

[54] **INTERLOCKING FRAME CONSTRUCTION**

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[51] Int. Cl. **E04h 17/14**

[58] Field of Search 256/24, 70, 69, 68, 256/65, 73

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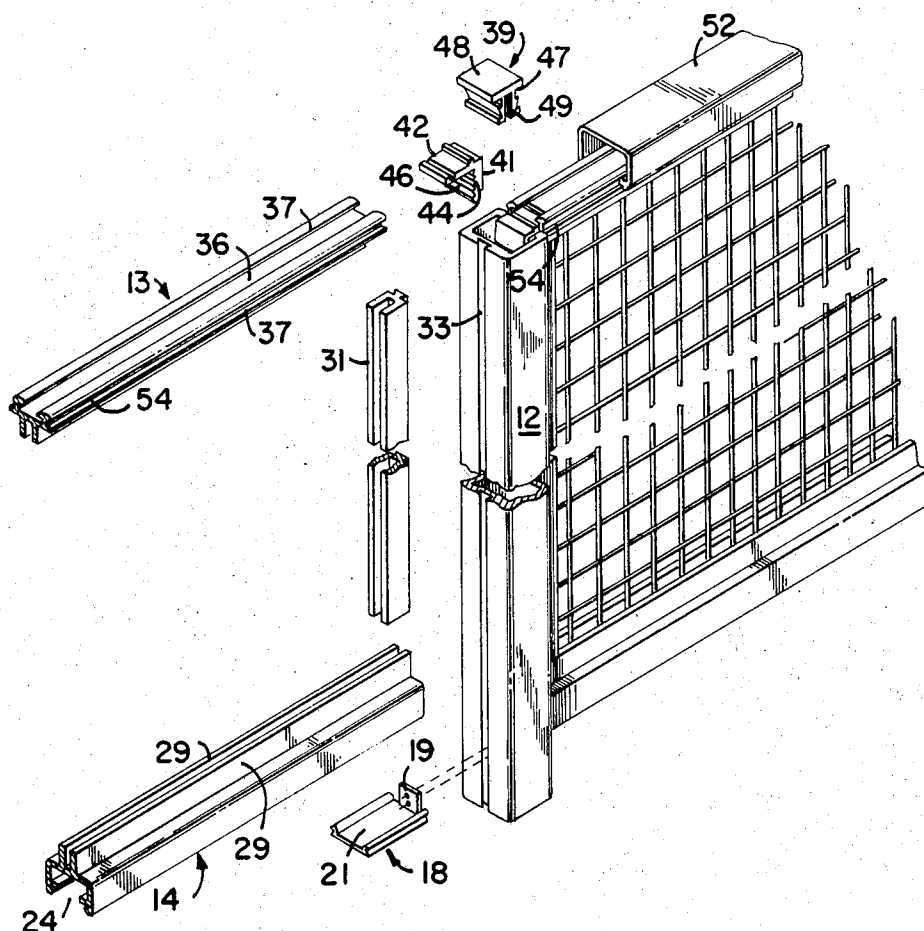
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[57] **ABSTRACT**

An interlocking frame construction for supporting panels of wire mesh screen or the like is described which is particularly useful in providing barriers along roadways. The frame construction includes a plurality of spaced apart posts between which extend rail members to define with each pair of posts an enclosed frame. Channels are provided extending along the posts and rails and opening toward the center of each frame to receive the edges of a panel to be supported. The rails are connected between the posts by anchors and connectors which enable at least one of the rails to be removed to facilitate replacement of one panel with another, and covering means are provided for normally enveloping the connectors so that unauthorized access thereto is prevented.

