Feb. 23, 1932. W. H. WHEELER 1,846,171

IDENTIFICATION DEVICE

Filed Sept. 12, 1923

Fig. 1.

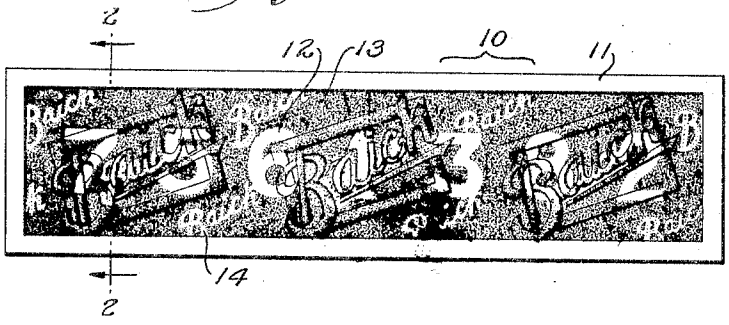


Fig. 2.

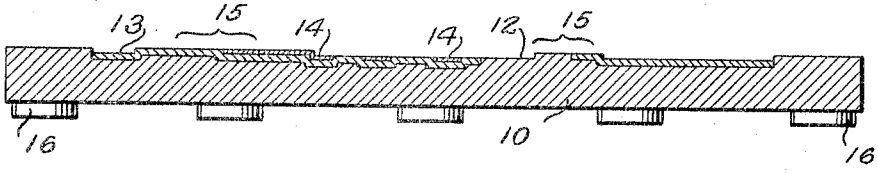


Fig. 3.

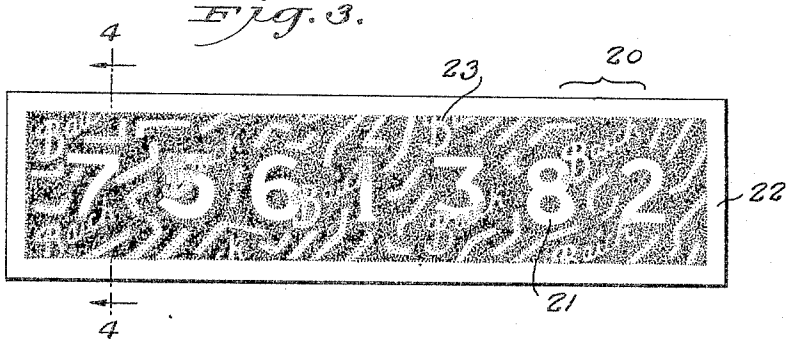
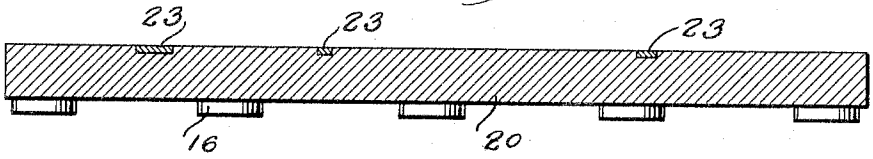


Fig. 4.



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UNITED STATES PATENT OFFICE

WILLIAM H. WHEELER, OF GLEN RIDGE, NEW JERSEY, ASSIGNOR, BY MESNE ASSIGNMENTS, TO FEDCO NUMBER PLATE CORPORATION, OF NEW YORK, N. Y., A CORPORATION OF DELAWARE

IDENTIFICATION DEVICE

Application filed September 12, 1923. Serial No. 662,231.

This invention relates to improvements in identification devices. It is concerned particularly with an identification plate for automobiles, but it should be understood that the device to be hereinafter disclosed may be used on other transportable vehicles and machines.

The prime object of the invention is to provide an identification plate which will serve to deter and in a large measure prevent the undetected theft of an automobile. This object is accomplished by providing a plate of the character stated which cannot be altered without detection and which cannot be duplicated without great labor and expense.

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

In the accompanying drawings,

Fig. 1 is a plan view of my improved identification plate,

Fig. 2 is an enlarged view in transverse section on the line 2—2 of Fig. 1,

Fig. 3 is a plan view of a modified form of plate,

Fig. 4 is an enlarged view in transverse section on the line 4—4 of Fig. 3.

Referring with particularity to Figs. 1 and 2 of the drawings, reference character 10 is used to designate a metallic identification plate. Any of a number of different metals might be used for the plate. Iron and nickel may be mentioned here as proving satisfactory for the purpose, but of course I am not limited to their use.

The raised edges 11 of the plate form a sort of frame or border for the identifying indicia 12. These indicia are usually in the form of numerals, each car being sent from the factory with a number plate on the engine block and on the frame. The numerals are raised slightly above the body of the plate as seen in Figure 2, although they are somewhat below the level of the border 11.

Within the border, there is an inlay of some metal which will contrast sharply with the metals of the numerals and border. Copper may serve for this purpose. The copper indicated at 13 is inlaid in the upper face of the plate and is flush with the indicia 12. This rather thin copper inlay forms a solid background of contrasting color for the numbers.

