

Background on Early VA Hospital Issues

[from RMS Editor Violet Isakson, c. late 1960s]

“Several years ago, the Veteran’s Administration Hospital Canteen Service with started the large Billboard matchcovers in Royal Blue. These blue matchcovers are sold through their canteens for 1¢ per cover.

These blue Billboards come in several variations. The earlier covers were all made by Universal of Washington, D. C. and Universal of Baltimore. The first ones had black strikers with white paper for the inside. Inside in fine print read: DO NOT MAIL MATCHES, TEAR ON PERFORATION!

More variations came in later. They were: Gray striker with gray inside and words, DO NOT MAIL MATCHES, CUT ON DOTTED LINE. Then Gray striker with white inside and DO NOT MAIL MATCHES, TEAR ON PERFORATION. Next, Gray striker with white inside, DO NOT MAIL MATCHES, CUT ON DOTTED LINE. The last of these single Billboards was gray with blank white inside. These came in late fifties and the Postal regulations allowed the matches to be sent through the mails if properly wrapped in foil or mailed in foil lined mailers.

During 1960 Universal came in with a new smaller print manumark which made the manumark much shorter and collectors added these as a new variation. All of the above Blue Billboard Matchcovers mentioned are single covers in the Royal Blue previously mentioned and each had a picture in gold of the respective Hospital for which the matchcover was issued. The front of the cover had in gold letters diagonally across: VETERANS ADMINISTRATION HOSPITAL; and also the name of the respective hospital. These single covers seem to be no longer made and the following have been discovered more recently.

A set of five in light navy blue appeared. The front side had a sketch of a white Eagle with white letters: VETERANS ADMINISTRATION. The back each had a different white picture, 1-The United States Capitol, 2-Lincoln Memorial, 3-Mount Rushmore, 4-Iwo Jima and the fifth one has THE TOMB OF THE UNKNOWN SOLDIER. To have a complete collection of these, one must have all three titles with the other four covers complete, for each set, making three complete sets. These sets have Universal Match Corp., St. Louis and Universal Match Corp., Washington, DC on the cover’s manumarks.

Next a set with the same general description as the above set appeared, only this set omitted the TOMB and Mount Rushmore pictures and added JEFFERSON MEMORIAL and LIBERTY BELL. This set is also in a lighter blue.

During 1965 and 1966 a set of nine by Maryland Match Co. appeared. This set is a medium blue with the usual EAGLE and VETERANS ADMINISTRATION in white on the front. The back has a picture in a white circle. The following appears: 1-Washington Monument, Washington, D. C., 2-Alamo, San Antonio, Texas, 3-Mount Vernon, Virginia, 4-Jefferson Memorial, Wash. DC., 5- The Capitol, Washington, D. C., 6-Iwo Jima Monument, Washington, D. C., 7-Liberty Bell, Philadelphia, 8-Independence Hall, Philadelphia and, 9-Lincoln Memorial, Washington, D. C.

The latest Veterans Administration set is a lighter blue set of ten covers by Universal Match of St. Louis. The front has the usual Eagle and VETERANS ADMINISTRATION in white. The back has picture in a white square. The following appears: 1-Liberty Bell, 2-Mount Rushmore, 3-Statue of Lincoln, 4-Jefferson Memorial, 5- Statue of Liberty, 6- Iwo Jima Memorial, 7-Monticello, 8- Gateway Arch, 9- Capitol Building and 10-Independence Hall.”