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Knife World Publications, PO Box 3395, Knoxville, TN 37927 Vol. 34 No. 2 February 2008 www.knifeworld.com

Nehi Leg Knives

by Dennis Ellingsen

I do not recall exactly how I got involved in the Remington Nehi premium advertising leg knife. I had been aware of it since it was offered as a novelty knife in the 1980s. I had only assumed that Remington made one for Nehi in the 1920s era, but I had no proof nor documentation to support this. And for a long while it was not that necessary for me to pursue. But then one day...

At the turn of the century in the early 1900s, Royal Crown Cola was bottling a ginger ale drink. In 1905 a product was introduced called Chero-Cola.

Nehi, a product of Royal Crown Cola Co., had its debut in the early 1920s as part of the Chero-Cola Company. At the time, Chero-Cola was the feature soda line, and Nehi was introduced to provide a multi-flavor drink. Since it was so successful, the company changed its name to Nehi Corporation.

To promote its product, Nehi had many promotional prizes available. In their promotional booklet that appeared in the early 1920s, one could get prizes from wagons to knives. In this first booklet the knives shown were a lady's leg knife with a celluloid

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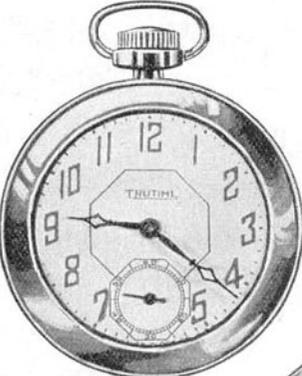


This group of leg knives with Nehi advertising contains both originals and reproductions. Which are original and which are not? See page 8 for the answers...

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handle and a four blade utility pattern knife. There are no clues as to what stamp these knives had. If you saved the requisite number of Nehi bottle caps and paid a small sum, you could go down to your local store and purchase these premium prizes.

The 1920s vintage coupon booklets were printed by the bazillions and can easily be found on eBay. One time, just in passing, I observed a Nehi premium knife advertised in a Nehi booklet, and it showed a Remington etch on the blade. This particular Nehi catalog page also

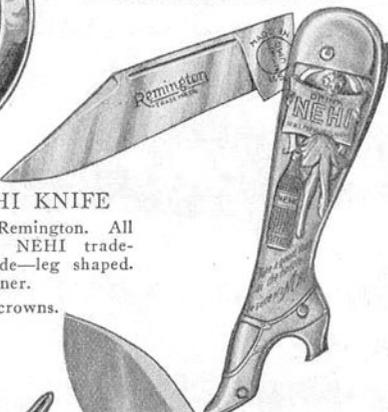
(Don't Let Em Fool You)



**"TRUTIME" WATCH
FOR MEN AND BOYS**

German nickel case—non-breakable crystal—silver dial with raised gold numerals. Guaranteed against defective material and workmanship. Stem winding and setting. The greatest watch value ever offered.

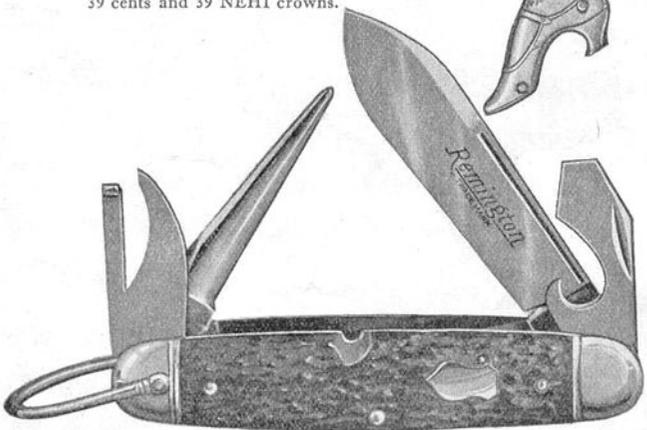
75 cents and 75 NEHI crowns.



COMBINATION NEHI KNIFE

Especially designed for us by Remington. All metal handle—embossed with NEHI trademark—highest grade steel blade—leg shaped. Heel may be used for bottle opener.

