



The Signevierist

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The Official Newsletter of the Fire Mark Circle of the Americas

"FIRE MAKERS" VISIT ATLANTA

THE ABOVE HEADING does not refer to General Sherman's Civil War march to the sea, but to a group of conventioners. At the conclusion of the Cyclorama's "Burning of Atlanta" the announcement was made for the "fire maker" group to report to the bus. That group was the Fire Mark Circle of the Americas, who were starting out on a day's outing as part of the 30th Annual Convention in Atlanta. We've all heard many different versions of the club's name; this was the funniest.

While the burning of Atlanta ended the first half the movie "Gone With the Wind," the cyclorama visit was our starting point for an entertaining and educational day. Having watched the movie just before the convention, it was neat to see and hear how much Margaret Mitchell intertwined actual people and events into her great American masterpiece.

Our guide, Peter Bonner, with his "Historical & Hysterical Tour & Commentary" set the mood for a most pleasant day. After visiting the "Road to Tara Museum," and buying the requisite refrigerator magnet of Vivian Leigh as Scarlet O'Hara, we dined on "Chicken Ashley" at Ashley Oaks Victorian Mansion. Lunch was served in the family rooms of the current owners and decorated in the Victorian style complete with antiques.

After lunch we visited a circa 1839 antebellum restored home, Stately Oaks Mansion, in Jonesboro, Georgia, site of a Civil War pivotal battle.

Peter Bonner's vignettes of the time period kept us enthralled on the bus. It was a tired, but happy, group who returned to the hotel, freshened up, had dinner together, and went back to the hospitality room for a second night of trading, selling and renewing friendships.

After a breakfast of cheese grits, which were served each morning, Saturday's business meeting brought us up to date for the past two years. Last year's convention was cancelled due to 9/11. Later, Jim Giles gave a pop quiz on early English and Colonial firefighting, and the "Great Fire of London." While the women went shopping, Gabe Laubacher ran a fast paced and fun auction. Gabe was a straight man to all the kibitzers in the audience. The auction lots were

varied with American and English fire marks and other collectibles.

The traditional Saturday night banquet was, in a word, beautiful. The opening prayer had special meaning to Glenn Hartley because Mildred, his wife, who had suffered a stroke over the summer, was at his side on the dais. As the Master of Ceremonies, and host of the convention, Glenn Hartley welcomed us. Jim Giles, outgoing President of the FMCA also welcomed us and gave a corsage to all the women present.

Glenn resumed the podium and presented a certificate to all the charter FMCA members present. Also, the following presentations were made: Max Klein Trumpet Award, Jack Brunson; Morton T. Werner President's Award, Bob Shea; and the FMC Max Klein Salver, Tom Hopkins.

Recognizing that the convention was dedicated to the 25 FMCA members/firefighters, Glen presented a customized certificate to the seven members present. The other 18 were mailed to those not attending. Jim Giles then presented the gavel to Tom Hewitt, who will preside over the club for the next year. Lastly, Glenn thanked the Atlanta Convention Committee for an outstanding job, to which all present seconded. Glenn eagerly awaits next year's convention in Fredrick, Maryland, where he can just take it easy.

The article on the last page of this newsletter appeared in The Atlanta Journal-Constitution, Saturday, Oct. 5 2002.



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IN MEMORIAM

IT IS WITH SADNESS that I inform you that Jerry Pajak passed away on July 11, 2002.

Jerry was a FMCA Charter member. His forte was fire grenades and fire sheet music, both topics of which he wrote articles on for the FMCA. When Jerry and Ann, his wife, hosted the 1990 Convention in Toledo, we had a chance to view his extensive collection of fire grenades and lightning rods. Also, how many people do you know have a fire engine in their garage? Jerry did!

Jerry was also our Publicity Chairman for many years and contributed fire mark articles to numerous publications.

The FMCA will make a donation in his name to the Toledo Firefighters Museum. To see some of Jerry's sheet music and an article by him on collecting fire sheet music just Google "Toledo Firefighters Museum." It's a wonderful site.

THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE "HOME"

MOST OF US ARE FAMILIAR with the Home Insurance Company, New York and their fire marks, BU#s 229-239. Did you know that *Footprints of Assurance* lists many other insurance companies with the name "Home Insurance Company?" *Footprints* lists the following "Home" companies:

BU#s 283-284, Home Insurance Co., Cincinnati,
BU#s 344-346, Home Insurance Co., Columbus,
BU# 355, Home Insurance Co., Lafayette, Ind.,
BU#s 300-302, Home Insurance Co., New Haven.

