

1,242,872.

C. SAUNDERS.
SELF SERVING STORE.
APPLICATION FILED OCT. 21, 1916.

Patented Oct. 9, 1917.
3 SHEETS—SHEET 1.

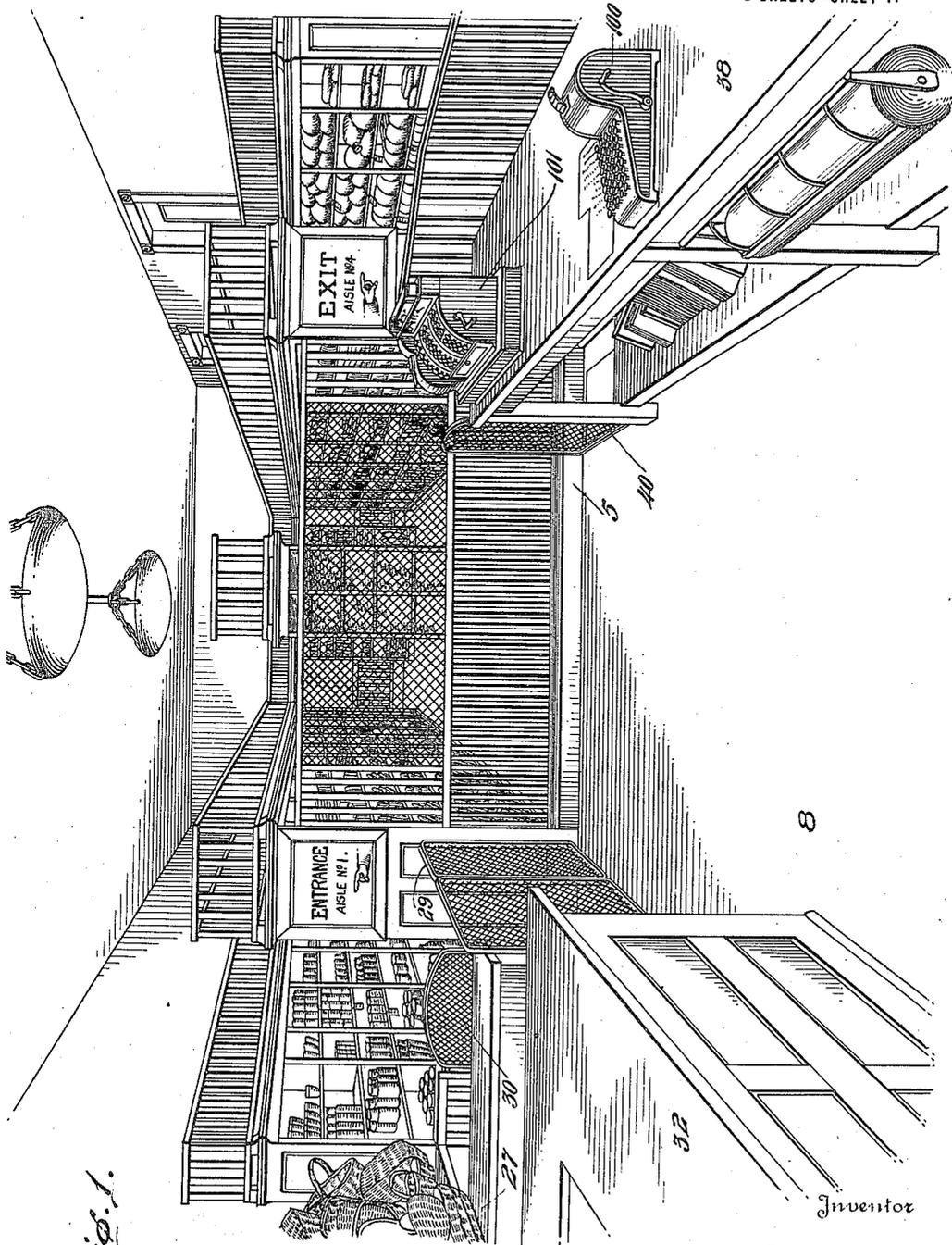


Fig. 1.

