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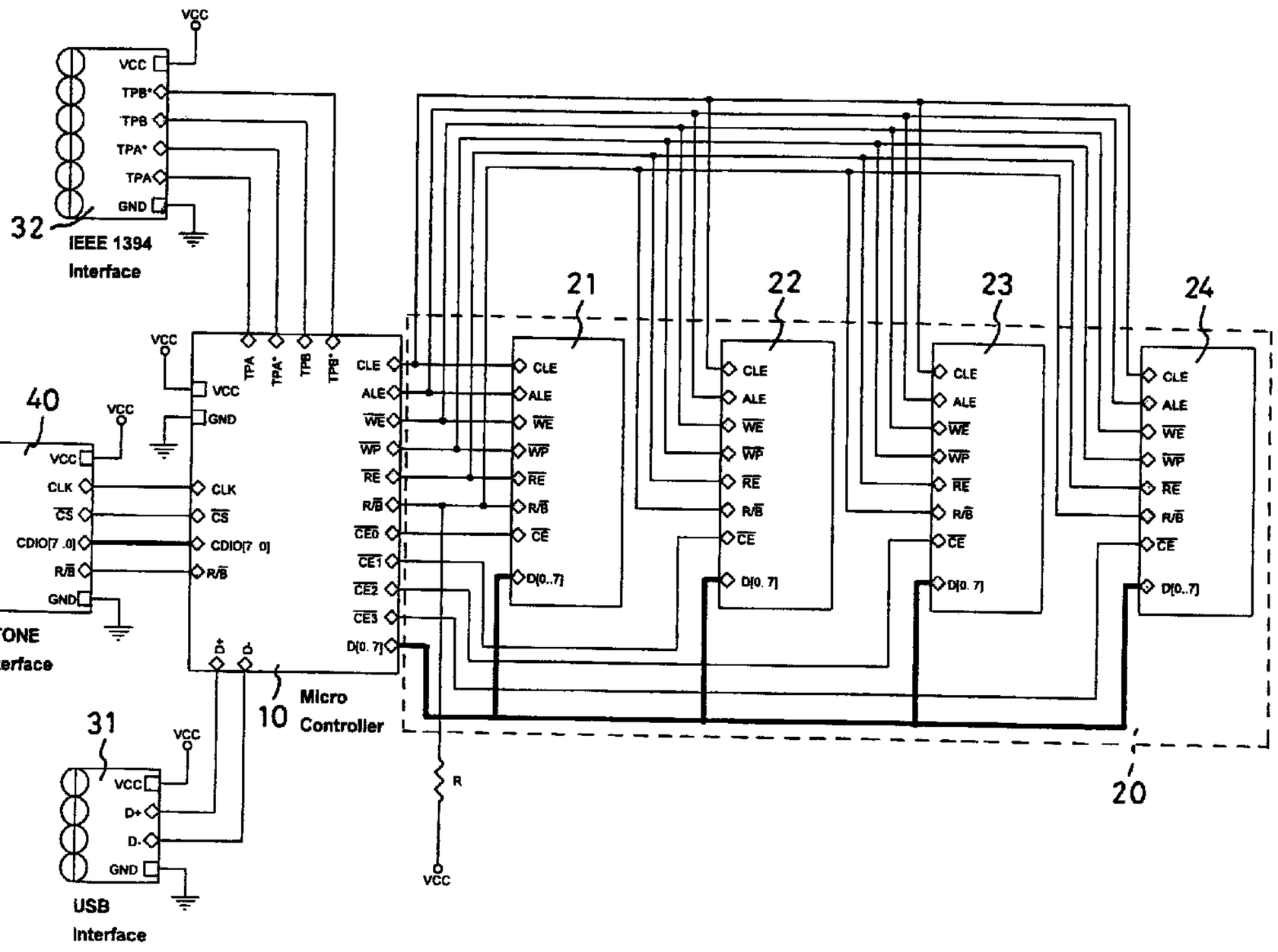
(54) Titre : CARTE MEMOIRE MULTI-INTERFACE ET MODULE ADAPTATEUR CONNEXE
(54) Title: MULTI-INTERFACE MEMORY CARD AND ADAPTER MODULE FOR THE SAME



(57) Abrégé/Abstract:
A multi-interface memory card and an adapter module for the memory card are disclosed to enable convenient transfer of data between the memory card and a computer. The multi-interface memory card has a micro controller (10), a memory unit (20), a USB interface (31), an IEEE 1394 interface (32), and a product interface (40). The memory unit (20) is connected to the micro controller (10), such that external computers or electronic products can read data from or write data to said memory unit (20) under the control of the micro controller (10). The USB and IEEE 1394 interfaces (31,32) are connected to the memory unit (20) via the micro controller (10) for controlling data access. The product interface (40) is provided for connecting to a digital product to read or write data.

MULTI-INTERFACE MEMORY CARD AND ADAPTER MODULE FOR THE SAME

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

A multi-interface memory card and an adapter module for the memory card are disclosed to enable convenient transfer of data between the memory card and a computer. The multi-interface memory card has a micro controller (10), a memory unit (20), a USB interface (31), an IEEE 1394 interface (32), and a product interface (40). The memory unit (20) is connected to the micro controller (10), such that external computers or electronic products can read data from or write data to said memory unit (20) under the control of the micro controller (10). The USB and IEEE 1394 interfaces (31,32) are connected to the memory unit (20) via the micro controller (10) for controlling data access. The product interface (40) is provided for connecting to a digital product to read or write data.

Fig. 1

MULTI-INTERFACE MEMORY CARD AND ADAPTER MODULE FOR THE SAME

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

1. Field of the Invention

The present invention relates to a multi-interface memory card and an adapter module; more particularly, the present invention relates to a memory card with multiple kinds of interfaces to communicate with an electronic product and a computer, respectively, for convenient data access, and an adapter module for such a multi-interface memory card.

2. Description of Related Art

Digital devices, such as electronic dictionaries, electronic translators, digital cameras, etc., are in widespread use today. The use of these digital devices requires storing of data in storage media, and generally memory cards are provided for such a purpose. As well known to those skilled in the art, various kinds of memory cards, such as the STONE card, Smart Media card, MMC card, Memory Stick card and Compact Flash card, have been provided with the advantages of compactness and large storage capacity, typically, more than several mega-bytes. The use of such memory cards enables the miniaturization of digital products. However, they do not have standard interfaces for communicating with a computer. Therefore, it is inconvenient to use a computer to read data from the memory card. Some of the existing methods to transfer data between a computer and a memory card are as follows:

1. Using a card reader: A card reader is provided to connect to an

interface port of a computer such that the computer is able to read data from a memory card that is inserted in the card reader. As different memory cards have different interfaces, a dedicated card reader must be provided for a specific memory card.

2. Using a transform disk: A transform disk that has the same physical specification as the 3.5-inch disk is provided with a slot for receiving a memory card, such that a computer can write data to or read data from the memory card when the transform disk is inserted into the disk drive of the computer.

