Christopher Clarke Antiques

Dealers in Campaign Furniture
& Travel Items

Milner's Double Plated Iron Portable Safety Box

Sold

Christopher Clarke Antiques
The Fosseway, Stow on the Wold, Gloucestershire, GL54 1JS
clarkeltd@btconnect.com • 01451 830 476 • www.campaignfurniture.com

REF: 83379

Height: 26 cm (10.2")

Width: 44 cm (17.3")

Depth: 31 cm (12.2")

Description

A metal 'Double Plated Iron Portable Safety Box' by Thomas Milner & Son.

As the large label to the interior of the lid notes 'These Boxes, manufactured of prepared compressed Iron, plated with Solder, so constructed as in case of fire to become air-tight by the soldering up of the cover, and chambered inside, leaving a hollow space surrounding their contents, are very generally adopted by the Gentry, Clergy, Solicitors, Bankers, Merchants, and others thoughout the Kingdom, for the protection of Ledgers, Books, Deeds, Plates, Cash, Office Papers, &c., from fire.'

The label goes on to extol the qualities of the box, using customers references to back up their claims. One client even went so far as to cover a box in 8 to 10 cwt of coal, which took close to 3 hours to burn. Afterwards, the papers and books etc. contained within the box were still perfectly legible.

The Safety Box has a hasp fitting to take a padlock to secure the box and a replaced cord to the interior to hold the lid upright when open. The hasp is stamped Milners. The double wall to the interior is noticeable on opening the box and has a thickness of approximately 3/4 of an inch. The interior walls are painted a pleasing blue in contrast to the black exterior. The large label is pasted to the inside of the lid. The box has good carrying handles to the sides.

Although the description above suggests these boxes were aimed more at the domestic market than the military, in 1824 Thomas Milner secured an order from the Duke of Wellington, as well as an official War Department contract, for coffers and strong boxes. In 1818, Wellington became Master-General of the Ordnance in Lord Liverpool's government. The easy to pack or store and robust nature of the boxes would have made them practical for the army besides their ability to protect their contents from fire.

The plain look of this box makes it hard to date and your first instinct is to believe it is late 19th century. However, the label, with the name of Thomas Milner & Son and the Liverpool address help to date it much earlier. Thomas had moved from Sheffield to Liverpool in 1830. He died in 1849 and his son William changed the company name to Milner & Son. This gives a date of manufacture to between 1830 and 1849.

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