

THE PERFIN BULLETIN

April 21, 1952

PUNCHED CONTROL MARKINGS ON SCHERMACK STAMPS: We are fortunate this month in being able to publish a fairly complete account of the use of punched control markings on the Schermack Type III coil stamps. In addition to an article by one of our own members, Lester Littlefield, we are printing excerpts from a letter from George P. Howard, another authority in this field. Also included is a list of the known varieties of control markings together with what identifications are known; this list should be considered as part of our serial catalog.

Since Schermack coil stamps are not common and are even scarcer with the punched control marks, let us begin with a few lines of introduction. In 1906, the government began issuing imperforate sheets of 400 stamps to meet the demands of the manufacturers of vending and affixing machines. These private companies punched and cut the imperforate sheets into coil strips. The Schermack Company was one of these concerns. This company used several varieties of perforated coils, all "unofficial." One of these, labeled Type III, is of interest to us. These Type III Schermack coil stamps are similar to ordinary coil stamps except that they have two rather large rectangular perforations instead of the familiar line of round holes. However, what interests us as perfin collectors is the fact that these stamps are also found with additional holes punched through the stamp proper. These additional holes, though not arranged as initials, are perfins in a sense and do have a place in our collections. The following paragraphs from George P. Howard serve to elaborate on the history and character of these "perfins."

"The Schermack Company and Mailometer Company are actually one and the same company. J.J. Schermack invented, developed and produced an electrically operated stamp affixing and envelope sealing machine. By 1909, his company, then called the Schermack Co., was "perforating" coils with two slots and supplying them in rolls of 3000 at 50 cents over face to the owners of their affixing machines. However, Schermack's interests were later bought out and the name changed to the Mailometer Company. The "new" company experimented with some large round hole perfs in an attempt to get the Bureau to produce a special coil for them, then dropped the idea when the Bureau backed out. Meanwhile their offices went on using the two slot perforation and continued to use it over a period of 20 years. Collectors have always called this perf the Schermack Type III perf, although all stamps so perforated after July 1909 were prepared by the Mailometer Co. for use in MOM affixers-which were still the same Schermack machines under a new name. It was still the same machine when Pitney-Bowes bought Mailometer out and produced the machine as their Model M-O-M.

"The gadget that punched the control marks was an "extra" on the affixing machines. That is, there were no "perfins" on the coils before they were placed in the machines. When the knife blade severed the stamp being affixed, the same operation punched the control marks on adjacent stamp. Since the stamps were locked in the machine and registers counted every stamp applied, there was hardly any need for the control markings to prevent the pilfering of stamps. However perforated identification marks were popular in that era and the Company had to meet the demand."

The Mailometer Co. produced several experimental control markings, which are listed on the catalog page, but they finally settled on a nine hole arrangement which is described by L. Littlefield in the next article.