

KEY AND TELEGRAPH



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The First UEM Vibroplex Ad

John's column is a little shorter than usual this time because, as a power company employee, most of his attention has been commandeered by the high winds and flooding caused by tropical storm Irene in upstate New York. John works in telemetry system maintenance, making sure that his control centers receive good information for monitoring the power flow in transmission and distribution lines. Many thanks to John for taking the time to give us a "Key and Telegraph" column for this issue. We look forward to having him back with a full-sized piece in January.—mfe

The actual date of the first Vibroplex ad placed by Horace G. Martin or his United Electrical Manufacturing Company (UEM) has always been somewhat of a mystery. It is generally known that one of Martin's agents, telegrapher and typewriter dealer O.T. Anderson of Chicago, made mention of the Vibroplex being available in a March 1905 ad he placed in the *Railroad Telegrapher*. Anderson then followed with another ad in the June issue of the *Commercial Telegrapher's Journal*, this time showing a line drawing of the Vibroplex. But, until recently, I could not find or confirm the first Vibroplex ad that was actually placed by Martin or UEM.

UEM (United Electrical Manufacturing Company) had been formed by Martin and a group of investors a year earlier, on February 17, 1904. Its primary purpose was to manufacture and sell Martin's electro-mechanical transmitter, called the Autoplex, and any other electrical products Martin was going to invent or promote.

Martin was a vice president and the general manager of UEM. He built the Autoplex (and eventually the Vibroplex) at UEM's 53 Vesey Street factory in New York City. Martin developed the instrument that became known as the Vibroplex during the period between August, 1904 and the winter of 1905. It was derived from his patent #767,303, granted to him on August 9, 1904. By the Spring of 1905, Martin was busy expanding his factory into the lofts of 53 Vesey St., and on May 17, 1905, UEM put the Vibroplex on display at the Railway Telegraph Superintendent's Convention in Chattanooga, Tennessee. There is no doubt that, during the winter and spring of that year, Martin also sold, loaned and gave away early models of his Vibroplex to other telegraphers for trials and use.

The date of the first Vibroplex ad run by Martin or UEM was used as an important piece of evidence in the 1905 and 1906 lawsuits between UEM and the Mecograph



Heading from the UEM Ad in the June 1, 1905 issue of *Telegraph Age*.

Company. Mecograph was Martin's main competitor in the semi-automatic telegraphy field and both claimed patent infringement. Lawyers on both sides made claims about when instruments were first invented and actually available for sale.

Lawyers for Mecograph tried to bracket Martin's advertising activities by showing

that, in January of 1905, he ran a full page ad on the inside cover of the *Commercial Telegrapher's Journal* advertising only his Autoplex with no mention of the Vibroplex. However, a June 1, 1905 UEM ad in *Telegraph Age* did mention the Vibroplex.

The Mecograph lawyers argued that this was the first time Martin or UEM had advertised the Vibroplex. During the lawsuits, Martin was put on the stand and asked directly if this was the first ad, but testified he could not remember. He did remember, however, that he "thought" UEM was selling the Vibroplex back in January of 1905 when his Autoplex ad was running.

It does appear, at this date, that the June 1, 1905 *Telegraph Age* ad mentioned by Mecograph's attorneys was indeed the first ad that made mention of the Vibroplex being available directly from Martin or

UEM. I recently obtained an original copy of the June 1, 1905 issue of *Telegraph Age* that contains this ad, a detail from which accompanies this article.

SOURCES

- The Railroad Telegrapher*, March 1905.
Commercial Telegrapher's Journal, January and June 1905.
Telegraph Age, May 1 and June 1, 1905.
U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, *Bellows vs. Martin*, March 2, 1908, Case #3068.
U.S. Circuit Court of Appeals, *Martin vs. Wall*, March 10, 1908, Case #3067.
Certificate of Incorporation, The United Electrical Manufacturing Company, Inc., February 17, 1904
U.S. Patent: Horace G. Martin, #767,303, August 9, 1904

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non-technical field that that gave him more time for crystal radio experiments and his studies of early radio history. He is a long-time member of AWA and a life member of the Arizona Antique Radio Club. He has written for the Arizona Club's Newsletter as well as the Xtal Set Society. The latter organization published his book *Crystal Radio: History, Fundamentals, and Design* in 1996.

DAVID W. KRAEUTER

A Radio/Lamp Marriage

David Kraeuter was born in Homestead,

PA in 1941. He holds an M.L.S. degree from the University of Pittsburgh. He has edited *The Pittsburgh Oscillator* and the monograph series of the Pittsburgh Antique Radio Society. Since the 1980s he has been interested in making the wealth of information buried in national patent publications more accessible to the public. In his book *Radio Patent Lists and Index, 1830-1980* published by the Edwin Mellen Press, he tabulates and indexes 6,200 U.S. and British patents issued to 100 radio and television inventors.

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working at a frenetic pace for nearly 4 days to put this event together.

Yours truly purchased an Atwater Kent clock radio. A radical departure from my black wrinkle/olive drab purchases. I had been looking for one for my wife for quite a while. And this just proves out the fact that you can usually find what you want in Rochester.

Next year the Convention will be held from Tuesday August 21 through Saturday August 25 at the RIT Inn. Registration will open on the Convention website immediately after the 2011 AWA Trustees meeting on in early November.

Roy Wildermuth, Chairman
AWA 2012 Convention
"WE ROCK"