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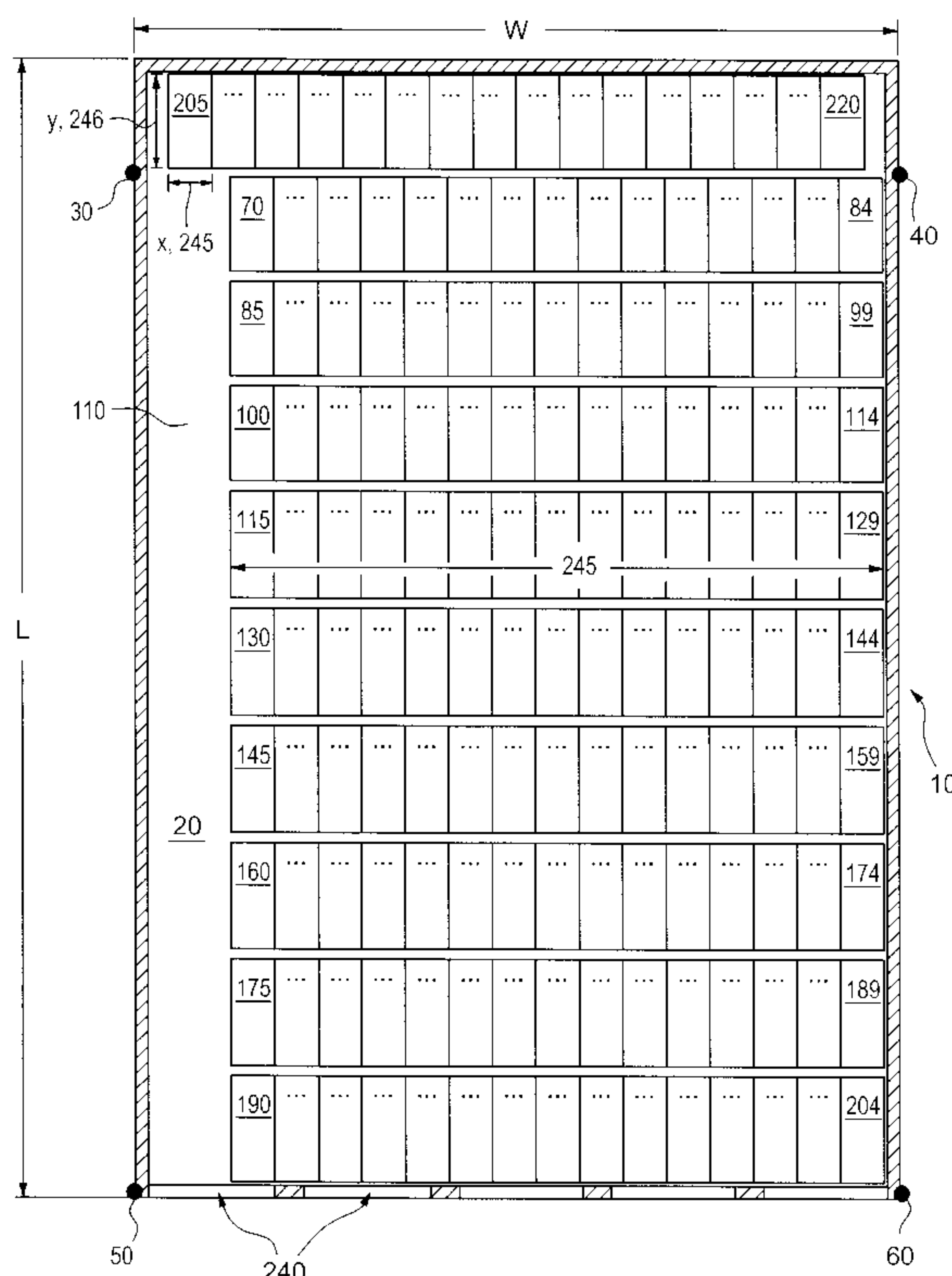


FIG. 3

(57) **Abrégé/Abstract:**

A high density storage facility including a plurality of rows of independently movable carriage racks, each row having a plurality of the independently movable carriage racks. Each carriage rack has a height, a length and a width, and defines a plurality of tiers, each tier defining at least one storage slot, the slots extending substantially the length of the carriage racks and being substantially open and accessible for inserting and removing objects into and from the width ends of the carriage racks. The carriage racks are disposed within the floor area and are independently movable along the floor in a direction consistent with the width of the floor



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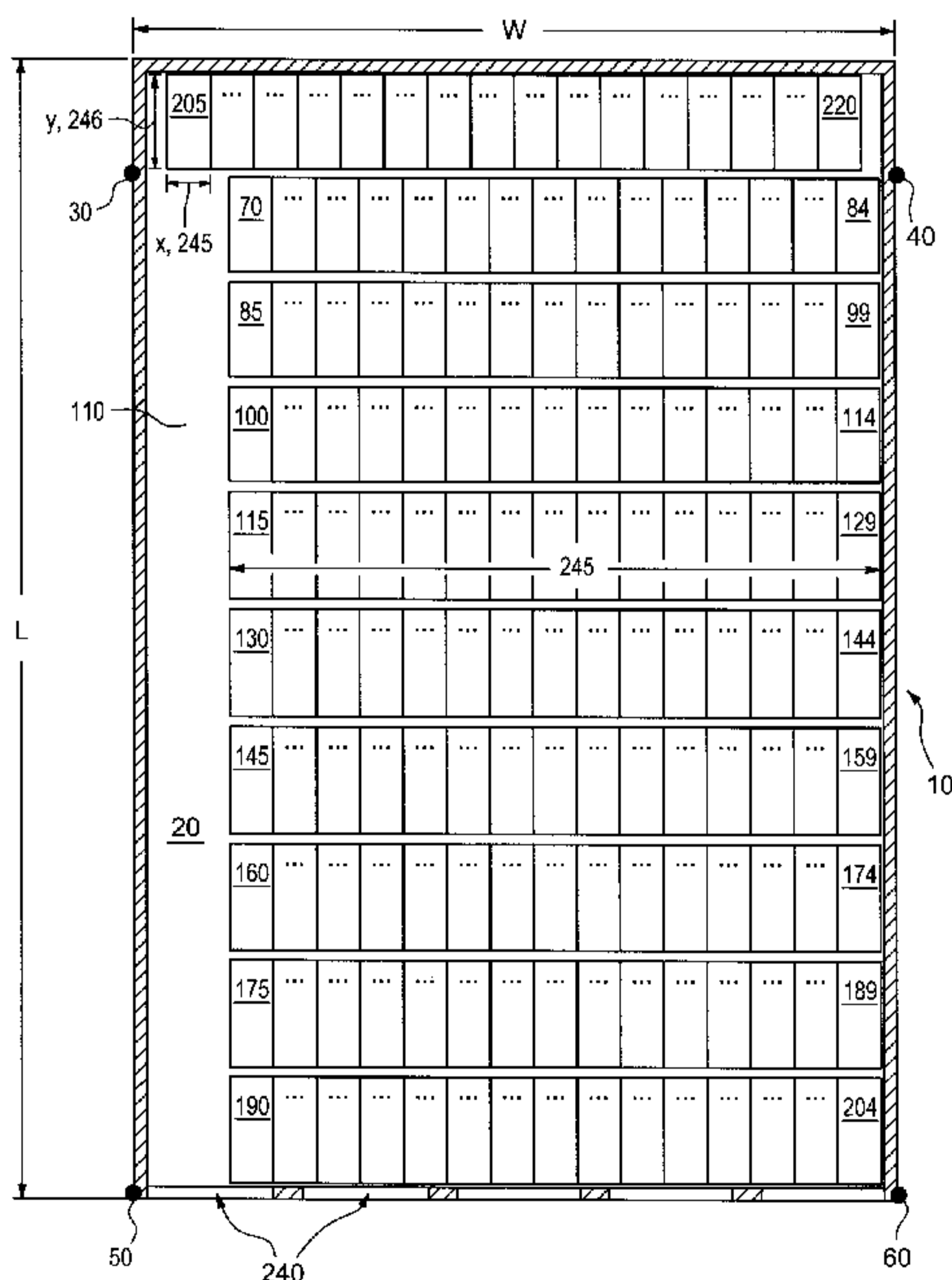


FIG. 3

(57) Abstract: A high density storage facility including a plurality of rows of independently movable carriage racks, each row having a plurality of the independently movable carriage racks. Each carriage rack has a height, a length and a width, and defines a plurality of tiers, each tier defining at least one storage slot, the slots extending substantially the length of the carriage racks and being substantially open and accessible for inserting and removing objects into and from the width ends of the carriage racks. The carriage racks are disposed within the floor area and are independently movable along the floor in a direction consistent with the width of the floor area.

HIGH DENSITY STORAGE FACILITY RELATED APPLICATIONS

[0001] This Application claims priority to U.S. Application No. 13/241,326 filed on 23 September 2011, which is a continuation-in-part application of U.S. Application No. 12/464,745, filed on 12 May 2009, and of U.S. Provisional Application Numbers 61/514,057, filed on 2 August 2011 and 61/127346, filed on 12 May 2008, all of which are incorporated herein by reference.

BACKGROUND

[0002] The present application relates to high density storage facilities, and more particularly to high density storage facilities for storing intermodal containers, boats and other large items.

[0003] Despite advances in building materials, material handling vehicles, and techniques, there is still a need for storage facilities for large sized objects such as intermodal containers, boats, cars, furniture and the like. Such facilities should provide mechanisms for obtaining ready and efficient access to the stored objects, as well as optimal use of storage space.

[0004] For example, conventional boat storage facilities include a large building with racks aligned along the walls and a large unoccupied floor space. This results in a large amount of unused space, as depicted in FIG. 1 for building B with corners C1, C2, C3 and C4. Two access entryways A1 and A2 are defined at an end of building B to enable a fork-lift truck to place and withdraw large items such as boats from the three stationary, fixed storage racks R1, R2 and Rs.

[0005] A more efficient system is depicted in FIG. 2 based on U.S. Patent No. 5,140,787 by the present inventor for facility F having building corners C1-C4 and a stationary rack S1 extending along length L of facility F. Multiple access doors A1, A2, A3 and A4 are provided along the length L. One or more of four movable elongated rectangular racks R1, R2, R3 and R4 can be rolled along length L to expose a selected rack row to a fork-lift truck entering through one of access doors A1-A4. However, many square feet of space must still be left open to provide turning and maneuvering room for the fork-lift truck, and

multiple access doors must be provided along the side of an elongated building.

[0006] Container terminals for storing and retrieving intermodal containers exhibit similar problems. Conventional facilities consume large areas of valuable seaport acreage. Because conventional facilities may use numerous aisles and provide wide spaces between intermodal containers, and because such containers are generally randomly placed and widely spaced, many terminal operators have difficulty in controlling the storage, retrieval and delivery of the containers. This often results in time consuming and costly repositioning and searching operations for displaced containers.

[0007] Therefore, a need exists for a high density storage facility which provides ready and efficient access to the space within the facility where items may be stored.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0008] An object of the present invention is to provide a highly modular and adaptable storage system which increases the storage capacity of a given area.

[0009] This invention features a high density storage facility including a plurality of rows of independently movable carriage racks, each row having a plurality of the independently movable carriage racks. Each carriage rack has a height, a length and a width, and defines a plurality of tiers, each tier defining at least one storage slot, the slots extending substantially the length of the carriage racks and being substantially open and accessible for inserting and removing objects into and from the width ends of the carriage racks. The carriage racks are disposed within the floor area and are independently movable along the floor in a direction consistent with the width of the floor area. Preferably, the carriage racks are arranged in the rows within the floor area with the lengthwise sides of the carriage racks being arranged substantially parallel to the lengthwise sides of the floor area.

[0010] In some embodiments, the carriages include a mechanism for moving the racks, such as at least one independently controllable motor to drivably move each carriage rack across at least a portion of the width of the floor area. The carriage racks may further be coupled and uncoupled along the width of the enclosed storage area for providing access to the width ends of the racks from the doors. The carriage racks may be connected and disconnected along their lengthwise sides, forming rows which are movable in a widthwise

direction along the storage area. Tracks for rolling the carriage racks may extend along the width of the storage area. According to one embodiment, the carriages include motor mechanisms for moving the racks across a portion of the storage area. For some applications, it may be useful to include as many rows of carriage racks as will fit along the width of the storage area.

[0011] The number of carriage racks may be chosen such as to leave a portion of the floor area unoccupied, of a size sufficient to provide access from optional doors to the width ends of the carriage racks upon selective movement of carriage racks within the rows along the width of the storage area. According to one embodiment, at least one door is selectively disposed along the wall of the building so as to provide access to the unoccupied floor area upon selective movement of one or more of the carriage racks in the rows of carriage racks along the width of the storage area. The unoccupied floor area may be selected to be of such size as to accommodate manipulation of the objects within the unoccupied floor area for insertion into the slots. The unoccupied floor area may further be selected to be of such a size as to be accessible to the doors upon movement of one or more of the carriage racks in the rows of carriage racks along the width of the floor area. A row of racks may include a series of spaced vertical supports interconnected by a series of spaced horizontal supports. The horizontal supports may be adjustable in position along the height of the vertical supports.

[0012] The facility may include a row of stationary racks arranged along at least one wall, the stationary racks having a certain length, width and height and being divided from top to bottom into storage slots. The slots may extend the length of the racks, and may be open and accessible from a width end for inserting and removing objects. The width ends of the racks may face the storage area.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

- [0013] In the accompanying drawings:
- [0014] **FIG. 1** depicts a conventional boat or other large object storage facility;
- [0015] **FIG. 2** depicts a known floor plan as taught in U.S. Patent No. 5,140,787;
- [0016] **FIGS. 3-8** depict an exemplary embodiment of a floor plan and operation of a storage facility utilizing carriage racks according to the present invention;
- [0017] **FIG. 9** is a schematic view of a pair of carriage racks coupled together and

mounted on wheels set in parallel tracks for rolling the carriage racks along the floor.

[0018] **FIG. 10A** depicts an electromagnetic coupling system suitable for use with illustrative embodiments of the present invention;

[0019] **FIG. 10B** depicts an exemplary rack, mounted on an electromagnetic carriage suitable for use with a maglev system according to exemplary embodiments;

[0020] **FIG. 10C** depicts an exemplary rack, mounted on a wheeled carriage suitable for use with a maglev system according to exemplary embodiments;

[0021] **FIG. 11** is a top view of a narrow storage area converted into a high density storage facility according to the present invention;

[0022] **FIG. 12** is a top schematic view of a storage facility similar to FIG. 2 showing six rectangular racks and a wide fork-lift truck aisle area;

[0023] **FIG. 13** is a top view showing how additional storage slots can be provided according to the present invention for the facility of FIG. 12 after a retrofit;

[0024] **FIGS. 14 and 15** are schematic top views of another high-density storage facility according to the present invention;

[0025] **FIGS. 16A-16D** are schematic side elevational views of different carriage rack storage configurations according to the present invention;

[0026] **FIGS. 17A-1 and 17A-2** are top left and right views, respectively, sharing match line ML-ML, of another high density storage facility according to the present invention;

[0027] **FIGS. 18A-1 and 18A-2** are side elevational left and right views, respectively, sharing match line ML-ML, of the stationary racks of FIGS 17A-1 and 17A-2 aligned with the length of the storage facility;

[0028] **FIG. 19** is an end elevational view of the width and height of the storage facility of FIGS. 17A-1 and 17A-2;

[0029] **FIGS. 20A-1, 20-A-2, 20B, 20C and 20D** are schematic side elevational views of different carriage configurations A, B, C and D of FIGS. 17A-1 and 17A-2;

[0030] **FIG. 21** depicts an exemplary carriage rack, mounted on a wheeled carriage suitable for use with an intermodal container according to exemplary embodiments; and

[0031] **FIG. 22** depicts an exemplary overhead view of fixed racks and carriage racks configured for use with an intermodal container according to exemplary embodiments.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0032] This invention may be accomplished by a high density storage facility including a plurality of rows of independently movable carriage racks, each row having a plurality of the independently movable carriage racks. Each carriage rack has a height, a length and a width, and defines a plurality of tiers, each tier defining at least one storage slot, the slots extending substantially the length of the carriage racks and being substantially open and accessible for inserting and removing objects into and from the width ends of the carriage racks. The carriage racks are disposed within the floor area and are independently, selectively movable as desired along the floor in a direction consistent with the width of the floor area to provide access to a chosen storage slot within a determined row. Preferably, the carriage racks are arranged in the rows within the floor area with the lengthwise sides of the carriage racks being arranged substantially parallel to the lengthwise sides of the floor area. The following description sets forth illustrative embodiments of the present invention, it being understood that other embodiments not specifically described herein are encompassed by the present invention.

[0033] **FIGS. 3-8** show the overall floor plan of an illustrative storage facility **10**. In one embodiment, a floor area **110** which is defined by lines connecting points **30, 40, 50, 60** is provided. The floor area may be in the shape of a polygon, for example, a rectangle or a square. The floor area includes a width, designated “W” in Figure 3, and a length, designated “L” in Figure 3. The direction indicated by the double-arrows associated with the width W in Figure 3 is referred to herein as the “widthwise direction,” and the direction indicated by the double arrows associated with the length L in Figure 3 is referred to herein as the “lengthwise direction.”

[0034] As depicted in **Figures 3 and 4**, an exemplary embodiment has a floor area of 275 feet by 425 feet, which allows a number of suitably placed carriage racks to be accessed. One having ordinary skill in the art will understand that the floor area may be greater or smaller than that shown, depending on the application. More or fewer carriage racks may be employed as needed. The carriage racks and the fixed racks each have a length and a width, as indicated by length “Y” **246** and width “X” **245** of fixed rack **205** in at least **Figure 3**. While the length and width have been described with relation to fixed rack **205**, each carriage rack as discussed below has a length “Y” **246** and width “X” **245**. Each fixed rack has a length and a width along the same axes defined in relation to fixed rack **205**.

Likewise, each carriage rack has a length and a width along the same axes defined in relation to other carriage racks in the same row and adjacent rows. The lengthwise direction of the fixed racks and the carriage racks may correspond to the lengthwise direction of the floor area, and the widthwise direction of the rack may correspond to the widthwise direction of the floor area.

[0035] A carriage rack is a movable rack, which may include means for locomotion integrated into the frame of the carriage, or may be mounted on a movable carriage structure. A plurality of movable carriage racks **70-84, 85-99, 100-114, 115-129, 130-144, 145-159, 160-174, 175-189, and 190-204** are arranged as shown in rows within floor area **110**, each row including a number of individual racks. Depending on the application, as many or as few carriage racks as needed may be selected. In the illustrative embodiment depicted in **FIG. 4**, each row includes 15 carriage racks. In this illustrative embodiment, a selected width of the area **110** is filled with carriage racks, for purposes of maximum space utilization. In other embodiments, concerns other than space utilization may call for a different configuration or a different number of racks.

