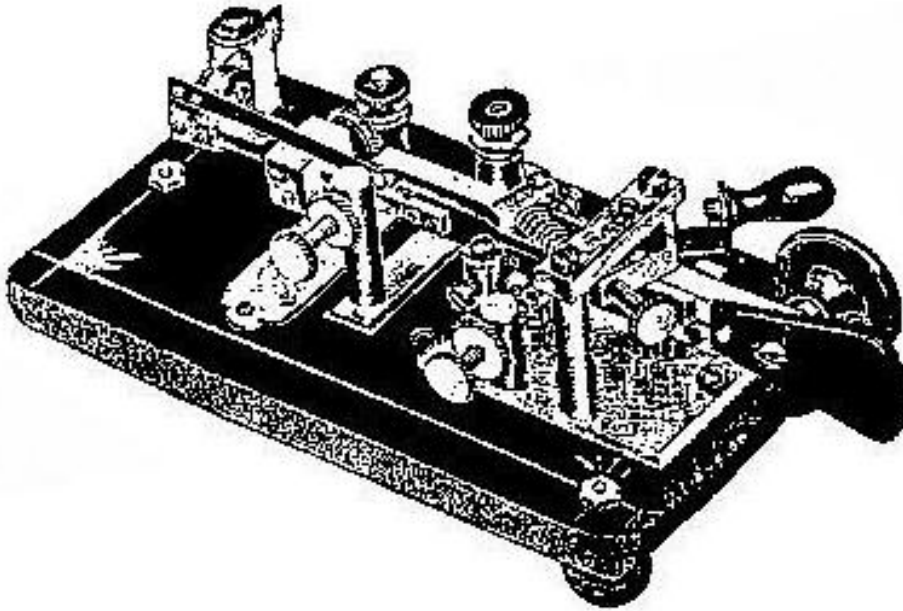


by John Elwood, WW7P, 5716 N. 34th Dr., Phoenix, AZ 85017 USA



As a key collector I have been asked many times to date Vibroplex keys. At first it appeared nearly impossible to do, so I decided to undertake a project that would help us know how old and when our keys were made. It's been a long job starting in 1990.

I'll start with serial numbers and approximate dates, then list the sources for my dates, such as when the keys were first/and last advertised, patent dates, sales slips, Vibroplex's addresses over the years, information from owners, etc.

After the above dates have been ascertained, other dates were determined by extrapolation of the figures.

Remember, these are approximate dates but I feel they are very close.

It appears that Vibroplex assigned blocks of numbers for different models of keys between 1905 and 1915.

KEY	SERIAL NUMBERS	KEY	SERIAL NUMBERS
ORIGINAL	400-4416	ORIGINAL	50,000-51,814
DOUBLE LEVER	6010-6014	With the 253 Broadway ad-	
DOUBLE LEVER	D5015-D5310	dress and later plates the	
ORIGINAL	9,000-9,999	serial numbers ran consec-	
"X"	10,238-12,250	utively.	
No. 4	B518-B1623		
ORIGINAL	20,011-20,788		
"X"	25,090-26,154		

Commas have been inserted to facilitate reading the numbers.

NUMBER	APROX. YR	NUMBER	APROX. YR
400-1,286	1905	84,682-88,402	1922
1,287-2,777	1906	88,403-91,375	1923
2,778-3,255	1907	91,376-94,316	1924
3,256-6,106	1908	94,317-95,865	1925
No numbers reported between		95,866-99,574	1926
6,107-9,999		99,575-101,339	1927
No numbers reported	1909	101,340-103,104	1928
		103,105-103,952	1929
No numbers reported	1910	103,953-104,800	1930
10,000-10,399	1911	104,801-105,648	1931
10,400-11,766 } * } 20,000-20,621 }	1912	105,649-106,496	1932
		106,497-107,344	1933
11,767-12,250 } * } 20,622-20,800 } 25,000-25,577 }	1913	107,345-108,192	1934
** } 50,000-50,907 } D5015-D5310 }		108,193-109,040	1935
		109,041-109,888	1936
		109,889-110,736	1937
25,578-26,154 } ** }		110,737-111,571	1938
50,908-51,827 } B518-B1623 }	1914	111,572-113,865	1939
		113,866-116,159	1940
* No numbers reported		116,160-118,452	1941
12,251-19,999		118,453-122,536	1942
** No numbers reported		123,537-126,619	1943
26,155-49,999		126,620-137,394	1944
51,828-54,231	1915	137,395-148,169	1945
54,232-57,268	1916	148,170-152,526	1946
57,269-60,308	1917	152,527-156,883	1947
60,309-64,573	1918	156,884-161,353	1948
64,574-72,352	1919	161,354-165,822	1949
72,353-80,960	1920	165,823-170,292	1950
80,961-84,681	1921		