39 cents and 39 NEHI crowns.

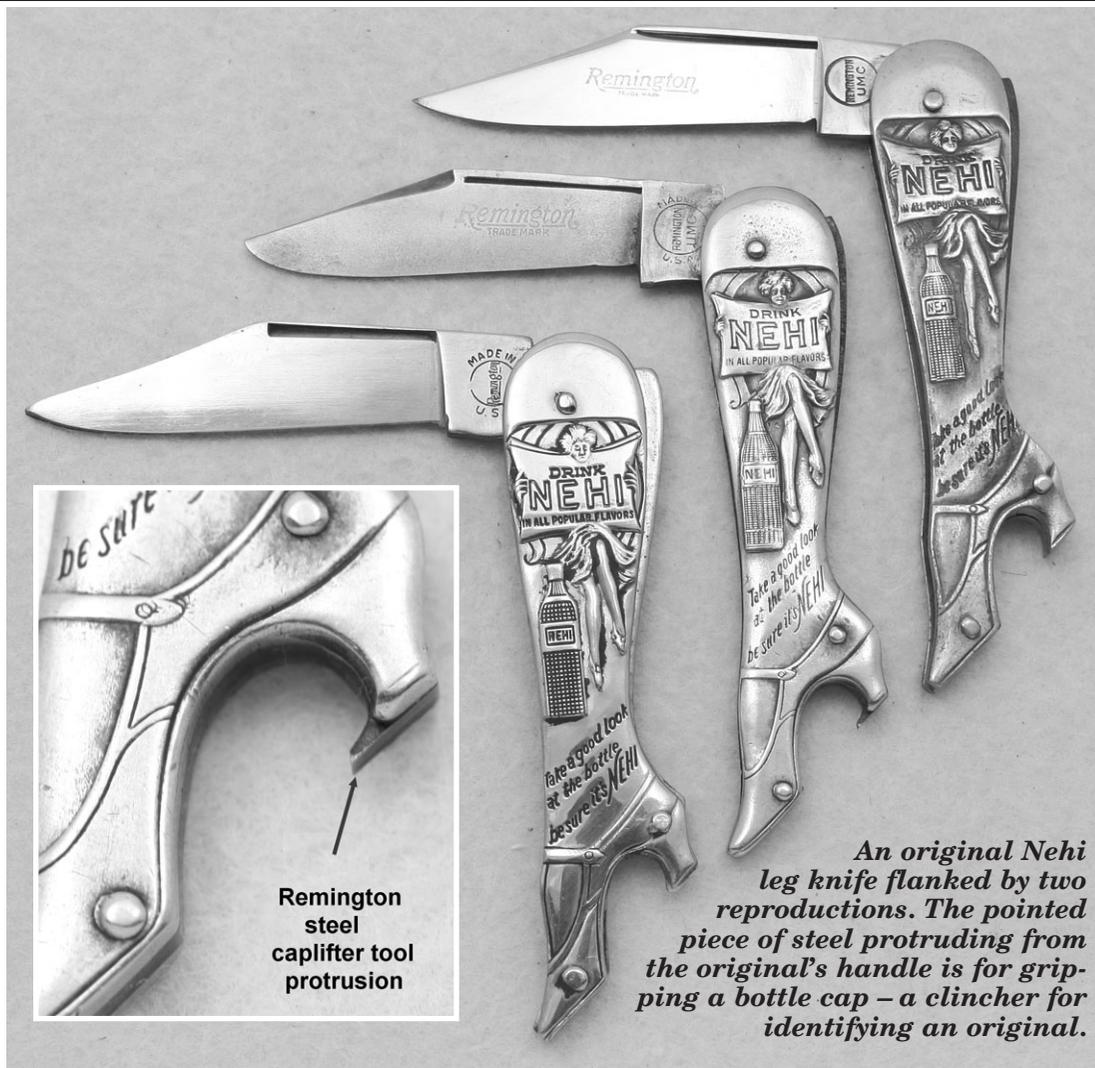


BOY OUTDOOR KNIFE

Regulation size, just what every boy wants, and a valuable article to have in the home. Ideal for fishing, hunting and outdoors. Made by Remington of highest grade steel. Stag handle—Nickel Bolsters—Brass lined. Ring in end for hanging or attaching to belt.

