April 1, 1969 A. J. TOTI 3,435,876

VALANCE STRUCTURE

Original Filed Oct. 22, 1965

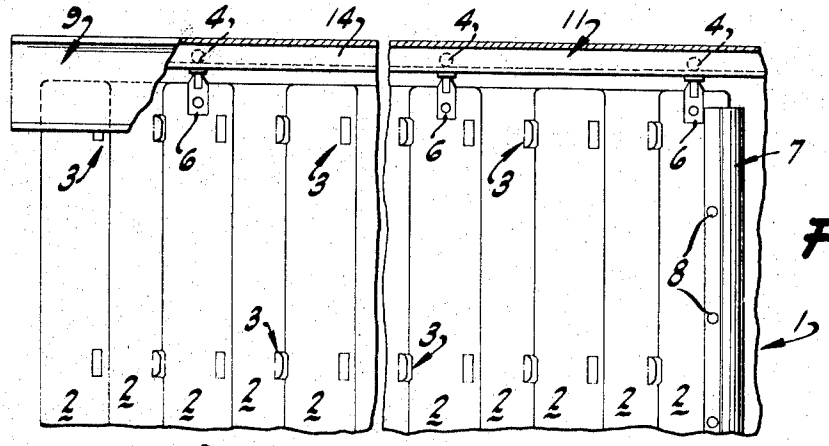

FIG. 1

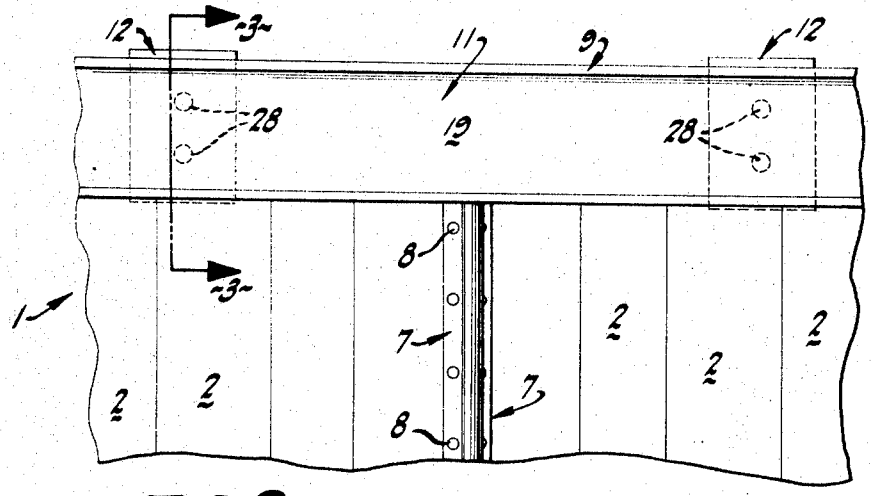

FIG. 2

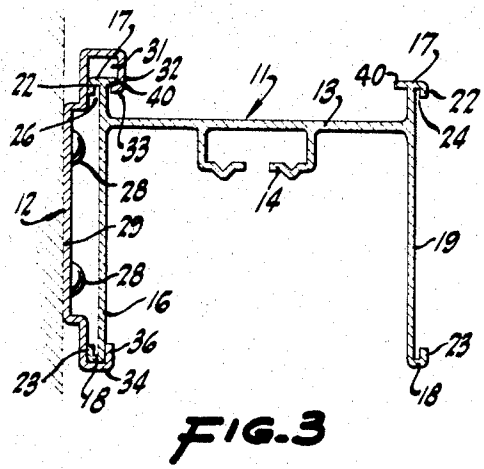

FIG. 3

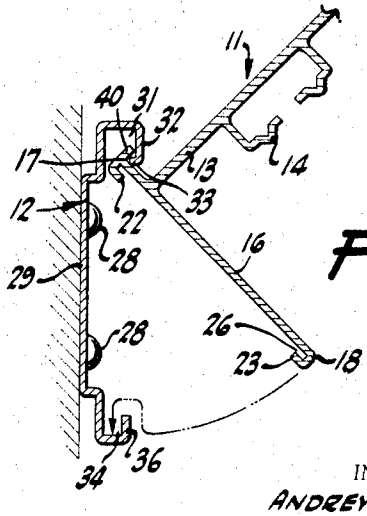

FIG. 4

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VALANCE STRUCTURE

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Original application Oct. 22, 1965, Ser. No. 501,184, now Patent No. 3,371,701, dated Mar. 5, 1968. Divided and this application Oct. 4, 1967, Ser. No. 672,883
Int. Cl. E06b 9/26, 9/38
U.S. Cl. 160—38 8 Claims

