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Greene

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[54] **DECORATIVE BELT LINKS**

[76] Inventor: **George Greene,** 59 Central Ave., Caldwell, N.J. 07006

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[21] Appl. No.: **246,877**

[52] **U.S. Cl.** **2/336,** 63/DIG.3

[51] **Int. Cl.** **A41f 1/00,** A41f 19/00

[58] **Field of Search** ..... 2/300, 315, 311, 2/325, 336, 338, 339, 321; 59/80, 78, 82, 90, 91; 63/DIG. 3; 161/48; 24/16 PB, 30.5 P, 201 A

[56] **References Cited**

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615,133	11/1898	Bienenzucht	2/338 X
469,449	2/1892	Kelley	59/91
594,201	11/1897	Frothingham	2/338 X
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Primary Examiner—George V. Larkin
Attorney—Edward Goldberg

[57] **ABSTRACT**

A unitary belt link of thin flexible material includes a central display area and integral longitudinal link portions extending from opposite sides of the central area. Cooperating coupling members are disposed at the opposite ends of the link. Open areas around the opposite sides of the central area extend laterally toward the edges of the link and provide narrow strips along the edges which connect the central area to the ends. The end coupling members preferably include lateral slots at one end and a larger laterally extending T-shaped integral tab at the other end engageable with the slots. A raised lateral surface on the tab fits within a slot to secure the tab in position. A plurality of like successive links are coupled together to form an adjustable length belt with decorative designs or indicia being displayed on the central areas. A single link may have the ends coupled together to form a decorative band.

