

Lots to collect in modern Christmas seals

By Fred Baumann

In the Dec. 19 issue of *Linn's* (page 14), I described 1994 Christmas seals that I received from the American Lung Association of Ohio.

I like Christmas seals, and I am pleased that the Scott U.S. specialized catalog lists seven decades of these colorful stickers — and dismayed by Scott's decision to stop listing them after 1979.

Scott's rationale is that "there is no longer one national issue. Additional designs are issued on a limited

used in recent months.

Two additional designs of Christmas seal and gift tag pairs, both perforated 12½, are shown in Figure 2.

The top pair shows a cheerful Christmas mouse giving a holly bedecked cat a present under the script heading, "Christmas is Love."

Text in the margin just above the gift tag on the rights tells us that the artist for this design was Travis Machacek, "National winner of American Lung Association's Kids' Christmas Seal

same silver frames as all other seals shown here.

The upper part of the sheet consists of 52 seals, each with a Christmas design from one of the 50 states, Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia. The state of origin is printed in the bottom-right corner of each seal, and they are in alphabetical order, from Alabama to Wyoming.

The text in the ninth row explains:

"These images were designed by children across the United States who have joined in the fight against lung disease. They are winning designs from among thousands of entries received by the American Lung Association's Kids' Christmas Seal Drawing Contest, sponsored by Triaminic Parents Club. Children ages six to 15 can enter this contest. Call 1-800-LUNG-USA for more information."

At the bottom of the sheet are nine gift tags with the winning Cat and Mouse design by Travis Machacek of Idaho, just like the ones in Figure 2. The design also appears in the seals on the sheet, at column 1, row 3.

The second, otherwise identical sheet, "94-14T3-5," has "SEASON'S GREETINGS 1994" under each design in the sheet, instead of the state name.

(We're left with a mystery, too. Is there, or was there, a "T5-5" — a fifth seal test design type? I do not know.)

Assuming that Scott pays no heed to gift tags (eight different, in all), that still leaves a staggering 110 different 1994 Christmas seals — two more than the number of face-different U.S. stamps issued the previous year.

Of course, those who wrote pointed out that there are many other seals in use during the holidays, too.

All of these are colorful and collectible, to be sure. But none have the longevity, the national circulation and, therefore, the popularity, of the ALA Christmas seals.

Doug S. Lehmann called me to explain the varieties of 1994 seals and gift tags, pointing out that the ALA examines the results achieved by its various test seals in January and February, assessing which design will be used the following year.

Drawing Contest, sponsored by Triaminic Parents Club." (Triaminic is a maker of children's cough syrup.)

Below that is a 1994 ALA copyright, and below that a more crucial bit of information: "94-14T1-5."

The "94" is the year, and "T1-5" means that this is test design No. 1 of that year.

The bottom design in Figure 1 shows a living Christmas tree of young carolers singing in the snow.

The pair shows the inscription "94-14T4-5" — another test design.

The most ambitious Christmas test seals this year were undoubtedly two large sheets. One of these, inscribed "94-14T2-5," is in Figure 3.

The 13½-by-8½-inch sheet is perf 12½, with the



Figure 1. Other collectible versions of the 1994 Elves and Teddy Bear seal: a self-adhesive version (top); a rouletted version with simulated perfs in black (middle); and a seal with Spanish text for fundraising in Puerto Rico (bottom).

basis as test seals to determine the designs to be used the following year."

I thought that case was worth revisiting. To try to convince Scott to do so, I asked collectors to tell me what other Christmas seals were out there in 1994.

Many readers responded. My conclusion, based on their information: U.S. Christmas seals today are far more complicated than they once were, but it should still be possible to Scott to bite the bullet and catalog them in some limited way each year.

The easiest way to catalog Christmas seals each year would be simply to list the most widely used design.

This year, for example, the general issue was the perf 12½ Elves and Teddy Bear seal in my Dec. 19 report.

