

# Poway Stamp Club Perfin Primer

By Bob Schappelle

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# Why Perfins And What Are They?

- Perfins are postage stamps with holes perforating the stamp.
- Perfins are a security measure to avoid theft of postage stamps.
- They are similar to marked money.
- Great Britain was the first country to use perfins. Unused stamps could be redeemed for cash at their post offices.
- Companies perforated their initials on the stamps for identification.
- Below are examples of stamps from the Northern Pacific Railroad.



## Start Dates For The First Countries To Use Perfins

- 1868 Great Britain
- 1872 Belgium
- 1876 Denmark, France, Germany, Switzerland
- 1877 Austria
- 1908 United States

## Countries With The Largest Numbers Of Perforation Patterns

- England 23060
- Germany 12000
- United States 6400
- Austria 3000
- France 3000

# Quality Of Perfins

- We are all familiar with such quality attributes of United States stamps as centering, never hinged, perforations, thins, and so on.
- Office workers were usually charged with perforating the company stamps, often resulting in poor quality of the perfins.
- In addition to usual stamp quality, centering of a single complete pattern is most important.
- Off-centering results in a split pattern.
- Wear and tear of the pins in the perforator device result in missing holes or blind holes.
- Double punches are often found if the stamp sheet is perforated twice.

# Regulations

- United States perfins were authorized starting in 1908. They were phased out when postal meters came into use, but many companies used them into the 1950s.
- One can still perforate stamps and use them today.
- Pattern size is restricted to an area  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch by  $\frac{1}{2}$  inch, although several classical patterns exceed this size, indicated in the catalogs with the letter I as a suffix to the catalog number.
- Hole size cannot exceed  $\frac{1}{32}$  inch.
- The pattern design is unregulated.

# Perfins Club Founded in 1943

- The club sells U.S. perfin publications, the most important being the U.S. catalog showing the patterns of the 6400 recognized perfins.
- The catalog editor is Steven Endicott.
- Members can purchase the catalog, which can also serve as a perfin stamp album, for \$65.
- Membership is \$15 annually.
- The club currently has 366 members world wide and a treasury exceeding \$100,000.
- Their web site, [perfins.org](http://perfins.org), is loaded with information.
- They run auctions to sell perfins for heirs of deceased members.

# How To Collect Perfins

- Arrange perfins alphabetically in an album—mounted face down to show the pattern.
- Collect many different stamps with the same pattern.
- Collect different patterns on your favorite stamp.
- Collect institution types such as railroads, banks, and universities.
- Collect a synoptic collection in a U.S. stamp album with a perfin on each stamp.



# Typical Catalog Page



# All Stamps With The Same State-of-Illinois Pattern

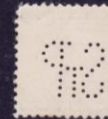


# Railroad Perfins

## Railroad Perfins



Chicago and North Western Railway Company  
General offices: Chicago, IL



Chicago, Milwaukee and Saint Paul  
Railway Company  
General offices: Chicago, IL



Chicago Great Western Railway Company  
General offices: Kansas City, MO



Great Northern Railway Company  
General offices: Saint Paul, MN



Illinois Central Railroad  
General offices: Chicago, IL



Louisville and Nashville Railroad Company  
General offices: Louisville, KY



Northern Pacific Railway Company  
General offices: Saint Paul, MN

# The Values of Sound Perfins Having Full Patterns

- The U.S. catalog shows ratings of perfins with their patterns.
- Ratings range from A to F, with A being the best rating.
- According to a census of members, fewer than 10 copies of perfins having an A rating are known.
- A perfin on a premium stamp will increase value of the perfin and decrease the value of the stamp itself without the perfin.
- For the purpose of trading, the dollar values of the stamps for each rating class are shown on the next slide.

# Current Values of Perfins

UNIQUE "A" rated perfins:	\$250.00
"A" rated (2 to 4 reported):	\$120.00
"A" rated (5 to 10 reported):	\$ 80.00
"B+" rated:	\$40.00
"B" rated:	\$16.00
"C+" rated:	\$4.00
"C" rated:	\$2.00
"D+" rated:	\$.50
"D" rated:	\$.25
"E" and "F" rated:	\$.10

# The Perfins Club Auction

## Example From October 2023

### US

Estimates:

UNIQUE "A" rated perfins: \$250.00

"A" rated (2 to 4 reported): \$120.00

"A" rated (5 to 10 reported): \$80.00

"B+" rated: \$40.00

"B" rated: \$16.00

Lot 1: US A275.5 B+

Lot 2: US B116-45 B+

Lot 3: US G66 B+

Lot 4: US I32.5 A

Lot 5: US I32.5 A

Lot 6: US I85 B

Lot 7: US I96 B

Any damage noted reduces the estimate by 50%.

