

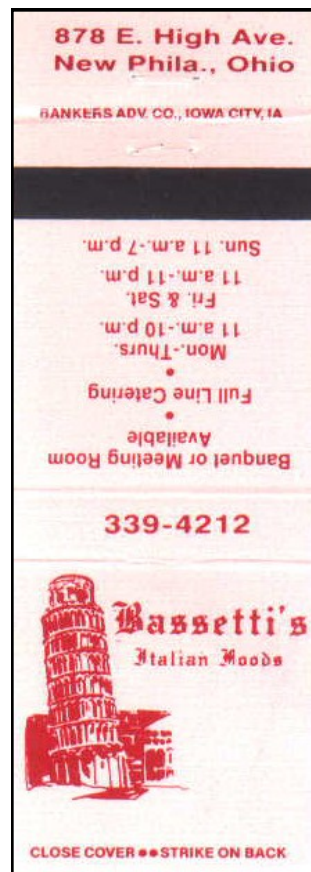
Oops! I Told You Not

The Tower of Pisa was built to show the rest of the world the wealth of the city of Pisa. The people of Pisa were very good sailors, and they conquered many lands, including Jerusalem, Carthage, Ibiza, Mallorca, Africa, Belgium, Britania, Norway, Spain, Morocco, and other places. But they had only one real enemy, the people from Florence. To show how well they were doing they started to build a really useless bell tower to go with the rest of the buildings near it - the Cathedral, Baptistery, and Cemetery.

They started to build the tower in the year 1173 that means the foot of the tower. After a while the war with Florence started again and they stopped. In 1180, they restarted, and in 1185 they had finished the 1st., 2nd., and the 3rd. floor. Another war with Florence, which of course meant that they put all their money in warfare. In this year, the tower started to lean to one side, so while they were building, it was already the leaning tower of Pisa. They must have been thinking that a bell tower without bell wasn't a bell tower so they put some bells on the top of the 3rd. floor in 1198.

After another war with guess who...Florence, they started again for a period of nine years, from 1275 till 1284. But they didn't have any reason to show off anymore since they had lost a big sea battle in 1284 against the fleet of Genoa. This was because they were betrayed by their own count, Count Ugolino della Gherardesca, who was locked up with his whole family in the tower of Gualandi. The people of Pisa threw the key in the Arno River and the count and his family died of starvation.

In 1319, they finished all the floors. Finally, they put the bell tower on top of it in 1350. In 1392, Pisa was sold to Florence, a rather large humiliation for the people of Pisa. They started a rebellion, but in



To Build It There!

1406 they had to surrender because they were under siege and everybody was dying of starvation. In 1499 they started another war against Florence. And again Pisa lost. They never managed to gain the wealth as in the early years, and now it is a small city somewhere in Italy and they are still showing off with their tower [<http://www.endex.com/gf/buildings/ltpisa/ltphistory.html>]

The tower is 8 stories high, standing 185 feet. The building weighs some 14,700 metric tons, and when I was there in the 1970s, it was some 14 feet off-center. The tower is there amidst a few other beautiful buildings, although the tower is the only one that is leaning. The immediate grounds are pristine, surrounded by lawn, but right across the street are a string of blatant tourist traps, souvenir stands, etc. I found that rather disappointing.

The government has taken measures to make certain one of its most famous tourist attractions doesn't actually fall over. Million of tons of supporting cement have been injected underneath the tower, and the tower's lean has, in fact, been corrected to at least a small degree...just enough so that there's no worry of it toppling.

Just as an interesting aside, there are actually some 80 different buildings around the world that have a similar lean, but the tower in Pisa has always hogged the limelight.

The covers seen here are part of my recently-started Tower of Pisa collection, of which I currently have a grand total of 26 covers. Obviously, most come from restaurants.

