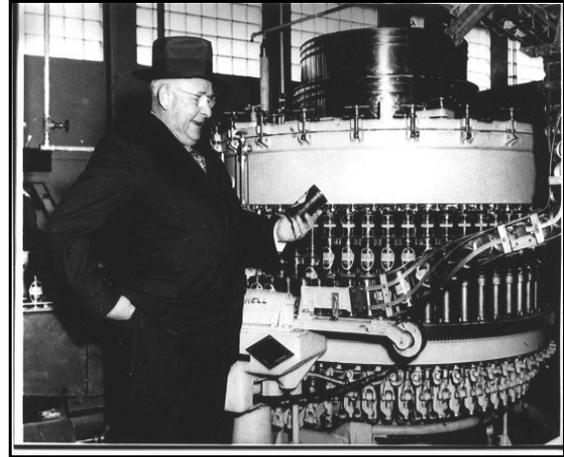


Figure 7g-30 – Harry Mitchell at the new can line (*El Paso Times* 12/19/1949; courtesy of Wil Mitchell)

Although Rick Chavez provided a pretty thorough description and history of Mitchell Beer Cans in his 2000 article “Harry Mitchell: The Man and the Brewery,” both Rick and I have discovered a few things that were not in his earlier article. Of greatest interest, I was able to “crack the code” that Mitchell used to date his beer cans. Most breweries used these codes, and several have been deciphered (e.g., Aschbrenner 1983).

Date Codes

Some cans used by various breweries have a number or mixed number/letter code stamped on the base of the can. Many (but not all) of the Mitchell’s cans have a five-digit numerical code stamped in black ink on the base. The stamping was an obviously speedy process because often the numbers (or parts of them) are smeared.

For several years, I collected numbers stamped on the bases of Harry Mitchell beer cans. I recorded the numbers, the type of logo on the can, the variation, and best estimate for when the cans were in production. The results – while still smaller numbers than I would like (total sample = 32) – have been very consistent, and the few discrepancies were probably a result of misreading the numbers, often because of blurring in the stamping.

The first number to the left is a year code. This single-digit code only varies between 1 (1951) and 6 (1956), and each year code matches the year that cans with that type of label were made. The next two numbers indicate the month, while the last two numbers show the day. The second and third numbers together are always less than 13 (with 09 as the highest I have seen so far). The final two digits are as high as 30 on cans I have seen, too high to be month designators

but a perfect fit for days. For example, the code on the can in Figure 7g-31 is 30915 – a date of September 15, 1953.

The few numbers I have recorded for the first two variations of Mitchell cans (Type 1, Variations A & B) are problematic – all but one have at least one crucial number blurred. With one exception, however, the remaining code numbers fit the expected periods.

Premium Beer

Mitchell cans are clearly divided into two types, both based on the same label styles as those used on bottles. The essential dating of the cans also follows the same general time period as the use of corresponding bottle labels. In the discussion below, I have cataloged cans using my system as well as including the Beer Can Collectors of America (BCCA) numbers (Beer Can Collectors of America 2001:100).

Type 1 (1949-1953)

Type 1 cans are characterized by a red background with a vertical oval in the center (gold background within the oval), topped by a horizontal oval (white background) in the foreground with no outline. They are very similar to the Type 2 bottle labels.

Variation A (BCCA #M 11) – This variation is identified by double gold bands at top and bottom, Internal Revenue Tax Paid (IRTP) information, and EL PASO, TEX. at lower part of label (Figure 7g-32). The label is only on one face of the can. Martells (1976:90) dated this variation at 1948, but production did not actually begin until late the following year. This variation was made from the inception of can production until the repeal of the IRTP requirement on March 30, 1950 (Kay 2000, 2005). An ad from the December 14, 1949, *El Paso Times* illustrated the new can (Figure 7g-33).



Figure 7g-31 – Example of the code on a can base – 30915 = September 15, 1953



Figure 7g-32 – Mitchell's first Premium beer can – Style 1, Variations A & B – 1949-1951 (eBay)



Figure 7g-33 – Add for the first can (*El Paso Times* December 14, 1949)

Variation B (BCCA #M 12) – same as Variation A except no IRTP. These were used after the law change in 1950 and may have continued in production during 1951.

