

Perfins in the 'Posta Ceskoslovenska 1919' Overprinted Stamp Issue

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To explain the circumstances of the perfins on "Posta Ceskoslovenska 1919" overprinted stamp issue it is necessary first to describe the historical and philatelic context.

Before the end of WWI, Czechoslovakia as a country did not exist. Its territory was a part of the Austro-Hungarian Monarchy and was split into two relatively separate administrations: the Czech territory (Bohemia, Moravia and part of Silesia) under Austrian administration, and the Slovak territory under Hungarian administration. As a consequence both these parts used different postage stamps issued by their corresponding administrations and used slightly different regulations. In October 28, 1918, as a result of WWI, independent Czechoslovak republic was established.

The first Czechoslovak stamps, with the vignette of Prague castle (so called "Hradcany"), were issued on December 18, 1918. Also, both Austrian and Hungarian stamps without any overprint continued to be valid in this territory until the end of February 1919. Hungarian and Austrian stamps with the "Posta Ceskoslovenska 1919" overprint were issued in December 1919, when there were enough new stamps for regular usage! Austrian and Hungarian stamps from the stocks of the Post Office and also stamps sold back to the Post Office by users were overprinted. These stamps were sold especially to philatelists with 50% additional fee and were scarcely used. Moreover, the Ministry of Posts and Telegraph was not willing to publish a list of issues or the number of overprinted stamps. It is known that only a few of some of them exist and today are among the most rare Czechoslovak stamps. With all of this said, it is obvious, that this stamp issue was redundant and very controversial.

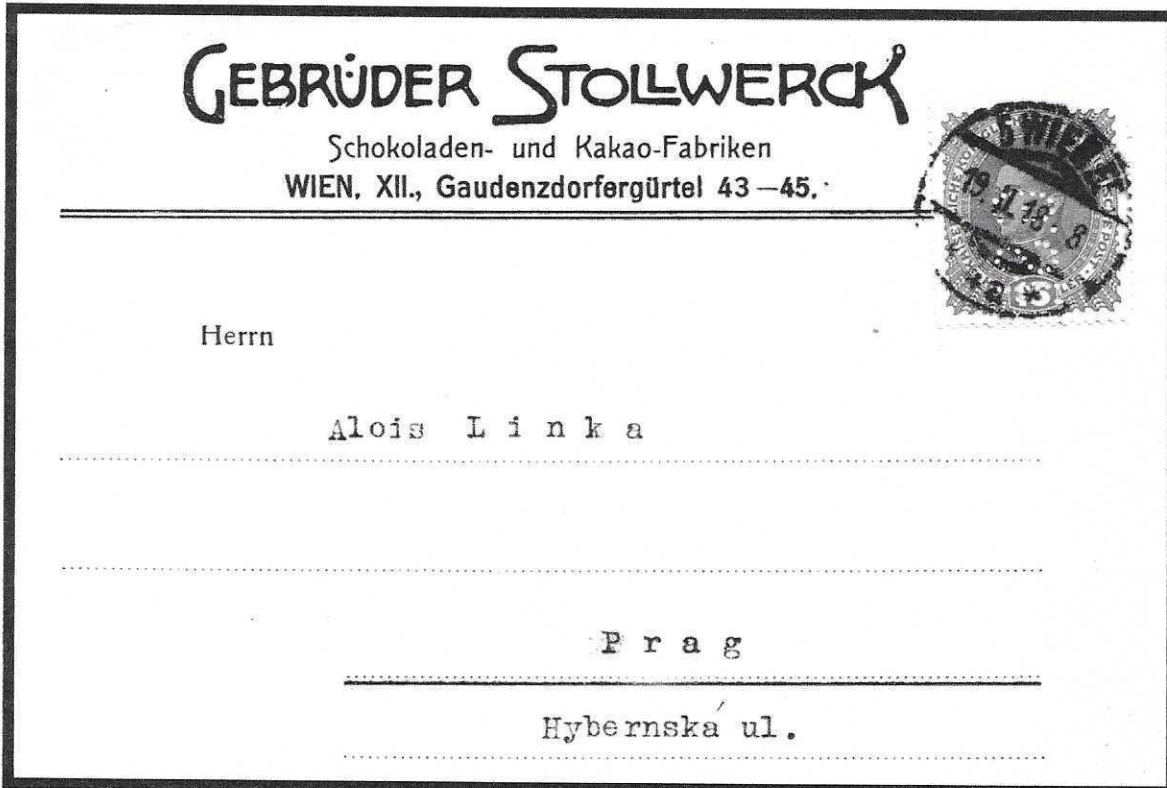
Stamps sold back to the Post Office were in complete or partial sheets. Among them perfined stamps were turned in and later overprinted. It is obvious, that such "perfins" (or better say perfined stamps) are of a completely different origin than standard perfins. Such stamps were perfined before

the overprinting process was performed and earlier than when these stamps were issued! We can even claim that these perfined stamps were issued by the Post Office. The problem is that with the exception of perfin "G.St." in the 10f Hungarian stamp (see Fig. 1), others were not officially listed in stamp catalogues.



