



# The Signevierist

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## **FIREMEN'S INSURANCE COMPANIES: FIREMEN'S INSURANCE COMPANY OF SAINT LOUIS**

**THE Firemen's Insurance Company of St. Louis** was chartered on March 12, 1849 and was organized by the same group of volunteer firemen who were the 1849 incorporators of the Fire Association of Saint Louis. It appears that the St. Louis firemen used the idea of the Fire Association of Philadelphia to organize both an association of firemen to promote harmony and to be a unified voice in dealing with the city government, and an insurance company to raise funds for the volunteers. Unlike the organizers of the Fire Association of Philadelphia, the St. Louis firemen chartered two separate companies. [*Laws of the State of Missouri, Passed at the Session of the Fifteenth General Assembly, Begun and Held at the City of Jefferson on Monday, the Twenty-Fifth of December, Eighteen Hundred and Forty-Eight, and Ended on Monday the Twelfth Day of March, Eighteen Hundred and Forty-Nine*, City of Jefferson: Hampton L. Boon, Public Printer. 1849. Pp. 287 - 290]

### Stock

- The capital stock was set at \$50,000 with 1,000 shares at \$50 each. \$10 was paid for each share at subscription with an additional \$5 due before the company went into operation.
- Business would begin as soon as the capital stock was paid up or "satisfactorily secured."
- Only members of a fire company could subscribe to stock.
- Each member could purchase no more than ten shares and each fire company, individually, no more than 20 shares.
- A stockholder who ceased to be a member of a fire company was compelled to sell his stock to a fire company member.

### Directors

- There were nine Directors Board of Directors who are stockholders and residents of the state.
- The directors would be elected every year by a plurality with one vote for every share.
- The directors would elect a President from their own body.

- The directors had the power from their own body to appoint a secretary and persons to assist in the performance of the business of the company, with salaries and allowances deemed proper.

### Miscellaneous

- The company was chartered “to make Insurance upon sea vessels and steam boats and other river crafts; upon freight, goods, wares and merchandise, against all maritime risks, or risks of rivers, and upon houses, stores and other buildings against fire..” Also, personal property would be insured.

- The board had authority to set up a fund out of the profits “for the special benefit of such members of the several fire companies belonging to this association as may become injured or disabled in the discharge of their duty at any fire or otherwise.”

- Fifty stockholders, who together own 300 shares, could at any time apply to the President and Directors to call for a general meeting of the stockholders

- Newly formed fire companies that had apparatus could be admitted to the company but the capital stock of the company would not be increased.

- Fire company members were entitled to a 5% discount on their insurance.

- Fire companies were entitled to an equal participation in all the benefits in proportion to the amount of stock held by the company.

- Dividends could not be paid to stockholders until all the capital stock was paid.

- While dividends might be paid from profits, “...the money received and the notes taken for premiums and guarantees on risks, which shall not have expired at the time of making such dividends, shall not be considered as forming a part of the profits...” [The concept of unearned premium was not always followed by many of the insurance companies of the late 1840s.]

I did not find any references to or advertising for the St. Louis Firemen’s Insurance Company. For example, the company was not listed in St. Louis business directories for 1850, 1866 and 1868. The company was not listed as one of the sponsoring insurance companies in the *Report of the Fire Departments of Cincinnati – and St. Louis, and the Use of Steam Fire Engines, by order of the Fire Underwriters of St. Louis, St. Louis, March, 1858*. George Knapp & Co., Printers. The lack of references leads me to suspect that the company may not have been successfully subscribed to or, if it was, had only minimal insurance writings.

The only direct reference to the company was the *First Annual Report of the Superintendent of the Insurance Department. State of Missouri, 1870. Part I. Insurance Companies Other Than Life*. Jefferson City, MO.: Horace Wilcox, Public Printer. 1870. p. 8: “The Fireman’s [Firemen’s] Insurance Company was perpetually enjoined and John G. Players, Esq. appointed Receiver.” This would indicate that the company was not operating and the state wanted to cancel its charter.

Bob Shea

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## THIS AND THAT

**M**EMBER Richard Neff has been wondering how the City Insurance Company's fire mark, B.157, was mounted. There are none of the usual mounting holes to attach it to a building. If any member knows, or has an opinion to this dilemma, please let me know and I will put it in a future issue.

