

STORIES FROM THE ARCHIVES



This two-page spread that ran in *The Saturday Evening Post* in 1909 is one of the earliest *Arrow Collar Man* ads in the PVH Archives. Both the man in formal dress at the far right and the leaning man in sportier attire are modeled on Charles Beach. Beach himself was known for his rather flashy style, given to Persian lamb collars and walking sticks.

Dating back to the 19th century, **ARROW** is the oldest brand in the PVH portfolio. In honor of Pride Month, the PVH Archives is proud to tell the sensational-but-true story of the **ARROW COLLAR MAN**.

In the early 20th century, the fictional *Arrow Collar Man* captured the public's imagination, thought of by many as the first sex symbol in all of advertising. His creator, the famous illustrator J.C. Leyendecker, along with *ARROW*'s creative leadership, have long been celebrated for inventing this icon of American masculinity in 1905—a supremely sophisticated and sporty gentleman who set the standard for style for nearly 25 years.

But what hasn't been as widely acknowledged is the *Arrow Collar Man*'s real-life inspiration. A Canadian-born Adonis named Charles Beach entered Leyendecker's life as his number one studio model and became his life partner for nearly 50 years. Read on for the story behind the romance and advertising genius that indelibly shaped the industry!



Images of Beach in a sporty Norfolk jacket are pasted into an original *ARROW* scrapbook dating to 1913.



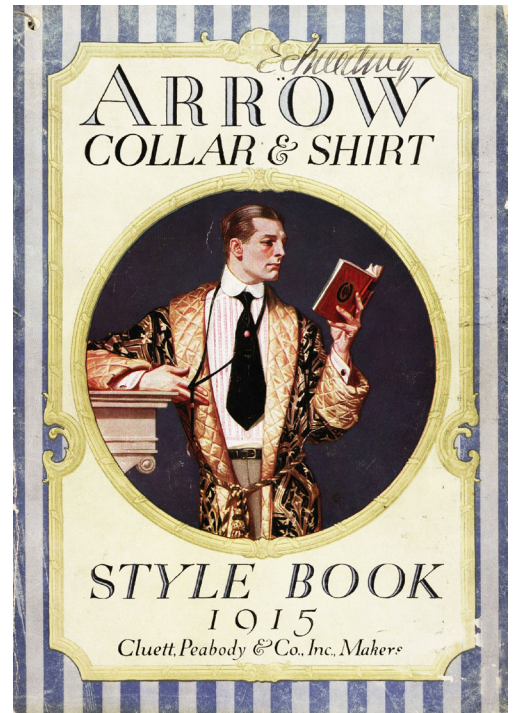
[L] A photo of the young artist; Joe was slight in build but was known to be a dapper dresser. [R] Detail of a 1922 painting at the National Museum of American Illustration showing Beach more head-on than most depictions.

[CHARLES WAS] TALL, POWERFULLY BUILT, AND EXTRAORDINARILY HANDSOME—LOOKED LIKE AN ATHLETE FROM ONE OF THE IVY LEAGUE COLLEGES. HE SPOKE WITH A CLIPPED BRITISH ACCENT AND WAS ALWAYS BEAUTIFULLY DRESSED. HIS MANNERS WERE POLISHED AND IMPECCABLE... - NORMAN ROCKWELL

Joseph Christian Leyendecker was born in southwestern Germany in 1874 and immigrated to Chicago with his family as a small child. Known as Joe to family and friends, he quickly displayed artistic talent that was matched by one of his brothers, Frank. After schooling in Paris, the brothers returned to Chicago to pursue their careers in illustration, at a time when American households greatly relied on illustrated magazines for news and entertainment. Joe, hardworking and gifted in rendering the human form, painted his first covers for the renowned publications *Collier's* and *The Saturday Evening Post*

in the late 1800s, commissions that turned into long-term, career-defining associations.

In 1900, Joe and Frank established a studio in New York where they hoped to gain more national-level advertising work and, on one fateful day in 1903, a young, attractive man appeared at their door. A native of Ontario, Canada, Charles A. Beach was just 17 years old, returning from a year in Europe. Frank hired Beach as a model but it was Joe that made him a national idol and his personal soulmate (although it was well-known that Frank was also gay.)



The 1915 Style Book cover image depicts Beach in stylish at-home dress: a quilted lounging robe over a crisp shirt and tie.

TO THE PUBLIC, THIS ICON OF SUAVE AMERICAN MASCULINITY SEEMED AS REAL AS ANY MOVIE STAR.

Charles's forthcoming fame was made possible by Charles M. Connolly, the new advertising manager for Cluett, Peabody & Co., Inc., the owners of the *ARROW* brand. Showing great savvy, Connolly hired Leyendecker to bring a new marketing concept to life: a unique and idealized male figure to consistently represent the brand, dubbed the *Arrow Collar Man*.

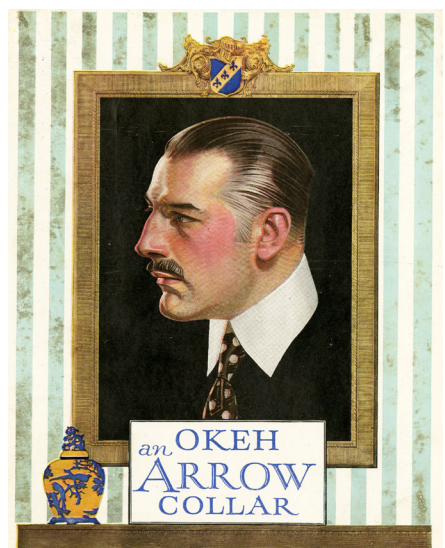
For Joe, who always painted from life and not photographs, the perfect model was a no-brainer. In *ARROW* advertisements, Beach appeared in a range of formalwear and sportier apparel, remaining recognizable by his chiseled features. Equal parts jock and dandy, he soon appeared in every subway and streetcar and in hundreds of newspapers, and men were certain to take note of what fashions he wore next. Sales boomed and hearts melted. To the public, this icon of suave American masculinity seemed as real as any movie star. Company lore held that in one month in 1917, the

Arrow Collar Man received 17,000 pieces of fan mail, including many proposals of marriage. He became such a pop sensation that the *ARROW* brand appeared in lyrics by the great Jazz Age tunesmith Cole Porter and even inspired a Broadway musical.

