

A brief history of the Joy-Kelsey Corporation

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With editorial guidance of Kenneth W. Krueger

I started this article because I wanted to know more about my "J. K. Corp." crystal radio. Eventually, I found patent *US1611151 A* that identifies it as having been designed by Joy Kelsey. My radio has an enclosed detector like their Skeezix radio. Most of these radios had an open detector. I was only able to find information about two models of radios they made. There is a fair amount of information about the two main founders of the company in their biographies. I found the company name represented as Joy Kelsey, Joy-Kelsey, Joy & Kelsey, and Joy and Kelsey.

James Cezanne Kelsey

James Cezanne Kelsey, III, one of the foremost authorities on telephony, was born on May 18, 1872, in Leavenworth, Kansas to James Cezanne Kelsey, Jr. and Mary Willie Kelsey. (1) He grew up in Hiawatha, Kansas. (2)

After attending the University of Minnesota, he attended the University of Kansas at Lawrence from 1891 to 1895, where he received a B.S. degree in electrical engineering and telephony. (3) While attending the University of Kansas he distinguished himself as a star catcher for the university's baseball team, the Jayhawks. (2)

His electrical engineering degree landed him a job as city electrician in Hiawatha, Kansas. Following that position he worked at the Emerson Electrical Mfg. Co. (no relation to the Emerson Radio Corporation), St. Louis, Missouri; the Fort Wayne Electric Corp., Fort Wayne, Indiana; and the Northwestern Bell Telephone Exchange Co. in Minneapolis, Minnesota. With this work experience, he advanced to general superintendent of the Duluth Telephone Co., Mesaba Telephone Co., and Douglas Telephone Co., all Bell auxiliary companies in and around Duluth, Minnesota. (4)

From 1902-1905, he taught at Purdue University, Lafayette, Indiana, where he established the course in telephone engineering and became an Assistant Professor of Telephone Engineering. (4) (3)

Mr. Kelsey became sales manager of the Kellogg Switchboard & Supply Co. of Chicago in 1905 and stayed with the company for about 10 years. (4)

Around 1903 he published a series of articles entitled, "Some steps in the evolution of circuit design" in The American Telephone Journal. He also published articles in Telephony: American Telephone Journal. In 1914 he became vice-president and financial editor of the magazine, succeeding H. B. McMeal as president in April, 1917. Due to ill health, which led to a nervous breakdown, he retired from the magazine in January, 1919. (4)

Not content with retirement, Mr. Kelsey was vice president of the Rogers Park National Bank in Chicago for a number of years. His knowledge of finance and telephony resulted in his being called to testify in several telephone rate cases. With his notoriety he was associated with the Rebuilt Telephone Equipment Co. As if that wasn't enough, he also acted as secretary of the California Independent Telephone Association. Pushing himself to exhaustion, the state of his health eventually required a rest. However, his health never quite recovered fully. (4)

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Despite his declining health, he formed, with Guy Joy, the Joy-Kelsey Corporation, Chicago, Illinois. (5) At his untimely death of pneumonia on December 8, 1922, he was only 50 years old. He was survived by his widow Anna Gosline Kelsey, sons James Edwards Kelsey and Frank C. Kelsey, his daughter Elizabeth McKay (Kelsey) (4), his father James Cezanne Kelsey, Jr., and siblings Thomas Chiles Kelsey, Lula Hazelrigg Herman and Landon McKee Kelsey (1). In his life, he accomplished many things.

Guy Albert Joy

Guy Albert Joy, also a recognized authority on telephony, was born in Kansas on March 3, 1876 (6), and grew up in Nebraska on a farm near Peru. His parents were William A. Joy and Anna M. Joy. (7)

He attended Peru State Normal Teachers College (8) and graduated from the University of Nebraska in 1897 with a degree in electrical engineering. (9) (10)

He served in the Spanish-American War as a Private in the second Nebraska Infantry regiment. (11) However, he contracted yellow fever and was hospitalized during much of his service. (8) He returned to Nebraska City on the hospital train, August 31, 1898. (12) On January 2, 1899, the Second regiment arrived at Havana, Cuba on the United States transport "Michigan." They were deployed after the armistice went into effect on August 12, 1898, which ended the war in Cuba (13), and were disappointed because they had no chance to fight. (14) He was a life member of the United Spanish American War Veterans, and a Past Commander of the Southern California United Spanish American War Veterans. (8)

Guy Joy moved to Illinois in the summer of 1901, where he worked for the Western Electric Co. doing installation, and in late 1902, the Kellogg Switchboard & Supply Co. of Chicago in the engineering department. (15) (10) He may have become acquainted with James Kelsey at this time. In August, he went back to Peru, Nebraska, to marry Edith Hutchinson. (16) Later, he became the sales engineer of Kellogg. He received a patent for the Kellogg Switchboard and Supply Company, Chicago, filed Apr. 6, 1908. (17) He received several other radio and telephone patents throughout his career. In 1918 he was secretary and treasurer of the Swedish-American Telephone Mfg. Co. and was in charge of the manufacturing department. (10) Guy was a close friend of engineer and inventor, Charles Kettering. (8)

In 1912, Guy Albert Joy co-authored the book entitled, Toll Telephone Practice with John Bernhard Thiess. (18) Mrs. Joy did a number of the illustrations. (8) He also wrote articles in periodicals, including those in Telephony and Nebraska Blue Print.