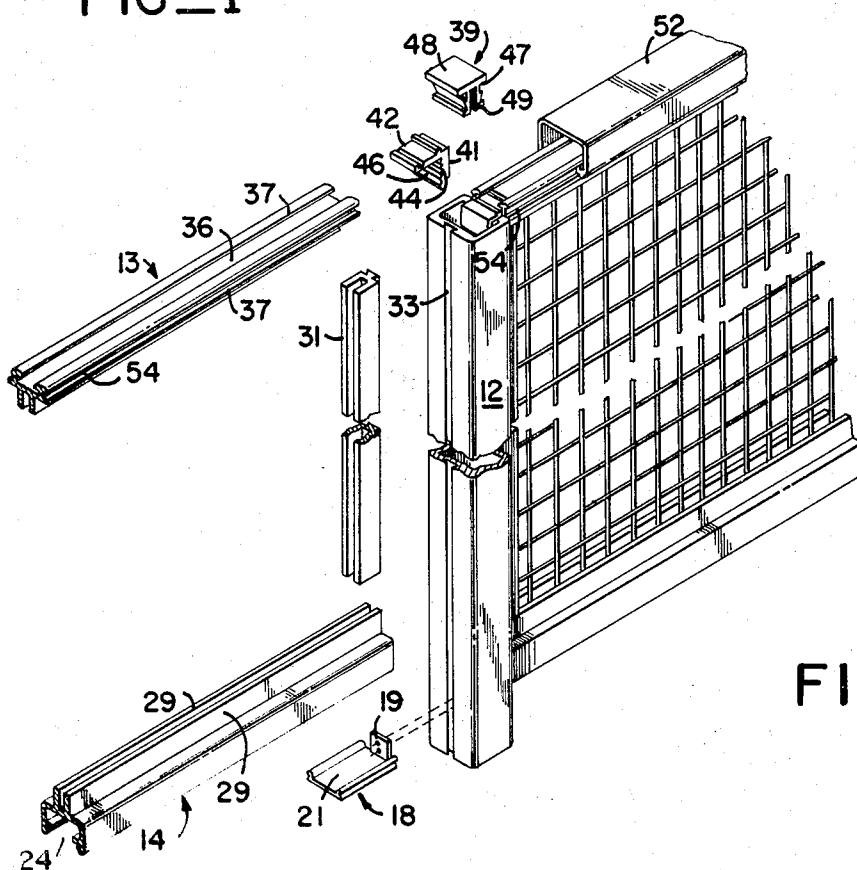
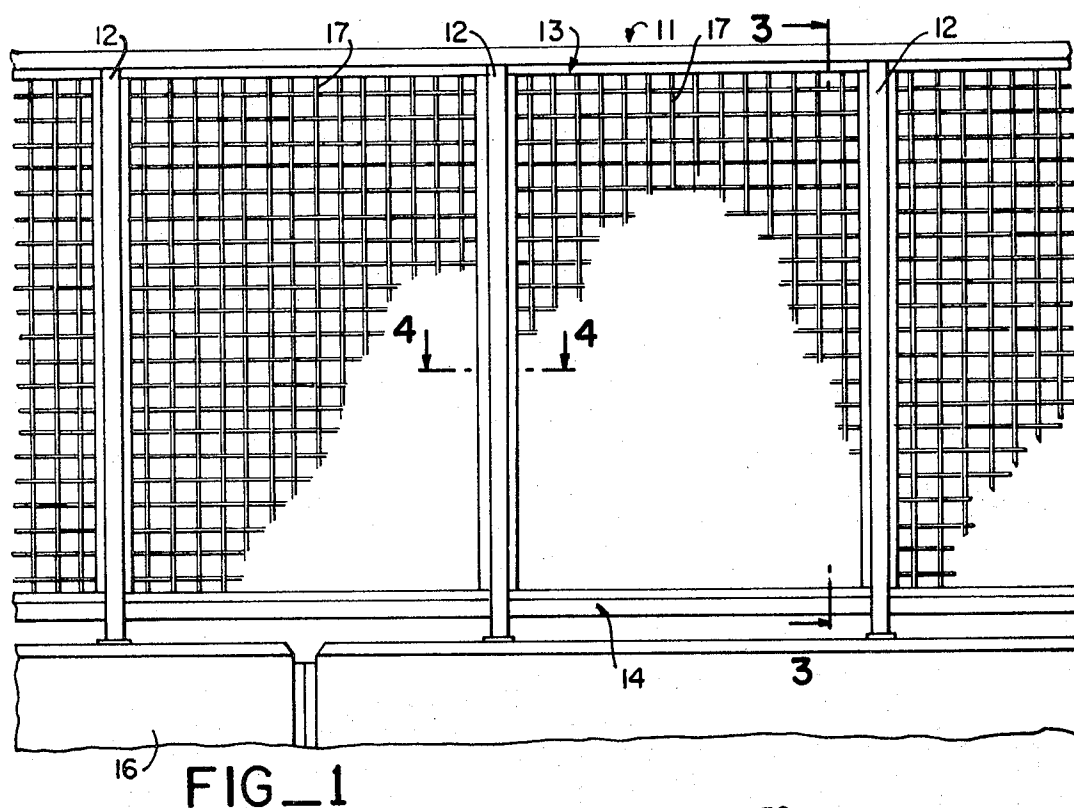
7 Claims, 6 Drawing Figures



