An apparatus is disclosed for securing decorative items such as figurines, lights, garland and Christmas stockings on top of or hanging over the front edge of a shelf or mantel. The apparatus has a retainer that is secured to the wall or the rear of a mantel or shelf, a fastener that is fixed to the decorative item, and an adjustable length tether connecting the two. The retainer is preferably a flat piece that inserts between the rear edge of the shelf or mantel but may be a U shaped clip mounted on the back edge of a shelf. The apparatus prevents the decorative items from being accidentally knocked off or pulled off the shelf or mantel.
APPARATUS FOR FASTENING ITEMS ON A MANTEL OR SHELF

FIELD OF THE INVENTION

[0001] This invention relates in general to fastening devices and more particularly to a fastening device for preventing decorative items, including Christmas stocking holders from falling of a mantle or shelf.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] Many people place decorative holder accessories on the edge of fireplace mantels. These decorative accessories support Christmas stockings, Christmas lights, figurines and other decorative items such as garland or strings of mistletoe. Typically, the holder accessory takes the form of a weighted figurine with an attached hanger that extends over the front edge of the mantel. The figurine is weighted heavily to keep not only itself in place, but also to keep it from slipping off the mantel despite the weight of decorations hanging from it hanger. This weighted figurine technique applies well to all mantle surface types, including harder surfaces such as marble or granite. However, weighted figurines have limited weight holding capability. The weighted figurines can be accidently pulled off a mantle by a child and damage the figurine or flooring beneath the mantle. More importantly, the falling weighted figurine can cause personal injury. This is particularly the case when a curious small child may pull at a stocking, dislodging the figurine and directing the falling object toward the child’s face or head. With a typical mantle height a weighted figurine could be traveling between 6 and 10 mph when it strikes a small child. The weighted figurine can cause serious personal injury to the child.

[0003] Most of the currently available Christmas stocking holders are designed for a single purpose, hanging Christmas stockings. Stringing lights, garland or other decorations between stocking holders is not a realistic option for two reasons. First, the hooks are often too small or too awkward to use for anything other than hanging stockings. In addition, the vast majority of these products cannot support the weight of lights or garland. Even the heaviest products tend to slide out of place when items are strung from adjacent stocking holders since they frequently slide on the mantel surface.

[0004] One prior art Christmas stocking holder is taught in U.S. Pat. No. 5,642,819 issued Jul. 1, 1997 to Ernesto Ronia. The stocking holder taught in this patent consists of a plurality of C type clamps that clamp onto the front edge of a mantel or shelf. The clamps are spaced from each other and have a rod passing underneath, and being supported by, the C clamps. Affixed permanently to the top of each of the C clamps is a candle holder. Christmas stockings or other decorations are suspended from the rod that passes underneath and is supported by the C clamps.

[0005] Another prior art means for supporting articles from a mantel, shelf or other planar surface is taught in U.S. Pat. No. 6,378,827 issued Apr. 30, 2002 to Jeffrey Kacines. This means for supporting articles is a one piece metal clip that has a general C shape with decorative additions and a point for hanging items such as Christmas stockings. When the clip is slid onto the edge of a mantel or shelf, the opening of the clip is expanded creating a spring pressure to hold the clip onto the edge of the mantel or shelf.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

[0006] The above cited prior art teaches a rather complex stocking holder and one that can be too easily pulled from the edge of a mantel or shelf. Therefore, there is a need in the art for an improved device for securing decorative accessories and other items on the front, top edge of a mantel, or hanging from the front edge of a mantle.

[0007] The foregoing need in the prior art is satisfied by the present invention. A strong, but simple and inexpensive fastening device is taught which can safely hold decorative accessories hanging from the front edge of fireplace mantels or shelves, and at the same time other decorative accessories on the top of the front edge of mantels and shelves. The decorative accessories cannot be inadvertently knocked off or pulled off the mantel or shelf and injure a person such as a child, damage a floor or furniture, and/or break the decorative accessories. Such decorative accessories include, but are not limited to, strings of lights, garland, Christmas stockings, strings of mistletoe, figurines and other decorations.

