

[54] **RURAL DELIVERY MAILBOX**

[76] Inventor: **Clarence A. Best**, PO Box 341, New Albany, Ind. 47150

[22] Filed: **June 2, 1972**

[21] Appl. No.: **258,987**

[52] **U.S. Cl.**..... 232/17, 232/34

[51] **Int. Cl.**..... **A47g 29/12**

[58] **Field of Search** 232/17, 33, 34, 19, 28, 232/47, 38

[56] **References Cited**

UNITED STATES PATENTS

729,110	5/1903	Young	232/28
1,239,323	9/1917	Virovatz	232/24
1,233,972	7/1917	Bryfogle.....	232/28
2,754,051	7/1956	Shellaburger	232/35
3,343,785	9/1967	Gegax	232/35
805,351	11/1905	Dresser	232/38
905,284	12/1908	Brockway	232/34
472,007	3/1892	Witherell	232/45

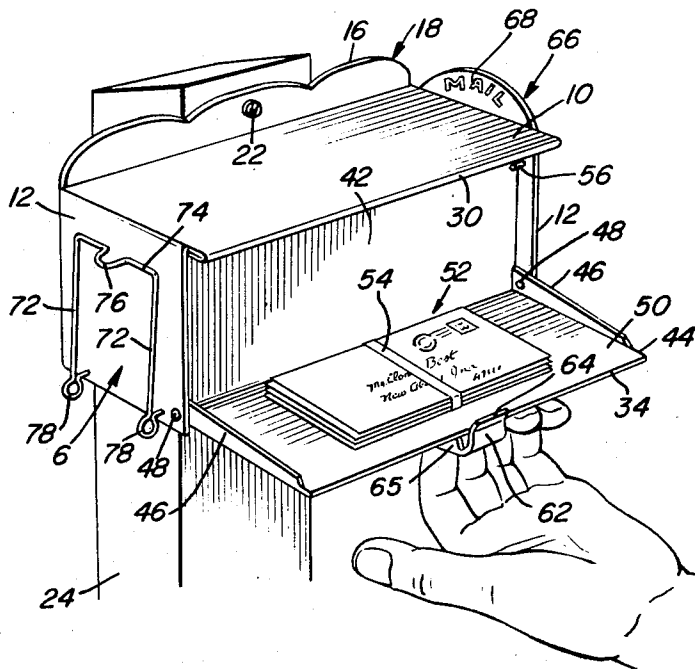
Primary Examiner—Francis K. Zugel
Attorney, Agent, or Firm—Clarence A. O'Brien; Harvey B. Jacobson

