

No. 692,178.

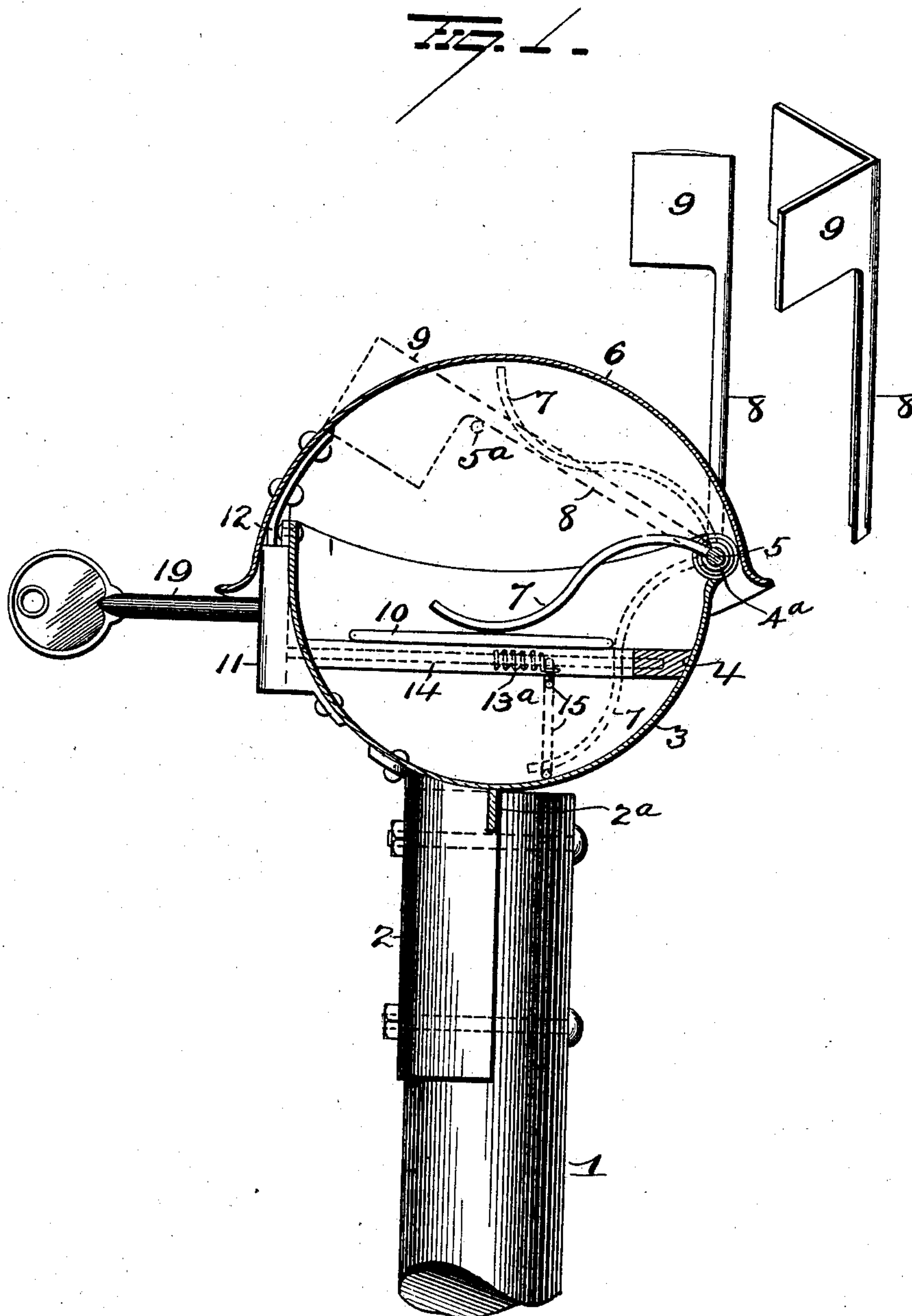
A. M. BURNHAM.
MAIL BOX.

Patented Jan. 28, 1902.

(No Model.)

(Application filed Jan. 30, 1901.)