10 Claims, 7 Drawing Figures

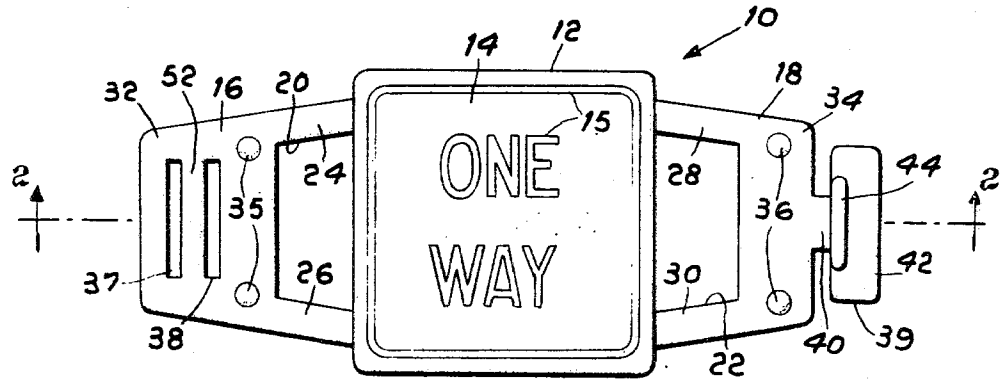


Fig. 1

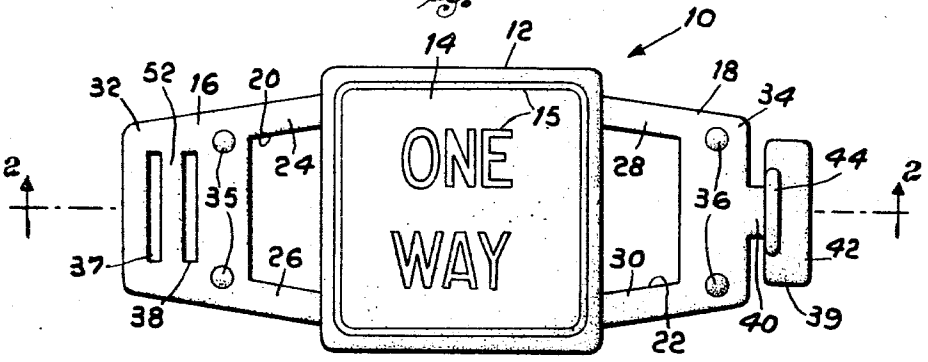


Fig. 2

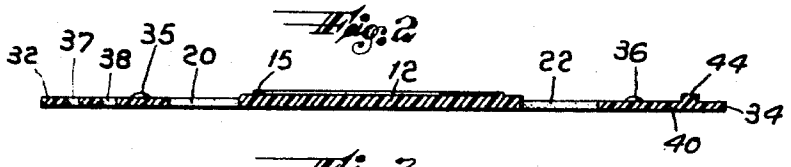


Fig. 3

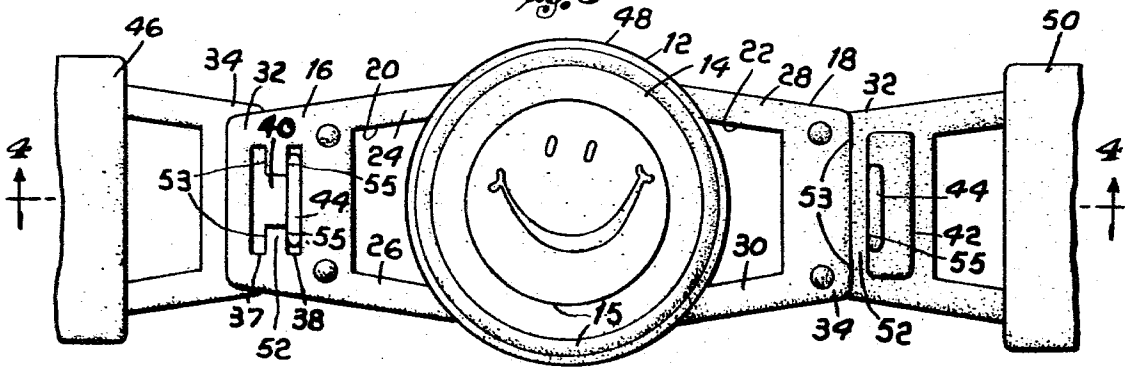


Fig. 4

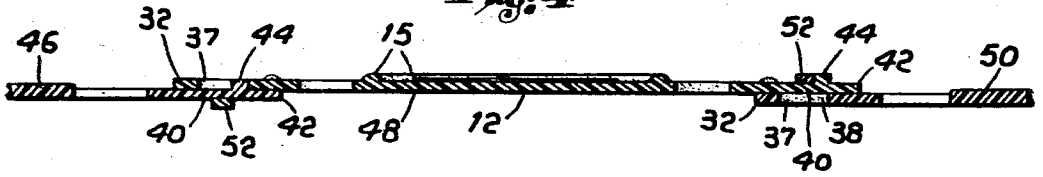


Fig. 5

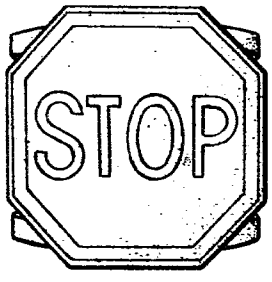


Fig. 6

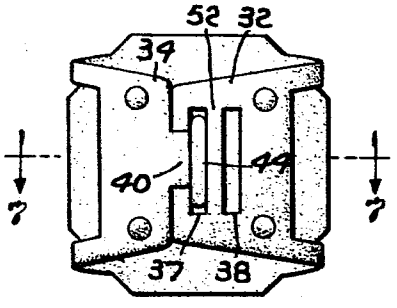
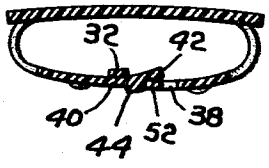


Fig. 7



DECORATIVE BELT LINKS

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

The present invention relates to decorative belt links and particularly to a novel link structure having an integral display area and end coupling members.

2. Description of the Prior Art

Previously available decorative belt links have included a plurality of successive members connected together by separate chain-link elements to form an adjustable belt. An example of such a belt is found in U.S. Pat. No. 615,133, issued Nov. 29, 1898, wherein alternate sections of flexible and rigid materials are connected by chain links and eyelets. Other known arrangements have included slotted links of flexible material which have longitudinal straps that are folded and passed through corresponding slots in successive links and are fastened by buckles and eyelets secured to opposite end members. Such a belt is shown in U.S. Pat. No. 594,201, issued Nov. 23, 1897.

