

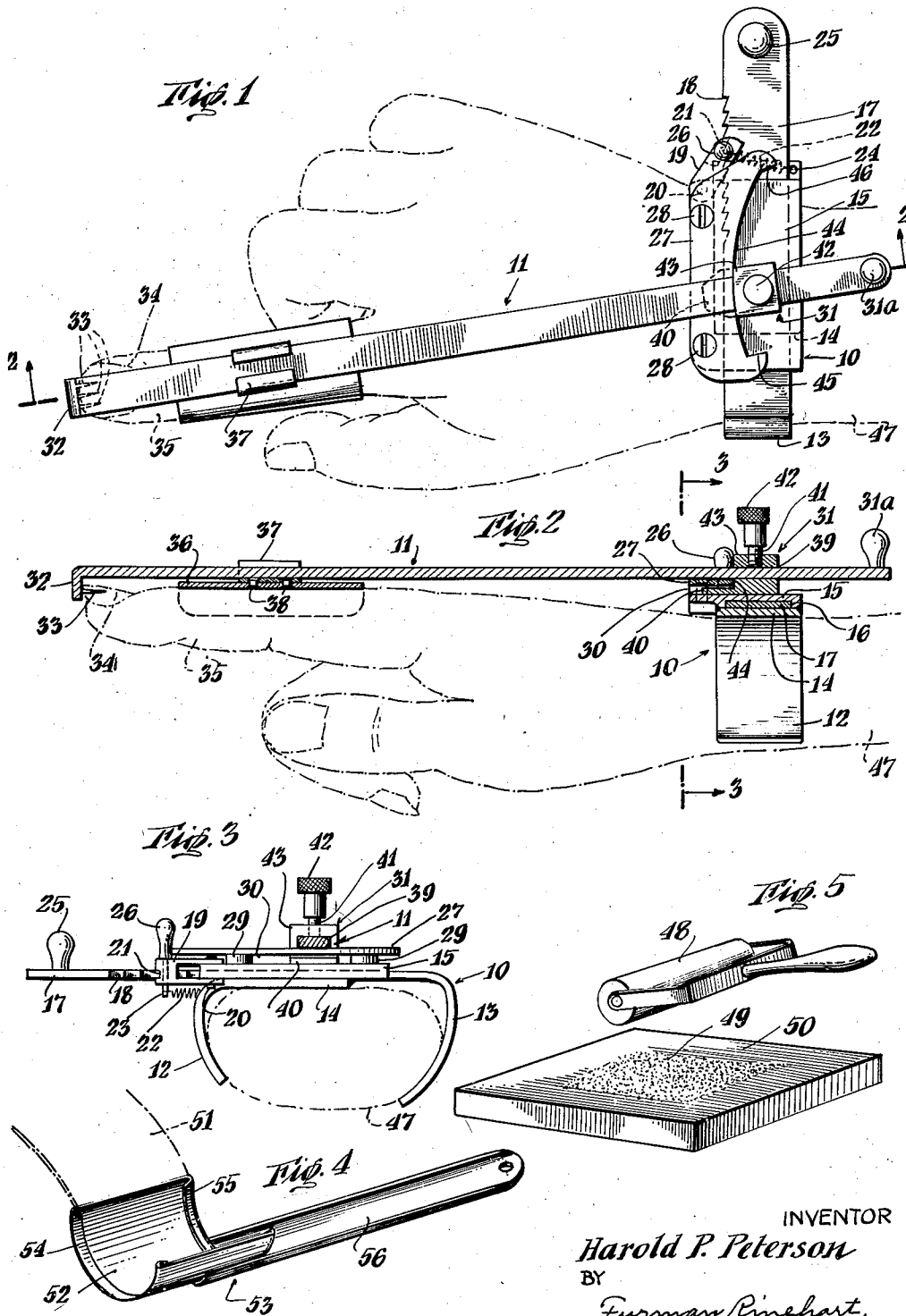
Feb. 1, 1949.

H. P. PETERSON

2,460,652

INSTRUMENT FOR POST-MORTEM FINGERPRINTING

Filed Sept. 11, 1946



INVENTOR
Harold P. Peterson
BY
Furman Pinehart.
ATTORNEY

UNITED STATES PATENT OFFICE

2,460,652

INSTRUMENT FOR POST-MORTEM
FINGERPRINTINGHarold P. Peterson, Raritan Township,
Middlesex County, N. J.

