

J. B. MURRAY.
MODE OF COLLECTING LETTERS ON STREET RAILROAD CARS.
No. 35,323. Patented May 20, 1862.

Fig. 1.

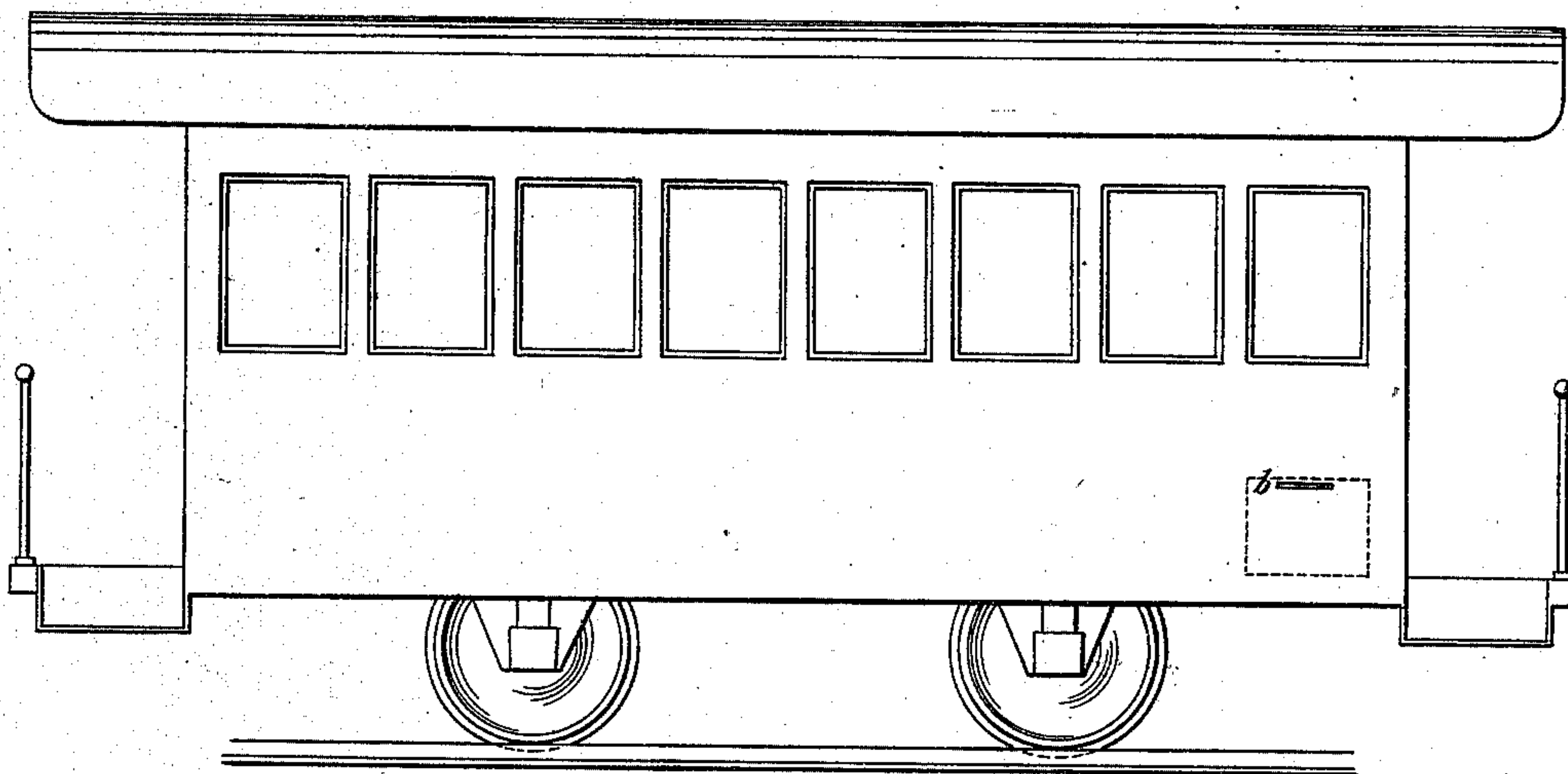
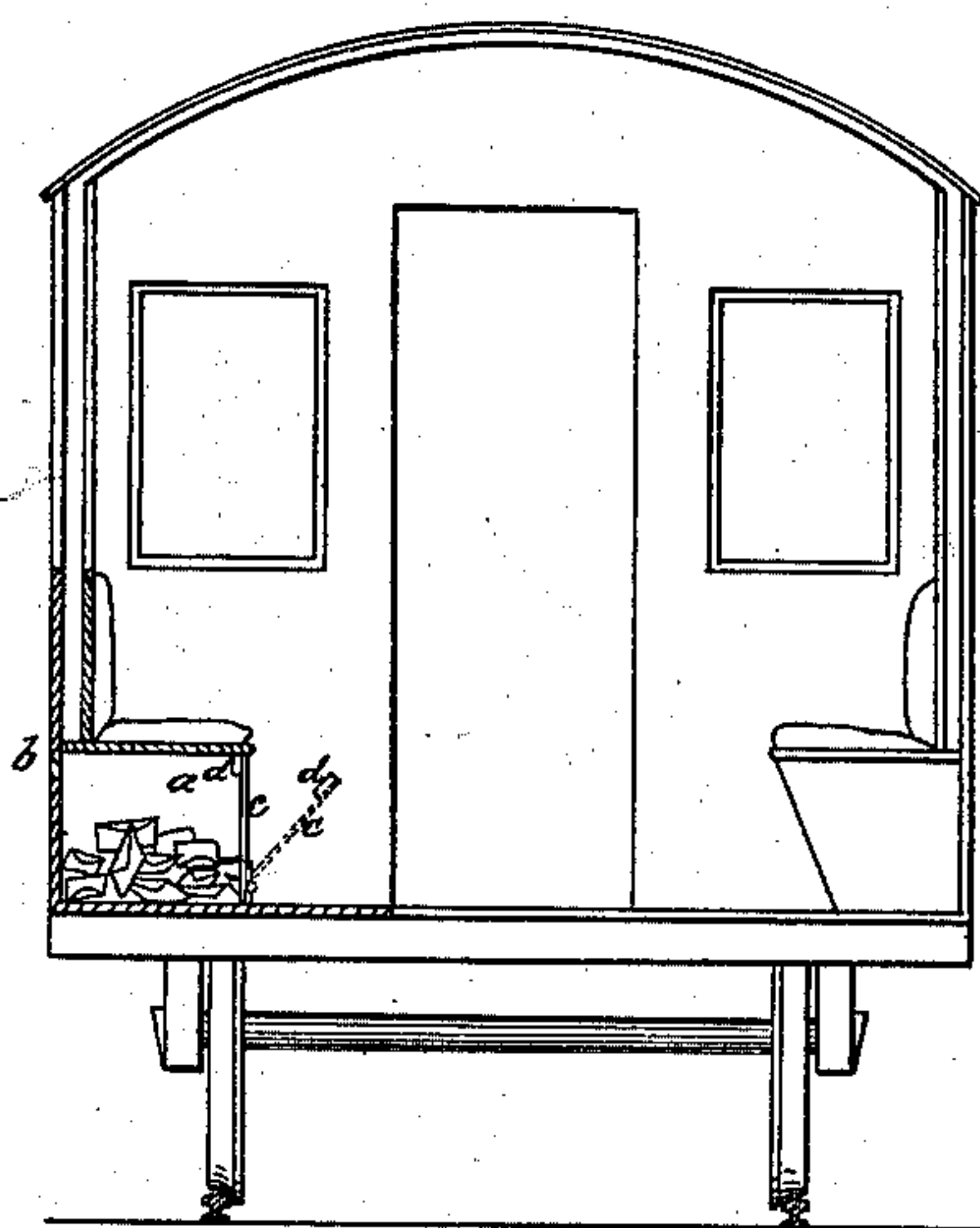


