



The Signevierist

Issue Number 2004 – 2

The Official Newsletter of the Fire Mark Circle of the Americas

WHERE DO YOU BEGIN?

FOLLOWING is the eBay description for an alleged antique UF fire mark. It is so outrageous that I didn't know where to begin to straighten the seller out. Rather than bother, I e-mailed the seller with a suggestion that he/she Google "American Fire Marks." If you find it confusing, don't blame me. There are no typos in my text.

"This is any all metal Fire Mark from the Fireman's Union Insurance Company. This Fire Mark shows a fire engine and the logo of the company as shown by the U F. Historically, in Philadelphia, there were, at the signing of the Constitution, no fire insurance companies that insured all properties for homeowners insurance. What happened was that individual insurance companies sold insurance to particular property owners. If you bought an insurance company, for example, from U F Insurance Company, the company would professionally mount its Fire Mark on the front of your property. If your house was burning down, you would call the fire company, and if a fire company from another fire company sponsored by another insurance company showed up at the scene, they would drive away unless you had mounted on your property, the appropriate Fire Mark. For example, Green Tree Fire Insurance Company was very active at Independence time in Philadelphia, and put its shield or Fire Mark on the front of the building. If you happen to call that fire company and the Green Tree Company showed up and saw your house on fire, they would drive away. Only a fire company organized and existing and sponsored by the U F Insurance Company was going to show up at your house and put your fire out. It is mounted on the base of the property over the front door. This Fire Mark dates to the time of the signing of the Constitution and is an antique relic or historic collectible. The original idea came from London and the earliest known Fire Marks that were sold and put on houses originated in Philadelphia."

AN INVITATION

The mailed version of The Signevierist included a revised application to join the Fire Mark Circle of the Americas. Only one application was included and that is because each of you is asked to get one new member. The Circle can only get wider by recruiting new members. Additional applications may be obtained on-line at the following address <http://ga.iaa.org/fmca/invitation.pdf>

PRIMER REMINDER

SAY THAT FAST 10 times. Novice, as well as long time collectors of fire marks, will obtain a wealth of fire mark knowledge from the packet "An American Fire Mark Primer." The Primer contains back issue articles on fire marks not available elsewhere.

The Primer is available to members at \$20.00, which includes shipping and handling. Just make your check payable to "FMCA" and mail to Ted Lussem, 2919 John Patterson Road, Des Moines, Iowa 50317-3136



MEASUREMENTS of BEVELED FIRE MARKS

of the

UNITED FIREMEN'S INSURANCE COMPANY, PHILADELPHIA

I have been fortunate enough to measure, with a caliper and scale, a large number of cast iron, beveled UF marks from two collections. Also, a number of FMCA members have supplied me with additional reliable measurements. Weights for the Bulau marks are from the monograph "Fire Marks of the United Firemen's Insurance Company, Philadelphia."

The data on the next page is arranged in table order by length with the longest mark on the top and the shortest length on the bottom. With the inclusion of measurements from Bulau's "Footprints of Assurance" it becomes fairly easy to categorize the marks by the appropriate Bulau number. Just as notable, it is easier to identify some reproductions just by measurements, especially by weight.

The measurements lend themselves to some interesting observations:

- The longer marks are the oldest.

• Note that the height of BU# 315, 9.5", does not fit the sequence. The monograph lists only other similar mark with the same dimensions, policy number 8042. Curiously, it is listed as 315 or 317. It would be nice if we could remeasure these two marks.

• Sprue marks:

BU 310 shows either a vertical or diagonal sprue.

