



# The Signevierist

Issue Number 2004 – 4

The Official Newsletter of the Fire Mark Circle of the Americas

## COLUMBUS CONVENTION

Like last year, hurricanes caused last minute cancellations to this convention. Thursday's opening cocktail party relaxed everyone and the room was abuzz with the chatter of good fellowship and the talk of fire marks. We had a large room which Linda Anderberg and crew set up with a silent auction. There were a large number of varied items and interest was keen for this night and till the end on Saturday morning. On Friday, after a sumptuous breakfast that included Starbucks coffee, the conventioners split into two groups. One group went on a tour of Columbus and the other boarded a bus for the Central Insurance Companies at Van Wert, Ohio.

Pam Purmort, daughter of Bill Purmort, Judy Allemeir, Fire Museum Guide, and James Covey, Sr. Communications Specialist, greeted us at the lobby of the Central Group's 1931 Georgian Colonial building. Some of us had déjà vu because we had visited the Central back in 1990, when our host was Bill Purmort. After a tour of the building, we finally got to the Fire Museum. The museum is a real treasure put together by Bill Purmort. If it's firematic, they have it and what they have is first class. The fire mark display is outstanding. We even had a chance to visit the back room where more fire marks were available for us to view. After a delightful lunch at the Willow Bend Country Club, some of us revisited the fire marks or just chatted with our hosts. Before boarding the bus back, we thanked our hosts for a pleasant visit. On the way home we stopped at an antique mall. It was the first time a bus pulled up to their mall.

The other group's tour of Columbus included a stop at a Whistle Factory; The Sulphen Corporation – manufacturers of fire trucks and lunch at the Golden Coral.

### APS FROM GABE

Regardless of how well planned and prepared the convention host committee is, the convention cannot and will not succeed if you, the members, do not attend. It is because of this that I would like to thank everyone that was able to come and enjoy the activities and renewed friendships. I do believe from the feedback that everyone was pleasantly surprised and had a very enjoyable visit to Central Ohio. You, the members made it a very successful FMCA Convention as usual.

Those of us eating at Max and Erma's earned \$81.13 for the FMCA Convention. I believe this was the first time something like that was attempted and I am very pleased with the results. There were members working behind the scenes and others who were unable to attend for various reasons. If I failed to personally thank anyone assisting in making our endeavor a success, I apologies for my oversight and would like to express my thanks to you at this time.

### IN MEMORIUM

It is with sadness that I inform you of the death, on August 23, 2004, of a long time FMCA member Tom Hopkins. Tom's firematic and fire mark collection was the envy of many serious collectors. Tom hosted two Houston conventions, 1988 and 1998, where we had a chance to view his collection both at the Heritage Society and the Houston Fire Museum.

Because of Tom's enthusiasm and efforts on behalf of the FMCA, he was made an honorary member of the Philadelphia Mafia, an unofficial chapter of the FMCA. Knowing Tom, he's probably organizing an FMCA chapter in heaven.

He was a dear friend to all of us. Flowers were sent to his family on behalf of the Circle.

### THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE "HOME"

THIS issues "Home" insurance company is the Home Mutual Casualty Company, Philadelphia, PA, which operated from 1946 to 1969. The item pictured is a needle threader.

### "FIRE MARKS" on eBay

A fire mark, 3 1/2" x 2 3/8" in size, attributed to the "Tree Mutual Assurance Company, 1784-", with policy "No 105", was sold for \$105.51. The seller did not know if it was authentic or a reproduction. Looks like the buyer didn't either

<<<<>>>>

A recent sale with a starting bid of \$650 had three reproductions; a Green Tree, an "FA" and a paperweight size Green Tree. After an email to the seller explaining why they were repros, the seller eliminated the paperweight and changed the bid to \$350 for the two remaining marks. A short time later the opening bid was changed to \$12. The revised description began, "I purchased these plaques for \$350 from a source that I trusted. Nonetheless, they are not originals, but reproductions. Live and Learn. [And join the FMCA, I might add.] At this point, I'm just getting rid of them."

