



The Signevierist

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The Official Newsletter of the Fire Mark Circle of the Americas

2016 SPRINGFIELD, ILLINOIS, FMCA CONVENTION

ON THURSDAY, October 20rd, attendees were greeted in the lobby of the President Abraham Lincoln Hotel, Springfield, Illinois, by our host, Dave Oldham and his able assistants. Except for the Board of Directors, who met at 2:00, attendees spent the better part of the afternoon meeting old friends and planning where to go to dinner. After dinner, the hospitality room opened where the Silent Auction items were displayed. Everyone had a chance to greet late arrivals, welcome new members and those attending their first convention.

Dave had an interesting historical tour planned for Friday. The first bus stop was at the historic red-domed Old State Capitol where Abraham Lincoln served in the state legislature and tried cases before the Illinois Supreme Court. I sat at the desk Lincoln occupied while in the legislature. Next stops were the Lincoln Tomb, a breathtaking granite monument, and the Air Combat Museum, a working museum that showed the role of military aviation with a P-51 D Mustang that saw combat during WWII and other aviation memorabilia.

Back on the bus; we were dropped off for a box lunch at the Illinois Fire Museum, which was the former firehouse of the Illinois State Fairgrounds. After lunch, we were bused to the Abraham Lincoln Presidential Library and Museum. Its theater, galleries and historic displays of Lincoln lore and legend were truly inspiring.

On Saturday, Logan Smith, FMCA President, conducted the morning business meeting. After a box lunch, we made our final bids on the silent auction items and returned at 1:00 for the main auction. Gabe Laubacher ran the auction of 140 items in record time. Sales for both the live and silent auctions totaled \$28,366. (See Linda Anderson's auction report below.)

The evening's banquet at the hotel with great food and service along with the chatter imparted a warm feeling of enjoyment and friendship. During the evening, Linda Anderberg received the Max Klein Silver Salver for meritorious service to the FMCA; John Eubank received the Max Klein Trumpet for enlisting the most new members for the year; and the Mort and Marilyn Werner Award for outstanding contribution to the FMCA was awarded to Peter Faber. Congratulations to all the recipients! Logan thanked and presented a plaque to our hosts, Norma and Dave Oldham. Logan Smith then introduced the incoming President, Dave Oldham, whose first official duty was to present the outgoing president with a plaque for his service from 2015 – 2016. Closing out the meeting, Logan wished all a safe journey home with the hope that all would attend next year's convention scheduled for Savannah, Georgia.

Thank you Dave and Norma for all your efforts and hosting a wonderful convention.

2016 FMCA Auctions

The 2016 Auctions are now history – but they will remain in my memory forever. We had our largest total sales for both the Live and Silent Auctions. We had a great set up for the hospitality room which allowed us to have a large amount of Silent Auction items available. Then, we just closed down half of the room on Saturday morning and the Live Auction began.

The Total Sales for the Auctions were \$28,366 (\$26,060 from the Live and \$2,306 from the Silent).

Live Auction: We started with 140 items with one was determined to be a reproduction, which was pulled. There was an 81% percent sold ratio. Lot 62 was a record sale for an item at the FMCA Auctions. The top 5 sales results were:

1. Lot 62 – Fire Bucket, \$7,000
2. Lot 36 – Mennonite Fire Mark, \$2,400
3. Lot 20 – General Insurance Company of Ireland Fire Mark, \$2,000
4. Lot 105 – Friendly Ins. Society of Edinburgh, \$1,500
5. Lot 16 – Sandusky Insurance Company Fire Mark, \$1,250

Silent Auction: We started with 190 items, with three were pulled or no show. 76% were sold. The top 5 sales results were:

1. Lot 1 - Fire Box Sign, \$160
2. Lot 64 – Copper Fire Pin, “1”, \$110
3. Lot 27 – Petrolex Copper Fire Extinguisher, \$100
4. Lot 121 – Fire Siren Toy, \$80
- 5 (tie). Lot 20 – State Farm, Two Sided Sign, \$70
- 5 (tie). Lot 21 – Northwest Fire & Marine Paperweight, \$70

My sincere thanks to both the sellers and buyers for making these our most successful auctions to date. It is not possible to accomplish this without all of you. But, I also want to thank others who helped me throughout the year:

Bob Shea, Nick Jennings and Logan Smith assisted me in proofing the FMCA website to make sure items were accurately described and there were no typos.

