

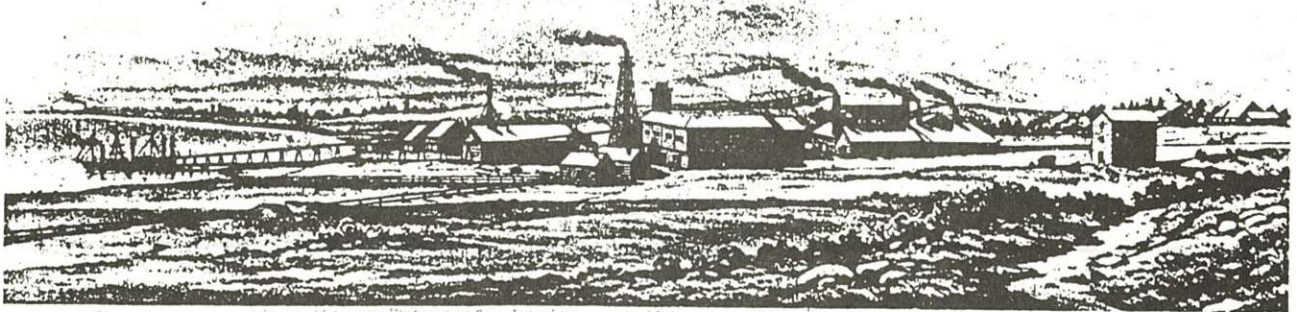
Safety Nitro Powder Company

by Mark Bohannon

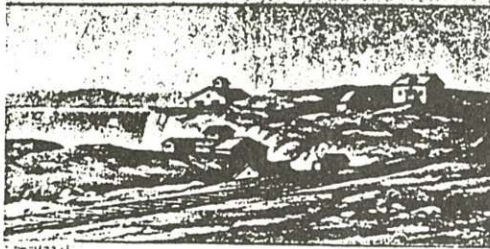
On December 20, 1880, the Safety Nitro Powder Company was incorporated to produce an explosive from the patents of Dr. Gilbert Dean, a San Francisco dentist who had become interested in explosives and had conducted experiments in his dental laboratory. Dr. Dean had the common belief that nitroglycerine could be made safe by modifications of the formula. His 1881 patents covered the addition of 10% nitrodextrine and 2-3% water to the nitroglycerine to make it safe in transportation.

The plant was located on Benson's Ranch on Pinole Point on San Bablo Bay, about 2 1/2 miles east of San Pablo and 4 miles west of Pinole.

