

Ford Meter Box's First Advertisement

The Ford Meter Box Company will celebrate its 100th anniversary in 1998. In anticipation of the upcoming centennial we are researching the historical archives of Ford Meter Box. We found the following story, which tells of Ford's first incursion into advertising.

In October, 1899, the first advertisements for the new company appeared. Edwin Ford ordered a series of small pamphlets, the first of which was a single sheet of paper, about five inches by fourteen inches, folded into an eight-page booklet with three photographs and text. One picture was a cutaway drawing of the meter box with its fittings, another was a side view of the box itself, and the third was of the reverse side of the box lid showing the manner in which the lid locked.

This little booklet described the company's only product:

"The Meter Box consists first of a salt-glazed, vitrified pipe or shell; second, of a cast-iron bottom coated as water pipe is coated, with asphaltum pitch. Through this bottom passes the inlet and outlet pipe thoroughly caulked with lead to said bottom. This bottom is cemented to the pipe or shell with the best hydraulic Portland cement, making a thoroughly water-tight bond to the Meter Box. The box consists, third, of a cast iron ring and

its lid. The ring is cemented to the top of the shell and coated with pitch in the same manner as the bottom. To the lid is attached, by a brass pentagon-headed screw, a steel latch which, when the lid is placed on the ring and turned to the right, engages under the cast lugs on the ring. The brass screw being now turned to the right draws up the latch, which, when the lid is placed on the ring and turned to the right, engages under the cast lugs on the ring. The brass screw being now turned to the right draws up the latch against the lugs and the groove of the lid, which is provided with the suitable gasket, down tight on the flange joint. The screw head is countersunk, making it impossible to open the box without a suitable wrench."

Other booklets, some of them more elaborate, followed over the next year or two. One of the very early advertisements priced a standard box with all fittings at \$5.50, f.o.b. Hartford City, Indiana. The shipping weight was one hundred pounds and, as always, the product carried an unconditional guarantee. Although the box advertised was the firm's "best-seller", Edwin Ford established an important company policy when he stated, in the ad, "We can make up these boxes longer or shorter for special settings. Prices quoted on application." From its earliest years, Ford Meter Box was eager to accommodate the customer.

