

DEDICATION

This book is dedicated to Dr. Clare M. Jephcott and Mr. Robert J. Woolley, who developed and nurtured the field of BNA perfin collecting.

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PREFACE

This book is designed as a working handbook for collectors of Canadian perfins (perforated insignia). As such, the information is spread out to leave room for notes, comments, and additions. The details listed are as complete as the BNAPS Perfin Study Group could provide at the time of publication. Due to the method of production and procedures for their use, a complete record of perfins will probably never exist. One of the pleasures of collecting perfins is that additions and expansion of the known range of use of perfins can be found by spending time rather than money. Anyone, regardless of length of time they have been collecting stamps, has an equal chance of discovering the scarcer perfins.

For the collector interested in the history of their subject, perfins is the perfect field. Most of the perforators (the machines which perforate the stamps) have had their physical location identified, but the perfins were much more portable and could be mailed from different cities. Some companies gave perfins to their salesmen to mail reports or orders back to the head office and other companies sent the perfins to branch offices, which were not large enough to justify a postage meter or their own perforator. The result is that tracing perfins can be an interesting study.

Then there are the usual items, which make more sense once their history is discovered. An example of this would be the Great Northern Railway's use of Canadian perfins G9 and G10. The Great Northern purchased Canadian stamps in Winnipeg, Manitoba, the closest Canadian city to their head office in St. Paul, Minnesota, where the stamps were perforated. The only Great Northern station of note in Canada was New Westminster, British Columbia, where the perfins were used. The surprise came when collectors found that all of the later Great Northern perfins had Winnipeg tagging, even though the stamps were never mailed from Winnipeg.

Whether or not you are interested in studying the history of perfins, there are three basic ways perfins can be collected.

A. The easiest way to collect perfins is by collecting one example of each perfin, as listed in the handbook. This is called a **Perfin Type** collection.

B. If you collect a copy of every issued stamp perforated by every perforator, you have a **Perfin Issue** collection.

C. Finally, there is the **Perfin Position** collector, the specialist who is trying to find each issued stamp perforated by each perforator in as many of the eight positions as possible.

Each of these three basic collecting approaches can be expanded to encompass the collecting of stamps, covers, or specific areas of personal preference. Some collections of specific areas known to the editors are: 1898 Map stamp, Small Queens, Admirals, 1967 Definitives, and the 1933 Royal William.

It should be noted that the members of the British North America Philatelic Society's Perfin study group gathered the information offered in this handbook over a period of 30 years. Thus, the information gathered is substantial in volume and reviewed for accuracy, but it cannot pretend to be the final word on Canadian perfins. Hopefully, it is the latest word. The BNAPS Perfin Study Group continues to exist for the exchange of new information and research. To those who may find

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new perfins, expand the reported dates, or discover new information, the Perfin Study Group is very interested in being advised of your findings so that other collectors can be informed. If you wish to contact the Perfin Study Group, either contact a BNAPS member, the Perfin Study Group address is in all BNAPS journals, or make contact through the BNAPS web site. Back issues of the Perfin Study group newsletters can be read at www.bnaps.org .

INTRODUCTION

This handbook represents an updating of the information known about Canadian perfins and is to coincide with the expansion of interest in perfins among philatelists. As this is not the final word on Canadian perfins, space has been made available throughout the book for additions and notes. With the unfortunate destruction of much of the known records by fire, war, and natural limitations in record maintenance, it is doubtful whether the whole perfin story will ever be told.

What is a Perfin?

For the purposes of this handbook, the definition of a perfin is taken from the quarterly supplement of the Postal Guide for April 1910, which states:

“No objection is made by the Department to the perforation of postage stamps with the distinctive marks (initials or other) of the individual or firm using them, but it must be understood that the designs employed should be for the purpose of identification, and not for advertising. The perforations shall not exceed one-thirty-second of an inch in diameter, and the whole space occupied shall not exceed one-half inch square.”

The Post Office's approval in 1989 of the Bees Stamps perforation indicates that there has been some relaxation from their 1910 guideline as the holes in this last perfin are larger than one thirty-second of an inch in diameter. As Cummins or American perforators do not appear to be readily available some change is not a surprise. Therefore, we have endeavoured to maintain the intent of the guidelines but have made the following relaxations:

- the perforation need not have been approved by the Post Office
- both postage and revenue stamps are included
- the hole size may exceed one-thirty second of an inch

In the same vein,

- it is understood that the perforation is applied prior to the stamp being used, to deter pilferage. When the stamp is perforated after being applied to something (like a document) the perforation is deemed to be a cancel, which is dealt with separately in Addendum D.

