

U.S. VENDED POSTAL INSURANCE (1965-1985)



10-Cent Booklet tied to Canoga Park SSPO Dedication Pamphlet
First vended on Aug 19, 1965 at the Fallbrook Square Shopping Center, Canoga Park, California, the opening day of this Self-Service Post Office. Later sold in Austin, TX and Silver Spring, MD.

Purpose. This exhibit explores the production, sale, and usage of U.S. Postal Insurance booklets and stamps. These vended stamps paid the fee for minimum insurance for third- and fourth-class mail, allowing customers to self-insure their parcels.

Background. A June 1965 Harris Poll found 69% of Self-Service Post Office (SSPO) customers wanted access to postal insurance. On July 22, Postmaster General Gronouski announced, "As a result of the survey, we are presently undertaking a study to determine if postal insurance can be vended economically by machine."

On August 19, the first insurance booklet went on sale, beginning a 20-year experiment where minimum insurance could be purchased from a vending machine.

The Story. This exhibit presents a chronological study of vended postal insurance booklets and stamps – how they were produced, sold, and used. It is a story of how they were vended in relative obscurity and handled with confusion. Finally, it is a story of how this experiment ended with scarcely a notice by the philatelic community.

Less than 5 million were sold. Even so, insurance stamps are an important aspect of the history of Insured Mail and the effort by the Postal Service to deliver customer convenience with 24-hour access to vended products.

The story of vended insurance stamps is closely tied to the development of the Self-Service Post Offices (SSPOs) and Postal Units (SSPUs). These vending units were first placed in shopping center parking lots; later in Post Office lobbies.

Content. The exhibit contains many seldom seen items. There is extensive coverage of the initial 10-cent booklet. There are EFOs, production and packaging material, and pertinent SSPO items. There is detailed coverage of revalued booklets (many validated with a dated cancel).

There are covers showing postal use of each insurance stamp. Most covers are philatelic in nature – intended for insuring parcels, non-philatelic examples are scarce.

Key items are highlighted using **purple text or border**. Revalued booklets documented by the original purchaser are indicated with a star ★.



Canoga Park, CA, Mar 23, 1966

10-cent Insurance Stamp, plus third-class rate for first 2 ounces. Only 4,786 ten-cent booklets sold at three SSPOs. Few covers exist – all philatelic.



10-Cent Booklets front and back
Signed and date stamped by Daniel Lucey, Canoga Park Acting Postmaster.

EXHIBIT PLAN and SUMMARY

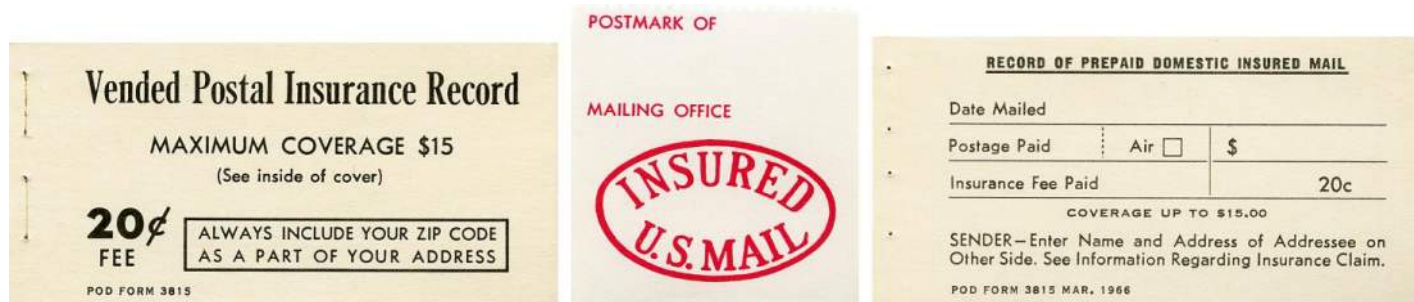
Insurance Stamp	Exhibit Outline	Minimum Insurance Fee
	<p>Precursor: Insured Minimum Fee Precursor: Self-Service Post Office A. 10-Cent Booklet A.1. Usage A.2. Production A.3. Transition to New Fee Booklet available 8/19/1965 7,500 shipped per BEP</p>	<p>10-Cents for \$10 insurance 8/19/1965 * to 3/25/1966 Duration: 7 months * 10-Cent fee began 12/1957, but no insurance stamp issued until 1965.</p>
	<p>B. 20-Cent Booklet B.1. Printing B.2. Booklet Assembly B.3. Packaging B.4. Distribution & Sales B.5. Usage B.6. Transition to New Fee Booklet available 3/26/1966 2,688,000 shipped per BEP</p>	<p>20-Cents for \$15 insurance 3/26/1966 to 4/17/1976 Duration: 121 months</p>
	<p>C. 25-Cent Revalued Booklet C.1. Creation C.2. Usage Booklet available 4/18/1976 Revalued existing stock</p>	<p>25-Cents for \$15 insurance 4/18/1976 to 7/17/1976 Duration: 3 months</p>
	<p>D. 40-Cent Revalued Booklet D.1. Creation D.2. Usage Booklet available 7/18/1976 Revalued existing stock</p>	<p>40-Cents for \$15 insurance 7/18/1976 to 5/28/1978 Duration: 22 months</p>
	<p>E. 40-Cent Booklet E.1. Production E.2. Sales & Usage Booklet available after 8/27/1977 465,000 shipped per BEP (continued on right side of page)</p>	