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SHEET 1 OF 2



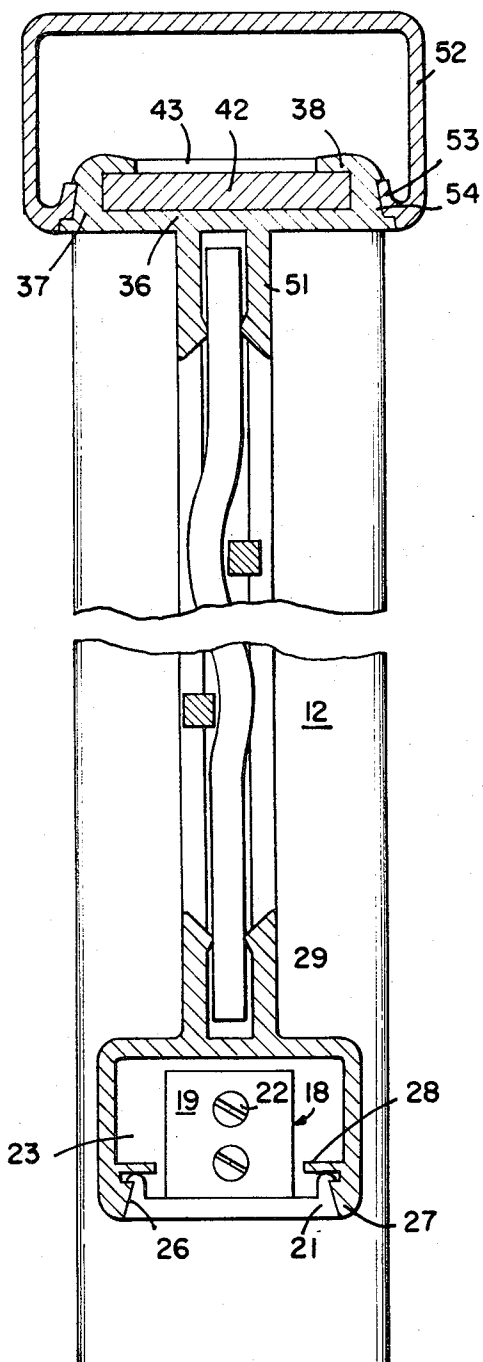


FIG_3

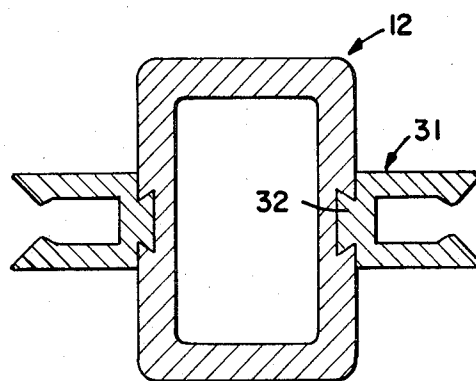


FIG_4

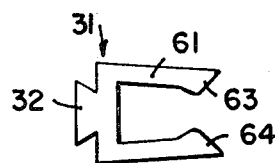


FIG_5

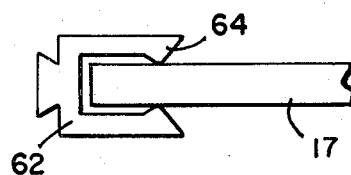


FIG_6

INTERLOCKING FRAME CONSTRUCTION

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to an interlocking frame construction for supporting panels and the like and, more particularly, to such a construction which is tamperproof and rigid while yet being easily assemblable and disassemblable to the extent necessary to change panels or the like.

