

Liberty Powder Co. 1931 - 1959

Eric Twitty

Despite the economic ravages of the Great Depression, enough demand existed in Pennsylvania's coal fields to support explosives company start-ups. One such outfit was the Liberty Powder Co. organized in 1931. Its dynamite plant built near Pittsburgh manufactured a variety of high explosives, and it wholesaled other blasting supplies, such as caps and fuse, from DuPont.

Liberty's main markets were coal mining in the Anthracite Region, Western Pennsylvania, West Virginia, and Ohio. A significant chunk of its business was selling permissibles sold as "Liberty No. 1", "No. 6" and "Liberty Gel", but it also made a complete line of nonpermissible explosives including straight and special dynamites, straight and special gelatins, semi-gelatin, and dynamites for surface work including "Quarry Gelatin", "Liberty Quarry", and "Blasto". The Liberty Powder Co. plugged away making and selling explosives

during the Great Depression, but business was not as good as its financiers had anticipated. By 1939 its financial situation was so poor that the company was forced to close its doors. Several years later it went out of business, F.W. Olin bought the defunct dynamite plant, refinanced the Liberty Powder Co., and got it fired up again. By the early 1940's Liberty's full line of explosives was back on the market throughout the eastern states.

In 1944 F. W. Olin retired from the explosives business and handed his empire over to his sons, John and Spencer who began to combine all of their holdings in Olin Industries, Inc. Curiously, the Liberty Powder Co. was one of the only companies not dissolved at this time. When Olin Industries, Inc. was merged with the Mathieson Chemical Co. in 1958, the Liberty plant was shut down and Liberty's charter was voided in 1959.

LIBERTY POWDER COMPANY

MANUFACTURERS OF EXPLOSIVES

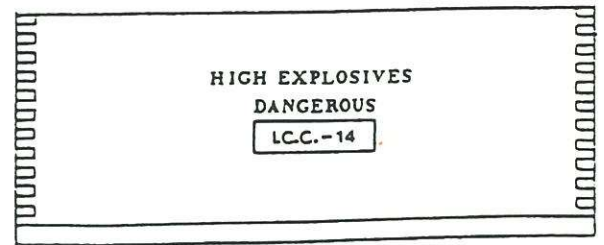
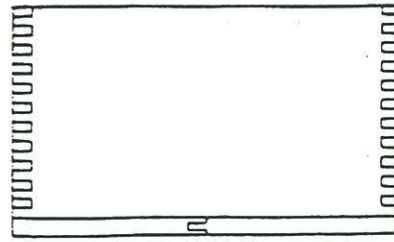
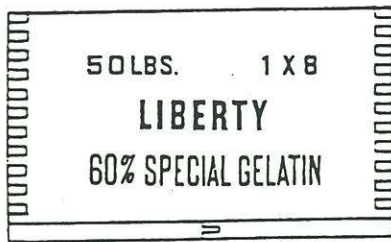
KOPPERS BUILDING

PITTSBURGH, PA.

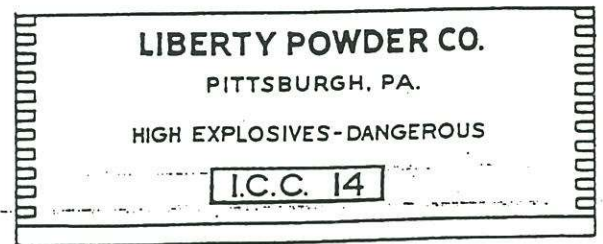
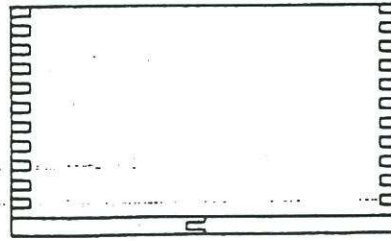
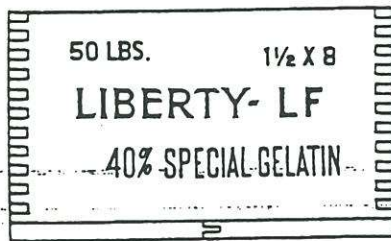
Scranton, Pa.,
Oct. 2, 1934.