66 cents and 66 NEHI crowns.

Note the Remington blade etches on these illustrations from a 1929 Nehi coupon booklet.



An original Nehi leg knife flanked by two reproductions. The pointed piece of steel protruding from the original's handle is for gripping a bottle cap – a clincher for identifying an original.

showed a Remington four blade utility knife that had the Remington etch on the main blade. It took about a year of diligent searching for me to again locate one

of these premium catalogs showing the Remington knives.

As difficult as the booklet was to locate, the offering of the Remington leg

knives must have been short lived too. The booklet gave a date of 1929, which documents when this knife was first offered. A bit of

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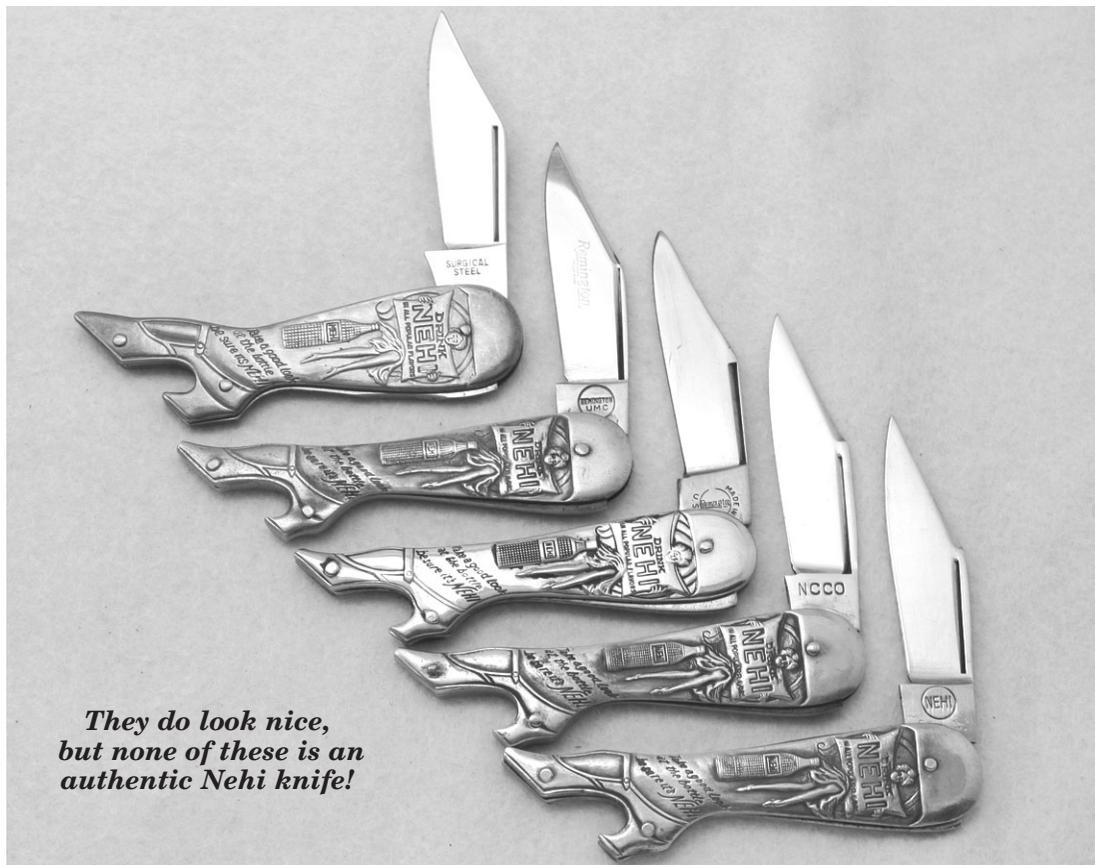
A closeup of the various Remington tang stamps encountered. Only the second knife from top is an original Nehi.

