



The Signevierist

Issue Number 2020-2

The Official Newsletter of the Fire Mark Circle of the Americas

Notes from the President

As you all know the past four months have been very difficult not just here in America, but on a global scale due to Covid-19. With this in mind the Board recently had a discussion about this year's annual convention that was to be scheduled in Indianapolis in October. It is with heavy heart that I must report that following the results of a canvassing of the membership the Board has unanimously decided to postpone the convention until 2021. While none of us really wanted to make this decision, we felt it was the right thing to do to keep everyone safe. Please keep in mind that we are not canceling the convention, we are just postponing it until October 2021. This way we can still meet in Indianapolis and don't have to start from scratch in another city. I know that this may be disappointing for many of you, but I did want to let everyone know that the board is currently discussing options to meet virtually or have some kind of interaction online if at all possible. If anyone has any ideas as how to proceed or would like to help, please let me know as soon as possible.

Another important note to mention is that we still have plans to go ahead with the auction this year. While we have not finalized anything at the moment, we have discussed various options. Linda Anderberg, as usual, has put together an amazing variety of items for the auction this year so if you have not checked the website already please go ahead and do that. I also wanted to mention it is be very important for you to check your email for Constant Contact notices from Bill Pope. This is the easiest

and safest way for FMCA to communicate with you, so please open those emails when they come. As soon as the Board comes to a decision about the auctions, we will let everyone know.

If you have any questions or concerns, please let me know as soon as possible and please check your emails for updates. Stay safe everyone and take care.

Michael Brankowitz
Mbranko24@mac.com

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THE A, B, Cs of AMERICAN FIRE MARKS

By Bob Shea

A is for the Acme Insurance Company, De Moines, Iowa, Bulau 461. The Acme Insurance Company was incorporated on January 15, 1883 and commenced business on February 5, 1883. As a stock company, it was incorporated with an authorized capital of \$200,000 of which \$50,000 was paid in cash and \$150,000 in notes. Among the incorporators were its future president, Ira Cook, and secretary, J. W. Canfield. Ira Cook was a well-respected member of the community, attorney, and insurance agent for the Continental of New York and the Insurance Company of North America.

A great future was predicted by the Iowa newspapers for the homegrown company because its stockholders were the most responsible capitalists in Des Moines and because of its able board of directors. One paper went so far as to say the company "insures against everything." Below is a modest company ad in the *Insurance Year Book for 1885*.

ACME
Insurance Company,
DES MOINES, IOWA.

Insures against Fire, Lightning and Tornadoes.

IRA COOK, President.

J. W. CANFIELD, Secretary.

It appears that writing fire, lightning and tornado insurance was not as profitable as envisioned and not worth the risk to the stockholders, so on August 8, 1885 the company retired and reinsured its business with the State Insurance Company of Des Moines, (Bulau 474, 475 & 475X1).

The Old Underwriter

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MORE UNFOUND FIRE MARKS

My article in the 2014-3 issue of *The Signevierist* reported that I found in the annual reports of the insurance departments six insurance companies that included under the category of expenses, a reference to "house plates". What was so unusual about these companies was that none of them had issued a known fire mark.

I recently found two additional insurance companies that included "house plates" as part of their assets in their annual statements to the state auditor. Neither of these companies were previously known to have issued a fire mark. I found that the statements were used as an advertisement to encourage the public to secure an insurance policy with them. Unfortunately, both companies failed after a brief existence.

Following is the information on the two companies:

Kentucky Insurance Company

Louisville, Kentucky

1865 incorporated; 1868, charter repealed by the legislature

[The company listed as assets "Books, Blanks, Stationary, and House Plates\$2,000.00. ¹]

Northwestern Fire Insurance Company (Also listed as North Western Fire Ins. Co.)

Decorah, Iowa

1865 incorporated; 1868 in receivership

[Amongst "Personal property accumulated" such as office furniture the company listed as assets "house plates\$4,500.00. ²] [Prior to the Kansas

Insurance Department, the Northwestern took from \$75,000 to \$100,000 premium from Kansas policyholders. Before the Northwestern collapsed, it appears there were no assets to pay losses.^{3]}

Within the past two years members have found fire marks from four insurance companies that were not listed in Bulau's *Footprints of Assurance*.

Currently there are eight confirmed insurance companies that we know issued house plates/fire marks for which no known example has been found. The probability is that there are more than eight new companies out there whose marks are ready to be found. Best bet: Louisville, Kentucky where I've already identified three companies.

Bob Shea

1 The Louisville Daily Courier (Louisville, Kentucky), 28 August 1866, p. 3. Newspapers.com. Web.

2 The Topeka Tribune (Topeka, Kansas), 26 April 1867, p. 2. Newspapers.com. Web.

3. *Ninth Annual Report of the Superintendent of Insurance of the State of Kansas*. Topeka, Kansas Printing House, 1879, p. 5.

