

# THE GIANT POWDER COMPANY

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One of the most successful powder companies in America, especially in the West, was the Giant Powder Company. They were the first company to manufacture dynamite in America. The company was incorporated in California on August 13, 1867, and was the only company in America contracted to produce dynamite according to Alfred Nobel's patent.

There were many plant explosions throughout the Giant Powder Company's history, but the largest--in terms of material damage and explosives destroyed--occurred on July 9, 1892. The explosion basically destroyed the plant, magazines, warehouses and office buildings.

The cities of Berkeley, Oakland and even San Francisco received considerable damage. With the neighboring towns objecting to the Giant Powder Company's rebuilding of their plant at the same location, a new location was needed.

It so happened that at this time, the Safety Nitro Powder Company had a plant in the same general area. Unlike the Giant Powder Company--which had a considerable amount of business on its books but no plant--the Safety Nitro Powder Company had a plant but an insufficient amount of business to operate the plant at its full capacity.

On August 22, 1892, negotiations to combine the two companies were concluded and the Giant Powder Company, Consolidated was incorporated.

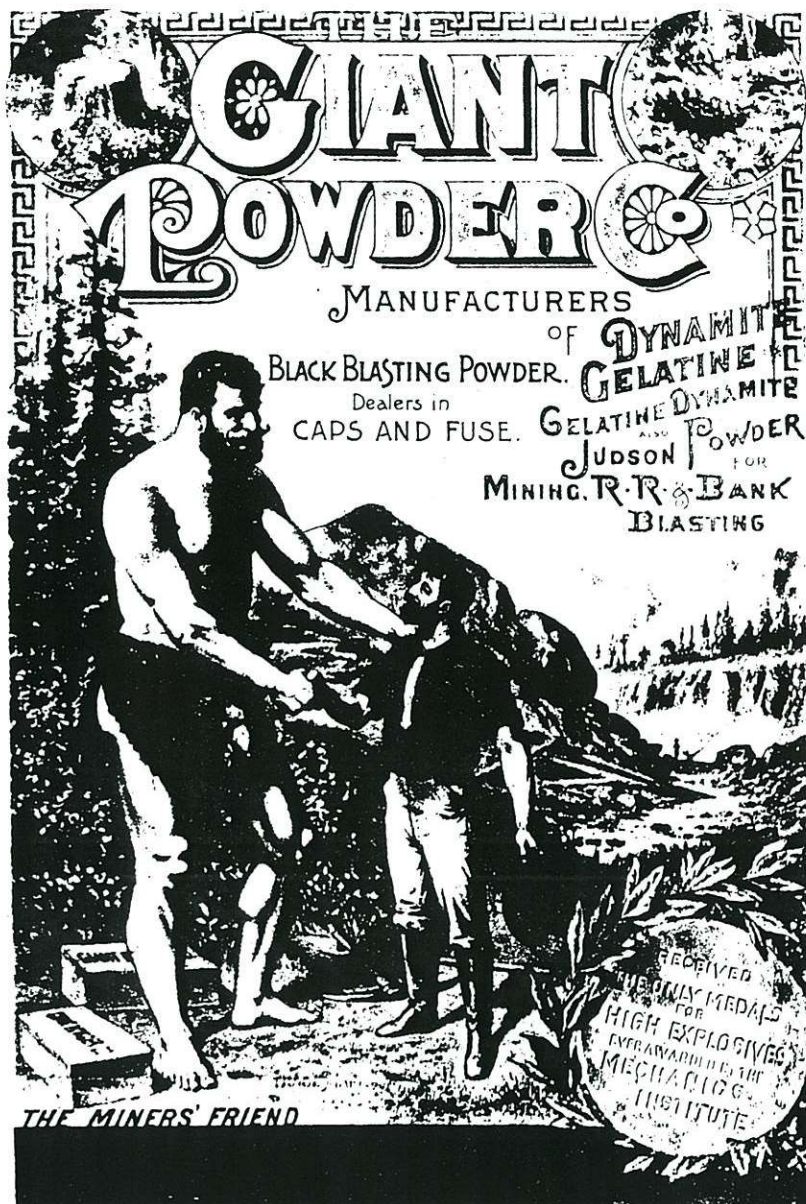


Figure 1. Reprinted poster (8" x 11.25") by the Atlas Chemical Industries, Inc.

