

Matches:

All this ongoing talk about the hobby...and it's always *covers...covers* and matchbooks, covers and matchboxes, covers and labels...*covers, covers, covers!* We never seem to talk about the...*matches!*

Of course, that's understandable to a large degree...We throw them away most of the time! Still, they're certainly something we have to deal with in the hobby, whether we keep our matchbooks intact or not. And, in the process of preserving or purging them, one does notice a certain variety...in some cases, even elegance.

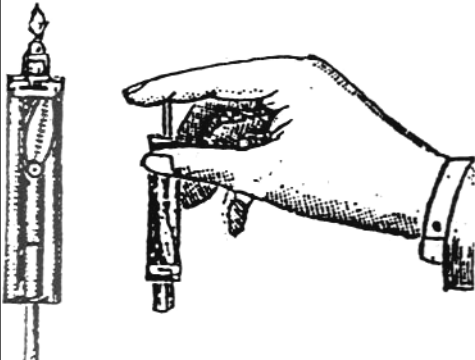
By far, the vast majority of matches we come across on a daily basis are the non descript (dare I say, "boring"?) grayish, paper matchsticks with the red heads...Whether in groups of twenties, thirties, or forties, they're what we're used to, and so we tend to overlook them. Such wasn't always the case with matches, however.

There was a time almost a hundred years ago in this country, when matches...*all* matches...were wooden. They came in match boxes, for the most part, although there were instances of other delivery systems, such as match 'pellets' (as seen in the Foley & Ruse advertisement below).

Although the matchbook first appeared in the 1890s, it really didn't begin having a sizeable and significant impact on the use of wooden matches here in the United States until the 1920s. It took awhile for the idea to catch on and become recognized, after all. I haven't seen any statistics on this, but I'd have to guess that by the 1940s, if not the 1930s, the paper match had already overtaken the

wooden match in sheer numbers, although that was certainly not the case elsewhere in the world, even in Europe.

Once the paper match reigned supreme, there was more leeway, I suppose, in



THE LIGHT OF THE WORLD

FOLEY & RUSE'S

MAGAZINES AND MATCHES

SUPERSEDING ALL OTHER MATCHES FOR LIGHTING PURPOSES

DIRECTIONS—Hold the Magazine with lighting end downwards, then open top of tubes by turning around the double cover. Drop the pellets in with igniting point downwards. Fill both tubes then replace cover.

To Light— Hold Magazine straight and down, as shown in the hand. Do not place thumb on movable shield. Remove cap from lighter at lower end, then press quickly on plunger with finger. This will instantly produce light. **TURN LIGHT UPWARDS AS SOON AS LIT.**(see cut showing light.) As the matches by their own weight drop from the tubes into carrier, it is absolutely necessary that Magazine be held as seen in hand - straight downwards until lit. If Magazine clogs take off the slide at lower end and clean.

<p>FACTORIES: Bowmanville, Ont. Davenport, Iowa.</p>	<p>CANADIAN ADDRESS: Foley & Ruse, 60 Adelaide St. West, Toronto, Ont. UNITED STATES ADDRESS: D. M. & M. Co. Davenport, Iowa.</p>
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Fig.10. A reconstruction of the instruction sheet supplied with each magazine. Note that the three branches of the company are included.

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creativity and variation...or more pressure...a result of stiff competition in the market, perhaps. Even though a couple of different types were to be seen right at the outset (printed sticks, for example), the major period of match ‘embellishment’ was to come from the 1940s on up through the 1980s, corresponding especially with the 1940’s-1950’s peak domestic industry innovation [*I might get an argument on that with Universal’s big creative push coming later, but Universal’s an isolated case*].

In the beginning of that era, the variations centered more on the matchsticks rather than the match heads. Features, for example, had already appeared in at least the 1930s, and so had the specially widened matchsticks to permit the artwork that we all have come to so appreciate. Then, in the 1940s and 1950s, the Feature (by Lion) reached both its artistic height and its peak popularity.

Although I couldn’t really begin to pinpoint with any authority exactly when different colored matchsticks actually began, by the 1950s, I think, we can begin to see varieties--black and gold seem to have been the favorites early on and continue to be today, the latter in metallic.

Around that time, but becoming more common later on, the match heads, themselves, could be seen to be in other colors besides the standard red. Now there might be white, or blue, or yellow, or...? Combined with specially colored matchsticks, the overall package could look quite unique as far as matchbooks go.

Other noticeable variations over the decades were to be seen in the shape of the matchsticks, and here we’re basically focused on wooden matches. Sometimes the matchsticks were simply smooth, round, tubular. Sometimes the sticks were shaved to produced facets. Sometimes, as can be seen with some of the fairly modern European matchbooks with wooden matches, the matchsticks are flat...something I’ve always seen as a distinct disadvantage, since it’s that thinness that takes the pressure when the match is struck...and so the matchstick often breaks.

And, while we’re on wooden matchsticks, a more recent innovation has been to do away with the wood altogether...and use plastic stems or stems of waxed or otherwise ‘enhanced’ paper. As a pipe smoker, I go through a lot of matches, and with the expertise I have gathered in at least this tiny slice of phillumeny, I can categorically say that these non-wooden matches are less than satisfactory, as well. Some of them are so tiny that you can hardly keep your fingertips away from the resulting flame!...If you *get* a resulting flame at all!

I’ve saved the most obvious area of variation for last--match size. I’ve already briefly alluded to the widening of some matchsticks for Features, but the *length* of matchsticks has varied probably almost since their first appearance. And, here, at least for wooden matches again, the various sizes usually had more to do with the match’s function than anything else. For example, (and I can attest to this through my often misspent childhood), back in the old days [*Oh my God! I’m old enough to say ‘Back in the old days!’*], when you had to light the gas burners on the kitchen stove with a match...you didn’t want your fingers to be anywhere near the burner. Thus...violá! ‘Kitchen matches’!...Extra-long, extra safe. Eventually, there were matches for lighting the fireplace, matches for lighting lamps, and so on...

