



The Signevierist

Issue Number 2003 - 1

The Official Newsletter of the Fire Mark Circle of the Americas

The LAST of the CAST IRON FIRE MARKS

"[The Lumbermen's Insurance Company of Philadelphia] was the last American fire insurance company to adopt and attach to insured buildings a badge, and being adopted after the elimination of the local fire brigades..."

Harold E. Gillingham

"Fire-Marks of American Fire Insurance Companies", 1914

I wish I had a nickel for every article/book that repeats the ideas in the above quote. Writers simply do not question the statement. So starts the myth. But, is it correct?

Because the Lumbermen's mark was cast iron, I have confined the search to only cast iron marks. Taking Mr. Gillingham at face value, I looked for newly organized fire insurance companies that issued cast iron fire marks in cities where the fire department was paid, not volunteer. I even confined the search to after 1873, when the Lumbermen's Insurance Company was organized.

To paraphrase a popular song in "Guys and Dolls", I had to "Brush Up My Bulau." Bulau's "Footprints of Assurance" lists a number of cities where fire insurance companies issued cast iron fire marks after 1873. I then looked up when the fire department in the same city became paid. I came up with the following:

<u>City</u>	<u>Insurance Company</u>	<u>Organized</u>	<u>Paid Fire Dept.</u>
Charleston, SC	Protection Fire Ins. Co.	1892	1882
Boston, MA	Eagle Mutual Fire Ins. Co.	1895	1870
Pittsburgh, PA	Guardian Mutual Fire Ins. Co.	1904	1870

It seems that Mr. Gillingham, and those who unquestionably followed him, are not correct. Were I to look for insurance companies that were organized before 1873 or issued other than cast iron marks, the number would increase dramatically.

Bob Shea

FEB 25 2003

GERMAN FIRE MARK CIRCLE

NOTICE: In 2004 the German Fire Mark Circle will have its 20th Anniversary. It is planned that a number of FMCA members and some from the English FMC will travel to Germany in May, 2004 to attend a joint meeting with the German Circle. A firm date has not been established, other than it will be sometime in May. The meeting will be held on a Saturday in Gotha, Germany at the Gothaer Insurance Company's museum and archives. The second day we will visit the National Fire Museum of Germany in Fulda, which is about 1 to 1 1/2 hours drive from Gotha. A possible third day can be arranged to visit a nearby castle, or the cultural city of Weimar, where Gothe and Schiller lived. I will make the local arrangements for the two or three days, but each person will be responsible to arrange his or her transportation from home to Gotha, Germany and return. Many people will want to go to other destinations either prior to or after the meeting, and they will be on their own. I have discussed these preliminary plans with the Germans at their meeting in April, 2002, and they are delighted that we would come. It was also discussed at the FMCA Convention in Atlanta, and so far 27 Americans have expressed a desire to go. We expect to have a few British and Italians also attend.

All those members who would like to go to Germany for this event and have not already given me their name in Atlanta, please send me a short note with your name to the following address: Bill Evenden, 6622 Paul Mar Dr., Lantana, Florida 33462, or telephone me at 561-585-0160, or e-mail me at: evenden@earthlink.net. This will not be a firm commitment at this time, but I need to know for planning purposes. All those who give me their name will receive more details of the venue at a later date.

Bill Evenden

"HOUSE PLATES"

THE ABOVE HEADING AND FOLLOWING is from the "Instruction Book, German Insurance Co., Freeport, Illinois," printed by "Tiffany's Instruction Book, for Fire Insurance Agents. [It is the undated sixth edition]

"The general use of these little signs is to be commended, and in no other way can a company secure so lasting an advertisement as by using them. There is of course a difference of opinion in this, as in other matters among underwriters, regarding the means to be adopted to introduce and advertise their respective companies, but we cannot agree with some, in the opinion, that the use of house plates is a needless expenditure. These little reminders cement, as it were, the bonds of faith in the security and protection extended by a company and it is a common thing to find parties who believe that their property is not insured unless they have a house plate nailed to

their buildings, and then they look upon them with pride, and feel that, in case of loss, their duty to their families has been done, and ample security provided.

Agents should always have a supply of house plates on hand, and in all cases, as soon as possible after a policy is issued, go and put them on every building, insured by their respective companies. Do not give them to the assured, with a request that they will nail them up, but go yourselves and plant the colors on every building insured in and by your respective companies, and you will find that it will prove a paying investment not only for your companies but also for yourselves."

Thank you Logan Smith for sharing this piece of fire mark history.



