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SIGNAL ATTACHMENT FOR RURAL MAILBOXES

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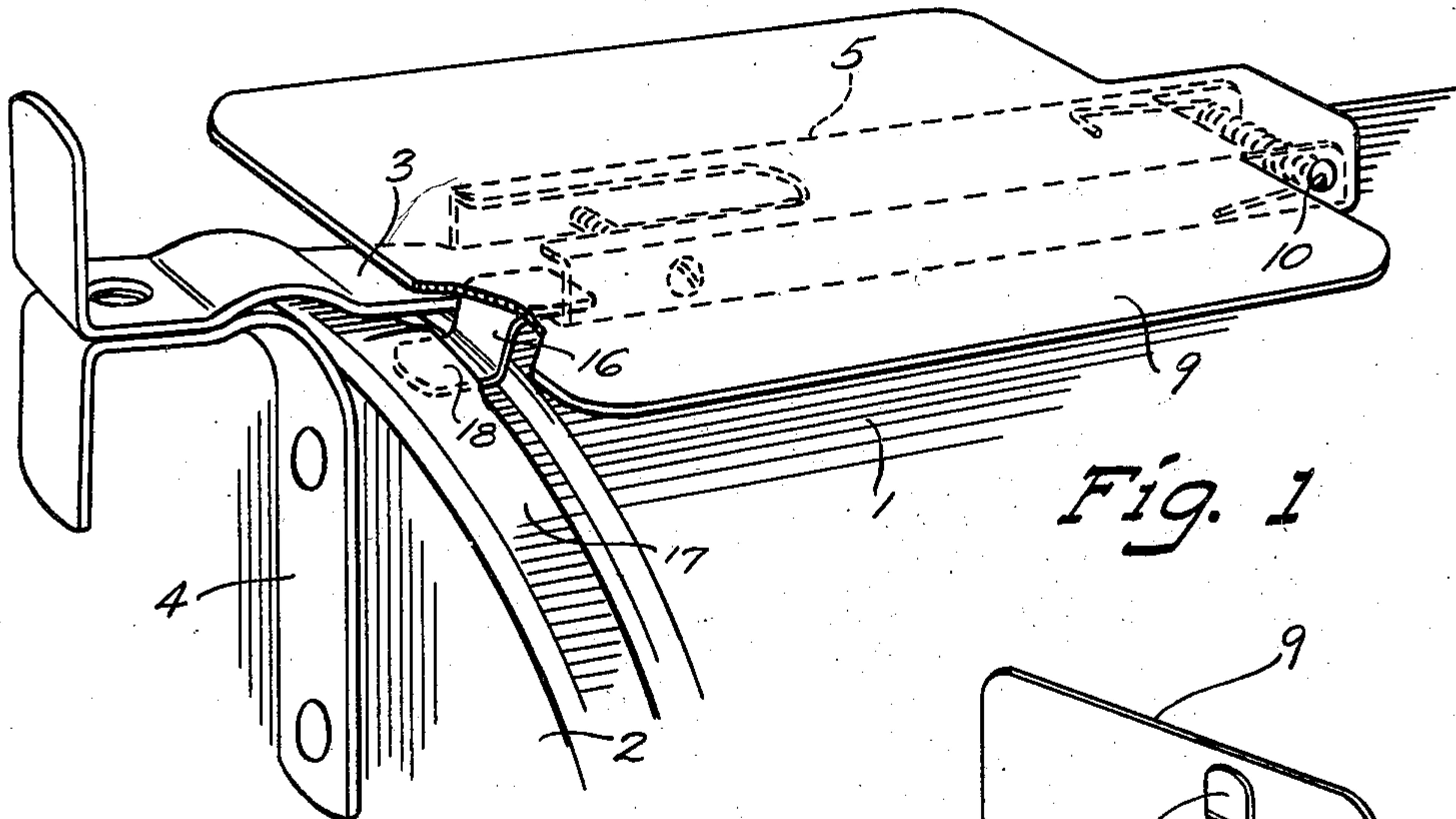