Variation C (BCCA #M 13) – same as Variation A except for red outlines around the ovals; single white bands at top and bottom; no IRTP; and EL PASO, / TEXAS (Figure 7g-



Figure 7g-34 – Mitchell's second Premium beer can style – Style 1, Variation C – 1951-1953 (eBay)

34). Unlike the earlier variations, these cans had the labels printed on both the front and back faces. These cans were used between about 1951 and the beginning of the next style in 1953. Date codes on this type of can in my sample extend from August 14, 1952 (20814), to June 8, 1953 (30608).

Type 2 (1953-1956)

Variation A (BCCA #M 16) – red can with a white, centered oval (surrounded by heads of grain). Inside the oval was a bell-tower drawing, followed by “Mitchell’s (red, Style III logo) / Premium Beer (black) / THE BALANCED BREW (red)” (Figure 7g-35). Like its counterpart in the bottle labels, the first of these had a tiny “HARRY” printed in the curl of the “M” in “Mitchell Brewing Co., El Paso, Texas” at the front heel of the can (Figure 7g-36).



Figure 7g-36 – Tiny “HARRY” in the curl of the “M”

The back of the can is identical, except for “Net Contents 12 Fluid Ounces (script)” at the heel. The only date code I have seen for this can was “30915” (September 15, 1953). The cans were probably made from mid-1953 to some point in 1954.



Figure 7g-35 – Premium can – Style 2, Variation A – 1953-1954 (eBay)

Variation B (no BCCA #) – same as Variation A but with no “HARRY” in the curl of the “M” (Figure 7g-37). The only complete code I have recorded for Variation B is “40112” (January, 12, 1954). These may have only been made in early to mid-1924. If eBay auctions are characteristic, these two variations are more scarce than the following two.



Figure 7g-37 – Curl of the “M without “HARRY”

Variation C (BCCA #M 14) – same as Variation A but with a single white band at the top and bottom of the can (Figure 7g-38). Variation C cans also had the tiny “HARRY” in the curl of the “M.” The only clearly recorded date code in my sample was “40707” (July 7, 1954), although another may have been made as late as March 21, 1955 (or even 1956). It is likely, however, that these cans were primarily made during 1954.

Variation D (BCCA #M 15) – same as Variation C but no “HARRY.” This was the most common of the Type 2 cans, probably filled between 1954 and 1956. Date codes in my sample extend from February 23, 1954 (40230), to April 12, 1956 (60412 – possibly 1955 [50412]).² The cans were made by the Continental Can Co. (Martells 1976:36), and the three evenly-spaced notches in the seam indicate a date in the late 1950s (Martells 1976:44). Even though the brewery dropped the apostrophe “s” (making the word “Mitchell”) on bottle labels in 1955, cans never reflected this change. Variation B cans continued to be marked Mitchell’s until the end of production in 1956.



Figure 7g-38 – Premium can – Style 2, Variation C – 1955-1956 (eBay)

A bit of discussion is in order at this point. When I discussed Type 2 Mitchell Premium beer cans in my 2007 article (Lockhart 2007:13-14), I was initially influenced by the BCCA numbers and made the assumption that the cans with white bands were earlier than the ones without them. This also made intuitive sense, since the last of the Type 1 cans had single white

² The official date for the Falstaff purchase of the Mitchell Brewery was April 14, 1956, so cans may still have been filled on April 12. These would almost certainly have been the last cans off the line.

bands. At the time, however, I had only begun collecting date codes from the can bases. While I had amassed a sufficient sample to “break” the code, I did not have an ample number to form the correct chronology for Type 2 cans.

The order noted above and on Table 7g-4 is almost certainly correctly sequenced, and the date ranges are now as close and precise as the current data will allow.

Table 7g-4 - Mitchell’s Premium Beer - 12 oz. Cans (1949-1956)

Type	Variation	Identifying Characteristics	Dates Used
1	A	double gold bands at top and bottom, Internal Revenue Tax Paid (IRTP) information, and EL PASO, TEX.	1949-1950
1	B	Same as Variation A except no IRTP	1950-1951
1	C	Same as Variation A except for red outlines around the ovals; single gold bands at top and bottom; no IRTP; and EL PASO, / TEXAS	1951-1953
2	A	Bell tower drawing; no white band at top or bottom; tiny “HARRY” in the curl of the “M”	1953-1954
2	B	Same as Variation A but no “HARRY” in the curl	ca. 1954
2	C	Same as Variation A but single white bands at the top and bottom (HARRY in the curl)	1954-1955
2	D	Same as Variation C but no “HARRY” in the curl	1954-1956

Golden Grain Beer

Type 1 (1955-1956)

Golden Grain was only packaged in cans and was only made for distribution in California. A single type of label was used in four variations. Mitchell used two of these variations; the final two belonged to the Maier Brewing Co. of Los Angeles, California. The Board of Directors transferred the label to Maier upon the sale of the brewery to Falstaff in 1956. All of these cans were marked on both faces. See Table 7g-5 for a chronology.

