

H. B. MAXWELL.  
Envelope.

No. 220,485.

Patented Oct. 14, 1879.

Fig. 1

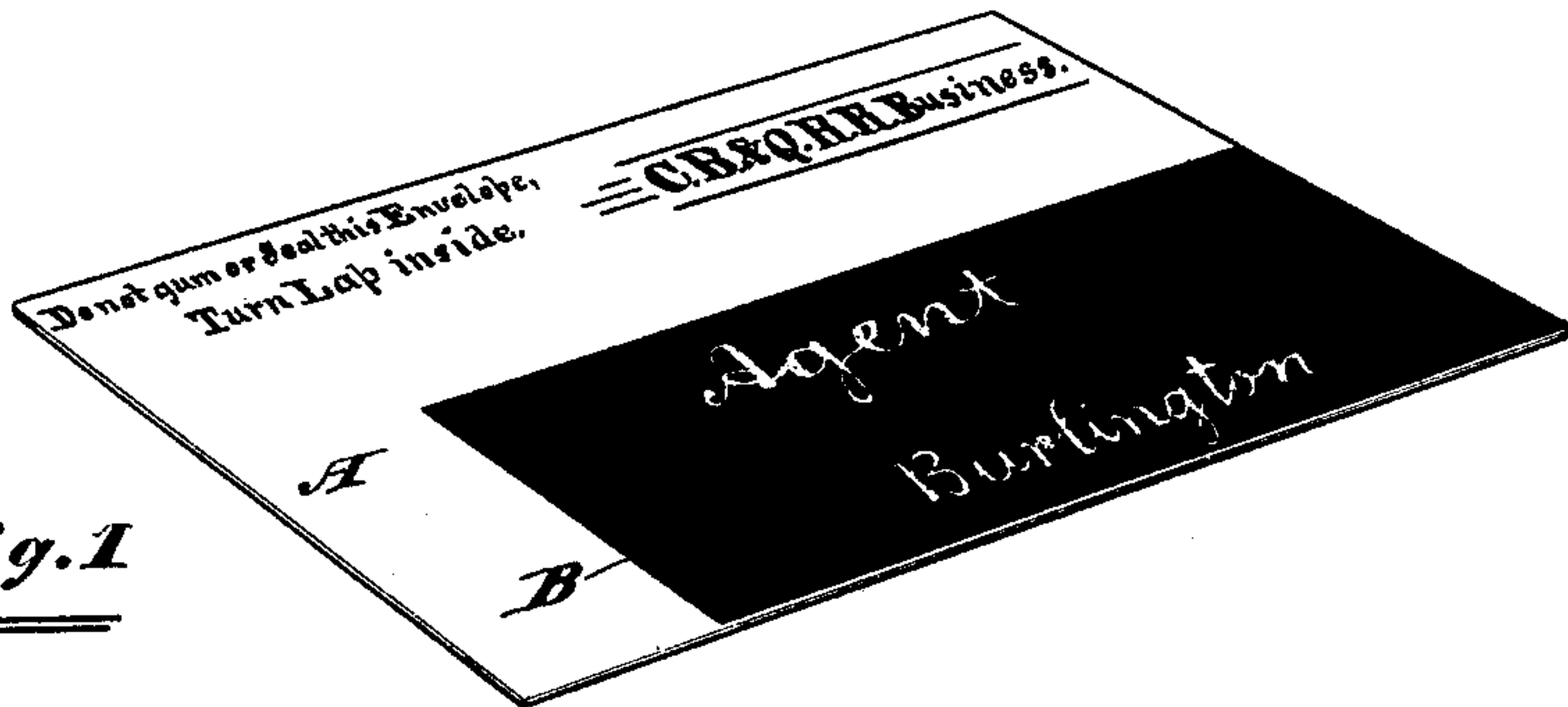


