United States Patent

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[54] ENVELOPE STRUCTURE

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[52] **U.S. Cl.** **229/71,** 40/359, 229/72, 229/73, 206/DIG. 29

[51] **Int. Cl.** **B65d 27/04,** B65d 27/06, B65d 27/08

[58] **Field of Search** 229/71, 72, 73, 74; 40/159, 40/359, 360, 16; 150/38, 14

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[57] **ABSTRACT**

An envelope structure fabricated of resilient, flexible plastic enabling repetitive use thereof. A central accessable compartment facilitates the mailing of such items as bank passbooks, documents or other mailable items. A second compartment is formed by securing a transparent, flexible plastic member to the outside surface of one of the compartment walls. The transparent plastic member is adapted to secure a reversable addressing member.

2 Claims, 6 Drawing Figures

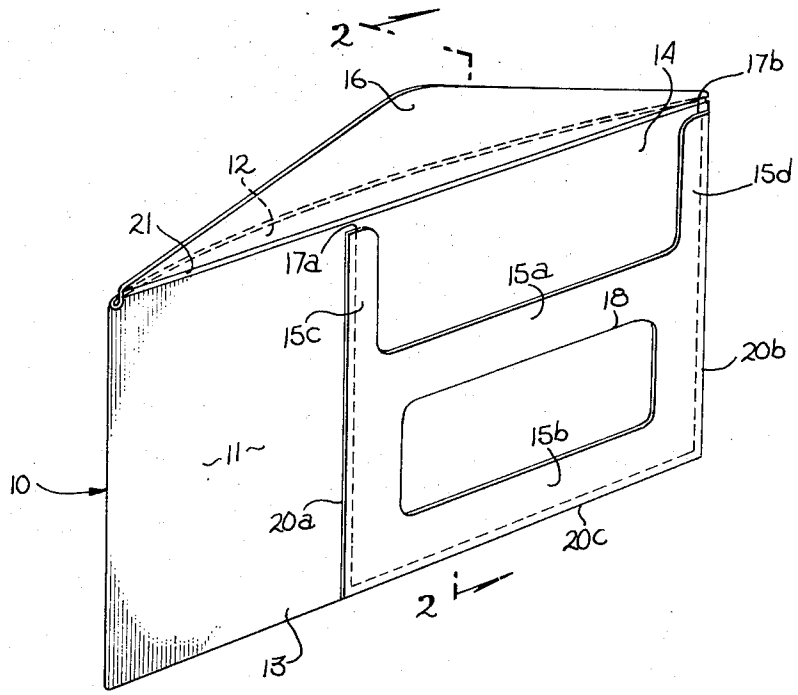


Fig. 1

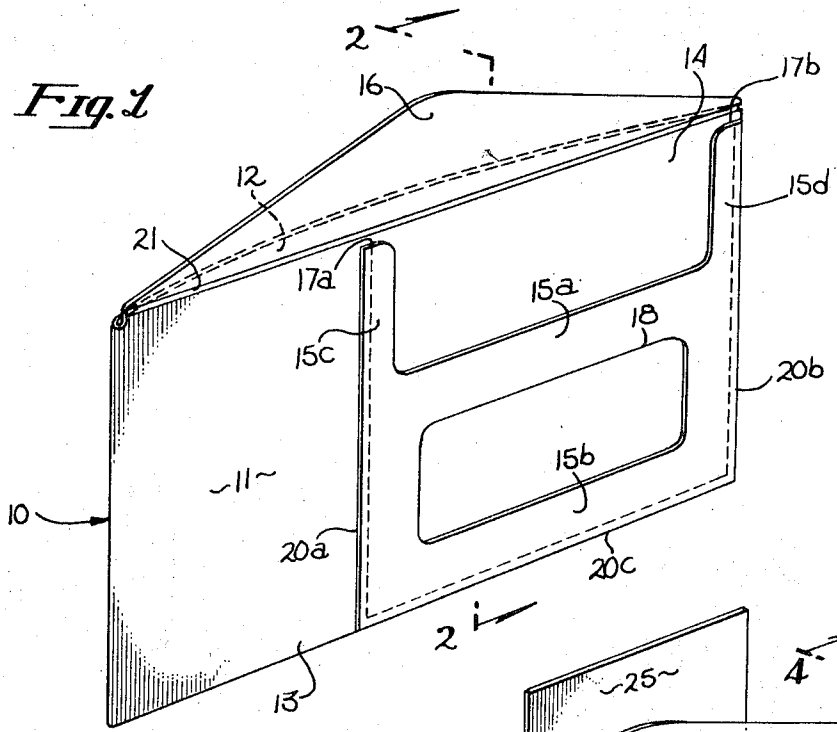
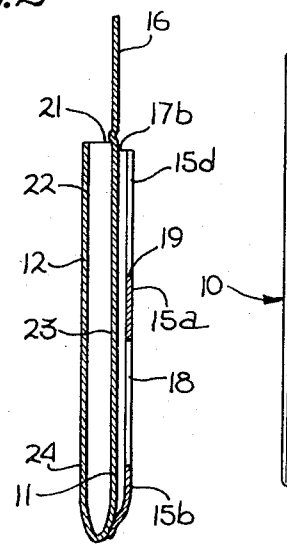


