

A Book Of

[Note: This 'essay', dated January 1981 and apparently attached to an album of 'junk' covers, was written by Win Lang, who was the editor for Golden Orange MC, in Southern California, for many years. Continued from our last issue]

Only the very rich could now “sport” a true Panama—made in Panama, literally under water and by hand; in its place we had the cheap imitation, still called a “Panama” to this day. Most of us wore a straw “boater”, the flat topped straw hat of the day. But a hat you wore—as evidenced by these covers!

Look at the clothing styles...and smile. They were very “in” at that time. Both men and women were legally required to wear a one piece “bathing suit” (the term “swim suit” was unknown)—at the beach. Yes, the law made men “cover up”...no just trunks, or you were hauled off to the “hoosegow”, in the “Paddy Wagon” or “Black Maria”.

Men purchased three-piece suits, and or topcoats and or overcoats for \$12.50; we usually paid for them in installments of 50 cents per week. Most clothiers “threw in” a tie, or a pair of shoes, to get the sale.

All candy bars were five cents, as were all bottles of soft drinks. We drank “Coke” and Orange Crush” and sang “Nickel, nickel, nickel—12 full ounces, that’s a lot—“Pepsi-Cola hits the spot”. The then famed Loft Candy Company, which charged 79¢ for a pound of chocolates, was saved from bankruptcy by Royal Crown Cola, which had successfully bested Coca-Cola in the courts and freed the use of the name ‘Cola’; The London (England) based and hundred year old Parker Game Company, with plants in the U.S.A., was saved only by an unemployed carpenter, in Atlantic City, who created a game for his children...and we all played “Monopoly”. Oh, it’s all here, in this old “junk”!

Hamburgers for 5¢? Of course...and the mustard was free. (Two doughnuts and unlimited coffee was a dime; beef stew and bread was 15¢.) The “Diner” was king...coined from the Pullman “Dining Car”, and in the beginning usually a converted old street car, hauled by horses into a location for the night only. Gradually it grew in elegance—and permanency. The covers are here.

Gasoline? Look at the glass-topped pumps shown on the covers. That proved—because you could see it—that you were not only receiving gas, but it was not watered. Eight gallons for one dollar, but in “gas wars” often 12 for \$1.00. The pumps were hand set to the amount ordered, and then hand cranked.

Hotels? Look at the covers...\$1.00 a night was common. “Cabins”? The fore-runner of today’s “Motel”...little shacks (mostly for shack-ups) on the highways—only California had “free ways” then—that openly advertised “closed garages” so that your auto couldn’t be spotted by an irate wife.

Jim Braddock was “boxin’ champeen of the world”; Strangler (Ed) Lewis was THE name in then honest wrestling; Jack Dempsey (just a broken show piece, not the owner) could be talked to at his “joint”, as we called nite clubs. Many of the famed nite clubs were merely continuations...often in name only...of former roadhouses, a “nice” name for a speak easy. A full meal plus a famous show could cost as much as \$2.00, where down the street, “eat as much as you want” costs were 35 to 50¢.

Ice? A peculiar thing to save covers from? Not really...look at the pictures on those covers! Those were ice boxes!

Memories: II

The markets...you phoned in your order for home delivery then...displayed their meats and fish on beds of real ice; you displayed a sign at home, indicating a 10¢, or 15¢, or (exceptional) 25¢ size, and the ice man brought it in on his shoulder, and put it in your “ice chest”. You dumped the pan of water at its bottom (Mario Lanza did this for a living).

Look again at these covers...a new menace has made its appearance...the “electric ice box”, or refrigerator. And, due to massive advertising, much of it on match covers, every refrigerator, regardless of make, was a “Frigidaire”. Remember Cold Spot—Kelvinator—Servador, the gas-fired refrigerator? If you don’t, these covers do. The G.E. “Monitor Top”? It’s here, too.

“Joe and Nemo’s”...one of the outstanding spots in staid old Boston, in (now wiped out) infamous Scollay Square. Hot dogs—25 for \$1.00; want to get a bet down? See Joe and Nemo. Want a “Sporting Girl”?...see them. (Take her across the street to the Crawford House Hotel...rooms by the hour.) Or, visit Joe and Nemo’s before and after the Old Howard, next door...Boston’s rowdy vaudeville house, once a church. They are all gone—the covers are here.

Those are just some of the sights and sounds and every day little things of that time zone...they are not ghosts! Look again, and sigh...and then say to yourself—”Now I know why he kept all that old junk—and I’m glad he did!”