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MULTI-COMPARTMENT CABINET STRUCTURE

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2 Sheets-Sheet 1

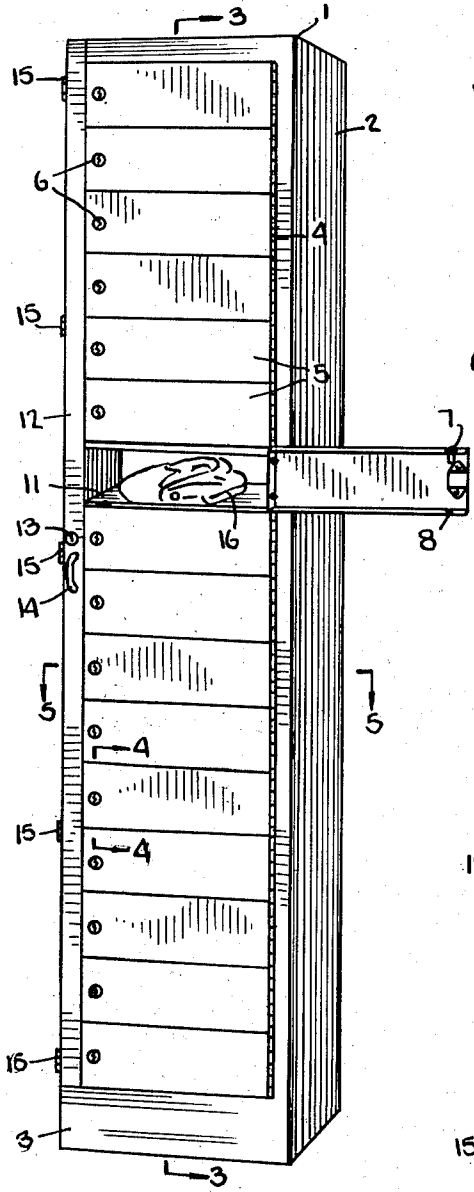


Fig. 1.

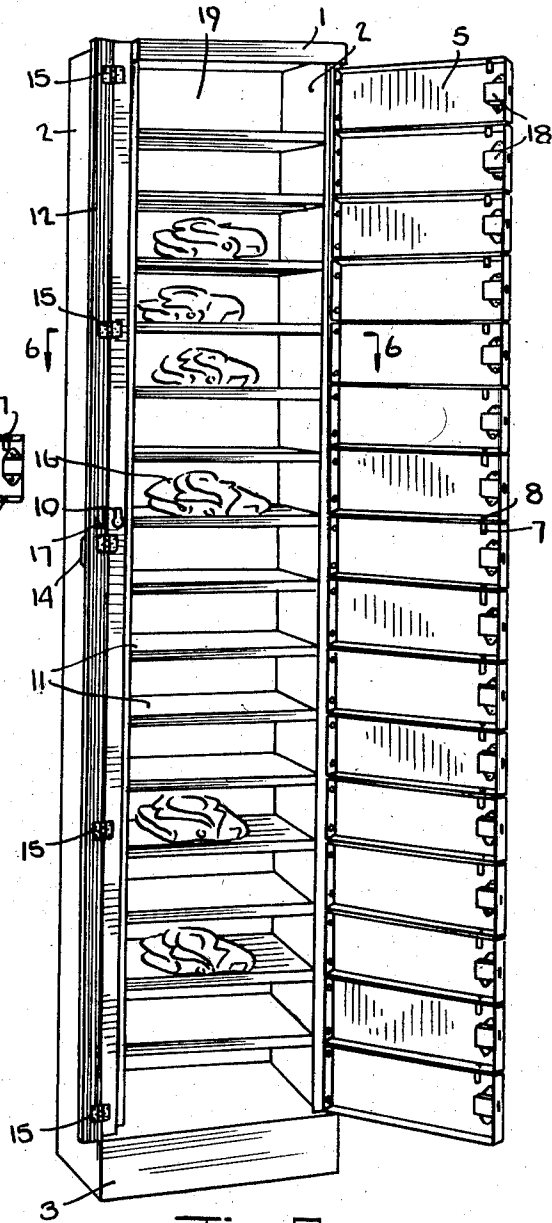


Fig. 2.

