

HOBBY HISTORY

Who Started The Matchcover Hobby?

[from February 1953 RMS Bulletin]

Each old-timer has his pet story from dog diggers. A story leaked out that a seeing-eye dog would be given to one blind man for each block of 250,000 (or thereabout) street matchcovers. The idea was not so fantastic as it appeared since blind persons were known to have fashioned from street discarded matchcovers objects of surprising color and charm. An epidemic of street hunting followed. Later, when exposed as a fake it bursted. Yet, from the first flurry, many are still collecting matchcovers. While this was going on, a newspaper headline read: "Scion of the 400 pays substantial sum for the Matchcover Pick-Up Rights after the Rose Bowl Football Game.

And another "Digger at the bottom of a well finds that his pipe has gone out. He has no matches, later he comes from the well to get a matchbook from his coat. He returns to find the well caved in. The matchbook saved his life! He has collected them from that day."

It is interesting to note that all of these events took place in and around 1933-34, the glorious years of the Chicago Century of Progress sets, particularly the Gold set of 1933, described by many as the most beautiful set in matchcover history. Books were bought by the thousands; given to old and new collectors as a big boost for a start. Collecting started in full sway in 1934 when Diamond introduced the colorful football, baseball, hockey, movies, scenics and educational - Group One Classics. Another contributing fact was the popularity of the automobile; the overall improvement in travel beginning with the early 1930s. Many still collect matchcovers from places they have visited. As for the direct spark that lit up the enthusiasm - take your pick.