

# The Meter Setter

5

May 2020

## Ford Meter Box Iron Products

Ford Meter Box has delivered high quality iron products to the water works industry for over 120 years. The variety of iron products include curb boxes, meter lids and covers for cold climates, meter boxes for moderate and warm climates, yoke bars, and pipeline products.

**Curb Boxes** – Ford curb boxes are available in two styles. The Arch pattern is used with curb stops in sizes 1" and smaller. An additional curb box base allows the Arch pattern to fit curb stops up to 2". The Minneapolis pattern curb box fits Minneapolis style curb stops in sizes 3/4" through 2".

**Lids and Covers** – Ford offers an extensive variety of meter pit lids and covers up to 36". For added protection against frost, Ford double lid covers have an inner lid with an inset outer lid for flush installations. Ford offers covers for yard installations or heavy traffic situations.

**Meter Boxes** – For moderate and warm climates, Ford's Meter Boxes are complete and compact meter-setting units. The body and lid of the boxes are constructed of durable cast iron and provide automatic spacing and alignment for the meter. Meter Boxes are available for single meter applications, longer meters, or double meter installations.

**Yoke Bars** – Yoke bars provide stability and proper spacing for meter settings. Ford yoke bars are available in three styles. The Y500 series is a standard yoke bar for removable brass end pieces. The Y500P series features pipe stakes for added stability. The Y200 series incorporates an integral FIP outlet.

**Pipeline Products** – Ford Meter Box offers ductile iron pipeline couplings and restraints. Ford cast couplings and adapters join various pipe types with the same or different nominal sizes. Uni-Flange® restraints are available for all pipe types ranging in size from 3" to 48".



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)



**Water Babies**  
Oil on canvas by Dee Mari Moore

## JUNE 2020

SUN	MON	TUES	WED	THURS	FRI	SAT
	1	2	3	4	5	6
7	8	9	10	11	12	13
Flag Day 14	15	16	17	18	19	First Day of Summer 20
Father's Day 21	22	23	St. Jean Baptiste Day (Québec) 24	25	26	27
28	29	30				

New Moon  
 First Quarter  
 Full Moon  
 Last Quarter

MAY 2020							JULY 2020						
S	M	T	W	T	F	S	S	M	T	W	T	F	S
					1	2				1	2	3	4
3	4	5	6	7	8	9	5	6	7	8	9	10	11
10	11	12	13	14	15	16	12	13	14	15	16	17	18
17	18	19	20	21	22	23	19	20	21	22	23	24	25
24	25	26	27	28	29	30	26	27	28	29	30	31	

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# Opera Houses on Main Street

During the four decades or so immediately after the Civil War, thousands of small towns and medium-sized cities across America erected theaters they christened as “opera houses,” but seldom did an opera company perform in any of them.

Fraternal lodges built some of the opera houses and established their clubrooms there. Wealthy individuals erected some as investments, and other towns raised money by public subscription to erect an opera house as a matter of civic pride.

Many of these venues were remarkable structures for the place and the time, and often they were the town’s pride and joy. And even if they never hosted a full-fledged opera, these theaters attracted a variety of plays, lectures, concerts, and vaudeville shows that brought live entertainment to small and often remote towns from Bangor, Maine, to John Day, Oregon, and from Uvalde, Texas, to Grand Forks, North Dakota. They sprang up in coal towns in Appalachia, in mining towns in Colorado and in cattle towns in Kansas and Nebraska.

They were the scene of high school graduations, dances, local political conventions and, at the time of the Spanish-American War, patriotic rallies.

Some of the opera houses, even in the smallest of towns, were examples of remarkable architecture. Others simply blended with the common commercial structures of Main Street and were distinguishable only by the words “Opera House” chiseled in stone, usually high on their facades. Some of the smaller venues were absolute jewel boxes, stunning in their ornateness.

In smaller towns, the theater itself was often on the second or even third floor of the building, with the lower floors given over to stores or offices that generated rental income. A feed store or hardware store might well occupy space below the auditorium, and in one Indiana town the local fire company had its headquarters beneath the theater.



*Eva Tanguay*

Even if the local opera house failed to bring a traveling opera company to town, it did manage to host attractions such as John Philip Sousa’s band or the dancing and singing of the energetic and popular Eva Tanguay.

Drama was a regular attraction of small-town opera houses that presented plays such as *East Lynne* or *Under the Gaslight*. Another popular but often poorly performed drama was *Uncle Tom’s Cabin*. Nearly everyone agreed that the thrill of seeing live bloodhounds in pursuit of Eliza and her

baby caused even the most critical of audiences to forget the poor acting.

In the heyday of small-town opera houses, theatergoing was a seasonal thing. Air conditioning was far in the future, so most opera houses closed in early June and did not reopen until September. This summer hiatus strained the revenue of these theaters, particularly ones in the smallest of towns.

The coming of paved roads, the expansion of interurban routes in the Midwest, and the arrival of the automobile made travel to cities easier for residents of little towns, and this put even more financial stress on local opera houses.

Some owners struggled to convert their theaters to movie houses, and others found different ways to postpone the nearly inevitable darkening of the stage lights. Some promoted boxing and wrestling matches in rings erected on the stage, but one by one most of the once-proud opera houses shutdown.

The buildings themselves were switched to other commercial uses. Some became stores or apartments or even bowling allies, but many fell into disrepair and soon met the wrecking ball.

But in recent years, some of the old opera houses, such as those in Staples, Minnesota, and Delphi, Indiana, have gained new lives as preservation groups have undertaken efforts to restore them. Once again, the small-town opera house is an object of civic pride.

*by Pete Jones*

Image Credit: Photo by J. [Jacob] Schloss. Library of Congress <http://hdl.loc.gov/loc.pnp/cph.3c11866>

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