

OK, Just What Is The Deal With ‘Acme’?

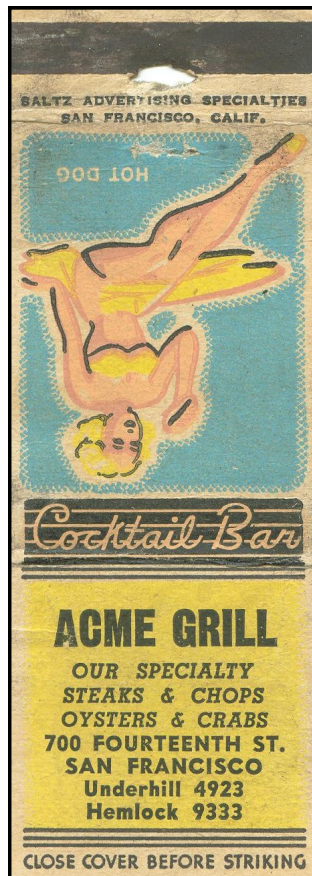
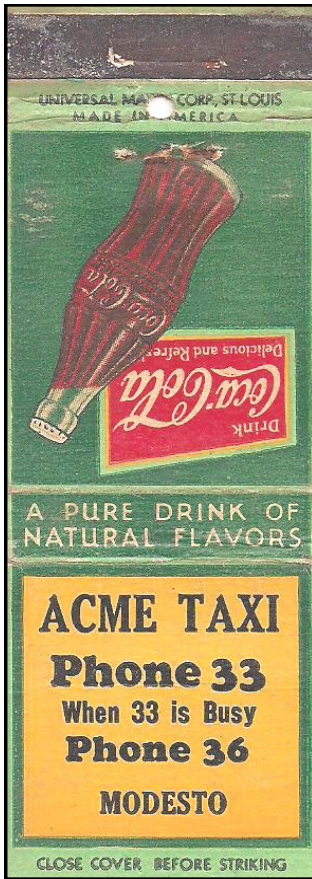
ac·me = noun. The point at which someone or something is best, perfect, or most successful. "Physics is the acme of scientific knowledge." It's also been suggested that ACME is an acronym for A Company that Makes Everything.

Although the term began being mentioned in the early 1800s, it became popular for businesses by the 1920s, when alphabetized business telephone directories such as the Yellow Pages began to be widespread. There were a flood of businesses named Acme. For example, early Sears catalogues contained a number of products with the "Acme" trademark.

Thus, with its definition and acronym characteristics, it's not surprising that many businesses chose ACME as a trade name. The big advantage of its use, though, was that it placed the business at the front, or nearly so, of telephone book listings, an advantage for any business (which is why businesses, etc. vie for top of the list placement with Google, Yahoo, etc. today.)

Use of "ACME" rose to a peak in the 1940s, declined somewhat after that and leveled off to its present day level.

The term is used as a generic corporate name in a huge number of cartoons, comics, television shows (as early as an *I Love Lucy* episode), and film (as early as Buster Keaton's 1920 silent film *Neighbors* and Harold Lloyd's 1922 film *Grandma's Boy*).



Interestingly enough, the term probably got its biggest boost from the famous *Road Runner* cartoons, which, not coincidentally, started in the late 1940s. The "Acme Corporation" was where Wile E. Coyote was always getting his equipment from in his unending attempts to get the better of the Road Runner.

We don't seem to see ACME as a business name very often any more; it's seen as somewhat archaic, however the term certainly lives on in various media formats. As an example:

-The 1988 Disney/Amblin film *Who Framed Roger Rabbit* attempted to explain Acme's inner workings in detail. The movie's plot is centered on the murder of Marvin Acme, the founder of Acme Incorporated. Many of the film's scenes involve Acme products, and the climactic scene of the film is set in the Acme factory. The Acme Corporation also appeared to produce non-Toonish devices, and had a company slogan: "If it's Acme, it's a gasser".

-In the movie *Armageddon* (1998), a reference is made to Coyote's failed attempts to catch the Road Runner with an Acme rocket.

-In *Last Action Hero*, ACME products (ACME dynamite, ACME Storage Center cardboard boxes, ACME video store, old ACME Engineering sign, ACME construction crane...) can be seen in the "Jack Slater IV" movie. An excerpt from a Wile E. Coyote cartoon is also shown early in the movie.

-In the web series *Web Therapy* (2009), a reference is made to ACME by Lisa Kudrow's character Fiona Wallace as a non-reliable DNA lab, its label including 'a Road Runner and a coyote'. [http://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Acme_Corporation]