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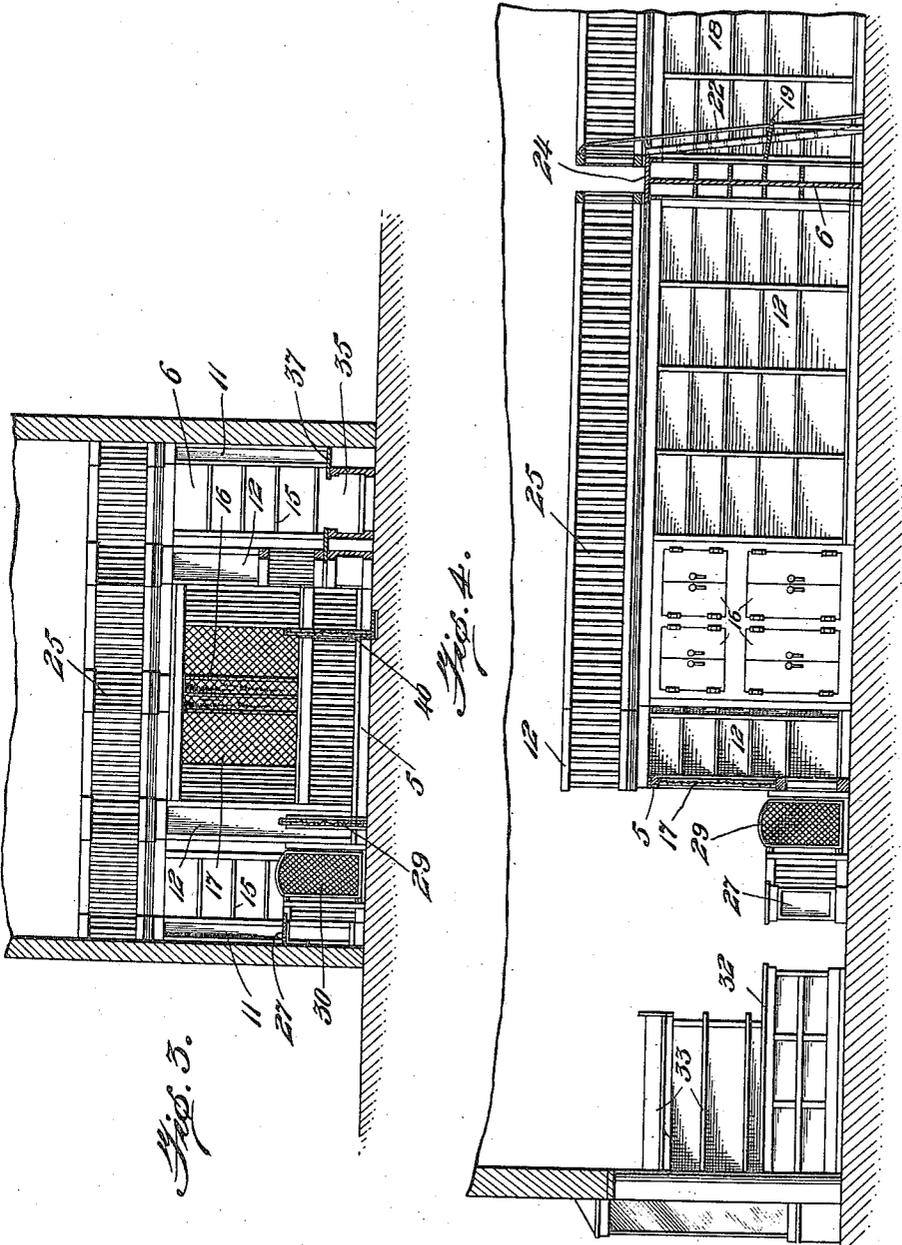
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UNITED STATES PATENT OFFICE.

CLARENCE SAUNDERS, OF MEMPHIS, TENNESSEE.

SELF-SERVING STORE.

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Specification of Letters Patent.

Patented Oct. 9, 1917.

Application filed October 21, 1916. Serial No. 123,983.

To all whom it may concern:

Be it known that I, CLARENCE SAUNDERS, a citizen of the United States, residing at Memphis, Shelby county, and State of Tennessee, have invented and discovered certain new and useful Improvements in Self-Serving Stores, of which the following is a specification.

The object of my said invention is to provide a store equipment by which the customer will be enabled to serve himself and, in so doing, will be required to review the entire assortment of goods carried in stock, conveniently and attractively displayed, and after selecting the list of goods desired, will be required to pass a checking and paying station at which the goods selected may be billed, packed, and settled for before retiring from the store, thus relieving the store of a large proportion of the usual incidental expenses, or overhead charges, required to operate it, all as will be hereinafter more fully described and claimed.

One purpose of the invention is to provide an arrangement for distributing the merchandise of a store in such a manner that the goods may be selected and taken by the customers themselves while making a circuitous path through the store; and whereby a large number of customers may be accommodated at the same time without confusion, and in an expeditious manner.

Another purpose is to utilize all the available floor space of the room to the best advantage; to dispense with the employment of many clerks who are usually engaged to wait upon the customers; and to insure that the customers become acquainted with the variety of lines of goods in the store and with the various items in the several lines.

