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(54) **WIRELESS ALARM SYSTEM**

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375/146; 370/515; 340/853.2; 340/3.5

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See application file for complete search history.

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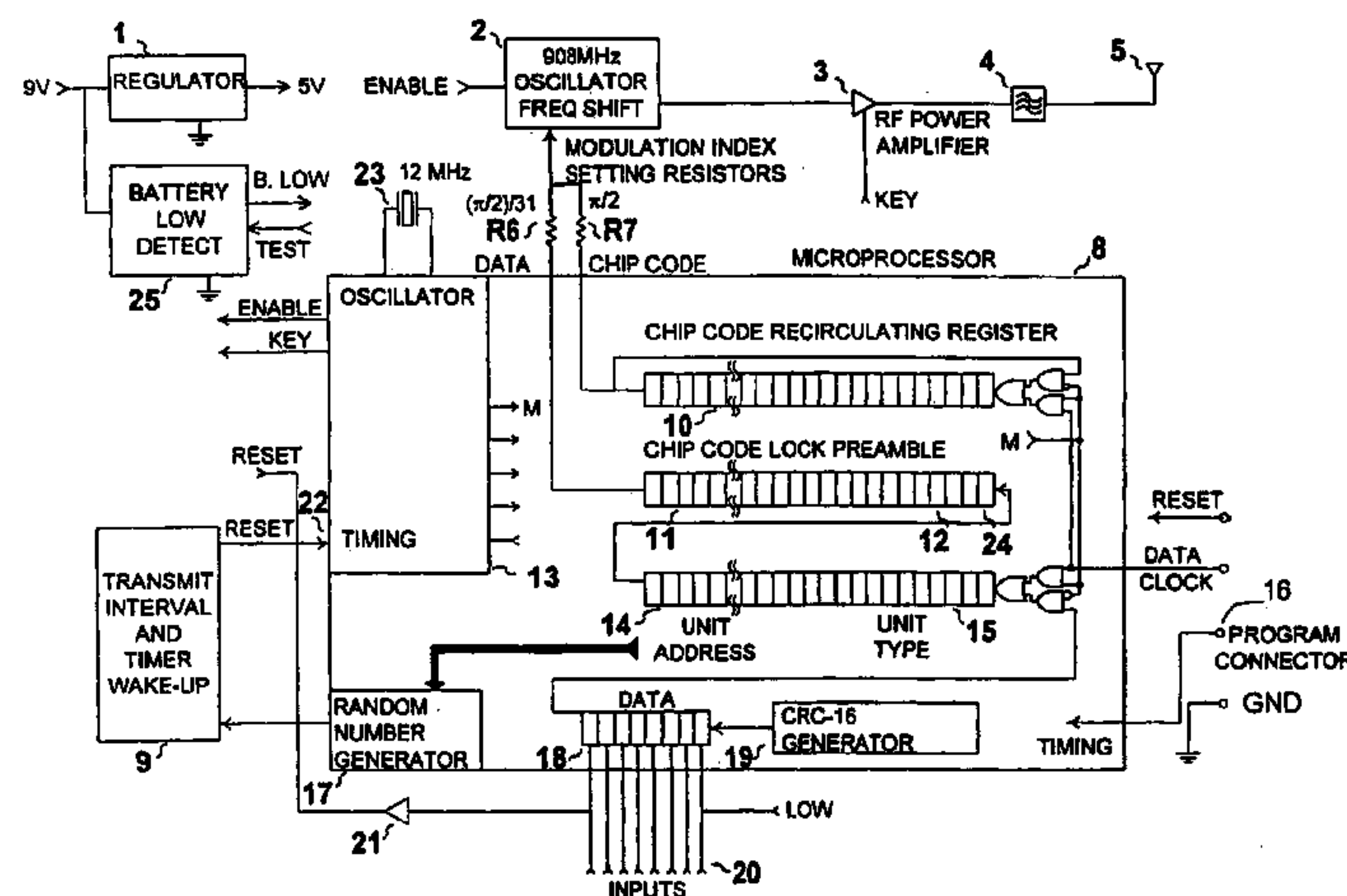
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(57) **ABSTRACT**

A remote power meter monitoring system using spread spectrum transmitters, fast frequency shift keying, spread spectrum receivers and a computer. The spread spectrum transmitter uses a chip code generator, preamble register, address register data register and oscillator coupled to a microprocessor to transmit information in a direct sequence spread spectrum signal. The spread spectrum receiver acquires synchronization of the spread spectrum signal using a microprocessor to despread and detect the transmitted information, which relates to data from a power meter.

80 Claims, 8 Drawing Sheets



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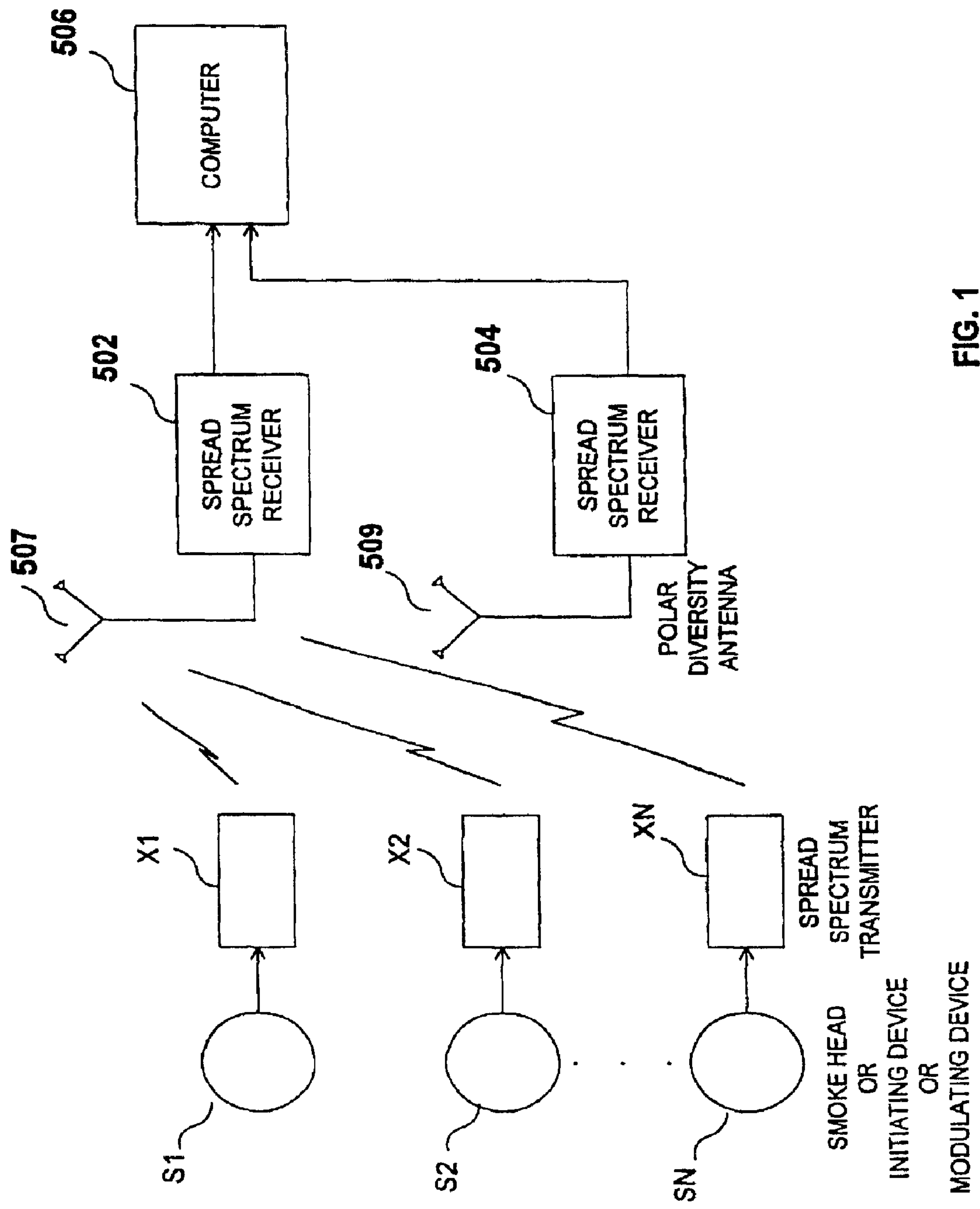