[0008] The novel fastening device consists of three parts. There is a retainer that attaches to either the rear of the mantle or to a wall behind the mantle. There is a fastener that attaches to an item to be secured or is part of the item. Finally, there is a tether in the form of a string or wire that connects the retainer to the fastener. The retainer can take the form of a thin strip of material that can easily be inserted into the space between a mantel or shelf and the wall at the back edge of the mantel or shelf. The fastener attaches to a figurine or other item on top of the mantel or shelf, or to a stocking holder or other item hanging in front of the hang or shelf, when these items are to be prevented from falling from the mantel or shelf. The tether is a strong line, string or wire that is attached between the retainer and the fastener. The tether prevents a figurine or other item from falling off or being pulled from the front edge of the mantle, including anything else hanging there from or being attached thereto.

[0009] For applications where a weighted stocking holder is not weighted sufficiently, the tether should be used between the retainer and the fastener. This will allow for lighter weight, less expensive, figurine stocking holders. In the case of weighted stocking holders, the tether need not be taught, but short enough to prevent the item from gaining significant velocity should it be pulled from the shelf or mantle. In this case, a single retainer can accommodate several fastenets or items.

[0010] As mantels come in many widths a way is provide for adjusting the length of the tether so that the weighted stockholder or other item will always remain in the proper position at the front edge of the mantle or shelf.

DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWING

[0011] The invention will be better understood upon reading the following Detailed Description in conjunction with the drawing in which:

[0012] FIG. 1 shows an embodiment of the invention having a fastener with a candle holder and candle that sits on the front edge of a mantel and has an integral hook that extends over the edge of the mantel for hanging a Christmas stocking, a light string, garland or other ornaments.
[0013] FIG. 2 shows another embodiment of the invention that has a flat fastener that sits on the front edge of a mantel, and has an integral hook that extends over the edge of the mantel for hanging a Christmas stocking, a light string, garland or other ornaments;

[0014] FIG. 3 shows a view of a portion of a fastener and retainer and a tether;

[0015] FIG. 4 shows a view of a portion of the fastener and retainer and how the tether connects the two; and

[0016] FIG. 5 shows an embodiment of the invention that is used with a weighted stocking holder in the form of a figurine.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION

[0017] The subject invention is a novel, simple and inexpensive, yet safe fastening apparatus for securing decorative items, including Christmas stocking holders, to the front edge of a mantle or shelf, and/or retaining other decorative items on top of the mantel or shelf.

[0018] FIG. 1 shows the invention used on a fireplace mantel 10 and FIG. 2 shows the invention used on a shelf 20. FIG. 5 shows the invention used on a fireplace mantel with a weighted stocking holder that has a ceramic or metallic figurine. The version of the novel apparatus shown in FIG. 1 has a hangar 13 with an integral candle holder 16. In addition, one version of a retainer 12 of the invention is shown in FIG. 1 and a variant retainer 22 is shown in FIG. 2. They perform the same function and may be interchanged. In addition, one hangar 13 is shown in FIG. 1 and a variant hangar 23 is shown in FIG. 2. They perform the same function and may be interchanged. The hangar 13 shown in FIG. 1, with integral candle holder 16, may be used on a shelf 20 with retainer 22, and hangar 23 shown in FIG. 2 may be used with mantel 10 in FIG. 1. Only two figures are shown for the sake of simplicity.

[0019] FIG. 1 shows a brick fireplace 11 with a mantel 10 thereon on which the invention is used to hang a stocking 19 at Christmas time. This embodiment of the invention has a hangar 13 that may be made of metal or plastic and sits on the top front edge of mantel 10. Hangar 13 has a J hook 14 extending down over the front edge of mantel 10 on which stocking 19 is hung with a loop of material 19a often made as part the stocking.

[0020] The invention also has a retainer 22 that wedges in between mantel 10 and wall 29 into which the brick fireplace 11 is built. In FIG. 1 retainer 12 is a relatively thin, flat piece of material that can be pushed between wall 29 and the back edge of mantel 10 as shown. Retainer 12 includes a ring 12a attached thereto upon which force can be applied to push retainer 12 between wall 29 and mantel 10. A tether in the form of a string, wire or plastic line 18 (hereinafter referred to as tether 18) can preferably be tied to ring 12a before retainer 12 is inserted between the wall and mantel, but it can be tied afterwards. Alternatively, instead of using retainer 12 a screw hook or eyelet screw (not shown) may be screwed into the wall at or near the point where retainer 12 would be inserted between wall 29 and mantel 10. Tether 18 is tied to the screw hook or eyelet screw instead of to ring 12a.