It is desirable in many places to which the public has access to provide a barrier of one sort or another to separate two areas. In some instances, the reliability of the barrier in providing the separation can be quite important. For example, in the case of barriers used on or adjacent to vehicular roadways, such as highways and railroad right-of-ways, to separate pedestrian traffic from the vehicular traffic, the integrity of the barrier can often mean the difference between safety and bodily injury. Quite often, a barrier for such a purpose must not only be capable of assuring that the pedestrian and vehicular traffic remain separated, but also must be capable of withstanding vandalism. Vandalism has been found to be a particular problem with respect to barriers installed on overpasses and bridges to protect pedestrians and also prevent such pedestrians from either accidentally or intentionally projecting objects onto the roadway. Ordinary chain fences and the like generally do not withstand the vandalism for a sufficiently long time to warrant their use for this purpose, nor do they provide the rigidity necessary to adequately protect the pedestrians. An improved pedestrian barrier for such uses, as well as other uses, is needed.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention is a tamperproof interlocking metal frame construction for supporting panels and the like, which can be easily assembled and disassembled but yet which is tamperproof and provides the rigidity desired for pedestrian barriers. In its basic aspects, the interlocking frame construction of the invention includes a pair of spaced apart posts between which extend a likewise spaced apart pair of rail members to thereby define a frame. Both the posts and rail members define channels along their lengths which open into the center of the frame for receiving opposite edges of panel to be supported. Anchoring or connector means are provided for securing the rail members between the posts. The connector means enables removal of at least one of the rail members to release the edge of the panel held thereby and allow the panel to be removed from the frame. As a particularly salient feature of the invention, covering means which are normally not removable envelope the otherwise exposed portions of the connector means to prevent tampering with such connector means and unauthorized removal of the rail or panel. Most desirably, the covering means is removable by an authorized person using a special tool or the like so that access can be had to the connector means to enable removal of the rail for replacement of the panel held by the frame.

The instant invention is especially useful in providing pedestrian barriers along overpasses or other roadway accompaniments to separate vehicular and pedestrian traffic. In such an arrangement, a plurality of spaced apart and coplanar posts between which rail members extend are provided to define a plurality of adjacent panel frame constructions of the invention. The panels

are desirably provided by a thick woven mesh screen providing transparency and passage of air or wind without allowing physical access between the areas separated.

The provision of the individual frames lends rigidity to the arrangement. Moreover, because the barrier is provided by a plurality of panels, if any individual portion of the barrier is damaged, it is only necessary to replace the panel at which the damage exists, rather than a large portion of the barrier as is the case when mesh fences or the like are used for a barrier. This advantage of the present invention is enhanced because of the disassemblable nature of the arrangement enabling removal of a panel for replacement. However, vandalism is prevented by the particular manner in which the various connectors are covered by other portions of the construction.

The present invention also facilitates assembly of pedestrian barriers and the like. That is, as will become more apparent hereinafter, the particular parts of the frame assembly can be easily secured together without welding and other permanent types of connections requiring time, skilled labor and equipment. The invention has this feature while providing the rigidity which is often necessary for a pedestrian barrier.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

With reference to the accompanying two sheets of drawings:

FIG. 1 is an elevation view of a section of a pedestrian barrier constructed in accordance with the present invention;

FIG. 2 is a partially exploded and broken away perspective view of the pedestrian barrier of FIG. 1, illustrating a preferred interlocking frame construction of the invention;

FIG. 3 is a broken sectional view taken on a plane indicated by the lines 3—3 of FIG. 1;

FIG. 4 is a sectional view taken on a plane indicated by the lines 4—4 in FIG. 1 but with the panels removed to illustrate the construction of one of the post members of the preferred frame construction of the invention;

FIG. 5 is an end view of a panel receiving channel prior to a panel being installed therein; and

FIG. 6 is a similar end view of the channel with a panel inserted therein.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

Reference is first made to FIG. 1 which illustrates a section of a pedestrian barrier referred to by the reference numeral 11. Barrier 11 is especially useful on overpasses and the like for not only protecting pedestrians from falling from the overpass into vehicular traffic but also for preventing pedestrians from dropping or throwing objects onto the roadway. As is illustrated, the pedestrian barrier is made up of a plurality of spaced apart and coplanar posts 12 between which extend upper and lower rails 13 and 14 respectively. The bottom end of each of the posts 12 is rigidly secured to a base such as by embedding the same within concrete abutments 16 around the sides of an overpass or other pedestrian walkway.

Each of the frames defined by each pair of posts 12 and their associated rail members 13 and 14 supports a panel 17. As here shown, panel 17 is formed of heavy

gauge wire mesh, and it will be appreciated that such a panel allows visual communication between the two sides of the barrier and provides a minimum of resistance to the passage of wind while yet preventing physical passage through the barrier of any object larger than the openings of the mesh. It should be noted that the particular means by which the various parts of the frame construction and panels are secured together is not visible in the barrier. This provides the barrier with a clean and neat appearance, as well as preventing unauthorized disassembly. It should also be noted that the interconnected framework made up of the posts 12 and rails 13 and 14 provide the barrier with a high structural rigidity capable of resisting greater lateral force than most barriers of this nature can resist.

