The Cover Story
Computer Vended Labels
by Newton Kulp

This story is an extension of the presentation I did last October on Computer Vended Postage (CVP). I received many favorable comments and have been informed from several fellow members that they looked for and found several machines and have used them. As far as I know I couldn't convince any of you to start a collection. One of the slides in the PowerPoint presentation was a list of the post offices in a radius of about 20 miles from downtown Orlando. As I was making some minor changes to the presentation to be given to West Volusia Stamp Club, I came up with what I thought was a brilliant idea at the time – visit all of the post offices in the greater central Florida area and get the same samples of the three different formats of labels. These formats are a large label **[figure A1, on front cover]**, an individually printed double wide single label **[figure A2, on front cover]** and a label with the pre-printed color indicia **[figure A3]**.

I used the common definition of Central Florida that includes the eight counties surrounding and to the east of Orlando. I then used the USPS website and determined there are 39 post offices that have a kiosk. Once I determined the extent and cost of the project, I should have taken my own advice at that point and forget about it, but I didn't. I spent five days and almost 1000 driving miles visiting the 39 post offices. Ten of the 39 offices initially had their machine inoperable when I arrived. I informed a clerk at the main counter about the problem. At six sites a postal employee was able to get the machine working while I waited. Three others didn't. One had a sign on it that said one of the printers was broken and they were waiting for a part. The second did not have anyone on site at that time who knew how to fix it. The third machine seemed to work but was unable to connect via the internet connection to get authorization on the credit card transactions, thus could

Figure A3

not complete the purchase. The postal employee worked for about a half-hour trying to get the connection to work and finally apologized and put an out of order sign on the machine. In second visits to these three sites I found that the kiosks were working, and I got my labels.

The final office was an entirely different story. The clerk I reported the problem to went to the back and returned several minutes later and said the man who knew how to fix it was busy and for me to come back later (I was not too happy about that since the office was more than 30 miles from home which I explained to no avail). I returned to this office 3 days after the first visit. The machine now worked for the larger size labels **[figures A1 and A2]** but not the printer for the preprinted color labels **[figure A3]**. After waiting about ten minutes a man came out and I told him the issue. Without checking it he said it worked and asked if I had gotten my labels. I replied that I had gotten some forever labels **[figure A4]** but they were not the ones I wanted. He replied very gruffly that there was no problem since I had labels with the face value I paid for and immediately left the lobby area. Needless to say, I was not very happy. I returned two days later, and the machine still didn't work. I would like to report this office to some postal official but have not been able to

determine whom I should contact (anyone know?).

While gathering the labels I found some very interesting "requirements" imposed by USPS on transactions initiated from the kiosks. There are several limits imposed on credit card transactions. The first is that charges allowed to a single credit card seem to be that a maximum of four charges per day. I found that if I tried a fifth charge it would be unauthorized. At first, I didn't understand why so I called my credit card customer service line. A very nice lady could not find why I was getting that message since she saw no indications of such on my account and did something to my account that would automatically accept any charge for a period of time. Three days later the same thing happened. I called the customer service line again and again the representative could not find a reason. She saw what the previous representative had done which further caused her to wonder what was causing the un-authorization. She put me on hold so she could contact others. She came back online about five minutes later. She said after talking to numerous other people up her command chain, it was determined that the post office department software was doing the denial, not the bank, thus they could do nothing further. The second limit imposed by the post office department to credit card transaction was that the minimum charge must be $1.00 and a maximum of $50.00. I found that if one uses a debit card and enters the pin number, neither of the above restrictions apply.

Figure A4
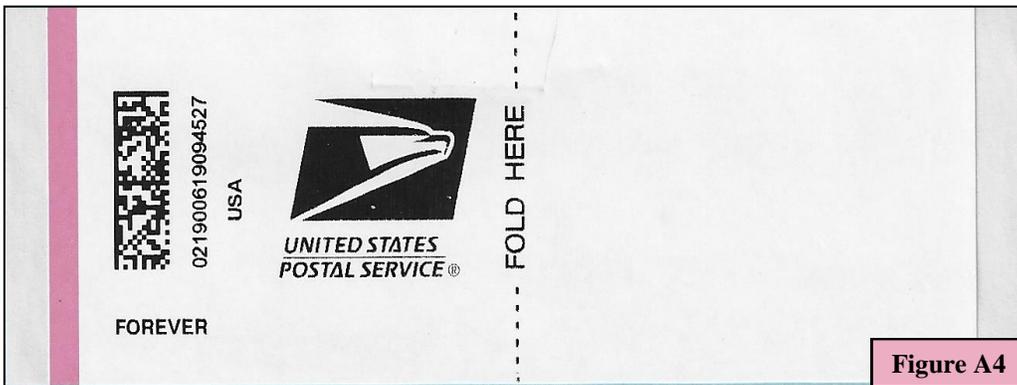
To purchase each individual type of label at each site I generated an individual transaction and printed a receipt for each. I took the labels and receipts, generated a set of custom album pages, and mounted them all into a three-ring notebook. I now ha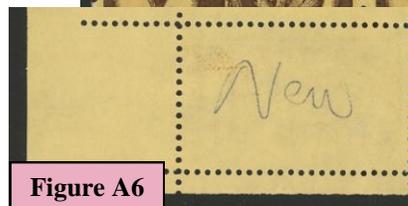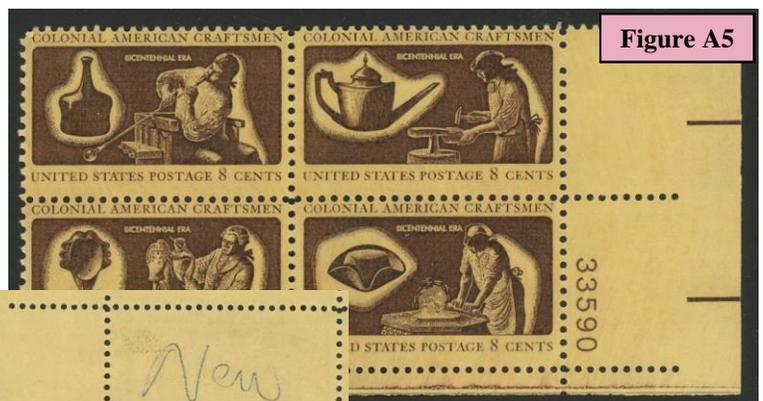ve what I consider a very nice and unique collection of computer vended labels from all of the central Florida post offices (except from the one where the obnoxious postal employee works).

How Not to Take a Stamp Inventory
by Phil Fettig

If you have been a member of the CFSC for a while you have heard me say "There is no wrong way to collect - Do what you enjoy!" Well, now I'm going to show you one way not to work on your inventory. **Figure A5** shows a nice plate block of the Colonial Craftsman issue. Some inventories include comments on condition or if the stamp is new or used. This collector wanted to make sure his records were up to date. **Figure A6** is a great example of how NOT to indicate a stamp is mint!

Yes – "New" is marked in ink.

Figure A5

Figure A6