



The Signevierist

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The Official Newsletter of the Fire Mark Circle of the Americas

SAVE THE DATE

FOR THE

2023 FMCA ANNUAL CONVENTION TEMPE, AZ. OCTOBER 12 – 15

I look forward to welcoming all our members, and friends to the 2023 FMCA Annual Convention to be held in October at The Embassy Suites Hotel-Tempe in Tempe, Arizona. For hotel reservations, please call the Hotel reservation directly at **800-774-1500**, and be sure to identify yourself as part of the FMCA group use **Group Code 900**. The FMCA Convention rate (single or double occupancy) is **\$169.00 plus tax per-night**. Since the \$169.00 room rate is available for three days before and after the convention, you may want to spend some extra time to see the sights in and around Tempe or other parts of Arizona. Our room block will **expire at midnight on September 15, 2023**, so don't delay in making your room and travel reservations. The board voted to lower the registration fee to only **\$200.00 per person** this year and any new member attending it is **\$100.00 per person for their first convention**.

The FMCA welcome and check-in table will be in the hotel lobby Thursday afternoon from 1 to 5 pm and in the Hospitality room around 8:30pm. When you check-in you will be given a packet of information on the area with dining and shopping information, along with your name badges, and itinerary of the convention as to times of functions, and tour information. We will be making stops on our Friday tours first to the Musical Instrument Museum where we will have a lunch before departing to the famous Hall of Flame Firefighting Museum headed by our co-host and member there Mr. Chuck Montgomery, included in our ticket price will be a one-year membership in the Hall which lets you go there at any time after our convention.

If you have questions about any of the plans, feel free to call me at **210-410-9468** cell or email me at tdhins@yahoo.com We are looking forward to seeing you in October as we will be voting on by-law changes at the regular membership meeting and discussing locations and viability of future conventions.

Sincerely, Host Tom Hewitt and President Dave Oldham

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Fire Mark, Folk Art, or Something Else?



This is FMCA member Logan Smith's most recent eBay find. For context the measurements of the solid pine backboard are 10.75 inches X 15.5 inches. The man or soldier and "insured" are hand carved and attached with nails to the backboard in multiple pieces. On the back is a sticker with Oct. 62 on it. This may have been the date it was acquired or maybe the date it was completed. So, after looking at this plaque, it begs the question: "Is this a fire mark?"

As we know the purpose of a fire mark was not only to indicate a building was insured by a specific insurance company or agency against loss by fire but also as a method of advertising for the company or agency. This plaque certainly would be the size of a fire mark that would be placed on a building but there are no mounting holes, only some hardware attached so it could be mounted on a wall. It does clearly state "insured" but can we conclude it is for fire? Secondly, it bears no company name or reference to a company other than the carved "continental" soldier. Not all fire marks distinctly indicated the name of the company though. Just look at B.149, the fire mark for Penn Insurance Company of Pittsburgh. That cast iron mark depicts William Penn with just the word "Insured" below like the carving on Logan's plaque.

There are some other clues that may help, mainly related to the materials used. While we know of many marks that had a wood backboard there are not really any marks made completely out of wood other than B.150, which is attributed to the Insurance Company of Florida. I would think if a company intended to issue a good number of fire marks hand carving them would be time prohibitive. Another clue is the nails used to attach the relief to the backboard. They appear to be round nails and don't seem to puncture through the backboard. Finally, you would expect wood to age significantly with exposure to the elements. This plaque doesn't look like a mark that has been exposed to the elements for over 100 years. (See the photo of the Green Tree mark on pg. 6 for comparison)

One thought is that it could possibly be a hand-made plaque imitating a fire mark in an attempt to resist the urge of would-be arsonists. I think the issue once again is lack of mounting holes that would enable it to be mounted to the outside of a house. My guess is that it is a piece of folk art. Someone that was passionate about fire marks decided to make their own hand carved version to display inside their home. It obviously took quite some time to carve and put together with some nice quality wood. If anyone knows who made this and why Logan would love to know. Feel free to share your thoughts!



