How To...Organize Your Dupes and Unwanted Covers

*[Keep in mind that this is just the way I do it; there are probably as many alternatives
as there are collectors]*

Covers are coming in on a fairly regular basis (if you're lucky); trading stock is produced when some (or most) of those covers prove themselves to be dupes. And, perhaps you've even acquired lots, collections, accumulations, etc. with the specific goal of building up your trading stock. In any event, if you're actively collecting, the process is constantly generating dupes--hundreds, thousands, perhaps tens of thousands. If you're just chucking them in a box (the very thought makes me shiver), you won't be able to pull the ones you need when you need to find them--for trading, donating, selling, whatever.

You need some type of system (to *my* way of thinking) so that you can always put your hands on exactly what you're looking for with as little fuss, time, and effort as possible. I present my own system as one possible solution.

When new covers come in, I imagine that there some collectors who go right to their albums and determine straight away whether they are needed or are, indeed, dupes of what they already have. I decided years ago that, for me at least, that was too time-consuming and inefficient. Instead...

1. I put all incoming covers into a holding box.

2. When the box is full, I then sort them into their various categories (putting aside any that I can determine just by first sight are dupes, and also putting aside all those that aren't in my want areas).

3. The covers I think have any chance of going into my collections are then put into individual holding areas (I have a cabinet affair that is made up of a bunch of cubby holes; each cubby hole is designated for a specific want area).

4. When a cubby hole is close to overflowing, that's when I sit down and match them against what I have in my albums, so that I'm working now with probably a few hundred covers, all in that specific category. The ones I can actually use go into the albums; the rest are then checked to see if they fall into any other of my want areas of a lesser priority. Those well then go into those other cubby holes. At the end of the process, I'm left with those covers that I have no need for at all.

5. So now, I have dupes/unwanted covers coming in from three different sources: Those that I knew were dupes right from the start, those that weren't in my categories, and those that have been shown to be dupes after checking my albums.

6. All of these dupes/unwanted covers now go into trays alphabetically partitioned into hundreds of categories where they will sit until I need them for trading or whatever. Stella Williams send me a trade; she wants Roses. Another trader is looking for Towns. Someone else is after F-S Hotels. I know exactly where everything is. It's all pre-sorted and ready to go out. All I have to do is count out the appropriate number of covers.

7. There *is* one more group of covers here that I haven't mentioned yet because they bypass all but the very initial stage of my system--nationals, categories that no one I know wants (chemical companies, etc.), struck, and damaged covers. Those were immediately set aside to be disposed of in whatever manner presents itself at some later date.