

Classifying Your Covers

“All these covers! How on earth do I make any manageable logic of them all?” No doubt, that thought has run through all of our heads at one time or another, but it’s especially prevalent among newer collectors as the awesome scope and variety that this hobby presents begins to set in. Well, let’s just dig into those piles and stacks of covers and see what we can do about that disorganized mess.

The first thing you should do is familiarize yourself with at least the major collecting categories within the hobby. Going through any decent hobby glossary of terms will enable you to do this. Basically, you come across three general types of categories: manumarks, trademarks, and subject matter.

Manumarks are the identifying manufacturer’s text line(s) usually found right under the cover’s striker, sometimes found on the inside, and rarely located at the foot of the cover. They tell which company produced the cover (not which company the cover was produced for). The sought-after categories in this area are normally the long defunct match companies: Star, King Midas, Crown, Federal, Diamond Quality (a footer), any “Safety First” (also a footer), etc. When you see one of these, you know you’ve got something to hang onto; the actual advertiser doesn’t matter.

Covers are also collected by

trademarks, almost always found on the inside of the cover: Cameo, Jewelite, Midget, Action, Uniglo, Foitite,, Perfect 36, Contour, Florentine, and a wealth of others exist. As with manumark categories, here, too, the actual advertiser on the particular cover doesn’t matter.

Novice collectors should also be advised that not all such covers bear the actual trademark. There are also many cases wherein the particular cover, being a conjunctive, carries one trademark, but also falls within other trademark categories, as well. For example, there are quite a few Uniglo covers that are also Foilites and Cameos, all at the same time. Such covers will normally only carry only one trademark, but can properly be housed with any of the qualifying trademark categories. It’s up to your preferences. For a collector of *all* fancy categories, such as myself, the ideal would be to have dupes of the cover available so that it can be housed with *each* of your categories that it falls under.

In a few cases, there will be more than one trademark on the cover. A *Matchorama Billboard*, as a case in point, is a Universal 4-color photo cover which is a 40-strike. Again, you can put this cover with your other Matchoramas or your other Billboards, if you’re collecting by trademarks.

How do you tell if a cover qualifies for a trademark category? Experience and familiarity with the categories will show you the way. Once you know, for example, that a *Matchorama* is a Universal cover that bears a 4-color photo, you’ll know that such covers may be put in your Matchorama collection whether it bears the trademark or not (it would have to be a Universal cover, though; other manufacturers have their own trademarked names for their color-photo covers).

Finally, there is the myriad of categories that result in classifying covers by their subject matter: Lobsters, Railroads, Airlines, Indians, Holiday Inns, Liquor Stores, American Legion, Dated...you name it. Here, the manufacturer and trademark don’t matter. Rather, does the cover have the qualifying item (i.e, cat) or business (i.e., Best Western).

It’s always been a truism in this hobby that you can make it anything you want. Yet, at the same time, there *is* a definite guiding structure and logic to it all. There *has* to be when you’re dealing in items by the thousands! It’s this peculiar blend of structure and freedom that gives the hobby one of its best selling points.

Happy sorting!