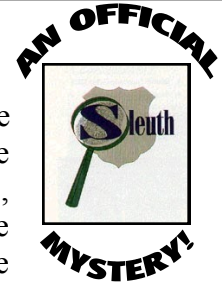


The Question of Early Non-Diamond Matchbooks



Using my handy-dandy *Manumark Dating Guide*, I may have turned up some interesting ‘evidence’....or, at the very least, and interesting question. Looking for the earliest dates for non-Diamond manumarks— American Match Co., Lion Match Co., N. Shine Co., Star Match Co., Union Match Co., and Universal Match Co. all have the earliest such date = 1928. *Is that simply a coincidence?* Keep in mind that the *Manumark Dating Guide* is based solely on those thousands of Dated covers that I have come across in the last 21 years of collecting. Undoubtedly, there are many more that I’ve never seen, so none of this is written in concrete. Still, no non-Diamond dated covers prior to 1928 is pretty odd! The earliest dated manumark I have for Ohio Match Co. is 1929.

Hmmmm! *Does that mean that all matchbooks before 1928 were Diamond-manufactured? Is that when the Diamond patent ran out? Can anyone come up with a dated non-Diamond matchbook earlier than 1928?* Apparently, it’s not that simple (is it ever?) I’m thinking, for example, of the well-known *dated* 1914 Stanley Adamkiewicz cover, and that’s by the McGill Match Co. [*which isn’t in the above MM Dating Guide, by the way, because I’ve never seen the actual manumark*]. So, that would seem to indicate that other companies were producing their own matchbooks at least as early as 1914.

I have some notes to myself on known Pre-World War I covers, of which I started a list:

1. Knights of Columbus cover issued to the doughboys.
2. Another Knights of Columbus cover
3. 28th Division Command. This was the Philadelphia Keystone Division.
4. Buy Fifth Liberty Bonds by a Philadelphia concern; each match had “Buy Bonds” on it (printed sticks).
5. Cramp Shipyard, Philadelphia. It solicited labor to build ships.
6. Washington Crisps cover

Are these all Diamond covers? Well, the Washington Crisps cover, c. 1910, is. And, so is that fabulous dated 1898 cover pictured on p. 17....but I don’t know about the rest. Perhaps their owners could drop me a note.

And what about the original Diamond patent (which was, of course, the original Pusey patent)? We all know the well-known story about how Diamond sued the Binghamton Match Co. almost immediately afterwards for infringing on its new patent...so we know that Diamond was certainly serious about keeping matchbook production to itself. But then we enter that same murky period— 1892-1919—discussed in the Jan/Feb issue, where we know next to nothing of the industry’s history. It’s curious that out of all the literature I’ve gone through in the last 21 years as an editor and researcher, I don’t recall ever having coming across a discussion (not even a mention) of this patent question. At some point, Diamond’s patent ran out and other companies were then free to begin manufacturing their own matchbooks. But *when* was that? Or, did Diamond, for its own reasons, simply make the matchbook public domain at some point during this period? After all, Diamond *did* do that with its non-poisonous match. Granted, it’s hardly likely. There would certainly have been mention of that in the literature, including Diamond’s own publicity as well as from other sources.

In any event, all this simply goes to further prove an old truism in Science—each discovery only leads to more questions....*but you have to admit....it’s fascinating!*