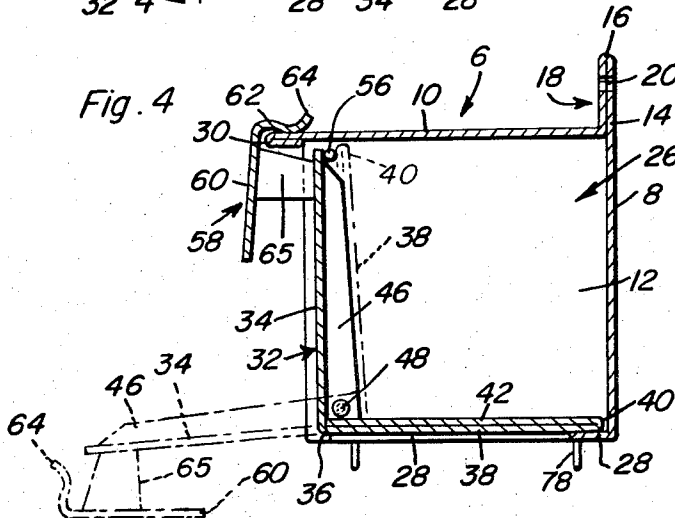
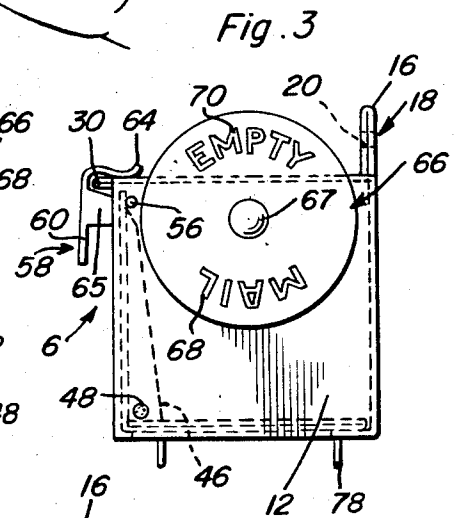
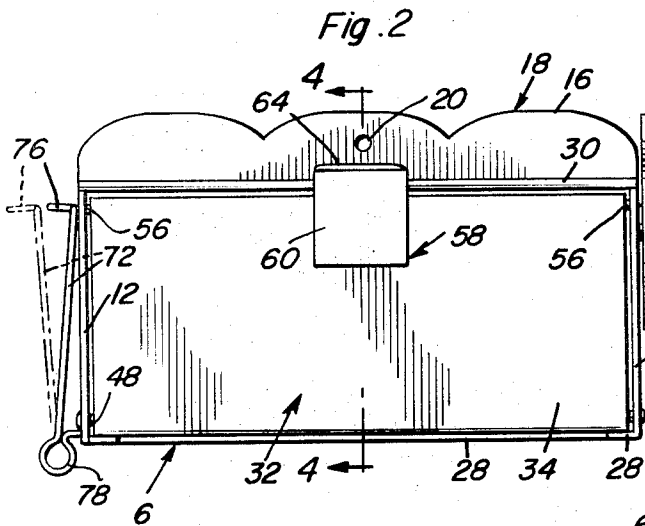
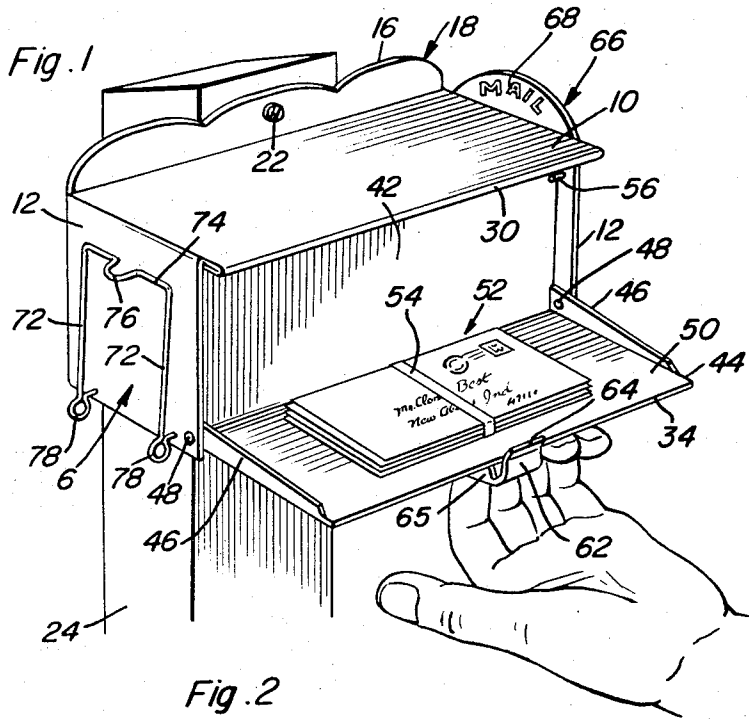
[57]

ABSTRACT

A rural mailbox housing has an open front and a cooperable open bottom surrounding by horizontal turned-in limit stop flanges, and is equipped with manually openable and closable closure means. The closure means is unique in that it embodies two panels joined to each other in a manner that one panel provides a front opening and closing door while the other panel normally rests atop several flanges and provides a suitable bottom wall for the receptacle portion of the housing. The first-named panel has transverse end flanges which are hingedly mounted in a manner to provide not only the normally closed door but an outstanding tray for incoming and outgoing mail. Stop pins aligned and fixed on the end walls check the swinging movement of both panels. A finger-grip with a retaining clip is positioned to normally position and retain the door panel in its closed position. A rotary dial or disc carrying the words "mail" and "empty" is accessibly mounted on one end wall. A novelly constructed small article clamp or clip, for miscellaneous folders and the like, is conveniently mounted on the other end wall.

