

2016 Presentation

SealMail – or seals that carried the mail and shouldn't have

⇒ 1. Title

Several years ago, the Christmas Seal and Charity Stamp Society published an article in its journal, *Seal News*, which described mail legitimately carried by seals. I thought, what about mail carried by seals, NOT legally? I approached several other members of the Seal Society and a few shared their examples of "SealMail" with me. Those combined with the examples I owned seemed good enough to share – so here we are!

If I have shown this here before and you remember it, you may take a nap – just don't snore, please!

⇒ 2. Legal

First, some examples of the legal seals [Military and members of Congress]

⇒ 3. Also legal

Next, a reminder about Emily Bissell who created our first Christmas, of TB seals. She prevailed on the local post office in Wilmington, Delaware, to allow her and her helpers to sell them inside the lobby of the post office. She said, "*These little seals will not carry any mail, but any mail will carry them.*"

The fact that these seals were sold in post offices for a penny - same as the going rate for postcards - and were called at first 'Christmas Stamps,' probably created some confusion. Thus, often mail was posted with a seal only; postal employees were either too busy to notice, being the Christmas season; or tolerant enough of this new idea to let them slide through.

⇒ 4. Looking here, does anyone wonder why one cover cost only one-and-a half cents and the other cost two cents??

⇒ 5. 1907

The earliest example we've seen of a post card going through the mail with a seal only is this one. Here a Type I 1907 seal (often called a local seal) serves as the 'stamp' on a postcard with a Dec. 24, 1907 postmark. The fact that it was a local mailing, in Philadelphia, and was almost Christmas, probably helped it along.

⇒ 6. 1908, 1909

A 1908 seal carried a post card in Baltimore, Maryland. Among early seals that carried the mail is this card – likely a holiday greeting as evidenced by the embossing – posted with a 1909 seal mailed from St. Louis, Missouri;

⇒ 7. Odd 1908

Here, we found this strange cover with a postmark date of April 16, 1908 over a 1908 seal. Clearly the date must have been tampered with.

⇒ 8. Odd 1912

And one 1912 seal on a postcard. The date cancel on this card clearly reads "Jan. 1, 1912." Since this is over a 1912 Christmas seal, and U.S. seals usually weren't issued until October or

November of the year shown on the seals, we can surmise the postal clerk who cancelled the postcard probably wasn't fully awake at 9 AM on January 1, **1913**.

I **divided** all the seal mail covers into categories in an attempt to organize things. In doing that, I found the cards and covers telling us a lot about themselves. (This is also called "postal history" by some, but I call it a lot of fun)

One of the divisions one I call "**Contests**." Maybe they were meant to test the postal clerks' alertness, but a number of covers sent with seals as postage went to various contests around the country.

⇒ 9 and 10 Super Jingo

The '**Super Jingo**' contest ran in the *Buffalo (NY) News* in the mid-1980s. The contest board looked like a bingo card, and entrants circled certain numbers, sent in the card in hopes of winning something. Seals instead of stamps carried these through the mail. Most were local and mailed in December. Both of these envelopes had the entries still in them, and one was made out from a family group.

⇒ 11. Boodle

Another contest, was the '**Boodle & Dine** Sweepstakes in St. Paul, Minnesota, with an entry sent from Florida in April 1983; the 'stamp' is a 1982 seal, showing Santa Claus offering a bone to the family dog. (1982 seals pictured Santa and the dog in six different poses). I tried researching this contest – but found nothing.

⇒ 12. Perky Panda

An entry in this category was sent to the '**Perky Panda Playtime**' at the *Post and Times Star* of Cincinnati. Sent from Amelia Ohio, (a small town east of Cincinnati) the envelope still had a child's pencilled handwritten note inside: "*Here is my entry to the perky Panda Contes[t] to see who wins with the best card.*" Then on a sheet of mama's pink stationery is: "*To a small boy On a big day. Merry Christmas and a happy New Year.*"

One of the four singing children seals of 1960 was used as postage. The letter was cancelled and sent Dec. 9, 1960. The sender's name and return address were on the outside of the envelope. There is no evidence her name was on the note inside.

