

MULTI PURPOSE CAP CRIMPER

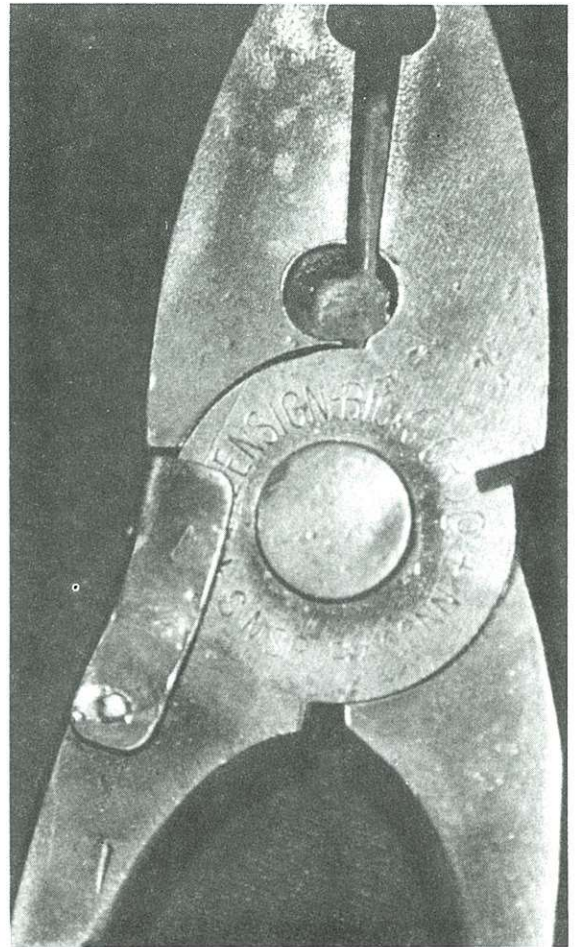
FROM ENSIGN - BICKFORD CO.

by John Kynor
Albuquerque, New Mexico

One of the things that I learned a few years ago from the Australian Aborigine folks is that we collectors share a common trait with them. The Aborigine have a tendency to "Walk About", and of course we as collectors in pursuit of that, "needed whatever", are, or at least should be, always walking about, look'n. A few years ago my wandering took me back to one of my favorite spots in Colorado; Victor. To me this is the top of the world, and some day may even be home, but Victor has been the source of some mighty fine examples of Cap Crimpers for my collection, thanks to some nice folks I have had the pleasure of meeting there. This brings me to the crux of the article.

The Ensign - Bickford Co. of Simsbury, CN, has a long established place in the history of explosives and mining in the United States,

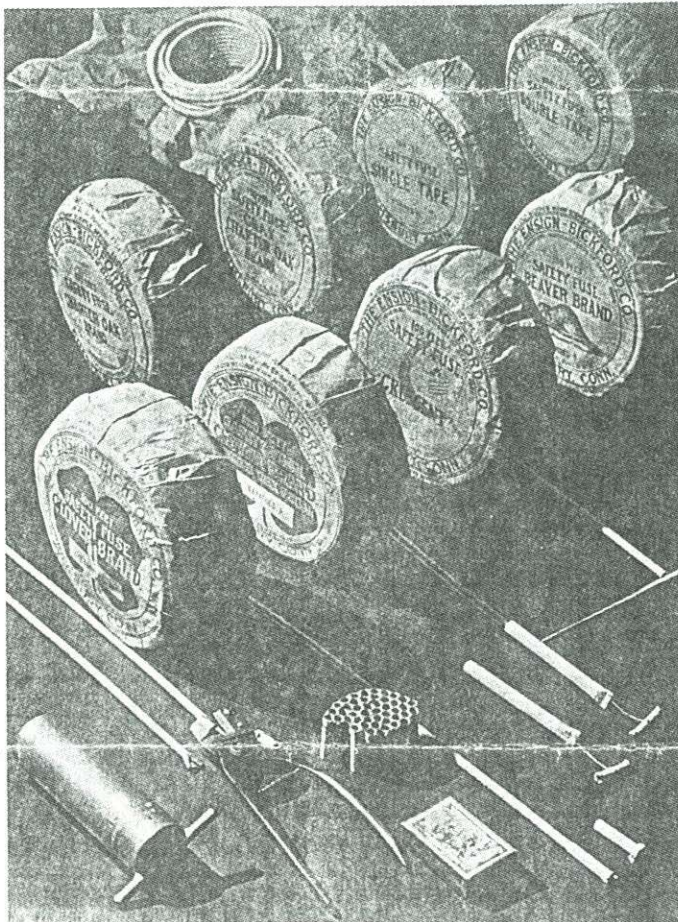
and they are well known to most of us. However, it came as surprise to me several



The Ensign-Bickford Co. of Simsbury, Connecticut Crimpers.

months ago that E-B had sold crimpers stamped with their logo. I learned this upon opening my mail and finding that the folks in Victor had found a very nice set of crimpers, and were offering them to me. Within a few days the set of crimpers were on my desk, and I found they were not an ordinary set of what I call "everyday crimpers", e.g. DuPont or Atlas No. 1's, etc.

The first thing I set about was trying to set a date of manufacture for this handy blaster's tool. After a few dead ends, I contacted Ensign - Bickford and achieved



Safety Fuse and Accessories

some success. They provided me a copy of an E-B photograph showing examples of their fuse products. In the photograph was a pair of crimpers that matched the pair I had acquired. The caption on the photo stated, "Safety Fuse and Accessories", the publication was dated 1936. It is not known as to what the actual time period was that these crimpers were available via E-B.

The first unique feature of these crimpers is they are spring loaded. The spring is made from coiled flat spring steel and it holds the jaws open when the thumb lock is released. The pictures show the thumb lock open and the spring in a relaxed position. The crimpers are at best heavy duty, as they are 5-9mm thick and 190 mm long. A rivet with a 12mm round collar holds the two halves firmly together. On the right side of the crimper, at about the three o'clock position, on the rivet is a slot that is a wire cutter. It will handle up to 24 gauge wire by my measure. There are three tools built into the jaws, although the pictures only show two.

The tool not shown is a fuse splitter, and it has a replaceable blade screwed to the opposite side of the jaws, along with a gutter to lay the fuse in. To see this you must look straight into the crimper jaws. The other tools are a sleeve crimp jaw at the top of the jaws. This makes a 5mm wide crimp, probably not waterproof. Below this is the fuse cutter which shares the blade of the

splitter. There is a hole in right handle for stripping wire, and the right handle is flattened at the tip to act as a pry bar. The left handle begins flat then is formed into a round cap well punch. An interesting oddity I found with these crimpers is their similarity to a pair of Italian Army crimpers I have in the collection. The Italian crimpers are listed in a 1938 Italian Army manual. Who knows?

Overall these crimpers are an excellently made multi-purpose tool. I

speculate that in 1936 they were not in great use as the cost to obtain one was surely greater than that of a DuPont #1, or a sharp pointed stick. Also, I'd be rather surprised if E-B gave these away with their products, but I'm sure that the engineer, miner, or blaster that had a pair was a might proud of them, and kept close tabs on their whereabouts.

Thanks to Craig Adams of E-B Co. for the historical data used in this article.



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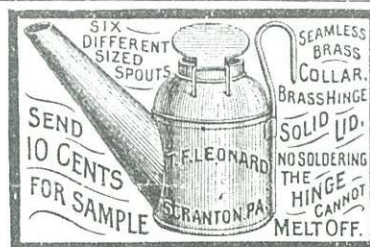
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