

# Karl Hutter – The Stopper and the Bottles

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Karl Hutter entered the bottle stopper competition when he acquired the patent for the Lightning stopper in 1877 – possibly also selling bottles by that time. He remained in business until his death in 1913. He used four different logos on soda and beer bottles – ranging from his full name “KARL HUTTER” to a simple “KH” during that period. His death resulted in the formation of a corporation, Karl Hutter, Inc.,” that remained in operation until at least 1930, possibly only selling stoppers.

## History

Much of the history of Karl Hutter is included in the section on Henry Putnam. We have abbreviated some of that information in this section.

**Karl Hutter, New York** (ca. 1877-1913)

**Karl Hutter, Inc., New York** (1913-ca. 1930)

Karl Hutter was born Carl Caspar Hutter in Westerwald, Germany, on February 14, 1851, and emigrated to the U.S. in 1867 at the age of 16, becoming an American citizen in 1872 (Wikipedia 2016). The 1872-1874 city directories listed Hutter as a beer bottler in New York, possibly for the Prospect Brewing Co. of Philadelphia.<sup>1</sup> Hutter later served on the Board of Directors for the brewery (von Mechow 2016). He seems to have entered the bottle stopper business when Charles de Quillfeldt assigned his reissued patent to Hutter on June 5, 1877. De Quillfeldt had originally received the patent for what would come to be called the Lightning Stopper on January 5, 1875 (Figures 1

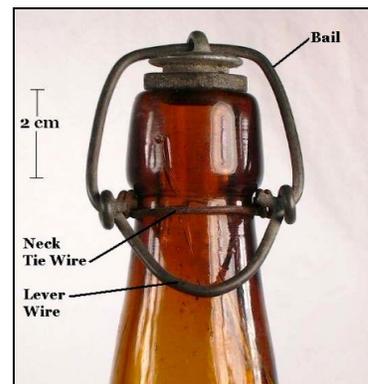


Figure 1 – Lightning stopper (Lindsey 2016)

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<sup>1</sup> Although these two locations seem to be incongruous, we do not have any data to resolve the issue.

& 2). Although this is discussed more fully in the Henry Putnam section (H Chapter), the relationship between de Quillfeldt and Hutter is unclear.

With de Quillfeldt’s new stopper under his control, Hutter opened up a bottlers’ supply business under his own name – Karl Hutter – no “Co.” Hutter was a jobber rather than a manufacturer, although he may have eventually built a factory. However, Henry Putnam – another user of his name alone as the business moniker – also marketed the Lightning Stopper, patenting an improvement in 1877 and manufacturing the stoppers in his Bennington, Vermont, plant (von Mechow 2016).

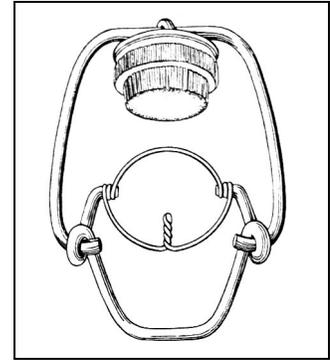


Figure 2 – Lightning stopper (Lindsey 2016)

Hutter registered the term “Lightning” for the fastener on February 12, 1878. The relationship between Hutter, de Quillfeldt, and Putnam is unclear, but both firms sold many of the same stoppers, and de Quillfeldt assigned at least one patent to each of the jobbers. Even though competitors sued Hutter in the 1880s, he successfully defended his invention (Graci 2003:51, 16-18, 20-21; Roller 1983:437; von Mechow 2016).

Hutter was located at 185 Bowery in New York by at least 1885, when he advertised “Karl Hutter’s Patent Lightning Stoppers” along with “Lager Beer, Weiss Beer, Soda and Ginger Ale Bottles, best quality.” He also offered Lightning fruit jars – a patent held by his competitor, Henry Putnam (*Puck* 1883:367 – Figure 3). As noted above, no one has yet discovered the personal and/or professional relationship between Hutter and Putnam (although see the Discussion and Conclusions section).

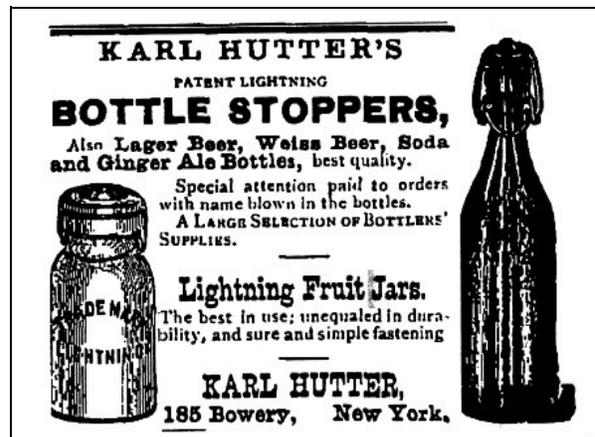


Figure 3 – 1883 ad (*Puck* 1883:367)

Von Mechow (2016) noted that Hutter also had “a manufactory in Bennington, Vermont.” Hutter’s associate, Henry Putnam, owned and operated a factory at Bennington from

1865 to the 1920s, but we have not been able to find any connection with Hutter at that location. Hutter certainly may have had some or even many of his supplies made by Putnam's plant.

