

A Forgotten Chapter in Christmas Seal History

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THE BULLETIN of the National Tuberculosis Association

Few people remember that from 1908 to 1912 there flourished in various localities throughout the country, a Christmas seal issued by the General Federation of Women's Clubs and bearing the double-barred tuberculosis emblem. When the National Tuberculosis Association began to form state associations in certain parts of the country, notably Vermont, Florida, South Carolina, Missouri, and New Hampshire, these Federation seals were found to have been in existence for one or more years. In some states they flourished and raised considerable sums of money. Some \$35,000 was raised in this manner during the holidays of 1908 and 1909.

The originator of the Federation's Christmas seal idea was Mrs. Rufus P. Williams of Cambridge, Massachusetts. As early as 1902 Mrs. Williams exhibited her definite interest in tuberculosis work by promoting the organization of the Cambridge Anti-Tuberculosis Society. In 1904 she organized the Health Division of the Massachusetts Federation of Women's Clubs and in 1906 succeeded in convincing the General Federation of Women's Clubs at its Biennial Convention in St. Paul that a Health Department for the Women's Clubs throughout the country should be organized. This was accomplished after an extended campaign which Mrs. Williams herself carried on, stressing the need for emphasis on tuberculosis work and the strategic opportunity the Women's Clubs offer for promoting this work. Among those who commended her in this campaign were Dr. Livingston Farrand, at that time Executive Secretary of the National Tuberculosis Association, Walter H. Wymen, the Surgeon General of the U. S. Public Health Service, and Dr. P. H. Rixey, Surgeon General of the

U. S. Navy. Numerous other letters of commendation were received from other sources, including the leaders in tuberculosis work throughout the country.

For the first four years of the program of the Health Department in the Federation, under the chairmanship of Mrs. Williams, the work was devoted entirely to tuberculosis.

In the effort to raise funds for the tuberculosis work that the enthusiasm of the national chairman generated. Mrs. Williams planned a Christmas seal. The Christmas seal was to be sold through state chairmen in various states and in some instances through local chairmen as for example, in Newton and Somerville, Massachusetts. Mrs. Williams herself superintended the designing and printing of the seals. Wherever possible the state flower was woven into the design of the seal. In all cases the seals and the advertising matter carried the double-barred cross, and some the slogan, "Victory Through Unity." One of the earliest posters used in the tuberculosis campaign was that prepared by Mrs. Williams for use in connection with the Christmas seal sale.

In a recent interview with Mrs. Williams she could not say exactly where she got the inspiration for her seal idea except that it came from Denmark. She says she thinks very likely she got it from the article in *The Outlook* which is probably the same source from which Miss Emily P. Bissell had received her inspiration a year previous.

Mrs. Williams continued as Health Chairman of the General Federation of Women's Clubs for four years until 1910. She was then made State Christmas seal chairman for the General Federation.

Mrs. Williams firmly believes that co-operation and not duplication of effort is the wisest way to achieve great success in any movement. Therefore, when the National Tuberculosis Association accepted from the Red Cross the Christmas seal as a method for earning money with which to promote efforts for the stamping out of tuberculosis, she recommended that as soon as was practicable, the women's clubs should unite with the National Tuberculosis Association in the sale of seals, thus emphasizing the motto of the Health Department of the General Federation of Women's Clubs, "Victory Through Unity." At this time Mrs. Williams resigned as Chairman of Seals, and no successor was appointed.

THE BULLETIN gladly does honor to Mrs. Williams for her splendid pioneer work in the early days of the Christmas seal.



We reproduce in black and white some of the seals, the originals of which were printed in red, green, and gold. The seals were put up in books of twenty-four and sold for twenty-five cents per book.