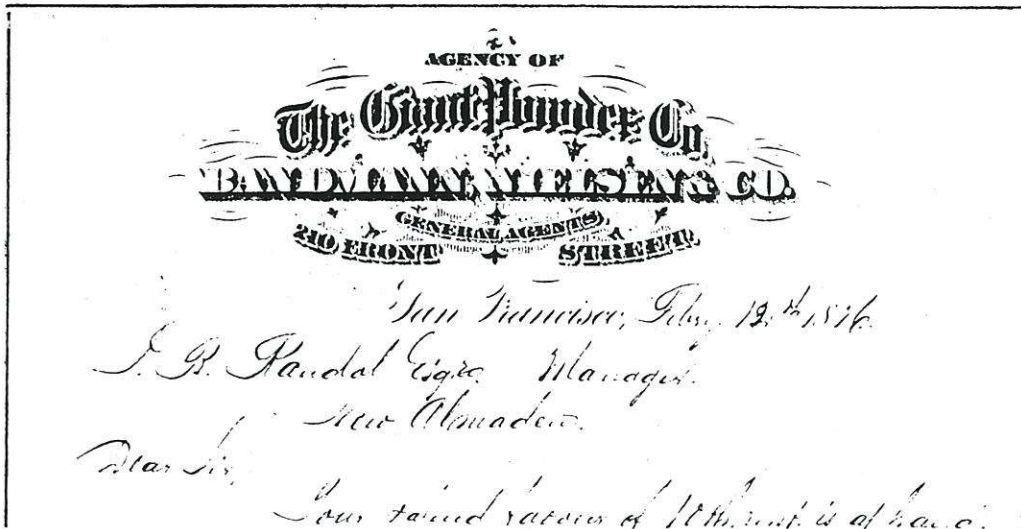


Figure 2. An 1876 Letterhead from the Giant Powder Company (8.5" x 11").

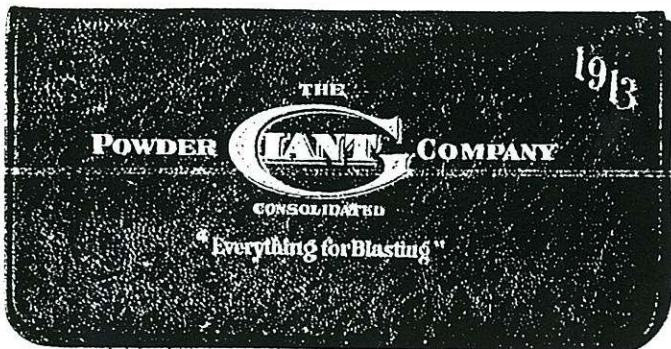



Figure 3. A 1913 light brown leather Giant Powder Company pocket calendar notebook.

Figure 4. Giant Powder Company dynamite box instruction sheet (10.75" x 7.75").




**The Giant Powder Co. Con.**  
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIFORNIA

See Within for  
**Instructions and Rules**  
For Transporting, Storing, Handling  
and Use of High Explosives and  
Permissible Explosives

These rules are not to be construed as  
superseding state, city or municipal laws,  
ordinances or regulations with which  
they may conflict.

To obtain best results from the de-  
tonation of the explosive in this package,  
use a strong detonator such as the No. 6  
Giant Blasting Cap or Electric Blasting  
Cap.

**SALES OFFICES**  
San Francisco, Calif.  
Butte, Mont.     Salt Lake City, Utah  
Los Angeles, Cal.     Spokane, Wash.  
Portland, Oregon     Seattle, Wash.



**INSTRUCTIONS AND RULES**

**STORING—KEEPING**

High Explosives should be stored in a dry, clean, well ventilated, bullet and shrapnel building, safely located with reference to other buildings, railroads and highways. Cases should be stacked in magazines top side up, the brand in front and in such a manner that the oldest stock will always be taken out first. If high explosives are kept underground, they should be in a clean, dry, box-magazine.

