

FOOTERS

by
Mike Prero

Over the years I've written about this category and that, one thing and then the other, but it's time that we get down to the bottom of things...*Footers!*

"Footers?! What a boring topic. Not enough people notice manumarks, let alone footers! I mean, how many ways can you say 'CLOSE COVER BEFORE STRIKING,' anyway?" Well, I think you'd be surprised!

A 'footer', by the way is the text at the very bottom tip of the matchcover. Basically, it's almost always a safety message about closing the cover before striking the match (or turning the cover over first, on later covers). The most common message is simply CLOSE COVER BEFORE STRIKING, but it's certainly not the only one, and that's not even counting the variations of the same message and additional text that may accompany the primary message.

Footers can be simple or complex, and they can come in a variety of languages. More important, however, is that they are often, especially on many of the older covers, used to identify the type of cover being referred to ("It was a DQ cover", or "Did you see that Green Hat cover on the table?", etc.). DIAMOND QUALITY, EMPIRE QUALITY, SAFETY FIRST, UNION MATCH, BLOT-R-MATCH... They're all footers that are referred to in the hobby every day.

But, look at the variety of the 'ordinary footers', such as those shown on the next page. And these, by no means, represent all the varieties, just those that I happened to have on hand at the moment.

Not all covers *have* footers, by the way. Some are blank in that area. Sometimes it may be a printing error; sometimes, especially on the older covers, it may have been cut off in the manufacturing process (one sees a lot of DQ's with half or most of the "DQ" missing). And, just to add a little spice to the topic, sometimes the footer isn't where it's supposed to be. In some cases, it's actually on the inside of the cover, and in rare cases, such as a Kaeser & Blair cover I have in my collection, it's at the *top* of the cover,

where the manumark is supposed to be. I assume the latter is an error, but whether due to some misalignment of the text on the uncut sheet of covers, or something else remains to be seen.

Of all the footers, I think any that have "QUALITY" are generally the most looked for and most sought after, such as the CONTINENTAL QUALITY shown below. They're not the oldest, and they're not particularly the rarest, but they're the most popular and well-known of all the footers. That's all a direct result of the popularity of the DIAMOND QUALITY footer. Many of the QUALITY footers were being produced when the earthly collectors were collecting, *before* the official appearance of the hobby.

By the way, did you know that 'CLOSE COVER BEFORE STRIKING' is the most commonly printed phrase in the English language? At least it *was*. With the drop off in matchbook production in recent years, I can't guarantee that's true anymore.

It should come as little surprise after this, I suppose, that I do, indeed, collect footers, myself. I currently have a grand total of some 90, but I'm sure there's many more out there waiting to be discovered. I particularly like the foreign language ones. It's interesting to see how the basic message is phrased, compared to what we're used to seeing on our own U.S. matchcovers.

So, remember, *always* check out the footer on that cover!

