

Francis A. Hancock: competitor to Joseph Sloper

For a number of years, Joseph Sloper and his firm had a virtual monopoly on perfins in Great Britain. Sloper's clever negotiations with the British post office made it next to impossible for anyone else to sell either postage stamp perforators or perfins themselves to users. That monopoly was broken finally and numerous other firms got involved in the manufacture and sale of postage stamp perforators.

One such firm was Francis A. Hancock, printer and stationer, of 37 & 38 Wood Street, in Cheapside in east central London. The advertisement shown here is from a trade directory, date unknown, but probably from the 1880s. It was found by a member of the British Perfins Society and illustrated in the February issue of their *Bulletin*.

Hancock offers to perforate stamps free of charge. The user of the perfin was expected to pay for the perfin die, of course, which would be retained by Hancock. As the user required perfins, Hancock would perforate them and provide them at the face value of the stamps. Dr. Harvey Tilles says Hancock would make extra money by buying postage in large quantities at a discount from face.

As the illustrations in the advertisement show, Hancock offered a variety of perforators for various uses. The paragraph in the center of the advertisement reproduces an article from the *Daily Telegraph* of March 23, 1880, about a 14-year-old clerk being hauled before a magistrate on suspicion of stealing a quantity of postage stamps from a wine merchant in Fenchurch Street. The point, of course, is that the theft could have been prevented had the stamps been perfinned.

At that time in England, postage stamps were commonly accepted as payment for small amounts in shops and the post office would re-purchase unused stamps from the public. For a 14-year-old clerk at the time, a few pennies was a lot of money. Whether it was worth jail time is another story.

POSTAGE STAMPS PERFORATED
FREE OF CHARGE,
BY
F. A. HANCOCK,
THE POST OFFICE, 37 & 38, WOOD ST., CHEAPSIDE, E.C.

Price "The Daily Telegraph," March 23rd, 1880.
HANCOCK'S PERFORATOR—FREE OF CHARGE—STAMPS—ORDER
before address the British Post Office, and stamped
quantity of postage stamps, the perfin die, and stamps of various
value, and a list of the various uses of the perfin die.
The perfin die is of various designs, and the stamps of various
value, and a list of the various uses of the perfin die.
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USE HANCOCK'S PERFORATOR
AND DEFT ALTERATIONS.
THE ONLY DESIGN NEEDS TO PREVENT FRAYS—MADE BY GERMANY, AND MOST OF THE LATEST TYPES.

Perforator with 1 Die 2/6. **UNDER 10 Pds.** Perforator with 2 Dies 4/6.

Perforator with the words
NOT NEGOTIABLE D-2
Complete, 40/- **PAID**

Perforator with the words
CANCELLED **PAID**
From complete, 50/- **PAID**

POSTMASTERS by sending their own STAMPS can have them PERFORATED
for their Customers at Half per cent. beyond the cost of the die.