

Pre-War Navy Ships

Pre-War Navy Ship covers are those issued before Sep. 2, 1945, although that actually works out to those issued before Dec. 7, 1941. Following the attack on Pearl Harbor, the Navy prohibited the use of any ship name or number on matchcovers, for security reasons. Thus, none were issued during the war.

This is where most of the hard ones are. There are some absolutely great old covers here. Most of the U.S. Navy Pre-War Ship covers were put out by Diamond Match Co., including the first, but there are a lot of Federals, as well, and covers from several other match manufacturers.

Of the 1,183 Pre-War covers listed, the Walter Mensch listing of 1956, which I have updated, lists some 53 Diamond Qualities (*after 22 years of collecting, I have 6!*). Four are pictured here. Note that the U.S.S. Converse cover [*lower left*] is an “extra-long,” or “tall.” The darker covers are the U.S.S. Medusa and the U.S.S. Chester, respectively. There are over 140 listed Federals and only one Crown, the U.S.S. Dupont, DD-152.

Some of the more interesting covers in this category [*to me, anyway*]: Cover #B122, U.S.S. Bear, AG-29...this ship was commissioned in 1876! Cover #39, U.S.S. Langley, CV-1...this converted carrier was used for some of the original experiments with planes taking off and landing on a ship; Cover #L199j, U.S.S. Louisville, CA-28...this cover is a pair of uncut 20s, forming a 40-strike; Covers #S54a,b,c, U.S.S. Salt Lake City, CA-25...this ship eventually ended up as a target at the Bikini Testing Range in the Pacific.

Pre-War Navy Ship covers are sure to be some of the most prized possessions of any collector. Handle them with care; the strikers may be brittle.

