United States Patent

Hollie

[15] **3,664,910**

[45] **May 23, 1972**

[54] IDENTIFYING DEVICE FOR DOCUMENTS

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[22] Filed: **Mar. 30, 1970**

[21] Appl. No.: **23,622**

[52] **U.S. Cl.**.....**161/147,** 40/2.2, 40/135, 117/0.5, 117/122, 118/31.5, 161/5, 161/149, 161/167, 161/406, 161/413

[51] **Int. Cl.** **B32b 3/02,** B32b 7/06

[58] **Field of Search**.....161/147, 149, 167, 413, 5, 161/6, 406; 117/0.5, 3.1, 122; 118/31.5; 40/125 A, 135, 2 A, 2.2

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Attorney—Herbert E. Kidder

[57] **ABSTRACT**

A document identification and protection system in which a stamplike patch is adhesively attached to a document such as a check, credit purchase invoice, and the like at the time of making the purchase, or writing the check. After peeling away a protective backing from the patch, a fingerprint is impressed on the exposed tacky surface, and a transparent cover sheet is then laid down over the print and adhered to the tacky surface, to protect and preserve the print. If the document is later questioned, the fingerprint can be photographed through the transparent cover sheet.

1 Claim, 7 Drawing Figures

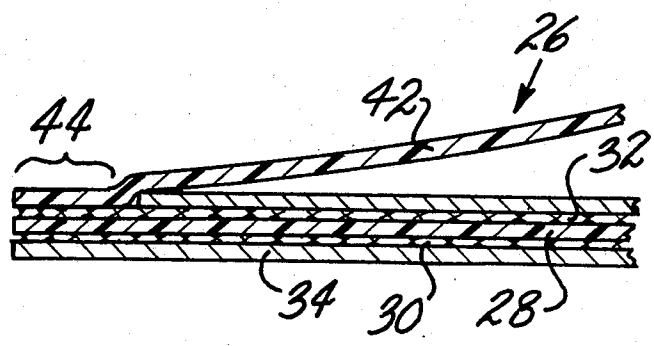
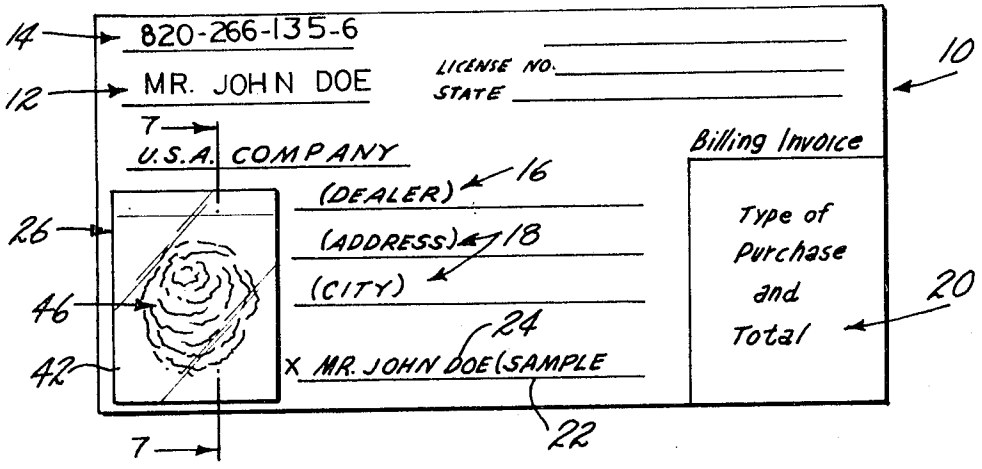


FIG. 1.



