

Ford Meter Box Expands Secura-Lok™ Line

Ford Meter Box is excited to announce additions to the Secura-Lok line! The Secura-Lok Locking Ball Valve series now includes barrel style locks on 5/8" – 1" straight and angle ball valves. The addition of barrel locks for angle ball valves enables the Secura-Lok to be integrally incorporated into Coppersetters, Yoke Settings, and Meter Boxes. These new valves, offered with an array of different end connections, allow local utilities to indefinitely suspend a customer's service by locking the valve in the closed position, ensure service is uninterrupted by locking the valve in the open position, or permit normal ball rotation by locking the valve in the open position, all at the meter!

For more information, contact your Ford Meter Box® representative or local distributor.





Fresh Snow
Oil on canvas board by Karla Ellis

NOVEMBER 2019

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Cycloramas: Yesterday's Blockbusters



Photo credit: Detail of The Battle of Atlanta from the Carol M. Highsmith Archive, Library of Congress. Control Number 2011630674

Through much of the 1800s, cycloramas were a sensational form of entertainment. One current writer has called them “the blockbusters of their day.” Artists created them by the hundreds, and millions of people saw them in special venues in North America and Europe. Eventually, the novelty of the amazing creations wore off, and the arrival of motion pictures helped push the cycloramas into oblivion. Only a few of these works survive.

Cycloramas were enormous paintings on canvases hundreds of feet long and up to 50 feet high. They were displayed in circular buildings capable of holding both the huge works and the large crowds that came to view them.

What is said to be the first cyclorama opened in the 1790s. It was a 360-degree view of Edinburgh, Scotland. Its creator, an Irish artist named Robert Barker, displayed his work in a brick rotunda in London’s Leicester Square.

Barker’s work was wildly popular, and hundreds of similar creations by hundreds of artists followed. Most depicted romantic landscapes, views of major cities, Biblical scenes and even depictions of disasters, such as the Great Chicago Fire of 1871.

Great military battles, particularly those of the American Civil War, proved to be the theme of several important cycloramas. The Second Battle of Bull Run, the Battle of Lookout Mountain and the clash between the Monitor and the Merrimack all found their way as subjects of cycloramas. A depiction of Custer’s Last Stand achieved popularity.

As cycloramas gained even more success, promoters scrambled to find other subjects. Canvases of Niagara Falls and the eruption of Mount Kilauea competed for the public’s attention. In the ever-increasing struggle

to draw customers, owners of some cycloramas experimented with live narration, special lighting and music.

Promoters of some of the more popular cycloramas took them on the road. Nearly every major city in America eventually had a venue suitable for showing the huge traveling canvasses.

But the craze for cycloramas eventually ran its course, and one by one the once-popular exhibits closed their doors. Some of the owners of the huge paintings that were so expensive to produce put them in storage, only to see them fall victim to fire, mildew and mold, and damage from rodents.

Of the thirty or so surviving cycloramas, two of the most important are on display in the United States. The “Battle of Gettysburg” cyclorama, created in 1884 by the French Artist Paul Philippoteaux, is displayed in the Gettysburg National Military Park Museum and Visitor Center. This is one of three versions painted by the artist. The National Park Service purchased it from a private owner in the late 1940s.

The other major cyclorama in America is “The Battle of Atlanta,” produced in 1886 by 17 artists at the American Panorama Company in Milwaukee. Some 6,000 human figures are shown on the canvas which is 49 feet high and more than 100 yards long. It weighs about 10,000 pounds. Its original owners displayed the canvas in several American cities before it passed into the successive ownership of several businessmen, one of whom gave it to the City of Atlanta.

After two different restorations, each of which cost several million dollars, “The Battle of Atlanta” opened to public view on February 22, 2019, in the Lloyd and Mary Ann Whitaker Cyclorama Building at the Atlanta History Center.

by Pete Jones

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