



Editorial

In Praise Of Earlier Collectors

There's an old saying about how we all stand so high because we stand on the shoulders of those who came before us. In my History classes, I'm always stressing how civilizations have borrowed the advancements of previous societies. In our own society, someone once figured out that 95% of everything the average American uses in an average day was invented by someone else, in another society, from another time.

Not surprisingly, then, it's the same with us, in our own hobby. How many covers would we have in our collections if it weren't for prior collectors gathering those covers, preserving those covers, and funneling them into the hobby? Only a very small fraction.

It was also those earlier collectors who started the hobby, established the standards by which we collect, and set the traditions that distinguish our hobby from others--traditions such as swapfests, room-hopping, display competitions, and so on.

They were the first to start collecting covers, in the early 1930s, at the latest. They scoured the tobacco shops for DQ's, Safety Firsts, and Midgets. They joined the early collectibles clubs, set up trading relationships with other collectors, and eventually decided that there should be a club devoted exclusively to match collecting. And thus they founded RMS, the first, and oldest, matchcover collecting club in the world.

They publicized the new hobby, extolling its virtues and displaying album after album. And, lo! They begat more matchcover collectors. They became fruitful and multiplied! And they went forth and established new clubs, from ocean to ocean, border to border.

They were patient, diligent, and innovative. They spent endless hours sewing their own pages, cataloging covers, and producing the hobby's first lists. They fashioned collecting standards, rules for trading, and bylaws for their organizations.

They met together in the first club meetings, formed the first conventions and swapfests, recognized others with the first awards. They published the first bulletins and held the first auctions. They became the hobby's first presidents, vice-presidents, secretaries, and treasurers. They were the hobby's first volunteers, its first tireless workers, its first advocates.

Those early collectors also became the first Outstanding Collectors of the Year and the first Hall of Famers. They gave, and received, the hobby's earliest awards. They pointed the way for those of us to come.

Some are remembered--Rathkamp, Perkins, Polick, Torrent, Cooper, and others; most are not...but they all deserve recognition for making us the collectors we are today. Like the explorers of yesteryear, they were the pioneers and trailblazers who opened the way for those who followed. Those of us today may, perhaps leave our own individual legacies to the hobby, but to the early collectors, the first collectors, goes the first appellation, the nod of approval, and a job "well done!"