FIG. 1

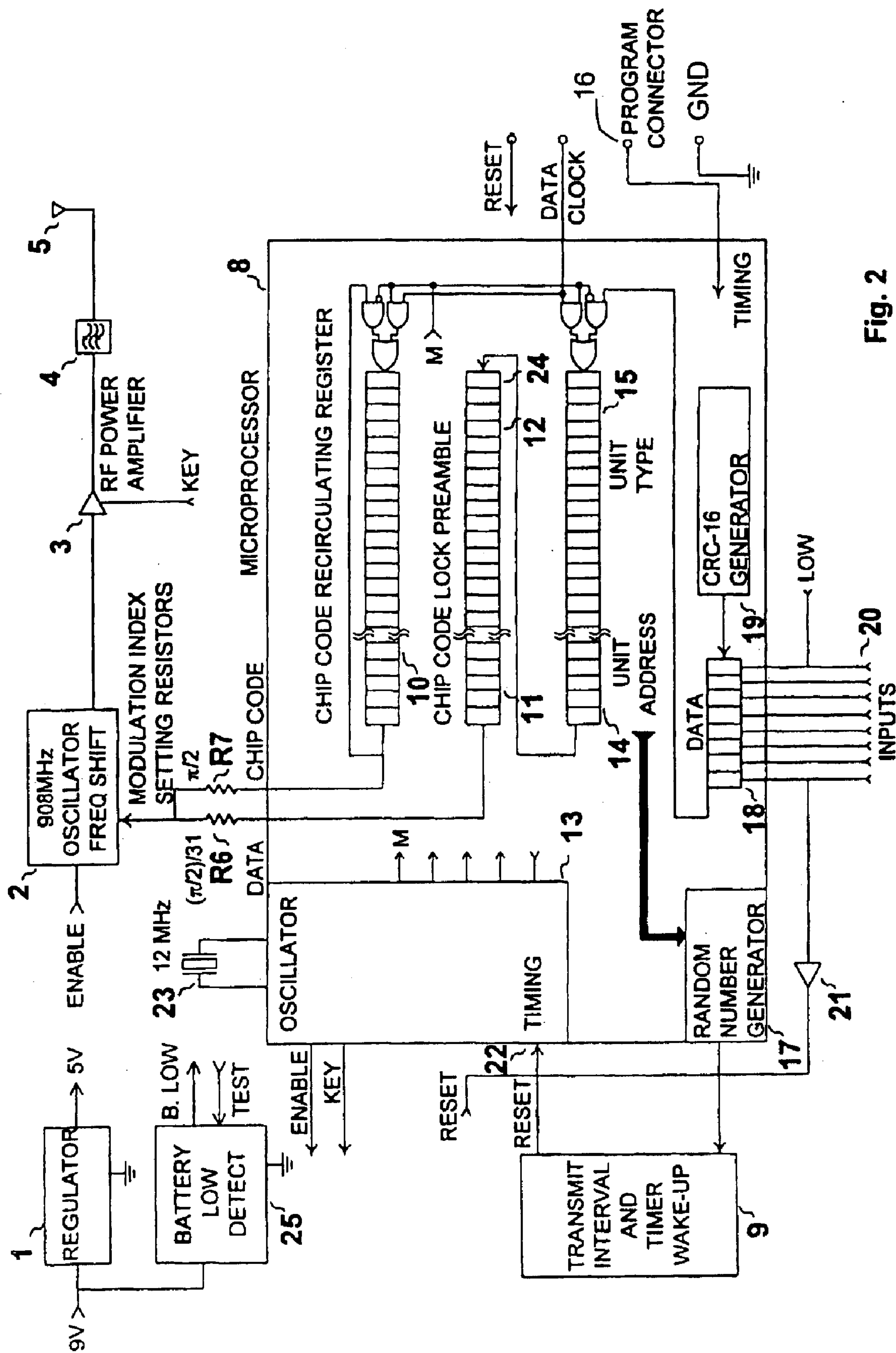


Fig. 2

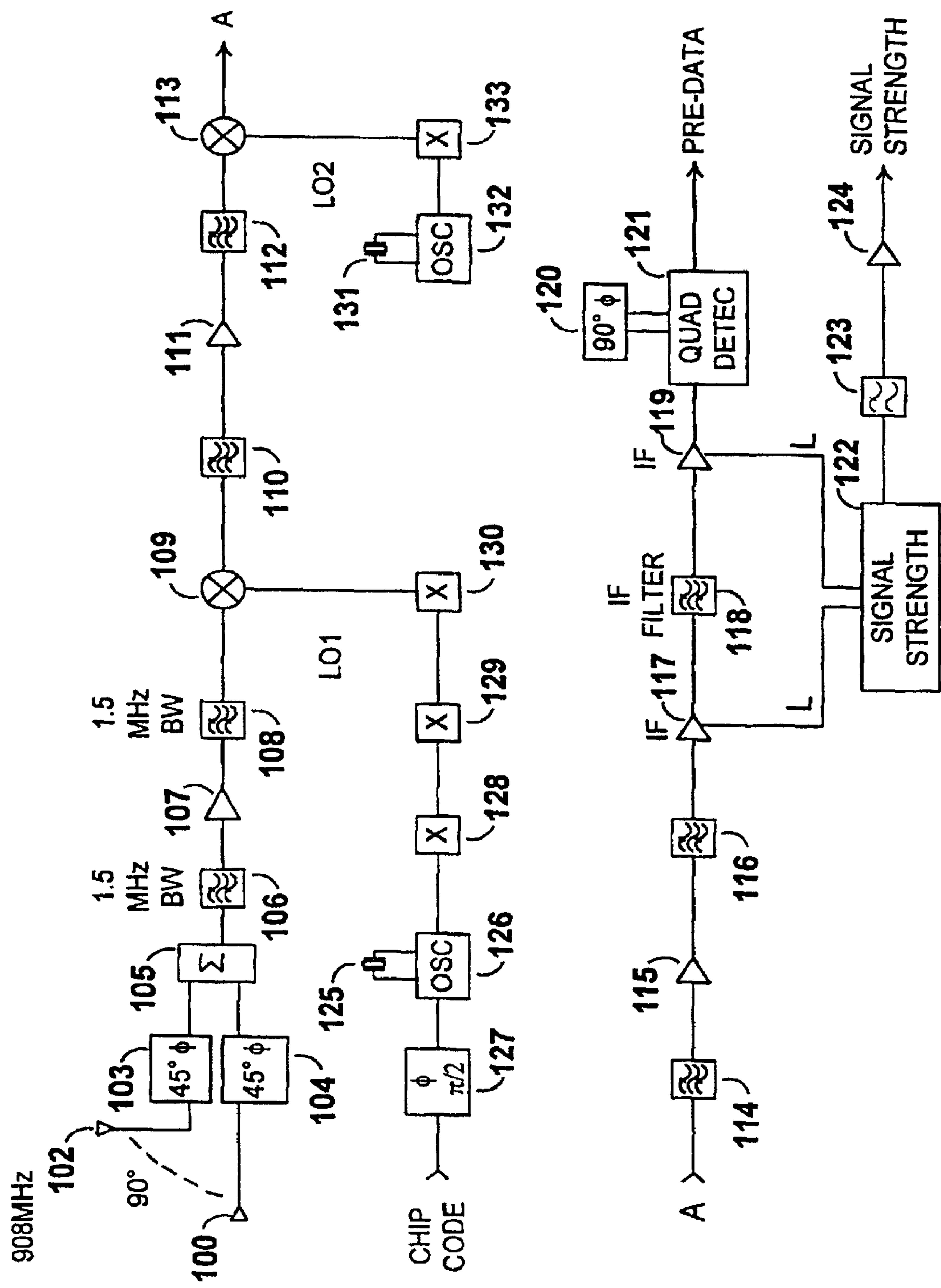
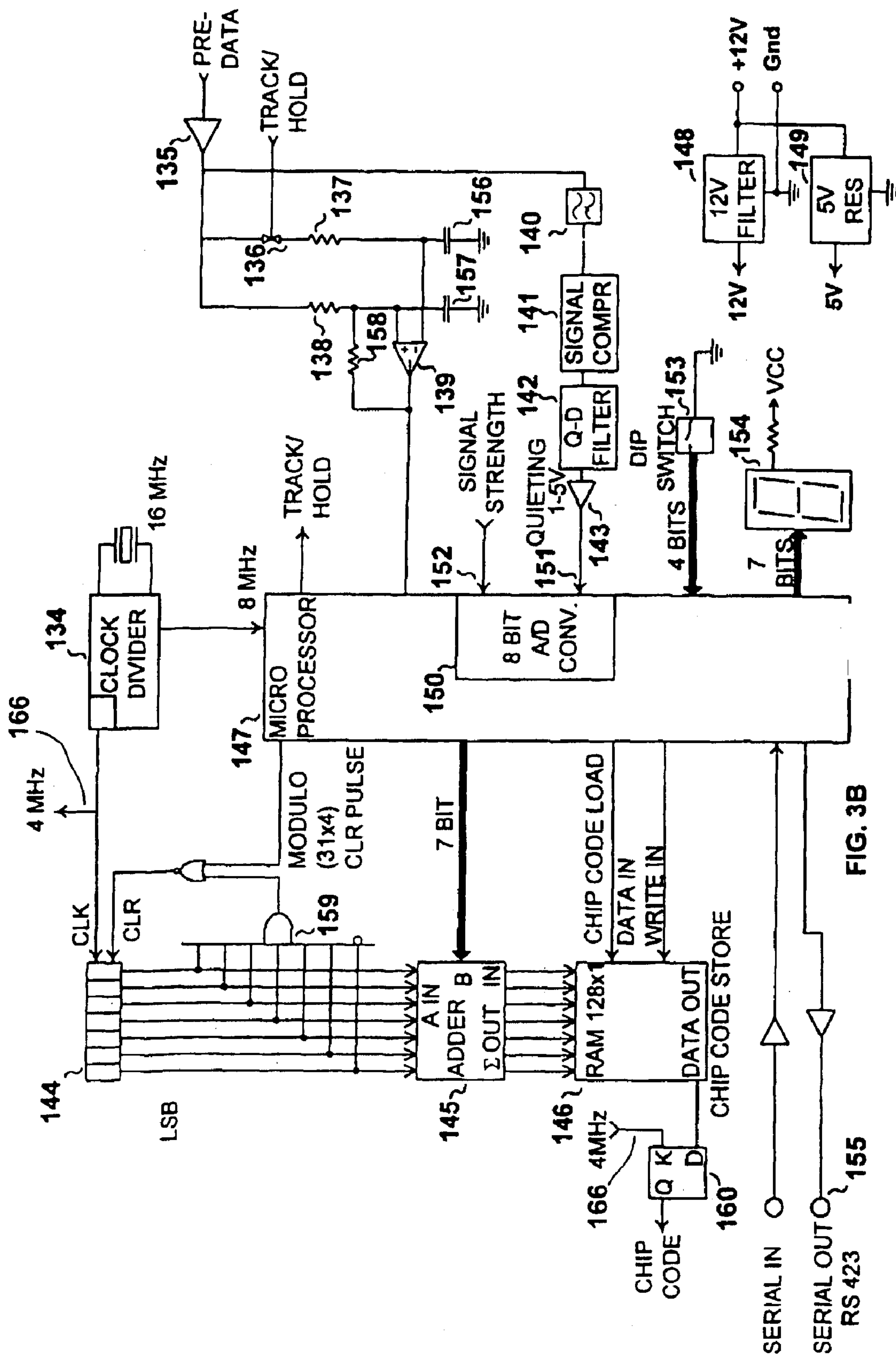
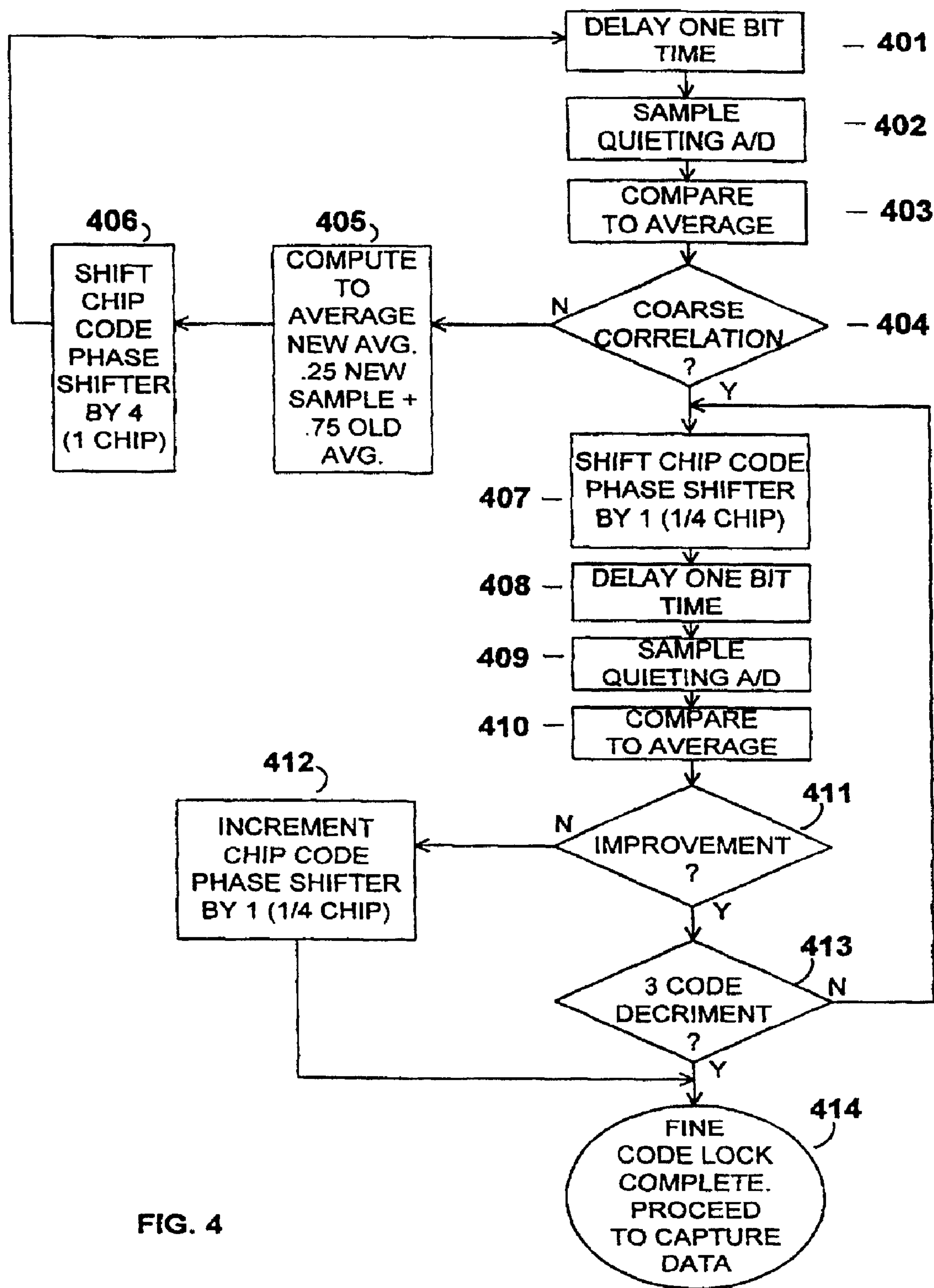
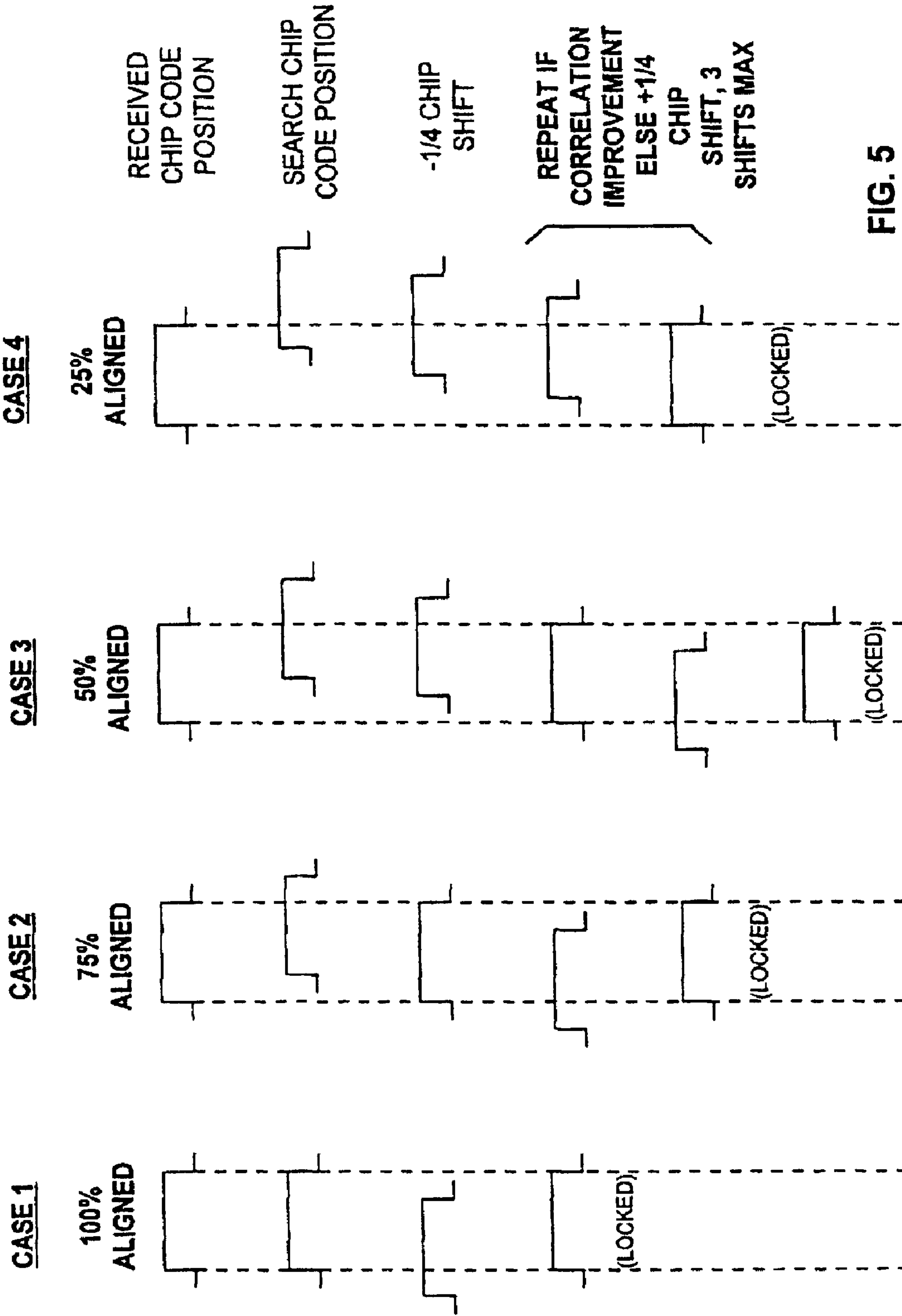


FIG. 3A







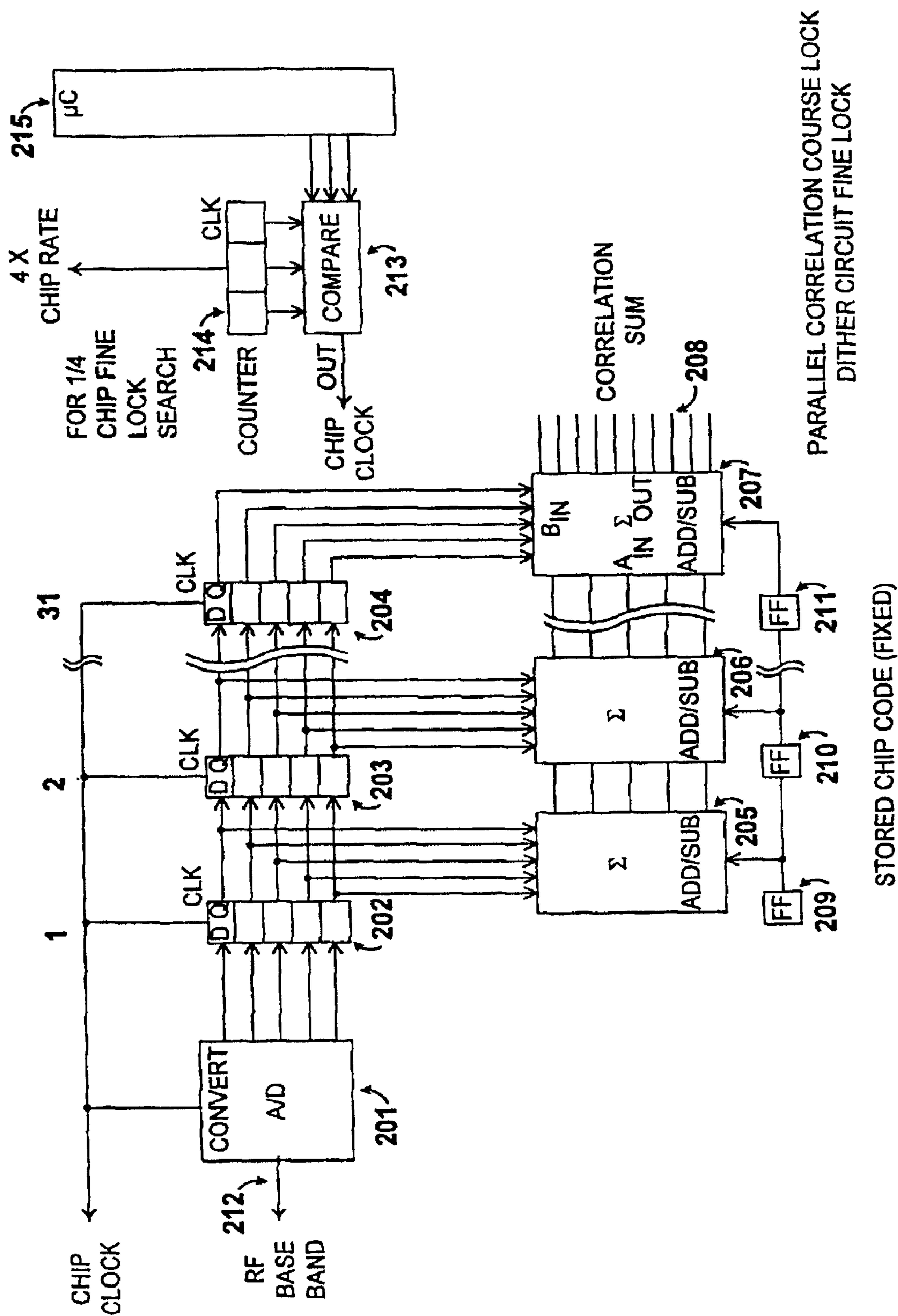
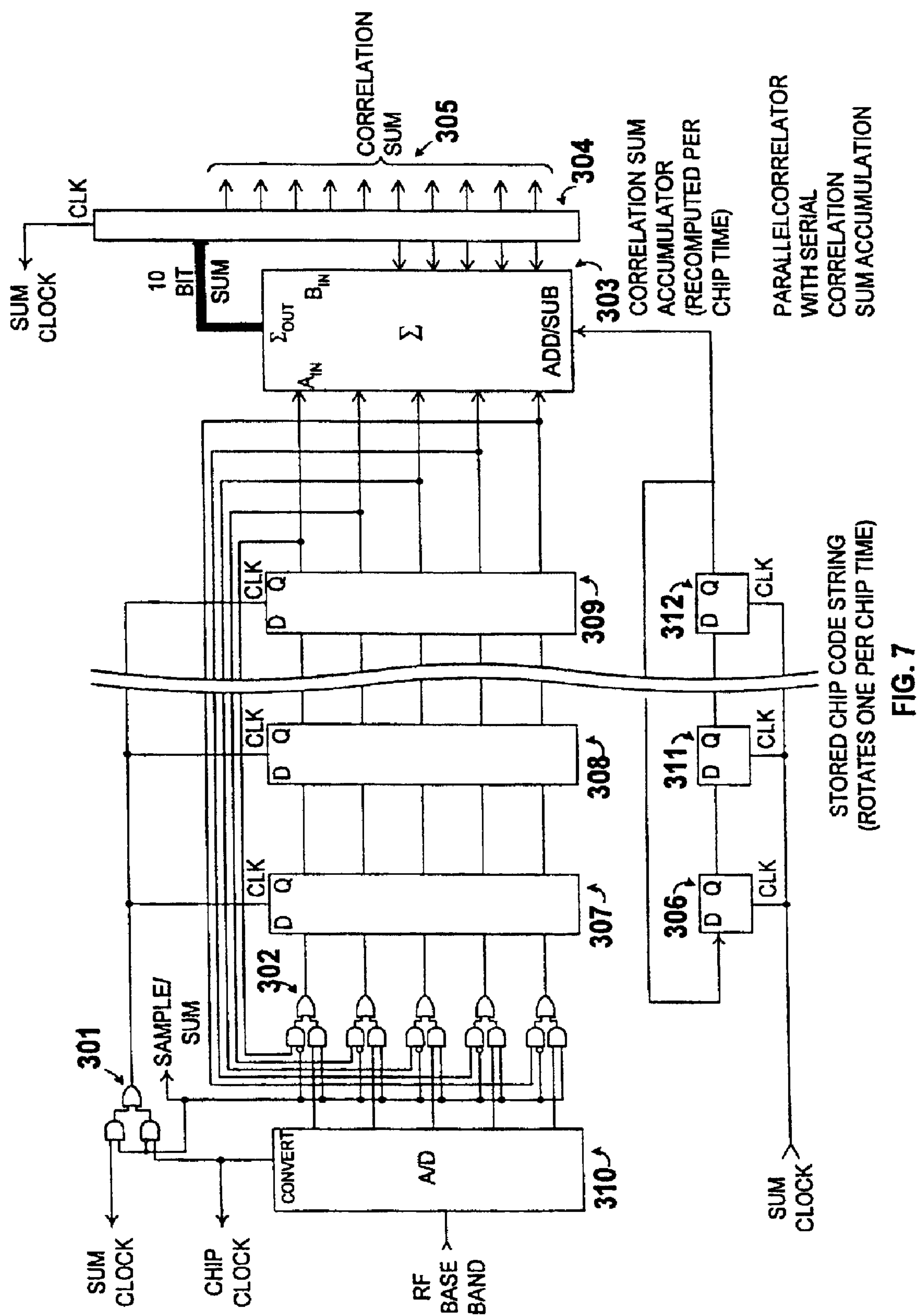