Fig. 2



Fig. 3

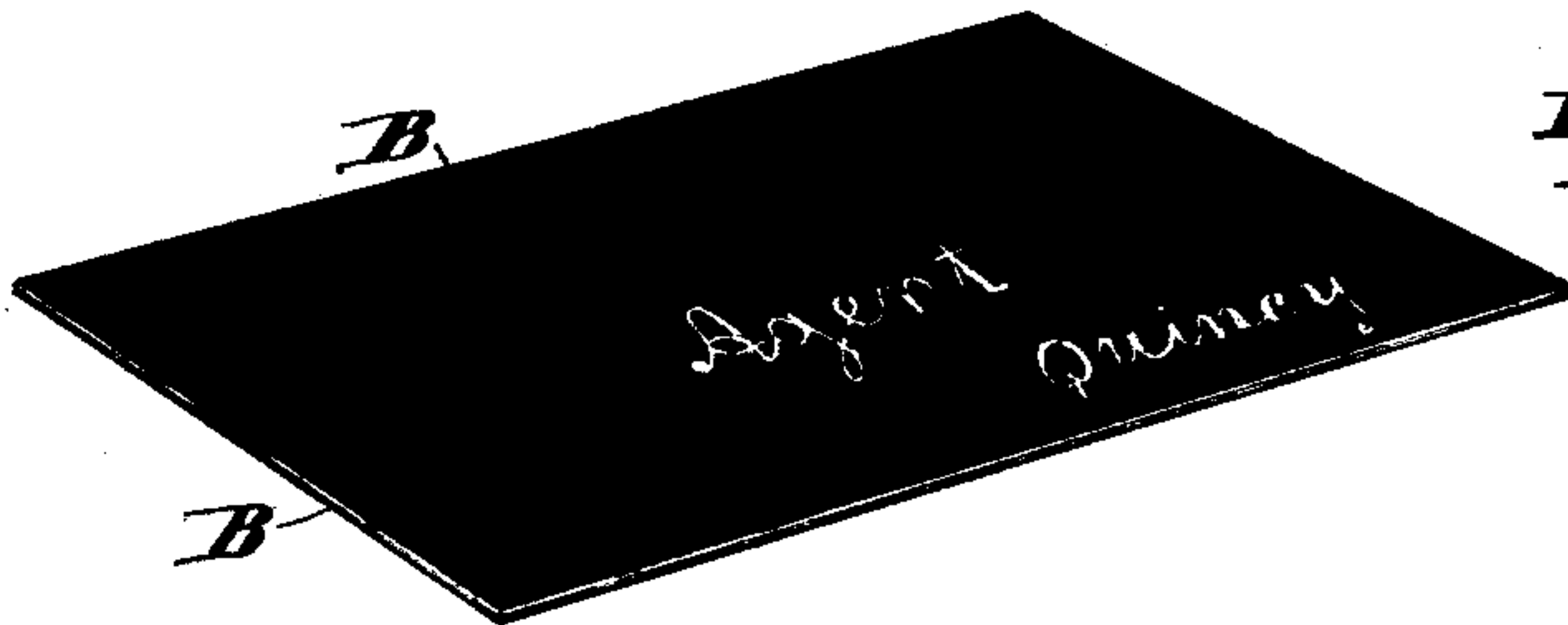
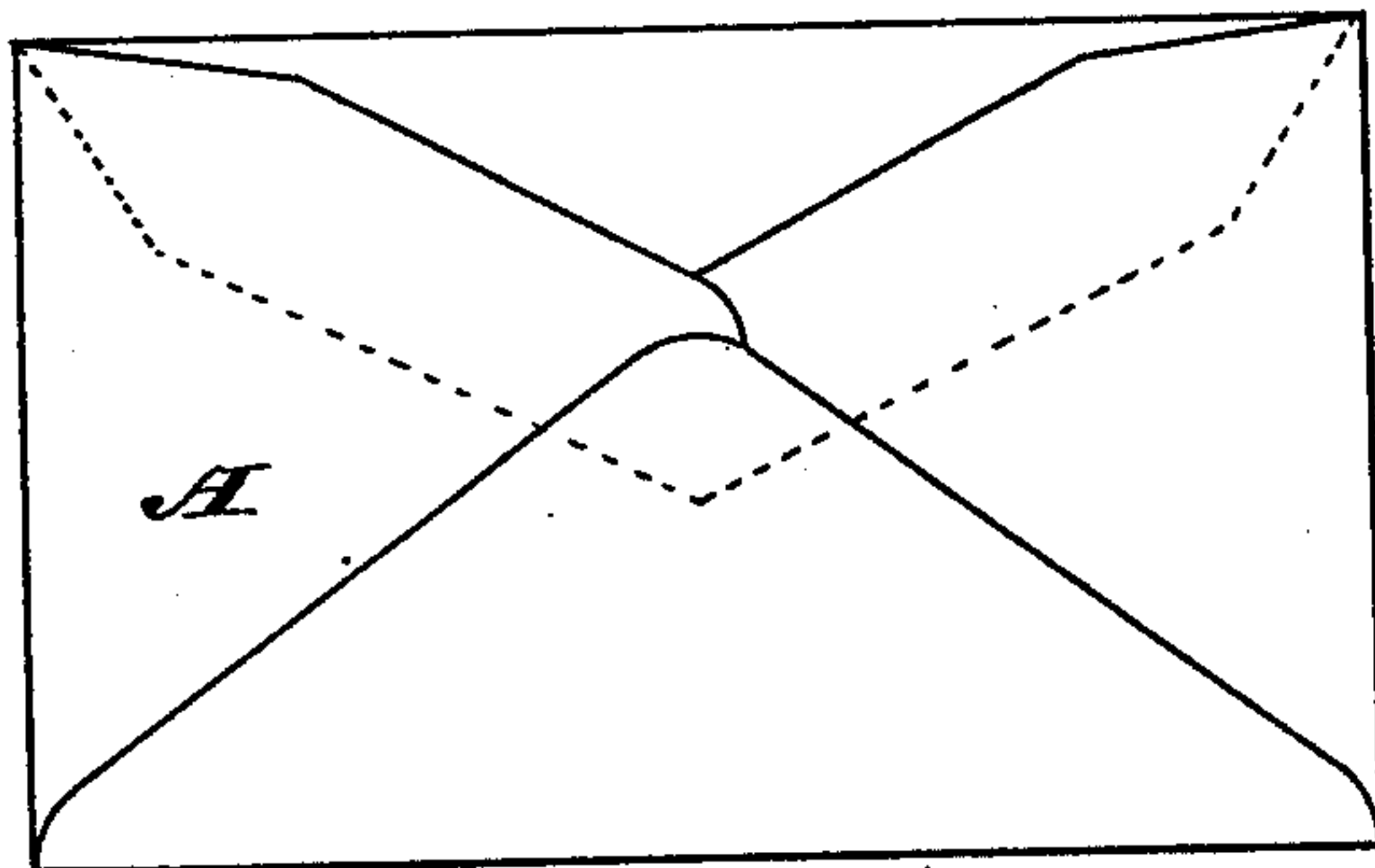


