

Advertising Postcards with Perfins

Second in a Series

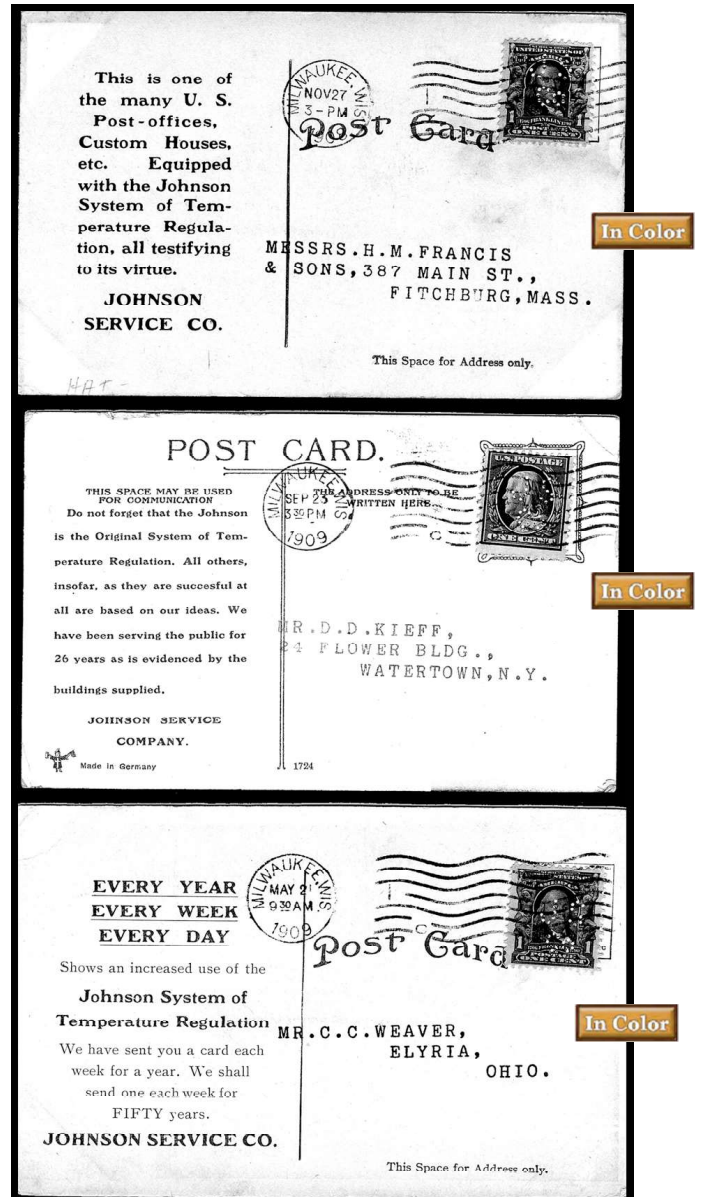
Bob Szmanski (LM#145)

Advertising with postcards was a big business in the early part of the 20th Century. If you knew your market, a couple of cents for the card and postage could get your message across easily and cheaply. And people even saved and collected these advertisements! When is the last time that you cut out some newspaper or magazine advertisement or saved a piece of junk mail or printed out some bit of spam received on your computer? I would guess that the answer would be "Not recently!"

Another perfin user who utilized this method of advertising was the Johnson Service Company of Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Johnson Service Company was, and still is, a provider for controls and service in the heating, air conditioning and fire alarm fields - all fields in which I worked prior to retirement. As a supplier, Johnson Service basically sold to contractors (only at retail!) and, naturally, as a service company, they preferred to be the "one stop" supplier and service company for all their manufactured equipment - a very high priced one at that! They preferred working with building engineers and the professional engineering groups to get their products specified in building projects. Government contracts were especially sought after as their low up-front costs were enticing to these potential customers. Notice in the list of identified cards that most all are government applications! Lastly, their products were not serviceable by generic parts but were strictly dependent upon their factory products! All in all - tough competition!

Their perfin is J146 and it is rated a C+. I have, in my collection, 17 advertising cards from this company and 6 perfins off cover - all in one cent 1902 or 1908 issues. Postmarks on these cards are dated between November 14, 1908 and March 19, 1910 - all were sent from Milwaukee. All are beautiful multi-colored cards printed by the E. C. Kropp Co. in Milwaukee.

Advertising seems different when comparing the early 20th Century to the present. Notice in Figure 1 the term "...testifying to its virtue." I never knew virtue could sell! I also like the following claim (middle card): All others, insofar, as they are



"successful at all are based on our ideas." Their lawyers must have been busy chasing all the copycat competitors! They should have hired a good English teacher who would have instructed their ad writer to move the comma after 'insofar' to after 'all'! But why nitpick! Look at the (lowest) card sent to poor Mr. Weaver in Elyria, Ohio. He must not have fallen to their weekly demands to do business, so they tried to

persuade him with the suggestion of sending a weekly card for 50 years! I wonder if they made

good on their bothersome threat.



Figure 2. Here are some of the beautiful postcards sent. All seem to be substantial buildings mainly in the Midwest part of the country.

Below is a listing of the various buildings on the postcards that I have in my collection. Can anyone

add to this list any date, stamp issue, or building information not contained in this article.

11-14-08	#300	Post Office	Lincoln, Nebraska (2 copies)
11-27-08	#300	Post Office	Helena, Montana
12-16-08	#300	Post Office	St. Paul, Minnesota
01-15-09	#300	Polk County Court House	Des Moines, Iowa
02-04-09	#300	City Hall	Milwaukee, Wisconsin
02-11-09	#331	City Hall	Bay City, Michigan (red print on obv)
02-11-09	#331	City Hall	Bay City, Michigan (orchid print on obv)
02-17-09	#300	Washington County Courthouse	West Bend, Wisconsin
05-15-09	#300	Court House	Rensselaer, Indiana
05-21-09	#331	Genesee County Court House	Flint, Michigan
07-03-09	#331	Appellate Court Building	New York, New York
07-21-09	#331	Court House	Baraboo, Wisconsin
09-15-09	#331	Court House	Jackson Minnesota
09-23-09	#331	Criminal Court Building	New York, New York
01-08-10	#331	Public Library	Rock Island, Illinois
03-19-10	#331	Hotel Radisson	Minneapolis, Minnesota