

WHAT
HAPPENED

Edwin Ford designed New Orleans' water meter cover in 1921.

The lowly **water meter cover** has become one of New Orleans' most iconic images.

With a crescent moon radiating beams to the stars, the 10-pound lid is so desirable that despite being protected by state law and a federal trademark thieves routinely swipe the lids from their boxes. Artists, with permission from the Sewerage & Water Board, also reproduce the image on pottery, jewelry and other souvenirs.

The cover was designed by Edwin Ford in the 1920s. The round top covered water meter boxes that Ford's company pioneered to protect water meters from the elements. Ford designed the cover after visiting New Orleans. Soon Ford's company, the Ford Meter Box Company of Wabash, Indiana, was selling half of its water meter boxes to New Orleans. The company gave New Orleans full ownership of the moon and stars design.

The problem of the meter cover thefts has become so bad, the S&WB has taken to replacing the stolen covers with plain iron lids.

Artists are required to receive permission from the Sewerage & Water Board before reproducing the meter cover design on their jewelry and other crafts and artwork.



Often, when the original Ford Meter Box Co. covers, above, are stolen, they are replaced with unadorned covers, right.