Fig. 1

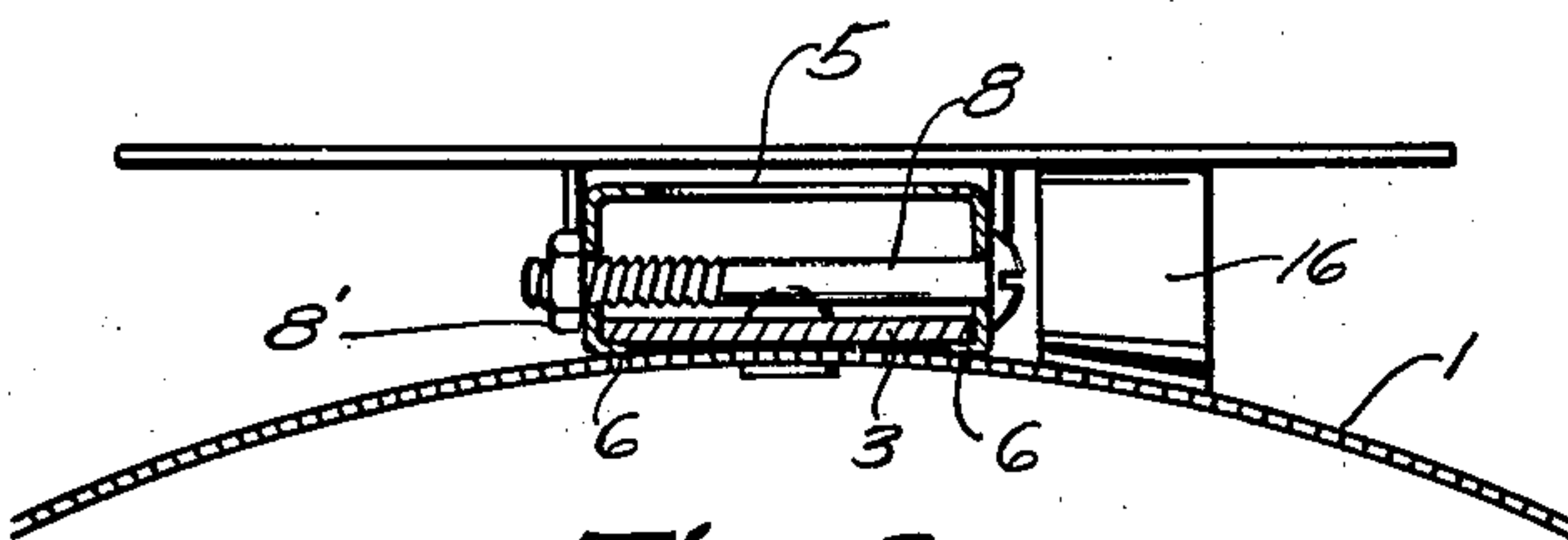


Fig. 3

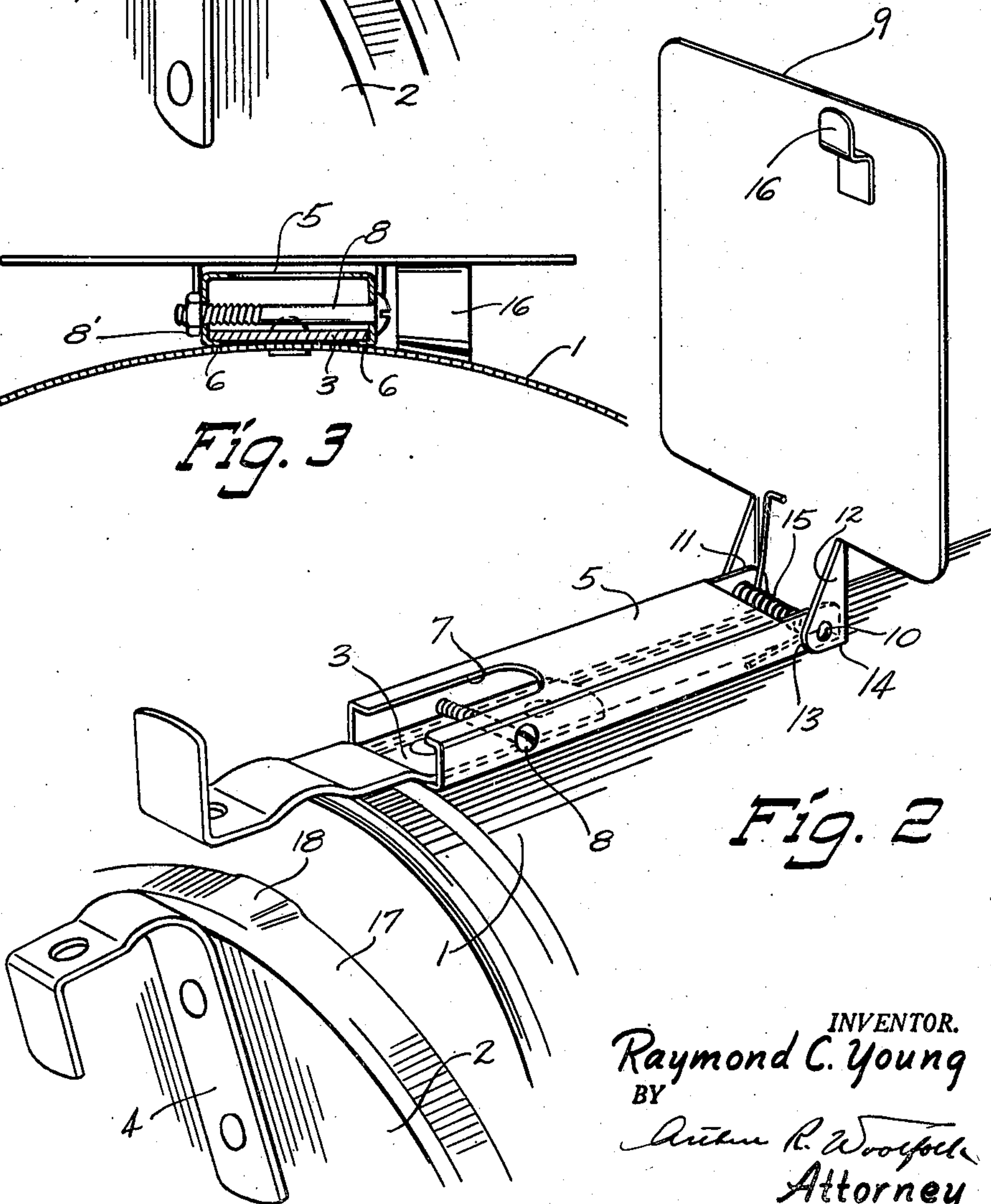


Fig. 2

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SIGNAL ATTACHMENT FOR RURAL MAILBOXES

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2 Claims. (Cl. 232—35)

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This invention relates to a mail box signal and is particularly directed to a signalling device for rural mail boxes.

Various attempts have been made to provide a signalling device for rural mail boxes but these attempts have not been wholly satisfactory as they resulted in damaging the mail box as they required holes to be drilled for bolts or otherwise required altering the mail box and, in addition, they have resulted in rather expensive and complicated mechanisms which usually could not be readily installed by the average person or user.

This invention is designed to overcome the above noted defects and objects of this invention are to provide a mail box signal which is extremely simple in construction, which is cheap to manufacture, and which does not require the drilling of any holes in the standard mail box but which, instead, may be easily applied by anyone without requiring any material degree of skill.

Further objects are to provide a mail box signal which automatically displays the signal or flag whenever the mailman opens the door of the box to deposit mail and which is so made that it does not interfere or hamper the mailman in any manner.

An embodiment of the invention is shown in the accompanying drawings, in which:

Figure 1 is a fragmentary perspective view of the front end of a rural mail box showing the signalling means attached thereto and in non-signalling position.

Figure 2 is a view corresponding to Figure 1 showing the signalling means in signalling position.

Figure 3 is a fragmentary view with parts of the supporting member and rural mail box in section.

