
Collecting Drugstores

by Larry Cole

For Arlene and me, collecting drugstore matchcovers was a natural – from 1952 to 1978, her father owned and operated a drugstore in Valhalla, NY, 30 miles north of New York City. The store had a soda fountain, telephone booth, and a newsstand. (Sad to say, I haven't come across any matchbooks.)

If you collect drugstore covers, you might be collecting a closely-related category, namely, drugstore products. Of interest here are the discontinued product brands and the low prices, like 5 cents for cough drops.

The number of different drugstore covers produced approximates 3800, which includes 450 Canadian – 3000 FS 20's 600 RS 20's, and 200 40's. 10's and boxes. 800 are nationals (no location, no phone number) such as CVS, Walgreens, Rite Aid, etc. (SEE). Most of the FS 20's are single-location from the 1940's and 1950's (lots of small towns and low-phones). Also, stock designs (I've come across 30 different designs – 2 are shown here) and conjunctives (SEE). Variations within manumarks (Universal) are very subtle (block printing vs. upper-lower script) and within upper-lower script (no following dots, 1 dot, and two dots.)

Between the mom-and-pops and the national chains, are the smaller chains – some not so small, see Nevins (INS, of Philadelphia) and regionals, like Longs (California and Hawaii).

With regard to organizing drugstore covers, we have eight groups : RS/FS 20/30/40 – that's six. Within the FS 20's we have a separate section for the stock designs, and within the RS 20's a separate section for nationals. For the FS 20's we have a name-page number spreadsheet to aid in locating a particular cover this, plus shifting around covers, involves some work.