In 1888, Charles Yockel of Philadelphia made some (maybe all) of Hutter's molds. Hutter had molds shipped to the Craven Brothers, Salem, New Jersey, showing that the Cravens made at least some of the bottles he sold (Tyson 1971:19-20). See the Other C section for more on the Craven Brothers. The *New York Times* (12/7/1892) noted that "Karl Hutter, bottlers' supplies" – by then at 32 Reade St. – was one of the businesses damaged by a fire in 1892.

Karl Hutter's seminal accomplishment occurred on February 7, 1893, when he received Patent No. 491,113 for a porcelain stopper that was a major improvement on the Lightning Stopper (Figure 4). The Hutter Stopper was cone-shaped with a leather or rubber washer at the end to maintain the seal. In addition, the top could have a transfer print applied to permanently advertise the name of the bottler. Putnam also sold the Hutter Stoppers. At least one stopper was stamped "HUTTER N.Y. GERMANY," suggesting that Hutter maintained a German connection as well.



Figure 4 – Hutter stopper (Lindsey 2016)

By 1897, Yockel sent some of Hutter's molds to the Salem Glass Works (Tyson 1971:20). See the Salem Glass Works section for more information about that company. Whether this indicated a shift in supplier or was merely one of several glass houses used by Hutter we do not know. Hutter remained in business until his death in 1913. An anonymous webpage (Jeremiah's Vanishing New York 2008) described the circumstances:

Even with all his wealth, prized Oriental rugs, and society club memberships, Mr. Hutter could not overcome the "acute melancholia" that led to his suicide in 1913. The Times reported that Mr. Hutter filled his bathtub with water, removed his clothing, got inside, and shot himself in the head--all in his "sumptuously furnished apartment" on Central Park. He left a note, saying, "The pain and agony endured in this world cannot be more than that to be endured by the soul in the next." (quotations from "the 1884 edition of *New York's Great Industries*")

Hutter died a bachelor at the age of 62 and “bequeathed a quarter of his estate and more than \$60,000 [to] public institutions and more than \$100,000 to its employees” (Wikipedia 2016). Hutter had relocated the business to 241 Lafayette St. by the time of his death, and the firm was incorporated as Karl Hutter, Inc., shortly thereafter. An ad in the Brewer’s Journal for December 1913 headlined the incorporated name (Figure 5). The firm remained in operation until at least 1930 (von Mechow 2016).



Figure 5 – 1913 ad (*Brewer’s Journal* 1913)

### The Hutter Stopper

Karl Hutter applied for a patent for a “Bottle-Stopper” on April 6, 1892, and was granted Patent No. 491,113 on February 7, 1893 (Figure 6). The patent called for “a tapering plug with a substantially triangular or heart-shaped slot, through which the inwardly bent ends of the bail wire can be inserted.” The conical plug was “adapted to fit the bottle neck and recessed or grooved horizontally” to accept “an elastic ring, band or washer” that actually affected the seal. The bail wire used leverage to hold the stopper in place and maintain the tight seal. Although the plug could be “made of wood, porcelain or any analogous material,” all examples we have seen were made of porcelain (Graci 2003:51).

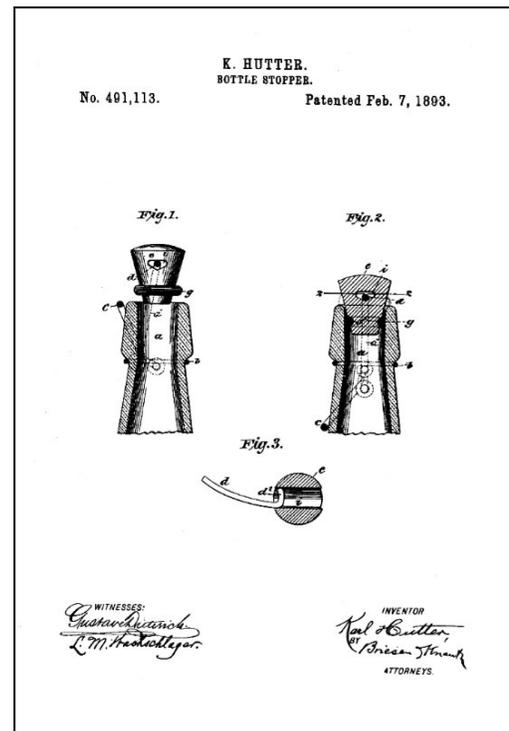


Figure 6 – Hutter 1893 patent

Why the stoppers never became popular on soft-drink bottles is currently unknown; their use seems to have been almost exclusively restricted to beer bottles with a limited application on very large soda and water bottles and some ginger ales (Paul & Parmalee 1973:14). Hutter stoppers were popular from their invention until ca. 1914, when crowns completely dominated the market. After a hiatus for a currently unknown period of time, Hutter stoppers again became

