

WILKINSBURG STAMP CLUB NEWSLETTER

Meets 2nd and 4th Sundays

August 1992

Box 8711, Wilkinsburg, PA 15221

A. P. S Chapter 1214

An officer of the Pennsylvania Postal History Society has contacted us about the possibility of that club having its annual meeting at WILKPEX '93 next April 17th. They would like their members who live in western Pa. to have their meeting at our show, so they would not have to travel to the central part of the state for a meeting. We would have to provide them with an area to meet on Saturday afternoon. This was discussed at our meeting last week and we would like to invite the Pa. Postal History Society to meet at WILKPEX '93. They will now discuss this at their October meeting and get back to us.

The 16 frames we borrowed from the Philatelic Society of Pittsburgh for WILKPEX '92 have finally been returned. Our thanks to the Pittsburgh Club for letting us rent those frames. We are planning on meeting with members of the Pittsburgh club sometime in October to discuss a joint purchase of at least 16 such frames to be owned jointly by the Pittsburgh and Wilkinsburg Stamp Clubs. These frames cost about \$130 each and shipping charges from Arizona bring the cost to about \$200 each. We looked into getting them made locally, but it does not seem possible. Any comments or suggestions will be appreciated. Member J. Pack has the plexi-glass available IF we can find someone to build the aluminum frames/legs. WILKPEX officers are hoping we can resolve this problem soon.

New WSC President Andy Novotny would like to revive the idea of some kind of program at least once a month. One popular topic of discussion in the past has been to go through the Philatelic Catalog and have a "round table discussion" on which U.S. stamps SHOULD be in your collection. Unofficially, we would like to do this after the first meeting in September, the 13th. Lou Yagle has led these discussions in the past and the attendance for those meetings have been above average.

After the Sept. 27th meeting, yours truly and Lou would be willing to have a small program about "Tagging." More about these two programs in the Sept. newsletter.

Thanks to Tom Shaw for writing last month's newsletter while I was in France. I always thought that stamp collectors were organized, smarter than "the average bear," and had a good sense of humor. I didn't realize until a few years ago how well traveled stamp collectors were. Members of our club have traveled to all parts of the world. Maybe we should have a discussion on places to see, places to avoid, and the best and worst times to travel to certain places in search of stamps.

Member Rich Melnick, who has been to Paris more times than he has been to Kennywood, passes on the following info to stamp collectors/travelers: If you are going to AMERIFLORA '92 in Columbus, Ohio, the international horticulture exhibit celebrating the Columbus Quincentennial Year, there is a philatelic extra to be found at the Monaco Exhibit (Pavillon de Monaco). In the gift shop are both mint stamps and post cards commemorating both the AMERIFLORA '92 Exhibit and Columbus' three ships. (Be sure to see the replica of the Santa Maria in downtown Columbus along the Scioto River.)

In downtown Columbus, at the Federal Building on High Street, the post office there has a special Christopher Columbus cancel to put on your cards for the asking. Both, the AMERIFLORA '92 and the special Columbus cancel, are available until Columbus Day.

The 10¢ Red Cloud stamp of the U.S. Great Americans series now exists as four separate major varieties. This stamp was originally printed by the BEP on its "A" press, and released Aug. 15, 1987 with block tagging. But, as high speed stamp processing equipment changed, USPS and BEP agreed that perforation equipment wear caused by the taggant would be minimal, due to a finer grind of zinc-orthosilicate and longer-lasting equipment.

As a result, the Red Cloud stamp with overall tagging appeared in late 1990. So now the entire surface area of the stamp glowed under shortwave UV light.

But, after only a short time, overall tagging on most stamps was replaced by phosphor-coated paper. The difference here is that the tagging is applied over the printed image on overall-tagged stamps. Phosphor-coated paper has the taggant applied to it before it reaches the BEP. This means that the printed image is laid down over the tagging. (There is one sure way of telling the difference between overall tagging and phosphor-coated paper: Hold the stamp at a slight angle under shortwave UV light, bowing it slightly. By looking at a particularly dense area of the design--Red Cloud's hair--you can see a slight tagging glare on overall-tagged stamps, since the tagging is on top of the printed image. If the stamp was printed on phosphor-coated paper, the line work will appear sharp, dark and clear, because it was applied over the taggant.)

The final and newest version of the Red Cloud stamp, untagged, came about after Jan. 1, 1991, when all low-denominated stamps (8¢ and less) were to be left intentionally untagged. This change was necessitated by postal fraud. Since automatic facing and canceling equipment cannot tell the difference between a 1¢ or a \$5 stamp, as long as both are tagged, some people were illegally short-franking their mail with low-denomination stamps.

By leaving the low-denomination stamps untagged, short-paid mail should be rejected by automated equipment and caught. This policy change created several stamp varieties.