Fig. 2



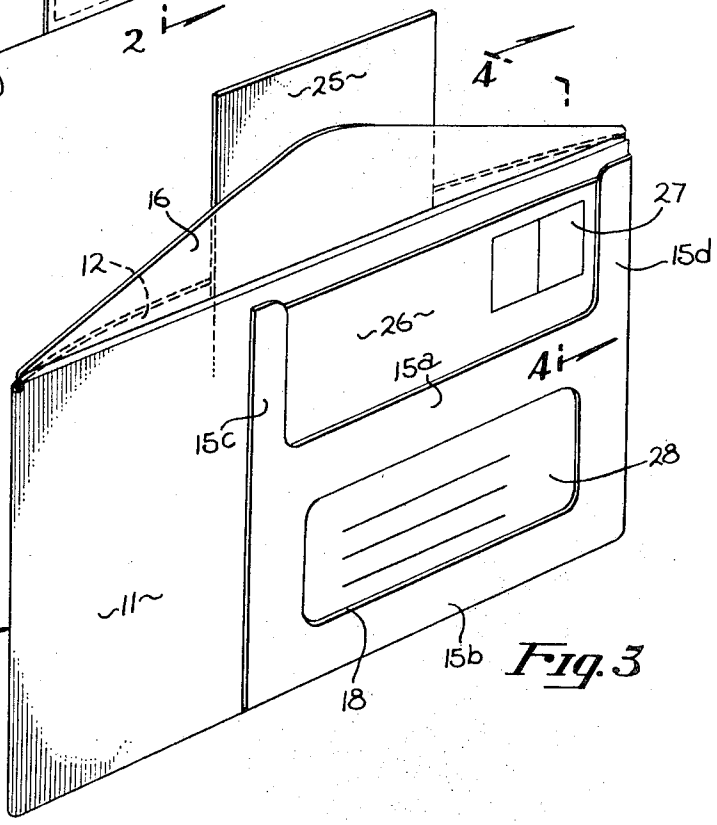


Fig. 3

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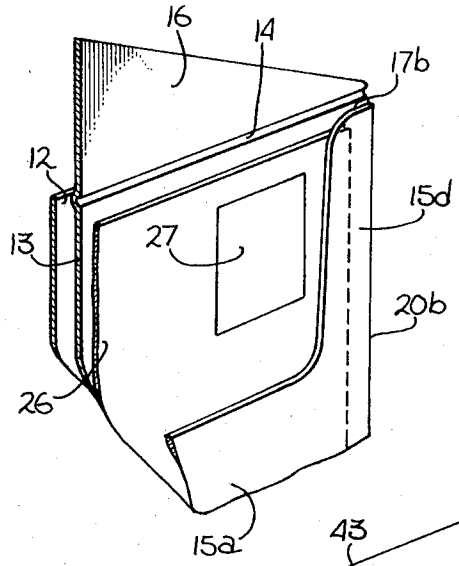


