

September 2010

# Collecting Crests

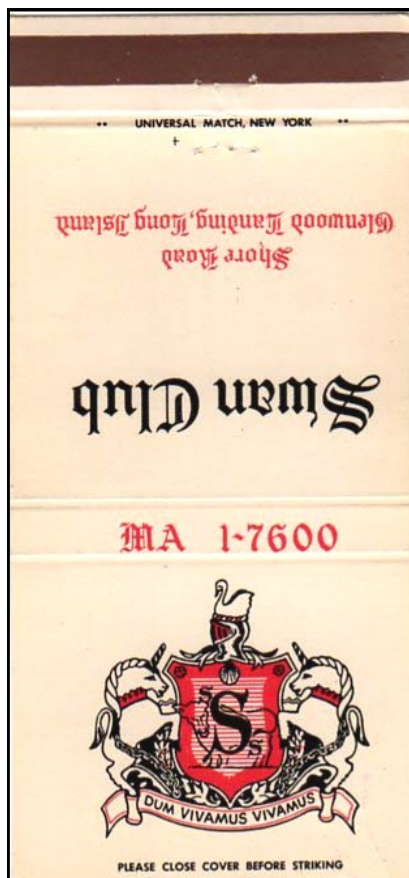
by  
Mike Prero

Since I've taught Medieval history for the last 37 years, it's probably not surprising to find that I have an affinity for Crests. Of course, even without that background, I think I'd still be collecting them...They're just so darn gorgeous!

But, let's get down to basics. If you're going to collect Crests, first you have to come to some decision as to just what a crest *is*, because, when most laymen [*you and I*] use the word, they're referring to the whole thing, as seen on the two covers below. But the complete design is actually called the "Achievement of Arms", and the 'crest' is technically only the decoration at the top. The centerpiece is the "Coat of Arms", usually pictured on a shield. To the sides are the 'supporters', normally living creatures holding up the shield. Finally, at the bottom, is the 'motto', pictured on a scroll. Whew! It's getting complicated!

In the study of Achievements of Arms, called 'Heraldry', there are all sorts of rules and symbols that guide the final creation. For example, only certain colors can be used: gold, silver, yellow, and white in the metallic colors, plus blue, red, black, green, and purple. Items from nature can be shown in their natural colors. No two metallic colors can be placed next to one another...and so forth. But, as collectors of what's already placed on matchover designs, we won't be concerned with such rules.

As noted above, though, somewhere



along the line you're going to have to decide what you'll accept as a Crest, and what you won't. If you're going to be a purist, for example, you're only going to collect those covers that show the entire Achievement of Arms...crest, coat of arms, supporters, and motto. But, as you start looking through covers, you'll quickly find that many Crests are depicted with only three of the four parts, or only two of the four parts, or...just the coat of arms on the shield and nothing else.

So....what are *you* going to accept as Crests in *you're* collection? Look at the last crest pictured below, for example. It has no motto and no supporters. Would that one go into your collection or not? It's your collection, so you set the parameters. If you're satisfied with whatever you come up with, then so be it!

In my own case, I settled on "acceptable covers have to have at least two of the four parts". Thus, I *would* take the last cover pictured below. My reasoning is that in requiring at least two of the four parts be present I eliminate those 'crests' that are simply the 'shields, and yet I still have room to collect all the other 'more complete' designs.

This is one of those huge 'small' categories in that it's one that has thousands of issues but is not widely collected. They're common, and that means they're easily available. And the reason they're common is that they're found mostly on Hotel/Motel/Restaurant covers...and Hotel/Motel/Restaurant covers are by far the most commonly produced matchcovers. Easy!

They come in all sizes and shapes. In my current 1,805 covers, I can see everything from Midgets to Giants...boxes, certainly...and even a couple of Contours. This is also one of those categories that goes way back in time, back to practically the beginning of matchboxes, let alone matchcovers...Not like collecting Web Sites, where you're only going to find them on rear-strikers. So, when looking for Crests, don't forget to check out you Oldies dupes.

