



The Signevierist

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Bulau 82, DUTCHESS COUNTY

ALWIN E. BULAU's *Footprints of Assurance* attributes fire mark number eighty-two to the Dutchess County Fire, Marine and Life Insurance Company, Poughkeepsie, New York, 1814-1906. This is the same information found in *American Fire Marks* by the Insurance Company of North America, page 128. The first two references to the company I found were from the *Insurance Blue Book 1876-1877*, C. C. Hine. Page 17 lists a Dutchess County Insurance Company "chartered for Poughkeepsie in 1814" that was combining fire and marine business with life insurance. [Note the name of the company.] The other reference on page 37 states that the "Dutchess County Fire and Life seem[s] to have revived their life privileges." [Again the name is different.] At this point, the starting date of 1814 matches Bulau but not the name. The following recap is found in *The Revised Statutes of the State of New York, Passed During the Year One Thousand Eight Hundred and Twenty Seven and One Thousand Eight Hundred and Twenty Eight... Volume III*, Printed 1829, page 553:

"To incorporate the Dutchess County Insurance Company," passed April 15, 1814, 37th Sess. chap. 216, Laws of 1814, p. 279."

At this point, I have a primary reference to a Dutchess County Insurance Company with a starting date of 1814, no cessation date or city of incorporation. Further research only seemed to muddy the water. For example, a "Dutchess County Mutual Insurance Company" was chartered on April 21, 1836, also in Poughkeepsie. This company was reorganized on March 21, 1900 as a capital stock company under the name "Dutchess Insurance Company." The Dutchess Insurance Company failed in 1905 due to the San Francisco earthquake and fire [Note that 1906 agrees with Bulau's date.] The officers and directors of the company became trustees for purposes of liquidation. There were a great deal of assets still available and the liquidation dragged on for years until 1910, when a newly formed insurer agreed to reinsure the Dutchess Insurance Company. The new company was named the "Dutchess Fire Insurance Company." If you guessed that the officers of both companies were the same, you guessed correctly. A later trial showed that there was never any reinsurance and that the president and directors misappropriated the assets of the "Dutchess Insurance Company." All this may be found in the *Documents of the Senate of the State of New York, Volume VIII, Number 18, Part 4*, pages 816-20.

I found the first full reference to the insurer in *The Description of the City of New York,..... To which is Prefixed, a Brief.....* by James Hardie, 1827, page 326:

"Dutchess County Insurance Company - 43 William-street. Incorporated in 1814; charter renewed and extended in 1822, to continue 20 years, for Fire, Inland navigation, Life and General insurance, and receive money on deposits, payable on demand, with 3 per cent interest. Capital \$200,000. Shares 25 dollars each. Election 1st Monday in January. Dividends first Monday in July and January."

In *Fitz-Greene Halleck: An Early Knickerbocker Wit and Poet* by Nelson Frederick Adkins, 1930,

page 169, the author footnotes a letter saying "Advertisements of the Dutchess County Insurance Company, signed by "F. G. Halleck" were common in newspapers of 1826." In "The Life And Times of Fitz-Greene Halleck" by James Grant Wilson, 1869, the author quotes a Mr. Jacob Barker, Vice President of the Dutchess County Insurance Company. "... as near as I recollect, in 1822 [Mr. Halleck]... accepted the office of secretary of the Dutchess Insurance Company, which was managed and controlled by me, he assisting me at the same time in my other business until about 1828, when the business of the company was closed." [Note that Mr. Barker did not include the word "County" when referring to his company.]

I now ask the reader to turn to page 46 in *Footprints of Assurance* and examine fire mark number 82. Note that the letters "D" and "C" are on the middle left and right edges of the mark and that the letters "F," "M" and "L" are on the bottom third. It is my contention that the letters "F," "M" and "L" refer to the lines of business written and are not in the chartered name of the company, which is "Dutchess County Insurance Company." This name agrees with the 1814 date. I have not found any primary sources that say where the 1814 Dutchess County Insurance Company was located. However, a court case involving the company and negotiable bonds issued by the city of Poughkeepsie leads me to conclude the company was chartered in Poughkeepsie, New York and moved to New York City. Also, until better information is found, the cessation date of the Dutchess County would be circa 1828.