Application September 11, 1946, Serial No. 696,334

7 Claims. (Cl. 41-4)

1

This invention relates generally to post-mortem fingerprinting and more particularly to instruments useful to facilitate the making of fingerprints.

The use of fingerprints for identification purposes of both living and deceased persons is, of course, well known. The obtaining of fingerprints of living persons having use of their hands has not been a particularly difficult problem to solve as the person's fingers may be inked and the impression of the fingers can be made by merely rolling the inked finger on a flat card or paper. This practice is well known and need not be elaborated upon further except to point out that the fingers of a living person normally are sufficiently flexible to be straightened out or extended so that the matter of taking the fingerprints is readily handled as the fingers are then flexible and capable of adapting themselves or of being adapted for inking and making the fingerprint impression on paper or other suitable medium.

In contrast with the fingerprinting of living persons, the problem of obtaining fingerprints of a deceased person has heretofore been a perplexing one. Nevertheless, it is very often desirable, and in many instances necessary, to obtain the fingerprints of deceased persons. It not infrequently happens that this fingerprinting must be done after rigor mortis has set in and this complicates and aggravates what has heretofore been a difficult and sometimes unpleasant, although necessary, task.

In performing this task, prior to my invention, it was the common practice to obtain the fingerprints of a corpse without the aid of mechanical devices to facilitate the manipulation of the rigid dead hand. The usual procedure is to make an impression (a fingerprint) of the fingers and thumbs separately. The procedure was substantially the same as to each digit. First, the finger to be printed had to be extended or straightened out as it is usually found that the hand of a corpse is clasped, that is, the fingers are folded under, tending toward a clenched position. After the finger is straightened it is usually necessary for the operator to hold the finger in position for fingerprinting by placing one or two of his own finger nails under the finger nail of the extended finger of the corpse. This leaves only the other hand of the operator free to ink the finger and then make the impression on a small piece of paper. Ordinarily the paper is supported on a concave "spoon" which is then brought up into contact with the inked finger. At best,

2

this is an awkward procedure and must be repeated for each digit of the corpse. The job is even more aggravated when performed in morgues where it frequently has to be done inasmuch as the bodies are usually kept under refrigeration and are stiff or rigid.

It is an object of my invention to provide an instrument to facilitate the making of post-mortem fingerprints the use of which will eliminate most, if not all, of the drawbacks attendant upon prior art practices.

According to my invention I provide an instrument which may be easily attached to and detached from the hand of a corpse and which will hold the digits in position in such manner that fingerprints may be made. The instrument comprises a wrist clamp and a finger-extending member or members which may be secured to the wrist clamp. The wrist clamp is preferably provided with adjusting means so that it may be securely fastened to the wrist of a corpse and the finger-extending member is preferably separate from the wrist clamp and is provided with means whereby it may be fastened to the finger to be printed and also with means whereby it may be adjustably but securely fastened to the wrist clamp, all to the end that the finger to be fingerprinted may with facility be extended and held in proper position for applying ink and for thereafter making the impression on a piece of paper or other recording medium.

Although the novel features which are believed to be characteristic of the invention will be pointed out in the annexed claims, the invention itself as to its objects and advantages and the manner in which it may be carried out may be better understood by reference to the following description taken in connection with the accompanying drawings forming a part hereof, in which

Fig. 1 is a top plan view of a device embodying my invention, showing the device clamped to the hand of a corpse to take a fingerprint of the index finger of the right hand;

Fig. 2 is a view in cross-section on line 2-2 of Fig. 1;

Fig. 3 is a view on line 3-3 of Fig. 2;

Fig. 4 is a view in perspective of a "spoon" used in making a fingerprint; and

Fig. 5 is a view in perspective of an inking plate and roller used for inking the fingers.

Referring now to the drawings, the device illustrated comprises a metal wrist clamp 10 and a metal finger-extending member 11. The wrist clamp comprises a pair of generally U-shaped

clamping arms 12 and 13 to engage the wrist. Arm 12 terminates at its upper end in a flat table supporting member 14 to which is secured a wrist clamp table 15. The table is provided with a groove 16 providing a guide channel through which slidably extends a wrist clamp adjusting slide member or bar 17. It will be observed that slide bar 17 is in effect a substantially horizontal extension of the U-shaped clamp arm 13. Hence the slide bar 17 may slide through the channel 16 between the table 15 and its supporting member 14, thus to widen or to narrow the space between the two depending clamp arms 12 and 13. This arrangement provides for adjustment of the instrument to varying sizes of wrists.

