

The Story of the Christmas Seal



By ELMO SCOTT WATSON

WHEN you buy a big sheet of Christmas seals, does it ever occur to you that there's an interesting story back of the addition of these little "scraps of paper" to the list of symbols of Christmas time? And do the names of Elmer Holboell and Emily P. Bissell come to your mind when you stick one of these gayly-colored little stamps on a Christmas package and send it away to carry its message of Yuletide cheer as well as the message that you are thus helping in a great humanitarian work? If not, they should, for it is to a Danish postal clerk and an American Red Cross worker that we owe the idea and development of the Christmas seal.

Back in 1903 a man named Elmer Holboell, a postal clerk in the post office at Copenhagen, Denmark, was busy in the division of outgoing mail. It was Christmas week and he was literally buried in cards and letters. The faster he sorted the faster they flowed in.

For a moment he paused in serious thought; then his face brightened. "These Christmas cards and letters should have an additional stamp—a benevolent stamp or seal at a small price within the reach of all. Why not call it a Christmas stamp?"

"Even a two ore" (about one-fourth of a cent) stamp on all these cards and letters would create a mighty sum if the plan could only be realized. Christmas is a time of generosity and good will, when we send a kindly thought even to those whom we neglect the whole year through. Two ore each on every greeting would mean a sum to be reckoned with—well, then, to the task."

He went with his plan to the head of the postal service and others with influence and authority. And so, when the first Christmas seal committee was formed, including, among others, six representatives from the postal department, the interest of the postal employees was insured from the start.

In 1904 the committee met to discuss the purpose and use of the possible income from the Christmas seal, and it was decided that the first object was the erection of a hospital for tubercular children, and, in general, the income from the seal should always be for the fight against tuberculosis, in one form or another.

Upon application to the then King Christian IX, Holboell secured the permission to have a likeness of the deceased Queen Louise on the first Christmas seal, and the king became so interested that he himself selected the picture which he wished used.

Naturally, Mr. Holboell and his committee felt some anxiety over the outcome of their first venture—an anxiety which proved to be without foundation. The success was overwhelming. The first printing of 2,000,000 was immediately increased to 6,000,000 and over 5,000,000 were sold.

Since that time a capital of 3,000,000 kronen has been realized, which has been used for the erection of large numbers of sanitariums and convalescent homes for tubercular patients. Holboell, the modest postal assistant, became postmaster at Charlottenlund, near Copenhagen, and a Danish cross of Knighthood was his badge of honor. He died of heart trouble in his sixty-second year on February 23, 1927, and as was fitting, the Danish Christmas seal for 1927 bore the picture of Elmer Holboell, whose idea has spread over the entire world.

The story of how Miss Emily P. Bissell's name came to be associated with the Christmas seal was told in an article by Leigh Mitchell Hodges which appeared in *The Survey* last year and which has been reproduced in pamphlet form by the National Tuberculosis association. His story of "The First Christmas Seal" follows:

December, 1907—the World war seven years ahead, but a deadlier war at flood—tuberculosis taking one-tenth of all who died from disease—folks everywhere wondering what could be done to stem the tide.

Mid-morning, December 13—a ragged, dirty newsboy walked into a Philadelphia newspaper office. Reaching up to a marble counter higher than his head, he put down a copper cent.

"(What was given is the seal illustrated above directly under the letters 'Ch' in the title of this article.)"

Noontime, December 9, 1907, in Wilmington, capital of little Delaware, two pretty girls in Red Cross uniforms taking their place at a table in the post office corridor, asking a quarter each for little pay envelopes thus labeled:

25 CHRISTMAS STAMPS
One Penny Apiece
Issued by the Delaware Red Cross, to stamp out the White Plague.

Put this stamp with message bright
On every Christmas letter,
Help the tuberculosis fight,
And make the New Year better.

These stamps do not carry any kind of mail, but any kind of mail will carry them.

Mid-morning, December 11, 1907, eighteenth floor of the North American building in Philadelphia, a day member of the staff in his cubbyhole. "A lady to see you," passing a card engraved "Miss Emily P. Bissell." "Is she good looking?" "Sure." "Show her in."

Enter the secretary of the Delaware Red Cross on unofficial business. She had come to ask a favor of the Sunday editor and thought she'd pay her respects to the columnist, who hoped the Sunday editor had granted her wish.

