

TITLE**POWDER COMPACTION PRESS AND METHOD FOR
MANUFACTURING OF CAPACITOR ANODES****TECHNICAL FIELD**

5 [0001] This invention relates to a powder compaction press and a method for making capacitor anodes.

BACKGROUND OF THE INVENTION

[0002] Compaction of tantalum or valve powder to make capacitor elements is known in the art as evidenced by the disclosure of U.S. Patent 5,949,639 issued
10 September 7, 1999 to T. Malda et al. for a Capacitor Element for Solid Electrolytic Capacitor, Device and Process for Making the Same and by the disclosure of U.S. Patent 6,191,936 issued February 20, 2001 to D.A. Webber et al. for a Capacitor Having Textured Pellet and Method for Making Same.

[0003] When making capacitor anodes by compaction of valve powder it is desired
15 to have uniform compaction. However when the capacitor element has an irregular exterior surface the compaction device typically does not produce a uniformly compacted capacitor element. It has also been found that the capacitor element may be damaged by the withdrawal of the punches used in forming such an element.

SUMMARY OF THE INVENTION

20 [0004] It is a primary object of the invention to form a capacitor element having an irregular exterior surface by compacting valve powder in such a way that the degree of compaction is uniform throughout the element. It is also an object of the invention to provide a powder compaction press which uniformly compacts a capacitor element having an irregular exterior and which does not damage the capacitor element when the
25 forming punches are withdrawn from the capacitor element.

[0005] The capacitor element is formed in a horizontal press or in a vertical press using opposed rib punches and opposed channel punches arranged in interleaved fashion. The opposed rib and channel punches are so positioned in their non compacting position, in which powder in the compression chamber is not under
30 compression, that in traveling to their compression positions the powder will be compressed to the same degree throughout the capacitor element. After the capacitor element is formed, the opposed channel punches are withdrawn first to avoid friction destruction of the element.

BRIEF DESCRIPTION OF THE DRAWINGS

35 [0006] Two embodiments of the invention are illustrated in the drawings in which

Figure 1 is a top view of a first embodiment in the form of a horizontal press with parts broken away for illustration purposes;

Figure 2 is a view taken on line 2-2 in Figure 1 with parts broken away for illustration purposes;

5 Figure 3 is a view taken on line 3-3 in Figure 1;

Figure 4 is a partial top view of the press of Figure 1 showing rib and channel punches in their non-compacting position;

Figure 5 is a top view similar to Figure 4 showing powder deposited in the compression chamber;

10 Figure 6 is a top view of the compression chamber showing the rib and channel punches in their compacting positions and the capacitor element in its compacted condition;

Figure 7 is a top view of the compression chamber showing withdrawal of the channel punches from the capacitor element;

15 Figure 8 is a top view of the compression chamber showing the rib and channel punches withdrawn from the capacitor element;

Figure 9 is a top view showing withdrawal of a pair side walls of the compression chamber;

20 Figure 10 is a section of a prior art press showing powder in a compression chamber prior to compaction;

Figure 11 is a section showing the punches of the prior art press of Figure 10 in their compaction position;

Figure 12 is a section showing the punches of the prior art press withdrawn from the compacted capacitor element;

25 Figure 13 is a perspective view of a capacitor element with a single lead wire;

Figure 14 is a perspective view of a capacitor element with three lead wires;

Figure 15 is a perspective view showing a modified capacitor element;

Figure 16 is a view taken on line 16 – 16 in Figure 15;

30 Figure 17 is a side view of a second embodiment in the form of a vertical press with parts broken away for illustration purposes;

Figure 18 is a view taken on the line 18 – 18 in Figure 17;

Figure 19 is a partial side view with parts broken away to show a compaction chamber filled with powder;

Figure 20 is a partial side view showing upper rib and channel punches lowered to the top of the filled compaction chamber;

Figure 21 is a partial side view showing the rib and channel punches adjusted to a desired pre-compaction position, and

5 Figure 22 is a partial side view showing the rib and channel punches in their compacting positions and the capacitor element in its compacted condition.