There are several problems encountered in using the aforementioned methods. For example, most of the card readers can not write data to the memory cards, and the data access speed is slow when the transform disk and disk drive are used for transferring data between a memory card and a computer. Furthermore, the use of a transform disk and disk drive to read or write data is likely to result in mechanical disorders because data is accessed by physical contact.

Moreover, the interface port provided for a computer generally depends on the requirement of the computer, and may vary according to the development of the computer industry. For example, the USB port and IEEE1394 interfaces have been introduced recently to provide high speed and large capacity interfacing capabilities. Clearly, if a memory card is to be used with computers with respective different interfaces, different kinds of card readers or transform devices are required, and thus it is obvious that the use of the memory card is inconvenient.

To solve the aforementioned problems, a memory card is provided in a pending U.S. patent application Ser. No. 09/449,961 entitled "Dual interface memory card and adapter module for the same." Although this pending patent may effectively eliminate the drawbacks in using the card reader or transform disk, it is deemed unsatisfactory as the memory card only has one kind of interface, e.g. the USB port, to communicate with the computer. Therefore, a novel memory card that can mitigate and/or obviate the problems is desired.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The object of the present invention is to provide a multi-interface memory card and an adapter module for the memory card to conveniently transfer data between the memory card and a computer without the risk of mechanical disorders.

In accordance with one aspect of the present invention, a multi-interface memory card is provided, which includes: a micro controller; a memory unit connected to the micro controller, such that external computers or electronic products can read data from or write data to said memory unit under the control of the micro controller; multiple connection interfaces connected to the memory unit via the micro controller for controlling data access, the connection interfaces conforming to different interface specifications; and a product interface for connecting to a digital product to read or write data.

In accordance with another aspect of the present invention, an adapter module is provided for a multi-interface memory card having a front end

formed thereon with an interface port for providing multiple connection interfaces and a product interface. The adapter module includes: a housing defining a slot for receiving the memory card; multiple interface connectors held in the housing and adapted for connecting to corresponding interface ports of a computer; and a terminal seat held in the housing, the terminal seat having a plurality of connection terminals, each having one end for facing to the interface port of the memory card, and another end connected to the multiple interface connectors.

In accordance with a further aspect of the present invention, a multi-interface memory card is provided, which includes: a micro controller; a memory unit connected to the micro controller, such that external computers or electronic products can read data from or write data to said memory unit under the control of the micro controller; a connection interface connected to the memory unit via the micro controller for controlling data access, the connection interface conforming to an IEEE 1394 interface specification; and a product interface for connecting to a digital product to read or write data.

In accordance with a still further aspect of the present invention, an adapter module is provided for a multi-interface memory card having a front end formed thereon with an interface port for providing an IEEE 1394 interface and a host interface. The adapter module includes: a housing defining a slot for receiving the memory card; an IEEE 1394 interface connector held in the housing and adapted for connecting to a corresponding interface port of a computer; and a terminal seat held in the

housing, the terminal seat having a plurality of connection terminals, each having one end for facing to the interface port of the memory card, and another end connected to the IEEE 1394 interface connector.

Other objects, advantages, and novel features of the invention will become more apparent from the following detailed description when taken in conjunction with the accompanying drawings.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is the circuit diagram of a multi-interface memory card in accordance with a first preferred embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 2 is a block diagram of the micro controller shown in FIG. 1;

FIG. 3 is a perspective view of the memory card and an adapter module in accordance with the first preferred embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 4 is a cross sectional view of the adapter module being inserted with the multi-interface memory card in accordance with the first preferred embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 5 is a plane view of the adapter module being inserted with the multi-interface memory card in accordance with the first preferred embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 6 is the circuit diagram of a multi-interface memory card in accordance with a second preferred embodiment of the present invention;

FIG. 7 is a block diagram of the micro controller shown in FIG. 6; and

FIG. 8 is a plane view of the adapter module being inserted with the multi-interface memory card in accordance with the second preferred

embodiment of the present invention.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

FIG. 1 shows a circuit structure of a multi-interface memory card in accordance with the present invention, which includes a micro controller (10), a memory unit (20), one or more connection interfaces (31, 32), and a product interface (40). The memory unit (20) is connected to the micro controller (10) via an address bus and a data bus, such that external computers or electronic products can read data from or write data to the memory unit (20) under the control of the micro controller (10). The connection interfaces (31, 32) are provided to connect to the memory unit (20) via the micro controller (10) for data access. The product interface (40) is provided to connect to a digital product, such as a digital camera, to read or write data. The micro controller (10) executes software to perform a data conversion operation to convert data read from an external product and store the converted data in desired memory locations in the memory unit (20). Furthermore, when the memory card is connected to a computer, the micro controller (10) can read data from the memory (20) and convert the data for transfer to the computer via a corresponding interface.

FIG. 2 shows the structure of the micro controller (10), which includes a microprocessor (13), a memory interface (15), multiple connection interface controllers (11, 12), and a host interface controller (14). The connection interface controllers (11, 12) are connected to the microprocessor (13) and the external connection interfaces (31, 32). The host interface controller (14) is connected to the microprocessor (13) and

the external product interface (40). The memory interface (12) is connected to the microprocessor (13), the connection interface controllers (11, 12), and the host interface controller (14).

In this preferred embodiment, the micro controller (10) is provided with two connection interface controllers (11, 12); one is a USB interface controller and the other one is an IEEE 1394 interface controller.

The host interface controller (14) is preferred to conform to the specification of a STONE card for connecting to the external product interface (40).

With reference to FIG. 1, the memory unit (20) is composed of flash memory, random access memory or read only memory chips. In this preferred embodiment, the memory unit (20) is composed of four flash memory chips (21~24) connected together via the bus and also connected to the micro controller (10).

In this preferred embodiment, there are two connection interfaces (31, 32); one is a USB interface and the other is an IEEE1394 interface for connecting to the two connection interface controllers (11, 12), respectively.

The product interface (40) is preferred to conform to the specification of the STONE card for connecting to the host interface controller (14).

When the memory card is installed in a product and electrically connected to the product via the product interface (40), the data output of the product is transferred to the memory card via the product interface (40), and processed by the micro controller (10) for being stored in the memory

unit (20).

[I don't understand the following – is it "...recording and writing..., or reading..."?]With such a design, the memory card can be placed in a product for recording data and writing the stored data to a computer via different interfaces or read data from a computer.

A practical implementation of the memory card in accordance with the present invention is shown in FIG. 3 for illustrative purpose. It is shown that a memory card (50) is in use with an adapter module (60), wherein the memory card (50) has the aforementioned micro controller (10), memory unit (20), and multiple interfaces. Furthermore, a front end of the memory card (50) is provided with an interface port (51) having a plurality of terminal holes. Four of the terminal holes are provided as the USB interface, while the others are provided as the IEEE 1394 interface and the product interface. In order to connect the memory card (50) to different interface ports of a computer, the adapter module (60) is employed, the internal structure of which is shown in FIG. 4.

