

HOBBY HISTORY

Matchbook Advertising Pays Off!....Well, Sometimes!

“Until the 2,500 booklets of paper matches ordered from a Chicago firm reached him on March 23, G. L. Evers was a respected community pillar in Dadeville, Tallapoosa County, Alabama. But now—

Mr. Evers feels that those matches ruined his reputation, so he is suing the maker for \$125,000 damages. The suit was filed in the Federal Court yesterday.

Mr. Evers’ chances of being elected county tax collector looked good. He kept the general store and was a good church member. He was a Democrat and like all the folks in his county, and ardent prohibitionist.

To forward his candidacy, he purchased the matches through an agent for a match company. He specified that the outside of the cover should bear his name and his record as an honest and able candidate. The inside was to have a simple notation that he had paid for that he had paid for the advertising matter.

The day the matches arrived, a big political rally was being staged in his town and Mr. Evers, having glanced at the outside of one of the packets of matches, began passing them out to all the prospective voters. A wave of good feeling arose about him. Suddenly it receded. As each of the voters had occasion to use their matches, it was found they immediately closed the booklet indignantly to conceal the inside of the booklet from the womenfolk.

Already a thousand booklets were in circulation when Mr. Evers looked inside one. His message wasn’t there. Instead he beheld a ‘ribald and obscene cartoon’ of a small boy by a stream. And

to make things worse, under it was printed this advice:

‘DON’T DRINK WATER,
DRINK BEER!’

The other candidates condemned him for the cartoon and the church groups met to protest against his urging the dry Tallapoosans to swill beer. Result: he ran a bad third in the race for county collector.” [*Chicago Tribune, June 14, 1938*]

Ed note: It’s especially interesting to note in this humorous incident that people not only objected to the anti-prohibitionist text, but also to the ‘obscene’ nature of the cartoon. Seeing all the single and stock Girlies from the past, and a number of well-known suggestive cartoons from the same period, as well, I think at least most of today’s collectors simply assume that such depictions were more or less universally accepted at the time. However, there was a large segment of the population that found these covers to be offensive...certainly a much larger group than you would find in today’s population....funny story, though!