



# The Signevierist

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The Official Newsletter of the Fire Mark Circle of the Americas

## 2019 ALEXANDRIA, VIRGINIA, FMCA CONVENTION

With an early Thursday morning Old Town Alexandria Walking Tour scheduled, most attendees arrived at the Embassy Suites Hotel on Wednesday. After securing their goodie bags for the updated agenda from the host, Mike Brankowitz, attendees had a chance to unpack and relax. Thanks to Linda Anderberg and Elaine Schlesinger, who prior to the convention set up dinner options for the upcoming three nights, people were able to get down to enjoy the hotel's complimentary snacks and drinks at 5:30 and catch up with old friends before setting off to dinner. The hospitality room was opened after dinner where everyone had a chance to meet more friends and welcome new members and those attending their first convention.

For the early arrivals on Wednesday the convention started on a very wet note. Fortunately, the storm made its way out of the area just in time for a Thursday morning tour of old town Alexandria. Catherine Weinraub, from the Alexandria History Museum, gave us a wonderful guided tour that incorporated not only the history of the city but also some fire history as well. We started at the hotel and walked 13 blocks up to City Hall which at one point was the center of town. We then walked a few blocks outward to see some of Alexandria's most interesting buildings including Gadsby's Tavern, the Apothecary Museum, and several fire houses. We were even treated to the return of the Relief Truck and Engine Company #1 from a fire. The fireman backed the engine into the bay with only 2 inches clearance on each side. They then graciously let us walk around for a quick private tour. After about 2 hours of touring Alexandria we were all exhausted and wind-blown so we took the free King Street Trolley back to the hotel to rest. Later in the afternoon we again met in the hotel lobby for another walk, or, for some of us, a ride on the free trolley, for a private tour of the Friendship Fire Company Museum. Established in 1774 the museum has an 1851 hand drawn engine and an 1858 hose carriage and lots of firefighting history. It appears that the stories about George Washington and the fire company are not really part of its history, just good stories. After the tour we went our separate ways to dinner and later most found their way to the hospitality room.

Friday morning's visit to the National Museum of American History at the Smithsonian Institute was all that we anticipated, even the ride on their huge freight elevator. Tim Winkle, Associate Curator, met us in the lobby and spoke about two of their public exhibits on volunteer firefighting. We then went to a large room in the staff area where we had a chance to view up close fourteen of the rarer marks from the CIGNA Collection. We knew ahead of time what marks were shown, so members could take notes on what to look for on the chance they see one for sale. After the viewing, the table was cleared and we were served a delicious buffet lunch.

It was a happy and excited group that boarded the bus for a private tour of the Washington D.C. Fire

& EMS Museum. Operated in the restored D.C. active firehouse of Engine No. 3 by the volunteer Friendship Fire Association, the museum traces the history of the fire department through its artifacts and memorabilia, including a steam fire engine, back to the late 1800s. Before we left, our group even had a chance to slide down a brass fire pole. After a tour around the National Mall to see some of Washington D.C.'s monuments, we returned to the hotel where people gathered to go to dinner. After dinner most found their way to the hospitality room.

Due to a scheduling conflict, Tim Winkle led off Saturday morning with a talk about the Smithsonian's acquisition and disposition of CIGNA's large firefighting and maritime collection in 2005. In the absence of President Jack Brunson, Mike Brankowitz followed with the business meeting. After a nice sit down buffet lunch, we made our final bids on the 197 silent auction items and returned at 1:00 for the live auction. Tom Hewitt ran the auction of 142 items in good time. (See Linda Anderson's auction report below.)

The food and service at Saturday evening's banquet, along with the chatter, imparted a warm feeling of enjoyment and friendship. In Jack Brunson's place Mike Brankowitz did the honors and presented the Morton T. Werner award for outstanding contributions to the FMCA to Tom Hewitt. Since Jack Brunson was absent, his retiring president award would be sent directly to him. Mike received the host plaque and closed the 2019 meeting by wishing everyone a safe journey home with the hope that all will attend the 2020 convention in Indianapolis on October 15-18, 2020.

Thank you Mike, with assists from Carol Smith, Chuck Barber and Bob Shea, for a delightful convention.

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## **2019 FMCA AUCTION UPDATE**

The official Sales, including Post Auction Sales were: Live \$29,145 and Silent \$1,334. The highest dollar values were from the UK rare lead marks that Bill Evenden arranged with the Seller to have sold at the FMCA auction. There was a lot of post auction interest in these marks. Thanks Bill. Hope you are feeling better after your surgery.

The Live and Silent Auctions were a huge success, thanks to so many people. My apologies if I missed anyone.

The first people to thank are Mike Brankowicz and Tom Hewitt who secured a wonderful, very large room for the 197 Silent Auction items. 125 were sold for a 64%. As always, I had great helpers for the set up – Jan Hardy, Tom Hewitt, Logan Smith. And, some great NEW helpers – Carol and Brian Smith and Charlotte Taff.