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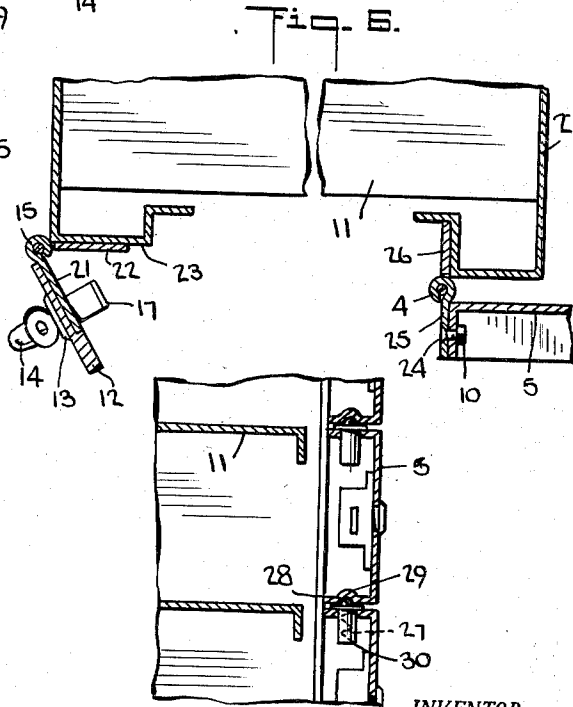
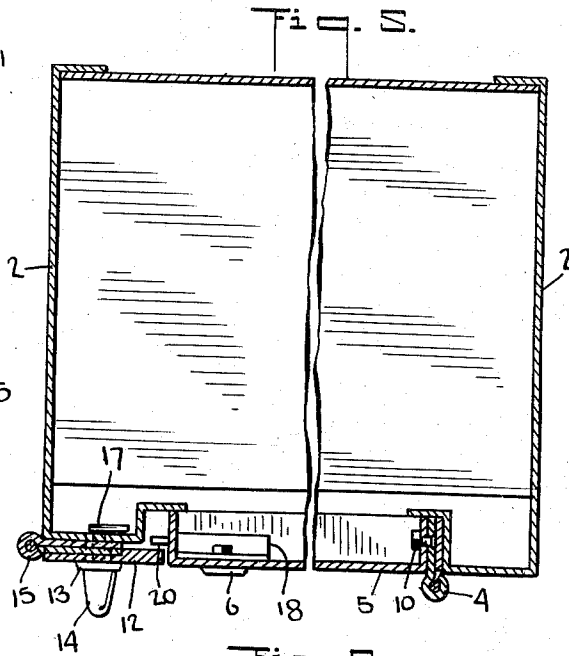
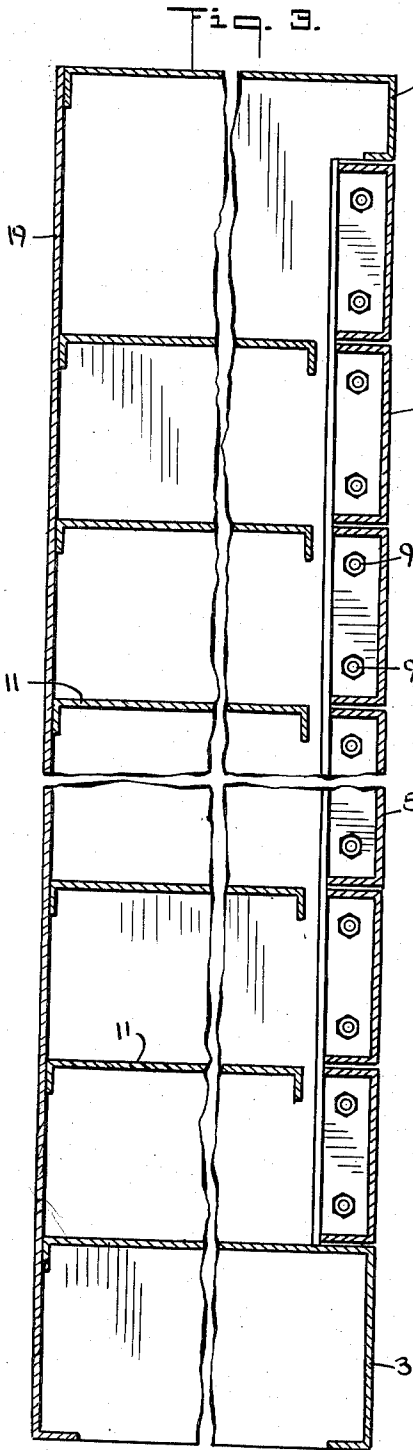


