

CAN I GET A PATENT?

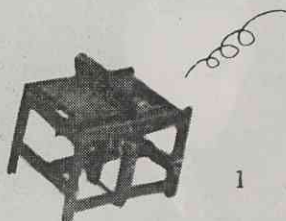
BY WARLEY L. PARROTT

When Patent Attorneys die and go to Heaven—as all long-suffering mortals should—they may perchance ask Saint Peter for the answer to this question which has been put to them almost daily throughout their professional lives.

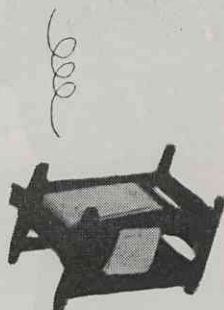
Each year about 100,000 people ask the U. S. Commissioner of Patents this question, through applications which they file in the Patent Office in Washington. And, he grants about 40,000 to 50,000 patents a year from the stock pile of pending cases. These figures give some indication of the "democratic" character of our present day patents as they are issued to a cross-section of our invention-minded population from North to South and East to West. This was not true of the early English patents, prior to Queen Victoria's time. They were indeed "aristocratic", being used principally by the reigning monarchs to convey title to land, to appoint high office and to grant monopolies on certain basic commodities, such as salt, to their favored subjects.

It is a matter of historical interest and importance that provision was made for the American patent system in the original Constitution of the United States, and by basing the patents on "inventions" it removed the monopolistic abuses of the early English patents. Anyone, whether palace born or log-hut sired, who had an original idea, could obtain a patent in the early days of the U. S. Patent Office, and there was no strict requirement for utility or serious motive, as indicated by the following humorous albeit not typical examples:

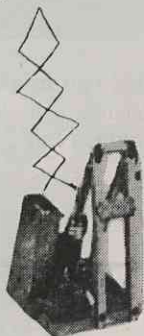
Patent No. 11942, issued November 11, 1854, was for a



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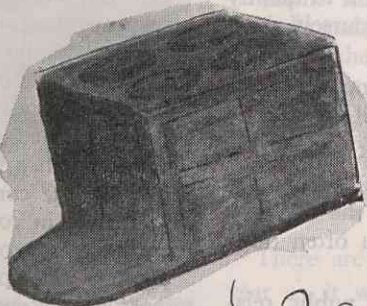
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