

In 1969, when the venerable Deshler Hotel (then at the northwest corner of Broad and High) was razed this letter was found in its cornerstone box.

Columbus, Ohio

August Second, 1915

TO THE OWNER OF THIS PROPERTY WHEN THIS BOX IS OPENED –

It may seem a foolish thing for me to write a letter to a person who is probably not yet born and who will not be able to read the letter for over seventy-five years, but I wish to express my keen regret of the fact that it is impossible for me to be with you when you read the letter, not that I care to live that long – as I am sixty-two years old now, - but I would like to stand with you, when I place this box, so as to be able to see some of the wonderful changes that will take place and know about the surprising developments that will be made in art, science and mechanics, and the wonderful advance in real knowledge. How I regret that I cannot know what you will know and see what you will see, for I am sure the people in this world will continue to advance as they always have and you should be very glad that you are living in the twenty-first century instead of the twentieth century. When I compare conditions that exist in this city today, with those that existed one hundred years ago, as shown in my grandmother's letters, (Betsy Green Deshler), it is simply impossible to realize what conditions will be in your time. I doubt very much if you will really be any happier than we are, or my grandmother was, but you will know so much more and things that will be simple to you, would be wonderful to us. I wonder how far you will develop the use of electricity; to what point aerial navigation will be practically used; how wonderful will be your system of transportation, the development of heat, power and light! I wonder what your form of government will be, for surely it will change from what it is now,; whether you will have wars and panics, sickness and poverty as we have! I hope not, and I believe if these things are not entirely eradicated, they will be greatly minimized. I wonder how you will live and what you will talk about; whether you will drink beer and whiskey and smoke tobacco.

I am enclosing a manual of The Columbus Club. I wonder whether your men will assemble at any place like that – play cards, pool, billiards and take a social drink or two or three!

I want to tell you what I think will become of the property. I believe our Trust, a copy of which I am placing in this box, will expire by limitation in about 65 years from now. No doubt, the property will be sold by the parties who will then own it, some of whom are as yet unborn, and the money divided among them. The property will then have been in our family more than one hundred and sixty years.

The building I am now erecting is considered by our best architects, engineers and builders, as being the very best construction that we know of today. No one knows how long it will stand and probably no one ever will know, because it will become obsolete before it becomes insecure. Within seventy-five years you will tear it down, not doubt, and erect a structure that will be relatively as fitting to Columbus as you know it, as this house is to Columbus as I know it. How I would like to see that building! My idea is that by that time, Columbus' immediate environment will contain a population of one million people. The house I am building is appropriate for a city of about 500,000; we have a population now of 210,000.

Although I cannot be with you when you read this letter, I can imagine the sympathetic smile that will come over your face as you say, 'That poor old man, how far he was behind in the times.' But there is one thing you will not know that I will know – I know now where you will be when you take this letter out of the box, but you will not know where I am at that time, and possibly I may have progressed much further than you will have done.

I hope you will enjoy building your house as much as I have enjoyed building the one you are destroying. I hope it will be successfully used and I would request that you place a letter in your cornerstone to be read by the person who destroys your building to erect a better one, and place a copy of my grandmother's letters with it, as he will know more than either of us and may be interested in reading ancient history.

With my kindest regards and very best wishes. I remain,
Yours very sincerely and regretfully,

John G. Deshler.