Based on the above you may want to amend the information for Bulau's number 82 on page 47 to:

"Dutchess County Insurance Company, Poughkeepsie, New York. 1814 - ca 1828."

Bob Shea



THIS AND THAT

ACCORDING to *A Modern History of New London County, Connecticut*, Benjamin Tinkham Marshall, Editor-in-Chief, 1922, Lewis Historical Publishing Company, NYC, p. 462, the first foreign fire insurance company to enter the US was the Phoenix Assurance Company in 1804.

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ENCLOSED is an alphabetical list of Connecticut insurers that issued fire marks, and an Addendum update for the Virginia Fire and Marine Insurance Company.

MORE on BULAU #140, WINDHAM COUNTY MUTUAL FIRE INSURANCE COMPANY

WHILE PREPARING my list of Connecticut insurers that issued fire marks, I was bothered by the fact that in my Addendum update of May 2006, I had moved the Windham County Mutual Fire Insurance Company from Bellows Falls, Vermont, to Brooklyn, Connecticut. I reviewed Bulau's notes on the mark: "Because [the fire mark was] found in Grafton, Vermont, which is near the home city [Bellows Falls] of this company [Windham Mutual Fire Insurance Company], it assumed that this mark represents this concern but the fact remains unverified."

I decided to check the distance between Brooklyn, Conn. and Grafton, Vt.; the distance is 101 miles. Theorizing that there must have been other mutual companies closer to Grafton than Brooklyn, Conn. I found a Connecticut River Mutual Fire Insurance Company, Bellows Falls, Vermont, which is only five miles from Grafton. The Connecticut River Mutual was a large mutual that operated from 1859 to 1882. Surely, this was the correct company.

After changing the location of the Windham Mutual Fire Insurance Company from Bellows Falls, Vermont to Brooklyn, Conn., I now wanted to change the name of the company. Was Bulau really this far off? Since I require more than one source to change Bulau, I decided to check the county where Grafton was located. It was Windham County. There are two Windham Counties; Vermont and Connecticut. Maybe there was also a Windham County Mutual Fire Insurance Company in Vermont. I checked my notes and did not find such a company. This was too much of a coincidence. Clearly it was time to start all over.

I went back to Google/Advance Search/Book Search and searched "windham county" and "insurance". Bingo! I got two good hits.

- *Journal by Vermont General Assembly, Senate, Published 1839;*

'S. 20 "An act to incorporate the Windham County Mutual Fire Insurance Company"

- *The Bibliography of Vermont or A List of Books and Pamphlets Relating In Any Way To the State. With Biographical and Other Notes. M. D. Gilman, 1897;*

'- Report of the Windham County Mutual Fire Insurance Company, November 1, 1855. Broadsheet'

"Discontinued business"

There were two companies with the same name, operating at the same time and within 100 miles of each other. At this point I was able to validate Bulau's information about the company. While it is possible that the mark was issued by the Connecticut River Mutual Fire Insurance Company, until information to the contrary develops, I agree with Bulau's attribution to the Windham County Mutual Fire Insurance Company, Bellows Falls, Vermont. Please discard your Addendum page for this fire mark.

Bob Shea

MORE on the GERMAN INSURANCE COMPANY, ERIE, BULAU US-GD-1

FROM THE *Executive Documents of the State of Minnesota, for the Year 1875, Volume 1, Fourth Annual Report of the Insurance Commissioner of the State of Minnesota, Part 1, p. 8:*