NUMBER	APROX. YR	NUMBER	APROX. YR
170,293-174,762	1951	Portland, Maine	
174,763-179,232	1952	386,952-391,230	1979
179,233-183,702	1953	4,003-4,955	
183,703-188,172	1954	5,261-5,921	1980
188,173-192,642	1955	40,000-40,787	
192,643-197,112	1956	40,788-42,077	1983
197,113-201,582	1957	Assorted nos.	1982 through
201,583-206,052	1958	42,078-49,762	1984
206,053-210,517	1959	01,185-01,671	1983
210,518-217,034	1960	01,672-02,158	1984
217,035-223,551	1961	49,763-51,710	1985
223,552-230,068	1962	02,159-02,645	
230,069-236,585	1963	51,711-54,163	1986
236,586-240,870	1964	02,646-03,132	
240,871-245,155	1965	54,164-55,911	1987
245,156-249,440	1966	03,133-03,619	
249,441-253,725	1967	55,912-60,077	
253,726-258,010	1968	No numbers re- ported	
258,011-263,874	1969	60,078-61,963	1988
263,875-266,151	1970	03,620-04,106	
266,152-267,328	1971	61,964-62,254	
267,329-270,152	1972	04,107-04,337	
270,153-272,975	1973	62,255-65,764	1990
272,976-373,006		04,338-05,334	
Only two num- bers reported		65,765-67,132	1991
373,007-375,415	1974	05,335-06,439	
375,416-378,752	1975	67,133-69,068	1992
378,753-382,089	1976	06,440-07,725	
382,090-385,426	1977	69,069-70,410	1993
385,427-386,951	1978	07,726-07,896	
		70,411-70,778	1994
		07,897-08,205	
		70,779-80,361	
		No numbers reported	
		80,362-80,870	1995
		08,206-08,514	
		Portland, ME & Mobile, AL	

NUMBER	APROX. YR	NUMBER	APROX. YR
80,871-100,499		100,500-	1995 (Continued)
No numbers Reported			

KEY	START DATE/SOURCE	STOP DATE/SOURCE
ORIGINAL	June 1905 "The Commercial Telegraphers' Journal", June 1905, Pg. 32	Still in production
Double Lever	Jul 1907-Aug. 1908 Nameplate from WD6DTC key	Feb. 1925 "The Railroad Telegrapher", Feb. 1925, Pg. 32
"X"	Dec. 1911 "The Railroad Telegrapher", Dec. 1911, Pg. 376a	Jan. 1923 "The Railroad Telegrapher", Jan. 1923, Pg. 6
No. 4/ Blue Racer	Aug. 1914 "Journal of the Telegraph", Aug. 1914, Pg. 15	Dec. 1966 Harrison Ad. "QST", Dec. 1966, Pg. 170
Upright	Nov. 1917 "Electrical Experimenter", Pg. 458	Feb. 1919 "Telegraph and Telephone Age", Feb. 1919, Pg. 11
Midget	Oct. 1918 "The Railroad Telegrapher", Oct. 1918, Pg. 268	Sep. 1920 "The Railroad Telegrapher", Sep. 1920, pg. 358
Martin Junior	c. Jul/Aug 1920 WW7P Survey	Oct. 1939 "QST", Oct. 1939, Pg. 106
No. 6/ Lightning	June 1927 "The Railroad Telegrapher", June 1927, Pg. 126	Nov. 1980 Tufts Ad. "73" Magazine Nov. 1980, Pg. 163
Champion	Nov. 1939 "QST", Nov. 1939, Pg. 114	Nov. 1980 Tufts Ad. "73" Magazine Nov. 1980, Pg. 163
Zephyr	Jan. 1939 U.S. Pat. 2,187,351 shows a Zephyr. Filed 1/9/39	1958 WW7P Survey. Last Zephyr s/n: 201,928
Presentation	Nov. 1948 "QST", Nov. 1948, Pg. 138	Still in production
Vibro-Keyer	Jan. 1960 "QST", Jan. 1960, Pg. 140	Still in production
Iambic	Dec. 1979 "QST", Dec. 1979, Pg. 212	Still in production
Brass Racer- Iambic	Nov. 1982 "QST", Nov. 1982, Pg. 162	Still in production

