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(54) **CLADDING ASSEMBLY AND METHOD OF CLADDING POSTS**

**Publication Classification**

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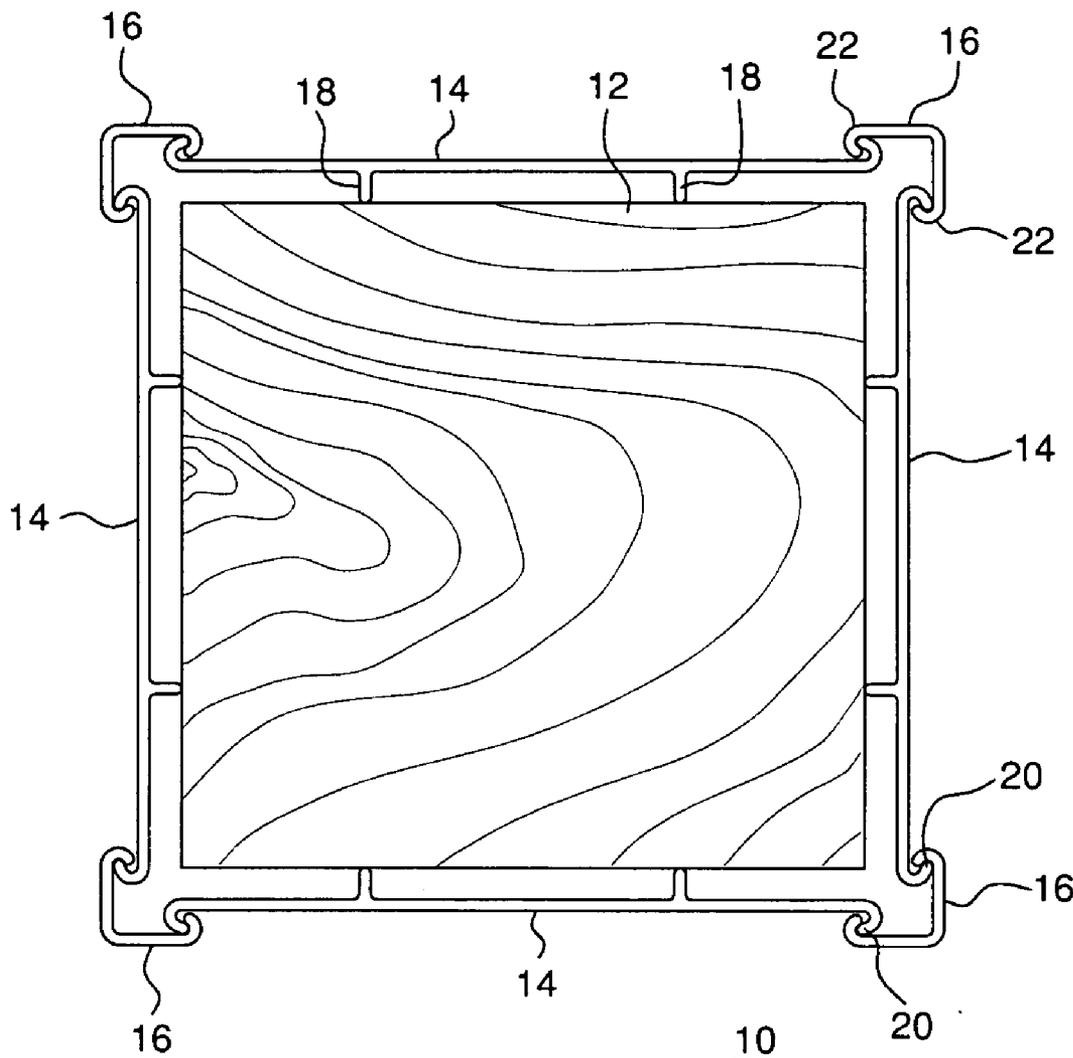
(57) **ABSTRACT**

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A post cladding assembly, a cladded building assembly and method of cladding a building structure using the cladding assembly are provided. The post cladding assembly includes at least one cladding panel and at least one connection element, wherein the connection element includes an androgynous means for engaging the at least one cladding panel to secure the at least one cladding panel to a building structure.

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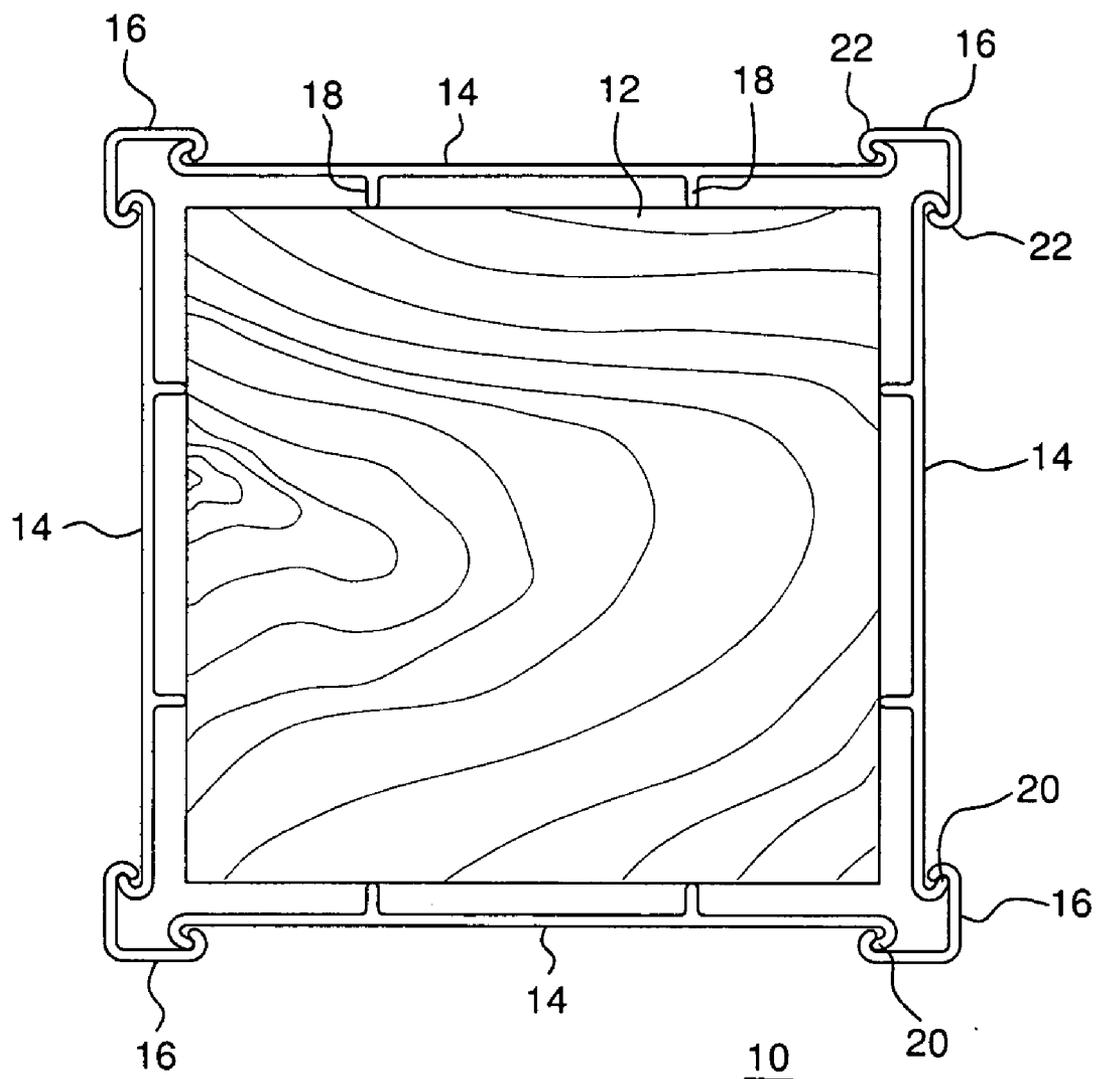


