



The Signevierist

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The Official Newsletter of the Fire Mark Circle of the Americas

Notes from the President

We are now starting the second quarter of the new year already. Where has time gone? Thanks to the “Ground Hog” we still have some winter weather occurring around the nation. So far this year the FMCA has gotten off to a fast start. At our great convention held in October in Gettysburg, Pa. hosted by our co-hosts Tom Hardy and Tom Hewitt the board decided to start having a board meeting every other month starting in January of 2023 on Zoom. We had our first Zoom Board Meeting on January 30 and our second one scheduled for March 27th. All board meetings are at 7:30 Pm Eastern Time. All Board members have been hard at work on many projects. Auction Chair Scott Tippen has our new auction item storage facility up and running and all the FMCA auction property is now being stored there. Secretary-Treasurer Bill Pope has reported he has completed the FMCA credit card security survey, also known as the Payment Card Industry (PCI) survey to allow us to use credit cards on the Hi-Bid auction portal. By completing the PCI, it keeps the FMCA from having to pay High Bid a monthly fee. The board also passed a motion to allow any extra room costs over the standard room rate for the convention host or auction authentication -committee for storage of auction lots to be reimbursed for the additional cost of a larger room or suite for committee work and/or storage at our conventions. Board member Logan Smith gave a quick report of the up-coming 2023 convention possibly to be held at Chattanooga, TN. the tentative dates are October 13-14-15. The board also agreed on a policy to allow the sale of auction items to members after the silent and live action has ended. Members will have up to 30 days to purchase the items at the reserve price plus the buyer fee and any shipping costs. We are working hard to get all the auction items listed with pricing on the Website, due to this year being the first time to use Hi-Bid it has taken a little longer but we are working to get this accomplished as soon as possible. The Board members are also looking at some possible revisions to the FMCA By-Laws which were last revised in 2009. If any member has any revisions, they would like the board to consider send your request to any board member and we will discuss them and once the board has approved them they will brought to the membership for a vote in accordance with the By-Laws. So, as you can see the board has many projects on its plate. So, if any member has anything they want

brought up please contact me. I hope in the future we can have a greater attendance at our conventions, without you and your support it is getting harder and more costly to host them. If you have a convention location you want to see us go to please contact me and we can consider it. In the meantime, have a great time collecting and displaying your marks, fire memorabilia or insurance items.!!

Dave Oldham

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ANOTHER UNFOUND FIRE MARK!

The following partial list of agent supplies was published in the January 14, 1886 issue of *The Salina County Journal*, Salina, Kansas, by The National Mutual Fire Insurance Company:

“In addition to all essential blanks, we shall have in stock new cards, letter paper, blotters, both large and small, pencils, memorandum books, house plates, (underlining added for emphasis) and the finest Calendar ever sent out in Kansas;...”

A review of other research sources does not reveal any other reference to a fire mark issued by this company.

When the mark does show up, the company data is as follows.

National Mutual Fire Insurance Company
Salina, Kansas
1885 – 1887, placed in receivership

Bob Shea

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THE ABCs of AMERICAN FIRE MARKS

P is for the Peoria Marine and Fire Insurance Company, Peoria, Illinois
1855 – 1869, Bulau US-PB-1

Refer to the previous articles on the Peoria in the 2007-3 and 2009-1 issues of

The Signevierist, which may be found on the FMCA website.

The Peoria Marine and Fire Insurance Company was actually incorporated on February 20, 1841, but did not commence business until 1855. Its authorized capital stock was \$50,000 at \$100 a share, with the authority to issue up to \$100,000. One of the original incorporators, Isaac Underhill, became president when the company commenced business in 1855.

The article in the 2007-3 Signevierist comments that Abraham Lincoln, while a member of the Illinois legislature, voted against chartering the Peoria in 1841. I think I may know why. As far as I can tell, none of the 1841 incorporators were connected to insurance at the time and up to 1855. Since it took Isaac Underhill fourteen years to find the investors to start the company, Lincoln, with his keen intelligence and down to earth reasoning, determined that the company was speculative.

In 1855, when the Peoria began actively writing marine, inland navigation, transportation and fire insurance in Illinois, Iowa, and Wisconsin, they advertised that the \$100,000 capital was paid up. Isaac Underhill was a firm believer in extensive advertising and the company's business began to expand.



