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(54) **DECORATIVE WOOD SURFACES**

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(76) **Inventors: Darren Andrew McLain**, Broken Arrow, OK (US); **Roger C. Poffen**, Broken Arrow, OK (US)

Correspondence Address:

Linda L. Lewis
Suite 2000
10 South Broadway
St. Louis, MO 63102 (US)

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(57) **ABSTRACT**

A decorative wood surface system having permanent decorative marking wherein the marking is made with a decorative strip inserted between pieces of interlocking wood surface such that the decorative strip conforms to the interlocking pieces and engages with them. Typically, the interlocking wood surface system is tongue and groove hardwood, and the decorative strip is a brass, steel, aluminum, plastic or resin strip adapted such that it conforms to the tongue and groove, and engages with it to provide a permanent decorative wood surface.

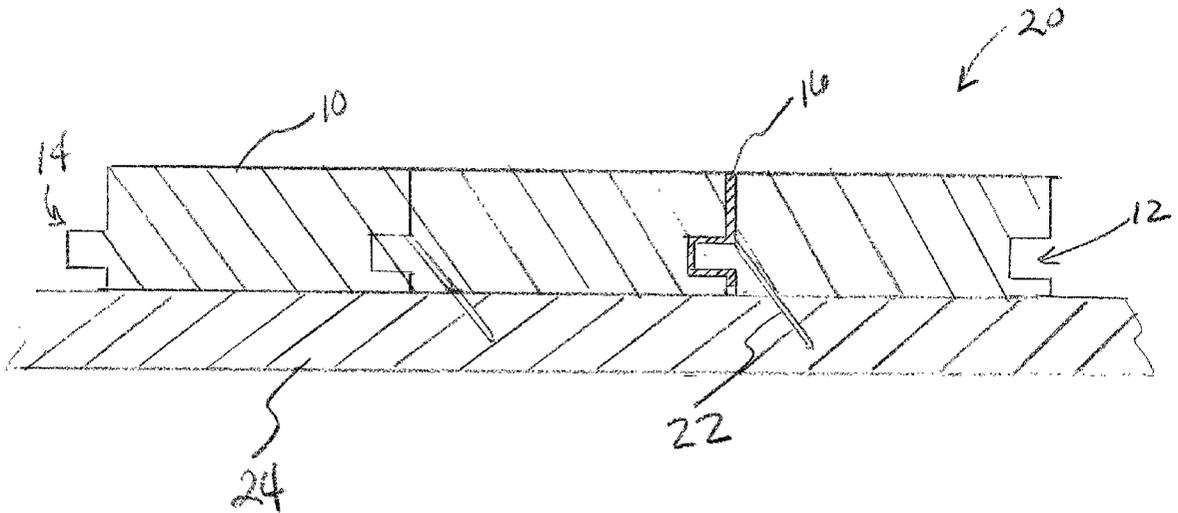


Fig. 1

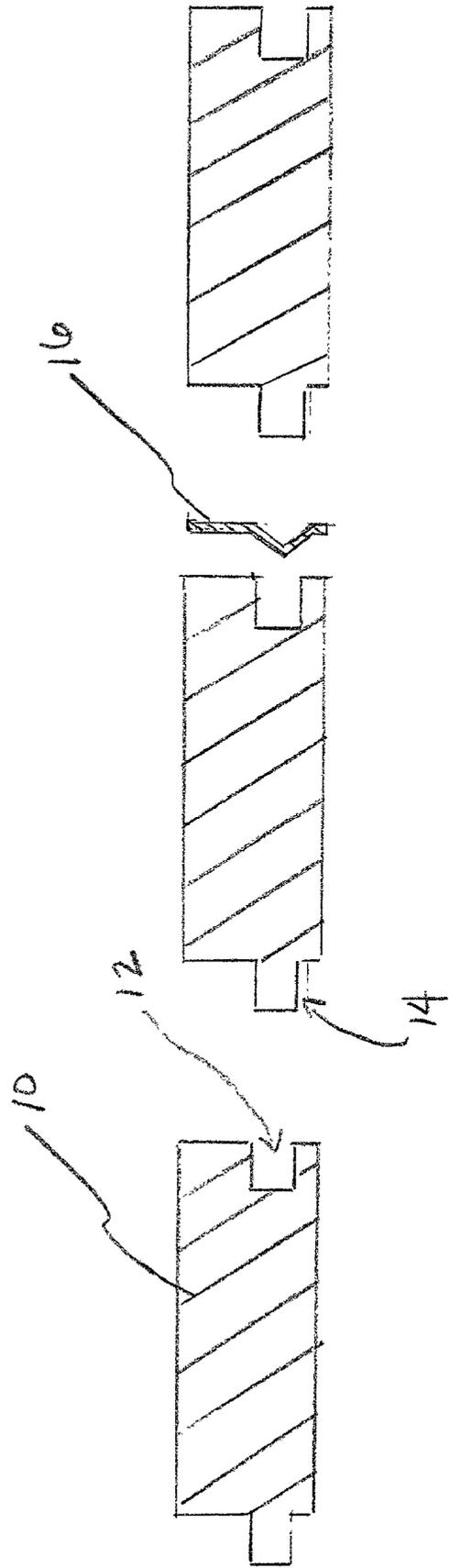


Fig. 2

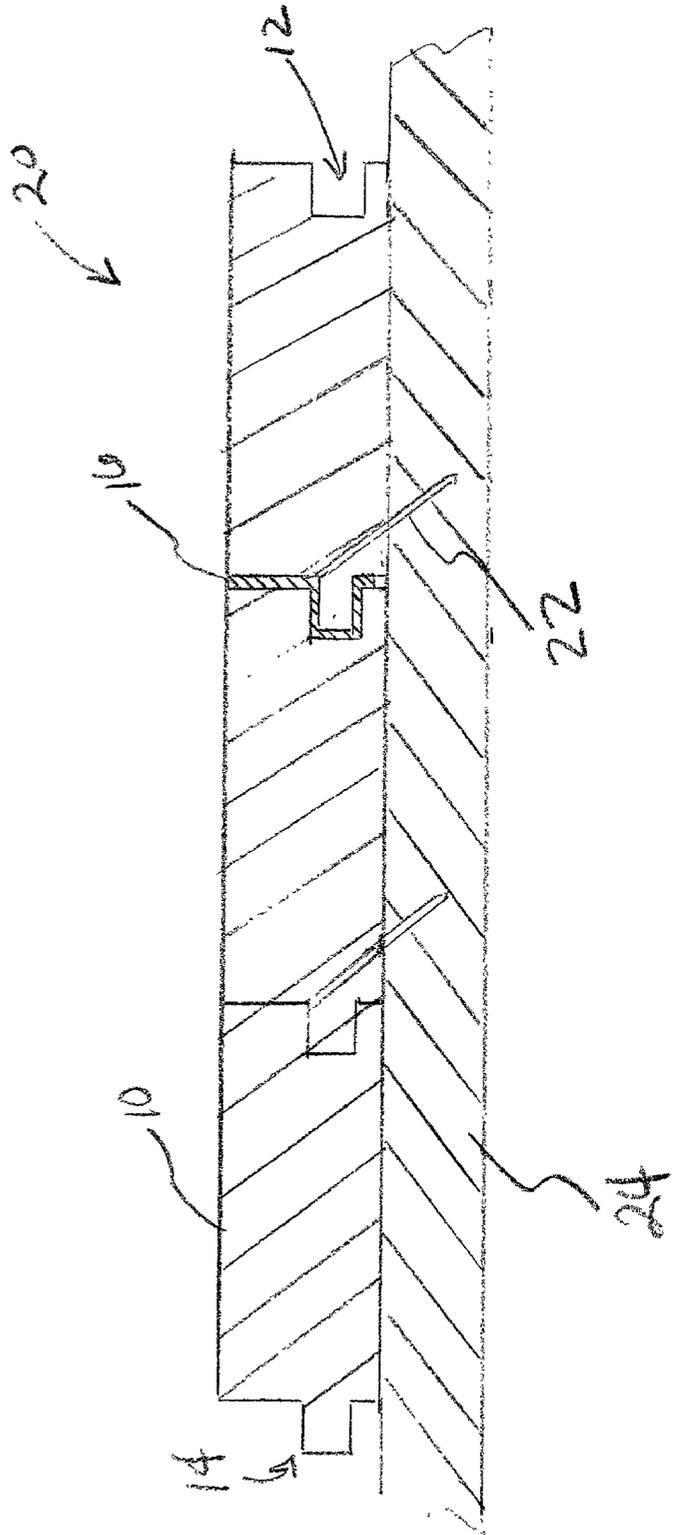
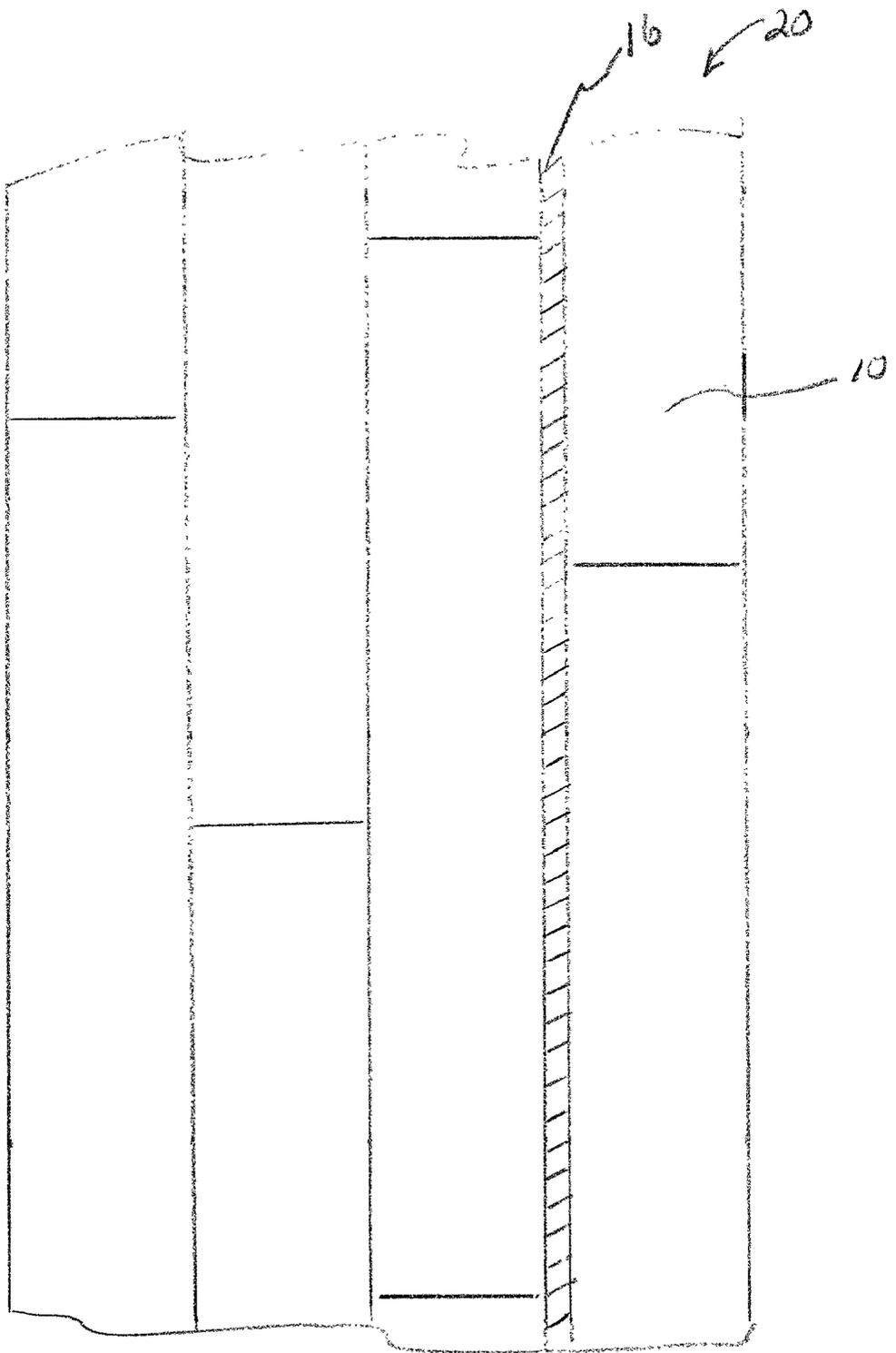