Reference is now made to FIGS. 2 through 6 for a detailed description of the interlocking frame construction. FIG. 2 depicts one of the posts 12 and the manner in which the various members of each of the frames is secured thereto. It will be appreciated that while only one of the posts is shown in detail, the other post of each pair making up a frame is identical and the various parts of the frame are secured to such other post in the same manner. As is illustrated, each of the posts 12 is a rectangular tubular member whose upper end is open. Most desirably, the post 12 is uniform in cross-section along its full length so that it is capable of being easily manufactured by an extrusion process or the like.

Means are provided for anchoring each end of each bottom rail to the posts between which it extends. More particularly, anchoring means in the form of an angle bracket 18 having two perpendicularly related legs 19 and 21, respectively, is secured between the post 12 and the bottom rail member 14 at each of the ends of such bottom rail. The leg 19 of the bracket is secured to the post by conventional fasteners, such as by the countersunk bolts 22. The other leg of the bracket, leg 21, is adapted for securance to the bottom rail 14. In this connection, the rail 14 includes a channel portion 23 which extends along its length and has a downwardly opening longitudinal mouth 24. The leg 21 includes along the length of its side edges upwardly extending side portions or hooks 26 which lockingly engage in a snapping fit with cooperating inwardly extending shoulders 27 adjacent the mouth of the channel portion 23. As is illustrated, the channel portion 23 has inwardly extending flanges 28 at a location above the shoulder 27 which are adapted to engage the hooks 26 and prevent the channel portion 23 from being forced downward onto the leg 21 a greater extent than is necessary to cause the snapping engagement.

It will be appreciated that the securance of the bottom rail member 14 to the bracket leg 21 as aforesaid not only acts to anchor the end of the rail member to the post 12, but also to envelop with the rail member the fasteners 22 so that they are hidden and normally inaccessible. The hiding of the fasteners helps the aesthetic appearance of the barrier as well as prevents the fasteners from tempting unauthorized persons to tamper with the arrangement.

If it is desired to completely enclose a channel portion 14 of the rail member after it is secured between a pair of posts 12, a snap lock plate (not shown) can be provided for closing those portions of the mouth 24 of the channel portion which are not closed by the bracket leg 21. Such a lock plate can simply take the shape of an extended bracket leg 21 and can be secured

within the mouth in the same manner that the bracket leg 21 is secured therein.

The bottom rail member 14 also includes means defining a channel for receiving an edge of a panel to be supported by the frame construction. That is, a pair of parallel and spaced apart flanges 29 extend upward from the outside surface of the base of the channel portion 23 for the full distance between posts 12. Such flanges 29 extend longitudinally for the full length of the channel member, and their spacing as well as their height, is dependent upon the particular construction of the panel to be supported. In this instance, the panel is the wire mesh screen 17 and the spacing between the flanges 29 should be such as to accommodate the lower edge of such rectangular screen.

Means are also provided along facing surfaces of each pair of posts defining opposed channels for receiving other edges of a panel. Desirably, such means is designed to be included on the posts after the bottom rail 14 of any particular frame construction is secured between the posts. This will assure that the channel defining means on the posts do not hinder the securance of the bottom rail to the post. To satisfy this criteria in a simple manner, the channel defining means for each post can be in the form of an elongated U-shaped channel member 31 having a tongue 32 extending longitudinally thereof and projecting outwardly from the outer surface of the channel base. As is illustrated, the tongue flares outwardly in cross-section away from the base and thereby has a wedge shape. Each of the posts 12 is provided on its faces for each frame with a complementary wedge shaped groove 33 for receiving a tongue. Thus, once the bottom rail member is anchored in place, the channel defining means for the posts can be simply installed by inserting the tongue 32 on an appropriate channel member 31 into the top of the groove 33 and sliding the channel member vertically downward with the tongue in engagement with the groove until the channel mates the corresponding channel defining flanges 29 extending upwardly from the bottom rail member. The complementary wedge shaped tongue and groove will enable this slidable engagement but will prevent movement otherwise between the channel member and the post to which it is secured. The distance between the legs of the channel members is also such as to accommodate the edges of the panel 17 for which they are provided, as will be hereinafter explained in more detail.