No matches or inflammable materials such as oil, gasoline, paint, carbide, city waste, etc., or metal or metal tools should ever be brought into a magazine containing explosives. Floors should be kept clean, free from loose shavings and no nail or bolt heads should be exposed. No artificial light other than an electric storage battery lantern or electric flashlight should be permitted in a magazine. No fire or gas should be allowed near a magazine and the ground around it should be kept clear of brush, leaves, grass, debris or other inflammable materials.

**TRANSPORTATION**

Blasting caps or electric blasting caps should not be transported in the bed or body of a wagon, auto-truck or other such vehicle, nor in a railroad car, cage or ship with other explosives, nor should blasting caps, electric blasting caps or other explosives be transported in the same vehicle, railroad car, wagon, auto-truck, cage or ship with metal, metal tools, matches or other inflammable substance.

**THAWING**

Never attempt to use frozen high explosives.  
Never attempt to thaw high explosives by putting them in hot water or steam, on or over hot steam pipes or boilers, or in a stove, in an oven or on any hot metal surface. Never attempt to thaw high explosives by holding them near the flame of a lamp or before an open fire or by placing them on hot sand, brick, stone, etc.

All large quantities are to be thawed, a separate building should be provided with shelves on which to spread high explosives, and equipped with protected steam radiators. Only exhaust steam should be used. Shelves should not be built over or near the radiator nor should cases be stacked nearby or where it would be possible for them to fall against it.

If small quantities are required, a thawing kettle may be used. The water must never be heated in the thawing kettle but in some other receptacle, and should never be put into the water jacket of the thawing kettle when not enough to heat the case. The high explosive compartment must always be kept dry and should be empty when the hot water jacket is being filled.

**USING PRIMING—CHARGING—TAMPING—FIRING**

**PRIMING:** When blasting caps are used, the proper length of fuse should be cut from the roll and the blasting cap crimped to the fresh cut end of the fuse with a cap crimper, not with a knife or the teeth. Be sure that the fuse is cut square across and that the end is pushed gently against the explosive material in the blasting cap. The crimp in the blasting cap should be made near the end which the fuse enters. In no work, cap sealing compounds made for the purpose—but not oil—should be spread over the joint between the fuse and blasting cap.

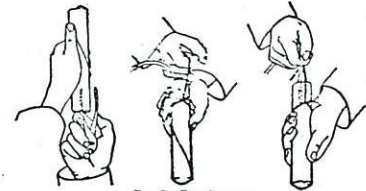
Punch a hole about the size of a lead pencil either in the end or side of the cartridge, this hole to be a little deeper than the length of the blasting cap. Insert the blasting cap and fasten the fuse securely to the dynamite cartridge to prevent the cap and fuse being pulled out of the dynamite cartridge. Aim to keep the blasting cap in the center of the cartridge.

**METHODS SUGGESTED ARE ILLUSTRATED BELOW**

FIG. 1—SHELL PRIMING



FIG. 2—END PRIMING



When electric blasting caps are used, punch a slanting hole from the center of one end of the cartridge coming out through the side about two inches from the end. Fold over the wires about twelve inches from the electric blasting cap to form a sharp bend. Then push the folded wires through the hole, starting at the end of the cartridge and coming out through the side. Open the folded wires and pass the loop over the outer end of the cartridge. Punch another hole straight into the end of the cartridge beside the first, insert electric blasting cap in this hole and take up all slack in the wires, as illustrated in Fig. 1.



When all metal Delby Electric Blasting Caps are used the cartridge should be punched deeper to take care of the longer shell. Otherwise, the priming process is the same as with Electric Blasting Caps.

When delay electric igniters with Blasting Caps attached are used, punch a slanting hole in the side of the cartridge and insert the cap end of the delay device in the hole, having the fuse about four inches along the outside of the cartridge. Near the end of the cartridge, securely fasten the delay electric device to the cartridge with the firing head and vent hole not in contact with the cartridge or explosive. This primer cartridge should be the last explosive cartridge to go into the bore hole. In order to prevent the firing head from moving, push the primer cartridge into the bore hole along with a cartridge of tamping following it and with the firing head from moving, push the cartridge of tamping as illustrated in Fig. 2.



After the break-up of the E. I. du Pont de Nemours Powder Company in 1912, the newly formed Atlas Powder Company was left without an explosives plant in the West.