[0036] In the illustrative embodiment, each row of carriage racks **70-84, 84-99, 100-114, 115-129, 130-144, 145-159, 160-174, 175-189, and 190-204** is movable widthwise along the area **110**. The rows may be mounted on rotatable rollers or wheels, such as wheels **11, FIG. 9**, which are in turn mounted in guides, slots or rails such as tracks **12** which extend a selected width of area **110, FIG. 3**. Alternatively, the rows may be mounted using any other system that facilitates the movement of the carriage racks, such as a magnetic levitation system, an air levitation system that allows movement of the rows of racks, or a system of wheels without a track, the system of wheels can include one or more tires. In the illustrative embodiment, wheels **11, FIG. 9**, are mounted at the bottom of both widthwise sides of each carriage rack **302, 304** and a series of spaced parallel tracks **12** are provided along the width of the area **110** to coincide with the direction of displacement. It is not a limitation of the invention that consecutive even reference numbers 302 and 304 are utilized in **FIG. 9**, while consecutive odd and even numbers are utilized in **FIGS. 3-8**. In some embodiments, each carriage rack in each row is movable independent of other carriage racks in the row. For example, in some embodiments carriage rack **70** moves independently of carriage racks **71-84**. In some embodiments two or more racks are coupled or formed together to move in unison. For example, in some embodiments carriage racks **70** and **71**

move in unison.

[0037] In the embodiments shown in **FIGS. 3-8**, all of the carriage racks in each row have the same length and width, although the lengths and widths of individual rows of carriage racks may vary. In that case, the widthwise disposition of wheels and complementary tracks **12** should coincide with the lengths of each individual carriage rack. The tracks may extend the width of area **110**, i.e. between the line connecting points **(30, 60)** and points **(40, 50)**. Alternatively, the tracks may extend a different distance, depending on the particular application. In some embodiments the widths **245, FIG. 10B**, of individual carriage racks may vary from row to row or in a row. In some embodiments the lengths **246** of carriage racks may vary from row to row or in a row.

[0038] Each carriage rack may be divided into slots **14, FIG. 9**, from top to bottom. In applications such as boat storage, one having ordinary skill in the art will appreciate that the total height of the slots may be determined by the facility. However, the size of the carriage racks may vary depending on the application.

[0039] In one embodiment, the carriages and racks are a unitary structure including a series of parallel vertically oriented supports **18** connected from top to bottom by a series of parallel horizontal **19** supports. Conventional mechanisms may be provided for adjusting a horizontal support up and down along the vertical supports **18**. For example, the mechanisms may adjust the horizontal support in increments of, for example, inches, or may adjust the horizontal support in larger or smaller increments, depending on the application. In one embodiment, the vertical distance between successive horizontal supports defines the slot height and the horizontal distance between successive vertical supports **18** defines slot width.

[0040] According to one embodiment, a series of doors **240, FIGS. 3-8**, are disposed along one widthwise wall of the facility. An unoccupied and changeable service and loading area **20** may be provided, the size of which may be selected based on a number of factors. Such factors may include where doors **240** are disposed along the outer wall.

[0041] When carriage racks in a row **70-84, 85-99, 100-114, 115-129, 130-144, 145-159, 160-174, 175-189**, and **190-204** are appropriately moved along the floor area **110**, enough floor area **20** may be left unoccupied so as to enable the user to gain access to

the width ends **245** of each row. As shown in **FIGS. 3 -8**, the unoccupied floor area **20** may be large enough relative to the displacement of doors **240** so as to enable a user of the facility to gain access to the width ends **245** of the carriage racks. This can be accomplished by moving one or more carriage racks sufficiently to enable a user to gain access to the width ends **245** of racks in a row through a door **240**. Objects to be stored in the slots may be inserted via the width ends **245** of the carriage racks. In some embodiments, objects to be stored in the slots may be inserted via the length wise opening **246** of the carriage racks.

[0042] As shown in **FIGS. 3-8**, a stationary row of racks **205-220** along the doorless widthwise wall may be provided. This may allow for greater storage utilization in the facility. The width ends **245** of racks **205-220** may also be accessible through at least one door **240** by appropriate movement of carriage racks in rows **70-84, 85-99,100-114,115-129,130-144,145-159,160-174,175-189, and 190-204** of carriage racks along the width of area **10**.

[0043] The size of the unoccupied floor area **20** may be selected such that it is large enough to allow the objects to be stored in the carriage racks and to be manipulated into the width ends **245** of the carriage racks. For example, the length and width of the unoccupied floor space **20** may be selected to be long enough and wide enough to enable a forklift to align itself parallel to the length of the carriage racks for insertion and removal of the boat(s) into and from the width ends **245** of the carriage racks. Likewise, the size of the unoccupied floor area **20** may be selected such that it is large enough to allow the objects to be stored in the carriage racks and to be manipulated into the length wise opening **246** of the carriage racks. For example, the length and width of the unoccupied floor space **20** may be selected to be long enough and wide enough to enable a forklift to align itself perpendicular to the length of the carriage racks for insertion and removal of an intermodal container from the length wise opening **246** of the carriage racks.

[0044] **Figure 4** depicts unoccupied floor space **20** at the far left of the floor area **110**. This configuration may facilitate, for example, access to the width end **245** of rack **220**. However, with reference to **Figures 5-6**, a user may desire to gain access to the width end **245** of carriage rack **104** to remove an object from the rack. According to one embodiment of the present invention, appropriate carriage racks may be shifted in a widthwise direction with respect to the floor area **110**, as depicted in **Figures 5-6**. In **Figure**

6, the appropriate carriage racks have been shifted such that unoccupied floor space 20 provides a passage to the width end 245 of carriage rack 104, allowing access to carriage rack 104, for example, by a forklift. In Figure 7, the carriage racks have been further shifted to provide a passage via unoccupied floor space 20 to the width end 245 of carriage rack 136. Similarly, in Figure 8, appropriate carriage racks have been shifted in order to provide access via unoccupied floor space 20 from the door to the width end of carriage rack 167.

[0045] In one embodiment, the lengths and widths of movable carriage racks 70-84, 85-99, 100-114, 115-129, 130-144, 145-159, 160-174, 175-189 and 190-204 may vary among different movable rows provided within a facility 110. The facility 110 may be provided with an unoccupied area 20 of at least a size sufficient to obtain access through an appropriate door 240 to all of the width ends 245 of the carriage racks. This may be accomplished, for example, upon appropriate widthwise movement of successive rows of carriage racks within a floor area defined by lines between points 30, 40, 50, and 60. The facility 10 may be provided with a stationary row of racks 205-220. These stationary racks may also have varying widths, or may be of the same width, and may be located along a doorless wall. The movable carriage racks 70-84, 85-99, 100-114, 115-129, 130-144, 145-159, 160-174, 175-189, and 190-204 may be aligned such that their lengthwise dimensions are substantially parallel to the lengthwise dimension of area 110.

[0046] In some embodiments, it may be necessary or desirable to access the length ends of the carriage racks. For example, intermodal containers may be stored in the racks which must be lifted, for example by a forklift, from the length ends. Accordingly, the racks may be oriented so as to afford access to the length ends from the doors.

[0047] In more detail, FIG. 9 depicts a schematic front view of a pair of illustrative coupled carriage racks 302 and 304 according to the present invention. The racks are divided into slots 14 by vertical supports 18 and by horizontal supports 19. A row of carriage racks may extend across the width of a selected defined floor space (*e.g.* between points 30, 60 and 40, 50), or may extend across any width that is appropriate to the particular application. The movable coupled racks may be mounted on rollable, rotatable wheels 11 which, in turn, may be mounted within complementary tracks 12 provided on the floor surface. In one embodiment, each axle A has at least one drive motor M to provide redundant systems to move the carriage racks.

[0048] The racks may alternatively be mounted on carriages. For example, **FIG. 10B** depicts an exemplary rack, mounted on an electromagnetic carriage suitable for use with a maglev system according to exemplary embodiments of the present invention. **FIG. 10C** depicts an exemplary rack, mounted on a wheeled carriage suitable for use with a maglev system according to exemplary embodiments of the present invention.

[0049] The carriage racks may be coupled along the lengthwise side, the widthwise side, or both. The carriage racks may be coupled using any suitable coupling method, such as by an electromagnetic coupling system, an electromotive coupling system, or a mechanical coupling system such as a system of hooks. For example, **FIG. 10A** depicts an electromagnetic coupling system suitable for use with illustrative embodiments of the present invention, such as to join together the lengths 246 of two carriages.

[0050] In one embodiment, the rows of fixed racks **205-220, FIGS. 3-8**, may be aligned such that their width ends **245** face the widthwise side of area **110** and are substantially parallel thereto. The stationary racks may be smaller, lengthwise or widthwise or both, than the movable racks for purposes of ease of loading, unloading and storage of smaller objects. Alternatively, the stationary racks may be of the same size as the movable carriage racks, or larger, depending on the application.

[0051] In one embodiment, motor means may be provided to drive the movable carriage racks in the rows of carriage racks along the lengths of area **110**. Remote control means for the motor means may be provided for access to the user outside of area **110**. These remote control means may be outside, such as on the outside surfaces of the walls in which access doors **240** are disposed. The user can thus drivably move the carriage racks remotely from outside areas **20, 110**. Alternatively, the remote control means may be located inside, as appropriate to the application. The motor means may also be controlled locally.

[0052] **FIG. 11** depicts a storage facility **400** according to the present invention nestled between walls **402** and **404** defining a narrow width **W**. For this example, width **W** is 35 feet and length **L** is 140 feet. Access for fork-lift trucks is provided at end **406**, where one or more access doors can be constructed. Row **408** has four 20-foot long by 8-foot wide storage slots in a first tier, which is provided by four movable carriage racks in one construction and is a single stationary rack having four slots in another construction.

Movable fork truck aisle 410, having a width of 11 feet for the carriage positions shown in FIG. 11, represents the open area needed within storage facility 400 to manipulate movable carriage racks in rows 412, 414, 416, 418 and 420 as needed to access a selected storage slot. Each row 412-420 is formed of three independently movable carriage racks which move substantially along width W between walls 402 and 404. In the illustrated construction, each row 412-420 has one carriage having a width of 8 feet, a second, middle carriage having a width of 7 feet, and a third carriage having a width of 8.5 feet. Carriage racks in rows 412 and 414 have lengths of 20 feet while carriage racks in rows 416-420 have lengths of 22 feet. The movable carriage racks provide a total of fifteen storage slots on the first tier to accommodate 15 items of different sizes and lengths on the first tier, such as different types of boats. Adding a second tier to each carriage rack and the stationary rack doubles the storage slots to 38 items. Five tiers would handle at least 95 items, assuming one storage slot per tier; other storage slot per tier configurations are described below.

[0053] Storage facility 500, FIG. 12, is similar to facility F in FIG. 2 as described above in the Background and is also based on U.S. Patent No. 5,140,787 by the present inventor. In this construction, facility 500 has an overall length L of 200 feet and an overall width W of 135 feet. A single stationary rack 502 extends along the length L defining fifteen stationary slots SS1-SS15 in a first tier. Facility 500 further includes six movable rectangular racks 504, 506, 508, 510, 512, and 514 each defining a number of movable slots MS1-MS8, MS9-MS20, MS21-MS30, MS31-MS42, MS43-MS52, and MS53-MS62, respectively, with the width ends of the slots facing the width ends of facility 500 and facing the direction of movement indicated by arrows 520 and 521. In other words, each rectangular rack row of boats is moved "fore and aft" or "bow and stern" relative to the position of the boats in the rack rows. Facility F can handle up to 77 boats, ranging in length from twenty feet to thirty nine feet, on tier level 1. Having four levels of tiers with similar storage slots would provide a maximum capacity of 308 boats or similar items for this configuration of facility 500.

[0054] Facility 500 requires an open fork truck aisle space 522 having dimensions of 95 feet, arrow 524, by 60 feet, arrow 526, for a total of 5,700 square feet of open space, to accommodate movement in the length-wise direction, arrows 520 and 521, of the six rectangular rack rows 504-514. Access doors must be provided along length side 528.

[0055] By comparison, if independently movable carriage racks according to

the present invention are installed, and rotated ninety degrees so that their width ends face side 528, an additional 20 boats can be added per tier as shown in FIG. 13 for the area bounded by arrow 524 of 95 feet and by arrow 526 of 60 feet. Installing four levels of tiers would increase the capacity by an additional 80 boats while still providing access to stationary storage slots in rack 502, FIG. 12, as needed. Movable carriage rack rows 540, 542, 544, and 546 each have movable carriage racks MC1-MC5, MC6-MC10, MC11-MC15, and MC16-MC20, respectively. In this construction, carriage racks MC1-MC10 have lengths of 20 feet each, carriage racks MC11-MC15 have lengths of 22 feet each, and carriage racks MC16-MC20 have lengths of 24 feet each. The widths of the carriage racks within each row are 8.5 feet, 8 feet, 8.5 feet, 8 feet, and 8.5 feet, with fork truck aisle 548 having a width of only 18 feet. Boats on movable carriage racks according to the present invention would be selectively moved "beam-to-beam" or side-to-side throughout facility 500 after a retrofit as taught herein. Alternatively, if a facility has an independent, unoccupied space bounded by the dimensions shown in FIG. 13, two additional storage slots can be added to row 540, per tier.

[0056] Storage facility 600 according to the present invention, FIGS. 14 and 15, has a stationary rack 602 and seven rows 604, 606, 608, 610, 612, 614 and 616 of movable carriage racks with their width ends facing narrow end 620. In one construction, facility 600 has an overall width of 135 feet, arrow 622, and an overall length of 200 feet, arrow 624, for a total of 27,000 square feet. Mobile carriage racks of rows 604-616 require an open fork truck aisle 18 feet wide for a length indicated by arrow 626 of 170 feet to 173 feet, for a total open space of approximately 3,060 to 3,114 square feet. To retrieve an item at location X in a carriage rack in row 612, carriage racks in rows 614 and 616 are shifted to the right, into open space 628, as shown in FIG. 15. The open space 628, FIG. 14, is now divided into two areas 630 and 632, FIG. 15, each having a width of 18 feet.

[0057] The first tier level of facility 600 can typically handle 102 boats ranging in length from 20 feet to 39 feet, and four tier levels would accommodate up to 408 of such boats. Retrofitting a conventional storage facility having a width of 135 feet and a length of 200 feet with an open end 620 with mobile carriage racks according to the present invention can dramatically increase the overall storage capacity. The mobile carriage racks are considerably smaller than the rectangular rack rows disclosed in U.S. Patent No. 5,140,787 and cost less to construct and to operate because entire rack rows are not moved as

entire units.

[0058] Although mobile carriage racks according to the present invention often have one or two slots per tier, that is not a limitation of the invention. Mobile carriage racks 702 and 704, FIGS. 16A and 16B, each have six tiers T1-T6, with decreasing heights of 8 feet for slots S1 and S2, 7 feet for slots S3 and S4, 6 feet for slots S5-S10, and open tops for slots S11 onward. Carriage rack 702 has an overall width of fifteen feet, with odd-numbered slots having a width of 7 feet and even-numbered slots having a width of 8 feet for asymmetric storage. Slots S1-S10 of carriage rack 704 each have symmetric widths of 8 feet, while slots S11-S13 have widths of approximately 5 feet or so to handle personal water craft, kayaks, or other more narrow craft.

[0059] Mobile carriage racks 706 and 708, FIGS. 16 C and 16D, have five tiers T1-T5 with total widths of 18 feet each. Slots S1-S8 of rack 706 each have a width of 9 feet while slots S9-S11 each have widths of 6 feet. The height for slots S1-S2 for both racks 706 and 708 is 10 feet, and the height for slots S3-S6 is 8 feet. Tier T4 of rack 708 has a height of 7 feet and four slots S7-S10 with widths of approximately 4.5 feet each. Open-topped tier T5 of rack 706 has three slots S9-S11 while tier T5 of rack 708 carries one or more pallets P to which a number of smaller items such as personal water craft are secured.

[0060] High density storage facility 800 according to the present invention is shown in top plan view in FIGS. 17A-1 and 17A-2 and in end elevational view in FIG. 19. Storage slots are shown in side elevational view in FIGS. 18A-1 and 18A-2 for stationary rack row 802 along the back length of facility 800. Match lines ML-ML show the relationship of the A-1 to A-2 drawings. Facility 800 has an overall length of 350 feet, arrow 810, and an overall width of 150 feet, arrow 812. The roof peak has a height of 50 feet, FIG. 19, with a front height of 41 feet, arrow 814, and a rear height of 46 feet. Access doors are spaced along length 820 for the front of facility 800. Stationary storage slot configurations, all with lengths or depths of 40 feet, are provided with letters in FIG. 18A-1 to designate the following widths and heights for a total of 120 stationary storage slots:

Table I:

Slot Letter	Width	Height	Total Number
A	14	14	24
B	12	12	12
C	15	12	12
D	10.5	10	24
E	13	10	6
F	8	9	42

[0061] Mobile carriage racks A are shown in end view in FIGS. 20A-1 and 20A-2 with 34 foot lengths and the following widths and heights for a total of 171 mobile A slots:

Table II:

Slot Letter	Width	Height	Total Number
N	8	7	35
M	8	8	35
L	8	9	35
K	10	7	2
J	10	8	2
I	10	9	2
H	10	10	30
G	10	12	30

[0062] Mobile carriage racks B are shown in end view in FIG. 20 B with 26 foot lengths and the following widths and heights for a total of 200 mobile B slots:

Table III:

Slot Letter	Width	Height	Total Number
S	8	7	24
R	8	8	12
Q	8	9	12
P	8	10	24
O	8	10	6

[0063] Mobile carriage racks C are shown in end view in FIG. 20C with 24 foot lengths and the following widths and heights for a total of 200 mobile C slots:

Table IV:

Slot Letter	Width	Height	Total Number
X	8	7	40
W	8	7	40
V	8	8	40
U	8	9	40
T	8	10	40

[0064] Mobile carriage racks D are shown in end view in FIGS. 20 D-1 and 20D-2 with 20 foot lengths and the following widths and heights for a total of 260 mobile D slots:

Table V:

Slot Letter	Width	Height	Total Number
Z'	6	6	52
Y'	6	7	52
X'	6	8	52
Z	6	9	52
Y	6	10	52

[0065] Therefore, in a footprint of 52,500 square feet, approximately 961 normal-sized boats can be stored in facility 800 and readily accessed as needed.

