

Perfins came into the world of philately as damaged stamps. Traditional collectors pushed perfins out of their albums because they had holes in them—holes that messed up an otherwise good stamp.

It wasn't until the 1930s that a few hardy (substitute *cheap* if you want) collectors began to collect perfins for the sake of the perfins. It was a cheap way to have some fun when there wasn't much money for other, more serious, philatelic enjoyment.

Perhaps because all perfins are inherently considered "damaged," there aren't any quality standards covering them. "Real" stamps are graded in terms of centering, color, and gum, but a perfin is just a perfin.

Is it time to set some quality standards for

All perfins are **NOT** created

Equal

Should perfins
be GRADED for quality
just like regular stamps?

Floyd A. Walker, Editor

perfins?

We have scarcity ratings. We know an A-rated perfin is worth more than a C-rated perfin because we know there are fewer of them.

But an A-rated perfin centered perfectly on a nice stamp is certainly worth more than an A-rated perfin with a couple holes missing, or cut close to the edge of the stamp.

Right?

Not necessarily, at

least if you judge from what we've seen offered. An A-rated perfin is an A-rated perfin. The going price is about \$20 to \$25. The condition of the perfin doesn't seem to make much difference, although a stamp with a corner off or the perfins cut off usually warrants a reduction in price because the stamp (not the perfin) is obviously inferior.

The same seems to

be the case with B- and C-rated perfins. D-, E-, and F-rated perfins are harder to judge because they're often not individually priced.

The obvious question is how we grade perfins in terms of perfin quality. What are the governing factors involved in grading a perfin as Extremely Fine, or Fine, or Good, or Poor?

Since I have this inherent wish to be abused, I'll put forth some suggestions. I'll be shocked if everyone agrees with me, but maybe in discussion there will be a basis for agreement. Here's what I think constitutes a top quality perfin.

1. It is complete: no holes missing, no holes poorly punched, no blind holes.
2. It is well-centered on the stamp.
3. It is correctly read from the face of the stamp on which it appears.

I recognize that there are some *preferences* involved in collecting that aren't reflected in those three criteria. Some collectors, for example, want the perfins in their collection to read correctly from the *reverse* of the stamp. The argument is that they're dis-

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Is it time to develop grading standards for perfins?

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playing perfins, not stamps, and the stamp doesn't matter.

to downgrade a perfin to F? Do three holes missing make it just G, or maybe even P?

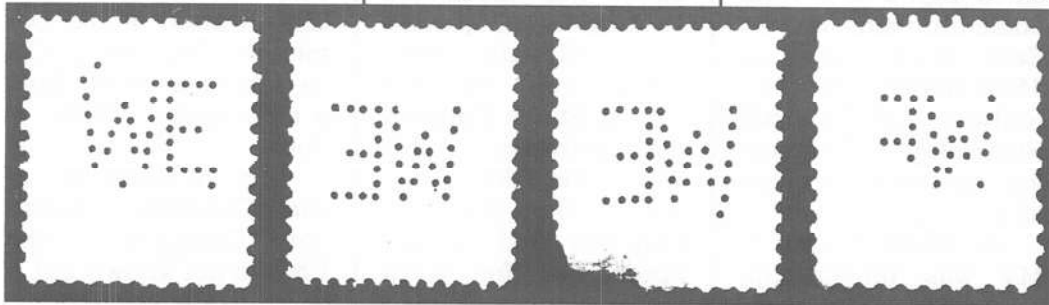
difference.

I'm old enough to remember that when Claude Cain came up

vinced that they would ruin perfins collecting—that all the fun of perfins would be destroyed when we started worrying about the rarity of one perfin versus another.

We've obviously come a long way from those days and it appears that as the number of perfins collectors grows, really top quality perfins are going to be harder and harder to find and thus inherently more valuable.

It's worth thinking about.



Which one would you rather have in your collection?
How would you grade each of these perfins in terms of quality?
There is no recognized standard for grading the quality of perfins.

However, it can also be argued that most perfins were applied from the face of the stamp; that is, the sheets of stamps were fed into the perforator face up, and that would support the "face up" standard.

In all fairness, the first criterion is reflected in the descriptions provided in lots in the Perfins Club auctions. Rudy Roy lists the number of missing holes in the pattern. The other quality standards he lists, though, cover the stamp and not the perfin: thin spots, pulled perfs, creases, and heavy inking.

I doubt that anyone will quarrel with the three criteria for a quality perfin (let's call it an XF perfin). But what about deviations from those standards? What sort of quality rating do you assign to a perfin with missing holes, or that's poorly centered on the stamp, or reads from the wrong direction? Is one missing hole enough

Perhaps the overriding question is whether any of this makes any

with his initial rarity ratings, a number of members were con-