

Chapter 3

PERFORATING MACHINES

Before proceeding further into the study of perfins, we might do well to know something about the machines that made them. There were several companies which manufactured stamp perforating machines, along with other types of business equipment.

As mentioned in Chapter 2, the first postage stamp perforator used in Canada was a Sloper Model #4, single die perforator (serial number 6863) which was proofed in England in 1887. The perforator (W10) was ordered by W. J. Gage & Company for its Toronto office. This perforator was destroyed in the Great Toronto fire of April 19, 1904. On March 14, 1905, Sloper & Sons shipped a replacement single die perforator (W9) to W. J. Gage & Company. Sloper & Sons shipped a four die Sloper perforator (W15) to William Tyrrell & Company on December 18, 1912. (The editors have not located a photo of a Sloper Model #4 nor a Sloper four die perforator.) The Sun Life Assurance Company (S15) perforator has been plated as a four die machine so it may also have been made by Sloper.



Cummins Model 14



Cummins Model 52

The machine that has had the widest distribution in Canada is Model 52 from the B. F. Cummins Perforator Company of Chicago, Illinois. This machine has a width to accommodate a row of five regular sized (George V Admiral) stamps which necessitates a sheet of stamps being folded or separated in half prior to the perforating operation. These groups of pins forming the set of initials are so spaced that when one-half sheet of regular sized stamps are perforated, the design appears in the center of each stamp. It is common, therefore, to find more recent stamps with their varying sizes having split or off-center perforations and, of course, double-sized stamps will contain part of an extra set of initials, or two sets due to the width of the stamp.

Quite a few of the earlier perforators, by plating, can be proven to be single die machines. In some cases, these perforators were later replaced with larger capacity perforators as the volume of required perforated stamps increased. As a result, few of these single die perforators are likely to be found. At present, the

2022 08 01

only single die perforator, manufactured in North America that is known to exist is the Cummins Model 14 operated by Ogilvie Flour Mills Company in Winnipeg (04). The Cummins Perforator Company specifications for this machine have not been located.

Model 52 shown above has a base measuring 12½" x 5" and weighs 23 pounds. The base is made of cast iron while the balance of the machine is steel. The listed capacity by B. F. Cummins is as follows:

*Three or less initials on each stamp – four sheets thick
(20 stamps at each stroke, row of 5)*

*Four initials on each stamp – three sheets thick
(15 stamps at each stroke, row of 5).*

*Five or six initials on each stamp – two sheets thick
(10 stamps at each stroke, row of 5)*

Stamps can be perforated at the rate of 300 to 500 per minute.

The second most common perforator is the Cummins Model 53. This machine, shown below, has a capacity to perforate a row of 10 regular sized stamps or five large sized stamps (a common size sheet for its time) with its 10 dies. Model 53 has a base measuring 17¼" x 5" and weighs 33 pounds. With its capacity being double that of Model 52, Model 53 was used to produce many of the more common perfins.



Cummins Model 53



American Model 6k

The Cummins Model 56 is an electrically operated machine; otherwise, it is identical to Model 53. Being operated electrically and controlled by a foot pedal, the operator can perforate stamps much more quickly using Model 56. None of the Model 56 machines have been confirmed to be physically located in Canada. The only confirmed machine is that of the New York Life Insurance Company, New York City (N6), where it was still in the mail room and perforating U. S. stamps in 1985.

To date, one American Perforator Company of Chicago, Illinois, machine is confirmed to have been used by a Canadian company. It is Model 6K and is very similar to the Cummins Model 53 both in size and capacity. It is believed that Cummins was no longer manufacturing perforators when the Canadian National Railways ordered its last perforator, (C24), from the supplier and, therefore, had to purchase the American brand perforator.

The perforations made by the machines mentioned conform to the requirements of the Post Office, i.e. holes not over one-thirty-second of an inch in diameter, and total space covered not over one-half inch square. Usually the pins are so arranged that when sheets of stamps are fed through the machines from top to bottom, face up, the initials will be horizontal and properly oriented when viewed from the face of the stamp. Occasionally, the pins are so arranged that the initials read vertically.

A sheet of stamps can be fed into the machine in eight possible different ways: any of the four sides of a sheet with the stamp design face up and any of the four sides with the gummed side up. So it is possible to find a perforation in any of eight different positions. Refer to Addendum C.

The Cummins Model 52, if a folded sheet was fed into it could produce mirror pairs with one position being the normal and the other reversed. These pairs are scarce, as they are usually separated when applied to the mail.

Carelessness on the part of the operator of any of the various types of perforators produces stamps with double perforations; some perforated obliquely and, occasionally, some with two impressions, being different positions.

Damaged dies which result in incomplete perfins are usually the results of the pins falling out of the perforator. It is presumed that the pins can be broken when they slip out of the guide but no one has reported trying this exercise. When many of the pins are missing, the damaged perfin can be quite difficult to identify. In some cases, a damaged die double perforation or complete perforation with a second perforation from which one or two pins cut the stamp can result in a perfin which appears to have an unrecorded code hole or two.

The following list of perforating machines has been physically confirmed by viewing each machine, excluding 08, 09 and 010, which are taken from Government equipment inventory lists.

Make	Dies	Perforation
Sloper Model ?	1	J10, W9, W10
Sloper Model ?	4	C38, S13, W15
Sloper Model ?	5	A11, A12
Cummins Model 14	1	O4
Cummins Model 52	5	B12*, C15, C16, D4*, G6*, G8*, G17*, G18*, G19*, G20*, G21*, G22*, G23*, I5*, I6*, I7*, I8*, I9*, I10*, I11*, I12*, I13*, I14*, I15*, I16*, I17*, I18*, I19*, I20*, I21, I22*, L1, L8*, M9*, M23, M28, N3*, O1*, O8, P4*, P5*, P6, P8, Q1*, R3*, S22*, W7*
Cummins Model 53	10	C6, C21, C26, C28, C46, O9, O10, P19, S2, W5
Cummins Model 56	10	N6
American Model 6K	10	C24, E1

Not Confirmed *