

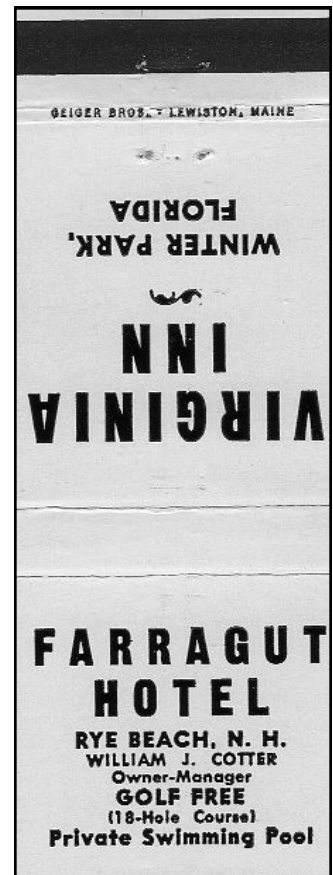
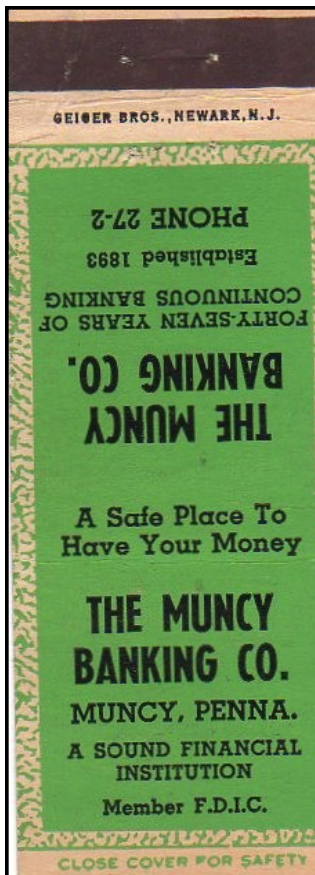
Geiger Bros.

[This is an update of a 2006 article]

Today, Geiger Bros. is the nation's largest family owned and managed Promotional Products distributor, but I became interested in the name as a manumark on old covers. As soon as I spied that wide striker on an older issue, I was interested!

The company was founded in 1878, when brothers Andrew and Jacob took over their father's two-room print shop in Newark, NJ. A staff of 4 (the brothers, a printer, and a bookkeeper) produced a small line that included advertising calendars, fans, and greeting cards. The second generation brothers, Frank, Charles, and George, entered the company in the early 1900s. They added date books and diaries to their expanding line. Frank's two sons, Ray and Frank, joined the business in the 1930s. Frank led the firm into the distribution of advertising specialty products made by other companies [and that's where the matchbooks come in].

Meanwhile, Ray acquired the renowned *Farmers' Almanac* becoming its 6th editor and tireless promoter for 60 consecutive years. Ray and Frank moved the company to Lewiston, ME, in 1955. Since then, the Geiger facility has been expanded four times to its current 140,000 foot size. Two of Ray's sons manage the company today. Gene is CEO and President and Peter Geiger is Executive V-P and editor of the *Farmers' Almanac*. Under their guidance, the company has experienced unprecedented growth over the last decade and has earned numerous business and civic honors. Currently, it is leading the industry's push toward e-commerce. More than 500 employees work in Lewiston and in field offices supporting a sales force of some 450 promotional counselors in nearly every state. [<http://www.geiger.com/11About/110GeigerHistory>]



I do the listing on Geiger Bros. covers and only have nine or so older ones listed [from the 1930s-1940s], and that tallies with the company's history, which states that it didn't get into "advertising specialty products made by other companies" until the 1930s.

There are 268 covers currently listed. Almost all are reverse strikers and 20-strikes. Only 15 are 30-strikes. One is a 40-strike. The vast majority of Geiger covers, then, have been issued in the last 40 years, despite issues beginning in the 1930s.

Paging through a collection of such covers, one notices immediately that graphics are few and far between, and there's a total lack (so far, at least), of Fancies, except a couple of Embossed.. These are not particularly 'pretty' or 'unique' covers, but their attraction, for me, has always been the long-lived history of this company and its association with the match industry. For me, it provides one of those little integral links in the story of the American matchbook.

Here's a company that has been steadily associated with covers for some 90 years, and, while there are literally thousands of 'jobbers' (middleman companies) today, existing between the manufacturer and the customer, hardly *any* can boast of such a lengthy association. In fact, the only other one I can think of is Kaeser & Blair, and that company's match history goes back almost all the way to the inception of the matchbook!

This is really a category for specialists. Although there may be a few collectors who save the older issues as part of their Oldies collection, I'm the only one I know of that collects Geiger Bros., any and all, as a distinct category. I have 268 presently. If you have any, or come across any, I'll gladly trade for them.