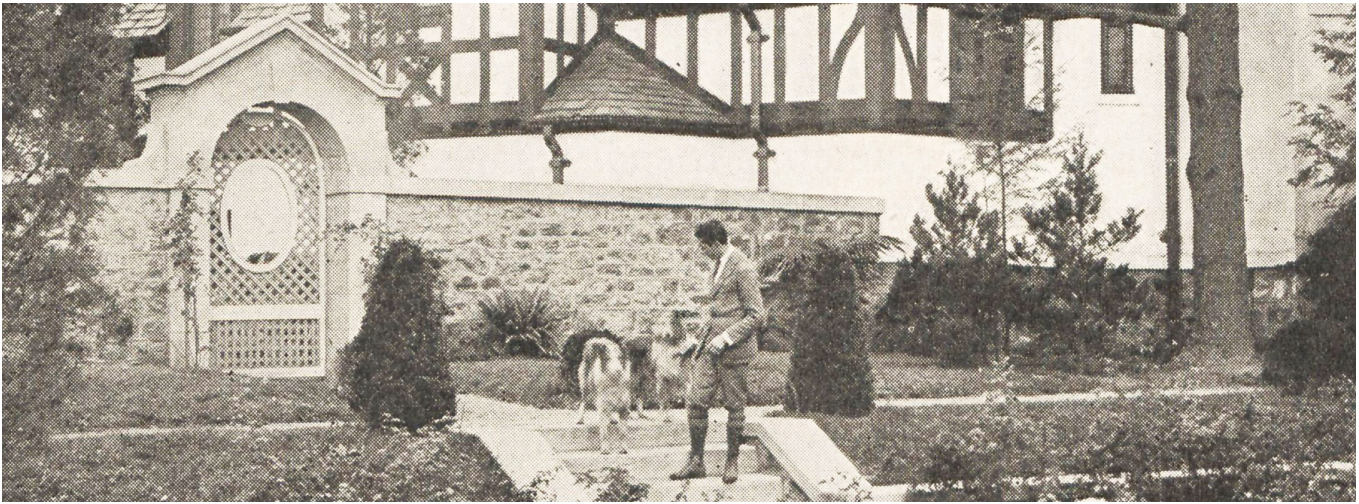
Meanwhile, Joe and Charles's relationship blossomed, even if its true nature was limited to their inner circle. Charles assumed management of the Leyendeckers' new Midtown studio and eventually took up residence at the brothers' custom-built mansion in New

Rochelle, NY. Actors, writers, flappers, and bootleggers lived it up at Charles' epic house parties but the patience of Frank and the Leyendeckers' sister Mary, who also lived at the mansion, wore thin. Jealousies flared and household tension increased until finally the blowup: Mary reportedly spitting in the handsome face of the *Arrow Collar Man*!

Frank and Mary promptly moved out, leaving the couple to manage their own business affairs.



As in these ads from 1915 and ca. 1920, Leyendecker varied Beach's superficial features, making him blond or a silver fox with a mustache.



In 1919, *Country Life* magazine ran a feature on the Leyendeckers' opulent New Rochelle estate. Charles appears in the background of one image playing with their pet collies.

RETRO STYLES BECAME FASHIONABLE IN THE EARLY 1970S - BRINGING BACK THE ARROW COLLAR MAN FOR A WHOLE NEW GENERATION.



As early as 1939, *ARROW* ran ads that looked back at the *Arrow Collar Man* with nostalgia. Retro styles became fashionable in the early 1970s, and this Leyendecker-print shirt from the *Joe Namath Signature Collection* brought back his image for a whole new generation.

Through the 1920s, Joe retained frequent commissions for magazine covers, *ARROW* ads, and artwork for other major clients, but newer graphic styles created competition. By 1930, *ARROW* was ready for a new marketing concept and terminated the partnership. As Joe and Charles aged and work dried up, the couple grew fairly reclusive. Yet they stayed together until Joe's death in 1951 at age 77. Charles passed away the following year, after inheriting half of Joe's estate (split with Mary) and destroying all of Joe's personal records per his wishes.

With the rise of photography, widespread interest in Leyendecker's style of illustration art waned in the latter half of the 20th century. But the scholars and collectors who have kept Joe's legacy alive are now further exploring his significance as a gay artist and masterful creator of icons. Some assess his sensuous depictions of the male form and the glances between the men

in his compositions as barely-hidden manifestations of his own desires. Still others caution against framing his creative output as solely a product of his sexuality, appreciating the complexity of identity and inspiration.

Regardless, now we can all appreciate the beautiful irony of the Leyendecker and Beach story: that together, two gay immigrants came to define the look of American masculinity and that the public—way before society's acceptance—loved every minute of it.

Resources

For a thorough exploration of the artist's life and work, please check out *J.C. Leyendecker* by Laurence S. Cutler and Judy Goffman Cutler.

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