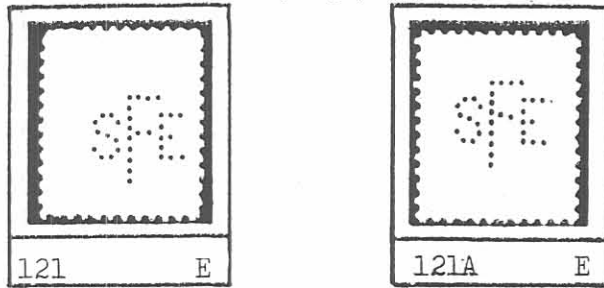


Bent Pin - S121A

John Lyding (L116)



Two perfin patterns, S121 and S121A, from *The Catalog of United States Perfins* are shown above. If you compare the lower cross-bars on the letter "F", you may note that the right hand holes are in slightly different positions. This hole in pattern S121A is noticeably lower than the corresponding hole in pattern S121. The first time that I noted this difference, I asked former US Catalog Editor, Harry Rickard, about the difference. Recently, I came across Harry's response which is paraphrased below.

Pattern 121A has been the subject of some discussion in the past. It was known as the "Bent Pin" version. Fortunately, during World War II, I worked in the Douglas Aircraft's tool and die shop for several years. My experience there indicates that the steel pins used in perforators do not bend, but they do break.

Since this is a minor die variety the discussions centered about deleting the variety. At times, I gave some thought as to how the variety was created. There are three possible solutions and lacking the records of the company that made the device or the Atchison, Topeka and Santa Fe Railroad there is no definitive way of determining which is the correct solution.

First, Pattern S121A might be from a single die device that was produced with the hole just a little lower intentionally (to distinguish the using office) or it was simply an accident of the manufacturing process.

Second, multi-head perforators are made using a master-die (i.e., template) which is used for drilling holes for the pins to be inserted for punching through the stamps. The template is placed over the block of steel to be used and the location of the

holes is then marked, either with a scratch in bluing or with a punch used to center the drill. If pattern S121A is a multi-head device, there are two possible explanations. The craftsman may have simply erred in marking the location of this hole or he failed to punch it with the template in place. When he was drilling the block, he simply misaligned the drill.

Finally, at some time after the device was manufactured, the right hand pin on the lower bar of the of the letter "F" broke off. When the device was repaired it was impossible to remove the imbedded pin and a new hole was drilled a trifle below the former hole. A new pin was inserted in the new hole, which was slightly out of line.

While we do not know which explanation is correct, we may get a clue with the appearance of the new edition of the *Catalog of United States Perfins*. Editor John M. Randall is including stamp usage data in this edition. If die S121 and S121A were not used during the same time periods, the repair theory would become more credible.