

FIRE MARK CIRCLE of the Americas

OBJECTIVES

The Fire Mark Circle of the Americas (FMCA) is an organization of persons interested in fire marks and other reminders of the early days of fire insurance. The object of the Circle is to bring together persons interested in the origin and history of fire insurance companies, their fire marks, volunteer fire companies and fire fighting equipment, firemen's badges, medals and tokens, old insurance company signs and all that pertains to the past of fire insurance... for the purpose of exchanging, recording information, and for the preservation of relics of the early days of fire insurance.

The FMCA was the first and only authorized branch of the Fire Mark Circle of England, which was organized in 1934. In 1975 FMCA became an independent organization, but, because of our mutual interests, we are still strongly affiliated with the Fire Mark Circle of England. Members of the FMCA are automatically dues paying members of the Fire Mark Circle of England and receive copies of all their bulletins and newsletters.

BACKGROUND INFORMATION

The FMCA was organized in 1972 by a group of fire mark collectors in the United States. These collectors knew of numerous other collectors throughout the country who were interested in sharing information and exchanging fire marks and fire artifacts...but had no practical way of communicating with each other. The initial meeting of the FMCA was at the Museum of the Home Insurance Company in New York. This was the logical place for the first meeting because the Home Insurance Company had sponsored and published the "bible" of fire mark collectors, "Footprints of Assurance" by Alwin Bulau. Thirty-five members participated in the first meeting.

The founding members were Max Klein, Morton Werner, Eugene Morris, Albert Wills, William Hedges, Thomas J. Tye, Home Ins. Co. and the Insurance Company of North America.

FMCA has members from all walks of life. In addition to insurance brokers and company

personnel, members include firefighters, attorneys, teachers and museum curators. Newsletters are issued on a periodically basis and members are kept informed about matters of mutual interest. Annual three day meetings are held at various cities across the country.

Participation varies with each member; some are interested in receiving information and exchanging items by mail; others share these same interests in addition to taking part in the annual conventions. Annual dues, including membership in the Fire Mark Circle of England are \$30 a year.

HOW FMCA WILL BENEFIT YOU

Through periodic Newsletters, monographs, mailings, some local meetings, and the annual convention, you will be kept informed and up-to-date on:

AVAILABILITY OF FIRE MARKS AND FIRE ARTIFACTS FOR SALE OR TRADE.....

OPPORTUNITY TO BID IN MAIL AUCTIONS OF FIRE MARKS OR AT THE ANNUAL CONVENTION AUCTION.....

ARTICLES OF A TECHNICAL NATURE AS SUBMITTED BY OUR MEMBERS.....

REPORTS FROM VARIOUS MEMBERS ON THEIR COLLECTING EXPERIENCES.....

WARNINGS AND REPORTS ON FAKES AND ON REPLICAS THAT COME TO THE ATTENTION OF OUR MEMBERS.....

AN OPPORTUNITY TO MEET YOUR FELLOW COLLECTORS AT OUR ANNUAL MEETINGS.....

A ROSTER OF FELLOW COLLECTORS.....

UPDATES TO NEWLY FOUND VARIANTS OF FIRE MARKS IN "FOOTPRINTS OF ASSURANCE" OR FIRE MARKS FROM COMPANIES NOT INCLUDED IN "FOOPRTINTS OF ASSURANCE."

THE OPPORTUNITY TO PURCHASE "AN AMERICAN FIRE MARK PRIMER" WHICH IS A COMPILATION OF FIRE MARK ARTICLES TAKEN FROM BACK ISSUES OF FMCA PUBLICATIONS.....

NOTICES OF UPCOMING EVENTS OF FIRE MARK ORGANIZATIONS IN ENGLAND, GERMANY, ITALY AND PORTUGAL.

AMERICAN FIRE MARKS

American fire marks, also known as "badges" and "house plates," are signs issued by insurance companies that were affixed to the front of a property to mark that the property was insured for fire. Fire marks carried the symbol or the name of the insurer and were made of cast iron, sheet brass, lead, tinned sheet iron, copper or zinc. They came in various sizes and shapes, sometimes attached to a wooden plaque.

Fire marks originated in England where each insurance company organized their own private fire brigade, and the fire mark was used to identify to its brigade the insured property. In America, eight volunteer fire companies were already formed in Philadelphia before the first insurance company, the Philadelphia Contributionship, was organized in 1752. Like the English companies, the Contributionship issued fire marks. Since half of the directors of the Philadelphia Contributionship were also volunteer firemen, the function of the fire mark was also to let the policyholder/firemen know that a loss to the property would affect them as mutual policyholders and hopefully, they would join in to fight the fire and minimize damage. The presence of a fire mark may also have deterred arson so prevalent in colonial times.

Fire marks were used in America for about 150 years. By 1800, with the organization of stock insurance companies, fire marks began to be used for advertising purposes. While newly organized insurers issued fire marks up to the 1890's, by the 1870's their use declined. They were replaced by the more colorful and cheaper print advertising.

Fire marks are a company's distinctive mark, and are historical reminders of an industry with little tangible evidence of its existence other than contracts and pieces of paper.

MEMBERSHIP FORM

I hereby apply for membership in the Fire Mark Circle of the Americas. I agree to abide by the Laws of the Circle currently in 1 interested primarily in fire marks for their historical value. Enclosed are my annual dues of \$30.00.

Date: _____ Signature: _____
(Please type or print)

Name: _____ Spouse: _____

Home Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Name of Business _____ Occupation _____

Address _____

City _____ State _____ Zip _____

Home Phone () _____ Business Phone () _____

Fax () _____ E-mail _____

Send mail to my home () or business () address

How did you learn about the FMCA? _____

Please check the following categories of interest to you as a member of the Fire Mark Circle of the Americas

- a. _____ Fire marks in general
- b. _____ Fire marks from U.S.A. ____; England ____; others (Please list) _____
- c. _____ Old insurance company signs
- d. _____ Modern insurance company plaques
- e. _____ Fire artifacts in general
- f. _____ Specific fire artifacts (Please list) _____
- g. _____ Fire insurance memorabilia (Please list) _____
- h. _____ May your collection be reviewed by appointment? _____
- i. _____ Would you serve on a committee? _____



YOUR INVITATION

to join the

FIRE MARK CIRCLE

of the Americas



Fire Mark
Fire Association of Philadelphia



Fire Mark
City Insurance Company
Cincinnati



Fire Mark
Chambersburg Fire Insurance Company

Please return this form, with a check payable to FMCA to: Elaine S. Schlesinger
Secretary, FMCA
1630 Arabella Street
New Orleans, LA 70115-5026