PUBLICATIONS AVAILABLE

THE FMCA STILL HAS a few of the following publications that you may purchase:

Hardbound book "Signs of Insurance" by Edward R. Tufts and Lynne A. Leopold-Sharp. This book, printed in 1991, contains 148 pages of photos and descriptions of fire insurance signs. Many of the photos are in full color. Just a few of these fine books left at \$39.00 each.

Addendum #1 to "Footprints of Assurance" published by the FMCA – shows and describes hundreds of fire marks not originally listed in Bulau. \$22.50 each.

Addendum #2 to "Footprints of Assurance" published by the FMCA – shows and describes hundreds of fire marks not originally listed in Bulau. \$22.50 each.

Addendum #3 to "Footprints of Assurance" published by the FMCA – shows and describes many fire marks not originally listed in Bulau. \$5.00 each.

All payment should be made to the FMCA and sent to:

Ralph Jennings
675 Forrest Creek Drive
Ambler, PA 19002

Note- Add \$5.00 shipping per order regardless of how many books are ordered.

FIRE MARK CIRCLE ARCHIVE PRIMER AVAILABLE

IF YOU'RE AN AMERICAN FIRE MARK COLLECTOR and you've wanted to acquire research material on fire marks not available anywhere else, the FMCA has just the thing for you. Now it is no longer necessary to have been a charter member of the FMCA to have access to such information.

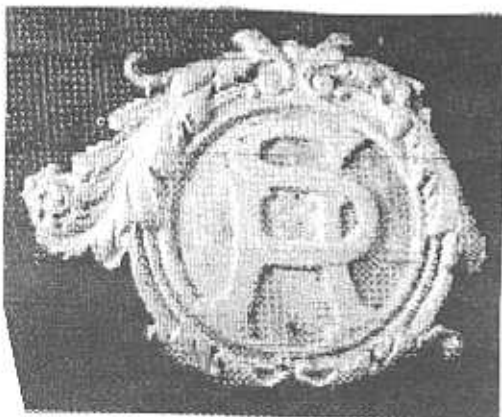
The Archive Committee has put together a packet of information entitled "An American Fire Mark Primer" that contains all the back issue articles on fire mark information from FMCA Newsletters/Journals. See the supplemental "A Fire Mark Bibliography" in this issue of the Signevierist to find out what is included. The information is on three hole, 8 1/2" x 11" paper ready for insertion in a binder.

With this Primer in your car trunk, you'll be ready to hit the antique shops. You'll be able to astound dealers with your knowledge. You might even avoid buying a repro.

The Primer is available to members at \$20.00, which includes shipping and handling. To order your copy, please make your check payable to "FMCA" and mail to Ted Lussem, 2919 John Patterson Road, Des Moines, Iowa 50317-3138.



FIRE MARKS ON EBAY



THE ABOVE ITEM sold on eBay with the following description:

"Original Antique Iron Insurance Fire Mark"

"This is a 19th century cast iron fire mark. I cannot identify the company, however, the letters are SH in a circle surrounded by acanthus leaves. Part of the leaf on the left side has been broken. It was originally on an old house in Historic Old Town Alexandria Virginia. Size is roughly 9 by 8 inches. It is quite heavy."

When I last saw the site there was one bidder at \$24.99. I hope the bidder didn't think they were getting a fire mark.

BOB SHEA'S BOOKCASE

I RECEIVED A LARGE, 16 1/2 by 21 1/2 inch, coloring book as a Christmas present entitled:

"Firefighters, American Heroes; Giant Story Coloring Book"

Donald L. Collins, Illustrated by Vern Henkel
2001, Colorful Story Books, Inc.,
2 Hollywood Court, South Plainfield, NJ 07080

I was pleasantly surprised when I came across the following text:

"Fire marks were attached to buildings to show which insurance company held insurance on that building. These were actually advertising signs."

Mr. Collins got it right. Maybe the next generation will know the correct story of American fire marks.

The text and pictures tell the story of the early volunteers to the 9/11 tragedy. You could spend hours researching in order to color the uniforms and hats of the volunteers. While it may not fit the average bookcase, I recommend it highly.



THANKS MEMBERS

DUE TO THE EFFORTS of Howard Girdlestone, who added a request for data to your dues bill, we will be able to publish the most accurate Directory in many years. Thanks to those members who submitted their changes. The Directory this time was delayed so that we might have the most accurate information possible. However, if we waited for the "SLOW PAYERS," we would NEVER get a Directory to the printers. For that reason we set a cut off date of February 1st. For those who did not send in dues prior to that date, be advised that you WILL remain on our mailing list and WILL receive all notices and publications. For those who have paid on time, your Directory is "IN THE MAIL."