Figure 1

When speaking about the G.St. perfin it is necessary to mention its pricing paradox. This perfin is known (I believe) in more than 100 issues and you can find it offered in many Czechoslovak stamp auction catalogues. Its price in the current Czechoslovak catalogue is almost US\$500 MNH or about US\$300 hinged. However, its scarcity factor is somewhere in the middle of the range. Its extremely high price comes from the repeated listing of this value in the stamp catalogues for tens of years. The same overprinted stamp without perfin is also relatively expensive; the literature speaks of approximately 300 known pieces. The perfined stamp is known in four types of the overprint and the perfin is known in four positions relative to the stamp. It must be added that the original Hungarian stamps (without overprint) with perfin G.St. are difficult to find and are relatively scarce, but they are also much cheaper! Perfin G.St. was used by a chocolate factory, Gebrueder (Brothers) Stollwerck in Bratislava (Pozsony), which is in the Slovak territory. Headquarters of this company was in Vienna and they used the same perfin; thus we find this pattern more frequently on Austrian stamps (see Fig. 2).



In Color

Figure 2: Perfin G.St. on Austrian cover sent from Vienna on Feb.19, 1918

The perfin G.St. is not the only one which we can find in these stamps. Several more perfins are known, but they are relatively scarce and difficult to find. As they have not been listed in any stamp catalogue in the past, their prices have not been defined yet. Having not been listed they are not of a

great interest for general stamp collectors, having interest primarily for collectors of perfins. It is also important to note that these perfins are usually found in the common, cheap overprinted stamps. So, I believe that their price must be lower than the price of the G.St. perfin.



In Color

Figure 3

Another very interesting example is the perfin MAY (see the strip of 5 in Fig. 3). This perfin has already been published in the literature in the thirties and it is known on two different originally-Austrian stamps: the 5H crown and the 15H emperor Karel (Charles) issues. From the picture it is clearly seen how the perfins were produced by a single-head perforator. As a minimum four stamp columns (but probably 5) were folded and perforated together. In this way large blocks or even complete sheets could have been saved for later overprinting.

Some other items are known: perfins F.L. and F.S. in originally-Austrian stamps (see Fig. 4), perfin K.F.e.T. in originally-Hungarian stamps and probably many more. All of the perfins mentioned were produced by single-head perforators.

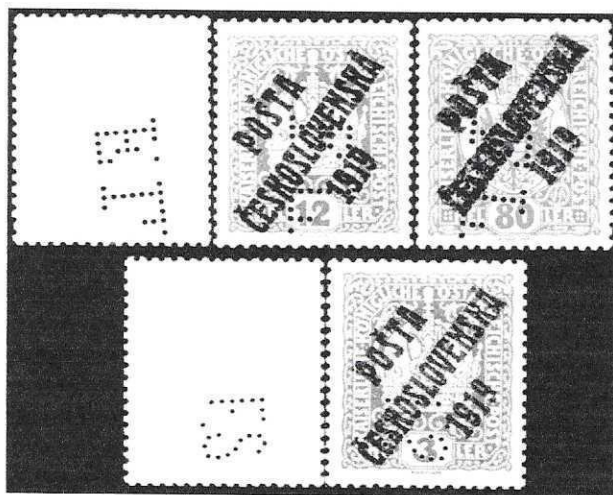


Figure 4

To present a complete list of perfins known on "Posta Ceskoslovenska 1919" overprinted stamps is a difficult task. An official list does not exist. Compilation of this listing is further confused by the many fakes and especially fakes of the overprints.

Currently these stamps are split between two groups of collectors: general stamp collectors and perfin collectors. General collectors usually do not have detailed knowledge of perfins and similarly perfin collectors are hardly able to distinguish between fakes and genuine stamps (especially the overprints). Some of the overprint' fakes are very good and dangerous. Experts do not want expertize cheap stamps, especially when they are perfined. I believe that some perfins reported in these stamps in the past and published in Maxa's catalogue are really fakes. The reason for so many fakes seems to be obvious. For a long time perfined stamps were considered as damaged stamps and thus were good base stamps for counterfitters to test the quality of their "new products". When perfins became popular, such "products" started to be a good material for sale to perfin collectors.

Perfins on "Posta Ceskoslovenska 1919" stamps are very interesting, but collectors must be very careful when such stamps are offered. As explained above, stamps with any cancellation are very suspicious and are probably fakes. But from my long time experience in perfin collecting, anything is possible.

New Book

Catalogo dei Perfin Italini - Italian Perfins Catalogue Aggiornamento - Update 2005 by Enrico Bertazzoli & Beppe Ermentini

96 pp. + enclosed 30 transparent drafting paper plates with 994 patterns - b/w ill. - softbound - printed 2005, includes rarity valuations in Euros; Italian and English text-. EUR 25,00

http://www.vaccari.it/_2_editoria/newbooks/newbooks.htm?SetLanguage=en

The catalog is in three parts. The first part of the adjournment deals with the new patterns and some varieties of those already catalogued and has the same graphic aspect of the catalogue itself. The

second part includes integrations and variations in the description of the individual patterns, already listed in the catalogue.

The third section is formed of 30 plates, on transparent drafting paper, divided into boxes, illustrating the 994 patterns known, in alphabetical order, actual size, accompanied by their catalogue number.

Ed. Note: I have not yet seen this update to the excellent original catalog by Bertazzoli & Ermentini, but if the reality lives up to the hype (and the first catalog's standard), this is a must have for collectors of Italian perfins.