Variation A (BCCA #G 17) – white general background with seven thin gold bands encircling both the top and bottom (heel) of the can. The central area has two complex golden grain stalks surrounding a gold central oval cross-hatched with thin brown lines. Inside the oval is: “Golden Grain (white block) / The Harvest (yellow script) / BEER (white block)” (Figure 7g-39). Centered in the top bands is “12 FLUID OUNCES” in brown letters. The heel bands are marked “BREWED AND FILLED BY MITCHELL BREWING CO., EL PASO, TEXAS.” The back of the can is identical.



Figure 7g-39 – Golden Grain can – Mitchell

Martells (1976:73) dated Variations A & B (also see next entry) at 1959. He was slightly off. Both were sold between 1955 and 1956. My example of the Variation A can had the “stacked C” mark (C within a C within a C) of the Continental Can Co. – followed by “38” – and the seam had three notches. According to Martells (1976:44), “Some late fifties cans had three alignment notches evenly spaced from the top to the bottom.” My example had a date stamp of “50709” – although the initial digit is blurred. The combination of the code and the seam style probably indicates that Variation A was the first can in the series and may only have been used in 1955.

Variation B - same but with the Golden Grain oval label on top of can as well on the side (Figure 7g-40). This can was also made by the Continental Can Co. and had eleven interlaced notches (six facing one direction, five facing the other) in the seam. My example had the same “Stacked-C 38” manufacturer’s mark as the earlier can. A similar seam used by the American Can Co. was dated by Martells (1976:44) at “1960’s to date.” Although earlier than the Martells date, Variation B was probably the second of the two Golden Grain cans and was likely only made in 1956.



Figure 7g-40 – Top of Golden Grain can

Variation C (BCCA #G 14) – same as Variation A except that the heel was marked “MAIER BREWING COMPANY, LOS ANGELES, CALIFORNIA. Maier took over production of Golden Grain after the Mitchell Brewery sold in 1956 (Chavez personal communication 3/16/2003).

Variation D (BCCA #G 15 and G 16) – same as Variation C but brown oval in center (Figure 7g-41). Martells (1976:73) showed this variation with and without a label on top of the can. My example had a tiny outline of the United States with “NATIONAL / CAN” inside – a manufacturer’s mark used by the National Can Co. during the 1950s. This variation was used by Maier, probably beginning in 1957. BCCA (2001:64) showed two variations of the darker Maier cans. I currently have no further dating information on either of them.



Figure 7g-41 – Golden Grain can – Maier

Table 7g-5 - Golden Grain Beer Cans (1955-1956)

Type	Variation	Identifying Characteristics	Dates Used
1	A	gold-on-white with gold oval label in center surrounded by grain	1955
1	B	Same but with the Golden Grain oval label on top of can as well on the side	1956
1	C	Same as Variation A except used by Maier Brewing Co.	ca. 1956
1	D	Same as Variation C but black oval	1957-?

Harry Mitchell Logos - Cases

From the inception of the company in 1934 until its closure in 1956, Mitchell used the industry standard cardboard cases (24 bottles to the case) for all returnable bottles. The single case I have seen for non-returnable, twelve-ounce bottles is similar in shape to the returnable cases. Thus far, I have found no surviving cases for either returnable or non-returnable quart bottles, although they were probably packed 12 to a case, again, the industry standard. Cases for each brand of beer had their own distinctive logos, and the logos changed for each of type of labels used on Premium Beer (see Table 7g-6).

It is clear that Harry Mitchell continued to use cardboard case boxes until they wore out regardless of the logo on the brand of beer they carried. One case of bottles (examined by the author) contained Bell Tower bottles, even though the box was marked with the Inverted Triangle logo (see below).