"The German of Erie was dissolved by decree of court in September, 1874, and placed in the hands of a receiver. Its death was quiet and peaceful. There was no struggle, no unnecessary resistance to the decree of Fate, but gently and quietly it expired. In death, as in life, it showed no pluck, no ambition, no sign of a desire to commence anew and try to correct past errors, but with that patience which borders on serenity, it quietly "gave up the ghost." And thus ended the German of Erie. In looking over its life, the wonder is that it lived so long. Its management was utterly stupid-in short, there could not have been much management to it. It lacked just the element which is most needed in the insurance business, to-wit, a knowledge of insurance. Possessed of this, and a reasonable degree of good business qualifications, it might to-day be a thriving company. The insurance commissioner of Pennsylvania says this about it:

"It was incorporated in 1837; its capital paid in mortgages and local stocks; it spread itself all over the country and did a large business. An effort, apparently successful, was made to repair its capital, but the downward course could not be arrested. The foundations were rotten, like those of all companies with capital paid in mortgages and stocks [just as good as money.]

"Luckily, the company had not acquired a business footing in Minnesota, and but little, if anything, is lost by its failure to any citizen of this State."

Bob Shea

2008 Convention: October 30 - November 2

If you have not made your room reservation at the Palm Beach Airport Hilton Hotel or sent in your registration form to Bill Evenden, please do so as soon as possible. Time is running out! For help or questions, call Bill at 561-585-0160 or Email at evenden@earthlink.net.



Virginia Fire and Marine Insurance Company
Richmond, VA, 1852 - 1958, merged w/ & into the
Globe Indemnity Company

Material: Tinned sheet iron

Size: 8" X 4 1/2"

Description: Rectangular. Raised border and "Virginia
Fire / and Marine. / Richmond, 1832"

Data: Originally chartered in 1832 as the "Virginia
Marine Insurance Company," the name was
changed to "Virginia Fire and Marine
Insurance Company" in 1852.

Credit: eBay
June 2008

FIRE MARKS of the CONNECTICUT INSURERS

Company	City	Org.	Cessation	Reason	Bulau #
Aetna Insurance Company	Hartford	1819	1987	changed name to CIGNA Property & Casualty Co.	<u>95*</u>
Charter Oak Fire and Marine Insurance Co.	Hartford	1858	1871	failed Chicago fire; 1872 succeeded by the "Atlas"	274
Charter Oak Fire Insurance Co., The	Hartford	1835	P	promotional mark; similar to Home of New Haven	487
City Fire Insurance Company	New Haven	1850	1855	retired	187
City Fire Insurance Co. of Hartford	Hartford	1854	1872	failed Chicago fire; succeeded by the "Orient"	283
Connecticut Fire Insurance Company, The	Hartford	1850	1908	name changed to Phoenix IC	192
Greenwoods Mutual Fire Insurance Co.	Winchester	1831	after 1855		<u>119</u>
Hartford County Mutual Fire Ins. Co., The	Hartford	1831	1957	changed name to Mutual Ins. Co. of Hartford	<u>120</u>
Hartford Fire Insurance Company	Hartford	1810	P		<u>69</u>
Home Insurance Company	New Haven	1859	1871	failed	<u>300</u>
Litchfield Mutual Fire Insurance Company	Litchfield	1833	P		<u>151</u>
Merchants' Insurance Company	Hartford	1857	1871	failed Chicago fire; reorganized as the "National Fire Ins. Co."	287
Middlesex Mutual Assurance Co., The	Middletown	1838	P		133
Mutual Assurance Co. of the City of Norwich	Norwich	1786	1950 ca		MA-1
National Fire Insurance Co. of Hartford	Hartford	1871	P		433
New England Fire and Marine Insurance Co.	Hartford	1858	1866	"wound up"	290
North American Fire Insurance Company	Hartford	1857	1871	failed Chicago fire	NE
Patrons Mutual Fire Ins. Co. of Connecticut	Glastonbury	1887	P	1961 dropped "Fire"; still in business	466
Phoenix Insurance Company, The	Hartford	1854	1965	merged w/ & into The Travelers Corporation	<u>255</u>
Putnam Fire Insurance Company	Hartford	1864	1871	failed Chicago fire	<u>351</u>
Tolland County Mutual Fire Insurance Co.	Tolland	1828	1906	retired	TA

*Underlined Bulau # = See additional marks in the Addenda