

Improving The

The Shape:

Pusey and others chose a basic rectangular shape for the matchcover (when opened). A number of companies have since tried their hands at altering that characteristic. The most notable, and the most successful, of these new shapes are the die-cuts.' The most important of these are Lion's 'Contour' and Universal's 'Jewelite'.

The Contour appeared in 1951, and, as far as I've seen, was limited to 20-strikes. Indeed, it was the length of a 20-strike, but parts of the cover (usually the sides, although I have seen examples where the bottom was die-cut) were die-cut into other shapes, normally a bulge on both sides, producing something of an hourglass shape when the cover was opened. The general idea was to cut the cover so that the advertiser's product was reproduced...so, for example, a trucking company's cover might show the front of a truck extending off one side of the cover, while the back of the truck extended off the other side. The result was quite a unique type of cover, and one which has since been sought after by almost all collectors. There were 1,147 listed as of July 1999.

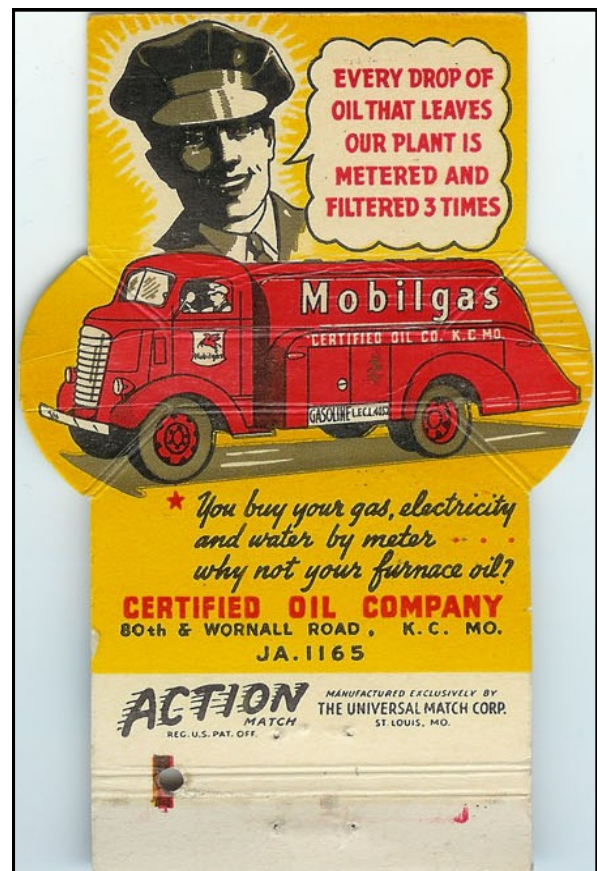
Universal's Jewelite was essentially the same idea, except that the cover was Jewel-sized. Almost all of the Jewelites stuck to a standard hourglass shape. There are some exceptions, but the Jewelites were never as individualized as the Contours. Advertisers simply chose the basic Jewelite shape and fitted their design to it, whereas the Contour was fitted to the advertiser's design. The most famous of the Jewelites were the Sports Jewelites. Here, the die-cut design easily fitted representations of football helmets, basketballs, and so on. Some 8,700 different Jewelites are listed, and Ray Vigeant, CT,



Seen here are:

1) Lion's famous Contour. This one is not all that dissimilar from the later Jewelite from Universal, although smaller. [courtesy of Kathie Williman, MD]

2) The much less famous Action, by Universal. This was a 30-strike size with flared sides that folded back into the cover when the cover was closed, so that, closed, the cover looked like a conventional 30-strike. [This one was courtesy of Jim Benes, NJ]



Matchbook: IV

reported having 2,450 Sports Jewelites alone in January 1999. As with the Jewel, Jewelite production halted in 1987.

Other shape changers included the 'Pocket Wallet', the 'Model' cover by Lion, the 'Action' and 'Safe-T-Lite' covers by Universal, and Maryland's 'Safe-T-Flap' (although the latter was on the inside of the cover)

There were other die-cut innovations along the way... 'Knot Holes', 'Eez-L' (Easel Back), etc., but these didn't change the basic shape of the matchcover. Lion's 'Display' covers, which came out in 1940, added a little pop-up flap to the inside of the cover; and, Lion had its 'Wagon Tongue', which was a cover with a small insert for advertising that had to be lifted before you could get to the matches; but I don't think these qualify for our topic of discussion here. Similarly, Maryland had a 'Child Guard' matchbook that it produced from 1977-1984, supposedly child-safe, but I don't think I've ever seen one, so I don't know if it entailed changing the shape of the cover (can anyone describe it for us?). I believe this was a different innovation from its earlier Safe-T-Flap.

Today, foreign die-cuts are the cream of the existing crop, especially those from Swedish Match. They tend to be far more radical and individually customized than the old Jewelites and Contours.