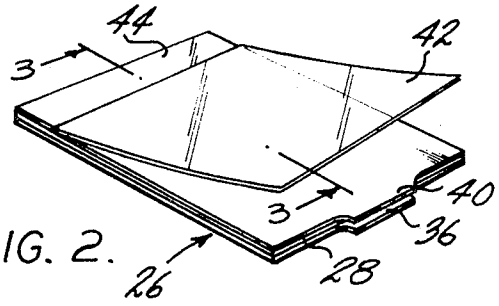
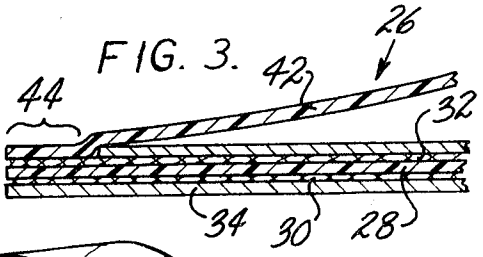


FIG. 2.

FIG. 3.



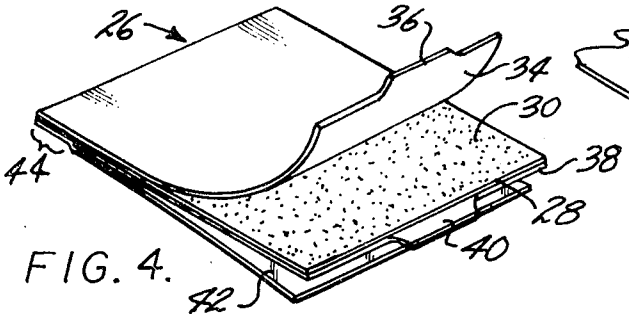


FIG. 4.

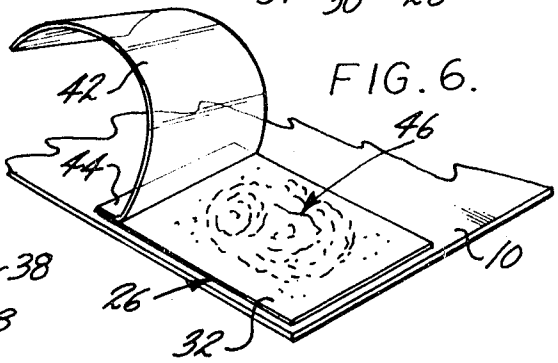


FIG. 6.

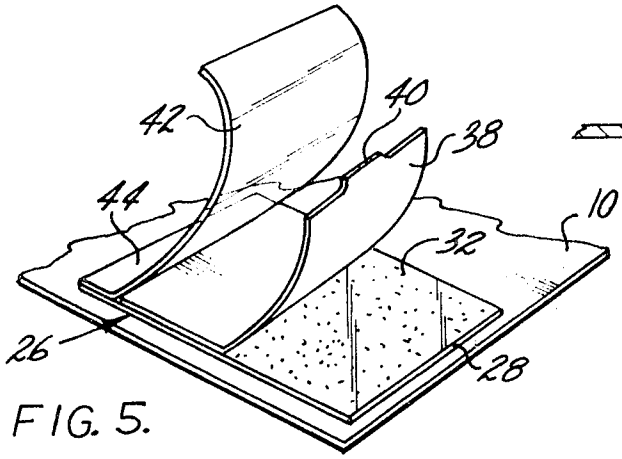


FIG. 5.

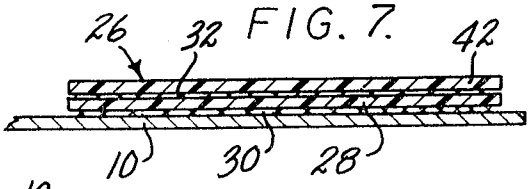


FIG. 7.

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IDENTIFYING DEVICE FOR DOCUMENTS

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to a document identification and protection system, and more particularly to a device that can be used with a check or credit purchase invoice to take a fingerprint impression of the individual writing or endorsing the check, or making the credit purchase, so that in the event the document is later questioned as having a forged signature, the fingerprint impression can be photographed and compared with the print of the person whose signature is supposedly forged.