popular on some beer brands and are used by a limited number of American and foreign brewers today (Lindsey 2016; Whitten 2016).

The actual pathway that led to the Hutter stopper began with the 1875 swing stopper patent of Charles de Quillfeldt (No. 158,406) that was transferred to Hutter in 1877. Hutter registered the term “Lightning” for the fastener in 1878. However, it was Henry W. Putnam who made the Lightning fastener a success, selling variations of both the de Quillfeldt stopper and his own adaptation of the Lightning for jars (Patent No. 256,857, February 10, 1882). Although the Lightnings remained in use until Prohibition, its popularity declined rapidly after the introduction of Hutter’s porcelain stoppers in 1893 (Graci 2003:16-18, 20-21; Roller 1983:437). For a more complete discussion of the patents (including patent drawings), see the Henry Putnam file in the H Chapter.

## **Containers and Marks**

### **KARL HUTTER and KARL HUTTER / NEW YORK (1877-ca. 1900)**

Mobley (2016) listed 55 beer bottles embossed KARL HUTTER (with or without “NEW YORK”) on the bases. Colcleaser (1966:12) added a single bottle; Feldhaus (1986:79) listed another; Pollard (1993:49-50, 130-132) added six more; and Lincoln (1970:23, 26, 36, 43, 49-50, 71, 75, 77-78, 84) illustrated and/or listed 11 additional examples. Von Mechow added an astounding 497 bottles, but these included all of the various Hutter marks. These were all body embossed bottles with brewery information, often in a round plate. All bottles were mouth blown. Most of them had one-part (blob) finishes, although Hutchinson-style bottles were present as were a few crown-finished containers. The finish method (i.e., applied or tooled) was only mentioned for tooled crowns, although some of the von Mechow (2016) photos appeared to show applied finishes.

The majority of the bottles from the sample were marked “NEW YORK.” A typical configuration of these marks was “KARL HUTTER (arch) / XVII / N (both horizontal) / NEW YORK (upward arch).” The most common type of embossing included a Roman numeral and/or the letter “N” between “KARL HUTTER” and “NEW YORK.” The “N” could follow the Roman numeral (with or without a hyphen) or could appear beneath it. Other central markings

included “17 8 D,” “13,” “N-26,” “33-N,” and “N-2C” (Figure 7). This mark appeared on the vast majority of all bottles made for the Lightning or Hutter stoppers.

### **K. HUTTER** (ca. 1893-ca. 1900)

Lincoln (1970:42, 51) noted two examples of the K. HUTTER mark: “VI. N. / K. HUTTER / N.Y.” and “XVIII N /



Figure 7 – Karl Hutter



Figure 8 – K Hutter (eBay)

K. HUTTER.” Pollard (1993:49-

50, 131-132, 173) added “2N. / K. HUTTER / N.Y.,” “K. HUTTER / 10B / NEW YORK,” “VXN / K. HUTTER / NEW YORK.” An eBay example was embossed on the base “K / HUTTER / N.Y.” (Figure 8). Hutchbook (Fowler 2016) listed 110 examples with this logo – all Hutchinson bottles, of course. This was the most common mark found on Hutchinson bottles.

### **KH and K.H.** (ca. 1900-1913)

Mobley (2016) and Lincoln (1970:29) included nine bottles with only the initials KH. on the base both with and without punctuation. All of the examples without punctuation were followed by two numerals then a letter (“KH 25 N,” “KH 29 - N,” “KH - 41 - N,” “and “KH - 29 - N”). These were all mouth blown, and all but one had blob finishes; the exception was a tooled crown. Each of these bottles was labeled with brewery information on plates in the center body. A couple of these bottles may have had date codes. An example was embossed “07 KH 08 09” on the heel, possibly successive date codes for 1907, 1908, and 1909.

The second variation, with periods, was probably used concurrently. All of these were mouth blown, and most of them were topped with tooled crown finishes – although a few were blob tops or Hutchinson bottles. The vast majority of these had what were almost certainly date codes, although a few could not be so interpreted. The frequent use of crown-topped bottles and date codes from 1901 to 1912 make it pretty certain that this logo was used from ca. 1900 to Hutter’s death in 1913.