5 Claims, 4 Drawing Figures





RURAL DELIVERY MAILBOX

This invention relates to certain new and useful improvements embodied in a rural mailbox and pertains, more particularly, to a housing which provides the desired receptacle portion and is equipped with structurally unique manually actuatable closure means for the open bottom and open front, a rotary signalling dial or disc accessibly mounted on one end wall, and a plastic bag clip or clamp accessibly mounted on the other end wall.

An object of the invention, generally stated, is to structurally, functionally and in other ways improve upon prior art mailboxes and, in so doing, to provide a simple, practical and reliably operable mailbox which is characterized by features which well serve the purposes for which they have been devised and successfully used.

For background purposes and because it shows the use of a hingedly mounted projectable and retractable tray, attention is invited to U.S. Pat. No. 1,810,769 granted to Fred I. Jaden. Also, and because it has a general bearing on the instant invention, attention may be directed to the mailbox disclosed in U.S. Pat. No. 1,670,244 granted to Arnon D. Dover. Although other patents show projectable and retractable front closure means the aforementioned patents are herein recognized as exemplary of the state of the art to which the present invention relates.

Briefly, the improved mailbox is characterized by an elongated open front and open bottom rectangular or equivalent housing embodying a vertical back wall, a horizontal top wall and complementary vertical interconnecting end walls. The lower marginal edge portions of the back wall and end walls are provided with turned-in horizontal ledge-like limit stop flanges which as shown encompass three marginal sides of the open bottom. The top wall has a forward or front lip doubled upon itself and projecting beyond the forward edges of the respective end walls and overhanging the openable and closable front. Manually actuatable closure means is provided for the open front. This means comprises a first vertical panel normally spanning the open front and providing an openable and closable door. It also includes a second horizontal panel joined at right angles to the lower marginal edge of the first panel and projecting rearwardly and inwardly into the receptacle portion of the housing and having its several marginal edge portions seated and supported atop the coordinating flanges and providing an upwardly outwardly swinging bottom wall for said housing. The first panel has laterally bent mounting flanges at its respective transverse ends and corresponding ends of the mounting flanges are hingedly joined to lower forward corner portions of the respective end walls of the housing.

In carrying out the principles of the invention the flanged door-forming panel provides a conveniently accessible and usable shallow tray for incoming as well as outgoing mail. The second panel has the additional function of assisting the placing of mail in and subsequently removing it from the tray. To the ends desired the upper forward corner portions of the end walls have aligned fixed pins which project into the receptacle portion and constitute stops, these stops serving to check the upward and rearward swinging and closing of the door and, in addition, the upward forward swinging and front closing position of the second panel.

These together with other objects and advantages which will become subsequently apparent reside in the details of construction and operation as more fully hereinafter described and claimed, reference being had to the accompanying drawings forming a part hereof, wherein like numerals refer to like parts throughout, and in which:

FIG. 1 is a view in perspective of a rural mailbox constructed in accordance with the invention and showing the same supported on a post and showing, what is more significant, the door forming panel in an open or down position where it constitutes a ready-to-use shelf for reception of several letters conveniently united by an encompassing rubber band.

FIG. 2 is a front elevational view, that is a view with the door in its up or closed position and with the catch latched in place.

FIG. 3 is an end view of FIG. 2 observing the same in a direction from right to left and revealing the rotary signalling dial or disc.

And FIG. 4 is a cross section on the vertical centrally located line 4—4 of FIG. 2 looking in the direction of the indicating arrows and showing the door in an open position in phantom lines.

By way of introduction to the description of the details it is to be pointed out that the mailbox herein revealed lends itself to use in the manner illustrated in FIG. 1 and wherein it will be noted that several letters are connected together by an encompassing rubber band. One of the features of the invention is that it enables the letter carrier, before he leaves his office, to sort the mail and to place a rubber band around the several (more or less) letters which are to be delivered to a particular residence on his route. By pursuing this manner of delivering mail valuable time and effort is saved and the result which is evident from FIG. 1, it is believed, is attainable in an obviously desirable manner.