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guessing and putting clues together made me think that only one run of this Remington Nehi knife was manufactured. It was purported that Remington had the ability to produce 10,000 knives a day so a bunch of knives were punched out to satisfy the Nehi program. The Depression in the early 1930s would have put a

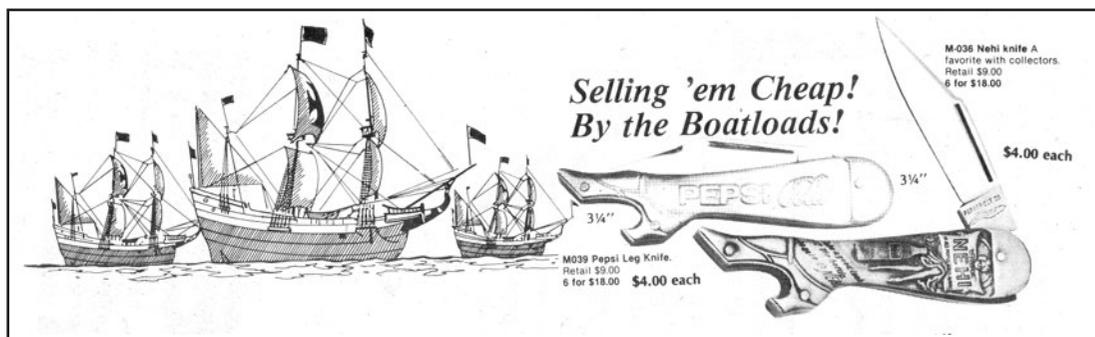
stop to the making of this knife; and in a 1930 Remington catalog, this general pattern R019 was marked discontinued. When considering the rarity of the original Remington knife, it can be surmised that there was a very limited production.

You wouldn't think the Remington knife to be rare because a replica knife appeared in the 1980s. These replica knives were made by the bazillions and sold for very inexpensive prices.

In 1982 Jim Parker sold Nehi reproductions and



They do look nice, but none of these is an authentic Nehi knife!



This 1982 ad shows how the reproduction knives were marketed to collectors.

continued to advertise them for sale into the late 1980s. At one point they were sold for as little as \$36 a dozen. They were offered with nickel silver handles or with brass handles. These were an extremely close copy of the

original Nehi advertising knife. So close, in fact, that when they had the Remington tang stamp, it was difficult to tell the originals from the reproductions.

I watched eBay with a passion to try and deter-

mine how to identify the reproduction from an original. I couldn't do it from the pictures so I started buying all the variations that appeared. I knew that the brass handled ones were reproductions; and of

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course the ones that had “Japan” lightly stamped on the blade were also not originals. A few wipes with a cloth usually took this mark off the blade; and now, like magic, it was an original Remington knife. Yeah, right.

All in all I had about a dozen variations of the reproductions until I got my first real, in the flesh, original Remington Nehi knife. I also came upon an advertising knife for Raybestos in the leg pattern that helped to authenticate my original Remington Nehi. The Raybestos company made friction brakes for automobiles. The Raybestos knife by Remington was the same in all the ways of construction that proved both knives to be original. After making this discovery I went back to eBay to see how many more originals would show up for sale. Slight few, I found out.

I then thought I would sell the secrets I found to identify the real Remingtons. Something like 39 Nehi bottle caps and \$39 seemed a fair price to recoup my expenditure of many dollars in acquiring knives to discover the secret. But dear elayne is my conscience, and this plan was scrapped.

On the tang of the reproductions can be found the following markings:

- NEHI
 - NCCO
 - REMINGTON MADE IN USA
 - REMINGTON UMC
 - PARKER CUT CO
 - SURGICAL STEEL
- And on the original we

find:

