

COLLECTING PERFINS

by Charles Chesloe

One of the most interesting facets of philately is the collecting of perfins. These are stamps that have tiny holes punched into them to spell letters or designs. This is usually done by commercial companies, firms or businesses to create identity and also prevent theft of postage by employees.



Fig. 1

Czechoslovakia had close to a thousand different perfins that are listed in the 1987 Maxa catalog which was published in Prague. Values are listed in a scale of capital letters which categorize the scarcity of the perfin and help establish its worth. This is the way they are coded:

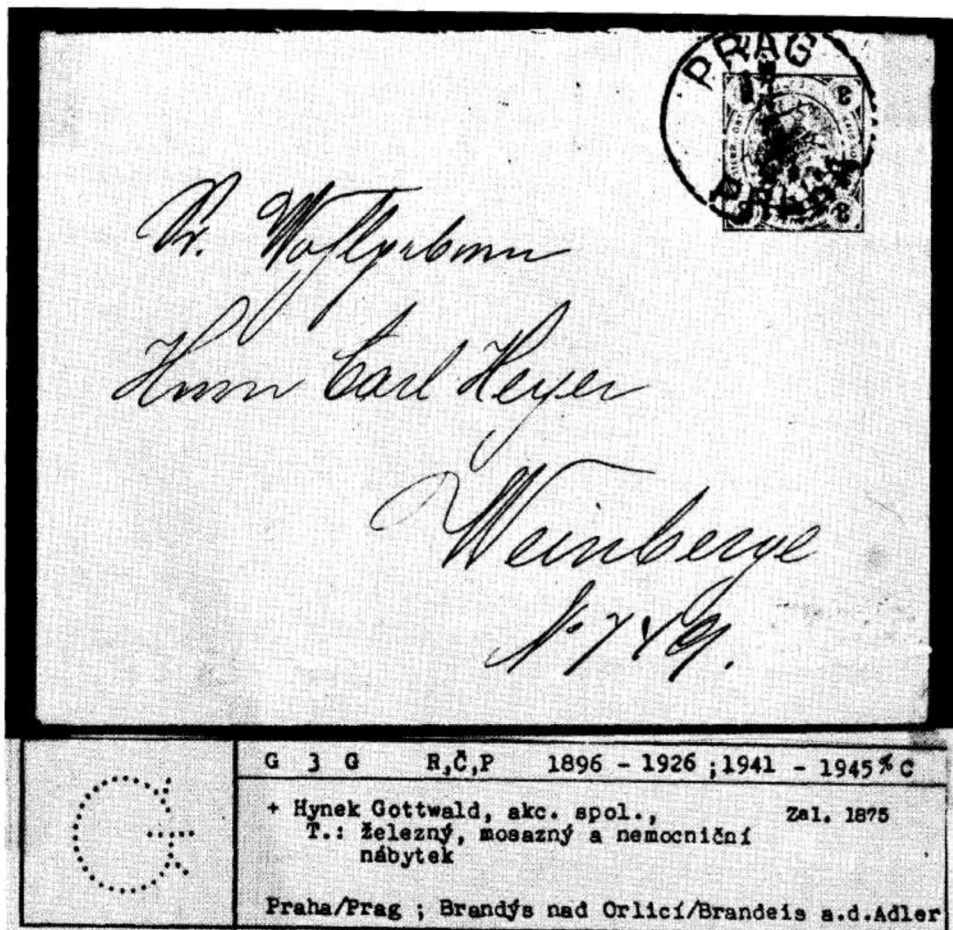


Fig. 2

- A - Over 200 pieces known of this perfin.
- B - Between 100 to 200 pieces known to exist.
- C - Between 50 to 99 pieces known to exist.
- D - Between 20 to 49 pieces known to exist.
- E - Between 5 to 19 pieces known to exist.
- F - 4 or less pieces in existence.

In my opinion, they are based on estimates on the current supply in Europe. Surely one must take into consideration the material that got into the United States and Canada after 1938 and never returned. Here are some examples of those that reached us. Below each is the Maxa catalog listing with its coded line.

Fig. 1 shows the initials "J.S." on an Austrian parcel form sent from Brno on July 22, 1895. It carries a "C" value rating and a catalog number "J97".