Special Quality Lager Beer (1934-1937)

Markings on the case are currently unknown but probably included script letters for “Harry Mitchell.”

Quality Lager Beer (1936-1943)

These were marked “Harry Mitchell (black, stylized italics – Style I) / QUALITY / LAGER BEER (both in red) / HARRY MITCHELL BREWING CO. / EL PASO, TEXAS (all in black).” An envelope in the Jim Mitchell collection had the Style I logo with a postmark of June 21, 1951. However, this does not fit with any other evidence concerning this logo, so the date likely reflected the use of an older envelope.

Bock Beer (1938-1941)

I have yet to see a Bock Beer case, but the markings were probably similar to Quality Lager Beer. The stylized Harry Mitchell (Style I) appeared on Bock labels and ads.

Select Beer (1941-1942)

These were the same as Premium 1 (below) but the parallelogram contained the word “Select” in script. By this time Mitchell’s appeared in capital letters (Style II).

Premium Beer (1) (1940-1947)

These cases had a red background with” MITCHELL’S” (black, Style II) in upper left corner followed by a cardboard-brown, upwardly slanted parallelogram with “PREMIUM” in black-outlined red letters. The lower red section was printed in black ink with “BEER / HARRY MITCHELL BREWING CO. / EL PASO, TEXAS

Premium Beer (2) (1947-1953)

A red-outlined scroll was superimposed on a red inverted triangle with “EXTRA DRY” stenciled into the upper red area and “BEER” stenciled into the lower red area. The scroll contained “Mitchell’s” in stylized red letters (Style III). Below the triangle was “HARRY MITCHELL BREWING COMPANY / EL PASO, TEXAS.” Some trucks during this period wore a logo with “MITCHELL’S / PREMIUM / BEER” surrounded by a circle, although the symbol never appeared on bottles, glasses, cases, or any other advertising I have seen.

Premium Beer (3) (Non-Returnable) (1947-1953)

These cases had a large red rectangle with “NO DEPOSIT” stenciled in the upper left corner and “NO RETURN” stenciled in the upper right. A white, horizontal oval adorned the center of the box with a stenciled-outlined red “Mitchell’s (stylized) / PREMIUM BEER” and “HARRY MITCHELL EL PASO, TEXAS” stenciled underneath the oval. Rick Chavez calls this logo the “Horse Track.” A letter from the Harry Mitchell Brewing Co., dated April 24, 1953, used the horse track logo (Jim Mitchell collection).

Premium Beer (4) (1953-1956)

A red rectangle contained “Mitchell’s (white stylized letters – Style IV) / PREMIUM BEER (black letters).” In the upper center, extending above the rectangle was the bell tower logo. Below the rectangle was “HARRY MITCHELL BREWING CO. EL PASO, TEXAS.” It is possible that an identical case with “Mitchell” (no “S”) was used during the final years – 1955-1956), although I consider that unlikely.

The Horse Track appeared with the Pilsener ball and the label used on Type 1 and 2 bottles on Mitchell’s trucks. A photo with the Horse Track trucks also showed Triangle cases.

The term “GOOD HONEST BEER” was used from 1934-1943, a period encompassing both the original Special Quality Lager Beer and Quality Lager Beer period.

Table 7g-6 - Chronology of Harry Mitchell Cases

Case Style	Beer	Dates
Unknown	Special Quality Lager	1934-1936
	Quality Lager	1936-1943
Unknown	Bock	1936-1938
	Select	1941-1942
	Premium 1	1940-1947
	Premium 2	1947-1953
	Premium 3 (Non-Returnable)	1947-1953
	Premium 4	1953-1956

Beer Glasses and Their Logos



Figure 7g-42 – Mitchell's shell – first glass type (eBay)

All known Harry Mitchell glasses were identified with Applied Color Lettering (ACL) logos (sometimes incorrectly called painted labels; the process involved silk screening – a different procedure). I have seen no embossed or etched labeling on glasses or any Harry Mitchell products. The ACL process was first applied to soft drink and beer bottles in 1934, although most bottlers did not commit to the procedure until the late 1930s or early 1940s. The first glasses made for Mitchell's were probably available in the late 1930s (see Table 7g-7).



Figure 7g-43 – Mitchell's goblet (eBay)

No known glasses were made to advertise either Bock or Select Beer.