Figure 1 demonstrates the difficulty in listings of even this limited scope — three other 1994 Elves and Teddy Bear Christmas seal types!

In Figure 1, the top Christmas seal and gift tag pair is a die-cut self-adhesive product.

The middle pair is rouletted, with false perfs printed in black and the entire design reduced in size.

The bottom pair in Figure 1 is perf 12½, like the seals I received. But this Spanish-language design is inscribed "FELIZ NAVIDAD."

Still, Scott should be able to handle this level of complexity in its listings. The trouble is that these were far from the only Christmas seals

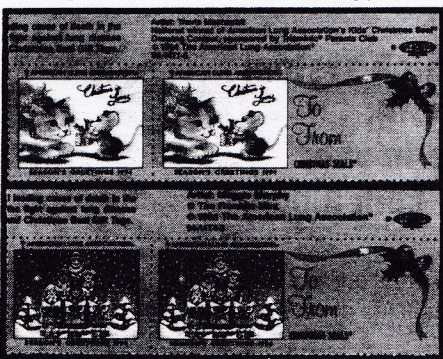


Figure 2. Two potential 1995 Christmas Seals tested during the 1994 holidays: an award-winning Cat and Mouse design created for a contest by a girl in Idaho (top) and a Snow Carolers design by artist Maggie Murphy (bottom).



Figure 3. There are 52 different seals — one for each state, Puerto Rico and the District of Columbia — in this one of two large se-tenant sheets of seals tested in 1994 for use in 1995. Seals showcase state winners in the American Lung Association's Kids' Christmas Seal Drawing Contest for children ages 6 to 15, sponsored by a maker of cough syrup.

The tests apparently are run by ALA state or regional chapters. Test mailings of the various designs go to comparable samples of consumers, and are assessed to see which brought the best response.

The most helpful and thorough correspondent I heard from was John B. Denune Jr., who supplied samples of all the seals shown here and many other recent, non-Christmas ALA adhesives, too. But his biggest contribution was information.

His father, John Sr., is a Christmas seal collector and expert, past president and vice president of the 63-year-old Christmas Seal & Charity Stamp Society, and currently on its board of directors.

The society, according to John Jr., "publishes seal literature including *Green's Catalog of TB Seals of the World*, the bible of Christmas seal collecting, which includes design experiment Christmas seals and spring [ALA] issues. The most recent edition of *Green's* cata-

log is 1983, with U.S. national seals (including experimental) updated through 1989."

John Jr. is the new editor of that catalog, and hopes to have "a completely revised U.S. national section through 1994 by next fall."

John Jr. also publishes price lists, while John Sr. has an impressive and lengthy list of specialized publications about seals. Many of the latter were listed in John M. Hotchner's U.S. Notes column in *Linn's* Dec. 19 issue (page 6).

John Jr. writes, "I think the Scott [U.S. specialized] catalog should list only the national Christmas seal issues, and leave the experimental seal listings to the Christmas Seal & Charity Stamp Society."

I'm inclined to agree. For 1994, for example, Scott could list either the perforated Elves and Teddy Bear seal, or that seal as well as the three in Figure 1.

Purists can and will argue

that such listings are incomplete, but they certainly would satisfy the vast majority of U.S. collectors.

The CS&CSS, the Denunes and other knowledgeable collectors could help Scott fill in the missing years.

Copies of the 48-page Denune Christmas seal price list are available for \$2 from John B. Denune Jr., 234 E. Broadway, Granville, OH 43023. John Sr. can be reached at the same address.

I'd like to thank all those who contributed commentary and cinderellas, including David Bize, Anne Bowbeer, Joe Bukis, Carl W. Fisher, Allan Hauck, Barth Healey, Karen Jurgensen, Gerald and Joann Kelly, Ross Knisely, Doug Lehmann, Larry Leskovjan, M.S. Lichtenstein, Tom Martoccia, Robert McCurdy, Hamilton Morris, David Occhipinti, Richard Sheasley, Joseph F. Spohrer and Harry H. Ulery Jr.

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