[0021] Hangar 13 has a small tab 15 at its rear edge that angles up and away from the top surface of mantel 10. Tab 15 has a hole there through (not shown in FIG. 1 but shown in FIGS. 3 and 4). Hangar 13, without stocking 19 and candle 17 is set on the top front edge of mantel 10 as shown and tether 18 is passed through the hole in tab 15 and is tied thereto. Tether 18 is strong enough to prevent hangar 13 from being pulled from the mantel 10 when a fair amount of pulling force is applied to hangar 13 or anything hung thereon, such as stocking 19. Stocking 19 is hung from J hook 14 of hangar 13 using loop 19a as shown. A candle 17 is then inserted into candle holder 16. Candle 17 can be a real candle or may be one of the newer battery powered candles that are common. If a candle 17 is not desired a figurine or other decoration may be placed on top of and may be fastened to candle holder 16.

[0022] A number of hangars 13 (not shown), as described in the previous paragraph, may be spaced along the front edge of mantel 10 and garland or a string of lights may be strung along the top of the J hook 14 of each hangar 13. In addition, while a stocking 19 is shown hung from hangar 13, anything else may be hung there from within its weight limitations.

[0023] As briefly mentioned above, the retainer 22 of FIG. 2 may be used in lieu of retainer 12 in FIG. 1.

[0024] FIG. 1 shows a wall 29 with a shelf 20 fastened thereto, and having vertical support from element 21. The invention is used with shelf 20 to hang a stocking 28 or other decorative ornament thereon. This embodiment of the invention has a hangar 23 that may be made of metal or plastic and sits on the top front edge of shelf 20 as shown. Hangar 23 has a J hook 24 extending down over the front edge of shelf 20 on which a stocking 28 is hung with a loop of material 28a often made as part the stocking.

[0025] FIG. 2 shows another embodiment of a part of the invention. Retainer 22 is a relatively thin, I shaped piece of metal that can be pushed between wall 29 and the back edge of shelf 20 as shown. Instead of a ring as in FIG. 1, retainer 22 has a tab 22a that angles up and away from the top of shelf 20 and has a hole there through (not shown in this Figure but shown in FIGS. 3 and 4). For ease of installation a piece of string, wire or plastic line 26 (hereinafter referred to as tether 26) can preferably be tied through the hole in tab 22a before clip 22 is inserted between the wall and mantel, but it can be tied thereto afterwards. Hangar 23 has a small tab 25 at its rear edge that angles up and away from the top of mantel 20. Tab 25 also has a hole there through (not shown in FIG. 2 but shown in FIGS. 3 and 4). Hangar 23, without stocking 28 hanging there from, is set on the top front edge of mantel 20 as shown and tether 18 is passed through the hole in tab 25 and is tied thereto. Tether 18 is strong enough to prevent hangar 23 from being pulled from mantel 10 when a fair amount of pulling force is applied to hangar 23 or anything hung thereon, such as stocking 28. Stocking 28 is then hung from J hook 24 of hangar 23 using loop 28a as shown.

[0026] In the following paragraphs an alternative way of attaching a hangar to a retainer is described. With this alternative no tying of a tether is required. While the following description is with reference to tab 25 of hangar 23 in FIG. 2, it also applies to retainer 22 with its tab 22a in FIG. 2, and to hangar 13 with its tab 15 in FIG. 1. With this alternative way of attaching a hangar to a retainer, the retainer 12 in FIG. 1 is not utilized because a ring 12a is not
needed. Only a retainer such as retainer 22 is needed because it has a tab 22a with a keyhole shaped hole 30 through it.