*Liberty letterhead, 1934. Hagley Museum &
Library, Wilmington, DE.*

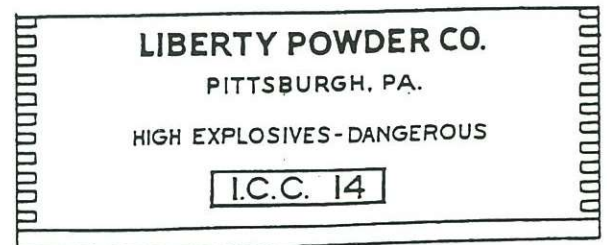
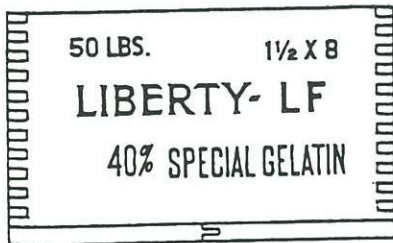
Special gelatin was one of Liberty's better selling explosives and the boxes illustrated below show their changes over time.



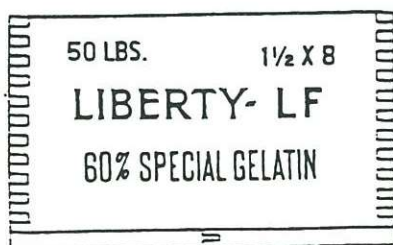
AGE: 1931 - 1939 RARE. Dates to earliest operations. Author.



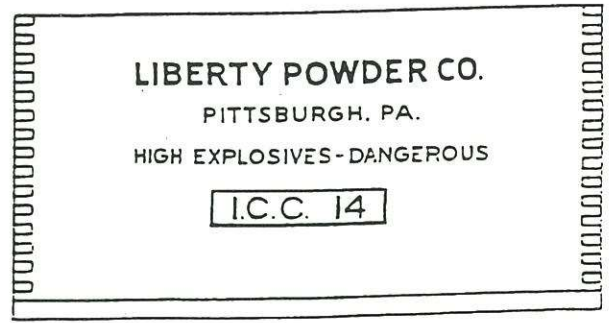
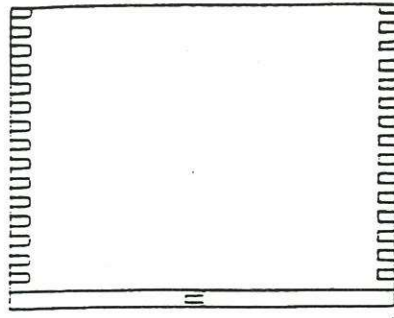
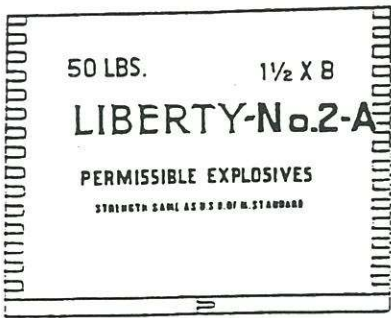
AGE: 1939 - early 1950's. SCARCE. This follows Olin's buy-out. Author.



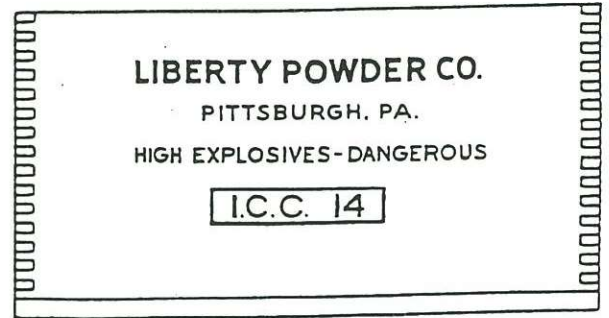
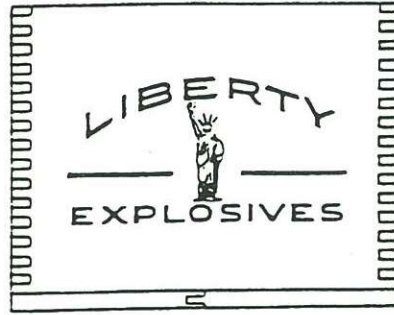
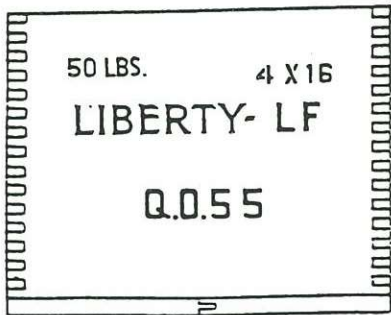
AGE. 1939 - early 1950's. Although this style is scarce, it is more common than above. This style also follows Olin's buy-out.



AGE 1951 - 1958. This style is the most common, but still scarce.



AGE: 1939 - early 1950's. SCARCE. Although Liberty sold alot of permissibles, not many of its boxes survive. Dan Lockard.



AGE: 1939 - early 1950's. RARE. This product was for surface blasting as suggested by the cartridge size, and was probably a special order for a large company. Steve Rush.