

Pressing Suggestions From The Past

“Although it is impossible to connect “pressing” with an particular individual the art perhaps is as old as 1933 Century of Progress (Chicago) set of 10. Delving into dates, 1933 is given as the beginning of public adaptation to matchcover collecting and pressing. The set just mentioned, no doubt the most beautiful multi-golds ever printed by Diamond, was more contributive to the beginning of public interest than any other factor. Dealers, selling these covers through the souvenir stores, conceived the idea of pressing as a further enhancement to their beauty. The late William Wirt (Doc) Wilson, the matchcover hobby’s most colorful character, devoted a full chapter to - “pressing” - as early as 1936, in MATCH PACK NOTES, Doc’s own journal. “First you get an ample supply of old magazines,” he wrote, “then you wet the insides of your matchcovers, and lay them flat on the outside cover of the magazines. The more magazines you keep piling up (and more matchcovers you can press) the better, since the added weight supplies the additional pressure, thus doing the better pressing.” Finally Doc warned against the use of hot irons - good sound advice! There are a few (a very few) who use hot irons, and perform a good service, but only through experience and good equipment. But for the sake of the average collector’s matchcovers (and disposition), it would be wise to steer him away from hot irons, usually resulting in hopeless curls as well as irreparable damage on embossed and certain types of compositions, as well as gilt and fugitive colors. Another common mistake by many “tailors” is overdousing with water. Through the years, I have maintained water is not necessary in pressing, in any event, and, although challenged in certain circles, all will agree that if and when there is an urge to use water, it should never be more than a thin film. It is my contention that many of the fine Diamond ships and Universal royal flashes of the middle and late 1930s, whose abrasives now are in a marked state of disintegration, were over-saturated with water at the start. They can be connected with a certain Baltimore dealer who, it is known, pressed with ample water. Likewise, I have seen the same covers from other sources still perfect.

Wilson’s suggestion for using magazines is as good as any. Those who don’t have sufficient magazines lying around might try the following simple method: First, cut two strips of corrugated paper 4½ x 1½. The latter dimensions conform to the regular sizes, but strips can also be cut to fit royal flashes, 30 sticks, Perfect 36s, or any desired sizes. Second, arrange your covers (about 100 at a time) with abrasives alternated. Third, set them between the two strips of corrugated paper. Fourth, tie up the package with two or three tightly wound rubber bands. Fifth, allow the rubber bands to remain intact for at least a week, or the longer the better.

Roscoe Yorgey of Carlisle, Penna., (who invented the threaded albums) also has an efficient system for pressing - moistens the inside of his covers and lays them on strips of corrugated paper weighted down with a heavy object. Corrugated paper permits circulation of air and hastens the drying. The next day the covers come out as flat as pancakes.

Pressing, no doubt, was more popular in the old days than now, since those with albums don’t care a hang either way. Covers eventually press in albums. In 1936 probably less than 25% of the collectors used albums. According to the 1949 Questionnaire, 86% used albums that year. Hence, with the popularity of albums, pressing is slowly falling out of fashion, although certain dealers employ good pressing as a potent stock in trade. In spite of the fact that we have never known a collector to complain about “getting unpressed covers for pressed covers,” there is no doubt that covers reflect the character and home surroundings of those who send them. Those with neat and smartly pressed covers usually are also neat and immaculate in their attire.” [*Ed Perkins, RMS Vice-President, July 1951 RMS Bulletin*]