

# CHRISTMAS SEALS AROUND THE WORLD



*by* PHILIP P. JACOBS, PH.D.

HOW THE IDEA OF A DANISH POSTMASTER SPREAD  
TO 40 COUNTRIES AND RAISED MILLIONS OF DOLLARS  
TO COMBAT TUBERCULOSIS

---

REPRINTED FROM THE · SEPTEMBER 1934 · "JOURNAL OF THE OUTDOOR LIFE"

---

## *In Our Own Country*

NO COUNTRY in the world has had greater success in the use of Einar Holboell's fund-raising idea, a tuberculosis Christmas seal, than the United States. With the 1934 seal sale, the total returns for 28 years will be over \$75,000,000. Beginning with a restricted sale in the state of Delaware in 1907, followed by the first nation-wide sale in 1908, the Christmas seal has become the chief means of support of national, state, and local tuberculosis associations in every state of the United States, numbering some 2,000 or more. The funds derived from the sale of seals are used for education, organization and demonstration of tuberculosis work. From the activities of these private, non-official tuberculosis associations has grown a gigantic official machine to fight tuberculosis in all parts of the country. The tuberculosis sanatoria alone, numbering 659 with a capacity of 87,000 beds, involve a capital expenditure of \$250,000,000 and an annual maintenance budget of nearly \$75,000,000. Thus the Christmas seals themselves have been multiplied manifold through the work of the tuberculosis associations.



1907



1934



1908

# Christmas Seals Around the World

*Besides the United States, forty countries use the colorful stamps to raise funds for tuberculosis work*

by PHILIP P. JACOBS, Ph.D.

BESIDES the United States, more than forty different countries throughout the world now have or have had Christmas seals or stamps that are sold wholly or partially for tuberculosis work. Little did Einar Holboell realize, when he conceived that first Danish Christmas seal, launched in 1904, that his simple idea would in a generation circumnavigate the globe. But that's the way with ideas. When one man anywhere in the world has a good one other men elsewhere are quick to grasp it and apply it to their own local needs. The Christmas seal is a link that has tied together countries all over the world and, to help each other in promoting Christmas seal sales, several international conferences have been held in Paris under the auspices of the French National Committee.

## COUNTRIES WITH CONTINUOUS SALES

Denmark claims the honor of having originated the Christmas seal sale and in that country and the neighboring country of Sweden Christmas seal sales have been held annually since 1904. No other countries in the world can boast of such records. There are, however, a number of countries that have held Christmas seal sales for ten or fifteen years and several who have held them



New South Wales, 1897

for as many as five consecutive years. Our own United States seal sale dates from 1907.

Let us run down a list of a few of these countries that have had continuous seal sales for five years or longer.

In Belgium, Brazil, Poland and Portugal, seal sales have been held regularly since 1927 only, although Belgium did have a tuberculosis stamp in 1910 and 1911. The Canadian National Tuberculosis Association has had a seal sale only since 1927, and the Christmas seal of the White Cross Society of Japan dates back to that year. The National Sanatorium Association of Canada, which is not the same as the National Tuberculosis Association of that country, has sold Christmas seals continuously since 1908, their sale having

started only one year after the first seal sale in the United States. In Jugoslavia, New Zealand and South Africa, seal sales go back only to 1929. In Finland a seal sale has been held annually since 1926, but Christmas seals were also sold in that country as early as 1908 and then again in 1910, 1912, 1915, and 1921. In little Iceland Christmas seals have been sold continuously since 1913 with the exception of one year, 1917. The Japanese National Association has sold seals since 1925. The French Comité Nationale began its seal sale in that same year.

Next to Denmark and Sweden, Norway claims the honor of having had the longest continuous seal sale. It was started in the year 1906. To students of history and government it is interesting to know that the Danish West Indies, now known as the Virgin Islands and a possession of the United States, had a seal sale, also due to Danish influence, from 1907 to 1916. Czechoslovakia has had a seal sale since 1919 and Switzerland has sold a semi-postal Christmas stamp continuously since 1913 except for the year 1914. In Italy Christmas seals were sold locally as far back as 1908 but the Italian National Tuberculosis Federation has sold seals only since 1931. The Argentine Republic's sale also began in 1931. To Korea belongs the distinction of having one of the most recent seal sales—started in 1932.

