

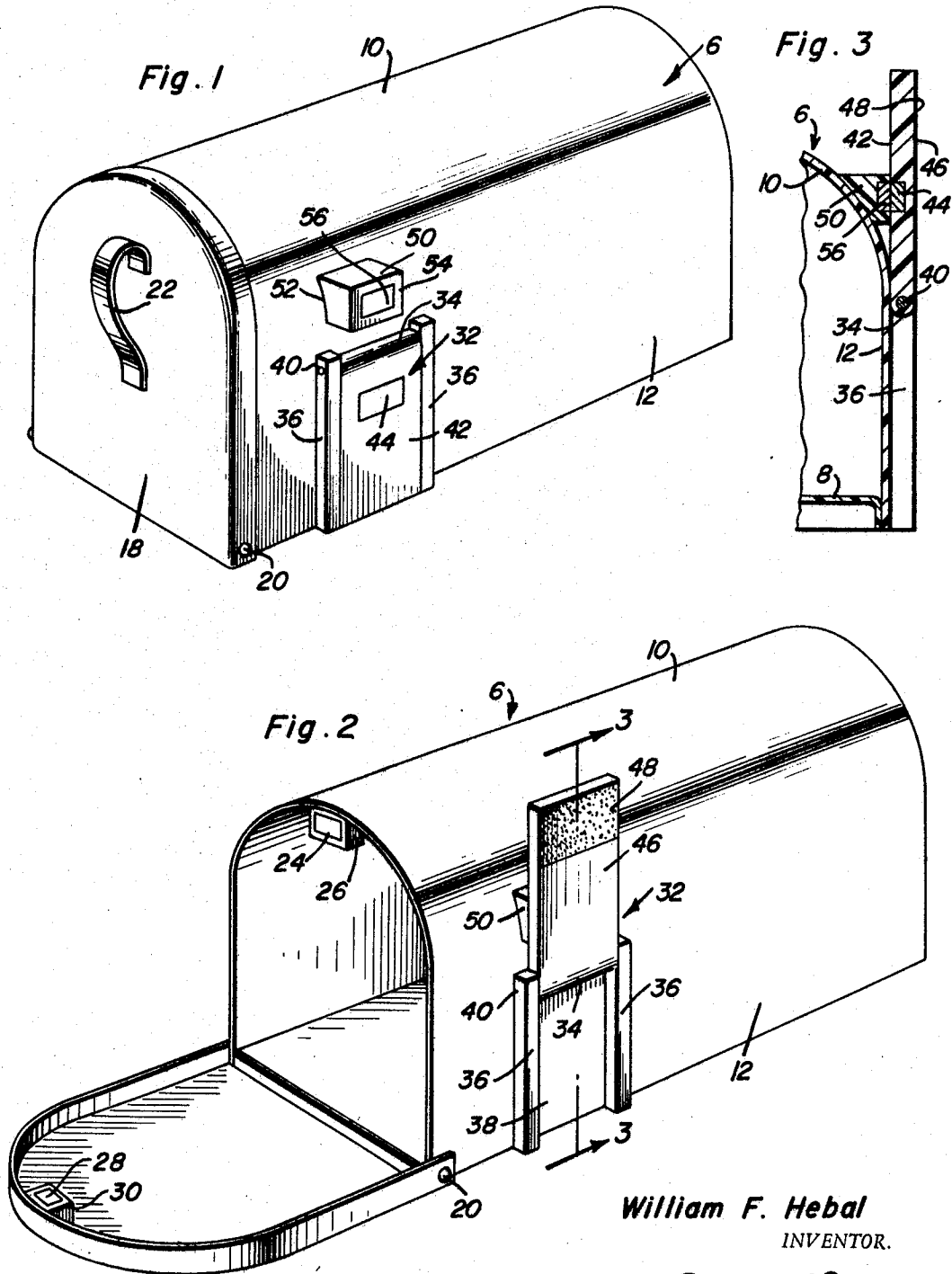
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RURAL MAILBOX SIGNALLING FLAG

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RURAL MAILBOX SIGNALLING FLAG

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ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

The mailbox proper is conventional. The regular flag is dispensed with and an improved signalling attachment is installed in lieu thereof. All parts of the regular mailbox will now be made from nonmagnetic material. In fact, only the two companion magnets will be metal. Two bar-like cleats are fixed on a vertical side and define a pocket for a pivoted plate having an embedded permanent magnet which is cooperable with a companion magnet bracketed on a coacting sidewall portion of the box to hold the plate either up or down.

