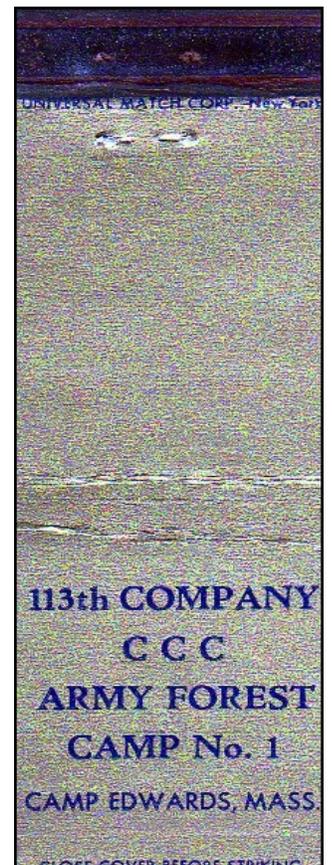


Collecting C.C.C Covers

by
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“C.C.C.’s”...that’s CIVILIAN CONSERVATION CORPS covers. It’s a category near and dear to the hearts of many ‘old timers’ in the hobby, but very few newer collectors ever tackle this one seriously. It’s an extremely difficult category to collect in. But, as with all difficult areas, the challenge makes each new acquisition a cause for celebration.

By March of 1933, 13,600,000 people were unemployed in the United States. Because of this emergency, President Franklin Delanore Roosevelt, only two days after his inauguration, called a meeting of high government officials to create a Civilian Conservation Corps. The plan was to put unemployed youths to work in forests, parks and range lands. Thus, the Civilian Conservation Corps was established by Congress in 1933, as part of Franklin D. Roosevelt’s ‘New Deal package to get the country out of the Great Depression and back on its feet again. It provided useful work and vocational training for unemployed single young men through conserving and developing the country’s natural resources (California’s current “California Conservation Corps” is modeled after the original C.C.C.). Membership was voluntary, and enrollees received a base pay of \$30 a month, most of which went to their families, if they were on relief.



At its peak in 1935, the organization had more than 500,000 members in over 2,600 camps. The C.C.C. added to the nation's material wealth through forest and wildlife protection, flood control, development of new state parks, soil conservation, and similar activities. Soil conservation was an especially hot topic of the day because severe drought began hitting the midwestern and southern plains in 1931, and as the crops died, the "black blizzards" began. Dust from the over-plowed and over-grazed land began to blow—leading to what we now refer to as the Dust Bowl.

Rather than establishing a new bureaucracy, the president established this program within existing governmental departments. The Departments of Interior and Agriculture were responsible for work projects and providing the personnel to manage them. The Budget Director provided the financial assistance, and the solicitor and judge advocate offered legal advice. The C.C.C. camps were normally run by the War Department, but the men were not subject to military control. With American involvement in World War II looming, greater emphasis was placed on projects aiding national defense beginning in 1940. Against President Roosevelt's request, however, Congress abolished the C.C.C. in 1942.

Although the Civilian Conservation Corps is now some 60 years in the past, its legacy certainly is still being felt today. Many of the C.C.C. projects would be financially impossible at today's costs, and many C.C.C. projects are still evident today around the country. Every time I make the 100 mile trip from here in Auburn, CA, to Reno, NV, via Interstate 80, I see the retaining walls, stone curve guards, etc. that were all built by the C.C.C. in the 1930s. And today, here in California, we have the "California Conservation Corps," which is fairly similar in its makeup and its tasks—various public service jobs. A short while ago, it was this new "CCC" that cleaned up a creek ravine locally.

Closer to home, the legacy also lives on through the matchcovers that many of the C.C.C. camps put out, each with its own company number and location. Most of the covers are wide-striker 20-strikes by

Maryland Match Co., but there are other sizes and manufacturers to be seen. Most covers, also, sport a green and yellow color scheme.

What makes this category so difficult to collect in is not only the age of the covers, themselves (60+years), but more importantly the very unusual scarcity and unavailability of the such covers. There were over 2,600 C.C.C. different camps, and yet there are only 325 known covers listed. John Williams, OH, a long-time C.C.C. collector, and the maintainer of the C.C.C. listing, has 235 in his collection.

Rarely, if ever, will you see these covers in trades (I've been an avid trader for over 16 years, and my C.C.C. collection numbers twelve!). Unless someone wills them to you, your only realistic hope, here, is to buy at auctions and advertise—the latter is another reason, by the way, to belong to several clubs. Advertising in the RMS Bulletin will reach the most collectors, but not all. Take advantage of your regional clubs' advertising policy in their specific bulletins. Most club editors are crying for members to run ads, but, as you see in any bulletin, very few people take advantage of the possibility.

