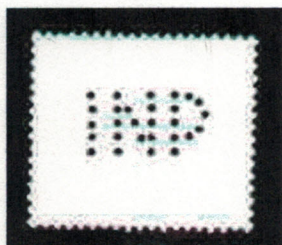




AN
INTRODUCTION
TO



**PERFINS
COLLECTING**



The PERFINS CLUB

2000

Perfins Club Officers and Committee Chairs

The names and addresses of the Perfins Club's Officers and Committee Chairs are published in each issue of *The PERFINS BULLETIN*. Please refer to your copy when desiring to contact any of them.

The Perfins Place Website

You are encouraged, if you have the capability, to visit the *PERFINS PLACE*, a website on the internet maintained by Club member Joe Coulbourne. In addition to a section devoted to The Perfins Club, there are many other on-line resources to be found there. A few include: general information and a history of perfins; links to other perfins clubs; links to perfins related sites on the internet; the current Perfins Club auction (as well as prices realized for past auctions; a page for perfins collectors to list their wants, offers for sale or trade; a complete listing of the Perfins Club Library; a listing of the current publications available from the Club; and many other features.

The Perfins Place url: <http://members.aol.com/perfins/> Be sure to bookmark it!



An example of a perfins cover with an identifying corner card showing correct use.

Shown on the front cover: Anchor design from Germany; O&Co from Great Britain; INP from Spain; DECO from Switzerland; H.W. from Netherlands; and BdE from Ecuador.

AN INTRODUCTION TO PERFINS COLLECTING

Who are WE?.... We are the **PERFINS CLUB**, a specialized stamp collecting organization founded in 1943 for those persons who are interested in collecting and studying stamps with **PERFINS**.

What are PERFINS?.... PERFINS is an acronym derived from **PER**Forated **INS**ignia or **INI**tials on stamps. Originating in England in 1868, perfins have been punched into stamps by large commercial organizations such as manufacturers, retailers, railroads, banks, insurance companies, etc., as well as by governments, to discourage stamp theft. Since then, in over 300 countries and stamp issuing areas, perfins have been utilized expressly for that purpose. In the United States over 6,500 different patterns of initials or designs have been perforated into U.S. postage, revenue, and special service stamps.

Where can I find PERFINS?.... Most often, perfins are the unwanted "damaged" stamps that are tossed aside by most collectors, or appear in collections as "space fillers" when a collector does not have a better copy, or can be found in mixtures, especially older mixes of definitive or regular stamps. However, in recent years, as collector knowledge has expanded, perfins have lost some of their second class status, and even stamp dealers can now be found with supplies of 'perfins' and categories of perfins covers. With the advent of the internet and on-line stamp auctions, perfins can be regularly found there as well. One source for perfins that has long been available is the **PERFINS CLUB** (and other perfins societies), where collector members have traded perfins for years - exchanging through swapping, sales circuits operated by the club, as well as club auctions. Seeking sources for perfins only enhances their collecting!

Why collect PERFINS?.... It is one of the easiest ways remaining today to be a worldwide collector without possessing an unlimited stamp collecting budget! Because stamps with perfins are most likely of little interest to a non-perfins collector, except as a space filler, they remain inexpensive, and with modest outlay a very nice collection can be formed. If completion is a goal, since some countries used as few as one perfins pattern, a complete collection of a country can be achieved. Another basic reason is that perfins collecting, in general, is more for enjoyment than investment, since many perfins patterns exist in large quantity on inexpensive stamps. Finally, perfins collecting offers the opportunity to make discoveries, even 132 years after their introduction, and many areas remain to be researched. New finds and discoveries occur almost daily.

How to Collect and Mount PERFINS.... There are basically two ways to collect and mount perfins. The basic collecting methods are: By **TYPES** - collecting one example of each perfins pattern, irrespective of the stamp that it is found on; or, By **ISSUES** - collecting a perfins pattern on as many different stamp issues as possible. Both collecting methods can be enhanced by collecting examples **On Cover** as well. Mounting perfins can be done in two ways - face down on a black background, so that the perfins pattern is shown; or face-up so that the stamp is shown (with perhaps a reproduction of the perfins pattern alongside)

This HANDBOOK is dedicated to introducing you to perfins and their collecting. We have tried to make it useful to both the beginning perfins collector as well as those more advanced. We welcome your comments and suggestions to help us improve this work.

