

# Ambrose F. Block 1927-2003

Having grown up ten miles from where Ambrose F. Block was born, Dave Skeide of South Dakota has a special interest in traps made by Block. Skeide has collected twelve traps modified by Block which include Triumph, Herters and Victors brands. It seems that Block did not like the traps of the time, so he modified them to fit his needs with the focus being on coyote.

Block was born in Grenville, South Dakota on April 30, 1925. He served as a Corporal in the US Army during the Korean War. Block lived most of his life at Woonsocket, South Dakota. He was a carpenter and an accomplished trapper. Besides putting up his own fur, he would do it for others as well. Block passed away on November 3, 2003 and is buried in St. Wilfred's Catholic Cemetery in Woonsocket.

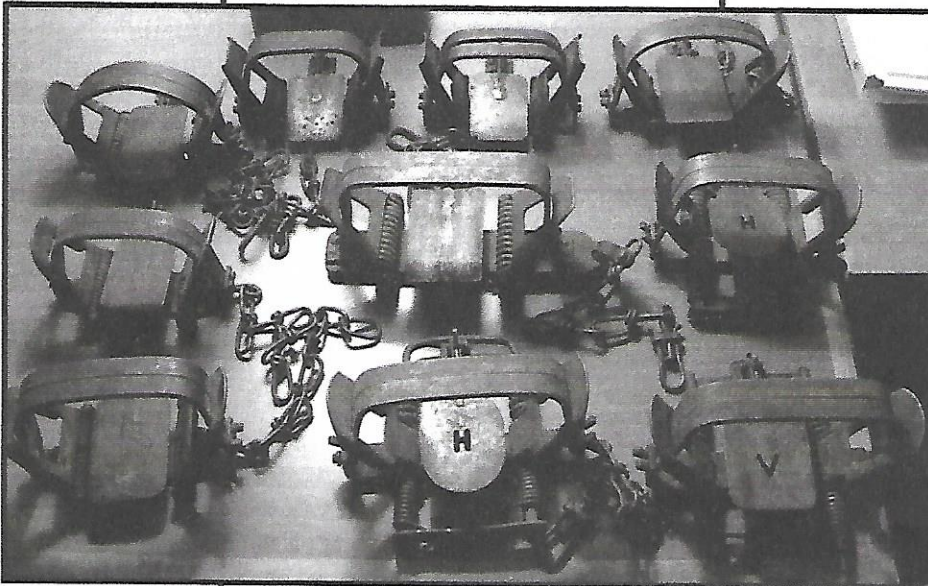
He started modifying traps in the 1970s and continued to do this until the early 1980s. All modifications were made in his garage in his backyard. He four coiled the traps or modified

them using parts he made. An estimated one hundred to one hundred and fifty were made. Skeide has six different sizes of modified traps.

Besides modifying traps, Block also patented an automatic setting trigger for his traps. The original version of this mechanism had small coil springs used to modify the pan tension. Block cut notches in the crosses of his traps, and depending on how heavy or light he wanted the pan tension, moved the end of the coil spring to the appropriate notch. Block sold his patent to Woodstream. The version produced by Woodstream did not have the tiny coil springs. Probably because of the damage done to them by the captured animal.

In Canada, he filed a patent for just the trigger on March 17, 1978 and received Patent #1097071 on March 10, 1981. Woodstream bought his Canadian patent on April 12, 1982. On July 28, 1978, Block wrote a letter to J.H. Robertson of the Woodstream Corpora-

tion. This letter was enclosed in a box with two traps with the "Block Trigger" as Block called them. Skeide had contacted Louie Krumwiede, who is the owner of the letter, two traps and original box, to bring them to the FTA Convention in Marshfield for me to photograph. Block said he had sent in a previous model and that the trigger mechanism on the two traps were considerably smaller and improved. Block said he came up with a faster working trap. In his opinion, this was a patentable improvement, but wanted feedback



from Robertson on that.

