

Columbia Powder Co. 1935 - 1958

Eric Twitty

The Columbia Powder Co. was incorporated in 1935 through F. W. Olin's Equitable Powder Co. to supply loggers, miners, and land developers in the Pacific Northwest. Its manufacturing facility and sales offices were in Tacoma, Washington, but it shared main offices with Equitable in East Alton, Illinois.

The Columbia Powder Co. manufactured all types of dynamite. Its product line included straight and extra dynamite, a free-flowing dynamite, a permissible explosive, and blasting powder wholesaled from Equitable. Its most popular products were several varieties of gelatins and a "Stumping Powder". Its main market was in the Pacific Northwest, but it was distributed as far afield as Utah, Idaho, and Montana.

The outbreak of World War II boosted the demand for Columbia's products as reclamation projects were pushed

to completion, mining of strategic metals in the west increased, and logging was heavy.

In 1944 F. W. Olin retired from running his small explosives empire and turned his assets, including the Columbia Powder Co., over to his sons. His sons merged them into Olin Industries, Inc. The charter for Columbia was maintained until 1958, although by the early 1950's Columbia's products were only sold under the Olin Explosives name.

Special gelatin was perhaps Columbia's most common product. On the following pages, is a chronology of boxes for this type of explosive that illustrates changes in labeling format.

The advertisement is enclosed in a decorative border. At the top center is a diamond-shaped logo with the word "COLUMBIA" inside. Below the logo, the word "EXPLOSIVES" is written in a bold, sans-serif font. Underneath "EXPLOSIVES" is a handwritten signature that appears to be "Burt Hunt". Below the signature is a dark rectangular box containing the text "COLUMBIA POWDER COMPANY" in white, bold, sans-serif letters, with "TACOMA, WASHINGTON" in smaller white letters below it. Below this box is another handwritten signature that appears to be "Herb Dick". Below the signature is the text "Montana Powder & Equipment Co." in a bold, sans-serif font, followed by "12 EAST LAWRENCE" and "HELENA, MONTANA" in a smaller, sans-serif font. Below this text are three lines of contact information: "Butte Montana—708 W. Galena", "Missoula, Montana—P. O. Box 1313", "Billings, Montana—3425 1st Ave. S.", and "Great Falls, Montana—2011 1st Ave. S.". On the left side of the advertisement, there is a vertical list of products under the heading "High Explosives". On the right side, there is a vertical list of products under the heading "Western Blasting Caps".

High Explosives

- Stumpings
- Special Dynamites
- Special Gelatins
- Coyote Bag Powder
- Free Flowings
- Permissibles
- Ditching
- Black Blasting Powder

Western Blasting Caps

- Regular and Electric
- Safety Fuse
- Coast and National Brands
- Accessories

 - Blasting Machines
 - Circuit Testers
 - Rheostats
 - Cap Crimpers
 - Lead and Connecting Wire

COLUMBIA
EXPLOSIVES

Burt Hunt

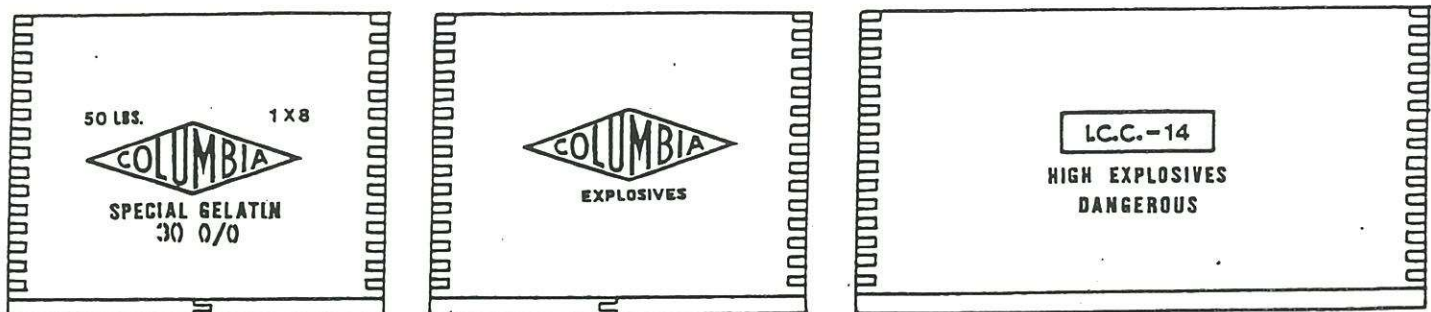
COLUMBIA POWDER COMPANY
TACOMA, WASHINGTON

