

"World's Oldest Perfin - Comment"

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On page 109 of the July/August 1994 issue there is a short article on the "World's Oldest Perfin and the *Handbook of British Perfins* (3rd. Ed., 1988) by John S. Nelson is mentioned. Knowing nothing about early British perfins., I turned to the 2nd. Edition (1983) of this book and read the first 12 pages which covered the story of Joseph Sloper's invention of the perforating machine and included a copy of the first page of his 1858 Patent. In the text, it states that the first perfin made had the letters "SC" which were the initials of Sampson Copestake who was the senior partner of one of the firms pressing the British Postmaster General to approve the use of perfins in 1867/68. It is not clear whether any of these were ever used on mail.

The most interesting information which I gained from reading the *Handbook* was the case quoted by Joseph Sloper to the Post Office in support of his request to use a perforating machine. The request was based on the urgent need to reduce the high level of theft of postage stamps by company employees. In 1869 a man was convicted in Manchester England, of receiving 7,820 stolen stamps to the

value of £35/19/2. The sentence was five years in prison. He had accepted the stamps from errand boys and junior clerks (who had stolen them from their employers) in payment for bread and cheese. At the time the post office would buy, at a small discount, unused stamps provided they were in pairs or larger blocks. With permission granted to

introduce perfins, on March 1, 1869, the Post Office issued an official Circular warning against buying back stamps with perforated letters in them since such stamps must be stolen.

Does any reader know of similar events prior to approval of perfin use in the United States?