This invention relates to portable showcases, and more particularly to a combination shipping container and showcase adapted not only to house and exhibit, but also to serve as a shipping container therefor, thereby providing a "Mobile Trade Fair."

Since the middle ages it has been the practice to exhibit wares at trade fairs, the products being displayed in booths set up for this purpose on the fairgrounds. This practice is now carried out on a much larger scale at modern international trade fairs which attract buyers from all parts of the world. Such fairs are usually conducted in major cities, such as Milan, Seattle, Brussels and New York, and their scope is often such as to require years of planning and preparation. Not only must buildings be erected for expositions of this nature, but industrial products from participating countries must be shipped to the fair site, and special display booths constructed to house these products. Of primary importance is the fact that under this arrangement it is mandatory that the buyer travel from his native country to the place of exhibition.

Participation in international expositions is a costly operation which is effectively limited to those corporations having major resources and engaged in export trade. Moreover, there are many areas of the world representing potential markets of sizable magnitude, which are not reached by the usual trade fair arrangements. Thus, such countries as Lebanon, Korea, Israel and Pakistan ordinarily do not serve as a site for international fairs, and these countries rarely have the opportunity to see exhibits of American industrial products and wares.

Accordingly, it is the principal object of this invention to provide a combination shipping container and showcase serving a multiple function, the container not only housing trade exhibits, but also acting as a means of safely transporting the exhibits to the doorstep of potential buyers. Thus the containers may be shipped in some countries to port cities which are not necessarily business centers, and from there moved inland by truck or rail to an appropriate exhibition site.

More specifically, it is an object of the invention to provide a low-cost shipping container which may be compartmentalized into exhibition booths for housing a variety of products, such as household appliances, industrial machinery or building materials, etc, the container having hinged sides which may be raised to provide showcase canopies, whereby the container acts to house and display the exhibits and also as a protective tent, doing away with special buildings.

A significant feature of the invention is that it makes it possible for manufacturers of modest means who normally are not engaged in the export trade, to exhibit their wares in all parts of the world through the use of one display and to reach areas beyond the usual boundaries of trade fairs. In effect, the containers in accordance with the invention constitute a mobile and self-sufficient trade fair, making it possible to stimulate export operations and to expand the scope of international markets.

Also an object of the invention is to provide a shipping container of the above-described type, which may be readily loaded and unloaded from vessels or railroad flat cars by means of hoists or other means, or which may be raised or lowered by fork lift trucks, or which may be transported by road, rail or sea to any desired port or inland site.

For a better understanding of the invention, as well as other objects and further features thereof, reference is made to the following detailed specification to be read in conjunction with the accompanying drawings, wherein:

FIG. 1 shows a combination container and portable showcase in accordance with the invention being hoisted from a truck onto a vessel for shipment in the hold thereof;

FIG. 2 shows a group of portable showcases, as set up at a fair ground;

FIG. 3 illustrates an individual showcase; and

FIG. 4 is a plan view of the showcase with the roof removed, showing the interior compartments.

Referring now to the drawings, and more particularly to FIG. 1, there is shown a combination container-showcase in accordance with the invention, the structure being generally designated by numeral 10. The structure is shown being discharged from a vessel 12 for conveyance by truck 11 to an interior point. This is by way of illustration only, and as will be clear from the description to follow, the container may be transported to any desired site by railroad, truck, or any other available means of transportation.

The showcase structure as shown in FIGS. 2, 3 and 4, is in some respects similar to a shipping and storage container of the general cargo type, and includes four corner posts 13, a floor 14 provided with skid channels 15, a roof 16, a pair of side doors 17 and 18 hingedly connected to the roof, and end walls 19 and 20. The side doors are locked shut from the outside by means of a crank type key which is inserted into the key holes 28. Other known locking means may be used for the same purpose. The entire structure may be formed of aluminum or steel beams and panels, or any other suitable material of high strength, or the corner beams and frame members may be of structural metal and the walls of wood panel.