He had not. She had wanted him to run a little story about this, taking a sheet of stamps from her handbag. Delaware was worried about tuberculosis, needed a few hundred dollars to start caring for poor patients. She had read Jacob Riss' story about the Danish Christmas Stamp in the Outlook, wondered if Delaware couldn't issue one and sell enough to build a small shelter—here it was, but she was afraid—

Downstairs went the occupant of the cubbyhole, two steps at a time, to the office of E. A. Van Valkenburg, president and editor of the paper that had been first to dispense the doctors by proposing publicity as the weapon to use against the white plague.

"Here's the way to wipe out tuberculosis," half-shouted the man from upstairs, as he waved the sheet of stamps under the editor's nose!

"What the hell do you mean?" A brief explanation. "Tell Miss Bissell the North American is hers from today."

"How soon can we have 50,000 of the stamps?" was asked of the lady from Delaware. She gasped and said she'd telephone from Wilmington that evening. "Fifty thousand," she echoed as she left, "Isn't that too many?"

Ten o'clock the morning of December 13, 1907, a few thousand of the stamps, they were so-called at first, on sale in the publication office and a few more at a booth in Wanamaker's. Also a top-of-column five-bank head on page one of the North American. Next day the whole editorial space devoted to a plea to buy these "bulletins" in the battle against the worst foe."

Next day a seven-column "spread" on page one, and on December 18,

with the stamps selling by thousands and telegrams from many parts of the country asking about them.

The presses in Wilmington couldn't print them fast enough, so a Philadelphia printer was enlisted. Through its Washington correspondent, the newspaper got the postmaster general's permission to put up a booth in the Philadelphia post office lobby.

From Jacob Riss, on December 19: "Good for you and for Philadelphia and the North American. Keep it up. I am glad the little seed I sowed in the Outlook last summer has borne fruit."

Five days before Christmas the governor of Pennsylvania and the Pennsylvania branch of the National Red Cross endorsed the stamp. Four days before Christmas an editorial urged that "A Million Mercy Messengers" be bought by the people. Two days before Christmas "Happy New Year" was added to the stamp design, the demand having grown so. The day after Christmas more than half a million already distributed to city, state and nation.

Then a flight of signed endorsements from Washington, President Roosevelt, Secretary of State Root, Secretary of War Taft; from Baltimore, Cardinal Gibbons; from other places leaders in public life, philanthropy and education all featured on page one.

On January 8, a check for \$1,013.97 sent to Miss Bissell, the proceeds of the North American's part in this preface to stamping out the plague—several times the sum Delawareans had wanted to raise and feared they could not get. And as much more from other sources in Pennsylvania. All told, Delaware and Pennsylvania raised \$3,000 from this first sale of stamps.

Meantime, the National Red Cross stopped, looked and listened, at an annual meeting, to Miss Bissell and the cubbyhole man, and slowly but surely decided to get behind the stamp. So the field was widened for the second round of these harmless "bulletins," harmless to all save the deadly germs.

On November 12, 1908, the first gun in the second campaign was fired by the North American, a page-one promise to sell 1,000,000 of the 1908 stamps, and one month later to the day it ordered its fourth million. Meantime—

Every day from November 12 to January 1, the Red Cross Christmas Stamp was a matter of first-page moment, and many a day it was given precedence over all other news in the North American.

"It is splendid," said President Taft at the meeting of the Red Cross in Washington, December 8. Two days later the first page of the North American came out with a border of the stamps in red and a three-column facsimile likewise colored. Other newspapers in many parts of the land were joining the procession. When the curtain was rung down on this act, in January, the net result of the stamp sale throughout the nation was \$135,000. "I never could have believed it," said Miss Bissell.

"Gimme one"—and how the tinkle of that copper coin has grown!

Annual sales of Christmas seals amounted to \$33,000,000 to date, from this source alone. Yet the money is the least part of it. The message is what has counted most. Between them, the death rate from tuberculosis has been cut in half. And it is still going down. Its fate is sealed.

(© 1926, Western Newspaper Union.)

OREGON STATE NEWS OF GENERAL INTEREST

Principal Events of the Week
Assembled for Information
of Our Readers.

A 19-pound turnip from the C. W. Cutsforth ranch near Eddyville is on display at Gervais.

Here's one for the family breakfast. A pullet, owned by Otto Lebeck, of Astoria, laid an egg 9½ by 7½ inches.

Douglas county's assessed valuation including public utilities, is \$33,494,173. This is an increase of \$40,983 over last year.

Gertude Geer, six-year-old daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Frank Geer of near Cottage Grove, was burned to death. A stump fire ignited her dress.

Deschutes county's valuation for tax purposes has passed the ten million mark for the first time. Including public utilities the total is \$10,341,224.