## DESIGNS AND SIZES, AND HOW SOLD

When we examine the seals of various foreign countries, we are impressed at once with the fact that most of them have been developed much more elaborately and in many instances with more beautiful designs than those which have been used in the United States. This can be done in most parts of the world



The First Christmas Seal



Norway, 1907



Finland, 1912





Canada

Anti-T.B. League of Quebec, 1924



Italy

Italian Red Cross, 1916



Ireland, 1925



France, 1926



Cuba, 1927



Brazil, 1927



Argentine Republic, 1933



South Africa, 1931



Belgium, 1932

because the seal is not limited in size as it is in this country. Most of the foreign seals are larger than ours, thus allowing for more detail in design. In the United States, however, the majority of the Christmas seals are sold by mail and that very fact restricts the size and weight of the seals, as well as the possibilities of design. A very slight increase in the size of our seal might double the postage of the tuberculosis associations on as many as twelve million letters, a serious and prohibitive increase in expense. Such countries as Poland or Japan sell 3, 5, 10 or more different seals in one year, some of them at a price approximating one cent, and others at five or ten or twenty-five times that amount. In the United States seals are issued in billion lots, while in other countries only a few million are printed.

It is significant that in many of the European and other countries of the world the Christmas seals are sold through the Post Office largely, and in not a few instances these seals are part postage stamps. For instance, in Luxemburg, in Belgium and the Netherlands, one may buy Christmas seals at the Post Office paying, let us say, a penny extra for them over and above the face value of the usual postage stamp. It is not compulsory to buy them since one may use the regular postage stamp, but the government offers them for sale. In New Zealand, the Christmas seals are sold entirely through the Post Office department. In many instances the seals have definite values and while in some countries they are sold as postage stamps in others, as for example in Poland, they have no value as postage stamps.

#### COUNTRIES WITH TUBERCULOSIS SEALS

In studying somewhat more closely the Christmas seals of certain foreign countries, we find many interesting facts. We can mention only a few here but our philatelist readers may be instigated to pursue the subject further. The countries are given in alphabetical order.

*Argentine*—The Argentine seals, first sold in 1931, have most unique pictorial designs. Those for the last two years, for example, are distinctly of a health character and reflect the influence of some of our American health education posters.

*Australia*—To Australia, or rather to the state of New South Wales, goes the honor of having the oldest stamp known to have been sold for the benefit of tuberculosis work. The two designs of the New South Wales Consumptive Home were issued in 1897, one of them for one penny and the other for twopence half-penny. We have been unable to secure records to show exactly how the 1897 seal at that early date happened to be put out under government auspices and no records are available to show that a sale of such stamps was ever carried on again after this one year, except that a few years ago one seal was issued. We know that another tuberculosis seal was issued in 1930, but we have no record of later sales.

*Austria*—has never had a nationwide sale of tuberculosis seals, although several different organizations have from time to time during the last twenty years used the seal idea for tuberculosis work. The German Workers Association for the War Against Tuberculosis one year had an Easter seal about two inches square. A tuberculosis seal was also sold in 1915 for tuberculous veterans returning from the war. The Red Cross tuberculosis seal was sold in 1933 and we have records of several other organizations that have sold seals.

