



Afterword: What is it about matchbooks?

Why are so many of them offered for sale on ebay and elsewhere, and why are so many people apparently eager to snap them up?

Part of the answer must lie in the collecting mania which is ingrained in so much of humanity and which is probably inherited from creatures that appeared earlier on the evolutionary path, notably crows and packrats.

Credit must also go to generations of designers and manufacturers who labored to make matchbooks attractive and to exploit every millimeter of this tiny canvas to convey a compelling message. As a result, the tiny canvases are also tiny windows that give us glimpses of taxi history.

Also, no matter how banal or ugly any individual design might be, something magical happens when a few different matchbooks come together. Their individual designs lend each other a kind of collective appeal.

It helps that matchbooks take up very little cupboard space. Once they have achieved useless-but-too-good-to-throw-away status it is easier to toss them into a drawer than to toss them into the trash. There they can reside inoffensively for years or decades until rediscovered by a later generation and treasured as an oddity.

There are certainly plenty of people who treasure them. Aside from the uncounted number of people who possess a few matchbooks as personal or family mementos, there are thousands of avid collectors who are constantly on the hunt.

These people call themselves "phillumenists" (lovers of light) and many of them have banded together in organizations like The [Rathkamp Matchcover Society](#) and the many clubs listed on the [The Matchcover Vault](#) web site.

In any case, these are the people who have preserved and continue to preserve this little corner of taxi history and it is only fitting to acknowledge our debt to them.

Our gallery is a sampling (250 matchbooks) from a total of 821 representing 680 U.S. and Canadian taxi companies.

Of these, 556 matchbooks came from one source ([Matchcover Collector.com](#)) and almost all the rest were found on ebay. See [List of Sources](#).