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	

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Commas have been inserted to facilitate reading the numbers.

NUMBER	/ C	APROX. YR	20 1	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 rep	no			95,866-99,574	1926
between 6,107-9,999		1004		99,575-101,339	1927
No numbers		1909		101,340-103,104	1928
reported		1909		103,105-103,952	1929
No numbers reported		1910		103,953-104,800	1929
10,000-10,399		1911		104,801-105,648	1930
10,400-11,766	ı			105,649-106,496	1931
* 20,000-20,621	}	1912		106,497-107,344	1932
11,767-12,250				107,345-108,192	1933
* 20,622-20,800	}			108,193-109,040	1934
25,000-25,577 **	}	1913			
50,000-50,907	•			109,041-109,888 109,889-110,736	1936
D5015-D5310	}				1937
25,578-26,154 **	}	1014		110,737-111,571	1938
50,908-51,827 B518-B1623	}	1914		111,572-113,865	1939
* No numbers				113,866-116,159	1940
reported 12,251-19,999	5 1 9			116,160-118,452	1941
** No numbers reported				118,453-122,536	1942
26,155-49,999				123,537-126,619	1943
51,828-54,231		1915		126,620-137,394	1944
54,232-57,268		1916		137,395-148,169	1945
57,269-60,308		1917		148,170-152,526	1946
60,309-64,573		1918		152,527-156,883	1947
64,574-72,352		1919		156,884-161,353	1948
72,353-80,960		1920		161,354-165,822	1949
80,961-84,681		1921		165,823-170,292	1950

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	1000
183,703-188,172	1954		5,261-5,921 40,000-40,787	1980
188,173-192,642	1955		40,788-42,077	1983
192,643-197,112	1956		Assorted nos. 42,078-49,762	1982 through 1984
197,113-201,582	1957		42,070-45,702	1904
201,583-206,052	1958		01,185-01,671	1983
206,053-210,517	1959		01,672-02,158	1984
210,518-217,034	1960		49,763-51,710 02,159-02,645	1985
217,035-223,551	1961		51,711-54,163	1986
223,552-230,068	1962		02,646-03,132	1900
230,069-236,585	1963		54,164-55,911 03,133-03,619	1987
236,586-240,870	1964		55,912-60,077	
240,871-245,155	1965		No numbers re- ported	
245,156-249,440	1966		60,078-61,963	1988
249,441-253,725	1967		03,620-04,106 61,964-62,254	
253,726-258,010	1968		04,107-04,337	
258,011-263,874	1969		62,255-65,764 04,338-05,334	1990
263,875-266,151	1970		65,765-67,132	1991
266,152-267,328	1971		05,335-06,439	1991
267,329-270,152	1972		67,133-69,068 06,440-07,725	1992
270,153-272,975	1973		69,069-70,410	1993
272,976-373,006 Only two num-			07,726-07,896	1990
bers reported			70,411-70,778 07,897-08,205	1994
373,007-375,415	1974		70,779-80,361	
375,416-378,752	1975		No numbers reported	
378,753-382,089	1976		T Chot rea	
382,090-385,426	1977		80,362-80,870 08,206-08,514	1995
385,427-386,951	1978		Portland, ME & Mobile, AL 3	

NUMBER	APROX. YR	NUMBER	APROX. YR
80,871-100,4 No numbers Reported	99	100,500-	1995 (Continued)
KEY	START DATE/SOURCE		STOP DATE/SOURCE
ORIGINAL	June 1905 "The Commercial Teleg Journal", June 1905, 1	raphers′	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 Telegray Dec. 1911, Pg. 376a	pher",	Jan. 1923 "The Railroad Telegrapher", Jan. 1923, Pg. 6
No. 4/ Blue Racer	Aug. 1914 "Journal of the Teleg Aug. 1914, Pg. 15	raph",	Dec. 1966 Harrison Ad. "QST", Dec. 1966, Pg. 170
Upright	Nov. 1917 "Electrical Experiment Pg. 458	ter",	Feb. 1919 "Telegraph and Telephone Age", Feb. 1919, Pg. 11
Midget	Oct. 1918 "The Railroad Telegram Oct. 1918, Pg. 268	pher",	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 Telegra June 1927, Pg. 126	pher",	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 s a Zephyr. Filed 1/9/39	nows	1958 WW7P Survey. Last Zephyr s/n: 201,928
Presentation	Nov. 1948 "QST", Nov. 1948, Pg.		Still in production
Vibro-Keyer	Jan. 1960 "QST", Jan. 1960, Pg.		Still in production
Iambic	Dec. 1979 "QST", Dec. 1979, Pg.		Still in production
Brass Racer- Iambic	Nov. 1982 "QST", Nov. 1982, Pg.		Still in production
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KEY START DATE/SOURCE STOP DATE/SOURCE Brass Racer- Nov. 1982 Still in production EK-1"QST", Nov. 1982, Pg. 196 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 Aug. 9, 1904 - Apr. 15, 1906 767,303 Aug. 9, 1904 Apr. 16, 1906 - Jan. 21, 1907 Others pending Jan. 22, 1907 - Jun. 30, 1911 Jan 22,07 842,154 Jan 22, 07 Ohers pend-Oct. 27, 1911 - Nov. 4, 1912 ing 842,154 Others pending Nov. 5, 1912 - Aug. 3, 1917 Nov. 5, 1912 1,043,449 1,043,449 Others pend-Aug. 4, 1917 - Mar. 18, 1918 ing 1,178,291 aprox. 1918 & 1919 (Boulter) 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 patents 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) 5

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 Broadway No Pat. Nos. 1963 - 1980 WW7P Survey. New company using up 833 Broadway plates between Sep. 1979-No word Pat-1980. ented 833 Broadway No Pat. Nos. 1980 - Aug. 1994 WW7P Survey No word Patented No street address RED/GREEN/BLUE COLOR BASE START/SOURCE STOP/SOURCE "QST", Jun. 1929, Jul. 1936 "QST", Jul. 1936, Jun. 1929 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 ".

