



PHILLUMENY meets PHILATELY

Stamp Advertising on U.S. Matchbooks

This one-frame exhibit explores the use of U.S. matchbooks for advertising aspects of philately – defense and war stamps, stamp dealers and collectors, philatelic events, and stamp approval services. The exhibit also ties individual, or groups of, matchbooks to a related philatelic item – stamps, panes, covers, postcards, souvenir sheets, FDCs, postmarks, meters, cinderellas, seals, savings stamp, and approval packets.

Phillumeny (*loving light*) is the study of match-related items – matchbooks, matchboxes, etc. The ubiquitous presence of matchbooks in the 20th century made them an ideal platform for advertising. They were abundant (and free) in stores, groceries, motels, restaurants, bars, gas stations, airlines, and even hospitals. The earliest use of matchbook advertising was about 1894, but it didn't catch on with the philatelic community until the 1930's, and lasted until about 1990.

Philatelic-related advertising is a small percentage of all matchbooks, about 1 in 1,000. Matchbooks with 20 matches (20-strike) are the most common, while 10, 30, and 40-strike were produced infrequently.

Key items have a reddish frame.

The exhibit is organized into the following sections:

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|---|---------------------------------------|
| 1. Pre-World War II Stamp Dealers (pg. 1) | 4. Dealers and Collectors (pg. 5-6) |
| 2. 1941 Defense Stamps (pg. 2) | 5. Philatelic Events (pg. 7a) |
| 3. War Stamps of World War II (pg. 3-4) | 6. Stamp Approval Services (pg. 7b-8) |



*Wide striker.
20-strike book.*



*1894 – Hawaii,
Star and Palms*

Stamps related to the matchbook design.



*1937 – Statue of
Kamehameha I*

These matchbooks advertise stamp dealers in Honolulu. The specific manufacturer mark (Manumark) next to the striker points to a 1940 printing by Crown Match Company

A wide striker (8-10 mm), staple width > 10 mm, or match cover length > 4 ½ inches are indicative of pre-WWII matchbooks.



SYNOPSIS

PHILLUMENY meets PHILATELY Stamp Advertising on U.S. Matchbooks

Update. Since the last showing, this exhibit was updated based on judge's feedback, including the addition of more appropriate philatelic items.

Treatment. This one-frame exhibit tells a full balanced story of the use of U.S. matchbooks for philatelic advertising from the mid-1930s to the late 1980s. Intertwined with those matchbooks are related philatelic items.

Organization is by the six sections listed on the title page. Within the sections are smaller logical groupings. The sections and groupings are roughly in chronological order. The exhibit is heavily weighted toward WWII matchbooks due to their quantity and variety, as patriotic advertisers supported the war effort.

The exhibit utilizes many different matchbook types and designs and has a large assortment of philatelic elements. In most cases, the philatelic items are contemporary to the matchbooks.

Importance. The use of advertising is an essential, but often overlooked, aspect of the philatelic hobby. Matchbooks were an important part of that advertising for 50 years, reaching both the philatelic and non-philatelic audience. From 1960 to 1990, matchbook ads for stamps on approval were used to attract new collectors.

Importance is also met by this exhibit being the only one focusing on this segment of philately.

Philatelic/Subject Knowledge and Personal Study and Research. This exhibit breaks new ground exploring the blend of phillumeny and philately. Website matchpro.org/Categories.html lists over 400 matchbook collecting categories, but none address philately or stamp collecting.

Little has been written on the subject. Ref. (1) mentions Stamp Approval ads, while Ref. (2) shows examples of Defense and War Stamp matchbooks.

The Manumark Dating Guide, Ref. (3), is the primary source for determining the year a matchbook was produced. There are thousands of Manumarks (manufacturer markings). Some narrow the production period to a year or two, while others identify a period of more than 20 years.

References:

1. "U.S. Stamp Notes by John M. Hotchner", *Linn's Stamp News*, pg 6, Sep. 28, 2015; follow-up, pg 6, Aug 22, 2016.
2. Charles, Harry K., Jr., *United States Savings Stamps*, pg 213, <https://www.usstamps.org/store/>, 2012.
3. Prero, Mike, MM [*Manumark*] *Dating Guide*, as of Oct. 2024, 132 pp, available at matchpro.org/References.html

To narrow down the date further, extensive research was done using city directories, census records, newspaper articles, and stamp ads in philatelic periodicals and magazines such as *Boys Life* and *Popular Mechanics*.

Research by the exhibitor led to several updates and additions to Ref. (3).

Philatelic items are correctly identified, and the rates used on covers are accurately explained.

Rarity. One measure of scarcity is that only 1 in 1,000 matchbooks fit the scope of this exhibit. However, determining the rarity of a specific matchbook is difficult. There were hundreds of companies and thousands of Manumarks. Production figures and censuses do not exist.

As an example, the matchbooks on the title page currently have no listings on eBay, but several years ago, the one on the left had three, while the other has not reappeared. I have seen only one example of several of the matchbooks in the exhibit, but am unable to make an objective statement of rarity.

That said, some types of philatelic matchbooks are rarer than others:

- Anything other than the standard 20-strike matchbooks (e.g., 10, 11, 30, & 40-strike). Six examples throughout the exhibit.
- Ads that offer free Defense or War stamps. Two identified – one in exhibit (pg. 2), one owned by exhibitor, but in poor condition.
- Salesman samples (pg 4).
- Matchbooks produced for individual collectors. Two identified; both in exhibit (pg 6).

Key items are identified with a reddish frame.

Condition. The condition of most matchbooks and philatelic items in this exhibit is Very Fine. Some, like the oversized Defense Stamps ad on page 3, have considerable wear, but are key to the exhibit.

Some matchbooks show damage where the staple was removed and where the book was folded. I tried to avoid matchbooks with striker wear.

Presentation. To give more flexibility in the arrangement of material, all pages are 17x11. Exhibit is well organized, minimal text, with a lot of information packed into one frame.



Figure 55. Eight matchbook covers, each exhorting the user to buy War or Defense Bonds and stamps.