The Signevierist

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MORE NEW DISCOVERIES

Can you believe that this issue will introduce four more newly discovered fire marks? This brings the total of new marks discovered in 2026 to eight!



The first mark we will discuss is the second mark attributed to the German Insurance and Savings Institution of Quincy, Illinois, 1859-1891. It is pictured above and will be classified as US-GC-2, as the only other previously known mark from this company is a rectangular tin mark listed as US-GC-1. Bob Shea discovered this mark while doing his regular fire insurance research online and is credited to The Children's Museum of Indianapolis / Indianapolis-Marion County Public Library. The size and material are unable to be verified at this time, but the mark is assumed to be stamped brass based on its striking similarity in design to US-AE-1 from the American Exchange Fire Insurance Company. It is also similar in design to B.246-X-2 from the Phenix Insurance Company with all three marks having a horizontal oval shape with a roped border. As all three companies were in existence from the 1850s to the late 1880s it's most likely that the same manufacturer was used sometime during that period to make each of the marks.

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House Plate Manufacturer



The advertisement above appeared in *The Lakeside Annual Directory of the City of Chicago, 1877–1878*, p. 1209. C. M. Cass was the successor to the firm of Cass & Porter, which operated from 1869 until about 1875.

Although it is known that Cass & Porter manufactured the fire mark (house plate) issued by the State Insurance Company of Des Moines (B475-X-1), no fire mark or house plate has yet been identified bearing the imprint or attribution of C. M. Cass.

Of particular interest is the eagle depicted in the advertisement. Its pose closely resembles the eagle illustrated on the Addendum page for the German Insurance & Savings Institution (US-GC-2), suggesting that C. M. Cass may have employed the same stock design or engraving used in the production of insurance house plates.

Bob Shea

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The following quote is from Footprints of Assurance under the mark listed as B.282, Adams Insurance Agency. "Only a few American Agencies ever issued their own marks." The addendum has three other marks discovered after Footprints of Assurance was published and includes US-FI-1, Michaelson & Hughes Co. General Agents, US-KA-1, Michael Kirsch Agency, and US-MI-1, McWethy Brothers. The mark listed on the next page will be the fourth and will be classified as US-BF-1, Samuel G.W. Brown. I have a feeling there are a lot more agencies that issued fire marks that have yet to be discovered!



The mark pictured above recently sold on eBay for a whopping $405. If a member bought this mark, please contact the editor or Bob Shea as we need to verify measurements for the addendum page. Samuel George Washington Brown, 1851-1827, entered the insurance business at an early age. By the early 1870s, he and his brother represented numerous insurance companies in Kittanning, Pennsylvania. By 1876, Brown was operating independently, with subagents soliciting insurance on his behalf throughout the region.

Over the course of his career, Brown worked in a variety of positions and cities within the insurance industry. The Philadelphia Inquirer described him as “one of the best posted fire insurance men of the country” and a “hustler”.

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The third newly discovered fire mark pictured above comes from a company well known to collectors, the Milwaukee Mechanics’ Mutual Fire Insurance Company, 1852-1885. Other marks attributed to this company include B.215, B.216, B.217, and B.216.V-A. This marks the fifth known mark issued by this company although two other marks, B.213 and B.214, listed in Footprints of Assurance are incorrectly associated with company. Of interest concerning this mark is the abbreviation of the name and the addition of “Mutual”. All other known marks from the company just have “Milwaukee Mechanics” displayed on the marks. This mark will be classified as B.217-X-1.