Fig. 3



DECORATIVE WOOD SURFACES

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0001] The field of the present invention is wood surfaces, more particularly, interlocking wood surfaces, such as hardwood flooring. The hardwood flooring of the present invention is decorative, in that strips are installed with the flooring that provide a permanent decorative effect. Alternatively, the strips are applied to the hardwood flooring for the permanent marking of a playing surface, such as for sports activities. A further application of the present invention is the wood surface on countertops, walls, ceilings, decks and tabletops. The decorative strips are installed in such a manner to provide durable decoration or marking that is easily maintained.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] Hardwood floors have enjoyed widespread acceptance and use in modern times. Such floors are commonly found in quality houses, auditorium stages and ballrooms. Decorative accents have been added to floors by painting or attaching decoration to the surface of the floor, but such decoration wears off with use or becomes insecure. Alternatively, a groove is routed out in the floor and accents, such as brass strips are inserted. Such a method of providing decorative accents is disclosed in *National Wood Flooring Association*, Technical Publication No. B200, 1998, which is hereby incorporated by reference. The brass strips are nailed and/or glued in place. As the floor is sanded to level and finish the floor, the heat of the sanding can cause the brass strip to heat, expand, and "pop out" of the flooring. As the flooring ages, the adhesive securing the strip can age, loose adhesion, and allow the strip to release and "pop out".

[0003] Alternatively, the decorative strip can be inserted into the groove between two planks of tongue and groove flooring, above the tongue and groove, but such strips would also tend to "pop out", as they are not engaged with the tongue and groove. Further, such strips would prevent the full engagement of the tongue and groove, thereby causing a structural weakness in the flooring.

[0004] Hardwood floors are also utilized for sports arenas for such games as basketball, volleyball, hand ball and squash, where the resilience of the hardwood playing surface is an essential element of the sports activity. However, the wear and tear on the flooring often wears off the markings on the hardwood floor necessary to play the games. When the floors are refinished, the markings must be reapplied. The present invention provides a permanent decorative accent or contrasting marking to be used with hardwood floors that is durable.

[0005] The present invention further provides a permanent decorative accent for a wood surface, wherein interlocking wood pieces are assembled to provide the wood surface. Such surfaces include, but are not limited to, countertops, walls, ceilings, decks and tabletops.

[0006] Hardwood floors are usually formed of strips or parquet squares of hardwood which have been precisely milled, so that when the strips or squares are laid down in a desired arrangement, they self-lock together to provide the desired smooth hardwood surface. One commonly employed locking mechanism has been tongue and groove

joinery wherein the hardwood strips and squares have been precisely milled so that opposite sidewalls define tongues and mating grooves. Such floors are disclosed in U.S. Pat. Nos. 4,644,720 and 5,566,930, which are hereby incorporated by reference. Neither of the above references disclose decorating or marking the hardwood floors, and neither of the above references disclose the present invention of durable and permanent decoration and marking of hardwood flooring.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0007] FIG. 1 is a longitudinal cross-sectional view of the flooring, before joining.

[0008] FIG. 2 is a longitudinal cross-sectional view of the flooring, after joining.

[0009] FIG. 3 is a top elevational view of the top of the flooring after installation.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

[0010] FIG. 1 is a longitudinal cross-sectional view of a decorative floor system 20, wherein the floorboards 10 have a tongue 14 and groove 12 that engage with the tongue and groove of other floorboards in an interlocking manner to provide a floor system 20. The present invention provides a decorative strip 16 which is adapted to conform to the tongue 14 and groove 12 when installed and engaged with the tongue and groove, so as to be permanently secured when the floorboard is installed.

[0011] FIG. 2 is a longitudinal cross-sectional view of the flooring after joining and installing. The floorboards 10 are installed on a subfloor 24, which is typically, but not limited to, half-inch, 5/8 inch, or 3/4 inch plywood. The floorboards 10 are installed by placing the board in the desired position and driving a one and a half, to two inch flooring cleat or flooring staple 22, at about a 45° angle to the subfloor 24 through the top notch of the tongue 14 and into the subfloor, thereby securing the floorboard. The further floorboards are installed by engaging the groove of the second floorboard with the tongue of the installed floorboard and driving a nail 22 through the tongue of the floorboard as subfloor, as described above.

