

The Mysterious “No-Name” Blasting Cap Tins

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In 2007, while on a business trip to New Mexico, I got the chance to visit Jack Purson and John Kynor, Sr. I wrote about it on the Eureka Forum in a post dated September 5, 2007:

This last week, while on a business trip, I had the great pleasure of visiting Jack Purson and John Kynor and seeing their cap tin collections. Jack’s collection includes the two No. 7 DuPont 25-count tins that are the only known examples of the tin. Jack also has a wonderful example of the round Illinois tin – white with the beautiful black font, and a mint Peerless- Whitehaven tin. In addition to tin collecting, Jack and I talked about mineral collecting and exploring old mines. Each of us used to do a lot of that when we were in college. Jack says that John got him started in cap tin collecting. John is a retired bomb squad guy. By his own account, John lacks about five tins to make his collection complete. John’s collection is like an encyclopedic reference to blasting cap tins. He has tried to assemble examples of all known variations of each tin. . . . I really enjoyed meeting, talking with and seeing the wonderful collections of these two men. Both are real gentlemen. Each of us confessed a desire to write an updated book on blasting cap tins, following Andy Martin’s terminology and Andy’s convention for identifying variations among tins. John is already working on that, using his own collection as the reference. I got a chance to take a look at what John has done so far, and it’s great. John hopes to have his book available for the Tucson show in February. I’m going to be one of the first buyers. I bought three nice tins from them, that will be among the best tins in my collection. These may be familiar to those of you who have been collecting for a lot longer than I have, but I was really excited about finding such nice examples of these tins. Anyway, my thanks to Jack and John for a great trip.



One of the tins I acquired on my trip was a “no-name” No. 6, 25-count tin that strongly resembles the round, yellow Hercules Powder Company tins of the early to mid 1900’s. Another example of this tin recently sold on eBay for \$217.50.

John Kynor completed and published his “Blasting Cap Workbook — Tins and Boxes” in 2008, a must have resource for cap tin collectors. He lists the No. 6, 25-count “no-name” tin on page 5 of his Workbook and pictures the tin in Plate 2. Andy Martin shows the top of this tin in the Addendum to his 1991 Blasting Cap Tin Catalogue. John pictures the 10-count version of this tin in Plate 5 of his Workbook. Andy’s Addendum also shows the top of a “no-name” No. 6, 10-count tin. John states that these “no-name” tins have been attributed to Hercules and are thought to have

preceded the analogous tins that have the full Hercules logos and legends. John also states that the “no-name” tin also exists in 100-count containers. If memory serves me, a No. 6, 100-count “no-name” tin sold on eBay not long ago. Sadly, I can’t find the listing.

For comparison, here are the analogous Hercules tins. They are some of my favorite tins. They are not rare, but it is difficult to find them in near mint condition. That’s what you should strive for.



The 25-count Hercules tin is similar in height and diameter to the 25-count “no name” tin, but not identical. My 25-count Hercules tin is 1 3/4 inches (4.45 cm) in height and 1 1/2 (3.81cm) inches in diameter. My 25 count “no-name” tin is 1 5/8 inches (4.13 cm) in height and 1 7/16 inches (3.65 cm) in diameter. The Hercules tin is more rounded on the outer edges; the “no-name” tin has squarer edges and a flatter top. This shape difference could account for the slight differences in size. It seems reasonable to attribute the “no-name” tins to Hercules, but we cannot know for sure. On the other hand, if Hercules did not make and use these tins, who did? In any event, the “no-name” tins are rare and desirable, and are handsome, if plain, additions to any cap tin collection.

