

The Circuit

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The Official Journal of the International Society of Worldwide Stamp Collectors

USPS Automation: Barcoding

by Tom Fortunato (# 379)

Back in 1983 the U.S. Postal Service (USPS) began experimenting with new automation equipment which would sort mail faster and more accurately than current methods. The result is known as barcoding.

As a letter begins the sorting process, it first goes through a facer/canceller machine that orients it face front and rightside up, then cancels the stamp. If the address is typed, it can go through an optical character reader (OCR) which reads the zip code and imprints a series of lines at the bottom of the envelope. The basic element of this barcode is a series of five long and short lines. The lines correspond to a single digit of the zip code. Five or nine digit zip codes are simply a grouping of these elements.

To read any barcode, disregard the first long bar on the left and the six bars on the right. Separate the remaining bars into groups of five lines each and refer to the chart (Fig. 1 - Page 2) to determine its value.

In one hour a barcoding sorter (BCS) can sort 30,000 letters. The alternate sorting method uses automated letter sorting machines (LSM). An operator views each envelope, locates the zip code, then types it into the LSM which sends it to the proper bin. More than fifteen operators would be needed to equal one BCS. On a cost per 1,000 letters basis, costs are \$3.39 for BCS versus \$15.00 for an LSM. This new technology has saved the USPS nearly a billion dollars in processing costs since its introduction, with more savings ahead.

A major effort is underway allowing mass-mailers to print barcodes on their outgoing mail before it's delivered to the post office. This further reduces handling by the USPS. As an incentive discounts from 2 to 5.7 cents per letter are given to the mailers, depending on the five or nine digit zip code used and the way it is sorted. Seven national companies are selling the barcoding equipment directly to mass mailers. However minimum quantities per mailing could be in the tens of thousands to receive full USPS discounts.

Smaller mailers can take advantage of a partial discount by going through a second party coder. These go-betweens collect smaller amounts of mail from a number of sources to meet the minimum quantity and receive a full discount. Half of the discount is passed along to the mailer and half retained by the coder who franks, barcodes and delivers the mail directly to the post office.

One Kansas company is also dealing with the general public with as few as a couple letters to mail. Postal Presort at 820 West Second in Wichita, Kansas 67203, offers individuals or mass mailers a two cent discount on first class mailings handled through them. They sell stamped labels at their headquarters which are applied to the lower left on the reverse of the envelope to be mailed. No postal franking is applied to the front of the envelope. After being dropped in a specially marked drop box, Postal Presort imprints a meter (at the fully discounted rate) to the front along with a barcode and also cancels their label on the reverse. Letters are sorted, bundled and delivered to the post office. Labels have been produced in both sheet and booklet format along with a newer "pre-stamped" envelope. They make interesting modern postal history collectables.

The postal service prefers to have mail barcoded and presorted before it reaches them. That's possible for typed items, but handwritten items present a more difficult problem for postal efficiency. A newer idea in processing them is remote video encoding. USPS computers digitize the front of the envelope and the data passes through phone lines to a contractor, whose employees determine the correct nine

(Continued Page 2)

Wow - What an Issue !!

We think that will be your first impression when you look through this combined November-December 1992 and January-February 1993 *Circuit* issue. A bit of explanation is in order.

Sorry for the delay in receiving your September-October issue. It was ready to be printed the end of Sept., but failure to have made an extra back-up copy of the computer file resulted in a disaster. The computer crashed and lost all files on the hard disk and on the one back-up floppy which was in the disk drive. The whole process had to be redone, typing, laying out, etc. By the time that was done, the printing and mailing accomplished, *The Circuit* was quite late.

Rather than rush an abbreviated November-December issue to you, it was decided to make a combined "super issue," scheduled to be in the mail in early January. This will allow us to re-adjust the schedule for future issues. For example, instead of receiving your March-April *Circuit* in mid-to-late April, it will be in the mail in early March. We think you will appreciate a more timely *Circuit*. It shouldn't be difficult to understand all the work that goes into each issue!!

Here is a brief summary of what you will find inside of this issue. The new by-laws are here with a ballot to vote on their adoption and a short questionnaire. Take the time to review them and mail your ballot. Every vote is important. Also included is our Code of Ethics/Trading Standards which every member should uphold.