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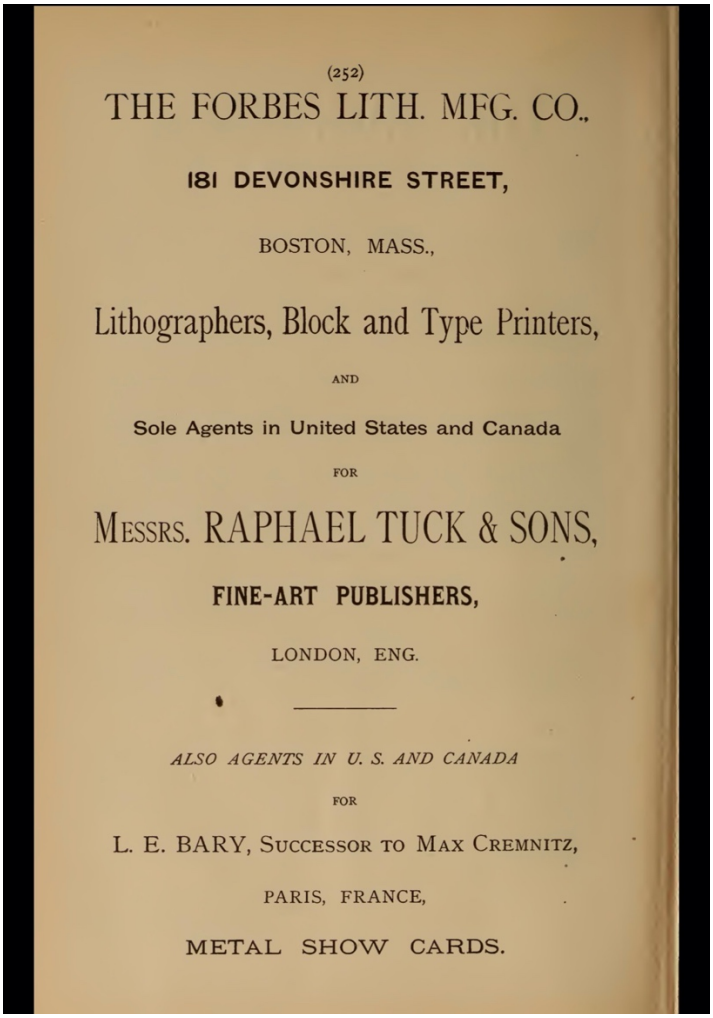
The final newly discovered mark pictured above will be classified as US-HE-1 and is attributed to the Howard Insurance Company, New York, NY, 1825-1888. The exciting thing about this mark is that there is a manufacturer listed which enables us to date the mark. The bottom left states “Max Cremnitz, BARY, Successor, Paris.”. The bottom right has paint loss, but it was determined it states, “Forbes Co. Boston, Sole Agents.”. Research indicates the mark was issued ca. 1885. Below is an advertisement for the Forbes Lithographic Manufacturing Company that lists L.E. Bary as successor to Max Cremnitz.



(252)

THE FORBES LITH. MFG. CO.,

181 DEVONSHIRE STREET,

BOSTON, MASS.,

Lithographers, Block and Type Printers,

AND

Sole Agents in United States and Canada

FOR

MESSRS. RAPHAEL TUCK & SONS,

FINE-ART PUBLISHERS,

LONDON, ENG.

ALSO AGENTS IN U. S. AND CANADA

FOR

L. E. BARY, SUCCESSOR TO MAX CREMNITZ,

PARIS, FRANCE,

METAL SHOW CARDS.

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DO YOU KNOW?

As we continue to discover U.S. fire insurance companies that issued fire marks but are not included in Alwin E. Bulau's Footprints of Assurance, have you ever wondered how many American fire insurance companies actually issued them?

Counting the companies listed in Bulau that are known to have issued marks, together with those included in the Addenda but not in Bulau, I arrive at approximately 350 companies.

Based on their dates of organization, U.S. fire insurance companies issued fire marks from 1752 until approximately the first decade of the twentieth century. Considering the tens of thousands of American stock and mutual insurance companies organized during that period, only a very small percentage issued fire marks.

This is where the membership can make a real contribution. Many discoveries begin when a collector shares a fire mark that has not been recorded, an unusual variation, or new information about a company or manufacturer. By sharing our discoveries with one another, we can continue to expand our collective knowledge and preserve the history of the fire marks we collect.

Bob Shea

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SAVE THE DATE!!!!

FMCA's First Virtual Convention will be held on Saturday **OCTOBER 10th**.

No convention fees and no travel expenses!

Bid in our Auction from the comfort of your own home!

Plus, the Auction will feature marks from long time collectors that are rare or have not been available for auction in quite some time. Don't miss it!!!!!!!!!!