



PLAQUES&LETTERS.COM

Don Baker dba Designs&Signs aka Plaques&Letters.com
3205 Arthur Drive, Ruston LA 71270

Website: <http://www.plaquesandletters.com/> Email: admin@plaquesandletters.com

Local Phone: 318-251-9693 Local Fax: 318-251-9680

Toll-Free Phone: 1-866-336-4135 Toll-Free Fax: 1-866-336-4650

Reposted 12/12/2009

NOTE: This is revised from original 07/20/2009 submission to the FTC. Franklin has removed some of "their" i.e. others' work, after we apprised them we were taking action. Franklin's Robert Barber has [emailed input](#) about this. This was the one FTC Complaint that I had some doubt about...despite their postings of *clearly others' work*. I've concluded that Franklin Bronze Plaques does manufacturer cast plaques. They simply liberally used others' work as their own before this; many of others' work still remain. The fundamental problem is: Once a prospect has it in their mind that someone's a manufacturer of one thing, most would assume they also manufacture all that they portray online. Franklin assuredly doesn't, but never bothers to mention that (aside from two parenthetical entries that few if any bother reading), making them seem far more than what they actually are. Items [bracketed] below are corrections, additions & updates.

"False Advertising" Complaint Against:

Franklin Bronze Plaques, 191 Howard Street, Franklin, PA 16323

[Website: <http://www.franklinbronzeplaques.com>]

Contact Info: Ph: 814-346-7205, Fax: 814-346-7047 info@franklinbronzeplaques.com

Federal Trade Commission
Consumer Response Center
600 Pennsylvania Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20580

Dear FTC:

There's a dynamic that lies run rampant in the architectural signage industry—*False Advertising by my competitors*—particularly as it relates to cast and etched plaques, and cast & flat cut metal letters offerings. If people choose to work with liars, that's their option... but they should be able to know who they're dealing with. Please visit http://www.plaquesandletters.com/FTC/THE%20TRUTH%20ABOUT%20ARCHITECTURAL%20PLAQUES%20&%20LETTERS%20ACQUISITION_rev.pdf for more. It is a simple fact that Matthews Bronze, A.R.K. Ramos, Gemini, Southwellco, International Bronze & Trigard are the major, reputable manufacturers in the bronze & aluminum plaques industry. (The first four also produce letters.) Franklin Bronze—from all appearances—make [some] themselves but [portray all of their posted images as their own. (I don't consider their two parenthetical attributions much of one.)] This leads people to believe that they are getting some "bargain". On their [http://www.franklinbronzeplaques.com/plaques.html?pl=Cast Plaques](http://www.franklinbronzeplaques.com/plaques.html?pl=Cast+Plaques) page, Franklin... states that they are a foundry making cast plaques: "Cast bronze plaques have

been created by skilled craftsmen pouring hot molten metal into sand molds for centuries. Franklin Bronze Plaques has been doing it since 1878”... Their FAQ page: <http://www.franklinbronzeplaques.com/faqs.html?rid=57#ans> offers: “Franklin Bronze has been manufacturing plaques for decades. Franklin Bronze & Alloy Company is one of the oldest continually operating foundries in Pennsylvania. We are a manufacturer not a middle man distributor. When you order from us you are buying direct from a manufacturer. We are one of only a few plaque retailers in the United States that produce, on site, most of the products...we sell.” ... “FRANKLIN BRONZE PLAQUES IS ON THE LIST OF RECOMMENDED MANUFACTURERS FOR THE NATIONAL REGISTER OF HISTORIC PLACES.”? (We’re on the same “List”, but have never pretended we’re “manufacturers”.) ...