Marshfield will have a municipal Christmas tree again this year: Merchants are arranging for placing of smaller trees along the principal streets.

La Grande and the Union Pacific system are making plans for a grand opening of the new union station there December 27. The depot is of two stories and cost \$150,000.

School taxes amounting to \$493,087 have been voted by 112 Lane county school districts. This amount will be raised by taxpayers and will be supplemented with other funds.

Elimination of the health unit and cuts in other departments, making a total reduction of \$7616, have been recommended to the county court by the Douglas County Taxpayers league.

Astoria had an oil gusher recently on one of its main business intersections. A truck delivering fuel oil lost its tank and traffic was halted by oil which sprayed the streets and sidewalks.

Thirty-five road districts of Lane county have voted to raise a total of \$86,589 to improve district roads. The amount raised last year was \$93,328. Ten districts voted down special tax proposals.

The Pacific Co-operative Poultry Producers announced the purchase of the Stancliffe property in Roseburg as the site for an egg packing station. Construction will start soon after the first of the year.

Ben F. Keeney, Lane county assessor, won two third prizes and a tenth award on his exhibits of Barred Rock chickens at the Chicago coliseum poultry show, according to word received at Eugene.

An organization has been formed at Pendleton to combat unemployment by some 34 representatives of 17 different service clubs, labor organizations, churches, welfare societies, lodges and other groups.

The city council of Salem has adopted a resolution providing for a four-hour day for workers on city construction projects and to use men instead of machinery when practicable, in order to relieve unemployment.

Lane county received from the state treasurer a check for \$37,103.12, which is the county's share of the second payment of the state market road fund. The money will be used by the county to pay market road warrants.

THE MARKETS

Portland
Wheat—Big Bend bluestem, 79c; soft white, western white, 69c; hard winter, northern spring, western red, 67c.

Hay—Buying price, f. o. b. Portland: Alfalfa, \$17.50@18; valley timothy, \$17.50; eastern Oregon timothy, \$19@20; clover, 14; oat hay, \$14; oats and vetch, \$13.50@14.

Butterfat—30@33c.
Eggs—Ranch, 18@25c.
Cattle—Steers, good, \$8.25@9.
Hogs—Good to choice, \$9.25@9.50.
Lamb—Good to choice, \$6.50@7.00.

Seattle
Wheat—Soft white, western white, northern spring, hard winter, western red, 68c; bluestem, 76c;
Eggs—Ranch, 22@31c.
Butterfat—34c.

Cattle—Choice steers, \$7.75@8.50.
Hogs—Good to choice, \$9.50@9.60.
Lamb—Choice, \$6.50@6.50.

Spokane
Cattle—Steers, good, \$7.25@7.75.
Hogs—Good to choice, \$8.75.
Lamb—Medium to good, \$6.50@6.

When the waters had subsided, and with no other wild-life expert around to take violent issue with, life must have been empty for Noah.

Fairy Story—"Once upon a time the cut-up at the party dropped the crystal from his watch, and failed to try it in his eye, as a monacle."

An English clergyman predicts that the next war will be between men and women, and Charley, the neighborhood Romeo, says he will be ready at the call, to enlist as a spy.

One of the major road-oiling projects for Jackson county the coming year will be the oiling of the Applegate road from Ruch to Provolt, or to the Josephine county line. This will give an oiled or paved highway from Medford to Provolt.

A White Wyandotte pullet belonging to John Bowman, a Bandon high school student, was awarded honors as the grand champion bird of the first Bandon egg and poultry show. It is said to be one of the finest birds ever exhibited in Oregon.

The first meeting of sheepmen in southwestern Oregon was held at Bandon recently. There are about 25,000 sheep in Coos county and 175 growers. The animals graze principally on cut-over land and hill slopes. There is room for at least 100,000, it is said.

Plans for the large addition to the Presbyterian church at Astoria will be given to contractors and bids will be opened December 20. It was announced by the church building committee. The total expenditure will amount to between \$20,000 and \$22,500.

The map of Oregon soon will have a new postoffice near Clifton, where the Bradley-Woodard Timber company has begun construction of a new hemlock sawmill to cost about \$250,000. The company has filed application for a postoffice under the name of Bradley.

With a program that will make the event one of the largest waterway observances along the Pacific Coast, Coos Bay will hold its second great transportation celebration in July, when the entire district will mark the completion of the \$4,000,000 harbor project.