FIG. 6



WIRELESS ALARM SYSTEM

Matter enclosed in heavy brackets [] appears in the original patent but forms no part of this reissue specification; matter printed in italics indicates the additions made by reissue.

CROSS REFERENCE TO RELATED APPLICATION

This application is a continuation of U.S. patent application Ser. No. 08/487,523 filed Jun. 7, 1995, *now U.S. Pat. No. 5,987,058*, entitled Wireless Alarm System which is a continuation of application Ser. No. 07/782,345 (filed Oct. 24, 1991) revived, *now U.S. Pat. No. 5,598,427* which is a divisional of Ser. No. 07/569,682 (filed Aug. 20, 1990), *now U.S. Pat. No. 5,095,493*, which is a divisional of Ser. No. 07/266,461 (filed Nov. 2, 1988), *now U.S. Pat. No. 4,977,577*.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

This invention relates to a wireless warning system for use in a large office building, and more particularly a wireless fire warning and detection system which employs spread spectrum technology with high reliability for continuously monitoring the building.

DESCRIPTION OF THE PRIOR ART

A number of systems and techniques have been employed in the prior art as a warning system for large buildings. These include having warning sensors for detecting fire, security, or other means wired directly to a main console, with indicators that a particular sensor has been activated. Systems also have been developed employing a radio link between the sensor and receiver. For example, U.S. Pat. No. 4,550,312 to Galloway et al. teaches the use of wideband sensors and transmitters. The sensors/transmitters transmit digital information to a central station by radio. These transmissions of messages are preceded by an additional access code to identify a particular property. This increases the message overhead, however, which lowers system throughput and lowers battery life.

U.S. Pat. No. 4,661,804 to Abel discloses a receiver-decoder used with a plurality of encode or transmitter units using digitally encoded addresses. This use of multiple redundant 35 second interval short transmissions is used to achieve reliable throughput.

U.S. Pat. No. 4,734,680 to Gehman et al. teaches the use of a pseudorandom number to lower probability of repeat data collisions. The Gehman invention provides for only four bits or sixteen time slot positions over which to transmit, which are inadequate for large systems; with hundreds of transmitters. The Gehman disclosure does not teach the use of a randomization interval with hundreds of possible of time slots with spread spectrum so that a destructive data collision can only occur in one chip time. Further, the Gehman patent does not teach the use of the transmitters unique address as a seed to the pseudorandom number generator, preventing two transmitters from drifting into lockstep transmitting schedule.

OBJECTS AND SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

An object of the present invention is to provide a wireless warning system having a high reliability for transmitting digital data via radio waves from an alarm or data transmission device to a remotely located receiver.

Another object of the invention is to provide a wireless warning system capable of data error detection and error correction using redundancy, for increasing communications reliability.

A further object of the invention is to provide a wireless warning system having a safety margin against jamming and undesirable interference.

According to the present invention, as embodied and broadly described herein, a wireless warning system is provided comprising a plurality of sensors coupled to a plurality of spread spectrum transmitters, respectively. The plurality of sensors are for detecting or warning against smoke, heat, unauthorized entry, or other sensing device to indicate some particular function in a room of a building. The system further includes at least one spread spectrum receiver having polar diversity antennas and microprocessor having a display, with the microprocessor coupled to the spread spectrum receivers.

An apparatus coupled to a modulation input of an oscillator of a spread spectrum transmitter is provided for controlling the spread spectrum transmitter, which includes chip-code-generation means, preamble means, address means, and data means. The chip-code-generation means can be embodied as a recirculating register, the preamble means can be embodied as a preamble register, the address means can be embodied as an address register, and the data means can be embodied as a data register. The recirculating register is coupled to the modulation input of the oscillator for storing the spread spectrum code. The recirculating register also outputs the spread spectrum chip code as a modulating voltage to the modulation input of the oscillator. The preamble register is coupled to the modulation input of the voltage controlled oscillator. The preamble register stores a preamble, and outputs, during a transmitting interval, the preamble as a modulating voltage to the modulation input of the voltage controlled oscillator. The preamble may include a coarse lock preamble and a fine lock preamble.

The address register is coupled to the modulation input of the voltage controlled oscillator through the preamble register. The address register stores a device address and a type code, and outputs, during a transmitting interval, the device address and the type code as a modulating voltage to the modulation input or the voltage controlled oscillator.

The data register is coupled to the data input and to the modulation input of the voltage controlled oscillator through the preamble register and the address register. The data register stores data received from the data input, and outputs, during the transmitting interval, the data as a modulating voltage to the modulation input of the voltage controlled oscillator.

The present invention further includes an error detection means coupled to the data register for putting a redundancy check code word at the end of a data sequence, for error detection.

A timing circuit is provided coupled to the enable input of the voltage oscillator for enabling the voltage controlled oscillator during the transmitting interval. The timing circuit also is coupled to the keying input of the RF power amplifier for enabling an RF power amplifier during the transmitting interval. Additionally, a pseudorandom sequence generator is coupled to the timing circuit for generating a random number for modifying the timing duration between each transmitting interval.

The present invention also includes an apparatus for generating a spread spectrum chip code for use with a

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receiver, including means for entering the spread spectrum chip code having n single chips. The entering means may be embodied as a hand terminal. The apparatus further includes memory means for storing chip words, each chip word having a plurality of bits. The memory means may include a random access memory (RAM) or other memory device. Also included is a processing means coupled to the entering means and to the memory means, and responsive to receiving the spread spectrum chip code for transforming a single chip of the spread spectrum chip code to a chip word and storing the chip word in memory means. The processing means may be, for example, a microprocessor or other electronic circuit device to accomplish these functions. Additionally, counting means are included coupled to the memory means of sequencing through n addresses of the chip words stored in the memory means, and sequentially outputting the chip words to the receiver.

The present invention further includes an apparatus for synchronizing spread spectrum chip code using a two step algorithm in a process coupled to a receiver having a quieting output. The apparatus includes means for correlating a first signal from the quieting output of the receiver with multiple code iterations of the spread spectrum chip code by comparing the first signal to an adaptive average to be exceeded by a preset margin. The means for correlating includes determining whether the amplitude of the first signal exceeds the preset margin. Included are means coupled to the correlating means for computing the adaptive average, in response to the first signal not exceeding the preset margin. The computing means adds the amplitude of the first signal to the previously computed adaptive average. Means coupled to the quieting output of the receiver is provided for correlating a second signal in response to the first signal exceeding the preset margin. The second signal is correlated with a portion the time duration of multiple code iterations of the spread spectrum signal. The means for correlating the second signal compares the amplitude of the second signal to an adaptive average by a preset margin to determine whether the second signal exceeds the preset margin.

A second species of the spread spectrum chip code synchronization method and apparatus, according to the present invention, is provided. The second species includes the spread spectrum chip code synchronization apparatus coupled to a baseband output of a receiver. The apparatus includes means coupled to the baseband output of the receiver for sampling and digitizing a plurality of analog signals from the baseband output of the receiver, for generating a plurality of data signals. Each of the analog Baseband signals is sampled and digitized during one chip time. Register means are provided, coupled to the sampling and digitizing means, of shifting the plurality of data signals sequentially through a plurality of shift registers. Means is provided coupled to the register means for adding in parallel each of the plurality of data signals stored in the plurality of registers according to a plurality of predetermined weights for each of the plurality of data signals. The adding means generates a correlation sum.

Comparing means coupled to the adding means compares the correlation sum to a preset margin. Means coupled to the comparing means dithers a chip clock by at least one portion of one chip time, thereby improving clock lock.

A third species of the spread spectrum chip code synchronization apparatus is provided according to the present invention. The apparatus comprises means coupled to the baseband output of the receiver for sampling and digitizing a plurality of analog signals from the baseband output of the

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receiver. The sampling and digitizing means also generates a plurality of data signals. Each of the analog signals is sampled and digitized during one chip time.

Register means also is provided in the third species of the spread spectrum chip code synchronization apparatus, according to the present invention, coupled to the sampling and digitizing means for shifting and recirculating the plurality of data signals sequentially through a plurality of shift registers. Means additionally is provided coupled to the register means for adding sequentially the data signals passing through one of the shift registers according to a predetermined weighting algorithm.

Additional objects and advantages of the inventions will be set forth in the description which follows, and in part will be obvious from the description, or may be learned by practice of the invention.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

The accompanying drawings, which are incorporated in and constitute a part of this specification, illustrate a preferred embodiment of the invention, and together with the description, serve to explain the principles of the invention.

FIG. 1 is a block diagrammatic view of the wireless sensor and detector system according to the present invention;

FIG. 2 is a schematic diagram of a spread spectrum transmitter;

FIG. 3A is a block diagram of a spread spectrum receiver;

FIG. 3B is a schematic diagram of a spread spectrum chip code microprocessor of the receiver;

FIG. 4 is a flow chart of the code locking algorithm;

FIG. 5 is a timing diagram of the spread spectrum chip positions;

FIG. 6 is a schematic diagram of a parallel correlator coarse lock dither circuit for proving a fine lock; and

FIG. 7 is a schematic diagram of a parallel correlator with a serial correlation sum accumulation.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE PREFERRED EMBODIMENTS

Reference will now be made to the present preferred embodiments of the invention, examples of which are illustrated in the accompanying drawings.

Wireless Warning Detection System

FIG. 1 illustrates the wireless warning system of the present invention. A plurality of sensors S1, S2, . . . , SN, are coupled to a plurality of spread spectrum transmitters X1, X2, . . . , XN, respectively. Also shown are the elements of a base station including a first spread spectrum receiver 502 and a second spread spectrum receiver 504, each of which are coupled to polar diversity antennas 507, 509, respectively. A microprocessor 506 having a microprocessor display is coupled to the first spread spectrum receiver 502 and the second spread spectrum receiver 504. The wireless warning detection system of FIG. 1 provides a high reliability for transmitting digital data via radio waves from a sensor S1, S2, . . . , SN. The sensor S1, S2, . . . , SN may be, for example, a smoke head detector, a security sensing device, or other initiating device or modulating device. As set forth below, the high reliability of the system includes means for data error detection and error correction.

The preferred embodiment consists of many sensor devices S1, S2, . . . , SN which may be a smoke detector, pull station, contact alarm, waterflow detector, guard station, or

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security access controller. These can be expanded directly to include voice modulation, local area network data link, long-range alarm monitoring, remote power meter reading, remote process control, etc.

The initiating device provides either a contact input or reflected light smoke chamber level or data byte to the spread spectrum transmitters X_1, X_2, \dots, X_N . The spread spectrum transmitters $[X_1, X_2, \dots, X_N]$ X_1, X_2, \dots, X_N include means for data message encoding in serial form and data integrity validation, means for re-sending the message to achieve redundancy, means for randomizing the message transmit interval to avoid repeat collisions, means for modulating the serial message into spread spectrum form and means for transmitting the spread spectrum carrier at the desired frequency.

The spread spectrum receiver's antennas **507, 509** minimize signal fading via polar diversity. Using two receivers provides redundancy as a primary and secondary means for receiving transmissions. The two polar diversity antennas provide spatial diversity against signal fading. The spread spectrum receiver **507, 509** collects the RF energy from polar diversity antenna **507, 509** and filters out undesirable frequencies. The receivers compare and synchronize desirable frequencies to the spread spectrum code of interest thereby extracting the original serial transmission. The spread spectrum receivers **507, 509** further validate the serial transmitter message and forward this information to computer **508** for display.

The spread spectrum of the present invention, in a preferred embodiment, uses fast frequency shift keying (FFSK). The techniques disclosed below are equally applicable for frequency hopping or phase shift keyed spread spectrum methods.

Transmitter

Referring to FIG. 2, a preferred embodiment of the transmitter of the instant invention is shown including chip-code-generation means, preamble means, address means, data means, timing means, pseudorandom-sequence means, and error-detection means. The chip-code-generation means may be embodied as a recirculating register **10** and the preamble means may be embodied as a preamble register **11**. The chip-code-generation means may be embodied as a shift register with exclusive ORed feedback taps. The address means may be embodied as an address register **14**, the data means may be embodied as a data register **18**, and the error-detection means may be embodied as cyclical-redundancy-check (CRC) generator **19**. The timing means may be embodied as timing circuit **13**, and the pseudorandom sequence means may be embodied as the random number generator **17**.

In the exemplary arrangement shown, a microprocessor **8** includes the recirculating register **10**. Preamble register **11**, address register **14**, data register **18**, CRC generator **19**, random number generator **17**, and timing circuit **13**. The timing circuit **13** is embodied as a timing algorithm in software, located in microprocessor **8**. Alternatively, these registers and circuits may be put together with discrete components or independently wired and constructed as separate elements, as is well known in the art.

As shown in FIG. 2, an oscillator, which is shown as a voltage controlled oscillator **2** is coupled to an RF power amplifier **3**, and the RF power amplifier **3** is coupled through a bandpass filter **4** to a micropatch or equivalent antenna **5**. The voltage controlled oscillator **2** includes an enable input and a modulation input, where the voltage controlled oscillator generates a spread spectrum signal in response to a

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modulating voltage being applied to the modulation input. The voltage controlled oscillator **2** is enabled by applying an enable signal to the enable input. The RF power amplifier **3** has a keying input and will amplify a signal from the voltage controlled oscillator **2** only if a keying signal is applied to the keying input. The voltage controlled oscillator **2** alternatively can be frequency locked to the microprocessor's crystal to improve stability. The voltage controlled oscillator **2** also can be replaced by a capacitor and inductor tuned oscillator and a chase shift keyed modulator, or any other means for generating a signal.