3 Sheets—Sheet 1.



WITNESSES
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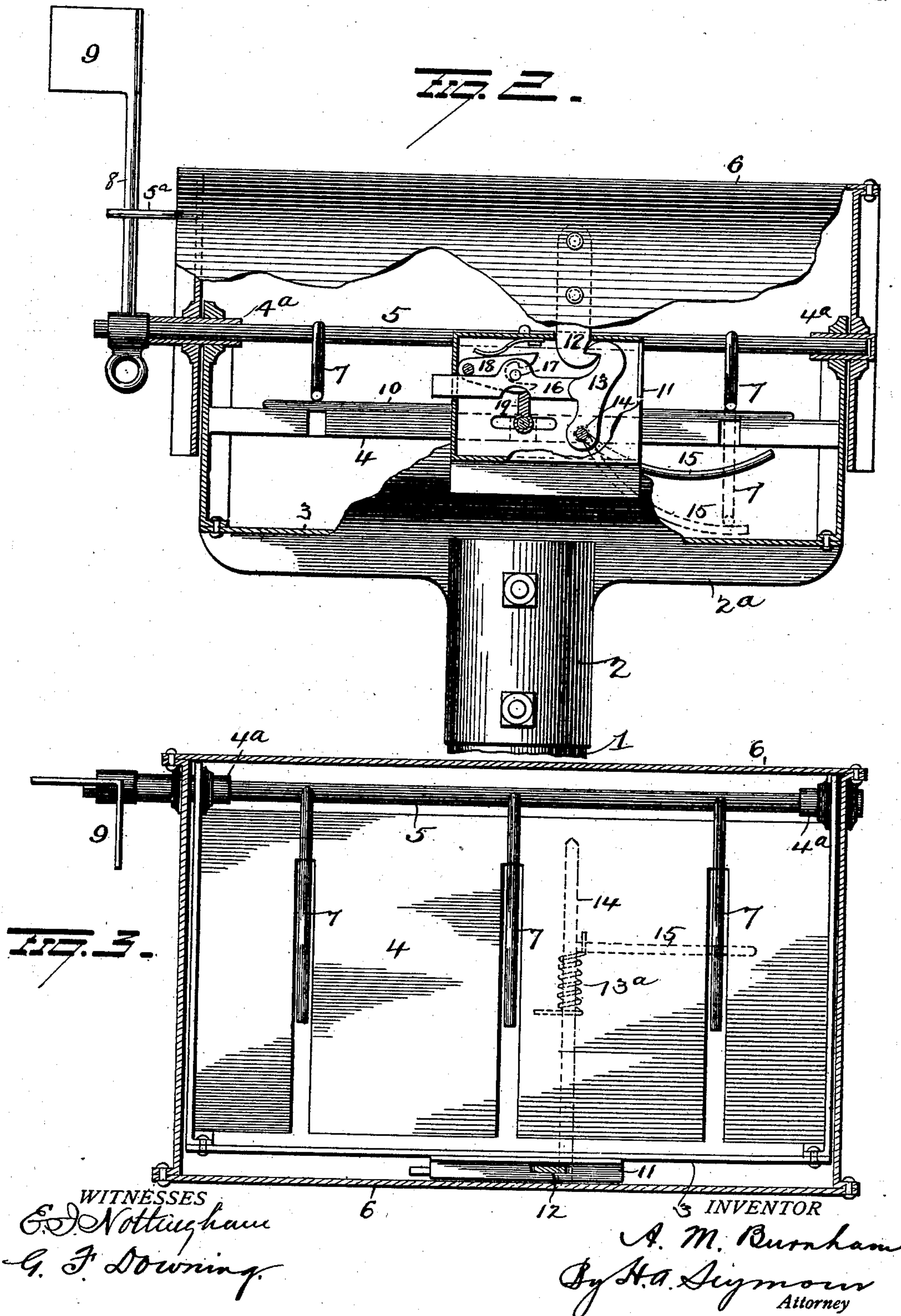
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