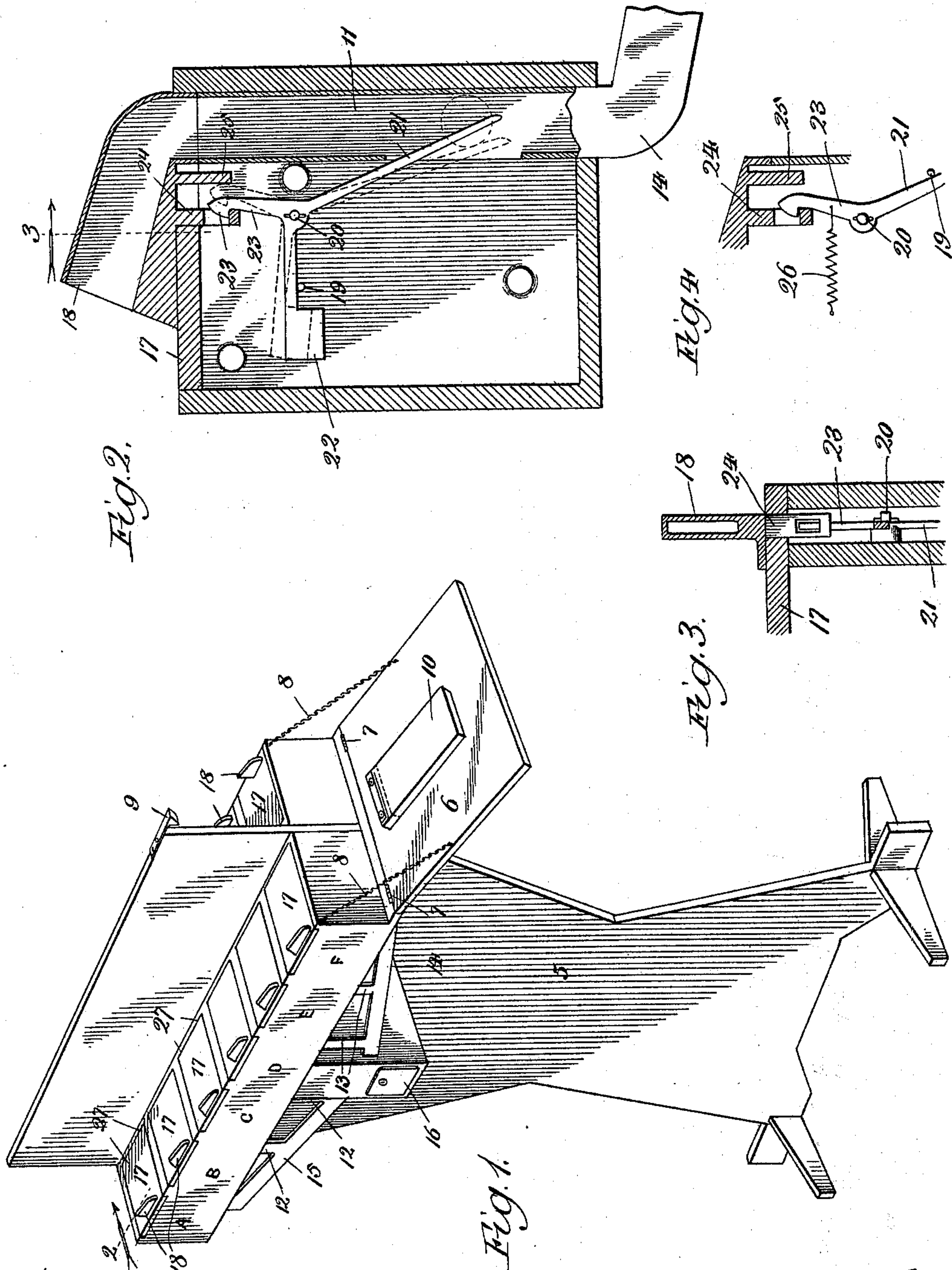


(No Model.)

G. L. PHELPS.
COIN CONTROLLED LETTER BOX.

No. 598,534.

Patented Feb. 8, 1898.



Witnesses:

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UNITED STATES PATENT OFFICE.

GEORGE L. PHELPS, OF WEST PULLMAN, ILLINOIS.

COIN-CONTROLLED LETTER-BOX.

SPECIFICATION forming part of Letters Patent No. 598,534, dated February 8, 1898.

Application filed April 17, 1897. Serial No. 632,552. (No model.)

To all whom it may concern:

Be it known that I, GEORGE L. PHELPS, a citizen of the United States, residing at West Pullman, in the county of Cook and State of Illinois, have invented certain new and useful Improvements in Coin-Controlled Letter-Boxes; and I do hereby declare that the following is a full, clear, and exact description of my invention in its best form now known to me, reference being had to the accompanying drawings, which form a part of this specification.

The object of my invention is to provide a coin-controlled letter-box or system of boxes which may be placed in hotels, stores, theaters, and other public places in which a patron may, by placing a specified coin, preferably a penny, in the slot, deposit and receive letters or other small parcels in said box.

