

## About Those Stock Designs...

'Stock designs', those that are ready-made and appear on a number of different covers, actually used to be much more common than they are now. We're all familiar with stock Best Western covers or stock Christmas covers, but in the period from 1920-1959 stock designs were really at their peak.

Many businesses then were either unwilling or unable to pay the extra charge for custom designed covers, or the manufacturer hadn't yet geared up to producing such customized designs. In any event, a business could get a case of stock design matchbooks (1000) for \$4.50 in the 1940's, so many took advantage of it.

The publisher, printing house, or match manufacturer (it varied) printed up a catalog of stock designs that a perspective customer could leaf through, and eventually the customer could point to a chosen design and stock number. The match salesman would then also note what the customer wanted on the cover in the way of advertising his own particular business.

The finished product would normally be a cover with the business name, address, etc. on the front, and the stock design on the back, or visa versa. Lots of stock designs also appeared on the inside, as well. And during World War II, as any Patriotic collector can attest, it became quite fashionable to order your matches with stock patriotic designs.

Stock designs are a nuisance to some collectors, but to others they hold the tempting possibility of putting together eye-catching page after eye-catching page. If you happen to be a Lobster collector, for example. Two pages of the same stock design, but with each cover being issued by a different restaurant, is a pretty appealing display.

...\$4.50 for a case of matches!!

