

The Alligator Match Co.— Did It Really Exist?

Well, I thought it was an fairly innocent Matchcover Mystery question—“*Alligator Match Co. was one of the companies that merged to form Diamond in 1880. What state was Alligator Match Co. in?*”... And, sure enough, Claude Pelletier, CAN, wrote in with “New York”, and Jim Benes, NJ, wrote in with “Missouri”. I have both states in my records.

But... Then Steve Gilbert, PA, wrote in with, “There was never an Alligator Match Company as such in Saint Louis. The Cupples woodenware company ordered matches with harder heads from Mansfield for Southern sales under the brand name of Alligator.”

Then... Jim Benes came back with, “I happen to have this box that reads “Alligator Matches Trade Mark The Diamond Match Co St. Louis Reg. May 26, 1874” with an alligator illustration, black on purple, 3 x 1-3/4 x 3/4. The reverse has a large illustration of a diamond shape with 2 crisscrossing matches behind it surrounded by a border. It's got 6 matches left and the remnants of a striker on one side.

However, I went to Google and found a site (<http://www.rdhinstl.com/mm/ro186.htm>) picturing the stamp and envelope shown here with the following info: There was never an Alligator Match Company as such in Saint Louis. The Cupples woodenware company ordered matches with harder heads from Mansfield for Southern sales under the brand name of Alligator. The stamps were prepared for that purpose. 28,705,240 of the Alligator stamps were issued from January of 1880 to February, 1883 on watermarked paper. The rouletted versions of these stamps were produced by the Bureau of Engraving and Printing around the end of 1880.

In order not to confuse distributors, Mansfield or Cupples used "Alligator Matches" in correspondence. My box certainly shows that Diamond Match produced "Alligator Matches" in St Louis, but I suppose I'm just making an assumption that prior to the merger with Diamond, The Alligator Match Co itself operated out of MO. And I'm also assuming this Trade Mark artwork of the alligator was also that of the Alligator Match Co, now bearing the Diamond name on this box (I've seen this with many of the boxes and crates, etc I have that are for Companies or Trade Marks that Diamond later merged with (such as Portland Star).”

The plot thickens... Jim Benes: “I checked my “Matches Were Made In Heaven and In Barberton, Ohio: The Story of the Diamond Match Company” book, by Herbert Manchester, and I found this paragraph under the section “Other Match Plants of the Sixties” (1860s) that talks of the plants that joined to form Diamond. It also appears in “The Diamond Match Company – A Century of Service, of Progress, and of Growth – 1835-1935” also by Manchester.

“A more prominent match maker in St. Louis was F. Mansfield. In 1868 he bought out Zisemann, Griesheim & Co., who had started shortly before. In 1870 Mansfield sold out to the Alligator Match Company, owned by August Eichele, one of the organizers of The Diamond Match Company.” It sure sounds to me like they existed. I did some more google searching but couldn't find much more.”

