



The Signevierist

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The 2025 Memphis Convention



Our annual convention got off to a rocky start for many of us as the Embassy Suites had overbooked and the National Guard was sent into Memphis a day or two earlier. While some members had to stay Wednesday night in another hotel, we were all eventually able to get organized at the same hotel on Thursday. In total we had 11 members take advantage of this year's first no-charge convention. Our convention officially kicked off with our board meeting on Thursday afternoon. It was a very fruitful meeting as Bill Pope stood in for President Dave Oldham. Bill thanked many of the members for their hard work over the year, especially Tom Hewitt for setting up what could possibly be our last convention. We also discussed the current state of our organization as well as what needs to be done to see us continue in the future. We all left hopeful that despite our decreasing numbers we would find a way to carry on and show the world our love of Fire Marks! After the board meeting the Silent Auction was set up in the Hospitality room as we all had dinner on our own.

Friday continued the trend of a rocky start to the convention as our shuttle bus was a no show. We quickly decided due to the size of our group we would just Uber to our locations. We crammed into two "large" vehicles and headed to the Memphis Fire Museum where we were greeted by Bill Adelman who is the Curator / Historian of the museum. Bill is also a photographer for the Memphis Fire Department and graciously took the photo above with my cell phone.

The tour started with Bill showing us all the fully restored and fully functioning, I might add, apparatus that were used over the years by the MFD. There were also many exhibits that were beautifully set up such as a 9/11 memorial, a tribute to African American fire fighters, a room donated by FedEx that simulates a kitchen fire and what to do in such a situation, and even a talking animatronic horse! Unfortunately, there were no authentic fire marks on display, but we all had fun none the nonethless. After our tour of the Museum, we all crammed back into Ubers for a trip to Graceland!

As the Memphis heat intensified, we headed over to the home of Elvis Pressley to take a tour of his home but first we all had a date with some Memphis BBQ. With our stomachs full we took a quick shuttle bus to the Elvis mansion where the King of Rock and Roll spent his down time. I have never seen so many mirrors in one house! We also got to see a little bit of the grounds which included pastures for horses, a swimming pool, and a racquet ballroom. Lastly, we headed over to see Elvis's extensive automobile and trike collection, then on to the gift shop! We did quite a lot of walking and we were all quite tired, so it was time to head back to the hotel for dinner.

After a good night's sleep our business meeting started with an extensive talk by Joe Lowry. Taken from ourmemphishistory.com Joe attended the National Fire academy and Emergency Management Institute. He went on to serve in the MFD where he worked in communications and data mapping before becoming Lieutenant in the Germantown Fire Department. He later served as Battalion Chief of Fire and EMS communications for Desoto County Fire. He is also a teacher whose specialties span five different disciplines and is qualified to lead FEMA classes as well as Industrial HazMat and OSHA. When a talk starts with "I like to blow stuff up!" you know it's going to be fun! He gave us a lot of Memphis history including some behind the scenes info from the day Elvis died. I think if given the time he would have talked all day!

Later that afternoon Tom Hardy finished up the silent auction and Gabe started the live auction. Gabe made short work of the 100 lots and most members left with a nice mark, sign, or auto tag. The surprise of the auction was a rare tin mark from the Enterprise Fire and Marine Insurance Company of Cincinnati, Ohio (B.378) that went for over \$900! This mark was from the collection of the late Peter Faber and is thought to be the one pictured in *Footprints of Assurance*.

After everyone collected their goodies most of us met for a nice dinner in the banquet room. It gave us all time to talk one last time before we all flew or drove back home. It was bittersweet as it might have been the FMCA's final convention. Hopefully not but I hope some members will step up in 2026 to continue our long history! If you have ideas for 2026 or would like to contribute some way, please reach out to one of our board members!



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MARYLAND INSURANCE FIRE COMPANY

When I first encountered the Maryland Insurance Fire Company, I thought the publication had the name wrong. However, after searching under the supposed correct name of Maryland Fire Insurance Company, I began to realize that the name was correct.