THE ELUSIVE COPPER FA

It wasn't until 2004 that the first copper fire mark of the Fire Association of Philadelphia was confirmed. While there were unverified written records of one, it wasn't until Ed Schlesinger found and identified one that its existence was verified. While still a rare mark, the B-91-V-A, has been identified a number of times.

Now, for less than \$70, you can have your very own copper FA. The same folks who brought you copper reproductions of British copper fire marks, now are offering copper reproductions of American cast iron fire marks. That's right, instead of a copper reproduction of a legitimate copper FA, you can have your own copper reproduction of a cast iron FA. My guess is that they couldn't acquire an original copper FA to use as a pattern for the mold.

Also available is a copper reproduction of a cast iron Firemen's Insurance Company of Baltimore, B.117.

Don't expect these marks to show up in the Addendum.

Bob Shea



SIX NEW COMPANIES FOR BOB'S INSURANCE NOTE ADDENDUM

The following will be attached as a word file to those receiving this newsletter electronically so that they may print it out and add to Bob's previous work.

Insurance Company East of Selma
Selma, Alabama

There is no record of this company other than this \$3 note dated September 29, 1862. A similar undated and unsigned note issued by this company was described as a "spurious shinplaster" from an "unknown institution" by *The Weekly Advertiser*, Montgomery, AL, October 22, 1862, p. 2.



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North Georgia Insurance Company  
Blairsville, Georgia

There is no record of this insurance company other than this \$2 note dated January 28, 1863.



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Troy Insurance Company
Troy, Alabama
December 9, 1861 -?

Although the company may have been insuring bailed cotton prior to its incorporation, there is no record of this company other than this \$1 note.



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Vermont Mutual Fire Insurance Company  
Montpelier, Vermont  
January 21, 1828 - P



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Warehouse Insurance and Deposit Company
Americus, Georgia
April 18, 1863 –?

Insurance was only one business that was authorized by the company's charter. Its sole purpose was to receive and invest in public stocks and substantial security in real estate. There is no evidence that the company was active in any insurance operations.



Photo from the Gary Doster Collection

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Western Insurance Banking Company  
LaGrange, Georgia

There is no record of this insurance company other than this \$1 note dated September 2, 1862.



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A POLICY NUMBER TELLS A STORY



It is always interesting to obtain a fire mark with a policy number as you can research the people and places behind the item in your collection. The mark pictured above is a third issue oval mark of the Mutual Assurance Company of Philadelphia. The policy number is No. 1138 and was issued to Joseph Sims (1760-1851), a wealthy shipping merchant, in 1801. Luckily the mark came with a copy of the policy and Sims insured an astounding 14 properties with the Mutual Assurance between 1785-1805 so there is even more information on Sims in *The Architectural Surveys 1784-1794*.

The policy states: “his house, situate on the North side of Cedar Street between Third and Fourth Streets, and to the East of his other three houses, the said House being seventeen feet front, thirty-three feet deep and three stories high. Two Trees.”

It is interesting to note the “Two Trees” listed on the policy. In *The Architectural Surveys* book (pg.81) it is noted that on Policy No. 108 (1794) there was a high rate charged for insurance on his building because of the hazardous nature of its use, and that it was previously insured for greater amounts with the Philadelphia Contributionship.

Also listed in *The Architectural Surveys* (pg.79) is some interesting information on Joseph Sims:

- Sims served as a private in Captain George Goodwin’s Company, Philadelphia Militia during the Revolution.
- Sims was a member of the Board of Trustees of the Mutual Assurance Company succeeding his brother Wooddrop and was also Treasurer from 1796 to 1801.
- His vessels, including the *Wooddrop Sims*, *Rebecca Sims*, and the *Fame*, carried cargoes of teas and East India luxuries. (Some of his ships were insured by INA)
- Sims married Rebecca who was a relative of Francis Scott Key, author of “The Star Spangled Banner”

I did some research and was able to find a picture of one of Joseph's Sim's properties ca. 1859 but unfortunately it appears the fire mark is no longer there. He suffered "business reverses" in 1823 and his policies were canceled in 1826.



Joseph Sim's old mansion.

West South of St. Peter's church ground on the West side of Third Street near Lombard St. (Part of the church, and Pine st., houses in the view).