DETAILED DESCRIPTION OF THE INVENTION

[0007] A horizontal powder press 26 is illustrated in Figures 1, 2 and 3. An elongated compression chamber 27 of uniform quadrilateral cross section is formed by a
10 bottom wall in the form of flat support 28, a pair of parallel side walls 31, 32 having confronting parallel vertical surfaces of equal height extending upwardly from the upwardly facing surface of the support 28 and a top wall 33 having a flat bottom surface in engagement with the coplanar top surfaces of the side walls 31, 32. A set of six
15 opposed rib punches 36, 36' and a set of four opposed channel punches 37, 37' extend into opposite open ends of the compression chamber 27. The linearly reciprocable rib punches 36 and channel punches 37 are interleaved flat plates. The top wall 33 is held in place on the top surface of the side walls 31, 32 by a press foot 39 which has a vertically extending opening 41 for accommodating a wire 42 inserted through an opening 43 in the top wall 33 and into the powder compression chamber 27.

20 [0008] Four powered drive mechanisms 51, 52, 53, 54 are mounted on the support 28. The drive mechanism 51 includes an electric motor 56 secured to the support 28 and driving a horizontally disposed screw 57 which extends through a threaded opening 58 in a thrust block 59. The thrust block 59 has a T-bar tongue and groove connection 60 with the support 28 permitting the thrust block 59 to move in the axial direction of the
25 screw 57 when the screw is rotated by the motor 56. The thrust block 59 includes a pair of cantilever arms 61 which are connected to the rib punches 36 by thrust bars 62. The drive mechanism 52 includes a powered driver in the form of an electric motor 66 having an output screw 67 in threaded engagement with an internally threaded opening 68 through a thrust block 69. The thrust block 69 has a T-bar tongue and groove
30 connection with the support 28. The thrust block 69 includes a cantilever arm 71 which is connected to the channel punches 37 by thrust bars 72.

[0009] The drive mechanisms 53, 54 in a similar manner include electric drive motors 76, 77, screws 78, 79 and screw blocks 81, 82 connected to the rib and channel punches 36', 37' by thrust arms 83, 84 and thrust bars 86, 87.

[0010] Figure 4 is a top view of an empty compression chamber 27 of the press 26 with the top wall 33 and the press foot 39 removed. The compression chamber 27 is ready to be filled with valve powder. The rib and channel punches 36, 36', 37, 37' have been adjusted to appropriate non-compacting or powder loading positions to achieve the desired degree of compaction during the compaction phase of operation. In the example illustrated in Figures 4 - 9 there is a 3 to 1 compaction ratio. Figure 5 shows the compaction chamber filled with valve powder 88. The top wall, not shown, is placed on top of the side walls 31, 32 and the press foot 39, not shown, is brought to bear against the top wall 33, not shown. The wire 42 is then extended an appropriate depth into the powder 88. The powder 88 is now ready to be compacted into a capacitor element. During, compression, in the illustrated example, there is a 3 to 1 reduction in the distance between the opposed ends of the rib punches 36, 36' and there is a 3 to 1 reduction in the distance between the ends of the channel punches 37, 37' during compression. Thus both the rib areas and the web areas between the opposed channels will be equally compressed, that is, compressed to the same degree or extent. Figure 6 shows the completion of the compaction step in the manufacturing process in which the rib and channel punches 36, 36', 37, 37' have been moved to their compacting position. The punches are moved from their non-compacting or chamber loading position shown in Figures 4 and 5 to their compacting position shown in Figure 6 at speeds proportional to the distances they move from their non-compressing positions to their compressing positions. The rib punches 36, 36' move faster than the channel punches 37, 37' and both sets of punches arrive simultaneously at their compression or compaction positions shown in Figure 6. Thus the rate of compaction of the powder in the rib areas of the element 89 is the same as the rate of compaction in the web between the oppositely disposed channels in the element 89. By starting compaction with the punches spaced at distances proportional to the finished width of the rib and web areas of the capacitor element 89 and by moving the punches during compression at speeds proportional to the distances traveled during compression, an element 89 of uniform density is produced.