It is also contemplated to have a supply or stock room located immediately in the rear of and adjacent to the sales department and so communicating therewith that said sales department may be constantly kept fully stocked; and it is also a consideration that said system of buying be offered to the public as a novelty in shopping or marketing.

The accompanying drawings, on which similar reference characters indicate corresponding parts, illustrate an arrangement of a store equipment and furniture, such as I have found suitable to accomplish the purposes above stated. In said drawings—

Figure 1 is a perspective view illustrating

the interior of a store as seen from the front end thereof, arranged and equipped in accordance with my invention,

Fig. 2 is a horizontal plan view,

Fig. 3 is a front plan, and

Fig. 4 a longitudinal section.

Referring to the construction in further detail, the store consists of a room provided with front and rear partitioning walls 5 and 6, dividing the floor space 7 into a lobby (forming an entrance and exit room) 8, at the front; a sales department 9, in the middle; and a supply or stock room 10 at the rear of the building, all proportioned with regard to the size of the store and the particular kind of business for which it is designed.

The sales department 9 has two rows of merchandise display cabinets or holders 11 arranged against the side walls of the room, and intermediate of these a series of display cabinets 12. Said cabinets 12 are constructed with shelves on opposite faces and are arranged in the room in line with and spaced from each other and have their respective alternate ends spaced from the partition walls 5 and 6 to provide passage-ways 13. The spaces between the cabinets form aisles 14 which, with passage-ways 13, form a circuitous path between the respective rows of shelving or cabinets 11 and 12. This circuitous path must be traversed by every purchaser who enters the sales room, and, while following the path, the customer has displayed before him for selection, the varied stock of goods that is offered for sale. The different kinds of goods are contained in packages suitable for convenient handling and assorted in lots of the different classes, as required to accommodate the different needs of different customers and enable them to conveniently select what they want of each item, all as will be understood.

The two display cabinets 11, on the side walls of the store, extend for the full length of the sales room, and at the rear end of the room, *i. e.* at the partition wall 6, said cabinets 11 are connected by similar cabinets, or shelving; 15, while cabinets 12 are only a distance apart to provide aisles of convenient width, and thereby all of the available space of the sales room is utilized to the best advantage. A portion of one of the display cabinets 12, preferably the forward part of the middle display cabinet, has constructed therein a refrigerator 16 (see Figs.

2 and 4) adapted for keeping produce of a perishable nature and preferably formed with a glass front for displaying its contents to advantage from the front of the store, and to this end the partition wall 5 has a screened opening 17 (see Fig. 3) that allows said glass front and the refrigerator contents to be seen from the room 8 and also from the side-walk immediately in front of the store. The doors of the refrigerator would preferably be mounted on self-closing hinges, and are narrow doors arranged in pairs in order that selections from the refrigerator may be conveniently made by the customers, from either side, without unduly obstructing the aisles, and insuring the closing of the doors thereafter.

The storage or stock room 10, at the rear end of the store, is also provided with series of shelves 18 and 19, appropriately arranged on the side walls and partitioning wall 6; and additional shelving may be set up in the central part of the storage room, or any other suitable way for keeping supply stock handy for delivery into the sales room may be employed. Access from the store room 10 into the display room is had through the passage-ways 20 provided respectively with the swinging doors 21, and a stairway or ladder 22 leads from the supply room to the galleries 23 that are provided on the tops of the display cabinets 11 and 12. Either of the galleries may be conveniently reached by the passage-ways 24 extending transversely of the store and at the rear of the sales room. The several galleries 23, and the connecting passage-ways 24 thereof, are suitably guarded by a banister or rail structure 25 (see Figs. 3 and 4) that follows the configuration of the gallery and aisle arrangement. It is contemplated that these galleries may be used by a "floor-walker," or other employee of the establishment, for the purpose of directing or instructing those who are not acquainted with the method to be followed while actually in the aisles, and also for supervising the sales and inspecting the amount of stock on hand without interfering with those who are in the aisle-ways making purchases.

The space or lobby 8 of the store is entered from the street through the doorway 26. To the left of the entrance there is a counter or display cabinet 27 forming a passage or inclosure 28. Gates 29 and 30 are located respectively at the entrances to the passage 28 and the first or beginning aisle of the circuitous path. A suitable tripping device 31 is provided for opening the gate 30, from one side only, by the weight of the person entering the store room, and the gate (30) may be fitted with a lock or fastening that will automatically secure the same and thereby allow passage therethrough in one direction only, *i. e.* in the way of entering

the sales room. The shelf or cabinet construction 27 is adapted for holding a supply of baskets or other receptacles to be taken, one by each customer, as he enters the sales room, for use in carrying the goods selected for purchase on his trip through the sales department, to be returned before the customer leaves the store, in a way to be further referred to.