If you add the word "Fire" or "Mutual" to the name, *Footprints* lists:

BU# 464, The Home Fire Insurance Co., Omaha;
and the Addendum shows:

BU# US-HC-1, Home Mutual Insurance Company,
Indianapolis.

My research material lists over 50 insurance companies in the United States with the word "Home" in its name. If your state has/had a "Home" insurance company, drop me a note or two about it. Also, send me a copy of a policy masthead, letterhead, and envelope or trade card with the name of the company on it. I'll use the graphic to make the newsletter a little homier.

[I couldn't resist the pun.]
Bob Shea, Your Editor

FIRE MARK

Here I sit upon the wall,
Between the windows of a building wall,
To let anyone know who might enquire,
Are those premises insured for fire?

My shape is varied, my colours too,
Gold and black and red and blue,
Clasped hands, a Sun, a Phoenix rising,
The variations were quite surprising.

I hear a drum, I hear a bell,
The building's on fire, it looks like hell,
Here comes the Company Fire Brigade,
If it's not their Mark, will they lend their aid?

For rivalry is very keen,
When the Company Brigades they reach the scene,
It's not our Mark you'll hear them cry,
To put out the fire they will not try.

They'll stand and jeer and make some fun,
When that Company's Brigades arrives at the run,
With leather helmets and coats of blue,
A new hand pump with a twelve man crew.

But these conditions could not last,
The time for rivalry was past,
So they all joined up, they had it made,
They formed the local Fire Brigade.

My time has come, no need to enquire,
Is this building insured for fire?
The local Brigade has come to stay,
To fight all fires without delay,
So I can retire and leave the wall,
To take my place in a famous hall,
In the museum, in the park,
I was a British Fire Mark.

J.F.A. Brown

[Editors note: This is true only of British fire marks.]



FIRE MARKS on eBay



RECENTLY THE ABOVE ITEM sold on eBay with the following description, "Up for auction is a fire mark dated 1817. I really don't know anything about this, purchased at estate sale. Says F A, 1817 and an embossed pumper with hose. Has felt on the back. Quite heavy, don't know what it is made from. Don't know the age of this item."

If it's a Fire Association of Philadelphia fire mark, then it's a new variant. I DON'T THINK SO!!

If you haven't already guessed what it is, here's a hint. Why didn't the seller give dimensions? One final hint - name some objects that might sit on a desk and have felt on the back.

It's a very expensive cast iron paperweight and it sold for \$102.50 + shipping and insurance. I wonder if the buyer sent it back. Maybe the buyer thought it was a fire mark for a dollhouse.

This is one of the more outrageous examples of items sold as fire marks on eBay. In addition to reproductions sold as originals, some of the other objects sold as fire marks are: signs, plaques, firemen's grave markers, anything with the sun on it and all sorts of odd badges.

Most sellers are candid about not knowing anything about fire marks and have the following caveat, "This mark is of extremely high quality and I believe it to be both vintage and original, however I'm not an expert and this could be a reproduction. It has both the look and feel of an older mark." They leave it up to the buyer to make a judgement. To be fair, sellers also invite questions from bidders.

Some members have purchased good fire marks on eBay and at good prices. They did so after asking the seller questions and, in some cases, obtaining close up digital pictures of the back and edges.

The bargains, the fakes and oddities are out there. If anything, eBay is entertaining.

Bob Shea

THIS AND THAT

This issue contains the third installment of Ed Tufts' monograph on fire stamps, "The Modern Age." Ed is a true devotee the fire service and stamps. Enjoy.

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Enclosed as a supplement is an updated "Subject Index" of FMCA publications from 1972 to the present issue.

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Ted Lussem has received the Philadelphia Award from the CPCU Society's Iowa Chapter and the AICPCU/IIA for 25 years of teaching underwriting and insurance courses.

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If you haven't already done so, please check out our web site, "firemarkcircle.org". While the information is basically the same, the look and feel is different. Look for new material in the future to generate membership and tell the correct story of fire marks in America.

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The next issue will contain an updated and expanded "Fire Mark Reproductions" published in 1989 by Al Wills. Perfect for spotting those fakes on eBay.