In the drawings, Figure 1 is a perspective view of a system of letter-boxes. Fig. 2 is a detail sectional end elevation on line 2 of Fig. 1, showing the locking mechanism of a single box with the outer plate of the lock removed. Fig. 3 is a partial detail side elevation on line 3 of Fig. 2. Fig. 4 is a modified view of a part of Fig. 2, showing weight 22 replaced by a spring 23.

Similar figures represent similar parts throughout the several views.

In the drawings, 4 represents a series of letter-boxes, each box being numbered or lettered with a consecutive number or letter of the alphabet, or a plurality of letters may be placed on a box; 5, a suitable standard for the same; 6, a writing-shelf; 7, hinges on which shelf 6 is adapted to swing up and catch a clip 9; 8, chains supporting shelf 6; 9, a clip; 10, writing-paper; 11, conduit-tube within the letter-box, the conduit being carried above the box and bent over, ending in the slot 18, as shown, in order to prevent an instrument being inserted vertically in tube 11 and picking the lock; 12 to 15, inclusive, flat conduit-tubes adapted to conduct a coin from tube 11 in the letter-boxes to the cash-box 16; 17, a box-cover hinged at 27, there being a separate cover for each letter-box; 18, a slot in which coin is placed; 19, a stop; 20, a pivot; 21, 22, and 23, the arms of a latch, pivoted at 20, of which 21 is a lever-arm entering conduit 11 through its side; 22, a

weighted arm, and 23 the latch-arm; 24, a catch attached to the cover 17, into which latch-arm 23 is adapted to lock; 25, a stop attached to cover 17; 26, a spring, and 27 hinges.

In operation a system of boxes arranged in any convenient cabinet form, of which Fig. 1 is an illustration, each box locked by the mechanism shown in Fig. 2, or any other suitable coin-controlled lock, are placed in a hotel-office, theater, store, or other public place where persons are likely to meet by appointment. When one of two persons who have agreed to meet at the point where a box is located finds he cannot keep his appointment, he can release the clip 9, lower shelf 6 to the position shown, and write a note upon the paper 10 on the shelf, (or he can bring or send his note already written,) and then, by depositing a coin in slot 18 of the proper lettered or numbered box, unlock it and deposit his letter therein, where the other party may, later on, by depositing another coin, again unlock the box and obtain the letter. It is evident that the letter may be inserted through a slot in the top of the box, should one be provided, in which case only one coin would be required—that deposited by the person desiring to remove the letter from the box.

The operation of the locking mechanism is as follows: When the box is locked, the latch-arm 23 is in engagement with catch 24, and the other two arms 21 and 22 of the latch are in the position shown by the heavy lines in Fig. 2. If, now, it is desired to unlock the box, a coin is placed in the slot 18 and passes down the conduit 11 until it strikes lever 21 and rocks the entire latch about pivot 20 until it is stopped by the latch-arm 23 striking against stop 25. The box is now unlocked, the latch being held by the coin (dotted circle) in the position shown by the dotted lines in Fig. 2. The operator now raises the cover 17 of the box. Stop 25 is raised with it and releases latch-arm 23, thus allowing the weight of the coin to move lever 21 to the left sufficiently to allow the coin to pass down through conduit 14 into the cash-box 16, from which at the proper time it can be collected by the owner, who holds the key. As soon as the coin passes lever 21 it is released, and the weight of lever-arm 22 or a spring, as shown

in Fig. 4, causes the latch to assume the original position ready to again lock the box when the cover is closed down. It is evident that the spring shown in Fig. 4 may be substituted for the weighted lever-arm 22 with the same effect.

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

1. The box having, in combination, the cover admitting to its interior, the coin-conduit, the pivoted latch for locking said cover placed within the wall and inaccessible from without, a stop attached to said cover adapted to control said latch, and the arm reaching within said coin-conduit, said arm being balanced to maintain locking engagement with the cover, except as actuated by the coin, and yielding under the weight of the coin sufficiently to release the cover, substantially as described.

2. In a coin-controlled box, in combination, the cover admitting to its interior, having attached to it a catch and a stop, a pivoted latch for locking said cover placed within the wall of the box inaccessible from without and adapted to swing between and engage with said catch and stop, substantially as described.

3. In a coin-controlled letter-box in combination, the cover admitting to its interior, a catch and a stop attached to said cover, a lever pivotally connected between its ends to the box and having at one end a latch adapted

to engage with said catch and swing against said stop, means for causing said latch to engage with said catch, the other end of said lever adapted to enter the side of a thin flat coin-conduit and under the weight of a coin in said conduit swing the latch end of said lever against said stop but still hold the coin in said conduit, said lower end of said lever being further adapted to swing substantially out of said conduit and allow said coin to pass through said conduit when the cover and stop are removed and the conduit adapted to conduct and confine the coin, substantially as described.

4. In a letter-box, the combination of a box and its cover 17, a coin-conduit 11 having a slot 18; the catch 24 and stop 25 attached to cover 17; stop 19; a latch pivoted at 20, consisting of a latch-arm 23 and a lever-arm 21 extending into conduit 11, and means for causing said latch-arm 23 to engage with said catch 24, for the purposes set forth.

5. In a letter-box, the combination of a box and its cover 17, the coin-conduit 11 having a slot 18, the catch 24 and stop 25 attached to cover 17; the stop 19, and the latch consisting of the arms 21, 22 and 23, pivoted at 20, for the purposes set forth.

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Witnesses:

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