

# ***More Vintage Beer Tap Markers***

**The Rest of the Story  
1930s - 1950s**

**George Baley**



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# Dedication

This book is dedicated to Barb, Maggie, Jenny and Lil Baley whose continued support and patience made this adventure possible. Also, to my children Heather and Jamie, both of whom I love and am very proud. And my grandchildren Lucy and Finn. And lastly, to all the good friends living and deceased, who opened their homes and collections to me, permitting this book to become a reality.

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## Introduction

Now, almost 16 years after the first book, *Vintage Beer Tap Markers (VBTM)*, the follow up edition *More Vintage Beer Tap Markers (MVBTM)* has become a reality. More than 700 new traditional ball knobs have been located, photographed and included here for the enjoyment of the collector. In addition, a like number of new knobs styles have been added.

Putting this book together was different, in that many of the major collections had been previously photographed on site. The knobs presented here were made available through the use of the Internet and emails as well as several photo shoots at my home and several breweriana shows.

Back when VBTM was created, all the images but a few were photographed using traditional Ektachrome 35 mm film which was a requirement of the publisher. More than 6,000 images were created for the 2,000 plus knobs in the first book. This book has moved into the digital world!

During the preparation of the first book, hundreds of slides of the “next” generation knobs were inventoried from the first shoot. These formed the foundation for this effort. Collectors throughout the country provided images from their collections which at times required some “photo cropping” to standardize what you see inside this book. While not every image was of ‘perfect’ quality, I chose to include most everything, especially if the image was of a really rare knob or insert.

As promised in VBTM, the of knob styles created at the end of *Prohibition* are included in this book. Traditional style ball knobs were the type of choice after Prohibition and continued until plastic became a common material after WW II.

Many alternate “style” knobs enjoyed relatively short life in comparison to the “ball” style. Some of these next generation knobs however enjoy prices that equal many of the ball style.

Two types, Daka-Ware and Newman Glass, lead the field of rarity and price. Others like the Newman aluminum, Cooler-keG and “Tin” can style are still second cousins to the Daka-Ware and Newman Glass.

The prices shown in Book I back in 2003 were created during a series of “pricing” meetings of knowledgeable collectors. The market and desirability of ball style knobs exploded with that book, making most every price shown outdated. It became obvious that price, or worth, or value is strictly in the eyes of the beholders, i.e. the buyer or seller.

For that reason, it was decided not to create an item by item specific \$ value, but instead to create 5 categories using a takeoff of the system employed by Bob Kay in his series on beer labels.

Value Estimates:

Code	\$ Range	Availability
A	1-100	Common
B	101-250	Less Common
C	251-500	Elusive
D	501-1000	Scarce
E	1000+	Rare

There will never be a situation where everyone agrees with the coded price ranges. It is my belief that the market should be left to the buyer and seller. Value becomes a function of a number of variables which could be defined as Market, Product, Buyer and Seller.

Market - geography, i.e. local factors of interest in item by region or brewery.

Product - rarity, visual appearance, condition, quantity and quality.

Buyer - financial \$ ability to purchase, desire to own, and overall knowledge, experience and competition for the item

Seller - \$ invested, market knowledge, and personal "fondness" towards the item

## The Categories

### Ball Knobs

The ball style knobs listed in the section entitled **Ball Knobs** represent the traditional style. By the mid-1950s most all breweries were replacing this style with larger size knobs usually fabricated with colorful plastic, wood or Plexiglass. The first *Vintage Beer Tap Marker* book describes in great detail many interesting facts about these knobs. The interested hobbyist is encouraged to seek a copy of that book for a more in-depth treatment.

### Kooler-keGs and "Side Winders"

The Kooler-keG type knobs essentially came in three distinct styles. The most common design is the squat little knob with a short base as shown as the Altes KK #1. A second style looks much like a traditional ball knob shown in the first section. They are easily identified by the square hole in the bottom vs a threaded round hole used by the majority of breweries from the beginning of knobs in the 1930s until today.

Most ball style Kooler-keG knobs employed an insert identical in size to that used in the regular style ball knob. In the first edition of VBTM, Kooler-keG knobs with ball knob size bodies were dispersed throughout the edition. For this volume, any traditional size knob that has majority of the KK knobs clearly show the words Kooler-keG somewhere on the insert.

The third section of this volume describes what have been fondly referred to as "Side Winders". This style was required on the Kooler-keG dispensing system using the square hole. The insert size of Side Winders is larger than the traditional insert in either a normal ball knob or regular Kooler-keG knob.

In their hey day, KK claimed to service over 200 breweries operating in over 5000 progressive tap rooms. In general, KK knobs are lower in value than non Kooler-keG knobs in "traditional" style bodies. One exception is that some KK knobs came from breweries with short lives making them more rare than one might expect. One advantage of collecting KK style knobs is that the number of knob/styles brands issued total in the hundreds vs thousands for the traditional knobs.

### Daka-Ware

Daka-Ware knobs were manufactured by the Harry Davies Company who initiated business in Chicago in 1933. This style knob was limited in years from about 1935-1938. The knobs are a small spherical shape with a convex metal face held in place usually by two small nails. Some late Daka-Ware have been found that did not use nails to fasten the insert to the Bakelite body. The face was commonly painted metal (usually copper). Many of the Daka-Ware knobs shown are difficult to read because of the paint loss on the painted face.

