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Dave Stump Discusses

PERFINS MACHINERY

Several articles on Perfins have illustrated machines used to produce United States Perfins. Illustrations of four models of Cummins machines were once included in a Bulletin. However, not too much is known about Perfins-making devices, especially those used or manufactured in other countries, and it would be well if an attempt were made to record this important information before it becomes totally unavailable.

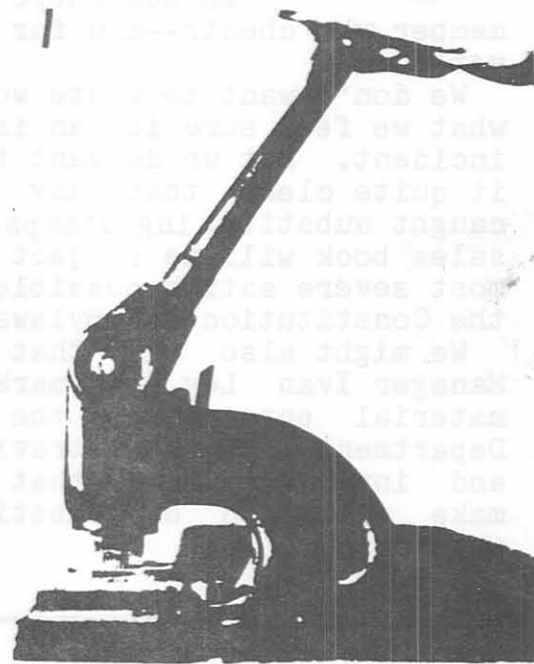
So far as is known, there have been only two manufacturers of stamp perforators in our country: the American Perforator Company, and the Cummins Corporation.

Correspondence with the American Perforator Company once brought replies on letterheads that had the company name perforated across the top. The old Bulletin logo was copied directly from this letterhead, and the same pattern now appears on Club stationery.

It is reported that the machines used in Canada, long before U.S. Perfins were authorized in 1908, were manufactured by Sloper.

Supplying machines for use in the United States has been simplified by the relatively uniform size of our country's definitives. The machines were built to take a horizontal row of either five or ten stamps at one time; that is, the five or ten dies were fixed to center on definitive stamps of standard size. The number of sheets accommodated at one time depended upon the number of pins required to produce the design. As a rule of thumb, one machine manufacturer suggested that with four letters in the design, four sheets (that is, four thicknesses) could be safely put through the machine at one time.

About 1922, an electrically operated device became available. I observed such a device in operation at the stationery supply depot of the Pennsylvania Railroad at Pittsburgh. This machine had ten dies in one



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horizontal row. The punching platform of the machine was about waist high and when the operator depressed a foot pedal, the male dies descended and punched a complete row of ten stamps. As the foot pedal was released, the sheet of stamps was automatically advanced one row, thus placing the succeeding row in position for punching. The three initials PRR were punched through five sheets of stamps at one time, and this machine supplied all of the perforated stamps used over the entire railroad.

SINGLE DIE MACHINES

Many foreign countries do not adhere to standard stamp sizes and, as pointed out by Walter Bose (#262) in his Argentine catalog, foreign machinery is usually designed to punch just one stamp at a time. One such single die perforator, used in Prague, Czechoslovakia, is shown in Figure 1 through the courtesy of Vojtech Maxa (#933).

FULL SHEET MACHINES

It has been reported that the British have some machines which will accommodate one complete sheet at a time; that is, the entire sheet can be perforated at one stroke. Since British standard sheets are 12 across and 20 high, such a machine would have 240 dies. The Sloper Company did custom perforating work for its clients, so it is entirely conceivable that such a machine could be kept quite busy.

CUMMINS CORPORATION MODELS

In the United States, Cummins machines were made in four models over a period of years.

- Model 50 was a single-die machine discontinued about 1930. There is supposed to have been a Model 51 which had

two dies, but no illustration has ever been found.

- Model 52 was a five-die hand operated machine discontinued about 1939.
- Model 53 was a ten-die hand operated machine. The last one sold was in 1956 for \$595. In 1908, the machine sold for \$60 with dies of three or fewer initials. At the same time Model 52 sold for \$35 with the same restrictions.
- Model 56 was a ten-die electrically operated machine not built after 1942.

PERFORATING COILS

Walter Bose also lists several patterns said to be limited to coil stamps only, implying that some machines were especially suited to handling stamps of this kind.

In the United States, we have only a few patterns that regularly turn up on coils. One well-known type, used almost exclusively on coils, is the City of Chicago's I WILL (I-119). But it is quite awkward to put coils through one of the usual types of perforating machines, and I have never heard of a machine designed specifically for coil stamps.

THE SCHERMACK PATTERNS

It is true that the Schermack coils came with Perfins punched in them, but these differ radically in manner of application.

Perfins, in the sense that we usually think of them, are applied to large numbers of stamps at one time, after which they are distributed to various locations. The Perfins are intended to protect the stamps in the handling that takes place between the point of supply and the point of use.

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Machinery. . . continued

In the Schermack machine, the stamps were kept in a locked case from which they were fed and applied directly to the envelope. The hole pattern was applied to one stamp at a time as it was fed to the point of application. The application of the Perfin really served no useful purpose. The prime purpose of the Perfin is to protect against misuse and to guard against theft. With the stamps safely locked in a machine there was little chance of theft.

At first, a few Schermack coils were punched with usual designs. I have one which has been perforated with the BA of B. Altman and Company, the New York City firm, but such examples are quite rare.

As most readers know, Schermack coil Perfins are punched with a nine-hole coded pattern. When normal patterns were fed into the Schermack machine, the small metal fingers which were part of the mechanism that advanced the stamps as they were used were apt to catch in the holes. Therefore a new system had to be devised in which a smaller number of holes were used and were concentrated in the center of the stamp. This

is the reason for the nine-hole code in Schermack Perfins.

HELP ADD TO THE STORY

All of the information in this article comes from my files which are quite extensive. However, much remains to be told about Perfins machinery and it is hoped that readers who can add to the story will communicate with me. As time permits, I will add new chapters to the story of Perfins machinery.

AN OFFER

As mentioned earlier, illustrations of four Cummins machines were once distributed as part of a Bulletin. These four 8½ by 11 illustrations, suitable for framing, reproduce Cummings advertising material of many years ago.

I still have a small supply of these illustrations and I will send a set, mailed flat, to members who send me 40¢ to cover the postage and packing.

Editor's Note: Dave will be on an extended trip until about the first of December, so members who take advantage of his kind offer should not expect rapid delivery of the illustrations.