[0066] **Fig. 21** depicts exemplary carriage rack **1100**, mounted on a wheeled carriage **1110** suitable for use with an intermodal container **1112** according to exemplary embodiments. The carriage rack **1100** includes four slots **1114-1118**. Each slot is accessible from the length wise opening **246**. In this embodiment the carriage racks **1100-1104** move in a length wise direction with respect to the length "L" of floor area **110**. In this embodiment, the tracks **12** extend in a length wise direction parallel to the length "L" of floor area **110**. Placement of an intermodal container into one of the slots of the carriage rack **1100** occurs from the length wise opening **246**. Likewise, removal of an intermodal container into one of the slots of the carriage rack **1100** occurs from the length wise opening **246**.

[0067] **Fig. 22** depicts exemplary overhead view of a plurality of carriage racks **1100**, mounted on a wheeled carriages **1110** suitable for use with an intermodal container **1112** according to exemplary embodiments. As exemplary depicted the carriage

racks **1100** move in a length wise direction “L” to define area **20**, which, in turn provides access and egress to a selected one of the carriage racks **1100**. The carriage racks **1100** may move individually. In some embodiments, two or more of the carriage racks **1100** are coupled to move in unison, but can be decoupled to move an individual one of the carriage racks **1100**.

[0068] As discussed above in relation to other embodiments, the carriage racks depicted in Figures 11 and 12, may be electromagnetically coupled and decoupled along a width wise dimension **245** or mechanically coupled and decoupled along a width wise dimension **245**.

[0069] The individual carriage racks in a row of carriage racks may be separately drivable, and the remote motor control may be provided with means for separately driving carriage racks in each row independent of carriage racks in another row. When the user wants to gain access to any particular movable row or stationary rack, the user can separately drive individual carriage racks and rows to move them to appropriate positions within area **110**, whereby access to desired racks can be obtained. In one embodiment, the user can gain such access by remote control.

[0070] In embodiments where a facility according to the invention is to be used for boat storage, area **20** may serve multiple purposes, such as loading/unloading, servicing a boat or other object, cleaning, and repair. In some embodiments, the storage facility may be fully or partially enclosed. The facility may or may not include a roof.

[0071] Although specific features of the present invention are shown in some drawings and not in others, this is for convenience only as each feature may be combined with any or all of the other features in accordance with the invention. While there have been shown, described, and pointed out fundamental novel features of the invention as applied to one or more preferred embodiments thereof, it will be understood that various omissions, substitutions, and changes in the form and details of the devices illustrated, and in their operation, may be made by those skilled in the art without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention. Substitutions of elements from one described embodiment to another are also fully intended and contemplated. It is also to be understood that the drawings are not necessarily drawn to scale, but that they are merely conceptual in nature.

What is claimed is:

1. A high density storage facility comprising:
a floor area having a length and a width;
a plurality of rows of movable carriage racks, each row having a plurality of the carriage racks, each carriage rack having a height, a length and a width, and defining a plurality of tiers, each tier defining at least one storage slot, the slots extending substantially the length of the carriage racks and being substantially open and accessible for inserting and removing objects into and from the width ends of the carriage racks, the carriage racks being disposed within the floor area and being independently movable along the floor in a direction consistent with the width of the floor area, said carriage racks arranged in the rows within the floor area with the lengthwise sides of the carriage racks being arranged substantially parallel to the lengthwise sides of the floor area.
2. The facility of claim 1, further comprising a wall disposed substantially parallel to a widthwise side of the floor area, the wall including at least one door selectively disposed along the length of the wall for providing access to the width ends of all of the carriage racks, the carriage racks being moveable along the width of the enclosed floor area for providing access to the width ends of the racks from the door means.
3. The facility of claims 1 or 2, wherein the carriage racks are releasably coupled along the width of the floor area for providing access to the width ends of the carriage racks.
4. The facility of any preceding claim, wherein at least two rows of carriage racks are disposed within the floor area and wherein as many rows of carriage racks are disposed within the floor area as will fit along the length of the floor area and leave a portion of the floor area unoccupied which is of a size at least sufficient to provide access to the width ends of the carriage racks upon selective movement of the carriage racks in the rows of carriage racks along the width of the floor.
5. The facility of claim 4, wherein the unoccupied floor area is further selected to be of such a size as to accommodate manipulation of the objects within the unoccupied floor area for insertion into the slots.

6. The facility of claims 4 or 5, wherein the unoccupied floor area is further selected to be of such a size as to be accessible upon movement of one or more of the carriage racks in the rows of carriage racks along the width of the floor area.
7. The facility of any preceding claim, wherein at least one door is selectively disposed along a widthwise wall of the facility so as to provide access to the unoccupied floor area upon selective movement of one or more of the carriage racks in the rows of carriage racks along the width of the floor area.
8. The facility of any preceding claim, further comprising at least one independently controllable motor to drivably move the carriage racks across at least a portion of the width of the floor area.
9. The facility of any preceding claim, wherein the carriage racks comprising a row are connected electromagnetically along their lengthwise sides forming rows which are movable and selectively disconnected or uncoupled in a widthwise direction along the floor area.
10. The facility of any of the preceding claim, further comprising a row of stationary racks arranged along the widthwise side of the floor area, the stationary racks having a certain length, width and height and being divided from top to bottom into storage slots, the slots extending the length of the racks and being open and accessible from one width end for inserting and removing objects into and from the width ends of the stationary racks, the width ends of the racks facing the floor area.
11. The facility of any preceding claim, wherein the carriage racks are mounted on tracks for widthwise movement within the floor area, the tracks extending the width of the floor area in a direction substantially parallel to the widthwise side of the floor area.
12. The facility of any preceding claim, wherein the floor area is enclosed.
13. The facility of any preceding claim, wherein at least some of the carriage racks include a series of spaced vertical supports interconnected by a series of spaced horizontal supports.

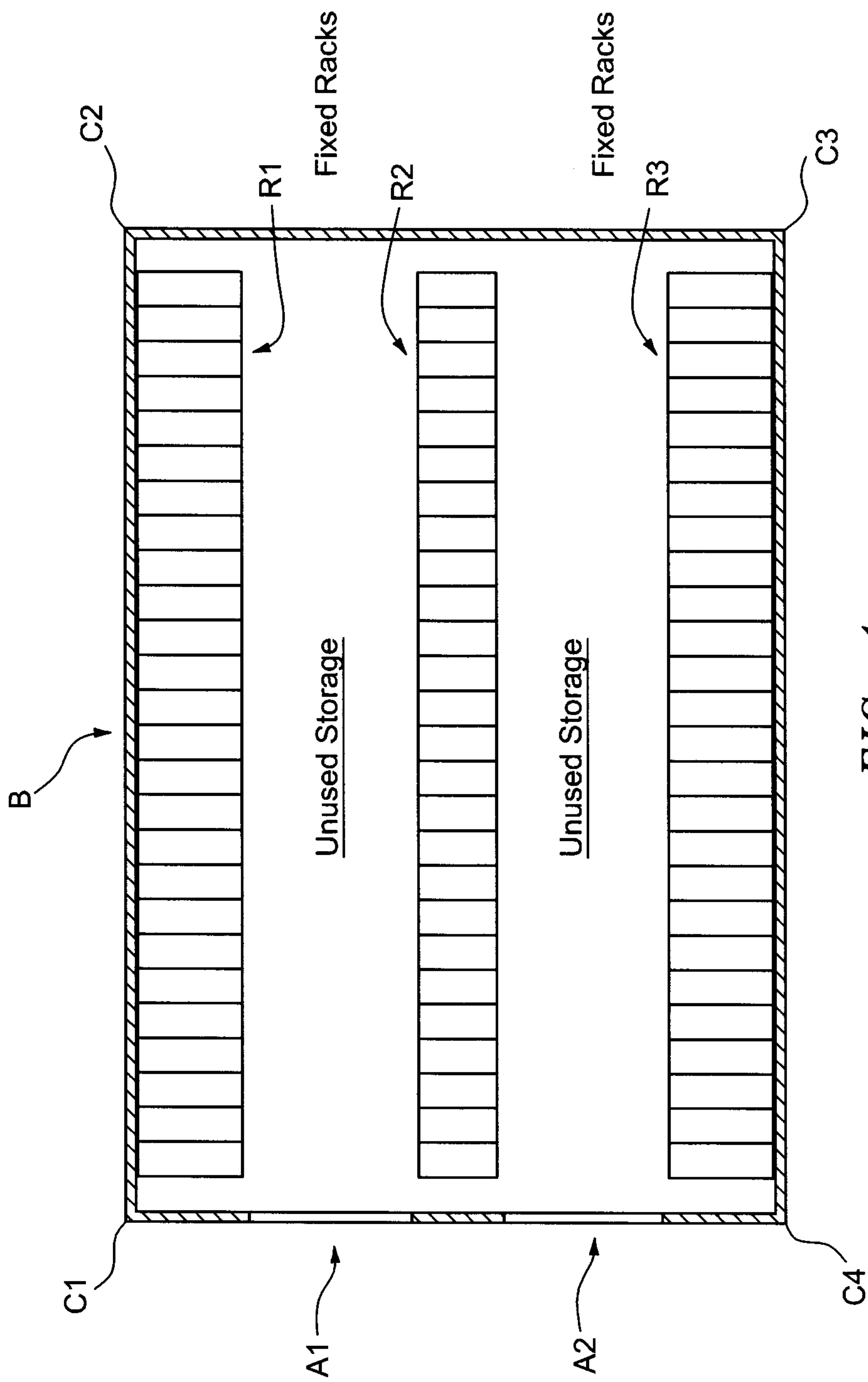


FIG. 1
(PRIOR ART)

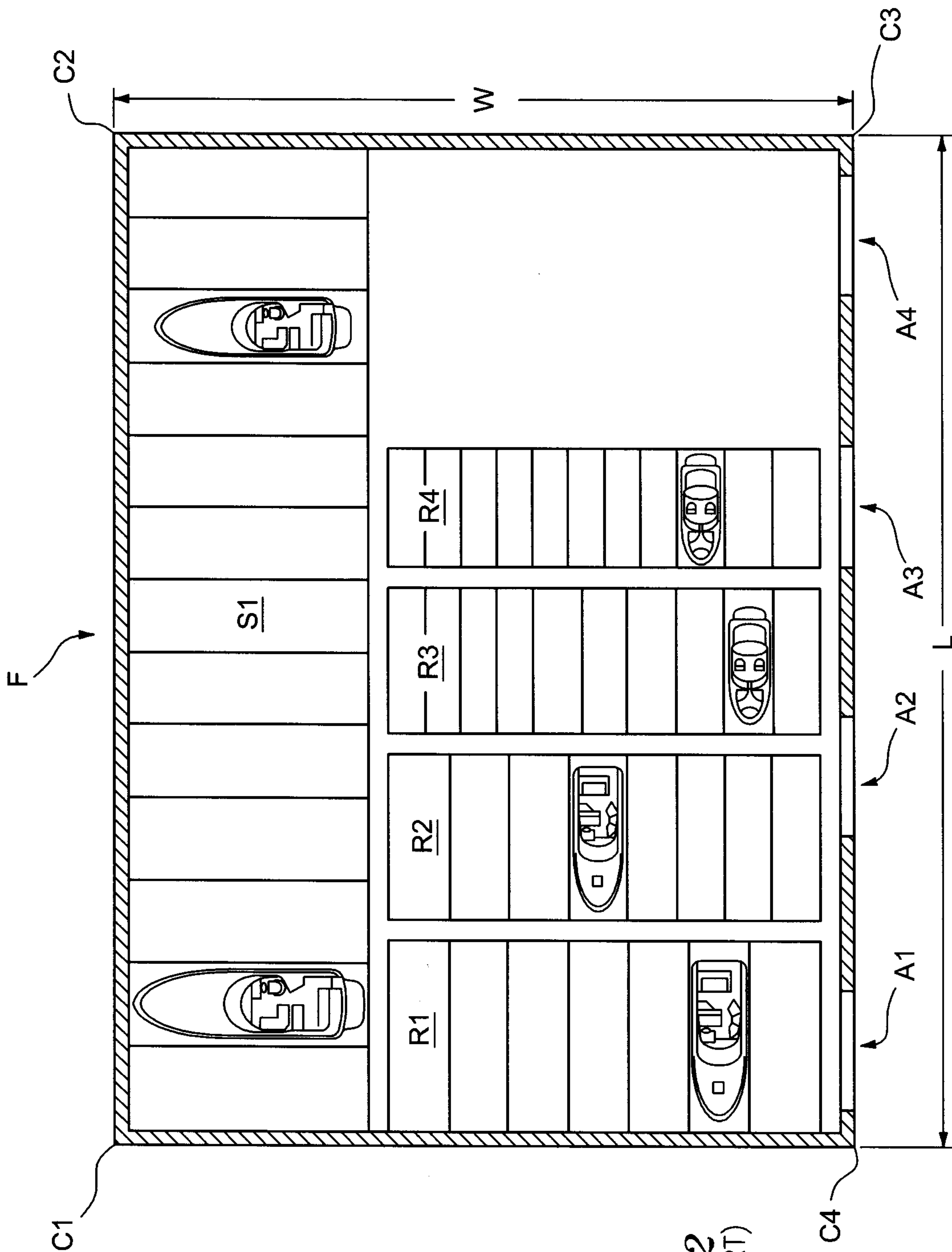


FIG. 2
(PRIOR ART)

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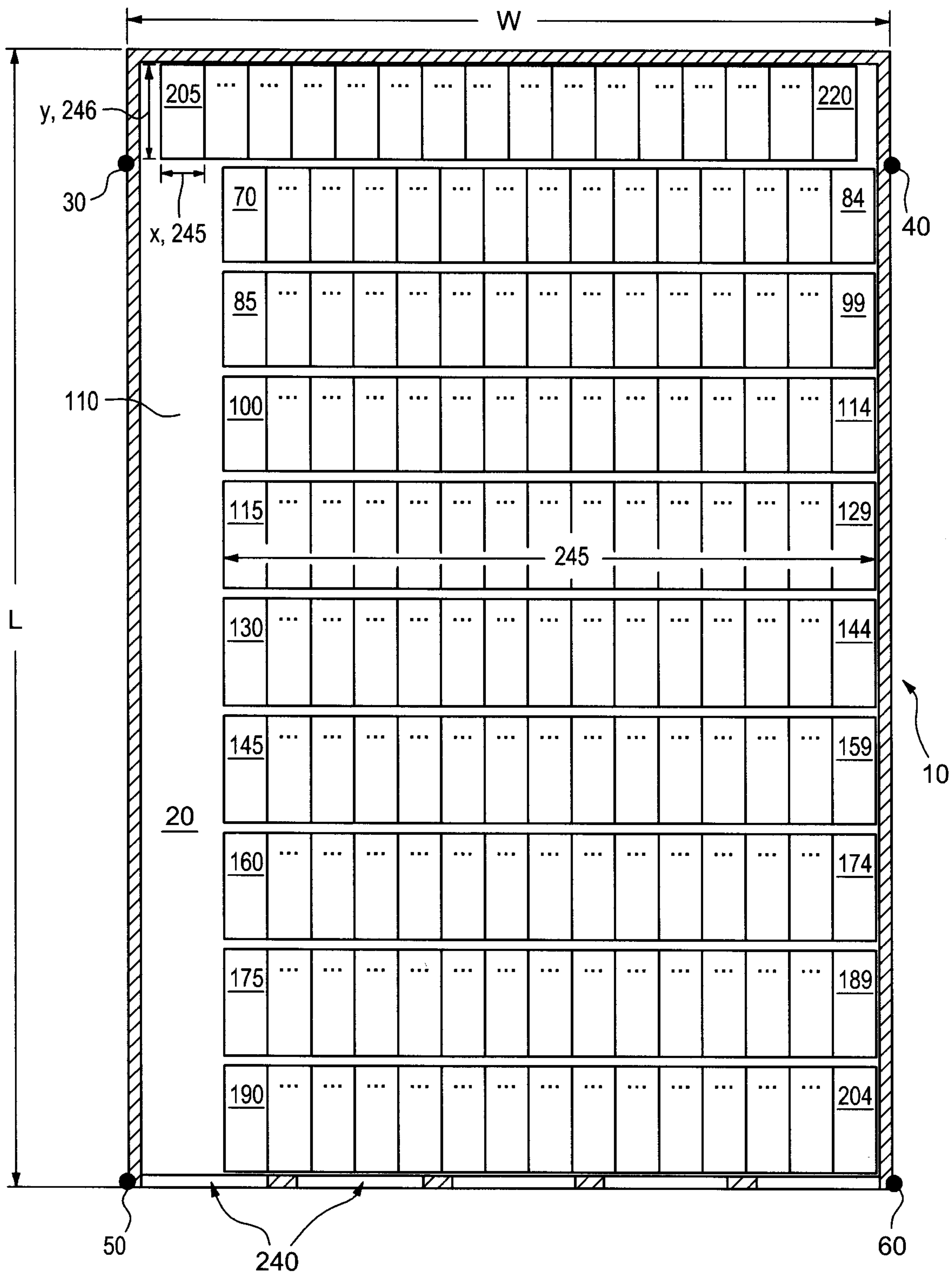


