

Airlines

by
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I think I can safely say that neither Wilbur nor Orville knew what they were really initiating on the December 17th, 1903, morning at Kitty Hawk, NC...one of the great traditional favorites of both old and new collectors alike...Airlines!...or, at least it used to be.

What a category! It has everything!...All types!...All sizes!...Gorgeous sets!...Beautiful fancies!... Exotic companies!...Plus, of course, a very distinguished history! And, paradoxically, whereas the challenge in other categories is to lay your hands on the old ones, the challenge in this category is to get a hold of the newer ones!

The earliest airlines got their start from even earlier air mail-carrying services, and neither really got started until after the end of World War I. With the end of that war, a large number of aircraft could be bought cheaply. This led to a great deal of air activity; barnstorming and stunt-flying were the order of the day.

Private companies in the U.S. were permitted to contract for carrying air mail after 1925. During the 1930's, aviation continued to expand. As transportation of passengers became profitable, routes were extended to several foreign countries. Transpacific air mail service, begun by Pan American Airways in 1934, was followed by the first transoceanic aviation service for passengers on the "China Clipper" (from San Francisco to Hong Kong in 1937). In 1939, transatlantic service was established... and from there "it was history!"

Any cover that advertises an airline qualifies for this category. Many of the European hotel covers carry an Air France or Lufthansa advertisement on the inside, and many of the older American airline covers carried dual advertisements for the airline and some other advertiser. (The well-known Pan Am-Chiclets covers, as an example)

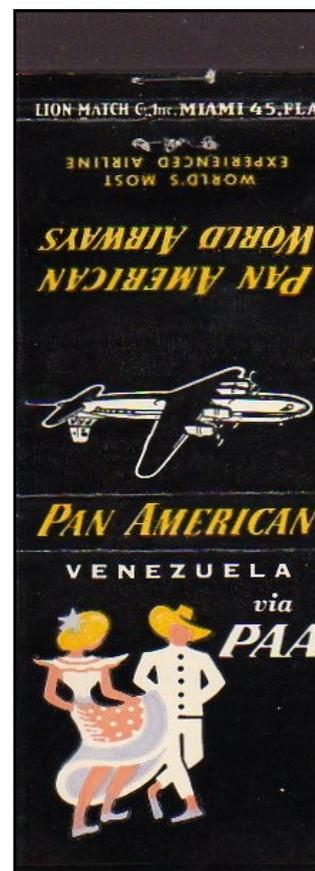
This category boasts lots of nostalgia and history, but one of its major attractions to many is the presence of a number of beautiful sets. First and foremost of these would probably be the 30-strike Pan Am sets, at least one of which are Displays. One of the most common, but none-the-less nice, is the Piedmont Airlines Jewel-Matchorama set (plus a variation set). Wardair put out a couple of nice color photo 30-strike sets. Ansett issued an attractive box set; KAL-Hyatt, as well as JAL, produced some colorful, slick 30-strike sets; Canadian Pacific has some nice sets, too. Finnair had a great 10-cover, 30-strike set featuring drawings of various planes it used since 1923.

And here's another category where the Foreign input is considerable and can really jazz up your collection. I always feel a feather in my cap is in order whenever I can add an exotic foreign cover to what I already have...a Saudi Arabian Airlines cover here, a Cubana Airlines cover there...

I don't have any really old Airline covers...no, DQ's, Crowns, etc., But I know some, at least are out there. I once ran a United Air Lines DQ that was in the late Evelyn Hovious's collection. If you have any, I'd be glad to run them in the bulletin. Just send me a scan or color photocopy.

I don't have many new ones either, since covers have basically disappeared from domestic airlines. Foreign issues are just about your only hope for any new ones, here. Still, where the interest of many collectors dwindles in the face of no new issues, other collectors thrive on going after the older issues...and it's always the case that there are still older issues to be found.

The largest Airlines collection I'm aware of is Sid Barlow's, ENG. He reported 4,354 as of January 2002 (Larry Ziegler, CAN, may have over 5,000, but I haven't been able to confirm that).



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