[0027] FIG. 3 shows an alternative way of attaching hangar 23 to retainer 22 in FIG. 2. Shown is a partial view of hangar 23 without J hook 24. Tab 25 of hangar 23 has a hole 30 through it as previously described with reference to FIG. 2. Hole 30 is keyhole shaped and has an elongated slot 30a and a larger diameter portion 30b. Instead of using string or wire as shown and described with reference to FIGS. 1 and 2, the tether 26 is a strong plastic line 26 having molded, spaced beads 26a along it. With this tether 26 there is no manual tying to be done to assemble and use the novel holding apparatus. The diameter of beads 18a is only slightly less than the diameter of portion 30b of the hole 30 and the diameter of line 26 between beads 26a is only slightly less than the diameter of elongated slot 30a.

[0028] FIG. 4 shows the alternative tether 26 attached to tab 25 of hangar 23. Tether 26 and some number of its beads 26a are first inserted through the larger diameter portion 30b of hole 30. This can be done because of the relative dimensions as described in the previous paragraph. After beaded tether 26 is inserted through hole portion 30b a sufficient amount is moved upward into elongated slot 30a. Since beads 26a have a diameter larger than the width of slot 30a beaded tether 26 cannot be pulled back through tab 25.

[0029] When using the beaded tether 26 as part of the invention, retainer 22 is first inserted between shelf 20 and the rear edge of shelf 20 or a mantel 10. Tab 22a has a keyhole shaped hole 30 through it, alike that shown in FIGS. 2 and 3, through which at least the first bead 26a on a first end of tether 26 is inserted through portion 30b and is then slid up into the elongated slot 30a in tab 22a. With hangar 23 positioned on the top front edge of shelf 20 or mantel 10 the other (second) end of beaded line 26 is inserted through portion 30b of keyhole shaped hole 30 through hangar 23 until there is no slack in beaded tether 26. Tether 26 is then slid up into the elongated slot 30a of tab 25. With no slack in beaded tether 26 hangar 23 cannot fall off mantel 10 or shelf 20. Any excess length of beaded line 26 after it passes through hole 30 in tab 25 of hangar 23 may be cut off.

[0030] FIG. 5 shows another embodiment of the invention wherein the invention is used with an existing weighted stocking holder 13 that has a ceramic or metallic figurine 33. Such a weighted stocking holder 13 has a J hook 14 that has a stocking 19 hung there from as previously described with reference to FIG. 1. If a child pulls on such a weighted stocking holder 13, without the use of the invention, the holder would fall and obviously do damage to the face of the child.

[0031] In this embodiment of the invention there would be no hangar with J hook because it is already part of the prior art weighted stocking holder 33. Instead the hangar 13 of FIG. 1 is replaced by a flat metallic or plastic base plate 34 that is adhesively fastened to the bottom of the weighted stocking holder 13. Base 34 has a tab 15 with a hole there through, as described with reference to FIG. 1, to which tether 18 is tied or attached. Base 34 may be also manufactured as an integral part of the weighted stocking holder 33.

[0032] As previously described with reference to FIG. 1 there is a retainer 12 that wedges in between mantel 10 and the wall 29 into which the brick fireplace 11 is built. Retainer 12 includes a ring 12a attached thereto upon which force can be applied to push retainer 12 between wall 29 and mantel 10. Tether 18 is tied to ring 12a before retainer 12 is inserted between the wall and mantel, but it can be tied afterwards. Alternatively, instead of using retainer 12, retainer 22 or a screw hook or eyelet screw (not shown) may be screwed into the wall at or near the point where retainer 12 would be inserted between wall 29 and mantel 10. Tether 18 is tied to the screw hook or eyelet screw instead of to ring 12a. Base 34 has a small tab 15 at its rear edge that angles up and away from the top of mantel 10. Tab 15 has a hole there through as previously described with reference to FIG. 1 to which tether 18 is tied. Tether 18 is strong enough to prevent figurine 33 and stocking 19 from being pulled from mantel 10 when a fair amount of pulling force is applied thereto. Instead of tether 18 the alternative tether means shown in and described with reference to FIGS. 3 and 4 may also be used.

[0033] This embodiment of the invention may alternatively be used for retaining only a figurine 33 or other decorative item sitting near the front edge of a shelf or mantel 10. The J hook 14 does not exist in this application. Figurine 33 preferably has made as part thereof base 34 that has a tab 15 to which tether 18 is tied or otherwise attached. However, base 10 may be adhesively attached to the bottom of separate figurine 33 by a purchaser of the invention. The retainer 12 is as previously described, and the alternative retaining means shown in and described with reference to FIGS. 3 and 4 may be used instead. The figurine 33 with base 34 attached thereto is secured using tether 18 and retainer 12 or alternative screw hook or eyelet screw as previously described.

