



The Signevierist

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The Official Newsletter of the Fire Mark Circle of the Americas

REVISITING B.240



Last year a member sold his collection of fire marks and one of the marks was B.240 or a variation of the “mark” attributed by Bulau to the Eagle Fire Insurance Company, Boston, Massachusetts. The one that sold last year was a reverse image of the one listed in “Footprints of Assurance” and the one I have in my collection. This renewed my interest in this mark and sent me down a rabbit hole of research to determine if this in fact is a fire mark. In researching this I checked the New York City Fire Museums collection to see if there were any listed as well as previous auctions to see what had sold in the past. The NYC fire museum in fact has one that includes information on the back where the mark was found. The mark has the initials of J.P. Stroud and the following info:

"This plate bought June 24, 1929, from L.P. Aardrup Lancaster Pa. He said he removed it from the old Western Hotel, corner West Orange St., and North Water St., Lancaster Pa. This hotel having been torn down June 1929. Said hotel being over 300 years old, the plate being nailed on the front wall very long ago."

This was very interesting to me as the location was Lancaster, Pennsylvania but the mark was attributed to a Boston company by Bulau. Admittedly Bulau states the source of the mark is unverified. This also got me think about how someone walking by would know what company this mark was attributed to. There is no company name or lettering at all for that matter. This is another

clue as most marks have company information or a well-known image that members of the community would know instantly like the hands of a Baltimore Equitable mark. If this was a well-known image in either Boston or Lancaster, why don't we know what company it is associated with?

Speaking of the image I looked closer at the mark and besides the obvious eagle there are other items pictured including thistles, three-leaf clovers, and a rose. I searched "Footprints of Assurance" and the only other mark that had these images was a British mark B.998, the Property Insurance Company, Limited, London, England. Bulau states the description as Rose of England, thistle of Scotland, and shamrock of Ireland. This left me with more questions than answers as why would there be symbols of America, England, Scotland, and Ireland on the same mark? Maybe the Property Insurance Company issued the mark in America, but I was unable to determine any credibility to this theory.

Finally, my search of previous auctions led me to a sale of the following plaque:



This was sold by Jeffrey S. Evans & associates auctioneers as an "American Historical Eagle Yellowware Plaque". Also of interest, an authentic Baltimore Equitable mark sold in the same auction, March 5th, 2022. We know fire marks could be issued with several different materials, but I am unaware of any American mark being issued with this material. Other searches revealed this image was used as fireplace andirons, with reverse images on either side.

While this is truly a beautiful plaque/sign, and I would like to believe that B.240 is a fire mark, I'm leaning more towards the argument against it. Why don't we have any idea of the company information? Why would there be two marks with reverse images? This seems like it would be more of an ornamental item. If you have any further information or comments the editor would love to hear your thoughts!

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WHAT'S REALLY THE MESSAGE?



Does the scene depicted in Logan Smith's article on the above blotter in the 2015-2 issue of the Signevierist also have another meaning or message? Why should the burning house and steam fire engine in the background remind the policyholder that he neglected to put up the company's fire mark on his house? Did the homeowner believe that the fire company would not fight the fire unless he had a fire mark on his home?

Maybe I'm just overthinking the message not to neglect to get a policy in the Phenix.

There is another thing that bothers me about the scene. Why are the ends of the horseshoe pointing down? Picturing the horseshoe shape as a cup means that good luck for the house fills the horseshoe. With the ends pointing down, good luck spills out and is lost. Besides, as depicted, the horseshoe looks like a frown.

