

Found: Original Documents of the RV&Co. Cuban Perfin

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In our hobby of collecting perfin stamps and covers the most exciting thing that can happen to you is when you find a previously unknown pattern identification corner card on a cover that reveals an "A" rated perfin stamp. What pleasure you would derive from such an event! Now multiply that pleasure about three fold and you will come close to realizing the experience that I had when I saw a letter on beautiful illustrated letterhead which I am about to describe!

I got the call from Octavio Cabrera, a Cuban-American friend of mine in Florida. He had been contacted by a Cuban who had recently traveled to Europe. I knew of him myself. The request was that he wanted to know if Octavio "had any interest in Cuban perfins." He replied that he was not interested, but knew someone who probably would be.

Two days later he sent 29 scans of materials. My friend told me to skip the small stuff (400 perfins, 10 revenue perfin stamps on documents and 15 covers!) and look at scans 27 through 29. I could not believe my eyes! Ricardo Veloso d/b/a Libreria Cervantes had signed a letter to post office officials asking for permission for his company to use perfin pattern **RV&Co.** on stamps. Libreria Cervantes was Ricardo Veloso's Havana bookstore, founded in 1910. Veloso also edited and published books for Cervantes. In 1926, Veloso merged his company with Cultural S.A. and they expanded their business in Cuba as well as abroad. There are a large number of covers bearing this perfin pattern and corner card.

The letter had an attachment consisting of a blank sheet of paper which had three perforated postage stamps. It also had two rows of ten perforation patterns, demonstrating to the Post Office exactly what his perforating machine produced (See Figure 1). Readers of *The Perfins Bulletin* may recall

that I predicted, on the basis of frequency of broken pin patterns, that **RV&Co.** was perforated on a ten die machine (*The Perfins Bulletin*, No. 641, Jul.-Aug., 2013, p 73). So I was pleased to see the ten punches across the paper. The letter itself is translated in the inset on that photo. (See Figure 2 on Page 8.)

The final scan revealed the answer of the Post Office officials, written the very next day. (See Figure 3 on Page 9.) That letter is also translated in the inset to that photo. In the reply, the Post Office acceded to the request with the proviso that the 1920 Post Office regulation regarding perfins be followed. The translation of that regulation is as follows:

Decree No. 321 of January 1, 1920, authorizing the use of perfins on Cuban stamps:

"Article 65. The public can mark stamps with distinctive perforations without the loss of their postal validity, provided that the perforations conform to the following rules:

- 1. They will only form letters, signs or figures and they must never represent advertisements of any kind.*
- 2. The letters, signs or figures may not exceed one-third of the dimensions of the stamp.*
- 3. The diameter of the holes shall be equal to that of the perforations that separate stamps from each other and the distance between the perforated holes shall be equal to the distance between the stamp perforations.*
- 4. The paper removed from the stamp by the perforations may not represent more than one eighth of the total surface of the stamp.*

Stamps marked with distinctive perforations that do not conform to the above rules shall be void."

I have not been able to find the Cuban regulation, if one exists, that requires registration with the post office which would prompt such a