Once set up, the Silent Auction was run smoothly again because of Jeanette Graham, Pat Hewitt and Linda Borgstrom. Linda B also handled the Absentee Bidders for the Silent Auction. Thanks to you three.

The Live Auction set up can be crazy busy – but thanks to the regular helpers and some great new helpers, we got done in record time. Tom Hewitt, Jan Hardy, Logan Smith and 4 new helpers that were so helpful and careful with the items – Carol and Brian Smith, Ed Grandi, Scott Tippen. Our Auction Verification Committee was working hard during the Convention reviewing the Fire Marks in the Live Auction and also during the year to make sure they were described accurately on the website. These 4 people – Bob Shea (Chair), Bill Evenden, Tom Hardy and Mike Brankowicz make our organization unique. Thank you. They also determined that 2 of the lots in the Auction were reproductions so they were pulled from the Auction.

The Live Auction had 78% of the items sold during the auction or after sales. That resulted in our gross amount of \$29,145. Tom Hardy, as usual, did an excellent job of handling the Absentee Bids. Jan Hardy recorded the bids, Logan Smith and Mike Brankowicz were the two that held up each lot as Tom Hewitt (yes, we had a substitute Auctioneer since Gabe was unable to attend) handled the auctioneer duties very well but I know Tom wants Gabe to be back next year.

One last person who I definitely want to thank – Elaine Schlesinger for doing the research for interesting restaurants to eat near our Hotel. Elaine and I hope that this has been fun for the Convention attendees since you get to pick from the choices of Restaurants for each night, we make sure you get there (most used the Alexandria Trolley this year) and make the reservations for you. It gets the Attendees together with others from the group so they can get to know each other, and eat in some unusual places. (this is optional - no one is required to go)I checked with the Board and they want us to continue this Restaurant research and reservations. Elaine has agreed to continue being the Restaurant “guru.” Thanks Elaine.

My thanks to ALL of the 40 Sellers. There would be no Auctions without you AND without the buyers. THANKS, SO MUCH.

Linda Anderberg  
Auction Chair

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## PENN INSURANCE COMPANY, BULAU 149



The cast iron cut out bust of William Penn is a rare, yet familiar fire mark. However, Bulau's *Footprints of Assurance*, INA's *American Fire Marks* and even eBay misname the company. All the above refer to the company as Penn Fire Insurance Company. (Underlining is added for emphasis.)

The correct name for Bulau 149 is Penn Insurance Company. It was chartered in May 31, 1841 and failed in 1845 due to the fire that devastated Pittsburg. While there was a Penn Fire Insurance Company in Pennsylvania, it was located in Philadelphia and, like the Pittsburg insurer, it lasted only four years from 1872 – 1876, when it too failed.

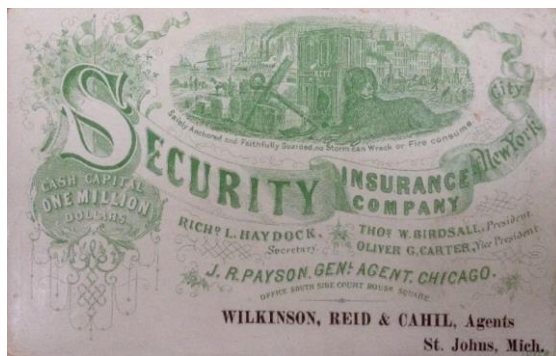
Bob Shea

# SECURITY FIRE INSURANCE COMPANY



Another Security Fire Insurance Company fire mark has surfaced. This is the third mark from this company to be discovered since “Footprints of Assurance” was published, bringing the total number of known marks to five. While Bulau lists the company dates from 1856-1870, Bob Shea previously updated this to 1856-1871, having failed due to the great Chicago fire. Also, in 1864 “Fire” was deleted making the company name Security Insurance Company, which is how Bulau listed them.

In researching this company, I was able to find the following trade card:



While hard to see, the motto under the picture states “Safely Anchored and Faithfully Guarded, no Storm can Wreck or Fire consume”. It’s clear the company wanted to show the “Security” that came with their policy but clearly they didn’t anticipate the devastation that would follow such a great fire.

Mike Brankowitz

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*United States Insurance Advertiser.*

FIRE AND MARINE INSURANCE.

**SECURITY INSURANCE COMPANY,.**  
No. 81 PINE STREET,  
NEW YORK.

|                             |   |   |   |   |                |
|-----------------------------|---|---|---|---|----------------|
| Cash Capital                | - | - | - | - | \$1,000,000 00 |
| Assets, August 1, 1864      | - | - | - | - | 1,462,643 19   |
| Liabilities, August 1, 1864 | - | - | - | - | 20,154 86      |

The insured can, at their option, have Participating Policies entitled to Scrip at regular rates, or Non-participating Policies at net rates in lieu of Scrip.

This Company continues to insure Fire, Lake, Canal, and River Risks and has recently entered upon the Insurance of Ocean Marine and Coast-wise Risks (cargo and freight only), at regular rates.

JOSEPH WALKER, President.  
THOS. W. BIRDSALL, Vice-President.  
RICHARD L. HAYDOCK, Secretary.