ABSTRACT OF THE DISCLOSURE

A valance structure for supporting traverse means for closing off door, window or like openings, such as vertical venetian blinds, drapes and other foldable closure structures. A one piece extruded valance member has a traverse track extending longitudinally thereof from which the drape, blind or like closure structure is to be supported. The valance member is removably interconnectable with a supporting bracket member, without requiring separate fasteners, by means of foot and shoulder portions on the valance member which are insertable in opposed channel portions provided on the bracket. The valance member also includes a slot in one wall thereof provided to receive therein decorative facia material.

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

This application is a division of application Ser. No. 501,184, filed Oct. 22, 1965 and now Patent No. 3,371,701, dated Mar. 5, 1968, entitled, "Foldable Panel Structure and Method of Assembly."

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

Field of the invention

This invention relates to means for supporting traverse structures for closing off door, window or like openings in residential or business buildings. Such closure structures include vertical venetian blinds, cloth draperies, metal or plastic interconnected panel drape structures, and the like which are designed to be traversed between retracted and extended positions to close off such door, window or like openings to preclude vision or light passage therethrough.

This invention is embodied in a valance structure which is securable to a supporting surface, such as a wall, or window or door frame, by cooperable bracket means, so that the closure structure to be supported thereby may be operatively positioned for traverse movement. This invention is specifically related to a decorative valance structure which hides the upper portion of the closure structure supported thereby from view, and which includes means for retaining decorative facia material in engagement therewith.

Description of the prior art

Valance structures have been generally known in the art heretofore. One such conventional valance structure is shown in Toti Patent No. 3,196,931, dated July 27, 1965. Such prior known structures, however, were generally secured by fasteners directly to a supporting surface, such as a window or door frame, as seen in the Toti patent. So far as is known, no valance members cooperable with a supporting bracket so that the valance member may be rapidly interengaged with the bracket without requiring separate fasteners to effect such interengagement have been employed or known heretofore. That is, valance structures, including a valance member which is interengageable in tilt-in fashion relative to a supporting bracket in the manner characteristic of this invention, so far is known, has not been employed heretofore. Furthermore, valance members formed entirely in one piece, including an integral track for supporting the closure structure to be supported thereby, have not been known heretofore. Nor have valance structures including the decorative characteristics of the subject valance member been known heretofore.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

The present invention relates to a valance structure which includes a one piece valance member having as an integral part thereof a track for supporting a traverse closure structure, such as a venetian blind, cloth drape, metal or plastic interconnected panel structure, or the like. More particularly, this invention relates to a channel shaped valance member formed with a box like configuration including a rear wall having shoulder and foot portions projecting in opposite directions therefrom which are slidably interengageable in tilt-in fashion with opposed channel portions provided in a special bracket member. Thus, to position the valance member in place, it is merely necessary to first secure one or more bracket members to a supporting surface, such as a wall, or door or window frame, and then to tilt the valance member into operative engagement with opposed channel portions provided on the bracket member. Removal of the valance member for purposes of cleaning and the like may be likewise easily effected.

Preferably the valance member is formed entirely in one piece, including the track structure running longitudinally thereof. Producing the same from a sturdy metal, such as aluminum, by an extrusion process has been found highly acceptable. In its preferred embodiment, the valance member is formed symmetrical in cross section with a generally H shaped configuration.

Additionally, the opposite front and rear walls of the valance member are provided with slot structures in which decorative facia material is receivable so that, when desired, the valance member may be decorated in accordance with the nature of the closure structure to be supported thereby.

From the foregoing, it should be understood that objects of this invention include: the provision of an improved valance structure for supporting traverse type closure structures for window, door and like openings; the provision of a one piece valance member in which an integral supporting track runs longitudinally thereof; the provision of a valance member which may be engaged with supporting bracket means without requiring separate fasteners to effect such engagement; and the provision of a valance member which includes means for receiving decorative facia material along the length thereof. These and other objects of this invention will become apparent from a study of the following detailed disclosure in which reference is directed to the appended drawings.

DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

FIG. 1 is a partial front elevational view, partly in section, of the valance structure of this invention, showing the same operatively supporting a closure structure defined by a series of accordion foldable panels which are traversable between extended and retracted positions.

FIG. 2 is a partial front elevational view of the subject valance structure showing the same engaged with supporting bracket means secured to a supporting surface.