YOUR OFFICERS FOR 2003

Tom D. Hewitt, President
Bill Pope, Vice President
Glenn Hartley, Sr., Secretary
Ted Lussem, Treasurer
Directors -
J. Malcolm Gonzales
Joe Gunderman
Gabriel Laubacher
Tom McDonald
Bob Shea

**THE MODERN AGE
E.R.TUFTS**

"A vertiable army of inventors, designers, and manufacturers of gasoline and diesel-powered fire engines have come and gone during this century. Fire engines bearing the nameplates of Ahrens-Fox, Crown, Hahn, Robinson, Knox, Maxium, Pirsch, Waterous and Webb are all examples of those who have responded to their last call so states Dr. M. W. Goodman in his great book "Inventing The American Fire Engine." (1994)

To depict all of the stamps that show apparatus would take enough space to utilize a number of news letters. So, I have opted to cover the subject by selecting those stamps that have fire engines from the earliest models.

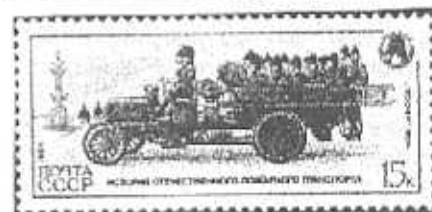
As the 19th Century came to a close, more thought was given to the steam fire engine, not necessarily the mechanics of the apparatus, but the need to respond more quickly. The addition of the self propelled engine and the inovation of the Christie Tractor was a step in this direction and soon, in the early 1900's the invention of the automobile would initiate a new concept for fire fighting - the mechanized engine. Bear in mind, several European cties were using electric engines. Thus the question, who built the first motorized engine in the world?

This honor is attributed to a Mr. Porteau, who designed an engine built by the French Manufacturer Cambier, in Lille, France. It made its debut in Versaillies in 1898.

In America, Harvey W. Eisenbise was the first inventor of the motor fire pump, in Reading, Pennsylvania in 1904.

The Knox Motor Co. of Springfield, Massachusetts produced an engine in 1904 and in 1906, after much testing, it was sold to Wayne, Pennsylvania.

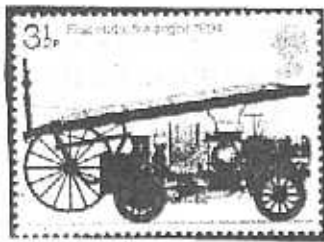
The first engine to appear on stamps, were on Russian stamps, (Scott # 5321) a 1904 Freye combination, and (Scott #5322), a 1904 Lessner.



and Cuba has a 1905 Knox (Scott # 2146)



On the Continent, Merryweather quickly re-tooled its self propelled engines to produce a motorized engine in 1904. This appears on Great Britain (Scott #716) and is referred to as the first engine.



The next, in chronological appearance, is (Scott # 647) a stamp from the Republic of Bhutan with a 1910 American La France engine. This stamp, issued in 1937 currently eludes my collection, however what makes this stamp interesting is the fact that American La France supposedly made its first engine in 1913.

In 1912-1913 the Russo-Baltysky Co. produced an engine shown on Scott #426, Latvia and Scott #5323 Russia.



In the United States in 1987 a pre-sort stamp of 20,5c has a great 1913 Ahrens-Fox. This is Scott #2264.



We must not forget that industrial development was world wide and engines were being made in Italy, France, Australia, Sweden, and of course by the German and English Companies.

Australia on Scott #858 displays it's unique 1914 Hotchkiss.



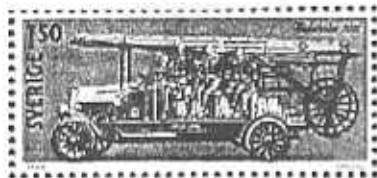
While Portugal on Scott #1518 has a Renault of the same vintage.



In 1995, Peru issued scott Number 1097 featuring a 1915 English Dennis Escape. This was a very popular engine in England for a number of years.



Not to be outdone, Sweden's Tidaholm Co., representing the Scandinavian countries, had one of their 1917 engines on Scott #1334.



The 1930's has Canada introducing a 1936 Bickle. Lancia of Milan, Italy made a 1937 engine for Chile and in 1940 proudly displayed their new Ford-Carro. Thus we begin to witness a rapid transition to bigger and more powerful machines.



At the conclusion of World War I, Germany applied its industrial knowhow to the development of Fire Engines by the Metz Co. and the German Democratic Republic issued Scott #2615 showing a L.F.-15,



Henry Ford was taking control of the automobile assembly business and turned his talents to mass production of fire engines. From 1920 to 1930 engines appeared on stamps from Cuba, a 1921 American La France. Costa Rica has a 1925 Knox, Portugal a 1927 Ford to name a few.