The overall mailbox or housing is denoted by the numeral 6. It comprises an elongated open front housing embodying a vertical back wall 8 (FIG. 4) a horizontal top wall 10 and interconnecting vertical end walls 12. It will be noted that the upper portion of the back wall is elevated above the top wall as denoted at 14 and is then bent and doubled upon itself at 16 to provide a mounting and attaching flange 18. This flange is provided with a suitable aperture or opening 20 to accommodate a headed fastener 22 which can, if desired, be used to mount the box on a support post or the like 24. It is within the purview of the invention to delineate the upper edge of the flange 18 in the manner shown in FIGS. 1 and 2 for appearance purposes. These walls define the hollow receptacle portion 26 which is best shown in FIG. 4. It will be noted that the lower marginal edge portions of the back wall 8 and end walls 12 are provided with lateral or turned-in several coordinating flanges denoted at 28. These flanges define the aforementioned open bottom of the receptacle portion. It will be further noted that the left hand edge of the top wall 10 in FIG. 4 is extended beyond the terminal edges of the end walls 12 where it is doubled upon itself to provide a reinforcing lip 30. This lip overhangs the open front. Manually openable and closable closure means is provided for the open bottom and open front and this means, generally stated, is denoted by the numeral 32. The means comprises a one-piece sheet material unit characterized by a first vertical panel 34, that

is a panel which normally spans the open front and provides the desired openable and closable door. The bottom part of this panel as shown in FIG. 4 is joined by a suitable connecting bend 36 to a second horizontal panel 38, the latter being joined at right angles and projecting rearwardly and inwardly into the receptacle portion 26 of the housing. This panel is denoted by the numeral 38 and is doubled upon itself as at 40 to provide the complementary portion 42. When the door or wall 34 is in the front closing position as shown in FIG. 4 the panel 38 is in a horizontal position and rests upon several the ledge-like flanges 28 and consequently closes the open bottom of the housing. As brought out particularly well in FIG. 1 the transverse ends 44 are provided with triangulate or equivalent upstanding flanges 46 whose wide ends overlap the end walls and are hingedly pivoted thereto as at 48. When the door is in the horizontal outstanding position shown in FIG. 1 the surface 50 provides a convenient shelf for the letters 52 which as already pointed out are stacked and held together by an encompassing rubber band 54. This flanged wall or panel provides not only a shelf but a shallow conveniently accessible and usable tray for incoming as well as outgoing mail. The panel 38 in FIG. 1 is in a vertical position and closes the front opening and assists in the step of placing the mail on the shelf or in the tray and then swinging the tray, as a unit, to the closing position shown in full lines in FIGS. 2, 3 and 4. It will be noted that the upper interior corner portions of the end walls 12 are provided with inwardly projecting limit stop pins 56 which serve in the manner shown in FIG. 1 on the one hand and also in the manner shown in FIG. 4. In fact in FIG. 4 it will be seen that the closure means is illustrated in its full line position which is the normal position and also in the phantom line position to in this manner bring out the function of the first and second panels and also the limit stop pins 56. It is reiterated that the stop pins serve to check the upward and rearward swinging and closing of the door as well as the upward, forward swinging and front closing position of the second or bottom closing panel 38.

The numeral 58 designates an L-shaped one-piece member having a long leg 60 and a short leg 62 the terminal of which is flared or bent (upwardly in FIGS. 3 and 4) as at 64 to facilitate its use as a retaining catch or latch. Suitable connecting members 65 are provided for joining the long leg to the front surface of the panel 34. When the panel is in its door closing position the hook-shaped leg or latch comes into play and is snapped over the lip 30.

It is within the purview of the invention to provide one end wall with signalling dial or disc which is denoted by the numeral 66 and is shown in FIGS. 1 to 3 inclusive. The central or hub portion of the disc is pivotally riveted in place as at 67, the disc being on the exterior of the end wall and conveniently available for operation by either the mail carrier or the resident owner. One half portion of the disc is provided with the word "mail" 68 and the other half portion is provided with the word "empty" 70. These words may be on both sides of the disc as shown in FIGS. 1 and 3. The manner in which this disc is used is believed to be self-evident and it takes the place of the commonly used signalling flag (not shown).

The left hand end wall as shown best in FIGS. 1 and 2 is provided with a wire small article holding clamp or clip. This clip is of U-shaped construction and embod-

ies legs 72 joined at upper ends with a bight portion 74 having an appropriate bend 76 providing a finger-grip. The lower ends of the legs are fashioned into resilient springy coils 78 which are anchored on the end wall in the manner shown. This clip or clamp can be used to position and retain newspapers, handbills, small packages and other small articles contained in plastic bags (not shown) which are not ordinarily and properly insertable into the receptacle portion of the housing.

