

Pioneers Of The Hobby: I

[from Esther Rancier, *Match Covers A Guidebook for Collectors*, 1976]

Our ancestral peers are long gone now, but it was due to their efforts that we have the hobby today. Imagine those early days, when one could walk around and simply pick up DQs, Group I, and other types which we consider today's treasures. They were the early collectors, the original collectors, who eventually stepped up to formalize their collecting interests and efforts into the matchcover collecting hobby.

“Doc” Wilson: The hobby has many pioneers, but none so colorful as Wert “Doc” Wilson. Modesty was not one of his virtues; he, himself, said that he was the one who knew the most about matchcovers, and it is not undisputed. In 1936, he published *Match Pack Notes*, the first publication devoted exclusively to matchcovers. It was highly informative but intensely personal. “Doc” hated matchcover clubs and refused to join the Rathkamp Matchcover Society when it was formed. He was the first County Seat and Small Towns collector. It is rumored that his County Seat collection lacked only two items. This record still survives [1976] as today's best collector is far from that record. He devised the Group 1,2,3,4, and 5 system, which he later denounced, arranging his covers only by town and state. In 1939, he became angry and quit publishing his *Notes*. After his death in 1944, his collection was purchased by Edgar Perkins of Florida.

Horace Rush: Horace Rush was a charter member and early RMS worker and served as Editor for many years. He won the first Outstanding Collector Award in 1946. In 1950, as RMS Secretary, he estimated he spent no less than two hours a day on Club work. In memory of this labor, the annual RMS award to the collector getting the most new members is now called the Horace Rush Memorial Award. Since his death in 1957, the hobby has never had another quite like him.

Henry Rathkamp: Henry Rathkamp was the original founder of RMS. On September 2-4, 1939, in Newport, Rhode Island, at Rathkamp's home, the first annual convention of matchcover collectors assembled, with people even camped in the backyard. They were greeted by the mayor, went sightseeing, discussed the hobby, and swapped covers. Fifty attended. In spite of war clouds, plans were made for another convention. It took place September 11-13, 1941 at Ken Riggs' home at Pocasset, Massachusetts, with 45 collectors from eight states attending. On September 12th, the collectors organized the Rathkamp Memorial Society of Matchcover Collectors (Rathkamp having died since the last meeting) in honor of the founder of their group. In later years, the name was shortened to the Rathkamp Matchcover Society and is known to hobbyists as RMS.

Robert Lockard: Bob Lockard of Philadelphia was the first RMS President. He made crucial decisions which vitally affected the fate of the infant Society. He appointed the committee that drew up the Constitution and used an Executive Committee which met repeatedly in the early years and held together the Society during the World War II years when travel curtailed formal conventions. Before RMS's second convention he passed away, but his imprint on the Society remains clear today.

Edgar Perkins: A charter member of RMS, Edgar Perkins was its first Secretary and is one pioneer who is still collecting at his retirement home in Pompano Beach, Florida [as of 1976]. He was active not only in RMS, but also in the NACAMO and Old Dominion clubs. He published two hobby books which are now out-of-print: *Matchcover Collecting As A Finer Art* and *American Bookmatch Collector*. He was also active in the Sunshine Club and issued the Perkins Americana covers for collectors.