This invention relates to rural mailbox signalling devices and, more particularly, to the category wherein permanent magnets are used, in one manner or another, to maintain the signal in (1) an elevated or up position to alert the carrier that mail for delivery has been placed in the box to be picked up and (2) lowered by the carrier to inform the patron that the box has been visited.

Postal regulations provide that rural mail carriers shall visit and examine the mailbox of a patron only when the customary signal is displayed to indicate that the box contains mail for dispatch. When the mail is collected from the box, the carrier takes the next step, that is, lowers the flag to its down position whether or not he delivers mail to the visited mail.

A general objective in the instant matter is to dispense with the usual simple pivoted staff-type flag and to substitute a simple flat-faced flap-like plate. This plate serves as the signalling flag and it is normally suspended in a down position when intentionally lowered to assume such position. It can however be held in an up or elevated mail pickup position when the patron has deposited mail and intentionally swings the plate to the elevated signalling position. When in the signalling position the plate is satisfactorily held by cooperating permanent magnets, one embedded in the plate and the other embedded in a retaining bracket which is mounted on a side wall of the conventional box.

Briefly, the invention is characterized by a simple rectangular nonmagnetic plate which is normally in a down position in a pocket provided therefor between a pair of fixedly mounted nonmagnetic bar-like cleats. The upper end of the plate is pivoted or hinged between the upper ends of the cleats. One surface or side of the plate is painted to provide a signalling flag. The other side is provided with an embedded permanent magnet. This magnet is aligned and cooperates with a fixed magnet or a magnetizable element embedded in a bracket which is bracketed on the side wall of the box in correct predetermined relation with respect to the swingable plate.

These together with other objects and advantages which will become subsequently apparent reside in the details of construction and operation as more fully hereinafter described and claimed, reference being had to the accompanying drawings forming a part hereof, wherein like numerals refer to like parts throughout, and in which:

FIG. 1 is a view in perspective of a conventional type rural mailbox which may be said to be standardized to include a downwardly and outwardly swingable door

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but which is made of nonmagnetic sheet material and which, more specifically, shows the signalling plate with an embedded magnet, and the retaining bracket with which the magnet is cooperable.

FIG. 2 is a view in perspective showing the lid or door of the box open and also showing the signalling plate in an elevated or up position to alert the carrier and which is held in this position by the aligned cooperating permanent magnets.

FIG. 3 is a fragmentary view in section taken approximately on the plane of the vertical section line 3—3 of FIG. 2.

It is reiterated that the rural mailbox is of conventional or standard construction except in the present situation the sheet material used is preferably nonmagnetic. The box proper is denoted by the numeral 6 and has a horizontal bottom wall 8 (FIG. 3), a convex top wall 10 and flat vertical spaced parallel side walls 12. The usual outwardly and downwardly swingable lid or door is denoted by the numeral 18 and is hingedly mounted in place at 20 and is provided with suitable handle means 22. The means for keeping the door closed may comprise, if desired, a first magnet 24 mounted in an adapter 26 for cooperation with a complementary magnet 28 mounted in a suitable adapter 30 carried by the upper crown or flange portion of the door.