By 1914, the Atlas Powder Company had acquired a controlling interest in the Giant Powder Company, Consolidated. Although the affairs of the Giant Powder Company, Consolidated were managed by the Atlas Powder Company since 1916, the two companies maintained separate corporate structures.<sup>1</sup>

According to dynamite box instruction sheets, it appears that the corporate separation between the Atlas Powder Company and the Giant Powder Company, Consolidated was maintained until around 1935/1936. After this time it appears that the Giant Powder Company, Consolidated ceased to exist as a separate corporation. The "Giant" brand name was retained by the Atlas Powder Company for the dynamite that they sold in the West.

There are a variety of artifacts known from the Giant Powder Company, some of which are shown here.

Figure 6. Powder box end (11.5" x 7").

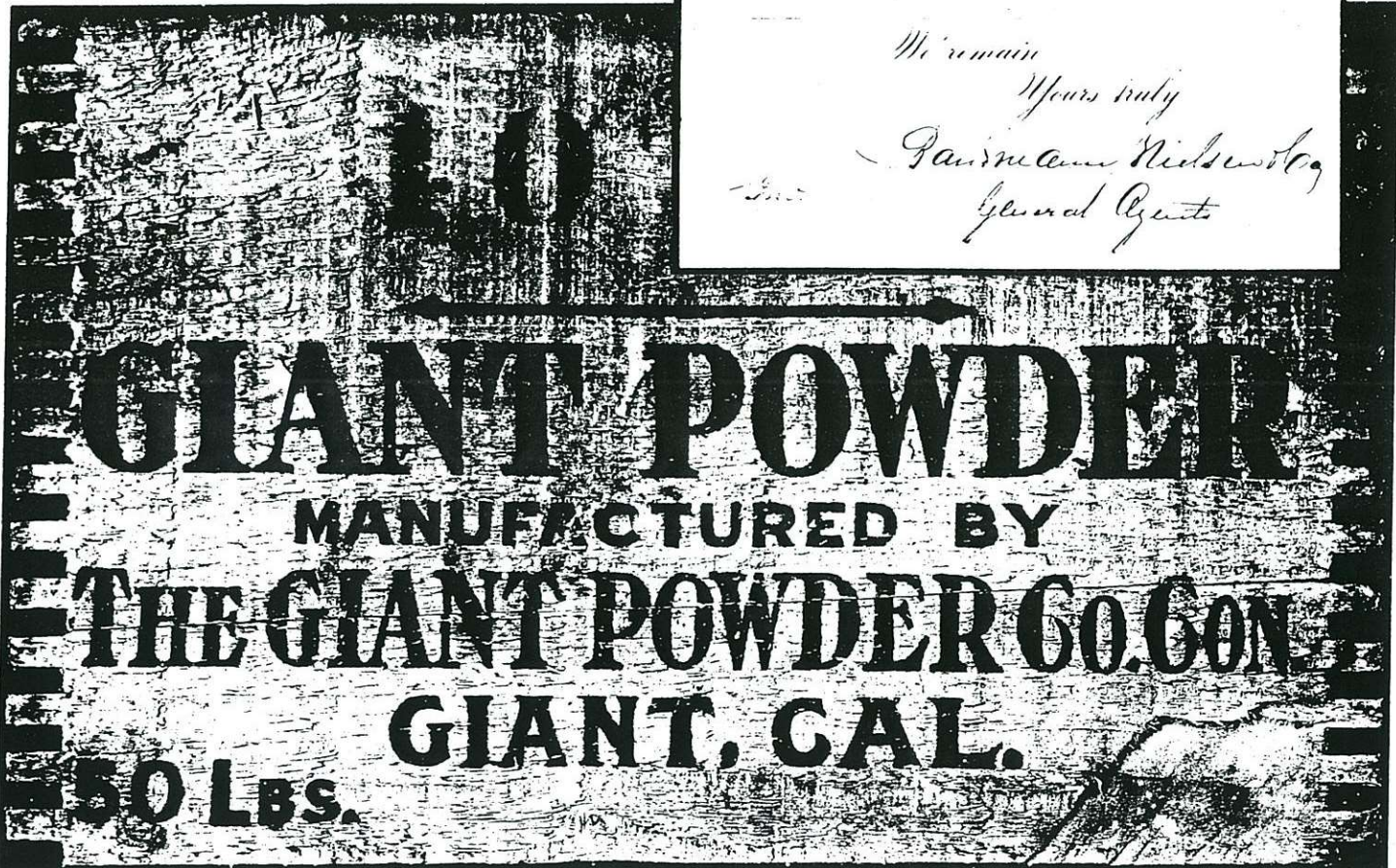


Figure 5. An 1877 Giant Powder Company billing receipt (5.5" x 8.75").

