

Paleophillumeny

A “treasure,” I suppose, is anything you come across that you can add to your collection; it could be any cover in any category, depending what the particular focus of the collector in question happens to be, but “treasure” for the paleophillumenist only means one thing....***OLD!***

Of course, “old” is relative [*see discussion on pp. 12-13*], but the world of Paleophillumeny, with a few notable exceptions, centers around a relatively small group of Pre-War covers. Some, such as ***Diamond Quality, Federal, Crown, Star, King Midas***, and the like are well-known throughout the hobby; others, such as ***Douglas, Empire, Rex, Acme, Hercules, Hellman, Los Angeles***, and perhaps a couple of dozen more types, are unknown to many collectors.

It's not just “old,” though, that differentiates the covers concerning us, here. There is also **RARITY!** And, “rarity,” one might argue, might also be seen to be a relative term. There are at least over 5,000 DQs, for example. Can we talk about “rare” and “thousands” in the same breath? You bet!...when set against the millions of different covers produced over the decades. And with DQs, I've purposely used an extreme example. The rest of the treasures to be sought, here, number far fewer.

We know what determines “old.” What about “rarity?” Rarity is determined by: 1) numbers, and 2) availability. The numbers produced of these particular “treasure” covers were never large to begin with. America's smoking population was significantly smaller before the war; there was much more competition in the domestic match manufacturing industry in those days; and, many of the manufacturers of these now eagerly sought-after covers were only in business a few years before they went bust. Add in the normal amount of attrition that one would expect to see over the decades, and you come out

with very small numbers.

Availability of these covers refers to how easy, or, in this case, how difficult, are they are to procure today. Although one occasionally hears a complaint or two from newer collectors that the “old-timers” are sitting on their old covers, refusing to part with them, and thus making it next to impossible for the people coming into the hobby to collect such gems, undoubtedly the vast majority of what's still available is *still* in the hands of the population at large (i.e., non-collectors). That means that the really gung-ho paleophillumenist is going to go out into the community and search for these treasures, rather than simply waiting for them to appear in auction lots and trades.

A perfect example of this involves two paleophillumenists that I happen to know quite well: myself and Loren Moore, CA. Now, I have been collecting these rare, old covers for a significantly larger number of years than Loren, but because Loren regularly combs flea markets, yard sales, paper shows, etc., his collection, of, say, DQs, must be at least four times larger than mine. He's going to the main source....and he's not paying auction prices, either! For the rest of us, who either don't have the time or inclination to similarly search, there is the “lesser” source...collectors.

Which leads us back to the statement above, where veteran collectors were being accused of hoarding their rarities....it's patently untrue. Unless they're nearing the end of their collecting careers, however, it's not reasonable to expect that they're going to put their collections up for grabs. It's their *dupes* that they're going to sell, trade, donate, etc., and, remember, many of those dupes have to be kept back for possible trades, as well. So, “availability” of these treasures within the hobby is lessened even further.

But all of this is true of the “treasures” of just about *any* hobby. The successful paleophillumenist is patient, persistent...and above all...knowledgeable! “Seek and ye shall find” doesn't work unless you know what you're looking for!