
How to: 'Draw' & Identify Perfins on Cover

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Here's another of those - "If you don't have a computer or don't use yours to generate images - quit now." - type of articles. However, for those of you who use your computer in this manner, here's a trick that works.

Many of us have had the experience of finding a perfin on cover that could be one of several patterns, some so similar that a simple look doesn't distinguish which one you have. You go to the catalog and find that the city in the cancel is not one identified in the catalog or the cancel is illegible - and so there is no help there. Quick... get the tracing paper and a soft lead pencil! Sometimes this works, and sometimes not.

The Japanese item I show elsewhere in this issue of the Bulletin had several perfins with small holes that didn't reproduce at all with the pencil/tracing paper method. And, nothing else I tried with a pencil and paper gave me useful information about the patterns on those stamps.

With the ready availability of extremely sophisticated computer technology the solution to this problem is (relatively) easy. All it takes is a computer with a respectable amount of RAM, a scanner, Photoshop or similar imaging software, a steady hand, and patience.

I'll show what I can of the process using the Ed Haack cover used earlier. Obviously the beaver pattern was not in question, but it was on the scanner when the idea for this note came to me.

The first step in the process is to set the cover to scan the stamp at a relatively high resolution. For this illustration I set the scanner at 600 dpi, isolated the stamp from the cover in "preview" mode and scanned it (#1). By isolating the stamp I kept the file size reasonable. (If you don't play with images a 3.5 meg file may not seem that reasonable - but it is given the resolution.)



1.

The second step was to straighten the image ('Rotate' under 'Image') and crop extraneous material (#2; for the purposes of this article I have created a false border around the stamp to delimit it clearly.)



2.

I then converted the image to grayscale ("Image", "Mode", "Grayscale") so it is a black and white image. Then I immediately return the b&w image to RGB format ("Image", "Mode", "RGB").

(Note: do not simply return color to the image by the "undo" function. Truly turn the B&W image into an RGB image as suggested.)

Now, select the paintbrush tool and select a brush that gives you a circle the same size as the holes made by the perforator. (In Photoshop you can select or create a circle that virtually exactly

matches the perfin pin size.) Pick a color (not either black or white – hard to show in a b&w illustration!) and carefully dot in the perfin pattern (#3).



3.

Now with the “magic wand” select any of the dots and under “Select”, choose “Similar”. All of the colored dots should now be circled by “marching ants”. Next, again go to “Select” and choose “Inverse”. Now under “Edit” select “Fill” and “White” (#4). This should give you a clean white



4.

background with a colored perfin pattern. Again “Select” “Inverse” and “Edit” and then “Fill” “Black” the selected dots (#5).



5.

If you have done this effectively, you should now have an accurate, catalog-quality illustration of the pattern punched in the stamp – while the stamp is still on cover.