

by  
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In all of the sixty-eight talks which have preceded this one we have never had occasion to depart from that ever-popular field of United States postage stamps or the details of their collection, but this being the Christmas season it is especially appropriate that we take up a subject which, although not dealing with actual postage stamps, is so closely allied and of such very wide-spread interest that it more than deserves this program.

In most of the Stamp Talks we have dealt with events of the long ago, with men who lived and performed their historic deeds in past centuries, but in this story we have only to go back twenty-eight years, to the Christmas season of 1904, when the Christmas Seal made its first appearance. No, we must go back another year, for it was in 1903 that the idea of the Christmas seal was born. You have all seen during the past few weeks the little sticker in its bright Christmas colors, bearing the picture of a little girl and a smaller boy singing lustily from an open book in front of them. That is the Christmas seal of 1932, produced and sold by the National Tuberculosis Association to provide funds for their great work in stamping out the terrible disease and in teaching preventative measures. You will see that little seal, with its message of hope and cheer adorning the myriad Christmas packages and letters, and while you can hardly help smiling in sympathy and pleasure at the mute appeal it carries, have you ever heard the story of how it all started, or of its miraculous growth?

It is true that this Christmas seal is not a postage stamp, nor is it allowed on the face of letters or packages because of the liability of causing confusion in the post office, but it has become so closely associated with the postal service thru its use at the Christmas season that there has gradually developed a vast number of persons who collect these attractive seals as they would postage stamps, and beyond question they make a marvelously beautiful collection. So greatly has the interest grown that today there is a national association formed for the purpose of fostering the collection of and the knowledge concerning these and similar labels. This association, the Christmas Seals and Charity Stamps Society, is now several years old, with members throughout the United States and Canada. There is also available a complete check-list of all known varieties of these seals issued both here and abroad, and there are dealers of national reputation who make a business of supplying the scarce, obsolete numbers of these fascinating little seals. So if they are not postage stamps, they are at least one of the outstanding side-lines of philately, and have a large number of followers. This growing interest has naturally brought about a demand for the early issues of the seals, and their scarcity, combined with this demand has created very high values for the older ones, seals that originally sold for one cent now bringing many dollars.

The war on tuberculosis has been going on for years, but it was only recently that there was devised this method for obtaining funds to carry on the battle. Over in Denmark in the year 1903 a postal clerk by the name of Einar Hoelbell was impressed with the vast number of holiday greeting cards and letters that he had to cancel every Christmas time in the course of his work there in the post office. He was also aware of the fact that there were a great number of sufferers from tuberculosis in his country, and that there was dire need of funds to

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aid in the fight against the disease, especially at that time for the construction of a new hospital in Copenhagen to take care of tubercular patients. With a flash of intuition that does occasionally come to the human mind, creating fame and honor overnight, Hoelbell connected these two ideas and saw that if to every piece of Christmas mail some little token could be attached, the cost of which would go towards tubercular relief, an immediate and ample fund would be available. With commendable logic he conceived the plan for a little paper sticker, or seal, bearing an appropriate design, to sell for the smallest monetary unit and to be used in addition to regular postage on all mail at Christmas time.

He took this idea to the royal family of Denmark, who gave it their approval and support. Other government officials came into line, and the result was that the following Christmas of 1904 saw the appearance of the first of all the Tuberculosis Christmas Seals. It is worth knowing that Denmark has never failed from that time to this in issuing an annual number of the seal, twenty-nine of them in all, counting the present year. Norway and Sweden also issued their first seals in 1904 and have also brought them forth every year with the exception of 1905 when Norway failed for the only time. Finland issued her first seal in 1905 and since then a dozen or more nations have added their names to the roll.