In order to finance its growth, the Peoria Marine and Fire amended its charter on January 15, 1857, to increase its capital stock to \$500,000. Also included was a new one sentence paragraph: "That the president or vice president of said company and four directors shall constitute a quorum for the transaction of any business relating to said company." This authority was similarly found in the charters of most Illinois wild-cat insurers of the time.

In its day the Peoria's management was lauded as including the most respectable and intelligent of businessmen and its policies were secure. The company had a good run for years but there were signs of its forth coming demise.

- When it listed its capital as \$500,000, the company did not always mention that only \$300,000 of the \$500,000 capital was paid in.

- It never disclosed how much was paid in dividends to the stockholders.

- All expenses were lumped together, including commissions.
- With a capital of \$300,000, except for 1859 and 1860, total assets were never above \$332,000. The Peoria never really grew by retaining any of its profits.
- After listing only \$319,000 of assets as of January 2, 1865, the company stopped listing its financial information in the newspapers. An annual report to the stockholders in April 1867 listed only total receipts for the year versus expenses and losses paid with a difference less than \$8,000.

The shoe dropped on August 1869, when it was reported that the Peoria Fire and Marine was not able to comply with new Illinois insurance laws requiring minimum capital. Supposedly its “liabilities were heavy, assets, nothing,” and it was unable to reinsure. By September, the State went to court and had the business closed and a receiver appointed. The Peoria was dissolved on November 10, 1869.

How big was the failure? The State Auditor determined that the Peoria’s assets were \$125,000, liabilities about \$125,000, and its capital impaired by about \$165,000.

The Old Underwriter

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As many of you know long time member Bill Evenden passed away in December last year. Here are a few comments shared from members both here and abroad:

Bill Evenden - a personal comment by Brian Wright, a member of the UK Fire Mark Circle.

It was with very great sadness that I heard of the death of Bill Evenden. Bill joined the UK FMC in 1970, and I met him and Lore many years ago when the FMCA came on a visit to Britain hosted by the UK FMC. Following this, Bill and I had been in regular communication sharing, what could be described as, an academic interest in fire marks, leading to us both writing detailed articles on various aspects of the subject.

Bill would often email me with a question, some of which I was even able to answer! He was always generous in sharing his knowledge with me to help in my research. As a subscriber to the publications of the UK FMC Bill would also email me with his comments and views on my articles, always interesting and constructive. His last email to me followed an article I published in the FMC Newsletter in the Spring of 2022 about the Rose Fire Office, founded in 1720 but destroyed by government legislation before the end of the year after they had been operating for only a few weeks. In this he wrote 'I enjoyed your article on the Rose Fire Office. You obviously invested a lot of time researching the information. Good job.' This sums up his generosity and appreciation of others work. I will really miss him.

From Bob Shea:

Bill was a consummate fire mark collector. Not only a collector, but Bill was also a fire mark scholar. He and Lore collected fire marks from all over the world. Their foreign marks are extensive and intriguing. Bill's English leads and knowledge were equal to Wright and Addis. His American collection was smaller but contained fine examples of classic marks. Bill and Lore will be deeply missed by fire mark collectors all over the world. I bet he has a few stories to swap with Bulau.

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New Hartford Variants to add to the Addendum



While both marks, from the Hartford Fire Insurance Company, will look like documented marks there are a few minor differences to point out.

The mark on the left will be classified as 71-V-B. It looks like 71-V-A except the material is aluminum, the size is smaller, and it would originally have been mounted on a plaque commemorating the 200th anniversary of the company. It also does not have the statement on the back indicating it is an authentic reproduction.

The mark on the right will be classified as 77-V-A. Bulau has 77 listed as silver lettering on a black background. This mark as you can see has gold lettering on a black background. If anyone has B.77 that verifies the mark truly has silver lettering the editor would like to hear from you!

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German Insurance Company of Freeport, Illinois



The German Insurance Company issued several fire marks (B.364-367), but they are generally fairly plain showing just the company name and sometimes the city. While their marks are plain this advertising calendar from 1888 is anything but. This colorful piece of advertising recently sold at auction for an astounding \$200. Notice the three scenes depicting that the company insured against Fire, Lightening, and Tornadoes!