FIG. 1

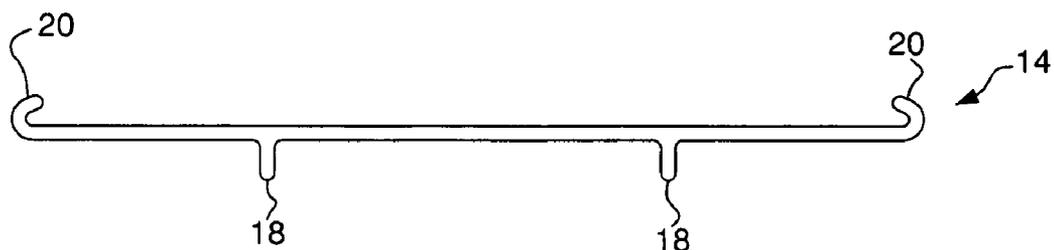


FIG. 2

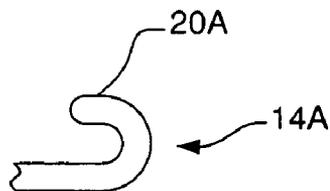


FIG. 2A

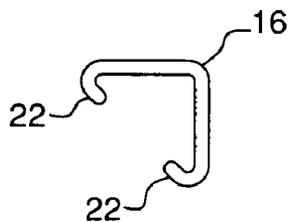


FIG. 3

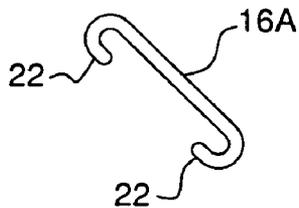


FIG. 3A

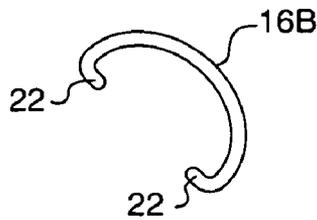


FIG. 3B

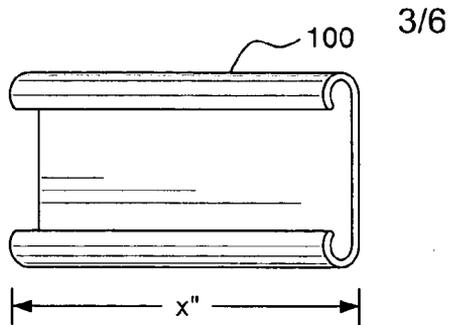


FIG. 4

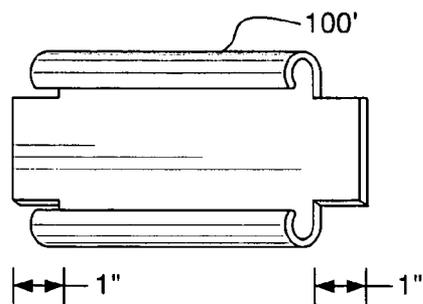


FIG. 4A

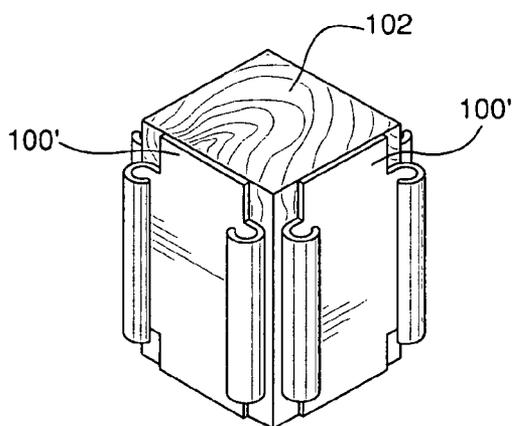


FIG. 4B

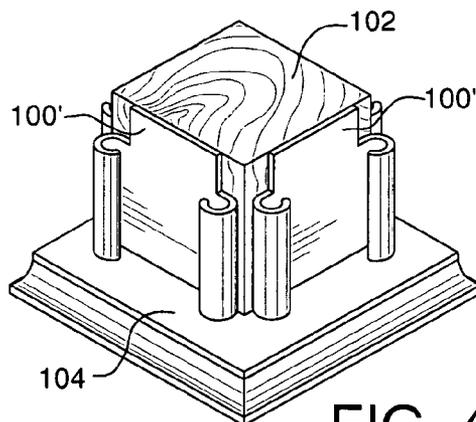


FIG. 4C

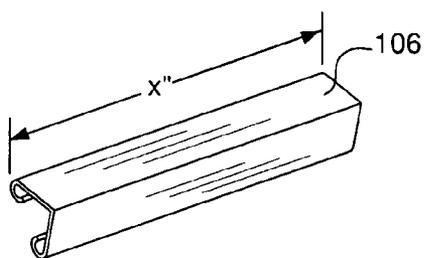


FIG. 4D

