

MONITE EXPLOSIVES, INC. 1925-1933

by Eric Twitty
Boulder, Colorado

Monite Explosives, Inc., organized in 1925, was one of only a few makers to manufacture a successful TNT commercial high explosive. It operated a small plant in Lacey, Washington near Tacoma from which it served mining, logging, and land development in the Pacific Northwest. One of the main selling points of Monite was that it was impervious to cold and it did not produce the dreaded "nitro headache" associated with nitroglycerine dynamite. Thus it was mildly popular in cold climates and on projects involving a lot of surface basting where dynamite was exposed to freezing cold.

In 1927 Monite Explosives opened a sales office in Reno, Nevada in hopes of capturing some of the Nevada/California market. Business with western Nevada mining companies, utilities, and surface projects was so good that Monite Explosives constructed a branch plant in a small, isolated valley several miles east of Reno in 1930. The plant was well financed, well engineered, and totally modern. Most of it was built of brick, concrete, and steel and nearly every step in the manufacturing process had its own, dedicated building.

The first step in making Monite was drying refined ingredients in a kiln and storing

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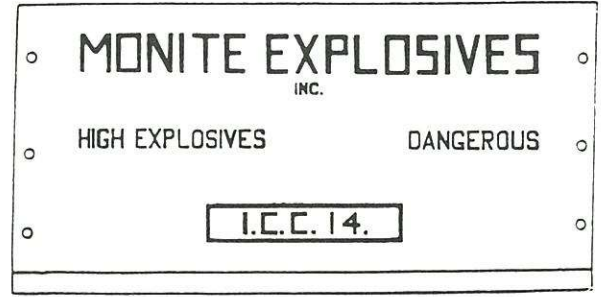
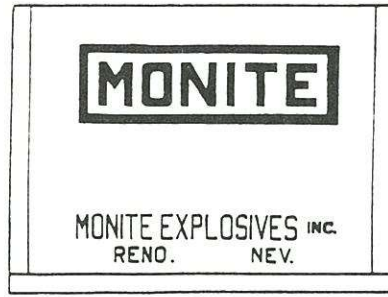
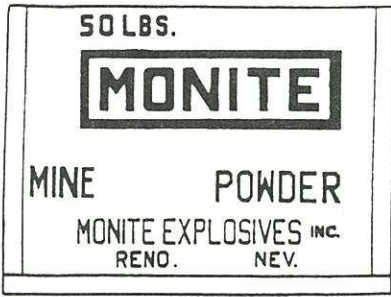
MONITE EXPLOSIVES, INC.

210 Byington Building

Reno, Nevada

Early 1930s ad run in newspapers from Reno to Sacramento calling for Monite dealers in hopes of generating sales to keep its new factory hopping.

them in hoppers. The ingredients were ground and sent to a 500 pound-capacity mixing drum that took as little as 20 minutes to mix a batch. The explosive traveled to an automatic packing machine that tamped the bulk Monite into paper cartridges. The



AGE: 1930-1933; RARITY: one known: Lane Griffin (side) and Martin Jensen (end). This box is a curious exception to Interstate Commerce Commission (I.C.C.) mandate if 1914 requiring box walls be joined with lock corner construction. Also, compare this with Dennite's box - construction is identical.

resulting cartridges were taken on a baby gauge rail car to the boxing house and hence to the storage magazine.

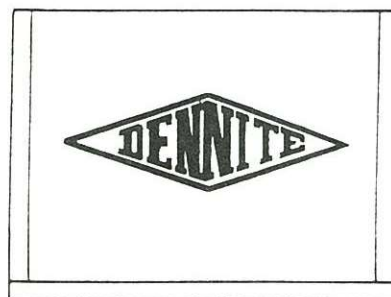
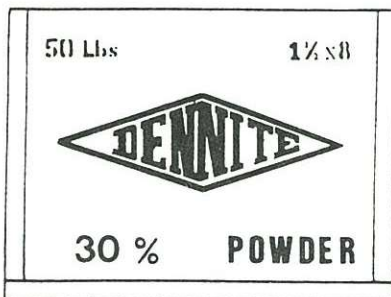
For reasons unknown Monite Explosives was dissolved in 1933. The Lacey plant was subsequently operated by the J.A. Denn Powder Co. and the Reno plant was reorganized as the Rocky Mountain Powder Co., which also was dissolved shortly thereafter.

Postscript

Recent events have put the Monite Explosives Company back in the spotlight. In 1993 a drum containing explosive components was found in an open field near Sparks, NV. The subsequent investigation revealed that this was a remnant from the old

Monite Manufacturing site. Unfortunately no old boxes were discovered. Since it was on B.L.M. land an examination process was begun to begin the restoration and remediation process. In typical governmental style, a full scale study was begun with the usual media hype and high priced consultants hovering. They couldn't just decontaminate and bury it - no, they have to educate us and justify their job positions.

In a great show of force, they took the drum of explosives to an open field, and instead of burning or decomposing it, they used a great quantity of new explosives (using the P=Plenty formula) to set off an explosion equal to the amount of new explosives.



AGE: 1932-1936; logos in red; product: TNT-based dynamite; RARITY: one known; Author. Compare this with Monite's box - it is identical in construction.


Since then the government has published an interim (only 2 inches thick) report on their investigation and printed a fact sheet.

This site has sat quietly for over 40 years, slowly decomposing and letting nature reclaim itself. But now, our overly protective, over-funded government must protect us from ourselves. - Editor

J.A. DENN POWDER CO.

1932 - 1936

In 1932 business for the Monite Explosives Co. in Lacey, Washington was not faring very well. When it went out of business and offered itself for sale, Joe Denn seized the opportunity and organized the J. A. Denn Powder Co. to buy it. Denn continued to make a TNT-based high explosive originally sold as Monite, but he renamed it "Dennite". Business was small and Dennite was

distributed on a limited basis in the Northwest and as far afield as Montana. In 1936 for unknown reasons Denn closed out his business. 

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