

No. 686,811.

Patented Nov. 19, 1901.

T. F. KELLY.

INDICATING MECHANISM FOR POST OFFICE BOXES.

(Application filed Mar. 7, 1901.)

(No Model.)

2 Sheets—Sheet 1.

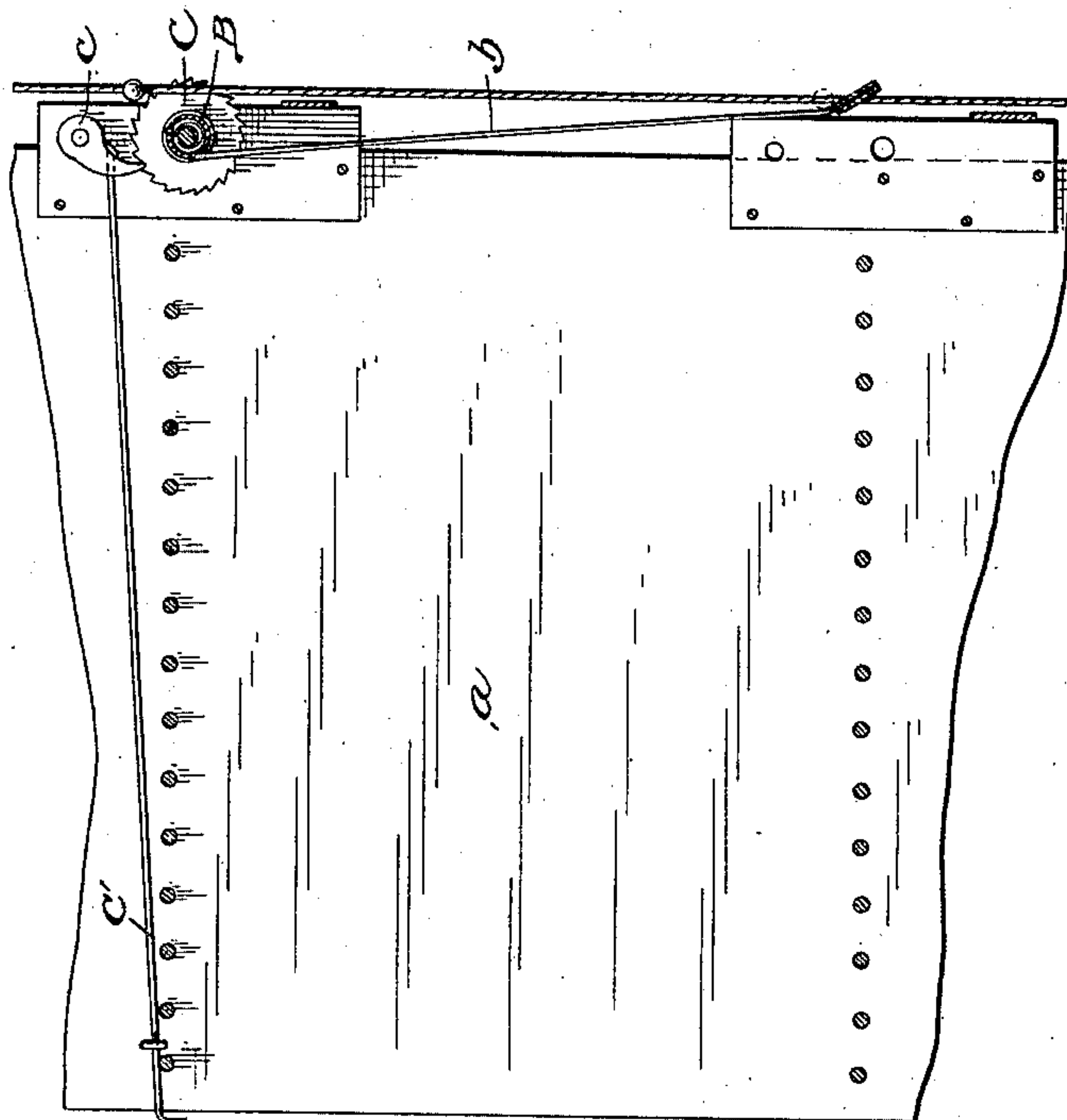


Fig. 3.

