

The ‘Smiling Boy’ Health stamps of 1931

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ABSTRACT: The ‘Smiling Boy’ pair of New Zealand stamps, named after the youth depicted on each value, was issued in 1931. The stamps carried a 1d (one penny) premium on their postage to raise funds for the burgeoning health camp movement. They bridge the gap between their charity stamp predecessors and the Health stamps of the future. The article considers their design, aesthetics and iconography, locating the stamps within their political and cultural contexts at a time of economic depression. The Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa has significant holdings of ‘Smiling Boys’ material, including Royal Mint die proofs and official correspondence, as well as specimens of the stamps and the promotional poster. These are among the sources utilised in this paper.

KEYWORDS: ‘Smiling Boy’ Health stamps, philately, stamps, art, design, material culture, posters, children, health, history, Great Depression, health camps, New Zealand.

Introduction: renowned but not respected?

The ‘Smiling Boys’ (1931), the ‘Full Face Queens’ (1855) and the ‘Penny Universal’ (1901) (Figs 1–4) are among New Zealand’s most renowned stamps. For several reasons, however, philatelists do not always accord the ‘Smiling Boys’ quite the same respect as their iconic predecessors. Aesthetically, they cannot fairly compare with ‘the Rembrandt of philately – the most beautiful stamp in the world’, as the ‘Full Face Queen’ design has been dubbed.¹ Nor do they match the historical significance of the ‘Penny Universal’. This stamp, symbolically launched on the first day of the twentieth century, enabled a letter to be posted anywhere in the world for one penny, subject to the reciprocal recognition of other countries (Gwynn 1988: 55). Conversely, the status of the ‘Smiling Boys’ as postage stamps sold at a premium for ‘charity’, as their inscription denotes, immediately compromised them for John Easton, author of the classic *British postage stamp design* (1943). He witheringly observed of the whole genre: ‘The Health stamps were designed as commercial posters, the most effective means of conveying propaganda, and although sanctioned for use on mails

they can hardly be regarded as postage stamps’ (Easton 1943: 301).

While this stance may seem purist and even precious today, the term ‘semi-postal’, commonly applied to denote a charity stamp, implicitly carries pejorative connotations, regardless of the worthiness of the cause or indeed the design. A somewhat defensive note was maintained relatively recently by the philatelist Robin Gwynn when he asserted: ‘No one would call the ‘Smiling Boys’ the most attractive of New Zealand’s Health stamps’, although he added: ‘they are the best known and much the most expensive – a set costs far more than all the other health issues put together’ (Gwynn 1988: 92). This still remains so and constitutes part of their appeal and mana, but will not be the focus of this article.²

Precursors of the ‘Smiling Boys’: the 1929 and 1930 charity stamps

New Zealand Health stamps have long been part of the country’s philatelic distinctiveness and heritage, as an article in the American *Scott’s Monthly Journal* of May 1942 recognised. They were both attractive and, at that time at



Left: Fig. 1 Charity/Health stamp, 'Smiling Boy', 1d + 1d, 1931. Designer Leonard Cornwall Mitchell (Te Papa PH.000311).

Right: Fig. 2 Charity/Health stamp, 'Smiling Boy', 2d + 1d, 1931. Designer Leonard Cornwall Mitchell (Te Papa PH.000312).

least, affordable. Unlike similar charity stamps from Belgium and Switzerland, a complete New Zealand collection of Health stamps could be obtained for 'somewhere in the vicinity of \$7.00' (Miller 1942: 86).

The introduction of the Health stamp is traditionally credited to the Danish immigrant Kirstine Nielsen (1873–1937). Her country of origin had first issued charity seals (not postage stamps) as part of the fight against tuberculosis in 1904.³ Some 20 years later, she proposed to Lady Alice Fergusson, wife of the Governor General, that a similar system should be adopted in New Zealand (Tennant 1994: 84). The Minister of Health, A.J. Stallworthy, incorporated provision for this in the 1929 Finance Act, and the first such stamps were issued on 11 December that year (Collins 1938: 402).

The first three annual issues (1929–31) were officially known as 'charity' rather than 'Health' stamps. This was consistent with the Cabinet's initial decision in October 1929 that proceeds of sales should go to the tuberculosis-prevention campaign. Stallworthy told the Crown Law Office that funds 'expended at my direction towards the cost of anti-tuberculosis measures' would benefit 'primarily the establishment of children's health camps' (Stallworthy



Left Fig. 3 Stamp, 'Full Face Queen' or 'Chalon Head', 2d, 1855. Designer William Humphreys (Te Papa PH.000734).

Right: Fig. 4 Stamp, 'Penny Universal', 1d, 1901. Designer Guido Bach (Te Papa PH.000601).

to Currie, 17 October 1929). This did not represent contradiction so much as conflation of the two causes. Margaret Tennant observed in her study *Children's health, the nation's wealth: a history of children's health camps* that 'by the later 1920s health camps were seen as the major weapon in the campaign against tuberculosis. Most particularly, they were promoted as a means of building up childhood resistance to the disease' (Tennant 1994: 69).



Fig. 5 Leonard Cornwall Mitchell, Filmcraft Studios, Courtenay Place, Wellington, c. 1927. Photographer unknown (reproduced courtesy of the Frank Mitchell collection).

The 1929 stamp – and its near identical successor of 1930 – help us to contextualise and at the same time distinguish the 'Smiling Boys'. The first stamp has, moreover, been persistently misattributed to Leonard Cornwall Mitchell (1901–71), designer of the 'Smiling Boys' (Fig. 5). The error was rectified by its perpetrator, R.J.G. Collins, in the second volume of his magisterial *The postage stamps of New Zealand*, but remarkably little heed of this has been taken since (Collins & Watts 1951: 152). The design should instead be credited to the sadly short-lived supervising artist of the New Zealand Railways Outdoor Advertising Branch, Stanley Davis (1892–1938). Davis's considerable talent, widely acknowledged in his lifetime, was long marginalised because of the canonical devaluation of commercial art, but his reputation has belatedly resurfaced with the recent publication of *Selling the dream: the art of New Zealand tourism* (Alsop *et al.* 2012: 42, 44).⁴

Davis's capable if unremarkable vignette depicts a newly qualified registered nurse in her uniform (Fig. 6). Produced by the Government Printer in Wellington, it employs the same line-etched relief process as the 1923 'Map' and 1925 'New Zealand and South Seas Exhibition' designs. The result, with its numerous small printing flaws, could hardly be considered refined, but it is precisely this quality that facilitates the philatelic reconstruction of a plate of 80 stamps. Subsequent health and charity issues up to the 1933 'Pathway to Health' design are likewise 'platable' (Collins 1938: 402).

In common with the George V definitive issues of 1915 and 1926, and the 'New Zealand and South Seas Exhibition' set, the design attractively incorporates decorative borders



Fig. 6 Charity stamp, 'Help stamp out tuberculosis', 1d + 1d, 1929. Designer Stanley Davis (Te Papa PH.000309).

of traditional Māori patterns, but the tukutuku motifs are now replaced with kōwhaiwhai.⁵ The central motif, the double-barred patriarchal cross, or Cross of Lorraine – later adopted by the Free French Forces in the Second World War – is the symbol of the International Union Against Tuberculosis and Lung Disease, and would reappear in both the 1930 and 1931 issues ('The Cross of Lorraine' 2005). The bottom corner panels spell out the dual 1d postage (left) and 1d charity (right) functions, which, with the exception of the 'Smiling Boy' 2d plus 1d discussed below, would be standard for all charity and Health stamps until 1939. The Crown Law officer, A.E. Currie, warned shortly before the new issue that 'unless the position is made very clear many people will still treat the proposed stamps as a seal and use ordinary stamps as well' (Currie to Stallworthy, 19 October 1929). Clearly this was heeded in the early designs. The most memorable feature of the stamp, yet one that has been curiously overlooked by philatelists, is its punning slogan, 'Help stamp out tuberculosis', which the future Labour Prime Minister Peter Fraser would quote approvingly in a Parliamentary question the following year.⁶ The impact was probably lessened, however, by the modest size of the stamp, which is identical to that of the definitives of the period.

