

Back-Strikers

I don't think I've ever actually seen where any collector specifically listed "Back-strikers" as a wanted category, but I don't see why they wouldn't be of interest as such—they're old, and, unlike the run-of-the-mill old covers, these have some history and distinction behind them, aside from their age. Back-strikers are the early reverse-strikers. Whereas the reverse-strike covers were federally mandated in the early 1970s, with the last of the front-strikers gone by 1978, back-strikers go back several decades earlier. The first appeared in 1927, but Ohio Match Co. was the first to regularly produce them in 1938, and certainly the Ohio Match Co. issues are the best known back-strikers to those of us who collect today.

Even though such back-strikers may not be collected as a category, undoubtedly collectors have them tucked away here and there as additions to their various other categories—as older Hotels, Restaurants, Transportation, and the like. But, they deserve to be taken a look at for the back-strikers they are. They were the 'first' of their kind, and, as Fate would have it, they were a portent of things to come. It'd be interesting to know what the original reasoning was for positioning the striker on the reverse side. Was it simply for safety, or was there something else involved—ease of production, for example. We'll probably never know the why's of it now, but it certainly was a good idea. One has to wonder, then, why the industry stuck with front-strikers until forced to change by the government. Not being privy to the intricacies of the production process, the only reason I can see is simple convenience for the customer. With a front-striker, one doesn't have to turn the matchbook over to strike the match. On the other hand, if the argument for back-strikers is simply safety...I'm trying to remember...I've been a pipe-smoker for the last some 45 years...*Has* a matchbook ever gone up in flames by my striking a match?...Actually, at least twice that I can recall! [Boy, that'll wake you up in a hurry!]