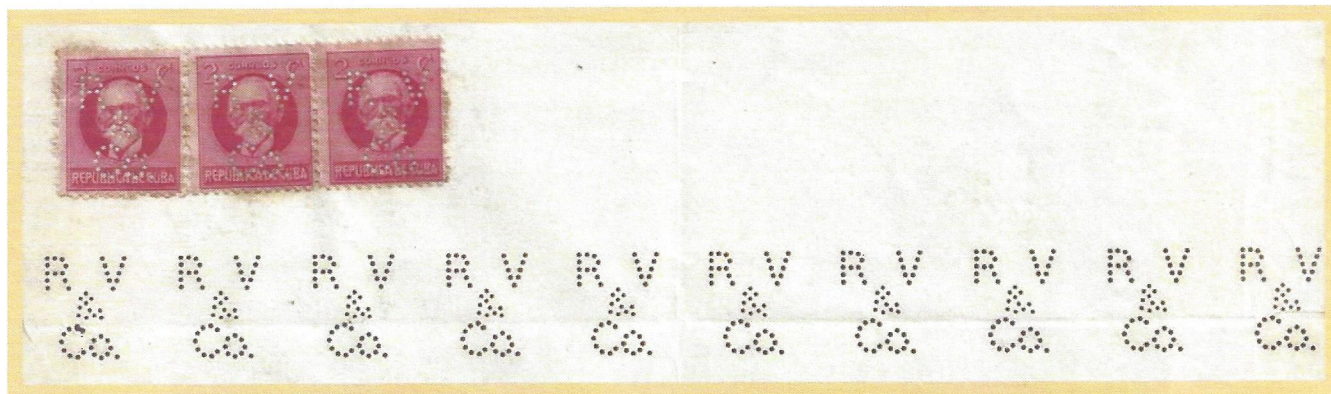


Figure 1: Attachment (portion) to letter to post office officials showing three perfin stamps and a row of perforations of a ten die machine (one of two rows is illustrated here).

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Found: Original Documents of RV&Co. Cuban Perfin (continued)

letter in the first place. We know that there is no such requirement in the United States. We also know that this decree of 1920 was written about six years after perfin use became prevalent in Cuba. Does this mean that somewhere, lurking in the Cuban government files, that one could conceivably find 20+ other such post-regulation requests? That is a tantalizing thought!

My payment was sent the same day. I could not even imagine him offering it to someone else! One surprise of this whole situation was realizing that these documents even exist. Another surprise was

the date of 1925. One finds a large number of **RV&Co.** perfin stamps from the 1917 definitive patriot series (including a few with pin breaks) which were used until four denominations were replaced in 1925. Yet here we have, in 1925, a perfect set (no pin breaks) of dies. The company must have had an existing supply of the 1917 issues.

I was thrilled to own this wonderful piece of Cuban philatelic perfin history, the likes of which you probably will not find in your United States collections.

