

# Hawaii...T.H.!

by  
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What are the two most important letters in “HAWAII?”.....”T” and “H”!! When you see those letters on a Hawaiian cover, you know it’s at least 40 years old and probably a good deal older than that. “T.H.”—Territory of Hawaii—my favorite type of Hawaiian covers.

We went over Hawaii’s general history in last June’s feature article, so we’ll skip most of the background details. We’re only concerned with a specific slice of Hawaiian history here, 1900-1959; that’s the time period when Hawaii was a territory, prior to becoming a state. It also proved to be the era of the formation of Hawaii’s modern economy and the birth of what is probably the most famous tourist destination on earth.

Our “T.H.” covers, then, come from the 1900-1959 time frame. Of course, your chances of ever coming across a 1900 Hawaiian cover are nil. Still, we’re talking very respectable *old* covers, here, even older than the dates given above would lead you to believe. Why? Because there are hardly any “T.H.” covers to be seen after World War II, even though Hawaii was to remain a territory for another 14 years. Almost all of the “T.H.” covers are pre-1945! Well, now! That means we’re actually talking about covers the bulk of which are in the 54-64 year old range! That’s reason enough for me to collect them...and they’re also early Hawaiian covers to boot.

So, what’s out there and where? Unfortunately, I don’t have any numbers on “T.H.” Hawaiian covers, specifically. Hawaiian collectors don’t break their counts out to include this category within a category [*it’d be nice*



*if they did, though].* The late Jim Moffett, Southern California, had the largest Hawaiian collection I know of, some 4,000 by the time he passed away several years ago. I can only imagine the ‘T.H.’ covers he must have had....but, on the other hand, there couldn’t have been all that many, judging by the frequency that I see such covers in trades and auctions and the relatively few I actually have in my own various collections.

Why so few? Well, the age for one thing. We’re talking about covers that would have had to survive half a century to be available now. Then, there’s the economy of that era to be considered. Pre-War Hawaii wasn’t the same bustling place we know it as today—that means fewer people, fewer businesses, fewer potential sources for matchcovers. Finally, there’s geography. All those earlier Hawaiian covers (US) came from the mainland, and, certainly, a considerable number simply bore “Hawaii,” “Hawaiian Islands,” or “Island of....” for a location, rather than the “T.H.” designation.

If you have a Hawaiian collection already, leaf through your album pages and take a look at how many “T.H.” covers you may already have. If you’re starting from scratch, the two best places to start looking among the covers you already have are your Crown Match Co. and Military covers. Crown was a California manufacturer at the time and in a perfect geographical position to supply covers to Hawaii. As you can see here, for example, Primo and Royal beers had a series going in Crown covers, a number of which were Hawaiian. Hawaii having a number of important Military locations, your Military collection will be the other most obvious place to look for “T.H.” covers. After that, your search will begin in earnest. A quick look through my own collections turned up 20-strikes only, no 30s or 40s. No 30s isn’t surprising, considering the time period, but there should be some Military 40-strikes around some place.

*Do you have a sizeable number of “T.H.” covers? Please let me know so I can update my data base.*

