



Editorial

The Advantages Of Auctions

It's hard to believe for collectors who haven't been in the hobby for at least three or four decades, but there was a time in the hobby when the selling of covers was looked down upon. More modern circumstances, however, have upended that outlook.

With the drastic decline in the availability of new covers, and the accompanying just-as-drastic decline in collectors, buying covers, it seems to me, is the only currently available method of building a good collection. Picking up covers at club meetings and freebie tables isn't a viable option; they're too few and too random. The same goes for other traditional sources, such as donations from friends and relatives. The same is true even of trading, unfortunately. These are good supplemental sources of covers, but they're few and far between, and most of these covers end up in your trading or dupe stocks, not in your albums.

Buying, however, is the exception to all of the above. Most of us can't afford to buy entire collections, so I'm focusing on the hobby's auctions here, and auctions, thankfully, have a wide array of advantages for the collector:

1. Auctions are readily available to all collectors via — club meetings, swapfests, conventions, club bulletins, the internet, and postal mail. For most auctions, you don't even have to leave the house.
2. Whereas freebie tables, gifts from friends, searching local businesses, etc. are all random, hit-and-miss affairs, auction lots are almost always presented in specific categories, so most of the randomness has been removed. You may not know which specific covers you're buying, but you know they're all in the category you're interested in.
3. Auction lots have not only been pre-sorted, but pre-screened for used and damaged covers (unless stated so up front), so you're not going to end up with covers that you're just going to toss.
4. Auctions offer the greatest variety of categories, everything from the old and rare to the small and obscure.
5. Auctions are a much more efficient method of collecting. They're faster, and your chances of finding exactly what you want are greatly increased. I've combed through freebie tables for over 30 years, for example, and I've found 7 or 8 useable Crowns, whereas whole bundles of such are available all at one time through an auction.
6. Auctions offer greater access to good covers. People who have left the hobby would sometimes complain that the veteran collectors were "sitting on all the good covers." Auctions give you access to those covers. Not only do veteran collectors funnel such covers through auctions, but upon their demise, their collections are very often broken up and dispersed as auction lots.

And, there are certainly other advantages to auctions. Most clubs depend on their bulletin auctions, not their dues, to pay the bills. Auctions afford the seller the opportunity to recoup some of the expenses incurred in building his or her collections. *And, there are more, but I'm out of room!*