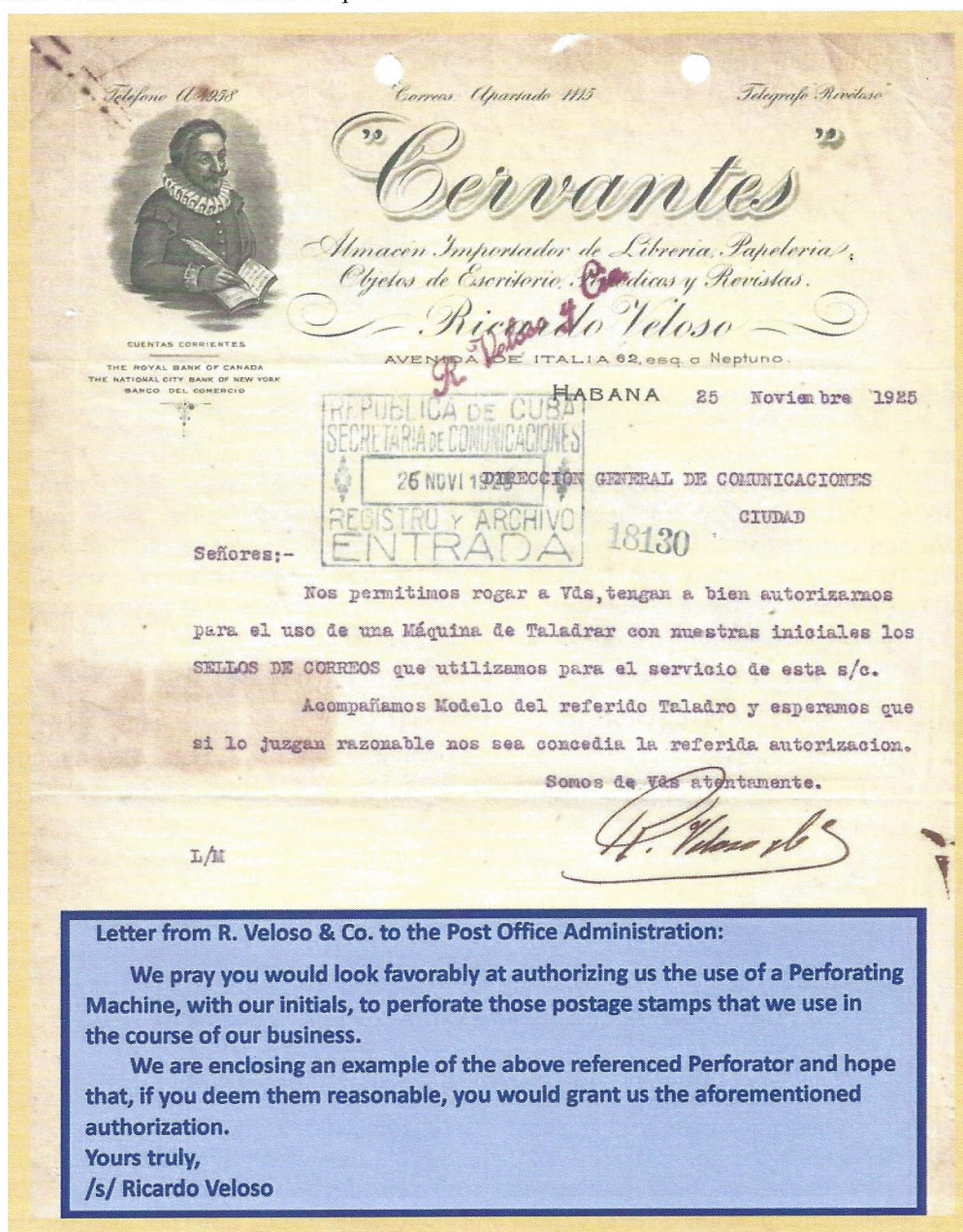



Figure 2: Letter to post office officials dated 25 November 1925

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	<p>REPUBLICA DE CUBA</p> <p>DEPARTAMENTO DE COMUNICACIONES</p> <p>SERVICIO DE CORREOS</p>	<p>Modelo 1024</p> <div style="border: 1px solid black; padding: 5px; color: white; text-align: center;"><p>This letterhead appears on the opposite side of carbon copy shown below</p></div>
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Habana, Noviembre 26 de 1,925.

Sres. Ricardo Veloso y Cia.
Libreria "Cervantes"
Ave. de Italia num.62
C i u d a d . -

Señores:-

En contestación a su atento escrito de 25 del actual, interesando permiso para taladrar los sellos de correos, con sus iniciales según el modelo que se sirven acompañar, por la presente se accede a lo solicitado, siempre que las letras no excedan de la tercera parte de las dimensiones del sello y el diametro de las perforaciones sea igual al de los que separan los sellos uno de otro, siendo la distancia entre los taladros tambien igual a la que media entre dichas perforaciones.-

De Vd. atentamente

Subsecretario de Comunicaciones

Post Office response:

In response to your kind letter of the 25th of this month, requesting permission to perforate postage stamps with your initials according to the example you provided, by this writing we accede to your request, provided that: the letters do not exceed one third of the dimensions of the stamp; the diameter of the (initials) perforations be equal to those that separate one stamp from the other; and that the distance between the (initials) perforations also be equal to the distance between said (separating) perforations.

NOTES: The words in parenthesis are implied. The correspondence is using "Taladro" (meaning drill, punch) to refer to the perfin pattern, and "perforaciones" (perforations) to refer to the separating perforations between stamps.

Figure 3: Letter from post office officials to Ricardo Veloso d/b/a Libreria Cervantes dated the next day