

Jan. 10, 1956

F. J. BURST ET AL
CABINET CONSTRUCTION

2,730,421

Filed Feb. 16, 1951

6 Sheets-Sheet 1

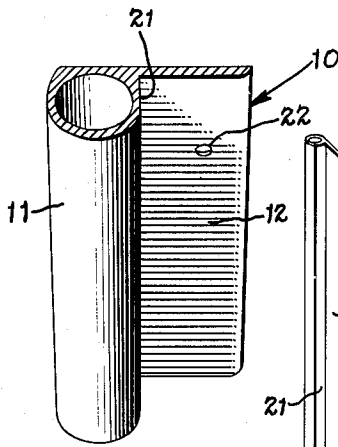


Fig. 1

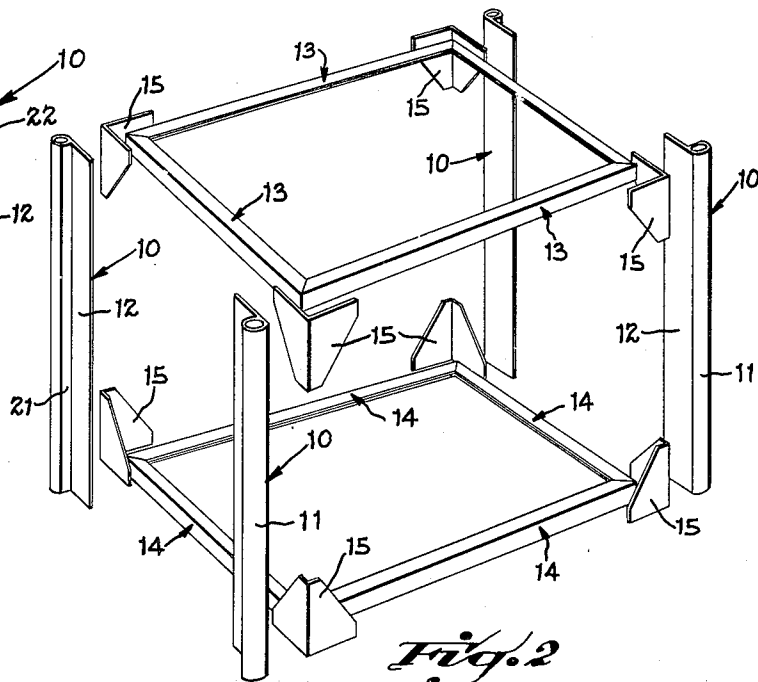


Fig. 2

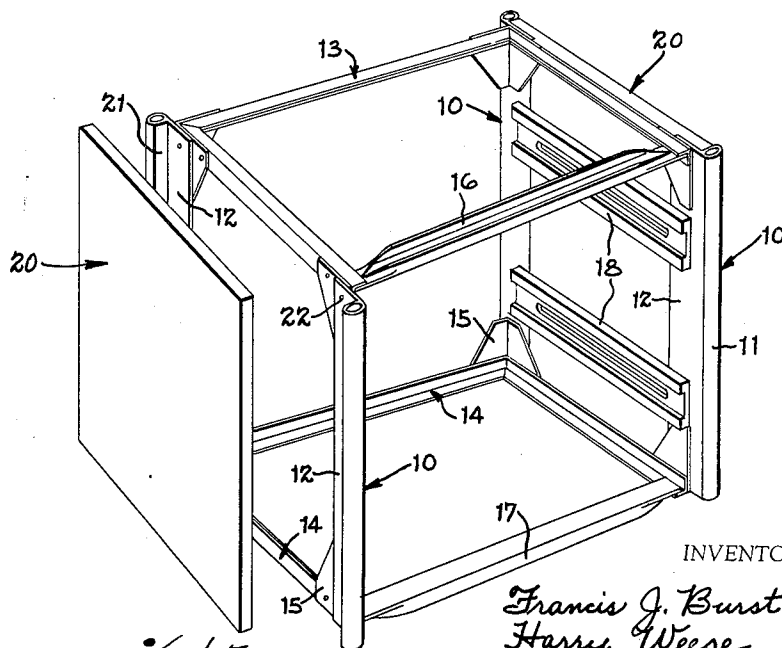


Fig. 3

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6 Sheets-Sheet 2

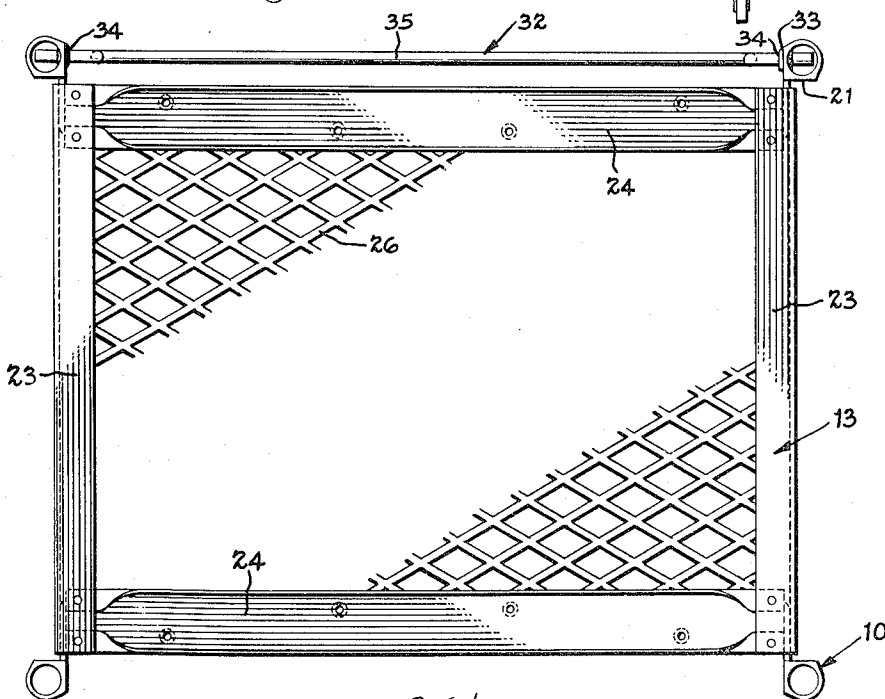
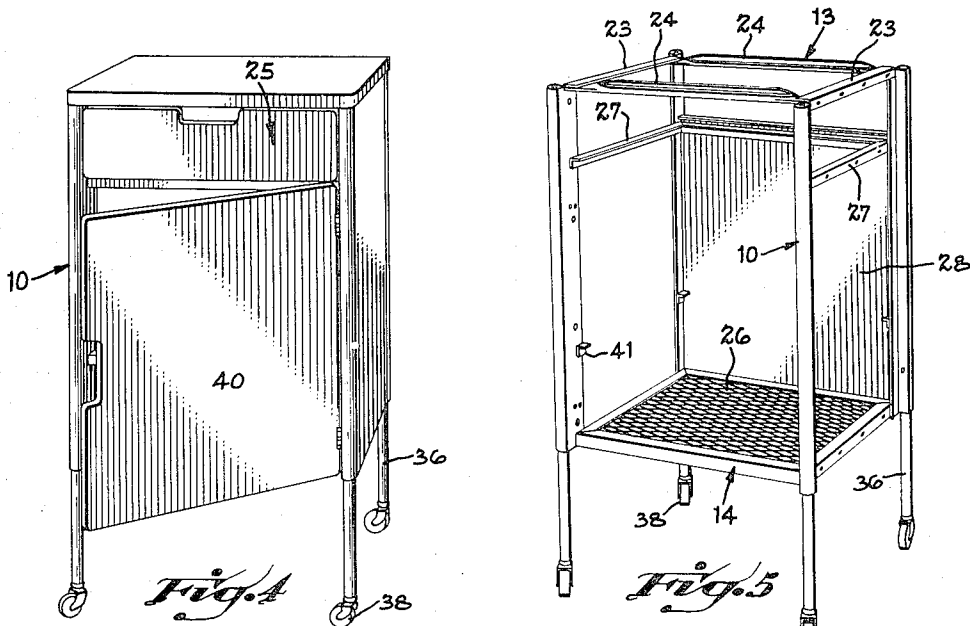


