
The Shadow:

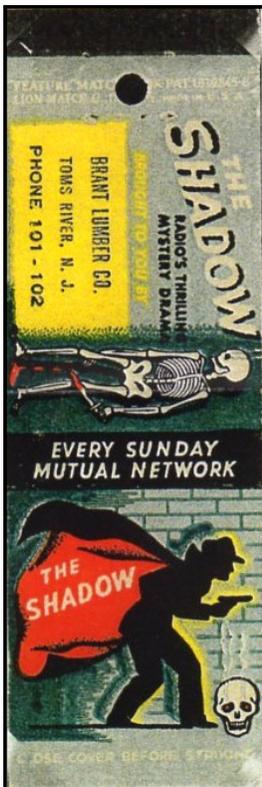
It's Thursday night, July 31, 1930. The time is 9:40 PM. Tuned into CBS, radio listeners are anxiously awaiting the first air wave appearance of "The Shadow." That was long before I burst forth upon the world, but I not only can remember listening to the episodes as boy (they ran on into the 1950s), but you can still catch reruns of the program if you carefully scan the radio in the evening. Indeed, I collect old radio shows and currently have 16 episodes of "The Shadow".

Back in 1930, when "The Shadow" was just beginning, James La Curto portrayed the part. It was part of the "Detective Story Hour". Street and Smith Publishers initially sponsored the program (which lasted a year) in an effort to popularize their magazine series, "The Shadow, A Detective Monthly".

In September, 1931, "The Shadow" underwent some major changes. Frank Readick, Jr. (who was the star in the later Detective Hour shows) was now "The Shadow", and Blue Coal took over as the sponsor of the episodes its own program, "The Blue Coal Radio Revue". The show remained an hour long, but it was heard on Sundays, now, at 5:30 PM.

For a short while, there was actually an overlapping of Shadows, as lucky CBS listeners were able to hear episodes both on Thursdays and Sundays. In October, 1931, the 9:40 Thursday slots were taken over by "Love Story Drama", or "Love Story Hour" (sponsored by Street and Smith), which also had portrayals of The Shadow!

A year later, in October, 1932, the series moved to NBC and continued what was to be a long relationship with the sponsor, Blue Coal. Frank Readick, Jr. remained the star for the weekly Wednesday presentations, In October, 1934, NBC aired the program on both Mondays and Wednesdays at 6:30 PM. Readick was featured in most of these shows, but the original Shadow, James La Curto, appeared in a few.



The program shifted to Mutual on September 26, 1937, and was again heard on Sundays at 5:30 PM. It was still sponsored by Blue Coal, but it had a new voice for Lamont Cranston, a young and relatively new theater and radio personality...Orson Welles. The 1937 programs also began to feature "The Shadow" as a character in the stories, rather than merely as a narrator. Orson Welles was The Shadow through 1938, while the now syndicated program was being sponsored by Goodrich.

Blue Coal again became the sponsor of the show in late 1938, and Bill Johnstone became the new voice. Bret Morrison was the voice of "The Shadow" for most of 1943, and John Archer took over near the end of 1944. Bret Morrison returned in September, 1945, and he remained the voice through 1954, when the program finally came to an end.

Blue Coal remained the sponsor until September, 1949, when Grove Labs sponsored the show for a year. The show remained on Mutual, but shifted to a half hour earlier slot, 5:00 PM, Sundays. In January, 1951, the US Army/Air Force became "The Shadow's" sponsor, after it was sustained for a few months by Mutual. Wildroot then sponsored it from approximately September, 1951 to

An Update

September, 1953, when various sponsors began to appear. The program was again “sustained” by Mutual until the last show, which was aired on the day after Christmas, 1954. [<http://www.old-time.com/shadow.html>]

Thus ended “The Shadow”, one of the greatest of the great old radio programs. But what about the covers? They exist, but they are very rare and exceedingly difficult to locate and obtain. I haven’t contacted everyone, of course, but no one that I heard from back in 1997 seemed to have more than eight. By comparing notes from interested collectors, we could initially identify 16 different covers, all 20-strikes, all stock designs. Recently, James Willard, MD, has been able to list 20 (shown below). There seems to be three different stock designs: two made by Diamond and one made by Lion. The latter type is a Display/Feature.... frosting on the cake!

To me, covers such as this would be worth far more than simple DQ’s and Safety Firsts. These covers have everything going for them: age, rarity, and perhaps most important of all...character!

Known Shadow covers:

Type A (skull on front)

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|--------------------------------|----------------------|
| 1. Marlborough Coal Co. | Marlboro Mass |
| 2. Turks Head Coal Co. | Providence, R.I. |
| 3. Caton Coal Co. Inc | 410 South Caton Ave. |
| 4. Park Ice & Coal Co. | 52 Main St. Nyack |
| 5. H Glennie | Buffalo N.Y. |
| 6. Watkins Coal & Ice. Co. | Phone 28 |
| 7. Benedict & Co Inc | Phone 86131 |
| 8. Crane Coal Co. | Blackstone, Mass |
| 9. Aimetti Coal Yard | Berwick PA |
| 10. Wolfeboro & Alton Coal Co. | Wolfeboro N.H. |
| 11. Brant Lumber Co. | Toms River N.J. |
| 12. Elgin Coal & Ice | Dealer in temp |
| 13. Your Neighbor Hood | (No state shown) |
| 14. N. Segal | Market 2-5021 |
| 15. Seasons Greetings | A.W. Bургbacher |
| 16. Richard W. Manthei | Riverside 9046 |
| 17. Kahlbaum Bros. | Carleton, Mich. |

Special thanks to James Willard, MD, for the new finds that have been added to the previous listing.

Type B (blue coal on back)

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| 1. The Peoples Coal Co. | Lancaster PA |
| 2. Hedstrom Spaulding | Buffalo N.Y. |
| 3. Fred Gross & Sons | Baltimore MD |
| 4. Consult classified phone directory for your nearest | |

Type C (blue coal on front)

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|---------------------|---------------------------------|
| 1. Fred C Zeitler | 345 South Ave. (No state shown) |
| 2. Atlantic Coal Co | Providence R.I. |

