

A study of Western Pacific Railroad perfin W154 and W155

Steve Grabowski (#3409)

A little history of the Western Pacific perfins is needed to set the stage for this study.

The U.S. perfins catalog of 1979 listed four perfins used by the Western Pacific Railroad: W154A, B, C and

of updating my collection to conform to the new catalog, I found that I have many missing hole perfins of W154, that is the 'A' and 'B', but only a single copy of W154. My inventory of W154s is as follows: W154 -1;

these are from the same perforator.

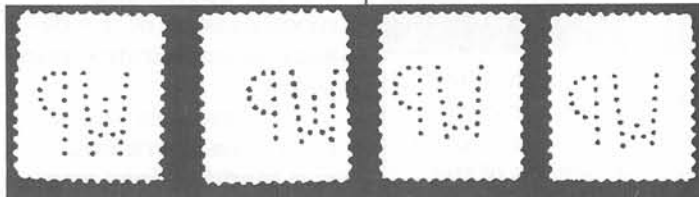
For perfin W155, I have 16 face different copies. These perfins appear on Scott 406 to 720, which would indicate, with a slight overlap, the introduction of a new perforator W154. However, the preponderance of issues prior to 720 would reinforce the new perforator theory to some extent.

In addition to my own collection I was fortunate to study the Joe Miller files for plating the Western Pacific perfins, through the courtesy of Chuck Spaulding who loaned me Miller's file for study. This file is an accumulation of approximately 500 perfins and/or photocopies of perfins, mostly partials.

This file reinforces the census of issues to

These platings show a variety of missing hole perfins, which is a known method for plating stamps. The only conclusion I could reach was that this may have been the condition of the perforators at some point in time. The strip of ten would be more convincing if it was shown with the stamp perforations and reading from right to left as one would expect if viewed from the reverse of the stamp.

After looking at so many missing hole perfins, one feature seemed to pop up: the alignment of the bottom holes of the W and the P. If W154 was truly a new perforator/die heads, would not the new die have these holes aligned (Figure 2)? All the perfins in my collection, in Miller's plating file and the strip of ten in the *Bulletin*, all exhibit this



W155

W154

W154A

W154B

W155. In the first and second updates of the 1979 catalog, in 1982 and 1985 respectively, the W154A and B were considered to be partials of W154C and 154C was renumbered W154. Figure 1 shows W155, W154, and the deleted W154A and W154B. The *Railroad Perfins Catalog* of 1987 listed only one perfin for the Western Pacific, W155. The new (1998) U.S. perfins catalog identifies two perfins W154 (a renumbered W154C) and W155.

As a collector of only railroad perfins I have expanded my collecting interests to include a single copy of the perfin and also face different and partial perfins. In the course

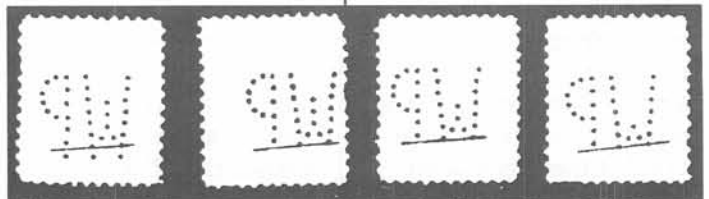
W154A - 22 with 2 partial perfins; and W154B - 27 with no partial perfins.

It seems odd that a complete perfin would be so scarce and the partial perfins would be so common. W154 is rated as a 'B' while the old catalog rated the W154A and W154B as 'E's.

If W154 was a new die, did it deteriorate in such a short time as to make the partial perfins so common? My accumulation of these perfins appear on issues as follows: Scott 562 for W154, for W154A from Scott 558 to 1036 and for W154B, Scott 552 to 1036. From this, one can assume that



The Western Pacific Railroad was founded in 1910 and merged into the Union Pacific in 1982. Today the railroad survives only as the Feather River Subdivision of the Union Pacific—serving parts of California, Nevada, and Utah.



W155

W154

W154A

W154B

which the perfin was applied. There were two platings which were a joint effort of Joe Miller and Bob Gray. The two platings show a ten die perforator, a size which corresponds to a strip of ten configuration written up in the September 1984 *Perfins Bulletin*.

same misalignment.

One, almost, must conclude that W154 and W155 are from the same die perforator and there is only one perfin variety of the Western Pacific perfin.

It appears that Bob Gray, editor of the 1987 *Railroad Perfins Catalog*,
(Continued on page 56)

Western Pacific Railroad perfin W154 and W155

(Continued from page 55)

had decided that W155 was the only die used. From the above discussion it seems that there was only one die variety, with variations due to deterioration of a die and/or intentional modifications of the design for appearance purposes.

I believe this was a multi-head perforator and modifications were made to correct the appearance of a damaged die head, with no concern about other die heads in reasonable appearance. If I were the user of a perforator, I would opt to modify the perforator for continued use and not be concerned whether all perforated stamps conform to a perfect perfin.

Since we do not know for certain (may never know) if, when and how these modifications occurred, it is difficult to decide how or if to list these perfin varieties.

Since collecting perfins or anything else is such a personal thing, I have decided that my collection will recognize the Western Pacific varieties as W154, W154A, W154B and W155. I would appreciate any and all comments on this study and conclusions.

Grabowski can be reached at 315 East
Lynwood Avenue,
Arlington Heights, IL
60004-3930