Bob Shea

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ANOTHER UNFOUND FIRE MARK

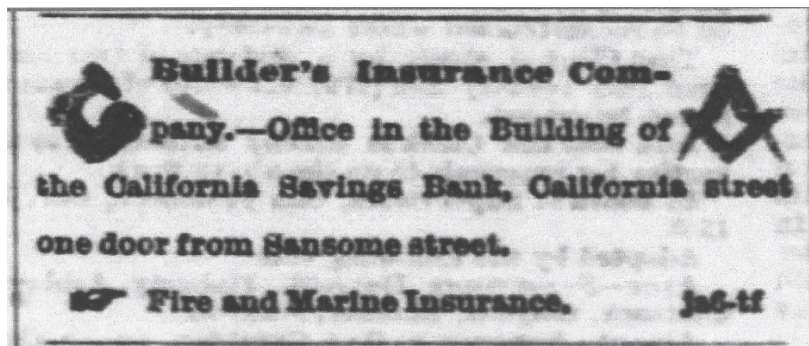
Page 3 of the September 21, 1867, issue of the *Weekly Calaveras Chronicle* of Mokelumne Hill, California reports on the first annual meeting of the Builders' Insurance Company. Below is the Balance Sheet submitted by the company:

BALANCE SHEET.	
<i>Receipts.</i>	
Total cash received for Capital stock	\$44,791 00
Total net amount rec'd for prem's	130,070 98
Total interest on deposits from California Building and Loan Society	4,390 21
Total received for State Tax..	3,000 33
Total.....	\$181,252 52
<i>Disbursements.</i>	
Paid for fire losses..	\$32,954 76
P'd for marine losses	1,108 01
Paid for Federal tax.	1,286 77
Paid for reinsurance.	3,332 76
Paid for brokerage..	10,931 86
Paid for salaries.....	6,568 67
Paid for printing and stationery	4,202 45
Paid for advertising.	6,925 65
Paid for donations...	2,910 00
Paid for Fourth of July celebration..	1,456 25
Paid for house plates and advert'g boards.	2,341 97
Paid for sundry petty expence	830 70
Balance assets in Company's hands.....	108,581 77
Total.....	\$182,252 52
The assets above named being composed of:	
Cash in Bank.....	\$52,814 69
Bank Stock.....	20,000 00
Fixtures and Furniture.....	2,123 96
Buggies and horses, etc.....	2,262 73
Premiums in course of collection	30,479 77
Stamps	805 42
Total.....	\$108,481 77

Under Disbursements, note the entry for "Paid for house plates (Underling added for emphasis.) and advertising boards..... \$ 2,341.97."

The entry denotes that the Builders' Insurance Company of San Francisco, California issued a fire mark. This fire mark is neither in Bulau's *Footprints of Assurance* nor the *Addenda*. The next year, 1868, the California Supreme Court ruled the company insolvent.

California members should be on the lookout for this rare mark from such a short-lived insurer.



