



The Willats Printing Company is one of those old, long-lived printing companies that was associated with matchcovers for much of its history. That puts it in the category of a Kaeser & Blair or Geiger Bros., but Willats, although long-lasting, was never a major player in the match industry. Sorting through covers, you'll rarely happen upon a Willats-manumarked cover.

It's perhaps of special significance to us collectors out here in the West, since it was a San Francisco company whereas so many of its peers were located in Chicago and further east. I actually tried contacting the company a number of years ago to get some background history on the company, but no one ever responded. Willats went out of business in 1996, after having been founded in 1906, so perhaps they were closing up shop when I sent my inquiry. It's a shame I 'missed' that one; now, we'll probably never be able to find out that information. I haven't been able to find it on the internet.

I do know that Willats was a general commercial printing firm, located at 950 Folsom St, in San Francisco. Looking at the covers they printed, and what we have listed, we can gather some other information...

There are only 113 covers currently listed, so they didn't put out many. One is dated 1939, one is a wide-striker, and several are World War II Patriotics, so we know for certain that their issues go from Pre-War to...? Hmm... We have to stretch and make an educated inference here.

Only one of the 113 listed covers is a reverse-striker, so we could tentatively say Willats issued covers from at least 1939 to after 1973, but by the move to reverse-strikers had already tapered off significantly from cover production...although the company was never a prolific producer in the first place.

Of the 113 covers, one is a 12-strike, one is a 40-strike, and all the rest are 20-strikes.

Not surprisingly, all of the Willens covers known so far are for businesses, organizations, or events in the San Francisco-Bay Area.

I list these covers, so I'd certainly appreciate scans or photocopies of any you run across, especially if you happen to find a reverse-striker.