FIG. 3 is a vertical sectional view taken through the valance structure and a supporting bracket taken in the plane of line 3—3 of FIG. 2.

FIG. 4 is a view corresponding generally to FIG. 3 which illustrates the procedure for interengaging the valance member and bracket means of this invention.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENT

As noted previously, the valance structure of this invention is capable of supporting various and varied structures for closing off a window, door or like opening, such as vertical venetian blinds, cloth drapes, interconnected panel structures of metal or plastic, or the like. This invention has particular utility when utilized to support an expansible and retractable panel structure of the type shown in the aforementioned Toti Patent No. 3,196,931, and in Toti Patent No. 3,371,701. However, it should be understood that this invention is utilizable to support any closure or decorative structure requiring a track to permit traverse movement of such structure between retracted and extended positions.

By way of illustration, FIGS. 1 and 2 of the attached drawings show this invention used to support an expansible and retractable panel structure of the type shown in Patent No. 3,371,701. For a full disclosure and understanding of the construction and operation of the illustrated panel structure, reference is directed to such patent. However, by way of brief summary, such panel structure, generally designated **1**, includes a series of foldably interconnected elongated slats or panels **2**, each of which is hingedly connected with an adjacent panel by hinge means, generally designated **3**, formed directly from the material of the panels interconnected thereby.

The panel structure illustrated in FIG. 1 comprises an assembly of only one series of operatively interconnected panels of a sufficient size to completely traverse across the window opening or like reference area to be closed-off thereby. Alternatively, two or more separate cooperable panel assemblies may be employed to close off such opening, as shown in FIG. 2.

The panel structure illustrated in FIGS. 1 and 2 is provided at its upper end with slidable means cooperable with the valance structure of this invention, as will be described, to maintain the panel structure in its operative vertical position. Such means, as seen in FIG. 1, comprises a series of slide members **4** (or roller members, if preferred), of any suitable construction which are pivotally connected with associated panels **2** by means of links **6** riveted, pinned or otherwise suitably secured to the top edges of the associated panels. It should be understood that it is not necessary to provide each panel of the closure structure with a slide member and link in that the hinge means provided between adjacent panels provides sufficient support for intermediate panels not provided directly with slide members **4**. Thus, slide members may be provided on alternate panels, or on other sequentially spaced panels as may be found desirable, as shown in FIG. 1. The number of slide members employed for a given panel structure will be determined primarily by the size of the structure and the nature of its operative design. For example, different types and numbers of slide members could be employed with vertical venetian blinds or cloth drapes than might be employed with a panel structure of the type shown in FIGS. 1 and 2. In any event, the slide members **4** are to be engaged with a traverse track provided on the valance member as will be described hereinafter.

By way of further background disclosure, and still referring to FIGS. 1 and 2, it will be noted that a panel structure of the type illustrated may be provided with means to facilitate grasping thereof to effect traverse movement thereof. Such means in the subject disclosure comprises a handle **7** secured by a series of pins **8**, in the manner described in the aforementioned patent, to the edge of the panel which defines one end of the panel assembly. If the assembly is of the type which includes two series of panels (FIG. 2), handle structure preferably is provided on the end panel of each series so that the handles lie adjacent each other and may be interlocked together, as disclosed in the aforementioned patent, to maintain the respective panel series in the extended position as seen in FIG. 2.

The decorative valance structure of this invention is generally designated **9** in the drawings and comprises two principal components, namely an elongated channel shaped valance member **11**, and means for supporting the valance member comprising two or more preformed metal brackets **12** with which the valance member is removably engaged, as will be described.

The preferred embodiment of the valance member illustrated is formed in one piece as an aluminum or like metal extrusion. The valance member includes a flat top wall **13** which has an integral track **14** extending longitudinally thereof for its full length. Track **14** depends from the undersurface of the top wall **13** and it is in such track that the aforementioned slide members **4** are engageable so that the closure structure supported thereby may be slidably traversed along the length of the valance member.

The valance member further includes a generally flat rear wall **16** having portions thereof which extend above and below the top wall **13**, as seen in FIGS. 3 and 4. The rear wall terminates at its upper margin in an enlarged shoulder portion **17**, which extends longitudinally of the valance member and defines one corner edge thereof, and at its lower margin in an enlarged foot portion **18**, which similarly extends longitudinally of the valance member and defines a lower corner edge thereof.

