



# The Signevierist

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The Official Newsletter of the Fire Mark Circle of the Americas

## **ANOTHER MEMORABLE CONVENTION JUST CAME TO A CLOSE IN SAVANNAH**

CONVENTIONEERS were greeted in the lobby of the Embassy Suites Thursday by the smiling face of Logan Smith who manned the welcome desk. After checking their goodie bags for the updated agenda, the FMCA Board of Directors met, while others went to their rooms and prepared for a 5:30 nightly Manager's Reception. After sorting out dinner arrangements, groups left to return in time for the Hospitality room to preview the silent auction items.

On Friday morning the group boarded a trolley and was delivered to the National Museum of the Mighty 8<sup>th</sup> Air Force. After viewing artifacts, exhibits of reconstructed locations, films and even a restored B-17 Flying Fortress everyone had an understanding and appreciation of the service of those who manned the planes, where only one in five survived their twenty-five mission tour of duty over Europe during WW II. After lunch, also at the museum, the trolley went to the city of Savannah, where we had a chance to view the beautiful 18<sup>th</sup> and 19<sup>th</sup> century architectural homes and picturesque squares. The weather was perfect for enjoying such a lovely city. It was a tired, but happy, group that returned to the hotel.

Dave Oldham, our President, conducted the Saturday morning business meeting expeditiously, which was followed by Logan Smith's presentation on insurance company auto tags. Auto tags are a growing collectible for many members with a number of tags in the Live Auction. After a nice sit down buffet lunch, we made our final bids on the silent auction items and returned at 1:00 for the main auction. Gabe Laubacher ran the auction of 141 items flawlessly.

The evening's banquet and chatter left everyone with a warm feeling of enjoyment and friendship. Dave Oldham presented the new president of the FMCA, Jack Brunson. Jack's first duty was to present a plaque to Logan Smith, our host for this year's convention. Jack then closed the 2017 meeting and wished everyone a safe journey home with the hope that all would attend the October 20 – 22, 2018 Convention in Austin, Texas.

Thank you Logan for a wonderful convention.

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## **2017 FMCA AUCTION UPDATES**

THE Live and Silent Auctions were held during the Convention in Savannah, Georgia. For the Silent Auction, we had a wonderful large room for the display of the 190 items. On Saturday, the Live Auction was held in a different room that also gave us plenty of room.

The total gross sales were \$15,356 for the Live and \$1,672 for the Silent Auction lots.

LIVE AUCTION: We started with 141 lots, none were pulled. Thirty five (35) were not sold. The top sellers were:

1. Lot 36. Fire Association of Philadelphia Tin Fire Mark. B94. \$1000
2. Lot 9. Associated Firemen's Ins. Co. Fire Mark. B166. \$910
3. Lot 25. Firemen's Ins. Co. Fire Mark. B116. \$900
4. Lot 26. Newcastle-Upon-Tyne Fire Mark. B688; W24B. \$800
5. Lot 43. Mutual Assurance Co. (Green Tree) Fire Mark. B38. \$755
6. Lot 42. Capital Fire Ins. Co. Fire Mark. B463. \$700
7. Lot 69. Hand-in-Hand Fire & Life Fire Office Fire Mark. B517; W2A. \$600
8. Lot 22. Hartford Fire Tin Fire Mark. B75-V-A. \$450
9. Lot 17. State Insurance Company Fire Mark. B381. \$400
10. Lot 78. National Assurance Co. of Ireland Fire Mark. B303: W59A. \$400

SILENT AUCTION. We started with 190 lots. One lot was pulled. Fifty nine (59) were not sold. The top sellers were:

1. Lot 72. Paper Mache Firefighter. \$75
2. Lot 161. Hiegel and Ryan Ins. Paper Clip. \$61
3. Lot 14. Fire Alarm Mfg. Playing Cards. \$51
4. Lot 3. Miniature Fire Bucket. \$50
5. Lot 2. Original INA Brass Door Knob. \$45.

I sincerely appreciate both the Sellers and Buyers. I especially want to thank two people who donated items to the Fire Mark Circle. Martha Girdlestone donated the last of her husband Howard's items, and Nick Jennings donated many items for the Silent Auction. Thank you everyone. I also want to thank those that helped me during the year and at the Convention.

Bob Shea is such a BIG help. He oversees the Auction Verification Committee and continues to research fire marks so he can determine if a fire mark is real or reproduction. He also assisted me during the year by reviewing the auction sites to make sure they were accurately described and there were no typos.

The Auction Verification Committee continues to set the FMCA apart from other buying sites for Fire Marks. The Committee consists of Bob Shea, chair, Peter Faber, Tom Hardy and Bill Evenden. During the Convention, the Verification Committee reviewed the fire marks that were entered in the Live Auction.

The Silent Auction was set up with the help of many. But, then, it was turned over to Linda Borgstrom, Jeannette Graham and Pat Hewitt on Saturday. Mike Brankowitz inherited the bidding duties for the Absentee Bidders so that Tom Hardy could continue with the Verification Committee. I am hoping that Mike will continue to do it in the future years. The Silent Auction was run so smoothly – thanks to all four of these people for making that happen.

