

The Maryland Perfins Identification Mystery: A Partial Solution

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The perfins identification problem on the Maryland wine and liquor stamps of the 1940s and 1950s (beginning with Hubbard L35 and W11) is progressing slowly with the application of knowledge of (1) the state's practice of assigning prefix letters to the license numbers of manufacturers and wholesalers and (2) the early Maryland wine and liquor meter strips.



Maryland liquor meter showing the identification of the company name and the license number

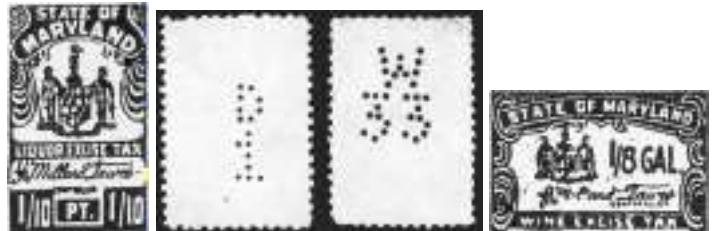
An August 2001 visit to the License and Permit Section of the Maryland Alcohol and Tobacco Tax Unit in Annapolis solved the prefix letter problem. D is assigned to the County Dispensaries who operate wine and liquor sales monopolies in their respective counties. The M prefix letter is assigned to manufacturers, a category that includes both distillers and rectifiers and the prefix letter W is assigned to wholesalers. That elucidates the meaning of the three letters that have been reported on perfins used to cancel the Maryland wine and liquor stamps.

The License and Permit Section has lists of current license holders, but none of the numbers seem to be in the range of numbers reported as perfins. Fortunately, we have another source of information closer in time to the contemporary use of the perfins. That source is the early long wine (Hubbard W1-4) and liquor (Hubbard L1-22) meter strips that had both the license number and the user's name printed on them.

County dispensaries

According to the state records D1 was assigned to Montgomery County and D2 was assigned to Wicomico County. Both have been recorded on

Maryland liquor stamps. The identification of D1 was also noted on an early 22¢ (1/5 gallon) meter strip in the author's collection which was canceled on June 24, 1936. There is an additional anomaly on the license number D1 discovered on the long



Maryland Wine and Liquor excise tax stamps and the D and W perfin design with a number on the second line

liquor meter strips. Montgomery County Dispensary is seen on meter strips with meter number 166 and 761. But Table 1 shows the values, dates, and meter numbers have been reported with the user identified as the Comptroller of the Treasury.

Table 1

Dennomination	Date	Meter Number
\$.06 7/8	May 31, 1933	100
\$.133/4	May 31, 1933	100
\$.22	June 5, 1934	770
\$.27 1/2	May 31, 1933	100
\$.55	May 31, 1933	100
\$1.10	May 31, 1933	100

The meter strips from meter number 100 have full gum and appear to have never placed on bottles. It seems likely that they are trial impressions run in the comptroller's office, perhaps to demonstrate their use to the state. The fact that most are meter number 100, probably the lowest number to be assigned to the state, tends to support that conclusion. May 31, 1933, is the earliest date



Maryland meter with Comptroller of the Treasury Identification, perhaps a trial us

reported on the meters, well in advance of the end of Prohibition, December 5, 1933, when public liquor sales could begin. The conclusion that these are sample, trial impressions is further supported by the next earliest reported date of use, December 5, 1933.

Table 2

License Number	User	Type of Meter	Perfin	Type of Stamp
M 1			•	L
M 3			•	W, L
M 4	Stand Dist. Products, Inc.	L	•	W, L
M 7			•	
M 9			•	
M11			•	
M13			•	L
M15	Belvidere Wine & Liquor	W		
M17	W. Graham & Co.	L		
M22	E. Kahn & Co., Inc.	L		
M23			•	
M27	Hanover Liquor Distrib. Co.	L		
M36			•	
M38			•	
M41				L
M42	Consolidated Dist. Corp.	L	•	W, L
M48			•	
M51	Interstate Dist. Inc.	L	•	L
M58	Universal Liquors, Inc.	W		
M64			•	L
M72	Callis & Hammond	L		
M76	Union Dist. Products	L	•	W, L
M79			•	L
M80	The Calvert Distilling Co.	L	•	
M88				W, L
M89			•	L
M90			•	L

Manufacturers

Since the numbers are assigned *in seriatim* upon application for a state license, it seems quite likely that some of the M numbers will never be found in the perfin reports. Companies may have ceased in existence before the use of

stamps and perfins. The Table 2 identifies some of the early license holders based on the early Maryland long meter strips. The type of meter strip (wine or liquor) is identified and also whether the perfin has been reported and on what types of stamp the perfin has been reported. Eighteen manufacturer's perfins have been reported; of those, only four user identifications have been reported to date.

Wholesalers

Twenty-one wholesaler perfins have been reported; of those, only four of the users have been identified (see Table 3 – next page).

Two of the wholesaler perfins (W39 and W59) are known in both a narrow and wide format. This is an area for some further research. It would seem that one could determine which format came first with a detailed reporting of the stamps on which they occur.

There is much still to be accomplished. On only a small portion of the perfins have we been able to conclusively identify the user. Perhaps of equal interest is the fact that seven identified manufacturers (or rectifiers) have been confirmed, although perfins from these users have not yet been reported. It is possible that these perfin numbers will never be reported if the company no longer was in business after 1940.

One of the collaborators on this project (Art Mongan) has diligently been recording the information on the bottles on which some of these stamps canceled with perfins were found. One might think that positive identifications of the user would be simple in such cases. One example should suffice to show that the identification is a bit more complicated. W14 has clearly been identified as Peirce &

Table 3

License Number	User	Type of Meter	Perfin	Type of Stamp
W 1			•	W
W 2			•	W, L
W 4			•	W
W 5	The Globe Distributing Co.	W		
W10			•	L
W11	Crosse & Blackwell	L	•	W, L
W14	Peirce & Hebner	L	•	W, L
W16				L
W17			•	W, L
W19			•	W
W22			•	W, L
W23	Lichtenstein Co.	L	•	L
W27			•	L
W28			•	L
W33			•	L
W34			•	W, L
W35			•	L
W37			•	L
W38			•	W, L
W39			•	W, L
W42			•	W, L
W43				L
W58			•	L
W59	Alex J. Mandel, Inc.	L	•	W, L
W69			•	L
W72			•	W, L
W74			•	L

Hebner, Inc. from an early liquor meter strip. Stamps with the W14 perfin have been found on bottles with the following identifications: Kronheim, importer, Washington, D.C.; Canada Dry, New York; and National Distillers, importer, Baltimore. It would appear that Peirce & Hebner was a Maryland wholesaler who handled a variety of products that were imported by other firms.

The author gratefully acknowledges the assistance of Chuck Spaulding and Art Mongan, the two perfin collectors who reported the list of perfins and kept pressing for someone to identify the meaning of the prefix letters



A Maryland wine meter, MD W4, with the identification of Wholesaler Number 5. Obviously the distilled spirits and wine meters have the potential for yielding identifications.