



# The Signevierist


Issue Number 2005 – 1

The Official Newsletter of the Fire Mark Circle of the Americas

## The CIGNA COLLECTION

The highlight of the Philadelphia FMCA Conventions was always a tour of the INA, later renamed CIGNA, Museum. The Insurance Company of North America was the first stock fire and marine insurance company in the United States. From its very beginning in 1792, the company acquired objects connected with the insurance business and early Americana. Its collection of fire marks and fire memorabilia is second to none. Their collection of buckets, parade hats, and engine panels represent the finest examples of firefighting art.

A December 12, 2004 article in The Philadelphia Inquirer announced that CIGNA Corp. is selling most of the paintings in its art collection and donating 5,000 pieces of its maritime, property insurance and firefighting collection. With an emphasis on its health insurance business, the company is divesting itself of the historical pieces that no longer reflect its business. It sold its life business in 1998 and its property and casualty business in 1999, exited reinsurance in 2000 and sold its retirement service in 2004.

The Inquirer article noted that Fireman's  Hall Museum would get CIGNA's 1858 Reaney & Neafie steam fire engine. Additionally, the company is talking with the Smithsonian Institute and the Wadsworth Athenaeum in Hartford to negotiate other donations.

Your editor will keep you posted on this fascinating development.

## PASSING OF THE GREEN TREE

Founded in 1784 the Mutual Assurance Company for Insuring Houses Against Loss by Fire, under its current name, the Green Tree Perpetual Assurance Company, closed its doors on February 7, 2005. The Green Tree was among a handful of insurance companies that issued perpetual insurance. A volatile stock market and low interest rates "made it very difficult for us to earn the kind of returns we need," said Charles D. Barber, CEO.

The Green Tree was an early supporter of the Fire Mark Circle of the Americas.

## IN MEMORIUM

It is with sadness that I inform you of the death, on December 28, 2004, of a long time FMCA member Larry Southworth. Larry was a collector of cast iron marks, especially those of the Fire Association of Philadelphia. Larry was with us at the last convention in Columbus.

## THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE "HOME"



This issues "Home" insurance company is "The Home Underwriters" of The Home Insurance Company, NYC. The item pictured is the letterhead from the company's stationary.

If you haven't been to our web site lately, please do. Christy Minardi, our web person extraordinaire, has added Al Wills' article "[Fire Mark Reproductions or Fire Marks I Have Seen on eBay.](#)" It's sure to be seen by many eBay sellers. I know I'll point a few sellers to it. This is good, free information that hopefully encourages more to join our club. We're looking for ideas to use the web site for both the members and for potential members.

### **"FIRE MARKS" on eBay**

Following is an ad on eBay for an "Antique Fire Mark, Associated Fireman's Insurance Co.":

"You are bidding on an antique Fire Mark. I have e-mailed an antique dealer who specializes in this, with pictures of the Fire Mark and he has said that the fire mark appears to be original. He said that if it were a repro it would have marks identifying who made the repro, which it does not. He also said that if it is original it should look very old and beat up which it does. I cannot guarantee that it is indeed original, only say that the antique dealer said that it appears to be so. I had this hanging on my house which is in the Philadelphia area. I assume no responsibility if the fire mark is not original ...The price is set based on what I have read on the internet and heard from the antique dealer I talked to. This fire mark is very rare. This is a serious auction, serious bidders only please!"

Note that the seller assumes no responsibility if the mark is not original, while later saying it is very rare. The starting bid was \$2,000. That's right, two thousand dollars.

The mark had two small, drilled mounting holes where there should have been one cast hole on the top. The Fire Mark Police was on this like bees to honey. The next day eBay reported, "The seller ended this listing early because of an error in the minimum bid or Reserve amount."

### **"BRITISH FIRE MARKS"**

If you have not read David Griffiths' review of "British Fire Marks" by Roy Addis in the latest issue of the FMC News, which you all have, please do so. (New members may write the editor for a copy.) With 250 years of fire mark history; 194 companies and 917 full color prints at a 50% scale, this is a book for any serious fire mark collector. I say serious because of the price; £250 for the larger edition and £75 for the smaller version. The book is a labor of love and may be ordered by writing Roy Addis. The address is Bramley Hill, Flat 35; South Croydon; CR6LW; United Kingdom or email [roy@firemarks.co.uk](mailto:roy@firemarks.co.uk)

### **THIS & THAT**

Save the dates November 3-6, 2005 and . plan to attend the 33rd Annual Convention of the FMCA. The convention will be held at the Red Lion Henalei in San Diego, CA.

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A mint 4" oval auto tag, issued by the Farmers Mutual Automobile Insurance Company of Madison, Wi, was sold for \$208.45 on eBay.

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A miniature Stieff pewter dollhouse Green Tree fire mark was sold for \$37.69 on eBay.!

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There are two variants and one new mark for the Addendum. (Click Below)

[The Concordia Fire Insurance Company of Milwaukee; Milwaukee, Wisc. 1870-1955e](#)

[German Insurance Company; Erie, Penna. 1867-1874](#)

[Phoenix Insurance Company; Hartford, Conn. 1854-1966](#)

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[Click here](#) to view the second installment of Jim Giles' trip to the German Fire Mark Convention.

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I'm running out of new "Home" advertising for the newsletter. Please send the editor copies/originals of Home items for future issues.

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[Click here](#) to view an updated grid of the FA fire marks. Most noticeable is the addition of the copper 91VA. Most other changes are in the range of weights and the sprues.

### **NEW MEMBERS**

The following have recently joined the FMCA:

Samuel L. Canerday  
Maurice "Bubby" Hartson, III  
Lewis B. Levin  
William H. Reed  
Richard P. Stitt

### **Organizational News**

Since assuming my office I have created three new committees, each intended to strengthen FMCA.

The Auction Lot Verification Committee ["ALVC"] is the formalization of what began as an informal process at the 2002 Atlanta Convention. The purposes of this committee are to upgrade the overall quality of our annual convention auction and to assure absentee bidders that all auction lots are genuine and that they may rely without question on the descriptions of those lots. Bob Shea has agreed to chair this committee. You will receive more information about the ALVC well in advance of the upcoming San Diego Convention.

The Past Presidents' Advisory Committee will do just what its name implies. When called upon to do so, the members of this committee will offer their invaluable advice and experience to the President or to any other FMCA officer or director. In the few short months since I have taken office, I have sought out the collective advice of our past presidents with excellent results, so I thought it would be a good idea to establish this committee. The immediate past president will serve ex officio as chair of this committee, so Tom Hewitt is its first chair.

The Glad and Sad Committee will recognize both happy and difficult occasions occurring in the lives of FMCA members. Glenn Hartley, Sr. has agreed to chair this committee. Any member who becomes aware of either a happy event or an unhappy event which has occurred with respect an FMCA member should e-mail Glenn about it at [GHartleySr@aol.com](mailto:GHartleySr@aol.com).

*Ed Schlesinger*

### **YOUR OFFICERS FOR 2004-2005**

Ed Schlesinger, President  
Gabriel Laubacher, Vice President  
Ted Lussem, Treasurer  
Dave Oldham, Secretary

### **Directors**

Linda Anderberg  
Bill Evenden  
Joe Gundermann  
Tom McDonald  
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