Fig. 2 shows the initial "G" on a local Prague cover with a partially obliterated postmark from the year 1897. It carries a "C" value rating and a catalog number "G3".

Fig. 3 shows the initials "J.Č." with a Prague postmark of Nov. 10, 1927 on a 100h redrawn Agriculture and Science issue Type III comb perforated 13 3/4 x 13 1/2. It has a "C" value



Fig. 3

rating and catalog number "J20".

Fig. 4 has the initials "B.F.&C." on a 50h comb perforated Masaryk stamp cancelled in Luhačovice during 1926. The perfin is that of the B. Fischmann Company in Brno. Apparently someone in the Company was spending some time at the Spa in Luhačovice. This perfin is quite scarce, showing a "D" value rating.

Fig. 5 shows the initials "N.E.K." of Nathan Eisler of Kolin. The date appears to be obliterated. It is also quite scarce, carrying a "D" value rating.

Fig. 6 shows the perfin "LIGA" of Centra in Děčín. It was mailed on May 6, 1927 and carries a "C" value rating.

Fig. 7 is that of an overweight letter franked with the 1930 Masaryk 60 h and 1 k denominations. It has an "F.&B." perfin of the firm Emanuel Jakub Friedmann & Brothers of Brno. Mailed in August 1931, it carries a "B" value rating.

Fig. 8 shows the perfin "L.B." of Ladislav Bartoš of Česká Skalice. It was mailed on Nov. 24, 1936 and carries a "B" value rating.

