

Schermacks, Perfins and Guide Lines

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I often find nuances with stamps or perfins that I had not originally appreciated when I go back through my collections and accumulations to reorganize the material. And so it was when I recently was looking at my “Perfins on Schermacks” stamp collection.

I had previously thought, naively and incorrectly, that the Schermacks were cut into strips from 100 stamp sheets. Therefore, I was a bit surprised the other evening when I spotted a vertical line in the margin of a Schermack in my collection.

In checking reference materials, I realized my error. The Schermacks were produced by first trimming the outside margins from panes of 400-subject imperforate panes, close to the stamps on the right edge and about 7mm on the left edge. (These 400 stamp panes had vertical and horizontal guide lines indicating where the large panes should be separated into 100 stamp sheets.) These panes were then pasted together right edge over the left edge tab to form a roll of 150 panes. These long rolls were then given Schermack slot perforations, then slit horizontally and rolled into twenty coils of 3000 stamps each. Vertical guide lines appear every twentieth stamp. Horizontal guide lines are the result of miscut sheeting during the final rolling of coils. The rolls were then run through a machine that applied the distinctive Schermack perforated stamps to envelopes.

Therefore, I should see more Schermacks with vertical lines on the margin than with horizontal lines on the top or bottom margins. And, of course, I did -- once I looked closer. And I found them in the quantities one would expect. (I am fortunate to have 290 Schermacks with perfins in my possession, so I have a reasonable number - statistically - to run such an analysis). Specifically, one would expect to find 20 stamps with vertical guide lines, and somewhat fewer than 20 with horizontal guide lines for every 400 such stamps collected. For a collection of 290 Schermacks, one would expect to find 14 with vertical lines and less than 14 with horizontal lines. I found 9 verticals and 7 horizontals – statistically, a very reasonable finding.

Shown below are examples of Schermacks with these two types of guide lines; a vertical guide line on Scott #343 and a horizontal guide line on Scott #344:

Vertical Guide line



**Design 90-56 on
Scott #343
with vertical guide line
(Perfin Rated A)**

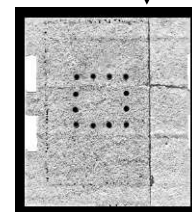


**Design 90-33 on
Scott #344
with horizontal guide line
(Perfin Rated A+)**

We know that the panes were attached, end-to-end, and then cut into 3000 stamp coils with Schermack perforations, resulting in some paste-up pairs. From a 400 stamp pane, one would generate 20 paste-up pairs. Therefore, in my collection of 290 Schermacks, I should find somewhere around 14 stamps with evidence of being part of a paste-up pair.

However, I found only two Schermacks with evidence of being one side of a paste-up pair. Why? After discussion with several collectors, the answer became obvious: as stamp collectors soaked the Schermack stamps off envelopes, they also caused the paste-up edge to separate from the attached stamp. An example of a single stamp from a paste-up pair of Scott #346 that has been perfined with Design 91-1 is shown below.

Paste-up Edge



**Design 91-1 on Scott #346 from paste-up pair.
(Perfin Rated A)
(Less than 20 copies of Scott #346 with any
12-hole Schermack perfin design are
estimated to exist today.)**

(Continued on next page.)

Schermacks, Perfins and Guide Lines (cont.)

Finally, there are center guide line blocks in these 400 stamp panes. There can be a maximum of 2 stamps from each sheet that show both the vertical and the horizontal guide lines. In my collection, therefore, statistically I might be lucky to find one or two. But alas, I found none with perfins. Check your collections – perhaps you are fortunate to have one!

Note that although I have loosely used the term “pair” here to describe the manufacturing process of Schermacks, please understand that in practice we

will find no postally used Schermack pairs, paste-up or otherwise. During the affixing process, the Schermack machine pulled the coil of Schermack-perforated stamps forward, punched the Schermack perfin and then immediately sliced the stamp from the coil and affixed it to an envelope. Therefore, when found as pairs, such Schermack pairs are the result of a philatelic favor.

I will be offering all of the duplicates from my collection for sale at the Vermont convention in August 2010.