Fig. 6

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6 Sheets-Sheet 3

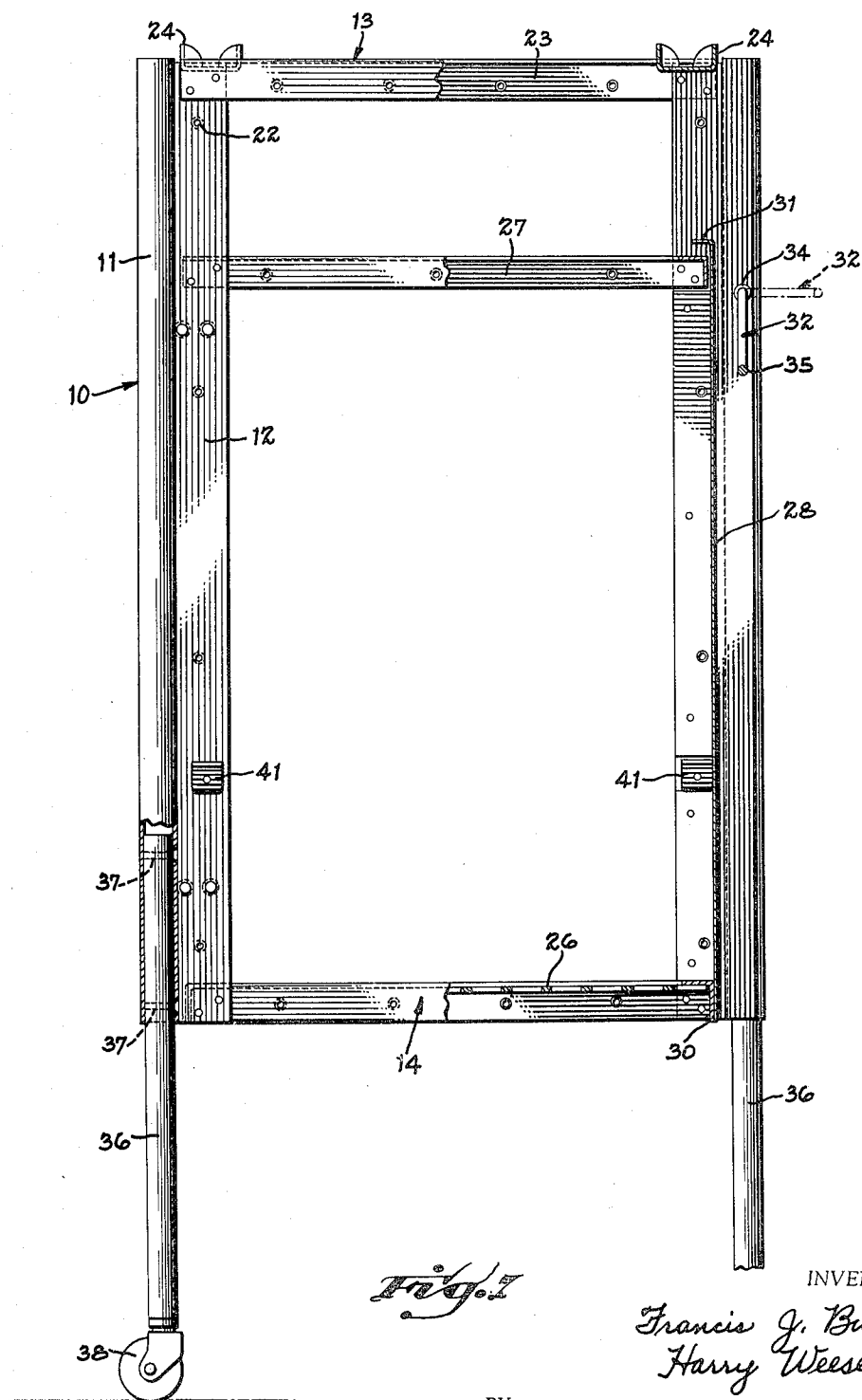


Fig. 1

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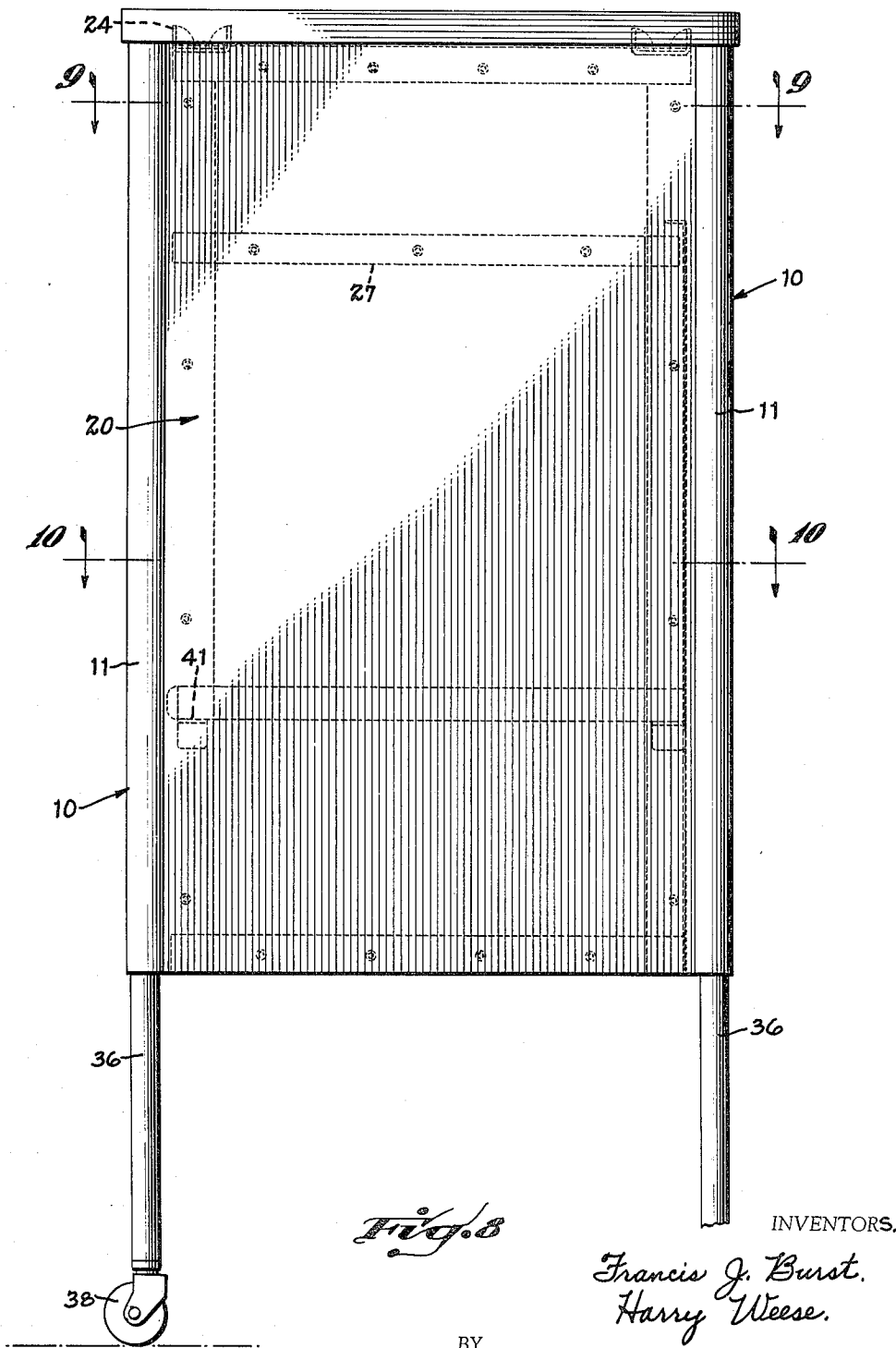
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6 Sheets-Sheet 4



