

"He thought he saw an albatross
That fluttered round the lamp:
He looked again and saw it was
A penny-postage-stamp."

No, the above is not one of the writer's frequent efforts at humorous verse. It is quoted from Lewis Carroll's Alice In Wonderland to perhaps put you in the mood for the rather puzzling Perfin story that follows.

Does the Perfin cover shown below represent a partial fake or a very unusual usage?

The writer will describe it in detail and let you draw your own conclusion. In any event, he believes you will agree that, as the aforementioned Alice said, it is "curiouser and curiouser" in several respects.

When the writer bought this Perfin cover at the recent Arkpex show in Little Rock, where he and fellow Perfins Club member Bill Bartlett served as judges, he was attracted to it primarily because of its unusual overall advertisement on the front. On closer examination, however, he realized that it has to represent either a partial fake or a very unusual usage.

The cover is franked with a stamp bearing the Perfin of the Mishawaka Woolen Manufacturing Company of Mishawaka, Indiana. The "BB" in circle Perfin (B-45) stands for the

"Ball-Band" product name used by that company. The Perfin-franked envelope was sent to a customer for use in reply. This was a perfectly normal practice, and many return-envelope Perfin covers can be found.

Here, however, the plot thickens. The Perfined stamp on the cover is a two-cent red, perf 12, Scott #406, issued in 1912. What's odd about that, you ask? Well, the cover is backstamped (with the company's time-stamp device) for receipt in 1949!

As an added curiosity, the cover was cut open at both ends and the top before the receipt time-stamp was applied, as clearly indicated by the fact that it overlaps slightly onto the front portion of the cover.

Unfortunately, while part of the Meadville, Pa., postmark is legible on the front, the date in the postmark is made unreadable by the black (sock) background on which it is struck. (The writer hopes you will pardon him for the irresistible urge to make the horrible pun that while he has seen many "socked-on-the-nose" cancels, this is the first one he has seen "nosed-on-the-sock.")

Thus, it cannot be determined from the postal marking as to what year the cover was mailed. The company time-stamp on the back undoubtedly is genuine; therefore, the only question is whether it was properly applied for current receipt of the cover, or someone applied it capriciously to an old cover they found in the company files. The one-cent presidential, used as added franking, likewise could be either proper usage or part of a hoax.

If one assumes that the time-stamp and the added franking were done as a prank, what remains is simply a very interesting early advertising cover with Perfin franking.

On the other hand, if one assumes the time-stamp and added franking to have been currently and properly applied, the cover becomes much more interesting, because it means either that the Mishawaka company was using some very old Perfins on its return envelopes in 1949, or that the customer may have waited three decades or longer to make use of the return envelope.

One other possibility - perish the thought - is that Uncle Sam's postal service took more than three decades to deliver the letter.

What is your opinion?



use the sales dept.