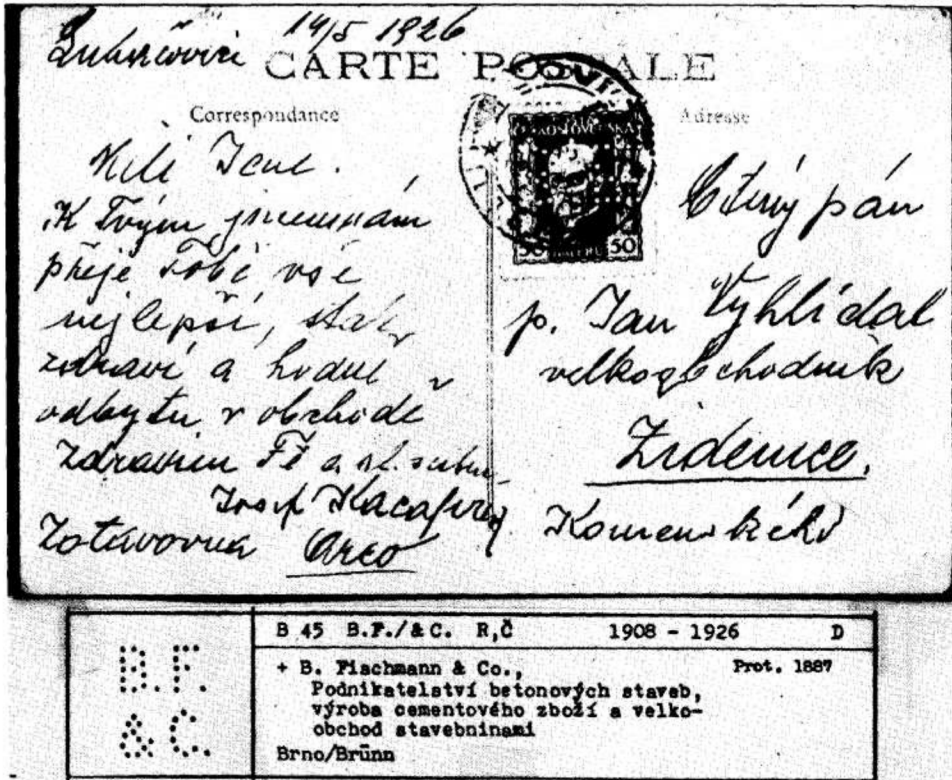


Fig. 4

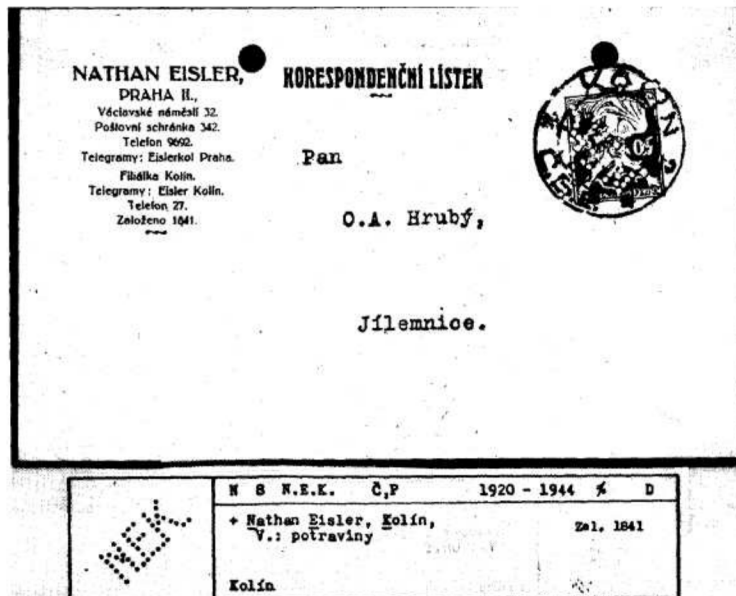
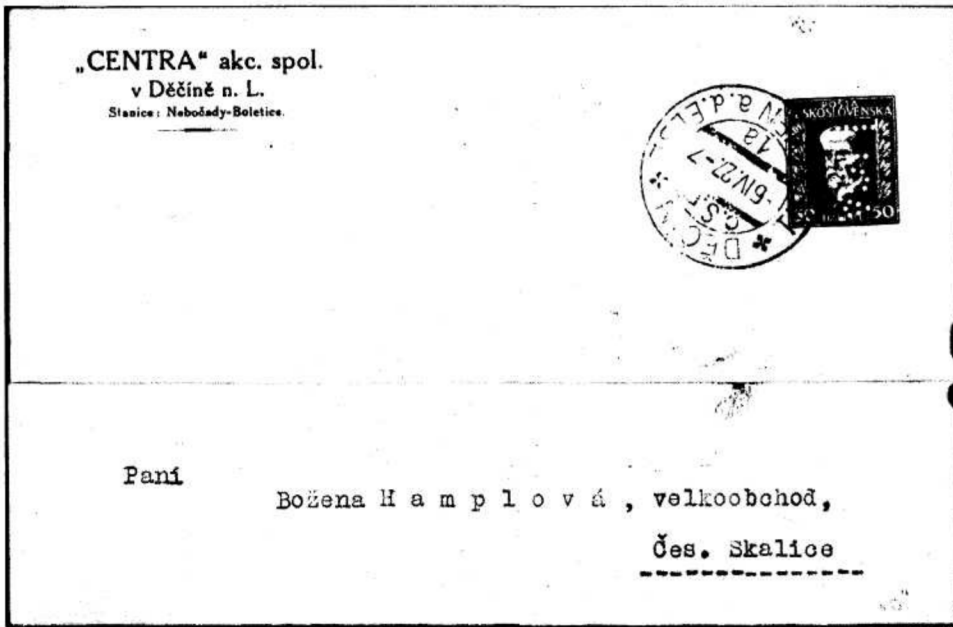
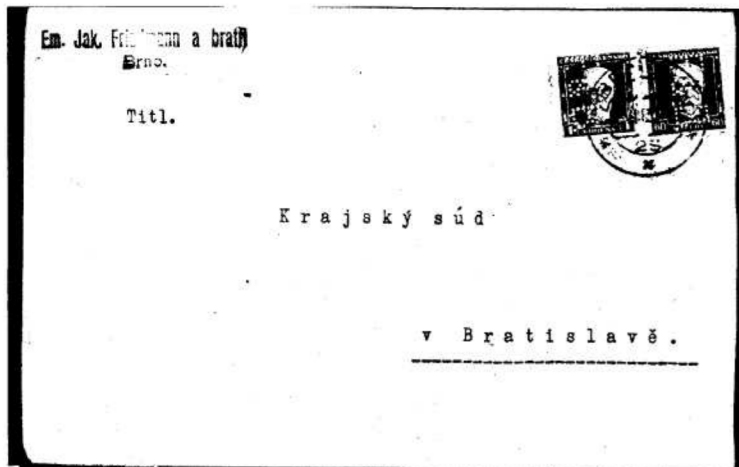