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6 Sheets-Sheet 5

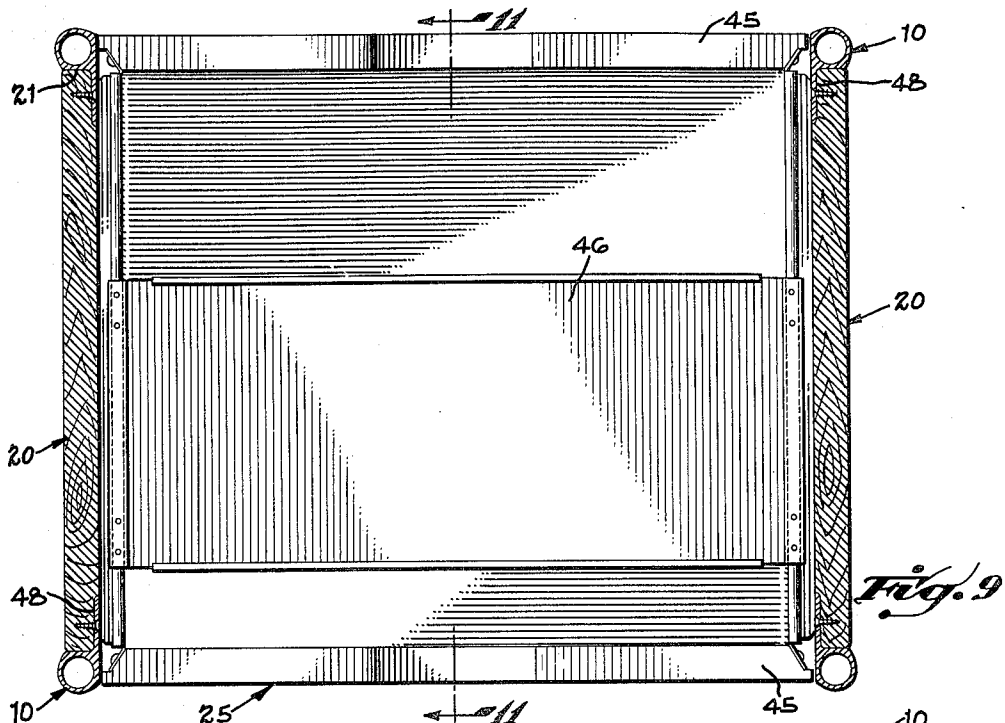


Fig. 9

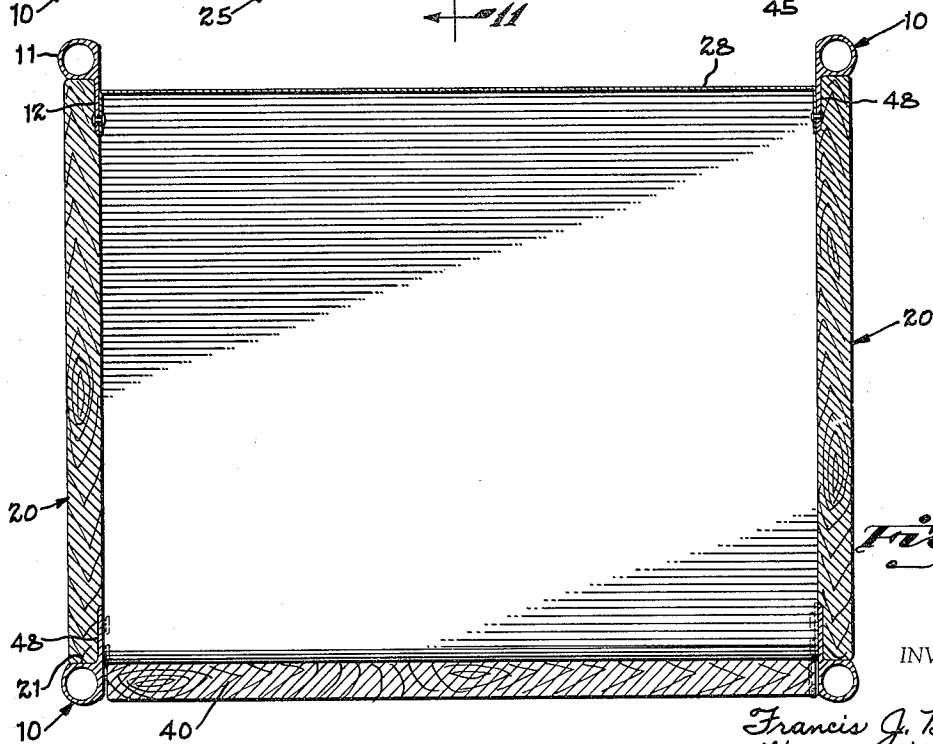


Fig. 10

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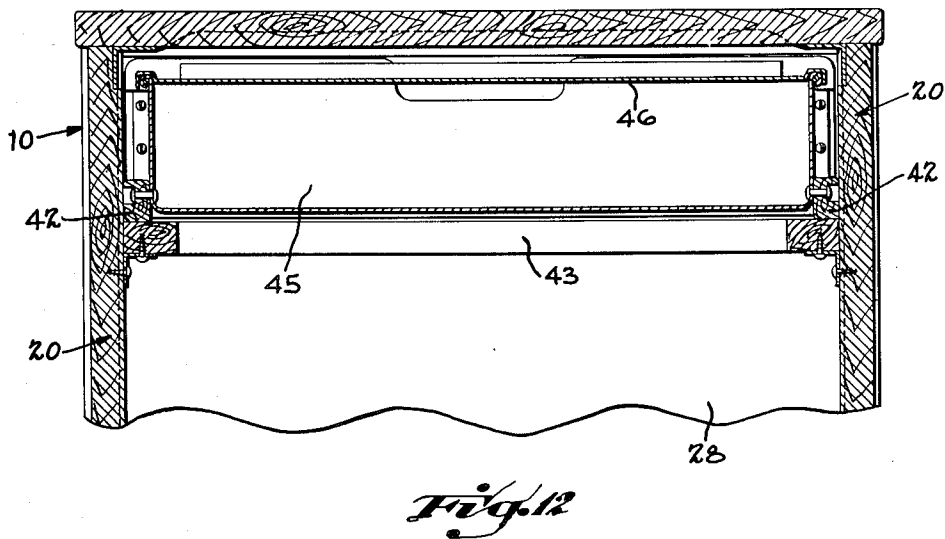
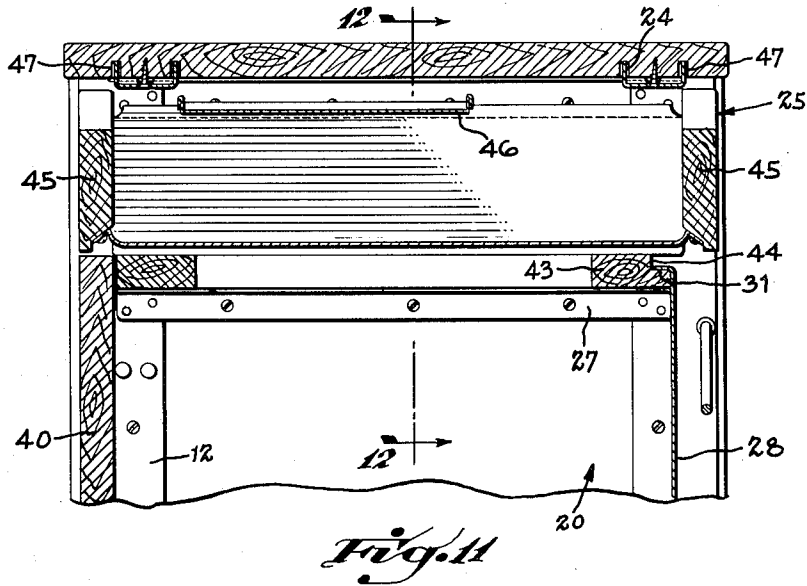
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6 Sheets-Sheet 6



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2,730,421

CABINET CONSTRUCTION

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Application February 16, 1951, Serial No. 211,226

4 Claims. (Cl. 312—257)

This invention relates to institutional furniture, and is particularly directed to the construction of cabinets, dressers, bureaus, and the like for use in hospital suites.