Sometime this spring, USPS made the decision to leave all stamps with face values of 10¢ and lower untagged. The first new issue this was noticed on was the Columbian series souvenir sheets, where the 10¢ stamp was untagged, but the 15¢ stamp had tagging. As a result of this policy change, it is possible for some previously existing stamps with 10¢ denominations, or less, to go back to press as untagged varieties.

The annual Salomon Brothers investment survey was released in early June. Stamps are back in the listing, and relative to the recent past, their performance looks pretty good. Thanks to the big run-up in the 1970s, stamps did pretty well over the last 20 years. Of all the investments surveyed, stamps ranked fourth, boasting an average annual return of 9.6% compounded. Only common stocks, old master paintings, and diamonds did better.

Since most collectors hold their stamps for decades, or even a lifetime, this longterm performance should provide comfort.

Stamp values decreased in the last decade. This year, for the first time since 1982, Salomon reports that stamps are up 3.4 %, which just about matches the rate of inflation.

YOU SHOULD KNOW THAT SALOMON'S STAMP INDEX IS BASED ON THE TOTAL SCOTT CATALOG VALUE OF A GROUP OF UNUSED U.S. STAMP SETS, INCLUDING MOST OF THE BEST KNOWN CLASSICS AND SOME BACK-OF-THE-BOOK MATERIAL.

Salomon did not name the stamps in their index, but Scott did. They are Scott numbers: 1-2, 112-122, 230-245, 285-293, 294-299, 300-313, 401-404, 424-440, 523-524, C1-C6, C13-C15, E1-E10, K1-K18, and Q1-Q12. The current Scott value of these stamps is \$64,891, up 3.4 % from last year. (YES \$64,891.)

Be aware that "The American Dream Collection" being endorsed by Assistant Postmaster General Gordon C. Morison is an expensive set of precious metal stamp replicas and is being directed to the Postal Services's mailing list of current collectors. Each replica costs \$79 postpaid, shipped and billed at a rate of one per month, making the cost of the complete collection of 25 items \$1,975.

Each replica is made out of .7 of a Troy ounce of precious metal worth about \$3 at current bullion prices. BUYER BEWARE.

On July 9th a new "Zipster Plus" test of a postal station program began in about 30 Seven-Eleven stores in Denver; Houston, San Antonio, and Austin, Texas; and Indianapolis, Indiana.

A Zipster Plus station is about the size of a soft drink machine. Various electronic, scaling, and printing components occupy the interior. A color touch screen computer monitor provides all the necessary prompts.

The envelope or package is put on the scale, and the weight/fee calculation is on the screen, asking for verification. Once verified, a dated, peelable, self-stick meter with the correct rate is produced. You place the meter strip manually on the envelope and payment is made at the checkout counter, or you can pay directly at the machine using a Zipster card, which is a prepaid debit card.

Many people who frequent a convenience store won't mind the 30% markup on most items. Beyond a single 29¢ single first class letter mailed, any multiple or greater cost service is charged a flat 30% over and above the USPS cost: a 2 ounce letter rate would cost 52¢ plus 30% (15¢) for a total of 67¢. A basic Express Mail package would cost \$9.95 plus a \$2.98 fee for a total of \$12.93

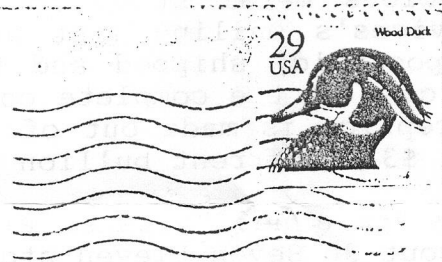
And, on Aug. 20 a variable-rate stamp will be tested in Oklahoma City, Detroit, Miami, and southern Maryland on new ECA-Gard machines. Two contractors built the machines for the test: ECA-GARD (which will use engraved coils perfed on the sides) and Unisys (which will use photogravure coils perfed on the top and bottom.)

Member John McCrea provided the following for your information.

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Slógan Direct Reader Imprints

Sometimes the flexibility of programming direct readers gives collectable covers. Here are illustrations of two from North Carolina last Christmas. HKY abbreviates Hickory, and AVL Asheville, the latter obscured by the regular cancel. Who knows, you might even find a Columbus gem, where a clerk testing a reader entered "---- This Job" or something similar, and was called away. About four hours of mail was processed before anyone noted the wording.



HAPPY HOLIDAYS HKY N.C. 286 12/18/91 PM



Another Pittsburg, PA Ramp cancel, in red, reported in the Postmark Collectors Club bulletin by Robert Hoover of Blairsville. This one is "Door 59", supposedly used as a receipting mark for hand in mail.

