

“Flat” Features

No, they're not salesmen's "flats." They're Features without the matches, just the covers. A number of collectors, including myself, collect by manumarks in a number of areas, and Lion Match Co.'s "Feature" mm is a growing category here. The first thing that runs through someone's mind when dealing with this category is, "Who on earth would strip the beautiful Feature matches out of these matchbooks and leave just the cover?" Well, no one I know; that's for certain! But, in bygone years, a lot of people apparently did, because these "Flat Features," as I refer to them, are relatively numerous. Of course, looking at how manufacturers have released covers in more recent times, it's also quite possible that when many, most, or even all of these were originally put into circulation that they contained no Feature matches at all, even though the manumark clearly stated "Feature." The same phenomenon, by the way, is to be seen with many of Lion's "21 FEATURE" covers (30-strike size).

Why collect them? Well, one good reason is that they're old, the majority coming from the 1940s and 1950s. That means you would be saving covers that are already 50-60 years old. For matchcovers, that's impressive. Another reason is that such Lion Features aren't made anymore. Indeed, the venerable Lion Match Co. is defunct, itself. Thus, you'd be collecting a finite item...a "limited edition," so to speak. They're also all front-strikers, of course (well, basically; there are some early back-strikers in this group). That would make them collectible to many collectors in an of itself. And, the piece de resistance, these are high-quality covers—we're talking Lion Match Co. at its zenith, for goodness sake!—the art work tends to be very nice, and these are relatively thick, heavy covers. I started collecting these in 1990 after looking at Dan Bitter's collection, which numbered well over a thousand then, and I have been an avid collector ever since. Dan, by the way, increased his collection to 3,212 as of January 2006.