Fig. 4.

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1

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## MULTI-COMPARTMENT CABINET STRUCTURE

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3 Claims. (Cl. 312-298)

This invention relates to an improvement in distribution cabinets, more particularly to cabinets having a plurality of individual compartments therein.

In many types of establishments, particularly manufacturing plants, it is frequently desirable to provide some device whereby laundry, tools or other equipment may be left by individuals in locked compartments, to which only they have access, and yet whereby the agent of the laundry company, or tool or equipment distributor or custodian, will be enabled, when required, to open all the compartments at once.

In the past, it has often been necessary for the person in charge to have a master key which opens a large number of individual cabinets. Such a procedure is slow and cumbersome, requiring as many manipulations of the locks as there are individual cabinets.

It is among the objects of this invention to provide a cabinet which obviates this disadvantage and which is nevertheless so constructed that individuals may have access only to their own compartments.

It is a more particular object of this invention to provide means on said cabinet by which the opening and closing of the entire plurality of compartments, in unison, may be controlled by only one lock, notwithstanding the provision of different locks for the individual compartments.

Another object is to achieve these results by means of a construction which is mechanically simple, relatively inexpensive to manufacture, staunch and reliable in operation, and attractive in appearance.

In accordance with this invention, there is provided a cabinet, usually of tall, narrow dimensions, containing a plurality of closely adjacent superposed compartments and individual closures for these compartments. The closures or doors are hinged to the cabinet along a common vertical hinge axis and each is provided with a locking tongue reciprocally mounted and adapted to project from the free edge thereof. A common keeper for the tongues is hinged to the cabinet along a vertical hinge axis and adapted to be locked in a position overlying the tongues. Thus, when the keeper is in its locked position, it detains the individual closures by bearing against their respective tongues. If the user of one of the compartments wishes to gain access thereto, then by means of his individual key he can cause the tongue of his compartment closure to retract so that it no longer projects beyond the free edge of the closure. The individual compartment can then be opened.

In aid of the aforementioned objects of this invention, there is also provided a spring-loaded ball projecting beyond one of the horizontal edges of each closure and a corresponding socket at the other horizontal edge of each closure, so positioned that each ball fits into the socket in the edge of the adjacent closure. This permits the entire bank of closures to be swung open or closed as a single unit, while still allowing the individual closures to be opened independently of one another.

In the accompanying drawings constituting a part hereof, in which like reference characters indicate like parts,

Fig. 1 is a front view of the cabinet with one compartment unlocked and opened;

Fig. 2 is a front view of the cabinet showing the entire bank of compartments open;

Fig. 3 is a section along the line 3-3 of Fig. 1;

Fig. 4 is a section along the line 4-4 of Fig. 1;

Fig. 5 is a section along the line 5-5 of Fig. 1, and

Fig. 6 is a section along the line 6-6 of Fig. 2.

In the embodiment of the invention herein chosen for illustration the cabinet 1 has side walls 2, a back 19, and a base 3. Within the cabinet are a plurality of superposed shelves 11, each defining the floor of an individual compartment upon which laundry or other items may be placed, as indicated at 16. Each compartment is provided with a closure 5 which pivots about a vertical hinge 4 common to all the closures. Each closure is provided with its own lock 6, controlling a locking tongue 20 that may be projected or withdrawn from the free edge of the closure.