The date codes seem to have been almost randomly applied, using either two-digit (e.g., 03) or four-digit (e.g., 1905) numbers and placed with both logo and date code on heel or base or logo on heel with date code on base. The differences may have indicated variation in glass houses supplying the bottles. We compiled this list from bottles we had seen in Mobley (2016), and Fowler (2016):

K.H. 1901  
K.H. 1902 base – crown  
K.H. 03 base – Hutchinson  
K.H. 1903  
K.H. 1904 base – crown  
K.H. heel; 05 base – blob-top  
K.H. 1905 heel – blob-top  
K.H. 07 base – blob-top  
K.H. 1907 heel – Hutchinson  
K.H. 09 heel – crown  
K.H. 1909 heel – crown  
K.H. base; 1911 heel – crown  
K.H. 12 heel

## **K**

Wilson (1981:10) recorded a 2 ½" base embossed with IX K. He presented a photo of a Ft Union “stout” bottle made from “dense green glass . . . . “with ‘XI (raised dot) K’ in the center of the base.” We recorded a similar base fragment at Fort Bowie with “II” replacing the “XI” Roman numeral. These were most likely made by the Kilner family in England, although Karl Hutter cannot be entirely eliminated at this time. See the Kilner section for more discussion about their logos, codes, and factories.

## **Discussion and Conclusions**

Hutter was certainly an inventor and operated a supply house for brewers or bottlers – including the sale of beer bottles – from ca. 1877 until his death in 1913. His name is best

known for his invention in 1893 of a porcelain variation of the Lightning stopper called the Hutter stopper.

We know that the Craven Brothers and the Salem Glass Works made some of Hutter's bottles, and there may have been other glass houses involved as well. All the bottles that we can identify were embossed with his name or initials in three major patterns, and all were mouth blown. We compiled a short study of 81 bottles from Mobley (2016) and 122 Hutchinson bottles from Fowler (2016).

Mobley (2016) only dealt with beer bottles, although these could be any type used by breweries. We divided the Mobley bottles according to the style of the mark with a secondary division by finish types: blob-top, Hutchinson, and crown. The majority of the bottles (67.9%) had the "KARL HUTTER" logo and all but one (54/55) had blob-top finishes. The remaining one was a crown. The nine bottles with "K. HUTTER" marks (11.1%) appeared on blob-top and Hutchinson bottles. Bottles with "KH" or "K.H." comprised only 20.9% of the sample, and 58.8% of the "K.H." bottles were topped by crown finishes. As noted in the "K.H." section above, many of these had date codes between 1901 and 1912.

The Hutchinson sample from Fowler (2016) showed a very different pattern. "KARL HUTTER" marks only made up 5.7% of the total, while "K. HUTTER" logos comprised the vast majority at 90.2% of the 122 bottles. Only 4.1% consisted of "KH" or "K.H." initials, two of the latter with date codes.

These two studies suggest that "KARL HUTTER" was used on the vast majority of bottles finished for Lightning or Hutter stoppers, while the bulk of the Hutchinson bottles were marked "K. HUTTER." Assuming that Hutter actually sold bottles initially along with his stoppers, and that he began having his name placed on bottles immediately after he started his business, "KARL HUTTER" would be the earliest mark, although the two would have been used concurrently from ca. 1880 to ca. 1900 (with "KARL HUTTER" used exclusively for the first three years).

Date codes, along with the increase in crown finishes, suggest that Hutter used the "K.H." logo from ca. 1900 until his death in 1913. "KH" (without periods) could have been

used slightly earlier but was probably concurrent with the punctuated mark. If the corporation formed after Hutter's demise continued to sell bottles, it probably used machine-made containers with no logo other than that of the actual manufacturer(s). The final chronology is presented below.

KARL HUTTER (ca. 1877-ca. 1900)

K. HUTTER (ca. 1880-ca. 1900)

KH or K.H. (ca. 1900-ca. 1913)

All of the logos were embossed on both heels and bases, but we have not discovered the meanings of Hutter's codes – with the exception of the date codes used from ca. 1900-1913. Von Mechow's (2016) distribution map shows that the bottles were overwhelmingly used in New York, Pennsylvania, and New Jersey, with a few scattered in the South and other states – plus a single outlier in Montana.

Future research should center on where Hutter obtained his stoppers. Although von Mechow (2016) noted a factory at Bennington, Vermont, we have not been able to verify that by any other source. Although this is speculative, Hutter may have formed an agreement with Henry Putnam, whereby Putnam actually manufactured the stoppers at his Ohio and, later, Vermont factories, selling them to Hutter at a discount in return for the use of the patent.

## **Acknowledgments**

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