United States Patent [19]

Bostic

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[54] **STAMP SOAKER**

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[52] **U.S. Cl.**..... **269/237,** 269/321 W, 269/287, 269/310, 134/201, 156/584

[51] **Int. Cl.**..... **B25b 1/04**

[58] **Field of Search** ..... 118/264, 270; 269/237, 269/321 W, 287, 310; 156/584, 344; 312/31.01, 31.02, 31.1, 31.2, 31; 134/201

[56] **References Cited**

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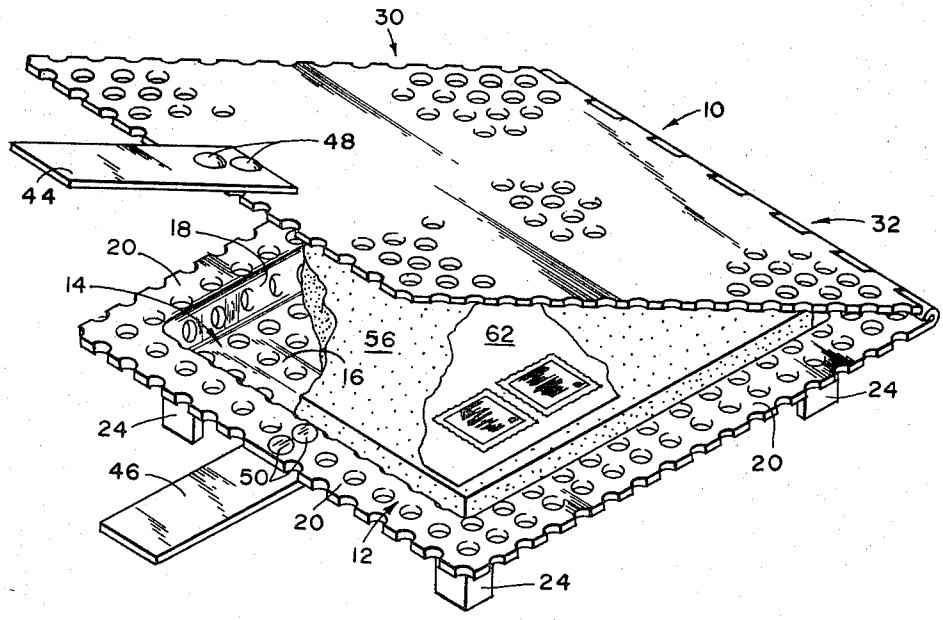
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Attorney, Agent, or Firm—William R. Coffey

[57] **ABSTRACT**

A stamp soaking unit comprising a pan providing a shallow cavity having a generally flat bottom, a sponge disposed in the cavity and having a thickness significantly greater than the depth of the cavity, a generally flat top for the pan disposed to cover and close the cavity, and a hinge for connecting the top to the pan for movement to and from its closing position which is generally parallel with the bottom of the cavity. The pan and the top are perforated, and the sponge is effective to hold envelope sections on which stamps are glued flat against the bottom and the top while the unit is held under a stream of hot water or steam.