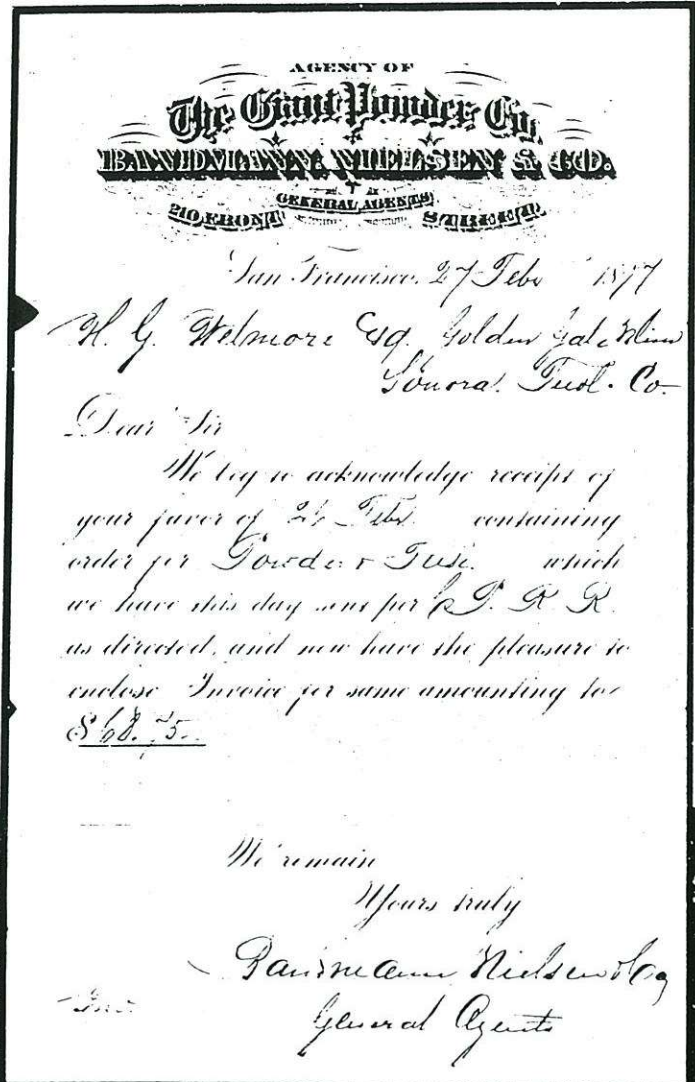




Figure 7. Two 100 cap blasting cap tins from the Giant Powder Company. The tin on the left is the earlier tin and has a black and white paper label on the lid (John Johnson collection). The tin on the right is a later tin and has an embossed lid (Don & Dave White collection).



Figure 8. The wrapper from a stick of 30% dynamite from the Giant Powder Company. The size of the stick is  $1\frac{1}{8} \times 8$ . (Mark Bohannon collection)

Figure 9. 1934 Giant Powder Company dynamite box instruction sheet, probably just issued after to the dissolution of the company (10.75" x 7.75").

**ATLAS POWDER COMPANY**  
THE **ANFO** DIVISION  
San Francisco, California

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See within for  
**Instructions and Rules**  
For Transporting, Storing, Handling  
and Use of High Explosives and  
Permissible Explosives

▼

These rules are not to be construed as superseding state, city or municipal laws, ordinances or regulations with which they may conflict.

To obtain best results from the detonation of the explosive in this package, use a strong detonator such as the No. 6 Giant Blasting Cap or Electric Blasting Cap.

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**OFFICES**  
SAN FRANCISCO, CALIF.

Butte, Mont.	Salt Lake City, Utah
Los Angeles, Calif.	Seattle, Wash.
Portland, Oregon	Spokane, Wash.