The microprocessor **8** is coupled to the modulation input of the voltage controlled oscillator **2** through first resistor **R6** and second resistor **R7**. The microprocessor **8** broadly controls the voltage controlled oscillator **2** by supplying an enable signal to the enable input of the voltage controlled oscillator **2**, and a modulating voltage to the modulation input of the voltage controlled oscillator **2**. Also, the microprocessor **8** controls the RF power amplifier **3** by supplying a keying signal to the keying input of the RF power amplifier **3**.

Included in the microprocessor **8** is a recirculating register **10** coupled to the modulation input of the voltage controlled oscillator **2** through second resistor **R7**. The recirculating register **10** stores a spread spectrum chip code, and outputs, during a transmitting interval, the spread spectrum chip code as a modulating voltage to the modulation input of voltage controlled oscillator **2**.

The preamble register **11** is coupled to the modulation input of the voltage controlled oscillator **2** through first resistor **R6**. The preamble includes the coarse lock preamble and the fine lock preamble. The preamble register **11** stores a coarse lock preamble in cells **12** and a fine lock preamble in cells **24**. The preamble register **11** outputs during the transmitting interval, the coarse lock preamble and the fine lock preamble as a modulating voltage to the modulation input of the voltage controlled oscillator **2** through first resistor **R6**. First resistor **16** and second resistor **R7** are chosen such that the desired spreading from the chip code and the data coming from the preamble register **11** is achieved.

Also shown in FIG. 2 is an address register **14** coupled to the modulation input of the voltage controlled oscillator **2** through the preamble register **11** and first resistor **R6**. The address register **14** stores a device address and a type code, and outputs during a transmitting interval, the device address and type code as a modulating voltage to the modulation input of the voltage controlled oscillator **2**.

A data register **18** is coupled to a data input **20** and to the modulation input of the voltage controlled oscillator **2** through the preamble register **11** and the address register **14**. The data register **18** stores data received from the data input, and outputs, during the transmitting interval, the data as a modulating voltage to the modulation input of the voltage controlled oscillator **2**. The data from the preamble register **11**, address register **14**, and data register **18** are outputted in sequence, and at the end of a sequence, the cyclical redundancy check generator **19** outputs a data word at the end of the code for error detection.

A timing circuit **13** is included in microprocessor **8**, and is coupled to the enable input of the voltage controlled oscillator **2** and to the keying input of the RF power amplifier **3** for enabling the voltage controlled oscillator **2** and the RF power amplifier **3**, by outputting an enable signal to the enable input and a keying signal to the keying input of the RF power amplifier **3**, respectively, during the trans-

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mitting interval. In essence, voltage controlled oscillator **2** and RF power amplifier **3** are not active or activated during a time duration of non-transmission, and are only activate during a transmission interval. The time duration between transmission intervals is made to vary in response to the random number generator **17** generating a random number and transferring the random number to the timing circuit **13**. The random number modifies the timing duration between each transmitting interval randomly.

Also shown are the voltage supply, regulator circuit **1**, and battery low detector **25**.

The spread spectrum transmitter monitors one or more data inputs **20** and transmits periodically a supervisory data message. One or more of the data inputs **20** can be set **21** such that they cause a priority transmission at an increased rate higher than the supervisory message rate. Moreover, the spread spectrum transmitter may be viewed as providing an information priority mechanism that is configured to increase a rate of information transmission when a sensor data, which is input to the transmitter, changes.

During installation of the transmitter, a device address (1-4095) **12**, "Type" code **15** (fire, security, panic, heat, pull station, etc.) Stored in preamble register **11**, and a spread spectrum chip code stored in recirculating register **10** are loaded via programming connector **16**. At installation time the "Panel" computer assigns the device ID address to each room number or unique device in the system which is to be monitored. The panel computer then prints a sticky label with the device's ID, address, type code and spread spectrum chip code, both in decimal and bar code form. The label is fixed to the smoke detector or alarming device and via the programming connector **16**, or the number can be entered manually with the aid of a hand-held terminal. Alternatively a bard code reader can be connected to the programming connector **16** and the device can be read electronically from the bar code and entered into the transmitter. Microprocessor timing is controlled by crystal **23**. Transmit timing is controlled by the wake-up timer **9**, which has its own low power oscillator.

In operation, the transmitter sends a supervisory message often enough so that the receiver can detect failure of any transmitter within 200 seconds. The microprocessor **8** effectively "sleeps" between these transmissions to conserve battery life while counter **9** counts down to wake-up microprocessor **8**. In order to minimize the chance of reoccurring data collisions from multiple simultaneous transmitters, the transmit interval is modified by random number generator **17**. Very fine resolution intervals are used equal to 500 temporal transmit positions. The random number generator **7** is seeded with the transmitters unique address **14**, resulting in different transmit schedules for each unit, thereby avoiding continuous collisions between transmitters.

Once the microprocessor a is reset by the wake-up circuit **9** the timing circuit **13** allows the crystal **23** to stabilize for 1-5 ms. The timing circuit **13** then enables the transmitter oscillator **2** and allows it to stabilize for 1 ms. The timing circuit **13** subsequently enables the RF amplifier **3** by sending a keying signal to the keying input. The RF energy from the RF amplifier **3** is filtered by bandpass filter **4** to reduce spurious RF emissions. The filtered signal is passed to a PCB foil micropatch 2 dBi gain antenna **5** which radiates the RF energy to an appropriate receiver. When the timing circuit **13** keys the RF power amplifier **3** it also begins to recirculate the spread spectrum **31** chip code stored in recirculating register **10** at a chip rate of 1 to 1.3 MHz. The chip code in turn causes a voltage swing 0-5 volts at the

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modulation input of the microprocessor. The voltage swing in conjunction with a modulation setting second resistor **R7** creates a proportional current which modulates voltage controlled oscillator **2** thereby generating a spread spectrum FSK signal. This improves the signal to noise ratio at the receiver by reducing required bandwidth and minimizes the chances for intersecting interference. The data is super imposed on the chip code by the resistor **6** as a $\frac{1}{31}$ deviation of the total modulation. Two or three adjacent chip code sequences are used to equal one bit time resulting in a baud rate of 14-21 [KB/s]Kb/s.

In order for a receiver to demodulate a spread spectrum chip code, it must time lock onto the spread spectrum chip code. Disclosed are three methods of this timing acquisition, one is serial and two are parallel assisted. All methods require some synchronization bits in the transmitted message specifically allocated to code timing acquisition, which allow the receiver to search the code and find a correlation peak. The serial correlator searches one bit time per chip in the code sequence to achieve a $\pm\frac{1}{2}$ chip code lock. This search can be hastened by searching cone code sequence time instead of one bit time thereby providing a two or three to cone speed increase. The parallel correlator searches all 31 chip sequences in parallel so that an initial $\pm\frac{1}{2}$ chip synchronization ("lock") can be achieved in one bit or one chip code sequence time. "Fine" code lock ($\pm\frac{1}{4}$ chip) for either serial or parallel assisted schemes mucus be followed by transmitted bit times allocated to allowing the receive- to achieve a higher resolution correlation "time" lock. One quarter chip lock accuracies perform to within 1.25 dB of optimal code alignment. The receiver's fine code lock algorithm seeks to optimize the correlation peak. Higher levels of code lock can be achieved by searching in smaller fractions of a chip. This can facilitate "time of flight" distance or location measurement applications such that 25 ns, 25 feet, of measurement resolution can be achieved.

The transmitter's microprocessor **[a]** **8** stores a synchronizing preamble in preamble register **11** of 36 bits for a serial correlator, which are broken into 21 bits for coarse lock **11** and 5 bits for fine lock **12**. For the two parallel correlation methods disclosed 6 bits are used in the synchronizing preamble, 1 bit for coarse lock and 5 bits for fine lock. The actual code locking bits are transmitted as alternating ones and zeros so that the receiver's data demodulator can adaptively choose an optimal I/O voltage level decision point. The preamble is followed by a single data message synchronization bit **24** then 12 ID address bits **14** and 3 unit type bits **15** from address register **11**, then 3 bits of input data from data register **18** and lastly 16 bits of CRC-16 data integrity check **19**. The CRC-16 generator **19** is biased on the entire proceeding message.

Once the message is transmitted, the timing circuit **13** turns off the enable signal at the enable input to voltage controlled oscillator **2** and the keying input of RF power amplifier **3**, regenerates a new random number from random number generator **17**, presets that number into the transmit interval wake-up circuit **9** and then sets the microprocessor **[3]** **8** into the sleep mode. Battery voltage regulation is provided by a micropower regulator **1**. Battery voltage is pulse tested to conserve battery life **25**.

The CRC-16 generator can have its kernel seeded with an identification number unique to each facility. For example, the kernel can be set by the facility address. Any facility having a transmission system which uses such a unique code as the kernel for the CRC-16 generator can be separated from adjacent facilitates without additional transmission time or message bits.

Receiver

The spread spectrum receiver comprises several major blocks:

- A. The RF section which converts the received signal to lower frequencies;
- B. Chip code generator with means of chip code phase shifting for correlation lock;
- C. Means to measure both signal strength and quieting to detect correlation lock over the dynamic range of the system;
- D. An adaptive data demodulator tolerant to DC i.e.: long strings of 1's or 0's; and
- E. Microprocessor algorithms to perform the above.

FIG. 3A shows the RF portion of the receiver which converts the received signal to lower frequencies. FIG. 3B shows a chip code generator with means for shifting a chip code phase for correlation lock, and means for measuring signal strength and the quieting output of the receiver to detect correlation lock over the dynamic range of the system. In FIG. 3A, a first polar diversity antenna **100** and a second polar diversity antenna **102** are shown and are physically turned so that their spatial phase relationship is 90° . Signals received from each of the first and second polar diversity antennas **100**, **102** are passed through a 45° phase shifting network **104**, **103**, respectively and then to a combiner **105**. The combiner **105** combines the signals received from the first and second polar diversity antennas **100**, **102**. The combined signal then passes through a first bandpass filter **106**, is amplified by amplifier **107** and passed through a second bandpass filter **108**, and is mixed with the mixer **109**. Typically, a crystal **125** controls the frequency of an oscillator **126**. The signal from oscillator **126** is frequency multiplied by first, second and third frequency multipliers **128**, **129**, **130**. The signal is mixed at first mixer **109** with the received signal from second bandpass filter **108**. The oscillator **126** is modulated by the spread spectrum chip code through a phase shifter **127**. The spread spectrum chip code is generated by the circuit in FIG. 3B. First mixer **109** down converts the received signal to a first intermediate frequency signal. The first intermediate frequency signal is in a first intermediate frequency range, and is passed through third bandpass filter **110**, amplified by second amplifier **111** and passed through fourth bandpass filter **112**. The output signal from bandpass filter **112** is mixed with a second mixer **113** with a second oscillator signal from second oscillator **132** to a second intermediate frequency. The frequency of the second oscillator **132** is controlled by second crystal **131** and frequency multiplied by fourth frequency multiplier **133**. The second intermediate frequency signal is then passed through fifth bandpass filter **114**, amplified by third amplifier **115**, filtered by sixth bandpass filter **116**, and amplified by fourth amplifier **117**. The second intermediate signal then passes via two routes. The first route passes through seventh bandpass filter **118**, fifth amplifier **119** and quadrature detector **121**. The quadrature detector **121** is coupled to a 90° phase shift network **120**. The output of the quadrature detector **121** is the pre-data. Taps are taken from fourth and fifth amplifiers **117**, **119**. Signals from these taps pass through signal strength combiner **122**, pass through eighth bandpass filter **123** and sixth amplifier **124**. The output of sixth amplifier **124** is the signal strength.

Referring to FIG. 3B, an apparatus which is embodied as a microprocessor **147** is shown for synchronizing a spread spectrum chip code using a two step algorithm in a microprocessor coupled to the pre-data output of the receiver. The signal from the pre-data output of the receiver passes through circuitry for generating a quieting output of the receiver.

The signal from circuitry coupled to the pre-data output, for generating the quieting output, includes amplifier **135**, ninth bandpass filter **140**, signal compressor **141**, quadrature detector filter **142** to produce the quieting output from seventh amplifier **143**. The output of seventh amplifier **143** is the quieting output, and passes to the microprocessor **147** through analog to digital converter **150**. The pre-data signal also passes through a filter comprising fourth and fifth resistors **138**, **137**, an operational amplifier **139** with sixth resistor **158**, and first and second capacitors **157**, **156**. This signal is fed to the microprocessor **147**.

The microprocessor **147** further includes means coupled to the correlation means for computing the adaptive average in response to the amplitude of the first data signal not exceeding the preset margin by adding the amplitude of the first data signal to the previously computed adaptive average. The microprocessor **147** comprises means coupled to the quieting output of the receiver via amplifier **143** for correlating the amplitude of a second data signal in response to the amplitude of the first data signal exceeding the preset margin. The second data signal is from the quieting output of the receiver. The first data signal is the digitized amplitude of the first signal, and the second data signal is the digitized amplitude of the second signal. When correlating the second data signal, the microprocessor **147** compares multiple iterations of the spread spectrum chip code, by comparing the second data signal to the adaptive average by a preset margin to determine whether the amplitude of the second data signal exceeds the preset margin.

The microprocessor **147** synchronizes the spread spectrum chip code by comparing the first signal during one information bit to an adaptive average to determine whether coarse correlation has been achieved. In response to the first signal not achieving coarse correlation, the microprocessor **147** computes an adaptive average by adding a first portion of the first data signal to a second portion of the adaptive average. Additionally, the microprocessor **147** correlates a second signal in response to the amplitude of the first signal exceeding the adaptive average by a preset margin within a portion of one chip of the spread spectrum chip code by comparing the amplitude of the second signal to the adaptive by a preset margin to determine whether the second signal exceeds the preset margin.

The microprocessor **147** also generates a spread spectrum chip code for use with the receiver, which is inputted through phase shifter **127** to oscillator **126** of FIG. 3A. The apparatus, which includes the microprocessor **147** and related circuitry, includes means for entering a spread spectrum chip code having n chips. The entering means may be embodied as hand terminal **153**. Also, the apparatus includes memory means for storing chip words, which may be embodied as random access memory **146**. The random access memory **146** is coupled to the microprocessor **147**. The random access memory **146** stores each chip word having a plurality of bits per chip. In a preferred embodiment, there are four bits per chip word. The apparatus further includes counting means coupled to the random access memory **146** for sequencing through n addresses of the chip words in the random access memory **146** and sequentially outputting the chip words to the receiver. The counting means may be embodied as adder **145** and timing circuit **147** with AND gate **159** for determining when to roll over when counting through n chip words. Clock divider **134** is included for controlling the microprocessor **147**.

In operation, the RF energy is received by two polar diversity antennas **101** and **102** which are physically rotated

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90 degrees, then phase shifted +45 degrees by the first phase shifter 103, and -45 degrees by the second phase shifter 104 and finally summed 105. This polar diversity method enhances faded area reception. The signal is bandwidth limited to 2.0 MHz by a first bandpass filter 106, amplified by first amplifier 107 and bandpass filtered by second bandpass filter 108 before being presented to the first mixer 109.

The first local oscillator generated by a crystal controlled oscillator 126 which is then phase modulated to the equivalent frequency pull of a modulation of 90° at a rate set by the chip code generator.

The chip code is initially selected by either the hand terminal 153 or by the remote serial port 155. Four chip code sets are loaded into the RAM 146 such that a single "1" is represented as "1111", this allows sub chip code searches by sequencing the two low order ram address bits. The ram memory is addressed at four times the chip rate so that ¼ chip resolution code searches can be performed. The counter 144 in conjunction with the clock input [156] 166 sets this chip code rate. The binary counter 144 causes the RAM [156] 146 to sequentially select and modulo repeat the entire stored chip code. The AND gate 159 determines the 31st count state $\times 4$ to create a reset pulse and causes the counter to cycle through (31×4) modulo states. In order to rapidly jump to any chip code table position the summer 145 is used to add offset 161 selected by the microprocessor's search algorithm. The flip-flop 160 synchronizes the output of the RAM 146 to the chip code clock [156] 166 to avoid variable propagation delays due to the counters and adders.