I've contacted Franklin about their "dissembling" before. When I asked Cynthia—their President (i.e., customer service/marketing, per their Robert Barber)—point blank why they post so many of Matthews Bronze images et al if Franklin is an actual foundry, her reply was: "Oh I can see why you said that. We're a foundry but sometimes we work with Matthews on certain projects like using their molds for the Patriotic Features line of theirs. They're just down the road from us..."They—Bernie, Cynthia & Audrey—should [still] be asked why their:

- Homepage: <http://www.franklinbronzeplaques.com/> features almost exclusively Matthews' plaques, as also seen (as Matthews is also one of our resources) on my http://www.plaquesandletters.com/patriotic_tributes_I.htm, http://www.plaquesandletters.com/patriotic_tributes_II.htm and <http://www.plaquesandletters.com/americana.htm> pages.
- ...
- Testimonials page: <http://www.franklinbronzeplaques.com/testimonials.html> offers in the first entry: "I recieved [sic] the letters for the USS New Mexico. After inspecting these I'm very pleased with the final product. Your Company did an outstanding job manufacturing the letters...", when *NOWHERE on their website does Franklin mention making or even offering letters* except this one-line entry "highest quality bronze plaques and letters" ["letters" has since been removed] and "Bronze Letters" in a Product Types chart, posted on <http://www.franklinbronzeplaques.com/products.html>. An actual letters manufacturer would "sure as heck" mention more than that. They show NO images of, nor any other information about any letters on their website.

Identical pictures down to the lighting & background textures are not "coincidental". Their:

- Military Memorials: [http://www.franklinbronzeplaques.com/memorials.html?me=Military Memorials](http://www.franklinbronzeplaques.com/memorials.html?me=Military_Memorials) [still has three] of Matthews' ImageCast or Patriotic Features: Example: <http://www.matthewsbronze.net/gallery/Slideshow.aspx?dvIndex=27&kw=Veterans&kwid=126&nImages=4> ...and as we also offer them, also seen on my own http://www.plaquesandletters.com/patriotic_tributes_I.htm, http://www.plaquesandletters.com/patriotic_tributes_II.htm pages. One selection of ours: http://www.plaquesandletters.com/images/Patriotic%20Plaques/Military%20Emblems/duty_honor_country_large_gif.gif
- Military Seals: <http://www.franklinbronzeplaques.com/memorials.html?me=Military%20Seals> page shows Matthews images: <http://www.franklinbronzeplaques.com/memorials-big.html?pid=130> vs <http://www.matthewsbronze.net/gallery/Slideshow.aspx?>

[dvIndex=22&kw=Seal&kwid=110&nImages=4](#)

<http://www.franklinbronzeplaques.com/memorials-big.html?pid=132> vs

<http://www.matthewsbronze.net/gallery/Slideshow.aspx?>

[dvIndex=17&kw=Seal&kwid=110&nImages=4](#) (Someone needs to inform Franklin that the DOJ and Great Seals aren't "military". And that their Matthews Bronze ILLUSTRATIONS of full color seals, as seen on <http://www.franklinbronzeplaques.com/plaques.html?pl=Military%20Seals> aren't "cast bronze" as they inform: Full color cast seals are almost always done in aluminum. Otherwise, it's like fully-painting a diamond, instead of painting cubic zirconium, or even a piece of glass.) <http://www.franklinbronzeplaques.com/memorials-big.html?pid=109> , [since removed], WAS an old Matthews image

<http://www.matthewsbronze.net/gallery/Slideshow.aspx?>

[dvIndex=38&kw=Patriotic&kwid=89&nImages=4](#) that "few in the know" post anymore because that Army isn't "Official", as this one of ours is:

http://www.plaquesandletters.com/military_seals/army_bas.jpg,

<http://www.franklinbronzeplaques.com/memorials-big.html?pid=122> [since removed], WAS an old Gemini (another manufacturer) image that "few in the know" post anymore—including Gemini, who now themselves post

http://www.geminiplaques.com/images/sealNavy_lg.jpg —because of its unsightly "hollow-headed eagle" on their former Navy seal image. INTERESTING NOTE: Since Franklin was "outed", they've removed [those] Army & Navy bas reliefs.

