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Collecting Mannhattans

by
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“Manhattan Match Company!” It has a nice ring to it. That’s what Nat Fruitman, Jessee Markel, and Louis Lipset must have thought as they founded the company back in 1936. Nat had already been involved with the formation of the Atlas and Jersey Match companies a few years earlier. This was his third shot at setting up a successful enterprise in the match industry.

Manhattan Match Company operated out of Elizabeth, NJ, and also (later) New York City. This entire area of the east coast had a long history of match companies and match manufacturing. The covers which Manhattan produced are all 20-strikes. They’re characterized by wide—strikers and a “Safety First” footer. There are at least six different manumark variations.

Among the covers in this category that I’ve seen, there are some Minor Politicals, at least one Elk (shown here), quite a high percentage of Full-lengths, etc.

Although the company was officially dissolved in 1948, the dissolution of such companies often took place years after production had stopped. Thus, the Manhattan Match Company quite probably went out of business quite earlier than the 1948 date. Another indication of this is the apparent absence of World War II Patriotic covers. I’ve seen two patriotic covers here, but they both say “Buy American,” which is not necessarily a war slogan.



All this is only based on the 183 covers I currently have listed, so I've double checked my own 1,189 World War II Patriotic covers...and no Manhattans. It's an indication, at least, that Manhattan may have shut down by early 1942, as King Midas may have, since I haven't seen any World War II Patriotic King Midas, either. If you have any of either, I'd certainly like to see a photocopy or scan. Also, out of those 183 listed Manhattans, only one is dated, and that's a 1936, so that's not particularly helpful here.

As with all of the covers from old, small, long-defunct companies, Manhattan covers are scarce, and you can rightly feel pleased with yourself if and when you happen to run across any. I actually found two once on the freebie tables at AMCAL!

Again, as with most of the covers produced by the old, small defunct companies from the 1930's and 1940's, Manhattan covers normally are not very attractive and don't sport anything that even approaches the art work of the old Crowns. Indeed, most Manhattan covers are simple two color, all text affairs...not very pleasing to the eye...but pleasing to the connoisseur!

As with all of these older covers, condition is almost a trivial consideration when it comes to whether or not you should keep a Manhattan cover. Struck or discolored...it's worth keeping in any event. Bobtailed or really mangled...well, that's your call. I take any of these old covers because I can list them, but whether they actually go in my collection depends on the condition. Struck is OK, always hoping I'm going to run across a better replacement. But the usual rule-of-thumb rule I follow here is that I don't keep it if it's really beat up. My overriding concern here is that such covers degrade the quality of my albums. Basically, though, you're lucky to find any!