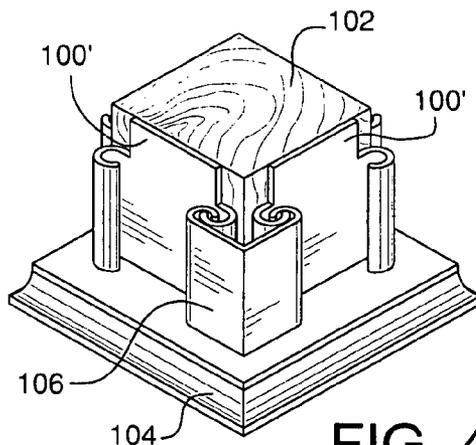


FIG. 4E

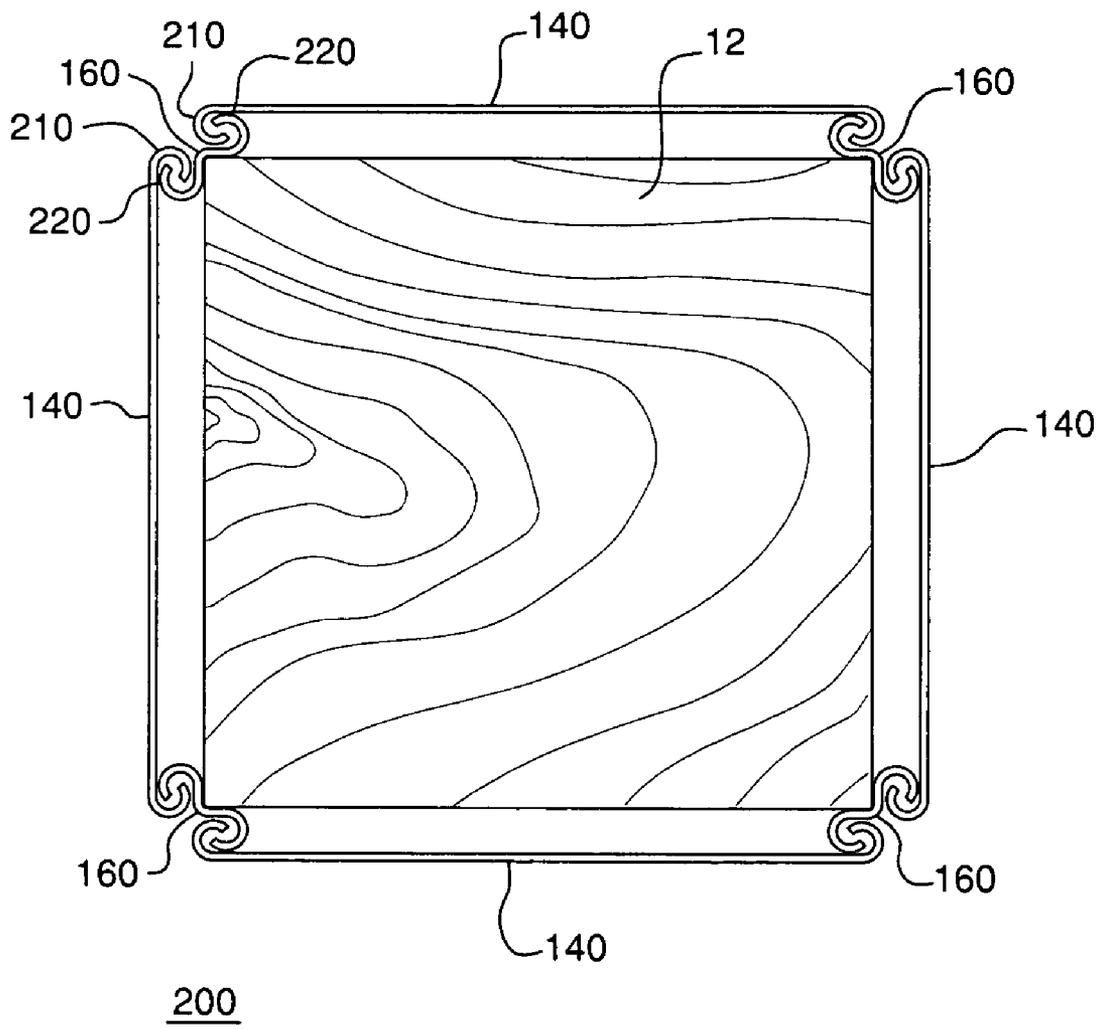


FIG. 5

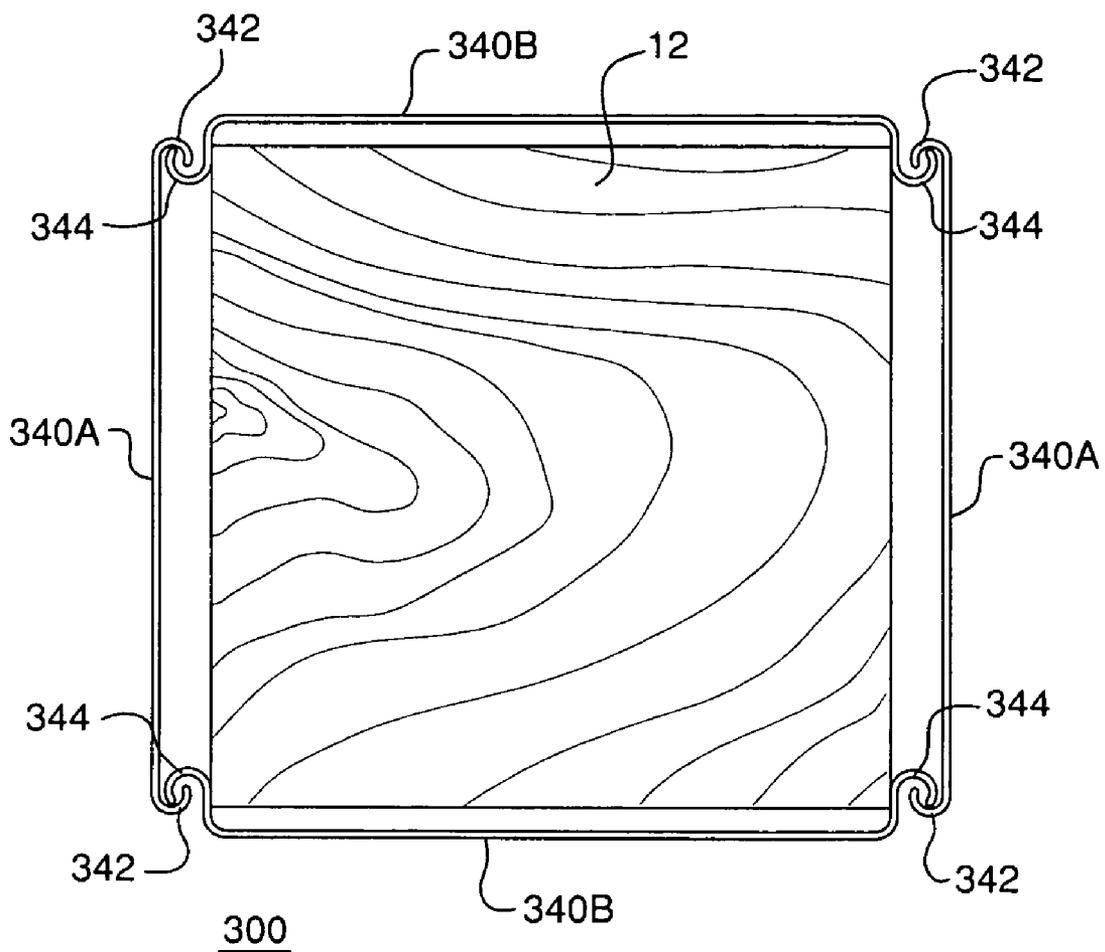


FIG. 6

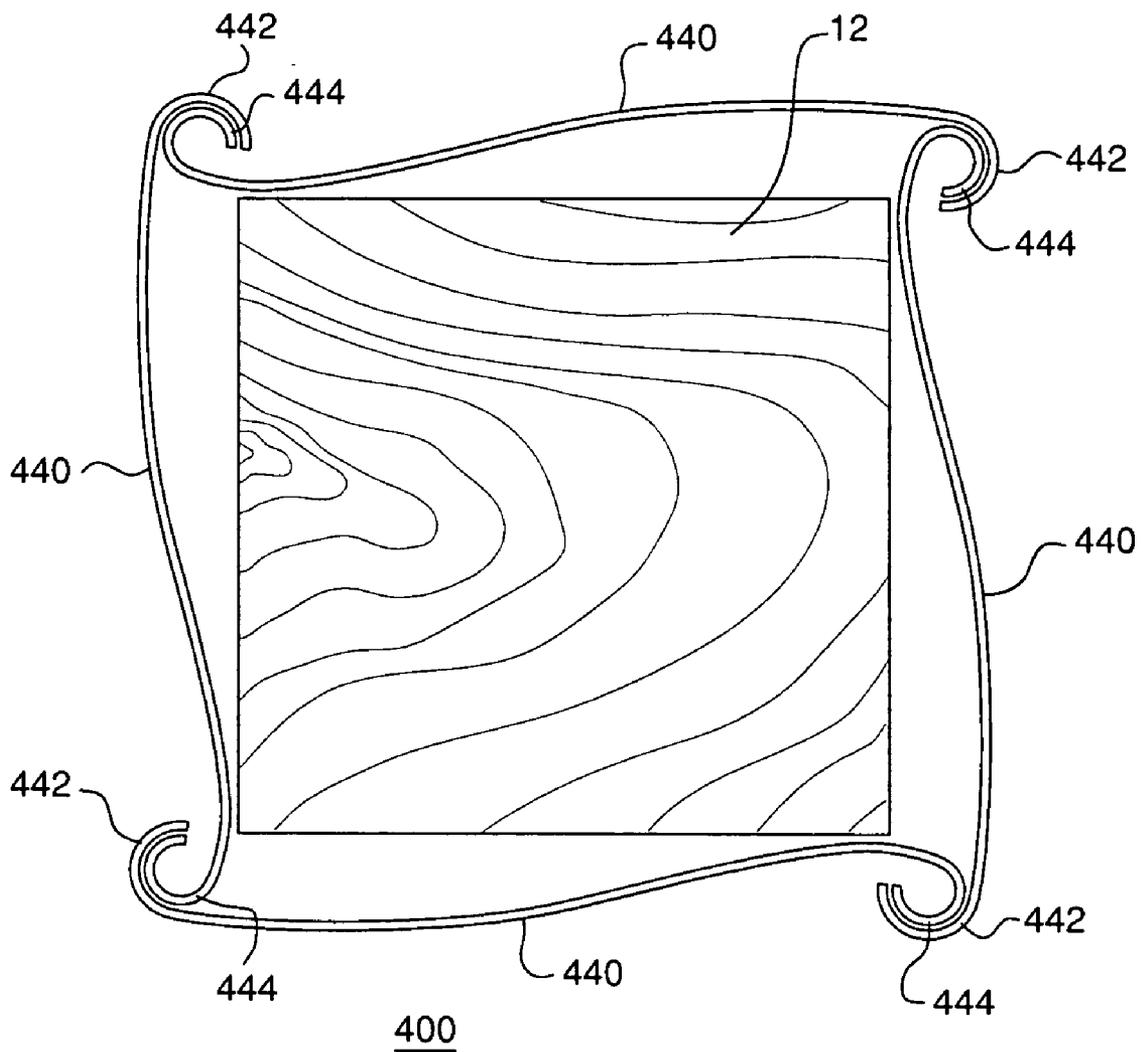


FIG. 7

**CLADDING ASSEMBLY AND METHOD OF CLADDING POSTS**

**CROSS-REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION**

[0001] This application is related to commonly assigned U.S. patent application Ser. No. 10/725,768, entitled, "Single Piece Post Cladding Element, Method of Cladding a Post and Method of Forming a Cladding Element" filed Dec. 2, 2003, the entirety of which is hereby incorporated by reference herein.

**FIELD OF THE INVENTION**

[0002] The present invention relates to post cladding elements and assemblies, and methods of cladding posts.

**BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION**

[0003] Posts for supporting outdoor structures such as porches, decks, boat piers and fences are clad for several reasons, including protection from the elements, reducing maintenance (e.g., painting), providing an aesthetic appearance and matching a fence system.