- perforations used for advertising (philatelic) purposes are listed in Addendum D. If there is a question that the perforation is for advertising (philatelic perfins), the parameters chosen are:

(a) due to the increasing use of postage meters and the declining use of perforators, any perforator purchased and put into use after 1950 was obtained for advertising purposes and, therefore, classified as a philatelic insignia and not included as a Canadian perfin.

(b) Post Office approval supersedes (a), there being only one example.

The Post Office explanation excludes the double letter punches and cancelling perforations, some of which have appeared in Editions 1, 2, and 3 of this handbook. To avoid confusion, these punches and cancelling perforations are in Addendum D. Single letter punches are not considered in this book. Newfoundland perfins prior to 1949 are not governed by the above regulations; however, Newfoundland perfins

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are included (excepting cancelling perforations – see Addendum D) when the perfins meet the intent of the Canadian regulations

Where identifiable, each perforating machine has been given its own number. When a machine has had all of the dies replaced, it is deemed to result in a new machine. However, when the dies are retooled to a larger hole size, being a noticeable change the new dies are deemed to be a subgroup of the perfin, as in the later use of Canadian General Electric (C16). When pins are missing or replaced this is deemed not to be a change to the machine and is not reflected in the numbering system. Die differences within a machine are function of the method of manufacturing of the machine are not considered in this book. Incomplete perfins, which could be mistaken as something other than what appear to be, are located in the book by their apparent initials and identified as to where they should be properly listed. Note: some of the future discoveries may also fall into this category.

There are several subjects that are referred to in this handbook that are not considered in detail. They are reviewed here.

Perfin Value

The determination of a fair value of any given perfin is complicated by the three different ways they are collected. A Type collector is almost always willing to pay more for a new Type than an Issue collector is willing to pay for an addition of a Type he already has. And a Position collector will usually pay less than an Issue collector. Thus, there is considerable discrepancy among perfin collectors as to how much each would consider paying for a specific stamp with a given perforation. This does not necessarily take into consideration the catalogue value of the used stamp without holes. An incomplete perforation or damage to the stamp will lower a perfin's value. An over-generalization relating to perfins is that they are inexpensive compared with other areas of philatelic collecting. The present scope of prices (2012) is 15¢ to more than \$300 per perfin with most perfins falling in the range of 25¢ to \$5. **Note:** the existence of a perfin in a stamp does not lower it below regular UNITRADE (SCOTT) used catalogue value as is the case in some countries around the world.

Mint, Philatelic and Fake Perfins

A problem that has a few collectors apprehensive is the hypothetical ease of making 'fake' perforations and problems with the 'philatelic' or 'favour' perfins. Philatelic perfins are perforated by someone (sometimes, unfortunately, a stamp collector) who has access to a perforator. This has resulted in Small Queens perforated on machines that were not built until the 1930s! Obviously, this is a potentially serious problem, but it would appear that the size of the problems is not large, as most perfin collectors realize the potential difficulties. As a rule, collectors ensure the security of the few discovered perforating machines by helping to arrange that the machines are lodged in a museum or archives, properly identified.



Philatelic or favour perfins. The 5-hole OH/MS was not used by the Canada Post office until July 1, 1939.

The problem of 'fake' perforations is another matter, and collectors have virtually no control over this. Although anyone can poke a hole in a stamp, very few collectors should be caught by such simple methods, as one's eyesight and experience can play a significant difference. It is generally acknowledged that in Canadian perfins, fakes are mainly a problem in the 5-hole OH/MS (08), and much less significantly, in the 4-hole OH/MS (09 and 010). In some cases, 'fakes' with holes that are out of alignment, improperly cut, or of such an unusual size, can be identified with some practice. The serious problem is the more expertly produced 'fake' which cannot be readily identified as such. At this point, most collectors will have to reserve judgement or trust that their source has both honesty and expertise in supplying good material or have someone expertise the perfin. In the 5-hole OH/MS (08), the more unusual perfins (ie. coils, perf-imperf pairs, higher catalogue price) the greater the risk of fakes. Fake perfins do exist and people have been convicted of criminal charges relating to perforating stamps with the intent to defraud collectors.



Fake strip of four 5-hole OH/MS (08) stamps.

In a similar vein, as stamps were originally perforated to prove ownership and to deter the theft of stamps, the possession of mint perfins is usually considered to be improper. An exception to this is the 4-hole OH/MS (09 and 010) which were sold across philatelic counters by the Post Office. Most likely the majority of mint

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perfins, other than the OH/MS, were originally stolen from the company that did the perforating so, technically, anyone having mint perfins probably has in their possession stolen property – a criminal offence. It may be possible to prove that possession of mint 'philatelic' perfins is not illegal, but as mentioned earlier, this is generally frowned upon by perfin collectors.