Adjacent to the free edges of the closures there is a common keeper 12 hinged to the cabinet along the vertical hinge axis defined by the aligned hinges 15. Each of the latter has one plate 21 secured to the keeper 12 and the other plate 22 fastened to the cabinet body (see Fig. 6). When swung to its locked position (Figs. 1 and 5) the keeper 12 overlies all the tongues 20 of the compartment closures. The keeper 12 is equipped with its own lock, which may be of any desired character. I have illustratively shown a lock mechanism 13 on the shaft of which there is a locking ear 17. When the shaft is turned to align the ear 17 with a correspondingly shaped opening 10 in the cabinet body, the keeper 12 may swing freely on its hinges 15. When the shaft is turned through about 90° the ear 17 is locked behind the panel in which the opening 10 is formed, and the keeper 12 is thus locked against movement. The handle 14 facilitates the opening and closing of the keeper 12.

Each of the compartment closures is also provided with horizontal flanges along its upper and lower edges, a spring-pressed but captive ball or equivalent detent 7 in one of these flanges, preferably the upper one, and a corresponding ball-receiving socket 8 in the opposite flange (see Fig. 1). The detent arrangement may assume the detailed construction shown in Fig. 4, whereby the spring 30 in cylinder 27 presses the ball 28 upwardly. The parts are aligned so that each ball cooperates with the socket 29 in the adjacent closure.

In operation the user of an individual compartment may insert his key into the lock 6 on his closure 5, rotating it to cause tongue 20 to retract into the lock body 18. The closure is thus released from the keeper 12 and may be pivoted about hinge 4 into the open position. Spring-loaded ball 7 in adjacent socket 8 yields to permit this. The reverse procedure is followed when the closure is to be re-locked.

When the agent of the laundry company, or other authorized person wishes to obtain access to all the compartments at the same time, he inserts his key in lock 13, and turns the shaft until ear 17 aligns with opening 10. Keeper 12 may then be pivoted about hinge 15 to the position shown in Figs. 2 and 6. This frees all the locking tongues 20 and the entire bank of closures 5 may be pivoted about hinge 4 as a single unit since they are held together by the spring-loaded balls 7 and the corresponding sockets 8. The reverse procedure is followed when the closures are to be restored to the closed and locked condition of Figs. 1 and 5.

While only one specific embodiment of this invention has been described, it is nevertheless possible to make changes in certain features of this device without departing from the spirit of the invention. For example, two vertical rows of closures may be provided, each row hinged at an outer edge of the cabinet, the closures meet-

3

ing in the center where they might be locked by a single common keeper, or by two keepers side-by-side. In such a case, of course, each bank of closures would open in a different direction.

These and other changes in the details of the device may be made without departing from the principles herein set forth, and the invention is therefore to be broadly construed and not to be limited except by the character of the claims appended hereto.

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

1. In a distribution cabinet, a pair of side walls, a rear wall, a series of horizontal partitions extending between the side walls and defining a plurality of closely adjacent superposed compartments, a plurality of individual closures for the compartments, the closures being hinged to the cabinet along a common vertical hinge axis, a locking tongue reciprocally mounted on each closure and adapted to project from the free edge thereof, a common keeper for said tongues hinged to the cabinet along a vertical hinge axis, and means for locking said keeper in a position overlying said tongues.

2. In a distribution cabinet, a pair of side walls, a rear wall, a series of horizontal partitions extending between the side walls and defining a plurality of closely adjacent superposed compartments, a plurality of individual clos-

4

ures for the compartments, the closures being hinged to the cabinet along a common vertical hinge axis, a locking tongue reciprocally mounted on each closure and adapted to project from the free edge thereof, a common keeper for said tongues hinged to the cabinet along a vertical hinge axis and means for locking said keeper in a position overlying said tongues, and yieldable interengaging means carried by adjacent closures to permit movements thereof in unison when the tongues of said closures are released from said keeper.

3. A cabinet according to claim 2 wherein the yieldable interengaging means consists of a spring loaded ball projecting beyond one of the horizontal edges of each closure and a corresponding socket at the other horizontal edge of the closure, so positioned that each ball fits into the socket in the edge of the adjacent closure.

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