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Member Gene Alair refers those interested in fire hydrants to [www.FireHydrant.org](http://www.FireHydrant.org), a hydrant-centric Web site with lots of fascinating information about "fire plugs." [Quiz: Name the fire insurance companies that issued fire marks with the image of a hydrant on it]

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New FMCA members, and some of the older members, should be sure to read Al Wills' article on the FMCA website entitled "Fire Mark Reproductions, or Fire Marks I Have Seen on eBay." After reading this article a few times, you may not necessarily be able to identify a good mark but you will surely be able to identify those that are obviously reproductions.

Included with this issue is an update of the grid to identify the various issues of the fire marks of the Fire Association of Philadelphia.

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### **COUNCIL BLUFFS FIRE INSURANCE COMPANY (BULAU 459)**

"The final report of W. V. Loomis as receiver for the Council Bluffs Fire insurance company [sic], which failed in 1895, has been filed. At the time of its failure the company claimed assets of nearly \$150,000, but the receiver was able to discover only \$1.15 in cash, besides a small amount of real estate. He scaled the assets at once to \$19,000 and finds that this was overestimated. The claims filed against the company were \$46,565, on which \$11,207 has been paid, while the balance of \$4,924 on hand will be largely consumed by the receiver's fees and expenses."

[*The Weekly Underwriter*. Dec. 10, 1904. p. 410.]

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### **INSURORS TAKE the PLEDGE**

**I**N 1840 Mr. Augustus Chester, on behalf of the American Temperance Union, obtained Resolutions from two Pittsburgh insurers, who issued fire marks, the Firemen's Insurance Company, Bulau 127, and the Pittsburgh Navigation and Fire Insurance Company, Bulau 122: "...allowing a return of ten percent of the premium of Insurance to all boats navigating the western waters, without alcoholic liquors." It seems that a large number of losses "originated in the too free use of alcoholic liquors."

Agents of the Hartford Insurance Company, Philadelphia Insurance Company, Lexington Insurance Company and Columbia Insurance Company also agreed to forward this proposal to their respective Boards to obtain similar resolutions.

[*Journal of the American Temperance Union*, Volume IV, No. 1, January 1840, pp. 36-37]

Bob Shea

## BULAU 196



(Photo courtesy of the New York City Fire Museum)

BULAU'S *Footprints of Assurance* attributes this mark to the "Equitable Insurance Company of Indiana," Indianapolis, Indiana, 1850-1903. However, *Reports of Cases Decided in the Supreme Court of the State of Indiana*, Vol. 175, pp. 334 – 345, lists the following history of this company:

1850 Organized as the "Indiana Insurance Company of Fort Wayne"

1893 Changed name to "Fort Wayne Insurance Company "

1899 Insolvent

1901 Reorganized as the "Equitable Insurance Company of Indiana" in Indianapolis

1903 Insolvent and receiver appointed.

The *1903 Best's Insurance Reports* writes that the Equitable Insurance Company of Indiana was not licensed by any state and is "operating under the special charter formerly used by the Fort Wayne Insurance Company, which failed in 1899...The company writes only surplus lines of not more than \$1,000 in all parts of the country." Best's also reports that the company "has persistently ignored" all requests for details of its operations.

Based on the above, the name of the company attributed by Bulau would actually have the dates 1901 – 1903 and is hardly likely to have issued a fire mark.

There is, however, another company that may be the source of the mark. It is the "Equitable Fire Insurance Company," a mutual, also of Indianapolis. Following are references I found for the above company:

- Page 362 of *Greater Indianapolis*, Jacob Piatt Dunn, Volume 1 Illustrated, The Lewis Publishing Company, Chicago, 1910, states: "The Equitable Fire, a mutual company, was organized in September, 1863, with W. A. Peele president and E. D. Olin secretary. It was changed to a stock company, and met large losses which caused it to go into the hands of a receiver early in 1868."

- The name of the company on a mailed envelope dated January 30, 1864 is shown as "Equitable Fire Insurance Co."

- A reference to the company in page 330 of the *Reports of Cases Argued and Determined in the Supreme Court of Judicature of the State of Indiana*, Volume XLII, 1874. In the case of Hashagan v. Manlove, the appellee was the "receiver of The Equitable Fire Insurance Company, a mutual insurance company, organized under the laws of the State of Indiana."

Based on the above, Bulau's mark #196 should be attributed to:

Equitable Fire Insurance Company (Mutual)  
Indianapolis, Indiana, 1863 – 1868.

Bob Shea