

THE APACHE POWDER COMPANY

by **Steve Eady**
Safford, Arizona

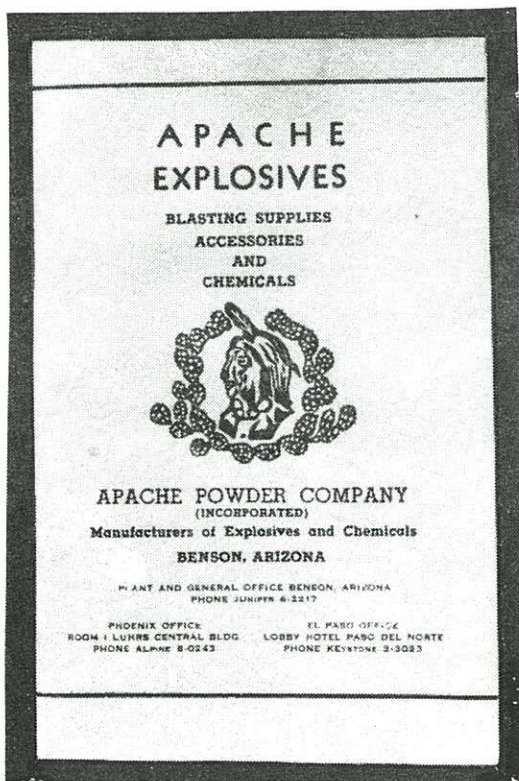
Bruce Johnson
Tucson, Arizona

Mark Bohannon
Oro Grande, California

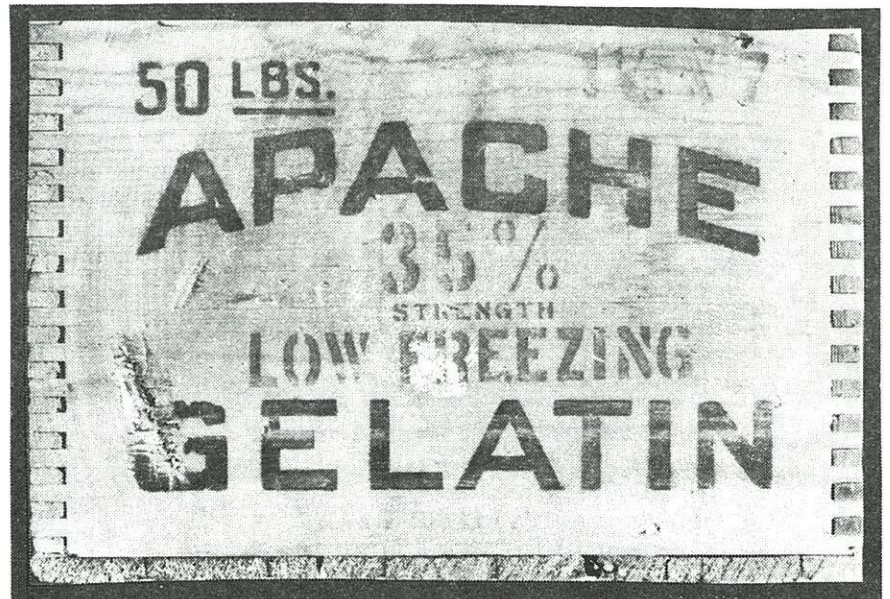
The Apache Powder Company was promoted by Walter Wallace Edwards, formerly of the Aetna and General Explosives Companies. He interested Charles E. Mills, previously of the Anaconda Copper Company, and a group of copper mining companies known as the Phelps-Dodge interests in becoming partners. The location for the dynamite plant was selected near Bensen, Arizona, early in 1920, and the dynamite plant began manufacturing dynamite in 1921. Mills became the president, and Edwards became general manager of the company. The plant manufactured the usual grades of dynamite and had an annual capacity of about 18,000,000 pounds per year. Its principal trade was in the copper mines of southern Arizona and adjacent territory.¹

The company originally shipped dynamite from a rail stop known as Curtis, Arizona. Boxes were marked with "Curtis, Arizona" until the mid 1930s when they were changed to read "Bensen, Arizona."

In 1956, the Apache Powder Company was listed as the largest producing single facility of explosives in the country. They produced 52,000,000 pound of dynamite per year as compared to American Pennsylvania, Atlas Missouri, and Atlas Giant explosive companies at 30,000,000 pounds per year each. Apache Powder Company products included eleven types of dynamite known as Nitroglycerine, Standard Dynamite, Special Dynamite, Blasting Gelatin 100%, Gelatin, Special Gelatin, Amogels, Quarry Dynamite, Ditching Dynamite, Special Stumping Dynamite, and Stumping Dynamite. They also produced one type of safety fuse with



Remember, if it were not for underground mine explorers, you would not have mining artifacts!