[0011] In the next manufacturing step, shown in Figure 7, the channel punches 37, 37' are withdrawn from the channels formed in the element 89 and for operational purposes may be withdrawn to their powder loading positions shown in Figures 4 and 5. By keeping the rib punches 36, 36' in their compacting position while the channel punches 37, 37' are withdrawn, breakdown of the edges of the formed element 89 are avoided.

[0012] As shown in Figure 8, the rib punches 36, 36' have been withdrawn and may be positioned in their chamber loading position shown in Figures 4 and 5. In the next step of manufacture, shown in Figure 9, the press foot 39 and the top wall 33 are raised and the side walls 31, 32 are moved laterally away from one another to completely
5 release the element 89, which may now be removed without burnishing of the sides of the element 89.

[0013] Figures 10, 11 and 12 show a prior art press manufacturing a capacitor element. After the compaction chamber, formed by side walls 91, 92, a bottom wall, not shown, and opposed punches 93, 94, is filled with powder, as shown in Figure 10, and
10 the top wall is closed, the opposed punches 93, 94 are moved to their compaction positions shown in Figure 11. Since the channel forming parts of the punches 93, 94 move the same distance as the rib forming parts, the web areas between the channels are compressed to a greater extent than the ribs. The non-uniform compaction of the element is highly undesirable from a capacitor quality standpoint. When the punches
15 93, 94 are released or withdrawn, as shown in Figure 12, portions of the element tend to break away because the pressure of the compacted powder within the confines of the punches is greater than the tensile strength of the compacted element. The foregoing deficiencies in the illustrated prior art powder compaction press are remedied by the herein disclosed invention.

[0014] Figure 13 is a perspective view of the capacitor element 89 formed by the
20 press 26. Figure 14 shows a capacitor element 96 with three wires and Figures 15 and 16 show a capacitor element 97 which has been formed, according to this invention, using a single pair of opposed rib punches and two pair of opposed channel punches.

[0015] Figures 17 and 18 schematically illustrate a vertical press 101 embodiment of
25 the invention. Four powered drive mechanisms 102, 103, 104, 106 are secured to a vertical support wall 107 and a valve powder compaction chamber 108 is formed by the vertical wall 107, side walls 111, 112, 113 and sets of opposed rib punches 116, 116' and sets of opposed channel punches 117, 117' which are supported in guide blocks 121, 122 mounted on the vertical wall 107. The side walls 111, 112, 113 are releasably held
30 in place by press feet 131, 132, 133. Drive screws 136, 137, 138, 139 driven by electric motors 141, 142, 143, 144, threadingly engage threaded openings in thrust blocks 146, 147, 148, 149 which have sliding tongue and groove connections with the wall 107 similar to that provided for the embodiment of the invention shown in Figures 1 – 3.

The support wall 107 has an opening 161 through which a capacitor wire 162 can be inserted into the compaction chamber 108.

[0016] Figure 19 shows the upper rib punches 116 and the upper channel punches 117 withdrawn from the compression chamber 108 sufficiently to permit valve powder to be placed in the compression chamber 108. The upper ends of the lower rib and lower channel punches 116', 117' are positioned to provide the desired amount of powder 151 for the element to be formed when the chamber 108 is filled to the top. The upper rib and channel punches 116, 117 are then lowered to close the top opening of the compression chamber 108 as shown in Figure 20.

[0017] As shown in Figure 21 the upper and lower channel punches 117, 117' are next adjusted to extend an equal distance into the compression chamber 108. This is accomplished by simultaneously lowering the upper and lower channel punches 117, 117' the same distance. The press is now ready for the compaction step. It will be noted that the wire 162 is centrally located in relation to the powder 151 to be compressed, the punches 116 and 116' are spaced equal distances from a horizontal plane 152 through the center of the wire 162 and the punches 117, 117' are also spaced equal distances from the horizontal plane 152. The element 153 shown in Figure 22 is formed by a three to one compression of the powder 151. In other words the distance between the opposed rib punches 116 and 116', shown in Figure 21, is reduced to one third in the compression step. Likewise the distance between the opposed channel punches 117, 117' shown in Figure 21, is also reduced to one third in the compression step. In order to effect an equal rate of compression in the rib and web areas of the element, the opposed rib punches 116, 116' are moved toward one another faster than the channel punches 117, 117' are moved toward one another. The ratio of the speeds at which the rib and channel punches move in the compaction step is equal to the ratio of the distances said rib and channel punches move during the compaction step. An equal rate of compaction of the powder in the rib areas and the web areas between the channels is effected, thus avoiding lateral shifting of the powder during compaction. A uniform compaction density of the element 153 is achieved.