In retrospect, it is evident that the Secretary of the General Post Office, George McNamara, had grossly overestimated the likely demand, fearing 'it would be dangerous to make the initial printing less than two million'. He promptly doubled this order, stressing 'extreme urgency', a few days before the stamp was released (McNamara to

Commissioner of Stamp Duties, 27 November 1929). In the event, the total number sold was 592,848, raising a relatively modest £2470 from the 1d premium ('Health stamp' 2012). At the time of their destruction, 2,633,840 stamps were still on hand (Somerville to Controller of Accounts, GPO, 17 September 1931). The timing of the issue, exactly two weeks before Christmas Day, intentionally capitalised both on the Christmas postal rush and attendant sentiments of seasonal goodwill. In subsequent years, the stamp would be launched each October, with postage of overseas Christmas mail in mind. This explains why even in 1931, newspapers still commonly referred to 'Christmas seals or charity stamps' to mean the same thing, giving some weight to Currie's legal opinion quoted above ('Christmas seal, health for children' 1931).

A delayed design

The Post and Telegraph Department originally planned to issue a 1930 charity stamp in an entirely new design, using the 'Smiling Boys' a year earlier than they actually appeared (Collins 1938: 402). However, due to printing problems experienced by Perkins, Bacon & Co., discussed in more detail below, a stopgap plate was therefore prepared by the Government Printer. A vignette design identical to that of 1929 was deployed, the same scarlet colour retained (again the norm until 1939) (Fig. 7). There was, of course, a change of date and a new slogan: the more generic 'Help promote health' was inserted (Collins 1938: 403). McNamara again miscalculated the demand, and this despite W.A.G. Skinner of the Printing and Stationery Department having warned that 'The number of stamps to be printed will not be very large' (Skinner to Commissioner of Stamp Duties, 3 April 1930). A million were printed (McNamara to Government Printer, 14 October 1930), but only 215,543 were sold. Several factors explain this: the deepening economic depression, which would in turn severely impact 'Smiling Boy' sales a year later; the use of a near identical design to that of 1929, thus offering negligible novelty value; and what Edwin Myers of the Department of Health would later recall as 'a total ignorance of what the whole thing was about' on the part of the public (Myers to Watt, 22 July 1935).

It was precisely this attempt at consciousness raising that explains an innovation accompanying the 1930 stamp: the official promotional poster, commissioned from the Government Printer and prominently displayed in post offices and other government buildings during the limited

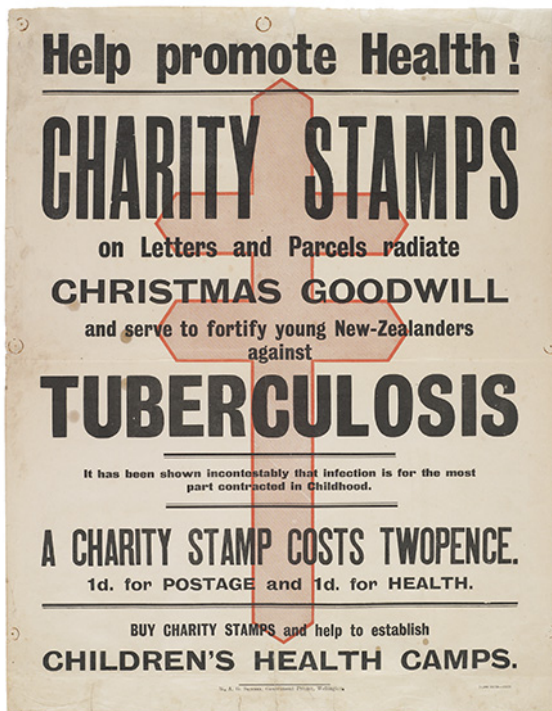


Fig. 7 Charity stamp, 'Help promote health', 1d + 1d, 1930. Designer Stanley Davis (Te Papa PH.000310).

period of sale (Fig. 8). The poster relies exclusively on the words and the symbolic double-barred cross. It is plain to the point of banality. The fight against tuberculosis, together with Christmas goodwill, are clearly spelled out, as is the role of health camps in fortifying young New Zealanders. The Government Printer poster to promote the 'Smiling Boys' the following year, with its reproductions of the stamps and reduction in verbiage (Fig. 9), marks modest progress but in neither poster is there any hint of what a vibrant artform the Health stamp campaign poster would become during the course of the decade (Fig. 9). Marmaduke Matthews's design for 1932 (Fig. 10), discussed in more detail below, is a turning point, but the artform culminates with Frank Kee's quasi-psychedelic and wittily entitled 'Make Health "Catching"' of 1940 (Fig. 11) (Tennant 1994: cover; Thompson 2003: 88).

Leonard Mitchell's original design for the 'Smiling Boys' probably dates from late 1929 or early 1930 (Figs 12–13). At the time, he was working at the pioneer Wellington film-making studio Filmcraft Ltd. According to his sons Frank and Allan Mitchell (pers. comm., 26 October 2012), Leonard was grateful to be in such employment to support his growing (and extended) family during the Great Depression period.

The postal authorities evidently envisaged a grander stamp than the 1929 issue. McNamara stipulated that the size (24 × 40 mm) should be identical to the 1882 Queen



Above left: Fig. 8 Poster, 'Help promote Health! Charity stamps', 1930, lithograph, 570 × 445 mm. Printed by W.A.G. Skinner, Government Printer, Wellington (Te Papa GH.009878).

Above right: Fig. 9 Poster, 'Health for the children! Will YOU help', 1931, lithograph, 570 × 445 mm. Printed by W.A.G. Skinner, Government Printer, Wellington (Te Papa GH.009879).

Below left: Fig. 10 Poster, 'Buy Health stamps for health camps', 1932, lithograph, 570 × 382 mm. Designer Marmaduke Matthews. Printed by E.V. Paul, Government Printer, Wellington (Te Papa GH.009880).

Below right: Fig. 11 Poster, 'Make Health "Catching!"', 1940, lithograph, 560 × 440 mm. Designer Frank Kee. Printed by E.V. Paul, Government Printer, Wellington (Te Papa GH.009886).



Left: Fig. 12 ‘Smiling Boy’, 1d, 1931, photographic print of artist’s drawing supplied by Government Printing Office. Original drawing *c.* 1929–30, designer Leonard Mitchell (New Zealand Post Museum collection, Te Papa PH.000711).

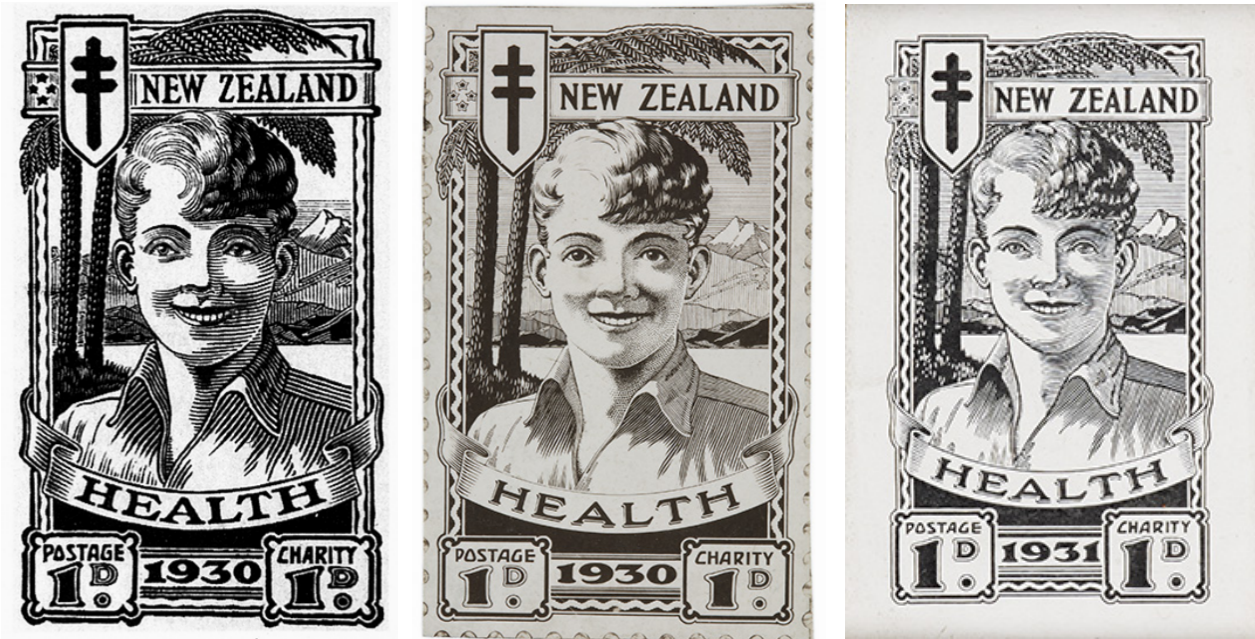
Right: Fig. 13 ‘Smiling Boy’, 2d, 1931, photographic print of artist’s drawing supplied by Government Printing Office. Original drawing *c.* 1929–30, designer Leonard Mitchell (New Zealand Post Museum collection, Te Papa PH.000711).

