

## Conventions Covers Disappearing?

If I wouldn't have noticed otherwise, being a collector of Dated covers it's pretty obvious that there has been a drastic drop in collector-issued covers for conventions. Such covers used to abound--sets, singles, Girlies, Hillbillies. No more, at least not in the numbers and frequency that we were once used to.

I took counts in my Dated collection to see just what was going on, only convention covers (no club anniversary, Christmas party, etc. covers). Here's what I found...

Year	# of covers	Year	# of covers	Year	# of covers	Year	# of covers
1949	5	1965	82	1981	108	1997	141
1950	6	1966	84	1982	144	1998	114
1951	18	1967	80	1983	181	1999	46
1952	25	1968	86	1984	79	2000	58
1953	63	1969	99	1985	160	2001	34
1954	114	1970	88	1986	101	2002	73
1955	153	1971	73	1987	97	2003	62
1956	102	1972	81	1988	98	2004	41
1957	99	1973	110	1989	140	2005	38
1958	80	1974	79	1990	141	2006	62
1959	80	1975	144	1991	113	2007	52
1960	60	1976	165	1992	97	2008	48
1961	46	1977	157	1993	84	2009	17
1962	60	1978	238	1994	106	2010	27
1963	57	1979	235	1995	124		
1964	103	1980	134	1996	144		

The numbers here aren't absolute--I don't have *all* the Convention covers, and these are just the Dated ones, at that--but what I'm missing I'm missing consistently, I believe--so the general trend still holds true, I think. And you *can* see a general trend here. I don't have any convention covers as we know them before 1949, and remember there were no convention in 1943 and 1945, due to the war. From 1949 to the early 1950s, they appear regularly in small numbers; from the mid-1950s to the early 1970s, there's a fairly steady, solid flow; the issues reach a resounding crescendo in the mid-1970s to early 1980s [*Wouldn't you just know it? I came in right at the tail end!*]; from the mid-1980s, things start going downhill; and in the 2000s, the numbers are a fraction of what they used to be. Thus, there seems to be a nice curve, and you can see where we are now!

Why? Well, the primary factor has to be the implosion of the domestic match industry, mainly in the 1980s (Maryland moved to Canada in 1984; Columbia defunct in 1985; Ohio defunct in 1987; Universal defunct in 1988; Superior defunct in 1990; Lion defunct in 1993). That lead to a drastic decline in collectors, and that means less collectors to issue convention covers. But secondary factors probably include 1) the increased cost of purchasing such matchbooks; 2) the newer restrictive art limitations on such small orders; and 3) with fewer collectors, fewer attending conventions, and fewer traders...what do you do with all those covers once you have them?

In actual fact, judging from the last several years, if it weren't for Girlie issues (mostly sets) there'd be practically no Convention covers at all. Let's hear it for the Girlie collectors!