Figure 7g-44 – Mitchell's barrel (eBay)

The Mitchell glasses were only made in four styles. The earliest, from the late 1930s, were the style called shells (Figure 7g-42). These were from the Quality Lager Beer era and were marked GOOD HONEST BEER. No other logos are known to be on shells. Goblets and barrels (Figures 7g-43 & 7g-44) both were made with all four styles of Premium labels. Shams (Figure 7g-45), however, were only made with the triangle and both bell tower logos. I have not seen a sham with the “horse track” mark.



Figure 7g-45 – Mitchell's sham (eBay)

Special Quality Lager Beer (1934-1936)

It is unlikely that glasses were made during this period.

Quality Lager Beer (late 1930s-1943)

These glasses were marked “Harry Mitchell (upwardly slanted stylized italics – Style I) / GOOD HONEST BEER (black ACL).”

Premium (Triangle) (1940-1953)

These glasses contained the inverted triangle with superimposed scroll. These were labeled “Mitchell’s (stylized italics – Style III) / PREMIUM (both inside scroll) / BEER (stenciled in lower segment of triangle – followed by stenciled dot).” They were marked in red ACL (Figure 7g-46).

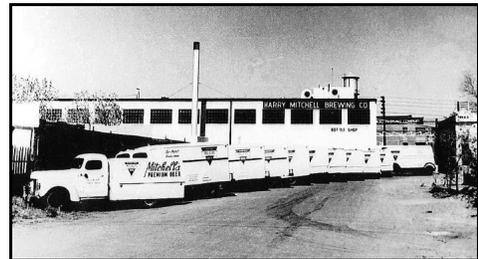


Figure 7g-46 – Inverted triangle logo on beer trucks (Courtesy of Wil Mitchell)

Premium (Horse Track) (1947-1953)

Each glass was marked with a horizontal oval surrounding “Mitchell’s (stylized italics – Style III) / PREMIUM BEER (all in red ACL).” Note that this logo retained the same style of lettering as the Triangle. It is notable that the Horse Track logo only appeared in connection with non-returnable bottles (advertisements, photos, six-pack holders). Thus, the Horse Track logo appeared on the sides of trucks that were also marked with the Pilsener ball and the label used on Style 1 and 2 bottles on their front doors (Figure 7g-47). Triangle cases also appeared in a photo with the Horse Track trucks for the same reason. Both were used during the 1947-1953 period.



Figure 7g-47 – Horse Track logo on beer truck (Courtesy of El Paso County Historical Society)

Premium (Bell Tower - 1) (1953-1955)

These glasses had a fatter horizontal oval with hops at left and right borders and a bell tower at top center that surrounded “Mitchell’s (stylized italics – Style IV) / PREMIUM BEER.” Again, these used red ACL. These, too, appeared on trucks.

Premium (Bell Tower - 2) (1955-1956)

These were the same as Bell Tower 1 but had the word, Mitchell (no “S”).

The brewery also used paper cups – at least during the later years (Figure 7g-48)



Figure 7g-48 –
Mitchell’s paper cup

Figure 7g-7 - Chronology of Harry Mitchell Logos on Glasses

Logo	Characteristics	Date
	<p>Good Honest Beer</p>	<p>late 1930s-1943</p>
	<p>Inverted Triangle</p>	<p>1943-1953</p>
	<p>Horizontal Oval (Horse Track)</p>	<p>1947-1953</p>
	<p>Bell Tower; Mitchell's</p>	<p>1953-1955</p>
	<p>Bell Tower; Mitchell</p>	<p>1955-1956</p>

Harry Mitchell Beer Trays

Only three types of trays are known to have been offered by the Harry Mitchell Brewery. All were only available during the early years of the brewery's operation (ca. 1934-1939). Why Mitchell chose to discontinue trays while offering other advertising incentives is currently unknown, although it may be connected with the shortage of steel during World War II. The termination of trays coincides well with the time period of the United States entry into the war. It is surprising, however, that trays were not reinstated after steel again became easy to obtain.

Tray 1

These were circular with a red background and a white labeling area across the center. The tray was marked "Harry Mitchell (black script) / PALE (downwardly-slanted, black-outlined gold letters) QUALITY / LAGER BEER (red)" with "BREWED AND / BOTTLED BY (left side) HARRY MITCHELL BREWING CO. (center) EL PASO / TEXAS (right side – all black)." The script "Harry Mitchell" probably dates to the Special Quality Lager period (1934-1936), despite the lack of "Special" on the tray. A beer opener made in a style that was mostly used prior to Prohibition is the only other item known to have used the word "PALE." This was probably the first tray used, possibly only from 1934 to 1935 (Figure 7g-49).