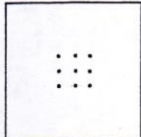
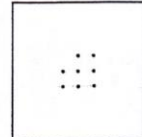
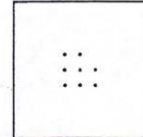
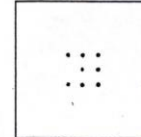
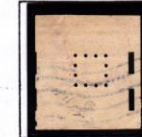
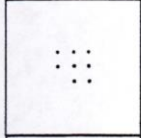
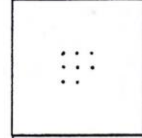
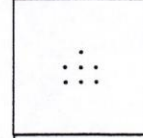
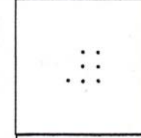
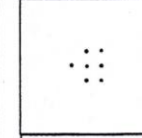
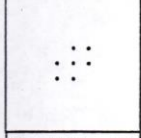
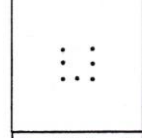
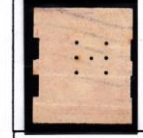
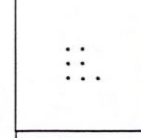
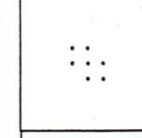
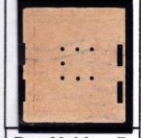
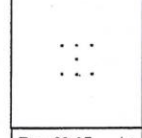
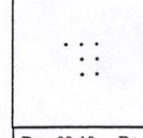
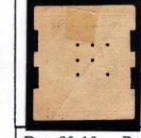
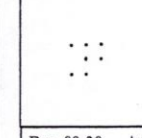

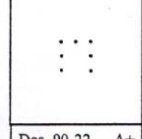
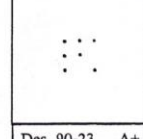
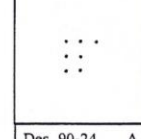
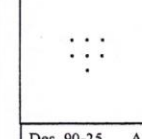
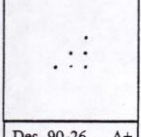
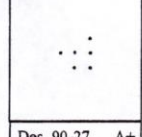
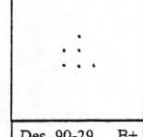
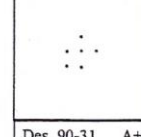
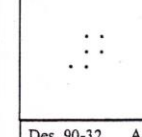
The number known for "A" rated is from the 2000 census or the 2015 census—whichever has the higher total number reported. All Perfin Catalog numbers used are from the 1998 edition, except for new patterns.

Most lots are in the attached scan. The very large lots are not scanned, and the moderate-sized lots have only a single, representative page scanned. Of course, I can send more detailed scans on request.

# A Page From the Catalog for Nonalphabetic Perfins



# A Page From the Catalog for Schermack Coil Perfins

 Des. 90-1 B+	 Des. 90-2 A+	 Des. 90-3 A	 Des. 90-4 A+	 Des. 90-5 A
 Des. 90-6 A	 Des. 90-7 A	 Des. 90-8 A	 Des. 90-9 A+	 Des. 90-10 A+
 Des. 90-11 B+	 Des. 90-12 A	 Des. 90-13 A	 Des. 90-14 B	 Des. 90-15 A
 Des. 90-16 B	 Des. 90-17 A+	 Des. 90-18 B+	 Des. 90-19 B+	 Des. 90-20 A+
 Des. 90-21 B	 Des. 90-22 A+	 Des. 90-23 A+	 Des. 90-24 A	 Des. 90-25 A
 Des. 90-26 A+	 Des. 90-27 A+	 Des. 90-29 B+	 Des. 90-31 A+	 Des. 90-32 A



# A Philatelically Inspired Cover



# Interesting Perfins



# Concluding Remarks

- Collecting perfins can provide chances for discovery.
- A large number of patterns can be purchased with minimal cost.
- Much information is available about the companies that used perfins.
- The Perfins Club currently has a project to find covers with the earliest known and latest known uses of a particular perfin.
- The data are being accumulated on the club website at an average of two new entries per day.
- With a finite number of patterns, perfin collection candidates constitute a bounded set, similar to stamps from dead countries and unlike stamps from current countries that issue many new stamps each year.