Fig. 4

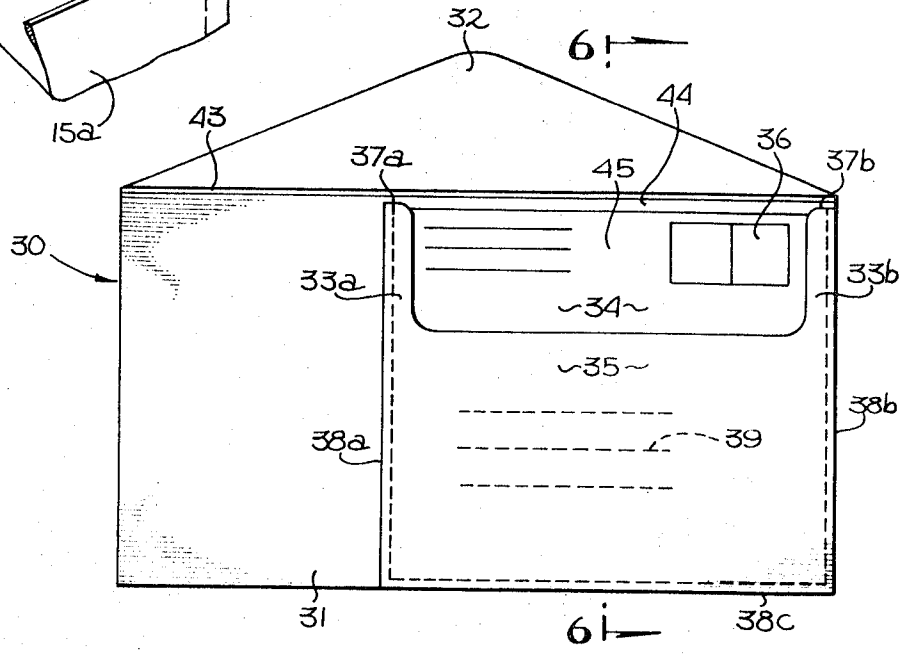


Fig. 5

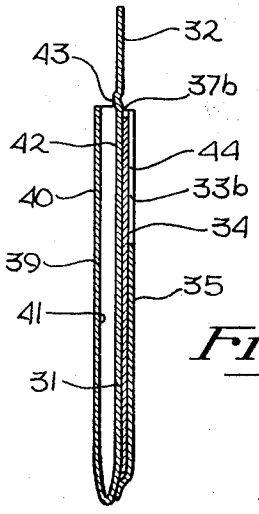


Fig. 6

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ENVELOPE STRUCTURE

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the invention

The present invention relates generally to the field of envelope-like containers, and more specifically pertains to those devices adapted for re-usable mailing purposes.

2. Prior Art

With increasing stress being placed on the need to provide time saving devices for consumers, it became evident that an area which could be improved was the use of a mailing device which could be sent to a predetermined party and easily returned by him to the sender. In the past few years, the financial industry has made increasing use of the concept of bank-by-mail procedures. The ability of a consumer to mail his bank passbook to the banking institution with the knowledge that the bank passbook could be returned in the same envelope has several advantages over those disclosed by the prior art. The ordinary use of a paper or cardboard envelope virtually eliminates the ability to re-use the envelope. Since the Post Office Department requires that the envelope structure be amenable to receipt of a postmark, the paper or cardboard envelope would be defaced after its initial use. A re-usable envelope would therefore have to be adapted to receive a markable member, the markable member being replaceable when the need arises.

The prior art discloses many envelope like devices which have multiple compartments, transparent window portions for observation of address, some of which utilize plastic material, but none of the devices so disclosed incorporates the improvements of the present invention. The problems inherent in the devices disclosed by the prior art relate to the liability to the structure to be totally re-usable. Those devices using transparent window portions either require that the member bearing address indicia be placed in the same compartment with the bank passbook or other item being carried or that the member bearing address indicia be placed in a separate sealable compartment. Either requirement is inefficient from the viewpoint of the ultimate consumer.