7 Claims, 4 Drawing Figures



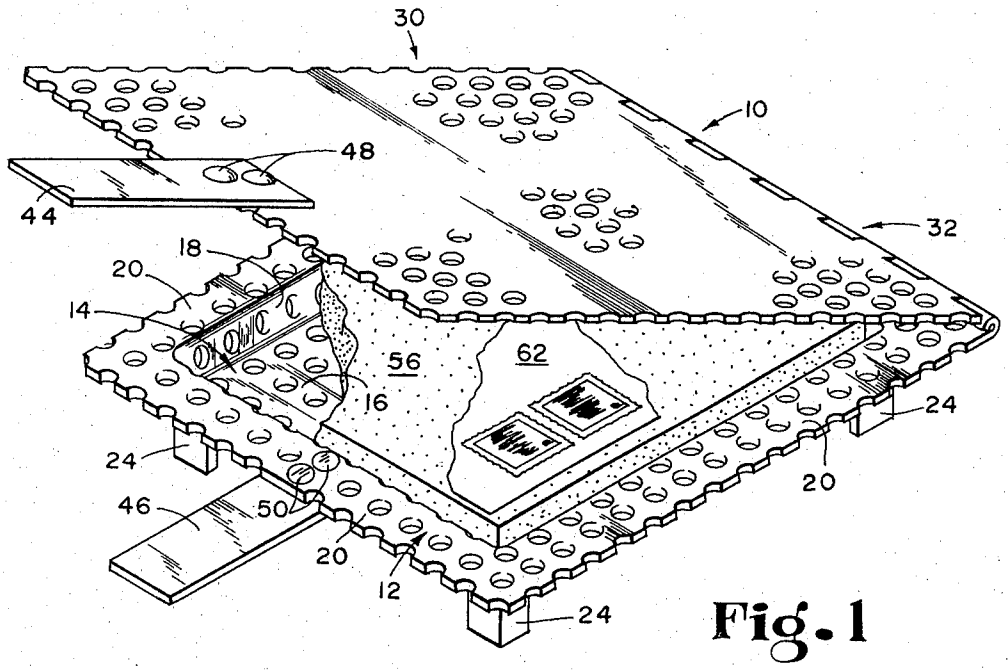


Fig. 1

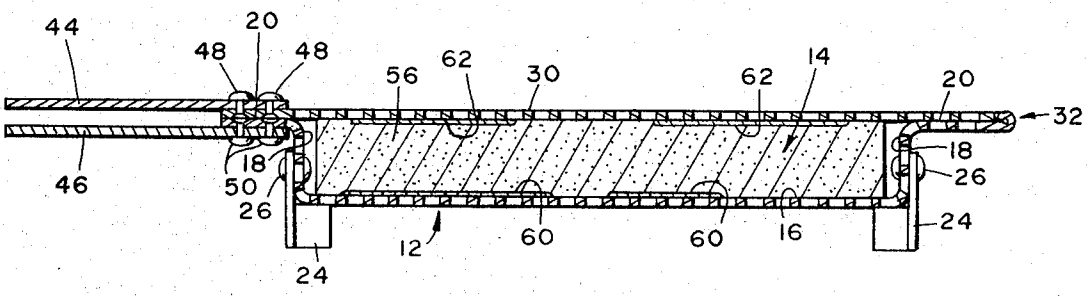


Fig. 2

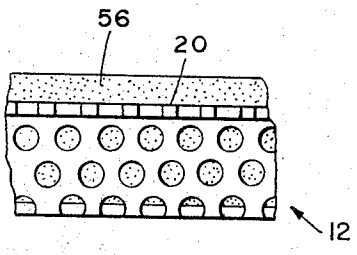


Fig. 4

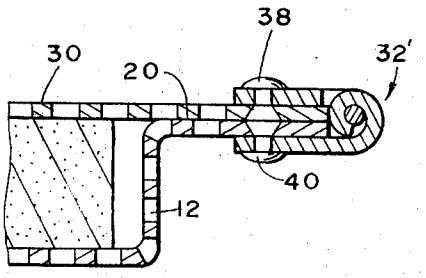


Fig. 3

STAMP SOAKER

The present invention relates to soaking units, and more particularly to the provision of a unit ideally suited for soaking stamps from envelope sections.

Stamp collectors conventionally obtain large quantities of envelope sections having stamps glued thereon. Such stamp collectors usually place the envelope sections in a container of warm water to soak the stamps loose from the envelope section. This process is time-consuming and quite messy. Stamps are soaked for too great a period of time in some instances using such conventional techniques.

Additionally, when stamps are soaked loose in a container of warm water, it is difficult to keep the stamps flat.

Soaking units of all types have been provided and suggested for various soaking functions. However, to my knowledge, no one has provided or suggested a soaking unit which is ideal for use by the great numbers of stamp collectors. I presently understand there are approximately nine million stamp collectors in the United States.