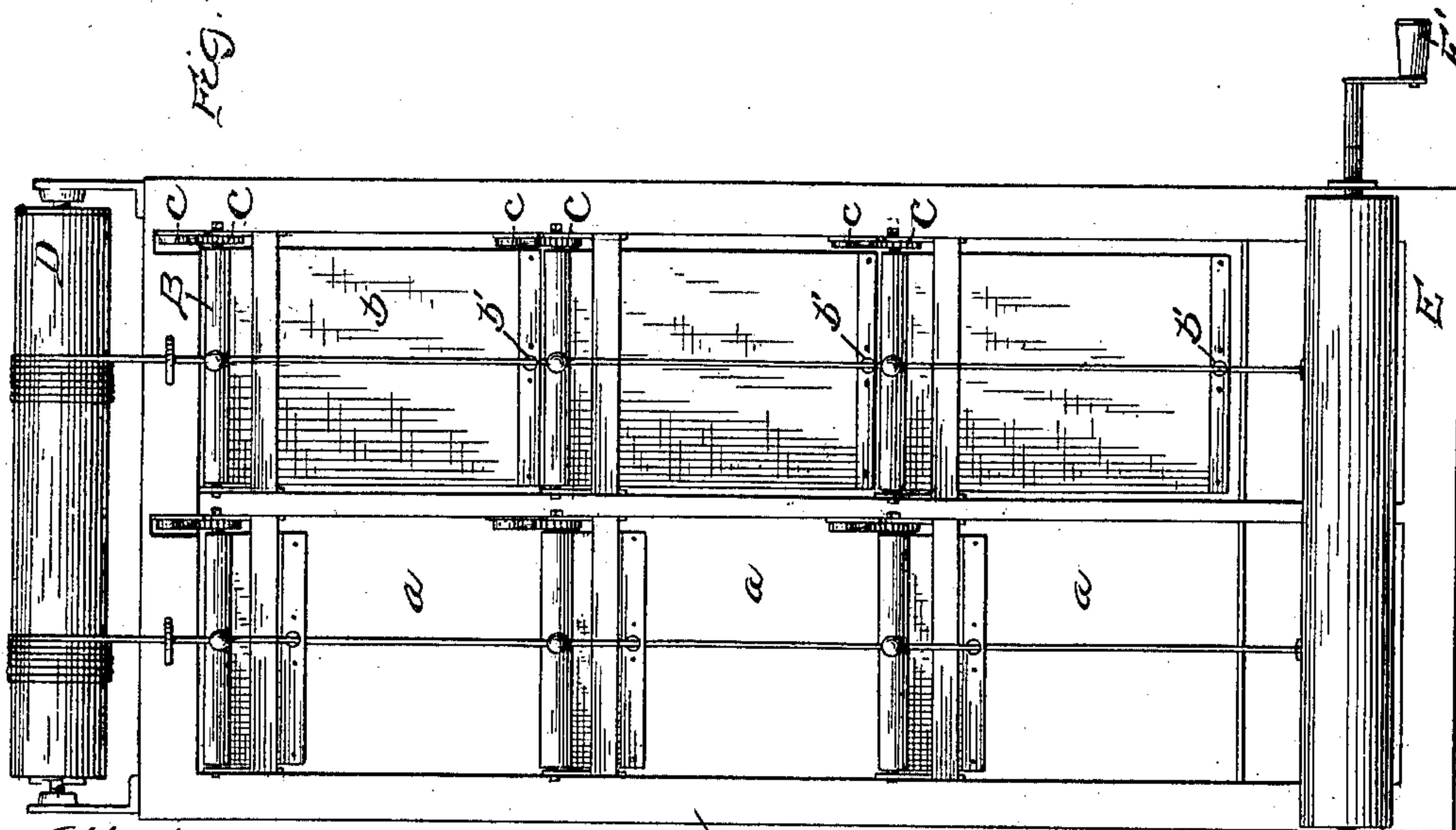


Fig. 1.