Figure 7g-49 – Mitchell Pale Quality Lager tray

Tray 2

These were marked the same as Tray 1 but without the word "PALE" under the word "HARRY" and in front of "QUALITY" (Figure 7g-50). This, too, was probably used in the Special Quality Lager period (1934-1936), although the lack of "Special" on the tray may mean that its use extended into the Quality Lager Beer era (1936 to 1943). If so, it was likely only used in the earliest years of that period.

Tray 3

These followed the same general design but with “Harry Mitchell (stylized black letters) / GOOD HONEST BEER (red)” with last line the same as the earlier trays



Figure 7g-50 – Second Quality Lager tray



Figure 7g-51 – Good Honest Beer tray

(Figure 7g-51). This tray was probably made and used during the early part of the Quality

Lager period (1936-1939). The “Good Honest Beer” jingle on advertising was replaced with “The Southwest’s Finest Beer” with the advent of the red bar labels in 1939. However, the stylized Harry Mitchell logo appeared on the first ads for the beer although not on the labels. Thus, the third tray could also have been used during the Special Quality Lager period, although that seems less likely with two other trays already in use during a two- to three-year period.

Harry Mitchell Beer Openers

The Mitchell Brewery offered beer openers in a total of five different styles – although the first one used two different slogans. Two were only made to open bottles, and the other three could be used on bottles or cans. Each was very distinctive and can be dated within a reasonable time period.

Special Quality Lager Beer (1934-1935)

The first opener was very small by later standards, only measuring three inches (7.6 cm.) in length. Made from nickle-plated, rolled steel, the opener had a hook on one end and a single hole in the other (presumably for a key chain). In the center was a stamped depression that Bull and Stanley (1999:23-24) called a “spinner button.” The package for a similar “key-shaped” opener advised, “PUT THIS ON YOUR KEY RING.” The hook end of the Mitchell opener was stamped with a pointing finger and the words “YOU PAY.” On the body was stamped “HARRY MITCHELL’S / PALE LAGER BEER” on one side. The other side was blank (Figure 7g-52).



Figure 7g-52 – Pale Lager Beer opener

Openers of this style (B-23 in Bull’s classification system) were in use prior to Prohibition; the earliest patent date

noted by Bull & Stanley (1999:23) was February 19, 1901. Augustus W. Stephens applied for a patent for a “Design for a Bottle-Seal Remover” on January 21, 1901, and received Design Patent No. 34,096 on February 19, 1901. The patent drawing showed what was obviously the initial design for the opener used by Mitchell (Figure 7g-53).

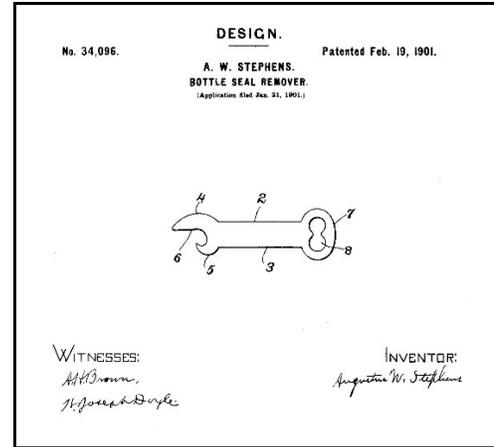


Figure 7g-53 – Stephens 1901 opener patent

Bull & Stanley (1999:24) also showed a patent date as late as October 22, 1935, for a similar style. These were therefore in use during the earliest days of the Mitchell Brewery. The only other use of the word, Pale, was on a tray marked “Pale Lager Beer” – probably the earliest tray used by Mitchell. Openers of this type were likely only distributed by Mitchell during the first year or two of operations (1934-1935).

Good Honest Beer (1934-1943)

Once Mitchell had adopted the Good Honest Beer slogan, he applied it to another of the “key-shaped” openers. This one was identical to the first opener except that “PALE LAGER BEER” had been replaced with “GOOD HONEST BEER.” These openers are scarce to rare, so they were probably only given away during the first year or two (1934-1935) that Mitchell used the slogan (Figure 7g-54).