FIG. 3

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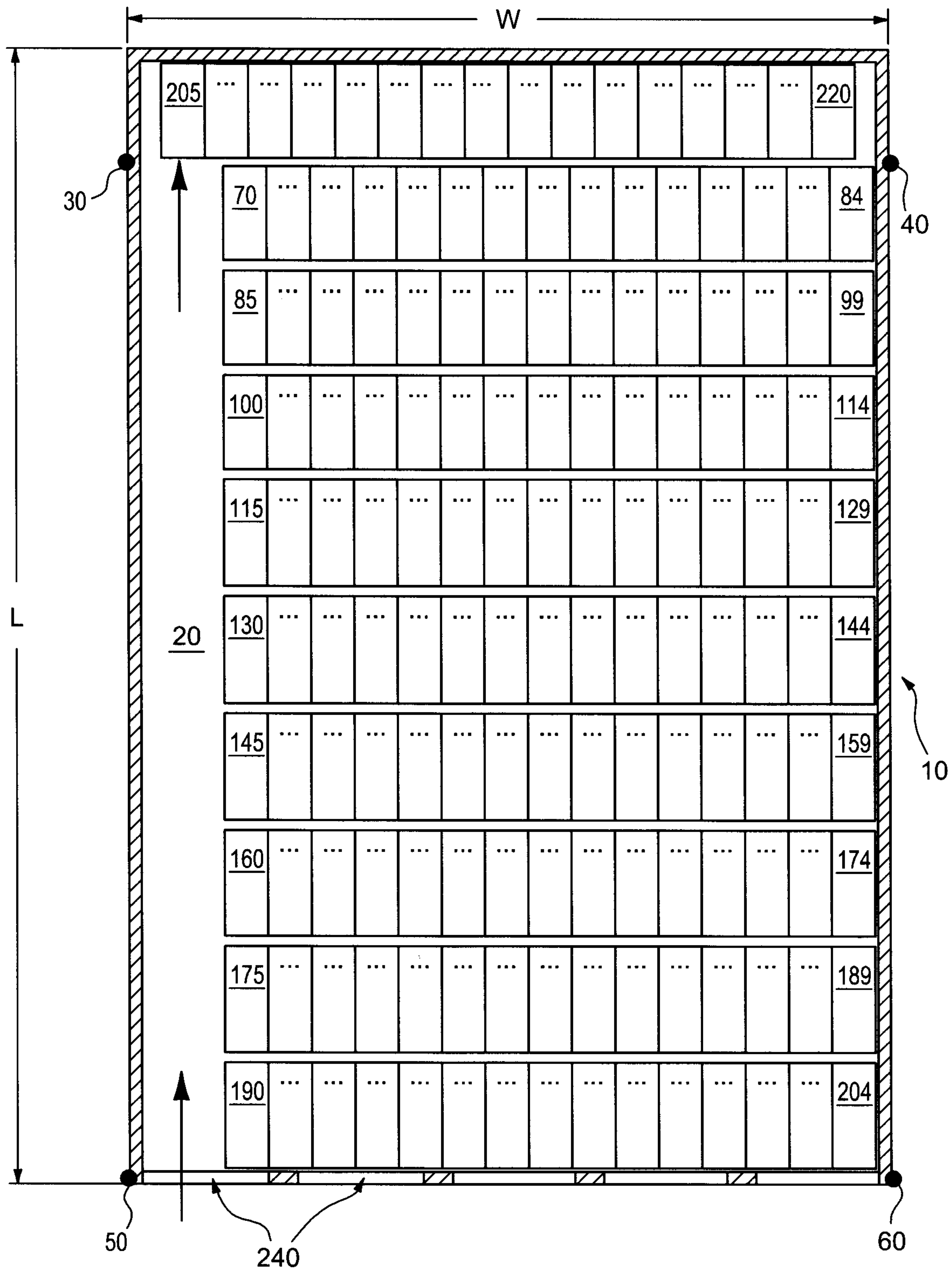


FIG. 4

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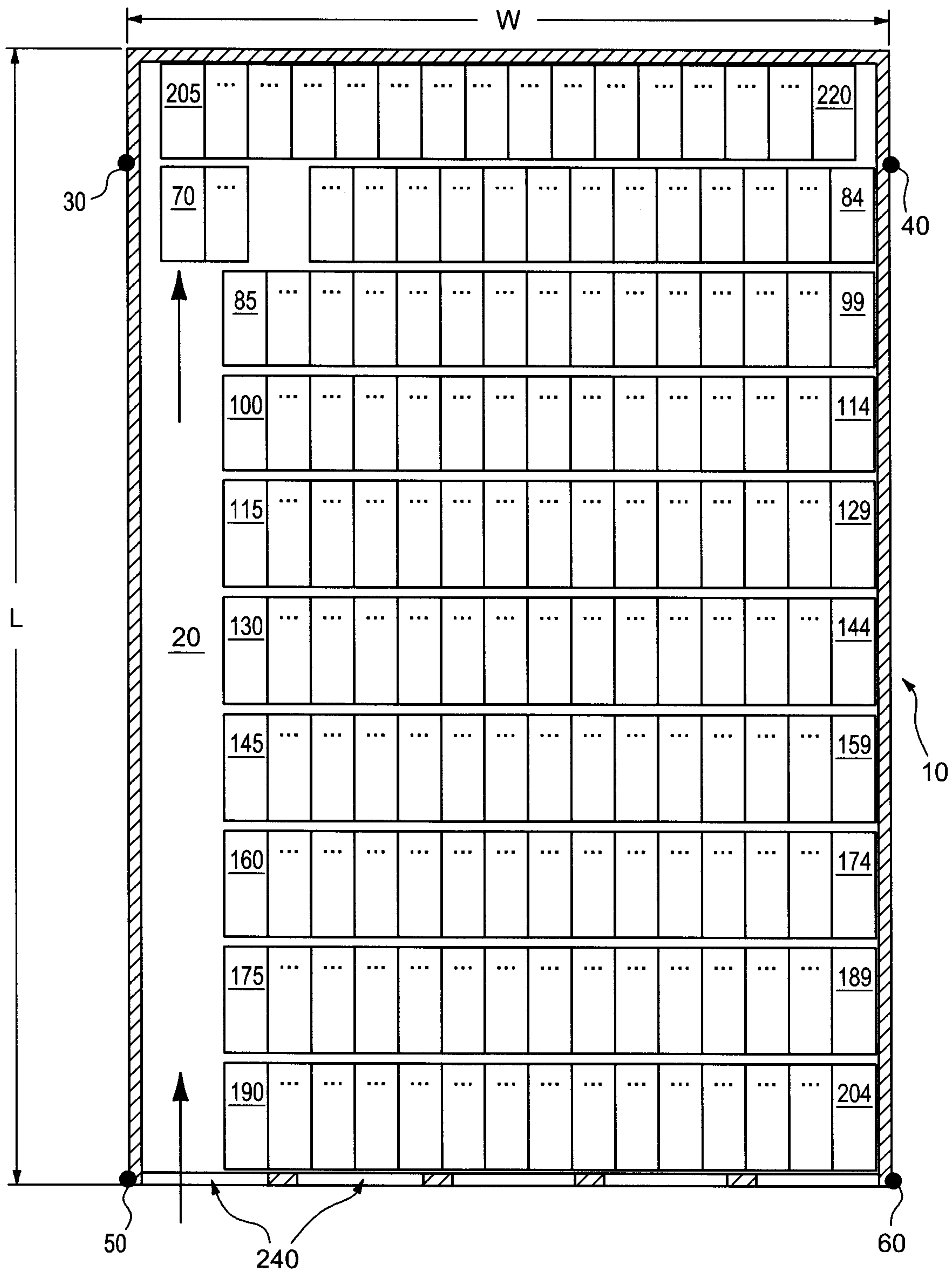


FIG. 5

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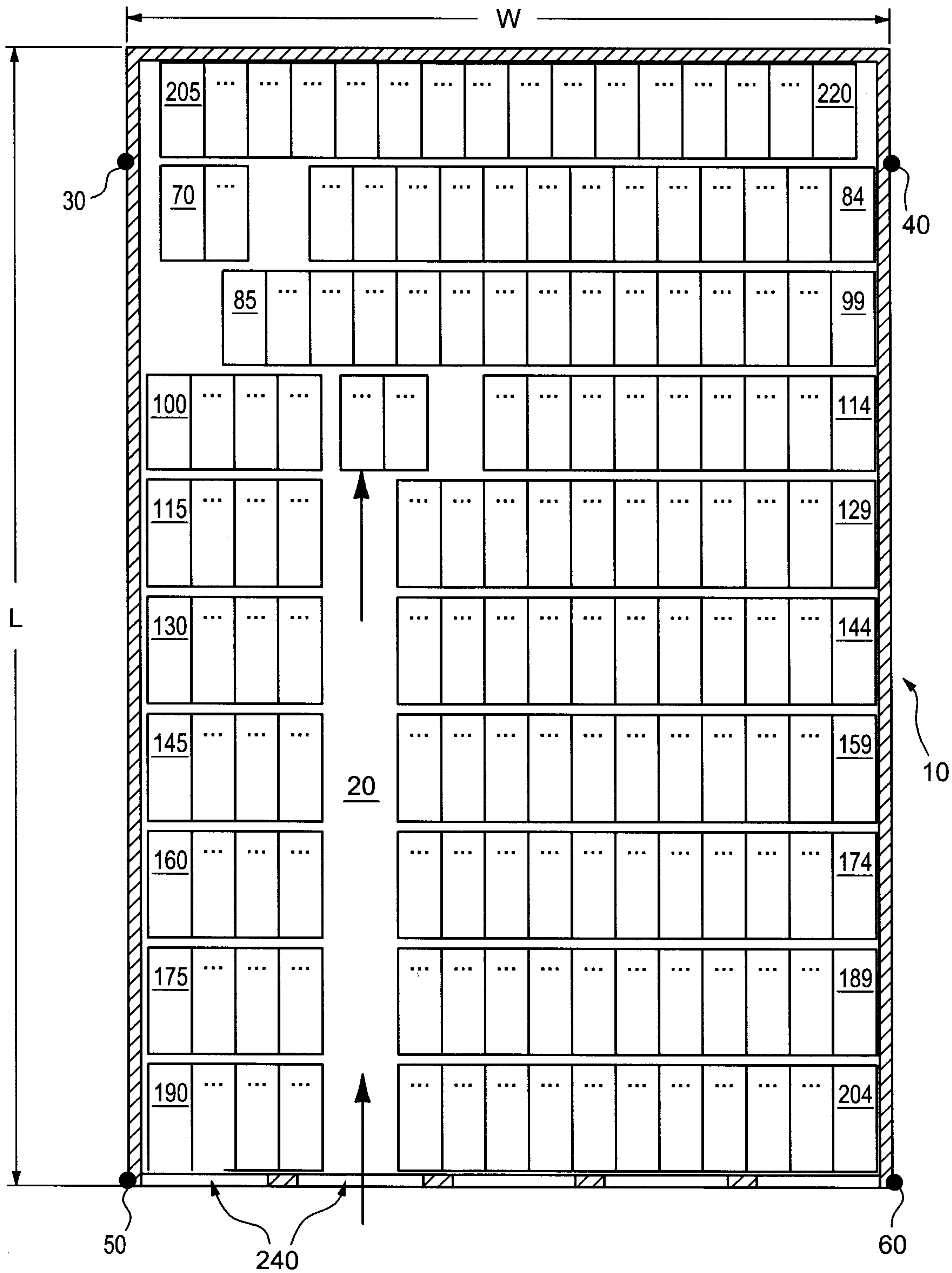


FIG. 6

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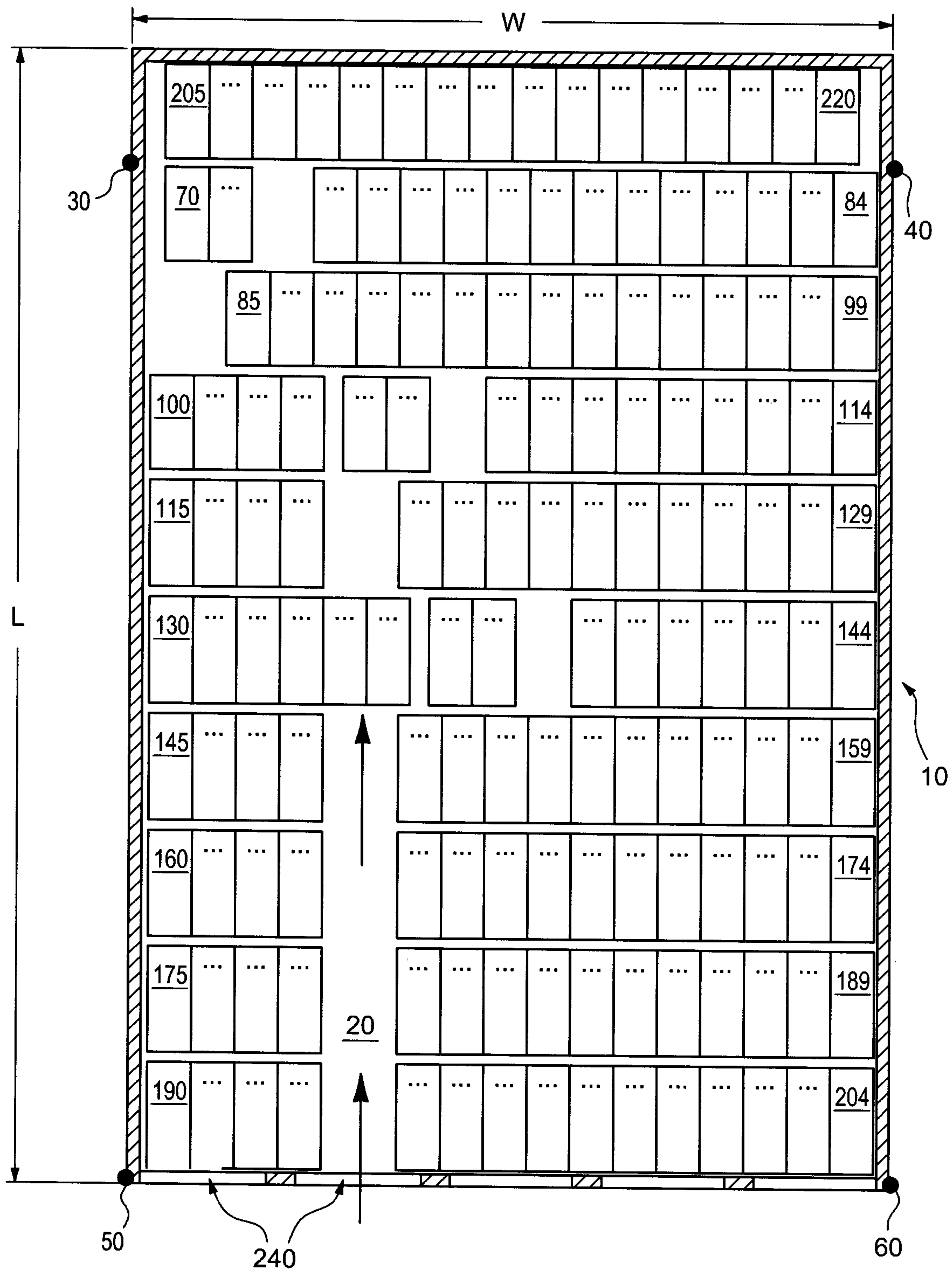


FIG. 7

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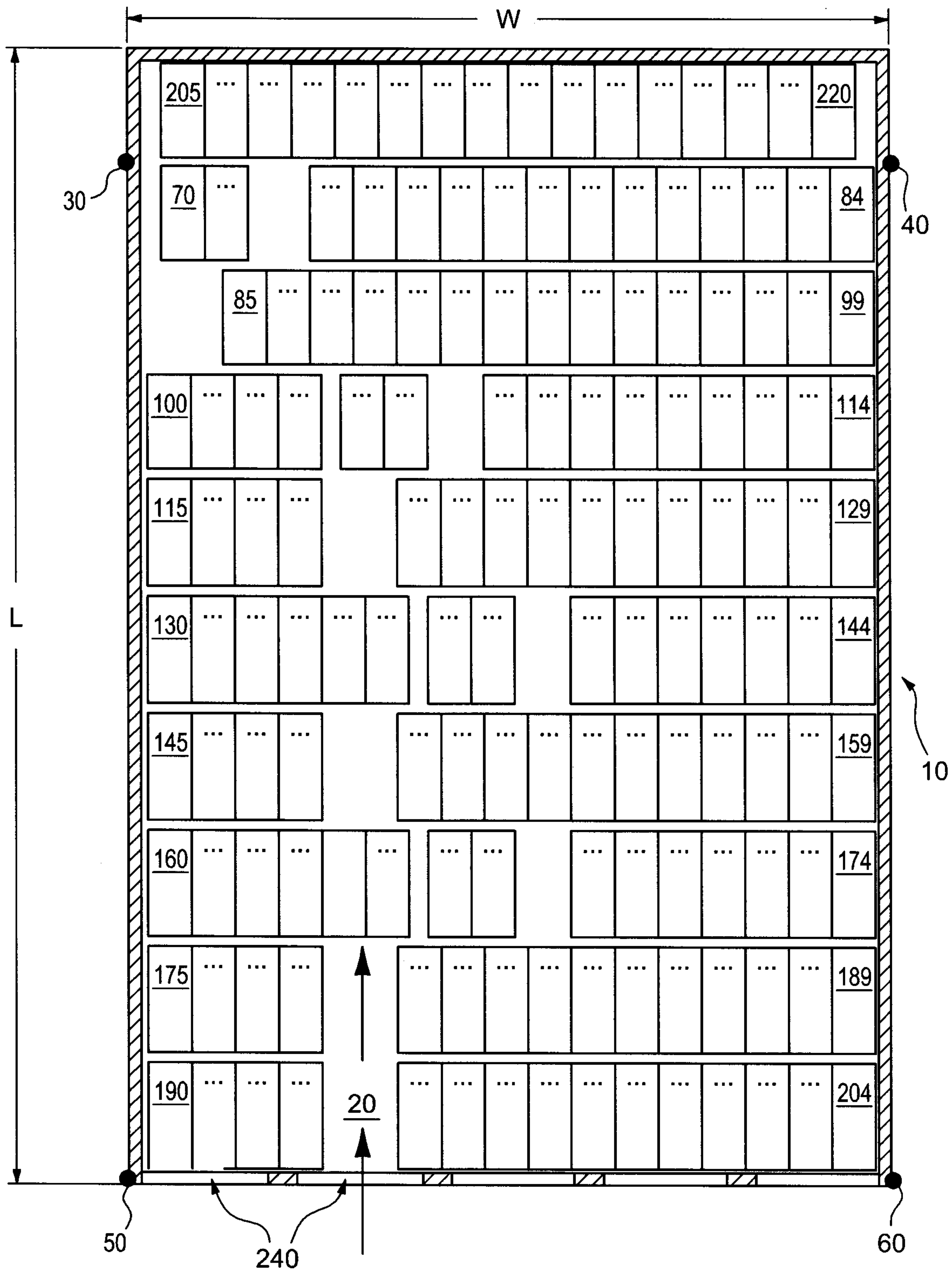


