
The Story of a Perfin (P188)

William Lesh (#3718)

The development of the Panama Pacific Company perfin (P188) begins with the building of the locks on the Panama Canal in 1906. On Dec. 10, 1906, the Pacific Ocean Exposition Company was formed in anticipation of a future celebration of the opening of the Canal. This company opened its office in the Merchant & Exchange Building on California Street in San Francisco in Dec. 1909. President William Taft had come to San Francisco in October of the same year proclaiming that the Panama Canal would be opened in the spring of 1915.

This gave impetus to the formation of the Panama-Pacific International Exposition Company on March 22, 1910; it was developed from the previous company under President Charles C. Moore. He was fresh from the triumph of the Portola Festival of Oct. 19-23, 1909, which drew 480,000 people to San Francisco - only three years after a devastating earthquake! The new company occupied the old offices of the Pacific Ocean Exposition Co.

Directly, a good-hearted battle ensued between New Orleans and San Francisco to be the site of the Exposition. The House of Representatives approved San Francisco as the site on Jan. 31, 1911. Approved by the Senate Feb. 11, 1911, the resolution was signed into law on Feb. 15, 1911. On May 17, 1911 the PPIE publicity slogan cancel was first used in San Francisco. On Oct 3, 1911 the company moved to new quarters at Pine and Battery Streets, it was known as the 'Exposition Building'. The first letterhead was ordered by the PPIE in Aug. 1910. After the move the letterhead no longer included an address.

In Sept. 1911, Allan Pollok was hired as Comptroller. Under him was the mailing department that stamped and mailed all items. As of Oct. 31, 1911, all purchases and machinery were handled through this office. The perfin machinery would most certainly have been ordered and subsequently controlled through his office.

Use of this perfin (P188) is first known in Feb. 1912. Obviously P188 may have an earlier date of use; between Nov. 1911 and March 31, 1912, \$1,073.26

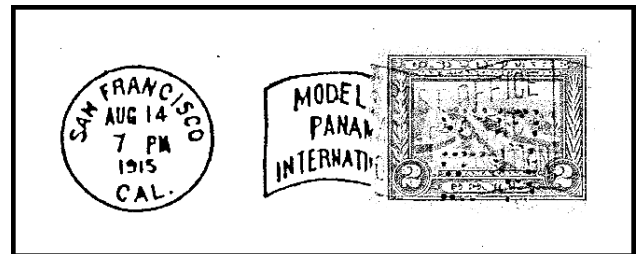
was spent on stores, supplies and postage; very few stamps were perfined at the beginning. In contrast, for all of 1912, \$5,350 was spent just on postage.

In the following year (1913) the PPIE distributed 3 million booklets, over 60,000 photographs, and 10 million mimeographed copies of articles. Among the 'booklets' was the so-called 'Hercules' booklet (so-called because it had the official poster of the PPIE ('The Thirteenth Labor of Hercules') on the cover.) This booklet alone weighed 5 1/2 ounces, and there were 200,000 'Hercules' booklets sent free of charge. There was also the descriptive pamphlet of 'Condensed Facts' and an illustrated folder for railroad rack distribution.

This was also the year (1913) that parcel post stamps were first issued. The only parcel post stamps known to this author with the P188 perfin are Q4 (4¢), Q6 (10¢) and Q8 (20¢). The total amount of postage purchased for 1913 was \$13,415.

This was also the year that the Service Building, built by F. P. & L. F. Fischer, was finished on the PPI Exposition grounds (in the middle of February.) Soon after the Division Works, that had overseen the construction of the Expo, moved in. Later the Exposition Guards, the Exposition Emergency Hospital, and the Dept. of Official Coins & Medals would move into the Service Building and would use P188 on the grounds of the Exposition.

The year 1914 saw \$23,539 of postage purchased.



SF15-03

1915 was the banner year; the Exposition opened on Feb. 20 along with the Model Post Office. I have two P188 2¢ PPIE commemoratives used with

Exposition cancels (Bomar 'SF15-03) (presumably used by someone in the Service Building.) A similar cover is shown in *the Perfins Bulletin* #274; it bears a P188 perfin tied with a Model Post Office cancel (SF 15-02) dated 6/29/1915.

On June 21, 1915, the PPIE commemorative coins were minted, and on June 28th they began to be sent by mail. The coin and medal mail would probably have borne the PPIE parcel post cancel SF15-05. This latter cancel continued in use at least until March 4, 1916, long after the closing of the Expo on Dec 4, 1915. The official closing of the Model PO was on March 31, 1916; the building housing the post office (Palace of Mines & Metallurgy) and the Service Building were torn down by the end of Jan 1916. This means the cancel, a post office clerk, and the perfins must have followed the move of the Department of Coins and the Expo guards to the Palace of the Fine Arts on or about Dec. 4, 1915. The Palace remained open until May 1, 1916, at which time the coins were only available by mail order.

In 1916, only \$3,076 of postage was purchased. Army Capt. Edward Carpenter was commandant of the Exposition Guards which was 295 strong. About

Jan 1, 1916 the need for the guards diminished and they began to be dismissed, by Feb 28 only 100 remained. In March the Commandant distributed 1500 honorable discharges and bronze Exposition medals which somewhat resembled the Panama Canal service medal. These medals were sent out by registered mail, but not all the stamps were perfined at least on these heavy letters. Many of these letters were returned as the guards, to a man, were all ex-military, and many had already reentered the service with war clouds gathering. The last known use of P188 is March 9, 1916.

This author has noted the use of P188 from past editions of *the Perfins Bulletin* on the following stamps: Sc#s 332, 374, 377, 379, 397, 398, 399, 400A, 401, 402, 403, 406, 414, 427, 430, 438, 439?, Q4, Q6 and Q8.

Bibliography

Todd, Frank Morton. 1921. *The Story of the Exposition*. 5 Vols.

Savadge, David. 1997. *Postal Markings of the Panama-Pacific International Exposition*.