Herb Dick

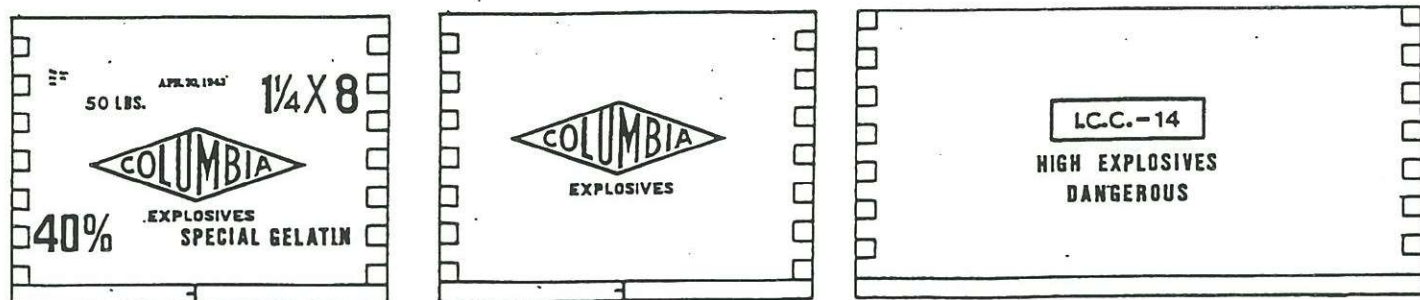
Montana Powder & Equipment Co.
12 EAST LAWRENCE HELENA, MONTANA

Butte Montana—708 W. Galena
Missoula, Montana—P. O. Box 1313
Billings, Montana—3425 1st Ave. S.
Great Falls, Montana—2011 1st Ave. S.

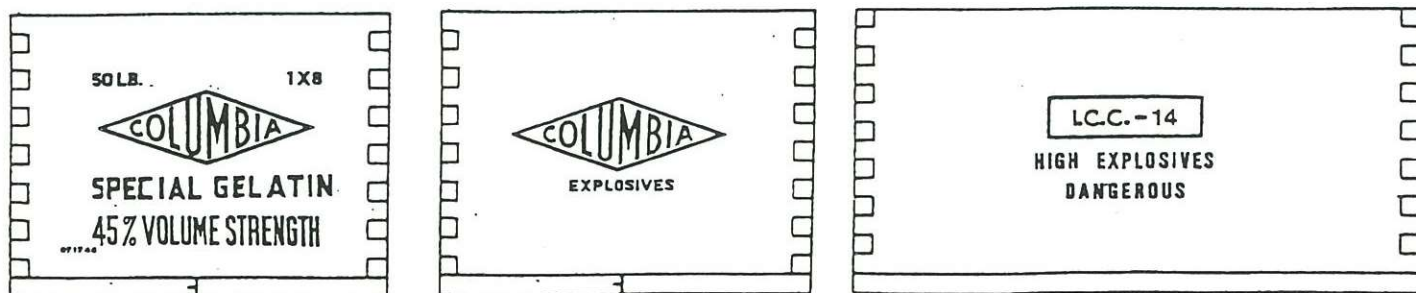
Advertisement. Herb Dick collection.



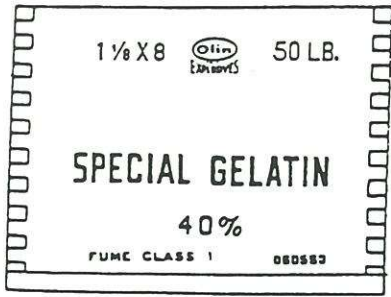
AGE: 1935 - late 1930's. SCARCE. Earliest style, note stenciled percentage strength. Author.



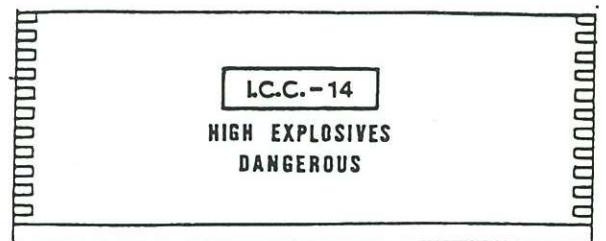
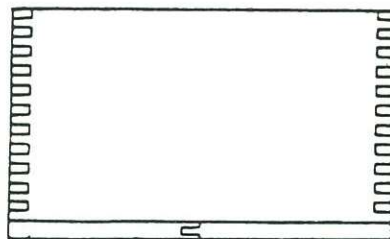
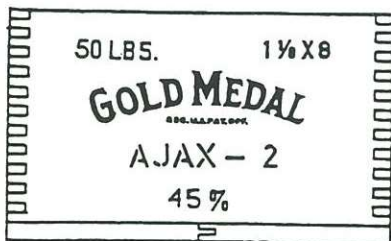
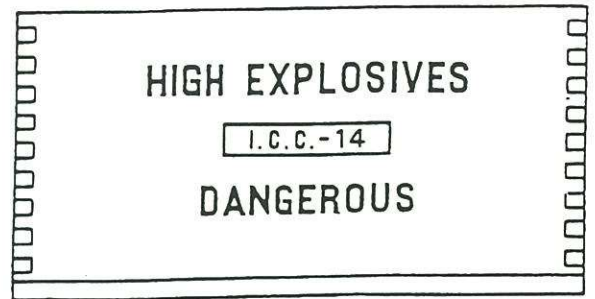
AGE: late 1930's - late 1940's. SCARCE. Author.



AGE: late 1940's - early 1950's. SCARCE.



AGE: 1951-1959. UNCOMMON - SCARCE. This is what Columbia's box format ultimately evolved into when it was consolidated into Olin Explosives. Author.



AGE: 1940's. RARE. Historically F. W. Olin and the Illinois Powder Mfg. Co. were on friendly terms and occasionally wholesaled each other's products when the need arose. This box, a well-established Illinois product name, was made by Columbia for Illinois on a contract basis and was sold in the West. Author.