[0018] Following the compaction step illustrated by Figure 22 the channel punches 117, 117' are retracted by the drive mechanisms 102, 103, 104, 106 from the element 153 and next the rib punches 116, 116' are retracted to a non-compacting position. Then the side walls 111, 112 and 113 are moved away from the element 153 to permit the element 153 to be removed without burnishing its surfaces. This retraction of the

punches 116, 116', 117, 117' and shifting of the side walls is similar to the procedure employed in fabricating the element 92 by the horizontal press shown in Figures 1 – 9.

[0019] The herein disclosed horizontal press 26 and the vertical press 101 carry out a method of manufacturing a capacitor element which produces high quality capacitor
5 elements having uniform compaction density and unburnished surfaces free of defects.

What is claimed is:

1. A press for forming a capacitor element from valve powder comprising:
walls forming an elongated compression chamber of uniform section
having openings at its opposite ends,
5 a set of opposed rib punches extending through said openings and
linearly reciprocable in said chamber a first distance between a non compacting
position and a compacting position,
a set of opposed channel punches linearly reciprocable in said chamber
a second distance between a non compacting position and a compacting position,
10 said opposed sets of rib and channel punches being interleaved,
first drive means operable to move said rib punches between their non-
compaction position and their compaction position at a first predetermined speed,
second drive means operable to move said channel punches between their
non- compaction position and their compaction position at a second predetermined
15 speed,
the ratio of said first predetermined speed to said second predetermined
speed being equal to the ratio of said first distance to said second distance, and
controls operable to cause said first and second drive means to
simultaneously move said rib and channel punches from their non-compacting positions
20 to their compacting positions.
2. The press of claim 1 wherein said controls for said first and second drive
means are operable to cause said second drive means to move said channel punches
from their compacting position to their non-compacting position and subsequently cause
said first drive means to move said rib punches from their compacting position to their
25 non-compacting position.
3. The press of claim 1 wherein the ratio of the linear distance between said
opposed rib punches in their non-compacting position to the linear distance between
said opposed rib punches in their compacting position being the same as the ratio of the
linear distance between said opposed channel punches in their non-compacting position
30 to the linear distance between said channel punches in their compacting position.
4. The press of claim 3 wherein said controls for said first and second drive
means are operable to cause said second drive means to move said channel punches
from their compacting position to their non-compacting position and subsequently cause

said first drive means to move said rib punches from their compacting position to their non-compacting position.

5 5. The press of claim 1 wherein said set of rib punches includes three rib punches in opposed alignment with three other rib punches, and wherein said set of channel punches include two channel punches in opposed alignment with two other channel punches.

6. The press of claim 5 wherein said punches are interleaved plates.

10 7. The press of claim 1 wherein a contiguous pair of said walls are shiftable away from the other walls thereby facilitating removal of a capacitor element formed in said press without burnishing contact with said walls.

8. A press for forming a capacitor element from valve powder comprising:
a stationary support having a flat horizontal upward facing surface,
a pair of parallel side walls of equal height resting on and extending
upwardly from said upward facing surface of said support,

15 said side walls presenting confronting parallel vertical surfaces a predetermined distance apart and coplanar top surfaces parallel to said flat horizontal surface of said support,

a removable top wall having a flat surface in engagement with said top surface of said side walls,

20 said upward facing surface of said support, said confronting vertical surfaces of said side walls and said flat surface of said top wall defining an elongated horizontally extending compression chamber of quadrilateral section having openings at its opposite ends,

25 a set of opposed rib punches extending through said chamber openings shiftable horizontally toward and away from one another in the elongated direction of said chamber between a powder loading position and a compacting position,

30 a set of opposed channel punches extending through said chamber openings shiftable horizontally toward and away from one another in the elongated direction of said chamber between a powder loading position and a compacting position,
said rib and channel punches being interleaved,

the ratio of the linear distance between said opposed rib punches in their loading position to the linear distance between said opposed rib punches in their compacting position being the same as the ratio of the linear distance between said

opposed channel punches in their loading position to the linear distance between said channel punches in their compacting position, and

actuator means operable to simultaneously move said rib and channel punches from their loading position to their compacting position.

