

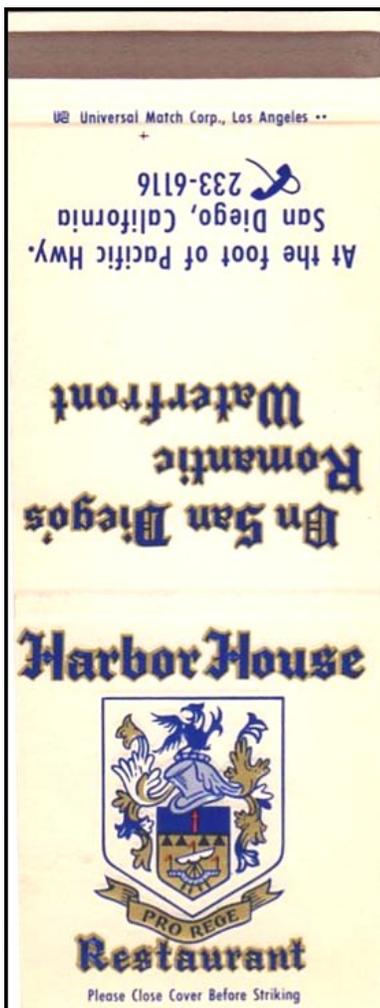
Collecting

Here's another category I only recently started collecting (!)...*Why?*...Um...Because I love History!...Because I teach Medieval History...Oh, OK, because they're... pretty! Well, they *are* attractive and eye-catching, especially the more detailed ones, and especially when those are on the fancier covers...and they are a lot of them!

And just why *are* there so many of them? Aha! It's my theory that it's a class thing! Only nobles were granted a coat-of-arms, and nobles are upper class. Hence, upper class is something most people aspire to...especially in a capitalist society such as our, even is we don't *have* nobles. Along with that association, however, comes another important part of the coat-of-arms persona...We associate history with it...a long, distinguished history...Hence, respectability. Thus, since the covers sporting these coats-of-arms are businesses and organizations, this second association is probably more important than the first.

The entire system of coats-of-arms, called "heraldry", started in the 11th and 12th centuries, in Europe...1066-Norman Invasion is the usual given starting point. Most historians give the need to recognize friend and foe in battle as the original impetus, and from there it gathered force and became an established tradition among the nobles of Europe, with the appropriate king or queen having the ultimate authority to bequeath such to new noble families.

More commonly used is the word 'crest', however most people today, when asked to define 'crest,' actually refer only to the 'shield' (center) portion of the coat-of-arms. The entire device is shown on the covers here and includes not only the shield design, but some sort of 'holders'



Crests

on the sides, a top decoration, and a motto (usually on a scroll) on the bottom. *[There are technical names for all these parts, but I'm not going to burden you with them here]*

This is a category that allows you to make what you want out of it. You can collect anything that even smacks of looking like a crest, or you can only collect entire coats-of-arms...or you can set your parameters somewhere in between. In my own case, I've decided that in order to qualify as a crest in *my* collection, the crest has to have at least *two* of the four parts noted above. I think that makes it somewhat easier to decide what's a crest and what's simply a 'logo' on a shield outline. I considered being a purist and only accepting complete coats-of-arms, but I quickly saw that that would mean that I would be passing up a lot of very handsome designs, so...Also, there's always the old quandary of how you mount your covers in your albums when some have the pertinent design on the front panel, while others have them on the back. Some collectors prefer to put all covers in top up, regardless. Personally, here, I want to see the crests first and foremost, so I put the back-paneled covers in upside down.

The biggest hunting grounds for crests is Hotels/Motels/Restaurants, but you'll find them in a wide variety of other categories—Funeral Homes, for example. Also, the fancier categories, such as Cameos and Uniglos, seem to have a higher percentage of crests than non-Fancy covers. On the other hand, there are categories where crests are comparatively rare—Banks, Store Sets, Christmas, etc. And, not surprisingly, you'll find crests on covers of all sizes, simply because size has nothing to do with the topic, business and organizations advertising on *all* sizes.

The late Marie Harbison, PA, reported having 1,306 crests in April 1993. There must certainly be thousands more....and I'm going to find them!

