

Official Belgian Tourist

A very thoughtful and generous lady gave me her late husband's collection to insure that they would 'have a nice home, and this set was one of the little 'finds' awaiting me.

I'm going to make the assumption that most collectors have never seen this set before...simply because I've been collecting Jewels for over twenty years, and *I* had never seen it before! I'm also making the assumption that the set consists of the eight Jewel covers shown here. That's only an assumption, though, since the box that housed them (designed specifically for this set) actually held twelve matchbooks—these eight and four dupes. And that has me wondering, I admit, that if this really is an 8-cover set, why was the box designed to hold 12? On the other hand, when one orders, say, a five-cover set from a current manufacturer, it comes in caddies of 50, so perhaps the box, itself, is no real indicator of how many there are in the actual set. If anyone knows for certain, it will be one of our readers, I'm sure...

Another factor giving me the impression that this is, indeed, a little-known set is its origin: the Official Belgian Tourist Bureau. The box that the matchbooks came in says, "with the compliments of the OFICIAL BELGIAN TOURIST BUREAU/DELEGATE'S OFFICE: 720 FIFTH AVE., NEW YORK CITY". I don't know how many Belgian Tourist Bureau outlets there were in the United States at the time, but even if this set were available at multiple locations throughout the country...how many could possibly have been given out? Not many.

In any event, it's a very nice set. Each cover has a different black & white (unfortunately) photo of a specific Belgian location on the back panel. The front panels are all the same—a beautiful, multi-colored, embossed crest (the official crest of Belgium or of the royal family, I gather). The insides are all the same, consisting of a pitch as to why you should visit Belgium along with the address of the



Bureau Jewel Set

Official Belgian Tourist Bureau in New York City. The inside text is black on a yellow background. There's also a small manufacturer's mark ('81') on the inside bottom right corner. If that stands for '1981', that's just about what the age of the covers look like, so I'll go with that until someone tells me differently. The top flap has the same text on all the covers: Country of age-old tradition as well as modern achievements."

Here's a listing of the eight different covers:

1. Antwerp	5. Hasselt
2. Bruges	6. La Roche
3. Brussels	7. Malmedy
4. Dinant	8. Mons

By the way, these covers are perfect examples of 'conjunctives'—covers that fall into multiple categories at the same time. These are all Jewel-Crest-Embossed-B&W Photo-Foreign at the same time! According to whatever your category priorities are, you'd have to decide which of the above collections would eventually house this attractive set.

There were 5,227 Jewels listed the last time I heard (September 2005—Art Houser does the listing). It's a great category to collect in—one of the 'Fancies'. I've got lots to trade...*hint hint!*