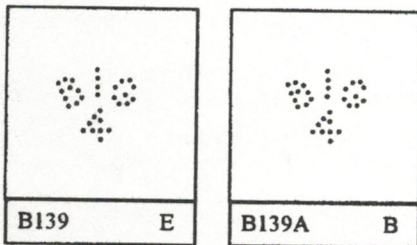
PERFINS TERMINOLOGY

Perforator - the machine which produces perfins in stamps, consisting of a body, a head containing a die or set of dies, a handle for depressing the head, and a set of metal plates through which the pins of the die travel.

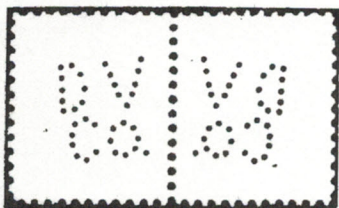
Head - that part of the perforator that contains the die or dies.

Die - the set of metal plates containing small holes and metal pins which produce the perfins pattern.

Die variety - a pattern which differs slightly from the master pattern. Die varieties can be found from machines with multiple heads, but most frequently occur when a die is repaired after damage, or a new machine is brought into use with a similar but not completely identical die.

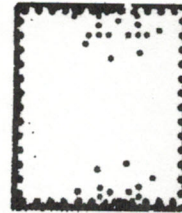


Mirror pair - an attached pair of perfins which are the opposite image of each other caused by the folding of a sheet of stamps before inserting the sheet under the dies. The center pairs become mirror pairs.

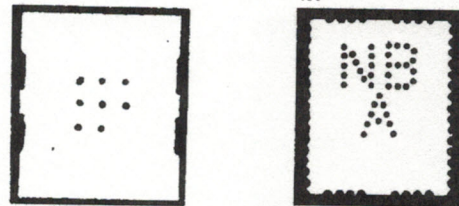


Dumb punch - a perfins whose holes have not been punched through, thereby leaving the bits of paper that should have been removed during punching in each hole. Also described as an 'incomplete' pattern.

Split - a perfins pattern that is only partly on the stamp because the stamp was not centered in the machine relative to the head, resulting in the pattern appearing on an adjoining stamp in the sheet as well.



Schermack perfins - a term used to identify what are termed "control holes" that were perforated into some vending machine coils provided by the company of the same name in the United States. A similar process, but using perfins letters, was done in some European countries, and are called "**POKOS**" after the machine manufacturer's name. Both **Schermack perfins** and **POKOS** were created as part of the process of affixing the stamp to the cover.



Illegal - in the U.S., a pattern that exceeds one or more of the U.S. Postal Service prescribed maximum sizes of 1/2 inch square and/or a pin diameter of 1/32".



Different size patterns and pins can be found on non - U.S. perfins demonstrating different regulations in other countries.

COLLECTING AND EXHIBITING PERFINS

Collecting - As mentioned previously, there are two basic methods of collecting - By TYPE and By ISSUE. These methods can be done with a single country, geographic area, or the world, though a world ISSUE collection would be a daunting task. There are other areas that one can specialize in, and in fact, are probably as many as there are perfins collectors, but a few areas that have numerous advocates will be mentioned.

Topical perfins - perfins that feature an industry (music, railroads, insurance companies, to name a few) can be pursued, both in a single country as well as worldwide. A single company, such as New York Life, could be pursued for its uses of perfins worldwide. Collecting perfins in the form of designs and monograms, those that make up words, those that were used by governments - the possibilities are nearly endless.

Stamp Issues - collecting perfins on a specific stamp issue (or series) of a country can be challenging - Great Britain's "Penny Red" issue (Scott # 33) that was in use when perfins were introduced; the U.S. 1902 issue, available when U.S. perfins were first introduced; perfins on air mail stamps, parcel post, revenue stamps - again, almost an unlimited area for building a collection.

