

Collecting F.O.E.'s

What are "F.O.E.s?" That's Fraternal Order of Eagles, an old and much-honored fraternal organization, and, to our benefit, an organization which has put out a long and varied line of matchcovers.

The Eagles were established on February 6th, 1898, in Seattle. Over the years, they have been very active in community services. In 1900, they sponsored America's first Workmen's Compensation Law; in 1923, they sponsored the first Old Age Pension Law; in 1935, when FDR signed the Social Security Law, he gave the pen to the Eagles, as a symbol of their invaluable support. In fact, the Eagles have been recognized for their invaluable community support by every president since FDR.

The list goes on and on. In 1942, the Eagles dormitory was built at Boy's Town; 1953 saw the establishment of the Eagle Haus in West Berlin; a trade school was opened in Naples, Italy, in 1958; a coronary research fund was set up in 1960; a low rental housing project was built in 1961 for senior Eagles; 1976 saw the founding of the first European chapter; and so forth.

There are over 1,900 chapters, or "Aeries," in the U.S. and Canada. There are also more than 1,700 auxiliaries....think of all the covers!...and covers there are! Pre-War, Post-War, stock, non-stock, all sizes and colors...covers to fill the albums of the most selective collector.

That's what first attracted me to this category—and all the Fraternalists, in fact. I love long series! I started collecting F.O.E.'s in 1991, and today I have 973, and that's not the biggest known collection by any means. I know there are many more covers out there. Sid Barlow, in England, for example, just reported in January that he has 1,993 in his collection.

There are some great old covers in this category—Federals and the like. There are a variety of stock designs and some sets, as well. And, some curiosities... how about an Eagles Aerie printed on an Elks cover? The Elks and the Eagles of Renovo, PA, may have gotten together and put out a joint cover, but I doubt it, since there is no identifying lodge number given for the Elks. More likely, this is some type of printer's goof....maybe the printer just figured, "You've seen one logo, you've seen them all!"

Lots of other conjunctive categories to be seen here, too, including a Girlie or two. There are actually several (at least) Girlie sets in what's been produced over the years, along with sets of Dogs, Hillbillies, Americana, and others.

As usual, I extend an invitation to any and all F.O.E. collectors to trade. I have dupes! Some Fraternal collectors collect by lodge, aerie, post number, etc. Although I arrange my Fraternal covers in this fashion, I don't seek them out this way, because then I miss out on all the other varieties. I.e., that 'numerical' collector is just looking for any cover from Aerie #676, whereas I'm looking for *all* covers from Aerie #676 and every other type of Eagle cover ever produced— *I want them all!! [see? There's that collector fanaticism that I frequently refer to]*. That's just a personal quirk. I don't think a collection is complete unless it contains *all* the covers, but other collectors have other goals, and there's nothing wrong with that.

If you're not an F.O.E. collector, you might consider getting into this category. It's challenging, but not impossible, and the result will be a rewarding, colorful, and historical collection. You can occasionally find lots of F.O.E. covers in auctions and elsewhere.