Victoria fiscals, which were then nearing the end of their lengthy reign (McNamara to Commissioner of Stamp Duties, 24 March 1930). Possibly because of the rather homespun printing quality of the recent charity stamp, quotes for the supply of the die and plate for its successor were now sought offshore from Perkins, Bacon & Co., the Royal Mint and Waterlow & Sons.⁷ Their respective tenders were for £65, £99 and £229 2s 6d (Post and Telegraph Department to New Zealand High Commission, London, 2 June 1930).

Predictably, the Perkins, Bacon & Co. tender was accepted, and at that stage there were not unrealistic hopes that the stamp would be ready in time for Christmas, hence the dating of the early designs as 1930. By September, however, the High Commission in London cabled the Post and Telegraph Department: ‘die proof submitted three occasions found unsatisfactory. Hopeful settle matter forthwith and ship about six weeks. Should year be altered to 1931’ (New Zealand High Commission, London, to Post and Telegraph Department, 18 September 1930). The following day this alteration was confirmed, and the recycling of Davis’s 1929 design for the imminent 1930 issue proceeded accordingly.

The Perkins, Bacon & Co. order was cancelled in early November 1930. By then, over two months after its deadline, clearly ‘the firm had much difficulty in preparing the die’ (Anonymous 6 November 1930). Collins (1938: 403) rather more graciously explained that the company’s failure in late 1930 was ‘owing to pressure of work already in hand’. Perkins, Bacon & Co. die proofs in black, all dated 1930, are considerable rarities (Fig. 14); in May 2012, a collection of 10 die and plate proofs was sold at auction by H.R. Harmer of New York for US\$7375. The proofs included a ‘mock up’ prepared for the engraver by photographing Mitchell’s drawing and making alterations in the width of the eyebrows, reducing the chin and shading in the face (Harmer 2012). At the national stamp exhibition Palmplex ’82, the organisers issued a limited-edition proof print in red from a Perkins, Bacon & Co. die of 1930. Gwynn (1988: 92, pl. XVI) describes these as ‘attractive and well worth incorporating in any collection of health stamps since they help explain the events of 1930–31’.

Fortunately for the New Zealand authorities, despite having lost the earlier tender, the Royal Mint had in the interim produced of its own accord a proof from a steel die,



Left: Fig. 14 'Smiling Boy', 1d + 1d, 1930, die proof, 1930. Printed by Perkins, Bacon & Co. (reproduced with permission from R. Gwynn (1988), *Collecting New Zealand stamps*, Auckland: Heinemann Reed, p. 92).

Middle: Fig. 15 'Smiling Boy', 1d + 1d, 1930, die proof, 1930. Printed by Royal Mint, London (New Zealand Post Museum collection, Te Papa PH.000716).

Right: Fig. 16 'Smiling Boy', 1d + 1d, 1931, die proof, 1930. Printed by Royal Mint, London (New Zealand Post Museum collection, Te Papa PH.000710).

made in order to provide its craftsmen with work experience (Collins 1938: 404). At the invitation of the High Commission, the Controller of the Post Office Stamp section at Somerset House compared the Perkins, Bacon & Co. and Royal Mint proofs, and deemed the latter much superior (Fig. 15). Hence the Royal Mint was now commissioned at its original quote of £99 (Anonymous 6 November 1930).

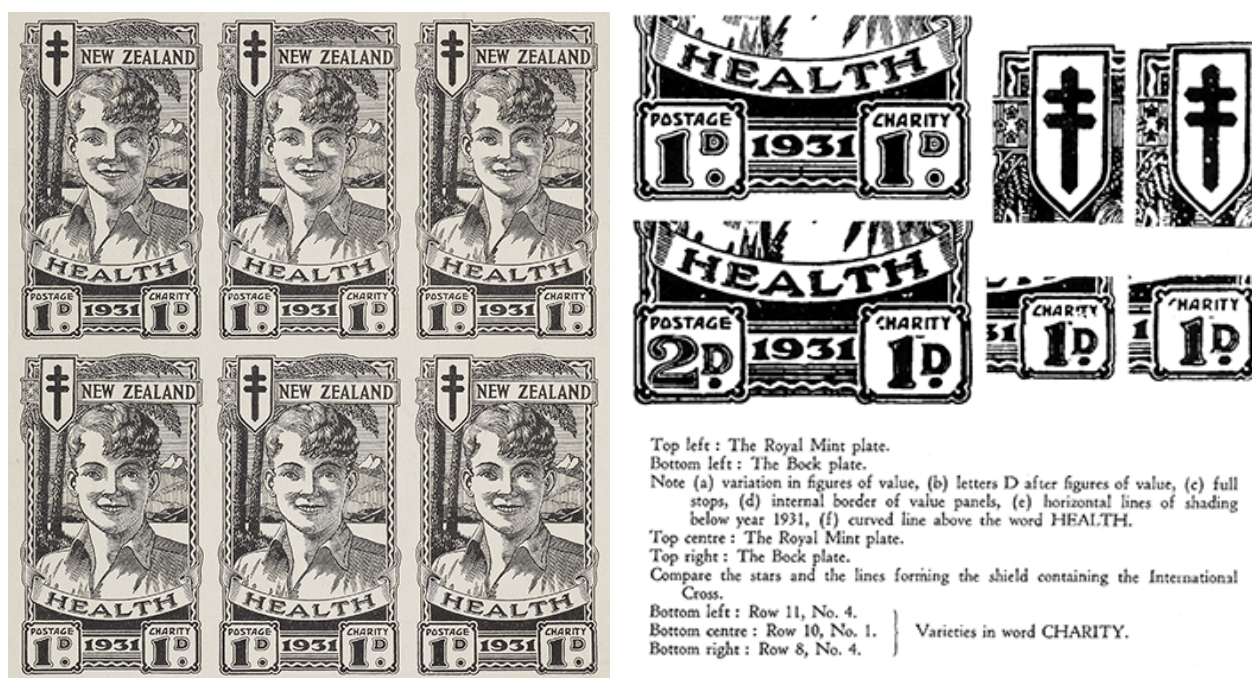
With more time now being available and the commission guaranteed, the Royal Mint engravers, like Perkins, Bacon & Co. before them, made numerous alterations besides the obvious one to the date (Fig. 16). Their improvements are evident in the two proof sheets in the Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa (Te Papa) collection, dating from November and December 1930 (Fig. 17). The boy's smile is rendered considerably more naturalistically and the shark-like, almost caricature aspect of his Perkins, Bacon & Co. predecessor is now considerably diminished; his face, neck and shirt are more softly and subtly modelled in their chiaroscuro effects; the sky is shaded, providing greater uniformity with the mountains; the gap between the ponga (tree ferns) trunks and the border is more satisfactorily resolved; and the wavy lines of the frame – always more

generic rather than those of the *kōwhaiwhai* of 1929 and 1930 – are now more sharply defined (Collins 1938: 405; Gwynn 1988: 92).

