

AUSTIN POWDER CO.

1883 - Post 1960

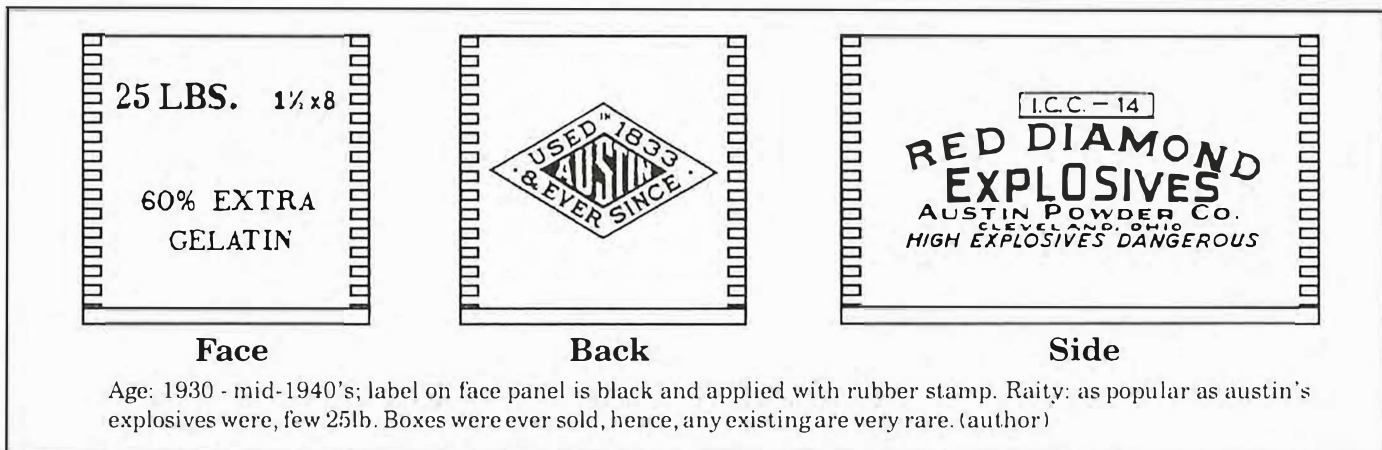
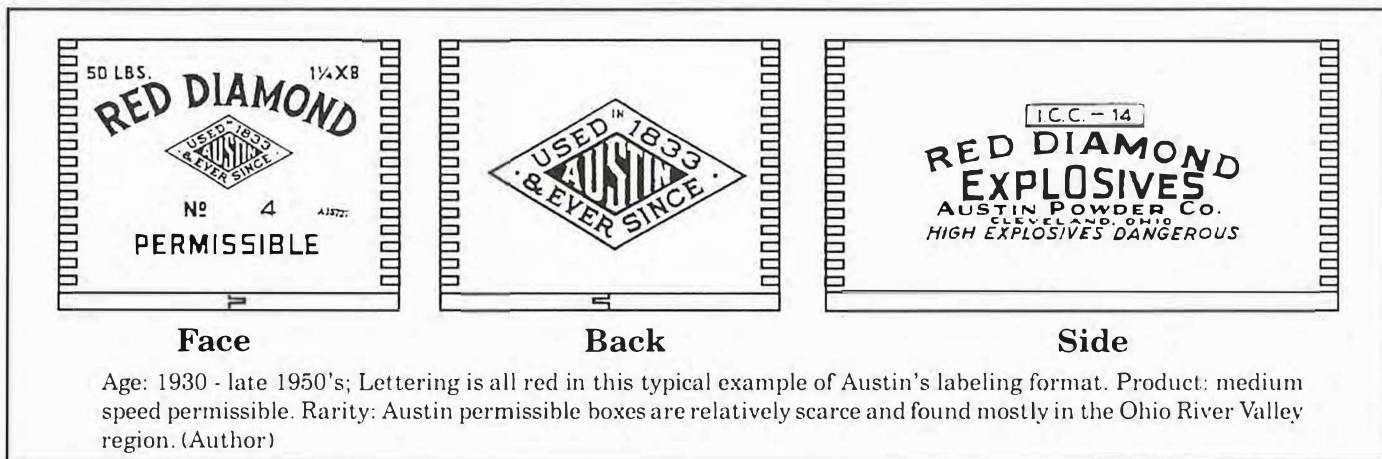
by Eric Twitty