In recent years, physicians and hospital managers have been paying increasing heed to the psychological aspects of illness and particularly, to the depressing effect of drabness, or the absence of hominess, upon the spirits of the patient. Recovery, and the speed of it, are, in many cases, materially influenced by the psychological attitude of the patient and this in turn is affected by the patient's capacity to feel comfortably adjusted to the atmosphere of the hospital room. On this account, it has been the effort of forward thinking hospital managers to make the hospital rooms as homelike as possible, consistent with appropriate sanitation and permissive maintenance costs.

It is generally agreed that wooden furniture is superior to metal furniture for hospitals from the points of view of atmosphere and appearance. However, the initial cost, at least, of all-wood furniture, particularly the finely made pieces, is higher than furniture made entirely of metal, primarily because of the processing advantages of metal over wood, since metal is better adapted to production techniques of manufacture. However, both have certain advantages, and the selection of one over the other is largely a matter of prejudice. At present, metal furniture is used to a greater extent than wooden furniture in hospitals, possibly as a result of its lower initial cost to the detriment of patients' morale.

The object of the present inventors has been to provide hospital furniture, such as cabinets, dressers, bureaus, etc., which combine the recognized advantages of both wood and metal furniture, which are light and easily moved about the hospital room, and which are adapted to be manufactured by quantity production methods and assembled by production line techniques.

In the drawings:

Figure 1 is a perspective view showing the preferred form of corner post used in the cabinet construction.

Figure 2 is a diagrammatic, exploded view in perspective showing the skeletal parts comprising the cabinet construction.

Figure 3 is a semi-diagrammatic view in perspective of a partly completed cabinet.

Figure 4 is a perspective view of a completed hospital bedside cabinet constructed in accordance with the present invention.

Figure 5 is a perspective view illustrating the skeletal metal parts of the bedside cabinet shown in Figure 4.

Figure 6 is a top plan view of the structure shown in Figure 5.

Figure 7 is a side elevational view of the cabinet shown in Figure 5 in which certain of the parts are broken away to illustrate details of construction.

Figure 8 is a view similar to Figure 7 showing a completed cabinet.

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Figure 9 is a cross sectional view taken on the line 9—9 in Figure 8.

Figure 10 is a cross sectional view taken on the line 10—10 in Figure 8.

Figure 11 is a fragmentary cross sectional view taken on the line 11—11 in Figure 9.

Figure 12 is a fragmentary cross sectional view taken on the line 12—12 of Figure 11.

The following detailed description of the drawings is divided into two parts. In the first part, the general aspects of the invention are disclosed by reference to the first three figures of the drawings. In the second part, which refers to Figures 4 to 12, a specific application of the present invention to the construction of a hospital bedside cabinet is disclosed. From a consideration of these two parts, the one disclosure being rather general and the second very specific, it is believed that those skilled in the art will be able to apply the principles of construction of the invention to all of the cabinet-type articles of furniture, that is, bureaus, dressers, storage cabinets or whatever is desired. In fact, one of the primary advantages of the present construction is that it is applicable to these various types of furniture without appreciable changes in the basic parts or the manner in which they are assembled.

The structures of the present invention are built around a novel corner post which is preferably pre-fabricated as an aluminum extrusion. A section of such an extrusion is shown in Figure 1, being indicated generally at 10. From a production point of view, the form of corner post shown has a number of advantages. It has no top as such, and even though it is not symmetrical, by turning it top for bottom, it may be used at any of the four corners of a cabinet. Thus, only one die is needed in its manufacture. The extruded form shown may be utilized for each of the corner posts of all the cabinet-type articles of furniture; regardless of their differences in size, the extrusion merely being cut to the length needed in a particular instance.

From a structural point of view, the form of the extrusion also has many advantages. The backbone of the corner post is the hollow tubular portion indicated at 11. The excellent strength characteristics of tubular forms are well known. In addition, of course, they are light in weight. A flange 12 is formed at one side of the hollow tubular portion 11 and extends from it at an angle which is tangential rather than radial, but not necessarily tangent to any particular circle as a matter of accurate geometrical description. Structurally, the flange reinforces the tubular portion so that the extrusion is surprisingly strong for its size and weight, this characteristic being most pronounced when aluminum or another light metal is utilized in its fabrication. The scheme of using one form of corner post for all articles of furniture in a hospital room suite not only lowers manufacturing costs but gives all of the furniture so fabricated a unity of design which is highly desirable.

As used in the present construction, the corner post is polyfunctional in that each surface of it has specific functional utility which contributes to the structure of the over-all article of furniture in which it is embodied. Generally, the structural members which form the skeleton of the furniture are fastened to the inside of the corner post flanges 12, this side being to the back of the extrusion shown in Figure 1. The basic metal skeletal parts are shown diagrammatically in Figure 2, in which four corner posts are utilized in combination with two rectangular structural forms, the top one of which is indicated at 13 and the lower one of which is indicated at 14. These rectangular forms may be made of either angle irons or channel members, or a combination of the two, depending on the clearances required and other

considerations in the construction of a specific article of furniture. When angle irons are utilized as illustrated in this figure, it is preferred that the four corners be mitered and welded so that each form is a rigid, self-sustaining unit in and of itself. In wide articles of furniture such as dressers and bureaus, it is suggested that sheet metal corner brackets such as those shown at 15 be utilized in order to reinforce the joints between the respective forms and the legs. These brackets are not required however in the smaller articles of furniture such as bedside cabinets and small storage cabinets.

The parts forming the metal skeleton are put together as illustrated in the semi-diagrammatic view of Figure 3. Bolts or rivets are utilized in assembling these parts, and, when so put together each joint within the skeleton is a metal to metal fastening. When so assembled, the elements described form a rigid, self-sustaining structure exceedingly resistant to deformation. This is an important point in furniture used in hospitals inasmuch as they are subject to hard use and with metal to metal fastening there is no chance for the bolts or rivets to work loose permitting one piece to shift relative to the other. This would not be true were there joints comprising metal to wood fastening, since it is well known that screws or bolts, with the continuous expansion and contraction of the wood eventually work loose.