This issue contains the fourth and last installment of Ed Tufts' monograph on fire stamps, "Fire Boats." Thank you, Ed, for the wonderful display of stamps and fire history.

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As promised, Al Wills' "Fire Mark Reproductions" is enclosed as a supplement to this issue. Make yourself a couple of copies to keep for reference. Keep a copy in your car trunk alongside the Primer. The 1989 version of "Fire Mark Reproductions" recently sold on eBay for over nine dollars plus shipping.

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Also included as a supplement is a three page bibliography of printed material on American fire marks.

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There is a new addition to the FMCA's website, firemarkcircle.org. The article, "American Fire Marks – A Good Story" is on the site. If you want to let people know the correct story of fire marks in America, refer them to our site. One member has already referred a newspaper writer to the site for background on a story of his fire mark collection.

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You may also access the above article if you Google "American Fire Marks".

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The next issue will contain an extensive list of English fire mark reproductions prepared by Ed Tufts.

THERE'S NO PLACE LIKE "HOME"

IN KEEPING WITH THE IDEA to make the Signevierist a homier publication Ted Lussem sent a trade card from the Home Fire Insurance Company, Omaha, Neb., Bulau #464. I have copied the back of this delightful card, which lists the reasons to insure in the "Home Fire."

SIXTEEN REASONS FOR INSURING IN THE "HOME FIRE."

1. Because it is a HOME Company.
2. Because it invests its money in Nebraska.
3. Because it belongs to no Pools, Trusts or Compaets.
4. Because it is the oldest and largest State Company.
5. Because it adjusts and pays its honest losses promptly.
6. Because the money paid for insurance is not taken out of the State.
7. Because its rates are the lowest consistent with safety to the assured.
8. Because its policies are short, easily understood and free from technicalities.
9. Because its stockholders are reliable and well known business men of Nebraska.
10. Because its Farm and Dwelling losses are paid immediately upon receipt of proper proof of loss.
11. Because it has paid over 3,550 losses to the people of Nebraska, amounting to over \$425,000.00.
12. Because it has more assets to the amount of insurance at risk than any other company doing business in Nebraska.
13. Because it has a cash capital and reserve as required by law, for the security and protection of its policy-holders.
14. Because it insures the Farmers' horses against fire, lightning and tornadoes in any private barn, stable or shed, on farm or within the state.
15. Because its Farm and Dwelling policies give permission to finish and repair buildings, erect additions and outbuildings, use gasoline stove in dwelling and steam power for threshing, without extra charge.
16. Because not a dollar of the peoples' money paid for insurance has gone into the stockholders' pockets, as the interest earnings from investments have paid all dividends to stockholders, and added over \$50,000.00 as security to policy-holders.



FIRE BOATS

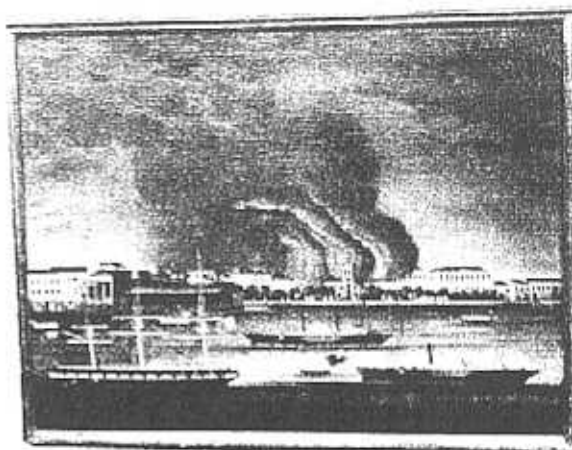
As I was contemplating the first three parts of this paper on "The Development of Fire Apparatus On Stamps", my thoughts turned to the special needs of those cities that have extensive waterfront property and the need for special equipment such as the fire boat. The more I became interested it became apparent that I should add another part to the project covering these great engines.

The first thing that comes to mind is the vast number of fires that have occurred around the world that raged unabated, resulting in huge losses to property and trade.

Naturally a number of questions comes to mind, principally, when did the fire boat come on the scene. To digress, when the China trade opened up, clipperships from all the major trading countries plied their trade with the great port of Canton. Located beyond the bar, up river, were the famous Hongs (warehouses) where many nations had space to off-load goods for trade and to warehouse return cargos pending sailing.

