June 16, 1931. F. W. BONITZ 1,810,264

APPARATUS FOR AUDIBLE SIGNBOARD ADVERTISING

Filed Nov. 2, 1928

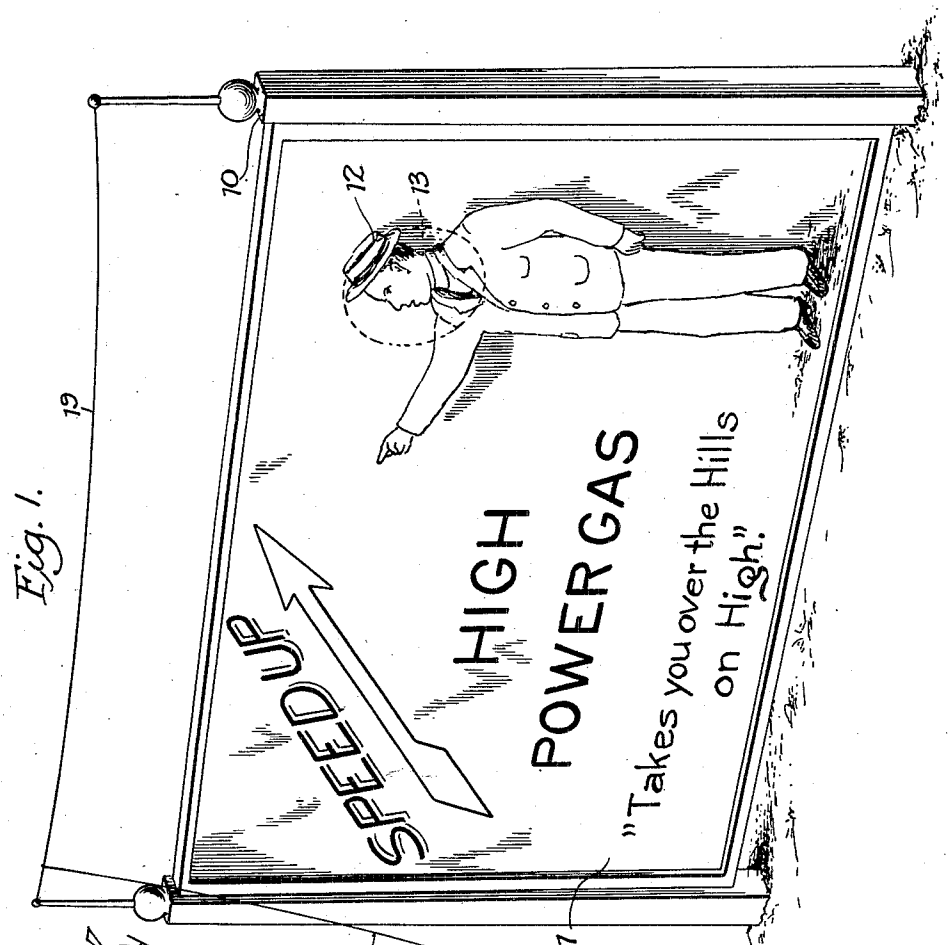

Fig. 1.

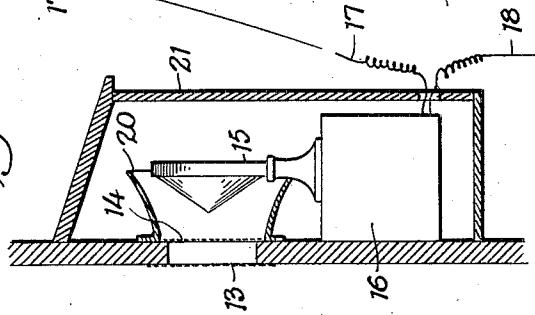

Fig. 2.

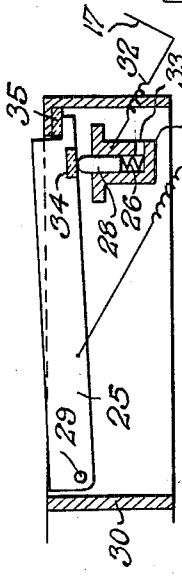

Fig. 3.

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1,810,264

UNITED STATES PATENT OFFICE

FRED W. BONITZ, OF CHARLOTTE, NORTH CAROLINA

APPARATUS FOR AUDIBLE SIGNBOARD ADVERTISING

Application filed November 2, 1928. Serial No. 316,842.

My invention relates to a method of and apparatus for displaying advertising matter and for simultaneously therewith drawing a person's attention to such advertising matter by the emission of sounds from the signboard whenever a pedestrian or a vehicle passes in front of the same.

The device is primarily intended to include the body of a person or a human head in the picture displayed on the signboard and to connect a radio loud speaker with said body of head in such a manner that the apparatus speaks to a person passing by and describes the articles advertised.

The loud speaker may be actuated through a radio set from an antenna adjacent the sign or from a private broadcasting station connected to all the signboards displaying the same article or product within a range of twenty-five to fifty (25 to 50) miles. In the city the broadcasting may thus be limited to operate during the lunch hour or the closing hour of offices and factories.

