

Did You Ever Wonder?

Did you ever wonder why those odd Universal covers have the striker at the bottom of the front panel? They *are* certainly odd! Well, you may have surmised that the repositioned striker was for safety reasons (and, hopefully, an additional selling feature, no doubt). The cover below adds to the verification of that theory—"The F·W·M·Safety-Matchfolder".

This additional bit of information, though, brings forth more questions. If Ferdinand W. Mostertz held the patent, did Universal contract with him to use the idea experimentally on some of its covers? Or, did Universal simply buy his patent and then use it? Hmmmm...Until someone comes forward with definite proof one way or the other, I'm going to take a jump and conclude that the answer was the earlier theory...that Universal contracted in some way to use the idea...because...two of the covers I have in this group aren't from Universal; they're Diamond covers. So, *both* companies couldn't have secured the same patent rights.

I currently have 58 of these covers—10s, 20s, 30s, 40s, Jewels. The variety of sizes is surprising, and they're all older covers. Guessing that the cover below is from the later 1930s (and Universal didn't come out with its *Royal Flash* trademark until 1936), then the range of covers that I have span the later 1930s-1950s era (or perhaps even a little later). That's also surprising, in light of the few such covers issued compared to the 20+ span of years. Why would it have taken Universal over 20 years to eventually decide that this bottom striker wasn't a feature that was going to be commercially successful? And, why so few issues? That hardly seems to be a 'fair' test of the innovation. Of, course, Universal produced even fewer *Classiques* before quitting that line. And, even by the late 1950s, it would have been too early for Universal to see the writing on the wall indicating that the industry was going to be forced into producing reverse-strikers; that wouldn't happen until 1973. Interesting!

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CLOSE COVER BEFORE STRIKING

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