The valance member further includes a front wall **19** having a configuration generally identical to that of rear wall **16**. Front wall **19** extends generally parallel to the rear wall and similarly includes an upper enlarged shoulder portion **17** and a lower enlarged foot portion **18**. The valance member is thus imparted with a generally H-shaped symmetrical cross section so that either wall **16** or wall **19** may be engaged separately in tilt-in fashion with the supporting means defined by the brackets **12**.

Each of the upper shoulder portions **17** of the valance member includes a downwardly projecting lip **22**, while each of the valance foot portions **18** includes an upwardly projecting lip **23**. Each pair of lips **22** and **23** overlie their associated walls and cooperate with each other in defining a retaining slot which extends the length of the respective walls. The front and rear wall slots are designated **24** and **26** respectively.

It is in such retaining slots that a length of decorative facia material (not shown) may be inserted to impart additional decorative characteristics to the valance member. Such decorative facia material may correspond in color and nature to the material from which the closure structure supported by the valance member is formed, or alternatively, contrasting material may be employed if preferred.

In this regard, with a hinged panel closure structure of the type shown in FIG. 1, the vertical dimensions of the respective slots **24** and **26** is such that a panel of the closure structure thereby may be snapped into engagement with the respective lips **22** and **23** which define such slots. Thus, the surface of the valance member which is visible to a viewer thereof may be adapted to blend in with the hinged panel or like closure structure supported thereby. Of course, even in the absence of such a decorative facia material, the clean and neat lines of an undecorated valance member present an attractive appearance.

The bracket supporting means employed with the subject valance member comprises a series of preformed metal brackets **12** which are positioned in spaced relationship along the length of the valance as seen in FIG. 2. Such brackets support the valance member without requiring separate fasteners to be employed between the brackets and the valance member to effect such support. Each bracket is secured by suitable means, such as a pair of screw fasteners **28**, to a supporting surface, such as the wall of a building or a window or door frame therein.

Each bracket member includes a flat base portion **29** provided with holes through which the screw fasteners **28** extend into the supporting surface. The bracket also includes an upper channel portion **31** offset from the base portion and defined by a reversely bent depending flange **32** which extends generally parallel to the base portion, and terminates in an inwardly directed lip **33**, extending longitudinally of the bracket. The bracket further includes a lower channel portion **34** which is also offset from the base portion and is defined by a reversely bent projecting flange **36** which extends longitudinally of the bracket.

It is in such opposed upper and lower channel portions which open towards each other that the upper shoulder portion **17** and the lower foot portion **18** of an associated valance member are slidably receivable in the tilt-in fashion shown in FIG. 4. The valance member is easily inserted into its associated brackets and is retained therein without requiring separate fasteners. In this connection, it should be understood that the height of the valance member rear or front walls, measured from the top of the upper shoulder portion **17** to the bottom of the lower foot portion **18**, is slightly less than the internal height of each bracket member, measured between the opposed bottoms of the bracket upper and lower channel portions **31** and **34**, as is evident rom FIG. 3.

Thus, to engage a valance member with the respective brackets which previously have been secured to a supporting surface, it is merely necessary to angularly orient the valance member relative to each bracket in the manner seen in FIG. 4 so that the upper shoulder portion **17** of the valance wall may be inserted through and into the upper channels **31** of the respective brackets until an inwardly directed flange **40** of the shoulder portion clears the lip **33** of each bracket upper channel portion. Then, by moving the valance upward or vertically until the shoulder portion approaches or strikes the bottom of the upper channel **31**, the foot portion **18** of the valance member may be pivoted inwardly to clear the upwardly projecting lip **36** of the lower channel portion of the respective brackets. Thereafter, the valance member may be allowed to move downwardly under the effects of gravity into the lower channel portion **34** of the brackets until the foot portion **18** of the valance member engages the bottom of such lower channel portion.

Separation of the valance member from the brackets is positively precluded by the flanges **32** and **36** of the brackets unless and until the operation just described is reversed.

From the foregoing it should be understood that this invention is directed particularly to a highly decorative valance member and cooperable supporting brackets therefor which are extremely simple in construction and which are designed to obivate the need for separate fasteners to maintain the valance member in engagement with the supporting brackets. When the valance member is operatively supported by the brackets, the operating and supporting mechanisms of the closure structure supported by the valance member are hidden from view.