With reference to FIG. 3 and FIG. 4, the adapter module (60) has an upper shell (61) and a lower shell (62) for combining with the upper shell (61) to form a housing, in which a terminal seat (63) is provided at one end of the housing, and a USB connector (64) and an IEEE 1394 connector (65) are provided at an opposite end of the housing.

The upper shell (61) and the lower shell (62) can be secured together by screw means or other appropriate securing means. Each of the upper shell (61) and lower shell (62) defines an opening at a first end thereof,

thereby forming a slot (66) for receiving the memory card (50). A second end of each of the upper shell (61) and lower shell (62) has a Y-shape and defines two openings, thereby forming two slots for receiving the USB connector (64) and IEEE 1394 connector (65).

The terminal seat (63) is substantially an H-shaped body which has two parallel rims and a rib extending between the two rims. Each of the rims defines a sliding slot (not shown) in an inner side thereof, such that the memory card (50) can smoothly slide into the terminal seat (63). A plurality of connection terminals (631) is extended through the rib. Each connection terminal (631) has one end for facing to the interface port (51) of the memory card (50), and another end connected to the USB connector (64) and IEEE 1394 connector (65). Therefore, when the memory card (50) is inserted into the adapter module (60), the interface port (51) of the memory card (50) receives the connection terminals (631) of the terminal seat (63), such that the interface port (51) is electrically connected to the USB connector (64) and the IEEE 1394 connector (65) via the plurality of connection terminals (631).

After the memory card (50) is combined with the adapter module (60), as shown in FIG. 5, it can be plugged to the interface port of a computer via the USB connector (64) or the IEEE 1394 connector (65). The memory card (50) in the adapter module (60) is thus electrically connected to the computer. Because the memory card (50) is directly connected to the computer via a high speed interface, the data transfer between the memory card (50) and the computer is fast. Accordingly, the computer can read data

from or write data to the memory card (50) in a fast and convenient manner.

In addition to directly inserting the adapter module (60) into the interface port of a computer, the adapter module (60) can be inserted into the slot of a hub that is further connected to the computer.

FIG. 6 is a circuit diagram of another preferred embodiment in accordance with the present invention, which differs from the previous embodiment in that the memory card is provided with only a connection interface (30) and a product interface (40). The connection interface (30) and product interface (40) are connected to the memory unit (20) via the micro controller (10).

FIG. 7 shows the structure of the micro controller (10), which includes a microprocessor (13), a memory interface (15), an IEEE 1394 interface controller (12), and a host interface controller (14). The IEEE 1394 interface controller (12) is connected to the connection interface (30). The host interface controller (14) is connected to the product interface (40).

As a result, the memory card can be placed in a product for recording data, or connected to the IEEE 1394 interface port of a computer via an adapter module. As shown in FIG. 8, the adapter module (70) is the same as that of the previous embodiment except that only one IEEE 1394 connector (71) is provided for connecting the memory card (50) in the adapter module (70) to the IEEE 1394 interface port of the computer.

The above description depicts the multi-interface memory card and the adapter module in accordance with the present invention. It is appreciated

that such a design can be applied to the existing STONE card, Smart Media card, MMC card, Memory Stick card, Compact Flash card, and the like. Consequently, it is convenient to use a computer to read data from or write data to different kinds of memory cards.

Although the present invention has been explained in relation to its preferred embodiment, it is to be understood that many other possible modifications and variations can be made without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention as hereinafter claimed.

THE EMBODIMENT OF THE INVENTION IN WHICH AN EXCLUSIVE PROPERTY OR PRIVILEGE IS CLAIMED ARE DEFINED AS FOLLOWS:

1. A multi-interface memory card (50) comprising:

a micro controller (10);

a memory unit (20) connected to said micro controller (10), such that external computers or electronic products can read data from or write data to said memory unit (20) under control of said micro controller (10);

multiple connection interfaces (31, 32) connected to said memory unit (20) via said micro controller (10) for controlling data access, said connection interfaces conforming to different interface specifications; and

a product interface for connecting to a digital product to read or write data.

2. The multi-interface memory card (50) as claimed in claim 1, wherein there are two connection interfaces (31, 32).

3. The multi-interface memory card (50) as claimed in claim 2, wherein said two connection interfaces (31, 32) are a USB interface (31) and an IEEE 1394 interface (32).

4. The multi-interface memory card (50) as claimed in claim 1, wherein said micro controller (10) includes a microprocessor (13), a memory interface (15), multiple connection interface controllers (11, 12), and a host interface controller (14).

5. An adapter module (60) for a multi-interface memory card (50) having a front end formed thereon with an interface port (51) for providing

multiple connection interfaces and a product interface, said adapter module (40) comprising:

a housing defining a slot (66) for receiving said memory card (50);

multiple interface connectors (64, 65) held in said housing and adapted for connecting to corresponding interface ports of a computer; and

a terminal seat (63) held in said housing, said terminal seat (63) having a plurality of connection terminals (631), each having one end for facing to said interface port (51) of said memory card (50), and another end connected to said multiple interface connectors (64, 65).

6. The adapter module (60) as claimed in claim 5, wherein said housing is composed of an upper shell (61) and a lower shell (62), each of said upper shell (61) and lower shell (62) defining an opening at one end thereof, thereby forming said slot (66) for receiving said memory card (50), and another end of each of said upper shell (61) and lower shell (62) defining multiple slots for receiving said multiple interface connectors (64, 65).

7. The adapter module (60) as claimed in claim 5, wherein said terminal seat (63) is an H-shaped body which has two parallel rims and a rib extending between said two rims, each rim defining a sliding slot in an inner side thereof, and said plurality of connection terminals (631) being extended through said rib.

8. A multi-interface memory card (50) comprising:

a micro controller (10);

a memory unit (20) connected to said micro controller (10), such that

external computers or electronic products can read data from or write data to said memory unit (20) under control of said micro controller (10);

a connection interface (30) connected to said memory unit (20) via said micro controller (10) for controlling data access, said connection interface conforming to an IEEE 1394 interface specification; and

a product interface for connecting to a digital product to read or write data.

9. The multi-interface memory card (50) as claimed in claim 8, wherein said micro controller (10) includes a microprocessor (13), a memory interface (15), a connection interface controller (12), and a host interface controller (14).

10. An adapter module (70) for a multi-interface memory card (50) having a front end formed thereon with an interface port for providing an IEEE 1394 interface and a host interface, said adapter module (70) comprising:

a housing defining a slot for receiving said memory card (50);

an IEEE 1394 interface connector (71) held in said housing and adapted for connecting to a corresponding interface port of a computer; and

a terminal seat held in said housing, said terminal seat having a plurality of connection terminals, each having one end for facing to said interface port of said memory card (50), and another end connected to said IEEE 1394 interface connector (71).

11. The adapter module (70) as claimed in claim 10, wherein said

housing is composed of an upper shell and a lower shell, each of said upper shell and lower shell defining an opening at one end thereof, thereby forming said slot for receiving said memory card (50), and another end of each of said upper shell and lower shell defining a slot for receiving said IEEE 1394 interface connector (71).