The Auction Verification Committee consisting of Bob Shea, Peter Faber and Tom Hardy reviewed the fire marks to determine if they were authentic and as described on the website. This sets the FMCA apart from other auction sites.

With 330 items to be set up at both the Silent and Live Auctions, it can be crazy. But, thanks to Tom Hewitt, Linda Borgstrom, Mike Brankowitz and Ted Lussem, we did it.

Thanks to Gabe Laubacher for continuing as the Auctioneer. Also, thanks to Mike Brankowitz and Logan Smith for showing the items during the auction and thanks to Jan Hardy and Ted Lussem for making sure that we have the correct bids/buyers as well as handling the money at the end.

While the Live Auction was in progress, the backroom people were handling the Silent Auction smoothly like they have done in the past. Thanks to Jeanette Graham, Linda Borgstrom and Pat Hewitt.

The Absentee Bidding was handled by Tom Hardy (and we had a lot of last minute bids). Then Tom and Jan Hardy had to take all the winning lots home and pack them for shipping. I have done that once or twice – sure glad I did not have to do it this year.

And, my thanks also to Tom Hewitt for always willing to do whatever is needed to be done – during the year or at the Auctions. He even helped me clear my room at the end with the boxes given to me for future years – and I ended up with the Springfield Hotel Directory book in one of the boxes.

As Auction Chair, I only look good if we have wonderful items for the Auctions. Next year is Savannah, Georgia, so we should have a good turnout. I am already looking for “wow” items for 2017. I got them this year and thanks to those sellers (you know who you are).

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click on the auction tab to see all results.

Linda Anderberg, Auction Chair

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## INSURANCE MEMORABILIA MANUFACTURER

In addition to manufacturing fire marks, M. L. Lee made insurance signs and paper cutters. Most FMCA members also have a paper cutter, a/k/a ledger marker, in their collection along with a sign or two. This company did it all! Insurance fire marks, paper cutters and signs. The ad below is from *The Insurance Year Book 1883-84*. New York, Chicago: The Spectator Company, 1883, p. 10. *Google Book Search*. Web.

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M. L. LEE,  
MANUFACTURER OF  
**INSURANCE SIGNS,**  
HOUSE PLATES, PAPER CUTTERS, Etc.  
GOOD WORK! \_\_\_\_\_ LOWEST PRICES!  
Designs and Estimates Furnished.  
22 & 24 NORTH WILLIAM STREET,  
One Block North Brooklyn Bridge Entrance, NEW YORK.

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THE CANCELLED POLICY

Have you ever been asked what the purpose of fire marks in America was? What was your answer? Did your answer take into account that fire marks in America were used for about 150 years; issued from California to New York, from Maine to Texas; issued by a mutual insurance company organized by English Colonists to a stock insurance company organized by New York financiers or even a group of volunteer firemen in Philadelphia?

Just when I thought I had a good answer, along comes the article below that appeared in *The Western Underwriter*, June 22, 1916, page 18:

“C. R. Tuttle, western manager of the Continental, is exhibiting a trophy in the way of a reply to a cancellation notice. The Continental cancelled off a risk in Oklahoma, tendering the unearned premium and asking that the policy be returned. In a few days came a letter from the assured, who was a woman, saying that her property had been insured in the Continental for many years and that she regretted very much to have the policy canceled. However, she said she was returning the policy. The policy, in her view happened to be one of the old tin signs of the Continental that was in vogue many years ago. The assured said that she had taken it off her building above the front door, and was returning it. This, in her mind, was the policy that was desired by the western department.”

FIRE MARKS ON WAGONS?

Recently the following ad appeared on eBay:



A Portuguese insurance fire mark to be used on wagons.

Themis Company.

Embossed.

Very Rare.

Average diameter: 7.5 cm / 3-in

Naturally, I was a bit skeptical, so I decided to research the company.

The company did not show up in the Portuguese fire mark book, *Chapas*, Google or in the *International Insurance Intelligencer, 1928-1929*.

Next, I went to Google Translate to translate the words on the object itself:

Viacao = road

Assistencia e Acidentes = assistance and accidents.

Bingo! The object was not a fire mark but an auto tag issued by a company that provided road side assistance, even for accidents.

I emailed the seller about my suspicions that the item was not a fire mark that was attached to wagons but a modern auto tag. Naturally, I was ignored.

Using Google Translate, I composed an email to Vitor Alegria, one of the *Chapas* authors, for his thoughts on the matter. He agreed with me.

Have you had a similar experiences? Why not share them with your fellow members?

