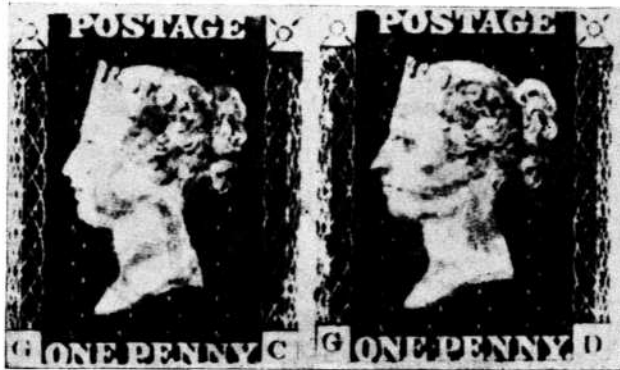


J. Perkins, Native Son, Engraved Penny Black



JACOB PERKINS

St. Peter's Lodge, Newburyport, Mass.

Initiated	June 10, 1794
Passed	June 15, 1794
Raised	June 15, 1794

The Fleet Street establishment was of considerable capacity, according to Thomas Gill, in 1839 there were nearly forty "improved rolling-presses" continuously employed by Perkins, Bacon and Petch at that time.

The first prints of the penny black line engraved stamp was issued May 6, 1840, and was followed shortly afterward by the two penny blue. In 1841 the black penny stamp was discontinued and the penny stamp appeared in various shades of red, orange and brown. From the correspondence of Perkins, Bacon and Petch at this time, it appears that many experiments were made with inks which could not be eradicated and inks that would dissolve before the postmark, in the event of this kind of forgery being attempted which would make the stamp appear unused. Also there were heated discussions between the members of the firm as to colors and shades, such as whether to use prussiate of potash in fugitive ink, and whether to print with oil or without, the texture of the gum for the adhesive backs and the number of first impressions, and so on in endless detail throughout the whole of 1840. In the settling of all these matters, Jacob Perkins must have had his say in the discussions, but his valuable advice in the one subject which he really understood is not especially recorded and this important work, it may

be said, was Jacob Perkins' swan song of worldly endeavor.

In Dendy Marshall's "The British Post Office from its beginnings to end of 1925" we find an enlargement from the proof die used for the first penny postage stamps of Great Britain 1840. This die was in use until 1855 when it was re-engraved by William Humphrys as Die II. In the proof specimen shown, the corners are not yet completed with the Maltese cross and plate letters.

Jacob Perkins

Master Engraver - Master Mason

By SAM BROOKS

Some time ago Brother Clarence W. Brazer advised me that he read somewhere that Jacob Perkins, the famous - engraver, he of the firm of Perkins, Bacon & Petch, was a Mason. We thanked Clarence for the tip but pressure of other business prevented us from following up the lead. Recently, we had some business to attend to at the Library and with some free time we checked on Jacob Perkins. Our inquiries led us to a book published in 1943 by the Historical Society of Pennsylvania, in Philadelphia, titled "Jacob Perkins, His Inventions, His Times and His Contemporaries," written by Greville and Dorothy Bathe.

There on page 23, was a note stating that Jacob Perkins became a member of the Newburyport Commandery K.T. and assisted in conferring the degrees of Red Cross and Knight Templar.

Jacob Perkins was born in New-

buryport, Mass., July 9, 1766. He had meager schooling but early showed promise of inventive talent. At 13, he was apprenticed to a goldsmith and worked at the trade till he was 17. He learned how to engrave dies, and made dies for copper coins minted by the Commonwealth of Massachusetts. He also did engraving of Bank Note plates. In the course of his experiments he devised a steel check-plate for printing bank notes, which made counterfeiting more difficult.

In 1819 we find him in England, establishing a firm for the manufacture of plates for printing bank notes. This firm was Perkins, Fairman and Heath.

With the introduction of the Penny Post, Perkins, now of the firm of Perkins, Bacon and Petch, made the master dies and printed the first British stamps, the famous "Penny Black." In a letter written Dec. 3, 1839, they stated they would "charge 8 pence per thousand stamps, exclusive of paper, which, we understand would be supplied us."

March 18, 1840, in a letter from Mr. H. L. Wickham to Rowland Hill, it was stated that Perkins, Bacon and Petch, were to receive 7½ pence per 1000 stamps, which included gumming the sheets, making the plates, and every other charge except the paper, to be supplied water-marked by the government.

Thus, Jacob Perkins with his invention of the siderographic patent for transferring an engraving on steel, assisted materially in the establishing of the first postage stamp.

Perkins was a member of St. Peter's Lodge, Newburyport, Mass. Initiated June 10, 1794. Passed June 15, 1794 and Raised the same day. He died in London, England July 30, 1849, leaving his work on stamps and stamp collecting to this day.



Image of a "penny black" from the Wikipedia site. Every stamp collector strives to get one of these stamps. Note that Great Britain itself does not put its name on stamps. An image of the monarch "says it all." When British stamps finally evolved into showing subjects other than reigning kings, then a little silhouette of the Queen (Elizabeth II) was (and continues to be) shown. Nevertheless, there is at least one stamp showing the Queen mother that escaped the shadow of her daughter. Ed.