

# Collecting Jerseys

by  
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*[Ed. note: I had technical problems with the feature article I had originally scheduled for this issue, "Art and Slogans of World War II", and I will run that in a future issue. In its place I'm running an updated version of an article I originally ran in the Sierra-Diablo Bulletin in 1994]*

Covers by the Jersey Match Company represent a somewhat larger category than most of the oldies we have been discussing of late. It's also a category that has more to offer the collector in a number of ways.

The Jersey Match Company was started in 1935 by Nat and Sully Fruitman (the same brothers who had founded the second Atlas Match Company in 1932) and Ruth Katz. It was based in Elizabeth, NJ, and also later in New York City. Records indicate that the company was eventually dissolved in New Jersey in 1944, but there is at least one Jersey cover dated 1948, which would seem to indicate that the New York branch continued on to that date.

Jersey covers are all 20-strikes, but there are varieties. The earlier covers are wide-strikers and are somewhat longer than later issues. Most Jersey covers have "Safety First" footers, however "Close Cover Before Striking Match" appears on what are probably the post-war issues, for the most part. There is also at least one Jersey cover with no footer at all (in its place is the advertiser's name. Shown here (right) is also a footer in Spanish. This Jersey cover was made for use in Peru.



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There are at least 24 different Jersey manumarks.

Even if you wouldn't be interested in Jerseys, as such, there are lots of great conjunctive covers to please just about all collectors: Airlines, Ship Lines, World Fairs, Full-lengths, Full-length Diners, dated, Politicals, and the list goes on.

Perhaps the most famous of all the Jersey covers, though, is its 'notorious' Girlie set, one cover of which is shown at the bottom left. Jersey's first, and only, Girlie set, which Girlie collectors will already be familiar with, was a six-cover set of line drawings, but it was the text that caused quite a stir. Each cover had a suggestive joke. Traditional rumor has always had it that there was such a commotion as a result of the set that Jersey went out of business. However, since the set was issued in 1940, and Jersey covers were still being produced some eight years later, the colorful story is not very likely.

Availability is something else that may attract old-cover collectors to this category. They're out there! I have 177 right now; Al Wolf reported having 488 as of February 2005; there are 569 Jersey covers listed thus far on my Jersey Match Co. listing; and there are most definitely more...and they're not impossible to get. I even have quite a few dupes, so you should find the same situation with most other established old-cover hobbyists.

You never know! You might even have a few Jerseys in with your other categories already. Failing that, you do see Jerseys in auctions on somewhat rare occasions. Generally, though, you'd be more likely to find them tucked in an auction lots of old Ship Lines, or old Airlines, or old anything...the key word is "old."