Once the chip code has modulated the oscillator 126, the combined signal is multiplied by 128, 129, and 130 to provide a signal from the first local oscillator to frequency mixer 109. This mixing stage 109 provides several features including is lowering the frequency to 160 MHz, narrowing the bandwidth to 125 kHz, and when the microprocessor locks bee code sequence, the mixer 109 despreads the original transmitted data signal.

The first mixer 109 output is bandpass filtered by third bandpass filter 110, amplified by second amplifier 111 and bandpass filtered by fourth bandpass filter 112. The first intermediate frequency signal is mixed by second mixer 113 with a signal from the second local oscillator. The second local oscillator signal originates from second oscillator 132 and is controlled by crystal 131. The resulting sine wave is frequency multiplied by fourth frequency multiplier 133 before being mixed at second mixer 113. The signal resulting from the second mixer 113 is lowered in frequency to 10.7 MHz and is bandpass filtered by fifth bandpass filter 114, amplified by third amplifier 115 and bandpass filtered by sixth bandpass filter 116. This signal is sent to fourth amplifier 117 with feedback bias current measured along with fifth amplifier 119 by a signal strength measurement circuitry 122. The signal strength measurement is low pass filtered by first lowpass filter 123 and buffered by sixth amplifier 124 before passing to the signal strength analog multiplexer input 152.

The signal from fourth amplifier 117 is filtered by sixth bandpass filter 118 and amplified by fifth amplifier 119. This output of fifth amplifier 119 is then quadrature detected with the aid of phase shifting circuit 120. The output of the quadrature detector 121 is buffered by amplifier 135, then high pass filtered 140. The signal is compressed to a manageable 45 dB dynamic range by compressor 141. The compressed signal is passed through a quieting detector filter 142 and buffered by amplifier 143 before being inputted to the analog multiplexer input 151.

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The "pre-data," buffered by amplifier 135, is also presented to an adaptive data demodulator. Varying DC levels will be present on this signal due to frequency uncertainty between the receiver and transmitters. The data 1/0 decision threshold is chosen as the average voltage of an alternating 1/0/1 . . . pattern in the synch preamble. During the preamble code lock search time, the analog switch 136 is enabled and pre charges capacitor 156 through resistor 137. This places an average voltage on capacitor 156 between a logic "1" and a logic "0". [once] Once code lock is achieved, and the data message synchronization bit 24 is detected, the analog switch [126] 136 is opened leaving the capacitor 156 at a stable level or the duration of the message. The buffered pre-data level is then filtered 157 with hysteresis set by resistors 158 and 138 and compared to the voltage level on capacitor 156. This results in reliable data bits provided on the output of voltage comparator 139.

Code Locking Algorithm

The code locking algorithm seeks to determine a correlation peak by comparing the received RF signal energy to a microprocessor controlled copy of the desired chip code pattern. The code locking algorithm digitizes the quieting detectors analog output once per bit time. The software maintains an adaptive average of the quieting samples to determine the level of correlation improvement. The described algorithm code locks to within ¼ chip time or within 1.25 dB of optimum. The baseband output also can be used in place of the quieting output.

The present invention includes three methods of using a microprocessor for synchronizing the timing acquisition of a spread spectrum chip code received by the receiver. The spread spectrum signal comprises a plurality of information bits. Each information bit is spread in spectrum by a plurality of chips from a spread spectrum code. The first method, as depicted in FIG. 4, comprises the steps performed by the microprocessor of inserting 401 a delay of one information bit time before the first information bit received by the receiver, and sampling and digitizing 402 the first signal from the quieting output of the receiver to generate a first data signal. The sampling and digitizing alternatively can be taken from the baseband or signal strength output of the receiver. The first method compares 404 the amplitude of the first data signal to the adaptive average during the time of one information bit to determine whether coarse correlation has been achieved. In response to coarse correlation not being achieved, the method computes 405 the adaptive average by adding a first portion of the amplitude of the first data signal to a second portion of the previously computed adaptive average. If the coarse correlation has been achieved, then the method shifts 407 the chip code by a third portion of one information bit time. In a preferred embodiment of the present invention, the chip time is divided into four portions, thus the shifts 407 is equivalent to delaying the chip by ¼ chip time duration.

An additional delay is inserted 408 and the method samples and digitizes 409 a second signal from the quieting output of the receiver to generate a second data signal. The amplitude of the second data signal during one information bit time is compared 410 to the adaptive average to determine whether fine correlation has been achieved. If fine correlation has been achieved, then a data capture algorithm is initiated 414. If fine correlation has not been achieved, then the method shifts 412 the chip code phase shifter by a third portion, which is equivalent in the present preferred embodiment to a ¼ time duration of a chip. The method then proceeds to initiate the data capture algorithm.

A delay 401 is inserted before digital conversion of the quieting output 402. This delay serves to insure re-occurring

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data samples equal to one information bit time. The new sample is compared to the running adaptive average **403**. If the improvement is greater than a preset margin, then coarse correlation **404** is achieved. Otherwise, if the new sample is within the noise error of the running average, the new sample is combined with the old average **405**; average = (0.25 new + 0.75 old average). The chip code phase shifter **161** is incremented by a count of 4 (1 chip time). This coarse code lock algorithm is then indefinitely repeated until coarse code lock is acquired.

If coarse correlation is achieved **404**, then the algorithm seeks to "fine" code lock. The chip code phase shifter **161** is shifted **407** by one ($\frac{1}{4}$ chip time). The one information bit time synchronizing delay is passed **408**. The quieting detector output is digitized **409** and compared **410** to the running quieting output average. If the new sample did not improve **411** the quieting by the preset margin then the chip code phase shifter is incremented **412** by $\frac{1}{4}$ chip to its past more optimum position. Fine lock is completed **414** and the code lock algorithm jumps to a data capture algorithm.

If the required margin of quieting improvement is achieved **411**, then the number of chip code shifts is checked **413**. Any search code position which is shifted more than three $\frac{1}{4}$ chip steps would undesirably slip one whole code cycle. Comparison **413** stops a search and the third-code slip and assumes an optimum correlation is achieved then proceeds to the data acquisition algorithm **414**. If three code phase decrements have not occurred, the algorithm repeats at shift **407**.

FIG. 5 shows four cases with one-quarter chip code lock achieved in each case using the first method.

A second method and apparatus for synchronizing a spread spectrum chip code using the baseband signal output of the receiver is shown in FIG. 6. The apparatus aspect of the invention includes means for sampling and digitizing a plurality of analog baseband signals, register means for shifting the plurality of data signals, means for adding in parallel the plurality of data signals, means for comparing the correlation sum and means for dithering a chip/sample clock by a portion of a chip time. The sampling and digitizing means may be embodied as analog to digital converter **201**. The register means may be embodied as the plurality of registers **202, 203, 204**. The adding means may be embodied as adders **205, 206, 207** and the comparing means may be embodied as comparator **213**. The dithering means may be embodied as the microprocessor **215**.

As illustratively shown, the apparatus for synchronizing the spread spectrum chip code has the analog to digital converter **201** coupled to the RF baseband output of the receiver **212**. The analog to digital converter **201** samples and digitizes the plurality of analog baseband signals from the baseband output of the receiver **212** and generates a plurality of data signals. The plurality of registers **202, 203, 204** is coupled to the analog to digital converter **201** and [shifts] shifts the plurality of data signals sequentially through the plurality of registers **202, 203, 204**. The plurality of adders **205, 206, 207** are coupled to the plurality of registers **202, 203, 204**, respectively, for adding in parallel each of the data signals stored in the plurality of registers **202, 203, 204** according to a plurality of predetermined weights for each of the plurality of data signals, respectively, to generate a correlation sum. The weights are controlled by flip flop circuits **209, 210, 211**, which contain the spread spectrum chip code. The adder **207** outputs a correlation sum **208** to a comparator **213** for comparing the correlation sum to a predetermined margin or threshold. The dithering circuit [embodies] embodied as a microprocessor **215** is coupled to

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the comparator **213** and dithers the chip clock by at least a first portion of one chip time, thereby improving chip lock.

In operation, the second method of using a microprocessor for synchronizing the timing acquisition of the spread spectrum chip code received by a receiver comprises the steps of sampling and digitizing using the analog to digital converter **201**, the plurality of analog baseband signal from the baseband output of the receiver **212**, to generate a plurality of data signals. Each is of the analog baseband signals is sampled and digitized during one chip time. The method shifts the plurality of baseband signals through the plurality of shift registers **202, 203, 204**. The plurality of data signals are added in parallel according to a plurality of predetermined weights, from flip flops **209, 210, 211** for each of the plurality of data signals, respectively, in the plurality of adders **205, 206, 207** to generate a correlation sum **208**. The correlation sum **208** is compared to a predetermined threshold or preset margin, and a chip clock is then dithered by at least a first portion of one chip time to improve clock lock. In a preferred embodiment, the first portion is one quarter of one chip time.

The chip clock samples once per chip time. A coarse chip lock may therefore be incorrect by $\pm\frac{1}{2}$ of a chip. To improve the lock, the chip clock is slewed in $\pm\frac{1}{4}$ and/or $\pm\frac{1}{8}$ chip steps controlled by an algorithm in microprocessor **215**. A clock with a rate equal to four times the chip rate is counted by counter **214**. The counters output is compared to an output of the microprocessor **215** equal to the code phase being searched. The microprocessor **215** can thereby search in fine chip code steps after a rapid parallel assisted search to 1, 31 chip code time. The total search required is equal to 6 chip code times, which can be sent in the spread spectrum transmitters code-lock preamble as disclosed.

As a further component reduction of the circuitry described above in the second species of the method and apparatus for synchronizing a spread spectrum chip code, the parallel assisted chip code lock can be serially summed instead of parallel summed. The serial sum of all 31 stages must be computed between chip samples (less than 1,000 ns). This speed can be achieved with available high speed CMOS ASICs with clock speed of 40 MHz or greater.

A third species of the spread spectrum chip code synchronizing method and apparatus is disclosed in the present invention, and is set forth in FIG. 7. The third species of the spread spectrum chip code synchronizing apparatus couples to the baseband output of the receiver. The apparatus includes means coupled to the baseband output of the receiver for sampling and digitizing the plurality of analog baseband signals, register means coupled to the sampling and digitizing means for shifting and recirculating the plurality of data signals, and means coupled to the register means for adding sequentially the data signals passing through the shift register means. As shown in FIG. 7, the sampling and digitizing may be embodied as analog to digital converter **310**. The register means may be embodied as registers **307, 308, 309** and the adding means may be embodied as adder **303**. As shown in FIG. 7, the analog to digital converter **310** is coupled to the baseband output of the receiver, and passes through a plurality of gates **302** to the plurality of registers **307, 308, 309**, to adder **303**. Also shown is a plurality of flip flops **306, 311, 312** having the spread spectrum chip code therein. The flip flops **306, 311, 312** input the spread spectrum chip code into the adder **303**. The adder **303** is coupled to a correlation sum accumulator **304** which outputs a correlation sum **305**.

In the preferred embodiment, the third species of the apparatus for synchronizing the spread spectrum chip code

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has the analog to digital converter 310 coupled to the baseband output of the receiver for sampling and digitizing a plurality of analog baseband signal and generating a plurality of data signals. Each of the analog baseband signals is sampled and digitized during one chip time. The plurality of registers 307, 308, 309 is coupled to the analog to digital converter 310 through gates 302 for shifting and recirculating the plurality of data signals sequentially through the plurality of registers 307, 308, 309 and gates 302. The adder 303 is coupled to register 309 for adding sequentially the data signals passing through registers 309 according to predetermined weights set forth in flip flops 306, 311, 312.

In operation, the third method of uses a microprocessor for synchronizing the timing acquisition of the spread spectrum chip code received by the receiver. The method samples and digitizes the plurality of analog baseband signals from the baseband output of the receiver using analog to digital converter 310, to generate a plurality of data signals. Each of the analog baseband signals is sampled and digitized during one chip time. The method further includes shifting and recirculating the plurality of data signals sequentially through the plurality of registers 307, 308, 309. The data signals are added sequentially as they pass through register 309 using adder 303 and accumulated. The correlation sum accumulator 304 then passes the correlation sum 305 to the microprocessor.

The third method is similar to the second method, except that there is only one adder 303 for the entire register chain instead of one adder per stage. The registers 307, 308, 309 are steered to recirculated by the AND/OR gates 302. The stored chip code string can also be shifted and recirculated. After each chip clock rising stage transition, an analog data sample is converted by analog to digital converter 310 and stored in register 307. Data in the registers are each register is shifted to a register to the right in the Figure as in the circuit in of FIG. 6. Immediately following the chip sample, a sequence is performed to accumulate a correlation sum. The AND/OR steering gates 301 and 302 are switched to the "sum" state. This passes a high speed summing clock of 40 MHz for 31 clock cycles to the registers 307, 308, 309 and to the stored spread spectrum chip code in 306, 311, 312. The steering gates 302 causes data in registers 307, 308, 309 to recirculate so that after 31 clock cycles of the adding phase, the data in register 307, 308, 309 will be in their original positions and ready to accept another spread spectrum chip code data sample and store phase. After each 40 MHz summing clock transition a new sum is generated by adder 303 and accumulated in accumulator 304. Adder 303 is caused to either add or subtract the inputs A_{in} from the accumulated total. This is determined by the stored chip code string in flip-flop 312 which creates the $x(+1)$ or $x(-1)$ correlation weighting causing either the addition or subtraction of the A_{in} inputs. The outputs of accumulator 304 are transferred to the next register stage and then at the next clock rising edge, the accumulator stores that total. After 31 summing clock cycles the accumulation 304 will contain the correlation sum 305. The multibit words stored and summed by the two alternative methods can be reduced to one bit samples and sums, resulting in a small loss of performance.

It will be apparent to those skilled in the art that various modifications can be made to the wireless detection system of the instant invention without departing from the spirit or scope of the invention, and it is intended that the present invention cover modifications and variations of the wireless detection system provided they come within the scope of the appended claims and their equivalents.

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We claim:

1. A remote power meter monitoring system, comprising:
 - a multiplicity of radio frequency transmit-only devices configured to transmit information, each radio frequency transmit-only device comprising,
 - a timer comprising a memory that holds a pseudo random time interval value, said timer configured to autonomously initiate transmission of said information after expiration of a time duration corresponding to said pseudo random time interval value held in said memory,
 - a pseudo-randomization means for generating and loading said pseudo random time interval value into said timer, and
 - a retransmission means for redundantly transmitting said information a predetermined number of times;
 - at least one sensing element configured to provide sensor data to said radio frequency transmit-only device, said transmitted information comprising said sensor data, an identification address being assigned to said radio frequency transmit-only device to which the sensor data is provided, and error detection code bits;
 - at least two receivers each capable of configuration to receive said transmitted information, and validation of said information based on said identification address and said error detection code bits contained in said transmitted information, said receivers providing redundant reception of said transmitted information; and
 - a monitoring means for monitoring said information as received and validated by at least one of said receivers.
2. A remote power meter monitoring system, comprising:
 - a multiplicity of radio frequency transmit-only devices configured to transmit information in a direct sequence spread spectrum signal at plural frequencies, each radio frequency transmit-only device comprising:
 - a processor configured to generate said information to be transmitted,
 - a crystal oscillator configured to generate spread spectrum timing for said information generated by said processor,
 - a timer configured to hold a pseudo random time interval value, said timer configured to initiate transmission of said information after expiration of a time duration corresponding to said pseudo random time interval value,
 - a pseudo-randomization means for generation and loading said pseudo random time interval value into said timer,
 - a retransmission means for redundantly transmitting said information a predetermined number of times, and
 - a wake-up circuit configured to initiate said crystal oscillator and said processor in respective active states upon expiration of said time duration so as to transmit said information, and configured to place said crystal oscillator and said processor in a reduced current state between transmissions;
 - at least one sensing element configured to provide sensor data to said radio frequency transmit-only device, said transmitted information comprising said sensor data, an identification address being assigned to said radio frequency transmit-only device to which the sensor data is provided, and error detection code bits;
 - at least two receivers each capable of configuration to receive said transmitted information, and validation of

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said information based on said identification address and said error detection code bits contained in said transmitted information, said receivers providing redundant reception of said transmitted information; and

a monitoring means for monitoring said information as received and validated by at least one of said receivers.

