

Francis A. Hancock: competitor to Joseph Sloper

For a number of years, Joseph Sloper and his firm had a virtual monopoly on perfins in Great Britain. Sloper's clever negotiations with the British post office made it next to impossible for anyone else to sell either postage stamp perforators or perfins themselves to users. That monopoly was broken finally and numerous other firms got involved in the manufacture and sale of postage stamp perforators.

One such firm was Francis A. Hancock, printer and stationer, of 37 & 38 Wood Street, in Cheapside in east central London. The advertisement shown here is from a trade directory, date unknown, but probably from the 1880s. It was found by a member of the British Perfins Society and illustrated in the February issue of their *Bulletin*.

Hancock offers to perforate stamps free of charge. The user of the perfin was expected to pay for the perfin die, of course, which would be retained by Hancock. As the user required perfins, Hancock would perforate them and provide them at the face value of the stamps. Dr. Harvey Tilles says Hancock would make extra money by buying postage in large quantities at a discount from face.

As the illustrations in the advertisement show, Hancock offered a variety of perforators for various uses. The paragraph in the center of the advertisement reproduces an article from the *Daily Telegraph* of March

23, 1880, about a 14-year-old clerk being hauled before a magistrate on suspicion of stealing a quantity of postage stamps from a wine merchant in Fenchurch Street. The point, of course, is that the theft could have been prevented had the stamps been perfined.

At that time in England, postage stamps were commonly accepted as payment for small amounts in shops and the post office would re-purchase unused stamps from the public. For a 14-year-old clerk at the time, a few pennies was a lot of money. Whether it was worth jail time is another story.

POSTAGE STAMPS PERFORATED
FREE OF CHARGE.
BY
F. A. HANCOCK,
THE POST OFFICE, 37 & 38, WOOD ST., CHEAPSIDE, E.C.

Free "The Great Telegraph," March 23rd, 1880.
 HANCOCK'S PERFORATOR.—Sole of the Great Telegraph.—Once
 before, when the British Post Office was in possession of the
 monopoly of postage stamps, the proprietors of stamps
 were compelled to use the British Post Office's
 stamps, which were not only expensive, but also
 liable to be counterfeited. Hancock's Perforator
 was invented to meet the requirements of the
 public, and to enable them to obtain stamps
 at a much lower price than those of the
 British Post Office. Hancock's Perforator
 is now in use by the British Post Office,
 and is the only one of the kind in the world.
 Hancock's Perforator is now in use by the
 British Post Office, and is the only one of
 the kind in the world.

Received
 for
 PAID & Co.

USE HANCOCK'S PERFORATOR
 AND DEFY ALTERNATION.
 THE ONLY DESIGN NEAR TO PREVENT FRAUD—USED BY HANCOCK, AND MOST OF THE LARGEST FIRMS.

Perforator with
 1 Die 57/6. UNDER 1000s Perforator with
 2 Dies 25/6.

Perforator with the words
 NOT NEGOTIABLE D-2 PAID
 Complete, 40/- From complete 25/-

CANCELLED PAID
 From complete, 50/- From complete, 25/-

POSTMASTERS by sending their own STAMPS can have them PERFORATED
 for their Customers at Half per cent. beyond the cost of the die.