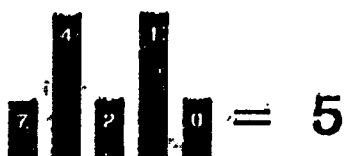
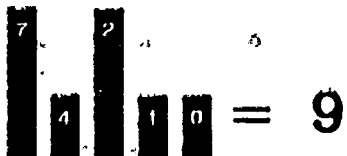
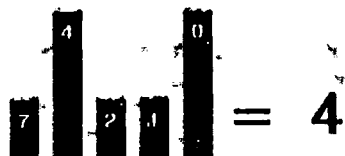
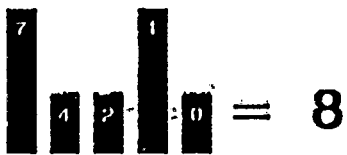
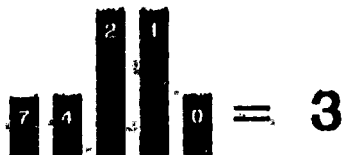
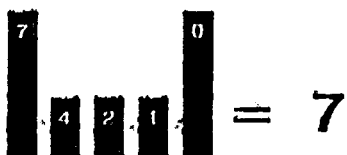
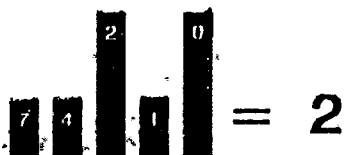
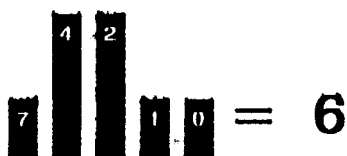
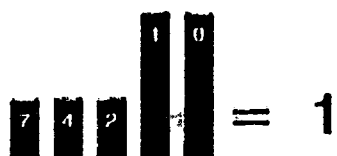
This issue debuts our Kid's Page, a joint co-operative effort between the ISWSC and the Junior Philatelists of America (JPA), the largest philatelic society for children and teenagers in the US. JPA member John Luong of Hawthorne, California, will edit one page each *Circuit* devoted to assisting adult collectors with youth philately from their point of view. We are also happy to

(Continued Page 2)

Figure 1.

BARCODE CHART

1. Ignore the single left-most and six right-most bars
2. Separate the remaining 25 or 45 bars into groups of 5
3. Use this chart to compare like patterns and decode



Barcoding (Continued)

digit zip code and send that information back to the sorting post office, which applies the barcode. The entire process can be done at the contractor's leisure - within guidelines - while the letters themselves are stored awaiting the barcode data

Bar coding is an integral part of the USPS's further automation plans. In the future all mail will be barcoded. In the mean time, test your new skills and decode the barcodes shown in Fig. 2. ...

ISWSC Club Sales Circuit

Although the sales circuit is not presently operational, the ISWSC does own club circuit books with stamp approvals from commissions out of the Omni Exchange. Additional sales books are being created out of the many stamps overseas members are sending in to pay their dues instead of cash. Most are mint topicals in full sets.

If you would like to purchase some of these stamps and reside in the USA, send your name and address to President Dave Nelson (# 25). Specify if you are interested in the regular or topical books. To help defray postage expenses, include \$1.00 with your request and your name will be placed on the list to receive them. Every penny of your purchase will go into the ISWSC treasury. ...

Wow - (Continued)

include a JPA membership application for your consideration in becoming a supporting member. (Mention ISWSC when applying.) The ISWSC has and will continue to make some stamps/ supplies shipments to JPA groups from our own members donations.

Would you like to become more active in ISWSC programs and policies? Consider running as a society officer for the 1994-95 term. Details can be found in the Call for Nominations article.

If space allows, we will try to make the new membership lists a pull-out section of future issues, allowing these pages to be added to the back of your current roster.

A sizeable auction/mail sale is in this issue, also. So get your bids in. And, of course, our regular columns, articles, news and special features round out this jumbo issue. Remember, we are always seeking your input to make each Circuit even better than the last. ...

Figure 2.

Decode These Barcodes

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.

Answers Page 7

Canada Honors a Traitor -- 100 Years After His Hanging

by Irving C. Whynot (# 490)

When does a traitor become recognized as a founder of his country? In the case of Louis Riel, more than one hundred years after he was hanged, and twenty years after he appeared on a stamp.

The Canadian House of Commons took the unusual step recently of recognizing Riel's role in bringing the province of Manitoba into Confederation in 1870. The cabinet minister who introduced the motion said it was of "tremendous symbolic significance for Canada's Metis people." (The Metis are descendants of Indian women who married whites.) The motion also recognized Riel's "unique and historic role" as a founder of the province of Manitoba.

