



The Signevierist

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The Official Newsletter of the Fire Mark Circle of the Americas

2006 Williamsburg Convention

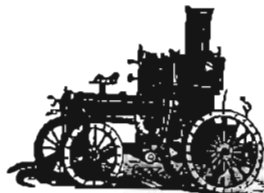
THE CONVENTION opened Thursday evening with a Ghost Walk in Colonial Williamsburg complete with a lantern and tales of ghosts. After an on your own dinner, the small but enthusiastic group gathered in the Hospitality room to catch up with old friends and swap fire mark stories. In the adjacent rooms Linda Anderberg and her helpers had the silent auction set up. The conventioners were already staking out the items they wanted to take home.

The next, day after breakfast, we carpoled to the Colonial Williamsburg Visitors' Center at Colonial Williamsburg. After viewing an orientation film, we visited a replica of a 17th century Virginia plantation. While not completely finished, the plantation did show the slave quarter, complete with re-enactor. Dinner on our own and a stop at the Hospitality room rounded out the full day. Later we visited the Governor's Palace.

After a full breakfast, Saturday started with the business meeting. Ed Schlesinger ran a tight meeting and we were finished with lots of time to view the silent auction to get in our last bids.

In the mean time the auction committee set up the live auction tables and the fun began. Due to last year's successful auction, and the fact that all the items in the main auction were on our website, the excitement for this year's auction was palpable. There were 124 marks and insurance/fire memorabilia, plus five from the silent auction. Our auctioneer, Gabe Laubacher, kept the auction moving along, while squeezing the last dollar out of the bidders. The main auction sales were almost \$25,000, and the silent auction sales were over \$6,500. Highlights of the auctions by Ed Schlesinger are included in this issue.

The Saturday Banquet began with a surprise speaker, James Madison, who later became the 4th President of the United States. Mr. Madison gave us his thoughts on his service to both Virginia and as the current Secretary of State to President Thomas Jefferson. The Secretary's talk was thoroughly enjoyed by all. Our MC and outgoing president, Ed Schlesinger, on behalf of all conventioners, thanked Ted and Keeta Hodson for hosting such a delightful convention. Rounding out the activities, Ed presented the Max Klein Silver Salver to Howard Girdlestone for meritorious service. Linda Anderberg won the Max Klein Trumpet for recruiting the most new members and the Morton T. Werner Award for her outstanding contributions to the FMCA. After introducing our incoming president, Gabe Laubacher, the convention was closed with the hope that all will be able to gather again next year in Louisville.



A Review of the Williamsburg Auctions

THERE WAS PLENTY of activity in both the live and silent auctions at our 2006 Convention in Williamsburg. Because of the excellent attendance at this meeting, thirty-one mail and live floor bidders registered for the Live Auction. This number represents a significant increase in the number of prospective bidders over the past few convention auctions.

80% of the lots in the Live Auction and 89% of the lots in the Silent Auction were sold.

The Live Auction

The Live Auction contained 124 lots consisting of the following types of material:

Fire marks:

United States: 41;
British Isles [United Kingdom and Ireland]: 43;
Other countries: 13;

Signs: 14; and

Other items [ledger markers, fire helmets, etc.]: 13.

99 of these lots were sold.

As may be expected, lots containing U.S. fire marks realized the ten highest prices, with these ten lots being dominated by five marks from Cincinnati companies and four marks from Philadelphia companies. Similar to the 2005 Live Auction, fire marks from Ohio-based companies realized the highest prices.

The following is a list of the top ten Live Auction lots, ranked in the order of the price realized by each lot:

<u>Lot No.</u>	<u>Bulau No.</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Price Realized</u>
10	207	Queen City Ins. Co., Cincinnati, tin	\$3,150
5	138	Fire Department Ins. Co., Cincinnati, cast iron	2,700
46	284	Home Ins. Co., Cincinnati, tin	1,600
18	378	Enterprise Fire & Marine Ins. Co., Cincinnati, tin	1,200
36	226	Girard Fire & Marine Ins. Co., Philadelphia, tin	1,150
8	85	Fire Association of Philadelphia, lead	1,000
19	329	The Reliance Ins. Co. of Philadelphia, tin	975
2	121	Hartford County Mutual Fire Ins. Co., Hartford, CT, tin [previously unreported variant]	900
14	195	Eagle Ins. Co., Cincinnati, cast iron	800
118	91	Fire Association of Philadelphia, brass	750

The Silent Auction

Because six lots intended for inclusion in the Silent Auction were never delivered to Williamsburg, there were 213 lots in the Silent Auction, with 35 items being added to this auction at the Convention. Of these 213 lots, 189 were sold.

Lot No. 124, a beautifully done leather bound copy of Brian Wright's The British Fire Mark 1680 – 1879 [1982], realized \$350.00. Lot No. 69, an elaborate pair of gold plated scissors inscribed "Compliments of Fireman's Fund Insurance Company", realized \$125.00.