Yet the new design nevertheless continued to be beset with problems. In April 1931, when the die and plate had arrived in New Zealand, the impressions on the plate were found to be spaced too closely together vertically, which meant that trial sheets could not be satisfactorily perforated. The solution was to cut the plate in three places and insert strips of metal spacers. Although this now made perforation possible, it also meant that the 1d stamp was seldom well centred (Collins 1938: 406; Gwynn 1988: 92).

A second stamp

A further challenge came in June 1931, when the universal penny postage rate for letters weighing up to 1 oz was doubled to 2d. McNamara promptly recommended that a second stamp of the new value should be issued in preference to an unsightly overprint. A clause was therefore added to the 1931 Finance Bill to amend the value of a 'charity' stamp from 1d to be henceforth 'of such amount



Left: Fig. 17 'Smiling Boy', 1d + 1d, 1931, proof sheet of 120 stamps (detail), 1930. Printed by Royal Mint, London (New Zealand Post Museum collection, Te Papa PH.000713).

Right: Fig. 18 Royal Mint 1d + 1d plate and William Rose Bock 2d + 1d plate (reproduced from R.J.G. Collins (1938), *The postage stamps of New Zealand. Vol. 1*, Wellington: Royal Philatelic Society of New Zealand, p. 408).

as the Postmaster-General determines' (Anonymous 29 June 1931). The move came as a consequence of the Great Depression, which was then at its most intense. The government was desperate to raise revenue – which had halved since the late 1920s – whilst limiting public spending (King 2003: 346). A cartoonist such as Gordon Minhinnick would have enjoyed a field day had the 'Smiling Boys' been produced a year earlier. An important point inadequately explained in philatelic accounts is that the penny rate remained valid for Christmas card, small packet and newspaper post, though the latter two rarely bore charity or Health stamps ('Christmas seal, health for children' 1931). This explains the retention of the 1d design and, indeed, the reversion to stamps of this value in subsequent years, with no new 2d appearing until 1939, when postage rates were again increased.

There was insufficient time for the new plate to be prepared in London, and so the veteran Wellington-based engraver William Rose Bock (1847–1932) was commissioned to make one of similar design to that of the Royal Mint, with the postage value altered to 2d, while the premium remained 1d (Gwynn 2010). Bock therefore prepared an etched-line die in zinc, which involved cutting

away both values in the lower corner panels and reinserting new, relatively uniform ones, decreasing the size of the numerals whilst increasing the size of the characters (Collins 1938: 408) (Fig. 18). He produced a second plate after his first one was deemed defective. Bock was certainly engraving down to the wire. Proofs were submitted to the Post and Telegraph Department on 22 October 1931, and just nine days later the new scarlet and deep blue stamps were on sale.

Notwithstanding the Royal Mint's 'highest satisfaction' with the 'accuracy and uniformity of detail' of its own recent stamp plates (Deputy Commissioner of Stamp Duties to Commissioner of Stamp Duties, 21 March 1930), that for the 1d abounds in printing flaws, as does the locally produced 2d plate (Collins 1938: 407). That said, Collins noted that since the latter was composed of copper and prepared in relief, any surplus metal left level with the plate surface 'could easily have been removed prior to the printing of the stamps. From an examination of the plate it does not appear as though any attempt was made to "clean" it up prior to use' (Collins 1938: 408). This is no negative reflection on Bock, whom Gwynn justly salutes for his 'remarkable contribution to New Zealand stamp production ... Often he was employed because there was no time for orders to be



Left: Fig. 19 Health stamp, 'Hygeia', 1d + 1d, 1932. Designers W.J. Cooch and R.E. Tripe (Te Papa PH.000277).

Middle: Fig. 20 Health stamp, 'Pathway', 1d + 1d, 1933. Designer James Berry (Te Papa PH.000278).

Right: Fig. 21 Health stamp, 'Crusader', 1d + 1d, 1934. Designer James Berry (Te Papa PH.000279).

placed overseas, so he had to work under considerable time pressure' (Gwynn 1988: 92). The 1931 2d was no exception, and his loss – Bock died in August 1932, aged 85 – is immediately apparent when the shoddy workmanship of the plates made by his successor, H.T. Peat, for the 1932 'Hygeia' and, particularly, the 1933 'Pathway' Health issues is beheld (Figs 19–20). Only with the 1934 'Crusader' Health stamp (Fig. 21) do we really witness engraving and printing – undertaken by De La Rue in London – that are of international quality (Collins 1938: 409–418; Wolfe 2010: 75–79).

Charity, Health and Christmas stamps

Luit Bieringa has hailed the 'Smiling Boys' as the 'first fully-fledged health stamp' (Bieringa 1990). While this is not entirely historically accurate, even in 1938 the punctilious Collins referred to the '1931 Health stamp' (Collins 1938: 404). Perhaps the design is best seen as occupying a transitional role between charity and health, prefiguring subsequent issues that unequivocally belong to the latter category. Although the message of funding the anti-

tuberculosis campaign is retained with the double-barred cross icon, the more generic sign 'Health' is now dominant, printed in a large font and brandished on a ribbon – almost a banner – that wraps around the frame. In the bottom right panel 'Charity' is used for the final time in this context.

'Charity' stamps would remain the standard appellation in government memoranda until at least late 1932 (McNamara to Commissioner for Stamp Duties, 30 November 1932). The official promotional poster, moreover, refers four times to a 'charity' stamp or stamps. Collins recalled that there was 'a good deal of objection' to the term (Collins 1938: 404). At the height of the Great Depression, 'charity' carried demeaning Victorian connotations, incompatible with New Zealand's cherished but battered self-image as 'God's Own Country', a situation exploited by the Labour opposition (King 2003: 346). This probably explains why the newly appointed Minister of Health, James Young, referred to the 1931 issue as 'Christmas stamps' even at the time of their launch; by December, he was calling them 'Health stamps' ('Christmas seal, health for children' 1931; 'Health camp, minister's appeal' 1931). Consistent with this, the *Auckland Star* explained that 'the object is to give the children not charity but a chance' ('Help the children' 1931).



Fig. 22 Health stamp, 'Dr. Elizabeth Gunn: Founder of Children's Health Camps 1919', 4¢ + 1¢, 1969. Designer Maurice Conly (Te Papa PH.000734).

'Health stamps for health camps'

The catchy slogan 'Health stamps for health camps' emerged at this point and, as Tennant observes, 'the link was never broken' (Tennant 1994: 85). While her study admirably analyses and chronicles the subject, it is necessary here to summarise the still precarious position of children's health camps in 1931. Barely a handful of them then existed. They ran heroically on a diet of sunshine, fresh air, canvas and the proverbial smell of an oily rag, to which might be added the modest proceeds of charity stamp sales. Although it may appear historically unfashionable in methodological terms, it is difficult not to credit much of the success of the nascent movement to two remarkable women doctors, Elizabeth Gunn (1879–1963) (Fig. 22) and Ada Paterson (1880–1937).

Gunn was a formidable, extrovert pioneer who had served as an officer in the First World War (Tennant 1994: 38–61), while Paterson was a more tactful, sensitive and popular administrator, director of the Health Department's Division of School Hygiene from 1923 until her premature death in 1937 (Tennant 1994: 62–65, 79). Gunn had established the first health camp at Turakina, near Marton, in 1919, which ran each summer through most of the following decade. Other camps sprang up in Awapuni, Motuihe and Port Waikato, serving the catchment areas of Palmerston North, Auckland and Hamilton, respectively. The South Island lagged behind, with an ill-fated solitary



Above: Fig. 23 Unadopted design for 2d + 1d Health stamp, 1932. Designer James Berry (New Zealand Post Museum collection, Te Papa PH.000715).

Below: Fig. 24 Health stamp, 'Lifebuoy', 1d + 1d, 1936. Designer James Berry (Te Papa PH.000332).

camp held at Andersons Bay, Dunedin, in 1922. Later, Cora Wilding, who was subsequently known for her Sunlight League health camps, organised a pilot version at Geraldine in September 1931. Much discussed in that same year was the proposed flagship of the movement, Raukawa (later known as the Otaki Children's Health Camp), the first permanent, year-round camp, behind which Paterson was the driving force (Tennant 1994: 76–83) (Fig. 23).