The Metis and Indians began to protest as increasing numbers of pioneer settlers moved into the western provinces of Manitoba and Saskatchewan. They wanted compensation for the land, which they said was theirs.

Riel was a leader of the natives and established his own "government" in Manitoba in 1869. The federal government sent troops and the rebellion was quickly crushed.

Riel was elected to Parliament three times in the years that followed the rebellion but never took his seat. He tried a second rebellion in Saskatchewan in 1885, failed and was arrested. Reviled as a madman and traitor, he was tried, convicted and hanged later that year, despite the jury's recommendation for mercy.

A stamp honoring Riel was issued in June, 1970 (Scott Canada # 515), marking the 100th anniversary of Manitoba's joining Confederation. •••



Canada's First Diamond Stamps Mark Country's 125th Birthday

By Irving C. Whynot (# 490)

It was a special 125th birthday for Canada in 1992 and the milestone didn't pass without special attention - including a multiple stamp issue.

The celebration came at a time of intense debate over the future form of Confederation, including the possibility that the majority francophone province of Quebec will opt for separation, perhaps with some loose association with the rest of the country.

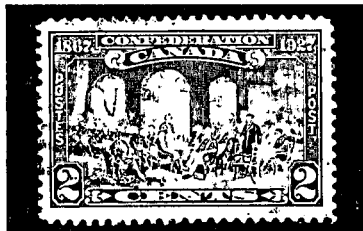
Still others see the United States. Society predicts Confederation before that the other by 2010. A public than one in three country will join the years.



Canada eventually joining The U.S. World Future Quebec will leave the end of this decade and provinces will join the U.S. opinion poll found more Canadians believing their U.S. within the next fifty

The birthday issue of March 25th consisted of twelve stamps, each depicting a scene from one of the ten provinces and two territories. They were in diamond format, a first for Canada. Canada Day stamps have been issued for more than a decade, but there were country's birth in

The Dominion of July 1 of 1867. The with a three-cent (Scott Canada # 135) Confederation" at more ambitious issue not been that the involved in the First



A five-cent set was issued in June, 1927 for the 60th birthday and it again includes one (Scott # 142) showing the fathers of Confederation - only there are more of them! Someone had noticed that the 1917 stamp had too few "fathers." It appears the photo had been cropped a bit too much in the 1917 issue! •••

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Canada's 1993 Stamps Will Cover Wide Range of Topics

Canada Post's 1993 stamp program will cover everything from prominent women and art to motor vehicles and dinosaurs.

The prominent women set of four will coincide with centennials of two national women's organizations and the 50th anniversary of the first federally appointed Canadian woman judge.

A five-stamp booklet will show handcrafted textiles and twelve Canada Day stamps will show provincial and territorial parks. Six stamps will begin a four year series of historic Canadian motor vehicles and a single issue will mark the centennial of the Stanley Cup, awarded the winner of the National Hockey League.

There will also be a sixth stamp in the Masterpieces of Canadian Art series; one on the bi-centennial of Toronto; a third set in the rivers series; a set of folk songs completing the folklore series; continuation of the Second World War series; and the usual Christmas issue.

A third in the Perhistoric Life in Canada series depicts dinosaurs and will be issued to mark Stamp Month 1993. Details on issue dates, denominations and so on are to be announced later.

••• Irving C. Whynot (# 490), Canadian Secretary

TORNESE: A currency unit in the Kingdom of the Two Sicilies (q.v.). Two hundred tornesi equalled one ducat.

President's Columnby **Dave Nelson (# 25)**

A couple of columns ago I promised you some tidbits from the *Pitcairn Island Cookbook* by Irma Christian. Since a fair percentage of our members are new since then, I will simply add that I read about this mail order item in the local newspaper some time ago and couldn't resist. I have always been fascinated by the story of this fantasy island founded over 200 years ago by "Mr. Christian" and the rest of the mutineers from *The Bounty*. I sent off my check at Christmas 1988 and the cookbook finally arrived this summer. In case you want to gamble on the same service, send \$12 to Mrs. Ben Christian, Box 2, Pitcairn Island, South Pacific Ocean. You should get some nice postally used commemoratives in the bargain, and if you're as lucky as I was, a copy of "*The Pitcairn Miscellany*".