The purpose of the device is threefold: (1) it clearly establishes that a questioned signature is genuine or forged; (2) it provides positive evidence for use in prosecution of the criminal, where forgery has been committed; and (3) it tends to inhibit forgery and fraudulent use of credit cards, because the average person contemplating forgery becomes apprehensive at the thought of leaving such positive and unquestionable identification of himself on the document bearing evidence of his crime.

With the current widespread use of credit cards, there is an increasingly serious problem with lost and stolen credit cards, which results in the loss of many millions of dollars every year due to fraudulent use of the cards by the finders or thieves. Most of this loss is borne by the credit card companies, who have no recourse against the owner who promptly reports the loss of his card. However, there have been many instances where a credit card has been fraudulently used by someone who had "borrowed" the card without the owner's knowledge, and in that case the burden of proof is on the card owner who denies that the purchase was made by him. If the forgery has been skillfully done, it may be difficult to prove that it is a forgery.

One of the problems faced by the credit card companies is that of obtaining legal evidence against suspected forgers in criminal prosecution. Oftentimes, a forger who has been apprehended has been involved in other credit card forgeries over a long period of time, but unless he confesses, there may be no way of connecting him to the prior forgeries. Where a forger has left evidence irrefutably connecting him to a considerable number of criminal forgeries, there is a better chance that he will be given a substantial sentence, and not merely released with a suspended sentence, to continue his depredations.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The primary object of the present invention is to provide a device whereby anyone putting his signature to a document can be required to place a fingerprint impression on the document, which is then covered up and protected, and remains with the document for all time. The fingerprint can later be used, if the signature is challenged, to establish that it is either genuine or a forgery.

Another important object of the invention is to provide a self-contained device that can be affixed to any document for the purpose of providing positive identification of the person who has placed his signature on the document.

A further object of the invention is to provide a device of the class described in the form of a stamp-like patch having a pressure-sensitive back which can be adhered to a document, and a pressure-sensitive front side that is adapted to receive a fingerprint impression without requiring inking of the finger tips, and which is subsequently covered by a transparent cover sheet after the impression has been made, so as to protect the print.

These and other objects and advantages of the invention will become apparent to those skilled in the art from the following detailed description of the preferred embodiment thereof, with reference to the accompanying drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS:

FIG. 1 is a view showing the "hard copy" of a credit card purchase invoice (i.e., the copy retained by the vendor and sent in to the credit card company for payment), with the device of the invention affixed to the lower left-hand corner thereof;

FIG. 2 is an enlarged perspective view, to somewhat larger scale, of the device of the invention before it is affixed to the document;

FIG. 3 is a fragmentary sectional view of the same, drawn to a further enlarged scale, taken at 3—3 in FIG. 2;

FIG. 4 is a perspective view of the device, showing the protective backing sheet being peeled off the underside thereof to expose the pressure-sensitive surface which is to be adhered to the surface of the document;

FIG. 5 is a fragmentary perspective view of the lower left-hand corner of the document in FIG. 1, showing the device of the invention affixed thereto, and the protective backing sheet being peeled off the front side to expose the pressure-sensitive surface upon which the fingerprint impression is to be made;

FIG. 6 is a view similar to FIG. 5, showing the protective sheet completely removed, and the fingerprint impression that has been made on the pressure-sensitive surface; and

FIG. 7 is an enlarged fragmentary sectional view, taken at 7—7 in FIG. 1, showing the device with its transparent protective sheet laid down on and firmly adhered to the pressure-sensitive surface bearing the fingerprint impression.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

In the drawings, the reference numeral **10** designates a document in its entirety, said document being any that requires a signature or other identification. The document **10** might be a personal check, or an agreement of any sort, or it might be the "hard copy" of a credit purchase invoice, as shown in FIG. 1. The hard copy of a credit purchase invoice (so-called because it is made of stiff card stock) is customarily the carbon copy retained by the vendor, which is subsequently sent to the credit card company for payment, and ultimately returned to the credit card owner with the statement of his account at the end of the month. The tissue copy upon which the details of the transaction and the signature of the purchaser are written, is removed and given to the purchaser.