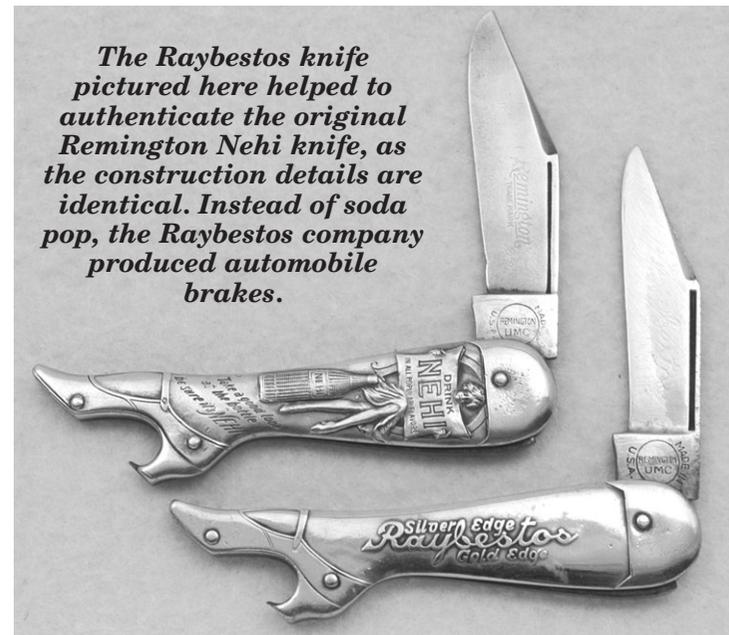
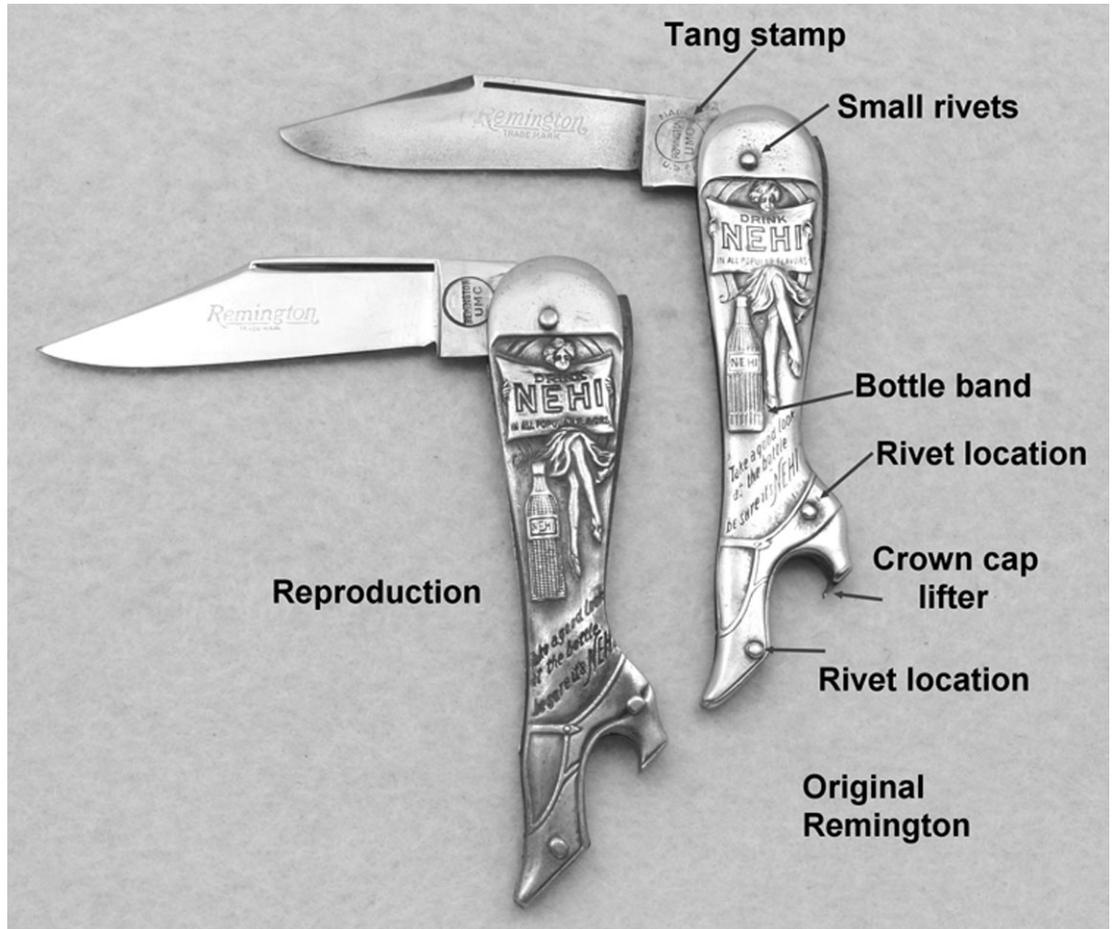
REMINGTON UMC -
MADE IN USA