History records a number of major fires 1822, 1841 and after the fire of 1841 the Canton Merchants Association purchased four engines from the Hunneman Company that were shipped in January of 1845. In December of 1856 a major fire destroyed the Hongs and the fate of

these four engine became unknown.



Augustine Heard, of Ipswich, Massachusetts, a major factor in the China Trade, purchased a rebuilt Hunneman engine for his warehouse in Canton. This is the first reference to a tradesman providing his own fire protection.

In America the first mention of a Fire Boat was in Boston in 1873 when Chief Damrell put a seventy-five foot, iron hulled steam tug, equipped with an Amoskeag steam engine, in service as a Fire Boat.

In 1877 there is a reference to a floating barge in the Thames River equipped with a Shand-Mason Steam Engine, that was towed to a fire scene by tug.

Subsequently, most major port cities around the world were equipped with these powerful, special service engines.

To my great surprise, none of the stamps depicting fire boats are United States issues. In fact, there are only ten countries that display the fire boat. The most prevalent is Poland, when in 1988 it issued six stamps (Scott # 2888/2893) showing their fire boats.



Three of these named "Strazak" #4, #11, #25 appear to be fairly modern while the "Blysk", "Zar" and the "Plominen" are post World War II.

In terms of first issues, it appears that Upper Volta issued Scott # 377 in Sept. of 1975 and Burkina Faso issued a stamp

picturing the fireboat "Hiryu" also in September of 1975. (Come to find out, it appears that these stamps are one and the same. What's more, I don't have either, but I'm trying). Incidentally, I just found out that Upper Volta became Burkina Faso in 1984.

In 1977, the German Democratic Republic issued Scott # 1868 showing a fire boat at work.



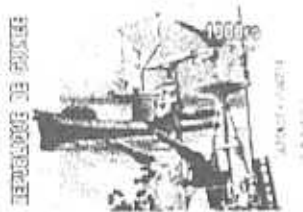
This was followed by an issue in February of 1989 (Scott #1575) by Germany showing the Hamburg Fire Boat.



In 1988 Turkey/N. Cyprus issued Scott #222 showing the fireboat "Piyale Pasa" #32.



And the latest in the series comes from the Republic of Guinea when it issued a set of S/S's, Perf and Im-Perf. showing two fireboats in action.



On the cover sheet of this article is a great example of a fire boats in action. This from the Malagasy Republic depicts the "Louis Colet" and the "Dauphin" showing their ability to throw water, with a burning oil rig in the background. This was issued in 1999 and certainly proves that if one wanted to specialize in a particular phase of firefighting, the history of spectacular waterfront fires around the world would make a great show. If countries would only issue the stamps, U. S. alone would have some beauties.

Ed Tufts

On the back page of this issue is a copy of the letter from the President of the Home Insurance Company that was mailed with Each copy of Bulau's Footprints Of Insurance.

Note that it has been exactly 50 years since this bible of Fire Marks was issued and has so Well endured. Too bad the Same can not be said of the Home Insurance Company

1853



1953

FIFTY-NINE MAIDEN LANE
NEW YORK 8, N. Y.

OFFICE OF THE PRESIDENT

April 27, 1953

Gentlemen:

On April 13 The Home Insurance Company crossed the threshold from its first to its second century of service to the American public. Such a long record of growth and progress could never have been achieved without the friendship and loyalty of its producers and employees and the good-will of its policyholders.

One of the distinguishing characteristics of The Home has been its high regard for the traditions of the past as witnessed by its efforts to preserve, in its museum collection, many of the relics and mementos of the fire insurance and fire protection professions. An entire section of the company's exhibit is devoted to the story of fire marks, those early signs which identified insured properties throughout the world.

At long last a comprehensive record of these marks has been made available to the collector and the public in a new book entitled FOOTPRINTS OF ASSURANCE. This work records every known fire mark while narrating the progressive story of the economic, political and geographical influences on the establishment and progress of the fire insurance concerns they represent. In the belief that this story will be of interest to our friends we have arranged with its publisher, The Macmillan Company, to forward a copy to you. Please accept this with our compliments and very best wishes.

We hope you will find FOOTPRINTS OF ASSURANCE interesting and enlightening and that it will serve to symbolize the strength and security of the property insurance industry and the confidence and stability of one such institution now entering its second century of service.

Cordially yours,

Harold Z. Smith
President

A Century of Property Protection