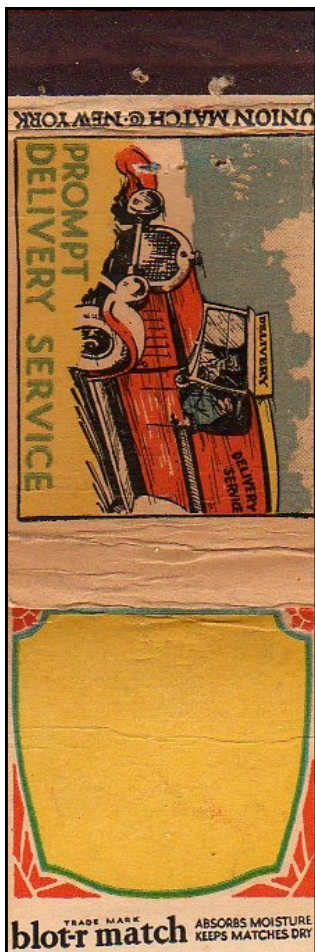


## Why 'Old' Is Old And 'New' Is New

One of the “basics” of matchcover collecting is learning which covers are “old” and which are “new.” Although there are many stages that can be seen in both types, the great dividing line distinguishing the two is World War II. If the cover in question was manufactured prior to December 7, 1941, it is considered “old” and can be referred to as a “Pre-War” cover. On the other hand, if the cover was manufactured after that date, it is considered to be a newer cover, even though, in fact, it may actually be as much as 56 years old! [Note, then, that the dividing line is *not* front-striker as opposed to reverse-striker. Front-strikers were still being issued as late as 1976, and early reverse-strikers were to be seen as early as the mid 1920s] There are several major reasons why the hobby uses America’s entrance into World War II as the dividing line .

First, there are some striking (no pun intended) physical differences between Pre-War covers and later issues. Many of the Pre-War covers were longer than what we are used to seeing today. Referred to as “Tall” or “Extra-Long,” these covers measured app. 4 13/16” in length, as opposed to the app. 4 7/16” of more modern covers. Characteristically, these longer covers are mid-1930s and earlier. Diamond, Universal, Ohio, Lion, Federal, and all of the smaller manufacturers of the period produced these lengthened versions. They were, in fact, the industry standard at the time. By the mid-1930s, however, the industry was moved to shorten the length of covers due to the requirements of cigarette vending machines. None of the longer covers are seen after the December 7, 1941, date.

“Tall” or “XL”



The material demands of the war also necessitated the conservation of resources, one of the effects of which was the mandated use of a smaller staple in matchbooks. Hence, another general difference to be seen between Pre-War and later covers.

Yet more differences are to be seen when we consider the strikers, themselves. You know you have an older cover when you see that the striker has been applied in an apparently crude fashion, perhaps even by hand, usually in a slanting position rather than horizontal. This is not true of all the older covers, but by the late 1930’s, this type of striker application had disappeared completely, so coming across such a cover gives you another indication of age.

Another feature about early strikers, and one almost all of us have had occasion to curse about while trying to strip such covers, is that prior to the late 1930s, many strikers were applied *after* the matches were assembled, thereby “burying” the staple under the striker (which is why you have to “dig” the staple out of the earlier covers...and usually at least partially damage the striker in the process).

“Sometime in the late 1930s, the manufacturers discovered that the striker material could be applied to the printed covers *before* assembly.” Now, the striker was applied to a printed cover, “usually with a wheel that picks up the material from a vat and rolls it on the printed

Crude striker



cover...Apparently, either Diamond didn't learn how to apply striker material to the printed cover before assembly, or chose not to, until about 1940, as the 1939 New York World's Fair covers still had the staple buried under the striker material."

The width of the striker seen in most Pre-War covers was also noticeably wider, varying from between 9-11 mm, although an 11 mm striker was fairly rare. "During the era of the Safety First and Diamond Quality (DQ) [1915-1938], the striker width remained rather consistent at from 9 to 10 mm." Later covers normally have striker widths between 5-7 mm.

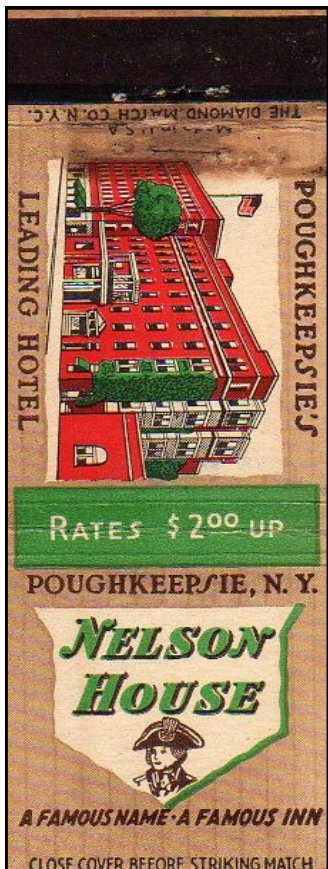
By World War II, the wide-striker had gone the way of the longer covers. The one notable exception that comes to mind is Superior Match Co., which continued issuing wide-striker covers all the way into the early 1950s.

Second, World War II marked the end of many match manufacturers. Competition, shortages of materials, new manufacturing dictates...the times just proved to be too much for many of the smaller companies. All-Trades, Advance, Chapman, Continental, Crown, Federal, Gem, King Middays, Merit, Oname, Republic (the earlier one), Standard, US Match & Prtg. Co., and Unit match companies are just some of the manufacturers that had disappeared during the war. Additionally, some specific types of covers were also war-time casualties, such as Lion's *Midget* and Ohio's *Junior*, neither of which could survive the change in staple specifications.

Finally, World War II also serves as a convenient divider as far as "footers" are concerned [the text at the very tip of the cover, such as "Close Cover Before Striking"]. *Safety First*, *For Safety*, *Diamond Quality*, and all the other "Qualities" were, generally, forever gone by the time the war was over. Actually, the "Qualities" and Ohio's *For Safety* had disappeared by the mid-1930s, and Jersey's *Safety First* continued until 1948, but, again, World War II is a logical convenience. By the time the war was concluded, footers were basically reduced to "Close Cover Before Striking" and variations thereof.

**Wide-striker**

**Later striker**



Of course, semantics plays a part in all of this, as well. When a collector tells me he or she is after "old" covers, I take that to mean Pre-War covers unless something else is specified. However, if that collector indicates that he or she wants "old Holiday Inns," "old Filigrees," or "older Jutes," it's understood that what they're looking for is the earlier issues of that type of cover, regardless of what the actual issuance dates might be. There were no Pre-War Holiday Inns, Filigrees, or Jutes, but each type certainly has its earlier issues.

So, 'old' is old, and 'new' is new...depending on what covers are being talked about, even though World War II is the general dividing line.