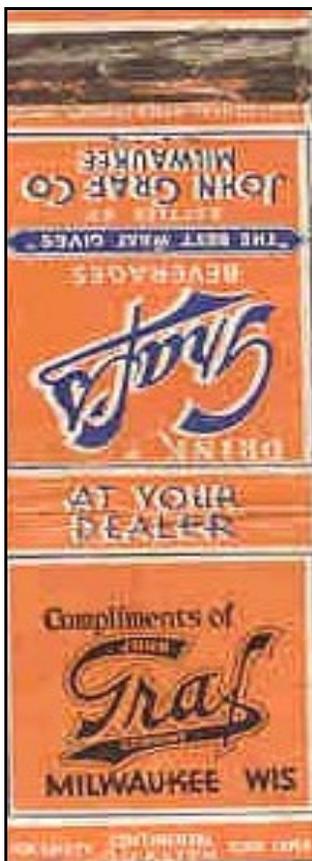


Qualities!

by
Mike Prero

Want to see my face light up? Show me a cover with a 'Quality' footer! There's an almost mystical...dare I say...'quality'...about them. "Quality" in this hobby means only one thing: **OLD!** When you see "Quality" at the bottom of a cover, as a footer, you're looking at a treasure!



Put out in the 1920s and 1930s by a variety of manufacturers, they're not the earliest covers, by any means. Diamond's Safety First predates the, and so do a number of other well-known manumarks and footers, but there's something about that QUALITY in the bottom left hand corner of a cover that always makes Christmas come early!

The most famous, of course, is the Diamond Match Company's **DIAMOND QUALITY**, affectionately known as **DQs**. I saw where someone once said that 500 such covers make up a good collection. If that's true, I've got a way to go, and few, if any, will ever catch up to the legendary Harry Branchaud's collection of 5,000+.

Much rarer, however, are the other QUALITYs...rarely seen, rarely spoken of, and *definitely* rarely obtained. How many of these gems grace your albums?

Acme Quality	(Acme Match Co., 1920s)
American Quality	(American Match Co., 1922-1930s)
Art Match Quality	(Art Match Co., 1922-early 1930s)
Art Quality	(Art Match Co., 1922-early 1930s)
Clover Farm Quality	(Diamond Match Co., c. 1920s)
Eddy Quality	(Eddy Match Co., c. early 1930s)
Empire Quality	(Empire Match Co., 1920s-1930s)
Empress Quality	(Empire Match Co.? 1920s-1930s)
Magna Quality	(Diamond Match Co.?, c. 1920s)
Ohio Quality	(Ohio Match Co., 1930s)
Stone's Quality	(Diamond Match Co., 1920s)
Superba Quality	(Diamond Match Co., c. 1935-c.1937)
Union Match Quality	(Union Match Co., 1927-1929)
Union Quality	(Union Match Co., 1929-c.1934)

Did I leave any out? I don't think so, but who knows what's still out there/

You could go through your entire collection and never come across any real examples of most of the above, but they *do* exist. You might see a few in a rare convention display now and then, and who knows...you may even come across them yourself. That's why you should *...Always Look for the Quality!*

Ever wonder which "Quality" actually appeared on the scene first? It's an interesting question, and there are a number of different contenders in the ring: Diamond Quality, Eddy Quality, Union Quality, Union Match Quality, Art Match Quality, American Quality, Empire Quality, Clover Farm Quality, Magna Quality, Superba Quality, Stone's Quality, Acme Quality...

Almost all of these "Quality's" were being produced in the 1920s-early 1930s, and for several I can't verify any firm dates other than the "1920s." I do have a seemingly solid date for American Quality starting in 1922, which would edge out Diamond Quality, which Bob Oliver's research pinpointed at a 1925 starting date.

I list all the Quality's, and, thus far, I don't know of any dated American Quality which shows 1922, or any DQ dated with 1925, but to answer our question, here, I'd have to say the earliest Quality was American Quality...in the absence of any contrary info.