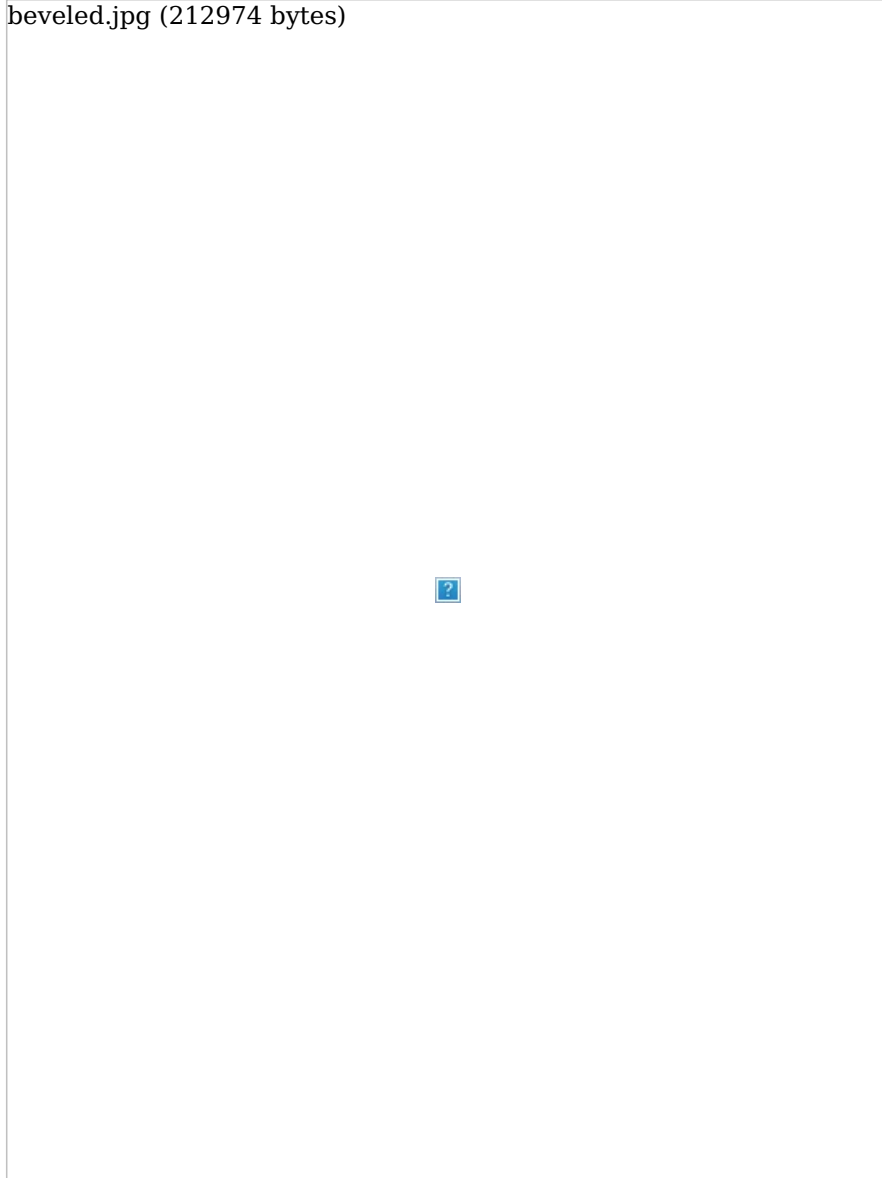
BU 315 specimens do not show a diagonal sprue.

BU 317 & 319 show a horizontal sprue.

Why not take the opportunity to identify, or confirm the Bulau number of the beveled UF marks in your collection?



beveled.jpg (212974 bytes)



WILTON FIRE MARK REPRO

THE FIRE MARK POLICE challenged a recent sale on eBay and the buyer had his money returned. The description of the "Signed Wilton Fire truck plaque 1870-1910" was as follows:

"Guaranteed (minus shipping) original "Firemark"—large iron plaque affixed to building to show insurance company firemen the house was insured. In those days insurance companies did their best to help put out a fire so the claims would be lower. ("UF" stands for United Firemen's Insurance Company of Philadelphia) I have seen replicas—but this is genuine and is signed by Wilton, one of the early foundries making them. It is, in my opinion, quite rare and is only the second Wilton example I've seen. It measures about 11 by 9 inches. As for condition, there are traces of original or, very early paint—and later bright red paint. This is typical, because people repainted them to keep them from rusting. Most of the paint has been removed, and much of the surface of the iron has a beautiful deep grey (sic) color caused by a century of oxidation."

The amusing aspect of this is that Wilton Products, Wrightsville, PA, made a variety of cast iron products such as bottle openers, trivets and candleholders from the 1940s to 1989. Wilton made fire mark reproductions of Baltimore and Philadelphia companies and is responsible for the ever popular

THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE "HOME"

THIS issues "Home" insurance company is the Home Mutual Insurance Company, Appleton, Wisconsin. The letterhead came from their 75th anniversary publication.



THIS AND THAT

HOLD THE DATES of September 16-19, 2004. Plan to attend the 32nd Annual Convention of the FMCA.

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A lead FA, BU# 85, recently sold for \$905 on eBay. There are lots of good fire marks on eBay. Get a copy of the Primer to help spot the good ones.

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The description on eBay of a miniature Fire Association fire mark read in part, "Three dimensional with a firehose around a Lighthouse."

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ARTICLES

YOUR EDITOR is looking for articles from the members. It can be about your favorite fire mark, such as how you acquired it. You can also tell us about what you've seen at the antique malls or shows. Is there any local museums or historical societies that have an exhibit that may be of interest to the membership?

Remember, this is your newsletter.

Bob Shea, Editor