The usual signaling flag is dispensed with and the improved flag herein shown is substituted therefor. This flag, generally speaking, comprises a substantially rectangular plate 32 of appropriate thickness and length which has one end portion 34 spanning the space between a pair of attached elongated bar-like cleats 36. These cleats are fixedly mounted on the sidewall 12 and a portion 38 of the wall bridges or spans the cleats and provides a pocket for reception of the liftable and lowerable plate 32. One end which may be the upper end (FIG. 2) is hingedly mounted as at 40 between the cleats. This plate is such in dimension and construction that it fits with requisite nicety into the accommodation pocket as shown in full lines in FIG. 1. One face called a first face of the plate is denoted at 42 and this face is provided on its median portion with an embedded permanent magnet 44. The other opposed face which may be called the second face for distinction is denoted by the numeral 46 and it has one end portion provided with a painted or equivalently applied reflecting and signaling surface 48. This surface comes into play when the plate or "flag" is in the up signalling position shown in FIGS. 2 and 3. The means for holding the plate comprises a block-like bracket 50 which is of general rectangular form and is fittingly applied and secured as at 52 to the upper wall portion. This bracket has a flat face 54 in which a second permanent magnet 56 is embedded. The magnet 56 can be of any equivalent magnetizable type. In any event it is so located that it cooperates with the flag positioning magnet 44 in the manner illustrated in FIGS. 2 and 3 in particular.

It is reiterated that the signal flag when handled in accordance with acceptably approved practice is supposed to be in the lowered or down position except, of course, when the patron has placed mail in the box for the carrier to collect. This normal or down position is illustrated in FIG. 1 wherein it is evident that the plate 32 is confined in the pocket existing between the fixedly mounted cleats 36. In other words, the plate simply hangs down in this normal state or position. The plate is commensurate in length with the length of the cleats and is of a cross-sectional thickness shown so that its surface 14 is flush with the surfaces of the cleats 36. At this time the first or outer face 42 faces outwardly and exposes the embedded permanent magnet 44. With the construction shown it will be evident that the patron or resident can readily lift and swing the plate upwardly from the position shown in FIG.

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1 to the position shown in FIGS. 2 and 3. Keeping in mind the bracket 50 is in its correct locale as shown, it will be evident that when the plate is swung up the magnet 44 aligns with and is adhered to the companion magnet or magnetizable element 56 embedded in the bracket. Thus by comparing the normal down position shown in FIG. 1 with the up position shown in FIGS. 2 and 3, the manner in which the flag or signal is set to alert the mail carrier is believed to be self-evident.

The foregoing is considered as illustrative only of the principles of the invention. Further, since numerous modifications and changes will readily occur to those skilled in the art, it is not desired to limit the invention to the exact construction and operation shown and described, and accordingly all suitable modifications and equivalents may be resorted to, falling within the scope of the invention.

What is claimed as new is as follows:

1. In combination, a rural free delivery mailbox open at one end for reception of mail, a closing door hingedly mounted at and normally covering said one end, said box having a vertical sidewall, a signalling flag attachment for said sidewall comprising a pair of spaced parallel duplicate bar-like cleats superimposed and fixedly mounted upon a predetermined area of said sidewall, the space between said cleats and that portion of said sidewall between said cleats defining an open ended pocket, a plate normally and wholly seated when in a down position in said pocket, said plate having an upper end hinged between the corresponding upper ends of said cleats, said plate having a first flat face residing flatwise against a coacting corresponding flat area of said sidewall when said plate is swung to said down position, also having a second flat face, means for positioning and releasably retaining said plate in an up position, said means being interposed between said side wall and said second flat face, said first flat face being exposed for viewing when said plate is up and having a distinctive visual portion which is adapted to serve as a mail carrier signalling flag.

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2. The combination defined in and according to claim 1 and wherein said bar-like cleats are alike in construction, are vertically elongated and of corresponding cross-sectional dimension, said plate being of a width corresponding to the space existing between the cleats and being of a cross-sectional thickness corresponding to the cross-sectional thickness of the cleats and also of a length corresponding with the length of said cleats, said means embodying a permanent magnet embedded in and carried by said second flat face, and a complemental magnetizable element embedded in a retainer bracket, said bracket being fixed on said sidewall in cooperative association and alignment with said cleats, plate, and magnet and particularly in oriented and coordinating alignment with the magnet which is embedded in said plate.

3. The combination defined in and according to claim 2, and wherein said bar-like cleats, said plate, and said bracket are made of nonmagnetic material, said bracket being block-like and of a comparable size and cross-sectional dimension proportional with the cross-sectional dimension of said cleats and plate.

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