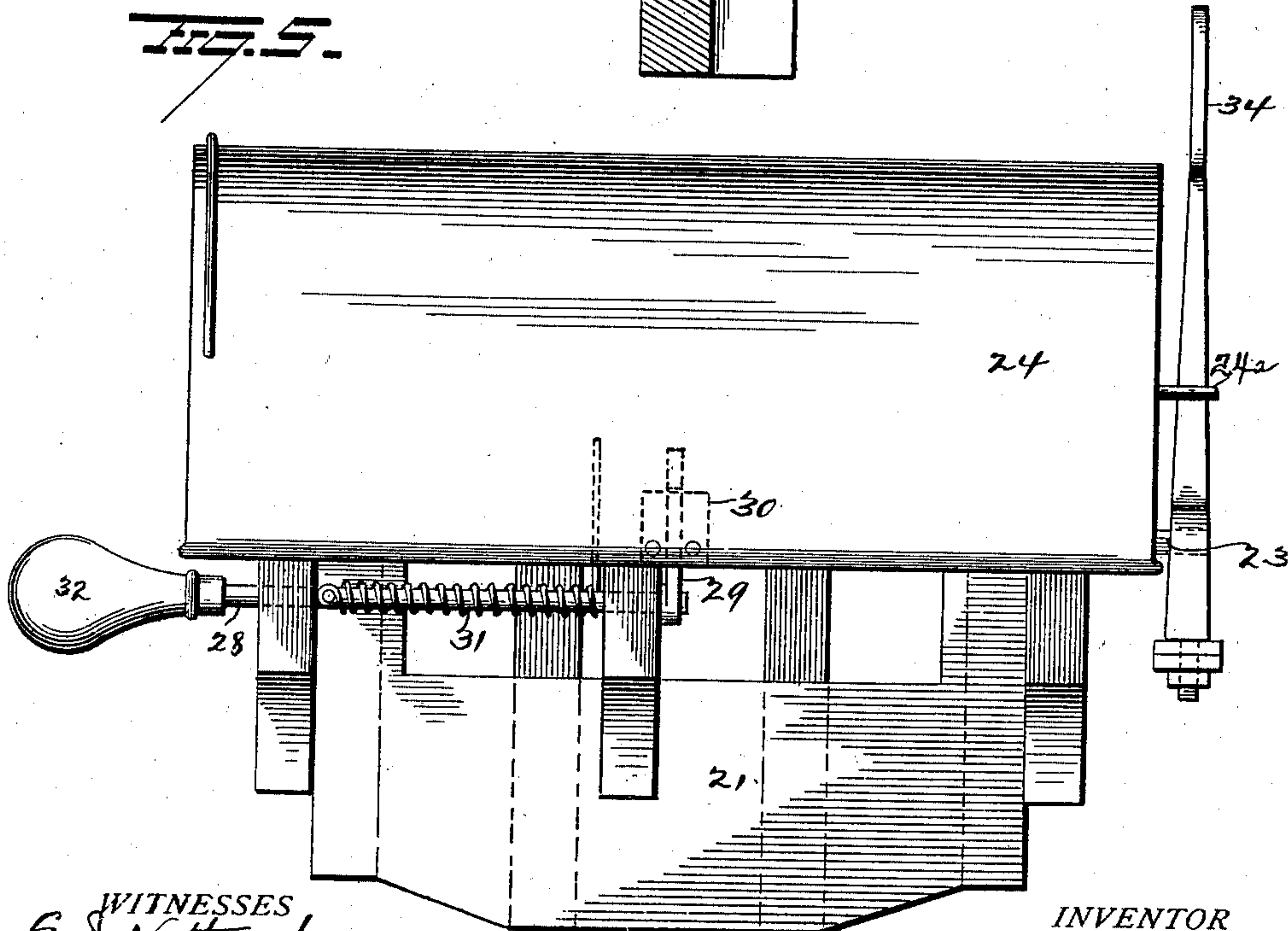
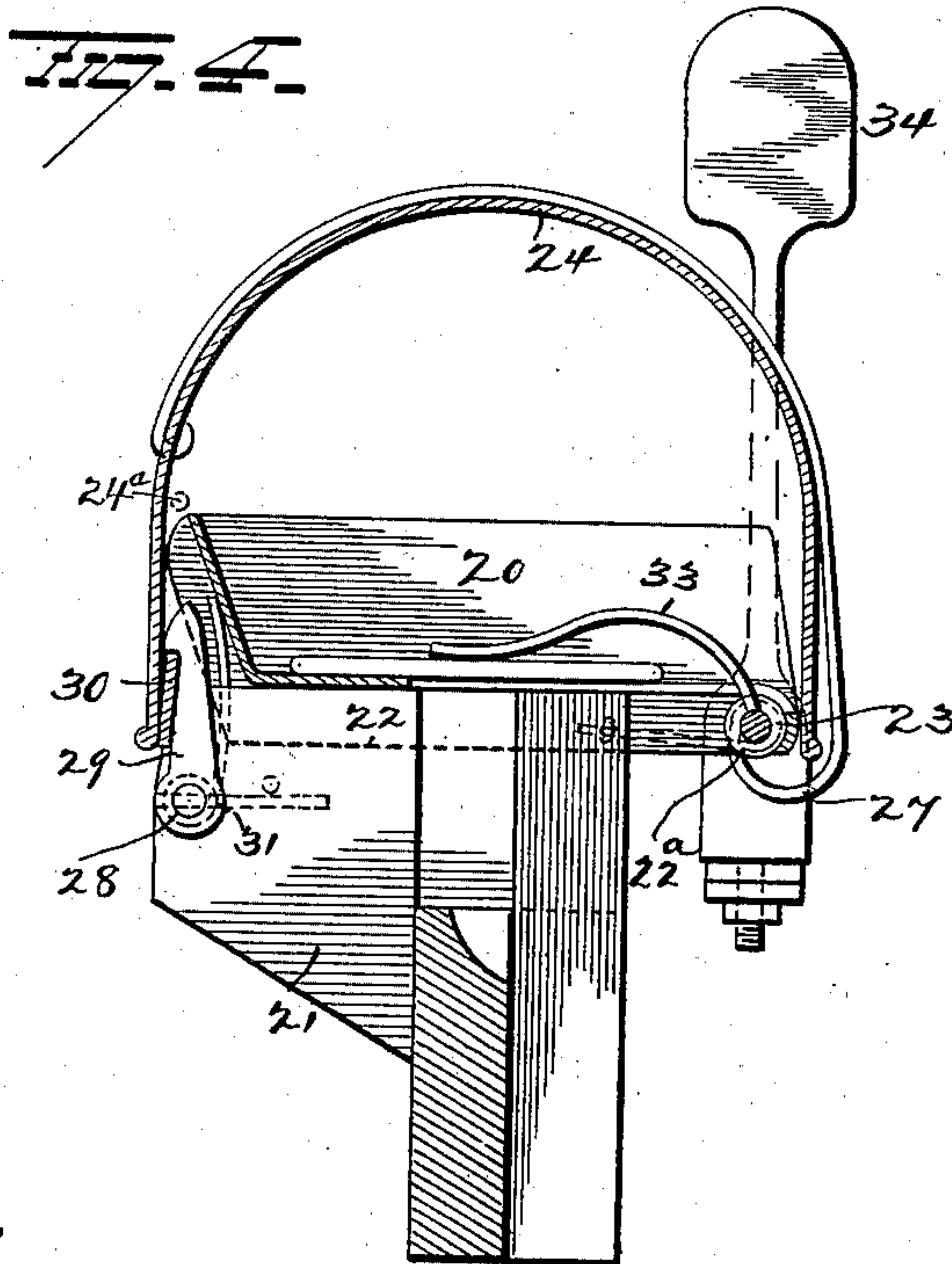
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UNITED STATES PATENT OFFICE.

