



Heritage or Hersey: II

Not surprisingly, perhaps, since these were the early days of the hobby, cover collectors represented a small group and, just like today, spread themselves over more than one hobby club. Thus, when the initial meetings that eventually lead up to the formation of the Rathkamp Matchcover Society were held, most of those collectors present were already members of such clubs as the United Matchonians and the Blue Moon Match Label Club. Also, not surprisingly, there were more hard feelings when RMS was finally formed in 1941. Those earlier clubs felt that, in addition to the plagiarism noted in our last issue, their very membership was being seduced away from them.

From the point of view of the founders of RMS, however, the main focus was on having an organization exclusively devoted to collecting phillumenic material, rather than the part-time spotlight that it was being given by these earlier organizations which also encompassed other collectibles, as well. I can sympathize with that view, but I also sympathize with M. A. Richardson, W. W. Wilson, Ernest Damron, and their like. They had basically gotten the collecting of covers, boxes and labels started as an actual organized hobby in the United States only to see it slip away from them and be basically left behind in the dust. I suppose one of them might have tried to get ahead of those pesky phillumenic rebels and head 'em off at the pass by setting up an RMS of their own *before* those 'hot heads' like Oliver, Riggs, Hospers, Lockard, and others could set their own up, but, even though they had forewarnings of such, apparently they didn't have the foresight...or perhaps just not the inclination. The forewarnings, by the way, came in *Match Lights*, which actually chronicled the original meetings, starting in 1939, leading to the formation of RMS.

Well, the rest is History, as they say, and, certainly, it *was* RMS that gave the hobby its real structure and maturity, as well as its continued publicity and evolution. Still, as I answer my students when they continually ask why it's necessary to study 'all that old stuff', I think its important that we not forget, and thus overlook, those who were responsible for helping us get where we are today. To use a fairly standard analogy, it's like standing at the top of a human pyramid and congratulating ourselves for being so high...without giving thought to all those people who are holding us up.