The manner in which the flanges 28 serve as ledges or limit stops for the panel 38 is shown in FIGS. 2 and 4. The manner in which the pins 56 function is evident in several of the views and is particularly well emphasized in FIG. 4 showing the full line and phantom line positions of the closure means 32. The proposed manner of using the attached or mounting flange 18 is evident from FIG. 1. FIG. 1 also shows the position wherein the panels 34 and 38 are satisfactorily used to provide the tray and shelf feature and also the cooperating second panel feature illustrated to advantage in FIG. 1. In fact all of the component parts including the finger-piece 58 and latch 62 are thought to be evident from the views of the drawing. Then, too, the manner in which the signalling dial 66 functions and the manner in which the wire spring clip or clamp functions is self-evident. Accordingly, a more extended description is deemed to be unnecessary.

The foregoing is considered as illustrative only of the principles of the invention. Further, since numerous modifications and changes will readily occur to those skilled in the art, it is not desired to limit the invention to the exact construction and operation shown and described, and accordingly all suitable modifications and equivalents may be resorted to, falling within the scope of the invention.

What is claimed as new is as follows:

1. A rural mailbox comprising a one piece elongated open front and open bottom housing and embodying a vertical back wall, a horizontal top wall and complementary vertical end walls, the lower edge portions of said back and end walls having relatively narrow turned-in horizontal coplanar ledge-like limit stop flanges encompassing longitudinal and transverse portions of said open bottom, said top wall having a forward terminal lip doubled upon itself and projecting beyond the forward edges of the respective end walls and overhanging said open front, manually openable and closable one piece closure means for said open front and bottom comprising a first vertical panel normally spanning and closing said open front and providing an openable and closable door, and a second horizontal panel corresponding in size and joined at right angles to the lower marginal edge of said first panel and projecting rearwardly and inwardly into the receptacle portion of said housing and having longitudinal and transverse marginal edge portions seated and supported atop the coordinating limit stop flanges and providing an upwardly outwardly swinging bottom wall for said housing, said first panel having laterally bent mounting flanges at its respective transverse ends, and corresponding ends of said mounting flanges being hingedly joined to lower forward corner portions of said end walls, said first door-forming panel providing a conveniently accessible and usable shallow tray for incoming as well as outgoing mail, said second panel having the additional function of assisting the step of positioning and loading mail in said tray and subse-

5

6

quently presenting and accessibly removing said mail from said tray, the upper forward interior corner portions of the respective end walls having axially aligned fixed pins projecting into said receptacle portion and providing stops, said stops being adapted to check the upward and rearward swinging and closing of said door as well as the upward forward swinging front-closing position of said second panel.

2. The mailbox defined in and according to claim 1, and wherein an upper edge portion of said back wall and adjacent rearward coacting edge portion of said top wall is fashioned into and provides an elongated integral upstanding housing mounting flange which is designed and adapted to be fastened to a mailbox supporting post.

3. The mailbox defined in and according to claim 2, and, in combination, finger-grip means secured to a median upper exterior edge portion of said door-forming panel, said means having a resilient snap-type clip which is releasably engageable with said lip, said finger-grip means comprising an L-shaped member embodying companion long and short legs, said long leg

providing the finger-grip proper and the short leg providing the snap-type clip and being bent and shaped to achieve its intended retaining and releasing functions, said long leg being spaced from and approximately parallel to that surface portion of the panel with which it is cooperable.

4. The mailbox defined in and according to claim 3, and a manually turnable readily accessible signal disc centrally pivoted on an upper exterior of one end wall and having opposite flat selectively usable faces provided with the words "mail" and "empty" for predetermined use by the mail carrier and also the resident owner of said mailbox.

5. The mailbox defined in and according to claim 4, and, in combination, a substantially U-shaped wire clip having limbs formed with spring resilient coils fixedly joined to an end wall of said housing, and a bight portion having a laterally bent finger-grip, said clip being opposed to but spaced from a cooperating surface of said end wall and serving to hold newspapers, magazines and similar small articles.

* * * * *

25

30

35

40

45

50

55

60

65