Connector means are also provided for securing each end of the upper rail member 13 to the respective posts. In this connection, the upper rail is in the form of an elongated bar having a plate base 36 and side portions 37 which extend upwardly from the longitudinal edges of the base. The upper free edge of each side portion terminates in an inwardly extending flange 38 (FIG. 3) which is spaced from, and generally parallel to, base 36. This construction of each of the upper rail members adapts each end thereof for securance to the upper end of its associated post simultaneously with the securance to such post of the end of an upper rail of an adjacent frame construction such as by means of the connector assembly 39. Most desirably, connector assembly 39 is substantially the same as that described in my issued U.S. Pat. No. 3,498,589, the disclosure of which is hereby incorporated herein by reference. Such assembly includes a hanger 41 for each of the rail members 13. The hangers 41 each have an outwardly ex-

tending tongue portion 42 adapted to engage within the slot at the end of each rail member defined by its base 36 and inwardly extending flanges 38. Each tongue 42 has width and thickness dimensions substantially the same as the interior dimensions of the slot so that a press fit between the tongue and slot can be obtained. It is to be noted that the upper surface of each tongue has a projecting stop 43 extending laterally thereacross to assure that the hanger is not insertable into the end of the locking bar for a distance greater than that desired.

The other end of each hanger 41 is adapted for insertion into the hollow end of the post 12 with the side surface of the hanger adjacent such end frictionally engaging the interior surface of the post. More particularly, a connector portion 44 depends downwardly from the tongue 42 of each hanger. The connector portion 44 is adapted to fit within the hollow end of the post with its interior side surface 46 in engagement with the interior surface of one of the side walls of the post. To assure good frictional contact between the connector portion 44 and the post, the surface 46 has a relatively large area and is serrated with the serrations running transversely thereof.

A wedge member 47 is provided for maintaining the hangers 41 secured to the post 12. Such wedge is made up of a flat head piece 48 from which depend two parallel spring walls 49. Upon wedge 47 being forced or driven into the hollow end of the post between the connector portions of the hangers inserted therein, it will act to provide a strong outward force against the hanger connector portions to maintain them in tight frictional engagement with the post side walls as is described in my previously mentioned patent. In this connection, the connector and tongue portions of each hanger can have the angular relationships and the connector portion in variation in thickness described in the patent to assist in providing the tight frictional engagement. Moreover, the opposed wedge walls and the hanger connector portions have cooperating projecting shoulders and recessed grooves as described in the patent to assist in providing the tight frictional engagement. Moreover, the opposed wedge walls and the hanger connector portions have cooperating projecting shoulders and recessed grooves as described in the patent adapted to lockingly engage when the wedge is positioned in the post to prevent withdrawal of the wedge.

The above described connector means for the upper rail members not only provides a rigid and tamperproof connection but also provides simultaneous securance of the upper rail members for adjacent frame constructions to the one post, thereby reducing the number of parts necessary.

Each of the upper rail members also includes means defining a channel adapted to receive the edge of the panel to be supported and opposed to the similar channel defined on the bottom rail. To this end, a pair of parallel and spaced apart flanges 51 extend longitudinally of the rail member and extend downwardly from the outer surface of its base 36. As is the case with respect to the other panel receiving channels, the depth of the channel and the width of it provided by the flanges 51 depends upon the particular panel to be supported.

It will be appreciated that each pair of spaced apart vertical posts and the upper and lower rail members therebetween define a complete frame for peripherally

supporting and surrounding a panel 17. It will also be appreciated that before the upper rail 13 is secured into place between the posts, the panel should be slipped into the frame between opposed channel members 31. In order to accommodate thermal expansion and contraction between the panel and the frame, a space can be provided between the inside surfaces of the channels and the panel edges as is necessary.

With particular reference to FIGS. 5 and 6 of the drawings, it should be noted that such of the panel supporting channels 29, 31 and 51 (although only channel 31 is illustrated) are preferably constructed in the manner illustrated, i.e. with the legs or flanges 61 thereof converging from the base 62. The distal end of each leg has an inwardly projecting detent portion 63 and terminates in an outwardly directed taper or bevel 64. The spacing between the detents 63 is less by about 0.025 inches than the thickness of the panel to be inserted therebetween. When the panel is inserted, the legs 61 are sufficiently flexible that they will spread apart from their normal converging relationship shown in FIG. 5 to their parallel position shown in FIG. 6 wherein the detent portions are resiliently urged against the panel. The taper or bevel 64 provides a ramp for facilitating insertion of the panel into the channel.

