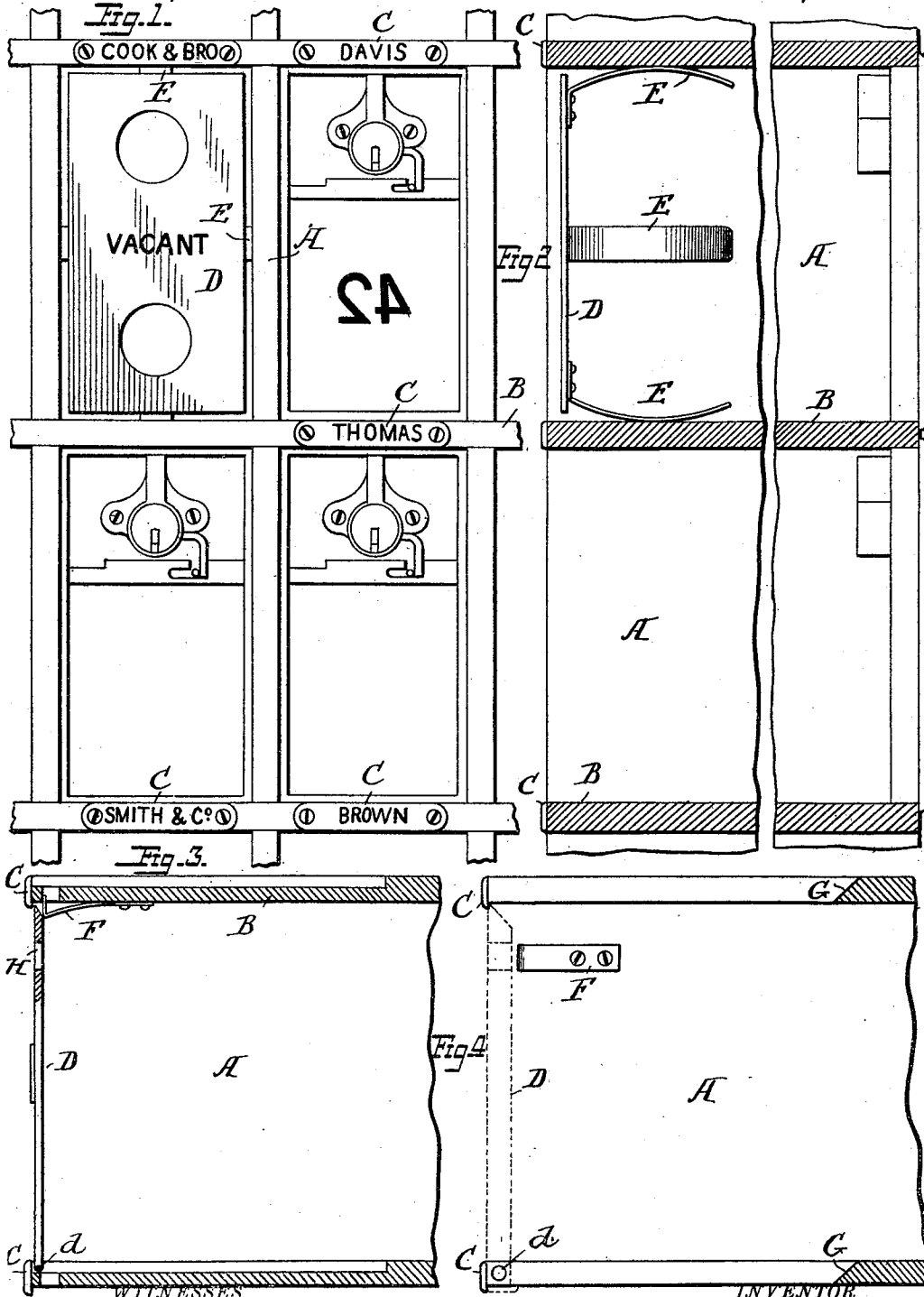


(No Model.)

G. L. BARNEY.
LETTER BOX.

No. 461,490.

Patented Oct. 20, 1891.



WITNESSES
John Hinkel
Alfred H. Hobson

INVENTOR
G. L. Barney
by *Lucas Freeman*
Attorney

UNITED STATES PATENT OFFICE.

GEORGE L. BARNEY, OF SEWARD, NEBRASKA.

LETTER-BOX.

SPECIFICATION forming part of Letters Patent No. 461,490, dated October 20, 1891.

Application filed June 12, 1891. Serial No. 396,027. (No model.)

To all whom it may concern:

Be it known that I, GEORGE L. BARNEY, a citizen of the United States, residing at Seward, in the county of Seward and State of Nebraska, have invented certain new and useful Improvements in Letter-Boxes, of which the following is a specification.

My invention relates to post-office boxes; and it consists in the features of construction, substantially as hereinafter pointed out.

In the accompanying drawings, Figure 1 is a rear view of a section of post-office boxes. Fig. 2 is a longitudinal vertical section through the boxes, showing one form of my improvement; and Figs. 3 and 4 are similar views showing details embodying my improvement.

