

## Collecting AAA Covers

Although a few collectors may have been collecting AAA covers all along, this is a category whose popularity has never seemed to really get off the ground, although I've been interested in them for the last several years and have found the category to be both rewarding and pleasurable.

These aren't triple A covers (insurance) covers; they're "AAA"-approved hotels, motels, and restaurants, although there's certainly no reason why one couldn't simply collect all "AAA" covers, regardless.

Although there are certainly newer ones to be seen, from the last 25 years, most of these covers will be from the 1950s and 1960s, and that means that most of these will be front-strikers. Having the "AAA" logo was, of course, good advertising for any type of lodging establishment. It meant that that business met was up to the standards that AAA set, thereby signaling the wandering wayfarer that this would be not only be a good place to stay the night, but also that it might well offer a better experience than the place with the flashier or bigger sign just down the street. I've noticed the logo on some older Best Westerns and other chain motels, but independent lodgings definitely sport it as well.

I would call this a small category, although, in terms of actual numbers, we're talking of somewhere between several thousand covers and many thousands of covers. It's "small", though, in the sense that it's not one of the hobby's major categories, and it's more or less "off-the-wall" (no negative meaning intended), in the sense that you're focusing on a rather minute detail on covers that are part of a much larger category (i.e., Hotels/Motels).

Since most of these "AAA" designations are on Hotel/Motel covers, one could easily guess that the sky's the limit here in terms of types, shapes, varieties, and sizes. You'll find anything and everything, but most, of course, are your standard 20-stick-sized covers. Aside from other Fancies frequenting this category, you'll also find a significant number of very attractive Matchoramas with the "AAA" logo on them, and...always a nice extra for me...a lot of sets and series. For example, in 1995, Evelyn Ramlow, WI, had approximately 100 "AAA" covers in her collection, and 75 of those were Friendship Inn covers, so there's another hint on where to look for them.

Since we *are* dealing with thousands of covers here, the usual alphabetical organization isn't enough, simply because the A's will soon go on forever, the B's will go on forever, and so forth. So, I've found, for my purposes at least, that I need something more. Thus, I have my "AAA" covers housed by state, then by size, and then alphabetically...and so far that's working well. I now have everything residing in eight 3" 3-ring binders.

Currently, I have 5,705 covers and boxes in my "AAA" collection, and I expect (although it's just a guess) that there must be at least four or five times that number in existence, so I'm sitting here gleefully rubbing my hands together at the prospect of eventually finding those other 20,000+ covers! Many of my regular trades [*Yes! Some of us still faithfully trade by mail!*] routinely supply me with yet new and hitherto unseen "AAA" covers.