SAFETY NITRO POWDER COMPANY



WORKS OF SAFETY NITRO COMPANY



Office, 430 California Street, San Francisco

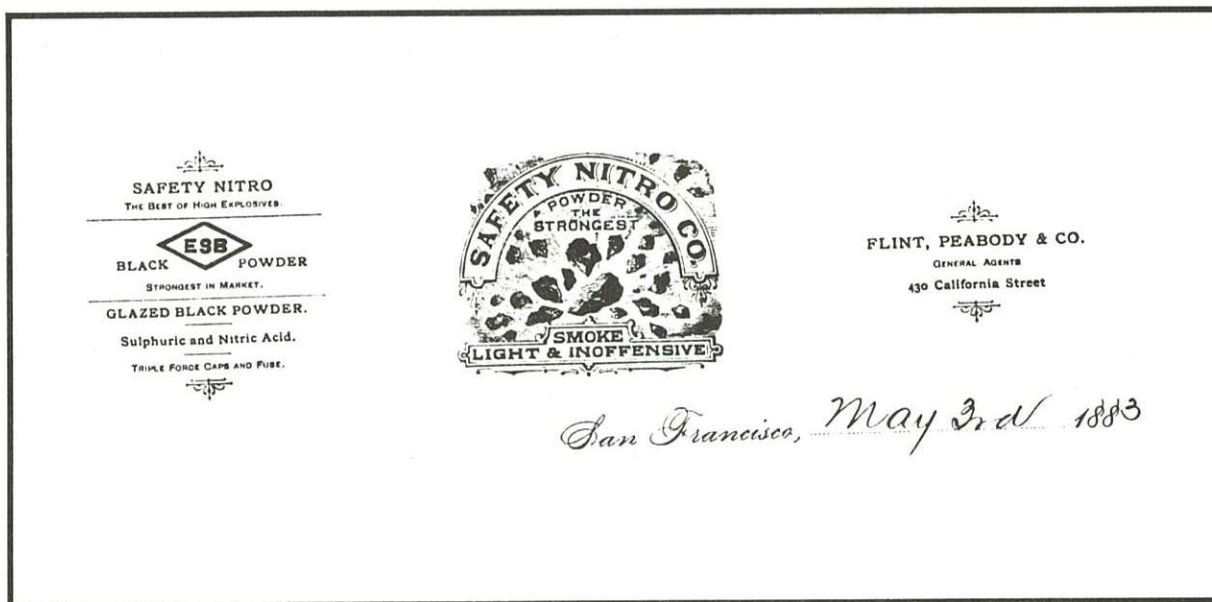
On Saturday, July 9, 1892, south of the Safety Nitro Powder Company's plant, at Fleming Point near Berkeley, a disastrous explosion occurred at the plant of the Giant Powder Company in which three white men and two Chinese were killed without any warning. The first explosion occurred at 10:30 AM in the nitroglycerine house where the men were cleaning up for the day.

Explosions were then followed in the dynamite mixing house, the Judson mixing house, the two Quinan machine packing houses and the box packing house. Then about five minutes after the last of these six explosions, two of the magazines which had been burning exploded and destroyed most of the remaining plant. The office and laboratory were set on fire by the concussion which had mixed together the acids, caps, dynamite, and other flammable objects in the laboratory. The Judson Drying House also caught on fire which then set fire to No. 1 and No. 2 warehouses.



This style box end is found in 50 lb. and 25 lb. sizes. The 50 lb. end is 8 1/4" X 9" while the 25 lb. size end is shorter at the top (8 1/4 X 7). The Safety Nitro Powder Company boxes are not 'Dove Tailed' and are one of the few brands which have identical ends. (Mark Bohannan collection)

Letterhead from 1883




The explosions and fires involved vary, according to different accounts, from 400,000 to 1,000,000 pounds of dynamite. One magazine, which was 200 yards away from the others, and contained "300 tons of blasting powder", was saved. Judson & Sheppard's San Francisco Chemical Works was almost completely destroyed and considerable damage was done in the cities of Berkeley, Oakland, and even San Francisco.

This left the Giant Powder Company with a considerable amount of orders to fill, but with no plant to manufacture dynamite. On the other hand, the Safety Nitro Powder Company's plant which was in the vicinity had insufficient business to operate their plant to capacity. Negotiations between the Safety Nitro Powder Company and Giant Powder Company were swiftly concluded and on August 22, 1892, the two companies were combined and incorporated as the Giant Powder Company, Consolidated.



50 lb. size box end. (8.5" X 8")
(Tony Potucek collection)

SAFETY NITRO POWDER
DYNAMITE
THE BEST OF HIGH EXPLOSIVES.

BLACK  POWDER

STRONGEST IN MARKET
FOR
BANK, STUMP and WOOD
BLASTING.

GLAZED BLACK POWDER
— IN KECS. —
TRIPLE FORCE CAPS
AND FUSE.

San Francisco, July 28, 1891.

Adelphi Stz. Mfg. Co.
BOUGHT OF *Mass. V. Co.*

SAFETY NITRO POWDER CO. *Cal*

Manufacturers of all Grades of

MINING AND BLASTING POWDERS,

OFFICE, 430 CALIFORNIA STREET,
SAN FRANCISCO, CAL

Works at Sobrante, Contra Costa Co., Cal.

100000 Trip. Exp. Caps @ 60¢ \$60 -

36000 ft. R.P. Fuse " 50¢ 180 -

245 -

Sept 1040 in Pow 18 \$227 -

Billhead