

Collecting Christmas Covers!

by
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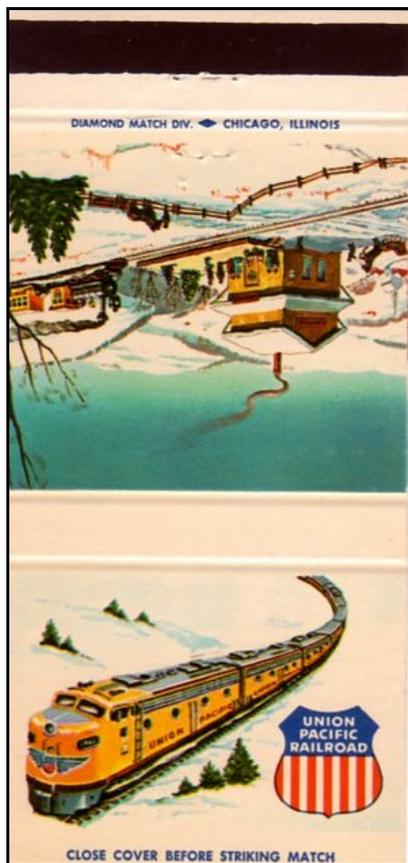
Well, there's hardly a more appropriate time to discuss this category than the Holiday Season! This is one of my favorite types. Don't ask me why; I can't explain it. Perhaps it's in the motherhood, flag, and apple pie genre. Perhaps it's because it's an unusually colorful category. In any event, I never tire of working with these covers.

Different collectors often have their own collecting standards, and Christmas covers are a good example. When I first started out, I only collected one of each type of outside design; the inside was irrelevant. Later, I changed to collecting them all, period! The late Bill Thomas only collected those with no commercial advertising on the front. Any way you choose to collect them, though, there's no doubt that this is a highly attractive category to many a collector, novice and veteran alike.

The older covers are of special interest to me...and what variety!—Midgets, Giants, Features, Cameos, Foillies, Uniglos, Signets, Satins, Pearltones, Rainbows—You name it! I have a little over 7,000 in my collection at the present time.

How to arrange them is always a perplexing question. When I was just starting out, Dan Bitter happened to mention that he knew of a Christmas collector who arranged them by color. Rather an intriguing idea, I thought, and I had mine that way for the first few years. It looked quite nice that way—pages of gold, pages of red, and so on. It also made it pretty easy to sort them out. Eventually, though, as my collection got larger, the relatively few color divisions were just too big to deal with, so now I have them alphabetized first, and then grouped by color with each letter of the alphabet.

Aside from the dazzling colors, endless varieties, and ohhhh so many Fancies, a larger than usual number are Dated, as well. That's frosting on the cake for me, since I collect Dated, too...and Fancies...and most of the cover types! No wonder Christmas is such a treasure trove for me!



And, of course, History serves to make them even more interesting...which leads me into one of my famous classroom stories...Not many people realize that Christmas was actually outlawed in this land once upon a time [*sort of looks as if we may be headed in that direction again!*]. When Charles Cromwell and the Puritan Parliament defeated Charles I in 1648, the Puritans began an austere 10-year reign over England. The Puritans were English Calvinists, a rather bleak, no-nonsense, no-fun group. Feelings were very high against Catholics because of the Reformation, and half or more of Europe's countries had already become predominantly Protestant.

Since Christmas was originally 'Christ's Mass', a Catholic ceremony, the Puritans passed a series of laws designed to wipe it out in England. Indeed, Christmas, itself, was not only outlawed, but it also became a crime to eat mince pies, light Christmas candles, and sing Christmas carols. All businesses were ordered to remain open on Christmas.

By the time Cromwell died in 1658, the majority of the English, who were not Puritans but Anglicans, voted the Puritan Parliament out and began persecuting them. It's not surprising, then, to find that the Puritans who immigrated to the New World and set up the colony of Massachusetts also outlawed Christmas there, up to 1681.