ARTHUR M. BURNHAM, OF GARDINER, MAINE, ASSIGNOR OF ONE-HALF TO
MRS. LUTE B. LIBBY, OF GARDINER, MAINE.

MAIL-BOX.

SPECIFICATION forming part of Letters Patent No. 692,178, dated January 28, 1902.

Application filed January 30, 1901. Serial No. 45,363. (No model.)

To all whom it may concern:

Be it known that I, ARTHUR M. BURNHAM, a resident of Gardiner, in the county of Kennebec and State of Maine, have invented certain new and useful Improvements in Mail-Boxes; and I do hereby declare the following to be a full, clear, and exact description of the invention, such as will enable others skilled in the art to which it appertains to make and use the same.

My invention relates to an improvement in mail-boxes, and more particularly to private mail-boxes for use in rural districts, the object of the invention being to provide a mail-box which can be easily opened by the carrier and mail deposited therein without dismounting from his vehicle and which will when closed by the carrier automatically lock and display a signal notifying the owner that mail-matter is in the box.

A further object is to provide a mail-box with means for preventing the locking thereof when the box is empty.

With these objects in view the invention consists in certain novel features of construction and combinations and arrangements of parts, as will be more fully hereinafter described, and pointed out in the claims.

In the accompanying drawings, Figure 1 is a view in section, illustrating my improved box closed. Fig. 2 is a front view partly broken away and in section. Fig. 3 is a top view in section, partly broken away; and Figs. 4 and 5 are views of a modified form of my invention.

