

KNOW YOUR COVERS!

Loco-foco Matches

Loco-foco matches were early matches which were pieces of pine dipped alternatively into melted brimstone and a phosphorous compound. They were popular in the early to mid-1800s.

Loco-foco matches also hold the title of the only match in the world to have a political party named after it! From 1835 to the mid-1840s, a radical faction of the Democratic Party came to be called the Locofocos.

The Locofocos were originally called the “Equal Rights Party,” until a group of mainstream Democrats tried to disrupt one of their political meetings by turning off the gas lights. The group continued their meeting anyway, debating in semi-darkness mitigated only by the light of matches struck and held aloft, thus earning their new name. Led by editorial writer William Leggett, they were involved in the Flour Riot of 1837 and in general were for Free Trade, greater protection for labor unions, against paper money, financial speculation, and state banks.

Ralph Waldo Emerson said of the Locofocos:

“The new race is stiff, heady, and rebellious; they are fanatics in freedom; they hate tools, taxes, turnpikes, banks, hierarchies, governors, yea, almost laws.”