FIG. 8

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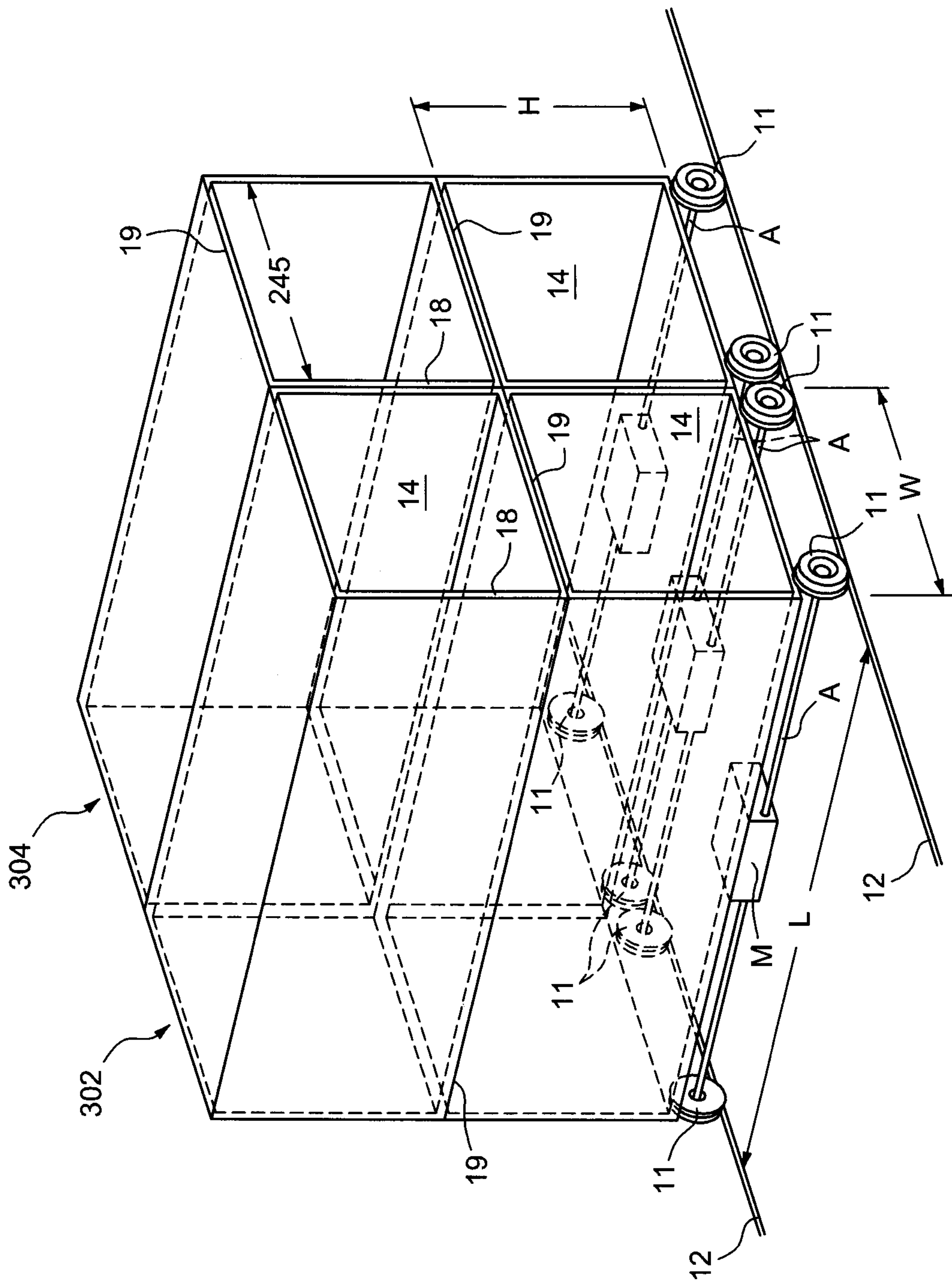


FIG. 9

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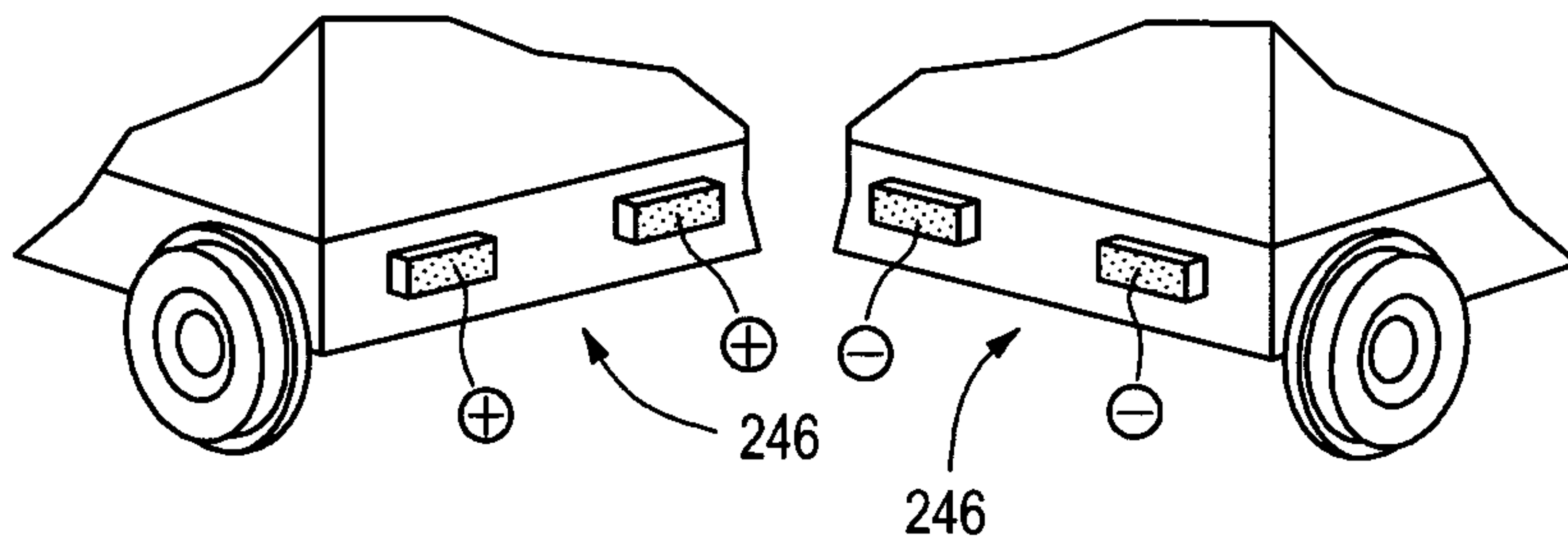


FIG. 10A

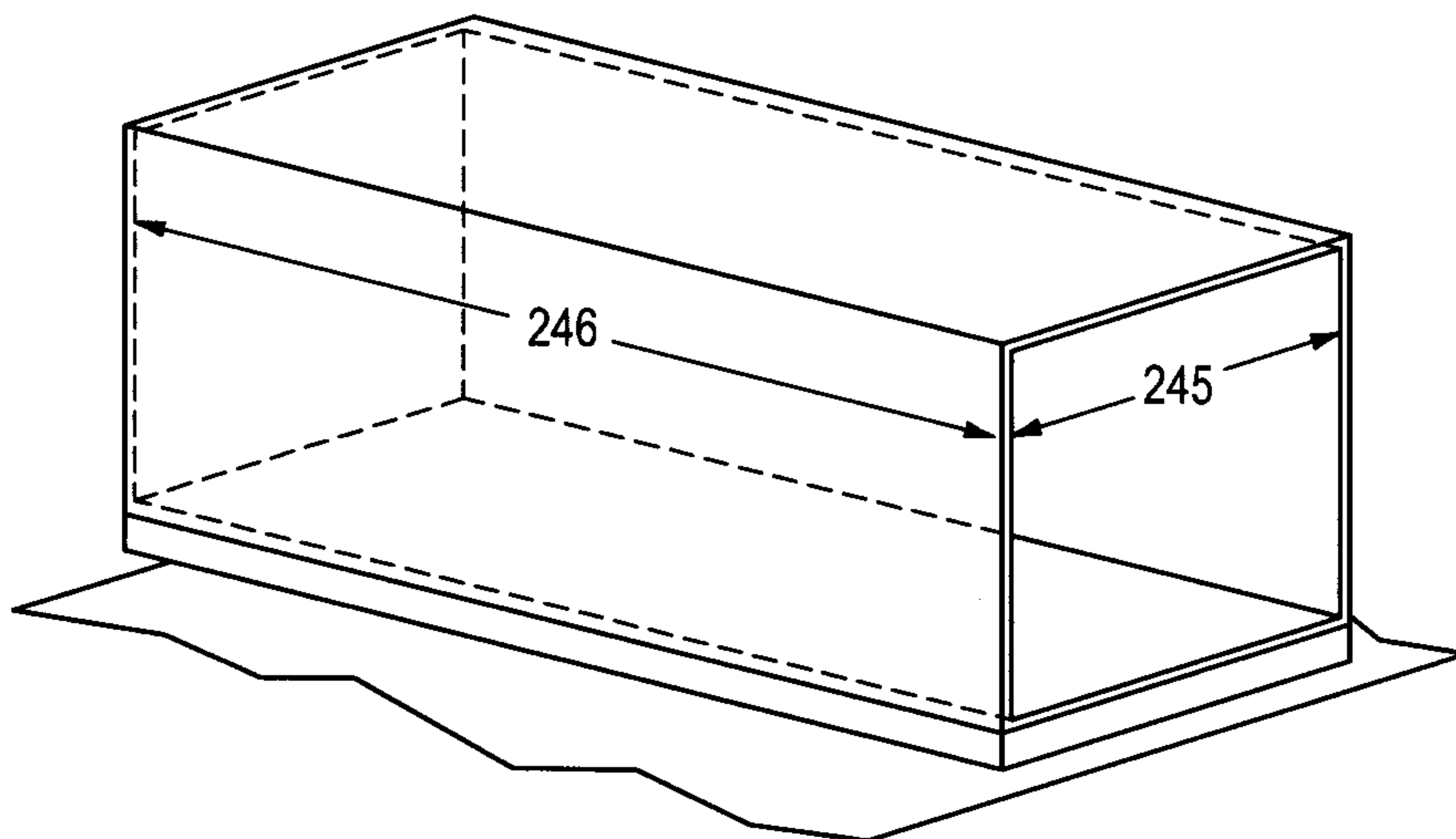


FIG. 10B

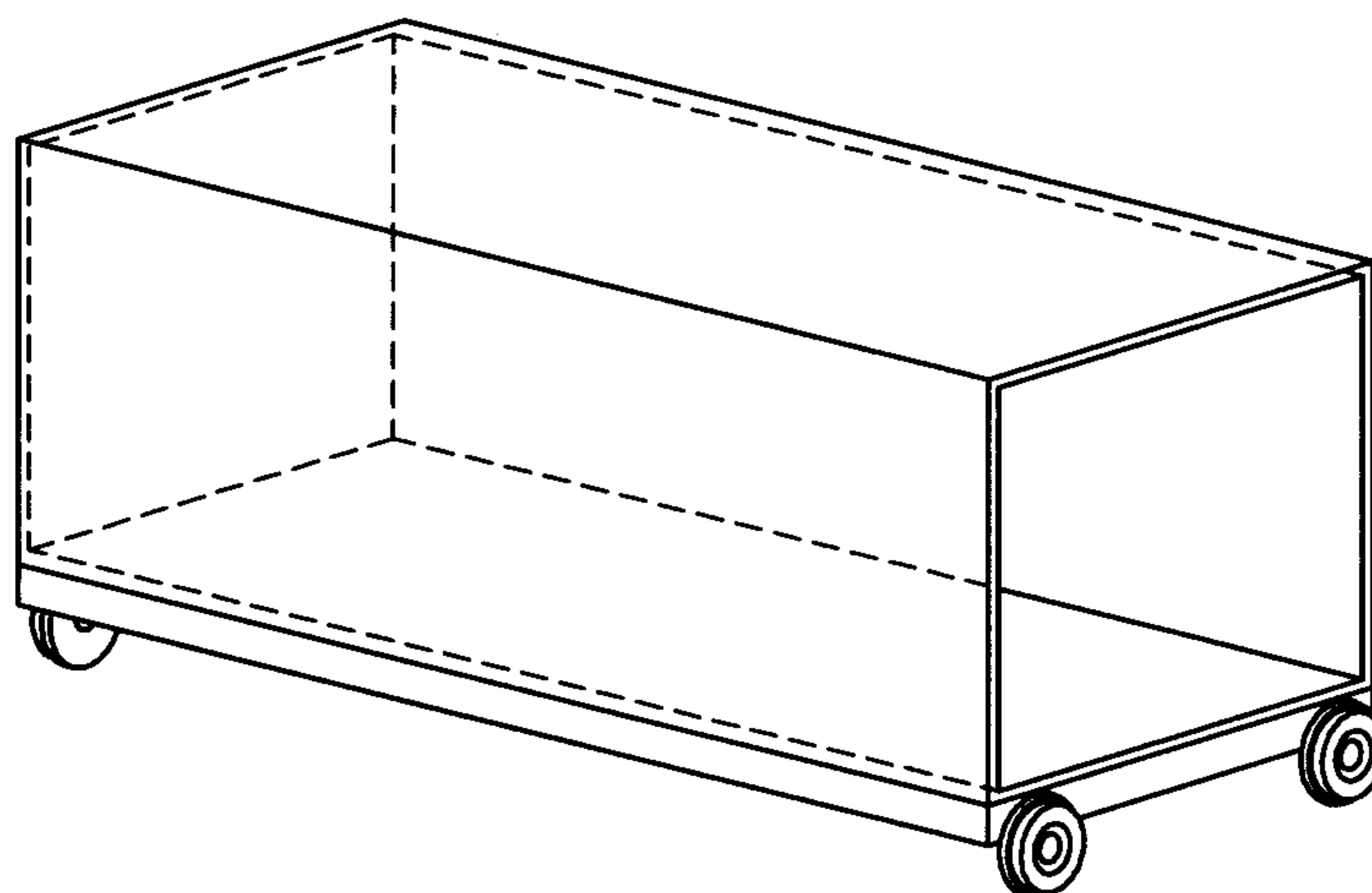


FIG. 10C

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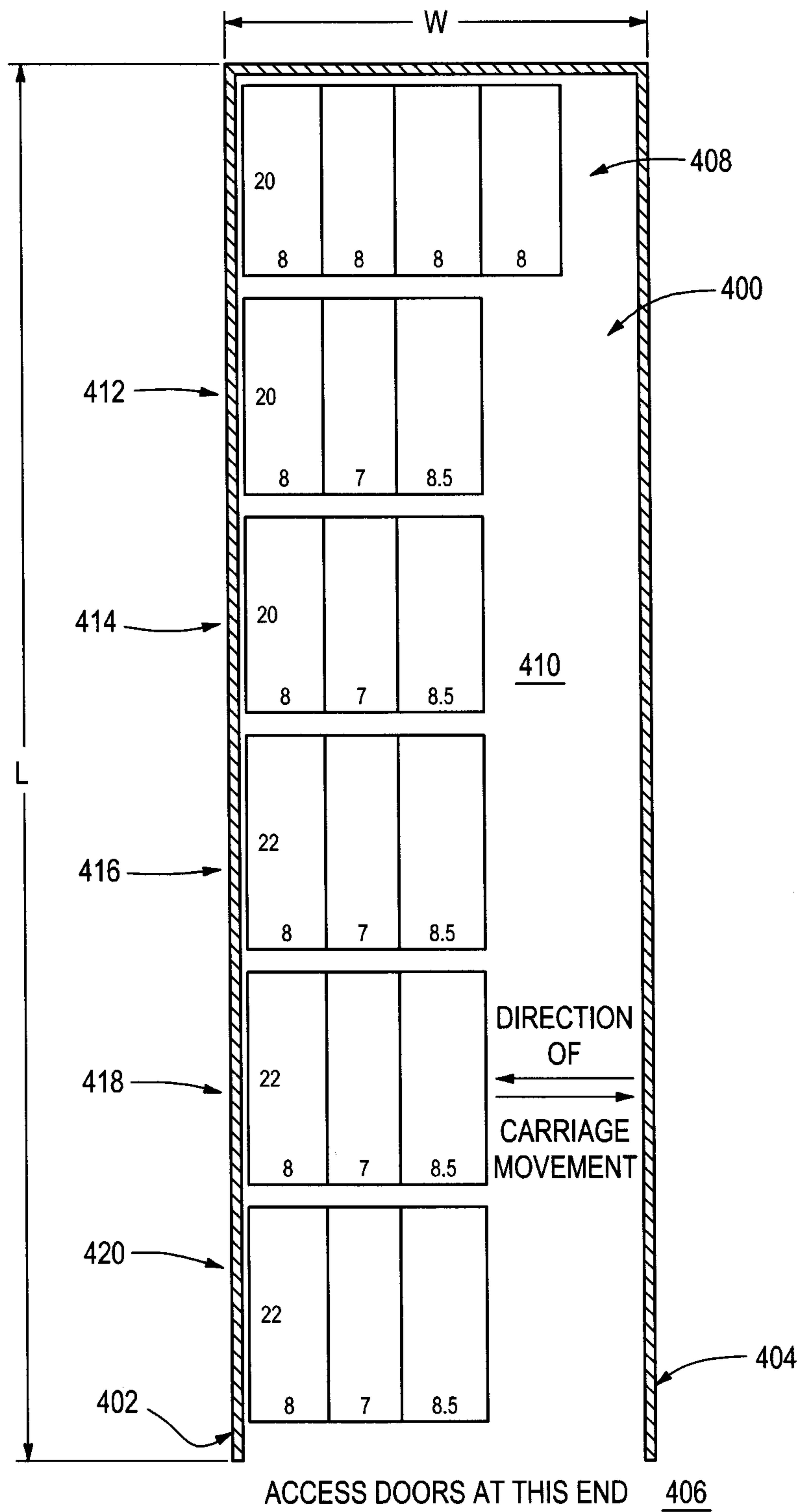