The Clatsop county court is preparing to request the Oregon delegation in congress to aid in the passage of the bill pending in the lower house providing for the return of \$100,000 paid by the county for the Tongue Point naval base site. The measure has passed the senate.

The assessed valuation of public service corporation property in Linn county for 1931 is \$34,269 less than for 1930. The valuation for 1931 is \$4,246,640, bringing the total assessment of the county to \$29,831,890. For the first time in 10 years the total is under \$30,000,000.

David Anthony Nork, 4, was scalded to death near Klamath Falls when he fell into a vat of boiling water prepared to scald hogs. The boy's father had been butchering hogs and was preparing to scald them. While he stepped outside the shed momentarily, the child fell into the vat.

Of 34 fires in the Santiam national forest during the fire season, 14 were man-caused, one incendiary, according to a report released by C. C. Hall, supervisor. The total area burned was 155 acres, of which 147 acres were covered by the only class C fire of the 34. The estimated loss was \$3163.

During the first 11 months of this year \$3,277,776 has been invested by newcomers to the state of Oregon farm lands, 88,221 acres being involved, according to a report of the land settlement department of the Oregon State chamber of commerce. The report shows 865 families coming into the state to become farmers.

With the razing of the old post-office building, the last of Cove's old landmarks is rapidly disappearing. Part of the building was the old Dixie schoolhouse built in the late '60s, and pioneers recall the time they attended school there. The main part of the building has stood for more than 50 years. This is the only one of the six old landmarks not destroyed by fire.

The old town pump in Jacksonville, which has served thirsty residents of the pioneer town for 75 years, is being replaced by a modern drinking fountain. The pump has stood beside the Beekman bank, oldest bank in Oregon, since 1855, and in its time drew water from its well for stage coach passengers and horses. President U. S. Grant is among the famous persons known to have used the water.

Peacock spit, one of the most profitable fishing grounds at the mouth of the Columbia river, is rapidly disappearing under tidal action. The spit is now leased by the Columbia River Packers association at a rental of \$36,000 a year.

One large sawmill, the plant of the Umpqua Mills & Timber company, is running full time at Reedsport. The plant will close for the holidays and then resume. The three other mills at Reedsport are closed for an indefinite time.

Some Reds were dispersed in China, where the precinct workers must be having a hard time keeping track of the color of politics.

The first man to make a nonstop flight round the world probably will be killed by the crowd that greets him when he lands.

A Pasadena centenarian says anybody can live to be one hundred if he does not worry. But he doesn't tell us how not to worry.

FOSTER BALKS



William Z. Foster.

Washington.—William Z. Foster, Communist leader, refused to submit a list of the members of the American central executive committee of Communists to the house committee investigating Communist activities. He also refused to take an oath, saying he did not believe in deity, but agreed to affirm that he would testify truthfully.

AMER. FARM BUREAU WOULD RUN SHOALS

Movement Is Launched at Boston Meeting of Federation.

Boston, Mass.—The American Farm Bureau federation in session here adopted a resolution seeking operation of Muscle Shoals by a co-operative organization of farmers. The federation also voiced its opposition to amending the agricultural marketing act this time.

Among other resolutions adopted were:

Recommendation for stricter regulation of the grain and cotton exchanges.

Recommendation that funds to be used as loans to farmers in the purchase of feed for animals, fertilizer, and seeds in the drought area to be made available immediately.

That congress appropriate money to insure immediate carrying out of the development projects authorized.

Advocation of a revolving fund in the federal treasury to be used exclusively to stabilize federal land bank bonds.

A declaration that the farm bureau would continue efforts to secure adequate tariff rates on vegetable oils, starches, sugar, dried egg products, and hides, and recommending an increase in the tariff on pulp and pulpwood.

The resolution pertaining to Muscle Shoals authorized and instructed the board of directors to move to set up a corporation truly representative of agriculture to lease and operate Muscle Shoals on a co-operative basis.

An amendment to the resolution regarding the river and harbors bill was defeated. The amendment would have put special emphasis on the Mississippi waterway and Great Lakes development projects.

Secretary of Agriculture Hyde told the federation that the hope of agriculture rests in an organization of farmers broad enough to plan production and control marketing, coupled with adequate tariff protection.

"The root of our troubles is over-production," he asserted.

WASHINGTON BRIEFS

Without debate, the senate confirmed the appointment of William M. Donk of Virginia as secretary of labor.

Secretary of War Hurley called ridiculous reports that Russia had been buying secrets of United States aviation plans.

Capt. Frank Hawks' glider plane, in which he made a transcontinental trip last spring, has been placed in the Smithsonian institution.