[0004] There are two common cladding methods. In a first method, a cladding sleeve is slipped over the post prior to installation of the post or if there is an unobstructed post end. This first cladding method and element cannot be retrofitted onto a post that is already installed (hereinafter, "pre-installed post"). If by choice or due to physical constraints (i.e., a preinstalled post) the first cladding method is not used, then the post is clad using a multi-piece cladding assembly installed around the post. Two to four piece assemblies are most common. An example of such an assembly is provided in U.S. Pat. No. 5,956,920 to Davis, entitled "Modular Post Cladding Element, Post Cladding Assembly, and Method of Cladding a Post", issued Sep. 28, 1999.

**SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION**

[0005] A cladding assembly, a cladded building assembly and method of cladding a building structure using the cladding assembly are provided. The cladding assembly includes at least one cladding panel and at least one connection element, wherein the connection element includes an androgynous means for engaging the at least one cladding panel to secure the at least one cladding panel to a building structure. In one embodiment, the assembly includes a plurality of polymeric cladding panels and at least one polymeric connection element. The cladding panels may include at least one pair of outwardly or inwardly extending, oppositely disposed catches, and the polymeric connection element includes at least one pair of inwardly or outwardly extending, oppositely disposed catches, wherein the at least one connection element is secured to the plurality of cladding panels with the inwardly or outwardly disposed catches of the connection element mated to the outwardly or inwardly disposed catches of the cladding panels, respectively, to couple the cladding panels of this embodiment together in cladding the building structure.

[0006] The cladding assembly can, if desired, fully enclose a member, such as a wooden post, to provide a maintenance free and aesthetically pleasing building structure. The assembly can be used where the building structure

is only partially enclosed, such as, for example, in a fascia cladding or siding corner trim applications, or deck sub-structure, columns, posts and rails. In such an application, one or more cladding panels could be applied to a building structure using connection elements to secure the cladding panels one to another, or to portions of the building structure equipped with a projection or flange suitably adapted for engaging a connection element. In this case, a portion of the building structure is clad, rather than completely surrounding the entire structure. The cladding assembly allows for easy retrofitting of an aesthetic appearance to either restore the appearance of a building structure to acceptability in the case of a deteriorated structure, or simply to change the desired aesthetics of the structure without removing it. The cladding can also be reversibly applied. If a change in appearance of a post is desired, the cladding can be removed and replaced with a cladding having a different aesthetic effect. For example, connection elements can be changed to produce different visual effects. Cladding panels could be provided with patterns, shapes or colors that could be used individually or with other patterns to yield cladded building structures having the desired attributes.

[0007] The cladding can be fit adjustably to a pre-installed structure. The connection system allows for some irregularities in the geometry of the post itself and allows a generally pleasing aesthetic effect when the cladding is fully assembled. The adjustability also enables accommodation of the cladding assembly to thermal expansion and contraction or other changes in dimension that can occur in use. The adjustability of the cladding assembly also can be beneficial when using the cladding with posts that are not of perfect dimensions. For example, if a post support structure were warped or twisted, the cladding would render a more desirable appearance.

[0008] The cladding assembly also lends itself to proper drainage. This attribute helps in drying and avoiding of water damage to the enclosed support structure over time. Further, as the cladding assembly, in one embodiment, is made up of a plurality of cladding panels, a cladding panel or panels can be easily replaced in the event of damage to a portion of the post or the cladding.

[0009] In the case of a four-sided square post, a cladding assembly can be produced by extrusion of identical cladding panels and connection elements. The cladding panels being of a single geometry simplifies the shipping and inventory needs. In the case of rectangular posts that do not have square cross sections, the cladding could be provided using one cladding panel type for the larger dimension and another cladding type for the smaller dimension, wherein the connection elements can be the same.

[0010] The cladding can also be used for more complexly shaped structures, such as, for example, hexagonal, octagonal, or higher order polygonally shaped posts or columns of varying sizes without the need for different cladding panels and connection elements for each contemplated shape to be clad.

[0011] The above and other features of the present invention will be better understood from the following detailed description of the preferred embodiments of the invention that is provided in connection with the accompanying drawings.

## BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0012] The accompanying drawings illustrate preferred embodiments of the invention, as well as other information pertinent to the disclosure, in which:

[0013] FIG. 1 is a top plan view of a cladded building assembly;

[0014] FIGS. 2 and 2A are profile views of embodiments of cladding panels;

[0015] FIGS. 3, 3A and 3B are profile views of embodiments of connection elements;

[0016] FIGS. 4-4E illustrate a method of cladding a post according to the present invention;

[0017] FIG. 5 is a top plan view of an alternative embodiment of a cladded building assembly;

[0018] FIG. 6 is a top plan view of another alternative embodiment of a cladded building assembly; and

[0019] FIG. 7 is a top plan view of another alternative embodiment of a cladded building assembly.

## DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0020] Described herein are a cladding assembly, cladded building assembly and method of cladding a building structure. In an exemplary embodiment, the cladding is designed to clad a wood post of rectangular geometry and square cross section, although the cladding may be applied to structures formed of other materials, shapes and types, such as piers of a deck or dock, mailbox posts, columns, lamp posts, etc.

[0021] Referring first to FIG. 1, a top plan view of a cladded building assembly 10 is provided. Cladded building assembly 10 includes a rectangular wooden post 12 having a square cross section. A cladding assembly is attached to the post and includes, in the illustrated embodiment, four cladding panels 14 and four connection elements 16. The connection elements 16 provide an androgynous means of engaging the one or more cladding panels to secure the cladding panels 14 to the post 12 in cladding the post. By "androgynous" is meant that the connection between adjacent components 16 is made using geometry that is neither male nor female in the way the engagement is made.

[0022] In one embodiment, the androgynous engagement is performed by mating catches. For example, in one embodiment each connection element 16 includes a pair of inwardly extending, oppositely disposed catches 22 that mate with a pair of outwardly extending, oppositely disposed catches 20, with a catch 20 being provided one from each of an adjacent pair of cladding panels 14. As can be seen from FIG. 1, the pair of inwardly extending catches 22 of the connection elements 16 are preferably generally shaped like a pair of hooks that anchor the connection element to the outwardly extending catches 20 of a pair of adjacent cladding panels 14.

[0023] As can also be seen from FIG. 1, each cladding panel 14 preferably comprises support structure for supporting the panel against the post 12. In one embodiment, the support structure comprises support posts 18, which provide the proper spacing for cladding panels 14 with respect to the side surfaces of post 12 and provide mechanical support for the cladding panel 14.

