

Strategies For Dealing With Paper Pages

In this age of plastic album pages, does anyone even *use* slotted paper pages anymore?...You bet! In fact, even though, as far as I know, no one actually makes such paper pages anymore, I'd be willing to wager that those paper pages still outnumber their plastic counterparts by a comfortable margin. They were the standard before plastic pages became available, after all, and switching over to plastic can be expensive.

But, they have their disadvantages, and the most serious one is that they can really damage your covers, especially the older ones. When you're sorting through covers and you notice nicks and tears around the corner areas, that's caused by fitting them into the slots on paper pages. So, here are some suggestions

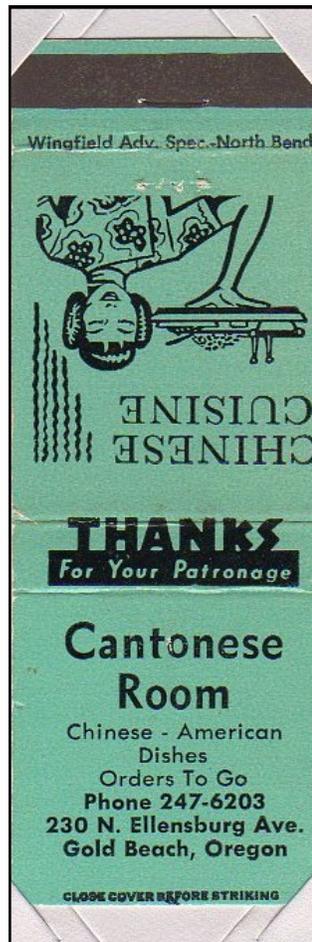
1) Right off the bat, I'd advise against putting any Pre-War covers on paper pages. They're thicker than today's covers, for one thing, and that means they're more difficult to get into the slots, especially when you've already got a cover in that slot on the opposite side. They're also much more likely to have brittle strikers, 'soft spots', and other problem areas, so trying to jockey them into slots just increases the possibility of further damage.

If you *do* have to mount such covers on slotted pages, use the method shown in the second pic here, avoiding the use of the crossbars. If there are going to be problems, they're usually caused by trying to wedge the covers under the crossbars.

Front side of page, using crossbars top and bottom



Reverse side of page, not using crossbars



2) Some covers are slightly wider than others. In 20's, for example, Superior and Monarch covers, especially, from the 1950s are wider than other 20s. In 30's, older Canadian covers are annoyingly wider than their American counterparts. Thus, when working with paper pages, one should always have a knife or razor blade handy for widening the slots when necessary.

3) Correspondingly, some covers are slightly shorter than the norm (D.D. Bean 20-strikes, especially the cheapo nationals produced 1970's-1980's, come to mind). The result is a cover that may pop out of the slots and even fall out of the page. Unfortunately, there's nothing that a knife or a razor can do about that. However, there *is* a solution.

Referring to the pics here, always put such short covers on the front of the page, rather than the reverse side (assuming you use the slots as I have pictured here). That way, you take advantage of the 'crossbars' on the slots to hold the cover in. And, in such cases, I always try to make sure there is

thicker cover in the same slot on the reverse side of the page. That also makes the short cover fit more snugly.

4) There's also the possibility that you'll sometimes encounter a cover or box that is just a tad bit too long (XL's or Talls fall into this category, for example, as well as a few foreign covers and boxes). Here, with your knife or razor, you can simply extend the top and bottom slots out until said cover or box is comfortably accommodated.

5) 40-strikes seem to present a special problem with slotted pages. Because of the extra cover size involved here, there's much more tension in the cover when you try to fit it into the final slots. The result is that sometimes the crossbar is torn open and rendered useless. The obvious solution, here, then, is to simply always only use the reverse side of the page to mount 40's, thereby avoiding the use of all the crossbars. Of course, if you do this, you're wasting the space on the front side of the page...so this solution isn't practical for most collectors.

Instead, I suggest, as a general rule for mounting 40's, that you only use the crossbars on the top *or* the bottom, but not both, as shown below. That way, when you approach that critical moment of fitting the final corners into the slots, and the tension in the cover is the greatest, you won't have the crossbars to deal with, and you'll avoid the possibility of breaking the crossbars and/or damaging the corners of your cover..



In fact, this last strategy might well be one to follow for all your covers, except where noted above. That is, using the crossbars on the top *or* the bottom, but not both. That way, you give all your covers the benefit of being held in by the crossbars at one end, but they're especially easy to finish off fitting in on the other end, because you're *not* using the crossbars there.

6) Slotted pages also don't accommodate all sizes. As far as I've ever seen, paper pages exist for 10's, 20', 30's, 40's, Jewels, Aces, and Midgets. Other than that, you just have to improvise. 12-strikes, for example, can be accommodated by simply widening the slots on a 10-strike page. The slots on other sized pages can sometimes be widened or lengthened for a few of the foreign-sized covers and boxes. But, for all the rest of the odd-ball sizes that won't work. What you *can* do, though, is use blank paper pages (no slots) and customize them to your own needs with photo corners. That enables you to put any size you want on the page, or even mix and match. This is especially effective for Giants and all those really creative Swedish and Japanese die-cuts.

7) Occasionally, one or more of the three holes punched in your pages to get them into your 3-ring binder will break. That's easily repaired with those little adhesive, reinforced circles that go over the damaged hole.

Slotted paper pages will be with us for decades to come, and, for some collectors, will remain the pages of choice, plastic notwithstanding. They do the job, but perhaps these suggestions will make the process less frustrating.