Speaking of companies that may have issued an unfound fire mark, check out this photo of an envelope that recently showed up on eBay. It is an advertisement for one of the companies in Bob's previous article:



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New Members

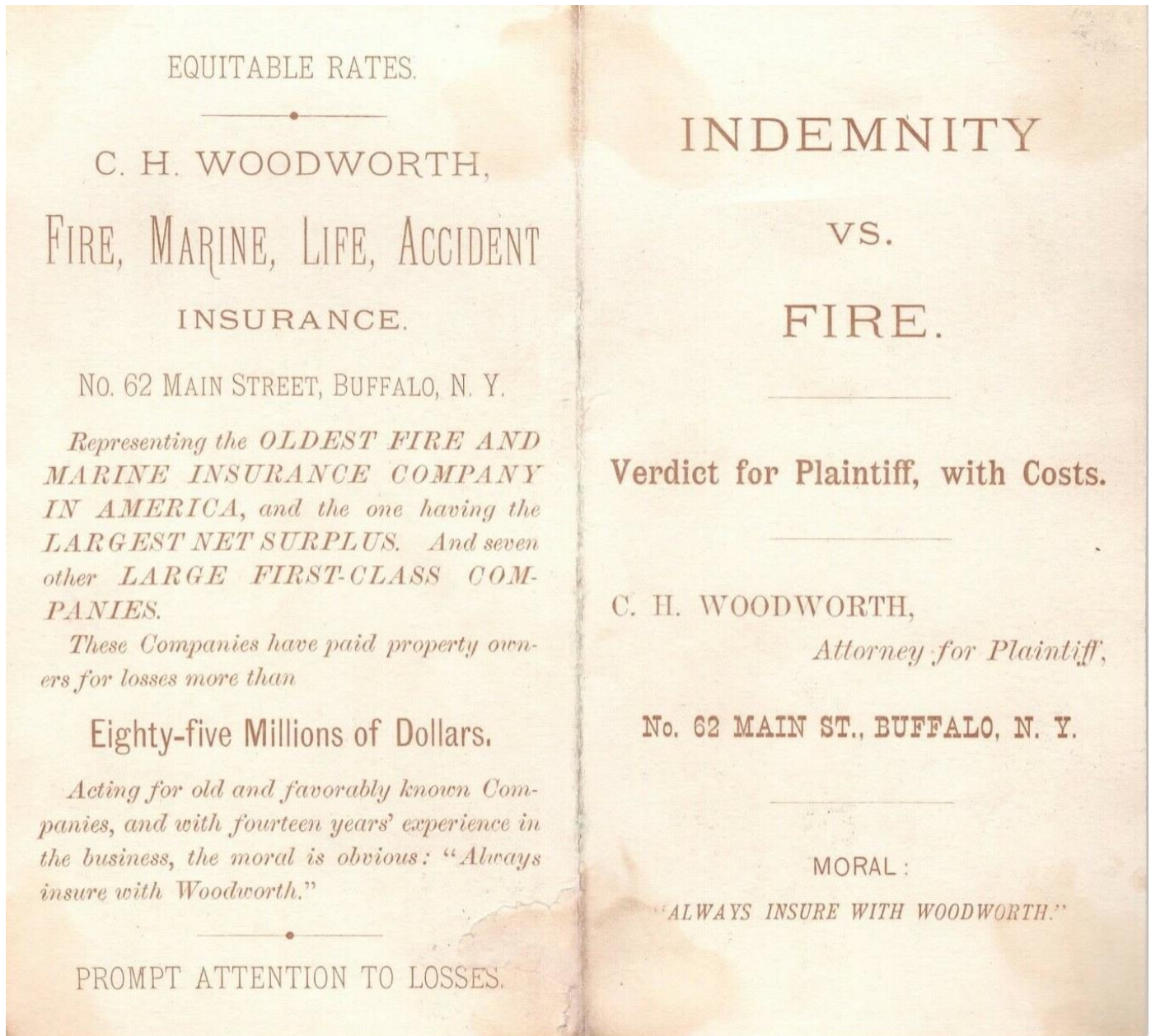
Please help me in welcoming Dalton Schulz and Jana Almejo as the newest members of the FMCA family. Dalton is a Firefighter with the Limestone Fire Department in Kankakee, Illinois and currently lives in Bonfield, Illinois. His interests include collecting fire artifacts and firefighting memorabilia including helmets, buckets, and parade belts. Jana Almejo is an Account Executive at Swingle, Collins, & Associates in Dallas, Texas and lives in Denton, Texas. Her interests include American Fire Marks, British Fire Marks, Old Insurance Company signs, and Fire Artifacts. Welcome to the FMCA!



I wanted to share a really neat trade card that recently sold on eBay. It is hard to see due to the size so if anyone is interested please let me know and I'll email you a larger copy. The card is an advertisement for the C.H. Woodworth Insurance agency. The agency represented companies that issued a fire mark including the Niagara, Phenix, Irving, INA, Republic and several others. The picture at the top left depicts a family's house on fire with a sign that reads "Insured By Woodworth" and a Mr. Brown proudly displaying his policy in hand. To the right is Mr. Brown's family moving into a new and better home. The bottom picture shows that of Mr. Smith who was not insured and as a result ended up at the poor house.



While it is neat to think that the “Insured By Woodworth” sign on the house represents a fire mark, my assumption is that it is just dramatically showing what could happen if you were insured versus what would happen if you were not insured. On the other hand, there are several agency marks out there including Adams Insurance Agency (B.282), Michael Kirsch Agency (US-KA-1), and New York Underwriters Agency (US-NC-1). Pictured below is a photo of the back of the card.



Newly Documented Fire Mark!

A newly discovered fire mark has come to light thanks to former member Ron Herman. Pictured below is a beautiful tin mark from the Hope Mutual Fire Insurance Company, Saint Louis, MO (1857-1901). The mark will be classified as B.286-X-1. The addendum page is attached for those interested in printing a copy for their addendum.

