

## OPEN PHILATELY

### Perfins are not just documents of company history, but can unexpectedly expand the possibilities of philately

The collecting of perfins went through several stages. At the time of the greatest boom in their use, i.e. in the late nineteenth and first half of the twentieth century, stamps bearing perfins were commonly considered to be damaged, and many collectors threw them away. It was not until around the Second World War that a few collectors in the United States and Great Britain became interested in them. Over time, they banded together to form societies that published newsletters and later catalogues of perfins. But these are countries where this method of marking stamps and postal stationery is still used today, albeit to a very limited extent. In our country perfin collections were "discovered" in the early 1970s by Vojtěch Maxa, who gathered a group of interested people around him.

#### V. MÜNZBERGER - V. HAVEL

Since then, the collecting of perfins has been evolving (of course not only in our country) and there has been a gradual specialization. The first collections were mainly general oriented. Gradually, there were a few brave exhibitors who focused their exhibits more on explaining what perfins are, with examples of a variety of material. Perfin exhibits by advanced collectors later showed entire series with perfins accompanied by stamps, regardless of the narrower time span. And believe me, it wasn't easy to get a hold of enough material for them. Gradually, collectors began to incorporate perfins into specialized territorial and thematic collections, albeit more marginally. More seriously interested people began to study the various contexts of the use of perfins, thus expanding our knowledge.

Nowadays, perfins reach almost all branches of philately, insofar as it can be found to coincide with the use of perfins. Their inclusion in exhibits today is recommended - in some cases even required - by FIP rules.

In this paper, we would like to present yet another approach to collecting perfins, which we even believe can attract new applicants to philately. It is a documentation of the origin, development and operation of companies that used perfins from their correspondence. Since

the FIP has approved a new directive of the so-called open philately, there is also room for the creation of competitive exhibits. They can also use other, non-philatelic materials, such as company envelopes, thematically related postcards, promotional materials, company stickers, invoices (often accompanied by nice advertising pictures and texts), receipts, etc. With the right selection of materials and careful processing, it is possible to attract the attention of visitors, even non-philatelists. They can remind them of the history of their surroundings, and perhaps the company in which they worked, or simply captivate with their variety and design. The advantage is that it is still relatively accessible material, even at low prices.

Today, however, such materials are also interesting to the companies themselves, or for their successors, who try to recall their successful heritage and draw customers' attention to it. You can learn a lot about the history of companies on the Internet or in promotional publications that many companies publish. It is possible to communicate with regional or industrial museums where, on the one hand, collectors can obtain useful information and, on the other hand, they can offer information and materials to museums, e.g., when organizing exhibitions. Memorabilia collectors and former employees can also be approached. Searching for materials and

information can also be an interesting "detective" activity.

There are opportunities to study the development of companies, their mergers, break-ups, or demise. It is possible to concentrate on a certain range of products in the region; for example, coffee products, chocolates, certain types of industrial products could be attractive, and we could certainly find more examples. From a collector's point of view, this is more appealing and adventurous than simply collecting new releases. It is one way of building a relatively valuable and sometimes difficult to replicate collection. Satisfaction is not only to be found in its price or in awards at exhibitions, but also in what we have managed to collect, how we like it, or those to whom we show off our work.



From the philatelic point of view, the focus of this paper is on examples of the use of perfins and their covers, supplemented by interesting non-philatelic materials; we want to emphasize the possibilities of their use. We are aware that other philatelic materials, such as meter stamps, can also be used to illustrate these themes, invoices with stamps, other company correspondence (which may also be of interest from the point of view of other fields of philately), etc. We are not limiting ourselves to materials that are acceptable from the point of view of the class of thematic philatelic exhibits, although perfins satisfy all these aspects.

As an example, we chose a Prague wine shop of the Tauber brothers. Anyone interested in perfins knows that the company has used perfins in abundance, and one might get the

impression that we're talking about some of the most common ones. Let's try to dispel that misconception, because even in a company like this... there are quite rare perfin items, some documented and confirmed only recently.

## History of the Tauber Brothers

From 1866, Vilém and Evžen Tauber operated wine cellars in Karlín. In 1871, Vilém Tauber founded a winery on the same site under the name of the Tauber Brothers. However, the space was no longer adequate, and the cellars were threatened by groundwater. The company therefore moved to Vysočany in the early nineties, where it built a modern factory to store and process wine, mostly from France, Bulgaria, Hungary, Yugoslavia, Italy, Greece, Spain, Portugal, Austria, Germany, Algiers and Asia Minor. It also had been selling Italian vermouths, French cognacs and Slovinak. Its own production focused on dessert (Perla Narentice) and medicinal wines. Business was going well, the company had 20,000 customers! They were hand-corking up to 8,000 bottles a day. The shipments were delivered by horse-drawn wagons in Prague, and to the countryside by post or rail, or by hired wagons. Foreign wines were delivered in barrels and tanks to the Vysočany station and piped directly to the factory cellars.