The slide bar 17 is provided with a ratchet having teeth 18 along its edges which cooperate with a pawl 19 mounted on the table 15 on pivot 20. The pawl has a tooth 21 to engage the teeth 18 of the ratchet and it is yieldably held against the ratchet teeth by means of a small tension spring 22 one end 23 of which is anchored to the pawl and the other end 24 of which is anchored to the table 15. The slide bar 17 is provided with a hand knob 25 and the pawl 19 is provided with a hand knob 26 to facilitate manipulation of the wrist clamp to clamp it to and to unclamp and remove it from the wrist.

The table 15 is provided with a shelf 27, which, as is explained later, serves as an anchor member to which the finger arm 11 may be removably fastened. This table shelf 27 is secured to the table 15 by means of screws 28 and held in spaced relation therefrom by spacers 29, thus providing a slot 30 between the shelf and table top 15 to accommodate a hook member 31 which is slidably mounted on the finger rod 11.

The finger rod 11, which is detachable from the wrist clamp, is provided at its inner end with a hand knob 31a. The finger rod 11 at its outer end terminates in a downwardly curved portion 32 which is provided with a plurality of inwardly projecting sharp prongs 33. These prongs extend inward in a direction substantially parallel to the finger rod 11 and slightly below it—a distance which will bring their points just below the nail 34 of the finger 35 when the finger rod rests upon it.

The finger rod 11 is also provided with a finger guide 36 which is slidable on the rod. It comprises an elongate U-shaped plate curved to fit over the finger and is slidably secured to the rod by a clip 37 secured to the curved guide plate 36 by rivets 38. This finger guide prevents the finger rod from moving sidewise off the finger and aids in lining up the finger rod when it is being clamped to the wrist clamp.

The hook member 31 is slidably mounted on the finger rod 11 which extends through a guide channel 39 in the body of the hook member 31. The hook member is provided with an outwardly extending hook arm 40 adapted to register with and extend into the slot 30 between the table 15 and its shelf 27. A set screw 41 having a knurled knob 42 extends through the bridge 43 of the slidable hook member 31. This set screw serves to anchor the hook to the finger rod in any desired adjusted position.

It may be noted here that the shelf 27 has a curved inner edge 44 and stops 45 and 46 at its ends. The inner edge of the shelf is curved so that when the finger rod is clamped on different fingers the rod will extend in a substantially

radial direction and thus "line up" with the particular finger to which the rod may be fastened.

The use of the instrument will be described in connection with the fingerprinting of the index finger of the right hand. First the finger-extending member 11 is detached from the wrist clamp 10. The wrist clamp is then placed on the wrist 47 and clamped tight with the table 15 substantially parallel with the top of the wrist. The prongs 33 of the finger rod 11 are hooked into the flesh of the finger just below the nail 34, the finger straightened out as shown in Fig. 1, and the hook arm 40 of the hook 31 is inserted in the slot 30, it having heretofore been explained that the hook is slidable on the rod 11. The curved finger plate 36 is placed over the joints of the finger and the finger rod 11 is drawn up taut. The thumb screw 41 is then tightened to hold the hook 31 fast with the hook arm 40 in slot 30. The instrument having been thus adjusted, the finger will be in the position shown in Fig. 1.

Ink is applied uniformly to rubber roller 48 by rolling it on ink 49 placed on the surface of the plate 50. The finger is then inked by rolling the inked roller 48 over the part of the finger to be printed.

A piece of paper 51 (shown in dot-dash lines) cut to be held in the concave portion 52 of the spoon 53 is placed in the spoon with the edges under the guides 54 and 55. Then the concave portion of the spoon by means of handle 56 is brought into engagement with the inked finger to make the fingerprint impression on the paper. That completes the operation of fingerprinting the index finger.

The device is then readjusted and each finger is then likewise fingerprinted. For the thumb, the wrist clamp 10 is readjusted to bring the table 15 and shelf 27 opposite the thumb and thereafter the procedure is the same as that for taking prints of the fingers. In each instance, of course, the paper strip 51 is moved to a fresh place. Preferably a strip of paper having areas for the prints of all fingers and thumbs is used, as this kind of strip may then be pasted onto a larger identification card which is well known to the art for keeping a permanent file record.

If desired, a plurality of finger-extending members similar to that disclosed in the drawings may be furnished with one wrist clamp so that all the fingers of one hand may be extended at the same time and held in position for printing. This, however, increases the cost of the device and this additional cost may not be warranted in many instances.

