

## What's Hot...and What's Not

We've done this before, of course, periodically, but this time there's a twist to the answer...*Nothing's* hot! Oh, sure, collectors continue to collect, gatherers continue to gather, buyers continue to buy...but, at the moment, there's no 'darling' category of the hobby...There's no new fad sweeping the country.

If one peruses the old bulletins (RMS, especially), it's readily apparent that a collecting 'craze' began with each new introduction of a major cover type--Matchoramas, Jewels, Jewelites, etc. Or, perhaps a World's Fair was going on here in the States, and everyone was searching for possible WF covers. But, it's unlikely that that's going to happen again.

And, when Holiday Inn covers were booming, Holiday Inn was a hot category; the same with Best Westerns; the same with Girlies, and so on. Now, such new issues are few and far between.

More recently, we've had the Casino cover boom, of course, where everyone was after the newest Indian Casino covers; then came the great Camels 30 Singles search, and so on. It doesn't look as if anything like that is on the horizon, either.

Indeed, we may have simply settled into a period (perhaps a permanent period) wherein collectors are just pursuing their tried and true likes, no longer in pursuit of either the industry's newest innovation or an advertiser's newest gimmick...because it doesn't look as if there are going to be any more (unless such comes from foreign manufacturers or businesses).

So, it would seem that we're destined to plod along, collecting what there already is. Oh! [doldrums] But, while the 'new innovations' aspect of the hobby may be a thing of the past, it's certainly not the death knell of collecting. As the late Carl Sagan would say, "There are still *billions and billions* of opportunities awaiting today's collectors. After all, there are so few of us...and *sooooo* many covers! The trick is to insure that there's a continuous incoming flow of those covers so that you can sift through them and find what you are looking for.

And, all this doesn't mean that you're not going to discover new categories (new, to you). As we 'mature' [*I was going to say 'age,' but that's rapidly becoming a sore point with me!*], our tastes and circumstances change, and, for collectors, that means many of us periodically change our wants, dropping some categories and adding others. I once looked upon Casinos with distain, for example; now, I collect them. One day, I 'discovered' "recommended by Duncan Hines" covers. Now, it's my favorite small category. I can't explain way. A couple of years ago, I started collecting Embossed and Raised-Ink covers; at the same time, I dropped Full-Frontals.

Thus, those 'new' categories are always out there. We, perhaps, just haven't discovered them yet. And today's 'hot' categories, while clamoring overall favorites on a national level might be absent, may well resolve themselves into whatever's individually 'hot' for the individual collector. So, *you*, determine what's 'hot' for yourself. What could be better than that?!

Small categories are always *in* for individual collectors. This one goes after Pandas; that one goes after Canadian Tax Stamps; and so forth. There will always be a demand for everything, because someone, somewhere, is always looking for...well...everything!

I still say trading is your best way to go, but it's harder and harder to find people to trade with.