



The Signevierist

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ANOTHER KANSAS FIRE MARK IS FOUND



In my spare time I like to scan Google Books to see if I can find evidence of undiscovered fire marks. I was inspired by Bob Shea's previous article that showed he discovered evidence of several undiscovered fire marks based on different companies listing a house plate as an expenditure in their annual report to the state insurance department. I have tried different searches over the years with little luck but recently I used a search with the keywords, "tin insurance plate". This search yielded only one result, but it was a very interesting one at that. The search led me to an article in the Leavenworth Weekly Times, November 2nd, 1911, page 2. In reading the article it describes a farmer who was tearing down a stone wall and discovered an old tin insurance plate. Here are some of the excerpts from the article:

John Powers, who lives at the site of the pioneer town of Mt. Pleasant, near Potter, in tearing down an old stone fence on what is known as the "Old Grandma Reed Place", on the town site, discovered underneath the wall an old insurance plate of the Kansas Insurance Company of Leavenworth. Accordingly, he turned the relic over to the George Remsburg museum at Potter and Mr. Remsburg set about to secure data concerning the history of the company which it represented.

The article then goes on to talk about the company but some of the dates and information did not match research on the company, so I have left that out. The final section of the article is also interesting:

The old plate is well preserved except that it was considerably battered and even perforated by Mr. Powers while removing the stone fence with a pick. It is now in the Remsburg

museum. It bears the inscription: "Kansas Insurance Company, Leavenworth".

After reading this newspaper article I immediately grabbed my copy of Footprints of Assurance and Addendum pages and looked for any reference to the Kansas Insurance Company. To my excitement there was no such reference, so I decided to see if I could back track and find if the tin insurance plate was preserved. In doing some internet searches I determined the Remsburg Museum collection was turned over to the Leavenworth Historical Society. I contacted them via email and actually got a response back. They unfortunately did not have the plate but stated that in fact the Remsburg collection was actually transferred to the Kansas State Historical Society in Topeka. I then contacted them and was in contact with several people from different departments. Finally, when all hope seemed lost, the Museum Registrar contacted me and stated she in fact did have the tin insurance plate in their collection. She in turn referred me to the curator of photographs who was able to provide me with the scanned image seen below. She also confirmed the measurements for me at 8 inches X 3 ½ inches.

It is truly amazing that Mr. Powers pulled this out of the ground and saved it instead of tossing it in the scrap pile. I believe he would have made a wonderful member of the FMCA since one of our main goals is the preservation of relics of the early days of insurance.

Mike Brankowitz

Editor's Note. The Addendum page of the Kansas Insurance Company mark (US-KC-1) is enclosed with this issue.

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## HIBERNIA FIRE INSURANCE COMPANY, BULAU 430

The following notice appeared in *The Insurance Times*, Volume IV, Number 6, June 1871, page 397. *Google Book Search*. Web:

**Hibernia Fire Insurance Company, Cleveland, Ohio.** This new fire company is now fairly under way, having complied with the laws of this State, and opened its offices at No. 263 Broadway, in the basement under the National Trust Company. Consistently with the nomenclature adopted, the great Irish patriot and exile, O'Donovan Rossa, Esq., has been appointed its metropolitan agent. Although he is wanting in special knowledge and experience in fire underwriting, he is a man of great aptitude, energy and firmness of purpose, and will doubtless command by his personal influence and repute an excellent line of business among his many friends and admirers. He will have able and experienced assistance, and gradually obtain the favor and patronage of the general public. *Erin Go Bragh!*

The above is a glowing endorsement of a company that very soon fell into trouble as a result of the Chicago Fire. It seems to have recovered and began writing business in Illinois, Indiana, Michigan, New York and Pennsylvania. However, due to losses, in 1874 the Hibernia retired from New York State. By April 1876 *The Insurance Times* reported that the Hibernian, a non-board insurer, was worthless and, later in 1878, *The Insurance Gazette* reported that company was insolvent and retired.

Bob Shea

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THE BACK IS BEAUTIFUL

“The back is beautiful,” is an expression used by Al Wills to indicate that you can learn a lot about a fire mark by studying the back. For example, you might see a manufacturer’s casting mark, soft red rust or unusual rubbings to indicate a reproduction. Also, the back may contain a sprue mark, tab or clearly defined hollowed out areas indicating a possible authentic mark.

Did you also know that a lot can be learned about the use of fire marks from the back of an insurance policy? Consider the back of the Firemen’s Insurance Company of Washington & Georgetown’s (Bulau 139) policy pictured below:



This early preprinted one year policy has the notation “use of badge,” [Note that the early American fire insurers referred to fire marks as “badges.”] Because there is no charge shown, it’s clear that the use of the company’s fire mark, Bulau 159, was optional for the insured. Al Wills’ article in the *FMCA Newsletter*, 1 – 1990, p. 4, states that the annual fee for the mark was 25 cents. While 25 cents may not be a great deal of money, in this case it was 5% of the \$5.00 premium. Note that the \$5.00 premium for \$500.00 coverage meant that the insurance rate was only 1%, or \$1, per hundred. Viewed from a percentage standpoint, in this instance, the charge for the use of the fire mark seems high.

If you are ever looking over an old fire insurance policy, especially one by a company that issued a cast iron fire mark, be sure to check the back to see if there was a charge for the fire mark.

Bob Shea

45th FMCA Convention Celebrate it in Austin, Texas

A few people have attended almost all of our conventions – starting with New York in 1973. Austin is going to be a great place to celebrate our 45th. It's also going to be an outstanding convention for those attending their first. All first time attendees will only pay half price registration fees. Check the website – Linda has once again pulled together an amazing group of fire marks most of us have never seen and a wide collection of marks and non-marks for every budget. Our hotel in Austin will be an Embassy Suites. We have enjoyed their hospitality for several recent conventions. The room rate is only \$129 which will include an excellent breakfast and a happy hour.

Austin is a city we can all enjoy. We haven't finalized the entire schedule but we expect to include a visit to the LBJ Library and other stops to make the Friday tour special. On Thursday and Friday evenings, along with dinner, you can find a wide and diverse selection of outstanding music to enjoy, together with food choices from Tex-Mex to fine dining. Make sure you have marked October 25-28 on your calendar. As we get a little closer, we will be sending registration forms and hotel registration instructions. This will be a convention none of us will want to miss.

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