KEY	START DATE/SOURCE	STOP DATE/SOURCE
Brass Racer- EK-1	Nov. 1982 "QST", Nov. 1982, Pg. 196	Still in production
Straight Key-	Nov. 1996/"QST", Nov. 1996, Pg. 201	Still in production
Most recent		
Pat. Date or		
Latest Pat.		
Number	Date Range	
Aug. 9, 1904 767,303	Aug. 9, 1904 - Apr. 15, 1906	
Aug. 9, 1904 Others pend- ing	Apr. 16, 1906 - Jan. 21, 1907	
Jan 22,07 842,154	Jan. 22, 1907 - Jun. 30, 1911	
Jan 22, 07 Ohers pend- ing 842,154 Others pend- ing	Oct. 27, 1911 - Nov. 4, 1912	
Nov. 5, 1912 1,043,449	Nov. 5, 1912 - Aug. 3, 1917	
1,043,449 Others pend- ing	Aug. 4, 1917 - Mar. 18, 1918	
1,178,291 (Boulter)	aprox. 1918 & 1919 WW7P Survey	
1,260,008	Mar. 19, 1918 - Jul. 1920 (Start of 825 Broadway address)	
Vertical Nos.	(On later keys with the Bug logo)	
763,303	At top of list is wrong. This patent is for a clip issued to Joseph A. Mayers, June 21, 1904. Correct number should have been 767,303 issued to Horace G. Martin, August 9, 1904	
1,260,008	825 Broadway. Jul. 1920 - Feb. 12, 1923. "The Railroad Telegrapher", Jul. 20, 1920, Pg. 274	
1,445,226	This patent number preceeded 1,260,008 plus other pat- ents pending on Vibroplex keys. 825 Broadway. Feb. 13, 1923 (U.S. Pat. date) - Feb. 12, 1925 -----	
	796 Fulton. Feb. 13, 1925 - Jan. 8, 1939 "QST", Apr. 1925, Pg. 76 (Minus 2 mos for ad to be submitted)	

Vertical Nos. Date Range

Magazine ads for period Jun. 1925 - Apr. 1941 shows address as either:

825 Broadway
or

832 Broadway

however, all keys for this period are marked:

796 Fulton St.

1,260,008 796 Fulton St. Jan. 9, 1939 - 3-26-42 (Date on J-36 key)
Other pats - - - - -
pending

833 Broadway 3-27-42 ---1945

"Patented" 1948 - 1963 WW7P Survey
833 Broad-
way

No Pat. Nos. 1963 - 1980 WW7P Survey. New company using up
No word Pat- 833 Broadway plates between Sep. 1979-
ented 1980.
833 Broad-
way

No Pat. Nos. 1980 - Aug. 1994 WW7P Survey
No word Pat-
ented
No street
address

RED/GREEN/BLUE COLOR BASE

START/SOURCE

STOP/SOURCE

Jun. 1929 "QST", Jun. 1929, Jul. 1936 "QST", Jul. 1936,
Pg. 86 Pg. 71

VIBROPLEX PATENTS

Only Vibroplex patents listed that appear as last patent number/or most recent date on the nameplate.

For a rough estimate of when your key was made, use that patent date and the next patent's filing date.

Patent Number	Filing Date	Patent Date
767,303	5/7/04	8/9/04
842,154	4/16/06	1/22/07
1,043,449	10/27/11	11/5/12
1,178,291	8/1/14	4/4/16
1,260,008	8/4/17	3/19/18
1,445,226	12/10/21	2/13/23

As I mentioned at the first of the article; this has been a lengthy project - well over six years, quite costly, data on over 3,135 Vibroplex keys and the aid of nearly 2,000 owners.

I want to say a special thank you to my wife, Edith, for all her help and patience over the years.

Another who has been most helpful is Tom French, W1IMQ.

This article deals only with the dating of the keys. For much more information on Vibroplex keys such as pictures, identification, ads, patents, modifications within models, nameplate data, etc., I recommend you purchase Tom French's latest book "Vibroplex Collector's Guide", Revised Edition. Tom's address is:

P.O. Box 88
Maynard, MA 01754
U.S.A.

A most heartfelt thank you to the many who furnished data on your keys. The first draft of this article listed each of you but it ran two and a half pages - single spaced. I'm afraid no publisher would accept that, so this paragraph will show my appreciation for your fine cooperation.

Now, when someone asks how old your key is, you can say, "The birth date of my Vibroplex key is _____".