**Color lithographic postcard of Vysočany from the turn of the century depicting the wine cellars of the Tauber Brothers**



**Invoice header from 1896 (in a typical design from that time) with a picture of the Tauber Brothers' factory**

The company successfully survived the first World War and continued to operate under the same name until the end of the 1920s. In 1931, it merged with the company J. B. Fischl from Karlin and continued to operate under the joint name of Tauber and Fischl. This name lasted until nationalization in 1948, although in 1933, the Tauber family sold the company for a severance payment.

World War II brought several changes to the company which followed the company until it was nationalized in 1948. Because the Fischls were Jewish, the company was arized during the occupation and a Sudeten German, Commissar Muschak, was appointed administrator. Part of the Fischl family emigrated and part ended up in concentration camps. Unlike the owners, the company survived the war relatively well. In 1945, the national administration was introduced. A former employee, Mr. Mrázek, was appointed administrator, but he died soon thereafter, and the enterprise was placed under the operational administration of the Large Distribution Cooperative Enterprise. In 1946, the

descendants of the former owners upon their return claimed restitution claims and took over the management. Not for long, however, because in 1948, nationalization took place and the owners emigrated again. The management of the company was again entrusted to the Large Distribution Cooperative Enterprise in Prague. In 1954 it was taken over by the Prague Winemaking Plants, later the Czech Wine Plants.

### Philatelic and non-philatelic documentation

Let us now turn our attention to the philatelic documentation of the company's history, especially its perfins, which we will supplement with some attractive non-philatelic documents, which should complete the picture of the company.



So far, we know that the company has used a total of 4 different perfins over time. The oldest, bearing the

owner's name, is not a common one and is found only on the Kreuzer stamps from the second half of the 1890s. When it is found, we're seldom lucky enough to get it all across a stamp. As can be seen in the picture, it would have been struck very carefully to get it on the to fit on the stamp. The fact that it was used by the Tauber Brothers company can be proved by an identification piece - a correspondence card from 1897, which bears their name and was franked with a perfined stamp.



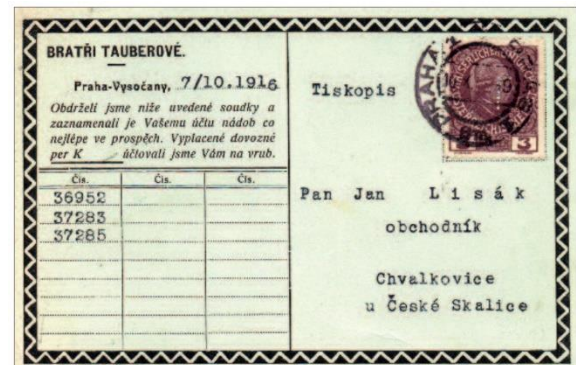
This graphic shows that the company was perfining and using stamps of various issues and values, including surcharges.



This perfin was used only briefly. It was apparently impractical to punch out such a long name, and so at the beginning of the twentieth century (1906) we find a perfin containing only one letter: the letter T. It was then widely used, and the entires or the soaked stamps with it are still commonly available today. However, in its original form (i.e., with all the holes forming the T) it is very rare and is missing from the vast majority of collections. We show it on an unused reply card.



A letter from 1911 with a 10h stamp bearing a perfin with one missing hole. This is an interesting advertising envelope where the printing was done negatively on the inner on the inside, so that it showed through only slightly.



Used in October 1916; two holes missing in the perfin pattern, probably one of its last uses.

Soon the perfin machine was damaged, and so most collectors have it with one missing hole. Later, in the autumn of 1914, another pin was broken, so that the perfin then resembled the letter L rather than a T, and many collectors misclassified it as such.

The damaged L-shaped perfin no longer seemed to meet the needs, so at the end of 1916 it was replaced by a new one, this time with the monogram B.T. from the initials of the company

name. We find it quite often, not only on Austrian stamps, but also on stamps and post cards of the First Republic. Among the most popular philatelic favorites are certainly those from the period of the founding of Czechoslovakia, even more so if we find them in mixed franking with Austrian stamps. Such a document is undoubtedly very rare and can be seen, for example, in the exhibit of J. Maleček located on the Exponet.



Letter from the end of September 1918, with stamps perforated B.T.



Perfin B.T. can be found on very common as well as very rare stamps - here in stamps privately perforated.



Letter dated October 1920 with two issues franking.



