

NUMBERS PLEASE!

BY VOJTECH MAXA

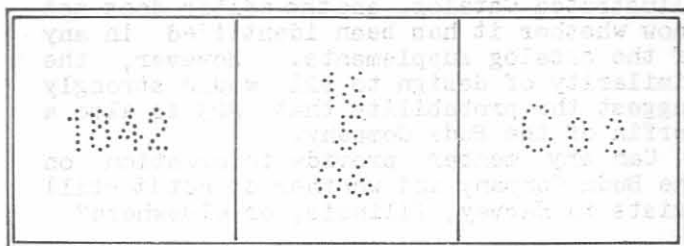


Figure 1

Figure 2

Figure 3

I am always fascinated by Perfins with numbers instead of letters. Sometimes the numbers have a clear meaning, but at other times, they remain mysteries.

The number 1842 (Figure 1) on a Czech Perfin is vitally important to every Czech male (and to many females, too) since it denotes the year of the founding of the famous Pilsner Urquelle Brewery. For more than a century, we Czechs and many foreigners have been enjoying this excellent beer.

The Perfin shown in Figure 2 appears on a British Africa Company stamp. The number 16/5/06 on three lines suggests that the design is not a Perfin designed to protect postage but rather a dating device of some sort. The three numbers suggest a date of 16 May 1906. The dating theory is supported by the fact that the Perfin is on a 10-pound sterling stamp - a considerable sum of money 70 years ago. Although it is impossible to confirm, I would assume the stamp was used for fiscal purposes.

If the design is indeed from a dating device, however, it suggests that the machine which punched it was capable of being changed daily. It is difficult, although not impossible, to conceive of a machine in 1906 which could easily be changed like this.

Can anybody offer any suggestions concerning the history of this design?

The pattern in Figure 3 may also have a very interesting history. The Co₂ design suggests the chemical formula for carbon dioxide - a gas widely used in the manufacture of soda water. The Perfin is on a Hungarian stamp with a Budapest postmark. It quite possibly belonged to some soft-drink manufacturer. But the question is - which soft drink?

There are other numbers which have interesting stories and pose interesting mysteries. What's your favorite?

(Editor's note: when Vojtech Maxa received the 1974 Hallock Card Award, which was announced in the January 1975 Bulletin, the editor did not have a photo of Mr. Maxa available to run with the story. However, a photo recently has been received and is printed on this page. Members will no doubt be pleased to see a likeness of this man who has given us so many fine articles.)



Vojtech Maxa