12. The adapter module (70) as claimed in claim 10, wherein said terminal seat is an H-shaped body which has two parallel rims and a rib extending between said two rims, each rim defining a sliding slot in an inner side thereof, and said plurality of connection terminals being extended through said rib.

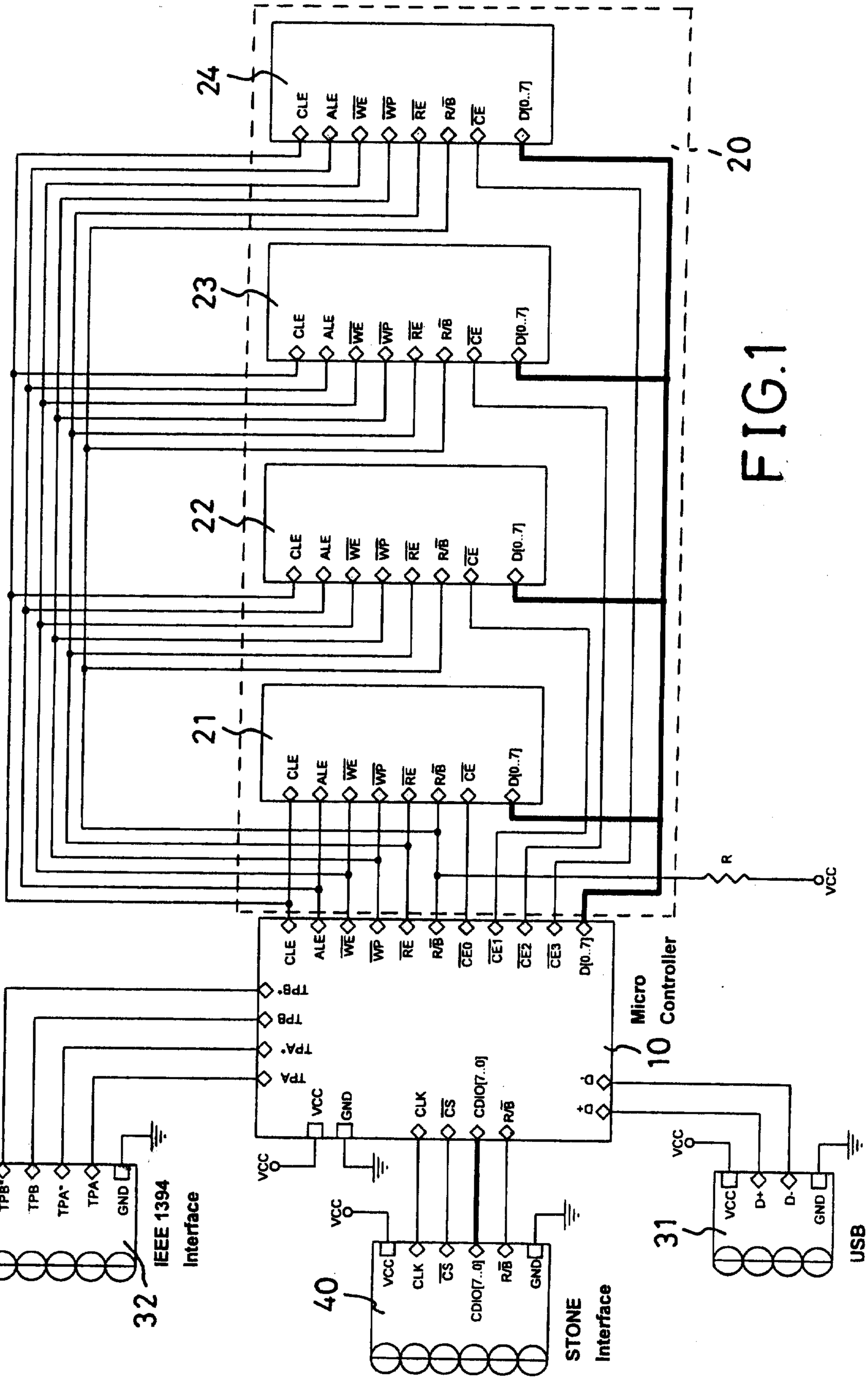


FIG.1

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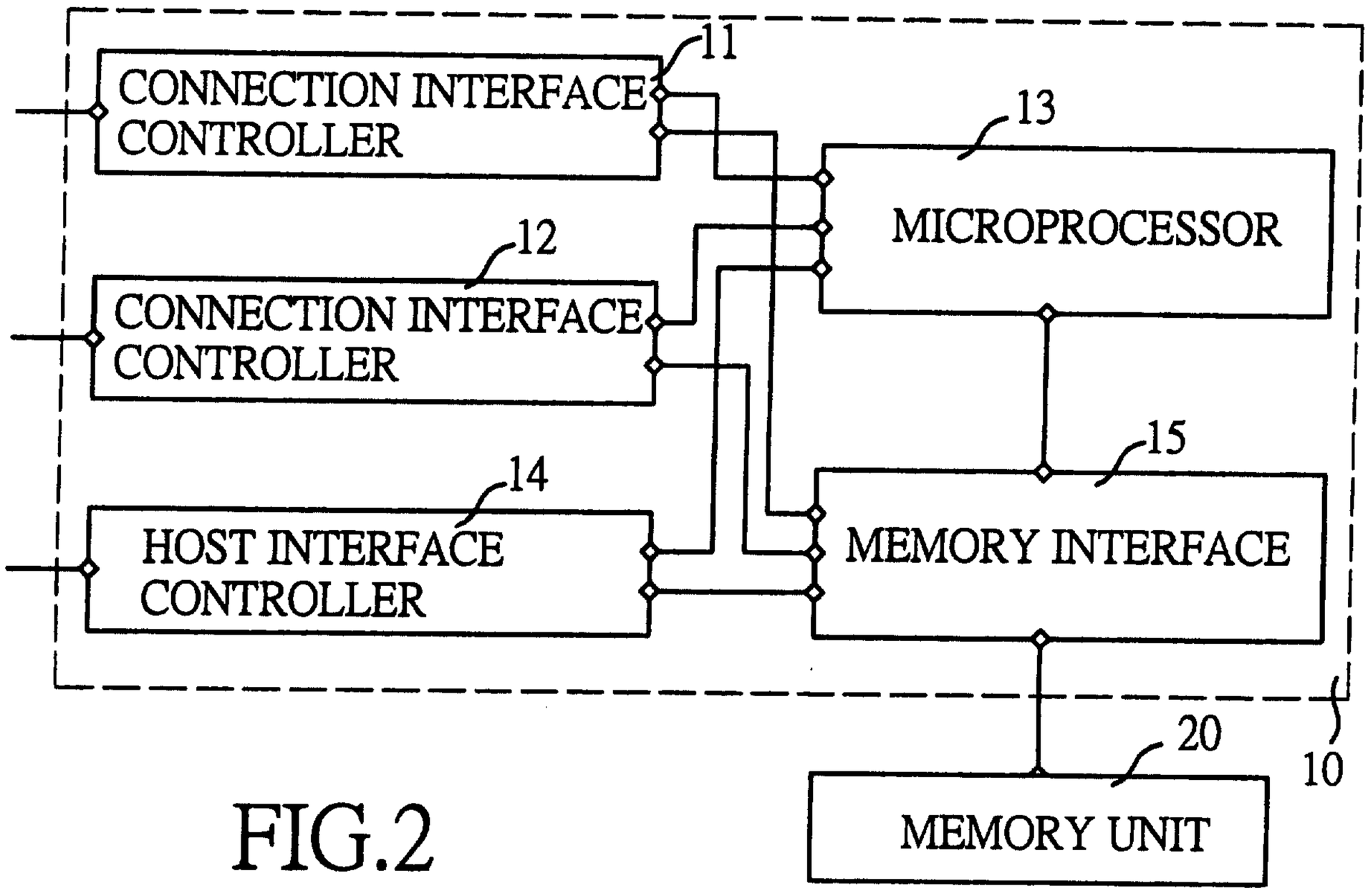