Of the ten Silent Auction lots realizing the highest prices, the remaining eight lots were:

<u>Lot No.</u>	<u>Description</u>	<u>Price Realized</u>
45	Fireman's Fund Ins. Co. red leather fireman's helmet front piece	\$ 55
54	Glass paperweight, Mercantile Fire. Ins. Co. of Canada	50
61	<u>The Great Boston Fire – 1872</u> [Boston Globe, 1972]	50
112	Bulau, <u>Footprints of Assurance</u> (well worn and annotated) [1953]	50
Henham,	<u>True Hero, The Life and Times of James Braidwood, Father of the British Fire Service</u> [2000]	50
2	Framed sheet music cover, "The Midnight Fire Alarm"	45
184	Auto tag, Farmer's Union Insurances	45
88	Silver pocket knife, Ticket Dep't., Travelers Ins. Co.	40

FMCA thanks all consignors and bidders who participated in both auctions for making them as successful as they were.

Thanks to Peter Faber, Jim Giles and Howard Girdlestone, who donated items to the Silent Auction. 100% of the proceeds realized from these donated auction items went to FMCA.

Thanks to the Auction Lot Verification Committee [Bob Shea, Chair, and members Bill Evenden, Peter Faber and Tom Hardy] for its yeoman work in examining and authenticating all of the fire marks in the Live Auction.

Finally, thanks to Linda Anderberg, our Auction Chair, to Gabe Laubacher, our auctioneer, and to everyone – Tom Hardy, Jan Hardy, Bette Higgins, Howard Girdlestone, Tom Hewitt, Ted Lussem, Logan Smith and Linda Borgstrom – who assisted them in staging both auctions.

Ed Schlesinger



"HOUSE PLATES"

"**House Plates** – Should be placed upon all risks covered by a Phoenix policy, and agents who stand in need of a fresh supply of these most useful articles will be good enough to send in their orders thereof. Our experience demonstrates the fact, the more the name of a good company is kept prominently and constantly before the public, the more successful will be the efforts of the agent in securing new risks; and we know of no better way of doing this, than by placing house-plates - such as are furnished from this office exclusively for that purpose - **on every house insured.**"

May 1, 1865. From a book entitled *Facts and Figures*, which is a bound volume of newsletters that were "Designed for the use and reference of Agents of the Phoenix Insurance Company, Hartford, CT."

Thanks again to Logan Smith. If any of our members have old agents manual, check it out for any reference to house-plates. Be sure to also check under agents' supplies issued by the company.



LETTER from the PRESIDENT

Hello,

I WOULD LIKE to take this opportunity to thank the 53 members that attended and made our 2006 convention a success, our 34th I believe. Ted and Keeta did an outstanding job attending to our needs and making our stay enjoyable. It was obvious that a lot of work went into the planning and to make sure our visit was a pleasant one. Thank you, Ted and Keeta.

I, for the most part, do not believe in reinventing the wheel. As such most Committee Chairs have indicated a willingness to stay on and remain unchanged. Next years directory will contain this information.

You will see that I have listed an eBay item of Membership in the FMCA. I am hoping that we will get some positive results from this as well as international exposure. Only time will tell. If you have other suggestions, please send them this way.

We have added a Convention Committee and are thus in need of people interested in helping Dave and Mary Wings, Committee Chairs of 2007. Please contact us if you have any interest in assisting us in Kentucky.

One Committee Chair is in need of help and with that I am extending an invitation to one and all to help and eventually take over the auction for Linda Anderberg. We have one volunteer so far, but I believe a second person would be a great help in order to divide the workload. Again, please contact us if you have any interest. As for the other Committees, if you have any interest, let us know. Assistants would be of vital importance if the Chair became ill or unavailable for any period of time. Start your writing career by sending Bob Shea stories or interesting factoids for the *Signevierist*, our news letter.

Now for a comment or two on an issue I am sure will upset some. This is a generalization and I am not picking on any one person. If I were, I would single people out. This is a food for thought issue that I feel needs addressed.

Many have told me that Membership is falling and something needs to be done. I agree, but I alone cannot tackle this issue. It is an issue that we all must address, but yet we seem to be defeating ourselves.

How so you ask? At our 2006 Convention I was told by three members that they were bidding on items for friends, two of which are not members and the third I don't know. I personally have a problem with that. To be bidding for a member is the same as bidding via our mail in bids in my mind and is not an issue.

To me bidding for non-members is just wrong. Can we stop this? No! Can you stop this? Yes! I have been asked by several fellow firefighters to bid on stuff that they have seen on our website. My answer has always been to say, any outsider for \$30.00 is eligible to bid at our auction. Along with that eligibility is a one year membership in the FMCA.

