The Exhibit

The exhibit presents covers/pieces with prints of each meter unit used “On The Ice” plus those used at the unique APO at Christchurch airport between the 1980’s to 2009. Souvenir covers, while plentiful for this period of time, were seldom franked with the station’s postage meter. Commercial mail/parcel examples can be quite challenging and the exhibit has seven items generously provided by former Antarctic workers and researchers.

Postage Meter Use In Antarctica

At least 25 countries have maintained research bases on the Antarctic continent and maintained post offices at these bases. Many countries also have produced postage stamps that could be considered postage for these “territories”. However, only three bases have ever been known to have postage meters installed at the station post offices. These are the New Zealand Scott Base on Ross Island and US bases at McMurdo (sharing Ross Island) and at the South Pole. Nine postage meter units were used at these bases.

Meter Use at New Zealand Scott Base

New Zealand Post Office maintained an office at Scott Base until 1987. The meter model used at Scott Base was an older Roneo Neopost model dating to about 1954. It is not clear how long that meter resided at Scott. In 1987 the NZ post office closed the office at Scott due to cost considerations and removed that meter. The base canteen obtained a more modern Framas postage meter in 1987 and it was used until 1992 when the PO insisted on inspecting the meter monthly. Impractical due to the distances. Meters may not have been used much at this very small station. Only special event examples from these two meters are published.

Meter Use At US Antarctica Stations

Two Pitney Bowes meters were reportedly introduced at McMurdo and South Pole Stations about 1987. Impressions from the McMurdo meter, if it existed, have never been reported. Impressions from the South Pole meter are known very poorly inked, but a few are good enough to read the meter serial number confirming that it was moved out of South Pole about 1991 and is known at McMurdo from 1995 to 2000 and it was replaced with modern PVI postal equipment in 2000. At South Pole, a succession of four different Pitney Bowes meters were used from 1987 thru 2009. A total of seven postage meter units used at the two bases. Hundreds of stamped collector covers were prepared, but only about 30 metered collector covers known. Early meter use was low at these bases. Now they are small cities. Meter usage has become about 60%, mostly on parcels. Both bases were Navy FPO until 1998 and Air Force APO after 1998. Note that FPO/APO post offices operate largely as if they are on US soil.

Christchurch US Air Force Post Office

The Christchurch airport is the jump off point used for US Air Force Antarctic supply flights. The US Air Force maintains an APO post office inside that airport which is used heavily by travelers to overcome strict flight weight limits. It is the only foreign post office on New Zealand soil and is available only to personnel traveling to and from the US bases and former Antarctic workers settled in New Zealand and processes 240,000 lb of mail per year. This base was Navy FPO until 1998 and Air Force APO since. This post office is included due to its unique mission.
Roneo Neopost Serial 305 at Scott Base before 1987

New Zealand Scott Base was built in 1957 on Ross Island near the existing US McMurdo "Operation Deep Freeze" base. Ross Island is the volcanic island occupied by the active volcano Mt. Erebus. A post office was always maintained as part of the base. A Roneo Neopost Frankmaster 305 serial number 108 was used at the base. This model dates back to 1954 but it is not clear when this unit was actually installed. It may have always been part of the post office but apparently seldom used. The only published examples are collector covers prepared for the Scott Base 25th anniversary.

The New Zealand Post Office closed the Scott Base Post Office for financial reasons in September 1987 and removed this postage meter.

Postcard showing New Zealand Scott Base with active volcano Mount Erebus in the distance.
Addressed collectors cover
Date: 8 December 1988 Scott Base
14 December 1988 Christchurch
Franked at Scott Base using the Frama postage meter number F340. Canceled at Christchurch as it enters mail-stream. Canterbury Museum, a natural history museum, conducts projects in Antarctica.

New Zealand Scott Base
When the Scott Base Post Office closed in 1987 the station Canteen Council bought a newer Frama postage meter which was placed in the canteen. In 1992 the NZ post office insisted on inspecting the meter monthly rather than at the end of the season. A logistical impracticality. The Canteen Council returned the postage meter in 1992.

Mail from Scott base was entered into the NZ mail stream like any mail bag from a corporate mailer and canceled at Christchurch.

Meter Used as C canceller
Scott Base often seems to have used the Frama meter as a canceler for stamped mail.