Referring to the drawings, it will be seen that a rural mail box has been indicated and comprises a housing 1 and a door 2 which is pivoted in the usual manner, not shown, adjacent its lower portion to the housing 1. The housing and door are provided with fastening means which consist of an upper strap member 3 attached to the top of the housing 1 and a strap member 4 attached to the door 2. These strap members which constitute the fastening means are of the usual construction and are arranged to temporarily hold the door closed.

The signalling device comprises a channel-shaped supporting member 5 which is provided with a pair of inwardly-turned lip portions 6 arranged to pass below the marginal edges of the upper strap 3, which strap is, as stated, attached

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to the housing 1. The channel-shaped supporting member 5 is provided with a slotted or cut out portion 7 adjacent its forward end to allow a considerable amount of freedom or yield for the front end of the supporting member 5. This front end of the supporting member is provided with a bolt or screw 8 which extends through the side walls of the channel-shaped supporting member 5 and has its threaded end received by a nut 8'. The construction is such that in applying the device, the supporting member 5 is positioned as shown in Figures 1 and 2 and the bolt or screw 8 is tightened and thus locks the fingers 6 beneath the upper strap 3. In view of the fact that the upper strap 3 is flat and that the adjacent portion of the housing 1 is rounded as shown most clearly in Figure 3, it is apparent that the fingers 6 can readily enter the space between the marginal portions of the strap 3 and the housing 1. This arrangement, therefore, provides a very simple means of rigidly attaching the supporting member 5 to the housing 1 of the rural mail box without requiring any skill on the part of the user.