More rugges rugged types of links are also known which are made of solid sections of flexible materials having T-shaped tabs and slots at opposite ends to engage complementary slots and tabs in adjacent links to form a belt, as in U.S. Pat. No. 3,418,803 issued Dec. 31, 1968. These various prior art devices, however, have been somewhat complex or have not provided both a decorative and secure unitary link which can readily be connected to other like members to form an adjustable length belt.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

It is therefore the primary object of the present invention to provide a simplified decorative belt link of a strong flexible material which includes an integral display area and end coupling members providing secure connections to adjacent links to form an adjustable belt.

This is achieved by a novel unitary flexible link structure having a central display area and integral longitudinal link portions extending from opposite sides of the display area. Narrow strips at the edges of open lateral areas around the sides of the central area provide connections to the ends of the link. Coupling members at the ends include lateral slots at one end and a larger laterally extending T-shaped tab at the other end which is engageable with the slots. The tab includes a raised lateral surface which fits within a slot to secure the tab in position. A plurality of such links are coupled together end-to-end to form an adjustable decorative belt. Other objects and advantages will become apparent from the following description taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 shows a front view of a typical belt link in accordance with the present invention,

FIG. 2 is a side cross-sectional view taken along line 2—2 of the link of FIG. 1,

FIG. 3 is a front view showing the coupling of several links to form a belt in accordance with the present invention,

FIG. 4 is a side cross-sectional view taken along line 4—4 of the links of FIG. 3 showing different end connections,

FIG. 5 is a front view of a single belt link having the ends connected to form a band,

FIG. 6 is a back view of the single belt link band showing the end connections in another form, and

FIG. 7 is a side cross-sectional view taken along line 7—7 of the link of FIG. 6 showing the end connections.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

As shown in FIGS. 1 and 2, a thin unitary molded or die cut piece of a suitable flexible material, preferably a plastic such as polyethylene,polypropylene, polyvinylchloride, or other similar materials, is formed into a belt link **10.** The thickness of the material may typically be in the order of 0.02 to 0.05 inches to provide both flexibility and strength. The link includes a central area **12** which may be of any shape such as rectangular, circular, hexagonal, etc., and may display any desired decorative design, indicia, sign or other information on the front surface **14** of the central area. The indicia **15** may be in the form of an integral raised or indented design molded into the surface, printing stamped onto the central area or a separate adhesive backed insert which is secured on the surface. The printing is preferably with a thin coating of pigment or ink of a contrasting color to that of the plastic link to provide a more prominent attractive display. The insert is likewise of a different color than the link body.

A pair of integral longitudinal link portions **16, 18** extend from opposite sides of the central area. Extending laterally along the opposite sides of the central area toward the edges of the link are a pair of symmetrical open areas **20, 22.** The open areas are spaced from the opposite outer edges of the link to provide pairs of narrow flexible strips **24, 26** and **28, 30** which connect the central display area to the opposite ends **32,34** of the link portions. Circular projections **35, 36** from the surface at each end are for decorative purposes to cover added impressions occurring during the molding process.

At each end of the link are integral cooperative coupling members which are preferably in the form of a pair of parallel coextensive narrow lateral slots **37, 38** at one end **32** and a T-shaped tab **39** at the other end **34.** The tab is connected to end **34** by a short longitudinal strip **40** and includes a lateral strip **42** longer and wider than the dimensions of the slots **37, 38** with which it is engageable. The tab **39** also includes a raised laterally extending bar **44** on the front surface along the inner side edge of lateral strip **42** and spaced from the outer edges and end of the lateral strip. The slots are of a larger width than the thickness of the strip **42** and bar **44** to permit their insertion into the slots. The dimensions of bar **44** are also adapted to fit within the dimensions of slots **37, 38** after insertion of tab **39** through the slots, so that while strip **42** extends beyond the slot dimensions on the undersurface of the line, bar **44** is in a fixed position within a slot.