[0024] FIG. 2 is a profile view of cladding panel 14, which clearly illustrates support posts 18 and catches 20. In the embodiment of FIG. 14, the catches 20 are angled, outwardly extending catches. FIG. 2A is a partial view of a second embodiment of a cladding panel 14A illustrating that the catches 20A can be generally semicircular shaped, u-shaped or squared catches.

[0025] FIG. 3 illustrates a generally right angle shaped connection element 16, as also shown in FIG. 1. FIGS. 3A and 3B illustrate alternative embodiments, specifically generally flat shaped connection element 16A and rounded or arched connection element 16B, respectively.

[0026] The connection elements 16 and cladding panels 14 described herein are preferably made from a thermoplastic polymeric material. Polyvinyl chloride (PVC), polyolefins, acrylics or acrylic copolymers are preferred. The use of capstocks, over-molded or coextruded polymeric layers that are flame, UV and/or weather resistant, or contain additives for rendering their resinous compositions flame, UV and/or weather resistant, such as polypropylene, polyethylene, HMPE, PVC, ABS (acrylonitrile butadiene styrene), polyurethane, polystyrene, acrylic or ASA (acrylonitrile styrene acrylate) polymers, for example, can provide an element of increased surface durability while maintaining lower cost for the bulk of the materials making up the product. A weather resistant base polymer could be used for the connection element and cladding panels, as opposed to a capstock with a weather resistant overmold, coextrude or additive, although this embodiment may be more expensive than using a capstock. The cladding panels and connection elements may be formed by profile extrusion, sheet extrusion, stamping, thermoforming and vacuum forming, for example. Sizing dies can also be used for shaping the composites. In a preferred embodiment, the connection element and cladding panels are co-extrusions having a weather resistant capstock on a more economical base stock.

[0027] A method of installing the cladding assembly on a building structure is described in connection with FIGS. 4-4E. As shown in FIG. 4, one or more cladding panels 100 is provided having outwardly extending catches formed along its entire length. The cladding panels 100 are cut to the appropriate length (designated "X") for covering a building structure, such as a post 102. As shown in FIG. 4A, portions of the outwardly extending catches of the cladding panel are removed from at least one, and optionally both, ends of the cladding panel, forming cladding panel 100'. In one embodiment, from about 0.5-2.5", and preferably between about 0.75-2.0" and more preferably between about 1.0-1.5", of the outwardly extending catches are removed from proximate to the top and/or bottom ends of the panel 100. This removal step accommodates the application of trim or molding as described in more detail below. It should be understood, however, that the trimming step is optional and is used to accommodate the trim or molding, when used. For example, in another embodiment, the cladding is installed without the use of a trim or molding piece and no portions of the outwardly extending catches are removed.

[0028] Next, as shown in FIG. 4B, one or more cladding panels 100' are aligned on a post 102. These cladding panels may be tacked using nails or otherwise directly secured to the post 102. Although not shown, it should be understood that one, two, three or four cladding panels, depending on their shapes, can be used to cover a four-sided post 102.

[0029] Referring to FIG. 4C, an ornamental trim or molding section 104 is constructed around the base and/or top end of the post 102 and over the portion of the cladding panels where the catches were removed. Those of ordinary skill should be familiar with the construction of trim section 104 and its details are not repeated herein. An example of the construction of trim section 104 is provided in U.S. Pat. No. 5,956,920 to Davis discussed above, the entirety of which is hereby incorporated by reference herein.

[0030] As shown in FIG. 4D, connection element 106 is cut to the proper length X. As shown in FIG. 4E, the connection element is then snap fitted over an adjacent pair of outwardly extending catches to secure the connection element 106 to the adjacent cladding panels 100' and the cladding panels 100' to each other. The steps of FIGS. 4B, 4D and 4E can be repeated to clad the other sides of post 104. Last, a second trim or molding section 104 (not shown) can be constructed to cover the top edge of post 104, covering the area where the catches were removed from near the top edge of the panels 100'. Alternatively, cladding panels 100 may be held in place by constructed trim sections or, optionally, manually, while connection elements 106 are secured to the cladding panels to form the clad structure, such cladding holding itself in place once assembled.

[0031] It should be apparent from the foregoing that the cladding assembly can, if desired, fully enclose a member, such as a wooden post, to provide a maintenance free and aesthetically pleasing building structure. The assembly can be used where the building structure is only partially enclosed, such as, for example, in a fascia cladding or siding corner trim applications, or deck sub-structure. In such an application, one or more cladding panels could be applied to a building structure using connection elements to secure the cladding panels one to another, or to portions of the building structure equipped with a projection or flange suitably adapted for engaging a connection element. In this case, a portion of the building structure is clad, rather than completely surrounding the entire structure. Optionally, an additional anchoring means could be used, such as, for example, a screw, staple or nail, in attaching the cladding to the building structure. While fasteners may be optionally used, the cladding assembly lends itself to be applied without the need for additional fasteners or glue and may provide a self supporting structure.

[0032] The cladding assembly allows for easy retrofitting of an aesthetic appearance to either restore the appearance of a building structure to acceptability in the case of a deteriorated structure, or simply to change the desired aesthetics of the structure without removing it. The cladding can also be reversibly applied. If a change in appearance of a post is desired, the cladding can be removed and replaced with a cladding having a different aesthetic effect. For example, connection elements can be changed to produce different visual effects. Cladding panels could be provided with patterns, shapes or colors that could be used individually or with other patterns to yield clad building structures having the desired attributes.

[0033] It should be apparent that the cladding can be fit adjustably to an existing structure that is already in place. The cladding does not need to be slipped over one end of the post. The connection system allows for some irregularities in the geometry of the post itself and allows a generally

pleasing aesthetic effect when the cladding is fully assembled. The adjustability also enables accommodation of the cladding assembly to thermal expansion and contraction or other changes in dimension that can occur in use. The adjustability of the cladding assembly also can be beneficial when using the cladding with posts that are not of perfect dimensions. For example, if a post support structure were warped or twisted, the cladding would render a more desirable appearance. Also, the cladding can be used on a support structure that is purely structural in its load-bearing capability, such as a pipe, floor jack or a section of angle iron, for example, to provide a pleasing finished look to a post so clad.

[0034] The cladding assembly also lends itself to proper drainage. This attribute helps in drying and avoiding of water damage to the enclosed support structure over time. Further, as the cladding assembly, in one embodiment, is made up of a plurality of cladding panels, a cladding panel or panels can be easily replaced in the event of damage to a portion of the post or the cladding.