Fig. 4



*Attest:*  
*W. L. Baker*  
*Edward D. Huslow*

**INVENTOR:**  
*Henry B. Maxwell,*  
*By P. L. Dydenforth,*  
*Attorney*

# UNITED STATES PATENT OFFICE.

HENRY B. MAXWELL, OF CHICAGO, ILLINOIS.

## IMPROVEMENT IN ENVELOPES.

Specification forming part of Letters Patent No. **220,485**, dated October 14, 1879; application filed March 7, 1879.

*To all whom it may concern:*

Be it known that I, HENRY B. MAXWELL, of the city of Chicago, in the county of Cook and State of Illinois, have invented a new and useful Improvement in Envelopes; and I hereby declare the following to be a full, clear, and exact description thereof, reference being had to the accompanying drawings, of which—

Figures 1, 2, and 3 are perspective views of envelopes provided with my improvement, and Fig. 4 a view of the reverse side.

My invention relates, chiefly, to an envelope which shall do service over and over again for an indefinite number of communications without suffering injury thereby beyond ordinary wear; and it is designed especially for use by railways in the transaction of private business.

It is well known that railway companies have hitherto been put to enormous outlays yearly in the purchase of envelopes for the transmittal of way-bills and other communications from point to point along their routes. It is usual to transmit such communications unsealed, since they fall into no hands save those of confidential employes, and there is therefore nothing to prevent the repeated use of the same envelope except the address written thereon. By striking out the address and writing a fresh one in another place considerable economy might, of course, be effected; but it is obvious that this could be repeated only a limited number of times, and moreover it is rather repugnant to good taste.

My invention consists in coating the surface of an envelope or railway postal-card, either wholly or in part, with a substance suitable for constituting the portion so coated a tablet or slate, so to speak, upon which matter may be written, and from which it may be readily erased, leaving the parts unimpaired for future use, all as hereinafter more fully set forth.

Referring to the drawings, A represents the envelope, and B the tablet formed thereon, which may cover only a portion of the back, as shown in Figs. 1 and 2, or the entire back, as shown in Fig. 3, according to requirement.

The preparation which I usually adopt for

the purpose, and which I find to be simple, cheap, and effective, is the ordinary black silicate preparation, or "slating," commonly employed for analogous purposes, and I prefer to apply it by means of a printing-press, as being the easiest and most rapid method. This particular preparation is written upon with a soap-stone pencil, and the writing is erased with the aid of moisture.

I do not limit myself, however, to any material or color as to the preparation employed, nor to any manner of applying it. The tablet may be of a character suitable to be written upon with a lead-pencil, if preferred, or with a pen and ink, or with anything else, without departing from the essential feature of my invention, provided only that the matter so written shall be readily erasable, as aforesaid.

It is advisable that the envelopes be formed of heavy and durable material, for, as there is nothing whatever beyond inevitable wear to impair their properties, this course, though involving a somewhat larger expenditure at the outset, will prove an economy in the long run. Of course, the envelope should never be sealed, since this would necessitate its destruction; but the lap should be turned inside, as indicated in Fig. 4.

To railway companies the saving resulting from the use of my envelope will, under proper regulation, be enormous. It is not unusual for a single large corporation to use upward of a million envelopes in the course of a year for its way business alone, whereas, if provided with my improvement, less than one-twentieth of the number would prove amply sufficient.

I apply the same principle to what are known as "railway postal cards." These are cards resembling in appearance ordinary Government postal cards, but which are unstamped and bear on the address side the title of the railway. They are used by companies for transmitting messages between officials along their own lines. With these I coat a sufficient portion of the address side, usually about the same relative proportion as shown on the envelope in Fig. 1, and coat the reverse side, on which the message is written, entirely, giving it the general appearance of the envel-



ope shown in Fig. 3. This, as with the envelopes, permits their use over and over again indefinitely.

I am aware that bill-files have been made having a strip of silicated paper attached thereto; but my invention is essentially different, since I apply the silicate directly to the surface of the envelope or postal card.

What I claim as new, and desire to secure by Letters Patent, is—

As an article of manufacture, an envelope or railway postal card having its surface coated, wholly or in part, with a substance suitable for constituting the portion so coated a tablet or slate, upon which matter may be erasably written, as and for the purpose described.

HENRY B. MAXWELL.

In presence of—

EDWARD D. WINSLOW,  
P. C. DYRENFORTH.