- Recognition Trees: <http://www.franklinbronzeplaques.com/products.html?pr=RecognitionTrees> are also Matthews': <http://www.matthewsbronze.net/techinfo/TREE-sizes.htm> Notice the identical nomenclature, as well as images. (We offer their same trees, as seen on: http://www.plaquesandletters.com/cast_donor_recognition_trees.htm) [Note: They provide no Matthews—the actual manufacturer—attribution on their page. We don't either...but we do go to great lengths identifying ourselves as Distributors.]
- Veterans Grave Markers: http://www.franklinbronzeplaques.com/Veterans_Markers.html Those are made by Centec [in Fremont, OH]. (We formerly posted that offering as well but lost interest.) <http://www.centeccast.com/> (They've had a "work-in-progress" website for years now but "Trust Me", they're the actual manufacturers of these. Ask them for their full print catalog; we've received it.) Franklin provides Centec zero attribution.
- ADA Plaques: <http://www.franklinbronzeplaques.com/plaques.html?pl=ADA%20Metal%20Plaques> Those are clearly Gemini ADA plaques, even images: <http://www.geminiplaques.com/ada.html> Gemini dispensed with the olive image background years ago ("Trust Me."). Franklin kept.
- AlumaColor: <http://www.franklinbronzeplaques.com/plaques.html?pl=Alumicolor> Here at least they [parenthetically] divulge "(Alumicolor™ is a registered trade mark of Matthews International Corporation)" that these are a Matthews' offering: <http://www.matthewsbronze.net/Alumicolor/AlumicolorHomepage.html>
- ImageCast: <http://www.franklinbronzeplaques.com/plaques.html?pl=ImageCast> Here at least they also [parenthetically] divulge "(ImageCast™ is a registered trade mark of Matthews International Corporation)" that these are yet another Matthews' offering: <http://www.matthewsbronze.net/imagecast/imagecasthome.aspx>
- Aluminum Plaques: <http://www.franklinbronzeplaques.com/plaques.html?pl=Aluminum> page: Refer to: <http://www.franklinbronzeplaques.com/plaques-big.html?pid=449> That "Park Place" image WAS another renown Matthews Bronze effort: <http://www.matthewsbronze.net/gallery/Slideshow.aspx?> [dvIndex=32&kw=Aluminum&kwid=5&nImages=4](#) Franklin has now eliminated that "Park Place" and several other posted [Matthews] images after [this Complaint was made known]. Still remaining: Franklin's "Aluminum Finish" example is seen on Gemini's <http://www.geminiplaques.com/borders.html> page.
- Bas reliefs: <http://www.franklinbronzeplaques.com/plaques.html?pl=BasRelief> Entry

<http://www.franklinbronzeplaques.com/plaques-big.html?pid=281> ...**Now that entry has also disappeared.** It WAS the same off-seen “Eye & Ear Institute of Pittsburgh” Image & design as Matthews Bronze’s, the actual Manufacturer:

<http://www.matthewsbronze.net/gallery/Slideshow.aspx?dvIndex=33&kw=Aluminum&kwid=5&nImages=4> NOTE: My [primary] concession in all of

this is, I don’t recognize any of the other plaque images in Franklin’s bas relief gallery. [They may have cast those after all.]