Bob Shea

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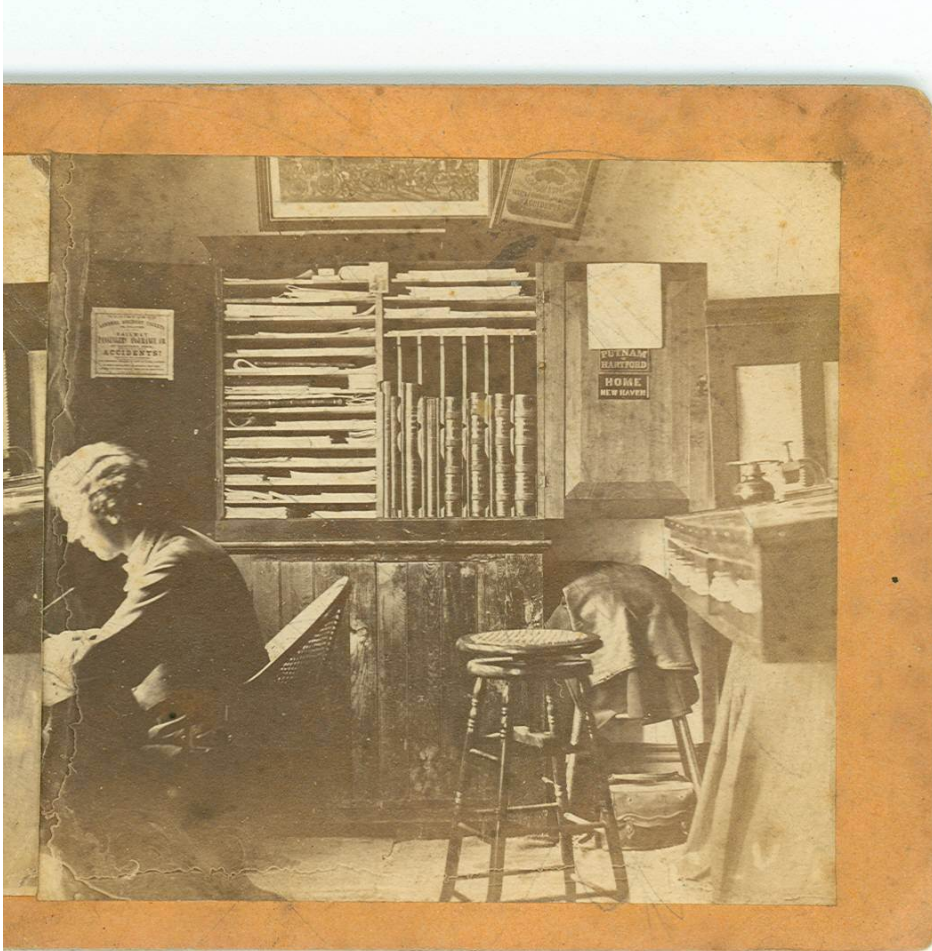
A recent auction sale for your viewing pleasure!



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Searching Stereoview Cards

One of my searches when looking for fire mark related items is cabinet cards with insurance advertising on them. This has led to several new fire mark discoveries. Several years ago, while searching eBay, I realized that there are a lot of stereoview cards with insurance as the subject matter. Anything from insurance buildings to office scenes. One such search led me to the following image which I think many in our organization will appreciate:



The picture is that of an insurance agency's office. If you look closely at the open cabinet door on the right, there are two fire marks attached to the inside of the door. The first is that of the Putnam Fire Insurance Company, Hartford, Connecticut (B.351). The second mark below the Putnam mark is from the Home Insurance Company, New Haven, Connecticut (B.302).

Out of all the insurance office or agency photographs I have come across I have never seen one with fire marks displayed anywhere. It really makes you wonder what the purpose was. Maybe just like fire marks on a house the agency was advertising the insurance companies they represented?

For those of you that may have trouble seeing the marks in question, here is a close-up view:



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Presidents Message

Well, we are well into the new year, and I hope to find all of you in good health and spirits as we go forth in the new year. As I write this, we have just concluded the first FMCA Spring Auction in many years. I hope all members participated as this will probably be the way we go in the future. This was a trial auction for the FMCA as we go forward. The Board of Directors has decided to stop using Hi-Bid to do our auctions for several reasons, one being the complexity of their format, cost and working with their organizational employees.

We know there may be some speed bumps as we get more into the process of hosting our own auctions, including picking and gathering items for the auctions, making up the descriptions, taking the photos, getting reserves from bidders, authentication of marks just to name a few. Linda Anderburg was always instrumental in gathering and collecting items from members and others for our auctions. If any member knows of any collections, good fire memorabilia, insurance items, that can be used for future auctions please get with Tom Hardy or Gabe Laubacher.

Mike Brankowitz is always looking for things to put in the newsletter, please get with him if you have any articles you might have, or ideas for articles. If you have a collection, a fire mark, or insurance item, you would like to feature, he would welcome that too. We need new material for the newsletter.

We are working on a possible convention site for this year, but no final details have been worked out, ~~several locations have been suggested. Any member willing to help or has a location suggestion~~ please contact Tom Hewitt of Bill Pope or me.

If you have not renewed your membership, please do so very soon as the new Directory will be updated soon by Secretary Pope.

Dave Oldham

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