Amongst matter that may be suitable for such advertising might be enumerated motor cars, motor oils and gasoline, cigarettes and other tobacco, perfumes, as well as hotels, restaurants and theaters. Each signboard may then contain only one advertisement with its individual loud speaker or several advertisements may be displayed on the same signboard, each with its special loud speaker which then naturally takes turns with his neighbors to describe the article or place advertised.

It is evident that in the case of advertisements for musical instruments the broadcasting may consist of musical performances instead of orations.

When advertising in the country or places where traffic is not so great, the audible announcing may take place more or less intermittently. For this purpose a lever such as a board, bar or rail may be provided across the sidewalk or the roadway, so that whenever a person or a vehicle passes the signboard, this lever would be depressed to close a switch to connect the radio, so that the figure would immediately address himself to the passerby.

In the accompanying drawing, one embodiment of the invention is illustrated and—

Figure 1 shows a perspective view of the device as seen from the roadway, and;

Figure 2 a vertical section along line 2—2 of Figure 1.

Figure 3, a vertical section of a circuit closer and an operating lever for the device.

In the figures similar characters of reference indicate corresponding parts of the invention.

The advertising medium is here represented as a billboard 10 erected near a public highway where it can easily be seen by persons passing on foot or in vehicles. The advertising matter is as usual painted or printed, preferably in colors on a large sheet 11 pasted over the front face of the board. In this instance a fanciful name for motor oils has been selected, but it is evident that a great variety of subjects may thus be represented.

In a suitable position near the advertising on sheet 11 is shown the head 12 or the whole figure of a man who may be pointing his hand to the legend on the board or the figure may be permanently affixed on the board, and the actual signs exchanged when desired.

In juxtaposition with the man's head an opening 13 is made through the board and a screen of wire mesh 14 is placed over this opening in order to permit sound waves from the rear to pass to the front of the sign board. Behind this screen and opposite the opening 13 is placed a radio loud speaker 15 of any suitable type and supported on a radio receiving set 16, which in the usual manner is connected by conductors 17 and 18 with an antenna 19 and the ground, respectively.

In order to throw all the sound from the loud-speaker through the screen 14 and opening 13 so as to make it appear to be spoken by the head placed in front thereof, a collector or funnel 20 may be fastened around the opening. In addition a small hood or housing 21 is arranged around the instruments and secured to the back of the board in order to protect them from rain, sun and dust, or theft.

The radio receiver with the loud speaker

may now be operated from a central station either periodically or continuously and other similar signboards within a wide range of this central station may be simultaneously set in action. Any person walking or riding past one of these signboards will then be attracted by the unusual occurrence of a speaking face or picture and may stop long enough to listen to the uttered announcements and to take special notice of the legend or illustration on the signboard.

A modification of the invention may consist in providing a rail 25 across the roadway or the footpath that normally is raised slightly above the surface thereof by a spring 26 or the like (see Fig. 3). This rail or bar 25 hinged at 29 in a box or casing 30 may then when depressed actuate a switch for starting the radio whenever a vehicle or person passes over it. If then the elastic element includes a pneumatic dash-pot 27 with an orifice 33, the plunger 28 thereof would slowly rise after each depression, thereby raising the bar or rod 25 to disconnect the switch, the bar and the dash-pot being preferably connected by wires 31 and 32, respectively, to a gap in the conductor 17. In Fig. 3 is shown an insulating block 34 between the plunger 28 and the lever 25. Another insulating plate 35 in the box 30 forms a stop for the lip 36 on the lever 25 for limiting its upward swing. This arrangement would be particularly suitable along country roads where the traffic is more or less intermittent. The verbal announcement made by the head 12 will then only be given whenever someone passes by the sign, the length of talking being limited to the time controlled by the plunger. In this manner a considerable saving would be made in electric energy consumed, as the loudspeaker and radio would only be operated intermittently when set in motion by the said bar.

It is to be understood that the invention is not limited to the details of construction here shown and described, but that these may be varied widely without departing from the spirit of the invention as defined by the claim.

It will be understood that the invention may be employed in the installation of a periodic speaking device operated by a phonograph; and it may also be used in connection with window display advertising wherein figures would proclaim from the window where the advertised goods might be found in the store. In the latter case a free standing figure or dummy may be used instead of the billboard, but the arrangement with radio set, loudspeaker and circuit closer would remain the same.

What I claim as new is:

The combination with a billboard of appreciable thickness having a suitable opening therethrough, sections of wire mesh overlying said opening at the front and rear thereof, a relatively thin display sheet having advertising matter thereon and covering the wire mesh at the front of said opening; of a radio set with a loudspeaker attached to the signboard behind said opening, a sound collector around the rear wire mesh covering the opening for the loudspeaker, a housing attached to the board and completely enclosing the radio set, loudspeaker and collector, and means for starting the radio set, said means including an antenna mounted on the billboard, and a circuit closer disposed in such position as to be actuated by nearby passing traffic.

In witness whereof, I have hereunto set my hand at Charlotte, North Carolina this 11th day of October, A. D. nineteen hundred and twenty eight.

FRED W. BONITZ.