Shown above is an early Apache powder box end. (Steve Eady collection)

Shown to the left is an Apache Powder Company catalog. The catalog is green with black lettering and is 7 by 4 1/2. (Ted Bobrink collection)



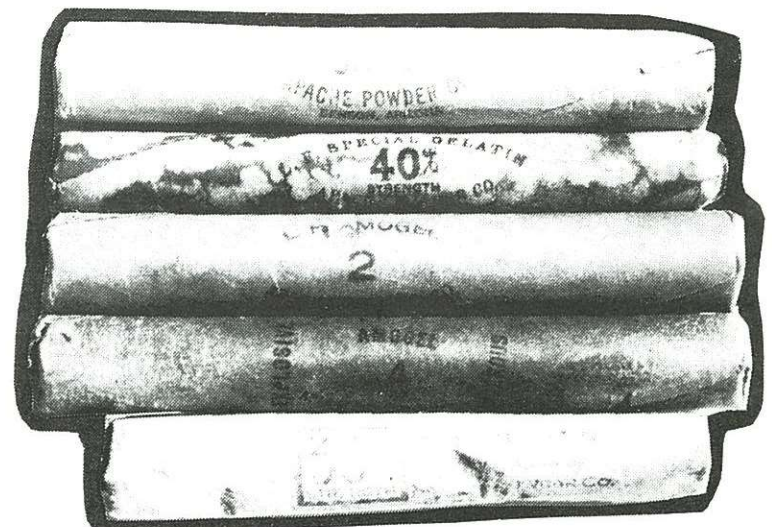
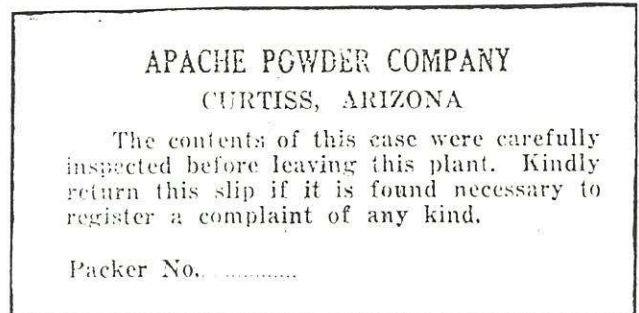
Shown to the left is the side of the Apache powder box shown at the bottom of this page and the previous page. (Steve Eady collection)

Shown below is packer's slip found inside Apache powder boxes. The packing slip is 3 inches high by 5 inches wide. (Mark Bohannan collection)

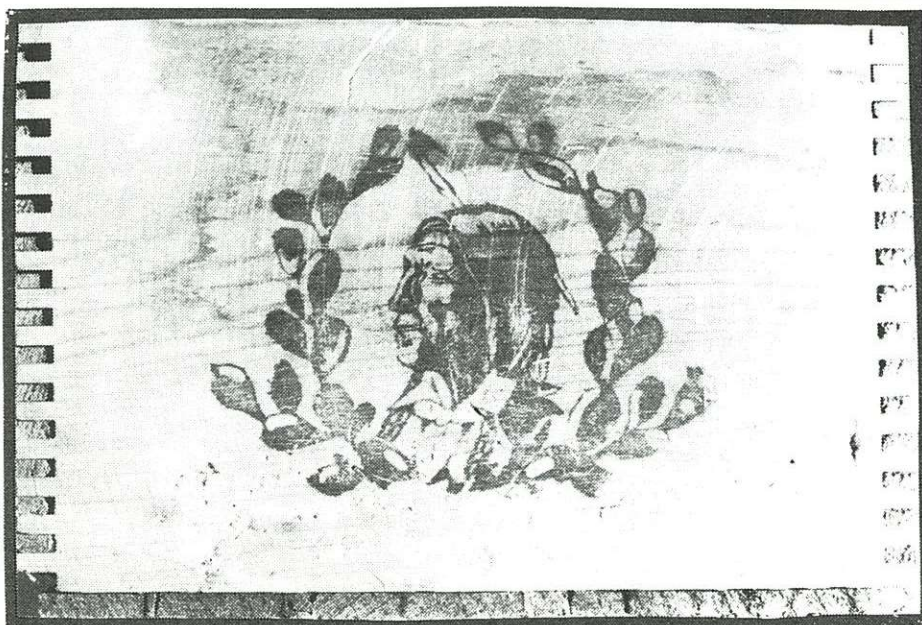
differing colors depending on the application. Although there are blasting caps with the Apache Powder label, they were produced by the California Cap Company.

Today the company is owned by Southwest Energy of Tucson, Arizona, and is named Apache Nitrogen Products Inc. They no longer produce dynamite. This was stopped in May 1984. Their product today is ammonium nitrate which is an intermediate blasting product which, when mixed with diesel fuel, becomes an explosive known as "prill." The facility is still south of Bensen, Arizona, and occupies an isolated 1,000 acre area surrounded by low hills for protection.

It was the practice of the company to produce calendars for many years. New catalogues were produced only when new products were introduced. Like all companies, they probably produced other give-aways, but no official record was kept of them.



Shown above are examples of five different dynamite sticks from the Apache Powder Company. From top to bottom, they are: a shell for blasting powder or--more likely--for stemming material; a stick of 40% Low Freezing Special Gelatin dated Aug. 11, 1941; a stick of #2 Low Freezing Amogel dated July 10, 1944; a stick of # 4 Amogel dated Aug. 3, 1864. This is a misprint and should be 1964; a stick of 35% L. F. Gelatin dated Dec. 10, 1934. This stick is the type that would have come in the powder boxes shown in this article. (Mark Bohannan collection)



Shown to the left is the logo end of the Apache powder box shown at the bottom of the opposite page. (Steve Eady collection)