Addressed cover to USA
Date: 10 December 1991 Scott Base
Not canceled at Christchurch
Amundsen-Scott South Pole Station

Unaddressed Operation Deep Freeze Cachet
Date: 22 January 1991
Rate: 25 cents first oz + 20 cents incremental
45 cents for two oz
Paid $0.20 Meter plus $0.25 Postal Envelope

Air Polarogramme—NSF Chalet at McMurdo
Date: 20 January 1999 South Pole
21 January 1999 South Pole
21 January 1999 South Pole Backstamp
9 February 1999 South Pole
16 February 1999 McMurdo Backstamp
Rate: $0.33 Domestic First Class Letter
Manuscript “First Day of the Reissue of the Meter Postage at South Pole.”

Pitney Bowes Model 5300 Serial 3345177
One of the very few examples with readable serial number. This Pitney Bowes Model 5300 unit installed about 1987 and used until 1991. Moved to McMurdo about 1995.

Pitney Bowes Model 5300 Serial 3345249
After 8 years without a postage meter this meter was installed and used just one season 1998/1999. APO AP 96958 used after 1998.
Amundsen-Scott South Pole
APO 96598

Pitney Bowes Model 6900 Serial 5407172
This postage meter was used from January 2000 thru January 2004. The South Pole Post Office in 2000 shows the PB Model 6900 on the counter. www.south-pole.com.

Postcard—FPO AP 96598 In Error
Date: 13 February 2000 FPO AP 96598
Rate: $0.20 Domestic Postcard
The meter was delivered using the old Navy FPO designation in the townmark. An error This was replaced the next season with the proper Air Force APO designation.

Air Force APO AP 96598 Correction in 2000/2001 Season
Date: 4 December 2000 South Pole
Rate: $0.33 Domestic First Class Letter
The meter's townmark was corrected from the erroneous Navy FPO error. This cover commemorates the Admiral Byrd flight in 1929.
Chilean Expedition traverse from Chilean Base
Punta Arenas to the South Pole.
Date: 5 December 2004 South Pole
Rate: $0.70 International Airmail Letter (IMM 29)
The Chilean exploration team traveled from their
Punta Arenas base to the South Pole and then re-
turned during the 2004/2005 season.

Chilean cachets on reverse of postcard.

Postcard-First Polar Helicopter Landing
Date: 17 December 2003
Rate: $0.23 Domestic Postcard
Postcard commemorates rescue landing.
Aircraft subsequently crashed requiring fur-
ther evacuations.

New and Old Stations Postcard (Reverse)
The old under the ice South Pole Station (Dome)
built it 1975 was damaged by moving ice. Replaced
by new base started in 1999. Postcard shows new
station (yellow building) half finished as of 2003.

Scott F Smith,
South Pole Station
PSC 468, BOX 400
APO AP 96598-5400
USA
Amundsen-Scott South Pole
APO 96598

Package Piece from South Pole
Date: 4 December 2003 APO 96598
Rate: $13.24 Total
$11.55 Parcel Select 5 lb Zone 4
$1.70 Parcel Air (DMM58 10Aug03)
An Antarctic worker sends personal items home perhaps for Christmas. The station store had a few gift items in stock by this time.
The Pitney Bowes model 6900 limits postage to $9.99, requiring two meter tapes.

Fitney Bowes DM100 Postage Meter
Date: 1 January 2006 South Pole
Rate: $0.80 International First Class Letter
Semi Official USPS Cover.

Pitney Bowes DM100 at South Pole
The semi digital PB Model 6900 had to be replaced as part of the Meter Migration Mandate. The fully digital model DM100 was installed in September 2005. However, this model requires full telephone support. South Pole only has telephone support for a few hours a day. The unit was removed in February 2006.

John Howell
2 Browns Road
Kingston, Tas, 7050
AUSTRALIA

Pitney Bowes Model DM100
Postage Meter
Amundsen-Scott South Pole
APO 96598

Pitney Bowes Personal Post
This model is not so demanding on resources but became obsolete January 2009 as part of the US “Meter Migration Mandate”.

Station Dedication Cover
Date: 21 December 2006
Rate: $0.84 International First Class Letter
Construction of new “above the ice” station completed in 2006/2007 season.

Parcel Front From the South Pole Station
Date: 3 November 2008
Rate: $17.67 Domestic Parcel 12lb Zone 8 (DMM300 12May08)
SAM. Military “Space Available Mail” by air overseas.
Parcel of belongings sent home. Recovered from box in the attic.

