March 3, 1959 G. E. WALTERS 2,875,540

SIGN WITH INTERCHANGEABLE LETTERS

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FIG. 1.

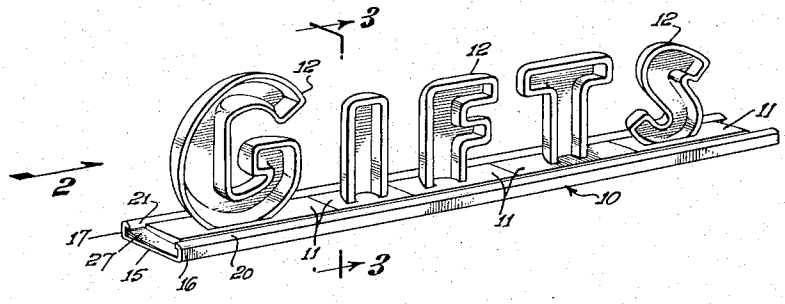


FIG. 5.

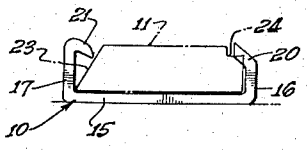


FIG. 3.

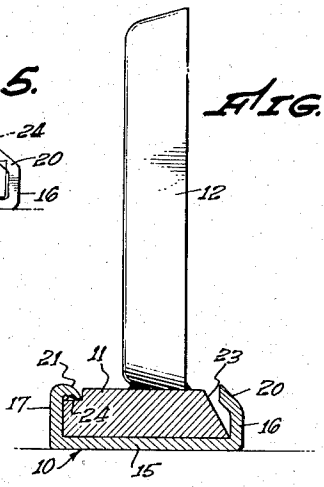


FIG. 2

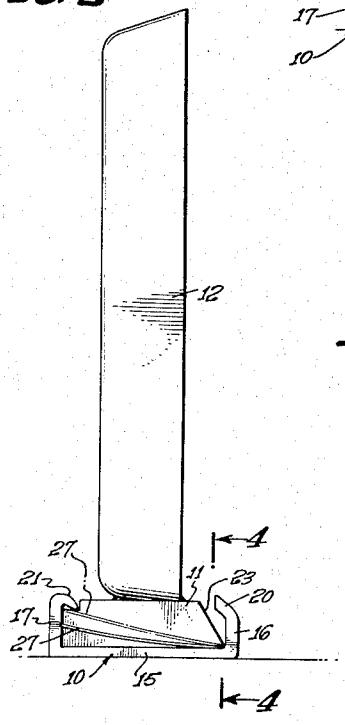
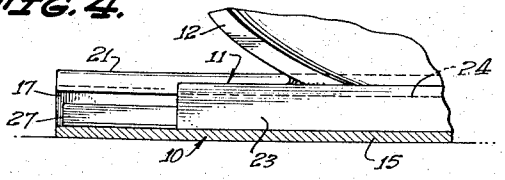


FIG. 4.



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SIGN WITH INTERCHANGEABLE LETTERS

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1 Claim. (Cl. 40—140)

This invention relates to signs, especially signs of the type used with merchandise displays, and is directed to a sign assembly having interchangeable letters that may be used in different sequences as desired.

The broad object of the invention is to provide such a sign assembly of pleasing ornamental appearance that is of simple construction and that may be changed from one order of letters to another in a convenient and expeditious manner. It is a further object of the invention to provide a sign assembly of such construction that the operation of arranging and rearranging the letters to spell out new words requires no skill whatsoever and will inevitably result in a sign in which the letters are correctly spaced. Thus a person with no experience in making and composing signs can assemble a sign having the same finished appearance as a sign produced by a professional in this field.

In general these objects are attained by a channel member to serve as a support means in combination with a set of letter members adapted for interchangeable engagement with the channel member. The letter members are fixedly mounted on individual base members that slide interchangeably into the support channel for alignment therein. In this regard a feature of the invention is that each of the individual base members is dimensioned in accord with the width of the corresponding letter to result in appropriate spacing of the letters. Thus it is merely necessary to push the base members together in end-to-end abutment in the channel support to cause the letters to be correctly spaced apart.

A further special object of the invention is to avoid the possibility of a letter being inadvertently placed in a reverse position. This special object is accomplished by making it impossible to insert a base member backwards into the channel support. For this purpose, both the channel support and the base members that fit into the channel support are of non-symmetrical cross-sectional configuration with respect to their longitudinal center lines so that a base member can be inserted into the channel support at only one longitudinal orientation relative to the channel support.

The various objects, features and advantages of the invention may be understood from the following detailed description of a selected embodiment of the invention, considered with the accompanying drawing.

In the drawing, which is to be regarded as merely illustrative:

Fig. 1 is a perspective view of a preferred embodiment of the invention;

Fig. 2 is an end view on enlarged scale taken as indicated by the arrow 2 of Fig. 1;

Fig. 3 is a transverse section taken as indicated by the line 3—3 of Fig. 1;

Fig. 4 is a fragmentary longitudinal section taken as indicated by the line 4—4 of Fig. 2; and

Fig. 5 is a diagrammatic cross-sectional view showing how the construction makes it impossible to insert a base member into the channel support with the base member in a reverse position.

The principal parts of the selected embodiment of the invention shown in the drawing include: a support channel, generally designated by numeral **10**; a plurality of base members **11** that are interchangeably slidable into the support channel; and letter members **12** that are fixedly mounted on the individual base members **11**. The letter members **12** may be of any suitable construction but in this instance are made of plastic material shaped as shown. The plastic may be tinted translucent material.

