Nov. 12, 1957 B. M. HINES 2,812,601

KEY TAG

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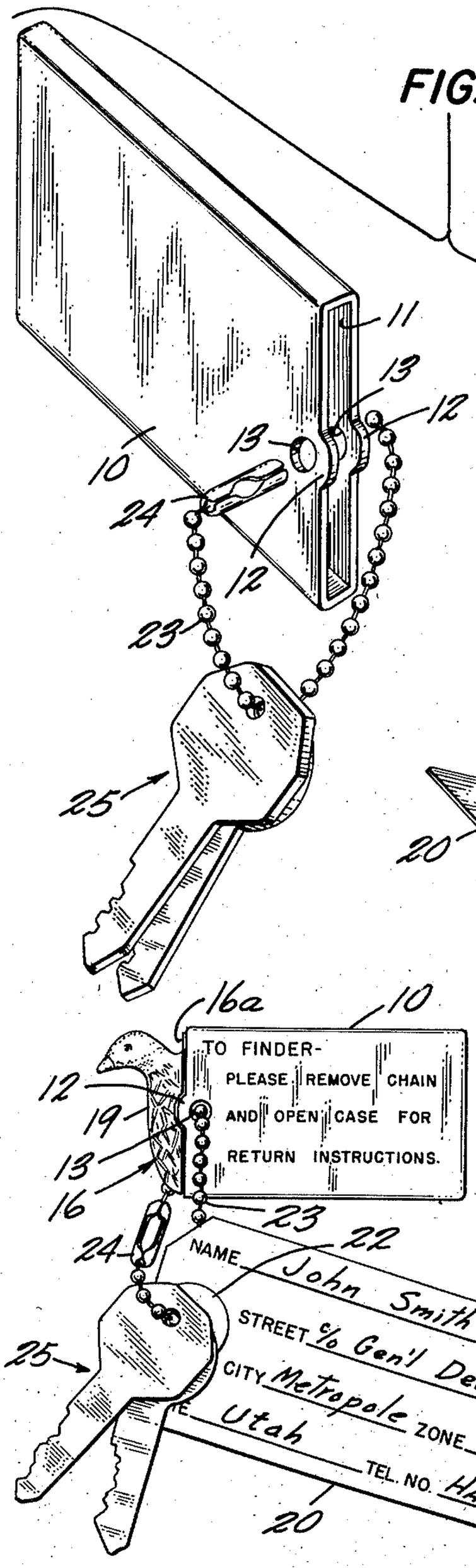


FIG. 1.

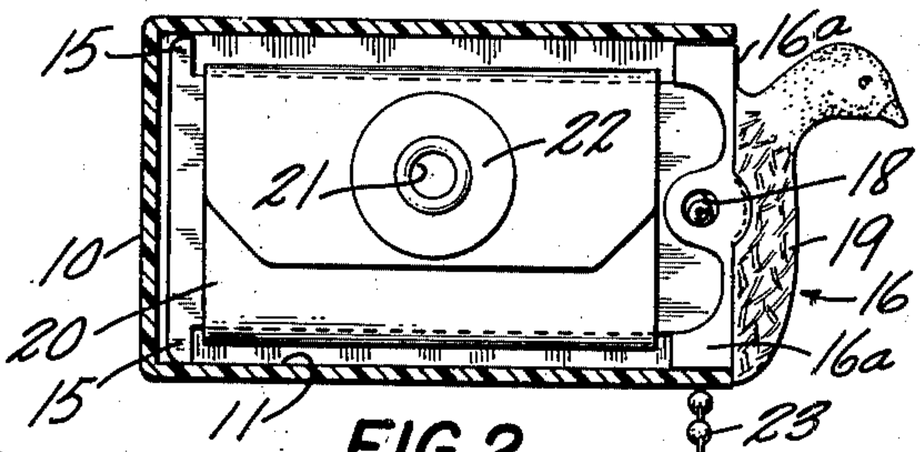


FIG. 2.