The two rectangular forms, 13 and 14, and the corner brackets 15 are all fastened to the flanges 12 of the respective corner posts. All fastening is by means of either bolts or rivets which pass through the metal parts in appropriate holes drilled for the purpose. It is preferred that the corner brackets 15 located at the rear of such cabinets as dressers and bureaus be right angular, each including a pair of triangular shaped arms. The two brackets utilized in the front of open face furniture constructions may be planar triangular sheets, as contrasted to the right angular ones used at the back corners, this arrangement permitting clearance at the front corners. In assembly, the brackets may be fastened to the outside of each of the respective four corners of the forms 13 and 14 and then both the brackets and the angle iron or channel members of the rectangular forms secured to the respective flanges of the corner posts. This is illustrated in Figure 3. The construction shown in this figure is that which is utilized for dressers and bureaus and the like, the front being open to accommodate drawers, thus at the top front a channel strip 16 is utilized in place of the angle iron shown in Figure 2, so that there is no depending lip to interfere with the top drawer. The channel strip may be fastened to the other three members comprising the rectangular form by welding or rivets, whichever is desired. In order to effect the joint between the respective ends of the channel and the angles, the upstanding sides of the channel are flattened over onto the channel base at the ends to form tabs which abut the underside of the horizontal portions of the respective angle irons; the rivets or bolts, if used, passing down through both members. The same scheme may be employed in the bottom rectangle form 14, the channel in this instance being turned so that the sides extend downwardly as shown at 17. If drawers are to be installed in the article of furniture, drawer slides such as those illustrated at 18 may also be fastened to the respective flanges 12 of the corner posts, the fastening also being made by bolts or rivets. Thus, observing the perspective view of Figure 3, it will be noted that all structural members which bear loads are fastened to inner faces of the respective flanges. This arrangement is applicable to all cabinet types of furniture.

The skeletal metal framework described is completely hidden from view in the finished article. A wood panel top may be installed, being secured by wood screws which extend up through the respective channels and angle irons of the upper form 13 into the top, and the two sides covered by wood side panels indicated generally at 20. The wood side panels are attached at the outer

faces of the respective flanges whereby the cabinets present a dominant appearance of wooden furniture, despite the strength of an all metal construction. In general, the back of the cabinet may be of any inexpensive material, metal or wood since it is not exposed, but the top preferably is made of wood to maintain the dominance of the wood motif in outward appearance of the cabinet. In the completed article, the front of the cabinet is either covered by drawers or doors, or a combination of them, which also are finished with wood fronts carrying out the appearance of a wooden article of furniture. The only metal exposed is that of the aluminum corner posts which, as a matter of fact, contrast with the wood and contribute distinctive design to the cabinet.

The side panels 20, the top, and door or drawer fronts preferably are made of plywood of sufficient thickness to take wood screws. Each of the side panels is set in to the recess formed by the tangential relationship of the respective flanges 12 to the hollow tubular portions 11 of the corner posts. A flat face 21 is formed at the flange side of hollow tube 11 to provide an abutment for the side edge of the wood panel, this flat face 21 meeting the flange at a right angle. In addition, it is preferred that the flat face 21 be substantially as wide as the thickness of the panel and that the tube extend out beyond the outer edge of the flat face so that when the panel is in place against the respective flanges at the side of an article of furniture the tubes protect it from being bumped and thus scratched or otherwise marred when the article of furniture is shoved against an object.

It will be noted that the panel is merely hung in place on the flanges by means of wood screws which extend through appropriate holes, such as the one illustrated at 22 in Figure 1, from the inside of the cabinet so that the outer surface of the side panel is not marred by fastening means. Since the metal skeletal framework is a self-sustaining structure in and of itself, none of the stresses placed on it are transmitted to the screw fastenings and thus there are no isolated stresses placed on metal to wood joints, and little likelihood of the screws working loose under these circumstances. In addition however, inasmuch as both side edges of the panel snugly abut the flat faces 21 and are against the right angular seats provided between the flat faces 21 and flanges 12, they serve as blocks between the respective corner posts and assist to maintain their parallel spaced relationship. If, under an extreme condition, one corner post is pushed toward the other, the plywood panel would have to compress between them before relative movement could occur, something which is quite unlikely to take place, because of the resistance of plywood to forces of this nature.

The construction illustrated in the first three figures of the drawings is essentially diagrammatic but from a consideration of these three figures, a number of advantages to the present construction from a production point of view will be apparent. All of the basic parts are subject to being manufactured by utilizing modern sub-assembly techniques. For example, the top and bottom rectangular forms can be completed before final assembly, the legs cut to length and appropriately drilled. Furthermore, all of the sub-assembly parts are such that they can be put together by assembly line manufacturing techniques. To speed the assembly, it will be noted that the inventors have completely departed from a number of the usual furniture manufacturing operations. There are no glue joints at any place in any of the articles of furniture. This is made possible because at no place is there an isolated stress placed on either a wood to wood joint or a metal to wood joint, all stresses being carried by metal to metal joints. Fine furniture assembly heretofore has required the services of skilled cabinet makers. In the present case, this is not necessary because all parts are put together by means of screws, bolts, or rivets. The final assembly of the skeletal parts can be

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done by anyone who knows how to rivet or tighten a nut onto a bolt. The installation of the wood panels can be done by anyone who knows how to use a screwdriver. As an additional point, it will be observed that all fastening is accomplished from the inside to the outside of the cabinet so that there is little likelihood of the finished outside surface of the panels being marred by the less than careful worker or an unskilled person. Nowhere in the final assembly are special tools needed. All joints and fastenings may be made by those tools which are in common use.

