

The Evolution of Bottle Closures
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Bottle closures for most of history consisted of a cork, wooden peg, and corncob or what ever was handy. The true evolution started shortly after the Civil War. Changes in beer styles and taste also promoted the change. The revenue laws taxing barrels and not bottles forced the breweries to look for alternatives to sell their products. As a result, bottlers and bottling brewers began to show up in massive numbers. Most had some type of container with embossing or a paper label. Pennsylvania alone had over 800 pre pro breweries not counting the bottlers. New York and Pennsylvania also spawned the largest variety of closure types. With the introduction of the lightning closure in 1875 a new concept became more accepted by the public and the bottling industry. From 1860-1895 there were over 4,000 closures developed and patented. The closure styles varied as greatly as the beer they held. Names such as Hutter, Rich, Lowell, Lloyd, Putnam, Matthews, Hutchinson, Champion, Susemihl and many more began to emerge. The European community also made numerous contributions with inventions such as the "Swing" stopper, which used dimples in the bottle top to hold the eccentric, rather than the neck wire used by most US inventers. Fritzner brought this innovation in 1880. Although it originated in Europe, there were several bottlers and brewers, located mainly in the upper Midwest that used the device. The Codd's patent followed the same course. This was a grand time in history for collectors and continues to be an item of historical interest. This growth continued until the early 1900's when the Crown Cork Closure ended the concept of the plug and bail.

There are several books in progress and articles in print to tell of closure history and hopefully even more will be known in the future. David Graci of Massachusetts has plans for a book to further detail the history of closures. Good luck David.