

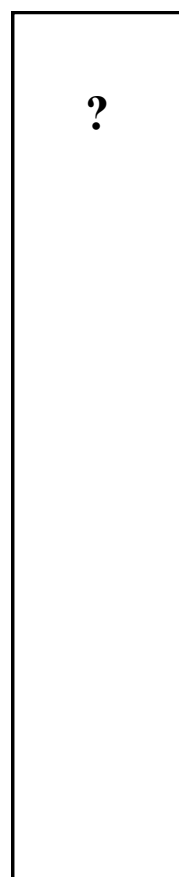
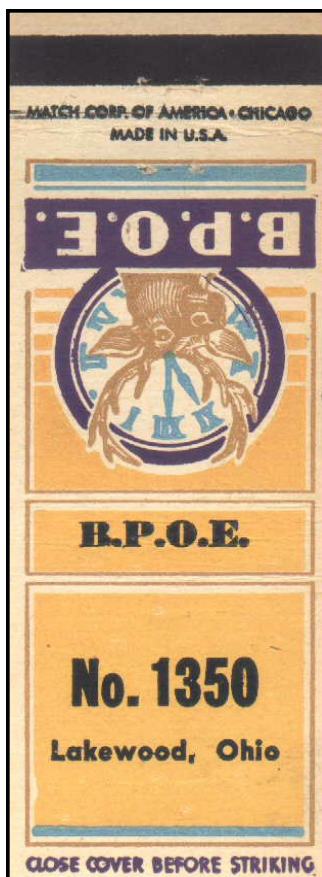
Benevolent & Protective

By far the biggest of all the Fraternal categories, Elks covers span at least 82 years of production from thousands of different locations. This is truly an awesome category, which is why it's one of my favorites. I currently have 5,495 and I'm still frequently finding more than I don't have, so how many different Elks covers actually exist is probably substantially more than that figure. That's why I'm always hunting for more—the thrill of the hunt! And each individual discovery is all the more satisfying!

Most of the covers to be seen in this category are stock 20-strikes, but there are have been several standardized designs over the decade, so that has created a wealth of covers simply amidst the stock designs. Additionally, there are many non-stocks and a wide variety of sizes, conjunctives, and types, including Jewelites, Features, Christmas, and more. There are also sets, including Girlie, Patriotic, and Taxi. And, there are all sorts of other interesting issues, such as errors. Some of the latter even have other fraternal logos and info on them (I'm assuming these are printing errors since they don't look like joint organization issues).

Some of the older issues include Federals; many of the older, defunct company manumarks; and, if memory serves me correctly, at least at couple of DQs, and some of the old, longer-version Lion covers. As of this writing (early June), the oldest Elks cover I know of is a Lion Safety First, but one of our readers might well even be able to come up with something even earlier, perhaps a Diamond SAFETY FIRST or something in that earlier range of years.

Elks covers are collected and organized by lodge numbers, starting with Lodge #1, New York City.



Order of Elks: Covers

For those few covers that actually don't carry a lodge number, there's a helpful listing of which locations

are which lodge numbers done by Mary Ross years ago. It lists lodges #1 - #2787. It's quite hefty, but it's a good checklist for locations, as far as it goes, for interested collectors. It's available from the RMS Library, so I would suggest interested parties contact RMS Librarian John Williams, 910 Howard Ln., Vandalia, OH 45377-1866 (E-mail: matchjsw@gemair.com). It is 26 pages long and copy costs are .10¢ a page. Currently, there is no comprehensive listing of Elks covers available. Not surprising, because starting from scratch on such a big category would be a very daunting endeavor, indeed. If you need to identify a lodge # or state for a cover, you can do that by going to the Elks' main web site (<http://www.elks.org>), but there is no one huge listing you can access or even print out (shucks!).

I collect all Elks covers (each different cover from the same lodge, plus all major variations), but some collectors only go after one cover from each lodge. You should be aware, though, that, while many Elks lodges issued a cover, and many issued a variety of covers, some lodges may not have issued any covers at all. Going through my own collection, there are lots of lodge numbers that I don't have anything from...and I'm only assuming that for each number there was, at least at one time, a functioning lodge...for all I know, that may not be the case (any Elks members out there that could check on that?) And, given the current climate, of course, your chances of finding newly issued Elks covers are considerably slimmer than in past years. I just had a function at the local Elks lodge here, for example, (Auburn, CA), and there were none at the bar, where I have always been able to get them in previous years. The especially good news is that Elks covers are readily available to collectors within the hobby.