The present invention envelope structure solves those problems left unresolved by the prior art. The present invention envelope structure is fabricated of a rugged, flexible plastic which is adapted to be re-used. A transparent member is secured to the exterior of the main carrying compartment, the transparent portion adapted to receive the address indicia bearing member. By providing a reversable, insertable address indicia bearing member, the envelope can be mailed and returned providing ease to both parties.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

It is an object of the present invention to provide an improved mailing structure.

It is another object of the present invention to provide a mailing structure having two compartments, one of which is adapted to receive address indicia.

It is yet another object of the present invention to provide a mailing structure which is simple and which may be manufactured and sold at a low cost.

To carry out the objectives of the present invention a central compartment must be first implemented. A substantially rectangular member is joined to a second member having a first portion substantially the same shape as that of the first member and having a second portion for use as a sealing flap. The first and second members are joined to one another at three of the rectangular edges, thereby forming a compartment with an opening therein, the opening positioned to be sealed by the flap portion. The first and second members are fabricated of a flexible plastic which will withstand the rigorous use to which it will be put. The flap portion is adapted to be folded upon the second member thereby closing the compartment opening, the flap being sealed to the exterior surface of the first member.

A second compartment is formed external to the first compartment, the second compartment being formed by two surfaces, one of which is the exterior surface of the second plastic member. The second surface of the second compartment is a transparent, plastic member. The transparent member is secured to the exterior surface of the first compartment, the enclosure formed adapted to hold and secure an insertable addressing member. The addressing member will have printed indicia on both sides, one side being the address of the original sender, the other side having the address of the original recipient. In addition, the inserted address member shall have a portion for receiving postage stamps. The transparent member will display the address of the intended recipient, a portion of the transparent member being adapted to expose the postage stamps for cancellation.

The novel features which are believed to be characteristic of the invention, both as to its organization and method of operation, together with further objectives and advantages thereof, will be better understood from the following description considered in connection with the accompanying drawing in which a presently preferred embodiment of the invention is illustrated by way of example. It is to be expressly understood, however, that the drawing is for the purpose of illustration and description only and is not intended as a definition of the limits of the invention.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWING

FIG. **1** is a perspective view of one form of the present invention.

FIG. **2** is a sectional view taken along the line **3—3** of FIG. **1**.

FIG. **3** is a perspective view of that shown in FIG. **1** when same is being used.

FIG. **4** is an enlarged sectional view taken along line **4—4** of FIG. **3**.

FIG. **5** is an alternative form of the present invention.

FIG. **6** is a sectional view taken along lines **6—6** of FIG. **5**.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PRESENTLY PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

An understanding of the present invention can be best gained by reference to FIG. **1** wherein an embodiment of the present invention envelope structure is generally designated by the reference numeral **10**. A front member **11** having a generally rectangular shape and rear member **12** of substantially the same size and shape are joined along three outer edges thereof, forming a pocket between the inner surfaces of front and rear members **11** and **12**, the pocket being accessable at the fourth edge of the front and rear members **11** and **12**. The unjoined edge of front member **11** is extended into flap **16**, flap **16** being adapted to fold back upon itself along edge **21** and being secured to the outer surface of the rear member **12**. Flap **16** could be a separate member joined to front member **11** along edge **21**, the joining being by conventional processes for securing plastic members. Front and rear members **11** and **12** and flap **16** are fabricated of conventional, flexible plastic, and are preferably a vinyl material such as polyvinyl chloride. The three joined edges of front and rear members **11** and **12** are joined by conventional processes such as heat sealing or a suitable adhesive adapted for securing plastic material.