The increase in the building of high rises, etc, and new developments requiring specialized equipment gradually brought about the demise of old line companies such as Webb, Robinson, Crown, Howe and Waterous and we began to see more and more Macks, Peter Pirsch, Seagrave, Margarius, Maxim and American La France. The big shiney compression dome of the Ahrens-Fox still attracted attention.

These companies dominated the scene up to World War II and for the next few years, the production of engines took a back seat to the war effort. The aftermath saw the inovation of converting the G.I. 4 x 4 to a fire wagon primarily to serve the rural communities.

Here the picture changes rapidly, new names of countries that segregated now were in the market for fire protection

and were demanding the biggest and best. So much, so, that some communities designed and ordered equipment only to find it would not fit in the Engine house.

Indeed it was a great sight to see a tiller operated 100ft. ladder in a small town where the highest building was probably fifty feet or the streets were too narrow for such an engine to navigate. It was not too long before development caught up to the problem and now cities and towns are happy to have the right equipment. This resulted in another transition in the manufacturing business. Peter Pirsch has gone, so has Seagrave, Auto-Car and Reo, and in their place, we see Emergency-one, Sutphen, Ranger and a number of custom builders in the market.

As collectors, we see souvenir sheets of very modern apparatus from such countries as North Korea, Madagascar, some of the new countries that were formerly part of the Soviet Republics. To picture them would not do justice to the stamps and I would hate to leave out any country.

I will extend my treatment of fire apparatus on stamps to Part Four and cover the use of the fire boats. They are an interesting part of the subject and anyone who has been to a raging wharf fire will appreciate the work of the Fire Boat.

Ed Tufts

Marks, patches are collectibles

By SANDRA ECKSTEIN
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The hospitality room at the Buckhead Doubletree Hotel was packed, reverberating with the good-natured banter of old friends discussing a beloved topic.

"It's a British fire mark, about 1820 to 1840. It's \$100."

"Who put these Camden Fire stock certificates out?"

"How much is the car tag?"

The Fire Mark Circle of the Americas 30th annual convention was in full swing Thursday night as members converged on the trading room. The group focuses on fire marks — old markers made of lead, tin, copper or iron that insurance companies gave to property owners so fire departments would know they were insured. Company officials thought volunteer fire companies might work a little harder if they knew they'd get a reward for saving the building. Some marks date to 1700, while in the United States they were used until about World War I.

Glenn Hartley of Sugar Hill, one of the founders of the Fire Mark Circle and chief organizer of this year's convention, said most members collect far more than fire marks.

"We collect a little bit of everything," said Hartley, whose collection ranges from badges and helmets to nozzles, toy fire engines and books on firefighting.

The convention includes trading nights and an auction of firefighting memorabilia. Just about anything connected to firefighting is collected by someone, including patches, badges, buckets, insurance signs, extinguishers and nozzles.

Several of the 65 people attending the convention this weekend are active or retired firefighters. Joe Baczewski is a 22-year veteran in Southington, Conn.

"I've got helmets, trumpets [used to shout orders to men before radios], badges, fire marks, all kinds of stuff," Baczewski said. "I put an addition on my house to keep my collection in."

Dave Oldham, a retired firefighter from Tay-



JENNI GIRTMAN / Staff

John Trutt (right) examines an old fire mark brought to the convention from Britain by John Utting. Marks were made of tin, copper, lead or iron.

lorville, Ill., once even had his own firetruck. But Oldham hasn't bought anything in almost a year because his house is full. Still, he knows the auction will lure him in.

"I'm sure I'll be down there looking, and I'll find something I have to have," Oldham said. "I just hope it's small enough to carry on the plane."

Experts say firefighting collectibles are hot. Dave Miller, a retired firefighter from Conroe, Texas, buys and sells fire items and puts out a publication called the Fire Collector Newsletter.

"[Sept. 11, 2001] stirred up a lot of interest in everything about fire departments," Miller said. "I've sold a lot of stuff this last year to people who have never bought fire items before."

Peter Molloy, executive director of the Hall of Flame in Phoenix, the largest fire museum in the world, said attendance has been up over the past year.

"Other museums in the area had lower attendance after 9/11, but ours increased," Molloy said. "Firefighter prestige is at an all-time high."