The invoice card **10** has the usual space to receive the impression of the credit card indicia, thereby printing out the customer's name **12** and account number **14**. Also printed on the card is the vendor's name **16** and address **18**. In the lower right-hand corner of the invoice is a space **20** to fill in the particulars of the transaction. A signature line **22** provides a place for the customer to write in his signature **24**. In the lower left-hand corner of the invoice is a space for the device **26** of the present invention.

The device **26** is preferably a square, or rectangular patch, about 1⅛ inches wide by 1⅜ inches to 1¾ inches high, which is adhesively affixed to the surface of the document **10**. The device **26**, as initially received, consists of a thin sheet **28**, preferably of polyvinyl chloride, having a first layer **30** of pressure-sensitive adhesive on its back side, and a second layer **32** of pressure-sensitive adhesive on its front side. The vinyl sheet **28** and its layer **32** of pressure-sensitive adhesive are preferably white, or cream colored, so that a fingerprint impression thereon will show up most clearly.

Detachably adhered to the back side payer **30** of pressure-sensitive adhesive is a protective backing **34**, which may be in the form of a slip of silicone-impregnated paper that adheres only lightly to the adhesive. The backing **34** may conveniently be provided with a tab **36** projecting from one end to facilitate peeling it away.

On the opposite side of sheet **28** is another protective backing **38**, which is lightly adhered to the pressure-sensitive adhesive **32**. Backing **38** also has a tab **40** at one end to provide a finger grip. As best shown in FIG. 3, backing **38** stops short of the top edge of the patch **10**, and a thin, transparent

mylar sheet **42** is firmly attached along a narrow marginal area **44** to the layer **32**. The mylar sheet **42** initially lies over the backing **38**, and is free from the same.

The use of the invention is as follows: At the time that the invoice **10** is made out (or at any time prior to that) one of the devices **26** is attached to the lower left-hand corner of the hard copy of the invoice, by first peeling off the backing strip **34** on its back side, as shown in FIG. **4**. This exposes the pressure-sensitive adhesive **30**, allowing the patch to be adhered to the card **10**.

When the invoice has been filled out and the purchaser has written his signature **24** on line **22**, the backing strip **38** on the front side of the patch is peeled away, and the purchaser presses his thumb or index finger against the pressure-sensitive adhesive **32**, leaving a fingerprint impression **46** thereon. The transparent mylar sheet is then laid down over the adhesive surface **32**, and becomes firmly adhered thereto. The fingerprint **46** is now fully protected from being altered or smudged, and can be photographed through the mylar sheet **42** at any time thereafter, using well-known infrared or ultra-violet lighting techniques.

Even though the purchaser's hands are clean and leave no visible print on the adhesive surface **32**, there is a clear impression that can be readily made visible and photographed. One of the advantages of the invention is that the person making the fingerprint impression is not required to ink or otherwise soil his hands, which would be objectionable to most people.

While I have shown and described in considerable detail

what I believe to be the preferred embodiment of my invention, it will be understood by those skilled in the art that the invention is not limited to these specific details, but might take various other forms.

I claim

1. A device for positively identifying a person affixing his signature to a document, comprising:

a patch of base sheet material of a size to receive a fingerprint impression, said patch having a first layer of pressure-sensitive adhesive on one side thereof to cause said patch to adhere to said document;

a first protective backing strip detachably adhered to said first layer of adhesive on said one side of said sheet material;

a second layer of pressure-sensitive adhesive on the other side of said patch to receive and take a fingerprint impression when a finger tip is pressed against it;

a second protective backing strip removably attached to said other side of said patch so that it can be peeled away to expose said second layer or pressure-sensitive adhesive so that a fingerprint impression can be made thereon; and

a transparent cover sheet affixed along one edge to said patch on said other side thereof, said cover sheet being laid down over said second layer of pressure-sensitive adhesive and adhered thereto after said fingerprint impression has been made, so as to protect said impression while at the same time enabling it to be photographed if necessary.

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