The complete structures are built around the corner posts and each surface of the corner post has a specific functional utility. The inner face of the flange 12 provides a fastening for all metal parts forming the skeleton and provides hanger support for such things as drawer slides, shelves and the like which normally are used on the inside of articles of furniture of this nature. The outer surface of the flange provides a seat for the wood panels. The flat face 21 provides an abutting surface for the edges of the said panels, this surface in combination with the outer face of the flange 12 forming a snug fit for the wood panels. The outer curve of the hollow tube 11 provides a bumper surface which protects the recessed finished face of the wood panel from mars and scratches. The exposed tubular surface, in addition, provides a very attractive contrast with the panel wood, and inasmuch as the corner posts are the common denominator of a number of articles of furniture which may make up one hospital room suite, the exposed curved surfaces of the hollow tubes gives to all of the furniture so fabricated a unity of design which is highly desirable. The hollow inside of the tube also provided a seat for leg construction, this point being discussed in detail below. Thus, every surface of the tube has its specific function, the whole, combined with others of its kind, providing the basis for a type of furniture construction heretofore unknown. These advantages are directed more to the construction and production. There is however, an exceedingly important feature to the construction which is rather difficult to illustrate clearly by drawings, and that is the aesthetic appeal of the furniture. Both strength and beauty are inherent in the construction utilized, the strength from the metal, and beauty from the wood.

As a general rule, hospital management figures on a twenty year amortization period for furniture, and of course for efficiency the furniture must last at least that long and during that period require little maintenance. There is little likelihood that the side panels of the cabinets disclosed here of ever being scratched because of the protection afforded by the metal corner posts. However, if through accident one is so marred or disfigured that it needs refinishing, since the side panels are merely hung in place, they may be easily removed and a spare substituted. The change can be done in a very short time while the article of furniture is in the hospital room. The same method of fastening used in the side panels is also utilized for the tops and as will be pointed out below, also utilized for the front door and drawer surfaces. Therefore, when it is necessary by reason of accident to refinish a cabinet, there need be no loss of use of it. This is quite an advantage when compared with past refinishing practices for wooden hospital furniture, and even all-metal furniture for that matter, where it was necessary to have spare pieces of furniture to be used as substitutes in the rooms for those being refinished. In the present instance, instead of carrying on hand complete spare articles of furniture, all that is needed is a few spare panels.

Attention is now directed to Figures 4 through 12, in which is disclosed a hospital bedside cabinet constructed in accordance with the general principles discussed above. The skeletal metal frame of the cabinet is shown in Figure 2 and for identification purposes, the numerals used to identify the counterparts of this cabinet in the struc-

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ture shown diagrammatically in Figures 1 through 3 are retained. In this instance, the top rectangular form 13 includes a pair of angle iron side members 23—23 and a pair of front and rear channel members 24—24. The channels are disposed with their sides extending upwardly in order to provide clearance for a drawer indicated generally at 25. The bottom rectangular form 14 in this cabinet is made of four angle irons which are welded at mitered joints at the four corners. A center panel of wire mesh 26 is shown on the lower form which is provided specifically for the purpose of ventilating the inside of this cabinet and if it is not desired, solid material may be substituted for it.

It will be noted that in the bedside cabinet the brackets 15 are not required, and also that the skeletal frame is further strengthened by angle irons 27 which extend along the two sides and across the rear of the cabinet just under the drawer 25. Also, in this construction the lower part at the rear of the cabinet is enclosed by means of a metal backing 28 formed of sheet metal, the sheet metal being bent over at its two sides in order to provide means for fastening it to the flanges of the respective rear corner posts (see Figure 10). The lower edge of the backing 28 may be bent up around the depending edge of the angle iron extending across the back of the bottom rectangular form 14 as at 30 in Figure 7. At the upper end, the backing may be bent over as at 31 in order to stiffen it along this edge.

It will be noted in Figure 7 that the metal backing is set in or recessed with respect to the rear corner posts in order to provide a space for hanging a towel. For this purpose, a towel bar 32 is journaled at its respective ends in bores which pierce the inner faces of the respective hollow tubular legs as shown at 33, Figure 6. If desired, rubber grommets 34 may be seated within the bores in the walls of the tubes, the grommets gripping the respective ends of the bar so that when the offset portion or central run 35 of the towel bar is swung out away from the backing 28, the friction between the bar and grommets maintains it in an extended position in which it is easier to use.

A preferred form of leg for furniture made in accordance with the invention is shown in Figure 7. At each corner a hollow tube 36 is inserted into the lower end of the hollow corner post and fixed therein by means of cross pins 37. A commercial caster 38, as shown in this figure, may be installed in the lower end of each leg.

The bedside cabinet structure illustrates quite clearly further structural utility of the corner posts, for it will be seen that at the front they provide places for hanging the hinges of a door shown at 40, and also means for securing brackets 41—41 for mounting a shelf inside the cabinet. Both the door hinges and the brackets may be fastened with metal screws or rivets, whichever is preferred. The particular door construction shown is described in detail in a co-pending application filed December 28, 1950, Serial No. 203, 148, now abandoned.

The drawer 25 which is mounted in the upper portion of the cabinet may be of the type which is adapted to be slid open from either the front or the back of the cabinet. For this purpose, a drawer slide, indicated by the numeral 42, may be used. If desired, a wood rectangular form such as that shown at 43 may be mounted on top of the angle irons 27 just under the drawer, the back one of the four being grooved as at 44 in order to accommodate the overturned upper edge 31 of the metal backing 28. The bottoms and sides of the drawer may be made out of sheet metal. However, the two ends 45, being exposed, are preferably made of wood as shown in Figure 11, carrying out the wood paneling motif. Also, a slidable tray, such as that shown at 46, may be incorporated in the drawer, the tray having rolled edges which embrace the upper edges of the sides of the drawer in sliding engagement.

The bedside cabinet shown here illustrates the adapt-

ability of the construction to such unusual features as the recessed towel compartment, the double ended drawer, the front door and the inner shelf. It is believed to be within the comprehension of those skilled in the art to adapt the principles of the construction to other articles of furniture, including those having sliding front doors or a front comprising a combination of drawers and doors. No matter what the construction, any and all members inside the cabinet can be hung directly onto the flanges of the corner posts so that their weight and the weight of articles placed on them will be carried directly to the corner posts without stresses being placed on the side panels.

