

HOBBY HISTORY

Merit Match Company

by Mike Prero

Hardly anything is known about the Merit Match Company. It was short-lived and had no appreciable impact on the industry, but, ironically, that's its attraction for collectors—the resulting rarity of its covers.

The company existed during World War II. Its production center was in Elizabeth, New Jersey. Elizabeth was also the home of the Jersey and Manhattan Match companies, but no connection between them and the Merit Match Company has thus far been shown to exist.

Judging from the covers I've been able to examine so far, Merit's business area was restricted to the East: New Jersey, Pennsylvania, New York, etc.

All of the Merit covers I have ever seen are World War II Patriotics. All are 20-strikes, rather bland, and have stock designs on the back. In fact, I have only seen two different such stock designs. It would be unusual if those were the only ones that the company had used, but, given Merit's short life span, it's a definite possibility.

One stock design shows the famous General Douglas MacArthur bust similar to those used by a number of other match manufacturers at the time. The other design is a red, white, and blue shield with "Remember Pearl Harbor" and "Victory Will Be Ours." Also notable is the fact that all these covers sport a Safety First footer. At least one cover is dated 1942.

Merit Match Company was apparently one of the many business casualties of the war—just too many shortages, too many restrictions, too much competition.

All this adds up to pitifully few matchcovers. I

currently have five such covers in my own collection and only 20 listed. I'd be very interested in getting photocopies of any that anyone happens to have, as I would on any of the older covers, so that our knowledge of these covers, and their manufacturers, might be expanded. And if you have any—hang onto them!