*Belgium*—offers a number of suggestions for those who are interested in studying Christmas seals. For example, the text on some of these seals is printed both in French and Flemish, as in 1925, 1926, 1931 and 1932. Some of the designs of the Belgian seals depict various institutions of local and national significance. In the year 1928, for instance, different cathedrals and public buildings were shown, such as those in

Brussels, Louvain, Ghent or Malines. In 1929 the seals showed scenes of various familiar places in Belgium. All of these issues were really postage stamps instead of seals. The 1932 Christmas seal, put up as a sheet inserted in a cover, shows twenty-five views of different Belgian sanatoria and preventoria, the whole packet or carnet selling for one franc, approximately 20c. This was the first genuine Christmas seal in Belgium. The cover of the carnet shows the famous Raemaeker's poster of the tuberculosis patient in bed with the nurse standing by saying to him, "Have courage, fresh air and good care will cure you." These seals are sold by the national organization known as L'Oeuvre Nationale Belge de Defense Contre la Tuberculose.

*Brazil*—Here we know of only one seal sold by the Brazilian National Anti-Tuberculosis League, that in 1929. On the other hand the Liga Paulista Contra a Tuberculose, namely the local tuberculosis association of the state of Sao Paulo, has had a seal sale continuously since 1927. The diamond-shaped seals used for three years by this organization have a value of 100 reals, and for three years they showed portraits of prominent physicians. The 1930 and 1931 seals have had a value double those of previous years.

*Canada*—Christmas seals in our neighboring country have had an interesting career. The National Sanatorium Association, which operates two free hospitals for tuberculosis in the Province of Ontario, has carried on a Christmas seal sale continuously since 1908. The Royal Edward Institute located in Montreal had a seal sale in 1909 and 1910 and again in 1912, in 1917, 1919, 1920, 1921, 1923, and 1925. Those sales were purely local. The Institute Bruchesi of Montreal also had a seal sale in 1925 and 1926, while several other local sales have been held in different parts of the country at various times. The Canadian National Tuberculosis Association, however, began its seal sale in 1927 and used for the first four years the United States seal design. Theirs were printed both in English and in French, however, or were overprinted with the words "Bonne Santé," for the French speaking provinces. Since 1931 the Canadian Association has issued its own seals in two editions, English and French. The Canadian National Sanatorium Association since 1923 has sold its seals in packets of 10, at 10c a packet. These seals are die-cut, usually round or



*An example of international interest—The Prince of Wales, when he was in this country in 1919, purchased Christmas seals*

some other shape than square or rectangular, and with special coloring, designs and embossing and cannot be distinguished from the usual commercial Christmas seals.

*Chile*—has sold a seal or stamp for the fight against tuberculosis but we have no records as to when it was issued or what organization sold it.

*Cuba*—In 1927 and 1932 the Cuban Anti-Tuberculosis League conducted seal sales. Their 1927 seal is an exact

reproduction, except for the text, of the French seal of the year preceding.

*Czechoslovakia*—Here we find many attractive seals, some of which are illustrated. They are sold by the Mazaryk National Anti-Tuberculosis League, which was named for the beloved president of that republic.

*Danzig*—is worth mentioning in this connection, both because of the fact that it is one of the old free cities of Europe and also because their only seals



we know about bear the legend "Tuberculosis Week." They were sold in various denominations ranging from 30 pfennig up to 1 mark 20 pfennig and for one occasion only, in 1921.

**Denmark**—There is so much of interest to tell about the seals of Denmark that we cannot possibly say all that we should like to in this brief article. Beginning with that first Christmas seal of 1904 which showed the head of Queen Louise, the Danish seals have had many beautiful and colorful designs. Some of them portray the industrial and agricultural life of the country, some illustrate various legends and folk lore, while others are purely pictorial or sentimental. All of them reflect a high degree of artistic design. The 1908 seal shows the children's tuberculosis sanatorium which was the first institution built from the sale of Christmas seals. The portrait of Einar Holboell was used on the 1927 seal.

Christmas seals in *Danish West Indies* are of special interest to us in this country since in 1917 the United States purchased these islands from Denmark and renamed them the Virgin Islands. Under the Danish regime, Christmas seals were sold in the islands from 1907

to 1916, inclusive. The regular Danish seal was not used but a separate local design was issued each year. We are not sure that the proceeds were used for tuberculosis but we infer that they were probably devoted to child welfare. This year, 1934, the Christmas seal sale in the Islands will be revived with the use of our own United States seal.