The end connections are shown in FIGS. **3** and **4,** wherein a plurality of like adjacent links **46, 48, 50** are connected successively to form a decorative belt. Each link may have a differently shaped central display area and indicia thereon while having the same sized and shaped longitudinal link portions and end coupling members. Corresponding parts of each link are numbered identically. The thin lateral strip **42** of the T-shaped tab at end **34** of link **46** in one form of connec-

tion is first inserted into the outer slot 37 from below end 32, then over the section 52 between the slots and into the inner slot 38. Strip 42 then extends below end 32 and bar 44 fits within slot 38 with the outer edge abutting the inner edge of the slot to secure the tab in position. Longitudinal strip 40 then rests on the center of section 52 which is bent downwardly below the surfaces of links 46 and 48. Strip 40 is slightly wider than section 52 so that the lateral edges 53 along end 34 adjacent strip 40 abut the lateral edges of section 52 along the inner edge of slot 37 spaced from the center portion. The inner edges 55 of strip 42 likewise abut the outer edges of inner slot 38 along the other side of section 52 to insure a secure linkage.

Another form of connection is shown at the other end between links 48 and 50. In this case lateral strip 42 of link 48 is first inserted into the outer slot 37 of link 50 from above end 32 and then under section 52 and out of the inner slot 38 so that strip 42 extends above the end 32 of link 50. The inner edge of bar 44 then abuts the inner edge 55 of section 52 which is bent upwardly in the center area over strip 40 between slots 37, 38. The lateral edges 53 of end 34 likewise abut the outer edges along the other side of section 52, to again provide a secure connection. The central display area 14 of link 48 also includes indicia 15 in the form of an integral raised border and a separate adhesive backed insert in the center.

As shown in FIGS. 5, 6 and 7, the ends of a single flexible link may be coupled together to form a decorative band. An example of a further form of connection is also illustrated in the back and cross-sectional views of FIGS. 6 and 7. The end tab of end 34 is again inserted over end 32 into slot 37 with strip 42 extending inwardly under section 52. The outer edge of bar 44 abuts the outer edge of section 52 with the bar being positioned within slot 37. The inner edge of strip 42 then abuts the outer edges of slot 37 in areas spaced from the center as strip 40 causes end 32 to bend inwardly. In this case only one slot is utilized while the other remains empty.

It is thus apparent that the present invention provides a novel decorative belt link of an improved design. While only a limited number of embodiments have been illustrated and described herein, it is to be understood that many other variations may be made in the particular design, dimensions and configuration of the present invention without departing from the scope of the invention as set forth in the appended claims.

What is claimed is:

1. A belt link comprising

a unitary body of thin flexible material,

said body having a central display area,

two pairs of integral narrow longitudinal strips extending respectively from opposite sides of said central area toward the ends of said body,

a pair of laterally extending open areas at respective opposite sides of said central area between said pairs of strips, and

integral cooperative coupling members extending laterally across the opposite ends of said body between respective pairs of said strips, the coupling member at one end being engageable with the coupling member at the other end.

2. The belt link of claim 1 wherein said pair of open areas are spaced symmetrically about said sides of said central area enclosed between said strips and end coupling members, each pair of said strips including an upper and lower strip connecting said central area to said ends.

3. The belt link of claim 1 wherein said coupling members include a first narrow lateral slot in one end and a laterally extending tab at the other end engageable with said slot and extending beyond the length and width of said slot.

4. The belt link of claim 3 wherein said coupling members include a second coextensive narrow lateral slot in said one end closely spaced from and substantially parallel to said first slot, said tab being a T-shaped extension having a longitudinal strip connected to said other end and a lateral strip extending from the end of said longitudinal strip, said T-shaped extension being engageable with both said first and second lateral slots in a common coupling.

5. The belt link of claim 4 wherein said T-shaped extension includes a raised narrow lateral bar on the front surface at one side of said lateral strip spaced from the outer end and edges of said lateral strip and engageable within one of said lateral slots.

6. A belt comprising the belt link of claim 5 in combination with a plurality of like belt links, each having said lateral slots in one end and said T-shaped extension at the other end, respective T-shaped extensions of each link engaging said lateral slots of each adjacent link, successive links being coupled to one another to form an adjustable length belt.

7. The belt link of claim 5 wherein a slot on said one end is coupled with said T-shaped extension on the other end to form a band.

8. The belt link of claim 5 wherein said link material is of plastic.

9. The belt link of claim 8 wherein said central display area includes raised and indented portions in a predetermined pattern on said surface.

10. The belt link of claim 8 wherein said central display area includes an adhesive backed insert secured on the surface.

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