

The Perforator

The Newsletter of the British North America Philatelic Society Perfin Study Group

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8 November 1988

Jim Catterick Steps Down as Editor

Jim Catterick has handed over editorship of *The Perforator*. During his years as Editor, Jim made contributions to the perfin collecting community that cannot be overstated. His dedication to disseminating perfin discoveries and the results of perfin studies made all of us better collectors. And knowing Jim makes us better people too.

On behalf of the Perfin Study Group, our heartfelt thanks to Jim for the work he has done for us!

...and Michael Behm Steps Up

The Perforator should be a forum for your views, interests, and discoveries, and you may regard this as an invitation for you to submit articles, opinions, and questions. As a reader, I have enjoyed most the articles that affect my understanding of my collection, for example, the article about the link between the CXL and CIL perfins. As a collector, I have enjoyed seeing exotic covers and postal history. As an editor, I plan to provide space for that sort of material and for those aspects of perfin collecting in which I don't take part, such as position collecting and OH/MS collecting. But this requires your help.

If you have interesting material you would like to show to the readers of this newsletter, send me a photocopy. If you have an idea for an article, or better yet, the article itself, write and tell me about it. Ask questions! (When exactly did the province of Saskatchewan rework its perforator in the 1950's?) Be involved!

An Unusual Gutta Percha Item

You don't see many \$1.00 perfins, but this is even more unusual than most. This is a Gutta Percha perfin, one of the patterns that is not especially common on high-value stamps, and the date of use is 30 May 1939. That's out of period for the stamp and for the perfin too! The last recorded cancellation was seven years before this stamp was used, and three other \$1 issues were released between the time this stamp was printed and its date of use. That might indicate the stamp sat in a safe for a long period of time before being used.



The Mutual Life Perforator

The Mutual Life Assurance Company of Waterloo gained approval to operate a perforator on 14 September 1914. The company chose to use a five-die machine to perforate stamps with the letters ML/C. Perfins were to be used both for outgoing mail and for prestamped return envelopes.



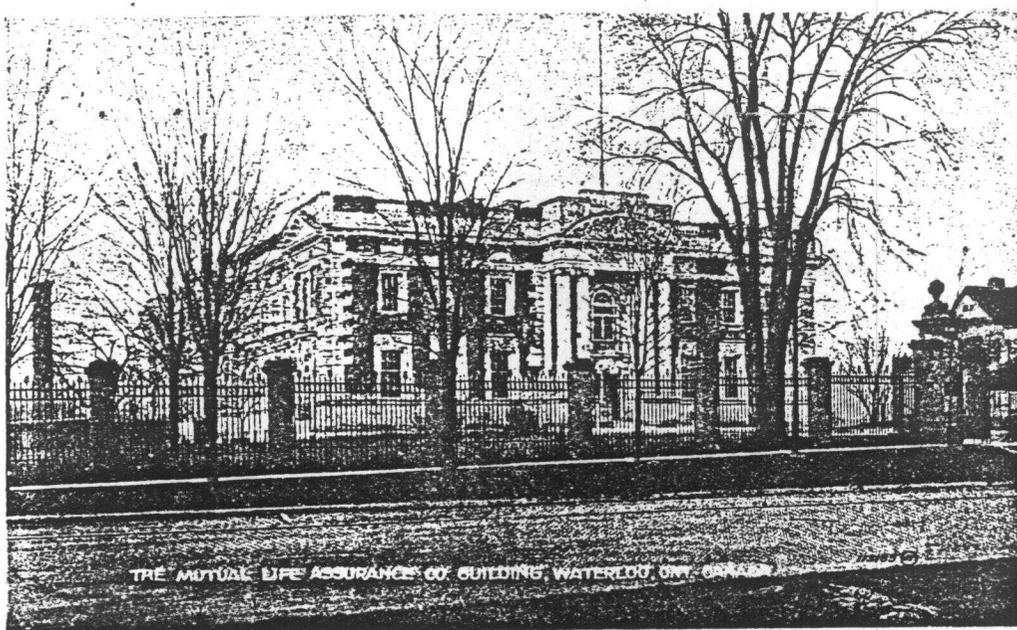
The first reported cancel on an ML/C perfin is from 12 January 1915. The last reported issue that has an ML/C perfin was printed in 1972, but this is not meant to suggest that Mutual Life produced perfins for 57 years. On the contrary, the Mutual Life perforator has had a sordid life.

