

Many mining artifact collectors dabble in blasting items. After all, mining and blasting are inseparable. Amongst the manufacturers of such items, the Illinois Powder Mfg. Co. is significant. Most dynamite boxes from Illinois Powder are obtainable yet relatively uncommon, while its kegs, some of its dynamite boxes, and its cap tins are fairly rare.

J. Lowe White began his career in the explosives business as a sales agent in St. Louis and Chicago for the Austin Powder Co. and the Keystone Powder Mfg. Co. in 1892. By 1905 White had a good feel for the explosives market in the Midwest and enough managerial experience to start his own explosives company. He gave the Austin Powder Co. and the Keystone Powder Mfg. Co. advanced notice that he was going to start his own high explosives company and left them on friendly terms. Austin and Keystone had no qualms about White's new company and in fact, Almon Lent of the Austin Powder Co. and A. C. Blum of the Keystone Powder Mfg. Co. became investors and technical advisors to White.

In 1907, White incorporated his new explosives company as the Illinois Powder Mfg. Co., which exclusively manufactured high explosives. He had a plant built on the Mississippi River in Sherman Hollow just east of Grafton, Illinois.

The dynamite made at the Sherman Hollow plant was sold under the brand name of "Gold Medal" in commemoration of White's award-winning dynamite display at the 1898 Trans-Mississippi Exposition. Up until the late 1920's, the Illinois Powder Mfg. Co. made straight dynamite and ex-

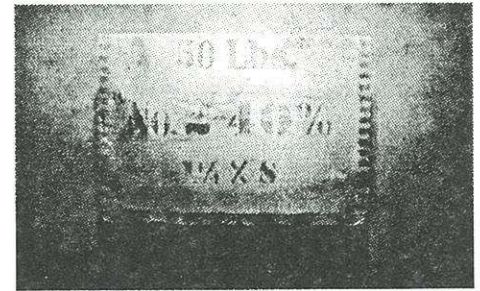
Illinois Powder Mfg. Co.

1907-1958

by Eric Twitty



This is the first style of Illinois' boxes, manufactured from 1907-1929, when the "cleat end" box and new labels were adopted.



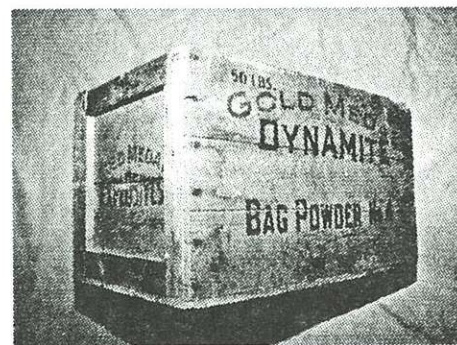
Front panel of Illinois' first type of box. Illinois was one of the last companies to use the old-fashioned nomenclature of No.1, No.2, and No.3 for its dynamite.



Rare 25 lb. box. The older logo on the side, newer logo inside the end, and the box's "cleat end" construction suggest this is a transition box dating to the late 1920's.



Illinois used this style of labeling in conjunction with this type of box construction from the early 1930's until the early 1940's. Illinois always kept its box lids simple.



This is the "cleat end" box Illinois adopted in 1928 and used exclusively through the 1940's and into the 1950's. Note the end inside the frame features a logo but the product label is on the box's side. "Bag Powder" was a free-flowing granulated dynamite used mostly for open pit mining. It was introduced in the late 1920's.



This is the label Illinois printed on the side opposite the product data beginning in 1928 until it was bought by American Cyanamid in 1958.

tra dynamite labeled under the old fashioned nomenclature of "No.1", "No.2," and "No.3." In 1917 Illinois manufactured permissible dynamite, which was sold under the brand-name of "Black Diamond No. 2-8".

The Illinois Powder Mfg. Co. maintained friendly relations with the Austin Powder Co. and the King Powder Co. In fact, Illinois wholesaled dynamite to the King Powder Co., and sales offices of the Austin Powder Co. carried Illinois' products.

Although the Illinois Powder Mfg. Co. did not diversify into industrial chemicals and synthetic products as did its competitors, such as the Hercules Powder Co. and the Atlas Powder Co., Illinois maintained a highly competitive policy in the explosives field. The late 1920's and early 1930's was a time of expansion in the explosives business for Illinois. In the late 1920's, Illinois pursued research and development to improve its line of explosives products. As a result, Illinois' line included a free-flowing dynamite, and a reformulated straight dynamite both sold under the brand name of "Gold Medal Dynamite", its "Gold Medal Gelatine", and "Hi Velocity Gelatine". In 1931 the Illinois Powder Mfg. Co. released "Powdertol" and "Ajax", which were low-velocity ammonium nitrate-based dynamites, and in 1935 "Black Diamond No. 12" was released.

In the early 1930's the Illinois Powder Mfg. Co. opened a new manufacturing facility in Provo, Utah. The name of the plant, Gomex, was a contraction of the brand-name of its products, which were "Gold Medal

Explosives". From this plant, Illinois sold its products to coal mines in Utah and Wyoming, and to tungsten and copper mines in Utah, Idaho, and eastern Nevada.

The heavy demand for strategic metals and minerals stimulated by World War II had a positive effect on the Illinois Powder Mfg. Co. Although Illinois did not make ammunition, it did a brisk business supplying coal mines in Utah, Colorado, Illinois,



By the 1940's Illinois stopped printing its logo on box ends. Ajax was an ammonium nitrate-based dynamite developed in the early 1930's.



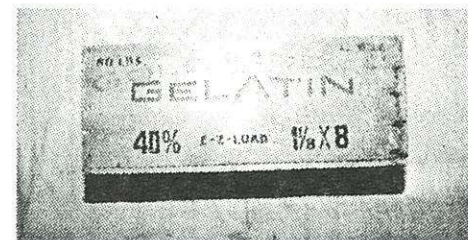
Illinois' Black Diamond dating to the 1930's. Like other boxes, labeling inside the frame on the ends was dropped by the 1940's.



This is a mystery box. The Gold medal and Ajax names are used, but Illinois name is not stated anywhere, and its construction is different than other Illinois boxes. It is dated 1946. It may have been dynamite wholesaled to another company.

Ohio, and West Virginia with its explosives. Illinois Powder Mfg. Co. also supplied tungsten, copper, iron, lead, and zinc mines with its products throughout the Midwestern states.

The Illinois Powder Mfg. Co. was bought by American Cyanamid in 1958. Its assets were absorbed and its corporate structure was dissolved by American, and the Gomex plant in Provo was closed.



Although most of Illinois products were nitroglycerine-based dynamite, they produced some gelatin. Most Illinois boxes are dated in the upper right corner.



Black Diamond dating after 1940. Other side is like above, only "Black Diamond" is in red.



This is the last type of box to come out of the Sherman Hollow plant immediately after American Cyanamid bought Illinois in 1958. In fact, the long sides of the box were originally printed with Illinois labeling, but they were reprinted with American's and the Illinois labels were turned inward.