

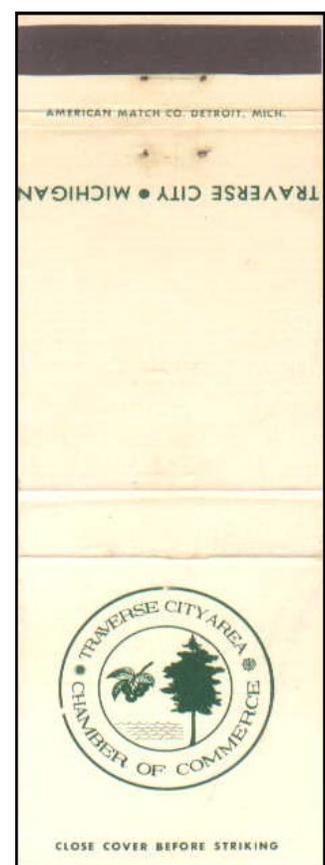
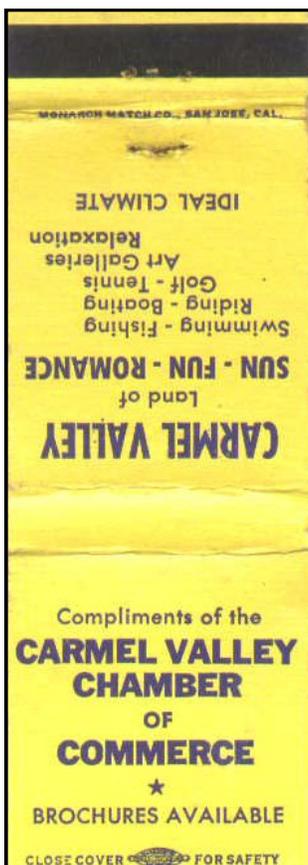
Collecting Chambers

A **Chamber of Commerce** (also referred to in some circles as a **Board of Trade**, though this phrase is not commonly used in the United States) is a form of business network. The primary goal of a chamber is to improve the business climate in a locality, typically through business networking, lobbying, and common projects and a selection of business services. The first Chambers of Commerce were founded in 1599 in continental Europe (Marseille, France and Brugge, Belgium). The world's oldest English-speaking Chamber of Commerce is that of Glasgow Scotland set up in 1783.

Membership in an individual Chamber in an area can range from a few dozen to well over 300,000 (as is the case with the Paris Chamber of Commerce and Industry). Some Chamber organizations in China report even larger membership numbers. Businesses which belong to a chamber of commerce can range from a single city or town Chamber, to a Regional Chamber of Commerce, to billion-dollar overseas corporations.

Some chambers have joined state, national, and even international bodies (such as the International Chamber of Commerce (ICC) and Worldchambers). In the majority of countries, the use of the term "chamber of commerce" is regulated by federal law. Currently, there are about 13,000 Chambers registered in the official Worldchambers Network registry, and the Chamber of Commerce network is the largest business network globally. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Chambers_of_commerce]

The idea of a national institution to represent the unified interests of U.S. business first took shape when President William Howard Taft, in a message to Congress on December 7, 1911, addressed the need for a "central organization in touch with associations and chambers of commerce throughout the



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country and able to keep purely American interests in a closer touch with different phases of commercial affairs." Four months later, on April 12, 1912, President Taft's vision became a reality when a group of 700 delegates from various commercial and trade organizations came together to create a unified body of business interest that today is the U.S. Chamber of Commerce.

More than 90 years later, the Chamber has grown to represent more than 3 million businesses, nearly 3,000 state and local chambers, 830 associations, and over 90 American Chambers of Commerce abroad. [www.uschamber.com/about/history]

Hmmmm! 3,000 state and local chambers....830 associations...and over 90 branches abroad...That could make for a nice collection...If covers exist! Well, they do!...Although, apparently not in the numbers that one could have hoped for. I just started collecting them, myself, earlier this year. I haven't even gotten to the point of advertising the category to my traders yet. So, so far, I have about 18. Not exactly impressive. But, I know there must be a substantial number of such covers out there. Look how many Chambers there are, and their job is to...advertise!...And matchbooks have traditionally be a fast, cheap, and effective means of advertising. So, voilà! I just have to find them! Apparently, other Chambers collectors are in the same boat, as I don't think anyone has ever reported having a goodly number of these covers.

I have high hopes for this category, though. It would make an outstanding collection from the point of geography...and a great display, say on a state or regional level. Anyone have any to trade?

