

Sad commentary on the "Merry Widow"

Bob Schwerdt (505L)

Special delivery stamp E7, ridiculed as the "Merry Widow," was issued December 12, 1908 and retired June 8, 1909. That the winged Mercury's helmet of the stamp design resembled a woman's hat of the times was not the reason for its withdrawal. Though the stamp in color, size, and design was vastly different from its predecessors, it was recalled, according to George B. Sloane, because its size and color were similar to the current one cent postage stamp, and letters were not getting the service that they deserved. (Ridicule may have played a small part, however.)

Perfins originated in the United States in the spring of 1908. So E7 fits into the early days of perfin usage. Since the stamp had such a brief life, we should not expect to find very many perfins in that issue, though subsequent special delivery issues are replete with perfins.

The sad fact is that after almost fifty years of collecting perfins, I have seen only two perfins of E7, the ones I own. I consider E7 one of the most attractive of the special delivery issues and deplore that its usage is perhaps the briefest on record of any U.S. stamp. It would be useful to discover the number of E7's printed and distributed before recall to help calculate perfin possibilities.

I list my two copies for the record and will gladly record and report any others that are reported to me:

B177 - B/O/E - Board of Education,
Chicago - Chicago, Nov. 1908 postmark
C360 - C (W) - P.F. Collier & Son, New
York - New York, Mar 29, 1909 postmark

I wonder if any E7 perfins exist on cover???