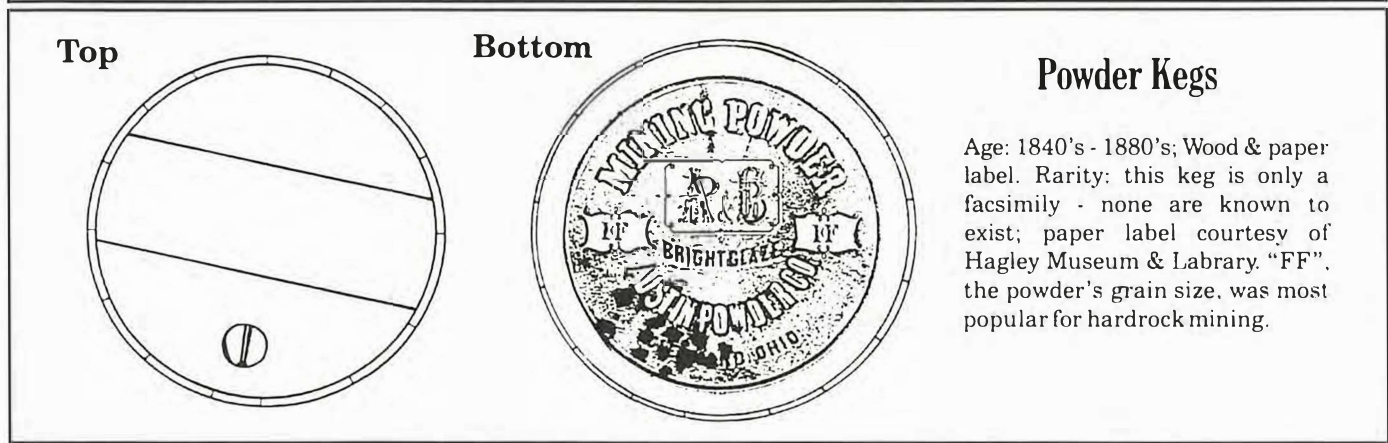
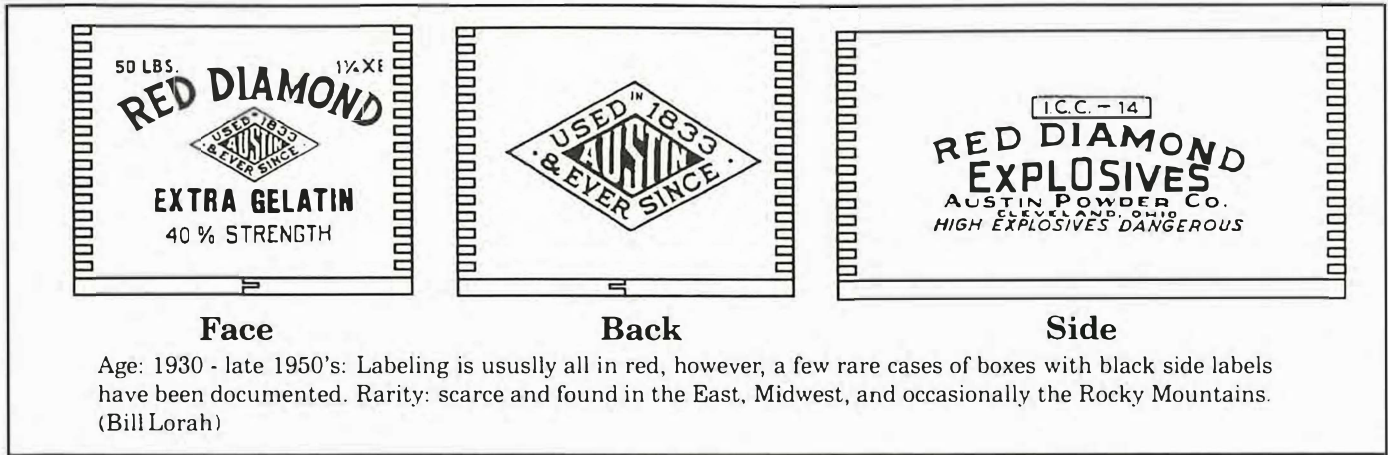
In 1832 Alvin, Lorenzo, Henry, Daniel, and Linus Austin struck out west from their home in Wilmington, Vermont in search of freedom, individuality, and prosperity; or as encouraging hometown residents phrased it, in search of "something to their liking". The five brothers traveled as far west as Kansas City, Missouri where they were forced to work in local lead mines to renew their depleted funds. They did not find mining for lead much to their liking and so they turned around and headed east until they reached Aakron, Ohio where they stopped to rest.