A signalling member or signalling flag 9 is pivotally supported from the rear end of the supporting member 5 by means of a pintle pin 10 which extends through rearwardly projecting ears 11 integral with the supporting member 5 and through ears or lips 12 formed integrally with the signalling flag 9. The ears or lips 12 are provided with rounded portions 13 which freely clear the housing 1 when the flag rocks from its normal restrained position shown in Figure 1 to its signalling or exposed position shown in Figure 2. The ears 12 are provided with rectangular corner portions 14 which act to arrest upward rocking motion of the flag 9 when it arrives at its signalling or vertical position as shown in Figure 2 by engaging the adjacent portions of the top of the housing 1 of the mail box.

It is to be noted that the flag 9 is urged towards an upright position by means of the spring 15 which is loosely coiled about the pintle pin 10 and which has one end bearing against the housing and the other end bearing against the flag 9. The flag is normally restrained against motion towards its signalling position by means of an angularly bent locking tongue or lip 16 which is arranged to be positioned below the inwardly directed flange 17 of the door 2 when the door is closed as shown in Figure 1. When the door is pulled open by the mail man to deposit mail in the housing or body portion 1, of the mail box, the

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signalling flag 9 is released and springs upwardly to its signalling position as shown in Figure 2. The flag 9 is preferably painted on both sides with a distinctive color, for example yellow, but of course any suitable color could be employed.

In the larger approved or standard rural mail boxes there is plenty of room below the flange 17 of the door 2 for the reception of the latching tongue 16. However, in the smaller size boxes it is desirable to form an upwardly projecting bulge 18 in the flange 17 of the door 2 as shown most clearly in Figure 2 to provide room for the accommodation of the tongue 16. This upward bulge 18 may be most easily formed by means of pliers having a flat nose as it is merely necessary to grip the flange 17 in the pliers and thereafter rock the pliers upwardly. This is easily done by anyone without requiring any degree of skill on the part of the user.

It is to be noted further that the device is very simple in its construction and may be cheaply made of small and relatively inexpensive metal parts. Further it is to be noted that the device does not require any mutilation of the standard mail box. It does not require any holes to be drilled in the mail box for bolts or screws but instead may be most readily applied as described hereinabove with the assurance that the supporting member 5 will rigidly and permanently grip the strap portion 3 of the fastening means.

It is to be noted particularly that the channel shape of the supporting member 5 serves the double purpose of providing strength and rigidity due to its shape and also forms a very effective clamping means for permanently clamping on opposite sides and beneath the strap member 3 of the rural mail box. In addition to this, the channel shape of the member 5 gives a finished appearance to the structure and does not leave any extended elongated marginal edges exposed. Further, it has been found that by tightening the screw, the channel shaped supporting member 5 is permanently locked or held in place and is not dislodged by any jarring or blows to which the mail box may be subjected.

It is to be noted also that when the signalling flag or member is in its lowered position, that it constitutes a cover or shield for the supporting member. Consequently, the supporting member is protected for most of the time against damage from rain, snow or sleet. In addition to this the supporting member is only displayed, as a rule, for a very brief interval of time, as the owner usually immediately removes the mail when the signal appears and resets the device. The result of this is that the signalling member will operate even though sleet may form on the upper side of the flag. This sleet would have no effect on the relative freedom or motion of the flag with respect to the supporting member.

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It is also clear that normally the flag is not visible from the house of the owner of the mail box, but as soon as the mailman opens the door to place mail in the box the flag moves upwardly to a displayed position. Subsequent closing of the door by the mailman does not disturb the flag which remains in its signalling position.

Although this invention has been described in considerable detail, it is to be understood that such description is intended as illustrative rather than limiting, as the invention may be variously embodied and is to be interpreted as claimed.

I claim:

1. A mail box signal device arranged to co-operate with a mail box provided with a hinged front door and a strap member on its upper side, said signal device comprising a unitary structure including a supporting member arranged to be positioned on the upper side of said mail box and having permanently locked gripping means for gripping opposite marginal edges of said strap member, a signalling flag pivoted to said supporting member and biased for upward rocking motion, said signalling flag being located above said supporting member and constituting a shielding cover for said supporting member when in a lowered position, and restraining means coacting with said flag and door and temporarily restraining said flag in a lowered position when said door is closed and arranged to release said flag when said door is opened.

2. A mail box construction comprising a housing having an open front end, a door normally closing said open end and hinged to said housing and having a marginal flange, said housing having a strap member on its upper side, a supporting member located on the upper side of said housing and having a channel-shaped portion provided with inwardly turned lower flanges arranged to grip below said strap member, means for drawing said inwardly turned flanges towards each other in gripping relation to said strap member, said means being arranged to permanently hold said flanges in gripping position, a signalling flag hinged to said supporting member and biased for upward rocking motion, and a tongue carried by said flag and arranged to be normally releasably held below the upper portion of the flange of said door.

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