Several of these contest entries had never been opened. Had they been jinxed by the improper postage? Or perhaps they were too late for a deadline for entries.

⇒ 13. Strikes

The postcard here, is a real puzzle. Addressed to the '**Strikes and Spares**' contest it carries what may be hand-back or decorative cancels from Canada and postal cancels – Three of them! - from New York city over a joined pair of 1970 US seals. This was the first year that there were 100 *different* seals in the seal sheet.

Several covers fall into a category I call "**ordinary mail**" – some possibly holiday cards sent out during December, from 1921 into the 1960s. and some just regular mail.

This was a long way from the early days when there was confusion over the seals. Thus, reasons for these letters to have gotten through the system posted with seals could be blamed on the Christmas season - more mail, substitute clerks, no automation or tagging yet.

⇒ 14. 1920 seals

Ordinary they may be, yet nearly each one has its own interesting quirk. One sent to and from San Francisco on Jan 14, 1921, was carried by a joined pair of 1920 seals.

⇒ 15. 1930

A Chicago letter had a 1930 seal as a stamp, . 1930 and another one on the back.

⇒ 16. 1946 and 1952

The 1946 lamplighter carried this letter (or holiday card)

A card from Niagara Falls, New York to Ohio went by way of a 1952 seal, nicely cancelled with the TB slogan cancel: "Fight TB, Support your TB Association" with the double-barred cross on the left.

⇒ 17 Two covers carried seals in the lower left corners — neither had a stamp. The 1957 piece shows a machine cancel in the usual place, over empty space. A machine cancel on the other obliterates the two 1966 seals (twice) as if they were postage stamps. No cancel is on the upper right corner

⇒ 18. 1913

Expo cancel for the 1915 Pacific Panama Expo event covers a 1913 seal used as postage.

Business Mail – to or from businesses using seals for stamps

⇒ 19. 1963 Mail to Hobby House in 1954 with a cancelled seal for that year. An upside-down 1962 seal sends a bill payment (probably) to Standard Oil in Cleveland, from Cincinnati Ohio

⇒ 20. Three Bankers Trust covers. These three covers mailed to Bankers Trust were all carried by the seals of those years. One cover shows receiving mark applied by the bank. In these cases, there was no return address and no attempt to collect postage due. Again, all were mailed in December or January.

⇒ 19. Miss Feeley of American Bank and Trust got a letter with a vertical pair of seals. The bank's receiving stamp can be seen, too. We wonder if the sender got the job!

⇒ 21. Young Rowena Sunico. of Knoxville, Tennessee got a really cool gift for Christmas, and then she filled out the product card to return to the company. Not sure from an unclear cancel when she mailed it, but it carried a 1983 Christmas seal for postage. So what did Rowena get? - -

⇒ 22 (Clock radio)

On Purpose? It was fairly apparent, while browsing through these covers with seals for stamps, that some were intentionally done that way. This is, of course, only speculation. We don't know these senders from 40-50 years ago, or their intent. However, guessing on the postal history of these covers makes the whole project just a bit more fun.

⇒ 24. Santa Claus

When little Stephen A. of Portland, Maine (name written on the back of the envelope) wrote a letter to Santa Claus in Dec. 1965, his mom (probably) gave him a couple of 1964 Christmas seals to use for stamps. At the post office, the envelope properly addressed to "Santa Claus, North Pole," was duly cancelled with a round dater. (The envelope, by the way, had been opened and was empty!) Letters to Santa Claus often were accepted and processed because they seldom went any further than the local post office in most cities.

and

⇒ 24 Joe's

A joined pair of 1965 seals — tree on left; girl feeding birds, right — carried a letter (or card) to "Joe and the employees/Joes Record Shop/Anderson, Indiana." A machine cancel of Anderson, IN with date of Dec. 27, 1965, cancelled the seals. Not sure if Joe's buddy or buddies stuck the 1965 se-tenant pair of seals on purpose — maybe it was thought those *were* postage stamps. Anyway it went through the postal system. [NOTE: No street address given — or asked for!]