Raukawa opened on 18 February 1932, just 11 days before the 'Smiling Boys' were withdrawn from sale. Its success marked a critical stage in the evolution of the health camp movement from the 'rugged individualism' and voluntarism of Gunn, to becoming part of the more sophisticated, government-funded and government-regulated welfare state by the end of the decade. Exponential growth of health camps and their resident populations would characterise the years ahead. Their future was secured in the Federation of Children's Health Camps (1936) and the 1938 King George V Memorial Fund Act, which gave the voluntary movement a statutory basis (Tennant 1994:

263). This welfare (and bureaucratic) revolution was accompanied by a veritable explosion in the popularity of Health stamps. The 186,731 'Smiling Boys' were swamped by 1,449,980 'Lifebuoy' or, as this author prefers to call them, 'Smiling Girl' Health stamps of 1936 (Fig. 24), providing a financial bonanza inconceivable in 1931 ('Health stamp' 2012).

'No pay; no puff'

Press coverage of the designs of the 'Smiling Boys' is far from extensive. The stamps did not enjoy instant classic status; rather, their status developed from their comparative scarcity as later collectors eagerly sought them out. They generated nothing like the excitement of either the 'Penny Universal' or, indeed, the 1936 'Chamber of Commerce' series – also designed by Mitchell – when queues of collectors and speculators formed outside post offices at opening time (Franks 1981: 51). Edwin Myers, a Department of Health civil servant and later national director of pharmacy, was the mainstay of the Health stamp campaign (Tennant 1994: 89). He recalled how he had assumed this role – which evidently carried no official title – in November 1931, a matter of days after the release of the 'Smiling Boys'. This was at a time when 'the general elections [were] only a month away and a slump at the front door. My first set back was to find the Newspaper Proprietors' Association had discussed Health stamps at a then recent meeting and had decided that the future policy would be – briefly – "no pay; no puff"' (Myers to Watt, 22 July 1935). Armed with a minuscule national advertising budget of £88 3s 4d, Myers's plight was all too understandable (Anonymous 1935). Yet his recollections, written in July 1935, conveyed a clear sense that the corner had been turned, thanks not least to his 'can do' attitude. Although he was sometimes prone to exaggeration, Myers's infectious enthusiasm merits quotation:

I felt at the beginning that the stamp idea must be built on a foundation that would not have to depend on spectacular selling stunts, and it was impressed on me that for steady selling year after year there must be some incentive. This incentive lay in Health Camps, and such was the plan I followed. By talking Health Camps to the right people one has something tangible to put up, and when the idea has sunk in, the Health Stamp is brought to light as a means for procuring the sinews of war. Today instead of having to urge upon existing Health Camp organisations to put their shoulders to the wheel when the stamps are out we now find them complaining that the stamps are not

produced soon enough to enable them to reap the benefit before Christmas, when the business tapers off to practically nothing. (Myers to Watt, 22 July 1935)

Myers insisted from the outset that the revenue derived from sale of stamps in any district should be reserved for its benefit: 'This policy is the only fair one, it encourages local effort, and removes from any organisation the prospect of getting a greater share of the fund by using particular pressure' (Myers to Watt, 22 July 1935). Consistent with this was the importance of impressing on 'local people that this is not a Government affair' (Myers to Bateman, 10 August 1934). In late 1931, Myers undertook a whistle-stop national tour, and claimed credit for getting the 'dormant' Wellington Health Camp Association – whose success has long been credited to Ada Paterson – 'started as an active body' (Myers to Watt, 22 July 1935; Tennant 1994: 65). Myers addressed the Auckland Community Sunshine Association in a 'hurried visit North'; he put proposals before the Waikato Children's Camp Committee; turning southwards, he visited the Sunlight League in Christchurch; and he delivered an address in Invercargill, whose immediate aftermath was the formation of a health camp association. He continued: 'Propaganda through Radio, the Schools, Picture Theatre Screens and various organisations was arranged. These avenues have been re-used each year since with variations in the attack in other directions, including the use of a few original "wheezes"' (Myers to Watt, 22 July 1935).

Phar Lap and Father Christmas

The 'wizard wheeze' of 1931, endorsed if not actually conceived by Myers, was the commission of racehorse Phar Lap (Fig. 25), by this time an Australian expatriate, to 'mark his approval' of the sale of postage stamps for children's health camps ('Phar Lap's autograph' 1931). Phar Lap's hoof 'stamp' – was auctioned for an undisclosed sum at a community singing event, held at Wellington Town Hall on 17 December. Both Myers – who 'joined with the song leader [Owen Pritchard] in bright patter and anecdotes' – and the Health Minister James Young were in attendance. Young assured the audience of how 'the health of the children had shown material improvement after a few weeks of the fresh air, sunshine, and routine of the health camp'. Admission to the function was free on production of Health stamps at the door, which could be retained for postage afterwards. Despite this, the *Evening Post* reported the turnout as 'somewhat disappointing', a poignant reflection



Fig. 25 Phar Lap, 1920s. Photographer unknown (Te Papa O.009451).

on the depth of the Great Depression ('Health camp, minister's appeal' 1931).

Although Myers complained of 'no puff', the stamp campaign received conscientious and entirely positive press coverage. Faced with a still largely unfamiliar public, the same message needed repetition and consolidation. At the outset, Young set the tone: 'Each charity stamp means the gift of one penny to the funds for establishing children's health camps; and it is believed that people will again welcome the opportunity of assisting in this way towards brightening the lives and improving the health of the children whom it is proposed to benefit.' The minister identified the benefits that the camps brought of 'adequate food, rest, sunlight and fresh air'. Everyone who bought a 'Christmas stamp' would assist in 'giving health to a child in need of it'. Young's colleague Adam Hamilton, the Postmaster-General, entreated: 'Only a little was asked, but that little was asked of everyone' ('Christmas seal, health for children' 1931). A charming photographic feature published in a mid-November *Evening Post* depicts the Kirkcaldie & Stains department store resident Father Christmas sending his Christmas parcels to England, naturally 'using the health charity stamps' ('Health stamps for health camps' 1931) (Fig. 26). Beside him is an array of toys and a copy of the promotional poster.

In Wellington, a publicity committee was formed to promote the use 'of Christmas seals or charity stamps'; its members included Myers and Paterson ('Health camps for delicate children' 1931). A 'large sale of stamps was expected' for the Christmas season by the ladies' auxiliary of



Fig. 26 *Publicity photograph for Health stamps*, 1931. Photographer Gordon H. Burt Ltd. (Te Papa C.002731).

the Auckland Community Sunshine Association ('Social gatherings' 1931). In Dunedin, Myers was reported as having 'stimulated the interest of the people in the Health Stamps, the sale of which is so important' ('Here and there' 1931). Without specifying quantities – which were probably disappointing for the campaigners – newspapers reported which postal districts had bought the most stamps. Wellington headed the list in the first week of December, while Hamilton knocked Auckland into second place ('Health stamps, Wellington heads list' 1931), perhaps because of the high profile of the thriving Waikato Children's Camp League and its leaders, W.H. Paul and Hilda Ross (Tennant 1994: 82–87). In mid-December, the Wellington Manufacturers' Association issued its members with copies of the poster. Each member was supposed to have 'this placard placed in his staff dining-room and factory, and it is expected that every member employed will purchase at least one stamp' ('Christmas seal, success of movement' 1931). Myers colourfully described such activities as 'beating up the business community' but, as he later recalled, 'with the imposition of increased postal charges, the commercial well was fast drying out' (Myers to Watt, 22 July 1935).

