



The Signevierist

Issue Number 2006 – 1

The Official Newsletter of the Fire Mark Circle of the Americas

Star Fire Insurance Company, Bulau 255

FOOTPRINTS OF ASSURANCE attributes number 255 to the Star Fire Insurance Company, Ogdensburg, NY. The dates of the company are listed as 1854 – 1857. The two prior marks, 253-254, are also attributed to the same company. Note that 253 and 254 are lead on wood boards, while 255 is tin. "Footprints" says that 255 was taken from a building in Ohio. It seemed odd that an insurance company that was in business for at most four years would issue two totally different fire marks, lead on a wood board and tin, and, further, that the tin would show up on a building in Ohio.

Thinking that the tin mark may be from an Ohio insurer, I checked the *Insurance Blue Book – 1876-1877* by C. C. Hine and the 1947 list of "Fire Insurance Companies That Have Failed, Retired or Merged" in the *1947 Spectator Insurance Year Book – Fire and Marine Analysis*. I could find no listing for a Star Fire Insurance Company domiciled in Ohio.

The only other listing for a Star Fire Insurance Company I could find was the Star Fire Insurance Company, NYC, 1864 – 1886. A 1902 publication by Charles A. Jenney, *Fire Insurance By States: From 1880 to 1901*, shows a "Star, New York." The Star is listed as retired in 1886 and wrote business in Ohio for at least five years beginning January 1, 1880. The same company is also listed as having written in most of the Midwest states.

During this period many Ohio and New York City insurers, writing business in Ohio, issued tin fire marks to policyholders. It is reasonable to suppose that the Star Fire of New York issued a tin fire mark to meet the competition.

While it is possible that the Star of Ogdensburg

wrote insurance in Ohio during its short four years, and issued two different types of fire marks, it seems unlikely. Based on the above facts, I question Bulau's identification of 255.

I would like to hear from the FMCA members what they think.

Bob Shea

Organizational News

TWO COMMITTEE CHAIRS have decided that they do not want to continue in those capacities.

Dave Wings has headed the Archive Committee since it was formed. Through his efforts and guidance, FMCA now has its own archive that serves as a repository for its records and related material. We thank Dave for his service that was instrumental in establishing our archive.

For the past several years Tom McDonald has chaired the Advertising Committee and the Website Committee, as well as videotaping events at our annual conventions. Tom has asked to be relieved of his duties as chair of both of these committees, but he will continue to videotape our annual conventions. Thanks to Tom for heading both of these committees.

I have appointed Gabe Laubacher to be Chair of the Archive Committee and Peter Faber to be Chair of both the Advertising Committee and the Website Committee. Gabe and Peter both readily agreed to serve FMCA in these respective capacities.

Ed Schlesinger

IN MEMORIAM



IT IS WITH SADNESS that I inform you of the death, on January 7, 2006, of Margie Marrs. As long-time FMCA members, Margie and her husband, Jim, helped with the planning at both the Houston conventions.

She was a gracious host at Jim's office, while he showed off his fire marks and collectibles. A donation in memory of Margie was sent to the "Smile Program" at the South Main Baptist Church in Houston.

Also, longtime member George "MAC" MacConnell passed away on Sunday, January 29, 2006. As a long time insurance adjustor, George knew the business and it was a delight to listen to his stories. George was doing flea markets before most of us knew what they were. Quite a few FMCA members have some of his pickings in their collections. A donation will be sent in Mac's memory.

NEW ITALIAN FIRE MARK BOOK

EIGHT YEARS after his first edition, a new improved second edition of the book titled *The Fire Plates of Italy* by Dr. Vito Platania has just been published. It contains photographs of over 770 different fire marks found in Italy to date, all in color on a scale of 0.24:1, and documents all the fire insurance companies known to have issued them between 1820 and 1970. This includes all the fire marks from foreign companies known to have been used in Italy, including a number of rare marks from British companies, such as The Glasgow, London & Lancashire, Norwich Union, Reinsurance & Guarantee, and The Times, to name a few.

The book is printed on quality glossy paper with a

plasticized cover and has 280 pages. Although it is mostly in Italian, the Introduction is also in English, German, and French, and most of the technical details of the marks and company chronologies are easily understandable. In an improvement over the first edition, the section on fire mark descriptions now contains an "Identification Column" which highlights the differences between the major variants and their sub-variants.

The regular price is 110 Euros, post paid to the USA, but for orders of 5 to 19 copies, the price is 88 Euros, and for 20 and above, it is 70 Euros. Payment must be made by bank transfer direct to the publisher in Italy.