Express letter dated 7 March 1925 with red commemorative postmark (date of birth of T. G. Masaryk).



Letter dated October 1925, with the company logo changed.

Perfin B.T. was used until the early 1930s, until the change of ownership, and with it the name of the company changed to Tauber and Fischl.

In addition to the three perfins described above, the recently documented fourth, again in the form of the letter T, but of a different size and design. On one soaked stamp, it had been known to us for a long time, but for lack of further evidence, we did not include it in the catalogue of perfins from the Czechoslovak Territory. Only the recent discovery of the identification cover allowed us to determine its user. It seems to have been used only rarely, and this corresponds to its rare



occurrence. So far, it is known only on the stamps of the Hradčany issue.



**Card from January 1920; stamp with newly authenticated perfin T.**

From surviving letters and correspondence cards, one can usually discover several other things besides the name of the establishment. Useful information, e.g., what branches it had, where it was located, what it was working on at any given time, and it is also possible to find out what logos and other forms of advertising it used at the time.

After the merger of the company with the Fischl family in 1931, we no longer have any documented use of perfins. After all, the machine with the B.T. perfins was by then well worn out and was producing perfins rather imperfectly. But that was a time when the use of meter machines was becoming widespread, and they were beginning gradually replacing perfins. Tauber and Fischl therefore soon acquired such a machine, as can be seen from the following illustrations.

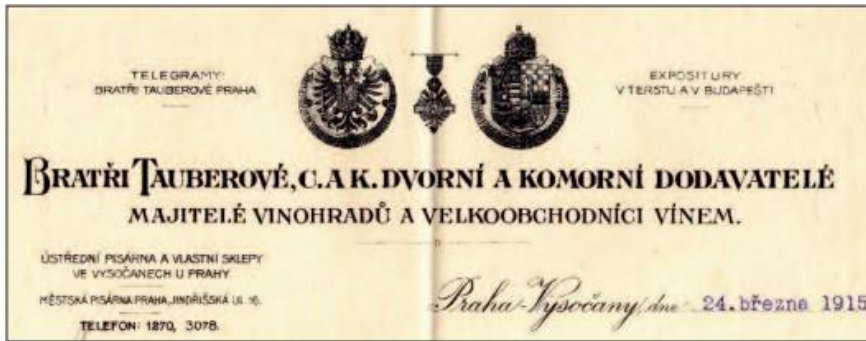
The examples we have shown so far are full-fledged philatelic material that can be used in all kinds of collections and exhibits. Of course, we can collect whatever we want, but in competitive exhibiting certain rules must be followed. However, the newly introduced exhibition class of so-called open philately allows us to a limited extent to include non-philatelic material (as long as they are originals - copies of material are not allowed). This brings a much broader possibility of using attractive documents in the exhibit and making it much more appealing to viewers. Not only that, but it can

also document the information that philatelically we can't for various reasons.

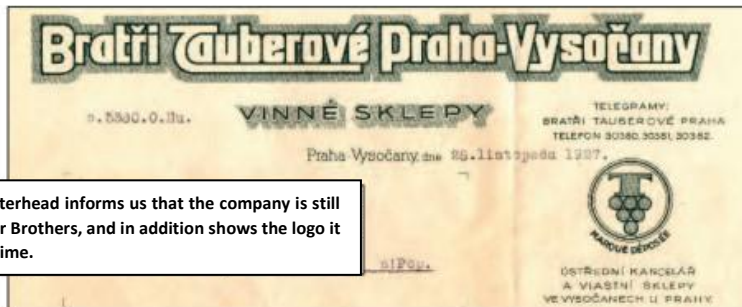


**Tauber and Fischl covers with Imprints of Meter Stamps (OVS) from 1931 and 1938.**

In the case of the Tauber Brothers, we documented its history with materials dating back three quarter of a century - and earlier. We ended up in the 1940s, which inadvertently shows why necessary more recent and contemporary materials are needed. It is through these that we could document the continuing history of this enterprise, most likely up to the present day (despite all the twists and turns of history, it is probably still part of some functioning company). But that is a task for other researchers, which of course goes beyond our present perfin excursion. Should any of our readers undertake the task, it would be nice if they would share their findings to the readers of this magazine.



From the letterhead (1915) we find, for example, that the company had offices in Trieste and Budapest and that at that time it had an office in Jindřiška Street in the center of Prague.



The 1927 letterhead informs us that the company is still called Tauber Brothers, and in addition shows the logo it used at the time.



Letterheads from 1941. The name of the Tauber and Fischl company has been preserved, but the additional text "Under the management of the Commissar" indicates that the original owners no longer managed it.



A sample of the vignettes the company used on its products.