On 17 December, when the Wellington East post office in Cambridge Terrace was opened, Government Architect J.T. Mair's art deco design was admired for 'typifying the onward march of progress'. In his ceremonial speech, Young stressed his 'special interest in the function' of the new building 'because the post offices at the present time were

selling health stamps ... Every person who bought one of these stamps was contributing to the happiness of children who needed a holiday but could not afford it.' Hamilton symbolically enacted the first transaction, 'the sale of some of the Christmas health stamps' to his cabinet colleague Young. Another such stamp was attached to the first letter sent from the office, which was appropriately addressed to the Wellington Children's Health Camp Association ('New post office' 1931). Press coverage ended at about this point, confirming Myers's earlier comment that after Christmas 'business tapers off to practically nothing' (Myers to Watt, 22 July 1935).

Fortune does not smile

The stamps were withdrawn from sale on 29 February 1932. Sales amounted to 74,802 of the 1d value and 111,929 of the 2d. Relevant files in the New Zealand Post and Department of Health archives do not provide statistics of the quantities actually printed, although in early October 1931, three weeks before their issue, McNamara requested 2500 sheets of the 1d, which totalled 300,000 stamps (McNamara to W.A.G. Skinner, 10 October 1931). The following October, he ordered remaining stocks to be destroyed (McNamara to Commissioner of Stamp Duties, 30 November 1932). The proceeds made available to health camps were £778 0s 11d, compared with £898 1s 11d raised by the 1930 charity stamp, itself a marked decline from 1929 ('Health stamp' 2012).

Although Myers provided several plausible explanations for this precarious beginning as discussed above, the overwhelming and insurmountable one was the impact of the Great Depression. Collins eloquently confirmed this: 'It has to be remembered that at the time these stamps were placed on sale ... the economic conditions prevailing were abnormal. The spending power of the general public had been considerably lessened through reduced incomes and by increased general and emergency taxation imposed by the Government.' The doubling of postal rates was a case in point. Collins continued: 'The forced need for general economy prevented many people from subscribing even small sums to any worthy cause. There is not the slightest doubt that the poor sales of the 1931 issue were definitely due to times of financial adversity, and the general improvement in the sales of subsequent issues bears ample proof in support of this contention' (Collins 1938: 406).

It wasn't, then, the stamps' fault. Or was it? Their critical reception has not generally been positive, although Wolfe

(2010: 77) has recently noted how their 'smiling subjects radiated a sense of good health', thereby fulfilling their prime function. Robin Gwynn and Laurie Franks are more critical, the latter stating: '[t]his set is the most famous of all our health stamps, not because it is the best design, but because it is the rarest and most valuable' (Franks 1981: 44). Douglas Muir, curator at the British Postal Museum and Archive, and a specialist in the stamp design of the inter-war period, is blunter still: 'I always thought they were hideous' (pers. comm., 10 September 2012). Unlike, for example, the near contemporary 1935 'Waitangi Crown' coin, the rarity of the object has not led collectors to discover any latent beauty in the 'Smiling Boys' (Stocker 2010: 187).

The world's worst stamps?

With one conspicuous and verbose exception, there appears to have been negligible published critical feedback on the stamps at the time of their issue. An article in the *Australian Stamp Monthly* on the stamps was quoted verbatim in the *Evening Post* on 15 December 1931. Perhaps because this was during the later stages of the promotional campaign and Christmas postal rush, it drew no apparent response either from interested parties such as Myers or from any readers. As was common practice at the time, the article was unsigned, and it was accompanied in the same journal by two further anonymous – and equally uncomplimentary – contributions to the 'New Zealand Notes' section, also quoted at length in the *Evening Post*. The original headline read 'New Zealand does it again – and again', and what followed berated the quality of a number of the country's recent issues. The harshest words were reserved for the 'Smiling Boys':

In the sacred cause of charity, two stamps have arrived which must be seen to be believed. Like the old lady at the zoo who exclaimed at her first sight of the giraffe, we feel tempted to assert, 'There ain't no such animile.' Against a pictorial background, which we hope is not typical of New Zealand ... appears the head of a curly-headed boy (or is it a marcelled young lady?). No, for the sake of New Zealand's reputation for chivalry, we must decide on the boy, for he is adorned with one of the most beautiful black eyes we have ever seen. He is also a typical boy in the way his ears stick out, while one of these has undoubtedly suffered in the same bout as his eye. His teeth appear to be intact, but there are distinct evidences of contusions in the upper lip and nose. Undoubtedly overflowing with animal spirits, our young friend bears a prominent label, 'Health.' Maori carvings [*sic*], the New Zealand arms [*sic*],⁸ the



Fig. 27 Type fiscal stamp, 'Arms', 1s 3d, 1931. Designer H. Linley Richardson (Te Papa PH.000763).



Fig. 28 Stamp, 'Pro Juventute', Switzerland, 20 centimes, 1933. Designer Jules Courvoisier (author's collection).

'anti-tuberculosis' cross, and appropriate inscriptions complete the design. The whole is just twice the size as it need be, and very badly surface printed. It is a little worse than the worst advertising label we have seen, and would disgrace the least self-respecting quack. ("World's worst" 1931).

The 'Smiling Boys', together with H. Linley Richardson's 1931 1s 3d 'Arms Type' fiscal stamp in lemon yellow (Gwynn 1988: 102) (Fig. 27), led the author to claim that 'New Zealand can now justly claim first and second prizes for the world's worst stamps – while some of her other recent issues are well in the running for third place ... An enviable record – perhaps.' A contributor to 'New Zealand Notes' was similarly scathing, calling the stamps 'the ugliest labels I have ever seen – so ugly that they'll spoil the look of any collection'. The author continued, presciently as it proved:

Still, market advisers cannot take that into consideration – except insofar as that fact means, undoubtedly, increased demand. Consequently, I advise readers not to overlook these two stamps. They may not be beauties (they certainly are not that), but they will turn out well. Why cannot the New Zealand authorities wake up to the fact that they are doing these charities a grave disservice in issuing these ugly labels? A well produced and attractive issue would sell in thousands. ("World's worst" 1931)

The invective of the main article is more than a little reminiscent of Charles Dickens's infamous critique of the

early Pre-Raphaelite painting *Christ in the House of His Parents* (1849–50) where, with journalistic gusto, he derided the 'hideous, wry-necked, blubbering boy ... who appears to have received a poke in the hand' (Rosenfeld 2012: 116). Both in J.E. Millais's classic painting and Mitchell's humbler stamp, there was an element of 'the shock of the new' that caused unsuspecting critics to lash out. There was no obvious philatelic precedent for the 'Smiling Boys' and, although a Swiss 'Pro Juventute' 20-centimes photogravure stamp depicting a smiling girl of Ticino set against the landscape was issued in 1933 (Fig. 28), there has really been nothing quite like them since.⁹ There is a case, then, for a more even-handed appraisal, and with it a more searching contextualisation of the 'Smiling Boys' than they have so far been accorded.

Why the 'Smiling Boys' smiled

The impact of charity and Health stamps in raising public consciousness has been cogently summarised by Margaret Tennant. They brought the camps to the attention of many New Zealanders, 'performing to this day [1994] a vitally important publicity function'. Furthermore, for stamp collectors worldwide, they 'helped to bolster New Zealand's image as a supposedly healthy, humanitarian country, with a concern for its future citizens' (Tennant 1994: 83). The 'Smiling Boy' was the first such stamp to do this and is thus

something of a pioneer. Although it is not recorded whether he saw the stamp, its image nicely vindicates George Bernard Shaw's affectionate complaint on his 1934 visit that 'the trouble with New Zealand is that it is rather too pleasing a place.' Apposite too was his observation that 'even you reporters ... look cheerful enough'. The health camps themselves were prime examples of what Shaw provocatively hailed as 'your communistic institutions', which were 'to some extent leading world civilisation today' (Orsman & Moore 1988: 586).

'Glowing with health', 'brown and bonny', 'bubbling with enthusiasm' and even 'hysterical with delight': these were how children on health camps were expected to feel, look and be (Tennant 1994). Above all, the camps and their residents were meant to exude 'cheerfulness', a favourite word of Ada Paterson (Tennant 1994: 65). The documentary film *Health stamps for health camps*, made at the apogee of the movement in 1949, does not show any detailed philatelic footage, but the viewer is introduced to a joyful boy munching his daily apple at Campbells Bay Children's Health Camp, whereas two less fortunate urchins, left behind in tumbledown Auckland, glower at us. A.R.D. Fairbairn, the narrator, observes: 'Some are healthy in spite of lack of places to play. Some are not. Buying stamps gives kids happy days' (*Health stamps for health camps* 1949).