Postmaster General Brown in his annual report disclosing a \$50,000,000 deficit, recommended an increase in the first-class postage rate from 2 to 2½ cents.

Frank T. Hines, veterans' administrator, suspended until January 5 the release of 200 veterans at the National Military home at Leavenworth, Kan.

Slays Grandmother; Chair Louisville, Ky.—Robert Lee Bennett, twenty-seven, charged with slaying his grandmother, Mrs. Rosa Bennett, sixty-nine, was sentenced to die in the electric chair.

Bigger Forest Fund Asked Indianapolis.—The central states forestry congress, with eleven states participating, endorsed a proposal that delegates ask their legislatures to provide larger appropriations to fight timber fires.

PLEADS FOR SENATE O. K. ON WORLD COURT

President Urges Early Consideration of Plan.

Washington.—Early consideration of the World court issue was urged upon the senate by President Hoover in a special message transmitting the revised protocols.

The President requested that the protocols be given consideration "as soon as possible after the emergency relief and appropriation legislation has been disposed of."

The President's message was read in the senate and referred to the foreign relations committee after Senator William E. Borah (Rep., Idaho), chairman of the committee, moved that the senate go into open executive session.

Senator Borah indicated that the method of handling the protocols would be taken up by the committee this week.

President Hoover apparently is convinced that the annual appropriation bills will be out of the way in time to take up the World court on the floor two or three weeks in advance of the adjournment on March 4.

"I have the honor to transmit to the senate for its consideration and action three documents concerning adherence of the United States to the Court of International Justice," said the President. "I inclose also a report of November 18, 1929, by the secretary of state. I trust the protocols may have consideration as soon as possible after the emergency relief and appropriation legislation has been disposed of."

"It will be recalled that on January 27, 1923, following extended consideration, the senate advised and gave consent to adherence to the court with five reservations; and it gave authorization to effect their acceptance by an exchange of notes. Consent to four of these reservations was promptly expressed at a meeting of the nations members of the court, and after negotiations, undertaken with the approval of President Coolidge, two protocols were drawn to revise the statutes of the court in order to embody this consent and also to meet the fifth reservation. The protocol of accession of the United States and the protocols of revision have now been signed by practically all the nations which are members of the court and have also already been ratified by a large majority of these nations.

"The provisions of the protocols free us from any entanglement in the diplomacy of other nations. We cannot be summoned before this court, we can from time to time seek its services by agreement with other nations. These protocols permit our withdrawal from the court at any time without reproach or ill will.

"The movement for the establishment of such a court originated with our country. It has been supported by Presidents Wilson, Harding and Coolidge; by Secretaries of State Hughes, Kellogg and Stimson; it springs from the earnest seeking of our people for justice in international relations and to strengthen the foundations of peace.

"Through the Kellogg-Briand pact we have pledged ourselves to the use of pacific means in the settlement of all controversies. Our great nation so devoted to peace and justice should lend its co-operation in this effort of the nations to establish a great agency for such pacific settlements."

Under the plans of the pacifist lobby, at whose insistence the President submitted the protocols at this time instead of waiting until next winter as was his original intention, a bombardment is to be kept up on senators by pro-court groups in the various states.

\$60,000,000 Drought Aid Bill Passed by Senate

Washington.—The bill introduced by Senator McNary (Rep., Ore.), chairman of the senate agriculture committee, to authorize an appropriation of \$60,000,000 for drought relief, was passed by the senate. It authorizes loans to farmers in the drought areas "for the purchase of food, seed or suitable crops, fertilizer, feeds for live stock and fuel and oil for tractors." The administration's opposition to loans for food was attacked by the Democrats. The measure was sent to the house where a similar bill specifying \$30,000,000 has been reported by the agriculture committee.

Approve Program to Put 150,000 Ry. Men to Work

Washington.—Unanimous agreement on a program which, it was said, would restore 150,000 unemployed railroad workers to service was reached here by representatives of the Railway Labor Executives' association, which consists of the 21 railway labor unions whose contracts affect the employment of 1,600,000 men.

200,000-Acre Ranch Sold El Paso, Texas.—Sale of the 200,000 acre Corralitos ranch near Las Cruces, N. M., by the McGregor Land and Cattle company, El Paso, to Charles L. Powell, Los Angeles stockman, is announced here. The consideration was reported at \$250,000.

Burn Barley as Fuel Roland, Manitoba.—Farmers around here are using their surplus barley for fuel, instead of coal and wood, considering it cheaper.