The back construction utilized is not particularly important inasmuch as a number of different forms may be used; for example, if desired, a metal back such as that shown at 28 may be continued to the top, thus closing completely the rear of the article of furniture, or if the back is never exposed to view in the normal use of the article of furniture, inexpensive wood sheeting may be used, the sheeting being fastened to the rear members of the respective upper and lower rectangular frames. Where it is necessary to provide clearance just under the top, channels like those indicated at 24 may be utilized, with grooves 47 being cut into the underside of the top in order to accommodate the upstanding sides of the channel.

The wood side panels in the bedside cabinet are seated and fastened as pointed out in the description of Figures 1 to 3. The cross sectional views of Figures 9 and 10 do, however, illustrate a preferred manner of setting-in the flanges of the corner posts with respect to the panels, which is not illustrated in the diagrammatic views of the first three figures. The inner face of the panel is cut out along the two side edges as shown at 48 to a depth equal to the thickness of the respective flanges so that when a panel is seated, its inner face is flush with the inner faces of the two corner posts to which it is attached; the recessed relationship giving a finished appearance to the inside of the cabinet.

In the present construction, the inventors have combined the recognized advantages of metal furniture with those of wood furniture, avoiding the disadvantages of each. But they have gone beyond this. The basic principles of construction may be applied to all of the cabinet-type articles of furniture in a suite, providing a pleasing continuity of design. And, although it cannot be fully appreciated from the drawings, the large unbroken finished wood surfaces afforded by the construction are outstandingly attractive.

This disclosure concerns hospital furniture construction primarily, but it will be readily apparent to those skilled in the art that the principles are equally adapted to all furniture constructions, domestic as well as institutional. As an example, office desks and other articles of furniture having corner posts exposed to knocks can be improved immeasurably by using the aluminum extrusions disclosed here instead of ordinary post constructions, whether they be wood or painted metal. The extruded aluminum posts need not be painted, in fact, it is preferred that the metal be uncoated. In this condition, even though hit or bumped hard enough to be indented or scratched, such marks are not particularly noticeable upon the bright surface. Bright aluminum is infinitely better than a painted surface in this respect because of the likelihood of paint chipping. And then in addition, the attractive contrast between wood and metal would be lost by coating the aluminum.

Having described our invention, we claim:

1. In cabinet construction, a pair of horizontally disposed rectangular forms, said forms fabricated from metal structural members and arranged one above the other in vertically spaced relationship, four metal corner posts, each corner post having a hollow tubular portion and a flange portion, said flange portion being co-extensive and

integral with said tubular portion and extending substantially tangentially therefrom, a flat face on said tubular portion, said flat face being co-extensive with said flange portion and disposed at substantially right angles thereto, said posts arranged in pairs at opposite sides of the rectangular forms with the flange portions of the posts of each pair disposed inwardly of the tubular portions thereof and extending toward one another, the respective rectangular forms rigidly secured directly to the inner faces of said flange portions by metal fasteners whereby said posts and forms comprise an all-metal skeletal cabinet framework, and a wood side panel secured to the outer sides of the flange portions of each pair of corner posts with the opposite vertical edges thereof abutting said flat faces of the respective tubular portions of said corner posts.

2. In cabinet construction, an all-metal skeletal framework comprising a pair of horizontally disposed rectangular forms, said forms fabricated from metal structural members and arranged one above the other in vertically spaced relationship, four metal corner posts, each corner post including a hollow tubular portion and a flange portion, said flange portion being co-extensive and integral with said tubular portion and extending substantially tangentially therefrom, a flat face on said tubular portion, said flat face being co-extensive with said flange portion and disposed at substantially right angles thereto, said posts arranged in pairs at opposite sides of the rectangular forms with the flange portions of the posts of each pair disposed inwardly of the tubular portions thereof and extending toward one another, and metal fasteners securing the respective rectangular forms directly to the inner faces of said flange portions of said posts.

3. In cabinet construction, a pair of horizontally disposed rectangular forms, said forms fabricated from metal structural members and arranged one above the other in vertically spaced relationship, four, identical, metal corner posts, each post including a hollow tubular portion and a flange portion, said flange portion being co-extensive and integral with said tubular portion and extending substantially tangentially from a side thereof, a flat face formed on said tubular portion, said flat face being adjacent to said flange portion and disposed at substantially a right angle thereto, said posts arranged vertically in pairs at the opposite sides of said rectangular forms with a post at each of the four corners of the cabinet structure and with the flange portions of the posts of each pair disposed inwardly of the tubular portions thereof and extending toward one another, the respective rectangular forms rigidly secured to the inner faces of said flange portions by metal fastening means, whereby said posts and forms comprise an all-metal skeletal cabinet framework, and a side panel secured to the outer faces of the flange portions of each pair of corner posts between each of the respective tubular portions thereof, said side panels displaying a wood face outwardly, whereby the cabinet from the outside thereof appears to be made primarily of wood.

4. In cabinet construction, a pair of horizontally disposed rectangular forms, said forms fabricated from metal structural members and arranged one above the other in vertically spaced relationship, four metal corner posts, each corner post including a hollow tubular portion and a flange portion, said flange portion being co-extensive and integral with said tubular portion and extending substantially tangentially from a side thereof, a flat face on said tubular portion, said flat face being co-extensive with said flange portion and disposed at substantially a right angle thereto, said posts disposed at the respective corners of said forms and arranged in pairs at opposite sides of the rectangular forms with the flange portions of the posts of each pair disposed inwardly of the tubular portions thereof and extending toward one another, the respective rectangular forms rigidly secured to the inner faces of said flange portions by metal fastening means, whereby said posts and forms constitute an all-metal skeletal cabinet framework having the area between the inner faces

of the respective flanges and between the respective vertically spaced forms free of structural obstructions, a wood side panel secured to the outer faces of the flange portions of each pair of corner posts with the opposite vertical edges thereof abutting the flat faces on the respective tubular portions of said corner posts, whereby only the tubular portions of the respective corner posts are exposed to the outside of the cabinet construction to provide a contrasting wood-metal appearance in which the wood predominates.

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