3. A remote power meter monitoring system, comprising:

a multiplicity of radio frequency transmit-only devices configured to transmit information in a direct sequence spread spectrum signal at plural frequencies, said information comprising a first field comprising a preamble configured to establish chip code timing synchronization and a second field comprising data, said first field being transmitted prior to said second field, said preamble having a length measured in bit times that is at least equal in length to a number of chips in a chip code sequence used to produce said spread spectrum signal, each radio frequency transmit-only device comprising,

a timer comprising a memory for holding a pseudo random time interval value, said timer configured to autonomously initiate transmission of said information after expiration of a time duration corresponding to said pseudo random time interval value held in said memory,

a pseudo-randomization means for generation and loading said pseudo random time interval value into said timer, and

a retransmission means for redundantly transmitting said information a predetermined number of times;

at least one sensing element configured to provide sensor data to said radio frequency transmit-only device, said transmitted information comprising said sensor data, an identification address being assigned to said radio frequency transmit-only device to which the sensor data is provided, and error detection code bits;

at least two receivers each configurable to receive said transmitted information, and configurable to validate said information based on said identification address and said error detection code bits contained in said transmitted information, said at least two receivers providing redundant reception of said transmitted information, said at least two receivers configured to establish chip code synchronization to said direct sequence spread spectrum signal using said preamble; and

a monitoring means for monitoring said information as received and validated by at least one of said receivers.

4. A remote power meter monitoring system, comprising:

a multiplicity of radio frequency transmit-only devices configured to transmit information in a direct sequence spread spectrum signal at plural frequencies, said information comprising a first field comprising a preamble configured to establish chip code timing synchronization and a second field comprising data, said first field being transmitted prior to said second field, said preamble having a length measured in bit times that is at least equal in length to a number of chips in a chip code sequence plus approximately five bit times, each radio frequency transmit-only device comprising:

a timer comprising a memory for holding a pseudo random time interval value, said timer configured to autonomously initiate transmission of said information after expiration of a time duration corresponding to said pseudo random time interval value held in said memory,

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a pseudo-randomization means for generating and loading said pseudo random time interval value into said timer, and

a retransmission means for redundantly transmitting said information a predetermine number of times;

at least one sensing element configured to provide sensor data to said radio frequency transmit-only device, said transmitted information comprising said sensor data, an identification address being assigned to said radio frequency transmit-only device to which the sensor data is provided, and error detection code bits;

at least two receivers each configurable to receive said transmitted information, and configurable to validate said information based on said identification address and said error detection code bits contained in said transmitted information, said receivers providing redundant reception of said transmitted information, said receivers configured to establish chip code lock and fine chip code synchronization using said preamble; and

a monitoring means for monitoring said information as received and validated by at least one of said receivers.

5. A remote power meter monitoring system, comprising:

a multiplicity of radio frequency transmit-only devices configured to transmit information in a direct sequence spread spectrum signal at plural frequencies, said information comprising a first field comprising a preamble configured to establish chip code timing synchronization and a second field comprising data, said first field being transmitted prior to said second field, said preamble having a length measured in bit times that is less than n bit times, where n equals a number of chips in a chip code sequence, each radio frequency transmit-only device comprising,

a timer comprising a memory for holding a pseudo random time interval value, said timer configured to autonomously initiate transmission of said information after expiration of a time duration corresponding to said pseudo random time interval value held in said memory,

a pseudo-randomization means for generating and loading said pseudo random time interval value into said timer, and

a retransmission means for redundantly transmitting said information a predetermined number of times;

at least one sensing element configured to provide sensor data to said radio frequency transmit-only device, said transmitted information comprising said sensor data, an identification address being assigned to said radio frequency transmit-only device to which the sensor data is provided, and error detection code bits;

at least two receivers each configurable to receive said transmitted information, and configurable to validate said information based on said identification address and said error detection code bits contained in said transmitted information, said receivers providing redundant reception of said transmitted information, said receivers comprising respective parallel correlation means for establishing chip code synchronization using said preamble; and

a monitoring means for monitoring said information as received and validated by at least one of said receivers.

6. A remote power meter monitoring system, comprising:

a multiplicity of radio frequency transmit-only devices configured to transmit information in a direct sequence spread spectrum signal at plural frequencies, each radio frequency transmit-only device comprising,

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a processor configured to generate said information to be transmitted,

a crystal oscillator configured to generate spread spectrum timing for said information generated by said processor,

a timer configured to delay transmission of said information by a predetermined delay after [said] expiration of [said] a time duration so as to allow for crystal stabilization, transmit carrier frequency stabilization and chip code timing generation stabilization,

a retransmission means for redundantly transmitting said information a predetermined number of times, and

a wake-up circuit configured to initiate said crystal oscillator and said processor in respective active states upon expiration of said time duration so as to transmit said information, and configured to place said crystal oscillator and said processor in a reduced current state between transmissions;

at least one sensing element configured to provide sensor data to said radio frequency transmit-only device, said transmitted information comprising said sensor data, an identification address being assigned to said radio frequency transmit-only device to which the sensor data is provided, and error detection code bits;

at least two receivers each of which being configured to receive said transmitted information, and configured to validate said information based on said identification address and said error detection code bits contained in said transmitted information, said receivers providing redundant reception of said transmitted information; and

a monitoring means for monitoring said information as received and validated by at least one of said receivers.

7. The system according to claims 1, 3, 4, or 5, wherein respective of said radio frequency transmit-only devices, further comprises:

a processor configured to generate said information to be transmitted,

a crystal oscillator configured to generate spread spectrum timing for said information generated by said processor,

an oscillator configured to generate a carrier on which said information to be transmitted is modulated;

a wake-up circuit configured to initiate said crystal oscillator and said oscillator in respective active states upon expiration of said time duration so as to transmit said information, and configured to place said crystal oscillator and said oscillator in a reduced current state between transmissions, said information being transmitted after a predetermined delay with respect to when said crystal oscillator and said oscillator are place in said respective active states so as to allow for stabilization in said oscillator and said crystal oscillator prior to information transmission.

8. The system according to claims 3, 4, or 5, wherein the chip code sequence used to produce said preamble being a same sequence as a data bearing chip code sequence.

9. A remote power meter monitoring system, comprising:

a multiplicity of radio frequency transmit-only devices configurable to transmit information in a message, each radio frequency transmit-only device comprising,

a timer configured to autonomously initiate transmission of said information after expiration of a time duration, [and]

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a pseudo-randomization means for randomizing the time duration between transmissions of said message,

a retransmission means for redundantly transmitting said message a predetermined number of times,

a processor configured to generate said information to be transmitted,

a crystal oscillator configured to generate spread spectrum timing for said information generated by said processor,

a carrier generator mechanism configured to generate a carrier on which said information to be transmitted is modulated, and

a wake-up circuit configured to initiate said crystal oscillator and said carrier generator mechanism in respective active states upon expiration of said time duration so as to transmit said information, and configured to place said crystal oscillator and said carrier generator mechanism in a reduced current state between transmissions, said information being transmitted after a predetermined delay with respect to when said crystal oscillator and said carrier generator mechanism are placed in said respective active states so as to allow for stabilization in said carrier generator mechanism and said crystal oscillator prior to information transmission;

at least one sensing element configured to provide sensor data to said radio frequency transmit-only device, said transmitted information comprising said sensor data, an identification address being assigned to said radio frequency transmit-only device to which the sensor data is provided, and error detection code bits;

a receiver configured to receive said transmitted information, and configured to validate said information based on said identification address and said error detection code bits contained in said transmitted information; and

a monitoring means for monitoring said information as received and validated by said receiver.

10. A remote power meter monitoring system, comprising:

a multiplicity of radio frequency transmit-only devices configured to transmit information in a direct sequence spread spectrum signal at plural frequencies, each radio frequency transmit-only device comprising,

a processor configured to generate said information to be transmitted,

a crystal oscillator configured to generate spread spectrum timing for said information generated by said processor,

a timer configured to initiate transmission of said information after expiration of a time duration,

a retransmission means for redundantly transmitting said information a predetermined number of times,

a pseudo-randomization means for randomizing the time [interval] duration between redundant transmissions,

a carrier generator mechanism configured to generate a carrier on which said information to be transmitted is modulated, and

a wake-up circuit configured to initiate said crystal oscillator and said carrier generator mechanism in respective active states upon expiration of said time duration so as to transmit said information, and configured to place said crystal oscillator and said carrier generator mechanism in a reduced current state between transmissions, said information being

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transmitted after a predetermined delay with respect to when said crystal oscillator and said carrier generator mechanism are placed in said respective active states so as to allow for stabilization in said carrier generator mechanism and said crystal oscillator prior to information transmission;

at least one sensing element configured to provide sensor data to said radio frequency transmit-only device, said transmitted information comprising said sensor data, an identification address being assigned to said radio frequency transmit-only device to which the sensor data is provided, and error detection code bits;

a receiver configured to receive said transmitted information, and configured to validate said information based on said identification address and said error detection code bits contained in said transmitted information; and

a monitoring means for monitoring said information as received and validated by said receiver.

11. A remote power meter monitoring system, comprising:

a multiplicity of radio frequency transmit-only devices configured to transmit information in a direct sequence spread spectrum signal at plural frequencies, said information comprising a first field comprising a preamble configured to establish chip code timing synchronization and a second field comprising data, said first field being transmitted prior to said second field, said preamble having a length measured in bit times that is at least equal in length to a number of chips in a chip code sequence used to produce said spread spectrum signal, each radio frequency transmit-only device comprising,

a timer configured to autonomously initiate transmission of said information after expiration of a time duration,

a retransmission means for redundantly transmitting said information a predetermined number of times,

a pseudo-randomization means for randomizing the time [interval] *duration* between redundant transmissions,

a processor configured to generate said information to be transmitted,

a crystal oscillator configured to generate spread spectrum timing for said information generated by said processor,

a carrier generator mechanism configured to generate a carrier on which said information to be transmitted is modulated, and

a wake-up circuit configured to initiate said crystal oscillator and said carrier generator mechanism in respective active states upon expiration of said time duration so as to transmit said information, and configured to place said crystal oscillator and said carrier generator mechanism in a reduced current state between transmissions, said information being transmitted after a predetermined delay with respect to when said crystal oscillator and said carrier generator mechanism are placed in said respective active states so as to allow for stabilization in said carrier generator mechanism and said crystal oscillator prior to information transmission;

at least one sensing element configured to provide sensor data to said radio frequency transmit-only device, said transmitted information comprising said sensor data, an identification address being assigned to said radio frequency transmit-only device to which the sensor data is provided, and error detection code bits;

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a receiver configured to receive said transmitted information, and configured to validate said information based on said identification address and said error detection code bits contained in said transmitted information, said receiver configured to establish chip code synchronization to said direct sequence spread spectrum signal using said preamble; and

a monitoring means for monitoring said information as received and validated by said receiver.

12. A remote power meter monitoring system, comprising:

a multiplicity of radio frequency transmit-only devices configured to transmit information in a direct sequence spread spectrum signal at plural frequencies, said information comprising a first field comprising a preamble configured to establish chip code timing synchronization and a second field comprising data, said first field being transmitted prior to said second field, said preamble having a length measured in bit times that is at least equal in length to a number of chips in a chip code sequence plus approximately five bit times, each radio frequency transmit-only device comprising,

a timer configured to autonomously initiate transmission of said information after expiration of a time duration,

a retransmission means for redundantly transmitting said information a predetermined number of times,

a pseudo-randomization means for randomizing the time [interval] *duration* between redundant transmissions,

a processor configured to generate said information to be transmitted,

a crystal oscillator configured to generate spread spectrum timing for said information generated by said processor,

a carrier generator mechanism configured to generate a carrier on which said information to be transmitted is modulated, and

a wake-up circuit configured to initiate said crystal oscillator and said carrier generator mechanism in respective active states upon expiration of said time duration so as to transmit said information, and configured to place said crystal oscillator and said carrier generator mechanism in a reduced current state between transmissions, said information being transmitted after a predetermined delay with respect to when said crystal oscillator and said carrier generator mechanism are placed in said respective active states so as to allow for stabilization in said carrier generator mechanism and said crystal oscillator prior to information transmission;

at least one sensing element configured to provide sensor data to said radio frequency transmit-only device, said transmitted information comprising said sensor data, an identification address being assigned to said radio frequency transmit-only device to which the sensor data is provided, and error detection code bits;

a receiver configured to receive said transmitted information, and configured to validate said information based on said identification address and said error detection code bits contained in said transmitted information, said receiver configured to establish chip code lock and fine chip code synchronization using said preamble; and

a monitoring means for monitoring said information as received and validated by said receiver.

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13. A remote power meter monitoring system, comprising:

a multiplicity of radio frequency transmit-only devices configured to transmit information in a direct sequence spread spectrum signal at plural frequencies, said information comprising a first field comprising a preamble configured to establish chip code timing synchronization and a second field comprising data, said first field being transmitted prior to said second field, said preamble having a length measured in bit times that is less than n bit times, where n equals a number of chips in a chip code sequence, each radio frequency transmit-only device comprising,

a timer configured to autonomously initiate transmission of said information after expiration of a time duration,

a retransmission means for redundantly transmitting said information a predetermined number of times,

a pseudo-randomization means for randomizing the time [interval] *duration* between redundant transmissions,

a processor configured to generate said information to be transmitted,

a crystal oscillator configured to generate spread spectrum timing for said information generated by said processor,

a carrier generator mechanism configured to generate a carrier on which said information to be transmitted is modulated, and

a wake-up circuit configured to initiate said crystal oscillator and said carrier generator mechanism in respective active state upon expiration of said time duration so as to transmit said information, and configured to place said crystal oscillator and said carrier generator mechanism in a reduced current state between transmissions, said information being transmitted after a predetermined delay with respect to when said crystal oscillator and said carrier generator mechanism are placed in said respective active states so as to allow for stabilization in said carrier generator mechanism and said crystal oscillator prior to information transmission;

at least one sensing element configured to provide sensor data to said radio frequency transmit-only device, said transmitted information comprising said sensor data, an identification address being assigned to said radio frequency transmit-only device to which the sensor data is provided, and error detection code bits;

a receiver configured to receive said transmitted information, and configured to validate said information based on said identification address and said error detection code bits contained in said transmitted information, said receiver comprising respective parallel correlation means for establishing chip code synchronization using said preamble; and

a monitoring means for monitoring said information as received and validated by said receiver.

14. The system according to claims 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12, or 13, wherein said radio frequency transmit-only device *further* comprises an information priority mechanism that is configured to increase a rate of information transmission when said sensor data input to said radio frequency transmit-only device changes.

15. The system according to claims 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12, or 13, wherein said radio frequency transmit-only device further comprises:

a transmitter oscillator having an enable input being configured to generate a carrier on which said information is carried;

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a power amplifier having an enable input and being configured to amplify said carrier prior to transmission of said information which modulates said carrier; and an enabling device connected to said enable input of said transmitter oscillator and said enable input of said power amplifier configured to enable an active state of said transmitter oscillator and said power amplifier during periods of information transmission and configured to place said transmitter oscillator and said power amplifier in a low current state during periods of non-transmission, thereby reducing current drain.

16. The system according to claim 1, 3, 4, or 5, wherein said radio frequency transmit-only device further comprises:

a processor configured to generate said information to be transmitted; and

a wake-up circuit that maintains said processor in a reduced current state between transmissions, and upon expiration of said time duration, as determined by said timer, places said processor in a normal operational state.

17. The system according to claims 1, 2, 6, [7,] or 10, wherein said radio frequency transmit-only device *further* comprises a programming connector means for assigning said identification address to said radio frequency transmit-only device using a serial data stream.

18. The system according to claim 17, further comprising a hand held terminal configured to load said identification address in the serial data stream to said programming connector.

19. The system according to claims 1, 2, 6, 9, or 10, wherein said timer is configured to divide said time duration into a very fine number of temporal time slots.

