

Perfins on the Alaska-Yukon Commemoratives

By Herb Ashendorf (#3486)

Some 55 years ago, when I was first introduced to stamp collecting, I was a very fortunate 8-year-old boy. The husband of a school teacher of mine took me under his wing and taught me all the basics of stamp collecting. Even more exciting was a very generous donation of duplicates culled from his collection, but ever so proudly displayed in mine.

Among the many things I learned was never to collect damaged stamps. Along with the lessons on thins, missing perforations, tears, fading, and so on, was the strong admonition to not include any stamps with the little holes punched in them. That lesson, along with many others, had been firmly implanted and lasted a life time—until about five years ago.

I started a specialized collection of the Alaska-Yukon issue, Scott #370 & #371. I thought about how appealing that specific stamp had always been to me, the variations of private vending perfis, the

eye appeal, and the great foresight that Seward displayed in purchasing Alaska, especially in light of the Cold War.

When the gold Hatton collection was broken up in February 1995, I bid heavily (read expensively) on some of the many choice items that appealed to me the most. Up to that time, I had never been offered either a precancel or perfin of either stamp. So, at the last minute, I instructed the agent to be sure to secure for me the lot of 6 perfins on #370 on cover (which came at a total cost of \$50) and a "WER/NER" perfin, on the imperforate stamp on a brown Werner Co. return envelope (net cost \$45). In the 30 months since then, I have seen two others, one decent example of the Werner for \$70 and more recently, a very ratty example for \$100. Both were proudly presented by very knowledgeable dealers with brief comments on overall rarity!

With all that freshly in mind, I set out to deliberately look for more exam-



This cover from W. M. Hoyt Company, wholesale grocers of Chicago, shows a November 15, 1909, use of an Alaska-Yukon commemorative. The stamps went on sale June 1 of that year.

Ashendorf is learning a lot about "damaged" Alaska-Yukon issues

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ples. I wrote letters, posted notes on the Internet, and have spent countless hours contacting dealers throughout the country. Total result: zero, nada, zilch and nothing—just the usual "sorry."

So those few pieces languished in my collection, not really unloved, but certainly not fully appreciated. Just sort of there, filling a "hole," but not much else.

I also have a collection of world wide early illustrated advertising covers. About a year ago, I had the opportunity to purchase a folded letter-sheet.

Ready to mail and fully folded, it measures 3¼ by 5½. When opened it measures a whopping 17½ by 11 and has a large blank center panel surrounded by ads with more of them on the back. It's called "The New Combined Envelope and Letter Paper," and all the information appears on the back side when folded. In pale violet it says "Patentee, Proprietor, & Publisher, Isaac Evans, and so on."

Can you imagine my surprise when I discovered that the Penny Red, from plate 147 which was put to press April 2, 1871, was perfined IE! Just above the placement of the stamp "This Stamp is," while below, "Not transferable." This piece bears no date anywhere, but the stamp is consistent with the style and type in use in the early 1870's.

My research has shown that there are only two of these covers recorded or known. Nothing has been learned about this perfin to date.

Now I was compelled to learn about perfins, those stamps I always thought to be damaged goods! So, I joined the Perfins Club. I hoped to

learn more about my "damaged" stamps. So far, the learning borders on just about a shock! U.S. perfins were first authorized in 1908 and I am chasing them on a large commemorative of 1909! No wonder my success has been so limited.

I joined the Perfin Club, primarily to learn. What has happened only two months into my membership?

One member promised to quote me a price on some Alaska-Yukons, a dealer who obviously got my name from the club roster sold me 23 A-Ys, mostly different, and I got the shock of my life. Now I'm learning a lot more about perfins than I ever thought possible.

I have no idea how many Alaska-Yukon commemoratives are known with perfins on them, but I am anxious to find out.

Herb Ashendorf shares his checklist of the perfins he knows exist on the Alaska-Yukon issue (at right) and would appreciate knowing of other known perfins on the issue.

Perfins on the Alaska-Yukon Issue of 1909

Pattern	Catalog #
HI/Co	H89
ACB/LD	A60
C&S	C407
GE	G72-29A
C&B	C385
First	F71
PB/C	P22 or P22A
USI/Co	U79
SSW	S272.5
GS/Co	G161
FAIR	F25 or F25.5
NYC	N182
G(Co)	G62
UTH	U103
AB/Co	A38
KL&Co	K41
REC/ORD	R54
CP	C258
S	S6
L&M/NY	L185
ATC(o)	A268 or A268.3
AC/C(o)	A64
WER/NER	W82
LC/CO	L55-2
R&K	R167 or R167A
ATC	A267A
BL	B150
HOYT	H149
W-C/Co	W46