**Estonia**—on the Baltic Sea furnishes an example of the use by the government of the tuberculosis cross on a semi-postage stamp. We have four different designs but no record of the year or years of issue.

**Finland**—The Finnish seals are also rich in color and folk lore. Some of them are much smaller than the United States seals and others are twice as large. The National Tuberculosis Association has fourteen seals in its collection beginning with the one issued in 1908. A number of them bear the legend "Suomi—Finland."

In France the development of the national Christmas seal sale is due largely to the beginning of the campaign against tuberculosis which started in that country under the direction of the Rockefeller Tuberculosis Commission in 1917. In 1925 the French Comité

Nationale de Defense Contre la Tuberculose decided to launch a Christmas seal sale. Through conferences and correspondence with the United States they became informed of the methods employed in this country, which they used as their model. At first it was impossible to use the mail sale as extensively as we use it here but gradually this method for selling seals also has been adopted. From very small beginnings their sale has yearly increased until, according to the latest figures, a total of more than 3,000,000 francs was realized. Two unique facts about the French seals are worth noting. The seals are sold in little booklets and in sheets, and both the booklets and the border of the sheets of seals themselves carry advertising for baby foods, chocolates and other articles. This advertising helps to defray the cost of printing. The seals are also imprinted with the name of each province in which they are sold. If the United States followed this style our seals would be imprinted with the name of each state.

Practically all of the French provinces now sell the national seals, but before the national sale began in France local seals were used. We have a record of a seal used in the city of Rouen as early as 1905 by the Association Rouennaise pour la Preservation de la Tuberculose. Local seals have also been used in Vosges and other parts of the country. The post office, telegraph and telephone employees have had a Christmas seal of their own since 1927 and this has been sold apparently in competition with the national seal.

**Germany**—A national seal sale has never been held here. The Deutsche Nothilfe has issued for several years sets of semi-postage stamps ranging in denominations usually from 8 to about 50 pfennig and the proceeds are used for general relief work. Some of the money probably goes toward the relief of tuberculosis patients but not a great deal. We have record, however, of one set of stamps issued by the East Prussian Tuberculosis Association bearing pictures of Robert Koch and other educational subjects more or less related to tuberculosis. The Bavarian Tuberculosis Association also sold one year a set of very attractive portrait stamps much larger than the usual stamp. Different members of the royal family were portrayed on these. In 1913 a Bavarian tuberculosis welfare stamp was issued in three different designs, evidently in



*Delegates to the First International Conference on Christmas Seals in 1930, standing in front of the headquarters of the French National Committee in Paris. The man at the extreme left is M. Lucien Viborel, director of the Christmas Seal Sale in France. The woman in white in the front row is Miss Lily Schwartz, secretary of the Norwegian National Association. At her right is Dr. Leon Bernard, Secretary General of the International Union Against Tuberculosis. Dr. F. Humbert, former associate secretary, stands behind Miss Schwartz. The author and Mrs. Jacobs were the only Americans represented. He stands eighth from the right, and Mrs. Jacobs is the first woman at his left. At the author's right is Captain H. M. Andersen of Denmark, one of the earliest collectors*

connection with a "Blumentag" (flower day) in Nuremberg on June 7th.

*Great Britain*—Never enthusiastic over the Christmas seal idea, a few years ago this country brought out a seal with the simple design of a wreath in gold with a double-barred cross and the name National Association for the Prevention of Tuberculosis in a circle. Because of poor planning, however, very little money was realized. Last year, in 1933, the British Tuberculosis Association resolved to try a better-organized seal sale, adapting American methods so far as possible. Our 1933 United States Christmas seals were used and the sale, although confined to London and vicinity, was conducted with a degree of success. This year, 1934, the British National Association will again use our United States seal with slight modification. In Scotland, under the leadership of Sir Robert Philip, a seal sale was begun in 1931. As it has not been very energetically pushed the results have not been very successful. Ireland has had Christmas seal sales held intermittently for several years. The famous Irish Woman's National Health Association under the capable leadership of the Marchioness of Aberdeen and Temair issued two seals in 1909. These are scarce and not generally known. In 1925 an attractive seal appeared but we have no record as to whether it was continued later. In Wales the King Edward VII Welsh National Memorial Association had a tuberculosis seal in 1928.

