

Eddy Match Co.

We always tend to tout the Diamond Match Company as the “grand old man” of the match industry, and rightly so, but few may be aware of the history of Canada’s giant, the Eddy Match Co., which had a proud track record of its own.

In 1851, before the Civil War had even started in this country, a young man named Ezra Butler Eddy set up a small match-making business in Hull, Quebec. It was hardly more than a one-room shack decked out as a work area where Eddy’s early wooden matches were produced.

Interestingly, while Eddy was making his “Sulphur matches” in his shop, the actual matchboxes were being made by female employees working in their homes. This was characteristic of much of the work in the pre-Industrial Revolution and even early Industrial Revolution work patterns. That’s of special note because today, with the advent of the personal computer, more and more workers are returning to the home as the primary work place. History *does* repeat itself.

So, Ezra Eddy, perhaps unknowingly, perhaps with foresight, started what would later become the match monolith of the North.

As soon as he could, Eddy moved away from the smelly sulphur matches to “Parlour Matches,” which used paraffin instead of sulphur. By now, Eddy’s problem was room. As business improved, more and more space was needed for expanded production. In 1866, Eddy moved into an empty sawmill. Four years later, he bought a small island, an ideal site for working with the dangerous materials required to produce matches.

When Diamond Match Co. made its discovery of a practical non-poisonous match public domain, the Eddy match Co. immediately switched to producing the newer matches. This was long before the Canadian government prohibited the making of the old white phosphorous matches.

Indeed, the Eddy Match Co. was always going to

be on the leading edge of the Canadian match manufacturing industry. Around 1910, Eddy introduced the first “No After Glow” match to Canada (self-extinguishing; the match burned down to a certain point on the stick and then went out automatically).

In 1928, Eddy introduced the first matchbooks in Canada. During World War II, the company expanded its production and met all of the emergency government requirements and guidelines.

Over the years, it produced a number of trademarks and manumarks that have become favorites of both Canadian and American collectors alike. Eddy trademarks include: Buffalo, Eddy’s Comet Match, Eddy’s Safety Matches, Eddy’s Wax Vestas, Eddylites, Eddylites Safety Pocket Matches, Eddylites Strike Anywhere Matches, Eddylites Utility Matches, Maple Leaf, Parlour, Redbird, Sesqi, and Telegraph. Eddy also produced an EDDY QUALITY footer on its early covers, a much sought-after type by collectors today.

In the troubled 1980s and 1990s, Eddy managed to hold out longer than most of the American manufacturers, but in 1998 it merged with Atlas, and production stopped on March 5th, 1999. It moved its production from its Pembroke plant to the Atlas Match factory in Euless, Texas. It is now no longer an independent manufacturer. Indeed, there aren’t any manufacturers left in Canada at all, now.