In this particular practice of the invention illustrated by the drawing, the support channel **10** is intended to rest on a suitable support surface with the letter members **12** extending upward. If desired, however, the arrangement may be reversed for use overhead with the open side of the support channel **10** facing downward and with the letter members **12** extending downward from the base members **11**.

The support channel **10** is preferably an extruded aluminum shape of the cross-sectional configuration shown in Figs. 3 and 4. The channel member has a bottom web **15** and two side flanges or legs **16** and **17**. The leg **16** may be termed the front leg since it is contemplated that this leg will be at the front of the assembled sign. This front leg **16** terminates in a flange **20** which is inclined rearward at approximately 45 degrees from the vertical. The second or back leg **17** is formed with a flange **21** that is turned inward and downward at an acute angle relative to the leg. Thus as the support channel is viewed from the front in Fig. 1, both the front flange **20** and the back flange **21** present extensive inclined surfaces that are parallel with each other to result in a certain pleasing and ornamental effect.

It is to be noted that the inside dimension of the front leg **16** measured from the bottom web **15** to the front flange **20** is less than the same dimension of the back leg **17** as measured from the bottom web **15** to the base of the back flange **21**. As will be explained, this fact is important in preventing inadvertent reversal of the letter members **12**.

The base members **11** may be made of any suitable material but preferably are made of a transparent plastic material. When made of clear light-transmitting material the base members are nearly invisible in the assembled sign and at first glance the letter members **12** appear to be mounted on a base that is made entirely of aluminum.

As best shown in Fig. 3 each of the base members **11** has a front bevel face **23** and has a back recess **24** that extends longitudinally along the back edge of the member. It will be noted in Fig. 3 that the back recess **24** fits relatively close under the back flange **21** and since the inside vertical dimension of the back leg **17** is greater than the corresponding inside dimension of the front leg **16**, the longitudinally recessed edge of the base member will not fit under the front flange **20**. This fact is illustrated by Fig. 5 in which the outline of a reversed base member **11** is shown in broken lines. It can be seen in Fig. 5 that if an attempt is made to insert a base member **11** backwards into the support channel **10**, the recessed edge of the base member will be blocked by the front flange **21**.

The bevel face **23** gives a distinctive shape to the front edge of a base member **11** and the bevel face soon becomes associated in the user's mind with the front of the corresponding letter member. In fact a person using this embodiment of the invention can tell by touch alone whether or not a letter is reversed and if a letter is reversed the fact may become apparent by touch alone. If, however, the user does inadvertently attempt to insert

a base member backward his efforts will be blocked to call his attention to the error.

Preferably the described sign assembly also includes some kind of retaining means or keeper means to prevent the series of base members **11** from sliding out of the support channel **10** and also to cause the base members to be held snugly together. In this regard a feature of the embodiment of the invention illustrated in the drawing is the use of a strip **27** of spring metal for this purpose. When a series of letter members **12** on corresponding base members **11** have been positioned end to end in the support channel as shown in Fig. 1 a keeper strip **27** may be inserted at each end to immobilize the series of letter members relative to the support channel.

The keeper strip **27** is of generally rectangular configuration and is dimensioned to slide freely into the end of the support channel **10** when the keeper member is in an inclined position shown in broken lines in Fig. 2. With the keeper strip **27** positioned against the endmost base member **11** the keeper strip is depressed by finger pressure from the broken line position in Fig. 2 to the position shown in full lines. This act of depressing the keeper strip bows the keeper strip downward into edgewise compression between the two legs **16** and **17** of the support channel **10**. The keeper strip may be bowed into contact with the bottom web **15** of the support channel to provide frictional resistance to displacement of the keeper strip but the edgewise pressure of the keeper strip against the two channel legs is relied upon primarily to hold the keeper strip in place.

With the support channel **10** made of a relatively soft metal, such as aluminum, and with the keeper strip **27** made of harder spring metal, a further feature of the invention in this regard is that the edges of the keeper strip dig into the metal of the support channel for positive engagement therewith. Thus with a keeper strip **27** mounted in this manner at each end of a row of base members **11** in the support channel **10** the whole assembly is unified and the assembly may be handled freely without relative movement among the letter members **12**.

My description in specific detail of a selected embodiment of the invention by way of example and to illustrate the principles involved, will suggest various changes, substitutions and other departures from my disclosure that properly lie within the spirit and scope of the appended claim.

I claim:

A sign assembly of the character described comprising: a rigid support channel having a central web and two leg portions substantially perpendicular thereto, each of said leg portions being inwardly flanged, the inside dimension of one leg portion as measured from said web to the flange of the leg being smaller than the corresponding inside dimension of the other leg portion; a plurality of base members; individual letter members fixedly mounted in upright position on said individual base members, said base members being slidable into one end of said base channel interchangeably to spell out different words as desired, said base members varying in length in accord with the width of the corresponding letter members for correct spacing of the letter members when the base members abut each other end to end, each of said base members comprising a solid block-like body having substantially parallel upper and lower faces, said faces being spaced apart by a distance greater than said inside dimension of said one of the leg portions of the support channel, each of said base members being recessed only along one longitudinal edge to engage said smaller-dimensioned leg of the support channel and cut-away along the other longitudinal edge only to avoid interference with said other leg but to interfere with said one leg when mounted in said channel the wrong way, said legs and said base members thus having complementary shapes to prevent a base member from entering said channel at a wrong longitudinal orientation relative thereto and permit it only at the other.

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