

HOBBY HISTORY

The Movers & Shakers: I

by Mike Prero

So far we've covered the histories of various companies—births, mergers, deaths; scions of the industry—the founders of match-making dynasties and would be kings; match tax stamps, and much more, but I think it's about time we take a look at and give due credit and recognition to the movers and shakers in the hobby, itself. So, for the next several issues we'll be discussing the founders of the hobby and of RMS, the shapers and trend-makers, and the tireless and dedicated souls who make this hobby work, who put in countless hours, not on their own collections, but on making sure the gears of the hobby are always well-oiled and running as smoothly as possible.

Henry Rathkamp, for whom our Society is named, was born August 26th, 1883, in New York City. He joined the United States Navy as an apprentice at the age of 14; he was married at the age of 20, and was the father of twins at 21! He reared a family of seven children all of whom lived near his home at 8 Elliot Place, Newport, R.I. He was always a hobbyist and started his collecting career with stamps which he finally sold to begin anew with matchbook covers in 1932. He specialized in Group One, liked the Army-Navy covers best and collected all kinds besides. He also had a wonderful collection of old beer steins which had a place of honor in his special hobby basement.

Henry proved to be a very fine host at the first large meeting of cover collectors which took place at his home on Labor Day weekend, 1939. His unexpected death in 1940 convinced founding collectors to later name their collectors' organization after him—our own Rathkamp Matchcover Society.

Ernest Damron, of Morgan-town, WV, was one

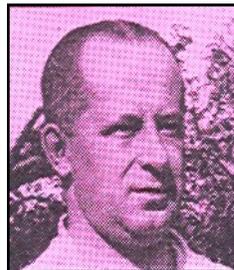


of the first organizers of the hobby. He was one of the very early collectors that we know of. In 1934, he joined The Blue Moon Match Label Club. He founded United Matchonian in 1936, which then went on to become what was probably the

largest such collector's club in the United States at the time, although, as has been noted elsewhere, it encompassed more than just cover collecting. Looking through issues of his *The United*, it's easy to see that he was very organized and really into what he was doing. His newsletter included several features that were to become staples of later hobby publications—ads, question and answer sessions, President's message, etc.

As with other early hobby organizers, Damron eventually felt he had been betrayed by other collectors, as they eventually left and formed RMS. Unlike W. W. Wilson, who folded his *Match Pack Notes* out of disgust in 1940, Damron kept his club going until he died in 1951.

Robert (Bob) Lockard, of Bryn Mawr, PA, was



one of the founders of RMS (RMS member #9). He was one of the early collectors in the hobby and was noted for his ardent hobby interests. Long before the formation of RMS, Bob was a member of the Blue Moon match Label Club and

had served as Secretary of United Matchonian. A noted prankster, he once gave Edgar Perkins what he termed the world's most beautiful feature. As Edgar opened this treasure, a firecracker inside exploded, causing much merriment. Bob also delighted in introducing himself as Tom Torrent, while Tom introduced himself as Bob Lockard.

Bob was elected first President of RMS in 1941. He was still serving in that capacity when he died suddenly in 1944; he was only 44 years old. He was inducted into the Hall of Fame in 1987.