

Holbøll's Danish Christmas Seals 1904-1927

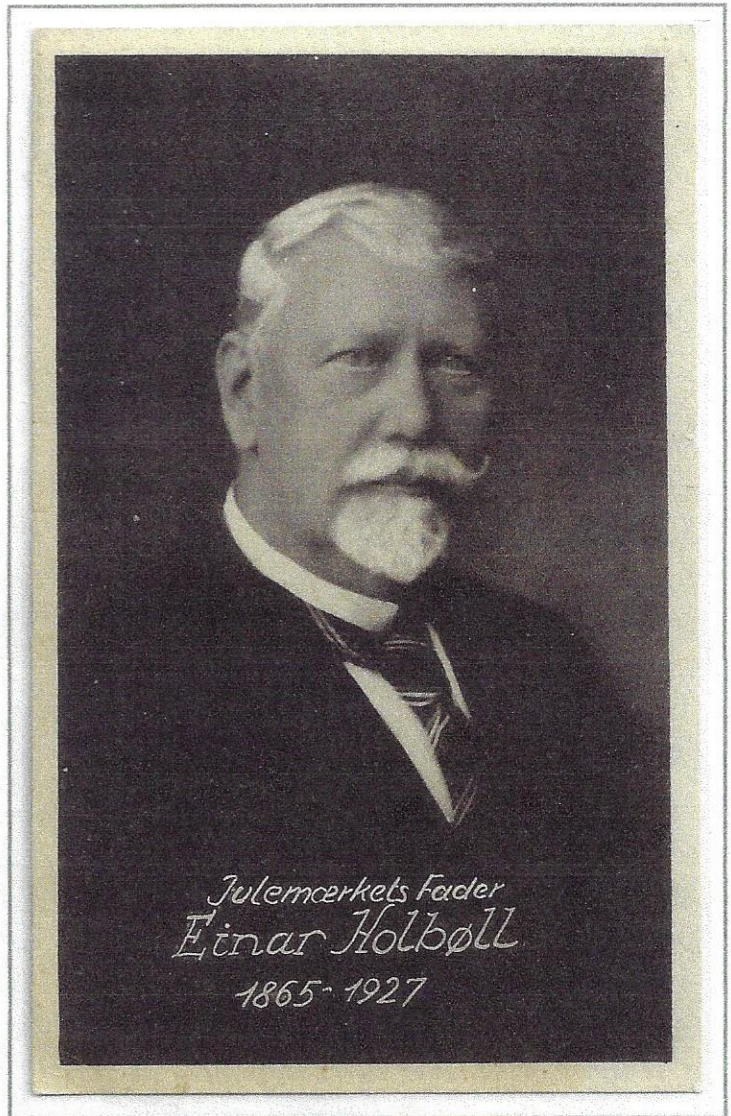
The purpose of this exhibit is to showcase the first 23 years of Denmark's Christmas Seal program while highlighting the involvement and influence of Einar Holbøll who created the idea and served on the committee that oversaw the development and release of the annual seal.

Denmark is widely considered the first country to develop and distribute Christmas Seals for the benefit of children, particularly those affected by Tuberculosis. Iceland (DK) and Sweden followed immediately. More than 120 countries, including the USA, followed Denmark's lead and produced Christmas Seals to raise money intended toward the defeat of Tuberculosis (TB).

The idea of Christmas seals was a brain-thrust of a 38 year old postal clerk, **Einar Holbøll**, working in a small post office in Denmark. As he was working far into the night of Christmas Eve, 1903. He observed that the majority of cards and letters were going to "comfortable" homes, "housing happy vigorous families." The absence of such greetings to the less fortunate created an epiphany that if all these Christmas greetings could be "taxed" or carry a surcharge by way of a Christmas Seal costing as little as 2 øre (~2 cents), it could bring in a good deal of money. **Holbøll**, who was fond of children, soon concluded that the money should be used for the benefit of sick children.

Holbøll took his idea to his chief, Mr. Svendsen, Director of Posts, and to Mr. Jerichow, Permanent Under-Secretary at the Ministry of Finance. The idea aroused interest and a committee of 15 was appointed. Mr. **Holbøll** became a member of the committee and after much lobbying; the King of Denmark gave his approval. So the work began to accept a suitable design for what would become the world's first Christmas seal.

This is where this exhibit begins in 1904, followed by 22 more years of Danish Christmas Seals. During this time, **Einar Holbøll**, known as the "Father of the Christmas Seal", would intimately be involved with the Christmas Seal Committee participating and overseeing the program, including the annual selection of the National Christmas Seals until his death in February, 1927 at the age of 61.



Unused postcard with portrait of
Einar Holbøll -- 1865 - 1927

The Exhibit is arranged chronologically from 1904 through 1927 followed by an appendix that highlights some of the tributes to Einar Holbøll that continued for many years following his passing. For each year, material is organized as follows:

- ESSAYS** - For some years, essays and/or proofs of seal designs were presented and considered
- ISSUE** - Production of seals, sometimes in multiple varieties and perforation types
- PROOFS** - Various proofs and progressive color proofs (pcp)
- ERRORS** - Multiple errors that often occurred for some years
- USAGE** - Examples of postally sent and cancelled Christmas seals are displayed

Key: Highlights of Holbøll's leadership within the Christmas Seal Committee are framed within a blue border. Items that are of particular significance or difficult importance are framed in red and/or marked with [S]

Notes: Numbering of issues is consistent with "Green's" catalog. For the period, dates were recorded with the day preceding the month, a format that has been followed herein. Copenhagen, the capital of Denmark, was originally spelled as Kjøbenhavn, then København. All are used interchangeably within the exhibit.