Figure 7g-54 – Good Honest Beer opener – key shaped

Mitchell replaced the “key-shaped” opener with a “wire-formed” opener made from a single piece of heavy-gauge wire 3/16" (0.35 cm.) thick – probably by 1935. The opener was 3 7/16" (8.8 cm.) in length and 1 1/8" (3.6 cm.) at its widest point. The wire was bent to form a square-cornered oval at one end and a handle at the other. The handle was flattened to accept an

embossed message, and three small areas at the oval end were flattened to create tabs that actually made contact with the cap. Both sides of the handle were embossed “HARRY MITCHELL’S / GOOD HONEST BEER” (Figure 7g-55).



Figure 7g-55 – Good Honest Beer opener – wire

The original patent for wire-formed openers was granted in 1915 to Edwin Walker, and similar openers were used until at least 1957 (Bull & Stanley 1999:36, 39). Edwin Walker applied for a patent for a “Crown-Opener” on September 21, 1909. He divided his original patent and filed again on July 19, 1910, finally receiving Patent No. 1,150,083 on August 17, 1915. Jessie Sterrett and Mary E. Steiner re-filed the patent in Walker’s name as the administrator’s of Walker’s estate on and received Patent No. 1,385,976 on July 26, 1921 (Figure 7g-56). This was titled a “Method of Making Crown Openers” and was apparently the other half of the original 1909 application.

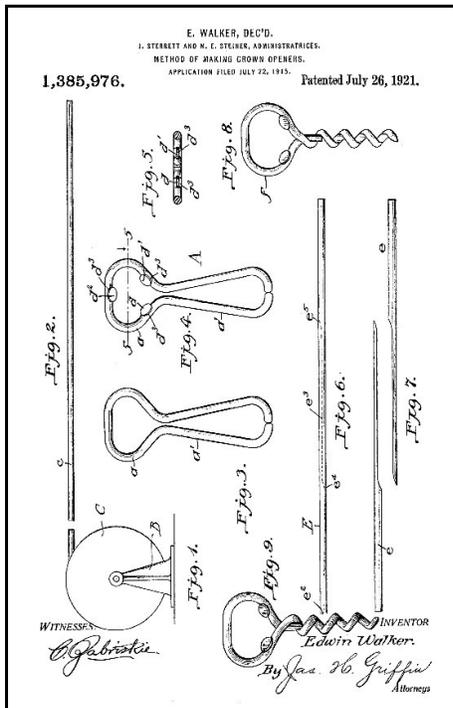


Figure 7g-56 – Sterrett and Steiner re-file of Walker’s 1915 patent

Although Bull and Stanley did not show the exact style used by Mitchell, very similar openers were pictured on page 39. The slogan GOOD HONEST BEER was in use by Mitchell from 1934 to 1943, and the brewery probably gave away this style of opener by 1935.

Premium Beer, Style III Lettering (1949-1953)

Although this opener looks like it was only made to open cans, it is actually a combination cap lifter/can piercer with the same device (a ribbed can piercer end) used for both purposes. The piercer was 4" (10.3 cm.) long and 3/4" (1.9 cm.) wide and was made from rolled steel. The top was stamped



Figure 7g-57 – Mitchell’s can piercer – obverse

“Mitchell’s (Style III letters) / PREMIUM BEER”. The back had the same imprint with “VAUGHAN U.S.A. PAT. 1,996,550” above “Mitchell’s” (Figures 7g-57 & 7g-58). According to Bull and Stanley (1999:54, 58), Vaughan was distinctly the largest producer of can piercers.



Figure 7g-58 – Mitchell’s can piercer – reverse

The patent number was issued to Dewitt F. Sampson and John M. Hothersall on April 2, 1935 (Bull 1999:55 – also see Figures 7g-26, 7g-27, & 7g-28). This type of opener was probably offered by Mitchell after the can line was installed in 1949. The Style III letters were used from 1947 to 1953, so the openers were probably in use between 1949 and 1953.

Premium Beer, Style IV Lettering (a) (1953-1955?)