It was three years after Denmark started the movement, or in the winter of 1907, that the United States entered the field. Early in that year Jacob Riis, one of the great social service workers of this country, received from Denmark a letter bearing one of that year's attractive little seals. Curiosity led him to find out its meaning, and his interest was so aroused that he wrote an article on the subject for Outlook magazine. This article was read by a Miss Emily Bissell of Delaware, and to her alone must go the credit for translating the idea of that article into action. She, like Einar Hoelbell, was trying to raise funds for a tuberculosis sanatorium, her's being in the state of Delaware. She took on herself the task of organizing the production and sale of these first American Christmas Seals of 1907, and succeeded to the astonishing extent of \$3,000.00. This was purely a Delaware venture but Miss Bissell saw that what had succeeded so notably on a small scale could presumably be made into a nation-wide affair. But to do this required the backing of a far larger organization than she had at her command. The National Tuberculosis Association, or the National Society for the Study and Prevention of Tuberculosis as it was at that time called, was a small society just getting started. But the American Red Cross Society was already a national organization of great strength, and to it Miss Bissell took her project. The result was that the Red Cross underwrote the work for the National Tuberculosis Association. With that powerful aid its success was assured, and that second year of 1908 the sales jumped from \$3,000 to \$135,000. In 1909 the amazing total of \$250,000 was realized, and since then the magnitude of the results has steadily increased until recent years have brought in more than five million dollars each time! The result of this universal acceptance of the Christmas seal idea has been astonishing. With the funds thus provided the Association has done an incalculable amount of fine work in curing the sick and preventing others from becoming ill. Its curative and educational work has had a marked effect on the health of the nation.

The history of the Christmas seal in the United States is divided into four distinct periods. The first seal, that of 1907, was issued by the Delaware Chapter of the American Red Cross at the suggestion of Miss Bissell, who also designed the seal itself. This first seal was simply a little gummed and perforated square of paper bearing a printed holly wreath and the words "Merry Christmas". A second edition was immediately printed with the added words "Happy New Year" so that the sale could be extended over another week. It bore also a small red cross, symbolizing the work for which it was used. No other wording appeared on the 1907 seal. The following year of 1908 the project became a national one and the seals were issued and sold by the American National Red Cross. The old 1907 design was retained in part but the seal was enlarged by the addition of a wide border around it, on which the name of the American Red Cross was printed. This was the first of the national

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seals. The slightly changed design was drawn by Howard Pyle, the famous American illustrator. In 1909 a new design was created and the seals for that year and also for 1910 were printed by the government at the Bureau of Engraving and Printing, the only two years that this has been done. The seals of all other years were printed by private companies.

So 1907 constituted the first period, while 1908, 1909 and 1910 completed the second. With 1911 a new arrangement was made whereby the seals were issued by the American Red Cross but sold by the National Tuberculosis Association, this latter organization being by then much stronger and more able to care for the distribution of the seals. The proceeds as before went to further the study and prevention of tuberculosis. This arrangement lasted from 1911 to 1919 inclusive, the two great organizations jointly sharing the responsibility of the annual production and sale of the seals. In 1919 it was evident that the National Tuberculosis Association was strong enough to handle the whole thing alone, so that year for the first time the double-barred cross, the international symbol of the fight against tuberculosis, appeared on the seal together with the solid square red cross of the American National Red Cross Society. This was the last time that the name or symbol of the Red Cross appeared on the seal. So closed the third period in the history of the Christmas Seal.

With the 1920 seal opened the fourth and present period, when the seals were both printed and sold by the National Tuberculosis Association without outside assistance. The Red Cross had carried them along the hard way for thirteen years, and now the younger society was fully able to shoulder the responsibility. Beginning with that year of 1920 it has been only the double-barred cross that has been shown on the seals.

There was one year, the war year of 1918, when the seals were not sold at all, but were given away in small lots of ten seals. That year the American Red Cross simply gave the Tuberculosis Association the immense sum of two and a half million dollars, making the sale unnecessary. In all other years the seals have been sold for the nominal sum of one cent each, small in itself but enormous in the aggregate, and far greater when the scope of the work is considered.

In addition to these non-postal seals issued here and in many other countries there have been a number of nations who have issued actual postage stamps bearing the well-known double-barred cross, these stamps usually bearing a surtax from the proceeds of which were taken funds for local anti-tuberculosis work. Among these nations are Latvia, New South Wales, New Zealand, Belgium and Portugal. It is also interesting to note that Hungary, although it has not issued stamps for this purpose, has as one of its national symbols this same double-barred cross, its use dating far before the days of the fight against tuberculosis. One of the most attractive of all collections would be one made up of the stamps and seals issued for this purpose, and such a collection is remarkably easy to complete.

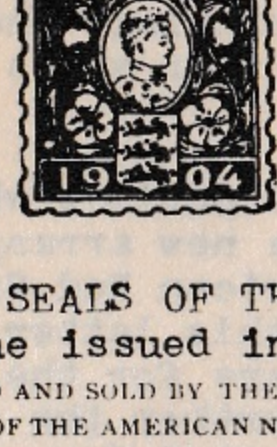
This closes the talk on the Christmas Seal, but on the next page will be found a rather remarkable illustration of every one of the seals issued in the United States thus far, as well as that earliest pioneer of all, the Danish seal of 1904. These illustrations have been made available thru the courtesy of the National Tuberculosis Association, the Journal of the Outdoor Life, Mr. A. W. Dunning of Wilmington, N.C., and the Scott Stamp and Coin Company of New York.