The upper extremities of the corner posts 13 can be provided with suitable fittings for connection to an overhead gantry crane spreader 21, as shown in FIG. 1, for hoisting the container when necessary. The container may also be lifted by means of conventional ship's cargo or gear hoists, crane hoists or fork lift trucks. When fork lifting is used the times of the fork enter the skid channels 15.

As shown in FIG. 4, the interior of the container can be divided into two main sections of equal size, by a longitudinally extending bulkhead 22, and these two main sections can be further subdivided by the insertion of partitions 23 into display booths. By way of illustration, the partitions have been shown as forming in one section of the container, booths A, B, C, and D, and in the opposing section, booths A', B', C' and D'. Otherwise, other arrangements are possible to provide larger or smaller booths, as desired, and the partitions are adjustably mounted in place by means of suitable fittings.

The doors 17 and 18 are hinged to the roof by means of piano type or other hinges 24 and 25, respectively, and when raised they form a canopy over their associated group of display booths. Each canopy-door is provided with a set of three telescopic legs 26, the upper extremities of which are pivotally connected to a bracket attached to the interior wall of the door. The lower extremities of the legs 26 are pivotally attached to anchor plates 27, which may be bolted or otherwise secured at the base of the site of the exhibit. Before closing the showcase doors, the telescopic legs are retracted, and the legs with
the plates thereon swung against the interior wall and latched or strapped thereto.

When setting up an exhibit, after the container has been placed at an appropriate site, such as the fair grounds shown in FIG. 2, all that need be done is to swing open the canopy doors, extend the supporting legs, and attach the anchors to the ground. Visitors to the display then have direct access to the booths, each of which may contain a separate display of household wares or other products. The display material and cabinets should be arranged in such a way as to be locked or tied into position within the booth, so that they are not displaced or otherwise upset in transport.

The containers may be provided with conventional electric-light outlets, and if desired, with ventilating fans. By setting up an assembly of such containers at a fair ground, as shown in FIG. 2, and by providing a portable electrical generator to electrify the various containers, a self-sufficient trade fair can thereby be erected, requiring no local facilities other than space. For further comfort, the roof and the canopy walls may include thermal insulation, such as foam plastic panels.

It will be evident that by the use of containers of the type disclosed herein, it becomes possible to advertise and display industrial products in all corners of the globe, disregarding the availability or non-availability of local facilities, and without protracted advance planning. Also, it becomes possible for smaller manufacturers lacking export experience to display their wares and expand their trade.

The containers are mobile in every sense, and groups of such containers, which together may form a varied and comprehensive exposition of goods, may be shipped by any available means.

While there has been shown what is considered to be a preferred embodiment of the invention, it will be manifest that many changes and modifications may be made therein without departing from the essential spirit of the invention. It is intended, therefore, in the annexed claims to cover all such changes and modifications as fall within the true scope of the invention.

I claim:

1. A combination cargo shipping container and showcase adapted to provide a portable mobile trade fair, comprising a rectangular shipping box having four vertical corner posts attached to and supporting a rectangular floor and roof at their respective corners, two opposed end walls being connected to and extending between adjacent pairs of said corner posts and a pair of side doors each having a height and length substantially equal, respectively, to the distance between said floor and roof and the distance between said opposed end walls, said pair of said doors being hinged connected at one longitudinal edge of each thereof to opposed longitudinal side edges of said roof, whereby said doors may be raised to form a canopy and when lowered form the side walls of said box, a central bulkhead extending between said opposed end walls dividing said box into two main sections, removable partitions dividing said main sections into alcoves for display purposes, said floor having skid channels opening to the exterior of said box and said corner posts having fittings on the upper ends thereof whereby said box may be lifted by engaging said skid channels or said fittings, and retractable legs pivotally connected to said side doors adjacent the longitudinal edges thereof opposite the hingedly connected edges thereof to maintain them in their raised position to expose the interior of said box for display purposes.

2. A case as set forth in claim 1 wherein said roof is lined with thermal insulation.

3. A case, as set forth in claim 1, further including key means accessible from the exterior to hold said doors shut.

4. A case, as set forth in claim 1, wherein said legs are of telescoping construction and are provided at their ends with anchor plates.

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