

Match Manufacturers: Diamond Match Co. (Part II)

More important than the “business” side, however, Diamond had also been busy producing a long line of dazzling trademarks which were to mark its position as the premier company in the US industry for most of its 116 years:

ABC	Golden State	Sanford
Ajax	Good Luck	Santa Claus
Alligator	Green Glo	Satinkote
Ambassador	Green Goddess	Search Light
American	Home	Soverign
Anchor	Independence	Sta-Dri
Atlantic	Jim Dandy	Stop-Lite
Bird's Eye	Little Star	Swan
Black Swan	Orient	Swift/Courtney
Blazers	Perfect 36	Tiger
Blue Bird	Pocketbox	Triumph
Blue Diamond	Press	Ultra-Slim
Clipper Match	Protecto	Uncle Sam
Colgate	Pullquick	Vestibule
Copperhead	Race	Victor
Diamond Color	Red Top	White Star
Domino	Red Wing	Wolverine
Globe	Roma	Yale Blue
Gold Medal	Safe Home	Zorns

...and that's only a fraction of them!

Diamond could also point to its development of the first non-poisonous match in 1910 (which it voluntarily made public domain in 1911) and the first cover to carry a national advertisement in 1925 (Pabst Blue Ribbon Beer).

Some of Diamond's innovations were spurred on by the nation's involvement in two world wars. After the outbreak of World War I, in 1914, Diamond opened three experimental plants for the manufacture of muriate of potash from domestic sources. Each plant approached the problem with a different solution, and a variety of needed materials, including potash, were extracted from existing sources.

During World War II, Diamond developed a waterproof match for the military. By the end of the war, more than ten million matches a day were coming off Diamond production lines.

Meanwhile, back on Wall St., Diamond was going through a bewildering array of corporate transformations. Diamond became “Diamond Gardner” in 1957, “Diamond National” in 1959,” and “Diamond International Corp.” in 1964. The latter acted as a holding company. In 1986, “Diamond Brands” took over and then merged with Atlas Match Co., the latter eventually being purchased by Bradley Industries.

And then the domestic industry plunged into chaos. The mid-1980's saw the collapse of the American match industry as modern collectors knew it. Current conditions saw increasingly rising production costs coupled with steadily decreasing demand.

American workers simply couldn't work for the wages received by their peers in Asia. Hence, as the price of American matches increased annually, the gap between American and foreign production costs became greater and greater. Eventually the gap had become untenable.

Helping all this to occur, the decline of the cigarette was another major factor. As more and more Americans realized that smoking is, indeed, dangerous to their health, millions of potential smokers (and matchcover users) never acquired the habit; millions of others stopped. Add to this, the controversy over second-hand smoke, the growing trend of smoking bans, and the advent of cheap, disposable lighters.

Universal, Ohio, Lion, Maryland, Superior, and others disappeared as manufacturers...but Diamond survived. Today, Diamond produces all the box matches in the United States. The golden days are over, to be sure, for both Diamond and the domestic industry as a whole. Imports have taken over a large part of what was left after the disastrous '80s. But, the tradition continues, and America's oldest existing match manufacturer is still going. What the future holds for Diamond is anyone's guess, but I can't help thinking that if, someday, Diamond finally succumbs, that will be the final death throes of the American match industry.