The Live Auction is always crazy busy; the set up must be quick. Thanks Tom Hewitt, Jan Hardy, Ed Schlesinger, and Mike Brankowitz for doing that. During the Auction, Gabe Laubacher continues as the Auctioneer with the help from Jan Hardy who lists the final bids for each lot.

After both Auctions are finished, there is always the packing of the items that did not sell. Pat, Jeanette and Linda B always seem to do this for me. Thanks – that sure helps. And, Tom Hewitt is always willing to do whatever is needed, which includes packing the boxes of the Live Auction. Thanks for all you do not only during the Convention but all year.

Austin, Texas is next year so starting in January I will be looking for more items for the Live and Silent Auctions. We continue to need more quality auction items, including the "WOW" items for the Live Auction. We also need more buyers and more members. Please let me know if you have any ideas for the next Auction – or if you would like to assist with the Auctions. I could always use more help.

Linda Anderberg, Auction Chair

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## A PHOTO SURE TO MAKE EVEN THE TOUGHEST FIRE BUFF CRY

Several months back, I acquired a small collection of old photographs taken by a photographer who was in business from the 1930s to the 1970s in Griffin, Georgia. Griffin is a medium sized town and has been around for well over 100 years. The photo was taken in 1943, the middle of World War II, and shows a citizen admiring the success of the community's scrap metal drive. The photographer had taken several shots of all the metal that had been donated by citizens and the town itself. In the rear of the line is a nice, early automobile preceded by two horse-pulled steam fire pumpers. While one appears to be in poor condition, the front one is still in nice shape and may have been the first steam engine the town had as evidenced by the "Griffin 1" glass plate adorning the front. This drive probably collected most of the fire marks and many of the auto tags from around the community too. Sad, sad, sad!



Logan Smith

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## GERMAN AMERICAN INSURANCE COMPANY, BULAU 439 - 440

The following notice appeared in *The Insurance Times*, Volume IV, Number 12, December 1871, page 870d. *Google Book Search*. Web:

German American Fire [sic] Ins. Co., N.Y. – The Germanic American enterprise of our old friend W. F. Heins, is proceeding at the steady and sure pace characteristic of the Teutonic race. Its aim being to favor the German importing houses, and for a time, at least, to restrict the business to a safe line of risks in the metropolis, it is probable that a capital of half a million will suffice for its requirements, although \$850,000 has been subscribed towards a capital of a million. Mr. Heins will be the president, and is at present in Germany engaged in completing his arrangement with the principals of German firms

having branches in this city [New York]. The German houses will use this company to save money on their insurance, by getting it at prime cost. The organization will open its campaign in February, and will start with a numerous line of risks supplied by its stockholders, whose subscriptions are made in comparatively small sums, and consequently cover a rather extensive field.

[The German American Insurance Company was chartered in 1872 and in 1917 changed its name to the Great American Insurance Company.]

Bob Shea

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## TO FIRE MARK OR NOT TO FIRE MARK

The following is from the July 16, 1912 Michigan *Manufacturers and Financial Record*:

### No More Hap-Hazard Insurance Buying

Once upon a time, as the ghost stories used to begin, there was a good deal of superstition about fire insurance. An example will illustrate: In the earlier days of extensive insurance against fire loses, and when house to house canvasses for business was not uncommon, the agent who secured the business would with great ceremony affix to the insured structure a small black and gold, or green and gold, or other colored but always gold-lettered sign, advertising the fact that the property was insured. Among the more ignorant patrons of the insurance corporations the virtue of their insurance seemed to lie in the protection of the integrity of these signs. A house might be repainted, but no desecrating brush defiled the tin badge which declared that it was insured in the Hibernian or the German-American Insurance Company. If by any chance the tin sign had to be removed for improvement, the jealous owner stood by uneasily until it was re-affixed and the virtue of his insurance policy restored. The people who kept their mental gaze fixed upon this evidence of their insurance rarely knew what the terms of their policies were, frequently lost or mislaid them, and depended solely upon the fetich of the tin sign tacked above their doors.<sup>1</sup>

The above is rather a curt dismissal of the value of fire marks. For an opposing view reread the article, "Why Fire Insurance Companies Issued Fire Marks" in the 2014-1 issue of the *Signevierist*, that may be accessed on the FMCA Website. After pointing out the importance of having a good underwriter to review your insurance needs, the unsigned article recommends the Detroit Underwriters' Company and goes on to extol the virtues of the principals. However, two years later the Detroit Underwriter's Company failed and a receiver appointed.<sup>2</sup>

I'm not sure if there is a moral here, but I certainly wouldn't mess with Bulau. Besides, as far as we know, no insurance company named "Hibernian" issued a fire mark.

Bob Shea

1. "No More Hap-Hazard Insurance Buying" *Michigan Manufacturer and Financial Record*, Vol.9, No.1, July 6, 1912. p. 4. *Google Book Search*. Web.

2. "Detroit Underwriters' Company Fails." *The Indicator*, Vol. XL, No. 18, p. 377. *Google Book Search*. Web.