Another combination cap lifer/can piercer used by Mitchell had the two devices at opposite ends of the rolled steel plate. The opener was 4 1/16" (10.5 cm.) in length and 3/4" (1.9 cm.) in width. This exact opener appeared in Bull and Stanley (1999:54) as #I-3. The top was imprinted with “Mitchells (Style IV) / PREMIUM BEER” with the Bell Tower to the right. The back was stamped “EMRO (an opener-manufacturing company) / PAT. NO. 1,996,000” (Figures 7g-59 & 7g-60). Note that the same patent number (issued in 1935) appeared on the earlier Premium opener and was apparently used for many variations (see Figures 7g-26, 7g-27, & 7g-28).



Figure 7g-59 – Mitchell’s opposit-end can piercer/cap lifter – obverse



Figure 7g-60 – Mitchell’s opposit-end can piercer/cap lifter – reverse

Style IV lettering was used from 1953 until the sale of the Mitchell firm in 1956. However, since a second type of opener was also used, this one was probably only used until ca. 1955.

Premium Beer, Style IV (b) (1955-1956)

This type of cap lifter/can piercer is different from the others in that it is curved in at the center (in cross-section) to provide extra strength. As in the first Premium beer opener, the same end was used for opening both cans and bottles. The opener was 4 1/4" (10.8 cm.) long and

13/16" (probably 7/8" uncurved) (2.0 cm.) wide. The opener was stamped "USE ON CANS / OR BOTTLES" at the opener end and "Mitchells (Style IV) / PREMIUM BEER / MITCHELL BREWING CO EL PASO, TEXAS" on the body of the opener (Figure 7g-61). Between the hole at the opposite end and the end, itself, was stamped "PAT PEND."



Figure 7g-61 – Mitchell’s final opener

According to Bull and Stanley (1999:58), this type of cap lifter/can piercer (J-8) was marked in a number of ways, including the 1935 patent number 1,996,550. However, the style actually belonged to “American patent 2,773,272 issued to George R. Harrah, December 11, 1956” (see Figure 7g-29). This likely means that the opener was made fairly near that date. Because of this information, I suspect that the opener was made and offered by Mitchell between 1955 and 1956.

Other Advertising Items

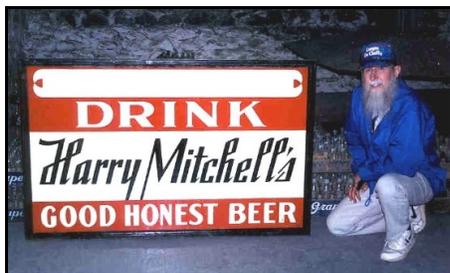


Figure 7g-62 – Author by Harry Mitchell sign (Illinois Brewing Co., Socorro, NM)



Figure 7g-63 – Mitchell’s indoor sign (Elaine Sleeman collection)

Harry Mitchell and the firm after his retirement used a large variety of advertising items. These included a huge assortment of signs. Some were large for outside use (Figure 7g-62), and some were smaller for use inside bars and other sales outlets (Figure 7g-63). Some large signs were painted on buildings, and a few of these – although faded with time – remain on El Paso walls (Figure 7g-64). A number of colorful signs only exhibited a beer glass and the Mitchell’s name, although others had various outdoor scenes, beer bottles, and occasional cartoon faces.



Figure 7g-64 – Wall sign (Rick Chavez collection)

Mitchell's also offered paper cups in at least two sizes, cardboard coasters, and paper napkins. At least one ceramic "stein" or mug was made in the shape of a face, with the Mitchell's name at the top. The brewery put out matchbook covers from the early days until the end of the company. At least one spoon was made, although I have not seen an example personally. The only photo I have seen was too small for me to record details. Another apparently popular item was a variety of wall clocks and thermometers (Figure 7g-65).



Figure 7g-65 – Wall clock (eBay)



Figure 7g-66 – Mitchell's patch

Clothing was another category. The various firms made several shirts – both uniform and for public use. Some patches from the Mitchell's uniforms have even survived to grace the shelves of collectors (Figure 7g-66). The firm made at least one cloth item that looks like a blanket (I have only seen a photo) along with tablecloths.

At least one other container type is worth mentioning. The brewery used aluminum kegs during at least the later years. These were stamped with the brewery name and the date of manufacture. An example was dated "6/53" (August 1953 – Figure 7g-67).

As with the various caps, cases, and other items, these may be dated according to the logos or styles of the Mitchell name.



Figure 7g-67 – Mitchell Keg

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