What originally got me interested in the company was item nine of its “Conditions of Assurance”:

“IX That all property insured by the corporation, and included in any one policy, shall have a badge or mark of said corporation affixed to the front, or conspicuous part of the building.”

Not only was this another insurance company that issued a fire mark that was not in Bulau or the Addenda, but it was also a company whose fire mark was unknown.

Incorporated on December 26, 1791, the Maryland Insurance Fire Company, Baltimore, Maryland was given extraordinary powers for an insurance corporation by the state legislature. Under specific guidelines set out by the legislation, the insurer was empowered to build a gun powder magazine out of town and set regulations and fees for the manufacturing and storage of gun powder in the city of Baltimore. Also, to prevent fires from a lack of proper regulations of chimney sweeps, which affect the insurer, the new company was given the authority to license, regulate and set fees for the Baltimore chimney cleaners.

While the gun powder aspect of the legislation was new, Baltimore already had in place legislation dealing with the regulation of chimney sweeps. The legislature had given power to a private, for-profit corporation, over a business that was previously under the jurisdiction of the city. What would today be considered municipality functions were privatized by the state legislature. This was something quite unique in American corporate law for its time.

I could find no newspaper references to the company after 1794. However, the company was referenced in legislation when Baltimore was incorporated on December 31, 1796, and again on May 6, 1797, when a Baltimore Ordinance required that all jurisdictions over the chimney sweeps be turned over to the city.

An 1803 Baltimore Directory that lists three insurance companies, does not include the Maryland Insurance Fire Company. Thomas W. Griffith in his 1824 *Annals of Baltimore*, page 120, says the Baltimore Fire Insurance Company, chartered in 1807, succeeded the Maryland Insurance Fire Company. However, the Baltimore Fire's corporate charter, incorporators or corporate structure does not disclose any relationship to the succeeded company.

The company seems to have faded from the scene.

Bob Shea

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THE ABCs of AMERICAN FIRE MARKS

V is for the Virginia Fire and Marine Insurance Company,
Richmond, Virginia; Bulau 123-124, US-123-V-A



The Virginia Fire and Marine Insurance Company was incorporated on March 14, 1832 as the Virginia Marine Insurance Company, a marine insurer authorized to raise \$100,000 capital stock, up to \$300,000, at \$100 a share. Writing only marine insurance, on March 6, 1841, the charter was amended to authorize the company to write fire insurance, be reinsured and change its name to the Virginia Fire and Marine Insurance Company. The capital stock was increased to \$200,000 on February 17, 1852. An amendment on January 4, 1858, authorized up to \$500,000 capital and reduced par value from \$100 to \$25. With its stock selling at \$41.50 a share and \$240,000 capital and surplus, the Virginia Fire and Marine began the Civil War confidently. By the end of the war, they were still solvent and had survived Confederate finances. With assets reduced to \$62,000 the stockholders raised cash subscriptions to increase capital to \$175,000 and resumed business.



Always known as a reputable and sound underwriter, the Virginia Fire and Marine built up its surplus and paid dividends from 8% to 10% over the years. Through a series of stock dividends over the years, the company acquired a capitalization of \$1 million dollars. In 1943 the Globe Indemnity Company of New York, a subsidiary of the Liverpool & London & Globe Company, Ltd., acquired stock control of the company. Although the Virginia Fire and Marine operated on an independent basis, the company was directly linked to the Royal-Liverpool Group by its management and reinsurance pooling. On July 1, 1958, the Virginia Fire and Marine Insurance Company merged into the Globe Indemnity Company.

The Old Underwriter

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Newly Discovered Fire Mark



Pictured above is a tin fire mark from the Citizens' Insurance Company, Pittsburgh, PA. This one will be classified as US-CH-1 as it is a company that was not known to have issued a fire mark until now. The addendum page will be attached for anyone that would like to print it out.