However, a mere set of numbers is not sufficient for complete identification of the car because the same set of numbers may be used by cars of entirely different makes and where numbers alone are used, a thief might switch a plate from one car to another. It is therefore necessary to add to the plate, a design which is peculiar to the particular make or model of the car on which the plate is to be used. This design may embody the name of the car, the initials of the name of the car, a trademark to identify the make or model of the car or the manufacturer of the car, or a symbol peculiar to the make or model of the car. Such a design which thus becomes a part of the identifying indicia, may be inlaid in the copper background as at 14 and may be formed in brass or some other metal which will contrast decidedly with both the numbers and the background. In Figure 1, I have shown an inlaid design which consists of the name of the car frequently repeated throughout the copper field. I prefer to identify the make of the car for which the plate is intended by using the name of the car as part of the design. It will be evident, however, that the design may be indefinitely complicated or materially simplified without departing from the invention and I do not limit myself to the use of the name as part of it.

The plate as thus far described effectively defies mechanical reproduction or alteration except at great cost. To insure against possible photographic reproduction, I may emboss a further design on the plate. This embossing serves to force a design out of the face of the plate flush with the border 11. The embossing indicated by the bracketed numerals 15 in Figure 2 includes all three metals since the embossed design is independent of the other design and the embossing is repeated indiscriminately throughout the length of the plate.

It will be evident that the embossed design may carry the name of the car or such indicia

as are peculiar to the particular make or model of the car, in which case the background could carry a conventional design not necessarily peculiar to the particular make or model of the car for which the plate is intended. In fact, the background could be left without any special design, although in order to complicate the unauthorized reproduction or counterfeiting of the plate, it is preferable to inlay a design in the background. In general then, I divide the indicia necessary for the complete identification of the car into two classes, one representing the make or model of the car (hereafter termed the "make indicia") and the other the number of the car (hereafter termed as the "number indicia"), and I superpose one class of indicia upon the other. This may be done either by embossing as shown in Fig. 1, or by inlaying, shown in Fig. 3 presently to be described. By the term, number indicia, I intend to include any indicia representing specific cars of a certain make or model whether expressed in numerals or alphabetical characters.

In Figure 1, the dark stipple indicates the inlaid copper background, the light stipple indicates the inlaid brass design and the unshaded surface the nickel or iron of the numerals and the body of the plate. The embossing has been indicated by outlined shading.

The processes by which these plates may be made are no part of the present invention. One of said processes forms the subject matter of a separate application filed on even date herewith. The matter of attaching the plates to the engine or the chassis frame of an automobile is also immaterial to this case, but I have shown lugs 16 on the back of the plate which facilitate spot welding of the plates to their supports.

In Figures 3 and 4, I have illustrated another form which my invention may take. In this instance, the plate is of two metal construction. The background 20 is of the same metal as the numerals 21 and border 22. The background is surfaced in a manner which will cause it to contrast sharply in color with the indicia and the border. Assuming that the plate is of iron, the background may be oxidized or "blued" while the number indicia and border are highly polished. Both color contrast and difficulty of reproduction may be realized in this manner. An inlaid design 23 representing the make indicia is also used. This inlay of brass, copper or other suitable material preferably includes the name of the car. With this form of the invention, the inlay may if desired extend across the polished face of the number indicia as well as across the oxidized background or field.

A process of forming the plates shown in Figures 3 and 4 is also described in the copending application above referred to.

There are a number of variations and alterations in the construction of the plate which might be resorted to without departing from the invention. A great variety of metals for instance are suitable for forming the plates. The inlaid design and the embossed design may be infinitely varied. The two metal plates may be formed with embossing or the three metal plates unembossed. The name of the car need not necessarily form a part of the inlaid design. The number indicia while preferably comprising numerals may take the form of alphabetical characters spelling out the numerals. In fact, any identifying indicia suitable for the purpose may be used. With the form of invention shown in Figure 3, the inlaid design need not necessarily extend over the face of the indicia. The border may be discarded altogether. The formation of lugs on the plates is a matter of convenience rather than invention. In this connection, it might be noted that the inlaid material need not necessarily form the background or the design. The identifying number indicia might be inlaid together with the background or the number indicia and make indicia may be inlaid; in fact, various slight changes and alterations might be made without departing from the spirit and scope of the appended claims.

I claim:

1. An identification plate comprising a body portion, identifying indicia integral with the body portion, a metal inlay surrounding the indicia and forming a background therefor, and a metal design inlaid in the background.

2. A metal identification plate comprising a relatively thick body portion, and a metal design inlaid on one face of the body portion, said body portion including raised identifying indicia continuing through the design.

3. An identification plate comprising three laminations of differently colored metals, two of said metals extending through the third metal and being exposed on the surface of the plate, said surface embodying identifying indicia formed by one of the metals.

4. A plate of the class described formed of a plurality of metals and including a surface displaying a background of one metal and identifying indicia of different metals inlaid in the background, said surface being embossed to display a design and said embossed design being superposed upon both indicia and background.

5. A plate of the class described formed of a plurality of metals and including a surface displaying a background of one metal and identifying indicia of different metals inlaid in the background and an inlaid design in the background, said surface being embossed to display an additional design, the embossed

design being superposed upon the indicia, the background and said inlaid design.

6. A three metal plate of the class described including a surface displaying a background of one metal identifying indicia of another metal and a design of a third metal, said surface being embossed to display a further design traversing the background, the indicia and the aforementioned design.

7. A plate of the class described comprising a surface displaying a background bearing two classes of identifying indicia thereon, one class of indicia being inlaid in the background and the other class being embossed, a part of the embossed indicia traversing a part of the inlaid indicia.

WILLIAM H. WHEELER.