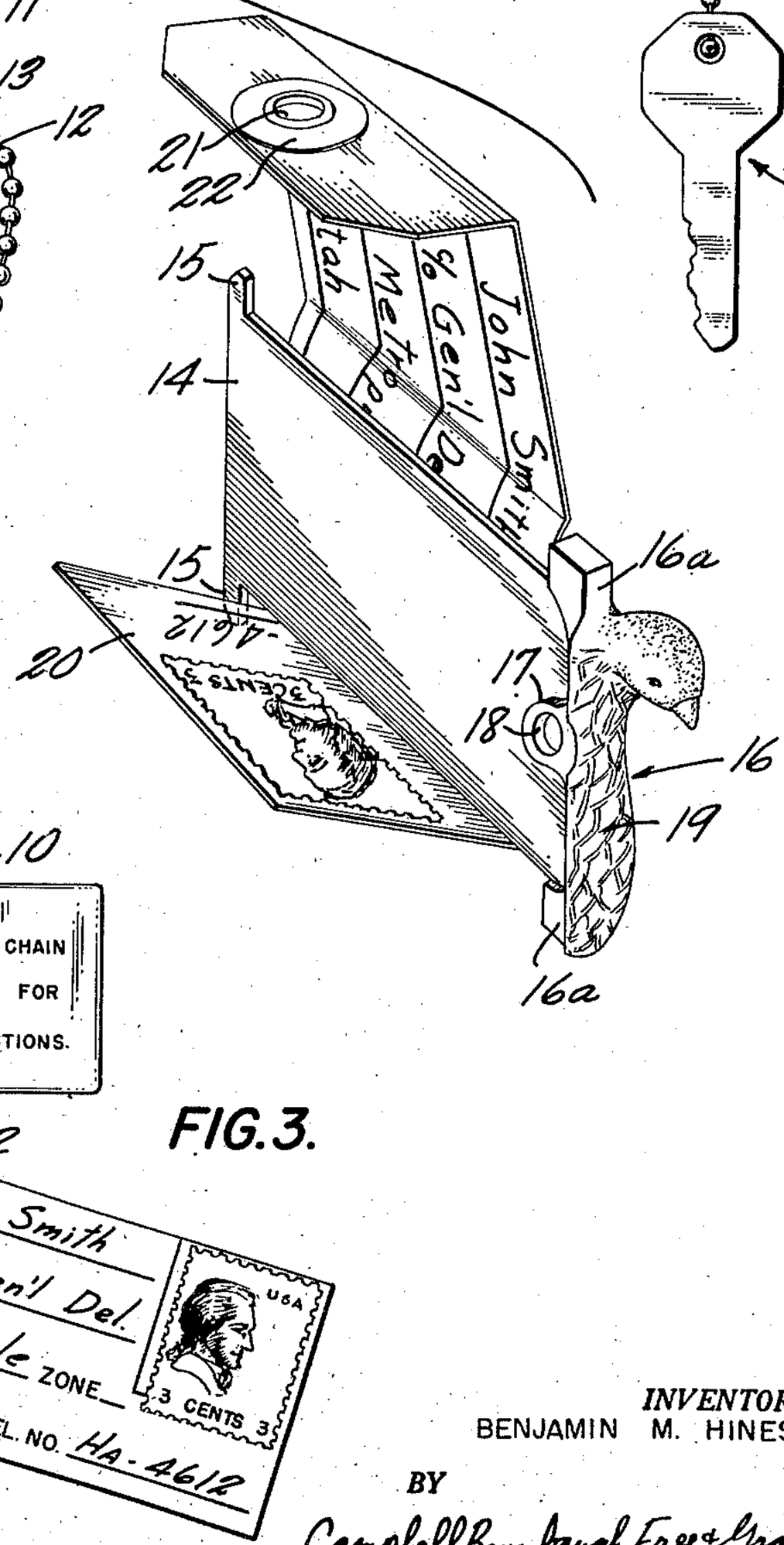


FIG. 3.

