

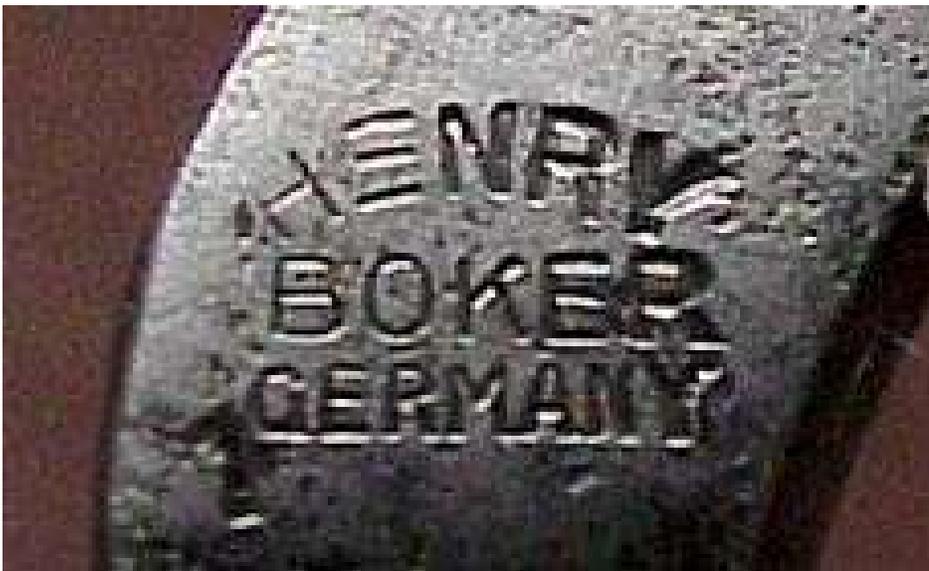
# Henry Boker Blasting Tool

*by Dave Johnson*



Many American mining artifact collectors are familiar with the name Henry Boker, manufacturer of the LIGHTNING and SUNSET miners' candlesticks. There are also Henry Boker frog lamps, which have turned up most commonly in Mexico. The Boker Frog lamps apparently did not find a ready market in the U.S. as very few have turned up here.

Henry (Heinrich) Boker established a hardware and cutlery manufacturing business in the early 1800s in Remscheid Germany. Many Boker cutlery items are stamped HENRY BOKER, SOLINGEN, Solingen being a town in close proximity to Remscheid. In 1837, Hermann Boker, Henry's brother, moved from Solingen to New York City and established Hermann Boker and Co., U.S. Agents for Heinrich Boker. Some years later a manufacturing facility was listed in Newark, New Jersey.



Boker received an order from the U.S. government to produce 45,000 1860 Pattern Cavalry Sabers, 1,646 Artillery Sabers and 569 NCO Sabers, most of which saw service in the Civil War, and are stamped HENRY BOKER, SOLINGEN. Hermann Boker & Co. contracted with the U.S. government to import muskets, rifles and pistols of European manufacture for use in the Civil War.

In 1867, Boker expanded his import business to Mexico when he opened a branch in Mexico City, which accounts for the relatively large number of Boker frog lamps that have been found in Mexico. Boker also supplied European firearms to the Mexican government.



*The Boker tool in the open position. Note the copper punch on the lower handle.*

The 1881 Trenton, New Jersey City Directory lists the Trenton Vise and Tool Works at 90 Union St. with Hermann Boker & Co. as proprietors. Thus, Boker apparently had manufacturing plants in Trenton and Newark.

In perusing the internet recently I came across a wide variety of Henry Boker manufactured items. These include swords, daggers, a wide variety of knives, tin shears, sardine can shears, scissors, wick trimmers, leather cutters, carpenters' braces and bits, folding rulers, straight razors, cork screws, wine bottle corks, pocket scales, hide scales and others. A Henry Boker item of special interest to mining artifact collectors will be the blasting cap crimper/fuse cutter tool pictured here. I recently obtained this unique piece from a dealer in Australia. It measures 7" in length. The end of one handle is a solid copper tipped punch and the other is a flat screwdriver type blade. In the European style, it is hinged at the end rather than being hinged liked a pliers, as is common in the U.S. made crimpers. Notice that the hole for crimping the cap is slightly offset so that the handles must be opened slightly to admit the cap. When the handles are compressed the cap is crimped, when the handles are released the cap may be withdrawn. The fuse cutter is below the crimping hole. Notice the pin above the fuse cutter that prevents the handles from closing together and crimping the cap too tightly. This is a well-made tool that any mining artifact collector would be proud to own.

For a history of the Boker company, see this internet link: <http://www.bokerusa.com/history.asp>



*The Boker tool: close-up views of the business end.*

