

## Monroe Residents Have Long History Selling Christmas Seals

I remember as a student at the Enterprise School in the fifties that we were asked to sell Christmas seals to our family and the neighbors. Unfortunately, there were not many neighbors who didn't have children in school to whom we could sell. It had been years since I had thought about this as I no longer notice Christmas seals on Christmas mail like I did then. This memory was triggered when I saw information in the 1910 newspapers about them. I checked with two high school classmates who did not remember selling the seals in the city schools, so there might have been another plan for selling them in the city.

The first article appeared on November 19 and contained only general information about the program. The Red Cross Christmas seal campaign was to open on November 28 and help the Wisconsin Anti-Tuberculosis association replenish its working fund and continue the battle against tuberculosis that had been so aggressively waged in 1910. The sticker that year was a square stamp with a red cross in the center with a circular message that said, "American Red Cross Merry Christmas Happy New Year" in red and green. At this time there were already 350 enthusiastic citizens who had volunteered to superintend sales in as many towns with more being added each day. Residents of Wisconsin had purchased 2.3 million stickers for a penny each in 1909. The article concluded, "Every piece of mail and every package and gift sent during the campaign should bear a Red Cross seal."

Twenty-thousand seals had been received before November 29 by Dr. L. A. Moore, who would arrange for their sale in Monroe. The Woman's club had taken charge of the canvas for the seals in their first year in Monroe the previous year. It was thought at the time of writing the news article that they might do it again in 1910.

Dr. Moore, the local campaign manager, had several female assistants at work by the beginning of December. They expected the sales that year to exceed the previous year. It was felt that, "every man, woman and child in the city should take an active interest." The stamps were placed on sale in many of the business places about the square and in the schools; various societies and ministers also engaged in the work. The lady leaders started to solicit the homes in the city on December 6; it was hoped that everyone called upon would respond generously to "lend their mite to the stamping out of the dreaded plague."

Some people asked if they could use the stamps that they had bought the previous year but hadn't used. Of course the stamps could be used, but "their use will not help in the campaign being carried on at the present time." In other words, it wouldn't raise any new money.

The last article I found that year was on December 10. The information came from Milwaukee and quoted the state Campaign Manager, Theodore J. Werle. He suggested that the seals not be used exclusively on mail matter, "but they should be stuck on everything from a package of needles to a locomotive." He felt that the seal was "an educator in addition to being a medium of obtaining revenue to carry on the warfare against tuberculosis." Business men stuck Christmas seals on bills, statements, transcripts; society women on invitations and calling cards; bowlers on their scoresheets; children on books; physicians on prescriptions. There was no limit to the use of seals.

I did not find any information about how many seals were sold in 1910. Knowing how generous people in Monroe have always been, I would guess that they sold all that they received. I did see that 14,000 seals were sold around the square by December 5 the following year. The high school sold \$175 of stamps by December 13, 1912. As I recall we still sold the seals for a penny each in the 1950s. It was a way to let people know that one supported the cause - if you actually used them. Our family did use them on our Christmas cards as did many of the people from whom we received cards.

A quick google search took to me to lung.org where I found out that the first Christmas seals were issued in 1907. At that time tuberculosis was the leading cause of death in the United States. When Emily



This was the headline in the December 10, 1910 issue of the Monroe Evening Times.

Bissell found out that a small Delaware sanatorium needed \$300 or it would have to close its doors, she designed and printed special holiday seals and sold them at the post office. I also found out that Christmas seals are still available now for a minimum donation of \$10. My Christmas letters this year will each sport a seal as they are trying to defeat asthma, lung cancer, influenza and other lung diseases, including Covid-19.