Of the 58 ML/C perfins I own, seven are uncancelled and two are mint. Looking at only issues after the Admiral period, I have 33 perfins of which eight are uncancelled or mint. The uncancelled stamps may have been removed from business-reply mail; most pay the first-class rate for their period. The mint perfins are probably philatelic.

Being a Waterloo resident, a few years ago I decided I should try to find out what became of the Mutual Life perforator. If the Mutual Life Company knew the whereabouts of the perforator, it would give some clues to the unusual number of uncancelled perfins. Enquiries at Mutual Life were unproductive. The company archivist did not know where the perforator was, nor could her enquiries with retired employees locate the machine. Other employees had attempted to find the perforator years earlier, without success.

Much to my surprise, the perforator found me last year. One of the collectors at the local stamp club knew of my interest in perfins and was able to locate the Mutual Life perforator in the hands of an antique collector. Ironically, the antique collector works for Mutual Life.

Apparently the perforator changed hands a few times after being discarded by Mutual Life, and the current owner cannot furnish an leads to previous owners. As for the future of the machine, it is supposed to end up in the company archives or at the postal museum, eventually.



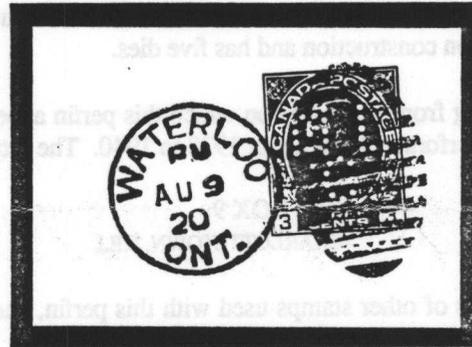
Using the Mutual Life Perforator

The Mutual Life Assurance Company used perfins both on mail being sent from their Waterloo head office and on pre-stamped return envelopes. The cover on the opposite page is an example of a mailing from head office. Pre-stamped return envelopes tend to be on manila paper, and seem to be the less common.

The ML/C perfin is most frequently found with a Waterloo cancellation. In the period of peak usage of the Mutual Life perforator most Waterloo cancels were like this one. The town cancel is simple and clean and the duplex blots out the stamp.