The dental dimension

The 'Smiling Boys' reveal the benefits of dental care, which was an important aspect of camp culture from Elizabeth Gunn's foundation at Turakina in 1919 onwards. Among her innovations reported in the *Wanganui Chronicle* was the synchronised, twice-daily 'toothbrush drill', where children were lined up and supplied with mugs of water and their own toothbrushes and paste, proceeding to brush, spit and brush again in cheerful unison ('Children's health camp' 1919; Tennant 1994: 178). But for the vast majority of children, no amount of toothbrush drill – or still more important, its maintenance on their return home – could ever hope to produce such perfect teeth as those of the 'Smiling Boys'. Indeed, they would be uncommon for any nine or ten-year-old boy such as is seen here. Far more likely, he would be in the process of losing his milk teeth at the time. Mitchell's image is thus necessarily an idealised one, whereas gap-toothed ultra-realism would have looked inappropriate and undignified.¹⁰ More importantly, perfect teeth such as these reflect the healthiness as well as the

happiness central to the stamps' message. Scott (1995), who has pioneered the sub-field of philatelic semiotics, notes the cleverness of Mitchell's design whereby the largest symbolic sign of the stamp, 'Health', itself forms into a smile that echoes that of the grinning boy. Still subtler is the placing of the 'Postage' and 'Charity' panels, which approximate to the level of his hands – which may well be, were they visible, outstretched palms. Scott (pers. comm., 22 October 2012) suggests a plausibly ingratiating message: 'give me a penny sir, and I will be healthy and smiling'. In retrospect, it is perhaps surprising that Myers did not make more of this in the promotional campaign.

Angus Trumble's lively microhistory, *A brief history of the smile*, makes a number of observations germane to the 1931 stamps. He notes that 'teeth are fiendishly difficult to draw' and that 'most artists have found it more trouble than it was worth' (Trumble 2004: xxii). The improvements to the smile made by the Royal Mint when compared with the original proof amply testify to this difficulty; victory was literally snatched from the jaws of defeat. Trumble (2004: 56) characterises the smile as 'a highly sophisticated concept, an expression of the emotions, a mode of communication, a beacon of desire, a ritual – an occasion, in other words of intense psychological, anthropological and social interest, the product of acute observation, cognition and interpretation'. This may well be so; but closer in mood to the stamps are the altogether simpler lines from the song 'When you're smiling', made famous by Louis Armstrong in 1929: 'When you're smiling/The whole world smiles with you.'¹¹ It is clear what the 'Smiling Boys' represent, and how the viewer is expected to respond. There is a wholesomeness, candour and innocence about them, and a refreshing absence of the 'lewdness', 'desire' or 'deceit' that Trumble (2004) explores in the smile. It requires a separate discussion, but it would not be far-fetched to detect a sense of national self-image in the stamps.

Even were they more purely formal and less iconographically contingent 'texts', the 'Smiling Boys' could only date from a particular moment in history. Trumble (2004) notes the comparative rarity of the smile in art prior to the introduction of motion pictures, which 'in so many respects revolutionised the way people looked at the world and at each other in the twentieth century'. With his employment at the time by Filmcraft Ltd., not to mention a personal enthusiasm for movie-going shared by so many of his generation, Mitchell was in an ideal vantage point to respond to this. Film frames permitted precise moments of

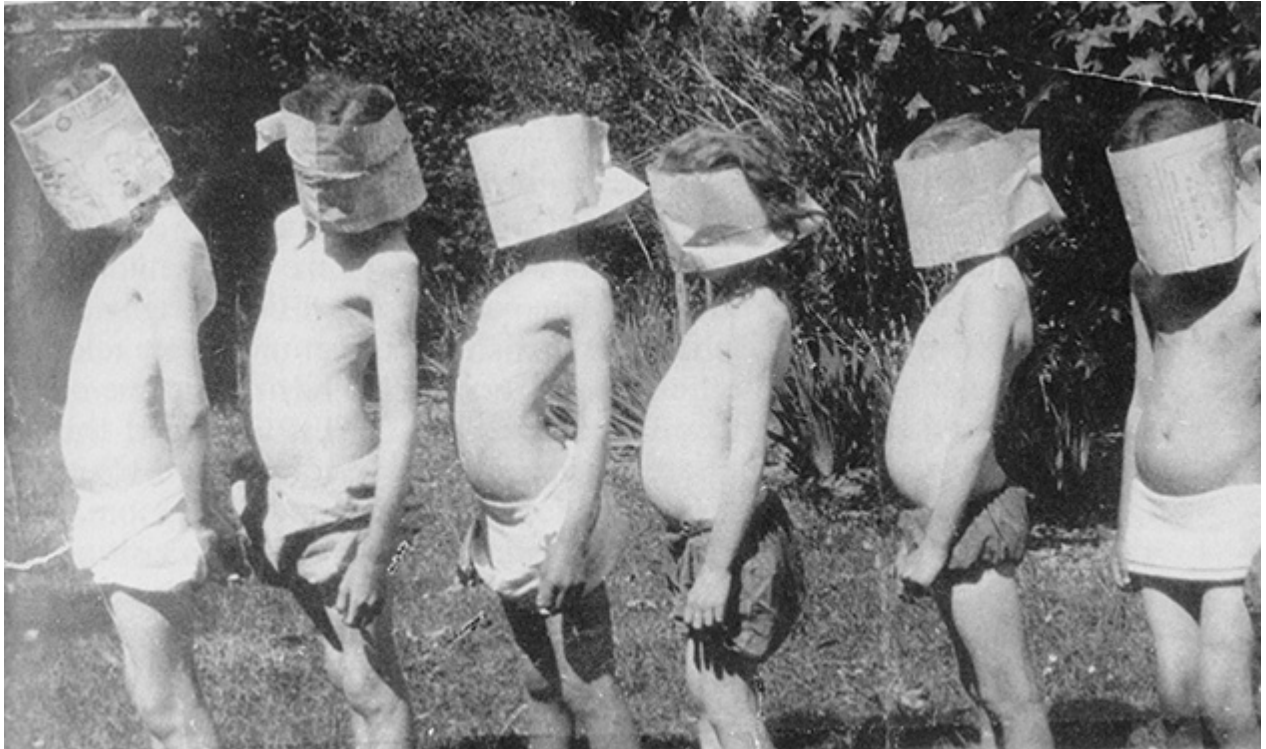


Fig. 29 *Malnutrits' (girls) lined up to publicise their deficient condition, c. 1930.* Photographer unknown (Children's Health Camps Board collection, reproduced from M. Tennant (1994), *Children's health, the nation's wealth: a history of children's health camps*, Wellington: Bridget Williams Books, p. 45).

spontaneity to be frozen, something 'that had eluded artists in the past ... The open smile in this way emerged from the sphere of domestic privacy and adopted its present position as an apparently universal symbol of health and happiness' (Trumble 2004: 154). Mitchell was wise to this early on. The 'Smiling Boys' precede by over a generation the famous series of late-1950s designs for Crest toothpaste advertisements by Norman Rockwell – an artist whom Mitchell much admired – which bear the common title: 'Look, Mom – no cavities!' (Frank and Allan Mitchell, pers. comm., 25 October 2012).

Illusion and reality

Although only the head and shoulders of the 'Smiling Boy' are depicted in the stamps, the viewer is encouraged to construct from this fragment his lithe, healthy, suntanned body and impressively growing physique. This could be rendered far more graphically in the larger poster format. Marmaduke Matthews's official 1932 campaign poster shows a full-length boy of a similar age to his 1931 brother, flexing his biceps to a pair of suitably awe-struck girls and

another smiling boy, as they build sandcastles (Thompson 2003: 80) (Fig. 10). For the first time the poster is a full-fledged example of art deco, both pictorially and in graphic design, with the hitherto dominant verbiage reduced to the by now familiar slogan: 'Buy Health stamps for health camps'. 'Charity' was buried in the sand.

