Large double-ended antique sterling silver pocket vesta match box

Henry Wells

£975



REF: 9789

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Height: 60 mm (2.36")

Width: 50 mm (1.97")

Depth: 15 mm (0.59")

Weight: 66 g

Description

Most unusual antique sterling silver, double-ended pocked vesta match holder, with inlaid enamel at words - 'MATCHES' at one end, 'FUSEES' at the other. The pocket vesta was the most popular form, often made to be suspended from a fob chain or an Albert chain. This lovely example is fitted with its original ring to do just that. The interior is gilded and the ribbed striker for ignition is on along one side of the case. An excellent collectible.

By the way, fuseés appears to be the French word for friction matches. The name has passed into English and a fusee is a match with a large head that stays lit in windy conditions.

The vesta case or match safe as they are known in the USA, is a pocket-sized case designed specifically for carrying friction matches. The first successful friction match was invented by English chemist John Walker in 1826, and in 1832 fellow chemist William Newton patented the "wax vesta". Newton named his incendiary invention after the ancient Roman deity Vesta, goddess of hearth, fire and home, and the name was widely adopted as a synonym for matches in everyday language. Since these early matches were prone to accidental ignition, so sturdy little containers quickly became an everyday essential.

Vesta cases are very collectible, with designs ranging from simple rectangular cases to elaborate novelties shaped like pigs, boots, books, owls, insects bottles or musical instruments. The list is endless!

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