FIG.2

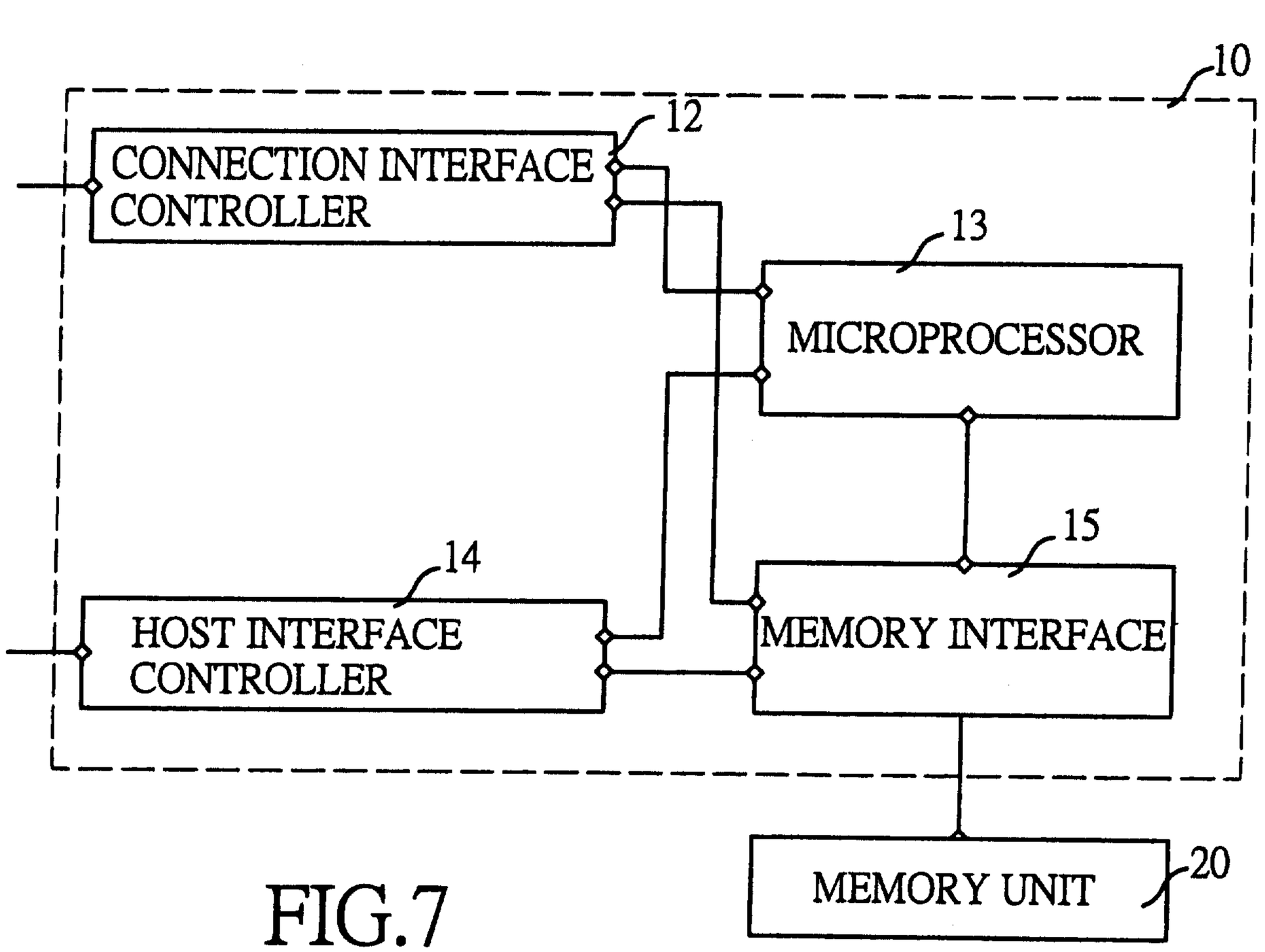

FIG.7

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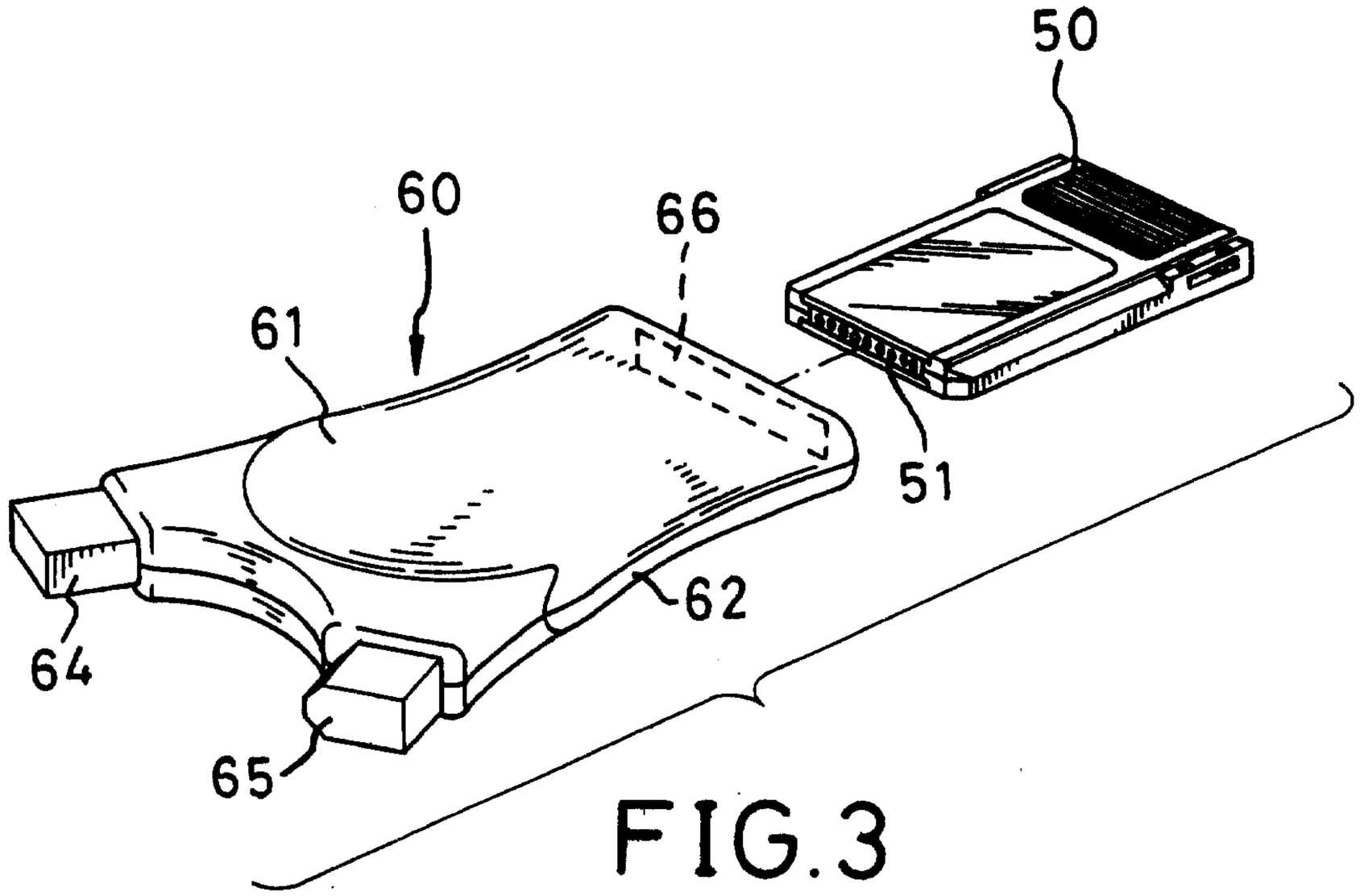

