



The Signevierist

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The Official Newsletter of the Fire Mark Circle of the Americas

WHATEVER HAPPENED to the OLD CALL BOXES?

ART ON CALL is the Washington DC effort to restore abandoned police and fire call boxes. More than 35 neighborhood organizations formed coalitions with residents and artists to select a theme and colors that combined art and community history. Led by Cultural Tourism DC, the DC commission on the Arts and Humanities, the District Department of Transportation identified, stripped and prepared about 700 boxes. An advisory committee reviews local proposals and grants up to \$250 per box. The neighborhood organization is required to match these funds and raise additional funds.

With the artist's permission we have copied a page of the sculptures of Michael K. Ross that were placed inside the call boxes in the Mount Pleasant section of DC. For more information on the project and Mr. Ross' contribution, please visit his website at www.michaelrossart.com.

Ed Tufts

"POST-FIRE" FIRE MARK

I RECENTLY ACQUIRED a small collection of Home Insurance Company agency publications entitled "News from Home." The June 1921 issue has a very interesting article about Agent John W. Pratt. The article discussed how Pratt had developed a successful and growing agency in Kennett Square, Pennsylvania. One of his practices involved an employee of the agency rushing to the scene of a fire that damaged a Pratt insured home and erecting a sign reading, "Insured by John W. Pratt." The article goes on to indicate this sign "...acts as an excellent advertisement." Since the primary purpose of a fire mark was for advertisement, this is an excellent example of that use and I suspect the

first recorded instance of a "post-fire fire mark." If anyone has or knows of one of these signs used by Pratt, I am certain your editor would like to know more.

Logan Smith

THIS AND THAT

If you haven't already paid your 2008 dues, please send your \$30 to Howard Girdlestone.

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The correct insurer name of Bulau's marks 136-138 is the "Fire Department's Insurance Company." Google it.

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Thanks to Peter Faber for enclosed Addendum page, US-GF-1.

FLORIDA CONVENTION, Oct. 30– Nov. 2

DON'T FORGET to plan early to attend the Convention at West Palm Beach. We are going to have a good group from the UK and Germany, making it a truly international gathering. So join us for fun and sun in south Florida and escape those miserable cold days in the north.

All those members who received the Questionnaire by email or post and have not sent a reply, please send your answer to Bill Evenden as soon as possible.

HOME INSURANCE COMPANY, NEW HAVEN, Bulau 300

THE FOLLOWING excerpt is from the Editorial Notes of the January, 1871 Western Insurance Review, p. 234:

"The disastrous failure of the Home Insurance Company of New Haven, is in reality a blow from which all fire insurance companies must suffer more or less. The "Home" is reported to have done the third largest exclusive fire insurance business in the land. It was admirably equipped, had the elements of an efficient and expensive organization, and employed many excellent underwriters in its service, however deficient and incompetent may have been the management at headquarters. All this machinery and business is thrown to the winds, as it were in the twinkling of an eye. In this section, the Home of New Haven had the confidence of the community. When the cloud came over it a few months ago, we attributed the loss of capital to misfortune and mismanagement, but if the telegraphic statement that the company never had over \$400,000, be true, then the whole affair must have been begotten by fraud and dishonesty. The statements which have been published, leave the Satterlie's, who managed the concern for many years, in a very unpleasant attitude. The point which surprises the public, is that the so-called fraud was not discovered when the stockholders had their meeting last summer, and the commissioner from New York overhauled the company's assets. If they were deceived, then who is wise?"

FROM THE PAST

From *Fire Engineering*, September, 1940:

"Fireboat Aids in Evacuation of Dunkirk"

The following story appeared in the July [1940] issue of *Fire*. Which is the official journal of the British fire service. The story, which was told by F. W. Jackson, who commands the fire services of London County, concerns the work of the fireboat *Massey Shaw* during the evacuation of British and French troops from Dunkirk. During the six days she was absent from her moorings in London River, she was instrumental

in saving hundreds of soldiers many of whom she transferred to larger rescue ships.

"On Thursday last," said Mr. Jackson, "the Government asked for the assistance of a fireboat to help in the evacuation of troops from Dunkirk. It was assumed that she was required for fighting fires on and around the quays. *Massey Shaw* was under way within three hours, manned by a volunteer crew, under the command of Station Officer H. Youngman."

"The situation at Dunkirk had apparently deteriorated so rapidly that there was no question of fire-fighting, and all available craft were required for rescue work."

"*Massey Shaw* was instrumental in saving several hundred men on her first two trips, and on the third trip, when she was the smallest craft allowed across the channel, it was no fault of hers that she came back without any soldiers. The work performed on this last trip, when she went right into the harbor, was in every way as creditable as that on the other two occasions."

"Having played her part in the evacuation, her adventures were not over," continued Mr. Jackson. "Yesterday, in the Straits of Dover, a French ship close by her was blown up. Once again *Massey Shaw* saved a large number of lives in very trying circumstances."

"I have purposely referred to *Massey Shaw* rather than to her crew as having done the work. I do not know if any member of it did work more outstanding than others, and I do not propose to try to find out, as it is obvious that operations of this type can be successful only by the combined efforts of all hands on deck and in the engine room."

"You will see, sir, that although some members of the crew standing are wearing London Fire Brigade uniforms, and some that of the A. F. S., they are all one crew, and I bring this particular point to your notice as an example of the way in which the two services are working together as one."

"We do not claim that *Massey Shaw* did any more than the many hundreds of little ships that took part in this dangerous job. What we are proud of is that this action confirms once again that, similarly to the Royal Navy, there is nothing that the fire service cannot do."

MICHAEL K. ROSS

In the summer of 2004, after almost two years of work, I completed nine bronze sculptures for the old call boxes in Mount Pleasant, in Washington DC. The sculptures retell the story of Mount Pleasant, from an early American Indian presence to the Civil War, to developments in the 20th century, and up through the present. Tour the boxes online, or **download a map** and take a walk around the neighborhood. I installed sculptures in an additional three boxes last summer in Sheridan-Kalorama.



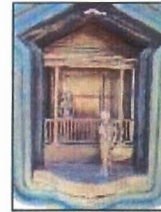
Nacochtank Family at the Piney Branch Quarry



Harvest at Pleasant Plains, ca. 1750



Casualties Arriving at Mt. Pleasant Hospital, May 1864



A village comes to life: Mt. Pleasant after the Civil War



The Trolley Arrives in Mt. Pleasant



At Home and Abroad: The War Years 1941-45 (Front side)



At Home and Abroad: The War Years 1941-45 (Reverse side)



Turbulence and Change: The 50s and 60s



Mt. Pleasant; The Immigrants' Journey



Mt. Pleasant Street, ca. 2004



Fire



Night Watch



The Geography Lesson

courtesy of www.michaelrossart.com

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