*Iceland*—Christmas seals have been sold there for the care of sick children including those with tuberculosis, and among them will be found some of the most artistic designs of any of the Christmas seals used.

In *Italy* local Christmas seals in Florence, Trieste and other cities have appeared from time to time during the last ten or fifteen years, but the seal of the Italian National Fascist Federation Against Tuberculosis is only three years old. Some of the local designs, especially those used in Florence, are unusually pretty.

*Japan*—No country has had a more interesting experience with Christmas seals than Japan. It is strange indeed that in a land where Christmas, essentially a Christian institution, is not officially recognized, that Christmas seals should be so popular. The Japanese Association for the Prevention of Tuberculosis with headquarters at Tokio began selling seals in 1924 when three round seals were issued. In 1928 they



*Einar Holboell, a Danish postal clerk, who in 1904 originated the idea of selling decorative penny stamps to raise money to build a hospital for tuberculous children*

resumed the sale and have carried it on yearly since. Entirely in Japanese characters, these seals are very beautiful in color and design. The White Cross Society, which is the local tuberculosis association for Tokio, has also issued Christmas seals of various designs and shapes since 1928. Apparently they are sold not only locally but all over Japan. A third society, known as the Shizen-ryoyosha or the Nature Cure Society of Japan, also sells seals and has been carrying on fairly continuously for several years. The proceeds from their sales go to pay for sanatorium treatment and for the building of sanatoria for the treatment of tuberculosis. This organization is also called at times the Double-Barred Cross Association.

*Korea*—has had a seal sale for two years only, its first sale being held in 1932. There is no national tuberculosis association in Korea, but the sale has been organized and promoted by Dr. Sherwood Hall, a Methodist Episcopal missionary who conducts a tuberculosis sanatorium and medical center at Haiju. Dr. Hall, who studied our American

methods of seal sale on his last visit to the United States, has closely followed them in Korea.

*Latvia*—The Latvian Anti-Tuberculosis Association issued in 1931 a set of ten somewhat unusual semi-postage stamps. These are the only seals of which we have had any record in that country.

*Norway*—Like the other Scandinavian countries, Norway has attractive designs that picture various domestic and symbolic scenes. The 1928 seal is especially outstanding because in that year the anniversary of the twenty-fifth birthday of the popular Crown Prince was celebrated by using his portrait on the Christmas seal.

*Portugal*—has sold seals through its national tuberculosis association continuously since 1927 but the government also issued semi-postage tuberculosis stamps as early as 1904 for the benefit of the National Aid Society for Consumptives. As is done in several other countries, the seals here are printed in a given year with the same design but in different colors. For example, the





Japan  
White Cross Society, 1930



Netherlands, 1933



Canada, 1932

1929 seal appears in light blue, purple, green, brown, and in several other shades.

**South Africa**—This country became interested in the seal through the fact that a Danish woman, Mrs. Christensen, had learned of the seals in her native land and, because she was interested in tuberculosis work, she started the seal sale in her new country. The design for 1931 is particularly unusual. The 1933 design is printed both in English and in the native Dutch dialect.

**Surinam**—better known as Dutch Guiana, South America, had a welfare stamp in 1928. Part of the proceeds evidently went to tuberculosis work and the stamps were semi-postal.

**Sweden**—Again we have many artistically lovely Christmas seals. They are examples of the work of such noted artists as Prince Engen of Sweden, Bruno Liljefors, the great bird artist and Axel Sjöberg. It is not surprising that the seal sale which was started in Denmark in 1904 should have spread in the same year across the narrow straits to Sweden. In neither Sweden, Norway nor Denmark, however, do the tuberculosis associations rely entirely upon the Christmas seal sale for their support. They have an annual flower day in the spring of the year, somewhat like a national tag-day, and usually in addition, they receive annually some form of governmental subsidy.

