



The Signevierist

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The Official Newsletter of the Fire Mark Circle of the Americas

FIREMAN'S FUND INSURANCE

"Christmas Greetings" Special Edition

As we wrap up 2022 and the Holidays are upon us, I thought it would be nice to do a special edition of our newsletter centered around the Fireman's Fund Insurance Company, since they were known to celebrate Christmas with advertising giveaways as far back as 1895. Fellow fire memorabilia collector and historian David Lewis has been collecting Fireman's Fund items for many years and has compiled a list of known giveaways along with photos documenting each item. As you can see from his list there are some dates that we don't have information for so if you are aware of an item, please contact the editor so I can relay that information to David. Special thanks to David for sharing his collection and research!

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| 1895 – Pocket Watch. New Year's Greetings Jan. 1, 1895. | 1908 – Unknown (possibly a pocketknife) |
| 1896 – Unknown | 1909 – Calendar (round like a coin) |
| 1897 – Unknown | 1910 – Paperweight |
| 1898 – Magnifying Glass | 1911 – Letter Opener |
| 1899 – Mechanical Pencil | 1912 – Folding Knife |
| 1900 – Calling Card Case | 1913 – Tape Measure with winder |
| 1901 – Fruit Knife or fingernail tool | 1914 – Wallet or Note Pad Holder |
| 1902 – Compass | 1915 – Match Safe |
| 1903 – Ruler | 1916 – Watch Fob |
| 1904 – Coin Purse (leather with flap and silver) | 1917 – Note Pad (black leather) |
| 1905 – Leather Wallet and Match Safe (hammered copper) | |
| 1906 – Unknown | |
| 1907 – Unknown | |







1916



1914



1913



1905



1917



FIREMAN'S FUND AUTO TAG

Did you know that there was a Fireman's Fund Auto Tag? While we are aware of only one known example, we are confident there are more out there so be on the lookout! Below is a photo with a little background.



There is a fascinating back story to the Fireman's Fund auto tag. The Western Department of the Fireman's Fund Insurance Company was located in Chicago and its management participated in the Western Automobile Underwriters Conference, a large number of insurers writing auto insurance in the Midwest.

The Automobile Protection and Information Bureau, organized circa 1913, also belonged to the Western Automobile Underwriters Conference, and at one time its secretary was also secretary of the Conference. While the Automobile Protection and Information Bureau did not insure automobiles, it acted as a central bureau where all members of the Conference reported their theft losses for investigation and recovery of autos. In 1921 E. L. Richard, manager of the Automobile Protection and Information Bureau, adopted an emblem to attach to the radiator of the insured automobile and supplied them to the insurance companies at two and one-half cents each. The tags showed the name of the "Automobile Protection and Information Bureau, Chicago" and the term of the insurance policy. Evidently the tags were replaced annually, with 1921 the earliest one known. It is not known which, if any, of the insurers in the Western Conference used the tags for their policyholders.

No doubt the Fireman's Fund Insurance Company decided to skip the middleman and had the Automobile Protection and Information Bureau insert Fireman's Fund Insurance Co. of San Francisco, California and the policy term on the tags issued to its policyholders.

Thanks to Bob Shea for this interesting history!

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Where are all the Fireman's Fund Fire Marks?



(Photo courtesy of the New York City Fire Museum's Collection)

Member Logan Smith was kind enough to share some interesting information from the pamphlet "Romance of the Insurance Business as Disclosed Through Ancient Fire Marks" by Elmer W. Bonstin San Francisco, California April 7, 1936, page 2:

"Right here in San Francisco; the Fireman's Fund Insurance Company issued fire marks which were attached to risks insured by them in the years 1863 and 1864, justly expecting that the volunteer firemen would exert extra effort in extinguishing fires in risks insured in the company for the reason well known to all students of our business, that the Fireman's Fund was organized with the intention to pay 10% of net profits into the charitable fund of their organization. No one knows how many of these marks were issued and they were supposed to have entirely disappeared, yet Mr. Levison, the President, while never having seen one, was confident that sometime one would come to light. For forty years he had held to this belief, asking the agents and special agents to be on the lookout for one – and then in 1933, the year of the seventieth anniversary of the company, Mr. Albert J. Anthes, special agent of the Selbach and Deans General Agency, presented him with one that had been in the possession of his family for nearly seventy years. This fire mark Mr. Levison has in a frame in his office. It is a small tinned or nickel plated oval mark of approximately four by seven inches and is one of the rarest fire marks in existence even though one of the last to be used by any company. It is stamped with a representation of a fire hydrant, on the left side, with hose attached, which hose is carried around to form the border of the mark, with the name of the company in the center. I am sure that arrangements can be made to see it by anyone interested. Not only has this first mark come to light after a search of forty years, but another one of a different design without the hydrant and hose has since been presented to him."

The mark pictured above is listed by Bulau in "Footprints of Assurance" as a reproduction, but could this be an authentic mark? I would love everyone's opinion on the matter. Wish I could make an appointment to see both marks in Mr. Levison's office!

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I would like to take this time to wish all our members a Merry Christmas, Happy Hanukkah, and a Happy New Year! Our organization has made a lot of positive changes this past year and I look forward to seeing what we can accomplish under our incoming President Dave Oldham. If you have a passion for Fire marks or collecting Fire memorabilia and would like to help in some way, please let me know so I can point you in the right direction. We could always use the help!! Thanks again for a great 2022 and I look forward to seeing everyone at our convention next year!

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