1 represents a post or upright to which a depending lug 2 on a strengthening-rib 2^a on the lower section 3 of the mail-box is secured, the lug 2 being in the shape of one-half of a cylinder and secured in a similarly-shaped notch in the upper end of the post by bolts, as shown.

The lower section 3 of the box is preferably semicylindrical in shape, composed of sheet or cast metal, or both, and provided with a slotted partition or slats 4 for a purpose which will more fully hereinafter appear.

The lower section 3 is provided near its rear edge in each end with aligned holes for the reception of sleeves 4^a, in which a shaft 5 is mounted, and on said sleeves 4^a the ends of

the upper section 6 are secured. The upper section is composed of sheet metal or cast metal, or both, and is of approximately the same shape as the lower section 3, but larger, so as to inclose the upper edge thereof and prevent the entrance of rain, snow, and sleet therein, which might damage the mail-matter and the box.

The shaft 5 is provided at intervals throughout its length with curved fingers or wires 7, adapted to pass freely through the slots in the partition 4 when the box is empty, and a rod 8 is secured on one end of the shaft 5 outside the box and adapted to be thrown back by a lug 5^a on the upper section 6 and carries at its free end a signal 9, preferably colored, so as to be seen from a distance, and bent in the form of a right angle to enable it to be seen from any direction, and when the box is closed and there is no mail-matter therein the fingers 7 will pass through the slotted partition and rest on the bottom of the box, thus holding the signal down to the position shown in dotted lines in Fig. 1; but when a letter, as indicated by 10, is in the box it will rest on the partition 4 and cover at least one of the slots therein, so as to prevent the fingers 7 from passing through the same, and thus hold the signal in a vertical position to indicate to the owner or carrier that mail-matter is in the box.

In order to secure the top in a closed position and prevent unauthorized tampering with the contents thereof, I provide a lock, which latter comprises a casing 11, secured to the front of the lower section 3 and adapted to be partially inclosed by the overlapping edge of the top or upper section 6, and a suitable notched bolt 12 is secured to the inner face of the upper section and adapted to project through a slot in the top of the lock-casing 11 and be engaged by a toothed catch 13, secured at its lower end on a revolubly-supported shaft 14, projecting into the lower section 3 of the box and having a bearing in the partition 4. A rod 15 is secured to the shaft 14 and extends at right angles thereto and projects beneath the partition 4 and in the path of one of the fingers 7, so that when the box is empty the fingers 7 will pass through the partition 4 and depress rod 15, thus turn-

ing the shaft 14 and moving catch 13 out of the path of the bolt 12 and prevent the locking of the latter when the box is closed; but when a letter is in the box and the fingers 7 are not permitted to pass through the partition the catch 13 will be moved by a coiled spring 13^a on shaft 14 to engage the bolt 12 and lock the same, as the movement of the rod 15 will not be interfered with by the fingers 7. A sliding bolt 16 is located in the lock-casing 11 and connected with the catch 13 and is provided with a pin 17, normally held by spring-tumblers 18 in such position as to hold the catch 13 in engagement with the bolt 12; but said tumblers are operated by a suitable key 19 to release the sliding bolt 16 and permit the operation of the catch. These tumblers 18 can be so shaped as to require a separate key for each lock, but permit the use of a master-key by the mail-carrier.

Instead of constructing my improvements as above described I might make the same as shown in Figs. 4 and 5. In this form of my invention the stationary bottom 20 is secured on a frame 21 and the latter to a post, and said bottom 20 is curved upward at its front edge and made with depending flanges 22 at each end, through aligned holes in which sleeves 22^a are passed and in which a shaft 23 is mounted. A semicylindrical top 24 incloses the bottom 20 and is secured on the sleeves 22^a, and a coiled spring 27 is mounted on one of said sleeves 22^a and connected at one end to the top 24, so as to automatically throw the same to its open position. A shaft 28 is supported in the frame 21 and carries at one end a catch 29, adapted to be held in engagement with a keeper 30 on the inner face of the front of the top 24 by a coiled spring 31, so as to hold the top in its closed position, and a handhold or knob 32 is provided on the free end of shaft 28 to permit the carrier to readily turn the same and open the box without alighting from his vehicle. The shaft 23 is provided at intervals throughout its length with fingers 33, adapted to move freely through slots in the bottom 20, and with a signal 34 at one end, adapted to be thrown back by a lug 24^a on top 24, and when a letter is placed in the box the fingers 33 will be held thereby in position to maintain the signal in a vertical position to notify the owner or carrier that mail-matter is contained in the box.

