

**A**lways on the lookout for Foreign Air Mail (FAM) route covers, I accidentally stumbled across a few perfin covers in a dealers "junk box" a few years back at a stamp show. However, it was not the perfins that caught my eye, but rather the CALIFORNIA CLIPPER markings on the covers. I sorted these two covers and a dozen or so others out and paid the dealer about 50¢ for each cover.

When I got home I put the covers in my "look up later" bin. Days turned into months and it was two years before I got around to examining my purchases.

The covers turned out to be more than met the eye.

First, let me start with the air mail side of the cover. The first thing that caught my eye was the CALIFORNIA CLIPPER markings on the front of the cover. This marking indicated that the mail was to be carried via the Pan American Airways "California Clipper" (NC-18602). These covers originated in Sidney, Australia, and were forwarded to Auckland, New Zealand, for connection with the regular Pan American Airways Clipper Service (FAM 19) route. This would have carried the covers to either Los Angeles or San Francisco, California, for forwarding to their final destina-

## California Clipper covers lead to identification of Australian perfin

Joe Coulbourne (#2574)

*I was introduced to perfins collecting via my other philatelic collecting interests. In my case, it was the love of the latest Machin series of definitive stamps from Great Britain that led me to perfins, now my main collecting interest. I have found the knowledge gained through my other philatelic interests has helped me to build my perfins collection. This article speaks of the marriage of two of my collecting interests, aerophilately and perfins.*

tion in New York. The California Clipper service only lasted for a little over a year and was active between 20 July 1940 and 23

November 1941.

Most California Clipper covers are found with the GPO Sydney cancellation, first known used on 14 September 1940. Most covers during this period were censored in Sydney. The two dots in the OPENED BY CENSOR printing on the censor tape are indicative of Military District 2 which included Sydney and Newcastle.

The "PASSED BY CENSOR S. 346" handstamp in violet further refines the search, as the S represents Sydney with the 346 being the censor's personal number.

Having explained the markings, let's examine the rates. On the one cover we see six stamps totaling 4 shillings paying the ½-ounce rate to the United States (it was cheaper by 1d to send mail to British Empire countries, by the way).

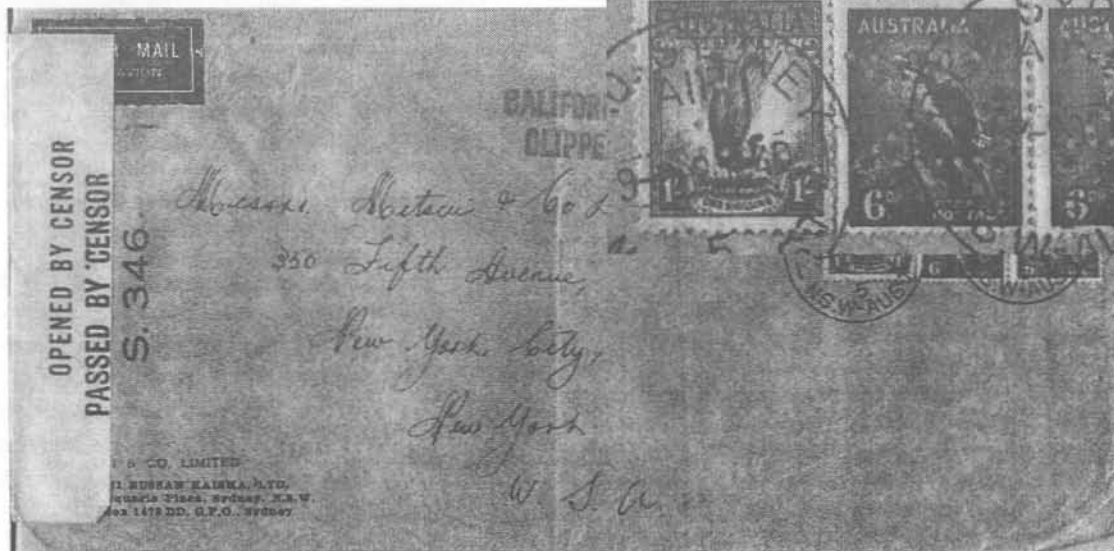
On the other cover we see 11 stamps making up the double rate (1 ounce) of 7 shillings 11 pence to the United States. Both covers are correctly franked.