Perfins Covers - many countries and postal administrations using perfins either kept no records, nor did perforating machine manufacturers (the war in England destroyed many of the Sloper firm's records), so determining who the user of a perfins pattern has relied mainly on obtaining a cover with identifying corner card. Add to this that the majority of perfins covers were commercial or government official mail, and perfins can present an opportunity for the postal historian as well as the researcher of the identification of a pattern's user.

PREPERS - an acronym for PREcancel PERfins, this specialty area combines two collecting interests. Many commercial firms used precanceled postage for their mailings, and their precanceled postage also included their company's perfins.

Revenue Perfins - this area of perfins collecting has only recently begun to attract a wider following. While perfins were used to cancel revenue stamps already affixed to a document, perfins were also punched into revenue stamps the same as postage - before being affixed to a document - and development of catalogs of revenue perfins are now in progress.

Exhibiting Perfins - although perfins collecting is a specialized area of philately, the same basic rules applicable to exhibiting any philatelic subject apply. Assembling the best quality material possible, arranging it in a manner that will appeal to the viewer, and developing the story so that it proceeds in a logical flow from the first page to the last - all essential to a perfins exhibit as well as that of any other philatelic subject. Perhaps unique to a perfins exhibit is that the subject does not readily lend itself to being seen, in which case either the perfins is mounted face down on a black background, or a copy of the pattern is shown alongside the stamp/cover/document.

One asset just now coming into wider use in preparing an exhibit is the computer and associated peripherals (scanner, printer). Not only can exhibit pages be developed to display any type of material, but they can also be stored on disk for revisions, updating, etc. A device such as a scanner can add images to an exhibit page that heretofore required the exhibitor to manually prepare. (This Handbook was prepared using a computer, and the perfins images were all scanned and inserted into the pages using a word-processing program).

WHAT ARE PERFINS WORTH?

Quality - As with collecting anything, attempting to obtain specimens of the best quality applies no less to perfins than any other type of philatelic material. Though a collection of perfins will most probably consist principally of used stamps, the collector should strive to obtain those in the best condition - lightly canceled, all perforations complete, the perfins pattern completely punched and centered as much as possible. Perfins covers should be clean, neatly cancelled, and showing as little evidence of wear as possible. Not all perfins material will meet these criteria, but trying to obtain the best quality examples for a collection will be rewarding.

A few years ago it could be stated, in general, that perfins were inexpensive, the unwanted 'damaged' stamps most collectors either discarded or relegated to 'space - filler' status. For many perfins, this remains true, as large collections can be assembled with minimal expense. But, as in any area of philately, there are exceptions, and some perfins material is now sought by non-perfins collectors because, in order to complete their collections, some items only exist with a perfins. Even the major catalogs now list and value some perfins material - Schermacks with control holes in the Scott Specialized; Australian "OS" officials in Stanley Gibbons; Tunisia postage due "T" perfins in Yvert, to note but a few examples.

Collector demand also factors in to the value of a perfins. Some areas have few perfins, and the area or country specialists as well as the perfins collector compete for examples.

While there is no catalog the perfins collector can go to for a value reference, for U.S. perfins, the Perfins Club has conducted surveys of members' collections for many years, and has determined a Rating system based on the scarcity of patterns known.

U.S. Perfins Ratings - based on the original efforts of Claude Cain, a rating scale based on relative scarcity of patterns reported has been developed and updated through periodic surveys. These ratings as currently used are:

A	Rare - 10 copies or less known.
B+	Scarce - 11 to 20 copies or less known
B	21 to 40 copies known
C+	41 to 80 copies known
C	Found often in collections of more than 2400 different patterns
D+	Above average
D	Average - found in collections of 1200 - 2400 different
E	Common
F	Found in practically all collections

Additional factors that will affect the value include the condition of the stamp on which the pattern is found and the stamp type. Perfins on cover have many additional factors too lengthy to list here that will also affect their value.