Various other slight changes might be resorted to in the general form and arrangement of the several parts described without departing from the spirit and scope of my invention, and hence I would have it understood that I do not wish to limit myself to the precise details set forth, but consider myself at liberty to make such slight changes and alterations as fairly fall within the spirit and scope of my invention.

Having fully described my invention, what

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

1. In a mail-box, the combination of a receptacle for mail, a door or cover therefor, a signal, means on the door or cover for raising the signal when said door or cover is opened and means in the receptacle to cooperate with mail-matter deposited in the receptacle to retain the signal raised after the door or cover has been closed.

2. In a mail-box, the combination with a receptacle, a door or cover therefor and a lock, of means in the receptacle and cooperating with the lock to retain the door or cover unlocked when the receptacle is empty and to permit the operation of the lock when mail-matter has been deposited into the receptacle and the door or cover closed.

3. In a mail-box, the combination with a receptacle, a door or cover therefor, a lock and a signal, of means in the receptacle constructed and arranged to be controlled by mail-matter inserted into the receptacle, for permitting the operation of the lock to lock the door or cover and to retain the signal in displayed position when the door or cover is locked.

4. In a mail-box, the combination with a receptacle and a cover therefor, of a pivotally supported signal-arm adapted to project above the box, a pin on the cover to engage the signal-arm and raise it when the cover is opened, and means within the receptacle constructed and arranged to be controlled by mail-matter inserted into the receptacle for retaining the signal-arm raised when mail-matter has been deposited into the box and the cover closed.

5. In a mail-box, the combination with a stationary receptacle and a hinged top or cover therefor, of a shaft projecting through said stationary receptacle and carrying a signal at one end and fingers on said shaft in the receptacle to be held by a letter or parcel deposited therein, in a vertical or other position to signify the presence of the contents of the box.

6. In a mail-box, the combination with a stationary receptacle and a cover or top hinged thereto, of a shaft projecting through said stationary receptacle and carrying a signal at one end, fingers on said shaft in the receptacle to be held by a letter or parcel deposited therein in a vertical or other position to signify the presence of the contents of the box and means for locking the cover or top in its closed position.

7. In a mail-box, the combination with a support, a slotted platform for mail, and a hinged top covering said platform, of a shaft carrying a signal at one end, fingers on said shaft adapted to move through the slotted platform and permit the signal to fall, but which will be held in position by a letter or parcel on the platform to maintain the signal in a vertical position.

8. In a mail-box, the combination with a sta-

tionary receptacle and a hinged top or cover therefor, of a slotted platform in said receptacle for mail, a shaft mounted in said receptacle and extending across the platform, a signal on one end of said shaft and fingers on said shaft adapted to move freely through the slotted platform when the box is empty to permit the signal to fall but whose movement will be limited by a letter or parcel on the platform to hold the signal in a vertical position.

9. In a mail-box, the combination with a receptacle and a closure therefor, of a bolt, a catch to cooperate with the bolt to lock the closure, a finger projecting from the catch and means cooperating with said finger for preventing the operation of the lock when the box is empty, said means constructed and arranged to be controlled by mail-matter in the box for permitting the engagement of the catch with the bolt to lock the closure.

10. In a mail-box, the combination with a receptacle and a closure therefor, of a notched bolt on the closure, a spring-actuated catch for engaging the bolt, a shaft, a signal there-

on, a finger on the shaft adapted when the box is empty to hold the catch out of engagement with the bolt but which will be held out of engagement with the catch when a letter or parcel is in the box and in position to set the signal.

11. In a mail-box, the combination with a receptacle and a closure therefor, of a bolt on the closure, a lock on the receptacle for engaging the bolt, a shaft in the receptacle, a signal carried by said shaft, a finger on said shaft in such position as to release the locking mechanism when the box is empty and to set the signal when a letter or parcel is deposited in the box and permit the operation of the lock to secure the closure against movement until the lock is operated by a key.

In testimony whereof I have signed this specification in the presence of two subscribing witnesses.

ARTHUR M. BURNHAM.

Witnesses:

A. M. SPEAR,
G. D. LIBBY.