

Matchcover Albums

Although a huge shift has taken place in recent years as to what is being used as album pages, there actually hasn't been all that much innovation and improvement as far as the albums, themselves, are concerned.

“Early matchcover albums probably began around 1935 by Gromey of New York. These albums were called twin-slit albums. The idea was not exactly new because twin-slit albums for post cards were available before World War I.

The Gromey albums carried an insert about membership in the United Matchonians. Some collectors apparently used to grumble that the membership lists must be of tombstones because people never responded to letters. However, Ernest Damron had legitimate access to new collectors through the Gromey albums.

The aspiring collector sent his membership to Gromey, not directly to United Matchonians. Gromey took a 40¢ commission on each member. Gromey's albums never were destined for greatness because the collectors of that day much preferred hand-sewn pages. The late Horace Rush sewed thousands of pages selling them for 5¢ each, just enough to keep him in cigarette money. Basically he performed the job as a service to the hobby. Many covers today are housed in Horace sold work, but few Gromey albums exist.” (*...from Long Beach Bulletin, June, 1976*)

Beach bought the business from Gromey after World World War II. For awhile, RMS had a nice deal going with Beach. RMS paid for a flyer insert to be put into Beach albums...about 100,000!. (*...from Long Beach bulletin, October, 1979*)

All of the early albums offered only 20-strike pages, of course. It wasn't until 1956 that Beach, responding to requests from collectors came out with pages for 30-strikes. Other album makers included Matchbook Cover Album Co. of America, Brooklyn, NY, which offered hard-cover albums with pages for 20s, 30s, and 40s. Yeingst's Match Service, Harrisburg, PA, which has just about paralleled the history of RMS, itself, was also offering attractive albums with pages for 20s, 30s, and 40s by the mid 1950s.

Although early collectors started off with either photo albums or even home-made album covers, ring binders quickly became the standard item for that purpose. The Beach albums notoriously had rings going up the entire page [*I often wondered why they did that...perhaps to make it more likely that the user would have to buy their pages...or am I being too cynical?*]. I'm not sure when the 3-ring binder made its first appearance, but collectors soon showed their preference for that medium above all others...and today, decades later, the 3-ring album is still the most popularly used type of album.

In past issues, we've discussed sizes and prices, and it appears the collectors use all sizes, although the 2" size is probably to most commonly used? I believe that's also the most widely-manufactured size, as well, being especially used by students for the school binders. The 1" binders are quite small, but would be ideal, I suppose, for the really small categories, and they're also the cheapest, especially during big sales. As I indicated before, I prefer the 3" size, finding that a few big ones actually take up less shelf space than a lot of small ones...and shelf space often becomes a nagging problem eventually as collections grow and grow. The 3" albums are comparatively expensive, though...*ouch!*