A second compartment external to the pocket formed by front and rear members **11** and **12** is implemented by joining panel **15** to a portion **14** of front member **11**. Portion **14** will be enveloped by panel **15**, leaving a second portion **13** of front member **11** to be used for such purposes as advertising indicia or instructions for use of the present invention envelope structure **10**. Longitudinal edges **20***a* and **20***b* of panel **15** are substantially parallel to one another, edge **20***c* of panel **15** being substantially perpendicular to each of edges **20***a* and **20***b*. Edges **20***a* and **20***b* are substantially the same size as the vertical height of the envelope structure **10** thereby enabling por-

tion 14 of front member 11 to receive panel 15. Panel 15 is fabricated of a conventional flexible plastic. Edges 20*a*, 20*b* and 20*c* are secured to first portion 14 of front member 11 thereby creating a second compartment between the inner surface of panel 15 and first portion 14 of front member 11. An aperture 19 is formed in panel 15, aperture 19 being defined by longitudinal member 15*a* and side panel members 15*c* and 15*d*. Window 18 is formed in panel 15 by the removal of material from panel 15, window 18 being defined by longitudinal member 15*a*, side panel members 15*c* and 15*d* and longitudinal member 15*b* extending along edge 20*c* of panel 15. Aperture 19 substantially defines an area for the exposure of postage stamps affixed to an insertable address member and permits cancellation thereof.

Portion 15 is secured to first portion 14 of front member 11 by securing edges 20*a*, 20*b* and 20*c* to front member 11. Upper edges 17*a* and 17*b* of side panel members 15*c* and 15*d* respectively are secured to first portion 14. By securing upper edges 17*a* and 17*b*, the compartment formed by panel 15 and first portion 14 can be adapted to securely receive an addressing or instructional member. By inserting a member into the compartment defined by panel 15 and first portion 14, the upper edges of the insertable member will be confined by edges 17*a* and 17*b* thereby preventing the member from being inadvertently dislodged.

The compartments of envelope structure 10 can be best seen by reference to FIG. 2 wherein a longitudinal cross-section thereof is shown. Inner surface 22 of rear member 12 and inner surface 23 of front member 11 form a compartment adapted to be sealed by the operation of flap 16. Flap 16 is folded along edge 21 and secured to outer surface 24 of rear member 12. Flap 16 is secured to outer surface 24 by conventional means but is preferably sealed by an adhesive adapted for use with flexible plastics. The second compartment of envelope structure 10 is formed from the mutual engagement of panel 15 and first portion 14. Aperture 19 permits visual access to the upper portion of an inserted member, window 18 permitting access to address or instructional indicia disposed upon an inserted member.

Use of the present invention envelope structure 10 can be best seen by reference to FIG. 3. FIG. 3 illustrates the insertion of members 25 and 26 within the compartments of present invention envelope structure 10. Insert member 25 is placed within the compartment formed by front and rear members 11 and 12 respectively, insert member 25 being such as a bank passbook. Insert member 26 contains area 27 for postage stamps and address indicia 28. Under the regulations of the U.S. postal Department, postage stamps 27 must be accesable for cancellation. Aperture 19 provides access to postage stamps 27 as well as additional area for cancellation. Window 18 has exposed address indicia 28 to carry out a prime objective of the present invention. Under regulations of the U.S. Postal Department, the address portion of mail must be amenable to marking in the event the piece of mail is sent to an incorrect address or because it must be returned for any other reason. In the embodiment of the present invention shown in FIG. 3, window 18 gives direct access to address indicia 28 thereby satisfying governmental regulations. In the embodiment described, panel 15 can be opaque as total access is provided for cancellation and visual observation of the address indicia 28.

The means by which insert member 26 is secured within the compartment formed by panel 15 and front member 11 can be best seen by the enlarged section shown in FIG. 4. Upper edge 17*b* of side panel member 15*d* is secured to first portion 14 thereby providing an obstruction preventing the inadvertent removal of insert 26. Once insert 26 has been placed within the respective compartment, the upper edge of insert 26 will be securely held by upper edge 17*b*.