In December of 1977, Block showed his invention to trappers at a fur auction. He said they were interested in the trap and wanted to buy them as soon as possible. Block thought that the amateur trapper could better compete with the professional trapper using his traps. Block asked if the trap would be available in time for the 1978-1979 season.

In the US, Block filed for a patent on the entire trap on March 11, 1985 and received Patent #4,622,774 on November 18, 1986. The abstract for his US patent said "An improved animal trap adapted to be less injurious to a trapped animal because of a center mounted swiveling chain. The trap also has a flat base made possible by novel way of fastening the trigger mechanism to the base and uses a novel self-setting trigger system. Furthermore, because of unique jaw levers, the initial force tending to close the trap is substantially greater than that of

former traps of similar size and conformation."

In the Background and Summary of the Invention, Block describes the self-setting trigger mechanism as follows. "I provide in my unique trigger mechanism a device which tends to push back somewhat on the foot of any animal stepping on the trigger. This results in a caught foot rather than a leg and therefore is less leverage on the larger bone in the foot."

Block marked his traps with an "A" and a "B" on the bottom of the base.

The right leg of the "A" and the back of the "B" shared the same line for Block's mark. In one instance, he marked the pan of a trap with his Social Security Number, something unheard of today.

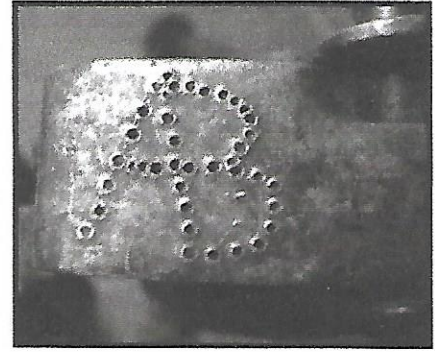
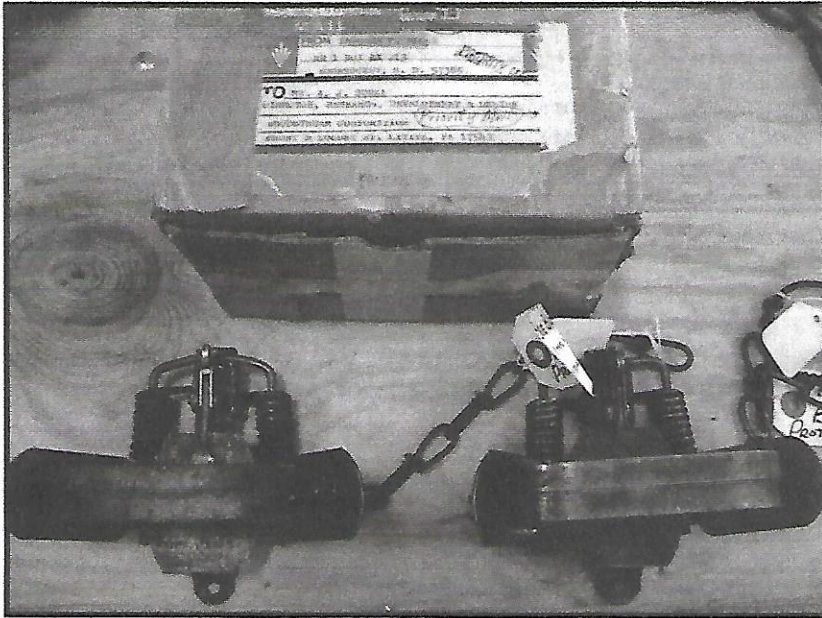
One trap he modified was of particular interest to me. It was a #3 Triumph Easy Set trap. Block turned the springs around because of the poor holding power they had in the original orientation. The Triumph Trap Company had used very powerful,

oversized springs on the larger Easy Sets to try to compensate for the poor holding power. After they were turned around, the trap had immense holding power.

Original Easy Set spring levers are shorter with wider tabs at the top to ensure they do not hit the underside of the jaws when sprung while still being compressible. Block cut the tabs off each side of the lever and welded a quarter inch of metal to the top to make it easier to set.