Attest:
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By *Wm. H. Hall*
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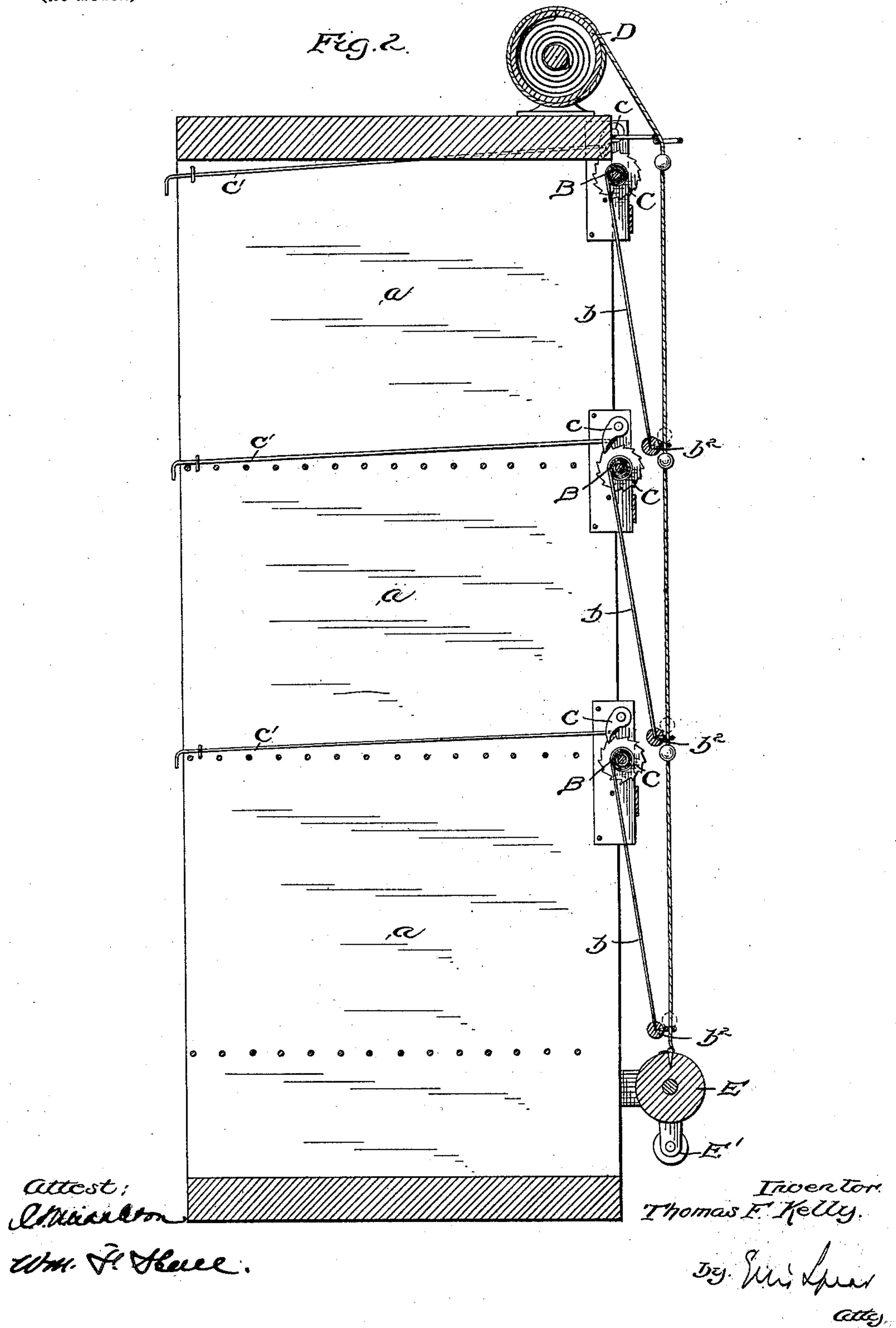
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2 Sheets—Sheet 2.



UNITED STATES PATENT OFFICE.

THOMAS F. KELLY, OF ADAIR, IOWA.

INDICATING MECHANISM FOR POST-OFFICE BOXES.

SPECIFICATION forming part of Letters Patent No. 686,811, dated November 19, 1901.

Application filed March 7, 1901. Serial No. 50,147. (No model.)

To all whom it may concern:

Be it known that I, THOMAS F. KELLY, a citizen of the United States, residing at Adair, Adair county, Iowa, have invented certain new and useful Improvements in Indicating Mechanism for Post-Office Boxes, of which the following is a specification.

My invention relates to improvements in indicators for post-office boxes. Heretofore, so far as I am aware, it has been customary when the end of the quarter or other period for which the boxes are rented is reached for the postmaster to place in each box a card bearing the words "Box vacant." This necessitates a vast amount of work upon the attendant and is unreliable, for the reason that the cards are apt to get lost out in the removal of any mail which may be left therein, resulting in danger of pecuniary loss to the postmaster. The present invention is designed to obviate these disadvantages and to provide means whereby signs "Box vacant" may be simultaneously applied to all the boxes; but these signs or indicators may be severally released as the box-rent on the individual boxes is paid.

To this end the invention consists in the combination, with a plurality of mail boxes or compartments, of a plurality of indicators for said boxes, means whereby indicators may be simultaneously moved or set, and means whereby they may be severally released or removed.

