



The Signevierist

Issue Number 2004 – 1

The Official Newsletter of the Fire Mark Circle of the America

YES, VIRGINIA, THERE IS A COPPER "FA" MARK

An undated paper, probably from the 1950s, prepared by J. G. Maconachy, a former Vice President of the Fire Association, describes the various marks issued by the company. In it, Maconachy described both a brass and a copper fire mark. Since no copper mark had ever been found, it was thought that he was incorrect about a copper mark.

It turns out that Mr. Maconachy was correct. There is a copper FA mark and it has just come to light. It is the only one known. The mark belongs to FMCA member Ed Schlesinger, who purchased it on eBay this past October.

Ed has been kind enough to share information for the enclosed "Addendum" page on the newly found BU 91-V-A.

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## AETNA "SIGNS"

The following is excerpted from "One Hundred Years of Fire Insurance: Being a History of the Aetna Insurance Company, Hartford, Connecticut, 1819-1919" by Harry R. Gall and William George Jordan, pages 89 & 90:

The little tin signs bearing the single word "Aetna" tacked on the walls of thousands of farm houses, stores, dwellings, and factories throughout the country, told the passers-by that the owners rested secure from the fear of loss by fire because they were protected by the big insurance Company that bore that name away off in Hartford, Connecticut.

Apropos of this familiar old sign, it was told a few years ago that a little girl traveling in a carriage through the country roads out in Ohio, noting the number of houses thus marked,

asked her mother why there were so many places called "Aetna." The mother told what the five letters meant, and added:

"I remember asking my father the very same question when I was a little girl like you, and when he answered me he told me that he, too, remembered as a young boy asking that question of his father."

**aetna1.jpg (4101 bytes)**



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MISSING MARK?

J. Griswold's article "Fire Insurance Companies and their Emblems," published in "The Chronicle: A Weekly Insurance Journal," page 326, No. 26. - Vol. XLVIII, December 24, 1891, states, "It [the Hanover Fire Insurance Company] has no special house-mark beyond the ordinary house-plate." Throughout the article house-mark refers to British marks and the American cast iron fire mark. House-plate refers to tin marks. Be that as it may, to date no tin fire mark has been found belonging to the Hanover Fire Insurance Company. Even Alwin Bulau admits that he has not seen one. Have the New York State FMCA members been looking?

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THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE "HOME"

This issue's "Home" insurance company is the Home Accident Insurance Company, Little Rock, Arkansas. The print came from a 1927 photo engravers sample book.



"FIRE MARKS"? on eBay

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The above item sold last year on eBay with the following description:
"EARLY CAST IRON EAGLE FIRE MARK MUST SEE"

"This item is one of the earliest fire marks of this quality that I have ever had the pleasure to owning. It depicts an eagle and he has some type of brass beak. He is all original as found. He is very heavy and has two posts on the back for mounting on the house or business. I had a display board made for it and he lofts rights easily. He is 12&1/2" and at it's widest point (the branch he is on) it measures 10&1/2" wide. He very definitely is early sand cast iron and is very attractive and primitive. It was explained to me many years ago that each fire dept. had it's own mark and if your house was on fire and your house was not marked by their certain mark then the fire pumpers would't try to put out the fire!! I would date this to the mid Victorian era. A great piece of historical firefighting...We specialize in the unusual!"

You can say that again.! I bet Alwin Bulau turned over in his grave

This supposed fire mark had twelve bids and sold for \$117.50 + S&H.

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**THIS AND THAT**

Found by Dave Oldham in a local paper; "Illinois: Built in 1885, the 10-story Home Insurance Building in Chicago is considered the world's first skyscraper because of its steel frame."

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Hold the dates of September 16-19, 2004. Plan to attend the 32<sup>nd</sup> Annual Convention of the FMCA.

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**HAVE YOU PAID YOUR 2004 DUES?
IF NOT, SEND YOUR \$30 TO
HOWARD GIRDLESTONE, NOW!!**

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**THE SAGA OF THE SUN FIRE OFFICE 1710 – 1969**

1782  
Leeds Fire Office  
taken over by the Sun

1827  
Bath Fire Office  
purchased by the Sun

1835  
Wilshire & Somerset  
later  
Wilshire & Western  
changed name to  
Salamander & Western  
purchased by the Sun

1841  
The Glasgow Insurance Company passed to the Sun

1843  
Sun Fire of Dublin  
became  
British & Irish United

taken over by the Sun

1843  
The Leicester Fire Office taken over by the Sun

1847  
The Hampshire of South England  
taken over by the Sun

1959  
Sun amalgamated with  
Alliance Insurance Company

"The Sun has now set" Or has it?

