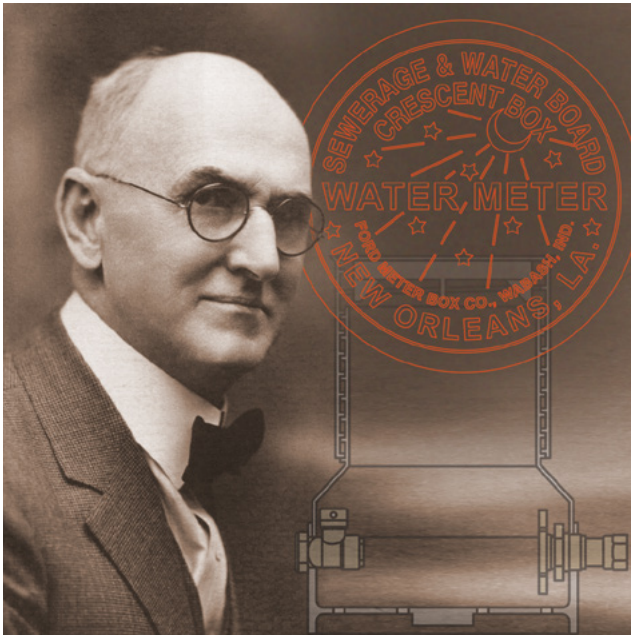


## Ford Meter Box Values Customer Feedback



Edwin Ford founded The Ford Meter Box Company to solve a need in his community by finding a way to measure residential water consumption in cold climates. The fledgling company improved and expanded its water product offerings in response to ideas and suggestions from customers. One example of this is the story of the Crescent Box.

Edwin Ford was making sales calls in New Orleans in the 1920s. The water superintendent mentioned he had trouble ensuring his meter boxes remained level with the ground surface because the terrain shifted so much at sea level. Edwin found a drafting table in the corner of the room and designed the Crescent Box. This meter box features an outer barrel with 7 inches of adjustability to allow for ground shifts. The Crescent Box is still manufactured and serves as an example of the importance of customer feedback.

Today, many new products are designed and manufactured each year based on customer requests. We are also committed to continuous improvement of our products, processes, and service. Hearing from our customers is important to us. We value your feedback and invite you to participate in a short survey! Visit our website, [www.fordmeterbox.com/survey](http://www.fordmeterbox.com/survey), to help us better serve you.



You're invited to the

## FORD QUALITY SURVEY

Completed surveys will be entered in a drawing  
to win one of five Amazon gift cards.

Survey expires 10/16/20

[www.fordmeterbox.com/survey](http://www.fordmeterbox.com/survey)



The Ford Meter Box Company, Inc., P.O. Box 443, Wabash, Indiana, USA 46992-0443  
Telephone: 260-563-3171 FAX: 800-826-3487 Overseas FAX: 260-563-0167 [www.fordmeterbox.com](http://www.fordmeterbox.com)



**Welcome**  
Watercolor on paper by Sarah Luginbill

## NOVEMBER 2020

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### THE FORD METER BOX COMPANY, INC.

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Phone: 260-563-3171 • Domestic FAX: 800-826-3487 • Overseas FAX: 260-563-0167 • [www.fordmeterbox.com](http://www.fordmeterbox.com)



# “I take pen in hand...”

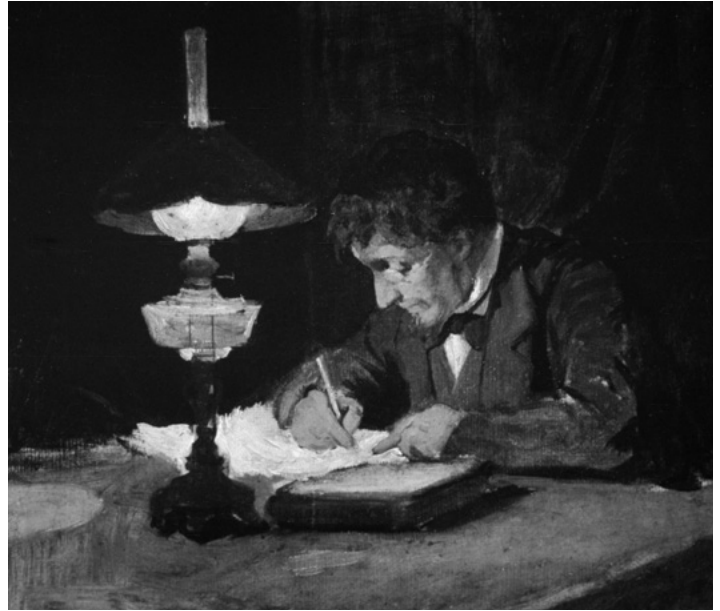
The art of letter writing has been in decline for several decades, but there's reason to believe that this has been reversed, at least for the moment. With the spread of lockdowns and social distancing brought about by the COVID-19 pandemic, Americans seem to be writing more personal letters.

Scholars believe that the first recorded handwritten letter was written by Persian Queen Atossa in about 500 BC. Until Samuel F.B. Morse sent the first telegraphic message from Washington to Baltimore in 1844, letters remained the primary method of communicating over a long distance. The posting of personal letters increased when Britain introduced pre-paid service with the first postage stamps in 1840. The first general-issue postage stamps did not appear in America until seven years later.

The Civil War was a golden age of letter writing. Soldiers on both sides sent millions of letters home over the four-year course of the war. They wrote in part to fill idle hours while in bivouac waiting for battles to begin, but mostly they wrote to assuage the fears of those at home. Many of the letters found their way into hometown newspapers of the day, and because of that they came to the attention of a far-larger audience than may have been intended. Farmers who moved to the Great Plains in the 1880s and the 1890s were only slightly less inclined to write letters to relatives back home in the East than were soldiers. Letters from the farmers' frontier provide historians with a window into the lives of those who settled in mid-America.

Travelers, particularly those Americans who went to Europe between the Civil War and 1900, produced prodigious numbers of letters describing their experiences abroad. Like the Civil War letters, these pieces of correspondence were passed along by recipients and reproduced by local newspapers.

In letters of the period, the salutation seldom mentioned the name of the recipient. Instead, the greeting would be “Dear Brother,” or “Beloved Wife,” or something similar. “I take pen in hand...” or “I take this opportunity to respond to your favor of...” (such and such a date) were typical openings for letters written during that time.



Letter writing dropped markedly with the rise of digital communication. The increasing use of word processors and other electronic devices has even motivated many school systems to eliminate instruction in cursive, and there are now examples of younger students who are unable to read longhand.

“Write a letter to me,” people once pleaded. Now they say, “Text me” or “Email me,” and the old-fashioned practice of writing letters has fallen out of favor. However, it may be that with more time on their hands, people are relearning the value of personal letters.

If more people are indeed writing personal letters these days, social historians should be pleased because they depend upon such documents as they record how ordinary people live their lives. Text messages, emails, and similar communications are often discarded quickly and never become a part of the permanent record. It's easy to hit the delete key.

The use of first-class postage (the rate for personal letters) has been in decline for several years, and officials project an 18 percent drop over the next five years. It remains to be seen if more people will continue to “take pen in hand” and sustain the uptick in personal mail, perhaps at least partly reversing the downward trend in this kind of communication.

*by Pete Jones*

Please send questions or comments to Pete Jones at [peteinwabash@comcast.net](mailto:peteinwabash@comcast.net).