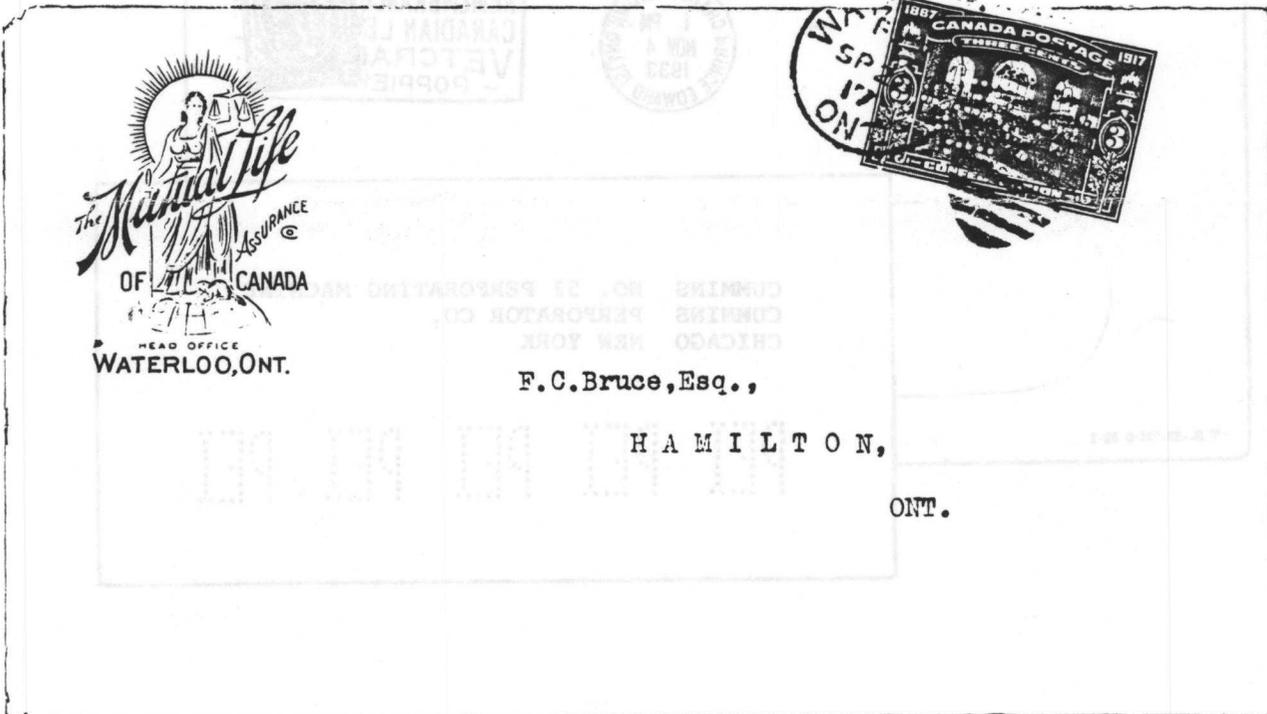
(This obliterating cancel probably led to many perfins being discarded over the years.)

Other cancellations that have been reported are Niagara-on-the-Lake and TOR & N BAY RPO NO.6.



Mutual Life appears to have produced large numbers of perfins in the Admiral era, then many fewer for the next fifty years. Who produced the perfins during that time, Mutual Life or a private individual? As mentioned, there is reason to believe that the perfins produced at the end of this period *may* have been philatelic. The problem is that you do not see obviously philatelic holdings, and I have not seen evidence of "manufactured" perfins. For instance, it is known that the International Harvester branch in Hamilton has (or had) its perforator on display in its offices. Thus it was not too surprising to see a full set of recent mint definitives for sale at the Toronto stamps shows. To the best of my knowledge, this is not the case with ML/C perfins.

The other problem is that you do not really see many ML/C perfins at all. The BNAPS survey results suggest that the average perfin collection has about a dozen copies. Given that the firm -or someone- produced perfins for up to 57 years, the ML/C pattern is oddly scarce.



The Province of Prince Edward Island

Recently a perfin specialist visited the Prince Edward Island archives in Charlottetown, P.E.I. As a result of his investigation, the PEI perforator (P7) has appeared from a dusty corner.