Referring now to FIG. 5 an alternative form of the present invention envelope structure is shown therein, the envelope structure being designated by the reference numeral 30. As with the case of that shown in FIGS. 1–4, a first compartment is formed by the inner surface 41 of rear member 39 and inner surface 42 of front member 31, three edges of the substantially rectangular members 31 and 39 being secured to one another. Flap 32 folds back upon itself along edge 43 and is secured to outer surface 40 thereby securing the predetermined contents within the first compartment. Front and rear members 31 and 39 are fabricated of flexible plastic and are preferably fabricated of a vinyl such as polyvinyl chloride.

Transparent panel 35 is secured to the front surface 44 of front member 31, transparent panel 35 forming a second compartment. Transparent panel 35 has two substantially parallel edges 38*a* and 38*b*, and edge 38*c* being mutually perpendicular to each of edges 38*a* and 38*b*. Aperture 45 is formed in the fourth edge of transparent panel 35, aperture 45 being bounded on the lateral edges by side panel members 33*a* and 33*b*, the transverse portion of aperture 45 being substantially parallel to edge 38*c*. Transparent panel 35 is fabricated of a flexible plastic which is amenable to receive printing ink. As mentioned, U.S. Postal Office regulations require that the address portion of a piece of mail be capable of being cancelled in the event the piece of mail need be returned. In the embodiment of the present invention shown in FIG. 5 and FIG. 6, the address portion of a mailing insert will be visually accessable through transparent panel 35 therefore requiring transparent panel 35 to be adapted to receive inking indicia.

Edges 38*a*, 38*b* and 38*c* of transparent panel 35 are secured to front surface 44 of front member 31. In addition, upper edges 37*a* and 37*b* of side panel members 33*a* and 33*b* are secured to front surface 44 thereby providing means to prevent inadvertent dislodgement of an insert member 34. Upon inserting insert member 34 within the compartment formed by transparent panel 35 and front surface 44, the upper edge of insert member 34 will be cooperatively engaged by the secured upper edges 37*a* and 37*b*, thereby preventing insert member 34 from being dislodged by other than intentional acts. Aperture 45 gives access to postal stamps 36 thereby permitting cancellation procedures to carry out upon postal stamps 36 in conformity with postal regulations.

The present invention provides a mailing device which can be re-used many times. When the present invention is used by a savings or other commercial banking institution, the depositor's bank passbook can be transmitted in the compartment formed by the first and second members, the recipient banking institution indicated by the addressing indicia on the address insert. After the deposit or other transaction is recorded, the financial institution can merely reverse the insert member thereby transmitting the present invention envelope structure back to the depositor. The present invention envelope structure described herein is economical to fabricate and simple to use thereby providing an effective device for commercial purposes.

I claim:

1. A re-usable envelope structure having first and second compartments for the containment of first and second insertable members comprising:

a. a first flat substantially rectangular-shaped plastic member;

b. a second flat plastic member of substantially the same shape as said first plastic member, said first and second members being fixedly secured to each other at three corresponding edges thereof so as to form said first compartment thereinbetween, said first compartment having an opening between the fourth corresponding unsecured edges of said first and second plastic members respectively; and

c. a third flat plastic member comprising;

i. first and second parallel lateral members, said lateral members being smaller in their width dimension than in their length dimension; and

ii. first and second parallel transverse members having smaller widths than lengths and being substantially perpendicular to said lateral members and integrally joined thereto, said first transverse member being

joined to said lateral members near the bottoms thereof and said second transverse member being joined to said lateral members near the centers thereof so as to form a window in the space enclosed by said first and second transverse members and the lower portions of said lateral members and an aperture in the space enclosed by said second transverse member and the upper portions of said lateral members, said window being adapted to expose indicia on said second insertable member, said third plastic member being fixedly secured to said second member along outer edges of said first and second lateral members and said first transverse member so as to form said second compartment thereinbetween, the width of said second compartment and the width of said second insertable member being arranged so that said second insertable member is securely contained in said second compartment by the cooperative engagement of the side edges of said second insertable member and the corresponding upper edges of said first and second lateral members.

2. An envelope structure as in claim 1 wherein said third plastic member is a unitary structure.

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