At one time I thought that I could detect an original Remington by the “Made in USA” tang stamp. I didn’t think that a Japanese knife manufacturer would be so bold as to put this mark on an imported knife. But they did. The only differentiation is that the original has the UMC mark under the Remington name on the tang. The reproduction has a straight line under the Remington stamp, and the “Made in USA” encircles the Remington mark. But then again there is the tang mark on the reproduction that has the UMC mark but no “Made in USA” around the circle.

All of the reproductions have stainless steel blades whereas the original Remington has a carbon steel blade. Some of the reproductions appear to be worn and rusted to make them look like they are original so you have to be careful. Blade steel is difficult to determine based on an computer picture.

I studied the originals and the reproductions with a magnifier and finally discovered a few clues to spot differences. One slight variation was the bottle band that was located on the bottom of the bottle shown on the knife. Most reproductions do not have this band shown. But not all. The other minor clue was the size of the rivets. The original versions had smaller rivet heads than the reproductions. This is difficult to spot on a picture, but two knives held side by side reveal this dif-

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ference. One blatant clue is the positioning of the rivet near the heel of the shoe. If the rivet touches a line or bisects the line, then this is a reproduction. The orig-

inal designs had the rivet above the line and in the open area of the heel area. But not ALL reproductions follow this rule, as I have a few where the rivet does not bisect or touch the line.



An authenticity key to the cover photo – thumbs-up & thumbs-down. (The tray is a repro Coca-Cola, too!)

For those who
DRINK GENUINE
NEHI
Quality Beverages
~ in all popular flavors, this little booklet is planned. It tells you how to get these attractive articles - something for every member of the family.

COMPACT
Tre-Jar silver finish case—equipped with standard Tre-Jar powder, puff and mirror—25¢ & 25 NEHI crowns.

AUTO-STROP RAZOR SET
This set includes one razor, one blade and one leather strop—packed in regular metal case—complete—20¢ & 20 NEHI crowns.

SAVE
NEHI
CROWNS
FOR

VALUABLE PREMIUMS

Offering premiums in exchange for bottle caps was a common practice during the era these knives were made. Look closely here and you'll find the leg knife!

There were numerous variations of the reproduction knives, and slight variations within these can easily be found.

Another clue, when applied to all the other clues, is the placement of the rivet just above the ball of the shoe. It appears that the Remington rivet comes close to the bottom of the knife and almost bisects the line on the sole of the shoe. On most reproductions the rivets are placed higher in this location.

But the real clincher in identifying real from reproduction lies in the bottle opener feature of the heel of the knife. The original has a pointed sharp piece of steel that is

exposed beyond the nickel silver handle. This steel projection was for getting a grip on a bottle cap in order to force it free from a bottle. No reproductions have this steel projection, but all original style leg knives do have this feature. If you run your finger in this area, you can feel the sharpness of this point.

An eBay sale of one of the reproductions went for over \$150. The rivet bisected the line; there was no barrel band and no protrusion of steel spike at the inside heel. I really felt bad, but then it was not my place to jump up and down and yell "Be Careful." For all I know there could have been several reasons why this went so high, and it

was not mine to judge. However it is mine to let people know what I have found out about these knives.

In most knives pictured on eBay, it is really hard to see this pointed projection. On the ones I purchased I used all the clues to verify it to be true. If the steel projection was visible, I knew it was an original for sure. I now have three original Remington Nehi knives. It was an expensive investment, but somehow it was pleasantly rewarding. It always is rewarding when you discover an answer to a mystery. So bottoms up, and a Nehi toast to the Remington Nehi premium leg knife. □