



The Signevierist

Issue Number 2007 – 1

The Official Newsletter of the Fire Mark Circle of the Americas

THE PRESIDENT'S CIRCLE

HERE IT IS, the new year of twenty zero seven. For many it is upon us with its winter chill. We begin this year with new trials and tribulations mixed in with the ones which we carried over from last year.

Traditionally it is the time of Resolutions - my (FMCA's) one resolution is this, "Ask for Help."

- Help is needed recruiting new members - membership is down below 170.
- Help is needed writing articles for the Signevierist.
- Help is needed establishing future convention sites
- We need auction items.
- Linda needs help with the auction. The list is endless...

Do you specialize in one type of Mark, Sign, Book Marks, Post Cards or other related collectible? Write a story explaining why and what you have found. Four paragraphs, one page, that's all we ask. You need not write a book. Look at all the one page stories Jerry Pajak used to contribute, so why not you? Send us a rough draft; we'll help you refine it. Are you able to proofread or type for us?

How do you keep track of your marks and the related information? Pass along your system and or ideas. Do you photograph your collection using special techniques or lighting to enrich the detail and color? Pass your secret on.

Are you able to help Dave and Mary with the Kentucky Convention? Why not drop a line or wire them offering that assistance? If nothing else, I know they would love to just chat. How about the Florida convention, are you able to help out? Do you have any ideas regarding advertising, membership or stories? Send those ideas in, any help is appreciated and I promise, we will give you credit.

Will you host a convention or have a suggested place of interest? It is easier than you think, especially now that we try to plan two years in advance. There are many places we have never been. Show off your city and state to the rest of us. Do you have a connection that would help the FMCA? Let us know we'll do the contacting if you prefer.

As always, I hope all is well and that you will consider donating a little time to your organization in 2007.

Take Care and Thanks -- gabe

**ROCK RIVER INSURANCE COMPANY,
BULAU 219**

ALWIN E. BULAU's *Footprints of Assurance* attributes number 219 to the Rock River Mutual Fire [underlining added for emphasis] Insurance Company, Rockford, Illinois, 1852-1869.

I have a business card in my collection for F. Babcock, Traveling Agent for the "Rock River Insurance Company, of Rockford, Illinois." The card states that insurance is written, "Upon either the Mutual or Stock plan, as the applicant may elect." I then Googled both "Rock River Insurance" and "Rockford" and had three hits. The first was an 1869 letter with the letterhead of the Rock River Insurance Company, West Rockford, Illinois. The letterhead lists a capital of \$500,000 and a charter date of 1852. The beginning date agrees with Bulau. The second hit was an "1860 Fort Madison City [Iowa] Directory" listing the "Rock River Insurance Co., of Rockford, Ill., F.S. Shigley, agent, cor Johnson & Arch." The third was a postal cover with a picture of the company's office in Rockford, Illinois. It was posted to Winona, Wisconsin and the year was not legible.

I then Googled "Rock River Mutual Insurance" and had only one hit. It was from the *Wisconsin Express*, Thursday, February 27, 1851 and referred to the reading of a bill in the state legislature to organize a Rock River Mutual Insurance Company. Another source, the 1901 Wisconsin Insurance Report lists under "Mutual Fire Insurance Companies of Wisconsin" a "Rock River Insurance Company, Beloit, Wis. [organized] Nov. 9, 1860." The report also states that the company failed in 1869. The 1869 date is the same termination date of Rockford's Rock River Insurance Company. I am unable to verify the cessation date for the Rockford insurer.

Based on the above, I conclude that the correct name for Bulau 219, whose two marks were found in Illinois, should be the "Rock River Insurance Company." Please note your *Footprints* and *Addendum* page to reflect this change.

Perhaps some of our Illinois FMCA members can verify the cessation date of the company.

Bob Shea

THIS AND THAT

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If you haven't already paid your 2007 dues, please send your \$30 to Howard Girdlestone.

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Thanks to Peter Faber and Frank Smith for the enclosed Addendum pages.

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The 2007 Autumn Meeting of the English FMCA is scheduled for October 12-14 in Canterbury. For more information, please contact our Secretary, Dave Oldham.

**NOTES ON THE UPCOMING 2007 FMCA
CONVENTION**

"If I should ask, "What is the worst thing that can come to our city?" you might reply: "An epidemic, carrying off our sons and daughters and making homes desolate," or even worse, "a hostile, plundering, destructive army." But worse than these, I say, is the invasion of our city by a body of men who come to revel and carouse in illegitimate ways, bringing a curse and leaving a stain that cannot be washed out." They bring shame, discredit and disgrace. It is true, as some point out, that this gives the city an advertisement and commercially are beneficial, but gain from such a source is loss and disgrace."