Thus, it is an object of the present invention to provide a stamp soaking unit which is simple in structure, easy to use and inexpensive, and yet very effective for the purpose intended. In meeting this object, the stamp soaking unit of the present invention comprises a pan providing a shallow cavity having a generally flat bottom, sponge means disposed in the cavity, a generally flat top for the pan disposed to cover and close the cavity, and means for connecting the top to the pan to be generally parallel with the bottom in its cavity closing position. The pan and the top are perforated, and the sponge means has a thickness substantially greater than the depth of the cavity such that, when the top is in its closing position, the sponge is compressed securely to hold envelope sections on which stamps are glued flat against the bottom and the top while the unit is held under a stream of hot water or steam.

The stamp soaking units of the present invention may be varied in size from, for instance, an 8 inch square pan to a pan which is 1½ ft. square.

Other objects and features of the present invention will become apparent as this description progresses.

To the accomplishment of the above and related objects, this invention may be embodied in the form illustrated in the accompanying drawings, attention being called to the fact, however, that the drawings are illustrative only, and that changes may be made in the specific construction illustrated and described, so long as the scope of the appended claims is not violated.

IN THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a perspective view of the stamp soaking unit of the present invention showing the sponge means thereof partially cut away;

FIG. 2 is a sectioned elevational view of the unit;

FIG. 3 is a fragmentary sectional view showing a hinge connection using a conventional and commercially available hinge to connect the top to the pan; and

FIG. 4 is a fragmentary elevational view of the pan showing the sponge means in its uncompressed condition.

Referring now particularly to the drawings, it will be seen that the illustrated soaking unit, indicated generally by the reference numeral **10**, comprises a pan **12** providing a shallow cavity **14** having a generally flat bottom **16**, and upwardly extending side walls **18**. The pan is generally rectangularly shaped with the cavity **14** being generally rectangularly shaped and centrally located within the pan to provide a boundary portion **20** extending perimetrally about the cavity and generally parallel to the bottom **16**. In other words, the pan **12** is formed to provide a perimetrally and outwardly extending flange portion **20** bounding the cavity **14**.

The pan may be supported on legs **24** which may be riveted or otherwise securely fastened to the pan to extend downwardly therefrom. In the illustrated embodiment, each leg **24** is an angle strip riveted to the corner of the pan as indicated at **26**.

The top **30** for the unit is preferably hinged to the pan **12** as indicated at **32** so that the top is movable between its opening position and its closing position covering the cavity **14**. The top **30** is shown in its cavity closing position in FIG. **2**. Preferably, the top **30** will be of the same shape and size as the pan **12** so that, in its closing position, the top **30** is resting uniformly against the flange portions **20**. In the embodiment of FIGS. **1** and **2**, the hinge connection **32** is provided by integrally forming rolled hinge portions on the pan **12** and top **30** and then connecting such portions together by means of a hinge pin. It will be appreciated that a standard commercially available hinge may be obtained and riveted or otherwise securely fastened to the pan **12** and top **30** to provide the hinge connection indicated at **32'** in FIG. **3**. In FIG. **3**, rivets **38, 40** are shown attaching a conventional hinge to the pan **12** and top **30**.

Then, handles **44, 46** may be attached respectively to the top **30** and pan **12** to extend outwardly from the edges opposite to the edges providing the hinge connection **32**. These handles **44, 46** may be riveted or otherwise securely fastened to the top **30** and pan **12**. In the illustrative embodiment, rivets **48, 50** connect the handles to the unit.

One or more sponges **56** may be placed in the cavity **14** to hold envelope sections **60** against the bottom **16** and other envelope sections **62** against the top **30** when the top is in its closing position illustrated in FIG. **2**. Preferably, the sponge **56** will have a thickness greater than the depth of the cavity **14** such that, when the top **30** is in its open position, the upper surface of the sponge **56** will be significantly above the upper surface of the flange portions **20**. Then, when the top **30** is in its closing position, the sponge **56** is compressed securely to hold the envelope sections **60, 62** respectively against the bottom and top. The free or uncompressed condition of the sponge **56** is shown in FIG. **4**.