[0035] In the case of a four-sided square post, a cladding assembly can be produced by extrusion of identical cladding panels and connection elements. The cladding panels being of a single geometry simplifies the shipping and inventory needs. In the case of rectangular posts that do not have square cross sections, the cladding could be provided using one cladding panel type for the larger dimension and another cladding type for the smaller dimension, wherein the connection elements can be the same.

[0036] The cladding can also be used for more complexly shaped structures, such as, for example, hexagonal, octagonal, or higher order polygonally shaped posts or columns of varying sizes without the need for different cladding panels and connection elements for each contemplated shape to be clad.

[0037] As noted above, a preferred building structure for cladding is a post. Four cladding panels could be provided along with four connection elements for cladding a square post. Alternatively, a given panel section could cover more than one side of the post such that, for example, two panel sections could be connected to wrap the post. Another approach would be to provide a single four sided panel that includes a subsection for each of the four sides with a connection element to close and hold the cladding in place. A single piece post cladding element that could be adapted for this purpose is disclosed in commonly assigned U.S. patent application Ser. No. 10/725,768, entitled, "Single Piece Post Cladding Element, Method of Cladding a Post and Method of Forming a Cladding Element" filed Dec. 2, 2003, the entirety of which is hereby incorporated by reference herein.

[0038] FIG. 5 is a top plan view of an alternative clad building assembly 200. Assembly 200 includes a rectangular wooden post 12 having a square cross section. A cladding assembly is attached to the post and includes, in the illustrated embodiment, four cladding panels 140 and four connection elements 160. The connection elements 160 provide an androgynous means of engaging the one or more cladding panels to secure the cladding panels 140 to the post 12 in cladding the post. In this embodiment, the androgynous engagement is performed by a pair of outwardly extending, oppositely disposed catches 220 that mate with a pair of

inwardly extending, oppositely disposed catches **210**, with a catch **210** being provided one from each of an adjacent pair of cladding panels **140**. As can be seen from **FIG. 5**, the pair of outwardly extending catches **220** of the connection elements **160** are preferably generally shaped like a pair of hooks that anchor the connection element to the inwardly extending catches **210** of a pair of adjacent cladding panels **140**. The assembly **200** can be constructed in the manner described above in connection with, for example, **FIGS. 4-4E**.

[**0039**] In an alternative embodiment of a cladding panel assembly, the at least one connection element includes a pair of oppositely disposed male connectors, and the at least one cladding panel has a pair of oppositely disposed female connectors for mating with the oppositely disposed male connectors. Alternatively, the at least one connection element includes a pair of inwardly disposed female connectors, and the at least one cladding panel has a pair of oppositely disposed male connectors for mating with the oppositely disposed female connectors of the connection element.

[**0040**] In another alternative embodiment of a building assembly **300** shown in **FIG. 6**, the connection element is integral with the cladding panels **340A**, **340B**. In the illustrated embodiment including four cladding panels, the cladding assembly includes two cladding panels **340A** each including a pair of inwardly extending catches **342** and two cladding panels **340B** each including a pair of outwardly extending catches **344**. In this embodiment, catches **342** of a cladding panel **340A** mate with catches **344** of an adjacent cladding panel **340B** proximate to each corner of post **12**. As should be understood, this assembly can be constructed with one, two, three or four cladding panels.

[**0041**] **FIG. 7** is a top plan view of another alternative embodiment of a building assembly **400** where the connection element is integral with the cladding panels **440**. Each cladding panel is identical and roughly shaped like an "S". In this embodiment, each cladding panel has an inwardly extending catch **442** and an outwardly extending catch **444**. The inwardly extending catches **442** are similarly shaped and larger (though differently oriented) than the outwardly extending catches **444** such that an inwardly extending catch **442** of a first cladding panel **440** can fit around the outwardly extending catch **444** of an adjacent second cladding panel **440** to secure the cladding panels together.

[**0042**] The cladding assemblies have been described, in one embodiment, as including a 4"x4" square post. A larger post, such as a 6"x6" post, can be clad in at least two ways using inventory available for cladding the 4"x4" post. In a first embodiment, the cladding panels used to clad the 4"x4" post are used. Enlarged connection elements are then used to connect the cladding panels together and to cover the portion of the 6"x6" post not covered by the cladding panels designed for the 4"x4" post. In the second embodiment, wider cladding panels about 6" or more in width can be secured to the 6"x6" post with connection elements from the 4"x4" post embodiment. These embodiments allow for larger post to be clad while utilizing inventory available to clad smaller posts. Alternatively, slightly wider (i.e., wider than the 4"x4" post embodiment) cladding panels and slightly larger (larger than the 4"x4" post embodiment) connection elements could be used.

[**0043**] Although the invention has been described in terms of exemplary embodiments, it is not limited thereto. Rather, the appended claims should be construed broadly to include other variants and embodiments of the invention that may be made by those skilled in the art without departing from the scope and range of equivalents of the invention.

What is claimed is:

1. A cladding assembly, comprising:

at least one cladding panel; and

at least one connection element, wherein the connection element includes an androgynous means for engaging the at least one cladding panel to secure the at least one cladding panel to a building structure.

2. The cladding assembly of claim 1, wherein said at least one cladding panel comprises at least one pair of outwardly or inwardly extending, oppositely disposed catches, and said at least one connection element is configured to mate with said catches.

3. The cladding assembly of claim 2, wherein said at least one connection element comprises at least one pair of inwardly extending, oppositely disposed catches disposed to mate with said at least one pair of outwardly extending, oppositely disposed catches of said at least one cladding panel, or

at least one pair of outwardly extending, oppositely disposed catches disposed to mate with said at least one pair of inwardly extending, oppositely disposed catches of said at least one cladding panel.

4. The cladding assembly of claim 3, wherein said inwardly extending, oppositely disposed catches of said at least one connection element include respective hook portions for securing said connection element to said outwardly extending, oppositely disposed catches of said at least one cladding panel, or

said outwardly extending oppositely disposed catches of said at least one connection element include respective hook portions for securing said connection element to said inwardly extending, oppositely disposed catches of said at least one cladding panel.

5. The cladding assembly of claim 1, wherein said at least one connection element and at least one cladding panel comprise a thermoplastic polymer.