20. The system according to claims 1, 2, 6, 9, or 10, wherein said radio frequency transmit-only device *further* includes a programming connector means for assigning through a serial data stream said identification address, a type code, and a code division multiple access channel on which said radio frequency transmit-only device is to operate.

21. The system according to claims 1, 6, 9, or 10, wherein said radio frequency transmit-only device comprises a data rate between 14 Kb/s and 21 Kb/s and a chip rate between 1 MHz and 1.3 MHz.

22. The system according to claims 1, 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12, or 13 wherein said pseudo-randomization means is configured to be seeded with said identification address so as to prevent repeat collisions.

23. The system according to claim 6, wherein a chip code sequence used to provide a preamble of said direct sequence spread spectrum signal is a same sequence as a data bearing chip code sequence.

24. The system according to claims 2, 6, 9, 10, 11, 12, or 13, wherein:

the wake up circuit places said processor in a normal operational state upon expiration of said time duration, as determined by said timer.

25. A remote power meter monitoring method, comprising the steps of:

retrieving data from a sensing element;

generating information containing the retrieved data, comprising,

generating an identification address field for holding an identification address corresponding to a transmit-only device, and

generating an error correction code;

transmitting the generated information, redundantly at pseudo random intervals from said transmit-only device, comprising,

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loading a timer with a pseudo random time interval value,
 enabling, upon expiration of said pseudo random time interval value as timed by said timer, a crystal oscillator used to generate spread spectrum timing signals, *and* a transmitter oscillator used to generate transmission signals,
 delaying information transmission for a predetermined time period, relative to [said] expiration of said pseudo random time interval value, to allow for stabilization of said crystal oscillator and said transmitter oscillator,
 transmitting a preamble portion of said information used for spread spectrum timing synchronization, said preamble *portion* having a length in bit times at least equal to a number of chips in a chip code sequence used in direct sequence spread spectrum format by said transmit-only device,
 transmitting the generated information in said direct sequence spread spectrum format based upon said chip code sequence and said spread spectrum timing signals at a predetermined frequency by said transmit-only device, *and*
 disabling said crystal oscillator and said transmitter oscillator, so as to conserve power;
 repeating said step of transmitting said generated information redundantly after a pseudo random interval of time so as to provide information transmission redundancy;
 receiving the generated information by at least one receiver;
 validating the received information based on said identification address and said error correction code;
 transferring the validated information to a monitoring mechanism; and
 monitoring the received data in the validated information with the monitoring mechanism.

26. The method of claim 25, wherein said step of generating information, comprises generating said information to have a data rate of approximately 14 Kb/s to 21 Kb/s and a chip rate of approximately 1 MHz to 1.3 MHz.

27. The method according to claim 26, further comprising the step of programming said identification address into said transmit-only device via a programming connector prior to installing said transmit-only device.

28. The method according to claims 25 or 26, wherein said step of transmitting said generated information, redundantly comprises the substep of generating said preamble *portion* using a preamble chip code that is a same chip code sequence as that used with said received data.

29. A remote power meter monitoring system, comprising:

- a multiplicity of radio frequency transmit-only devices configured to transmit information, each radio frequency transmit-only device comprising,
 - a timer configured to autonomously initiate transmission of said information after expiration of a time duration,
 - a random number generator configured to generate a pseudo random time interval value and to cause the time [interval] *duration* between transmissions to be pseudorandom, and
 - a retransmission mechanism configured to retransmit said information a predetermined number of times;
- at least one sensing element configured to provide sensor data gathered therein to said radio frequency transmit-

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only device, said transmitted information comprising said sensor data, an identification address being assigned to said radio frequency transmit-only device to which the sensor data is provided, and error detection code bits;

at least two receivers configured to receive said transmitted information, and configured to validate said information based on said identification address and said error detection code bits contained in said transmitted information, said receivers providing redundant reception of said transmitted information; and

a monitoring apparatus that is configured to monitor said information as received and validated by at least one of said receivers.

30. A remote power meter monitoring system, comprising:

- a multiplicity of radio frequency transmit-only devices configured to transmit information in a direct sequence spread spectrum signal at plurality frequencies, each radio frequency transmit-only device comprising,
 - a processor configured to generate said information to be transmitted,
 - a crystal oscillator configured to generate spread spectrum timing information for said information generated by said processor,
 - a timer configured to hold a pseudo random time interval value and initiate transmission of said information after expiration of a time duration corresponding to said pseudo random time interval value,
 - a random number generator mechanism that generates said pseudo random time interval value and loads said pseudo random time interval value into said timer, [and]
 - a retransmission mechanism configured to cause said information to be retransmitted a predetermined number of times, and
 - a wake-up circuit configured to initiate said crystal oscillator and said processor in respective active states upon expiration of said time duration so as to transmit said information when in said respective active states, and configured to place said crystal oscillator and said processor in a reduced current state between transmission times;

at least one sensing element configured to provide sensor data to said radio frequency transmit-only device, said transmitted information comprising,

- a data field that holds said sensor data,
- an address field that holds an identification address being assigned to said radio frequency transmit-only device to which the sensor data is provide, and
- an error field that holds error detection code bits;

at least two receivers each configured to receive said transmitted information, and configured to validate said information based on said identification address and said error detection code bits contained in said transmitted information, said receivers providing redundant reception of said transmitted information; and

a monitoring apparatus that is configured to monitor said information as received and validated by at least one of said receivers.

31. A remote power meter monitoring system, comprising:

- a multiplicity of radio frequency transmit-only devices configured to transmit information in a direct sequence spread spectrum signal at plural frequencies, said information comprising a first field comprising a preamble

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configured to establish chip code timing synchronization and a second field comprising data, said first field being transmitted prior to said second field, said preamble having a length measured in bit times that is at least equal in length to a number of chips in a chip code sequence used to produce said spread spectrum signal, each radio frequency transmit-only device comprising, a timer configured to autonomously initiate transmission of said information after expiration of a time duration,

a random number generator that generates a pseudo random time interval value and causes the time [interval] duration between transmissions to be pseudorandom, and

a retransmission mechanism configured to cause said information to be retransmitted a predetermined number of times;

at least one sensing element configured to provide sensor data to said radio frequency transmit-only device, said transmitted information comprising,

a data field that holds said sensor data,

an address field that holds an identification address being assigned to said radio frequency transmit-only device to which the sensor data is provided, and

an error field that holds error detection code bits; at least two receivers each configured to receive said transmitted information, and configured to validate said information based on said identification address and said error detection code bits contained in said transmitted information, said receivers providing redundant reception of said transmitted information, said receivers configured to establish chip code synchronization to said direct sequence spread spectrum signal using said preamble; and

a monitoring apparatus that is configured to monitor said information as received and validated by at least one of said receivers.

32. A remote power meter monitoring system, comprising:

a multiplicity of radio frequency transmit-only devices configured to transmit information in a direct sequence spread spectrum signal at plural frequencies, said information comprising a first field comprising a preamble configured to establish chip code timing synchronization and a second field comprising data, said first field being transmitted prior to said second field, said preamble having a length measured in bit times that is at least equal in length to a number of chips in a chip code sequence plus approximate five bit times, each radio frequency transmit-only device comprising,

a timer comprising a memory that holds a pseudo random time interval value, and configured to autonomously initiate transmission of said information after expiration of a time duration corresponding to said pseudo random time interval value held in said memory,

a random number generator configured to generate said pseudo random time interval value and load said pseudo random time interval value into said timer, and

a retransmission device for redundantly transmitting said information a predetermined number of times;

at least one sensing element configured to provide sensor data to said radio frequency transmit-only device, said transmitted information comprising said sensor data, an identification address being assigned to said radio frequency transmit-only device to which the sensor data is provided, and error detection code bits;

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at least two receivers each configured to receive said transmitted information, and configured to validate said information based on said identification address and said error detection code bits contained in said transmitted information, said receivers providing redundant reception of said transmitted information, said receivers configured to establish chip code lock and fine chip code synchronization using said preamble; and

a monitoring device for monitoring said information as received and validated by at least one of said receivers.

33. A remote power meter monitoring system, comprising:

a multiplicity of radio frequency transmit-only devices configured to transmit information in a direct sequence spread spectrum signal at plural frequencies, said information comprising a first field comprising a preamble configured to establish chip code timing synchronization and a second field comprising data, said first field being transmitted prior to said second field, said preamble having a length measured in bit times that is less than n bit times, where n equals a number of chips in a chip code sequence, each radio frequency transmit-only device comprising,

a timer comprising a memory that holds a pseudo random time interval value, said timer configured to autonomously initiate transmission of said information after expiration of a time duration corresponding to said pseudo random time interval value held in said memory,

a random number generator configured to generate said pseudo random time interval value and for loading said pseudo random time interval value into said timer, and

a retransmission device for redundantly transmitting said information a predetermined number of times;

at least one sensing element configured to provide sensor data to said radio frequency transmit-only device, said transmitted information comprising,

a data field that holds said sensor data,

an address field that holds an identification address begin assigned to said radio frequency transmit-only device to which the sensor data is provided, and

an error field that holds error detection code bits;

at least two receivers each configured to receive said transmitted information, and configured to validate said information based on said identification address and said error detection code bits contained in said transmitted information, said receivers providing redundant reception of said transmitted information, said receivers comprising respective parallel correlation mechanisms that establish chip code synchronization using said preamble; and

a monitoring device for monitoring said information as received and validated by at least one of said receivers.

34. The system according to claims **[39]**29, 30, 31, 32 or 33, wherein said radio frequency transmit-only device *further* comprises a program connector through which said identification address is input in a serial data stream format.

35. The system according to claims 29, 30, 31, 32, or 33, wherein said radio frequency transmit-only device *further* includes a program connector through which said identification address, a type code, and a code division multiple access channel on which said radio frequency transmit-only device is to operate are input in a serial data stream.

36. The system according to claims 29, 30, 31, or 33, wherein said random number generator is configured to be

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seeded with said identification address so as to prevent repeat collisions.

37. The system according to claims 31, 32, or 33, wherein said timer is configured to delay transmission of said information to be transmitted by a predetermined delay after said expiration of said time duration so as to allow for crystal stabilization, transmit carrier frequency stabilization and chip code timing generation stabilization.

38. The system according to claim 37, wherein said radio frequency transmit-only device further includes a programming connector through which said identification address, a type code, and a code division multiple access channel on which said Radio-frequency transmit-only device is to operate are input in a serial data stream format.

39. The system according to claim 37, wherein said random number generator is configured to be seeded with said identification address, thereby preventing repeat collisions.

40. A remote meter monitoring system comprising:

a multiplicity of radio frequency devices configured to transmit information, each radio frequency device comprising,

a timer configured to autonomously initiate transmission of said information after expiration of a time duration, and

a retransmission device configured to transmit redundantly at least a portion of said information a predetermined number of times;

at least one sensing element configured to provide meter data to said radio frequency device, said transmitted information comprising said meter data, an identification address being assigned to said radio frequency device to which the meter data is provided, and error detection information; and

at least two receivers each configured to receive said transmitted information, and to validate said transmitted information based at least in part on said identification address and said error detection information contained in said transmitted information, said receivers providing redundant reception of said transmitted information.

41. A remote meter monitoring system comprising:

a multiplicity of radio frequency devices capable of transmitting information at plural frequencies, each radio frequency device comprising,

a processor configured to generate said information to be transmitted,

a crystal oscillator configured to generate data timing for said information generated by said processor,

a timer configured to initiate transmission of said information after expiration of a time duration,

a retransmission device configured to transmit redundantly at least a portion of said information a predetermined number of times, and

a wake-up circuit configured to initiate said crystal oscillator and said processor in respective active states upon expiration of said time duration so as to transmit said information, and configured to place said crystal oscillator and said processor in a reduced current state between transmissions;

at least one sensing element configured to provide meter data to said radio frequency device, said transmitted information comprising said meter data, an identification address being assigned to said radio frequency device to which the meter data is provided, and error detection information; and

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at least two receivers each configured to receive said transmitted information, and to validate said transmitted information based at least in part on said identification address and said error detection information contained in said transmitted information, said receivers providing redundant reception of said transmitted information.

42. A remote meter monitoring system comprising:

a multiplicity of radio frequency devices configured to transmit information at plural frequencies, said information comprising a first field comprising a preamble configured to establish data timing synchronization and a second field comprising data, said first field being transmitted prior to said second field, said preamble having a length measured in bit times that is sufficient in length to establish data bit timing used to subsequently decode said information, each radio frequency device comprising,

a timer configured to autonomously initiate transmission of said information after expiration of a time duration,

a retransmission device configured to transmit redundantly at least a portion of said information a predetermined number of times, and

at least one sensing element configured to provide meter data to said radio frequency device, said transmitted information comprising said meter data, an identification address being assigned to said radio frequency device to which the meter data is provided, and error detection information; and

at least two receivers each configured to receive said transmitted information, to validate said transmitted information based at least in part on said identification address and said error detection information contained in said transmitted information, said at least two receivers providing redundant reception of said transmitted information, said at least two receivers configured to establish data timing synchronization to said information using said preamble.

43. A remote meter monitoring system comprising:

a multiplicity of radio frequency devices configurable to transmit information at plural frequencies, said information comprising a first field comprising a preamble configured to establish data timing synchronization and a second field comprising data, said first field being transmitted prior to said second field, each radio frequency device comprising,

a timer configured to autonomously initiate transmission of said information after expiration of a time duration,

a retransmission device configured to transmit redundantly at least a portion of said information a predetermined number of times, and

at least one sensing element configured to provide meter data to said radio frequency device, said transmitted information comprising said meter data, an identification address which is unique to the meter being assigned to said radio frequency device to which the meter data is provided, and error detection information; and

at least two receivers each configured to receive said transmitted information and to validate said transmitted information based at least in part on said identification address and said error detection information contained in said transmitted information, said receivers providing redundant reception of said transmitted

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information, said receivers configured to establish data timing synchronization using said preamble.

44. A remote meter monitoring system, comprising:

a multiplicity of radio frequency devices configured to transmit information, each radio frequency device comprising,

a timer comprising a memory that holds a time interval value, said timer configured to autonomously initiate transmission of said information after expiration of a time duration corresponding to said time interval value held in said memory,

a generating means for generating and loading said time interval value into said timer, and

a retransmission means for redundantly transmitting said information a predetermined number of times;

at least one sensing element configured to provide meter data to said radio frequency device, said transmitted information comprising said meter data, an identification address being assigned to said radio frequency device to which the meter data is provided, and error detection code bits;

at least two receivers each capable of configuration to receive said transmitted information, and validation of said information based on said identification address and said error detection code bits contained in said transmitted information, said receivers providing redundant reception of said transmitted information; and

a monitoring means for monitoring said information as received and validated by at least one of said receivers.

45. A remote meter monitoring system, comprising:

a multiplicity of radio frequency devices configured to transmit information at plural frequencies, each radio frequency device comprising,

a processor configured to generate said information to be transmitted,

a crystal oscillator configured to generate data timing for said information generated by said processor,

a timer configured to hold a time interval value, said timer configured to initiate transmission of said information after expiration of a time duration corresponding to said time interval value,

a generating means for generating and loading said time interval value into said timer,

a retransmission means for redundantly transmitting said information a predetermined number of times, and

a wake-up circuit configured to initiate said crystal oscillator and said processor in respective active states upon expiration of said time duration so as to transmit said information, and configured to place said crystal oscillator and said processor in a reduced current state between transmissions;

at least one sensing element configured to provide meter data to said radio frequency device, said transmitted information comprising said meter data, an identification address being assigned to said radio frequency device to which the meter data is provided, and error detection code bits;

at least two receivers each capable of configuration to receive said transmitted information, and validation of said information based on said identification address and said error detection code bits contained in said transmitted information, said receivers providing redundant reception of said transmitted information; and

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a monitoring means for monitoring said information as received and validated by at least one of said receivers.