With the envelope sections **60, 62** firmly held against the bottom **16** and top **30** as illustrated in FIG. **2**, the unit **10** can be placed under a hot water tap which conventionally would provide a stream of hot water at a temperature of, for instance, 130° F. to 140° F. By applying such a stream of hot water against the top **30** for a period of time of, for instance, 10 to 15 seconds, the stamps will be thoroughly soaked from the envelope sections **60, 62**. The sponge **56** distributes the heat and water uniformly to all of the envelope sections such that, when the top **30** is opened after a 10 to 15 second hot water application, the stamps will almost fall off the envelope sections. It is not necessary, for instance, to direct the stream of hot water against the bottom as well as the top. By just applying the hot water stream to the top, and generally to the central portion of the top, all stamp sections will be uniformly soaked.

The legs **24** are provided so that the unit **10** can be rested on the bottom of a conventional kitchen sink.

By holding the two handles **44, 46,** the user of the unit **10** can assure that the sponge **56** will be uniformly compressed. Locking means (not shown) may well be provided for locking the top **30** in its cavity closing position shown in FIG. **2.** For instance, one of the handles **44, 46** may be provided with a spring clip or other such device for gripping and holding the other handle.

With the unit **10** used as described above, it is not necessary to soak the stamps for any appreciable period of time after removing the unit from the stream of hot water. The 10 or 15 seconds under the hot water stream usually will be sufficient to permit removal of the stamps from the envelope sections.

As discussed above, both the pan **12** and the top **30** are perforated for the passage of water therethrough. The pan **12** and top **30** may be fabricated from, for instance, 22 gauge perforated sheet steel or 0.050 perforated aluminum sheet. Sheet stock which contains ⅛ inch perforations set on 3/16 inch staggered centers has proven to be satisfactory for constructing the unit **10.**

Both the steel stock and the aluminum stock may be finished by covering the stock with a silicone polyester finish which is a very hard and durable finish. Such a finish is conventional and commercially available. It is tough enough such that the pan **12** may be formed to provide the cavity **14** after the pan **12** is finished with the silicone polyester finish.

In the illustrative embodiment which depicts an 8 inch square unit, the cavity **14** is ¾ inch deep while the sponge **56** is 1 inch thick.

I have found that foam plastic sponges which are commonly sold for use in cleaning operations are completely satisfactory for the purpose described. Such sponges are available in supermarkets and conventionally purchased for use around kitchens and bathrooms of a home.

I claim:

1. A stamp soaking unit comprising a pan providing a shallow cavity having a generally flat bottom, sponge means disposed in said cavity, a generally flat top for said pan disposed to cover and close said cavity, and means for connecting said top to said pan to be generally parallel with said bottom in its cavity closing position, said pan and said top being perforated, said sponge means being effective to hold envelope sections on which stamps are glued flat against said bottom and said top while said unit is held under a stream of hot water or steam.

2. The unit of claim **1** in which said pan is generally rectangularly shaped with said cavity being generally rectangularly shaped and centrally located within said pan to provide a boundary portion extending perimetrally about said cavity and generally parallel to said bottom, said connecting means including hinge means connecting said top to said pan for movement between a closing position against said boundary portion and an opening position away from said boundary portion.

3. The unit of claim **2** in which the thickness of said sponge means is such that, when said top is in its closing position, said sponge means is compressed securely to hold such envelope sections, respectively, against said top and bottom.

4. The unit of claim **3** in which said pan and top provide adjacent parallel edges joined together by said hinge means and opposite edges, handle means on said pan and top and extending outwardly, respectively, from said opposite edges.

5. The unit of claim **4** including downwardly extending leg means for supporting said pan.

6. The unit of claim **1** in which said sponge means has a thickness greater than the depth of said cavity such that, when said top is in its closing position, said sponge means is compressed securely to hold such envelope sections, respectively, against said top and bottom.

7. A stamp soaking unit comprising a perforated pan providing a shallow cavity having a bottom, sponge means disposed in said cavity, a perforated top for said pan disposed to cover and close said cavity, and means for connecting said top to said pan for movement to and from its cavity closing position, said sponge means having a thickness greater than the depth of said cavity such that, when said top is in its cavity closing position, said sponge means is compressed securely to hold envelope sections on which stamps are glued against said bottom and said top while said unit is held under a stream of hot water or steam.

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