- Portfolio: <http://www.franklinbronzeplaques.com/plaques.html?pl=Portfolio>:
<http://www.franklinbronzeplaques.com/plaques-big.html?pid=574> That’s a Matthews ImageCast plaque (with Matthews’ default Travertine texture for that process—no one else in the industry offers that texture— <http://www.matthewsbronze.net/techinfo/CP-bkgdtex.htm> —for this or any other plaque process). What actual “manufacturer” puts another foundry’s work in their own “Portfolio”??
<http://www.franklinbronzeplaques.com/plaques-big.html?pid=224> ...**now also removed.** It WAS the same off-seen “Ingram” Image & design as Matthews Bronze’s, the actual manufacturer: <http://www.matthewsbronze.net/gallery/Slideshow.aspx?dvIndex=30&kw=Add-On Plates&kwid=3&nImages=4>
<http://www.franklinbronzeplaques.com/plaques-big.html?pid=213> “Waikoloa Golf Course, Hole 12”...**now also removed.** It WAS the same as the actual manufacturers, which is again Matthews Bronze:
<http://www.matthewsbronze.net/gallery/Slideshow.aspx?dvIndex=16&kw=Maps&kwid=69&nImages=4> ...
- Etched Plaques: <http://www.franklinbronzeplaques.com/plaques.html?pl=Etched> *If that’s their work, why WAS there found some of these IDENTICAL imaged offerings by Gemini, an actual etcher?:* <http://www.signletters.com/MetalPlaques/etched.html> *Both entities etched the same “Metropolitan”, “Riviera” and “Jeff Gordon” plaques...which Franklin has now also removed? Why did they remove these and several more images once they were [revealed] if they [had actually made those projects]?*

...Franklin Bronze’s “Design Options”:

Portraits: <http://www.franklinbronzeplaques.com/options.html?op=Portraits> The top three images [were] Matthews’ “ImageCast” plaques.

Standard Borders: <http://www.franklinbronzeplaques.com/options.html?op=Standard Borders>

Those are Gemini’s standard borders images: <http://www.geminiplaques.com/borders.html>

Franklin kept their original olive background.

Specialty Borders: <http://www.franklinbronzeplaques.com/options.html?op=Specialty Borders>

Those are Matthews’ Specialty Borders: <http://www.matthewsbronze.net/techinfo/CP-border.htm> Notice the unique shading around the yellow box background behind the borders themselves. Background Colors:

<http://www.franklinbronzeplaques.com/options.html?op=Standard Background Colors> Fewer but same images which have been cropped.

“Custom” Background Colors: <http://www.franklinbronzeplaques.com/options.html?op=Custom Background Colors> Most of the rest of Matthews’ colors are posted there. <http://www.matthewsbronze.net/techinfo/CP-bkgdcolor.htm> Notice the identical radiused yellow boxes around the colors.

Textures: <http://www.franklinbronzeplaques.com/options.html?op=Textures> Those are two of four Matthews’ Texture images: <http://www.matthewsbronze.net/techinfo/CP-bkgdtex.htm>

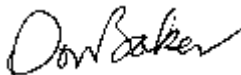
Mounting: <http://www.franklinbronzeplaques.com/options.html?op=Mountings> Those are also Matthews’: <http://www.matthewsbronze.net/techinfo/CP-mounting.htm>

Q: What “*manufacturer*” who has ostensibly been “Manufacturing Bronze Plaques since 1878”, as Franklin claims in their header, uses *someone else’s* specification diagrams? *They’ve had 131 years to create their own.* A: [Franklin does actually *manufacture* some of their plaque offerings. They’d prefer to use someone else’s work however.]

.....Finally, Franklin posts on their “About Us” Page: “Franklin Bronze Plaques is a woman-owned business (WOB) under Federal and State guidelines.” That’s interesting, given that Cynthia has emailed us (under a different guise) before: “Even though most of the family members have passed on the son continues to run and operate the business.” Now how does this “family owned business” receive whatever benefits are inherent in being a “woman-owned business” if a man actually owns it? [Robert Barber, President, Franklin Bronze & Alloy Co., once emailed: “I am president of Franklin Bronze, and major owner of Franklin Bronze Plaques... I am very upset at the appearance of false statements about my company... our sand casting foundry, **completely under my ownership and management.**” When this issue was broached, he then offered: “Franklin Bronze Plaques is a legally woman owned business. As I approach retirement I have sold 60% of my shares to Cynthia and Bernie: I turned the balance over to my wife... .. I still speak of it as my business, but **I have nothing to do with its operation.**” Whatever.]

Production Note: A digital copy of this letter [was] included. Upon usage, you can click on the hyperlinks found there and immediately access the webpages offered here.

Thank You,



Don Baker