Covering means are provided for enveloping the otherwise exposed portions of the connector assembly 39 once the upper rail member is installed in place. Such connector means is in the form of an elongated channel cover 52 which extends along the upper rail member in covering relationship to the connector means. In this connection, the channel cover 52 can be sufficiently long to extend over the upper rails and associated connectors for several adjacent frame constructions. The channel cover is most desirably provided with a downwardly opening mouth along its length which has inwardly projecting reentrant flanges 53 extending for the length thereof. These flanges 53 are complementary to longitudinal grooves 54 in the exterior surfaces of the side portions 37 of the upper rail member and are adapted to fit within such grooves in a snap, normally non-removable, rigid engagement. This results in the cover being rigidly secured over the upper portion of the rail member bar and hiding the otherwise exposed portions of the connector to prevent tampering therewith and possible unauthorized removal of the rail member.

The ease with which a pedestrian barrier or the like made with the interlocking frame construction of the invention can be installed, even though the resulting structure is rigid and tamperproof, should be apparent from the above. To summarize, one need only first embed the posts 12 in a desired base, secure the bottom rail for each frame between adjacent posts, and then slidably engage the post channel members in their grooves. The panels can then be slipped into position and the upper rail members secured thereover. Snapping engagement of the channel cover 52 with the upper rails completes the installation.

As mentioned previously, one of the advantages of the instant construction is that it enables individual panels to be replaced if it should become necessary to do so in view of damage or the like. For such replacement, the channel cover 52 can be released from its engagement with the upper rail member by a special tool or the like designed to expand the side walls of such cover away from the upper rail to release the flanges 53

from the grooves 54. Then the upper rail of the appropriate frame can be removed by dismantling the connector assembly 39 at each end thereof. In this connection, the wedges 48 are normally non-removably secured between the hangers 42. Thus, it is necessary to actually cut each of the wedges in the middle and drive the same into the post 12 beyond the hangers before the upper rail can be removed. While this is a fairly simple operation, it is not an operation which would be obvious to a vandal or the like unfamiliar with the assembly. Moreover, although it destroys the wedge member, such members are relatively inexpensive and replacement ones can be provided when the frame is again fully assembled.

Removal of the upper rail assembly affords the access to the panel which is necessary in order to remove the same. The panel need only be slipped upward in the channel members 31 for removal and a new panel can be inserted by reversing the process. Thus, it is not necessary to disassemble the frame construction to any great degree to enable the desired panel replacement.

While the invention has been described in connection with a particular embodiment thereof it will be appreciated by those skilled in the art that various changes can be made without departing from its scope. For example, although the construction described is for rectangular panels, i.e., the post and rail members make right angles to one another, panels with other peripheral shapes such as rhomboidal, can also be accommodated by simply mitering adjoining ends of the posts and rails with the appropriate angles. The angle brackets 18 and the hanger portion 42 can also be provided with an appropriate included angle between their respective legs to enable securance of the members at the desired angle. In view of this change and others which can be made, it is therefore intended that the coverage afforded applicant be limited only by the claims.

I claim:

1. A tamperproof interlocking frame construction for supporting a panel or the like comprising a pair of spaced apart posts, means along facing surfaces of said posts defining opposed channels for receiving opposite edges of a panel to be supported, a first rail member extending between said posts and defining a third channel for receiving a third edge of a panel, anchoring means for securing each end of said first rail member to a respective one of said posts, a second rail member extending between said posts at a location spaced from said first rail member and defining a fourth channel facing said third channel for receiving a fourth edge of a panel, connector means for securing each end of said second rail member to a respective one of said posts, and normally non-removable covering means for enveloping the otherwise exposed portions of said connector means to prevent tampering therewith and unauthorized removal of said second rail member, said anchoring means for each end of said first rail member including fasteners for securing said anchoring means to one of said rail members and said posts, the other of said rail members and said posts enveloping said fasteners upon being secured to said anchoring means to thereby render said fastener means normally inaccessible, said anchoring means further including for each end of said rail member an angle bracket, one leg of which is securable to said posts by said fasteners and the other leg of which includes along its side edges upwardly extending side portions which are lockingly engageable with in-

wardly extending shoulders at the mouth of a channel portion of said first rail member adjacent the end thereof for simultaneously securing said rail member thereto and enclosing said fasteners.

2. The interlocking frame construction of claim 1 wherein said means along facing surfaces of each of said posts defining opposed channels comprises for each of said posts an elongated channel member adapted to receive the edge of a panel and having a tongue extending longitudinally thereof and projecting outwardly from the outer surface of the channel base, said tongue in cross-section flaring outwardly from said base to have a wedge shape which is slidably engageable within a complementary wedge shaped groove on said surface of its associated post.