The invention also includes the details of construction hereinafter pointed out, and particularly set forth in the claims.

The invention is illustrated in the accompanying drawings, in which—

Figure 1 is a front elevation of a set of boxes or pigeonholes with my attachment applied thereto. Fig. 2 is a cross-section, and Fig. 3 a detail.

In the drawings, A represents a set of post-office boxes, compartments, or pigeonholes of the ordinary or any desired construction, each compartment being indicated at *a*. At the top of each compartment I provide a transverse shaft B, upon which is wound a small curtain *b*, bearing the desired words to indicate when the curtain is unwound or drawn down that the box-rent is due or that the term for which rent has been paid has expired.

These shafts B are spring-pressed after the manner of the ordinary shade-roller or in any suitable and desirable manner, so that they tend to maintain the curtains in a wound-up condition. Ratchet-wheels C are secured on the shafts at the sides of the compartments, which are engaged by pawls *c*, whereby the indicating-curtains when drawn down will be prevented from being wound up again.

In order to draw all the curtains down simultaneously, any suitable means may be employed, but I prefer to use that shown in the drawings and now described. A spring-roller D is journaled at the top of the case A, to which are secured a plurality of cords or wires corresponding in number to the number of vertical rows of boxes. These cords lead downward through eyes *b'* at the lower edge of the curtains and are secured at the bottom to a drum or roller E, extending along the bottom of the case and provided with a suitable operating-handle *E'*. A plurality of buttons are provided on each cord, one button for each curtain, and it will thus be seen that when the shaft or drum E is rotated the cords will be drawn upon against the tension of the spring-roller at the top, and the engagement of the buttons with the eyes in the curtains will cause the curtains also to be drawn down against the tension of their respective spring-rollers. As soon as the lower shaft has been rotated sufficiently to cause the curtains to display their indicating characters the said lower shaft is released, when the upper spring-pressed shaft at once draws all the cords up, the curtains remaining down by reason of their pawls and ratchets. Each curtain may thus be released independently of any other by simply disengaging its pawl from the ratchet-wheel, allowing the spring-roller to raise the curtain.

In order to enable the postmaster or other attendant to conveniently operate the pawls, rods *c'* are connected to them and extend backward into convenient reach of the operator. I prefer also to secure a bar *b²* to the lower end of each curtain, of sufficient weight to hold it straight and form the eyes in these bars, as shown.

In the case of lock-boxes I may apply a curtain and releasing device only and omit the means for simultaneously operating them.

Having thus described my invention, what I claim is—

1. The combination with a plurality of mail-boxes or pigeonholes, of a plurality of indicating devices, means for simultaneously displaying all said indicating devices, said indicating devices being capable of being severally restored to normal position, substantially as described.
2. The combination with a plurality of pigeonholes or compartments, of an indicating device for each box, means for simultaneously setting or exposing all of said indicating devices and means for severally restoring them to normal position, substantially as described.
3. The combination with a plurality of pigeonholes or compartments, of a plurality of spring-pressed indicating devices, one for each compartment, means for simultaneously setting said devices against the pressure of the springs and means for severally releasing said indicators to permit the spring to return them to normal position, substantially as described.
4. The combination with a plurality of pigeonholes or compartments, of a plurality of indicating-curtains, means for simultaneously extending the curtains, and means for severally winding up the curtains, substantially as described.
5. The combination with a plurality of pigeonholes, of a plurality of spring-pressed rollers, curtains carried by said rollers nor-

mally wound thereon, means for unwinding said curtains from the rollers and simultaneously exposing them all, and means for severally releasing them, substantially as described.

6. The combination with a plurality of pigeonholes, of a spring-pressed roller adjacent to each pigeonhole, a curtain attached to each roller and normally wound thereon, means for simultaneously unwinding all of said curtains, independent means for each roller for maintaining the curtain in an unwound condition and connections for operating said roller-controlling means, substantially as described.

7. The combination with a plurality of pigeonholes, of a plurality of spring-wound rollers, curtains carried thereby, a spring-wound shaft above said compartments, cords connected thereto and extending downwardly through the eyes in the curtains, a winding shaft or drum at the bottom to which all of said cords are attached, enlargements on the cords for engaging the eyes and independent holding and releasing means connected to each roller, substantially as described.

In testimony whereof I affix my signature in presence of two witnesses.

THOMAS F. KELLY.

Witnesses:

HENRY E. COOPER,
JAMES M. SPEAR.