### AUCTION RESULTS

A SEPARATE attachment lists the auction results. Linda Anderberg, our auction coordinator, beat the bushes to assemble a great listing of auction items. I hope you

noticed that there were some not too often seen cast iron and tin marks. I know a number of people at the auction enhanced their collections. Thank you Linda, Kita Hodson, and Jan and Tom Hardy, for all your hard work.

~~~~~  
**THIS & THAT**

SAVE THE DATES **November 3-6, 2005 and** . plan to attend the 33<sup>rd</sup> Annual Convention of the FMCA. The convention will be held at the Red Lion Henalei in San Diego, CA.

<<<>>>

Lost & Found. Did anyone at the Columbus auction mistakenly pick up item 167, a BU# 1699, Stockholms Stars fire mark? If so, please contact Linda Anderberg.

<<<>>>

To follow up on the interest in insurance company auto tags at the Columbus silent auction, enclosed is a list of the known insurance companies that issued auto tags. Happy collecting.

<<<>>>

Notices for dues will be sent shortly. Please pay promptly and save Howard the extra work and the club extra postage to follow up.

**DAMAGING YOUR INVESTMENTS**

If you are expecting advice or comments on your 401K's, 403B's, IRA's or the like, then you can stop reading now. However, if you are expecting some comments regarding how individuals are damaging their memorabilia collections, read on.

Regardless of your reasons for collecting Signs, Marks, or other memorabilia, I believe everyone will agree your collection IS an investment. So why is it that we as FMCA members continue to devalue and damage our own collections? What follows, I hope will make some sense.

Having gotten my auction items home, I was amazed at how many people had taped items to not only the back but also the front. Take the tape off and off with it comes paint, chips or at the very least leaves a chemical residue. **YOU ARE ALSO PEELING AWAY MONEY!** All cause damage and diminish the value of your collectible. I know I don't bid as high when I see such methods used to record data, inventory items, and the list goes on.

I see pencils, pens and markers used to write on the backs of Signs and Marks. You have just reduced your investments' value. Do you store or mount your memorabilia on acid free board? You should, in recent years we all saw the chemical reaction at a museum, of all places, between the wood and mounted Fire Marks. Once the damage is done it is permanent, permanently reducing the value of your investment.

Tape and self-adhesive stickers should NEVER be used to secure information, prices and the like to any memorabilia. Other habits that severely "damage" items are gluing felt, paper or other types of backing to collectibles. In any form, chemicals damage collectibles even if you are unable to see it. My first thoughts when I see the above, what are they trying to hide? If you have used any of the above items, don't go ripping them off without seeking the advice of a professional restorer.

Speaking of restoration, take it to a professional, don't do it yourself. I recently took a cast iron piece that had been "restored" into a professional. He stated that had the damaged piece been left alone, it would be worth three times what it is now in its "restored" condition.

If you are thinking of painting a Mark or two, DON'T. If you still insist, do it over the drain, at least then you can see your money disappearing.

Gabe Laubacher

**\$2 FOR AN "FA" BADGE**

An 1826 printing of the "Charter of the Trustees of the Fire Association of Philadelphia" notes "The individual expenses of Survey, Badge and Policy shall always be extra charges..." Where the perpetual premium was under \$500, the survey and policy charge was \$3.50 and the badge (fire mark) was \$2.00. For premiums over \$500, there was a single charge that included the survey, policy and badge. For annual or limited policies, the insured was "...not required to place badges on the property insured without their own consent..."

From this, we can infer that fire marks were required, at this time, on perpetual policies, but optional for annual or limited policies.

**BROTHER BONAVENTURE**

The following story is from Augustine E. Costello's "Our Firemen: A History of the New York Fire Departments, Volunteer And Paid," page 197, which was first published in 1887.

"Some years ago a visitor desired to see the monastery at Hoboken, and was

referred to Brother Bonaventure. The brother and the visitor were passing

turned and pressed the hand of the visitor, exclaiming "How do you do, Joe? Don't you remember me?" Brother Bonaventure was Daniel Kelly, Mechanics' old-time foreman, and "Joe" was one of his former comrades. The monk told his friend that was the only way he could save his soul. Kelly was brought up within the sound of the old Mechanic's bell. Within the monastery was a bell which rang for prayers at midnight. The recluse explained that a special indulgence was granted to the monk who first responded to its peal. Brother Bonaventure's experience and practice in invariably being the first to answer the old fire bell stood him in good stead now, and he gained all the indulgences."

[BACK TO FMCA HOME PAGE](#)