If you would like to take advantage of the lower price, I am taking orders for all FMCA members who want me to order the book for them. I already have advanced orders for 20 books, so the lower price is now guaranteed. However, I must have your order NO LATER THAN APRIL 3rd. I will then place one combined order with the publisher and transfer the total amount from my Euro bank account in Germany. DO NOT SEND ME ANY MONEY UNTIL YOU GET A CONFIRMATION FROM ME. The final price in US Dollars will be based on the exchange rate and bank fees charged to me on the day the money is converted to Euros, plus the cost of mailing the book within the US.

If you would rather order the book directly from the publisher and pay the full price yourself, you must transfer 110 Euros to the CASSA DI RISPARMIO DI FIRENZE, The bank transfer number is: IT 74 A061 6002 8090 00013793 C00 CRFIIT3FXXX. The last 11 digits of this number is the Swift code needed for international bank transfers.

At the same time send your name and address to:
**Spett.le, Edizioni Tassinari,
Viale dei Mille 90,
50131 Firenze, Italy**
and indicate that you are ordering the book titled, *Le Targhe Incendio in Italia*.

You can place your order with me by letter or by email as follows:

Bill Evenden
6622 Paul Mar Drive
Lantana, Florida 33462
or
evenden@earthlink.net

OUR UPDATED and REVISED WEBSITE

AT THE San Diego Convention last Fall your Board of Directors voted to hire Digital Backups Group, a website manager and internet consulting firm recommended by Linda Anderberg, to assist in making revisions to the FMCA website at www.firemarkcircle.org.

The purposes of making these revisions are two-fold:

1. To establish an independent, free-standing website easily accessible by both members and non-members alike; and
2. To make improvements to the design of the website, to give it a fresher look and to make it more user-friendly.

The ad hoc Website Committee, consisting of Bryan Webster (our web host with Digital Backups Group), Linda Anderberg, Gabe Laubacher and me, has been hard at work making the necessary changes and improvements to the website over the past couple of months.

Our website is now a stand alone site so that it will receive "hits" when a non-member uses a search engine to navigate the Internet and types either "fire mark" or "firemark" into that search engine. Please encourage prospective members to visit our website. Any questions should be e-mailed to either Gabe Laubacher or me.

To facilitate communication with the public, particularly prospective members, we have created some new e-mail addresses, which can be found in the "Contact Us" Section of the website, so that non-members and members alike may, with a minimum of effort, reach the FMCA official in charge of a particular organizational function.

These new e-mail addresses, and the persons who will be receiving e-mail sent to those addresses, are as follows:

Information@firemarkcircle.org,
Gabe Laubacher,
Auction@firemarkcircle.org,
Linda Anderberg,
BookSales@firemarkcircle.org,
Nick Jennings,
Editor@firemarkcircle.org,
Bob Shea,
Website@firemarkcircle.org,
Peter Faber and
President@firemarkcircle.org,
Ed Schlesinger.

FMCA members should also visit our website. After all, it exists for your use. The Website Committee would be interested in comments about the revised and improved website that any member may have. Please direct your comments to:

Linda Anderberg, Gabe Laubacher, Peter Faber, or Ed Schlesinger at the above e-mail addresses.

Now comes the fun part. If you go to our revised website and review it, you will note the vertical arrangement of three well known American fire marks – (1) a cast iron United Firemen's with original paint, (2) a tin Hartford [BU 75-V-A] and (3) a cast lead Mutual Assurance ["Green Tree"] on an original oval wooden board – appearing on the opening page and on each successive page. We want to have a similar vertical arrangement of three fire marks included on each successive page of the website, but with photographs of three different American fire marks appearing on each page.

The committee is looking for photos of photogenic fire marks to give our website,

Website@firemarkcircle.org

additional eye appeal and to increase its attractiveness to non-members. We are soliciting from you, our members, photographs of American fire marks from your individual collections that you think are worthy of being included on successive pages of our revised website. To pick the photographs that will be added to these successive pages we will use the same criteria used to select the initial photographs already included on the website, namely:

1. Only American fire marks are eligible;
2. No repainted fire marks will be considered;
3. No damaged fire marks will be considered;
4. No reproduction fire marks will be considered;
5. Only color photographs of a fire mark appearing on a white background will be considered; and
6. Photographs must be clear and the subject fire mark in focus.