46. A remote meter monitoring system, comprising:

a multiplicity of radio frequency devices configured to transmit information, said information comprising a first field comprising a preamble configured to establish data timing synchronization and a second field comprising data, said first field being transmitted prior to said second field, each radio frequency device comprising,

a timer comprising a memory for holding a time interval value, said timer configured to autonomously initiate transmission of said information after expiration of a time duration corresponding to said time interval value held in said memory,

a generating means for generating and loading said time interval value into said time, and

a retransmission means for redundantly transmitting said information a predetermined number of times;

at least one sensing element configured to provide meter data to said radio frequency device, said transmitted information comprising said meter data, an identification address being assigned to said radio frequency device to which the meter data is provided, and error detection code bits;

at least two receivers each configurable to receive said transmitted information, and configurable to validate said information based on said identification address and said error detection code bits contained in said transmitted information, said at least two receivers providing redundant reception of said transmitted information, said at least two receivers configured to establish data timing synchronization to said information using said preamble; and

a monitoring means for monitoring said information as received and validated by at least one of said receivers.

47. The system of claim 46, wherein the multiplicity of radio frequency devices is further configured to transmit information at plural frequencies.

48. The system of claim 46, wherein said receivers further comprise respective parallel correlation means for establishing data timing synchronization using said preamble.

49. The system according to claim 44 or 46, wherein respective of said radio frequency devices further comprises:

a processor configured to generate said information to be transmitted,

a crystal oscillator configured to generate data timing for said information generated by said processor,

an oscillator configured to generate a carrier on which said information to be transmitted is modulated;

a wake-up circuit configured to initiate said crystal oscillator and said oscillator in respective active states upon expiration of said time duration so as to transmit said information, and configured to place said crystal oscillator and said oscillator in a reduced current state between transmissions, said information being transmitted after a predetermined delay with respect to when said crystal oscillator and said oscillator are placed in said respective active states so as to allow for stabilization in said oscillator and said crystal oscillator prior to information transmission.

50. The system according to one of claims 44 or 46, wherein said radio frequency device further comprises:

a processor configured to generate said information to be transmitted; and

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a wake-up circuit that maintains said processor in a reduced current state between transmissions, and upon expiration of said time duration, as determined by said timer, places said processor in a normal operational state. 5

51. A remote meter monitoring system, comprising:

a multiplicity of radio frequency devices configured to transmit information, each radio frequency device comprising,

a processor configured to generate said information to be transmitted, 10

a crystal oscillator configured to generate data timing for said information generated by said processor,

a timer configured to delay transmission of said information by a predetermined delay after expiration of a time duration so as to allow for crystal stabilization, transmit carrier frequency stabilization and data timing generation stabilization, 15

a retransmission means for redundantly transmitting said information a predetermined number of times, and 20

a wake-up circuit configured to initiate said crystal oscillator and said processor in respective active states upon expiration of said time duration so as to transmit said information, and configured to place said crystal oscillator and said processor in a reduced current state between transmissions; 25

at least one sensing element configured to provide meter data to said radio frequency device, said transmitted information comprising said meter data, an identification address being assigned to said radio frequency device to which the meter data is provided, and error detection code bits; 30

at least two receivers each of which being configured to receive said transmitted information, and configured to validate said information based on said identification address and said error detection code bits contained in said transmitted information, said receivers providing redundant reception of said transmitted information; and 35

a monitoring means for monitoring said information as received and validated by at least one of said receivers. 40

52. The system according to claim 51, wherein a code sequence used to provide a preamble of said information is a same sequence as a data bearing code sequence. 45

53. A remote meter monitoring system, comprising:

a multiplicity of radio frequency devices configurable to transmit information, each radio frequency device comprising, 50

a timer configured to autonomously initiate transmission of said information after expiration of a time duration,

a varying means for varying the time duration between transmissions of said information, 55

a retransmission means for redundantly transmitting said information a predetermined number of times,

a processor configured to generate said information to be transmitted,

a crystal oscillator configured to generate data timing for said information generated by said processor, 60

a carrier generator mechanism configured to generate a carrier on which said information to be transmitted is modulated, and

a wake-up circuit configured to initiate at least one of said crystal oscillator and said carrier generator mechanism in respective active states upon expira- 65

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tion of said time duration so as to transmit said information, said information being transmitted after a predetermined delay with respect to when the at least one of said crystal oscillator and said carrier generator mechanism are placed in said respective active states so as to allow for stabilization in the at least one of said crystal oscillator and said carrier generator mechanism prior to information transmission;

at least one sensing element configured to provide meter data to said radio frequency device, said transmitted information comprising said meter data, an identification address being assigned to said radio frequency device to which the meter data is provided, and error detection code bits;

a receiver configured to receive said transmitted information, and configured to validate said information based on said identification address and said error detection code bits contained in said transmitted information; and

a monitoring means for monitoring said information as received and validated by said receiver.

54. The system of claim 53, wherein the wake-up circuit is further configured to place the at least one of said crystal oscillator and said carrier generator mechanism in a reduced current state between transmissions.

55. A remote meter monitoring system, comprising:

a multiplicity of radio frequency devices configured to transmit information at plural frequencies, each radio frequency device comprising,

a processor configured to generate said information to be transmitted,

a crystal oscillator configured to generate data timing for said information generated by said processor,

a timer configured to initiate transmission of said information after expiration of a time duration,

a retransmission means for redundantly transmitting said information a predetermined number of times,

a varying means for varying the time duration between redundant transmissions,

a carrier generator mechanism configured to generate a carrier on which said information to be transmitted is modulated, and

a wake-up circuit configured to initiate at least one of said crystal oscillator and said carrier generator mechanism in respective active states upon expiration of said time duration so as to transmit said information, said information being transmitted after a predetermined delay with respect to when the at least one of said crystal oscillator and said carrier generator mechanism are placed in said respective active states so as to allow for stabilization in the at least one of said crystal oscillator and said carrier generator mechanism prior to information transmission;

at least one sensing element configured to provide meter data to said radio frequency device, said transmitted information comprising said meter data, an identification address being assigned to said radio frequency device to which the meter data is provided, and error detection code bits;

a receiver configured to receive said transmitted information, and configured to validate said information based on said identification address and said error detection code bits contained in said transmitted information; and

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a monitoring means for monitoring said information as received and validated by said receiver.

56. A remote meter monitoring system, comprising:

a multiplicity of radio frequency devices configured to transmit information, said information comprising a first field comprising a preamble configured to establish data timing synchronization and a second field comprising data, said first field being transmitted prior to said second field, each radio frequency device comprising,

a timer configured to autonomously initiate transmission of said information after expiration of a time duration,

a retransmission means for redundantly transmitting said information a predetermined number of times,

a varying means for varying the time duration between redundant transmissions,

a processor configured to generate said information to be transmitted,

a crystal oscillator configured to generate data timing for said information generated by said processor,

a carrier generator mechanism configured to generate a carrier on which said information to be transmitted is modulated, and

a wake-up circuit configured to initiate at least one of said crystal oscillator and said carrier generator mechanism in respective active states upon expiration of said time duration so as to transmit said information, said information being transmitted after a predetermined delay with respect to when the at least one of said crystal oscillator and said carrier generator mechanism are placed in said respective active states so as to allow for stabilization in the at least one of said crystal oscillator and said carrier generator mechanism prior to information transmission;

at least one sensing element configured to provide meter data to said radio frequency device, said transmitted information comprising said meter data, an identification address being assigned to said radio frequency device to which the meter data is provided, and error detection code bits;

a receiver configured to receive said transmitted information, and configured to validate said information based on said identification address and said error detection code bits contained in said transmitted information, said receiver configured to establish data timing synchronization to said information using said preamble; and

a monitoring means for monitoring said information as received and validated by said receiver.

57. The system of claim 56, wherein said multiplicity of radio frequency devices is further configured to transmit information at plural frequencies.

58. The system of claim 56, wherein the wake-up circuit is further configured to place at least one of said crystal oscillator and said carrier generator mechanism in a reduced current state between transmissions.

59. The system according to one of claims 44-46, 51, 53, 55 or 56, wherein said radio frequency device further comprises an information priority mechanism that is configured to increase a rate of information transmission when said meter data input to said radio frequency device changes.

60. The system according to one of claims 44-46, 51, 53, 55 or 56, wherein said radio frequency device further comprises:

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a transmitter oscillator having an enable input being configured to generate a carrier on which said information is carried;

a power amplifier having an enable input and being configured to amplify said carrier prior to transmission of said information which modulates said carrier; and an enabling device connected to said enable input of said transmitter oscillator and said enable input of said power amplifier configured to enable an active state of said transmitter oscillator and said power amplifier during periods of information transmission and configured to place said transmitter oscillator and said power amplifier in a low current state during periods of non-transmission, thereby reducing current drain.

61. The system according to claim 62, further comprising a hand held terminal configured to load said identification address in the serial data stream to said programming connector means.

62. The system according to one of claims 44-46, 51, 53, 55 or 56, wherein said radio frequency device further comprises a programming connector means for assigning said identification address to said radio frequency device using a serial data stream.

63. The system according to one of claims 44-46, 51, 53, 55 or 56, wherein said timer is configured to divide said time duration into a very fine number of temporal time slots.

64. The system according to one of claims 44-46, 51, 53, 55 or 56, wherein said radio frequency device further includes a programming connector means for assigning through a serial data stream said identification address, a type code, and a code division multiple access channel on which said radio frequency device is to operate.

65. The system according to one of claims 44-46, 51, 53, 55 or 56, wherein said radio frequency device comprises a data rate between 14 Kb/s and 21 Kb/s.

66. The system according to one of claims 53, 55 or 56, wherein said varying means is configured to provide a pseudo random time so as to avoid repeat collisions.

67. The system according to one of claims 45, 51, 53, 55 or 56, wherein:

the wake up circuit places said processor in a normal operational state upon expiration of said time duration, as determined by said timer.

68. A remote meter monitoring method, comprising the steps of:

retrieving data from a sensing element;

generating information containing the retrieved data, comprising,

generating an identification address field for holding an identification address corresponding to a transmitting device, and

generating an error correction code;

transmitting the generated information, redundantly at intervals from said transmitting device, comprising, loading a timer with a time interval value,

enabling, upon expiration of said time interval value as timed by said timer, a crystal oscillator used to generate data timing signals, and a transmitter oscillator used to generate transmission signals,

delaying information transmission for a predetermined time period, relative to said expiration of said time interval value, to allow for stabilization of said crystal oscillator and said transmitter oscillator,

transmitting a preamble portion of said information used for data timing synchronization, said preamble portion having a length in bit times at least equal to a length of a code sequence used by said transmitting device,

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transmitting the generated information based upon said code sequence and said data timing signals at a predetermined frequency by said transmitting device, and
 disabling said crystal oscillator and said transmitter oscillator, so as to conserve power; 5
 repeating said step of transmitting said generated information redundantly after an interval of time so as to provide information transmission redundancy;
 receiving the generated information by at least one receiver; 10
 validating the received information based on said identification address and said error correction code;
 transferring the validated information to a monitoring mechanism; and 15
 monitoring the received data in the validated information with the monitoring mechanism.

69. The method of claim 68, wherein said step of generating information, comprises generating said information to have a data rate of approximately 14 Kb/s to 21 Kb/s. 20

70. The method according to claim 69, further comprising the step of programming said identification address into said transmitting device via a programming connector prior to installing said transmitting device. 25

71. A remote power meter monitoring system, comprising:
 a multiplicity of radio frequency devices configured to transmit information, each radio frequency device comprising, 25
 a timer configured to autonomously initiate transmission of said information after expiration of a time duration, 30
 a number generator configured to generate a time interval value and to cause a time interval between transmissions to vary, and
 a retransmission mechanism configured to retransmit said information a predetermined number of times; 35
 at least one sensing element configured to provide meter data gathered therein to said radio frequency device, said transmitted information comprising said meter data, an identification address being assigned to said radio frequency device to which the meter data is provided, and error detection code bits; 40
 at least two receivers configured to receive said transmitted information, and configured to validate said information based on said identification address and said error detection code bits contained in said transmitted information, said receivers providing redundant reception of said transmitted information; and 45
 a monitoring apparatus that is configured to monitor said information as received and validated by at least one of said receivers. 50

72. A remote meter monitoring system, comprising:
 a multiplicity of radio frequency devices configurable to transmit information at plural frequencies, each radio frequency device comprising, 55
 a processor configured to generate said information to be transmitted,
 a crystal oscillator configured to generate data timing information for said information generated by said processor, 60
 a timer configured to hold a time interval value and initiate transmission of said information after expiration of a time duration corresponding to said time interval value,
 a number generator mechanism that generates said time interval value and loads said time interval value into said timer, 65

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a retransmission mechanism configured to cause said information to be retransmitted a predetermined number of times, and
 a wake-up circuit configured to initiate said crystal oscillator and said processor in respective active states upon expiration of said time duration so as to transmit said information when in said respective active states, and configured to place said crystal oscillator and said processor in a reduced current state between transmission times;
 at least one sensing element configured to provide meter data to said radio frequency device, said transmitted information comprising,
 a data field that holds said meter data,
 an address field that holds an identification addresses being assigned to said radio frequency device to which the meter data is provided, and
 an error detection code field that holds error detection code bits;
 at least two receivers each configured to receive said transmitted information, and configured to validate said information based on said identification address and said error detection code bits contained in said transmitted information, said receivers providing redundant reception of said transmitted information; and
 a monitoring apparatus that is configured to monitor said information as received and validated by at least one of said receivers.

73. A remote meter monitoring system, comprising:
 a multiplicity of radio frequency devices capable of transmitting information at plural frequencies, said information comprising a first field comprising a preamble configured to establish data timing synchronization and a second field comprising data, said first field being transmitted prior to said second field, each radio frequency device comprising,
 a timer configured to autonomously initiate transmission of said information after expiration of a time duration,
 a number generator that generates a time interval value and causes the time interval between transmissions to vary, and a retransmission mechanism configured to cause said information to be retransmitted a predetermined number of times;
 at least one sensing element configured to provide meter data to said radio frequency device, said transmitted information comprising,
 a data field that holds said meter data,
 an address field that holds an identification address being assigned to said radio frequency device to which the meter data is provided, and
 an error field that holds error detection code bits; at least two receivers each configured to receive said transmitted information, and configured to validate said information based on said identification address and said error detection code bits contained in said transmitted information, said receivers providing redundant reception of said transmitted information, said receivers configured to establish data timing synchronization to said information using said preamble; and
 a monitoring apparatus that is configured to monitor said information as received and validated by at least one of said receivers.

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74. A remote meter monitoring system, comprising:

a multiplicity of radio frequency devices configured to transmit information, said information comprising a first field comprising a preamble configured to establish data timing synchronization and a second field comprising data, said first field being transmitted prior to said second field, each radio frequency device comprising,

a timer comprising a memory that holds a time interval value, and configured to autonomously initiate transmission of said information after expiration of a time duration corresponding to said time interval value held in said memory,

a number generator configured to generate said time interval value and load said time interval value into said timer, and

a retransmission device for redundantly transmitting said information a predetermined number of times;

at least one sensing element configured to provide meter data to said radio frequency device, said transmitted information comprising said meter data, an identification address being assigned to said radio frequency device to which the meter data is provided, and error detection code bits;

at least two receivers each configured to receive said transmitted information, and configured to validate said information based on said identification address and said error detection code bits contained in said transmitted information, said receivers providing redundant reception of said transmitted information, said receivers configured to establish data timing synchronization using said preamble; and

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a monitoring device for monitoring said information as received and validated by at least one of said receivers.

75. The system according to one of claims 71-74, wherein said radio frequency device further comprises a program connector through which said identification address is input in a serial data stream format.

76. The system according to one of claims 71-74, wherein said radio frequency device further includes a program connector through which said identification address, a type code, and a channel on which said radio frequency device is to operate are input in a serial data stream.

77. The system according to one of claims 71-74, wherein said number generator is configured to provide a random number to avoid repeat collisions.

78. The system according to one of claim 71-74, wherein said timer is configured to delay transmission of said information to be transmitted by a predetermined delay after said expiration of said time duration so as to allow for crystal stabilization, transmit carrier frequency stabilization and timing generation stabilization.

79. The system according to claim 78, wherein said radio frequency device further includes a programming connector through which said identification address, a type code, and a channel on which said radio frequency device is to operate are input in a serial data stream format.

80. The system according to claim 78, wherein said number generator is configured to produce pseudo random numbers for avoiding repeat collisions.

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