

FLASHBACK!

Who Started The Matchcover Hobby?

[February 1953 RMS Bulletin]

Each oldtimer has his pet story from dog to diggers. A story leaked out that a seeing-eye dog would be given to the one blind man for each block of 250,000 (or thereabout) street matchcovers. The idea was no so fantastic as it appeared since blind persons were known to have fashioned from street matchcovers objects of surprising color and charm. An epidemic of street hunting followed. Later, when exposed as a fake, it bursted. Yet, from the first flurry, many are still collecting matchcovers. While this was going on, a newspaper headline read: "Scion of the 400 pays substantial sum for the Matchcover Pick-Up Rights after the Rose Bowl Football Game. And another "Digger at the bottom of a well finds that his pipe has gone out. He has no matches. Later he comes from the well to get a matchbook from his coat. He returns to find the well caved in. The matchbook saved his life! He has collected them from that day".

It is interesting to note that all of these events took place in and around 1933-34, the glorious years of the Chicago Century of Progress sets, particularly the Gold set of 1933, described by many as the most beautiful set in matchcover history. Books were bought by the thousands, given to old and new collectors as a big boost for a start. Collecting started in full sway in 1934 when Diamond introduced the colorful football, basketball, hockey, movies, scenics and educational—Group One Classics. Another contributing fact was the popularity of the automobile, the overall improvement in travel beginning with the early 1930s. Many still collect matchcovers from places they have visited. As for the direct spark that lit up enthusiasm—take your pick...

...Pursuant to the request from the newer members, "How they became interested in matchcovers:", Perry M. Brewer - RMS #698 - admits the usual mistakes by beginners, cutting off the abrasives, shellacking the surfaces and even nailing to the wall. He had no idea that so many people were interested in the hobby. After joining the RMS, he realized his mistakes, and managed to replace many of the covers previously mutilated. Just as soon as his name was published in the Bulletin, Perry received many covers from other members, and now has 7,000 different, all in accurate file. Mr. Brewer writes in conclusion, "I am now abiding by all the rules for collecting as contained in the instructions to beginners. The Bulletins are interesting, and I enjoy receiving letters and cards from other members. My objective now is to accumulate the largest collection of different matchcovers in the U.S.A. Perhaps you can advise me on how many I would have to get to accomplish this." Dear Perry: For your last query, Doc Higgs - 61 Carey Ave., Wilkes-Barre, Pa., may have the answer.

...Many have complimented the officers for a larger and better Bulletin that the members are now getting, but some say, "Why not still a larger one, and printed?" That can be done! Who can suggest how 100 cartons of choice, uncirculated matches can be gotten each month for sale to the members at a nominal cost? If this were done, we could spend well over \$100.00 each month for that Bulletin that you want. It's up to you!

...The MONOGRAM OF CALIFORNIA (San Francisco) has issued a set of "Match Grins" made by Lion in 30 Stick size. There are 10 books to the set, each having a picture on the front with appropriate gag to match. A few of the gags are risque, so they will not be listed herein. However, the covers are oddly attractive.

[Ed. Note: the spelling seen in all of these Flashback articles is the original]