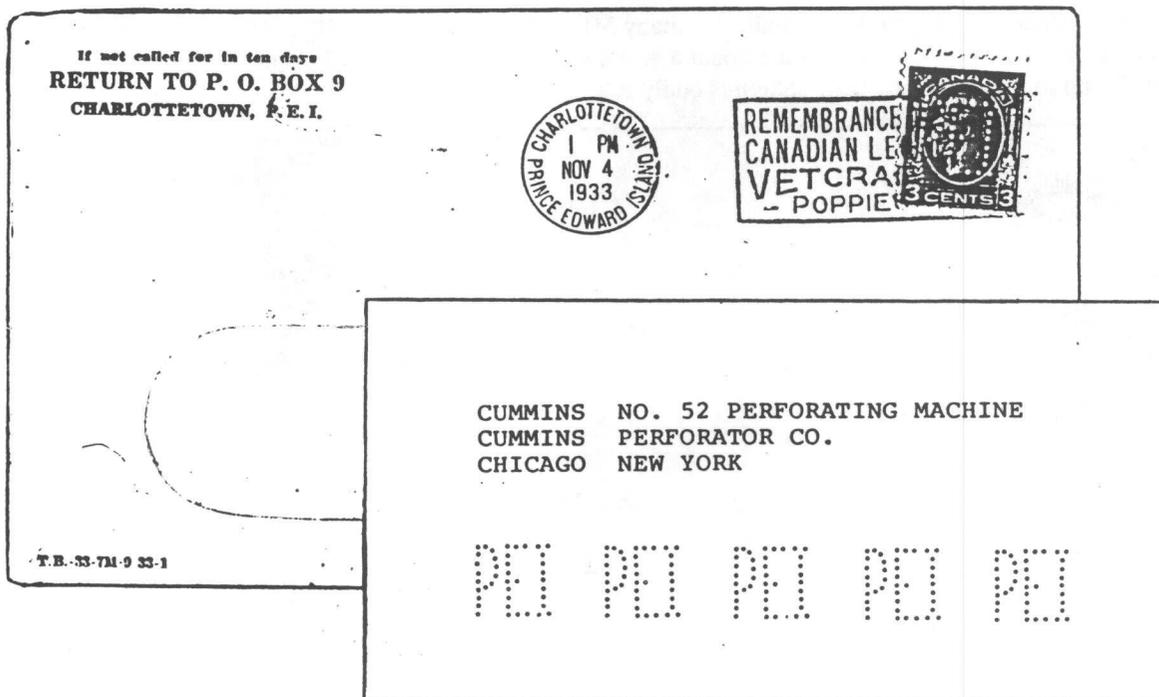
The perforator, a Cummins model 52, was manufactured in the United States. The machine is of a heavy cast-iron construction and has five dies.

Judging from the issues on which this perfin appears (Scott #149 to #235), the provincial government used their perforator from about 1928 to 1940. The return address of P7 covers is usually:

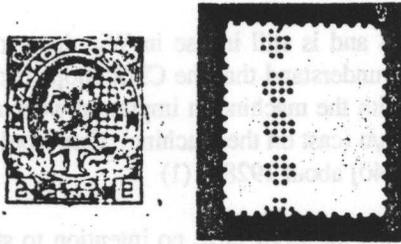
P.O. BOX 9
CHARLOTTETOWN, P.E.I.

Reports of other stamps used with this perfin, and dates of usage if possible, would be appreciated. Please write:

G. Douglas Murray
Box 693,
Charlottetown, P.E.I.
C1A 7L3



A New Pattern?



A member of the perfin study group has discovered a copy of the U.S. Catalog pattern "Design 16" on the Canadian stamp shown at left. The stamp is MR4, a war tax issue, and the cancel reads "Meo"ta, "Sas"k.

The owner suggests that this could be a proper perfin because of the postal usage. Your comments are invited.

Editor's Comments

Is this a new pattern or is it an example of a cancelling device?

In defense of the "new pattern" theory, notice the perforating holes are the proper size for a perfin. Many cancelling devices use larger holes. I would like to think that this is a new A-rated perfin, but there are reasons to think otherwise.

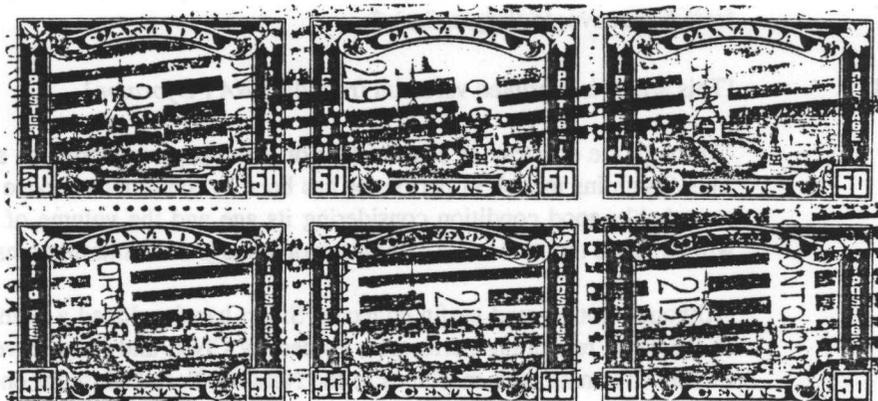
First, the pattern extends across the stamp, implying that the design has been made by a perforator that was created for stamps larger than definitives. This is very unusual in a perfin, but fairly common in a cancelling device.

