

"Perfins" - Then and Now

Paul Mistretta (LM-111)

Having read the previous article, a half-century old article by a then-active Club member, it is interesting to note where we have made vast progress in our efforts to understand our hobby.

Some significant progress is noted. Comparing today's knowledge to that reflected in the article clearly suggests that we have come light-years from the '50s in our cataloging efforts, both in the US and abroad. And so, apparently, have prices for the less common perfin patterns. The number of identified patterns for the US has increased 120 percent to the range of 6,000 identified patterns. And we know a bit more about US patterns with branch office holes than we did then. The fourth edition of the Canadian catalog produced by Johnson and Thomasson produced in 1985 has made collecting the perfins from that country significantly easier for novices and veterans alike. And, the recent British cataloging efforts have somewhat eased the "identification is unusually difficult" problem identified in Jo's article.

But some things seem very similar. The basic syntax of pattern description we use now has been refined from that shown in the article, but the five pattern orientations shown are still in use (with several others) in the current US Catalog. The face-up/face/down question still is a collector decision, one made by each collector for him or herself. The decision to collect issues or types is still a real collector choice. And specialty collections of perfins

reflecting specific types of business (insurance companies, railroads, universities, etc.), perfins on stamps reflecting types of service (air mail, parcel post, official, etc.) and even by city in which the pattern originated (often the collector's home city) still abound.

And one more similarity needs to be discussed. Back then – and now – we have a measure of confusion in our terminology.

Before I go any further with this article I need to include a disclaimer. Nothing written here is intended as criticism of our possible past language nor of anyone who has, in the past, used what might now be considered imprecise language.

My speculation began with a note from Rudy Roy in which he Rudy's stated:

I am concerned that we are allowing our predilection to abbreviate everything to cause the terminology that has evolved for perfins philately to become inaccurate and incorrect.

Specifically, I am referring to the use of the abbreviated word "perfs" to in-any-way refer to perfins (which, as we all know, is a derivative word from *PER*Forated *INS*ignia or *IN*itial*S*).