I believe it was Kipling who coined the phrase, "The sun never sets on the British Empire," and while you take into consideration the lifeline of purchases and takeovers, you would have to conclude that the Sun Insurance Office could no longer qualify.

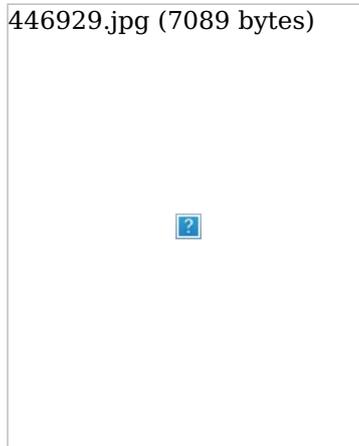
However, the remarkable numbers of Sun fire marks issued over the years will probably keep that company in the running for years to come.

In total, the company issued over 924,000 lead marks, before switching to tinned iron. The lead marks were made by ten different manufactures from 1710 to 1815. Each manufacturer made his own mold and this probably accounts for the change in facial expression on these colorful gold and blue marks.

Another interesting aspect of these marks is the amount of lead utilized in their making. The average mark weight is two pounds - 2 X 924,000 comes to 1,848,000 or 924 metric tons.

Ed Tufts

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**PASS IT ON**

As I write this update, I am hoping that everyone is finding this time of year rewarding and fulfilling as we celebrate Christmas, the various Religious Holidays, and of course the New Year.

Mention the New Year and we immediately think of those RESOLUTIONS made with the best of intentions. We (The FMCA) are hoping that one of those RESOLUTIONS is:

**to attend the 2004 FMCA Convention in Columbus, Ohio September 16<sup>th</sup> – 19<sup>th</sup>.**

Many different approaches are being attempted at this Columbus Ohio Convention.

**Everyone** is being asked to sell five business card ads at \$20.00 each. If a form is needed, just contact me. This is the time to brag about your own company! We are attempting to sell the front and back covers, inside and out. Can you help?

**Two Friday Programs** are being planned. **(You will have to pick one)**

One is the all day tour of the **Central Insurance Fire Museum** in Van Wert, Ohio. This is made possible only because of Mr. Purmort and his staff.

Two will be a tour of the Columbus area.

**We** are staying at the Hilton Columbus at Easton Town Center.

A city itself with over 100 shops, multiple movie theaters, live entertainment, mimes, and in excess of 30 restaurants directly across the street.

Live Jazz in the Hotel and FREE Hotel parking.

FREE shuttle to and from the Port Columbus Airport (CMH).

**And fabulous weather – Sorry Ed, I had to! Remember, it's the unplanned than make Conventions memorable.**

We are hoping to see many new faces this year, to exchange war stories with those who usually attend the conventions and to welcome any new attendees. If you will be a new attendee or know of a new attendee, let us know in order that we can team you up with someone capable of making introductions to other members.

Sincerely,

**In the 1800s, the volunteer fire companies framed in black the funeral notices of deceased members in the company minutes. It is fitting that the Fire Mark Circle of the Americas records the passing of Al Wills.**

It is with deep regret that we announce the death of Albert E. Wills on Friday, February 6, 2004. As a charter member of the Fire Mark Circle, there isn't a member of the Circle who has not been coached by Al. He gave his knowledge freely to those who asked.

Al Wills was more than fire marks. he was a husband, father, grandfather, soldier, teacher, historian, volunteer firefighter, honorary Fire Chief of the Philadelphia Fire department, and friend.

Anyone who knew Al remembers him running around from place to place at the Fire Mark conventions. he wanted to be first; he was always on a mission - fire marks. Somehow Al may have pulled another one on us. As we sang the lines, "Till my trophies at last I lay down," from the hymn "The Old Rugged Cross," at his memorial service, we cannot imagine Al laying down his trophies. he's first again! He'll already have found the good marks in heaven, when we arrive. He and Alwin Bulau will have a lot to talk about.

Our sympathies are extended to his wife Adele, his son Woody and his family.

We will miss you, Al. Rest in peace.

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