

Hey! Here's a Healthy Activity—Collect Hospitals!

Why would I think of Hospitals now? Well, for goodness sake! This is the anniversary of America's first hospital! And how fitting!...Who started it (along with Dr. Thomas Hood)? None other than our last month's topic....Benjamin Franklin! It was February 11th, 1751, when The Penn. Hospital was established...and it's still going today. Anyone have a cover from it? I couldn't find one in my collection.

Hospitals, as such, probably go back to the Ancient World [*matchcovers from those early hospitals would be pretty scarce I would imagine*]. Certainly, there were doctors in all of the Ancient civilizations *Hippocrates, after all, is looked upon as the Father of Modern Medicine*], but it's questionable whether there was much that would be recognizable to us today as actual hospitals. My research tells me that there were certainly hospitals in the Middle Ages (i.e. leper hospitals, etc.), but today's concept of hospitals actually evolved out of the earlier "pesthouses" maintained for the care of the indigent and homeless, which by the way, had a level of care that few emerged from alive!

And, modern hospitals have continued to evolve...and multiply. By 1960, for example, the proportionate hospital bed capacity in the United States had more than quadrupled in less than 100 years. Additionally, many hospitals today, especially in the larger cities, have developed into huge medical centers, incorporating not only treatment for the ill and injured, but medical research and training, as well.

Perhaps most astounding of all, in light of present day circumstances and knowledge, many, if not most, hospitals in this country generated their own matchbooks for most of the 1900s. Smoking was seen to be therapeutic!...Just look at how many people still say that the reason they smoke is because it relaxes them...and I was one of them—I smoked a pipe for 37 years...and I still miss it!

In any event, that means there are Hospital covers to collect. So, if you're a beginning collector, or a seasoned collector thinking of starting in on Hospitals, here is some basic information you should know. First, traditionally, not all Hospitals are normally included in the category! Normally, Military hospitals are collected under the Military umbrella, and Veterans Hospitals are collected as a category of their own. That basically leaves 'regular' hospitals as those that are collected here—public hospitals, private hospitals, university hospitals, etc.

Second, you'd have to decide for yourself, for the purposes of your own collection, what else this category might entail. For example, what about hospices? Outreach programs? Etc. From my own perspective, I include such covers as long as the name of the hospital is on the cover. [*that might seem a no-brainer, but I don't do that in other categories. National Parks and Airports, for example—I don't include covers that have the name but don't actually come from that place... "Mike's Motel, just opposite LAX" wouldn't make it into my Airports collection*].

Third, I have over 700 of these Hospital covers, and I'm under the impression that there are probably at least double that number, so, numerically, this isn't the minute category that some might think. It's an interesting category, and, although most of the covers are not particularly eye-catching, every hospital has its own history...you might even find covers for hospitals that you have been in....perhaps even the one where you or your children were born!