If you have any fire marks which you want to be considered for inclusion on successive pages of our website, please e-mail clear photographs of such fire marks to Linda Anderberg, Gabe Laubacher, Peter Faber and me [yes, all four of us] at our respective e-mail addresses given previously in this article. We will be pleased to consider any and all photographs submitted to us.

The deadline for submission of photographs to our committee is April 1 [no fooling!].

Ed Schlesinger

THIS AND THAT

Don't forget:

**FMCA 2006 CONVENTION
WILLIAMSBURG, VA
October 26-29, 2006**

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I MISTAKENLY WROTE in the last issue that the Ohio Farmers Insurance Company "went out of business." While they may not issue any more fire marks, they did not go out of business. They are alive and well. Check out their website at: <http://www.westfieldgrp.com/index.jsp>

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More Don't forget:

If you haven't paid your 2006 dues, send your \$30 to Howard Girdlestone!

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## NATIONAL FIREMARK AWARDS

**T**HAT'S RIGHT... firemark as one word, not two. The firemark here is an award by the Liberty Mutual Group in recognition for exemplary display of valor, and commitment to public health and safety. Introduced in 1986, the 2005 award went to St. Louis Firefighter John Hernandez, of Engine 31, and New York City Firefighter John Patrick Murphy, of Ladder 156 in Brooklyn.

Firefighter Hernandez received the Heroic Award for his acts that saved the life of a three-year old boy in a fatal fire, and Firefighter Murphy received the Community Service and Public Education Award for his work on the FDNY Help Team, despite a serious car crash in 1995 that left him with a broken neck and unable to resume his duties as a firefighter.

The awards were received at Liberty Mutual's "Where's the Fire?" exhibit at INNOVENTIONS at Epcot at the Walt Disney World Resort in Florida. If you have a chance to visit Walt Disney World, you may want to see this exhibit. It is billed as the nation's largest fire safety and education experience in a 4,000+ square-foot exhibit designed by Walt Dis

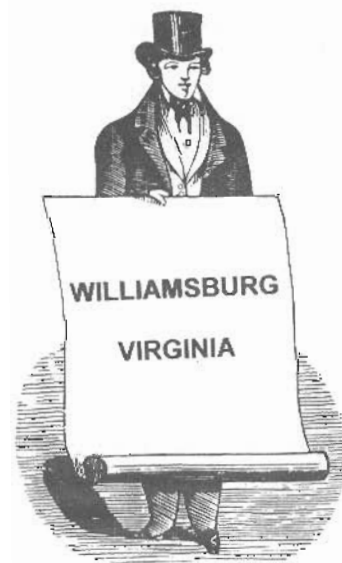
ney Imagineering in cooperation with Liberty Mutual's fire safety specialists and the U.S. Fire Administration. "Where's the Fire?" features an interactive game house that challenges guests to find and eliminate common - and uncommon - home fire hazards using a technologically unique "safety light." Younger children especially enjoy the smaller scale "Play It Safe" house where they learn safe behaviors should a fire occur in their home.

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THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE "HOME"

This issue's "Home" insurance company is "The Home Indemnity Company," NYC, which was incorporated in 1930. It was owned by and under the same management as the Home Insurance Company, also of NYC. After redomesticating to New Hampshire in 1973, the Home Indemnity merged in 1996 into the Home Insurance Company.

THE HOME INDEMNITY COMPANY





American Fire Insurance Company
Philadelphia, PA 1810-1913

Material: Tinned sheet iron

Size: 6 13/16" x 3 1/4"

Description: Rectangular. Green background. At top, flat black letters "AMERICAN FIRE / 1810." At center, vignette of American eagle facing right with wings spread and perched on a flag pole with an American flag. At bottom, in flat black letters "PHILADELPHIA." Mounting holes in all four corners.

Note: The company resumed operations in 1908 after ceasing due to heavy losses in the 1906 San Francisco earthquake and fire. In 1913 the company merged with the Insurance Company of the State of Pennsylvania.

Credit: Ed Schlesinger



The German Washington Mutual Fire Insurance Association
Louisville, Kentucky. 1860 - 1921

Material: Tin.

Size: 5 7/8" x 3 7/8"

Description Oval. Border, bust of Washington and "D.W.G. / F. V. G" raised. The name on the mark is Deutsche Washington Gesellschaft Feuer Versicherungs Gesellechaft, which translates to The German Washington Mutual Insurance Association. The word "German" was dropped from the name in September 1921. The company is still in business.

Credit: Dave Wings