The Austins liked the Aakron area and acknowledged its business opportunities, amongst which a notable demand for gunpowder. With their funds, the five brothers established a small water-powered gunpowder mill at Old Forge and crewed it themselves. Later known as the Newburg Mill, this site was specifically chosen by the brothers because it had fine water power and it had access to the local

transportation network of roads and canals. From Aaron, the Austin Powder Company gained access to number of markets which included coal, iron, and clay mining, quarries, municipal construction, railroad construction, and canal projects.

Business for the Austin was good and in 1865 they expanded by leasing a mill built by the Cleveland Powder Company at the Five Mile Lock on the Ohio Canal. At the end of the lease in 1869 the Austin Powder Co. purchased the mill, known by this time as the Brookview Mill, and operated it profitably until 1907 when the expansion of the city of Cleveland forced its closure. The expansion of Cleveland city limits was forecast as early as 1891, and in preparation for the Brookview Mill, a new mill was built by 1892 near Glenwood, Ohio. For a while both mills operated simultaneously. Around 1900, the Glenwood Mill was dedicated to the manufacture of gunpowder, while the Newburg Mill was dedicated to producing blasting powder.

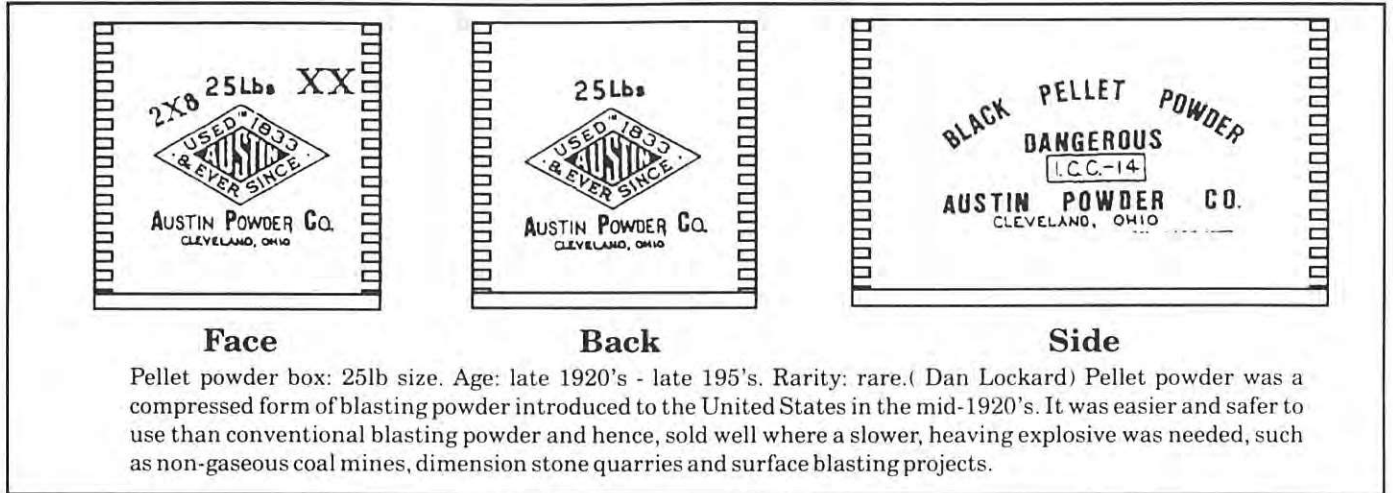




Despite the upsurge in demand for high explosives in the 1880's and 1890's, the Austin Powder Co. limited itself to the blasting powder for decades. It was not until approximately 1910 that Austin involved itself in high explosives by selling Gold Medal Dynamite, manufactured by the Illinois Powder Mfg. Co., through its sales agencies. It sold like hot cakes which was duly noted by Austin's upper management. The success of Gold medal coupled with many direct requests for an Austin-brand dynamite received in the home offices caused Austin managers to give serious consideration to