Another cabinet construction of shelving or merchandise holders 32 and 33 is located at the front and on one side of the room 8 to provide a fruit department, or this space may be utilized as a meat department, or for any other purpose, as will be understood.

The space to the right of the room 8, as one enters the building, is utilized as the checking and settlement department of the store and consists of a partition or fence structure 34 providing an aisle 35 that communicates with the exit end of the last aisle 20 of the circuitous path. Said partition has a shelf 36 along its side at a convenient height which may be utilized by customers for resting their baskets while the purchases of those in advance are being checked up, wrapped, and paid for. Another basket resting shelf is provided along the front end of the aisle and another, 37, is located on the opposite side of the aisle 35, as shown. A relatively long counter or table 38 is located adjacent the partition 34 and therewith forms the exit aisle 39 that communicates with the outlet aisle 35 of the circuitous path. When each customer enters the exit aisle 39, he places his basket on the counter, the goods which he has selected are taken from the basket, checked up, billed on the adding machine 100, or in any other convenient manner, and wrapped, and payment is made therefor and the sale and payment recorded on the cash register 101 before the purchaser passes through the exit and trip-actuated gate 40 and leaves the store. The gate 40 is provided with a self-locking device similar to that of the gate 30 and allows the same to be opened only from one side, *i. e.* in the direction for leaving the store.

The method of utilizing my invention will be readily understood from the foregoing description, and its advantages in the saving of time, labor and expense will be appreciated. In actual operation it has been found that the usual margin of profit on the sale of goods allowed for the successful operation of what are known as "cash groceries" may be reduced by more than half without reducing the measure of profits. It has also been demonstrated that the sales capacity of a store, equipped in accordance with my invention and operating in accordance with my system, is increased several times, *i. e.*, the sales of a store thus equipped have exceeded, by three or four times, the amount of sales that it would be possible

to handle in the same store waited upon by clerks in the usual way.

It is also apparent that, by this arrangement of store, the goods for sale are protected from handling and disarrangement, except by those having business in the store and by, at least, prospective customers, thus protecting the goods to this extent. It will also be apparent that while the store shown and described is designed expressly for the vending of groceries, the arrangement is equally valuable for the sale of goods of other classes; for example, such stores as "10 cent stores" could employ this system to great advantage. In such stores the merchandise containing cabinets would, of course, be of the construction and arrangement best adapted to serve the purpose of the store.

It is obvious that those skilled in the art may vary the details of construction and arrangement of parts without materially departing from the spirit of my invention, and I therefore do not wish to be limited to such features except as may be required by the claims.

Having thus fully described my said invention, what I claim as new and desire to secure by Letters Patent, is:

1. An apparatus for the vending of merchandise having a series of merchandise holders or display cabinets arranged parallel with each other and with spaces between them to form aisles and with the ends of alternate cabinets spaced from the wall or partition in the store, whereby a circuitous path is provided through which the customer must pass from the entrance to the exit, substantially as set forth.

2. An apparatus for the vending of merchandise having a section closed to customers except for an entrance and an exit and a series of merchandise display cabinets arranged within said section in rows in line with each other forming aisles for the pas-

sage of customers, the adjacent aisles of which communicate at alternate opposite ends of said section and form a continuous passage-way from said entrance to said exit, substantially as set forth.

3. A store for the vending of merchandise having a partition dividing the room into an ante-room or lobby on one side thereof and a salesroom on the other said partition having independently situated entrance and exit ways leading into and out of said salesroom, a series of merchandise holders with aisles therebetween arranged in the salesroom with their respective alternate ends spaced to provide passage-ways, said aisles and passage-ways forming a circuitous path which the customer must traverse from the entrance to the exit, and a structure located adjacent the exit arranged to provide a checking and settlement station, substantially as set forth.

4. A store for the vending of merchandise having a partition dividing the room into an ante-room or lobby and a salesroom, said partition being constructed to provide an entrance and an exit, a closure for the entrance, a closure for the exit, a series of merchandise display cabinets or holders arranged in rows in the salesroom and at distances apart to form aisles and having passage-ways at alternate ends whereby a continuous circuitous path is formed from said entrance to said exit, and a structure adjacent the terminal of the path at its exit end providing a checking up and settlement station, substantially as set forth.

In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand and seal at Washington, District of Columbia, this sixteenth day of October, A. D. nineteen hundred and sixteen.

CLARENCE SAUNDERS. [L. S.]

Witnesses:

E. W. BRADFORD,
E. S. CLEMENTS.