FIG. 11

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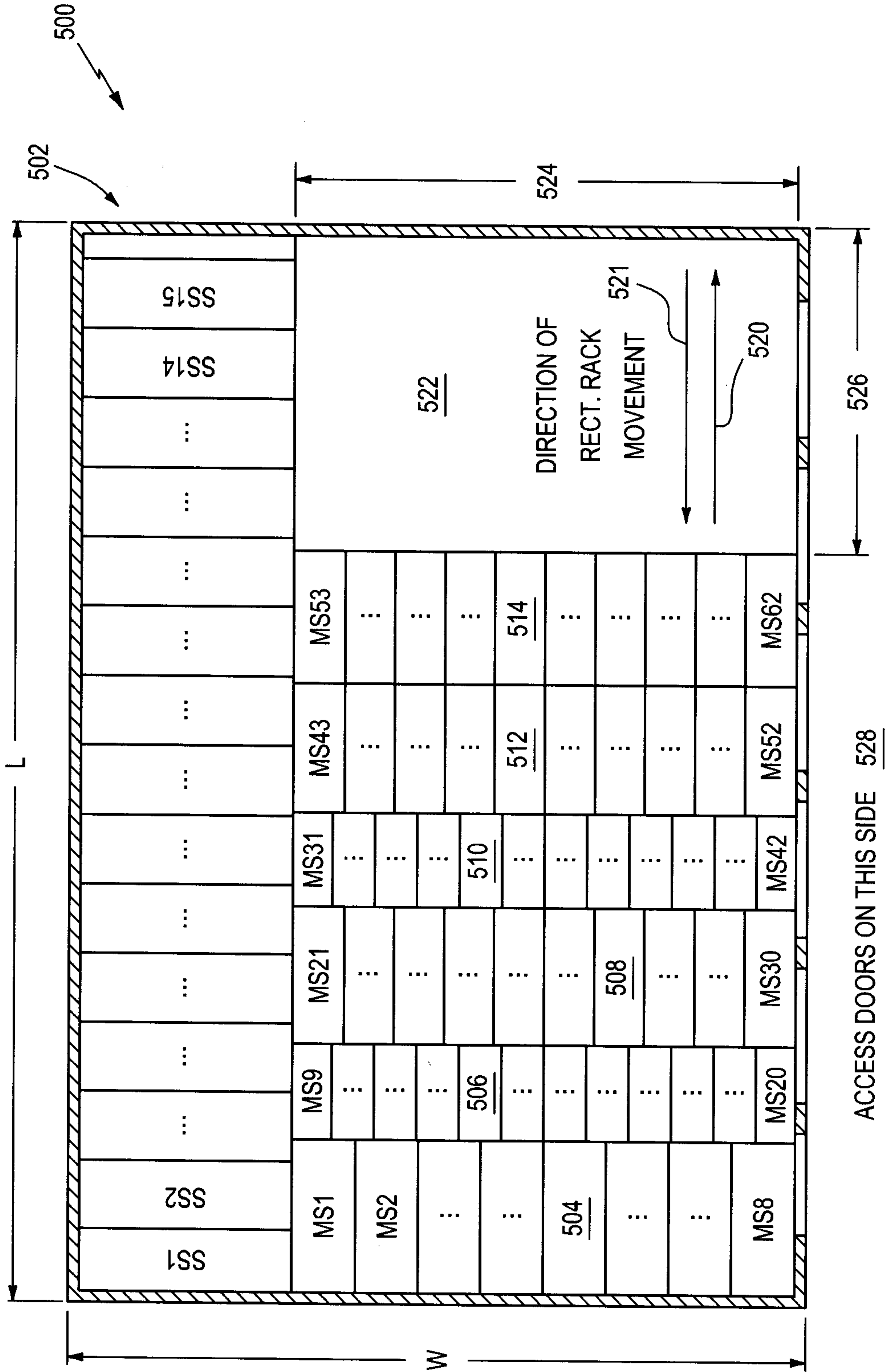


FIG. 12

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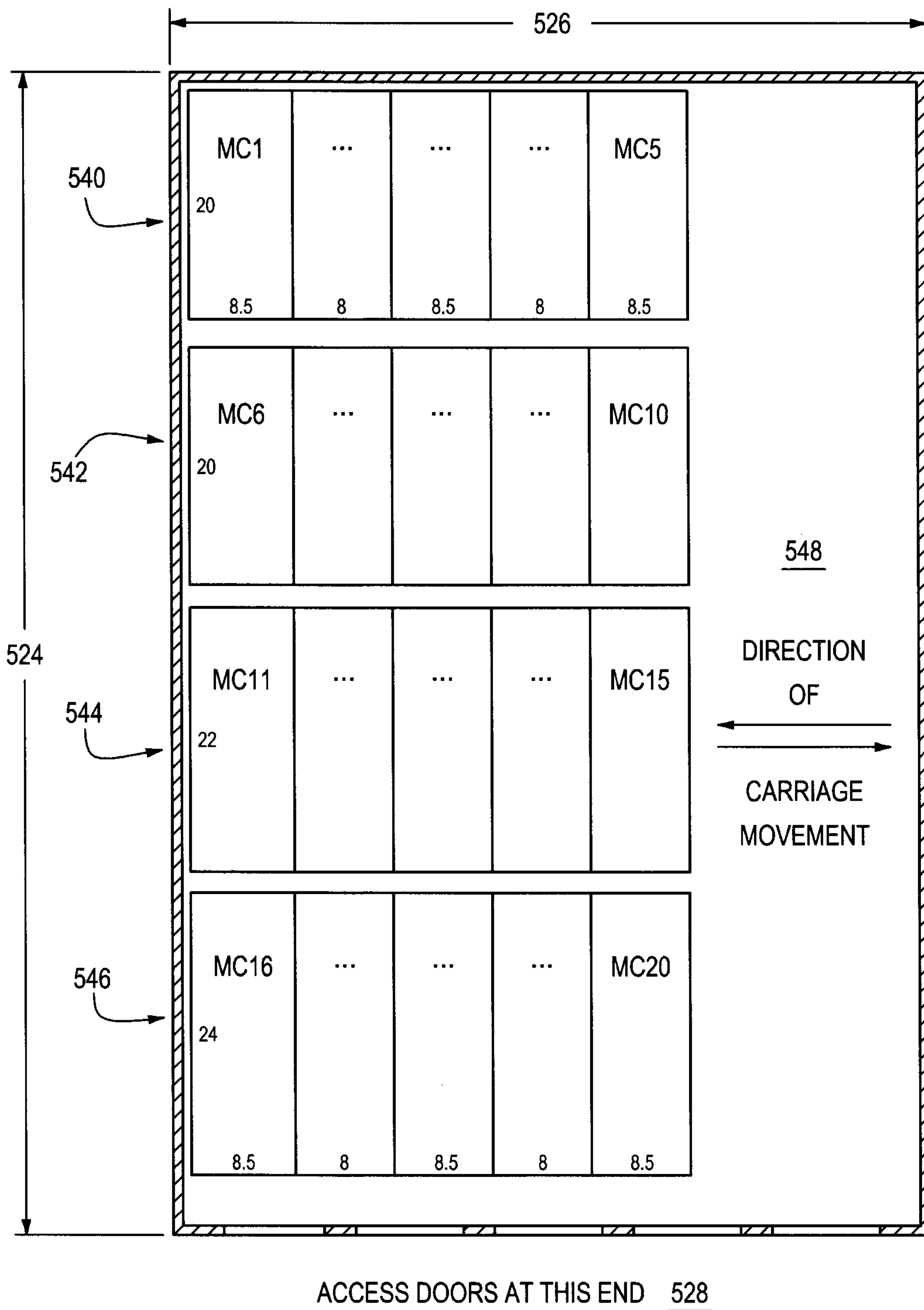


FIG. 13

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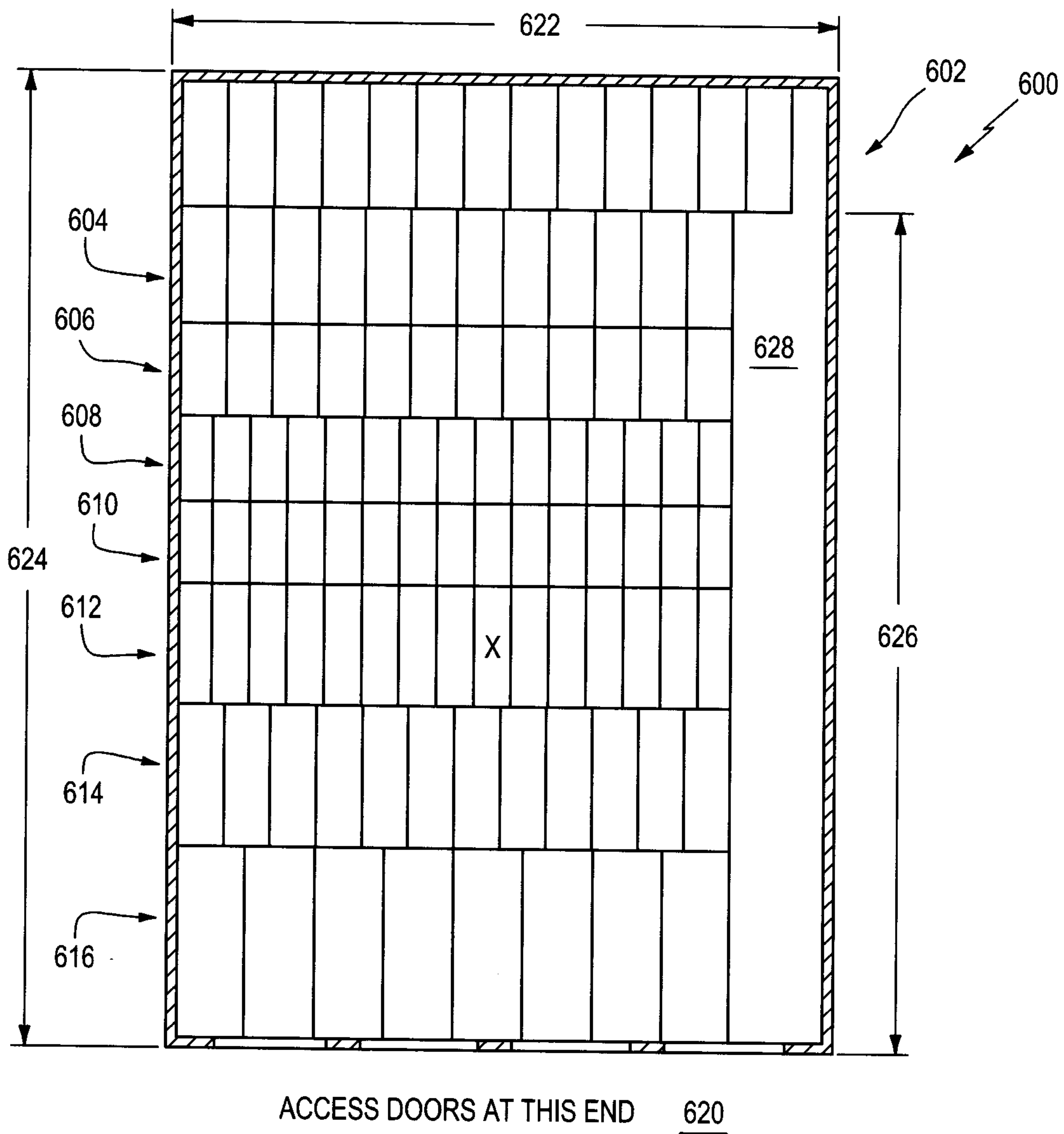


FIG. 14

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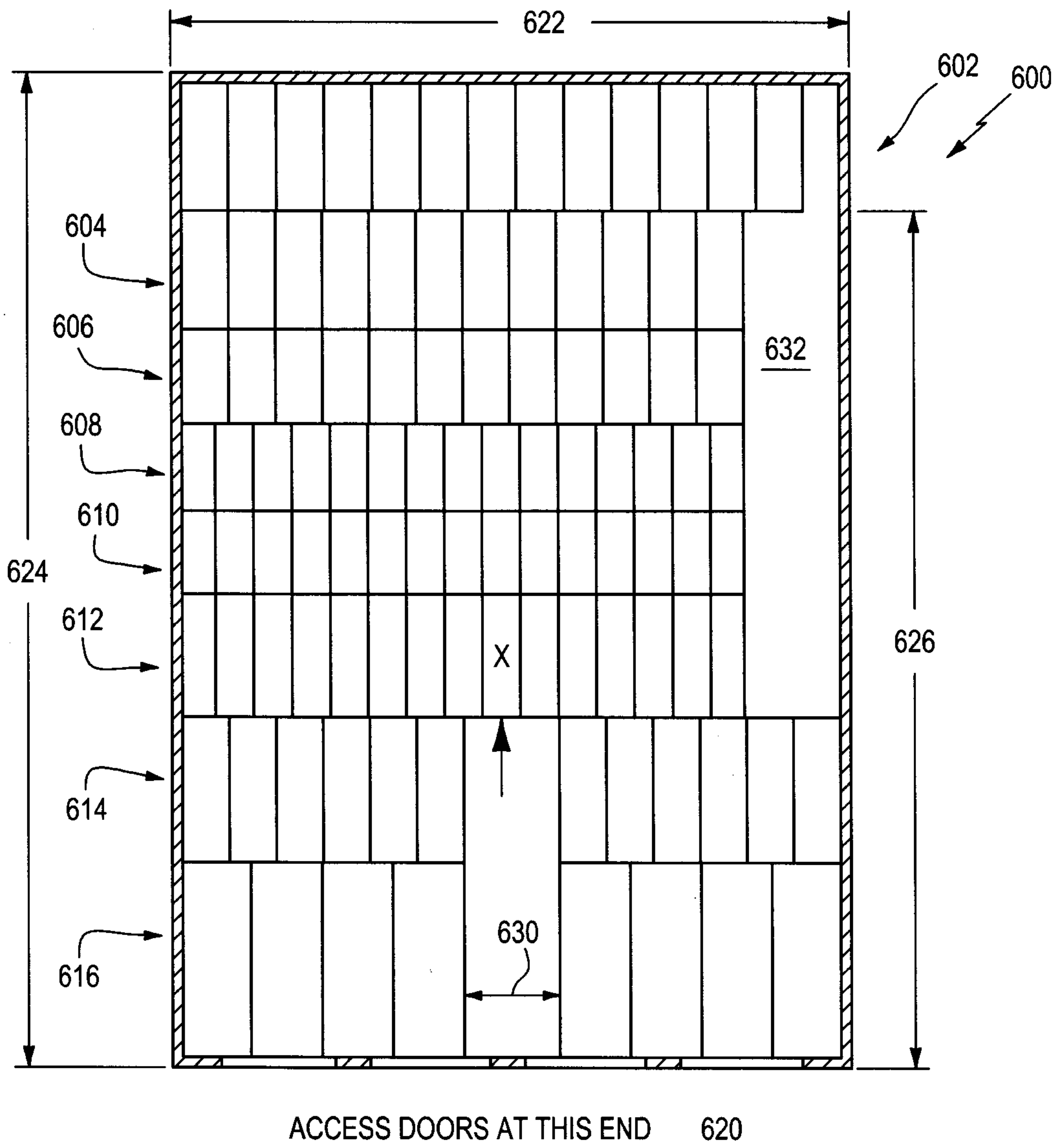