It is possible this pattern was meant to extend across a row of stamps. I am not familiar with any perfin designed this way, but again, many cancelling devices have this form. (If this *is* a perfin, the user would find the stamps greatly weakened and very hard to separate.)

The other problem is the rarity of the pattern. A pattern *could* be discovered that is A-rated in both Canada and the US, but I think it is more likely that a resourceful citizen of Meota, Saskatchewan noticed that there was no ink cancellation on a postage stamp used to pay the excise tax on a cheque he received. A little water, a little paste, and he recycled a stamp.

A Unique Block from the Legislative Assembly

This Grand Pre block shows all five dies of the Legislative Assembly machine. The roller cancel reads "Toronto - Ont, 219".



Perfins in the 1980's
Part 4: C45 CNR Winnipeg

by Mike Hargraft

Feb 1980 "No. C21a [C45] came into use about 1928 and is still in use in Winnipeg to date. In June, 1978, the machine was disabled and I understand that the CNR shops had the perforator back in use by September 1, 1978 with the machine in improved working condition. This machine is a Cummins model 53, s/n (cast on the machine). One would suspect that this perforator probably replaced C17 [C40] about 1928." (1)

"Perfin collectors will be pleased to know that the CNR have no intention to stop using the perforators they still have in use; C19 [C41], C20a [C43], and C21a [C45]. Although the quantities are not as large as in the past, new perforated stamps will continue to appear with these dies." (2)

[Ken Rose published a check list in his columns in *The Canadian Stamp News* that also appeared in the *BNA Perforator*, Vol.4, No.2, January 1983. Further columns updated this list. All of these are listed in Part 1.]

28 Jan 86 "I think the CNR machines in Winnipeg and Edmonton have been severely curtailed in their usage -- if not discarded altogether. [True for Edmonton, not for Winnipeg.] It is years since I saw a current stamp from either of these locations." (3)

3 Jun 86 "I have six covers on my desk at the moment, all with current or nearly current stamps with C45 perfins, most of which have been reported before. However, it does reinforce our notion that this machine has not been "retired", as previously assumed. All postmarks that I can read are dated September, 1985." (4)

[The following paragraph is from a letter from Stuart Clark to Mike Dicketts, of which Stuart sent me a copy. The remarks are about the 10-die Winnipeg perforator.]

"The Winnipeg office supplies postage to all stations and offices that do not have a postage meter machine. The area covered from Winnipeg runs from Biggar, Saskatchewan, to Armstrong/Thunder Bay, Ontario. Before 1916 this area extended to Vancouver, however in 1916 a machine was placed in Edmonton, and now this office supplies postage from Vancouver to Biggar, Sask."

Jan 87 [This article is reprinted verbatim from the *BNA Perforator*.]

"Through the courtesy of Stuart Clark of Winnipeg we reproduce a proof strike of C45. This Cummins model 53 perforator has been in continuous service since 1923, and is in remarkably good condition considering its age and the volume of stamps perforated. It will be noted that three dies exhibit minor damage from missing pins.

"Although not an avid perfin collector, Stuart has developed a keen interest in the future of the three remaining perforators owned by CNR, and is endeavoring to persuade the owners to donate their machines to the National Postal Museum once the perforators are no longer required. CNR confirms that C45 is still in use, and we understand that C43 remains in service also." (5)

13 Jan 87

"From Winnipeg comes the following information, or rather, from the History Research, Corporate Communication Branch of the CNR,

"The perforating machine used by the company (in Winnipeg) is still much in use and will continue to be for some time. When a new machine replaces it, rest assured it will not be scrapped, but more likely it will be earmarked for the Museum of Science and Technology in Ottawa since the Postal Museum has been closed for the past number of years.'