Skeide had the opportunity to meet Block's widow. She had just gotten ten official copies of the patent made and gave him a copy. Any inquiries about these traps should be directed to Dave Skeide, Webster, South Dakota.

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Ambrose Block initials marked on bottom of base

Two Block Trigger traps sent to Woodstream in 1978 along with letter, in the Louie Krumweide collection.

**United States Patent** [19] [11] Patent Number: **4,622,774**  
 Block [45] Date of Patent: **Nov. 18, 1986**

[54] ANIMAL TRAP 2,713,745 7/1955 Bratke ..... 43/92  
 [76] Inventor: Ambrose F. Block, Rte. 3-Box 26, 2,875,596 3/1959 Elencik ..... 43/85  
 Woonsocket, S. Dak. 57385 4,045,905 9/1977 Souza ..... 43/88  
 4,486,972 12/1984 Helfrich ..... 43/88

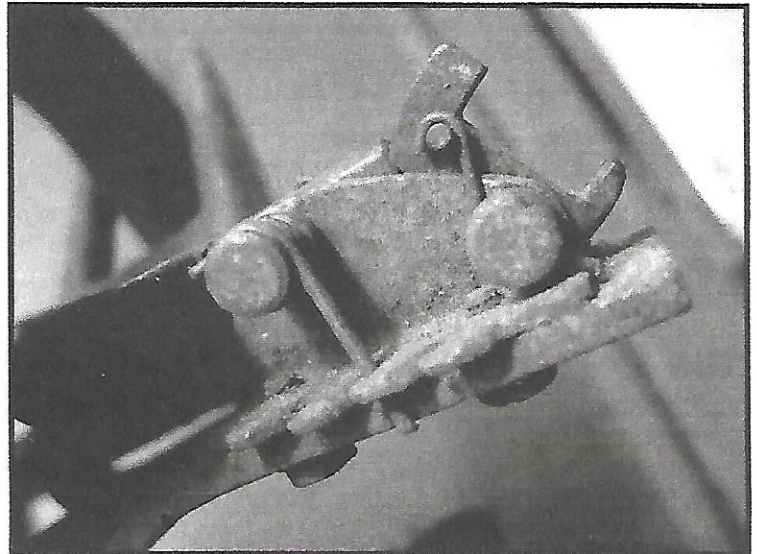
[21] Appl. No.: 710,706  
 [22] Filed: Mar. 11, 1985  
 [51] Int. Cl.<sup>4</sup> ..... A01M 23/26  
 [52] U.S. Cl. .... 43/88; 43/92  
 [58] Field of Search ..... 43/88, 90, 91, 92, 93, 43/94, 95

[56] References Cited  
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 409,467 8/1889 Kelley ..... 43/92  
 860,639 7/1907 Crago ..... 43/92  
 1,176,670 3/1916 Egerstight ..... 43/92  
 1,465,528 8/1923 Ruffy ..... 43/88  
 2,216,911 10/1940 Hanoold ..... 43/90

Primary Examiner—Nicholas P. Godici  
 Assistant Examiner—K. Rowan

[57] ABSTRACT  
 An improved animal trap adapted to be less injurious to a trapped animal because of a center mounted swiveling chain. The trap also has a flat base made possible by novel way of fastening the trigger mechanism to the base and uses a novel self-setting trigger system. Furthermore, because of unique jaw levers, the initial force tending to close the trap is substantially greater than that of former traps of similar size and conformation.

10 Claims, 9 Drawing Figures

 A technical drawing showing two views of the trap mechanism. The top view is a perspective drawing of the trap's interior with numbered parts (10, 15, 16, 17, 18, 21, 22, 30, 32, 35, 45). The bottom view is a cross-sectional drawing showing the trigger mechanism and jaw levers with numbered parts (31, 33, 35, 36, 37, 41, 49, 50, 51, 52, 53, 54, 56, 57, 58, 80, 88, 47, 10).


Closeup of Block self setting trigger system



W EXP on pan—Woodstream Experimental trap