FIG. 15

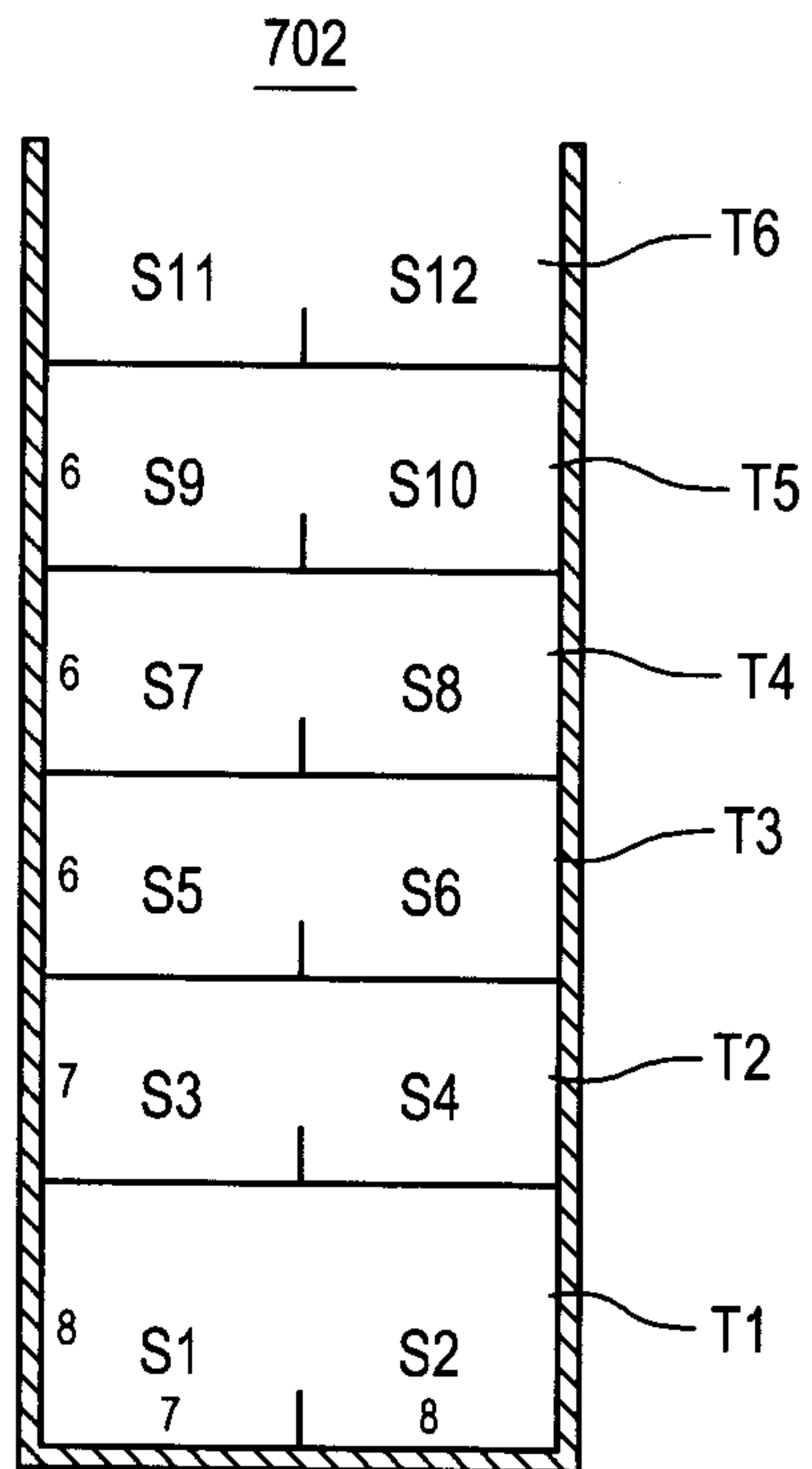


FIG. 16A

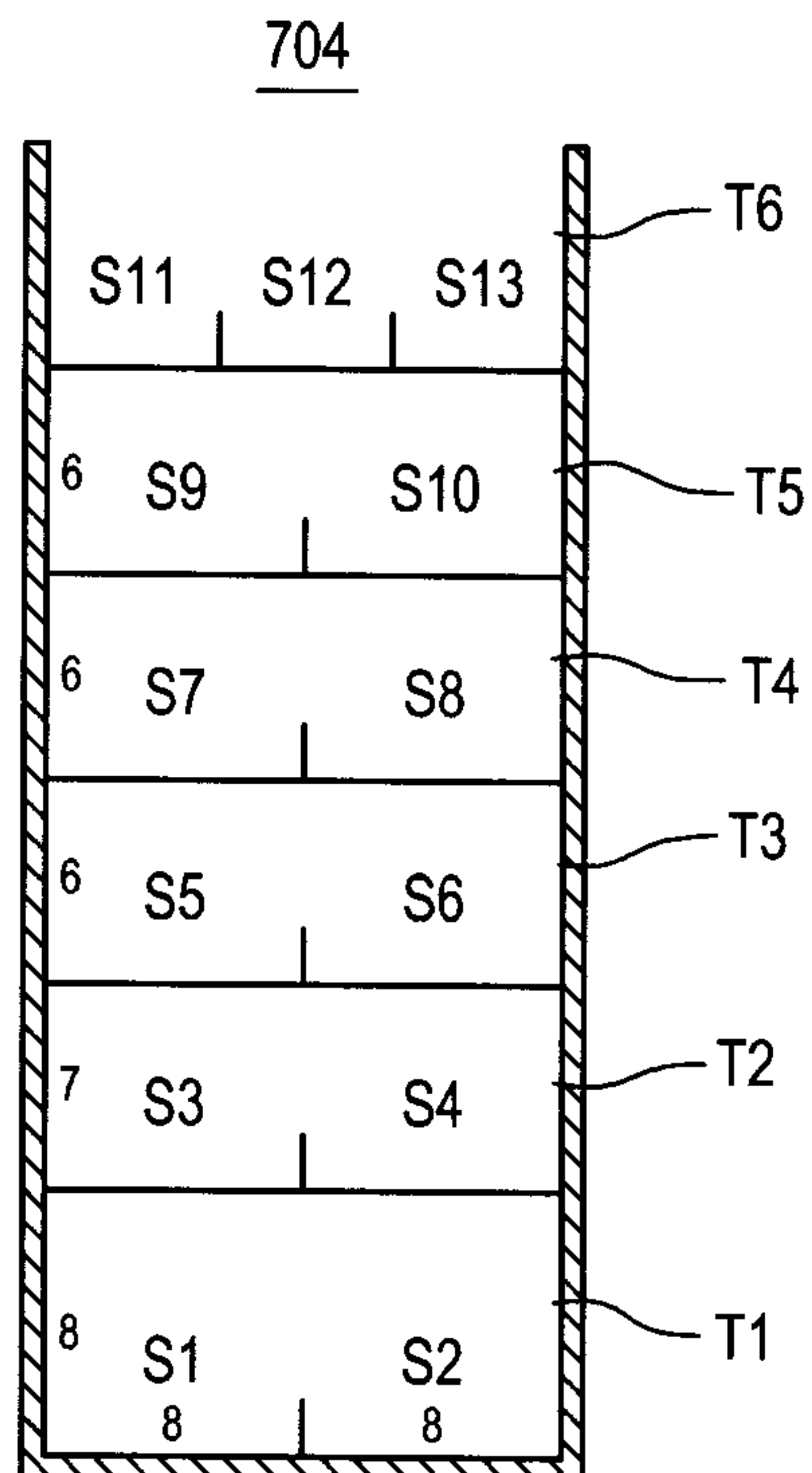


FIG. 16B

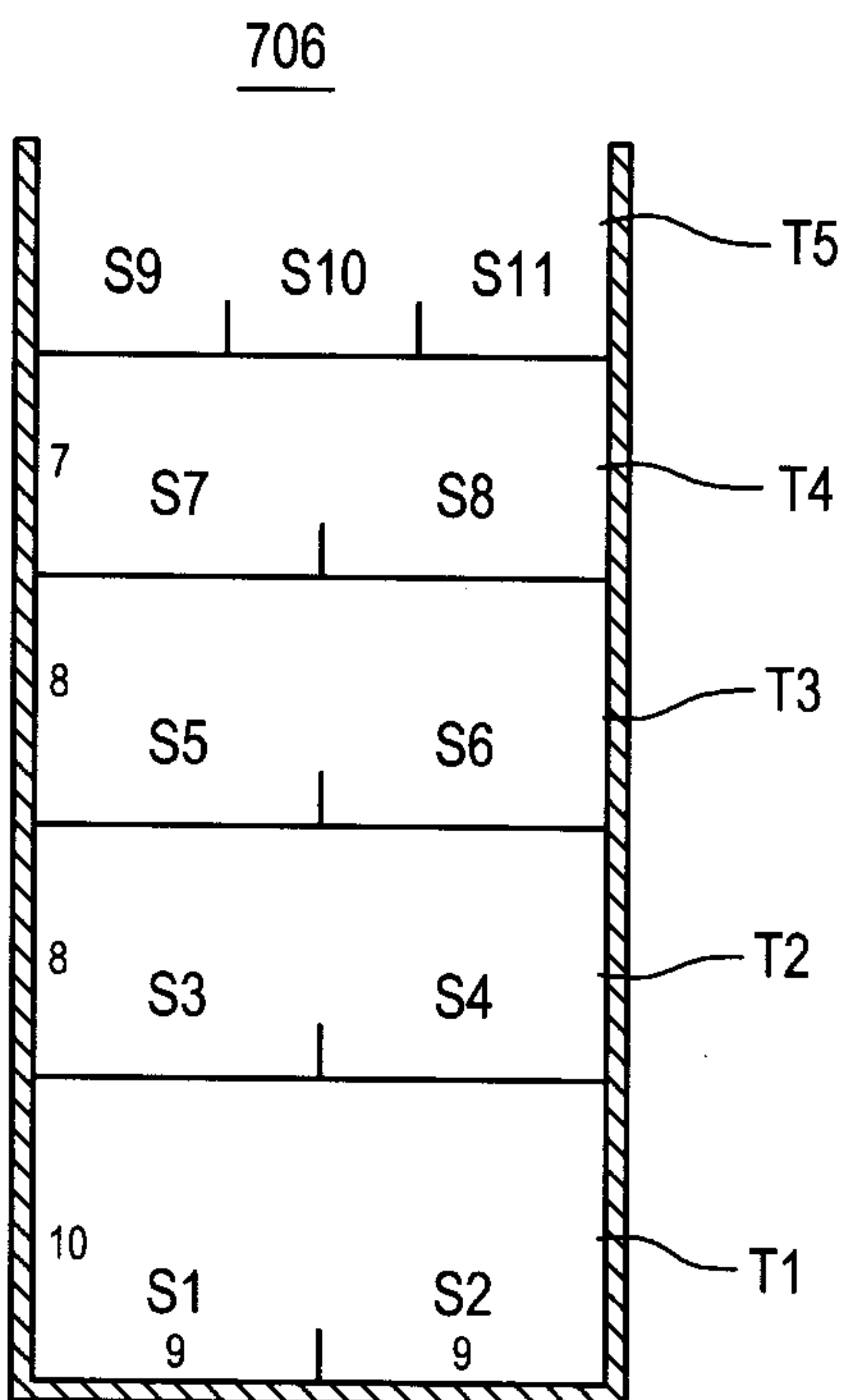


FIG. 16C

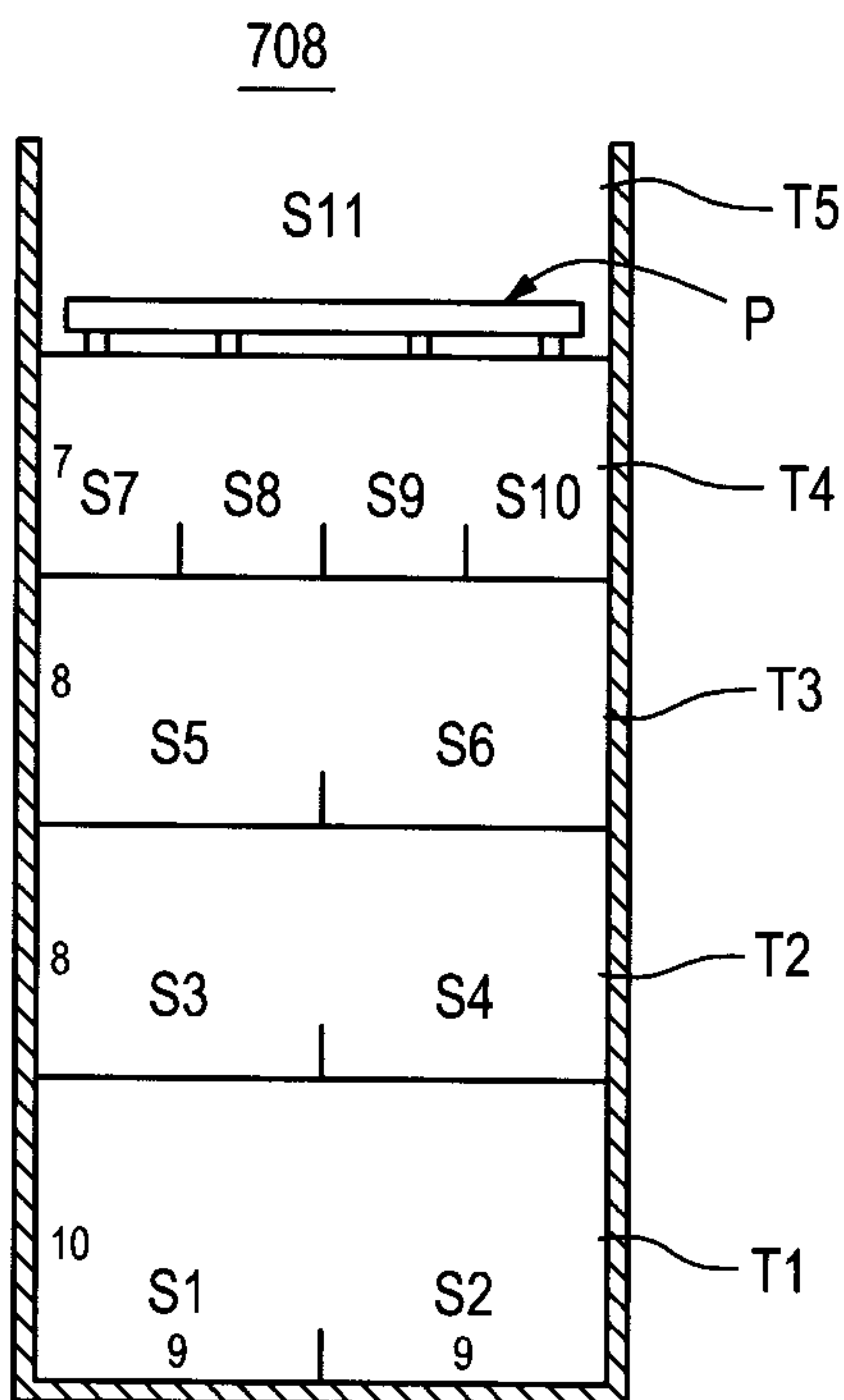


FIG. 16D

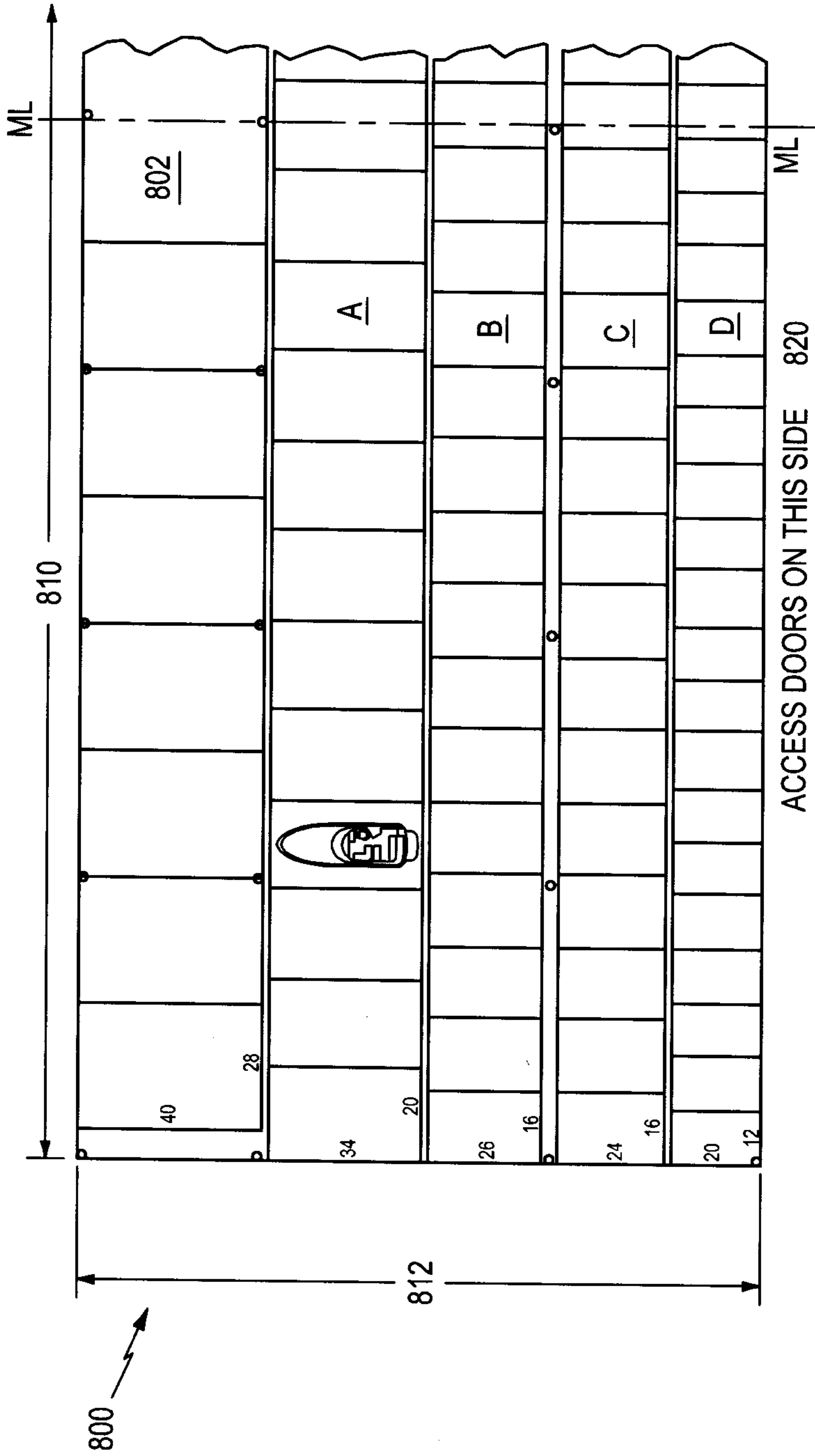


FIG. 17A-1

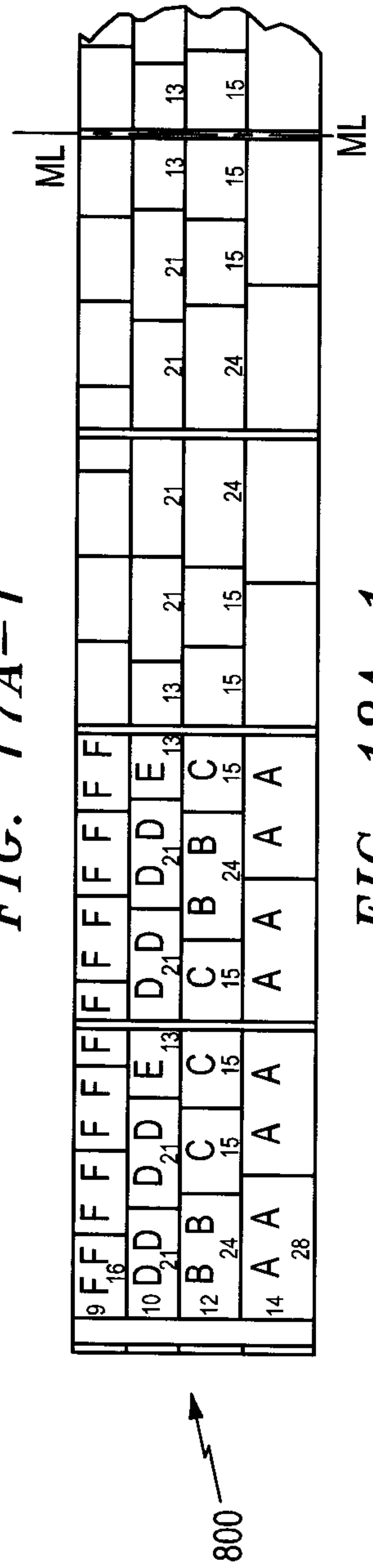


FIG. 18A-1

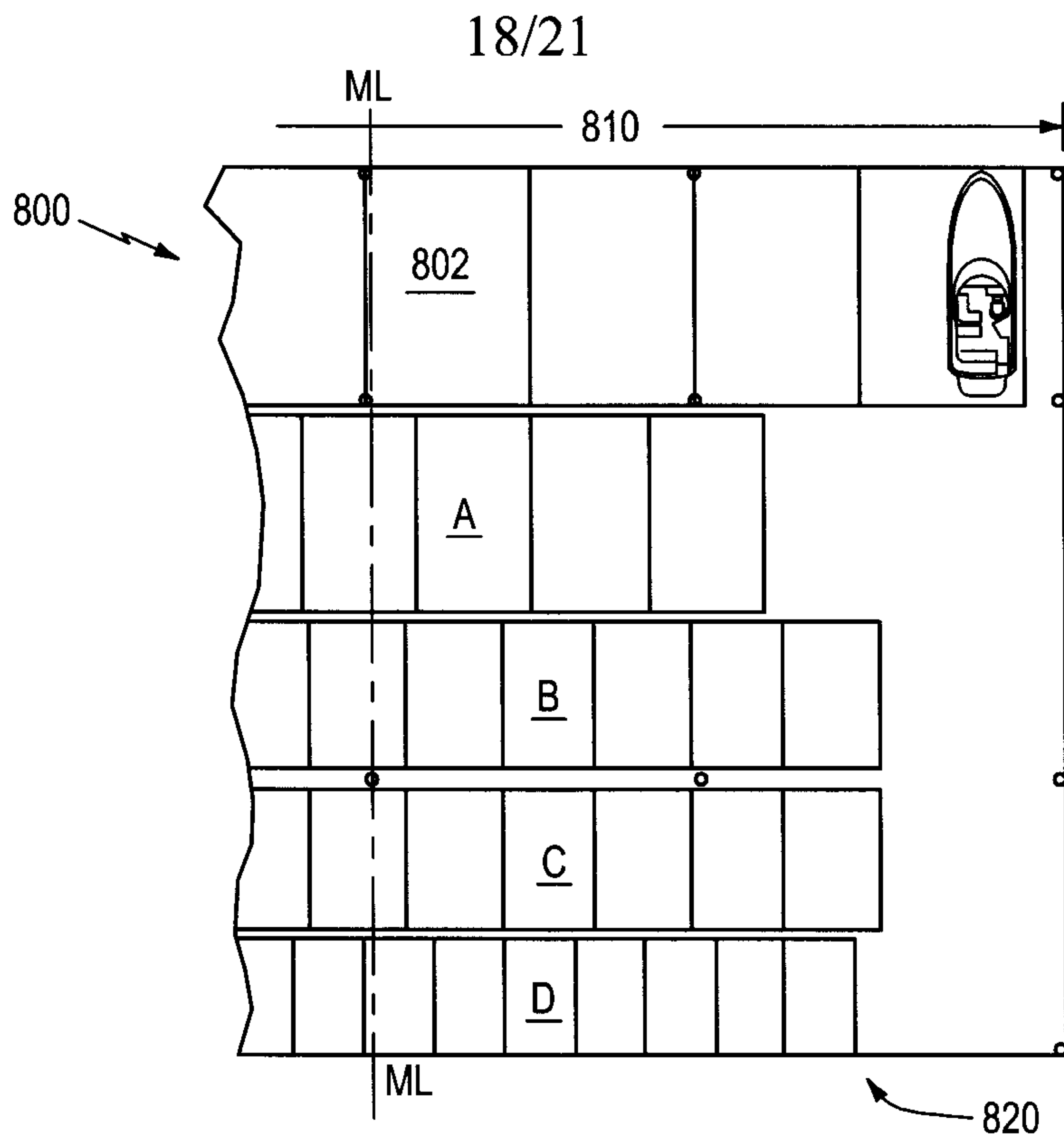


FIG. 17A-2

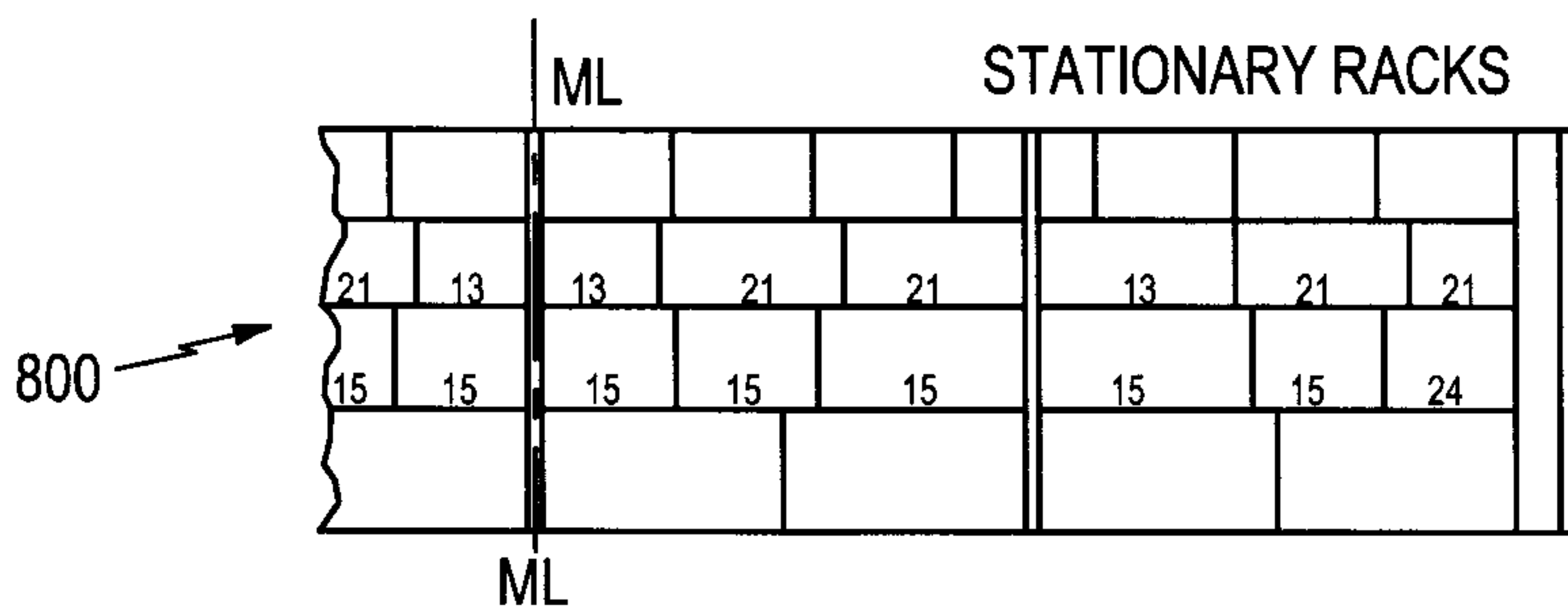


FIG. 18A-2

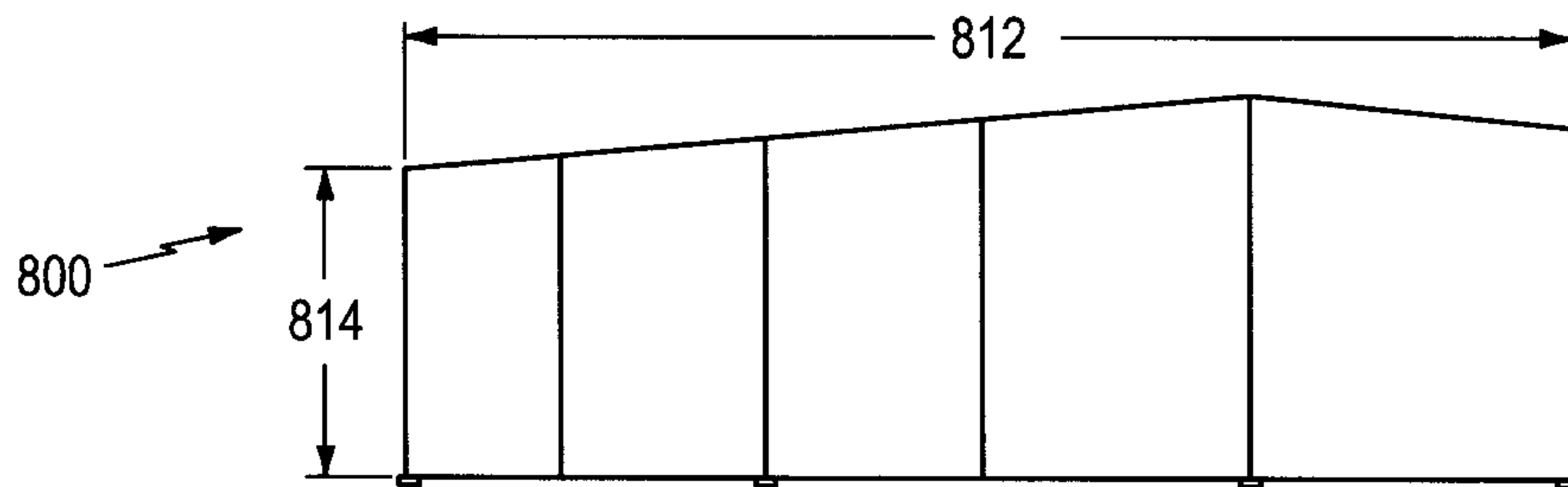


FIG. 19

1

7	K	
8	J	
9	I	
10	H	
12	G	
	10	10

FIG. 20A-1

7

N				
M				