These are, as a style, one of the rarest and most valuable knob styles ever produced. For this printing, only 100 or so examples have been identified. It is suspected that the small size of this style knob probably did not gain popularity with many of the large brewers who likely wanted a greater visual presence to promote their beer.

## **“Tin” Cans**

The nick name “Tin” Can is derived from the full metal construction used in the body of this style knob. They are differentiated by the larger face diameter than other knobs of the same era. Two style designs are identified by whether the main shaft is straight (#1 4 Clover) or displays a “ball” shaped ball/bulge (#2 '84).

## **Newman Glass**

Another short lived tap knob was the Newman Glass. While their rarity parallels that of the Daka-Ware style, their durability was by far the worst of any type of knob in the post-Prohibition era. Not only were they easily broken, but the durability and quality of the lettering was extremely poor. For that reason, many of the Newmans were difficult to find a good "face" to photograph. Two rare knobs, the Jung and Champagne Velvet are only a "shadow" of their original printing. many of the knobs shown in this book almost requires a magnifying glass to read the print.

This style is very rare like the Daka-Ware and attracts a high price in the collector arena.

## **Newman Aluminum**

Possibly the least attractive style knobs ever produced was the Newman Aluminum. This style had a short-lived popularity and was used heavily by Pennsylvania and Ohio breweries. Unlike the Newman Glass, Newman Aluminum possessed better quality and durability than their glass cousins. A lack of visual design and minimal décor makes them occupy a lower level of collector interest.

## **Tap Marker Signs**

The Tap Marker Sign is probably one the rarest forms of beer Tap Markers because they are not knobs. How could they be included in this book? Looking at the requirement in Section 23, paragraph (j) of Act 398, known as the Beverage License Law approved Jul 18, 1935, it provides that:

“It shall be unlawful for any retail dispenser to furnish or serve any malt or brewed beverages from any faucet, spigot or other dispensing apparatus unless the trade name or brand of the product served shall appear in full sight of the customer and in legible lettering upon such faucet, spigot or dispensing apparatus.

This means that the lettering of the trade name or brand must appear upon the spigot or faucet or device attached or affixed securely thereto and at all times in full view of the customer.” This section of the book shows a predominance of use of the TMS identifier in both the Northwest and East Coast. The signs were either free standing or fabricated to fit a specially designed frame. Special thanks go to Brian Anderson, John Cartwright and Dick Straskofsky for providing a majority of examples of this item.

## **Miscellaneous Styles**

Tap marker design saw a variety of styles in the years after Prohibition. Most were created to fill a need and for the most part never really caught on by breweries. The last sections include a variety of styles from glass and metal balls, to “hockey puck” style knobs.

## **Birch Beer Knobs**

In gathering “knobs” for this book, I came across a ball style knob with beer “sounding” names, i.e. Birch Beer. While not beers as we think of them, this type is often being promoted as “beer” knobs on eBay and other avenues. In reality, they are of the same era as regular beer knobs and look a lot like a beer knob based on size and insert design. Some collector buy these to use as the body to hold inserts for regular beer inserts. They are included only as an alert to collectors of being potentially misrepresented.

## **The Rest of the Next Era**

The transition from ball knobs to the tap handles commonly used in bars today passed through a very collectible phase made up of a variety of colorful plastic knobs like those shown. It was my intent that this effort of documenting tap markers focus on this style knob, as well as fill in any gaps by including the multi color knobs offered referred as “TV” style knobs. To complete the transition from the 30's to the 50's, a sampling of Plexiglass knobs is included. These by no means have the value or rarity of the earlier sections, but were included as a means of hopefully exposing novice collectors to their existence. As originally a pull tab beer can collector, it was exposure to flat tops and cone tops that fed my interest in expanding my collecting interests to other kinds of collectibles like knobs of the styles discussed above. This section includes what is called the little “squat” or “TV” styles. What became obvious when gathering knobs for this Next Era section is most of the examples are from breweries that did not survive. This highlights their demise and shows off so many of the neat old breweries.

This Next Era sampling of knobs is by no means complete. I was pleased by the participation of so many collectors who provided access to their personal collections. If the hobby wishes more on this style of knobs, please make your wishes known. Presenting these affordable type beer tap handle hopefully will encourage the new collector to become active in this form of breweriana collectible.

## **Craft Beer Tap Handles**

Interest has been expressed about a book covering the new craft beer phase of the hobby. I am not certain how that will be fulfilled. With over 4,000 craft beer brewers out there, the number and examples is overwhelming, to say the least. This number (4,000 brewers of craft beers) suggests even if only half employ custom tap handles and each craft brewer has 4-6 different handles that the number could easily exceed 10,000!! So a book picturing say a dozen per page would have a volume size of close to a thousand pages. This book for example will cover about 160 pages from front to back. The thought of capturing that many in a book is mind bending! While not every craft brewer employs fancy tap handles, there is a plethora of examples that might find interest among the breweriana collecting hobby for such a book. What do you think? Your thoughts are welcome. No promises, but just a question.

## **Brewery Information**

The summary information shown under each image was compiled through the use of numerous references. Data for items in Chapters 1 to 9 is generally thorough, but no brewery information is included for any of the knobs in the last sections for TV” and Plexiglass knobs. It became evident that there were numerous brewery changes such that the value of the search did not appear worthwhile.