5 9. The press of claim 8 wherein said actuator means moves said rib and channel punches at speeds producing a uniform rate of compression of said powder throughout said element.

10 10. The press of claim 8 wherein at least one of said side walls is shiftable away from the other side wall to facilitate removal of an element formed in said press.

11. A press for forming a capacitor element from valve powder comprising:
vertical walls forming a vertically elongated compression chamber of
uniform quadrilateral section and having top and bottom openings,

a set of opposed upper and lower rib punches vertically reciprocable in
said chamber,

15 a set of opposed upper and lower channel punches vertically
receptrocable in said chamber,

said upper rib punches being interleaved with said upper channel
punches,

20 said lower rib punches being interleaved with said lower channel
punches, and

drive means connected to said punches operable to position said punches
in a powder loading position in which said upper rib and channel punches are positioned
a predetermined distance above said top opening and said lower rib and channel punches
extend through said bottom opening,

25 said drive means being operable to move said rib and channel punches
from said powder loading position to a precompression position and to simultaneously
move said upper and lower rib and channel punches from said precompression positions
to element forming compression positions at speeds proportional to the distances said
rib and channel punches travel in moving from their precompression positions to their
30 compression positions, whereby said element is uniformly compacted.

12. The press of claim 11 having four side walls defining a compression
chamber having a rectangular cross section and wherein an adjacent pair of said side
walls are movable to facilitate removal of a capacitor element formed by said press.

13. The press of claim 11 wherein said drive means is operable to sequentially retract said channel punches and said rib punches from their compaction position.

14. A method of making a capacitor element with opposed indentations in its laterally opposite sides defining ribs and channels, comprising the steps of:

providing a press with a compression chamber, a set of opposed rib punches, a set of opposed channel punches interleaved with said rib punches shiftable between non-compaction and compaction positions, and power means operable to move said punches between said non-compacting and compacting positions, the ratio of the distance between said opposed rib punches in their non-compacting position to the distance between said opposed rib punches in their compacting position being equal to the ratio of the distance between said opposed channel punches in their non-compacting position to the distance between said channel punches in their compacting position,

using said power means to position said opposed rib punches and said opposed channel punches in their non-compacting position,

filling said chamber with valve metal powder,

using said power means to compress said valve metal powder to form a capacitor element by simultaneously moving said channel punches and said rib punches from their non-compacting positions to their compacting positions at speeds proportional to said ratio distances they move in forming said element, and

using said power means to retract said punches from their compacting positions to their non-compacting position.

15. The method of claim 14 in which said channel punches are retracted before said rib punches during the step of retracting said punches.

16. A method of making a capacitor element having opposed indentations in its laterally opposite sides defining ribs, oppositely disposed channels and at least one web between said oppositely disposed channels comprising the steps of:

providing a compression chamber,

placing a predetermined amount of valve powder in said compression chamber,

compacting said powder with interleaved sets of opposed rib and channel punches to form said ribs and channels by moving said punches from non-compacting positions to compacting position producing the same degree of compaction in said ribs as in said web between said channels and

withdrawing said punches.

17. The method of claim 16 in which said channel punches are withdrawn from said capacitor element prior to withdrawal of said rib punches.

5 18. The method of claim 17 wherein the ratio of the distance between said rib punches in their non-compacting position to the distance between said rib punches in their compacting position is the same as the ratio of the distances between said channel punches in their non-compacting position to the distance between said channel punches in their compacting position.

10 19. The method of claim 18 wherein said rib and channel punches move at speeds during compaction to produce a uniform rate of compaction of said powder in said ribs and said web of said element.