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KEY TAG

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1 Claim. (Cl. 40—17)

This invention relates to identifying tags for articles such as keys.

It is well known that identifying tags for keys have been provided with the name and address of the owner. However, if lost keys with such an identifying tag are to be returned to the owner by a finder, the finder usually must deliver the keys personally to the owner or package them for mailing. In view of the inconveniences involved, it often happens that keys even if found are not returned.

Attempts have been made to provide for the return of lost keys to their owners. One such solution practiced on a wide scale involves the distribution by an organization of key tags bearing the organization's address. Each such tag also bears a code number (replicas of automobile license numbers have been used) and the organization maintains an index of all such code numbers and the owners assigned that issued tag. An arrangement with the Post Office whereby the postage fee is prepaid facilitates their return to the organization. There the identification of the owner is made and the keys are finally packaged and mailed to the owner.

It is apparent that the above solution to the lost-key problem entailed unnecessary complexity and expense and furthermore prevented the expeditious return of lost keys to their owner.

Accordingly, it is an object of the present invention to provide an identifying tag construction which permits a prompt and direct return by mail of the identified subject matter with minimum effort and expense.

It is another object to provide a key tag of the above character which is of such size that it may be conveniently carried in a pocket or purse and yet contain all the necessary components to facilitate a prompt return such as a stamp and an addressed return tag containing mailing directions.

These and other objects of the invention are accomplished by providing an identification tag of plastic, metal, impregnated paper or a combination thereof comprising two cooperating outer and inner members, one essentially fitting within the other and held in such position by a member such as a key chain threaded through both sections. The inner member in the preferred embodiment carries wrapped about it a stamped paper or cloth tag carrying the owner's address and when in position within the outer member carries the return address tag concealed and protected within the key tag assembly. The key tag contains on its outer surface appropriate instructions directing a finder how to dismantle the key tag and separate the cooperating sections, place the return address tag on the key chain, and reassemble the key tag. The entire assembly may then be deposited in any mail box for return to the owner.

In the accompanying drawings:

Figure 1 is an exploded view in perspective of a key tag embodying the principles of the present invention;

Figure 2 is a view in elevation, partially broken away, of a normally assembled key tag; and

Figure 3 also is a view in elevation of the key tag prepared for mailing.

These figures comprise an illustrative embodiment of the invention. A flat, rectangularly shaped casing indicated by reference character **10** of the figures comprises the outer key tag body having an inner chamber **11**. The casing **10** may be constructed from any suitable material such as plastic, metal, or impregnated materials, for example. Near the open end of the casing there are openings **13** which may be set in round protrusions **12**.

A second cooperating member **14** is adapted to fit snugly within the chamber **11** of the first cooperating member **10**. The end of this inner member **14**, which is positioned innermost within the chamber **11**, is provided with transversely extending lugs **15** and at its outermost end is fitted with a handle **16** having shoulders or abutments **16***a* adapted to give a snug fit with the opening of chamber **11** to seal it and preserve its contents. The inner member **14** has a hole **18** suitably reinforced by the boss **17**. This hole coincides with the openings **13** in the outer member or casing **10** when the inner member is wholly in cooperative position within the member **10** as illustrated by Figure 2. The handle **16** may be decorative in nature as illustrated but is preferably of a type to give a good grip such as by a roughened surface **19** to permit ease in sliding the member **14** in and out of the chamber **11** of member **10**.

The inner portion of the member **14**, it will be noted from the embodiment of my invention illustrated by Figure 1, is somewhat less in thickness than the width of the inner chamber **11**. Also the area between the lugs **15** and the shoulders **16***a* is somewhat less in width than the width of the inner chamber **11**. These two factors permit the member **14** to carry within the chamber **11** an additional member such as the return address tag **20** wrapped about the recessed portion of the inner member **14**.

