

“Say, buddy, can you spare a matchcover?”

I receive queries every week from non-collectors wanting to know the *value* of the matchcovers they’ve amassed here and there over the year or those just inherited from grandpa. Everyone’s interested in *value*. But, I wonder if they ever stop to consider that many of those covers had a value when they were brand new—not because they were collectibles at the time, but rather because of the many free offers, rebates, and discounts that a person could receive with them.

Look on the back of your front-strikers, and you’ll find all sorts of goodies. Free pamphlets, books, and brochures—you could practically start your own library; a dollar off this, five dollars off that—you could save yourself a fortune; a free oil change or lube job, free cleaning of a shirt, free paint at the local hardware store; and contests—contests galore!

Many of the contests were of the “spell-the-word” variety. Each matchbook had a different letter on the inside. Spell the particular business’s name and the world was yours! The KFOX Radio series, featured in the July/August RMS Bulletin, is a good example of this type of promotion. But, there were a variety of other types. A hidden word or symbol, for example (usually placed directly behind the matches on the inside of the cover) that made you an instant winner—of something. Then there were puzzles that could be solved for prizes or discounts.

Whatever the offer, the point is that often times matchbooks brought the individual more than an instant light—and the retailer more than a quick advertisement. You could supplement your income and raise your standard of living...all with that little miracle—the matchbook!

Interesting, although I don’t know of anyone who collects this type as a separate category. I could see it as a fairly spectacular collection, sorted by the type of offer.

Again, though, you’d be looking for basically older covers, and that would make it difficult (challenging) for many collectors). Just quickly going through some of my covers for this article, I was able to come up with 43. You normally don’t come across such offers and contests in the reverse-striker covers—another bit of Americana gone but not forgotten.

Take a look and see what you can find!