"Mr. Clark also sent me a blank sheet of paper with the full ten-impression strip of perforations across the top. The machine must be getting on....because the pins are very dull, and I don't think there are a dozen holes that are completely perforated on the whole strip of ten. [I believe that the non-punched-through holes are more a function of the paper used than the age of the machine, although it is reasonable to suppose that this machine could no longer perforate as many sheets of stamps as it could when new.] There was also a note on the back of the letter that reads,

"CNR machine on the fourth floor, Union Station, on Main Street at Broadway (in Winnipeg.'" (6,7)

March 87

"The Winnipeg machine is [like the Vancouver machine] a Cummins #53, with the only difference being in the actual perforations.

"The Vancouver and Winnipeg perforators are the only two working machines known left in Canada. It is hoped that when the practice of perforating stamps is discontinued, CN will see fo it that these perforators are donated to the National Postal Museum in Ottawa. Philatelists and postal historians alike would be most grateful." (8)

19 May 87

"He has been assured that the two existing machines (Winnipeg and Vancouver CNR) will eventually end up in the Postal Museum. From the looks of the perfins that are being done by these two machines, it will not be very long before they are useless....and the pins on the one in Winnipeg must be very dull, because you very rarely see a hole that is completely punched through." (9)

20 Oct 87

[The latest reporting to Ken Rose about these perfins, with some comments.]

#783 3 cent flower definitive	#920 5 cent artifact definitive
#921 10 cent rooster definitive	#943 \$1 Glacier National Park
#? 36 cent Volunteers commemorative	#? 55 cent artifact definitive
#? 72 cent artifact definitive	

In recent months I have noticed a drastic reduction in the reportings from CNR Winnipeg and an increase in the reportings from Vancouver. I wonder if this means that the Winnipeg machine is rapidly being replaced by meters, which would leave us with only one perfin machine left in operation in Vancouver. Hope somebody in Vancouver can confirm or deny this fact." (10)

16 Feb 88

"...Edmonton machine is now out of use, which leaves only the Winnipeg and Vancouver CNR machines, and I am sure the writing is on the wall for these as well." (11)

26 Feb 88

[Stuart Clark reports that the Winnipeg machine is still in everyday use, supplying offices too small to have a meter machine.] (12)

Footnotes for Part 4 of Perfins in the 1980's

- (1) Jon Johnson, *Railway Perfins*, The BNA Perforator, Vol.1, No.2
 - (2) Ibid.
 - (3) Ken Rose, *Tagging Along*, Canadian Stamp News, 28 Jan 1986
 - (4) Ken Rose, *Tagging Along*, Canadian Stamp News, 3 June 1986
 - (5) Editor, *C45 CNR Winnipeg*, The BNA Perforator, Vol. 8, No.1
 - (6) Ken Rose, *Tagging Along*, Canadian Stamp News, 13 Jan 1987
 - (7) Peter McCarthy, *Stamps on Track*, Keeping Track, Mar 1987, Vol.22, No.2
 - (8) Ken Rose, *Tagging Along*, Canadian Stamp News, 13 Jan 1987
 - (9) Ken Rose, *Tagging Along*, Canadian Stamp News, 19 May 1987
 - (10) Ken Rose, *Tagging Along*, Canadian Stamp News, 20 Oct 1987
 - (11) Ken Rose, *Tagging Along*, Canadian Stamp News, 16 Feb 1988
 - (12) Ken Rose, *Tagging Along*, Canadian Stamp News, 26 Feb 1988
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Auction News

I don't imagine there is a perfin collector anywhere who has won a mail bid on a perfin lot and not been disappointed. The problem is that perfin lots are very hard to describe adequately. For instance, would you be tempted by:

Canada and US Railway Perfin Mixture

About two hundred Canadian and US railway perfins. Some duplication. A nice batch. Estimate: \$50.00

How much duplication? What's a "nice batch"? Could it be a nice batch of Canadian railway perfins and not even have all the CPR patterns? (Yes, according to one auction house.)

Take the worry out of auction bidding (and selling) by getting involved in the Study Group Perfin Auction. Contact Mike Hargraft at the address below to arrange putting your perfins into the auction. Watch *The Perforator* for the auction material *accurately and completely described*, then mail your bids to Mike Hargraft.

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