I claim:

1. Means for supporting an expansible and retractable structure, comprising:

(A) a valance member which includes

(1) a top wall having a track extending longitudinally thereof from which said structure may operatively depend, and

(2) a rear wall connected with said top wall,

(3) said rear wall projecting above and below said top wall and terminating at its upper margin in a shoulder portion which extends longitudinally of said valance member and at its lower margin in a foot portion which extends longitudinally of said valance member, and

(B) a bracket member securable to a supporting surface, said bracket member being interconnected with said valance member to support the same, comprising

(1) a base portion engageable with said supporting surface and securable thereto,

(2) an upper channel portion defined by a downwardly projecting lip spaced from said base portion within which said shoulder portion of said valance member rear wall is receivable, and

(3) a lower channel portion defined by an upwardly projecting lip spaced from said base portion within which said foot portion of said valance member rear wall is receivable,

(C) the height of said valance member rear wall measured between said shoulder portion and said foot portion thereof being less than the height of said bracket member measured between the opposed bottoms of said upper and lower channel portions thereof, whereby said valance member may be interconnected with said bracket without requiring separate fasteners by inserting said valance member shoulder portion into said bracket upper channel portion at an angle relative to said bracket base portion and pivoting said valance member toward said base portion until said valance member foot portion clears said bracket upwardly projecting lip so that said foot portion thereafter is receivable within said bracket lower channel portion, said downwardly and upwardly projecting lips of said bracket channel portions precluding separation of said valance member from said bracket when said valance member foot portion is seated on the bottom of said bracket lower channel portion.

2. The supporting means of claim **1** in which said valance member further includes

(4) a front wall substantially identical in construction with said rear wall,

whereby a generally H-shaped transverse cross-section is imparted to said valance member so that either said front wall or rear wall may be engaged with said bracket,

(5) said shoulder portion and said foot portion of each of said front and rear walls of said valance member including an outer lip overlying and extending generally parallel to its associated wall,

(6) said lips on said valance member shoulder and foot portions together defining a retaining slot within which decorative facia material is receivable along the length of said valance member.

3. Means for supporting a blind, drape or like closure structure, comprising in combination:

(A) a valance member which includes

(1) a top wall having an integral track extending longitudinally thereof from which said structure may operatively depend, and

(2) a rear wall connected with said top wall which projects above and below said top wall and terminates at its upper margin in a shoulder portion and at its lower margin in a foot portion, and

(B) a bracket member securable to a supporting surface, said bracket member being interconnectable with said valance member to releasably support the same, comprising

(1) a base portion engageable with said supporting surface and securable thereto,

(2) an upper channel portion, and

(3) a lower channel portion opposed to said upper channel portion,

(C) the height of said valances member rear wall measured between said shoulder portion and said foot portion thereof being less than the height of said bracket measured between the opposed bottoms of said upper and lower channel portions thereof, whereby said valance member is insertable into said bracket channel portions and retainable therein without requiring separate fasteners.

4. The combination of claim **3** in which said valance member further includes

(4) a front wall substantially identical in construction with said rear wall,

whereby a generally H-shaped transverse cross-section is imparted to said valance member so that either said front wall or rear wall may be engaged with said bracket,

(5) said shoulder portion and said foot portion of each of said front and rear walls of said valance including an outer lip overlying and extending generally parallel to its associated wall,

(6) said lips on said valance member shoulder and foot portions together defining a retaining slot within which decorative facia material is receivable along the length of said valance member.

5. An elongated valance member which is channel shaped in transverse cross-section, comprising:

(A) a top wall,

(B) an integral track depending from the underside of said top wall and extending longitudinally thereof,

(C) a rear wall to be engaged with bracket means to support said valance member in an operative position, and

(D) a front wall extending generally parallel to said rear wall,

(E) at least said rear wall including a shoulder portion extension along its upper margin above said top wall and a foot portion along its lower margin,

(F) said shoulder portion and said foot portion being engageable with said bracket means when said valance member is supported by such bracket means in said operative position.

6. For use in combination with the valance member as defined in claim 5,

(G) bracket means comprising a bracket member defined by

(1) a base portion securable to a supporting surface by fastening means, and

(2) opposed upper and lower channel portions opening towards each other in which said shoulder portion and foot portion of said valance member are separably received to maintain said valance member in operative engagement with said bracket member.

7. The valance member of claim 5 in which

(F) said top wall and track, said front wall, and said rear wall are all formed in one piece as an integral metal extrusion.

8. The valance member of claim 5 in which

(F) at least said front wall includes opposed lips partially overlying and slightly spaced from said front wall,

(G) said lips together defining a retaining slot extending longitudinally of said valance within which decorative facia material is receivable.

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