

Striker

Ah, the striker! Mysterious, sensuous, renown throughout the civilized world. One wisp of a match across its sublime surface can lead to anything from a tantalizing medium rare steak to a blazing inferno sweeping across a city—satisfaction and ecstasy...or death and destruction—all from the striker!

And, as with all things great and terrible, the striker has gone through its own peculiar evolution over time. Of course, the striker existed even before the matchbook...because of its use on matchboxes. Here, though, we're only concerned with the former. And, in the almost 120 years since the matchbook's inception, the striker has undergone a number of changes—in substance, in width, in color, and in position.

In fact, it may come as something of a surprise to at least some of you that Joshua Pusey's first matchbook [although some question has been raised if his was actually the *first*] had the striker on the *inside* of the matchbook. However, shortly afterwards, by the time the Binghampton Match Co. was producing the first commercial matchbooks, the striker had already been moved to the outside, someone apparently noting the possible dangers of having the striker by the match heads.

Thus, we basically start out with the striker in the 'standard position', that being on the top flap ('front-striker' to us). And, for standard covers, that's where it stayed for the next some 80 years. There were exceptions here and there, though.

In late 1937, and from there into 1942, Diamond Match Co. produced its Base Friction covers. These had the striker where the bottom fold normally is.



Positions

Given the numbers of other types of covers, these are fairly rare.

Then, in 1938, if my sources are correct, Ohio issued its first Back Striker. These were the early reverse-strikers, thus putting the striker *under* the manumark, rather than above it. For some reason, these didn't become the norm until the government finally mandated such in 1973. And even Ohio still issued most of its covers with the standard positioned striker....so one wonders why it issued Back Strikers for at least those several years...Perhaps it had something to do with the advertising layout on particular covers.

Next, we come to the ever-popular Odd-Striker, a Lion trademark for its covers which featured the striker in an unusual location and shape on the cover, dictated by the advertiser's design (i.e., the famous Hitler cover where the striker is on the seat of his pants); it was issued from 1942-1962. It's also a stand-alone category for such covers. 611 were listed as of 7/09.

Sometime in the 1950's (the example below is dated 1953), both Diamond and Universal experimented with the idea of putting the striker on the *front* panel, rather than the top or back panels. I collect these, just because they're so opposite the norm (I currently have about 20 or so, and they're not all 20-strikes).

Finally, there are the *detachable* strikers, which are technically not even part of the covers; they're usually stapled on. Now, you might immediately think that we must be talking about foreign covers, but, while a number of foreign covers *do* sport detachable covers, there was also one notable type of US cover that boasted such, as well...

O w n a m e ! T h e
**Owname Renewable
Matchbook Co.** - NYC-
based company; later
changed to Owname
Products Corp.; makers
of a rather unique type
of covers: 30-strikes
with the striker held in
place by the staple;
many are dated on the
inside/some are
transparent/ at least 1
is made of copper; 1925-
1940s. 362 currently
listed.

*Can't think of any I
missed, but if you know
of any just let me know.
Don't have any more
room in this spread
anyway!*