Why are we willing to give memberships away? Bidding for non-members is just that, giving memberships and its rights away for free. With our ranks slowly dwindling, I would think this is the last thing we would want. **WE NEED TO START DOING WHAT IS BEST FOR THE FMCA!**

For those of you who are bidding for non-members, I am asking you to stop this practice. It is hurting the FMCA. It is a weed that is slowly strangling this organization. Instead, ask these friends to join the FMCA. At \$30.00 per year it has to be one of the best deals in town. And if all else fails, buy a membership as a gift to them. Everyone has a birthday and of course Christmas is once again, just around the corner.

With that --- Merry Christmas and Happy New Year.

Gabriel (Gabe) Laubacher

Eco91@aol.com --- Please list **FMCA** as the subject matter if you do write, thank you.

THE FIRE MARK COLLECTORS' BIBLE

While I'm sure most FMCA members have at least one copy of *Footprints of Assurance* by Alwin E. Bulau, have you ever thought about the book itself? "Footprints" was published in 1953 by The Home Insurance Company to celebrate "A Century of Property Protection," and was dedicated to Harold V. Smith, President of the Home, who was himself a fire collector.

We can only guess that the first, and only printing, of "Footprints" was not less than 5,000 to 10,000 and that its "coffee table" size made it quite appealing to insurance people. But not all copies were the same, namely:

- 500 copies of "Footprints" were designated as "Presentation Copies." I am sure that these copies were intended for friends and business associates of Harold V. Smith and other high level executives of The Home. These copies came in a black "slipcover" box. Aside from this box, the only ways to distinguish a Presentation Copy from a regular run production copy are:

Two pages behind the title page, a sheet with the following appears:

"A
Limited Edition
of Five Hundred Copies Of Which
This Is Number
Presented
With The Compliments Of
_____"; and

The edges of the pages of the volume are done in gold, rather than in white as they usually appear.

I own one numbered, signed and dated copy of this "Limited Edition" [hereinafter "LE"]. It is No. 158, signed by both Alwin E. Bulau and Harold V. Smith and dated January 5, 1956.

Based on the few signed and numbered copies of the LE that I have seen, the fact that more unsigned and unnumbered copies of this LE appear to be available than the signed and numbered copies, and that LE No. 158 is dated in early January, 1956, about 2 and 1/2 years after "Footprints" was published in 1953, it appears that far fewer than 500 copies of the LE were ever actually numbered, signed and dated, i.e., fully issued as a limited edition.

I would welcome information from all members who own LE copies, whether fully numbered, signed and dated or not so issued. My email address and my mailing address are both in the FMCA Membership Directory. If you own a fully or partially numbered, signed and dated LE, please include all relevant information in your response.

If I receive enough responses, I will publish a compilation of this information in a future edition of "The Signevierist". I will keep confidential the identities of every- one who responds.

- Finally, although the overwhelming numbers of copies of "Footprints" that I have encountered have a blue hardback cover under their gray dust jacket, there is also a red hardback cover. I don't know the significance of the red cover.

Ed Schlesinger

**MILWAUKEE MECHANICS'
BULAU 213-217**

BULAU'S *Footprints of Assurance* attributes numbers 213-217 to the Milwaukee Mechanics' Mutual Insurance Company, Milwaukee, Wisconsin. Note that the first two marks only show the words "Milwaukee Mutual," while the last three show "Milwaukee Mechanics'." The *1857-58 Milwaukee City Directory* lists both a "Milwaukee Mutual Fire Insurance Company" and a "Milwaukee Mechanics' Mutual Insurance Company."

While I have not found much information on the Milwaukee Mutual Fire Insurance Company, *The Dictionary of Wisconsin* lists Samuel Slatter Daggett as its president from 1848-1858. A "Milwaukee Mutual" is listed in *The Insurance Year Book for 1888*. No organization date is shown. *The Spectator Insurance Year Book—Fire & Marine Analysis, 1947* lists a "Milwaukee Mutual" as having failed in 1891.

The organization date of the Milwaukee Mechanics' Mutual Insurance Company is 1852. This at least four years after the earliest date known for the Milwaukee Mutual. It does not seem likely that the Milwaukee Mechanics' would issue a fire mark with the words "Milwaukee Mutual," when such a company was already in existence.

It is most likely that marks 213 and 214 should be attributed to the Milwaukee Mutual Fire Insurance Company. Marks 215-217 are correctly attributed to the Milwaukee Mechanics' Mutual Insurance Company. An Addendum page is enclosed for the Milwaukee Mutual.

I would appreciate any additional information from the Wisconsin FMCA members on the Milwaukee Mutual Fire Insurance Company.

Bob Shea



THIS AND THAT

Plan now to attend the FMCA 2007 convention in Louisville, Kentucky, The Gateway to the South, October 25-28, 2007.

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If you haven't already paid your 2007 dues, please sent your \$30 to Howard Girdlestone.

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Results of the live auction are enclosed.

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YOUR OFFICERS FOR 2006-7

Gabe Laubacher, President
Linda Anderberg, Vice President
Ted Lussem, Treasurer
Dave Oldham, Secretary
Directors –
Jack Brunson
Bill Evenden
Peter Faber
Hal Sandstrom
Bob Shea