Fig. 5



LIGA	L 20 LIGA	Č	1920 - 1930	C
	+ Centra, akc. spol., T.: tukové výrobky (Liga - ochranná známka umělého tuku) Děčín		Prot. 1925	

Fig. 6



F & B	F 9 F. & B.	R, Č, P	1908 - 1944	B
	+ Emanuel Jakob Friedmann & bratři, Prot. 1897 T.: papírnické zboží, lepenka a posací potřeby Brno/Brünn			

Fig. 7

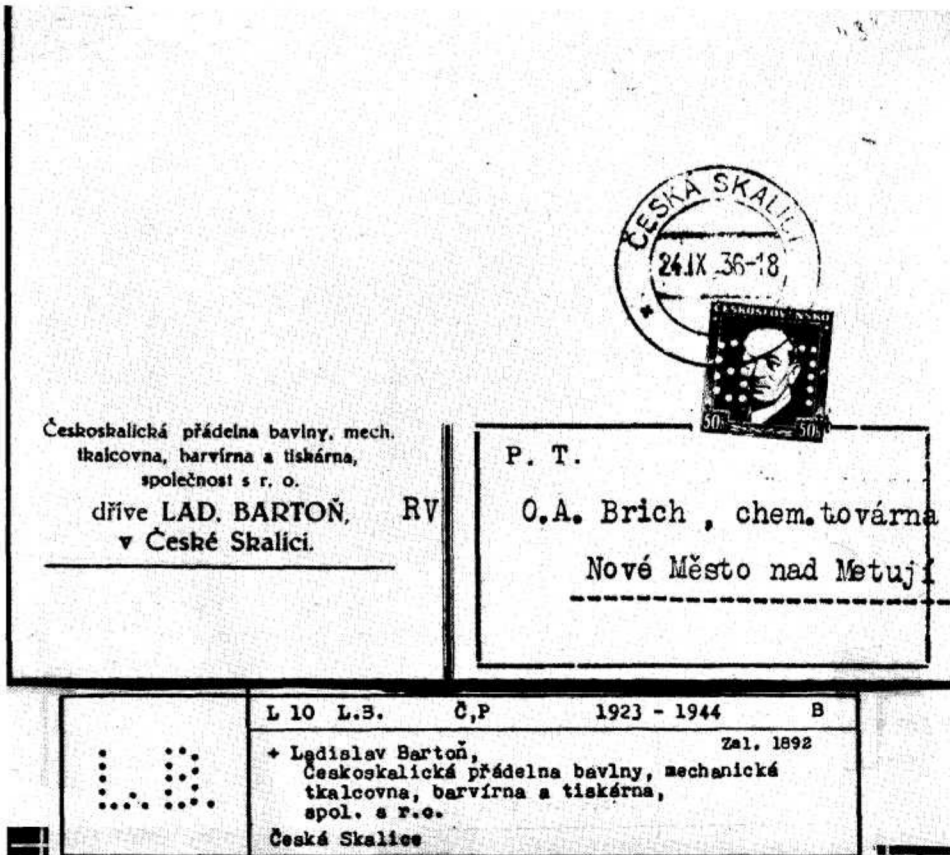


Fig. 8

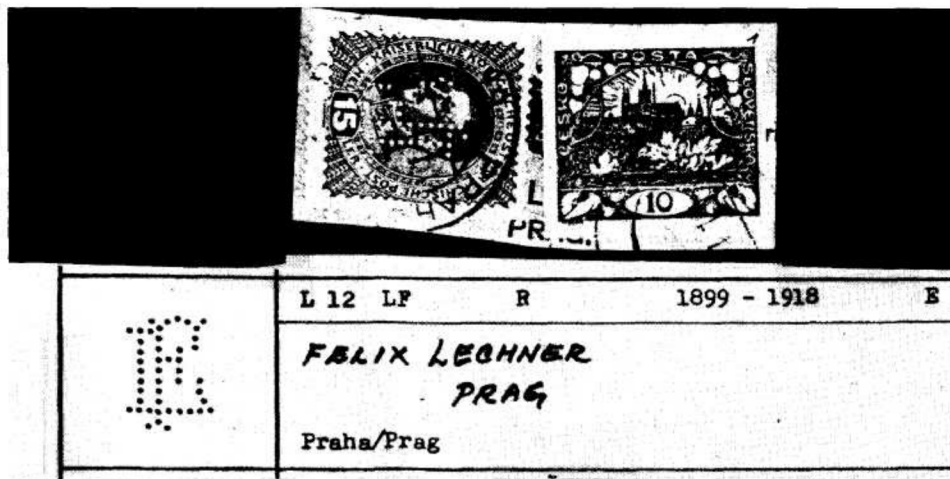


Fig. 9

Finally there is Fig. 9. Of all these illustrations, this last one is the "Piece de résistance". It shows the perfin of Felix Lechner of Prague, an artistic logo combining the letters "F.L." This business did work in the wood industry and the export of wood. The perfin has an "E" rating, which is that of a rarity.

This article contains but a sampling to show what perfin collecting is all about. Covers with perfins are single stamps and are usually moderately priced at dealers' tables and sometimes you may be lucky enough to find a real bargain. In an earlier article a few issues ago, I described a registered cover I purchased with Austrian issues of 1908. The cover was sent from Bohemian Escompte Bank in Děčín in 1913 with a perfin that carries a rating value of "E". I paid ten dollars for the cover and found it under "Austria" in a dealer's cover box.

Collecting perfins can be lots of fun and can be limited to a particular country like Czechoslovakia or it can encompass several European countries. But to get the most out of such a collection, one should have available the Maxa Perfin catalog. Our Society library carries one under Item 97 and it is available to our members on a loan basis.

Below each illustrated cover, I have shown its listing in Maxa 1987. The top line to the right of the perfin shows the catalog number first (i.e. L12 in Fig. 9). Next comes the letter or letters of the perfin (i.e. LF). "R" is a code to designate it appeared only on Austrian issues. Then follow the years during which the perfin was used (i.e. 1899-1918). Actually the Felix Lechner perfin shown in Fig. 9 was cancelled in Prague on Jan. 11, 1919. Finally comes the rating (i.e. E for rarity).