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All back numbers of these Stamp Talks of the current season may be obtained at no cost except 1¢ postage for each. They are as follows:

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|---------------------------------------|---------------------------------|
| No. 58-The Drama of the Postage Stamp | No. 63-An Epic in Iron          |
| No. 59-In The Beginning               | No. 64-The Wizard of Menlo Park |
| No. 60-The Penalty of Failure         | No. 65-Bridging the Atlantic    |
| No. 61-Greatest Name in History       | No. 66-Setting The Keystone     |
| No. 62-A Conquest of Peace            | No. 67-I Have But One Life      |
| No. 68-Conquering Six Nations.        |                                 |

THE FIRST CHRISTMAS SEAL  
DENMARK 1904



THE CHRISTMAS SEALS OF THE UNITED STATES  
(First one issued in 1907)

SEALS ISSUED AND SOLD BY THE DELAWARE CHAPTER OF THE AMERICAN NATIONAL RED CROSS.

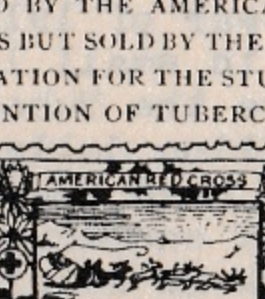


1907

SEALS ISSUED AND SOLD BY THE AMERICAN NATIONAL RED CROSS.



1908



1909



1910

SEALS ISSUED BY THE AMERICAN NATIONAL RED CROSS BUT SOLD BY THE NATIONAL ASSOCIATION FOR THE STUDY AND PREVENTION OF TUBERCULOSIS.



1911



1912



1913



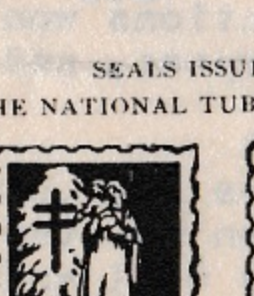
1914



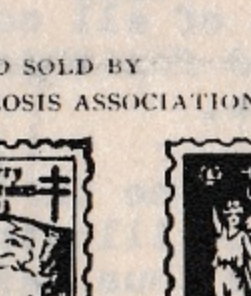
1915



1916



1917



1918



1919

SEALS ISSUED AND SOLD BY THE NATIONAL TUBERCULOSIS ASSOCIATION.



1920



1921



1922



1923



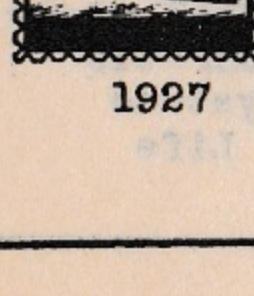
1924



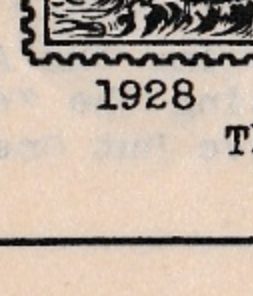
1925



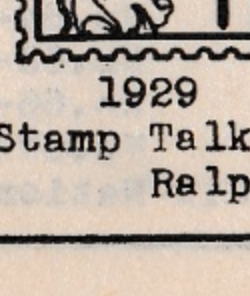
1926



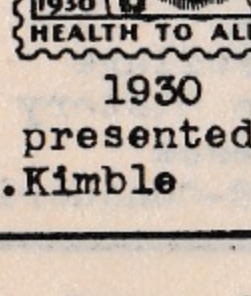
1927



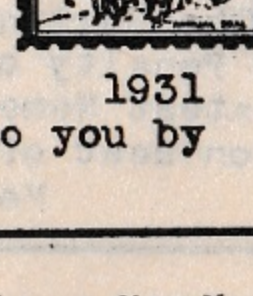
1928



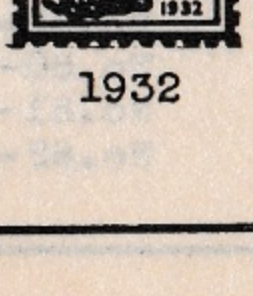
1929



1930



1931



1932

This Stamp Talk is presented to you by  
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