⇒ 25. Jerry Greene — from a number of covers in my collection (and those of other seal collectors) we began to suspect that Jerry Greene was perhaps someone who was 'baiting the system.,' and sending these covers to himself. And he, or a parent or friend, must have been a seal collector. Otherwise how would he happen to have a couple of 1932 Christmas seals in 1955!

⇒ 26. Wouldn't it seem logical to you to affix a 1970 seal on the envelope being mailed to the local Tuberculosis Association? It seemed so to a lady in Valley Center, Kansas; and apparently to the postal workers who let the ragged 1970 corner seal carry the donation envelope

⇒ 27. What may have been bills being paid were mailed with U.S. Christmas seals. One from a resident of a Columbus suburb to an insurance company in Hartford Connecticut (zip 06152) was sent from Columbus Ohio on Dec. 13, 1977 with a 1975 seal. Oddly, this envelope went to Butler, PA (zip160xx) first, possibly due to some dyslexic postal clerk. This we learned from a cancel on the back of the cover.

⇒ 28. Thrifty

The other went to a doctor in Minneapolis with a joined pair of 1971 seals - which happen to show a dual perf shift. This on an envelope belonging to the "Thrifty Super Markets!" How thrifty can you get? While the "Thrifty Markets" appears to be crossed out, there is no other return address showing.

Two possibly disgruntled taxpayers obviously decided “not to spend one more cent!” when sending mail to the tax collectors of Virginia Beach, Virginia and Riverhead, New York.

⇒ 29 Va.Beach AND

A tax collector of Virginia Beach got a letter with the 1990 doves and poinsettia seal in the spot for the stamp. It was doubly affirmed by the P.O. - machine cancel and ink jet spray run over the seal.

Riverhead - A 1992 seal – cardinals and snow – franked the blue envelope to the Riverhead Receiver of Taxes. To make it more amusing, the slogan cancel "Do Something Wild" sits over the seal.

⇒ 30. A joke??

Seals other than Christmas

⇒ 31. Easter:

Easter seals have been with us almost 80 years. Do you remember the name of the organization that promoted these seals? [The Society for Crippled Children was started in 1919 in Elyria Ohio and became a National Society two years later. Because the seals produced around Easter time became so popular, the Society took on the name Easter Seals (Society) and remains that today. The white lily is its “trademark” just as the double-barred cross is the emblem for TB]

Here a 1960 Easter seal carries possibly the phone bill for Palumbo’s Plumbing.

⇒ 32. Next; an Easter seal from 1987 franked a letter to and from Largo, Florida. Its message emphasizes the rehabilitation focus of Easter Seals – “But Ability in Disability. The white lily is seen at the bottom. On the bottom, a 1981 Easter Seal took this mail from Kansas to New York.

⇒ 33. Holy Child

A cover sent from Washington state to Oregon is neatly cancelled over a Holy Childhood seal, dated Nov. 17, 1973. Holy Childhood is a non-denominational, non-profit agency that has enriched the lives of people with intellectual and developmental disabilities for nearly 70 years. [Its Mission is to prepare children and adults with intellectual and developmental disabilities for maximum independence and integration in the community through individualized programs and services, in keeping with the philosophy and vision of our founders. We are dedicated to serving our people in an atmosphere of dignity and compassion.]

⇒ 34. S. Africa

Even Overseas – These are Christmas seals, but NOT from the U.S. A joined pair of South Africa bi-lingual Christmas Seals, cancelled Dec. 13, 1949, took a letter to its destination in another city in S. Africa.

⇒ 35 Amvets

Two envelopes sent to Mrs. J. Gallagher in November 1958 in Macedon, New York were posted with Amvets “I PLEDGE ALLEGIANCE” seals. One, postmarked on Nov. 13, 1958 from East Rochester, N.Y. with a machine cancel, got through the mails.

