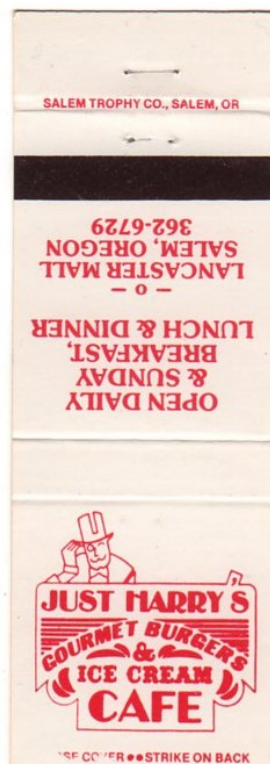


The Humble Saddle

by
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They're saddles! Sometimes they're blank, but more often they're not; sometimes they have pictures; more often they have text. They divide the back panels from the front panels, and, in most cases, provide the main folding points for the covers....And yet, we still don't normally pay all that much attention to them.

Why not? Well, primarily, I would guess, the very fact that the saddle is the smallest part of the outside (not counting the front flap) means that there simply isn't much space to work in, and that would lead to the almost inevitable result that not much of importance ends up there. Saddles normally don't have the business name on them; all the main info is elsewhere, on the back or the front; one doesn't see great art work there. In fact, on some covers the collector sees, whatever *was* there on the saddle, has been crossed



off, overprinted, etc. Even in Full-lengths, one might well argue that the saddle is nothing more than a transition area between the front and back panels.

But, the saddle *is* part of the outside of the cover...and usually *does* have something to contribute to the overall aesthetics and information presented. By its very nature, though, I think that only some collectors would be really focused on what the saddle has to offer.

For example, Low Phone Number collectors would be certain to check out the saddle simply because that's where phone numbers often appear on covers. By the same token, listers may note what appears on the saddle of each cover as identifying characteristics and, thus, also focus on the saddle portion of the cover. And, anyone looking for variations would have to check out the saddle, since that's where they're often found--either in different phone numbers, differently sized text, the absence of a particular graphic, etc. Indeed, even the absence of anything on the saddle may be variation in itself.

As far as frequency of exactly what *is* found to be on the saddle, a quick survey of 200 mixed 20-strikes showed that 1) there's about a 50/50 chance of the saddle being blank, on the one hand, and 2) about a 50/50 chance of something being found there, on the other. Plus, 3) if there *is* something there, it's more likely to be a phone number than anything else. Usually, 4) there's no graphic at all, but, 5) in those cases where there is, it's usually a phone (at least on the front-strike covers). When there is text to be seen on the saddle, it's 6) almost always a single line, 7) only occasionally two lines, and 8) rarely three lines or more.

And, lest us not forget that on the early Diamond covers, the manumark was on the saddle. And, because the saddle, when the matchbook is closed, offers not one, not two, not four, but *six* different corners, the saddle is often where damage appears when and if there is damage to be seen on a cover. Thus, one way or another, the saddle *is* an integral part of the matchcover and not to be overlooked...Sometimes...*sometimes* ...one finds gems.