L				
8	8	8	8	8
H				
G				
	10	10	10	10

FIG. 20A-2

10

7	S			
8	R			
9	Q			
10	P			
10	O			
	8	8	8	8

FIG. 20B

10

7	X			
7	W			
8	V			
9	U			
10	T			
	8	8	8	8

FIG. 20C

1

6	Z ₁			
7	Y ₁			
8	X ₁			
9	Z			
10	Y			
	6	6	6	6

FIG. 20D-1

8

Z ₁				
Y ₁				
X ₁				
Z				
Y				
6	6	6	6	6

FIG. 20D-2

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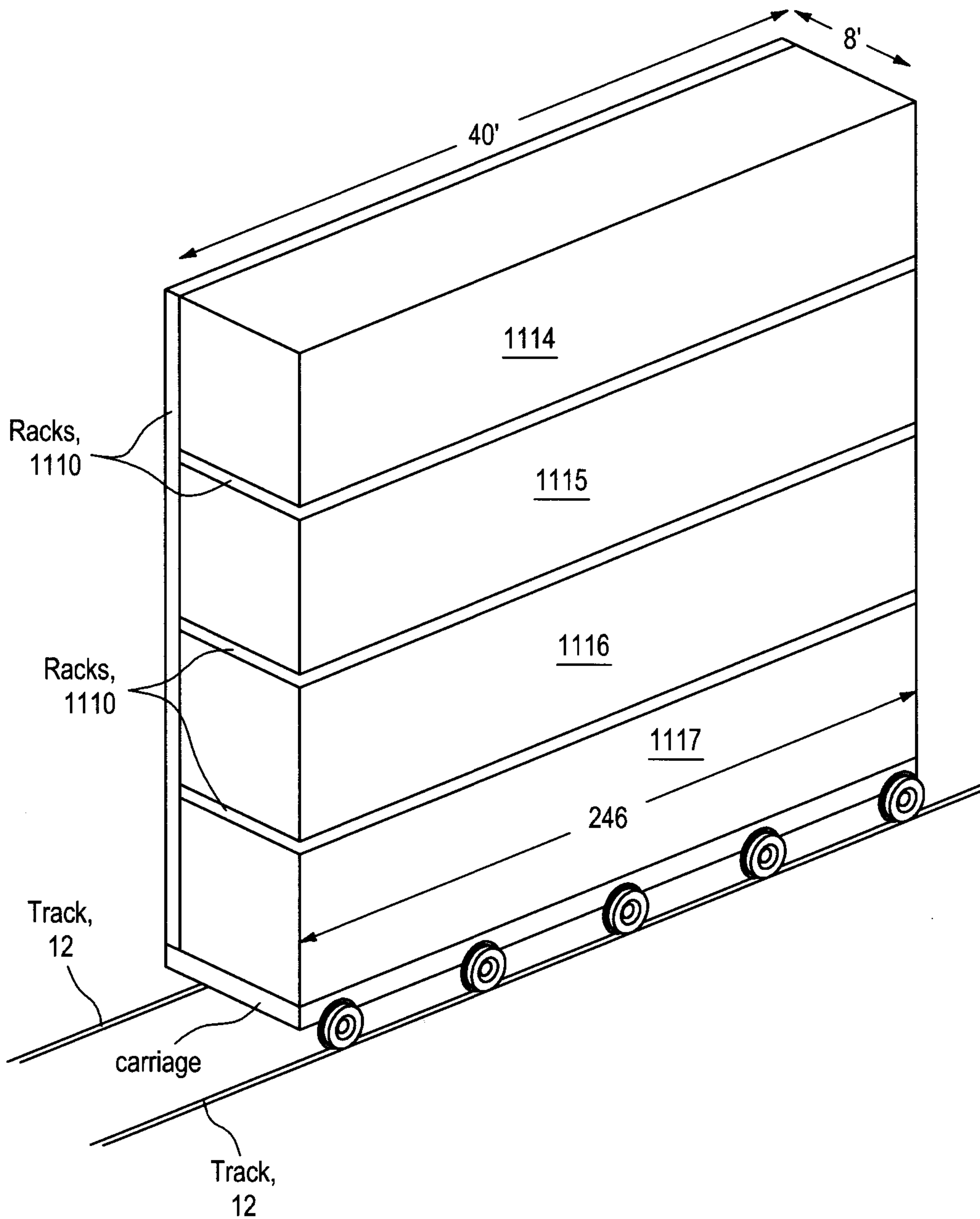


FIG. 21

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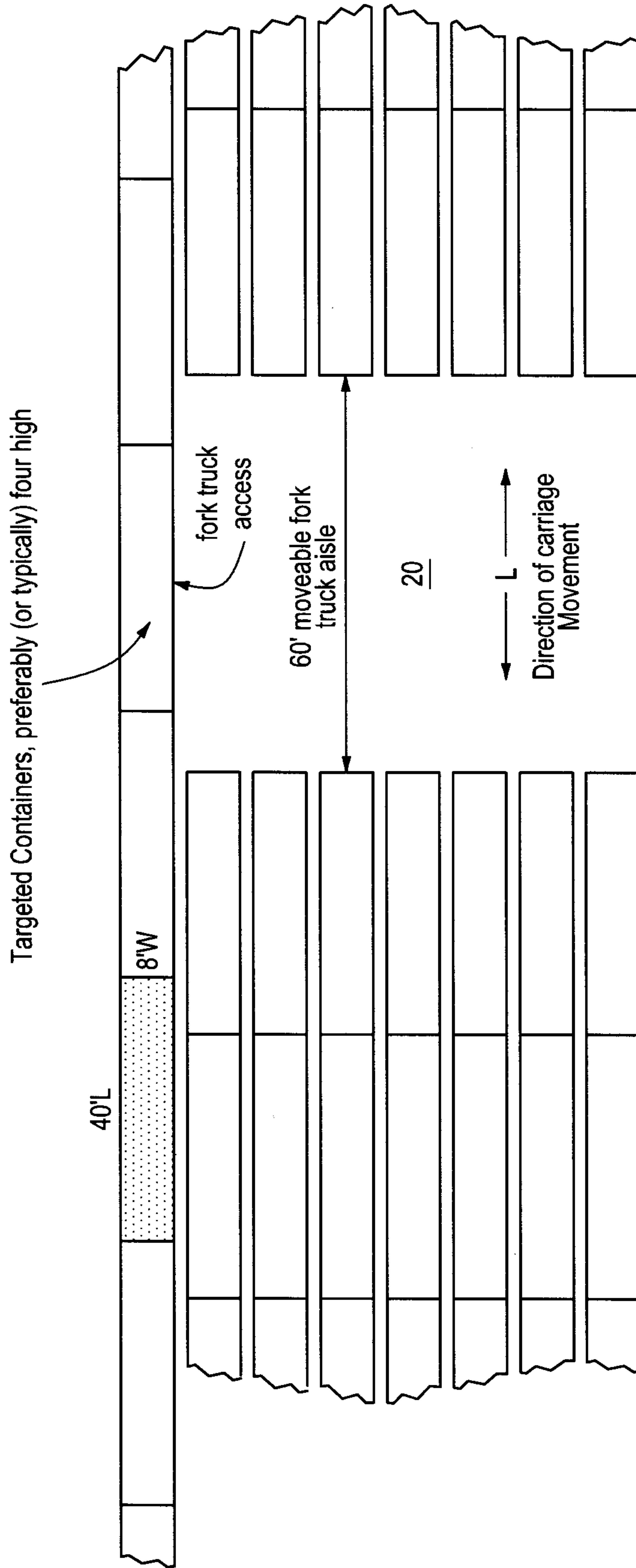


FIG. 22

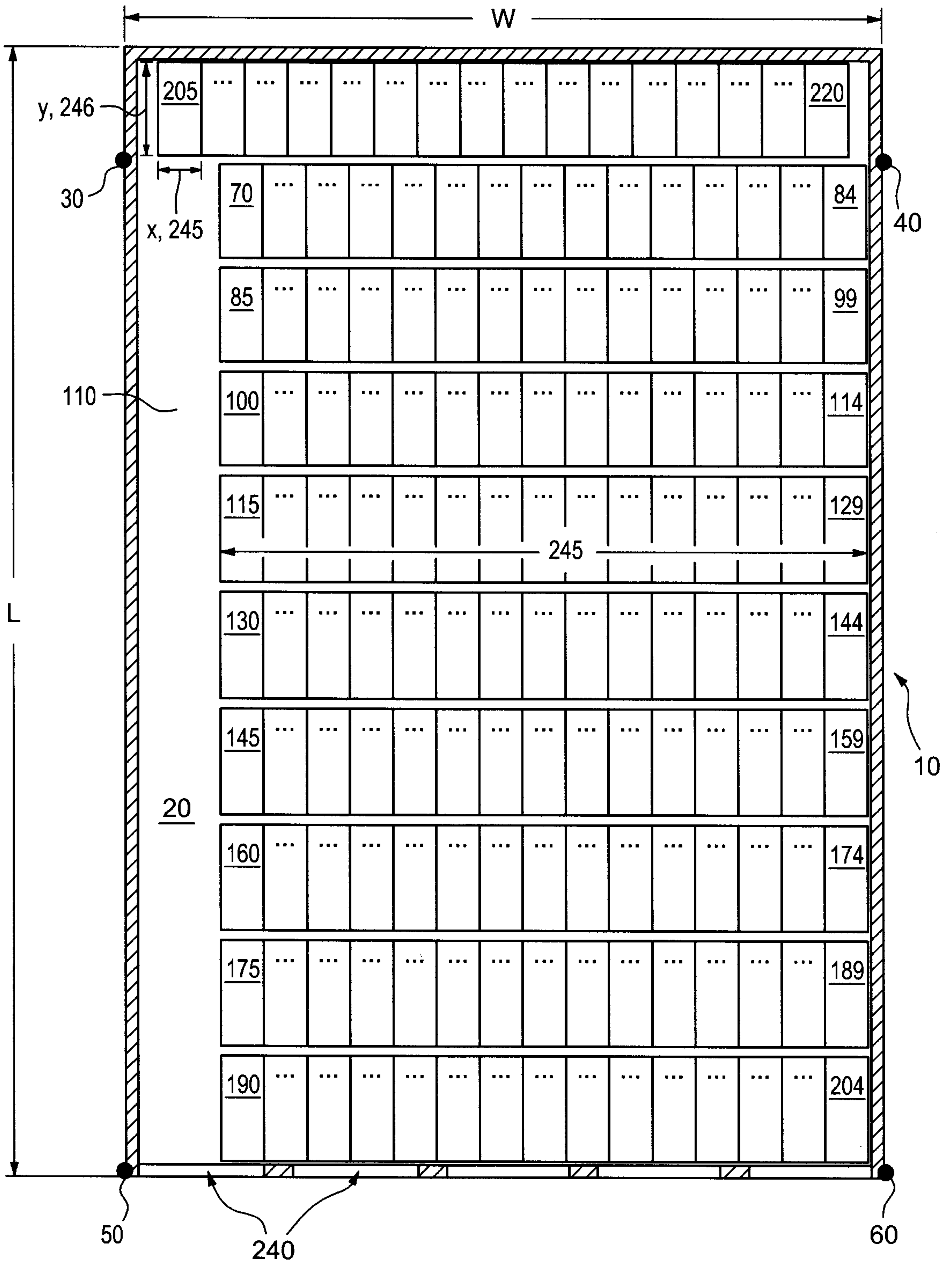


FIG. 3