(continued)

	<p>F. 50-Cent Revalued Booklet F.1. Unauthorized 60-Cent Booklet F.2. Creation F.3. Usage Booklet available 5/29/1978 Revalued existing stock</p>	<p>50-Cents for \$15 insurance 5/29/1978 to 3/21/1981 Duration: 34 months</p>
	<p>G. 50-Cent Booklet G.1. Production G.2. Sales & Usage Booklet available after 11/18/1978 695,700 shipped per BEP</p>	
	<p>H. 45-Cent Revalued Booklet H.1. Creation H.2. Usage Booklet available 3/22/1981 Revalued existing stock Could not be revalued by adding a stamp, because the fee decreased.</p>	<p>45-Cents for \$20 insurance 3/22/1981 to 2/16/1985 Duration: 47 months</p>
	<p>I. 45-Cent Booklet I.1. Production I.2. Usage Booklet available after 9/1/1981 562,000 shipped per BEP</p>	
No stamp produced; no revaluation specified.	<p>J. End of Vended Insurance</p>	<p>50-Cents for \$25 insurance 2/17/1985 to 7/1/1985 * Duration: 5 months * 50-Cent fee valid to 4/2/1988, but insurance stamps ended 7/1/1985.</p>

Exhibit Synopsis

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Update. This exhibit was totally revamped in 2021 and expanded to six frames. It has a more logical flow, additional material, and detailed information on stamp/booklet production. Subsequent additions include the earliest known postmark for a 50-cent stamp (pg 6-1) and the only known parcel piece with a 45-cent stamp (pg 6-7).

Background. In 1965, an experiment began to determine if postal insurance could be vended economically at Self-Service Post Offices (SSPO). You could buy an insurance stamp, fill out the receipt, and insure a parcel for minimum coverage without standing in line at the post office.

Treatment. This exhibit presents a complete, balanced, chronological study of the insurance booklets and stamps from their inception in 1965 to their removal from sale in 1985. It tells a story of how they were produced, sold, and used.

The exhibit contains many scarce and seldom seen items. There is extensive coverage of the original 10-cent booklet and covers (only 4,786 sold). There are covers showing postal usage of each insurance stamp, plus several first and last day of use covers. There are major EFOs, production and packaging material, and relevant SSPO items. There is extensive coverage of revalued booklets.

Key items in the exhibit are highlighted with **purple text or matting**.

There are no essays or proofs in the hands of collectors. Plate layouts have not been found, but the likely layout of the 20-cent booklet is reconstructed based on cutting marks. There were no first day ceremonies, but a number of first day of use covers are shown. The exhibit is missing 1 of 13 revalued varieties. Described in a 1979 price list, it has not been seen.

The exhibit may appear to be overly weighted toward the 20-cent booklet. However, the 20-cent

fee lasted longer than the other six fees combined, plus production details are presented that aren't repeated for the other booklets.

Importance. Postal Insurance is a major category of service, and the 20-year effort to provide vended postal insurance to the public is a notable period in its history. Vended insurance is also an important chapter in the Postal Service's goal of making products easily accessible. Insurance was available at 1,500 Self-Service units by 1975.