manufacturing dynamite. But this did not give way to action until the boom period of the late 1920's, during which Austin officials sought a plant site and planned manufacturing and marketing strategies. Despite the nation's plunge into depression in 1929, enough demand remained in the areas served by Austin that it proceeded with its plans to make high explosives. In the same year Austin obtained a fine site strategically located on the Baltimore & Ohio Railroad in MacAther, Ohio and construction began at once. By 1930 a modern dynamite plant was built with a manufacturing capacity of eight



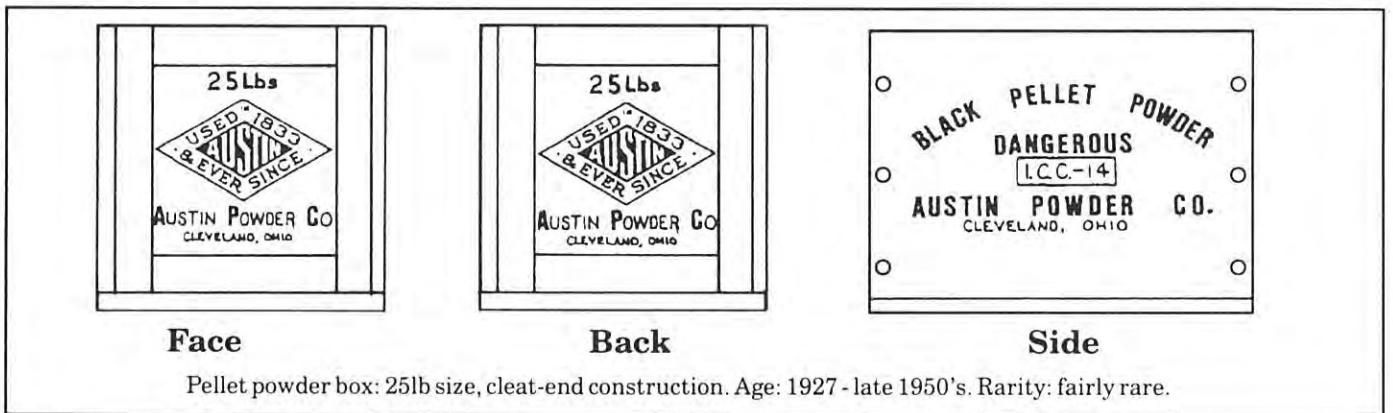


tons per day. Products manufactured were straight dynamite, gelatin , semi-gel, ammonium nitrate, extra formulas, and permissible dynamites. All products were sold under Austin's "Red Diamond" logo.

Most of Austin's high explosive customers were quarries, metal mines, salt mines, and coal mines in the South, the Midwest and Pennsylvania. Some of Austin's products made their way as far east as Massachusetts and as far west as Colorado and Montana.

With income provided by the explosives boom caused by World War Two, and in response to heavy mining in the South and Midwest, Austin began an expansion program during which it opened five new high explosives plants. These included

Ocala, Florida; Madisonville, Kentucky; Boonville, Indiana; Carrier Mills, Illinois which opened in 1955; and La Follette, Tennessee which opened in 1958. The main offices remained in Cleveland , Ohio and in 1955 a new center was opened in Madison, Kentucky to serve the southern states. By 1950 the Austin Powder Co. was one of only a few explosive manufacturers still making blasting powder, the others being the Atlas Powder Co., E.I. DuPont de Nemours & Co. , the Hercules Powder Co., and the King Powder Co. The Austin Powder Co., one of the oldest explosives companies in continuous operation in North America, remained highly competitive, progressive and successful well beyond 1960.



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