



One of a kind Topicals:

by Pat Morgan



If you have the Austria SC#2191 (left) you are the proud owner of the entire topical collection of PEZ on stamps. The stamp depicts the original peppermint candy, the first patented "regular" dispenser, as well as one of the iconic PEZ pin-up girls used in the original marketing of PEZ to adults.

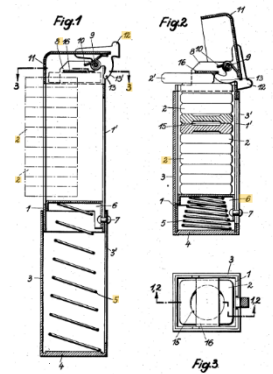
While nearly every one of us at one time or another has had a PEZ, how much do you know about these tiny pieces of candy?

In 1927, Eduard Haas III (right) introduced a peppermint candy in Austria, and PEZ was born. The original PEZ was round, called PEZ drops, sold in small tins, and was extremely popular. The brand name PEZ came from the German word for peppermint, "Pfefferminz" taking the P from the first letter, E from the middle letter and Z from the last letter. The candy was quickly changed to the familiar brick shape that it has remained since. Haas initially made PEZ as a breath mint to help smokers quit and marketed them to adults. The PEZ girl on the stamp was part of the original adult marketing using pin-up girls.



In 1935, PEZ built a large-scale factory in Czechoslovakia to manufacture the candy. Until 1948, except during WWII when cardboard boxes were used, the brick shaped tablets were sold in small pocket-sized tins, like Altoids are today. Oscar Uxa invented and patented a small mechanical box (left) for dispensing the tablets and in 1949 the first dispenser was officially introduced at the Vienna Trade Fair. The original dispenser held the same number of tablets (12) as today! This dispenser without the modern head is referred to as a "regular" dispenser. The "regular" dispenser is also shown on the stamp.

PEZ began U.S. distribution operations in 1952 and all PEZ were still imported from Europe. On December 2, 1952, PEZ was awarded the first U.S. patent number for a dispenser (right). In 1957, PEZ added a 3D character head to the top of a dispenser. The Halloween Witch became the first traditional character head dispenser in 1957. Popeye was the first licensed character head introduced in 1958, quickly followed by Mickey Mouse. Santa Claus was the most highly produced dispenser of all-time as a new one is issued each year, just like Christmas stamps.



In the 1960's, PEZ continued to bring a new dimension to the dispenser base with stickers and die-cuts. PEZ tried out some rare and unusual candy flavors, such as Licorice, Flowers, and Chlorophyll, but thankfully those were discontinued.

By 1973, The PEZ market in the US grew to the point that the company needed to manufacture the candy domestically. The plant in Orange, Connecticut was opened on November 19, 1973. This plant remains the only U.S. PEZ manufacturing facility to this day. The interchangeable rubber head character dispensers were introduced in 1978.

The small tabs were added to the bottom of the dispenser base (right) to help it stand upright, in Europe during 1984 and three years later (1987) in the U.S. These tabs are referred to, in the collector community, as 'feet' and help determine year and value of vintage dispensers, much like gummed and self-adhesive stamps do for philatelists.



As PEZ collecting grew in popularity during the early 1990s, the first ever PEZ collector convention was held in Mentor, Ohio on June 15, 1991. Collectors from the U.S., Canada, Europe, and Japan made PEZ an international phenomenon. PEZ collectors, or PEZ Heads, have been meeting annually since 1991 at PEZAMANIA, like philatelists meet each year at the APS Great American Stamp Show.

In 1993 Forbes Magazine featured PEZ on its cover and the prestigious Christie's auction house in New York held the first ever pop culture auction featuring PEZ.



In the mid-90's PEZ reintroduced two popular products - peppermint flavored candy and the 'regular' PEZ dispenser. The Tweety Bird PEZ Dispenser was featured on an episode of the popular Seinfeld television show (left) and has often been referenced in television series.

In 2005 PEZ released the Star Wars Collectors Set (right). This was the first PEZ limited edition set. In 2006 PEZ released dispensers featuring Orange County Choppers; the first time that PEZ featured living people on its dispensers.



In 2011 the PEZ Visitor Center (left) was opened in Orange, CT. Today, billions of PEZ candies are consumed annually in the U.S.A. alone. PEZ, like stamps, are fun to collect and a staple of American pop culture.

In conclusion, the next time you see a PEZ while you are checking out at the store, stop and think that to a PEZ Head that item excites them like a postage stamp does you!



Just for fun... While researching I found these two stamps using vintage PEZ ads to create stamp images. These are, however, not actual postage stamps.

Sources: [The History of PEZ - About Us – PEZ Candy](#)
[PEZ - Wikipedia](#)