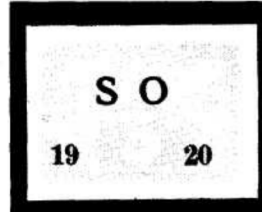
For the Beginner

MORE ON OVERPRINTS

There is another group of overprinted stamps which are very definitely a part of Czechoslovak Philately, but which will not be found in the Czech section of the Scott Catalogue. Scott lists them under the heading EASTERN SILESIA. They are Hradčany Issues, both imperf and perforated; the 500h and 1000h of the first Masaryk stamps; Special Delivery Stamps; Postage Due Stamps and Newspaper stamps, all of which are overprinted SO 1920. Included in the Eastern Silesia listing are ten stamps of Poland with the same overprint.

The explanation for these overprints is a story of considerable historic significance. There is a part of the former Austrian Silesia which is known as Těšín and, because of its economic importance, was of great interest to both Poland and Czechoslovakia. Following the fall of the Austro-Hungarian Empire, Poland occupied this territory. However, the Czechoslovak Army pushed the Poles back and occupied the region. At a conference in 1920 the Těšín area was continued within the boundaries of Czechoslovakia and a Commission, which took over the government of the area, suggested that both Czech and Polish stamps be overprinted SO, which probably stood for the latin "Silesia Orientalis" (Eastern Silesia) plus the year date 1920. For some reason (perhaps philatelic?) these stamps were overprinted in rather large quantities considering the comparatively small area intended for their use. Many varieties of the overprint are found as well as counterfeits. However, very few are known to exist postally used on cover.

Because of limited space, we are illustrating only two SO overprints - one on Hradčany and one on a Special Delivery stamp.



- Phillips B. Freer