

HOBBY HISTORY

The Movers & Shakers: VI

Doc Wilson - "Very little is known about Doc, largely because he would have nothing to do with other collectors, but legend has it that he worked for an adding machine company on the Pacific Coast until one night when, at a company banquet, Doc's wife made a scene. Doc walked out on the banquet, the wife, and the job. He turned up next in Baltimore, and stayed there, collecting match covers, until he died, at which time an intensive search was undertaken for the cash fortune that he was supposed to have hidden somewhere in his collection and for some relative who would pay for his funeral.

Doc is said to have had at one time "the greatest collection of match covers in the world." From time to time, he is known to have sold off parts of his collection for more than \$18,000. But the part he worked most of 10 years to build up and would not sell while he lived was his 'small town' collection.

Doc's ambition was to get one match cover from every town in the United States with a population of less than 1,000. It is said that he sat down at his typewriter every morning at 6 A.M. with a *Postal Guide* beside him and worked until midnight or later writing letters asking for match covers. If there was no business in the town which used match cover advertising, Doc would send the postmaster a blank match cover, with return postage, and ask him to cancel the blank with the town's stamp. When Doc died, 15,000 out of a possible 55,000 postmasters had come across.

...[Ed] Perkins bought the remains of "Doc" Wilson's celebrated collection when Wilson died. It weighed three quarters of a ton." [From *The American Magazine*, August, 1950, pp. 42-43+] [Special thanks to Richard Thompson, MN, for this]

Frank Ryan, PA: "...an engineer of Philadelphia and three times president of the Rathkamp Match Cover Society, has his own scheme for building up a collection by correspondence. Not entirely satisfied with the response he was getting from the hundreds of members whose names and addresses are given in the match-cover club lists, Ryan joined a Pen Pals club. One pen club led to another, and now he belongs to 7 of them. The idea was that these non-collectors, on receiving a letter from Ryan, would fork over any old match covers they had kicking around which they believed to be valueless. Often, what has happened is that, in response to a letter asking for match covers, Ryan gets a proposal of marriage.

He writes back politely saying that he is already married and has two daughters, thus spreading disappointment pretty widely in the wake of his search for match covers." [From *The American Magazine*, August, 1950, pp. 42-43+]

Frank Ryan died in 1972, after 38 years of collection. He was RMS President from 1946-49, voted Outstanding Collector for 1948, and inducted into the Hall of Fame in 1984.