[0034] While what has been described herein is the preferred embodiment of the invention it will be understood by those skilled in the art that numerous changes may be made without departing from the spirit and scope of the invention. For example, when the invention is used on a shelf 20, retainer 22a can alternatively be a U shaped piece of material that is inserted onto the back edge of the shelf with one portion underneath the shelf, a second portion at the rear of the shelf, and a third portion on top of the shelf. Tether 26 is attached to the first portion that extends on top of the shelf. This alternative embodiment is practical because shelving material is generally of a common thickness.

What is claimed is:

1. Apparatus for holding items on and/or hanging items from a shelf or mantel that is adjacent to a wall with the shelf or mantel having a top, a front edge furthest from the wall and a rear edge nearest the wall that define the width of the shelf or mantel, so the items are not easily pulled off or knocked off the shelf or mantel, the apparatus comprising:

   a first element positioned on top of the shelf or mantel near its front edge and an item is fastened to the first element;

   a second element that is held to the wall; and

   adjustable means for connecting the first and second elements to span shelves or mantels of different widths so that any force applied to the item fastened to the first element will not cause the item to fall from the shelf or mantel.
2. The apparatus in accordance with claim 1 wherein the first element comprises first hangar means that extend over the front edge of the shelf or mantel, said first hangar means permitting the item to be hung in front of the shelf or mantel planar surface.

3. The apparatus in accordance with claim 2 wherein the first element comprises a first fastening means that permits the item to be fastened to the first element on top of the shelf or mantel.

4. The apparatus in accordance with claim 3 wherein the adjustable connecting means has a first end and a second end and the first element comprises first means for holding the first end of the adjustable connecting means.

5. The apparatus in accordance with claim 4 wherein the second element comprises second means for holding the second end of the adjustable connecting means.

6. (deleted)

7. The apparatus in accordance with claim 1 wherein the first element comprises a first fastening means that permits the item to be fastened to the first element on top of the shelf or mantel.

8. The apparatus in accordance with claim 7 wherein the first element comprises first hangar means that extend over the front edge of the shelf or mantel, said first hangar means permitting the item to be hung in front of the shelf or mantel.

9. (deleted)

10. The apparatus in accordance with claim 1 wherein the adjustable connecting means has a first end and a second end and the first element comprises first means for holding the first end of the adjustable connecting means.

11. The apparatus in accordance with claim 10 wherein the second element comprises second means for holding the second end of the adjustable connecting means.

12. (deleted)

13. (deleted)

14. Apparatus for holding items set on a shelf or mantel that is adjacent to a wall, with the shelf or mantel having a top, a front edge furthest from the wall and a rear edge nearest the wall, so that items pulled off or knocked off the shelf or mantel will not fall very far, the apparatus comprising:

   a first element positioned on top of the shelf or mantel near its front edge and an item is fastened to the first element;

   a second element held to the wall; and

   means for connecting the first and second elements and if a force is applied to the item fastened to the first element that causes it to fall from the shelf or mantel the item will not fall very far and will held by the connecting means.

15. (deleted)

16. The apparatus in accordance with claim 14 wherein the first element comprises a first fastening means that permits the item to be fastened to the first element on top of the shelf or mantel.

17. The apparatus in accordance with claim 16 wherein the connecting means has a first end and a second end and the first element comprises first means for holding the first end of the connecting means.

18. The apparatus in accordance with claim 17 wherein the second element comprises second means for holding the second end of the connecting means.

19. Apparatus for holding an item set on a shelf or mantel that is adjacent to a wall, with the shelf or mantel having a top, a front edge furthest from the wall and a rear edge nearest the wall, so that if the item is pulled off or knocked off the shelf or mantel it will not fall very far, the apparatus comprising:

   a fastening element held to the wall; and

   A tether having a first end that is attached to the fastening element and a second end that is attached to the item on the shelf or mantel, and if a force is applied to the item fastened to the tether that causes it to fall from the shelf or mantel the item will not fall very far and will held by the tether.

* * * * *