The Perfins Club auctions are an excellent source of data for determining the value of the scarcer patterns through study of the Prices Realized published after each sale.

Non U.S. perfins have not had a rating system developed, so pricing here is difficult to ascertain. Several countries (Great Britain, Germany, Austria, France) used perfins extensively, and large collections can be developed inexpensively. Others had but one or two patterns that were in use for a brief period and can command a premium when trying to acquire. Study and knowledge can reward a perfins collector when pursuing non-U.S. perfins patterns.

THE PERFINS CLUB

The **PERFINS CLUB** was organized in 1943 and has continued as a specialty society since that time. The club was the pioneer perfins organization, leading to the founding of numerous other perfins groups in the world. The club continues to strive to be the leading perfins society, with a worldwide membership and an array of extensive services available to its members.

The **PERFINS** Bulletin

is the official journal of the club, published 10 times per year and sent to all active members. The award winning 20+ page journal is filled with informative articles about all perfins, U.S. and worldwide, as well as club news and features. Articles by members about their discoveries, research projects, or on any perfins topic are always welcome.

Publications is one of the featured services the club provides. The first catalog of perfins - **The U.S. Perfins Catalog** - began to be serially published in the journal, then became a separate publication in 1966, with the last major revision published in 1998. The club has also published non-U.S. catalogs - as club projects, and as publisher of catalogs prepared by members working with the club's Foreign Catalog Editor. The club also provides, through its Publication Sales Manager, perfins publications from other sources as available. Periodic listings of available publications appear in TPB.

The Club Library is probably the largest repository of information on perfins in existence. The Club Librarian maintains a list of material available for loan to members, and the list is periodically published in the journal. Donations of perfins articles from any source are always welcome. A copy of the list is available for a #10 SASE to the Librarian.

Club Sales Circuits are available for both single perfins, U.S. and foreign, and covers. The Sales Circuit managers' addresses are published in the journal, and members can both buy and sell through the circuits. Send a #10 SASE to either (or both) Sales managers for details about their circuit operations.


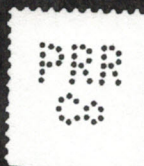








Club Auctions appear in the journal 4 - 5 times per year, and usually consist of 3 - 400 lots of U.S. and foreign perfins and covers. Members may both bid on lots in the auctions and consign material for sale through the auctions. The Auction Chairman's address (including email) is in every issue of the journal.

A Club Website is now available on the worldwide web for access by every member connected to the internet. Developed and maintained by member Joe Coulbourne, the website, called **The PERFINS PLACE** (<http://members.aol.com/perfins>), features not only the Perfins Club, including a Library list, Publications list, current club auctions, and numerous additional Club features, but also links to other perfins groups, as well as useful links to sites that may be of interest to the perfins collector. You are encouraged to visit the site and use this perfins collecting resource.

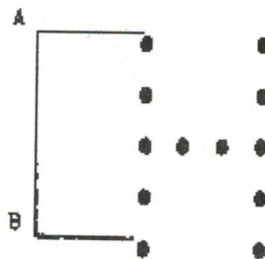
Research into perfins, even though having been around for over 132 years, is still in the beginning stages. Impressive efforts have been made in producing catalogs for the U.S., Great Britain, Germany, France, India, Italy, and several other countries, and the club has published the **World Perfins Catalog** in several volumes, but new discoveries appear almost daily. As new information appears, the need for major revisions of some works, as well as publication of new catalogs is ever present. Everyone, new member or veteran, can contribute, and you are encouraged to contact the respective Catalog Chairs to join in the effort.

