

THE WESTERN UNION TELEGRAPH COMPANY

BRANCH OFFICE PERFIN PATTERNS

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Catalog Chairman

A few words of description of the manner in which the Western Union Telegraph Company operated may be of help to Club members in classifying their "WUT" and "WU" Perfins. These notes are intended to accompany Catalog pages #W-17, 18, and 19, which were all distributed as a part of the August 1962, Perfins Bulletin, and will be made a part of the permanent Catalog.

operation: This company maintained two primary patterns of

1. - In locations where the volume of traffic warranted, offices were maintained under full control of the Telegraph Company.
2. - In other (smaller) locations, the company had contracts with nearly all the railroad companies in the United States, whereby the Railroad employees handled the traffic, and, although required to observe Western Union policies and rules, reported to a designated railroad official (usually the head of the Telegraph & Signal Department), and accounted for all finances to the Railroad Company. This class of office was NOT furnished stamps by the Western U.

The "WUT" designs appear to have been the first Perfins used, but the earliest date of use is not certain and they were later replaced by the "WU" designs. The 1910-11 stamps are the first series on which Perfins of this company have been reported, and both the "WUT" and the "WU" designs are found on this series. The "WUT" apparently was discontinued after the 1922 issue of stamps.

While it is known that the "WU" patterns were assigned to the various districts or divisions which the company divided the United States, no information - other than that gleaned from postal markings - has been received concerning the "WUT" design. However, considering the fact that THREE of the known NINE "WUT" patterns are seen with Chicago precancel cancellation, it seems improbable that these patterns were assigned by divisions.

(The writer worked for W.U. in a department which used Perfins in 1917, and it was the branch patterns then in use which interested him in collecting Perfins as a hobby.)

Memory is a bit hazy, and information on the point is not too reliable, but it is known that the company at that time had eight or more divisions, each with a general office headquarters from which stamps bearing the assigned branch pattern were distributed to the offices within the division territory. From the best information available now, the following divisions existed in 1917:

NEW YORK CITY: Metropolitan Division, covering New York City and nearby New Jersey points.

NEW YORK CITY: Covering New England points.

NEW YORK CITY: Covering those portions of New York and New Jersey not included in the Metropolitan Division. Also Pennsylvania and south to and including District of Columbia.

Atlanta, Georgia; Chicago, Illinois; Dallas, Texas; Omaha, Nebraska; and a city on the west coast, were all division headquarters too, but their exact territories are not now known.

About 1917, the company set up new divisions, but re-arranged certain territories, and established headquarters in Seattle, Oklahoma City, Portland, and at other locations not now recalled. When centralization became the trend in large organizations, the W.U. did the same, and today the following divisions exist:

- NEW YORK CITY, Metropolitan Division; covering metropolitan New York, and nearby New Jersey points.
- NEW YORK CITY, Eastern Division; covering New England, New York, New Jersey, and Pennsylvania (excluding territory of the Metropolitan Division), and south to and including the District of Columbia.
- ATLANTA, GA., Southern Division; covering south from the D.C., and west to the Mississippi.
- CHICAGO, Ill., Lake Division; covering territory west of the Eastern Division, to and including the Dakotas, Nebraska, and Missouri.
- DALLAS, Texas, Gulf Division; comprising the territory west of the Southern Division, and south of the Lake Division, and west to include Kansas, Oklahoma, and Texas.
- SAN FRANCISCO, Pacific Coast division; covering territory west of the Lake and Gulf divisions.

No explanation has been found for the appearance of branch pattern 21-22 in both Atlanta, Georgia; and San Francisco, California. Both cities are in different divisions. Also, no plausible reason is known for covers franked with pattern 46 from Dallas, Texas; and Syracuse, N.Y. Undoubtedly, there are other "puzzlers"!

Since there are 26 different "WU" branch designs, it is quite possible that each time a division was assigned a different territory - whether the result of expansion or retrenchment - a new Perfin machine may have been furnished. It is also possible that a few of the major cities were assigned individual machines.

In the listings of "WU" patterns in the Perfin Catalog, only such headquarters as were definitely known to have had Perfin machines at one time, are listed.

We hope that additional information may eventually be forthcoming which will permit the listing of other division headquarters to which Perfin machines were assigned. Correspondence on this subject is invited, - please address the writer at:

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