As a footnote, air-mail rates changed so often that postal clerks (usually) had to be consulted for the proper rates which may mean that our business clerk went to the post office with

perfinned stamps in hand to post these letters.

As to the perfins, we find that the stamps are perfinned with pattern M.7. The *Commercial Perfins of Australia* catalog

(Continued on page 74)



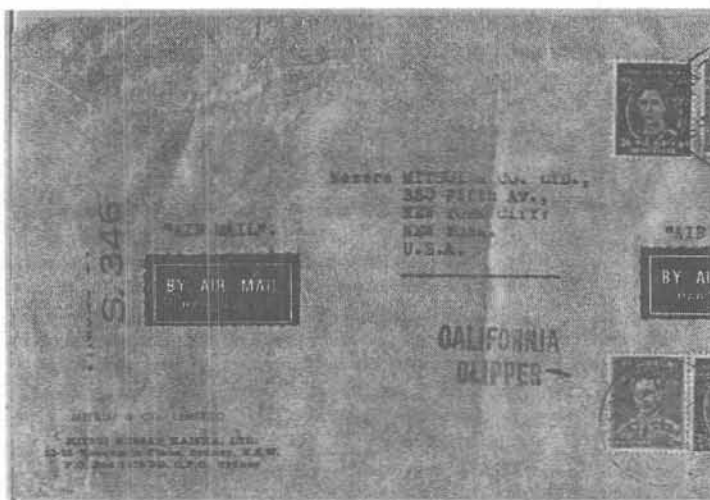
# Australia M.7 identified as pre-war Japanese firm

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by John Grant & John Mathews states that the pattern is known used in Sydney during the 1935-1936 time period.

It further states that the perfin is rare, the user is unknown, and that the pattern is only found on

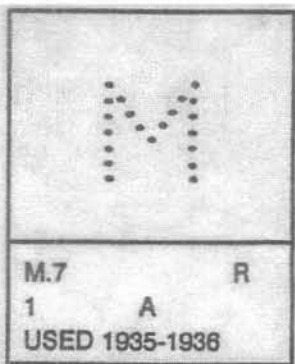
the fate of the Sydney office of the Mitsui Company, I believe it would be safe to say that World War II led to the demise of this office due to its problem of who used this perfin is



Australian stamps.

What an unexpected treat! I had stumbled across not one but two covers, either of which provides the identification of the unknown user.

The return address, printed on the front of both covers indicate that the stamps were used by Mitsui & Co. Limited, Mitsui

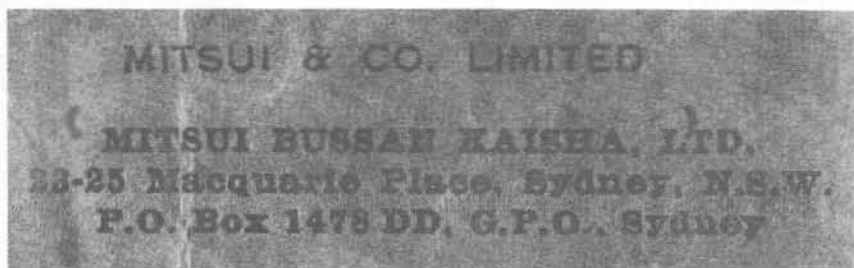


Bussan Kaisha, Ltd., 23-25 Macquarie Place, Sydney, N.S.W., P.O. Box 1478 DD, G.P.O., Sydney.

Both covers were posted to the Mitsui office in New York. With the covers dated 2 October 1940 and 11 February 1941, it would be safe to extend the period of use to 1941.

Without further knowledge of

obvious Japanese influence.



The rarity of the perfins may make the covers more valuable in the perfin field than examples of the short-lived California Clipper service.

I would not, however, entertain soaking them off to provide examples of the pattern. No matter to which "interest" these covers apply, the combination of collectible air mail rates/routes with rare perfins certainly makes them worth far more than the 50¢ I paid for each.

The excitement and pleasure in being able to clear up this one small mystery and solve the

one of the foremost reasons why perfins collecting has become my philatelic passion.

## References

1. "California Clipper" Covers, Robert Wilcsek, *The Airpost Journal*, May 1994, Pages 195-201.
2. Pre-War Australian Airmail Rates to the UK, USA & Canada and Censorship Markings, Robert Wilcsek, *The Airpost Journal*, November 1994, Pages 455-462.