My copy is Volume 33, Number 11, November, 1991. The editors, Tony and Chris Washington, talk about the coming Christmas season and how the holiday spirit seems to vary from year to year depending upon ship arrivals. 1991 saw a supply ship in October which made that a good holiday with imitation Christmas trees in many houses (think about that...how could they get fresh pine in such a remote tropical place?). The November shipping report lists 11 ships, 6 of which just passed by, 4 are said to have "stopped" but if you have seen pictures of Adamstown harbor you know that means they anchored some ways off shore. One of the ships "dropped mail". None of them dropped or took on cargo.

The November weather is summarized by *Misty Fairweather* (honest). It rained on nine days, totalling 38.1 mm with ave. humidity of 78%, a high temp of 23.0 C and a low of 18.6. There were 203.6 hours of sunshine (I guess with no cable tv or concert halls there people have time to put a stop watch on old sol). The monthly fishing catch consisted of 649 rock, 741 boat, 1 cuta, 1 tuna and 3 sharks.

The hard news for this issue was the public referendum over building an airstrip. A developer proposed building one that would handle 8 passenger aircraft and bring more tourists, supplies, etc. to the island and give them medical evacuation capacity and many other benefits of bringing civilization a little closer. On the down-side were two little problems. It would cost money and there was only one flat place on the island where an airstrip could be built...smack in the middle of their gardens. Voting was mandatory and the outcome was a tie. Yes, all this drama and we end up tabling the motion due to lack of a majority.

Oh, the recipes? O.K. just one. **Humpus Bumpus** is made with 1 cup mashed ripe bananas (they grow year around on Pitcairn), 1 egg, 1 tbs. arrowroot flour and spices as desired. Mix this mess up and drop spoonfuls of it into hot oil in a pan. Brown on both sides. Fresh strawberries go especially good on Humpus Bumpus.

I finally managed to finish an audit of our Sales Circuit and all books have been returned to their owners. The circuit was running in the red so paying off the book owners has depleted our treasury for awhile. The main reason for this insolvency was simply a structure that was inappropriate to a world-widers group I think. Judging from my poll at **STaMpsHOW '92** and via other contacts with members, there just are not many worlders that fill their blanks one at a time for "cash American". I almost never do myself unless I am within a few stamps of completing a country when I might actually dig up some of the green. The rest of the time I buy box lots, country collections and old accumulations and then trade away the good duplicates and give the common to kids. Having

good material at attractive non-dealer prices was most certainly not the problem; we had \$20,000 worth of clean, sound, uncommon stamps for 30 - 40% of Scott which is a pretty good deal under the current "retail" price structure, but we simply had too few buyers. The Circuit was sending out books with ISWSC paying the postage when the average cost of mailing was well above the average club commission so we lost money on every transaction. We have not yet decided at the Board level to discontinue the circuit and we do have a couple of qualified volunteers to take it over, but unless there is a strong showing of support from potential buyers we will not be able to do so. If you want to pay cash for nicely priced stamps and you are able to buy an average of \$25 or \$30 per exchange then please let us know via the survey in the current By-laws ballot. If we get enough interested parties we will feel a lot better about the effort and the risk to the club of a restart. Even the big APS itself doesn't seem to have much luck with worldwide sales booklets. One example of our good sellers is **Jack Sackett** to whom I just returned over 100 books of nice, reasonably priced material. Jack is out a lot of time in mounting his stamps (although we did sell quite a bit for him). He is now willing to send these direct to you if you want to write to him and request something on an approval basis. I've seen his books and recommend them if you buy stamps this way. His address: 301 Static Road, No. Middletown, KY. 40357.

Jerry Gross, one of our **Omni Exchange** managers reports that one of his most active exchangers is **Chas. Holman** (#369), age 91. He is a very active trader who makes up great books and does personal trading on the side. A tip of the hat to "Chas". I am pretty sure despite his respectable age that he is not our most senior ISWSC member. How about you, or someone you know? Let's do a search for the first born ISWSC member. If you have Chas beat please send me a card. Since he was probably born in 1901, this amounts to a search for any remaining Victorians

(Continued Page 6)



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SOAKERS, I PAY 20% TO 30% For used stamps, per my Scott numbered list. Example's below. French Andorra (Pay 30%) #291 to date; Austria (pay 20%) 1366-92, 1397-99, 1410-11, 1420 to date, B339 to date. Some countries I need only a few of, others like Morocco (pay 30%) & I need 90% of the country. Send me a list of countries, that you have to sell, I will send you a numbered list of that country and what % I will pay. (ISWSC #644) Dennis Parker, 5008 Buffalo S., Ft. Worth, TX 76119-7809 (1/1)

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