Fig. 2.



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IMPROVED MODE OF COLLECTING LETTERS ON STREET-RAILROAD CARS.

Specification forming part of Letters Patent No. 35,323, dated May 20, 1862.

To all whom it may concern:

Be it known that I, JOHN B. MURRAY, of the city and county of New York, in the State of New York, have made certain new and useful Improvements in Means for Collecting Letters and other Mail Matter for the Mails in Cities and Towns; and I do hereby declare that the following is a full and accurate description thereof, reference being had to the annexed drawings, making a part of this specification, and to the letters of reference thereon.

Formerly letters intended to be dispatched by the mails from cities and towns were deposited in the drop-letter box of the post-office. The great increase of mail matter which attended the popularization of postal facilities made manifest the inconvenience of carrying or sending every letter to the post-office by a special messenger. This was obviated in part by individuals and companies who established a system of collecting letters at various points in receiving-boxes bearing their name and stationed in some corner store, tavern, or other public place. These boxes were provided with suitable locks, and were kept locked except when opened by the messenger, who was provided with a key and at stated times visited the boxes, removed the mail matter therefrom, and conveyed it to the post-office. Although a small charge was made for this service, it was considered a great convenience and saving of time, and the practice was continued by private individuals until the business became of considerable importance both pecuniarily and with reference to the convenience and comfort of the community. The want of responsibility of the private persons and companies engaged in this business led to the appropriation of it by the Government, and it became a part of the business of the Post-Office Department.

In the progress of time the insecurity of the letter-boxes in the corner groceries and taverns in which they were kept, and the embarrassment which attended access to them by females and children, led to the adoption of cast-iron boxes placed upon the street-lamp posts, which are reasonably secure and accessible to the public; but although the latter mode of collecting letters for the mails in towns and cities is a manifest improvement, so far as the reception and security of the let-

ter is concerned, over the old tin boxes in corner stores, that were formerly used, it does not possess any advantage over the old mode in point of celerity of conveyance of the letters to the post-office, which is one of the most important requirements of any local letter-collecting system.

Letters deposited in the lamp-post boxes must wait a longer or shorter period, in proportion to the number of times per day the messenger visits them, before they commence their journey to the post-office, to which they do not even then go directly, but pursue the circuitous route of the messenger. For this reason the practice of dispatching letters by special messengers to the post-office is continued by those whose necessities require prompt transmission of their letters by the first mail. For this purpose I take advantage of means already in use for the public conveyance of passengers from point to point within cities, towns, &c., such as street-railway cars and omnibuses running on regular stated routes. The routes of such conveyances in cities, in order to accommodate the necessities of city travel, are usually arranged so as to converge to the business centers, near which the post-office is generally located.

My said invention consists in improving the means of collecting letters and other mail matter for the mails in towns and cities by combining the before-mentioned letter-boxes provided with suitable locks with street-railway passenger-cars or other similar public and constant passenger-vehicles such as are used on stated routes in said cities and towns for the local conveyance of passengers, substantially hereinafter described.

The drawings illustrate my invention as adapted for use in connection with a street-railway car, Figure 1 being a side elevation, and Fig. 2 a transverse section, of the same.

Letter *a* represents a receiving letter-box located near one end of the car, under the seat for passengers. It is provided with a proper aperture or slide, *b*, through which letters may be introduced into the box from the exterior of the car by any person standing on the platform or on the street beside the car.

Letter *c* represents the door to the letter-box, provided with a lock, *d*, which is kept

locked to prevent the passengers within the car from access to the letters.

The operation of my invention is that letters dropped in the box immediately move toward the post-office, and when they arrive at the end of the route of the street-car or other public vehicle by which they are conveyed, or at that part of the route nearest to the post-office, may be taken from the car immediately to the post-office by a messenger, who is provided with a key and intercepts the car for that purpose. If the letters are to be removed from the box before the car reaches the end of its route, it will be convenient to have the door of the box on the outside of the car in position as shown by dotted lines, Fig. 1; and it is evident that many changes may be made in the situation of the letter-box without changing materially its relative convenience and security as a repository for letters.

Now, I am aware from information that on railway routes between cities and towns railway-carriages have been set apart for the especial conveyance of mails, to the exclusion of passengers; and I am also aware from information that some years ago the experiment was tried of using a pouch for the reception of letters in connection with such a car, the letters being brought by special mes-

sengers from various parts of the city of Washington to said car at the railway-station, from which it departed daily for Baltimore, the letters being introduced into said car through a hole in the side, and received in an open box or pouch not protected from access by a lock, and in a private apartment occupied by a mail-agent, whose business it was to transfer the letters as they came through the hole in the side of the car immediately to the proper mail-bags in the said private apartment, which was a locomotive post-office and not suitable for the purposes for which my invention is adapted, and I therefore disclaim it.

What I claim as my invention is—

Collecting and conveying letters and other mail matter to the post-office in towns and cities by means of properly-secured letter-boxes or other suitable repositories for the reception of drop-letters, in combination with street-railway cars or other suitable public vehicles such as are used for local passenger conveyance on stated routes in towns and cities, substantially as described.

JOHN B. MURRAY.

Witnesses:

JOHN CLARK,

E. T. LATHAM.