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
ORIGINAL
DOUBLE LEVER
DOUBLE LEVER
D5015-D5310
ORIGINAL
9,000-9,999
"X"
10,238-12,250
B518-B1623
ORIGINAL
20,011-20,788
"X"
25, 090-26,154

KEY SERIAL NUMBERS
ORIGINAL $50,000-51,814$
With the 253 Broadway ad-
dress and later plates the
serial numbers ran consec-
utively.

Commas have been inserted to facilitate reading the numbers.


NUMBER

| $170,293-174,762$ | 1951 |
| :--- | :--- |
| $174,763-179,232$ | 1952 |
| $179,233-183,702$ | 1953 |
| $183,703-188,172$ | 1954 |
| $188,173-192,642$ | 1955 |
| $192,643-197,112$ | 1956 |
| $197,113-201,582$ | 1957 |

201,583-206,052 1958

206,053-210,517 1959
210,518-217,034 1960
217,035-223,551 1961
223,552-230,068 1962
230,069-236,585 1963
236,586-240,870
240,871-245,155
245,156-249,440
249,441-253,725
253,726-258,010
258,011-263,874
263,875-266,151
266,152-267,328
267,329-270,152
270,153-272,975
272,976-373,006
Only two numbers reported
$\begin{array}{ll}373,007-375,415 & 1974 \\ 375,416-378,752 & 1975 \\ 378,753-382,089 & 1976\end{array}$
382,090-385,426
385,427-386,951

NUMBER

Portland, Maine
$\begin{array}{ll}386,952-391,230 & 1979 \\ & \\ 4,003-4,955 & \\ 5,261-5,921 & 1980 \\ 40,000-40,787 & \\ 40,788-42,077 & 1983\end{array}$
Assorted nos. 1982 through 42,078-49,762 1984

01,185-01,671 1983
01,672-02,158 1984
49,763-51,710 1985
02,159-02,645
51,711-54,163 1986
02,646-03,132
54,164-55,911 1987
03,133-03,619
55,912-60,077
No numbers reported

60,078-61,963 1988
03,620-04,106
61,964-62,254
04,107-04,337
62,255-65,764 1990

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04,338-05,334
$$

65,765-67,132 1991
05,335-06,439
67,133-69,068 1992
06,440-07,725
69,069-70,410
1993
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
APROX. YR

No numbers
Reported


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Brass Racer- Nov. 1982
    EK-1 "QST", Nov. 1982, Pg. 196
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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 Aug. 9, 1904 - Apr. 15, 1906
767,303
Aug. 9, 1904 Apr. 16, 1906 - Jan. 21, 1907
Others pend-
ing
Jan 22,07 Jan. 22, 1907 - Jun. 30, 1911
842,154
Jan 22, 07
Ohers pend-
ing
842,154
Others pend-
ing
Nov. 5, 1912 Nov. 5, 1912 - Aug. 3, 1917
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
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)
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.

Other pats pending 833 Broadway No word Patented 833 Broadway

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

1,260,008 796 Fulton St. Jan. 9, 1939-3-26-42 (Date on J-36 key)
"Patented" 1948 - 1963 WW7P Survey

No Pat. Nos. 1963 - 1980 WW7P Survey. New company using up 833 Broadway plates between Sep. 19791980.

833 Broadway 3-27-42 ---1945宛

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:

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