From:
Bill Spindler, RPSC
South Pole Station
PSC 468 Box 400
APO AP 96598

To:
Bill Spindler
c/o Kathy Spindler
511 Hiscock St
Ann Arbor MI 48103

U.S. MAIL
PS LABEL 136
FEB. 1971

DESTINATION
SFO
SAN FRANCISCO
CALIFORNIA (USA)

WEIGHT
5.4

VIA

United States Postal Service
Customs Declaration
May be opened officially
See Instructions on Reverse
Do not duplicate without USPS approval

Quantity and detailed description of contents (1):

For commercial items only
If known, HS item number (4) and country of origin of goods (5)

Date and senders signature (6)
3 Nov 08

PS Form 2976, January 04
**Pitney Bowes Model 5300 moves to US McMurdo Base**

The McMurdo post office was operated by the US Navy from 1957 with a complex zip code history. From 1991 to 1998 used FPO 96599. After 1998 the Air Force took over using the zip code APO AP 96599.

The Pitney Bowes Model 5300 serial 3345117 that had been used at South Pole Station from 1987 was moved to McMurdo and is known to have been used there from 24 August 1995 to 17 October 2000.

This meter was replaced with modern PVI postal meters as mechanical meters became obsolete in 2000.

Reportedly another PB Model 5300 meter was present at McMurdo from 1987 but impressions from that unit have never been published.
McMurdo Station
APO 96599

Postcard. World Flags at South Pole
Date: 21 October 1999 McMurdo
Rate: $0.33 Domestic First Class Letter Rate
Posted at McMurdo using the Model 5300 postage meter.

Postcard of McMurdo Station as seen from Observation Hill. Known as Mac Town, it houses about 1100 scientists and support personnel during the Austral Summer. About 200 during winter.

Elaborate McMurdo Cover
Dates: 17 October 2000 McMurdo
18 October 2000 McMurdo
Rate: $0.33 Domestic First Class Letter
Elaborate cover prepared in October 2000 using McMurdo meter 3345117. Reverse (shown below) contains note that delivery was delayed one year due to illness of a clerk.
USAP (US Antarctic Program) operates the bases as shown in circular sticker.
Cachet also depicts a USAF KC-10 Tanker refueling a C-141 cargo aircraft, an essential support operation for many round trip supply flights.
What is a PVI?
Since the late 1990’s the US Post Offices have used postage meters made by MOS/Unisys. These units include keyboard, touch screen, scale and printer. Generally known as a Postage Validation Indicia (PVI) Printer.

PVI Imprint McMurdo Post Office
An Opened Letter.
Date: 28 December 2006
Rate: $0.39 Domestic First Class Letter

R.D. Hale

McMURDO STATION
PSC 469 BOX 700
APO AP 96599

SFO
SAN FRANCISCO
CALIFORNIA (USA)

U.S. MAIL
P S LABEL 136, February 1971
PSN 7690-05-000-4406

DESTINATION

WEIGHT

11.3

SYD UA9587
SFO UA870

SAM

Clair VonHande
USAF Post Office at Christchurch
APO AP 96531

Pitney Bowes 5300 then the USPS PVI
The Christchurch airport is the jump off point for US and NZ Antarctic bases as well as bases of other countries. The US Air Force maintains a post office at the Christchurch airport for use by personnel travelling to and from Antarctica. Handles about 240,000 pounds of mail a year supporting the continuing US Operation Deep Freeze.

Used Pitney Bowes model 5300 meters until 2000 when Post Office PVI units were installed.

Pitney Bowes model 5300 postage meter.
Date: 9 November 1999 USAF APO 96531
Rate: $0.33 Domestic (To NZ should be $0.60 International)
Probably meant to be a round trip cover through McMurdo but directed to NZ postal system for delivery in Christchurch.

Air Polarogramme showing LC-130 Hercules at McMurdo Station
Date: 17 October 2000 USAF APO 96531
19 October 2000 USAF APO 96531
25 October 2000 McMurdo
Rate: $0.33 Domestic or $0.60 International
Paid $0.50
Air Polarogrammes are printed by a number of companies with Antarctic themes and are often sold at tourist counters.

PVI Mail Label from Christchurch to Denver
Date: 07 February 2008
Rate: $7.02 Domestic Parcel Post 3lb to Zone 5 (DMM300 14May07)
Antarctic worker returns to Christchurch, mails personal materials home.
The Air Force Post Office at Christchurch installed the PVI units in 2000 as all US offices made this change.