The other with a Fairport, N.Y. postmark on Nov. 3 did NOT cancel the seal - rather "4c Due" was scrawled beside. This one has two postage due labels in the bottom corner which were cancelled from Macedon. This means that Mrs. Gallagher (or someone) paid the 4 cents.

Makes one wonder if the sender knew about the postage due from Mrs. G, - and tried again 10 days later from another post office!

CAUGHT!

This brings us to some examples of "seal-mail" that were caught for their postal infractions.

⇒ 36. 1908 due

For example, not all 1908 seals-as-stamps made it through the mail system. From Joe Ward's collection we see a 1908 seal franking a letter in Philadelphia. A large black "DUE 2" appears on the lower right. Nearby is a two-cent postage due stamp, confirming that payment was collected.

.⇒ 37. 1911 due

A similar case with this post card that a sharp-eyed postal person caught with a 1911 Red Cross seal. Why Red Cross? It happened that after Emily Bissell got the seal project going, the NTA wasn't yet able to assist her financially. So she appealed to the Red Cross and that organization issued the Christmas Seals until 1920, when the TB Association took on the project solely.

And why a lesser cost than three years earlier? (Postcard rate)

. ⇒ 38. 1918 due

A later example is a cover with a 1918 seal postmarked Foxboro, Mass. The recipient in Connecticut paid the fee - 2 cents - as seen by the postage due stamp affixed. The member who loaned us this cover, said, "It's a good example of what *should* happen." The 1918 seal on cover is difficult to find as it was in the midst of WWI and seals were sent only to contributing Red Cross members in booklets of ten.

⇒ 39. Bank

When it came to collecting postage, Bankers Trust finally had to pay! Although there is no postal indication that the 5 cents was collected.

.⇒ 40. Book club

An amusing scenario showed up on a card mailed to a Book club in New Jersey. John T. in San Francisco stuck three 1972 seals (joined) on his selection card.

⇒ 41. .Book club back

On the back where he is asked to indicate what he wants: an extra book, another book, or no book at all. Beside the choice, "Send no book this month" he penned emphatically "OR EVER!"

He mailed the card on Halloween 1972 - 'Trick or Treat!' The trick was on the book club when they had to fork over 8 cents to claim the card - with no sale in the prospect!

⇒ 42. S&H

Two covers that "got caught" also qualify in the next category of seals other than Christmas used for postage.

When J. Jones in Georgia mailed a letter to Mr. Williams in New Jersey she put a 3-cent Liberty stamp on the envelope, and an S&H Green stamp. The post office took exception to this and rubber-stamped "Postage Due 1 Cent" on the cover, twice, and in purple ink.

Apparently Mr. Williams may have found one of those notices in his P.O. box that said something like "Please call at window for mail," and he wondered why. So someone wrote on the envelope, "S&H Stamp No Good for Postage." (First class postage had gone to 4 cents the year before)

⇒ 43. Spring seal (from American Lung Association)

"**We forgot one**" - - so wrote Betsy & Chuck Berry (CS member/dealers) about a letter they sent that came back sporting a "Postage Due" line in red on it. When the couple moved, they sent out 500 Change of Address letters. Each one was to get a 1-cent stamp, a 32-cent stamp and an ALA spring seal. They missed the 32-cent stamp on this one, and it was returned.

⇒ 44. 1931

Of course, there's a brief miscellaneous category! The Christmas Seal and Charity Stamp Society was founded in 1931, so we have a handback cover with a 1931 seal cancelled from Santa Claus, Indiana.

⇒ 45 [FINALE page]

A cover that I find really amusing is this one:

⇒ 46. Many

I often wondered whose mother or dad was furious on discovering someone used 16 cents worth of stamps, camouflaged by all those seals, when 3 cents would do.

⇒ 47. PS Who sent this??