[0012] The decorative strip 16 is installed by placing the strip between the tongue of an installed floorboard and the groove of the next board to be installed (or vice versa, i.e., the groove of the installed floorboard and the tongue of the next board to be installed), so as to engage the strip in the tongue and groove. The floorboard adjacent to the strip is rapped with a hammer to secure the strip 16 by interlocking the strip with the floorboard. The floorboard is nailed in place as described above.

[0013] Although the flooring is typically nailed into place, it is also contemplated that other fastening means can be used such as stapling or gluing. Although the typical subfloor is plywood, other subsurfaces, such as concrete can be used and the floorboards fastened with glue.

[0014] The floorboard is typically hardwood flooring of the tongue and groove type. Typical hardwoods are hickory, oak, maple or pine. However, other flooring materials are contemplated in this invention, including plastics and composites. Further other types of engaging and interlocking

flooring are also contemplated in this invention, including those that hook or snap together.

[0015] The preferred decorative strip is metallic, such as brass, aluminum or steel. However, other materials that conform their shape to the interlocking flooring can also be used, such as plastics and resins. Such decorative strips of contrasting colors are preferred for marking gym flooring for sporting events.

[0016] FIG. 3 is an elevational view of the top of the flooring system 20 after installation. The decorative strip 16 is clearly visible from the top, and is engaged by and surrounded by the floorboards 10 to provide a permanent decorative marking.

[0017] While a preferred embodiment of the invention has been described, applicant does not wish to be limited thereby, and it is understood that various modifications could be made without departing from the spirit of the invention. Accordingly, it is understood that changes may be made without departing from the scope of the invention as particularly set out and claimed.

What is claimed is:

1. A permanent decorative wood surface system comprising interlocking wood surfaces with a decorative strip, wherein the decorative strip is inserted into and engaged with the interlocking surfaces to provide a permanent decorative wood surface system.

2. The decorative wood surface system of claim 1, wherein the interlocking wood surface is hardwood floorboard.

3. The decorative wood surface system of claim 2, wherein the hardwood floorboard is tongue and groove floorboard.

4. The decorative wood surface system of claim 3, wherein the hardwood floorboard is made of hickory, oak, maple or pine.

5. The decorative wood surface system of claim 4, wherein the decorative strip is metallic.

6. The decorative wood surface system of claim 1, wherein the decorative strip is selected from the group consisting of brass, steel, aluminum, plastic or resin.

7. A decorative flooring system comprising tongue and groove hardwood floorboards with a decorative brass strip inserted into and engaged with the tongue and groove of the floorboards to provide a decorative flooring system.

8. The flooring system of claim 1, wherein the decorative strip is a contrasting color strip, suitable for marking flooring for sporting events.

9. The flooring system of claim 8, wherein the interlocking flooring is hardwood floorboard.

10. The flooring system of claim 9, wherein the hardwood floorboard is tongue and groove floorboard.

11. A method of preparing decorative wood surface comprising placing a decorative strip between two pieces of interlocking wood pieces so as to engage the strip in the interlocking pieces thereby providing a permanent decorative surface.

12. The method of claim 11, wherein the interlocking wood pieces are tongue and groove floorboards.

13. The method of claim 11, wherein the decorative strip is selected from the group consisting of steel, aluminum, brass, plastic or resin.

14. The method of claim 11, wherein the wood is selected from the group consisting of hickory, oak, maple or pine.

15. The method of claim 11, wherein the two pieces of wood are a first strip of hardwood floorboard and a second strip of hardwood floorboard, wherein when the second strip of boarding is installed, the decorative strip is engaged between the first strip and the second strip to provide a permanent decorative hardwood floor.

16. The method of claim 15, wherein the interlocking floorboard is tongue and groove floorboard

17. The method of claim 15, wherein the hardwood floorboard is selected from the group consisting of hickory, oak, maple or pine.

18. The method of claim 15, wherein the decorative strip is selected from the group consisting of steel, aluminum, brass, plastic and resin.

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