FIG.3

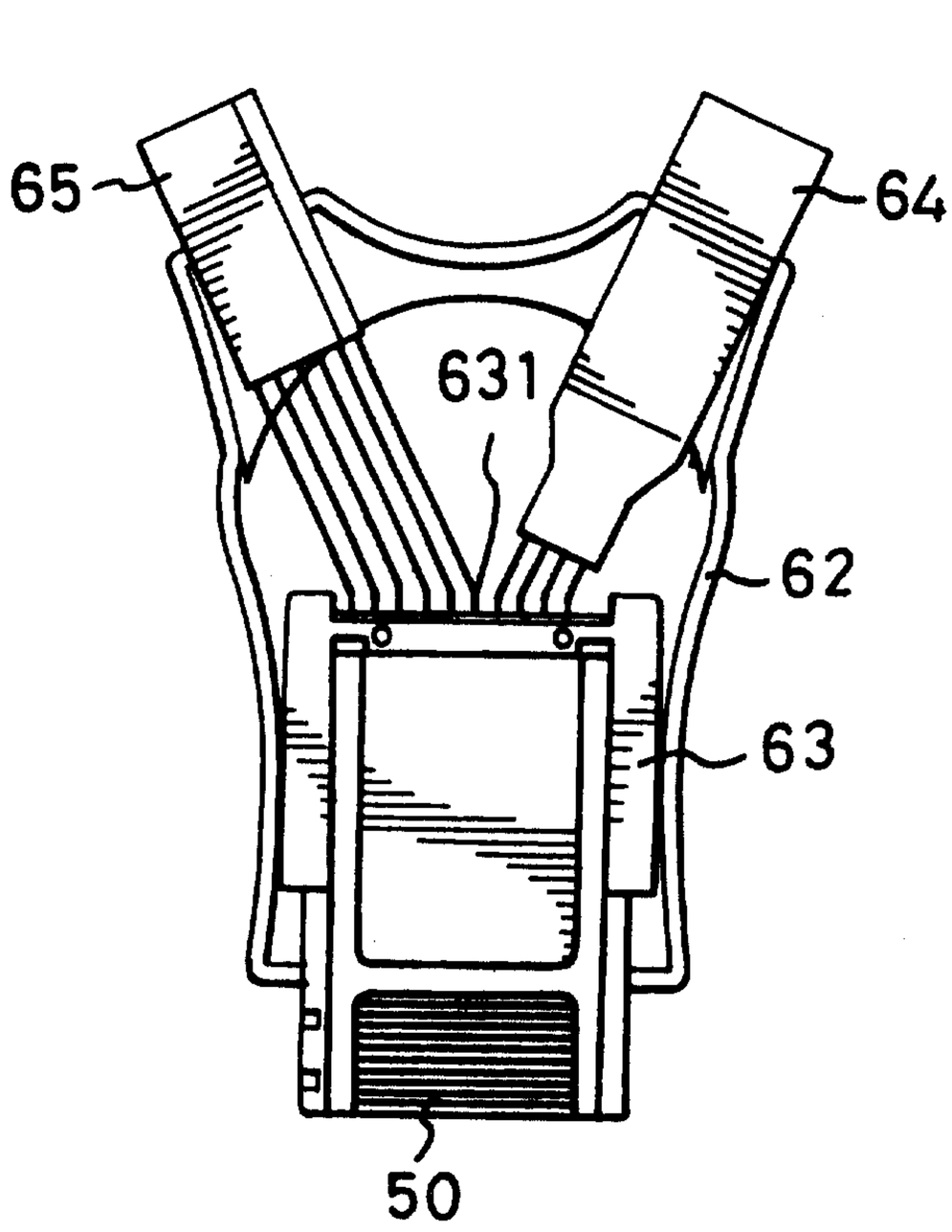

FIG.4

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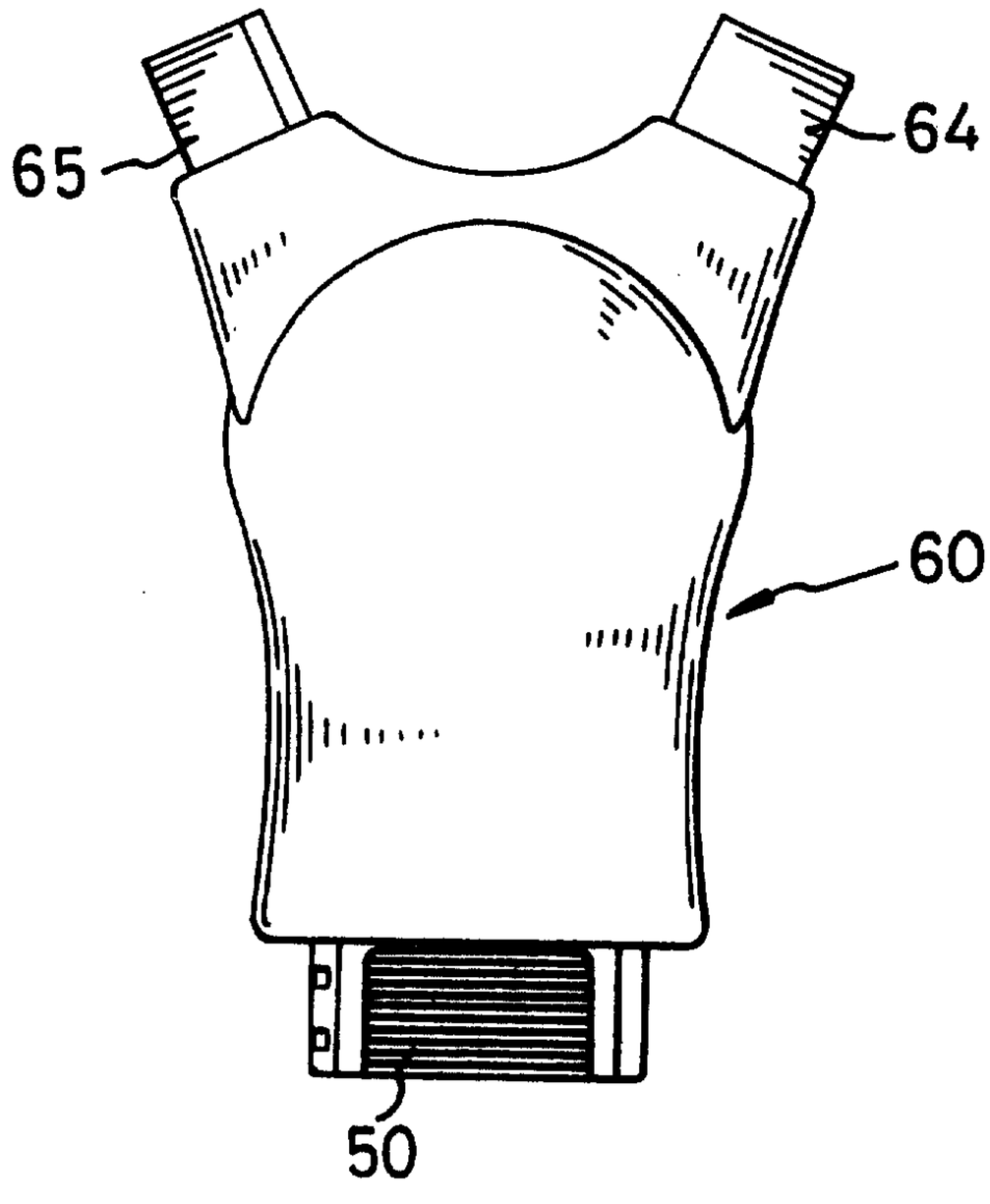

