

The PNEM perfins of the Netherlands

If you have any perfins from the Netherlands, chances are good that one of them is a PNEM. There were actually two PNEM perfins and in this article, Jan Verhoeven, the editor of the catalog of Dutch perfins, tells the story of these two perfins. This article was brought to our attention by Martin O'Grady and is published here, in slightly condensed form, with the permission of the author.

The article first appeared in the *PERFILEX '97* program and later, in English, in *Netherlands Philately*.

The *Provinciale Noordbrabantse Electriciteits Maatschappij* (PNEM), the Dutch gas and electric firm, used

two different perforators over a period of 70 years. The first (PNEM-1) was used from 1917 through 1944. The second (PNEM-2) was used from 1951 through 1987. Each has its own story.

The perfins were used at the PNEM headquarters in 's Hertogenbosch mainly for in-country letters and printed matter. The PNEM is one of the few companies that also used semi-postal stamps for their mailings--at least prior to World War II.

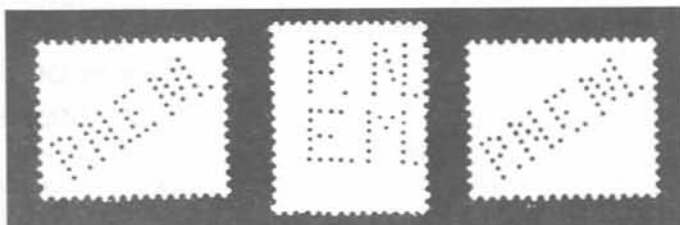
During the life of PNEM-1 two pins were broken off. Soon after the perforator was put into use the period after the E disappeared. I assume that the pin was present originally. Although I have looked for a complete perfin, I've never seen one. In 1936, the lower left pin of the E also disappeared.

During 1944, the entire perforator disappeared, possibly due to circumstances caused by the war.

Between 1944 and 1951 PNEM did not use a perforator.

On November 2,

1950, Cliché and Stempelfabrik A.C. Verhees quoted a price for a perforator with the letters PNEM with a delivery time of six



PNEM-1 (left) and PNEM-2 (center). In 1936, the lower left pin of the E in PNEM-1 disappeared (right).

weeks. On November 13, 1950, the perforator, as quoted, was ordered by PNEM. It took a while before the perforator was delivered. On February 2, 1951, PNEM inquired about the delivery date. On February 3, Verhees replied that "after repeatedly writing, a note was received

today from the representative of the company manufacturing the perforator informing us that it would take somewhat longer before the perforator can be delivered because the perforator has to come from another country." Exactly when the perforator was delivered is unclear, but most likely it was after February 5, 1951.

Over a period of time the PNEM, as a regional organization, took over more and more local gas & electric companies. These were spread over various towns. After their takeover, these local companies became part of the PNEM. They were identified as district or regional offices and they sent out their own mail.

Based on administrative procedures, we understand that their stamps came from headquarters in 's Hertogenbosch. This means that there was only one perforator. Since the stamps used at the various locations and mailed locally were perforated in 's Hertogenbosch, only the cancel tells which town the letter was mailed from. PNEM employees also used the PNEM perfins for private mail.

The perforator is about 15cm (6 in.) high, 15cm long, and 5cm wide. It weights about 2 kg (4.5 pounds). There is a small drawer to catch the paper punches. PNEM folded their stamps (harmonica fold) prior to perforation. About five stamps at a time were perforated.

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A cover with a diagonal PNEM-1 perfin used March 5, 1927. It was canceled by hand with an advertising cancel of 's Hertogenbosch Vestig U in Den Bosch, Bouwgrond voor Handel and Industrie (building sites for commerce and industry).

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I've heard that the office manager was a philatelist and that he instructed the employee who applied the perfins to make "nice perforations." This is the main reason the PNEM-2 perfins are generally nicely centered. The manager was particularly fond of the perforator, and this is one of the reasons it was used for such a long time.

Due to the increasing popularity of perfins, we have unfortunately noticed improper use of the perforator. I do not know of false PNEM-2 perfins, but I have noticed improper use of the perforator itself. In these cases it involves applying PNEM perfins to stamps no longer in use when the perforator was put into official use. Recently I came into possession of a stamp with the perforation applied to both the stamp and a hinge attached to it. It is most unlikely that the PNEM used stamps removed from a stamp album. We have to conclude that a philatelist was at work here.

Sometimes one encounters uncanceled but used stamps. These appear on postal pieces left uncanceled by the post office or on

prepaid return cards or covers not returned by the addressee.

Unused perfins were left over, for example, by an employee of PNEM taking them home to be used for mailing but somehow never getting to them and also forgetting to return them to PNEM's stamp vault. Some PNEM perfins were sold to the public at kiosks and quite a few of these were never used.

Of the PNEM-2, even parts of sheets are known unused. These are remainders of the various PNEM stamp vaults cleared out after the use of perfins was discontinued. By now most of these have ended up in the hands of stamp dealers or collectors.

I understand that there never was an official PNEM announcement about stopping the use of these perfins. At a certain point people just thought that using the perfins was a bit childish.

With the discontinuance of these PNEM perfins in 1987, the history of Dutch perfins came to an end. Based on this fact and the unusual usage of the PNEM-2 perfin, the perfin has taken a unique place in Dutch perfin history.