The Crescent Box: Celebrating 100 Years!

In the 1920s, Edwin Ford was the company’s only salesman and spent much of his time on the road visiting water utilities. 100 years ago this month, Edwin was visiting with George G. Earl, Chief Engineer and General Superintendent of the Sewerage and Water Board in New Orleans. As the men talked, Mr. Earl described the challenges the city faced with their current water meter settings. The open bottom of their meter boxes allowed mud and wildlife to enter. Meter readers would often find an angry gopher resting in the mud when removing the boxes’ lids. Also, since much of New Orleans is below sea level and rain water must be pumped from the ground, settling soil would cause the meter box lids to be inches above grade after installation.

Always quick to develop solutions to meet customer needs, Edwin took to an empty drafting table in the facility and began sketching a new box to address these issues. The cast iron base would seal the box off from wildlife, but holes in the bottom would allow for water drainage. The box featured two threaded barrels with 7” of adjustability which would allow the overall height of the box to be altered to meet grade as the soil around it settled.

Encouraged by Mr. Earl’s reaction to the concept, Edwin brought the draft back to Wabash to refine his design. The Sewerage and Water Board approved the new design and placed an order for 100 sample boxes. Inspired by the Crescent Box design, Edwin filed for a patent in June 1922 and received patent 1,495,011 in May 1924 for a combined meter setting and support box.

This isn’t where the story ends. The Crescent Box included a custom lid with a moon and nine stars that became a cultural icon for the city. So much so, that the lids were frequently stolen for use as décor items. Unfortunately, this caused the city to begin ordering plain lids in 1973 to deter would be thieves. You can still find the original lids in a few places around the city, but you can also find the design used for trinkets such as wall clocks, earrings, and t-shirts in souvenir shops.

Ford Meter Box is just as committed to solving complex issues for our water works customers today as we were 100 years ago. Reach out to us or your local FMB distributor about your challenges so we can help you develop a tailored solution. Who knows, we may even write a story about it in the year 2121.