FIG.5

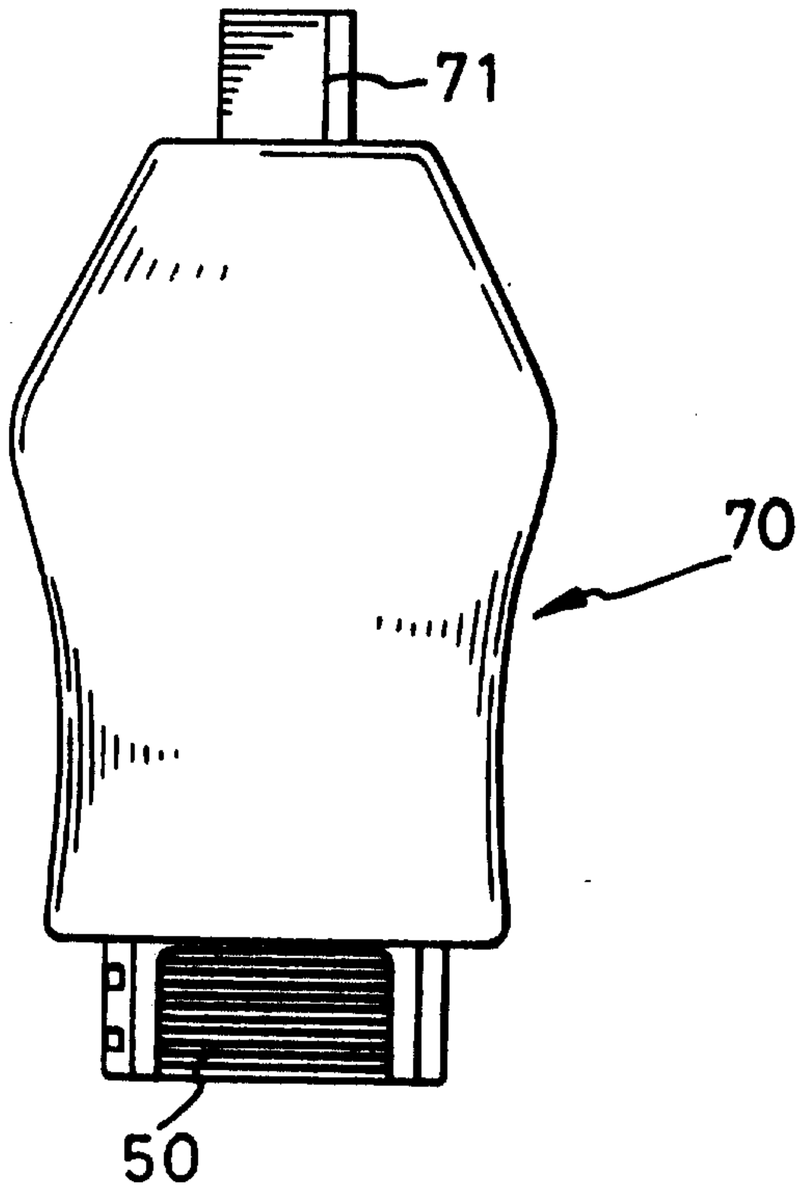

FIG.8

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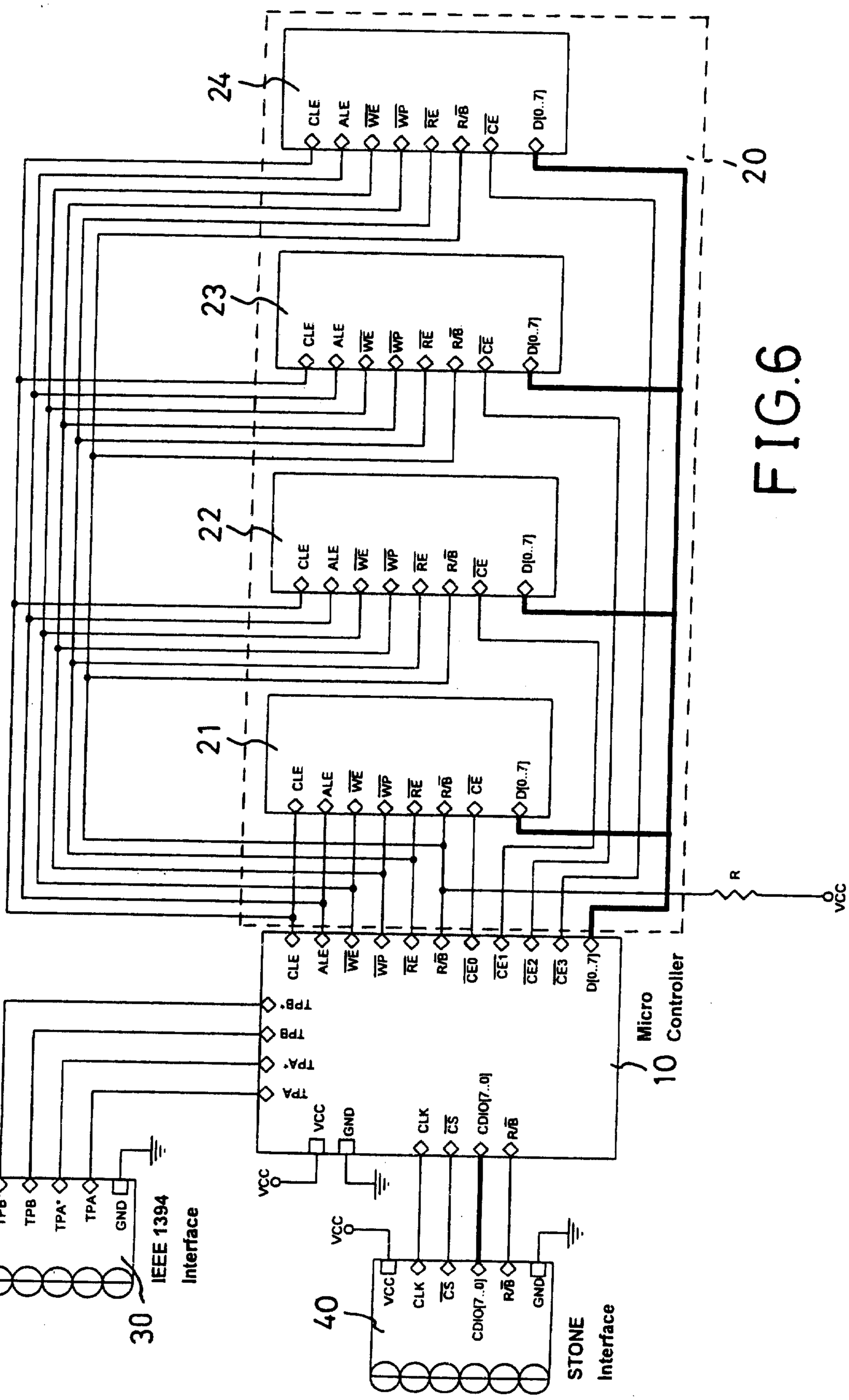

FIG.6

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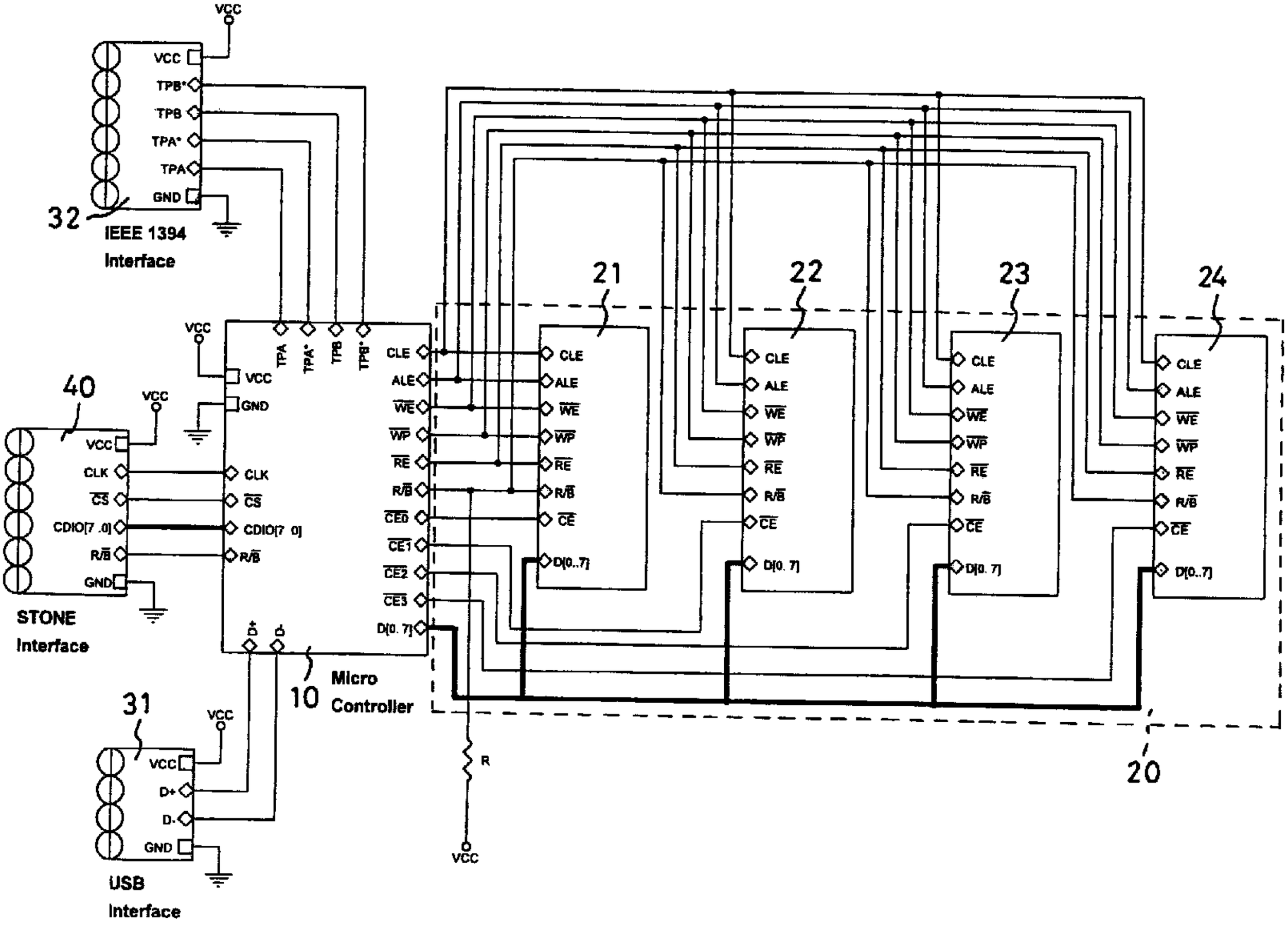
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VCC
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TPB
TPA*
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GND
32
IEEE 1394
Interface
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23
24
VCC
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D-
10
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VCC
D+
D-
GND
USB
Interface
R
VCC
20