ILLUSTRATED DEFINITIONS










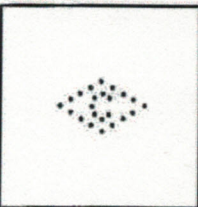
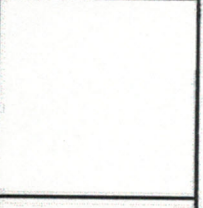
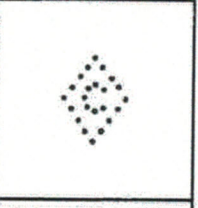

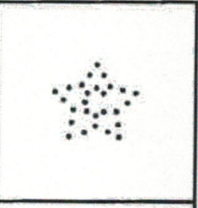

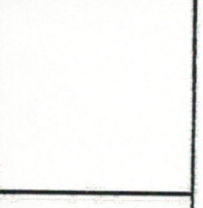
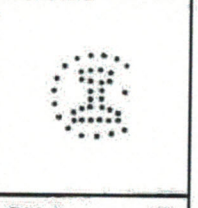
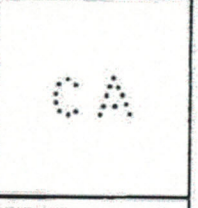
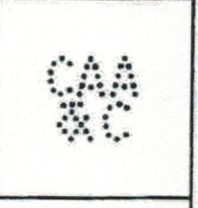
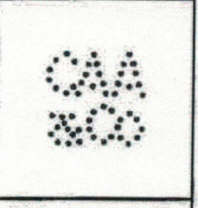
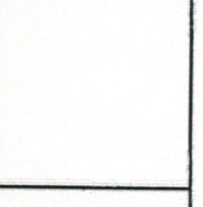
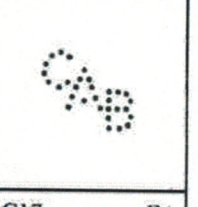
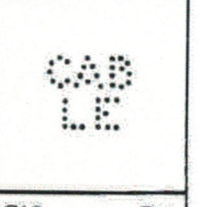
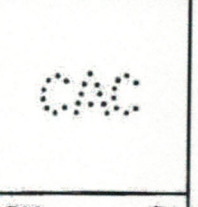
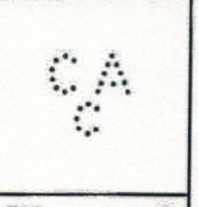
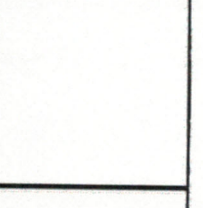
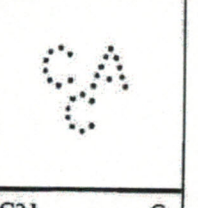
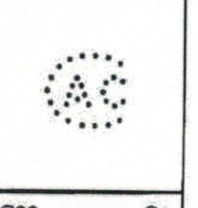
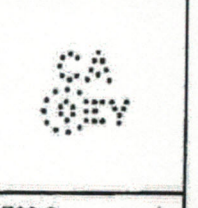
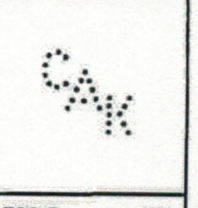
The following illustrations are provided to demonstrate the majority of perfin patterns that you are likely to see.

	ONE HORIZONTAL LINE		TWO HORIZONTAL LINES
	THREE HORIZONTAL LINES		LETTERS IN AN ARC
	CONDENSED, i.e. SOME OF THE HOLES OF ONE LETTER FORM PART OF THE SECOND LETTER		DIAGONAL
	DIAGONAL, UP.		LETTER(S) ENCLOSED IN BORDER SUCH AS CIRCLE OR OTHER FIGURE, NOT A LETTER.
	A SECOND LETTER WITHIN THE OUTER LETTER		MONOGRAM

The letters in a perfin pattern are measured in millimeters. A description would also include the number of holes in the pattern (12 in this illustration):



A TO B FOR HEIGHT

				
	C2 B	C3 D	C4 C	C4.5 A
				
	C5 C	C5.5 A	C6 C	C7 B
				
	C8 D+	C9 D	C10 E	C11 C
				
	C11.5 C+	C11.7 A	C15 D+	C16 E
				
	C17 B+	C18 D+	C19 C+	C20 C
				
	C21 C	C22 C+	C22.3 A	C22.7 B+