Production and sales of vended insurance incorporated several innovations:

- first booklet pane to use moisture-resistant gum, eliminating the need for interleaves
- use of rouletting instead of perforations (10-cent booklet)
- inclusion of a non-stamp pane (the receipt)
- authorization for local post offices to revalue the booklets by adding postage stamps
- a "Collect Souvenir Pages" ad that is unique to insurance booklets (50-cent book)

It is the in-depth study of the production, sale, and usage of this unusual postal product that gives importance to this exhibit. And this is the only exhibit that focuses on Vended Postal Insurance.

Knowledge and Research. The exhibitor specializes in U.S. complete booklets and is a member of the United States Stamp Society (USSS) Booklet Committee. A major focus the last 30 years has been the Insurance Booklets. The materiel and information shown in this exhibit is a huge advance over that previously available.

Extensive research was performed against original source material – the archives of the Bureau of Engraving and Printing (BEP) and United States Postal Service (USPS), plus the acquisition of hundreds of pages of research notes and correspondence of early collectors (Cheney,

Bayless, Stawecki, and Brown). Twelve stamp periodicals were scoured for pertinent articles. The results of this research were first published in references 1 and 2, but the expansion of knowledge continues.

Collaboration with the USSS Booklet Chairman resulted in several updates to the Scott catalog: expanded information on the 10-cent booklet, booklet varieties, and revalued booklets, plus a redesignation from “insurance labels” to “insurance stamps”.

Less than 5% of the items in this exhibit came from any one source and none were originally purchased or created by the exhibitor. Many were obtained by mass mailings to booklet dealers and collectors; others came from targeted solicitations of authors of past postal insurance articles. Most EFOs were found by the exhibitor by examining thousands of booklets.

Rarity. It would be nigh impossible to produce a comparable exhibit. The basic stamps and booklets are easy to obtain, but the EFOs and validated revalued booklets are scarce. However, it is the postally used covers that are most difficult. Intended to insure parcels, non-philatelic usage is rare, and even philatelic covers are difficult to find. In the last ten years, I’ve only found one cover of any type at a national stamp show – there are 46 in this exhibit. Beginning with sales of 4,786 10-cent booklets, less than five

million booklets were sold the next 20 years – an opportunity for modern-day rarities.

The exhibit has only 4 covers identified as non-philatelic (pg 3-1, 3-2, 4-5, 6-7). However, several “philatelic” covers were used for the intended purpose – to insure a parcel’s content (philatelic merchandise). There are 6 parcel pieces (pg 1-6, 3-3, 4-4, 4-5, 6-7). Even the blatant philatelic covers are needed to tell the story.

Revalued Booklets. An important part of vended insurance is revalued booklets – a postage stamp added to the insurance stamp to change its value. Created by local post offices, many varieties and errors exist. Although anyone could create their own variety, there is little evidence this has been done. Many in this exhibit are documented by the original purchaser (noted with a ★), plus there are several scarce examples where the revaluation is validated by a dated cancel. 33 of the revalued booklets are authenticated in some manner. Non-authenticated booklets are included to show various methods of revaluation. Several rare revaluations are not marked as key because they would be easy to fabricate.

Condition. Considering the scarcity of the items, condition is remarkably good. A couple worn covers key to the story are included (e.g., earliest non-philatelic cover, pg 3-1), while several interesting covers were excluded due to poor quality.

Select References:

1. Moll, Alan, *Postal Insurance Booklets (1965-1985)*, USSS Research Paper Number 16, available from the United States Stamp Society (USSS), March 1998, 50 pages, www.usstamps.org/resources/research-papers
2. Moll, Alan, “United States Postal Insurance Booklets (1965-1985),” *The United States Specialist*, March 1998, pp. 103-118, https://members.usstamps.org/PDF/Specialist_817/31269.pdf
3. Browne, Glen, “The Postal Insurance Labels,” *The American Philatelist*, June 1982, pp. 518- , (corrections and follow-up in October 1982, pp. 874-)
4. Cheney, Willis F., “The 10c Parcel Post Insurance Stamp”, *STAMPS*, July 9, 1966, pp. 62-63.
5. “Insuring Parcels at ‘Self-Service’ Offices”, April 30, 1966, *Western Stamp Collector*, pg. 11.