The terms and expressions which have been employed herein are used as terms of description and not of limitation and there is no intention in the use of such terms and expressions of excluding any equivalent of the features shown and described or portions thereof, but it is recognized that various modifications are possible within the scope of invention claimed.

What is claimed is:

1. An instrument of the character herein described which comprises a wrist clamp having adjustable wrist engaging means so that the clamp may be fastened to the wrist of a deceased person's hand and a finger-extending rod capable of holding a finger of the hand in extended position for fingerprinting, said rod having wrist clamp engaging means at its inner end to attach said rod to said clamp and a slender sharp flesh contacting part secured to the rod at

5

its outer end to press into the flesh and fasten said rod at its outer end to said finger.

2. An instrument useful in obtaining post-mortem fingerprints which comprises a wrist clamp, said wrist clamp having a pair of clamp arms adjustable to be clamped on and to be removed from the wrist of a deceased person's hand and a finger holding rod capable of holding a finger of the hand in extended position, said finger holding rod having an elongate portion on which is an adjustable member engaging said wrist clamp to fasten said finger holding rod to said wrist clamp and a flesh contacting prong-like member at the outer end of said rod shaped to engage the flesh of the finger under the nail to fasten said rod to said finger.

3. An instrument of the character herein described which comprises a wrist clamp, said wrist clamp having a pair of arms adjustable to fit the wrist of a deceased person's hand and a finger holding member capable of holding a finger of the hand in extended position for fingerprinting, said finger holding member comprising an elongate rod having a straight portion and a portion bent downwardly at its outer end, a sharp pointed flesh contacting member attached to the bent portion and a hook member slidable on the straight portion adapted to fasten said rod to said clamp.

4. A device useful for purposes herein described which comprises a wrist clamp having adjustable clamp arms thereon so that it may be adjusted to fit various sizes of wrists, a finger-extending rod for holding a finger in extended position, a prong-like sharp flesh piercing member on said rod adapted to fasten said rod to a finger and an adjustable member engaging said wrist clamp for fastening said rod to said wrist clamp, said wrist clamp engaging member being adjustable to accommodate said finger rod to various lengths of fingers.

5. A device of the character described which comprises a wrist clamp and a finger holding member, said wrist clamp comprising a pair of clamp arms adjustable for different sizes of wrists, a table on the wrist clamp adjacent said clamp arms and means secured to said table for attaching thereto the hereinafter mentioned hook member, said finger holding member comprising a finger rod, means including a flesh contacting device at the outer end of said rod adapted to fasten the rod to a finger and a hook member on said rod adapted to engage said hook

6

member attaching means whereby to fasten said rod to said wrist clamp, said flesh contacting device comprising a sharp member which pierces the flesh under the nail of the finger.

6. A device useful in making post-mortem fingerprints which comprises a pair of wrist clamp arms, one of said arms terminating in a table supporting member and the other of said arms terminating in a slide member having a ratch along one of its edges, a table supported by said table supporting member and having a channel therein through which said slide member is slidable, a shelf on said table, a pivoted pawl secured to said table engaging said ratch, a pivoted pawl secured to said table engaging said ratch, a finger arm having a flesh piercing member at its outer end, a hook member slidably mounted on said finger arm having a hook arm to engage said shelf and having means to temporarily lock said hook member to said arm, and a finger engaging member slidably mounted on said finger arm between its outer end and said hook member.

7. A device useful in making post-mortem fingerprints which comprises a pair of wrist clamp arms, one of said arms terminating in a table supporting member and the other of said arms terminating in a slide bar having a ratch along one of its edges, a table supported by said table supporting member and having a channel therein through which said slide member is slidable, a shelf having a curved inner edge above the table surface to provide a slot, a pivoted pawl secured to said table engaging said ratch, a finger rod having a flesh piercing member at its outer end, a hook member slidably mounted on said finger rod having means to temporarily lock said hook member to said rod and having a hook arm insertable in said slot to engage said shelf at said curved edge, and a knuckle engaging member slidably mounted on said finger arm between its outer end and said hook member.

HAROLD P. PETERSON.

REFERENCES CITED

45 The following references are of record in the file of this patent:

UNITED STATES PATENTS

Number	Name	Date
50 605,715	Hohmann	June 14, 1898
1,345,783	Kelly	July 6, 1920
1,837,691	Thigpen	Dec. 22, 1931