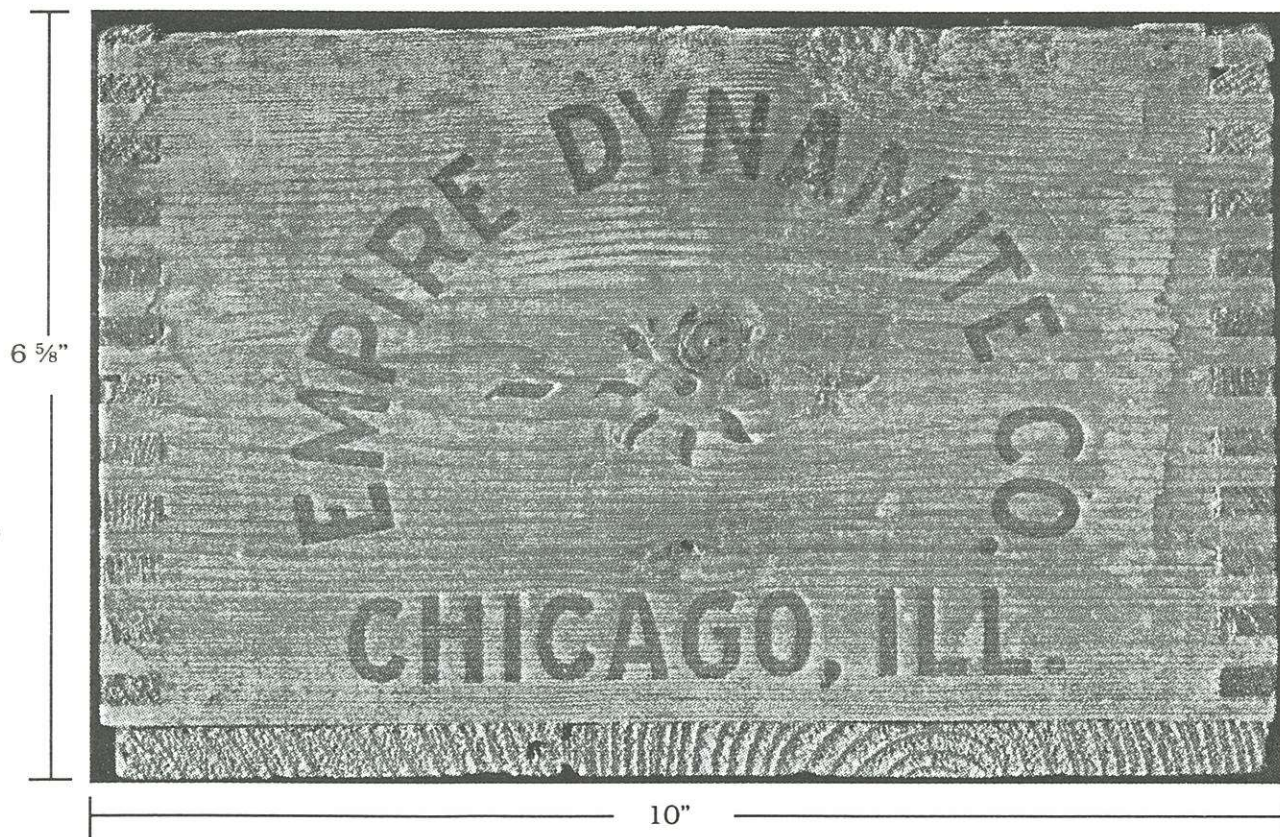


# Evaluating a Dynamite Box

by Dave Thorpe



I almost didn't pick it up when the old man showed me his candlesticks and oil wick lamps for sale, but at last minute, I asked: "how much for the box?" I know next to nothing about dynamite boxes except that, 'the smaller the better'. This being a 25-pounder was too good a deal to pass up. I've later come to realize that it is a fairly rare piece, and that not much is known about the Empire Dynamite Co. of Chicago, Illinois.

Most boxes have some clues as to when they were manufactured, and whether they could have been used in mining. Although dovetailed joints don't tell us too much, they generally indicate an earlier time when more care was given to manufacturing. Their presence is also attractive for the collector.

First, a couple of spec's on the box itself. It measures 6 5/8 X 10 X 16 1/2 inches. On each long side, the lettering reads:

**HIGH EXPLOSIVES  
DANGEROUS**

On the other end not shown, it reads:

**25 LBS**  
**40% AA LF**  
**1 ¼ X 8**

Bob Schroth, longtime underground mine explorer, has salvaged many boxes over the years. He confirmed that the "1 ¼ X 8" refers to the dimensions of dynamite sticks used in mining.

Many dynamite boxes are found with the letters "I.C.C." on the side. The presence of these letters, I had heard over the years, indicates a more modern box, but no one is precise as to what years these letters corresponded to. An inquiry to over the Mining-Collect newsgroup answered some questions. The following response was submitted by Jack Purson, who had some knowledge of Eric Twitty's research:

No "ICC" notation was used prior to 1914. "ICC-14" was used from 1914 to post-1960. "ICC-15A65" was used from the late 1940's to post 1960. The word "Explosives" was used from 1880 to 1900. "Explosives - Danger" was used concurrently 1870-1905. "High Explosives - Dangerous" was used from 1905 to 1915. "Dangerous High Explosives" was used from 1914 to 1960.

From the above information, I could guess that my box was made sometime between 1905 and 1913. As to the Empire name? It doesn't seem to fit with a Chicago location....perhaps a subsidiary of a New York based company? Time will tell as the avid researchers dig up more on company names.

For myself, dynamite and candleboxes make nice backdrops for lamp displays. I have a few brands, including the Apache brand dynamite box from Arizona. Although relatively common, the Apache is an attractive box, with the trademark design of an Indian's head on the end. I suppose I can be content that I have stumbled on at least one box, the Empire, that might be regarded as somewhat early and rare.

I've learned one other thing about boxes...you can't find anyone to trade a good cap lamp for one! Best to just keep 'em.