Yet there is a poignant and pathetic slippage between the propagandist illusion perpetuated alike by the 1931 stamps and – more comically – by the 1932 poster, when we contrast it with harsher 'reality'. The latter is evident, for instance, in a photograph of so-called 'malnutrits', who are lined up at a camp to publicise their deficient condition (Tennant 1994: 45) (Fig. 29). The girls are suffering from rickets and other malnutritional conditions, manifest in their skinny legs and swollen bellies.

One of Gunn's ideals was to fatten up 'more valuable stock' on her Turakina farm campsite 'than it had ever fattened before in pastoral records' (Tennant 1994: 52). In his speech launching the 'Smiling Boy' stamps, Health Minister James Young referred to the 'ill nourished and delicate children' whose health would be safeguarded by a stint in a health camp. He put the case simply and movingly:



Fig. 30 Commemorative half-crown coin reverse, 'New Zealand Centennial', 1940. Designer Leonard Cornwall Mitchell (author's collection).

'Children's health camps deserve Dominion-wide support. Many sickly children are made well and happy by them' ('Christmas seal, health for children' 1931). The 'Smiling Boys', triumphant 'poster boys' of the health camp movement, in retrospect arouse scepticism about their delicacy and sickness in the first instance. They represent, however, a potent ideal, which was nicely articulated in 1937 when the New Zealand Rugby Union declared its support of the King George V Memorial Fund: 'From the children of today we recruit the rugby players of tomorrow, and nothing would please us more than to see every child with the physique and the opportunity to take his place on the football field' (Tennant 1994: 125).¹² Health camps would assist precisely that.

Who was the Smiling Boy?

It would be a highly appealing story had the model for the 'Smiling Boys' grown up to be an All Black, a hero in the North African campaign, or perhaps even both. But like Michelangelo's *David*, he almost certainly existed purely in the artist's mind and visual databank.

Although several other charity and Health stamps can be directly traced to photographs of individuals, for example the 1929 and 1930 'Nurse', the 1935 'Key to Health' and the 1937 'Rock-climber', this does not apply to the 'Smiling

Boys'. Frank and Allan Mitchell do not believe that he was based on any identifiable individual, although they plausibly maintain that having three small sons around him subliminally influenced Leonard's creation. The eldest son, Leonard ('Lenny') Victor Mitchell (1925–80), would have been no more than five years old at the time of the design, and his facial features did not accord with those on the stamps. Lenny's chronically shy temperament, rather than family illness or indeed poverty, probably led to his being sent to Otaki Children's Health Camp, an experience that he evidently loathed (Frank and Allan Mitchell, pers. comm., 26 October 2012).

The term 'portrait' is ultimately inappropriate for the stamps, as this presupposes a sense of personality and characterisation as well as likeness. By contrast, the attractive, symmetrical features of the 'Smiling Boys' make them constitute a 'type', at once a composite, construct and ideal.

Conclusion: a semiotically efficient stamp?

The criticism of the *Australian Stamp Monthly* notwithstanding, Allan Mitchell – himself a stamp designer – admires the soft, rounded and modelled features of the 'Smiling Boys', conveying the lines of his father's pen drawing and, like this author, believes the stamps to be more successful than has traditionally been maintained (pers. comm., 26 October 2012). Where their design can surely be admired is in what David Scott terms the 'semiotic efficiency' of a stamp, where typographical and iconic (emblematic national identity) components are effectively synchronised to reinforce the desired message. The 'Smiling Boys' at once exude and extrude a particularly 'concentrated ideological density' within their necessarily small frames (Scott 1995: 14). A design crammed with icons, symbols and words (the Southern Cross, the double-barred cross, 'Postage', 'Charity' and 'Health'), a miniature New Zealand landscape tableau of mountains, lake and punga, framing the pièce de résistance of the 'Smiling Boy' himself, placed close to the picture plane and engaging in eye contact with the viewer, would all seem to spell near certain thematic confusion and visual disaster. To his credit, and a feat that he would repeat with his complex design for the 1940 commemorative half-crown coin reverse (Fig. 30), Leonard Mitchell treads the tightrope precariously but successfully (Stocker 2011: 216–221). The 'Smiling Boys' smile on, and the spectator smiles back at them.

Acknowledgements

I am grateful to Patrick Brownsey and Stephanie Gibson (Museum of New Zealand Te Papa Tongarewa, Wellington, New Zealand); Robin Gwynn (Napier, New Zealand); Tim Hyland (Department of History and Art History, University of Otago, Dunedin, New Zealand); Douglas Muir (British Postal Museum and Archive, London, England); David Scott (Trinity College, Dublin, Ireland); and Margaret Tennant (Massey University, Palmerston North, New Zealand) for their assistance with my research. Frank Mitchell offered me his kind hospitality and, together with his brother Allan, answered questions about their father, Leonard Cornwall Mitchell.

Notes

- 1 Gordon Kaye, quoted in Gwynn (1988: 4). Easton (1943: 46) states that in the 'Full Face Queens', 'the New Zealand design has come alive ... one feels that one is interested in New Zealand, rather than in the fact that the postage rate for New Zealand is one penny.'
- 2 Gwynn (1988: 137) notes that the Stanley Gibbons catalogue value of the 1931 1d mint had increased from £13 to £160 between 1972 and 1981. The current Len Jury catalogue values unmounted mint specimens of the stamps at \$700 each (July 2012).
- 3 Winifred Macdonald, a former employee at Otaki Hospital, made a rival claim in a letter to *The Dominion* (Macdonald 1935: 8). She went on to complain about the 'dismal failure financially' of Health stamps up to that point, which she attributed to 'an overdose of officialdom'. Macdonald dated her original 'plan, complete with examples' to 1927, but even if this is correct, Nielsen had preceded her by one year. In turn, opinions differ about the world's first charity stamp. This is sometimes credited to Denmark (1904), whose seals inspired Nielsen, although New South Wales and Victoria (both 1897) have their champions. See Altman (1991: 28) and Tennant (1994: 83).
- 4 See also Thompson (2003: 75, 96). Davis was acclaimed in an obituary by Leo Fanning in the *New Zealand Railways Magazine* as an 'Artist and idealist ... His bold, striking treatment of many subjects has been highly praised by well-qualified critics of the British Empire and America' (Fanning 1938: 15). He is not mentioned, however, by Dunn (2003) or by Pound (2009).
- 5 For a useful discussion of kōwhaiwhai and koru motifs on New Zealand stamps, see Pound (1994: 192).
- 6 According to Alister McIntosh (1976: 7), Fraser had 'a strong sense of humour'.
- 7 For Waterlow & Sons as printers of British stamps in the 1920s, see Muir (2010: 215, 225, 248).
- 8 The Southern Cross is the first quarter of the shield of the New Zealand coat of arms itself; see Mackenzie-White (2012).
- 9 A dubious descendant, however, is the 33¢ 'Smiley' stamp, based on Harvey Ball's *Smiley* (1963), issued by the US Postal Service in 1999 (Woo 2001).
- 10 Gerard Kiljan's designs for the 1931 Dutch 'Kinderzegels' (Child Welfare) stamps provide a startlingly modernist contrast to the contemporaneous 'Smiling Boys'. Scott (1995: 42, 44) observes: 'Kiljan's photographic images of clearly disabled children in bold colour against a white background, were revolutionary in their realism and directness ... The oblique typography of the commemorative text is deliberately out of synchronisation with the rest of the typographic elements, enhancing the feeling of unease created by the image.' Further, Scott recognises that 'the image has suffered from a reduction in scale and from typefaces that are swamped by their white backgrounds ... The crux of the problem is that of legibility and scale' (Scott 1995: 44). No such problems arise with the far more conservative 'Smiling Boys' design.
- 11 Frank Mitchell informed the author that his father loved Louis Armstrong 'not only for his music but for the enthusiasm he put into making it' (pers. comm., 6 November 2012).
- 12 For an excellent discussion of physical welfare as the people's entitlement in New Zealand during the 1930s and 1940s, see Macdonald (2011: 70–98).

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