3. The interlocking frame construction of claim 1 wherein said second rail member comprises an elongated bar having upwardly projecting side portions, and covering means for said connector means includes an elongated channel cover which is open mouthed with inwardly projecting reentrant flanges adjacent the mouth thereof and extends along said second rail member in covering relationship to said connector means at the locations at which said rail member is secured to said posts, the mouth thereof, said elongated bar side portions and said reentrant flanges on said cover having cooperating shoulders and grooves adapted to lockingly engage in a normally non-removable snapping fit to rigidly secure said cover to said bar.

4. The interlocking frame construction of claim 3 wherein one end of at least one of said posts is generally hollow for connection thereto of one end of said second rail member, said connector means being adapted to join concurrently to said post said end of said second rail member and the end of a similar rail member for an adjacent panel frame construction whereby said post and said connector means act as portions of both of said frame constructions.

5. The interlocking frame construction of claim 4 wherein said connector means comprises for each of said second and similar rail members a hanger having a first portion adjacent one end thereof secured to its respective rail member and a second portion angularly related to said first portion for insertion into said hollow end of said post with a side surface thereof frictionally engaging the interior surface of said hollow end, and a wedge having depending, opposed walls and adapted to be driven into said hollow end of said post between said second portions of said hangers when both of the same are in said hollow end to force said side surfaces into tight frictional engagement with the interior surface of said hollow end, said opposed wedge walls and said hangers have cooperating projecting shoulders and recessed grooves adapted to lockingly engage when said wedge is positioned in said hollow end between said hangers to thereby hold said surfaces in tight frictional engagement and prevent withdrawal of said wedge.

6. A tamperproof interlocking frame construction for supporting a panel or the like comprising a pair of spaced apart posts, means along facing surfaces of said posts defining opposed channels for receiving opposite edges of a panel to be supported, a first rail member extending between said posts and defining a third channel for receiving a third edge of a panel, anchoring means for securing each end of said first rail member to a respective one of said posts, a second rail member ex-

tending between said posts at a location spaced from said first rail member and defining a fourth channel facing said third channel for receiving a fourth edge of a panel, connector means for securing each end of said second rail member to a respective one of said posts, and normally non-removable covering means for enveloping the otherwise exposed portions of said connector means to prevent tampering therewith and unauthorized removal of said second rail member, said means along facing surfaces of each of said posts defining opposed channels comprising for each of said posts an elongated channel member adapted to receive the edge of a panel and having a tongue extending longitudinally thereof and projecting outwardly from the outer surface of the channel base, said tongue in cross-section flaring outwardly from said base to form a wedge shape which is slidably engageable within a corresponding wedge-shaped groove on said surface of its associated post.

7. A tamperproof interlocking frame construction for supporting a panel or the like comprising a pair of spaced apart posts, means along facing surfaces of said posts defining opposed channels for receiving opposite edges of a panel to be supported, a first rail member extending between said posts and defining a third channel for receiving a third edge of a panel, anchoring means for securing each end of said first rail member to a respective one of said posts, a second rail member extending between said posts at a location spaced from said first rail member and defining a fourth channel facing said third channel for receiving a fourth edge of a panel, connector means for securing each end of said second rail member to a respective one of said posts, and normally non-removable covering means for enveloping the otherwise exposed portions of said connector means to prevent tampering therewith and unauthorized

removal of said second rail member, one end of at least one of said posts being generally hollow for connection thereto of one end of said second rail member, said connector means being adapted to join concurrently to said post, said end of said second rail member and the end of a similar rail member for an adjacent panel frame construction whereby said post and said connector means act as portions of both of said frame constructions, said connector means comprising for each of said second and similar rail members a hanger having a first portion adjacent one end thereof secured to its respective rail member and a second portion angularly related to said first portion for insertion into said hollow end of said post with a side surface thereof frictionally engaging the interior surface of said hollow end, a wedge having depending, opposed walls and adapted to be driven into said hollow end of said post between said second portions of said hangers when both of the same are in said hollow end to force said side surfaces into tight frictional engagement with the interior surface of said hollow end, said opposed wedge walls and said hangers having cooperating projecting shoulders and recessed grooves adapted to lockingly engage when said wedge is positioned in said hollow end between said hangers to thereby hold said surfaces in tight frictional engagement and prevent withdrawal of said wedge, said means along facing surfaces of each of said posts defining opposed channels comprising for each of said posts an elongated channel member adapted to receive the edge of a panel and having a tongue extending longitudinally thereof and projecting outwardly from the outer surface of the channel base, said tongue in cross-section flaring outwardly from said base to form a wedge-shaped groove on said surface of its associated post.

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