In post-offices where there is a comparatively large number of letter-boxes into which the mail is distributed to the owners or subscribers of the boxes it is common to mark the boxes with the name of the owner or person renting the box by attaching suitable labels or other devices to indicate such ownership and to guide the clerk in sorting and distributing the mail. It often happens that more or less of the boxes are vacant or not rented, and the clerk by accident or mistake is liable to place mail-matter in the vacant or unrented box, which may remain there a considerable time without being taken by the owner of the letter or the mistake discovered by the clerk; and it is the object of my present invention to provide some simple and effective means whereby such errors and the like may be avoided, and whereby the clerk may be readily informed that any particular box is not in use, and that he must not place any mail-matter therein. This is usually accomplished in practice by removing the label or other indication of the owner; but when the clerk is accustomed to deposit mail in a certain place for a certain person, through carelessness or inadvertence he is liable to insert mail-matter in the vacant box without specially noticing that the label is removed, and it seems necessary to provide some more positive indicator that the box is vacant. To accomplish this end most readily, I provide a movable panel, which may or may not be removable from the box, and which can be adjusted so as to effectually prevent the inser-

tion of any mail-matter in any desired box, and that when the box is rented can be readily moved, so that the box will be in condition to receive the mail-matter.

Referring to the drawings, A B represent, respectively, the vertical and horizontal sections of frame of the letter-boxes, which may be of any suitable and desired construction.

B represents the doors on the front of the case, provided with suitable locks, as is usual. The inner faces of the boxes are preferably provided with suitable labels C, indicating to whom the respective boxes belong, or by whom they are rented.

D represents a movable panel, which is adapted to be supported in the letter-box and to practically fill the inner opening or end thereof. This panel may be of any suitable construction and of any material, and may be secured in position, when desired, in any suitable manner. Thus in Figs. 1 and 2 the panel is shown as being a plate having substantially the contour of the inside of the box, and having preferably the word "Vacant" or equivalent matter on its outside. This panel is held in place by the spring-arms E, which in the present instance are shown to be of curved form, having one end secured to the back of the panel and the sides bearing upon the inner sides of the box. It will be evident that the panel can readily be inserted into any empty box and be supported therein, practically filling the opening, and when it is desired the panel can be removed and the box used, as is usual, and the panel may be inserted in another box. This construction is exceedingly cheap and simple and at the same time effectual, and can be used in any style of boxes already set up, it only being necessary that the panel and its attachments for supporting it either in the form of springs or equivalents should be made of a size to fit the boxes in use. In Fig. 3 I have illustrated another way of accomplishing the same end, which can be cheaply and easily made when the boxes are being manufactured. In this case the panel D is hinged at *d* to the lower portion of the box, and normally when the box is in use forms part of the floor or bottom of the box. When the box is vacant, the panel can be raised, as shown in the drawings, and supported in a position to close the

end of the box, some suitable device, as the spring-clip F, preferably being used to sustain the panel in its elevated position. It will be noticed that in this case the name-plate C extends slightly below the bottom of the upper box and forms an abutment for the panel.

In Fig. 4 I have illustrated a slightly-different modification, in which the panel D is made of a portion of the bottom of the box, the bottom being cut or separated on a bevel or incline G and pivoted as before at *d*, and it will be seen that when the box is empty this portion of the bottom of the box can be raised and sustained in its elevated position by a suitable clip F, or otherwise, and effectually close the box. When the box is in use, the panel is turned downward and forms a portion of the bottom of the box. A suitable opening H may be made in the panel, by means of which the spring-clip or other fastening device can be readily operated.

From the above it will be seen that the details of construction of my improvement may be varied without departing from the spirit thereof, and that it is only essential to have a movable or removable panel or portion which is adapted to be inserted or placed in the rear end of the box, and which shall act to effectually close the same, so as to prevent the clerk from depositing mail-matter therein, and which when the box is rented can be moved or removed, so that the box can be used, as usual. In this way it will be seen that the errors now so frequently made in distributing mail-matter into vacant boxes is

avoided and the time of the distributor is saved, as it is practically impossible for him to place mail-matter in the vacant box, and he will readily observe what boxes are vacant and what in use.

I have shown the panel as hinged to the bottom of the box; but it is evident that it may be hinged or otherwise connected to the top or sides of the box.

What I claim is—

1. The combination, with a post-office letter-box having one end closed and the other end open and adapted to receive mail-matter, of a movable panel adapted to close the open end, and thereby exclude mail-matter from the box, substantially as described.

2. In combination with a post-office letter-box, a movable panel for the rear end of the box, the panel being connected to and forming part of the frame of the box, substantially as described.

3. In combination with a post-office letter-box, a movable panel to close the rear end of the box, the panel being hinged to the frame and forming a portion of the bottom of the box, and a fastening device for securing the panel in its elevated position, substantially as described.

In testimony whereof I have signed my name to this specification in the presence of two subscribing witnesses.

GEORGE L. BARNEY.

Witnesses:

F. L. FREEMAN,
J. S. BARKER.