These words were spoken by the Reverend R. D. Naylor, pastor of the Linden Street Methodist Episcopal Church, in a sermon denouncing the 1903 Pennsylvania State Firemen's Convention coming to Allentown.

I only refer you to these words in the hope that the attendees of the upcoming 2007 Louisville, Kentucky, FMCA convention will bear in mind the delicate nature of the citizens of Louisville. The Pennsylvania State Firemen's Association had, as a centerpiece, their "Asphalt Dance." I trust that the FMCA's auction and banquet will not draw such notoriety. Since, "Gambling devices are not tolerated and the disgusting side shows are not allowed," there should be none of the usual problems at this convention.

Respectfully submitted,
Constance Goodchild

"FIRE MARK PHILADELPHIA 1817 INSURANCE RARE, PLUG PLATE"

The above heading and following was for an item recently offered on eBay.

"HELLO FOLKS TONIGHT WE HAVE A VERY RARE ANTIQUE FIRE MARK FROM THE

FIRE ASSOCIATION OF PHILADELPHIA PENNSYLVANIA

PLEASE NOTICE THAT MOST PAINT IS STILL INTACT.

SHOW CONDITION

VERY RARE BECAUSE THIS IS NOT A HOUSE MARKER

THIS IN AN ACTUAL FIRE PLUG

(FIRE HYDRANT) MARKER

THEY USED TO CALL THEM FIRE PLUGS.

WHAT I FIND EXTREMELY COOL ABOUT THIS PIECE OF HISTORY, IS THAT THIS WAS AN ASSOCIATION MARK THAT THEY WOULD PLACE ON THEIR HOMES TO LET THE FIRE FIGHTERS KNOW THAT ARE A MEMBER.... AND IF YOU DIDN'T HAVE ONE...OH WELL LET IT BURN.

FIRE ASSOCIATION MARK DATED 1817.

FLAT AND MADE OF IRON, WITH A FULL STREAM OF WATER GUSHING FROM A HOLE ATTACHED TO OLD TIME FIRE PLUG

THE LETTERS F A WERE GILDED, AS WERE THE PLUG AND HOSE. THE GRASS AT THE BASE (SIC) OF THE HYDRANT WAS GREEN

THIS IS THE BEST PIECE ON EBAY MINIMUM VALUE OVER \$600. MUSEUM QUALITY PIECE

THIS CAME FROM AN ESTATE OF A VERY OLD MAN THAT WAS IN THE INSURANCE BUSINESS AND IT WAS HANDED DOWN TO HIM.

WE ARE RELEASING THIS WONDERFUL PIECE TO AUCTION AT ONLY A \$99 START...DON'T MISS THE BOAT ON THIS ONE...

I SAY VERY RARE BECAUSE EXACTLY HOW MANY FIRE PLUGS WERE IN PHILLY BACK THEN.

THIS FIRE MARK FOR THE PLUG MEASURES 3 INCHES BY 2 INCHES

IT WAS MADE TO LET OTHER INSURANCE COMPANYS (SIC) KNOW THIS WAS THERE (SIC) PLUG.

TYPICALLY IT WOULD SWING OUT OF THE WAY SO YOU COULD ATTACH THE HOSE.

THE CONDITION IS AMAZING TAKE A LOOK AT THE PICTURES"

The pictures showed a "FA" paperweight!! The very one most members have or have had. The Fire Mark Police jumped on this.

After a few emails, the ad was modified somewhat. The seller clarified that it was not true that if you did not have a fire mark on your house, the firefighters would let the house burn. Also, the seller deleted the bit about the best piece on eBay, a value of \$600 and the number of fire plugs in Philly. The seller also reduced the starting bid to \$49. Needless to say, there were no bidders.

This has got to be the most outlandish ad I've ever seen on eBay. However, I have to give the seller an A+ for creative writing.

Bob Shea and the Fire Mark Police

"HOUSE PLATES"

"**House Plates** – A very heavy demand for Phoenix house-plates rendered it necessary that a second supply be ordered from our manufacturer, the first having been entirely exhausted; and having just received them, we are prepared to furnish all agencies which heretofore have not been supplied. Let house-plates be placed on every risk you take."

July 1, 1866. From a book entitled *Facts and Figures*, which is a bound volume of newsletters that were "Designed for the use and reference of Agents of the Phoenix Insurance Company, Hartford, CT."

Thanks again to Logan Smith.

2007
FMCA
Convention
October 25--28
Louisville, KY.
“Y’all” come!!!!

Galt House Hotel
phone(800)843-4258

Dave and Mary Winges

502-367-8866