

Perfins and their forerunners in Cisleithania until 1900

One of the consequences of the introduction of postage stamps was their stealing and misuse in companies by their own employees or co-workers. Companies have taken various measures against this, which has resulted in the use of corporate perfins. Using of “Perforated Initials” originated in the UK in 1868 and has gradually spread throughout Europe and overseas afterwards. The Austro-Hungarian Monarchy took over this practice in 1877 with two separate regulations particularly for Cisleithania (the Austrian part) and particularly for Transleithania.

The exhibit documents the historical development of such measures in Cisleithania from the introduction of stamps until 1900. In the **first part** it shows various forms of marking (“pre-devaluating”) stamps before perfins came into practice - they are **perfin forerunners**. Such measures can be found in all stamp issues by then. The **second part** focuses in detail on the **origins** and the **gradual introduction of perfins**. The phases of this process can be appropriately split and demonstrated by using perfins on stamp issues valid since 1877. Perfins are generally seldom during the whole 19th century; they are difficult to find on stamps and especially postally used on covers and cards identifying their users. They are extremely rare in the early phases, used on the 1867 and 1883 issues; some of the presented items (covers, cards) are the only one still known. The exhibit presents **all perfins still known on the 1867 issue** and **majority ones used on the 1883 issue**. After 1890, the use of perfins gradually increased but they are not simply to find. In this section, the exhibit focuses on presenting perfins on the **wide range of various entires** that are **unambiguously related to their users** and the place of use. The scope of the exhibit does not allow to present all the perfins after 1890, so the selection is limited to some interesting ones. This presentation is part of perhaps the largest perfin collection focused on this area and time period.

Perfins were used on a wide range of documents in postal traffic. As part of postal history, the most important items for collecting perfins are documents that clearly identify their users. But such items are far from being known to all perfins, all the more so in selected time periods for the same perfin. So, to present perfins in their entirety, it is necessary to display them not only on letters, cards, stationery, parcel or other postal forms, but also on single stamps. Their various face values reflect the different types of shipments, so they can also well illustrate the image of perfins use. The exhibit is split into time periods, in which it is further divided by larger territorial units. The sub-chapters sort perfins alphabetically, but also with regard to the savings the space on the sheets.

Plan of the exhibit:

1. Perfin forerunners

- 1.1. Precancellation by using company cachets
- 1.2. Precancellation by hand crossing out
- 1.3. Other forms of precancellation
- 1.4. Linking predecessors and using perfins

2. Use of perfins

- 2.1. First steps in using perfins (1877 – 1883)
- 2.2. Early use of perfins (1883 – 1890)
 - 2.2.1. Perfins from the Czech lands
 - 2.2.2. Perfins from the other parts of Cisleithania
- 2.3. Perfins used in the period 1890 – 1900
 - 2.3.1. Perfins from the Czech lands
 - 2.3.2. Perfins from the other parts of Cisleithania

Own research:

The exhibitor continues in his study to broaden the general knowledge of Austrian perfins in this period. He also participates in the Perfins catalog of Austria and from the territory of the former Czechoslovakia. He has written several articles on this theme, especially for the Czech specialised bulletin PERFINY.

- indicates rare items in the exhibit (this applies both to rare perfins and also their interesting using).