

Brown & Bigelow

by
Mike Prero

Anyone who's been collecting covers for awhile is familiar with the Brown & Bigelow manumark. As with similar companies, such as Kaeser & Blair and Geiger Bros., Brown & Bigelow is not a manufacturer, but rather a distributor. And, they've been around for quite awhile, since the late 1800's, but I don't recall ever seeing a Brown & Bigelow manumark on any really old covers. Their highpoint, as far as covers go, seem to be around the 1960s.

"Brown & Bigelow is a leading distributor of promotional products and calendar advertising. It is a full service promotional products company with sales offices strategically located throughout the United States.

1896 was a time of technological upheaval; the industrial revolution was creating entirely new lifestyles. That year Herbert Huse Bigelow, a young calendar salesman, realized part of his ambition when he teamed up with a financier named Hiram Brown to form his own calendar company.

It was a one-man show, with young Bigelow the sole representative in management, on the sales force, and at the press. It was a humble beginning in a second floor print shop. Founded on courage, determination, and a deep sense of perfectionism, the young firm soon became one to be reckoned with in the small calendar world of the 1890s.

Sales mounted. The first branch sales office opened in Boston in 1902, with others soon following. The business needed more space as early as 1899 and moved to new quarters, soon to be outgrown. The company built its own large manufacturing plant in 1914, and in 1980, built its present headquarters in St. Paul.

The company prospered after WWII, leveled off, was sold and survived three separate ownerships and ten management teams. In May of 1988 William D. Smith Sr., a former B&B employee, purchased the Atwater Group (as it was then called).

Within 3 months he had changed the name back to Brown & Bigelow and started the rebuilding process. One year later Brown & Bigelow posted a sales increase and has nearly every year since. Additionally, the firm modernized its physical set-up by purchasing new printing equipment and updated its philosophies.

In 1994 the business was again refocused and split into a distributor of promotional products and a supplier of calendars under the banner of HotLine. At the time HotLine introduced the Price Buster Line, and this along with the ClassicLine was marketed to industry distributors. Sales spread and they now count over 6,000 distributors as valued customers. In the following years, Brown & Bigelow prospered from the collective efforts of its hundreds of talented employees.

Recently, Brown & Bigelow has been expanding its opportunities by partnering with distributorships such as Corporate Motivators (April 2010), The Adcentive Group (October 2010), Best Promotions (March 2011), and The Brandmarket (December 2011).” [<http://www.browncanbigelow.com/experience/our-story>]

BROWN & BIGELOW

NEVER
DODGE
AN ISSUE
IF YOU
CAN
AVOID IT!

COFFEE TO PLEASE ANYONE

Harris Sea-Shell Restaurant
 4219 Leopard (Hwy. 9)
 CORPUS CHRISTI
 TU 2-8502

CLOSE COVER BEFORE STRIKING

BROWN & BIGELOW

A NEAR MISS

—RMS—
 LONG BEACH IN '67

AMCAL Convention
 Fresno Motel
 FRESNO, CALIF.
 May 19-22, 1966

RMS Convention
 ALLENTOWN, PENNA.
 Aug. 21-28, 1966

CLOSE COVER BEFORE STRIKING

BROWN & BIGELOW

YOUR MOVE

—RMS—
 LONG BEACH IN '67

AMCAL Convention
 Fresno Motel
 FRESNO, CALIF.
 May 19-22, 1966

RMS Convention
 ALLENTOWN, PENNA.
 Aug. 21-28, 1966

CLOSE COVER BEFORE STRIKING

BROWN & BIGELOW

WANTED

—RMS—
 LONG BEACH IN '67

AMCAL Convention
 Fresno Motel
 FRESNO, CALIF.
 May 19-22, 1966

RMS Convention
 ALLENTOWN, PENNA.
 Aug. 21-28, 1966

CLOSE COVER BEFORE STRIKING

BROWN & BIGELOW

THE FINISHING TOUCH

—RMS—
 LONG BEACH IN '67

AMCAL Convention
 Fresno Motel
 FRESNO, CALIF.
 May 19-22, 1966

RMS Convention
 ALLENTOWN, PENNA.
 Aug. 21-28, 1966

CLOSE COVER BEFORE STRIKING

BROWN & BIGELOW

BARBECUE

Phone 794-9880

COLUMBINE
CONOCO

3593 W. Bowles Ave.
 LITTLETON, COLO.

CLOSE COVER BEFORE STRIKING