

# A Safety Nitro Size 2 Date Giant Box

by Mark Bohannon

On the morning of Saturday, July 9, 1892, the dynamite manufacturing plant of the Giant Powder Company was completely destroyed by a number of explosions involving from 400,000 to 1,000,000 pounds of dynamite.

The first explosion occurred in the nitroglycerine house where the men were cleaning up for the day. Five other explosions followed which subsequently destroyed the dynamite mixing house, the Judson mixing house, two machine packing houses, and the box packing house. About five minutes later, two of the powder magazines exploded, destroying the major part of the remaining plant. Even though the plant was virtually destroyed, only five men were killed—three white men and two Chinese. Considerable damage was done in Berkeley, Oakland, and even in San Francisco, where plate glass, as well as other windows were broken.

The result of the explosion was that now The Giant Powder Company still had a consider-

able amount of business orders to fill but had no plant to manufacture their dynamite. Rebuilding at the old site was now out of the question because of the objections of the neighboring towns.

On the other hand, the Safety Nitro Powder Company, which had been incorporated on December 20, 1880, had a dynamite manufacturing plant in a good location nearby, but their business was not sufficient enough to operate the plant to capacity.

On August 22, 1892, after quick negotiations, the Giant Powder Company, Consolidated, was incorporated as a combination of the original Giant Powder Company and the Safety Nitro Powder Company.'

The Giant Powder Company, Consolidated probably continued to sell Safety Nitro Powder into the late 1890s.

There are two styles of dynamite boxes from the Safety Nitro Powder Company. The first (left) is probably the earliest style, and is the

rarest of the Safety Nitro Powder Company boxes. The second (right) is probably a later style box, and is the most commonly found Safety Nitro box.

It appears that after the consolidation, the Giant Powder Company—whose office had been at 30 California Street—assumed the office of the Safety Nitro Powder Company at 430 California Street.



All Giant Powder Company boxes produced after the consolidation were then stamped with:

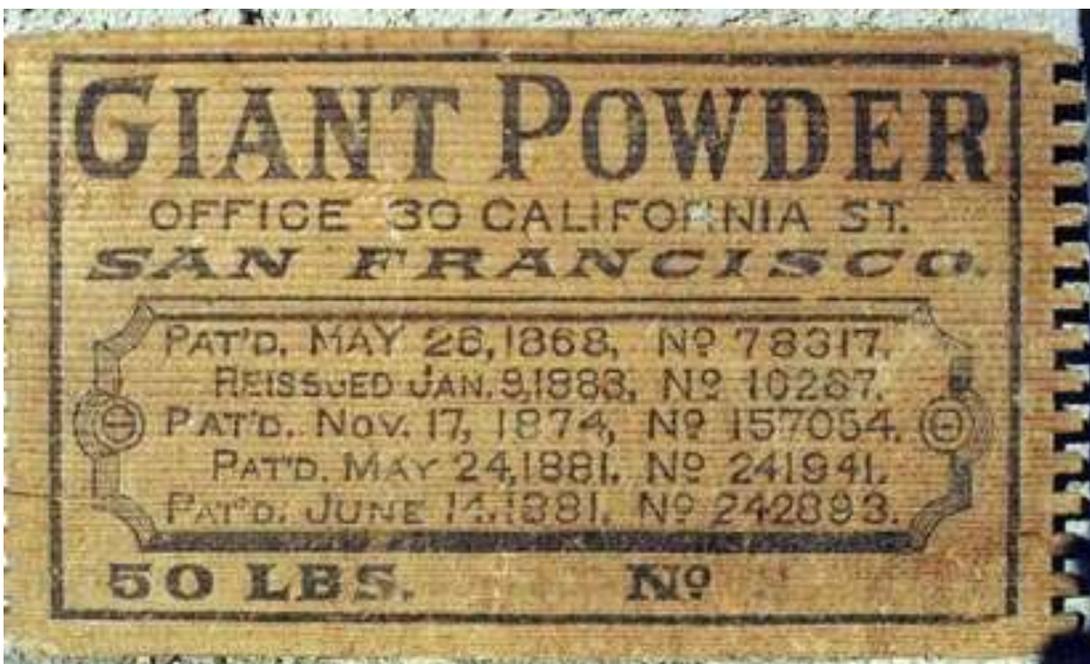
OFFICE 430 CALIFORNIA STREET  
and/or  
GIANT POWDER COMPANY, CON.

Probably one of the first dynamite boxes produced by the Giant Powder Company, Consolidated, was the "2 date" powder box (far right). This box was produced from 1892 until probably the late 1890s.



Very recently, an unusual Giant Powder Company box was found (upper photo, left). This box is the same size as the Safety Nitro Powder Company boxes. It is surmised that this box is a product of the explosion and then consolidation of the Giant Powder Company and Safety Nitro Powder Company in 1892. When the explosion at the Giant Powder Company occurred, it not only destroyed all of their dynamite, but probably also most of

their wooden packing boxes. With the consolidation, the Safety Nitro Powder Company not only supplied the Giant Powder Company's need for dynamite, but also with extra wooden packing boxes. This is probably the case with this unusual size Giant box, The Safety Nitro size box was probably used for only a very short time after the consolidation due to the extreme rarity of this size box.



(left) A pre-Consolidation Giant Powder Company box end. Note the 30 California St. office address. Mark Bohannon collection.

**Source:**  
Van Gelder, Hugo Schlatter. History of the Explosives Industry in America. 1927. P. 443-447.