G-1603 250M 6-34

**INSTRUCTIONS AND RULES**

**STORING—KEEPING**

High Explosives should be stored in a dry, clean, well ventilated, built and fireproof building, safely located with reference to other buildings, railroads and highways. Cases should be stacked in magazines top side up, the front in front and in such a manner that the oldest stock will always be taken out first. High explosive cases are kept underground they should be in a clean, dry, box-magazine.

No matches or inflammable materials such as oil, gas, or paper, candles, kerosene, stoves, metal, or metal tools should be kept in a magazine containing explosives. They should be kept clear from loose explosives and not stored in a magazine. No open flames or light other than an electric storage battery lamp or electric flashlight should be permitted in a magazine. No fire or sparks should be allowed near a magazine and the ground around it should be kept clear of brush, leaves, grass, debris or other inflammable materials.

**TRANSPORTATION**

Blasting caps or electric blasting caps should not be transported in the bed of a wagon, auto-truck or other such vehicles. They should be in a railroad case or case with other explosives, nor should blasting caps, electric blasting caps or other explosives be transported in the same vehicle, railroad car, wagon, auto-truck, case or ship with metal, metal tools, matches or other inflammable substance.

**THAWING**

Never attempt to use frozen high explosives.

Never attempt to thaw high explosives by putting them in hot water or steam, on or over hot steam pipes or boilers, or in a furnace, in an oven or on any hot metal surface. Never attempt to thaw high explosives by holding them near the flame of a lamp or before an open fire or by placing them on hot sand, brick, stone, etc.

If large quantities are to be thawed, a separate building should be provided with sheltering which to spread high explosives, and equipped with protected steam radiators. Only exhaust steam should be used. Shelves should not be built over or near the radiator and the cases be stacked nearby or where it would be possible for them to fall against it.

If small quantities are required, a thawing kettle may be used. The water must never be heated in the thawing kettle but in some other receptacle, and should never be put into the water jacket of the thawing kettle when hot enough to burn the hand. The high explosive compartment must always be kept dry and should be empty when the hot water jacket is being filled.

**USING**  
**PRIMING—CHARGING—TAMPING—FIRING**

**PRIMING.** When blasting caps are used, the proper length of fuse should be cut from the roll and the blasting cap crimped to the fuse at one end. The fuse with a cap crimped, not with a knife or teeth. Be sure that the fuse is cut square across and that the end is perfectly square against the explosive material in the blasting cap. The cap to the blasting cap should be made near the end which has the fuse crimped. In hot work, cap crimping is accomplished by the cap crimping tool which should be spread over the joint between the fuse and blasting cap.

Punch a hole about the size of a lead pencil either in the end or side of the cartridge, this hole to be a little deeper than the length of the blasting cap. Insert the blasting cap and insert the fuse end of the primer cartridge in the hole. Press the primer cartridge in so that it is firmly seated. Aim to keep the blasting cap in the hole of the primer cartridge.

**METHODS SUGGESTED ARE ILLUSTRATED BELOW**

**FIG. 1—SIDE PRIMING**

**FIG. 2—END PRIMING**

When electric blasting caps are used, punch a slanting hole from the center of one end of the cartridge coming out through the side about two-thirds from the end. Fold over the wire about twelve inches from the electric blasting cap to form a sharp bend. Then push the folded wires through the hole, starting at the end of the cartridge and coming out through the side. Open the folded wire and pass the tip over the other end of the cartridge. Punch another hole straight into the end of the cartridge beside the first, insert electric blasting cap, in this hole and take up all slack in the wires, as illustrated in Fig. 3.

When all metal Delay Electric Blasting Caps are used the cartridge should be punched deeper to take care of the longer shell. Otherwise, the priming process is the same as with Electric Blasting Caps.

When delay electric igniters with Blasting Caps attached are used, punch a slanting hole in the side of the cartridge and insert the capped end of the delay device in this hole, having the fuse element lying along the outside of the cartridge. Near the end of the cartridge securely fasten the delay electric device to the cartridge with the firing head and vent hole in contact with the cartridge explosive. This primer cartridge should be the last explosive cartridge to go into the bore hole. In order to protect the firing head from injury, push the primer cartridge into the bore hole along with a cartridge of tamping following it and with the firing head and vent hole alongside of the cartridge of tamping as illustrated in Fig. 4.