

The Mystery Box

Part IV -- Conclusion

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As I beheld cover after cover and strip after strip, one thought never left me. How did these covers and strips manage to arrive together at one place? These were not just any covers or strips. They were a good assortment probably not researched, at least to present the information, by whoever had them. There were many new identifications for the US Perfins Catalog both in the covers and in the strips.

The first name that I came across was on a piece of an envelope showing the return name and address of Harry Rickard, 2547 - 218th Place, Long Beach 6, Calif. As there was nothing more to the piece, I can only surmise that Harry Rickard, a one time US Catalog Editor, had crossed paths with this material, or that whoever had this material knew Harry. I very much doubt that Harry ever owned this material as there was too much information that he, as catalog editor, would have gleaned from it had it been in his possession. The address predates the use of the zip code, so the envelope probably predates the 1963 beginning of Zip code use.

The second name that struck me was that of Capt. Forrest Swisher (Article #3 in March, 2003 Perfins Bulletin). The Captain had certainly had his hand in this material in some manner as the amount of information in that previous article indicates. Nonetheless, both Harry Rickard and Capt. Swisher were West Coast based! Most all of this material was centered in the middle of the US. Minnesota and Wisconsin perfins were extremely plentiful. I kept thinking of Doug Turner, hoping that a cover or even a strip identifying the HD (H60) from Milwaukee with a Harley-Davidson Motorcycle Company would be exciting. Alas, to no avail!!! What is the connection with these two States and why is there not a greater amount of material from Illinois and especially Chicago given its the close geographic location?

The first clue I had dismissed. Look at the cover pictured (Fig. 1). I would propose this as the smallest known US perfin cover. Stamp magazines in the recent past have had a love affair with small

covers. This is small but remember we are talking "perfin" covers! Note a Milwaukee cancel of December 20, 1909 on a 2¢ red with an STP (S287) perfin of the Chicago, Milwaukee and St. Paul Railroad. The cover is addressed to a Dr. S. Keller, 496 Mitchell St., City (= Milwaukee).



Figure 1. A 3.7" x 2.4" cover franked with a perfined 2¢ red stamp (pattern S287). Is this the smallest perfin cover known?

Another perfin cover of interest is also addressed to Dr. Keller (Fig. #2). This cover has a W2 perfin. While not of great note, the reverse has a return address of Box 25 Milwaukee, Wis. and a penciled notation of American Steel & Wire Company. Could that be their Box number? What really caught my eye about this cover was the nice 2¢ Pilgrim Tercentenary issue of 1920.

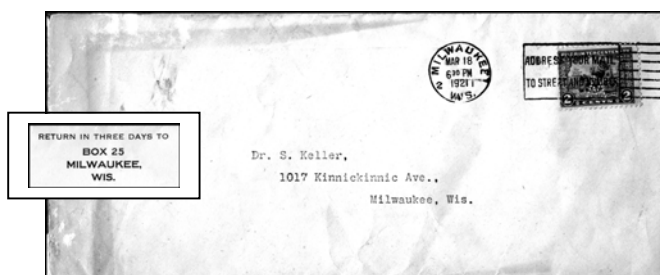


Figure 2. Cover franked with a perfined stamp (pattern W2). Return address (inset) is reproduced from the back of the cover.

Well, I had been through all of the perfin material but there yet remained a non-perfin cover from the APS to none other than Dr. S. G. Keller (Fig. 3). What initially caught my eye about this cover was the imperforate (Scott #577) copy of a 2¢ definitive, the then current Washington issue. I thought that

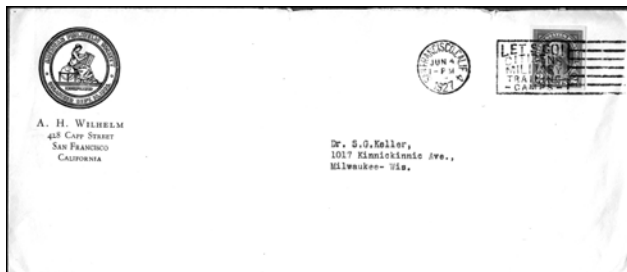


Figure 3. Cover envelope that contained the material shown as figure 4. This cover is franked with an imperforate 2¢ red that is not perfinned – but the contents proved it to be a perfins collector’s treasure chest!

was nice but, wait a minute, there was something inside the cover! What came out was mind-boggling! It was a blank cover with the return address of the Milwaukee Philatelic Society and more precisely with that of Dr. S.G. Keller, Sec'y-Treas., 395 46th Street, Milwaukee, Wis. And, in the fold of the reverse envelope flap, (Fig. 4) a card signed by our founder, Hallock Card, indicating that

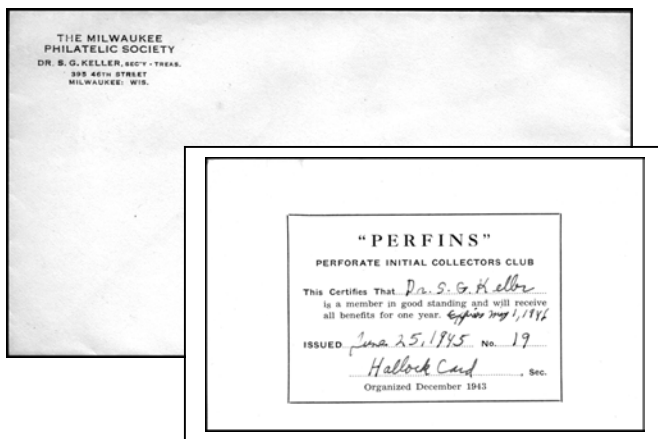


Figure 4. Unfranked envelope with a printed Milwaukee Philatelic Society return address and a 1945 “PERFINS’ / Perforate Initials Collector Club” membership card in the name of D. S. G. Keller and signed by Hallock Card.

Dr. S.G. Keller - Member #19 - was a member in good standing paid through May 1st, 1946!

With the help of our Librarian Doug Turner, I was able to read some of the old Perfin Bulletins and determine both that Dr. Keller was mentioned in May 1946 with a change of address to 435 E. Lincoln Ave. in Milwaukee and, in the April, 1947 issue. Forrest M. Swisher, M.D. was mentioned with a change of address to 3802 Mt. Vernon Ave. Alexandria, VA.

How all this material ended up in one place, I do not think will ever be known for certain. As material of both of these collectors is present and Dr. Swisher must be some forty or fifty years younger than Dr. Keller, the material could have passed from one to the other. Or maybe not! I do welcome information on either of these two former members. Maybe one of our members holds the key to the answer of the questions concerning this material.

I hope that you have enjoyed this information as much as I have enjoyed putting it together. Please share any interesting stories that you might have with the membership through the Perfins Bulletin. I know you will enjoy writing it and I know that our members will enjoy reading it!