6. The cladding assembly of claim 1, wherein said at least one connection element and at least one cladding panel comprise polyvinyl chloride, a polyolefin, a polystyrene, polypropylene, an acrylic, an ABS polymer or an ASA polymer.

7. The cladding assembly of claim 1, wherein said assembly comprises four cladding panels and four connection elements, each one of said four cladding panels comprising a pair of outwardly extending, oppositely disposed catches along opposite edges thereof, each of said connection elements comprises a pair of inwardly extending, oppositely disposed catches, or

each one of said four cladding panels comprising a pair of inwardly extending, oppositely disposed catches along opposite edges thereof, each of said connection elements comprises a pair of outwardly extending, oppositely disposed catches.

- 8.** A cladded building assembly, comprising:  
 a building structure; and  
 a cladding assembly secured to said building structure, said cladding assembly comprising:  
 at least one cladding panel; and  
 at least one connection element, wherein the connection element includes an androgynous means for engaging the at least one cladding panel to secure the cladding panel to said building structure.
- 9.** The building assembly of claim 8, wherein said at least one cladding panel comprises at least one pair of outwardly or inwardly extending, oppositely disposed catches, and said at least one connection element is configured to mate with said catches.
- 10.** The building assembly of claim 9, wherein said at least one connection element comprises at least one pair of inwardly extending, oppositely disposed catches disposed to mate with said at least one pair of outwardly extending, oppositely disposed catches of said at least one cladding panel, or  
 said at least one connection element comprises at least one pair of outwardly extending, oppositely disposed catches disposed to mate with said at least one pair of inwardly extending, oppositely disposed catches of said at least one cladding panel.
- 11.** The building assembly of claim 10, wherein said inwardly extending, oppositely disposed catches of said at least one connection element include respective hook portions for securing said connection element to said outwardly extending, oppositely disposed catches of said at least one cladding panel, or  
 said outwardly extending, oppositely disposed catches of said at least one connection element include respective hook portions for securing said connection element to said inwardly extending, oppositely disposed catches of said at least one cladding panel.
- 12.** The building assembly of claim 8, wherein said at least one connection element and at least one cladding panel comprise a thermoplastic polymer.
- 13.** The building assembly of claim 8, wherein said at least one connection element and at least one cladding panel comprise polyvinyl chloride, a polyolefin, a polystyrene, polypropylene, an acrylic, an ABS polymer or an ASA polymer.
- 14.** The building assembly of claim 8, wherein the cladding assembly comprises four cladding panels and four connection elements, each one of said four cladding panels comprising a pair of outwardly extending, oppositely disposed catches along opposite edges thereof, each of said connection elements comprising a pair of inwardly extending, oppositely disposed catches, or  
 each one of said four cladding panels comprising a pair of inwardly extending, oppositely disposed catches along opposite edges thereof, each of said connection elements comprising a pair of outwardly extending, oppositely disposed catches.
- 15.** The building assembly of claim 8, wherein said building structure comprises a pre-installed post.
- 16.** A method of cladding a building structure, comprising the following steps:

- aligning at least one cladding panel along said building structure;
- providing at least one connection element, wherein the connection element includes an androgynous means for engaging the at least one cladding panel to secure the at least one cladding panel to said building structure; and
- securing said at least one connection element to said at least one cladding panel, whereby said building structure is clad.
- 17.** The method of claim 16, wherein said at least one cladding panel comprises at least one pair of outwardly or inwardly extending, oppositely disposed catches, and said at least one connection element is configured to mate with said catches.
- 18.** The method of claim 17, wherein said at least one connection element comprises at least one pair of inwardly extending, oppositely disposed catches disposed to mate with said at least one pair of outwardly extending, oppositely disposed catches of said at least one cladding panel, or  
 said at least one connection element comprises at least one pair of outwardly extending, oppositely disposed catches disposed to mate with said at least one pair of inwardly extending, oppositely disposed catches of said at least one cladding panel.
- 19.** The method of claim 18, wherein said inwardly extending, oppositely disposed catches of said at least one connection element include respective hook portions for securing said connection element to said outwardly extending, oppositely disposed catches of said at least one cladding panel, or  
 said outwardly extending, oppositely disposed catches of said at least one connection element include respective hook portions for securing said connection element to said inwardly extending, oppositely disposed catches of said at least one cladding panel.
- 20.** The method of claim 16, wherein said at least one connection element and at least one cladding panel comprise polyvinyl chloride, a polyolefin, a polystyrene, polypropylene, an acrylic, an ABS polymer or an ASA polymer.
- 21.** The method of claim 16, wherein the at least one cladding panel comprises four cladding panels and said at least one connection element comprises four connection elements, each one of said four cladding panels comprising a pair of outwardly extending, oppositely disposed catches along opposite edges thereof, each of said connection elements comprising a pair of inwardly extending, oppositely disposed catches, or  
 each one of said four cladding panels comprising a pair of inwardly extending, oppositely disposed catches along opposite edges thereof, each of said connection elements comprising a pair of outwardly extending, oppositely disposed catches.
- 22.** The method of claim 16, wherein at least two cladding panels are aligned along said building structure, said at least two cladding panels being aligned adjacent to one another, wherein said cladding panels comprise a pair of outwardly or inwardly extending, oppositely disposed catches, said method further comprising:

securing the cladding panels to said building structure;  
and

after said securing step, securing said at least one connection element to said pair of outwardly or inwardly extending, oppositely disposed catches.

23. The method of claim 22, further comprising the steps of:

providing said cladding panels, wherein the catches run substantially along the entire length of said cladding panels; and

removing a portion of said catches from a portion of said cladding panels proximate to at least one of the top and bottom of said cladding panels.

24. The method of claim 23, further comprising installing a trim or molding section proximate to at least one of the top and bottom of said cladding panels, whereby an area from which said portion was removed is concealed from view.

25. A post cladding assembly, comprising:

a plurality of polymeric cladding panels, said plurality of cladding panels comprising at least one pair of outwardly or inwardly extending, oppositely disposed catches; and

at least one polymeric connection element, comprising at least one pair of inwardly or outwardly extending, oppositely disposed catches, wherein said at least one connection element is secured to said plurality of cladding panels with said inwardly or outwardly disposed catches of said at least one polymeric connection element mated to said outwardly or inwardly disposed catches of said plurality of polymeric cladding panels, respectively, to couple said cladding panels together in cladding a building structure.

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