The return address tag **20** carries appropriate postal markings such as indicated positions for name and address and is provided preferably with a postage stamp. It also is provided at one end with a hole **21** strengthened by an annular reinforcement **22**. Appropriate instructions (not shown) may be printed on the reverse side of the address tag **20** to enable the finder to easily reassemble the key tag, as explained hereinafter. As clearly shown in Figure 1, the return address tag **20** or other intelligence or material may be wrapped around the inner member **14** in the recesses or notches between the lugs **15** and the handle **16**. It should be noted that the lugs **15** perform the important function of acting to cause the removal of the tag **20** from the chamber **11** as the inner member **14** is withdrawn. Conversely, the transversely extending portions **16***a* of the handle **16** engage the tag **20** and carry it into the chamber **11** upon sliding in the member **14**.

A conventional bead key chain **23** passing through the openings **13** and **18** is preferably used to hold the members **10** and **14** in cooperative relationship providing a sealed chamber for member **20** as shown in Figure 2. This chain has a locking link **24** and also serves to carry a set of keys **25**. Other flexible or rigid locking and key holding means may be substituted for the bead chain **23** if desired.

To assemble this novel key tag, the address tag **20** is wrapped on the inner member **14**, as shown in Figures 1 and 2, and these members are then slipped into the chamber **11** in the casing **10** until the holes **13** and **18** coincide and the shoulders **16***a* act to close the inner chamber **11**. The key chain **23** is then passed through the openings **13** and **18** and the locking link **24** utilized in the well-known manner to connect the ends of the chain **23**.

A finder of the lost keys 25 will note the instructions on the casing 10, shown in Figure 3, and has only to open the key chain 23, pull it from the openings 13 and 18, grasp the handle 16 and slide out the inner member 14 and the return address tag 20 which it carries from the chamber 11. The return address tag is unwrapped and strung on the key chain 23 by means of the hole 21. The member 14 is then slid back in the outer case 10 until the holes 13 and 18 coincide and the key chain again passed through them. The chain ends are locked together by the link 24 and the entire assembly then appears as illustrated by Figure 3. The return address tag 20 contains the address previously inserted by the owner and a stamp and the entire assembly may merely be dropped into a convenient mailbox for return to its owner.

It will be apparent from this description that a novel key tag has been provided which although sufficiently small and decorative to be conveniently carried on a set of keys yet serves as a container for a suitably stamped and addressed tag which facilitates the return of the keys when lost.

It will be understood that the above-described embodiment of the invention is illustrative only and modifications thereof will occur to those skilled in the art. Therefore, the invention is not to be limited to the specific apparatus described herein but is to be defined by the appended claim.

I claim:

A key tag comprising a casing including two narrow walls joined by two wide walls to form a chamber, an end wall enclosing the chamber at one end, the chamber being open at its other end, aligned openings in the wide casing walls at the open end of the chamber, a flat inner member adapted to slide in and out of said casing chamber, a first pair of transversely extending lugs on the inner end of the flat member adapted with the member to fit closely between the two narrow chamber walls, a second pair of transversely extending lugs on the outer end of the flat member adapted to fit snugly in portions of the open end of said casing adjacent to the narrow chamber walls, shoulders formed on the outer end of said flat member adapted to bear against the edges of the open end of the chamber, an opening in the outer end of said flat member in alignment with said casing openings when said shoulders bear against said edges, a projection adjacent to said shoulders on the outer end of the inner member adapted to be gripped for sliding the inner member in and out of said chamber, a flexible return address tag loosely wrapped about said inner flat member between said two pairs of transversely extending lugs, said lugs forcing the insertion and removal of the flexible tag in the chamber upon movement of said inner flat member, and a key chain passing through said openings acting to retain said flat member in said chamber, whereby said return address tag may be removed from the flat member and assembled on the key chain with the casing.

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