

Improving The

The Striker:

Still, there were other facets of the matchbook that could be tinkered with. Perhaps, manufacturers undoubtedly noted, there was some other design change that would allow competitors to lose their share of the market. If not how the matchbook opened, then what about the striker? Surely, there was potential there! The size...the position....HMMMMMM....

Early matchbooks had almost all uniformly started out with nice, wide, 'easy-to-hit' strikers. That basically came to an end with World War II and the ensuing shortage of materials. The width of the standard striker became noticeably narrower, as it is today. Thus it is that 'wide-striker' are associated with Pre-War rather than Post-War covers. But, compared to our other 'innovations' thus far, the narrower striker was mandated by circumstances rather than being the result of a marketing idea.

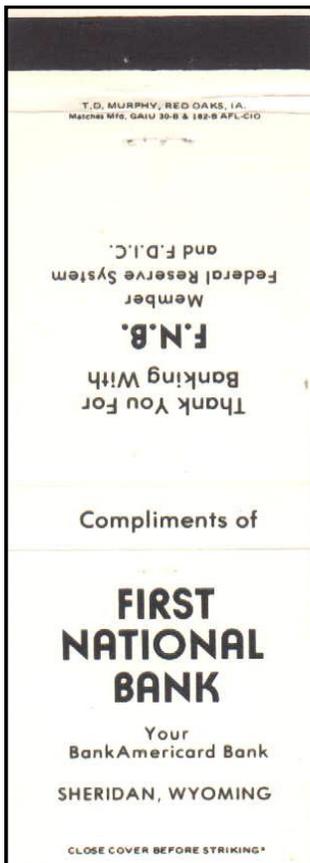
As was the moving of the striker from the front to the back of the matchbook...Pusey had again made the logical and obvious choice. When the matchbook opened in the front, why make an extra step of turning the matchbook around and striking the match on the back? Hence, he put the striker on the front. Obviously, even though he was a lawyer, he never envisioned a government determined to save its people from themselves (also note that Pusey never put a 'Close Cover Before Striking' on his matchbook either!) Still, even before the government-mandated change in striker location in 1973, manufacturers had already tried the idea long before, most notably Ohio Match Co. in the 1930's. Today, collectors traditionally refer to these very early Reverse-Strikers as 'Back-Strikers' in order to

Basic striker position, front -striker

Post-1973 striker position, reverse-striker

Ohio Match Co. back-striker

note these earlier 'prototypes'. Diamond had also tried putting the striker where the fold is on its 'Base Friction' covers from the late 1920's to 1942.



Prior to that major (and permanent) change, however, there were other locations introduced for the striker. Lion's 'Odd-Striker' put the striker anywhere, and in any shape, that the advertiser wanted! The famous World War II Patriotic cover with the striker on the seat of Hitler's pants is a well-known example of an Odd-Striker. This type of cover

apparently first appeared in

Matchbook: II

1942 and was produced all the way up to 1962, but there are relatively few. The largest number I've seen is 343, reported by Judi Wittwer in 1997. I would assume the design and production costs were high for this type of customized cover, and thus their numbers were limited.

In the 1960's (?), Universal even experimented with moving the striker from the top flap and putting it at the bottom of the front panel, just above the 'Close Cover Before Striking', but that was a flop, and the few examples that exist are looked upon as oddities. Over the years, I've set them aside whenever coming across them, and I probably have less than 10 example. If there is a trademark name or an agreed upon term for these, I'm not aware of it.

The remaining striker factor, namely how it is affixed to the matchcover, has also been the target of change. Although domestic manufacturers have traditionally favored the 'paint-it-on-as-a-liquid' approach, some manufacturers, almost all foreign, have sometimes used a solid strip of striker material put on the matchcover, sometimes permanently, sometimes removable. Probably the most famous domestic example of the latter are the 'Owname' covers. When the staple is removed, the striker comes off the cover (much to the annoyance of the collector). Of course, with the PullQuick concept, the striker wasn't even visible to the user. It was on the inside, wrapped around the match head. None of said changes had any success.

Another related portion of the affixing the striker topic is whether the striker was put on before or after the staple, since, in the vast majority of cases, they were both in the same location. The majority of early covers had the striker material applied *over* the staple...making it very chancy to try and remove the matches and open up the cover for flattening.

*Diamond Match Co.
Base-friction*

*Monogram Co.
Odd-Striker*

*Universal Match Corp.
'oditty'*

Eventually, all manufacturers changed to putting the striker material *under* the staple. Now, there was a change that really made life much nicer for the collector, but, again, it wasn't a change that actually 'improved' the matchbook's design.

