

HOBBY HISTORY

Historical Tidbits: IV

> The October 1980 issue of New West Magazine published a two page spread called "Open Cover Before Striking." Primarily pictorial, it showed the match stems from 21 Feature covers. However, the text that went with the photos implied that collecting covers was dangerous. The writer, Ellen Melinkoff, said, "Nowadays a growing number of slightly embarrassed collectors actively seek out and stockpile these combustible artifacts. As does New York based photo journalist, Richard Jenkins, whose prized possessions, these are - or were, rather, for shortly after these pictures were taken, his entire collection committed suicide by spontaneous combustion." New West was the same magazine that reportedly turned down a responsible article on the hobby done by a free lance writer who took the trouble to do his research with bona fide members of the hobby. *January 1981 Long Beach bulletin*

> After 1840, the British firm of Blackwell & Williams of Whitechapel, London, began to produce Victoria & Albert Matches, named after Queen Victoria and her consort Prince Albert. During the 1840s, the firm made various Congreve matches. By 1846, Blackwell left the firm, and Richard Seanor became Williams's partner. From 1846-48, the company was called Seanor & Williams. After Williams raised more capital to become the senior partner, the firm was called G.C.B. Williams & Co. It lasted until 1851. Seanor remained with the company; Williams disappeared from the match industry. Many early companies were not overly profitable, hence there was a high turnover in ownership. Matches were still apt to be messy and smelly, and public acceptance was somewhat low. *November 1980 Long Beach bulletin*

> "The first organized club catering to cover collectors, although not exclusively, was the Blue

Moon Match Label Club under the directorship of M.A. Richardson in Ticonderoga, new York. The club's first membership list in October 1932 shows no collector now within the hobby. Richardson, himself, was member number 1. The first supplement to the list was published in April 1933. Again, there are no names of people still collecting.

By October 1933 member number 150 was W.W. Wilson, one of Long Beach's members until his death in August 1974. The next familiar name is Carl Davenport, number 160. Carl joined as a youth. He was active in the Long Beach Club and some time ago kindly lent the old membership lists used in this story. Member number 163 was Ray Yeingst, a long time participant in the Pennsylvania collecting scene.

In April 1934 another supplement list number 197 belonged to Robert Oliver, who was also active in the Long Beach Club. By October 1934 so many cover collectors had joined the group that special designations were added to their names. It is on this list that Ernest Damron joined the group. He later became famous as the leader of the United Matchonians.

Those people who joined Blue Moon before 1935 can be classified as the real pioneers of the hobby. They are beyond the designation old-timer. It was through these early efforts that the covers of the 1930s are obtainable today. Cover collectors really had no place to go before Blue Moon for mutual help or exchange of information.

Blue Moon, of course, did not answer all the collector's needs. United Matchonians and other groups tried to help the cover hobby, but various other hobby information was also included. One group seemed nearly taken over by razor blade wrapper collectors. When RMS was formed, it wisely devoted itself to covers exclusively. Yet it was from Blue Moon contacts that cover collectors began the long chain of correspondence and meetings which paved the way for an exclusive cover club.

...*Long Beach bulletin, November 1975*