

February 2009

# Old Covers Are No Longer Available ...Nonsense!

by  
Win Lang and Mike Prero

*[Collectors these days often complain that there's a scarcity of covers, especially the sought-after old ones. I ran across the following November 1979 Golden Orange Matchmaker article by Win Lang, entitled "Old Covers Are No Longer Available. Nonsense!" My comments are in script...the Ed.]*

We are prompted to this remark [*the title*] from a note received from one of our ardent members. It read, "I wish I had started collecting covers 20 years ago, when old covers could be found. I'm afraid that it is much too late for me, now."

To which we repeat, NONSENSE! To begin with, we are not dealing with one-of-a-kind-only items. There were countless thousands of covers in circulation forty years ago, as there are today. There were great collectors then, as now—and some of them are still active in our hobby.

It is perhaps to our advantage today that in "yesteryear" there were far fewer collectors than today. It means that those collectors had access to more covers per collector, that they probably gathered and kept more covers on a per-ratio basis. Fewer collectors meant more covers to each one.

In any events, dupes of old covers do exist. They are available. As we have said before, they are not going to show up in your mail—at least very often—until you do something to cause this to happen. Here are some of the things you can do:

- 1: Let your traders know of your interest.
- 2: Let your various club memberships know, too. Most clubs publish an annual roster showing the member's top interests. Most bulletin Editors will give you some publicity, if you ask.
- 3: In those bulletins which accept advertising, advertise.
- 4: And this often can be far more effective than you can imagine—contact your local newspaper. They are always on the prowl for "human interest" stories. Your hobby story can produce covers (usually older covers at that) from non-collectors who have some in their possession.
- 5: The same results can be obtained by putting up cover displays. There are show windows in your area that are empty because the business has no need of window displays. (Finance companies are a good example.) They are quite often delighted to have you use their space. Some banks have openly requested displays. Your local Chamber of Commerce and other community-minded organizations

will grant you space for a display. Besides, you very likely will bring new members to our club. It is amazing how often you will hear, "I've collected covers for years. I had no idea that there are organized clubs in existence." Think back—before you discovered this, didn't you think that you were the only collectors in your area?

- 6: Attend your club(s) meetings. "The wheel that squeaks the loudest gets the grease" is true today, as then. Make your wants heard and known.
- 7: If your club has auctions...most do...watch for old covers coming up. Bid for them...aggressively. Note the prices paid, so that even if you lose, next time you will know where to begin the auction.
- 8: Perhaps your local club meetings do not have cover auctions, but the regional meetings, AMCAL, SWAPFEST, etc. most certainly do. The annual R.M.S. Conventions features several auctions of covers each year. If you cannot be there in person you can ask one of your friends who will be there to act as your agent. At the R.M.S. Convention just concluded a new record high sales figure was reached. Among many items sold, there were (1) an album of old hotels, 3,650 covers., sold for \$35.00, or slightly under one cent per cover; (2) an album of 2950 old hotels, at \$22.00; (3) an album of 3500 old hotel covers; (4) bundles of 600 old hotel covers; bundles containing covers from 1928 thru 1978; and on and on.

The political scene saw covers from Wendell Wilkie, Franklin D. Roosevelt and Herbert Hoover change hands at the auction.

There were many "Souvenir" singles and sets, which we will be exploring in these bulletin issues; covers from World's Fairs from the 1930s-1940s; plenty of Group I covers including movie stars, baseball players, radio stars, etc.

If old and now defunct MMs are your interest, D.Q.s, Crown, others went on the block. If World War Two covers intrigue you, you might have acquired much wanted items such as the complete Walt Disney-Pepsi Cola set of 48; or, a General Douglas Mac Arthur propaganda cover dropped over the Philippine Islands. This, just a sampling to prove to you that such covers are available.

- 9: Study your club membership rosters. (plural!) Contact those members interested in old covers.
- 10: Watch and read carefully your club bulletins...every so often, for one reason or another, an old collection will be advertised for sale, either by the piece or as a whole. Estate sales are common. Lack of space or forced to relocate are other reasons...
- 11: Contact the known top experts in this field. (if you don't know who they are, ask.) Very probably they have dupes they will be glad to trade or sell.
- 12: There are a number of collector-dealers in the hobby who actively sell covers. Contact them for prices. One such dealer advertised for years, "Always over a million covers in stock".

So, there's 12 answers to "old covers are not available". There must be many more. The question now: Do you really want to meet this challenge head-on? Are you a collector or an "amasser"? Do you want everything served to you on the proverbial silver platter or are you willing to invest some time, toil and tears?

*Well, I don't have much room for comments. Everything Win has suggested here still applies, although perhaps not to the same degree as 25+ years ago...and it applies to all covers, not just old material. It continually surprises me to see, though, for example, how very few people use the free advertising afforded to them by most of their clubs. A collector, by definition, must always be looking for something, but most remain a 'silent majority'...which makes Win's closing remark quite apropos, I think. You're not going to get covers by osmosis! You have to get out there and do your share of 'field work'!*