In **Switzerland** the stamp sale of Pro Juventute, an organization devoting itself to child welfare with emphasis on tuberculosis, dates back to 1913. We have records of a local seal sale in 1912 and in a number of instances local seals have been issued since that time strictly for the prevention of tuberculosis. The seals of Pro Juventute are combination postage stamps and seals and do not belong strictly in the class of our Christmas seals either in their use or in the way they are sold.

**Syria**—Syrian Christmas seals sold in 1924 and 1926, are novel because of the Arabian characters. These seals were sold by the Syrian Anti-Tuberculosis Society.

#### RÉSUMÉ

For collectors of foreign Christmas seals there is a thrill awaiting, especially for those who wish to engage in an extensive correspondence and secure all of the seals from all the different organizations. In order to assist the collector we have appended a list of various national organizations that are now using strictly tuberculosis Christmas seals. Several reliable dealers of Christmas seals in the United States carry limited stocks of some of the foreign seals, but most of the others can be secured by diligent correspondence with foreign representatives and dealers.

#### ACKNOWLEDGMENT

The writer of this brief account of foreign Christmas seals is deeply indebted to Captain H. M. Andersen of Elsinore, Denmark, who first interested him in this subject; to Mr. Charles Lorenz of Springfield Gardens, Long Island, through whose indefatigable efforts one of the most valuable check lists of countries issuing Christmas seals has been prepared; and to Mr. W. L. Kinkead of Glen Rock, New Jersey, and Miss May A. Rigney of the National Tuberculosis Association's staff, who have read the manuscript and have offered valuable suggestions.



Korea, 1932

#### A LIST OF NATIONAL ORGANIZATIONS THAT ISSUE TUBERCULOSIS CHRISTMAS SEALS

**Argentina**—Instituto de Enfermedades Infecciosas "Jose Penna," Seccion Programa de Lujo y Estampilla de Navidad, address, Profesor Francisco Destefano, Alsina 1618, Buenos Aires

**Belgium**—Oeuvre Nationale Belge de Defense contre la Tuberculose, 82, Rue de Stassart, Bruxelles-Ixelles

**Brazil**—Liga Paulista Contra a Tuberculose Rua da Consolacao, 111, Sao Paulo

**Canada**—Canadian Tuberculosis Association, Plaza Building, Cor. Rideau and Sussex Sts., Ottawa

**Denmark**—Julemærkekomiteen, Norrevoldgade 46, Copenhagen

**England**—National Association for the Prevention of Tuberculosis, Tavistock House North, Tavistock Square, London, W.C.1

**Finland**—Suomen Tuberkuloosin Vastustamisyhdistys Yrjökatu 13, Helsinki

**France**—Comite National de Defense contre la Tuberculose, 66, Boulevard St. Michel, Paris

**Italy**—Federazione Italiana Nazionale Fascista per la Lotta contro la Tuberculosi, Via Nazionale 172, Rome

**Japan**—Japanese Association for the Prevention of Tuberculosis, Tokyo. White Cross Society, Nishikicho, Kanda, Tokyo

**Korea**—School of Hygiene for the Tuberculous, Haiju

**Norway**—Forretningskontoret for Tuberkulosearbeidet, Postboks 253, Oslo

**Poland**—Polski Zwiazek Przeciwgruzliczy, Ul. Chocimska 24, Warsaw

**Portugal**—Assistencia Nacional ads Tuberculosos, Lisbon

**South Africa**—Union of South Africa Christmas Stamp, P. O. Box 101, Durban

**Sweden**—Svenska Nationalforeningen mot Tuberkulos, Sturegatan 16, Stockholm

**Switzerland**—Schweizerische Vereinigung gegen die Tuberkulose, Kirchgasse 36, Zurich