By late 1918 or early 1919, Guy A. Joy was vice-president of the Rebuilt Telephone Equipment Co. when it moved to 4021-27 W. Kinzie Street, Chicago, Ill., (19) the future home of the Joy-Kelsey Corporation.

After the death of partner James Kelsey in late 1922, Joy-Kelsey folded. Joy went on to found the Oxford Radio Corporation in 1929 (2), but he lost everything in the 1929 stock market crash, and paid every cent to his creditors with money he earned selling men's suits door to door (20) and by cashing in all of his life insurance. (8) After this, he worked in various offices to make a living. His wife, Edith, who had been a school teacher, returned to teaching. (21) She made a quilt of all of Guy's ties that he couldn't use anymore. (20) Guy filed for his military pension in 1931. (22) They moved to San Gabriel, CA c. 1947 (16) to enjoy their retirement.

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In 1973, he was in a Convalescent Home in El Monte California. (21) He died of heart failure at the Veterans' Hospital in Martinez, California (8) on January 20, 1978, (23) at the age of nearly 102. Guy was married to Edith Hutchinson Joy, and they had children named Dorothy Elizabeth (Joy) Evans, and an adopted son, Perry Towne Joy. (21)

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The Joy-Kelsey Corporation was in business from about 1922 to 1929. This is some of the information that I was able to find including events that led up to the founding of the company and its end.

In 1919, The Rebuilt Telephone Equipment Co. moved from 5235-5237 Ravenswood Avenue, Chicago, Ill (the same address as the Swedish-American Telephone Mfg. Co.) to a new building at 4021-27 W. Kinzie Street, Chicago, Ill. They were still at that address in 1921 (24). Geo. H. Crandall was president of the company, Guy A. Joy, vice-president, and C. E. Shaw secretary and treasurer. (19) James C. Kelsey was also associated with the company. (4) In early 1922, the Rebuilt Telephone Equipment Co. changed its name to Joy-Kelsey Corporation. Its capital changed from \$2,500 to \$50,000. (25) Guy A. Joy was president, W. P. Brown vice-president, James C. Kelsey secretary-treasurer, and Roy W. Augustine was sales manager. (5)

The earliest record that I found of the Joy-Kelsey Corporation was their 9FR amateur radio call sign listed in Amateur Radio Stations of the United States, June 30, 1921, at their 4021 West Kinzie Street address, with 450 Watts of power. They were still listed in Citizen's Callbook Magazine, May 1923.

By May, 1922 they were building five hundred radio sets a day, (26) initially crystal sets. They sold crystal detectors; transmitters; radio parts; a complete line of speakers; dynamic cones, both A.C. and D.C.; and radio chassis of seven and eight tubes. There was a "J-K" Amplifier and Control Panel. (27) (28) (29) (29) Perhaps the most interesting radio they made was a "Skeezix Radio Toy," a tin litho crystal radio in a metal can made by the American Can Company, marketed by Live Long Toys. (30) (31) It featured Skeezix and other characters of the *Gasoline Alley* comic strip by Frank King. The radio is marked "©1924 by Frank O. King." Another more common crystal set was built in a wooden box with only one dial, marked with "J.K. Corp" on the black front panel. This radio also appeared under the names of Jewel, Serenādo and Victor. (30) (32) These were marked "J.K. Corp." The Jewel version of this radio was offered free with a Radio Map, for "20" New Six-Month Chronicle subscriptions in the Spokane Daily Chronicle June 21, 1922. There were other papers that had similar offers.

The company achieved some recognition throughout their existence. Several radio-related patents were granted to the Joy-Kelsey Corporation for their innovations such as "Inductance coil for high-frequency circuits," (33) "Radio Receiving sets," (34) and "Tuning coupler." (35) In 1927, Roy W. Augustine of Joy-Kelsey along with Harry G. Sparks of Sparks-Withington (Sparton) and Fred S. Armstrong of Vesta Battery, were added to the permanent board of directors of the Radio Protective Association, (36) which was formed for the purpose of battling against "radio monopoly," primarily targeting RCA, the General Electric Co., the Westinghouse Co., and AT&T. (37) Also, Frank Reichmann, a pioneer of the radio industry, joined Joy-Kelsey In 1928. (29) Later, they had an exhibit at the Third Radio Manufacturers' Association Trade Show, June, 3-7, 1929, listing their address as 542 N. Parkside Ave., Chicago, Ill. with Roy W. Augustine as their Delegate. (38)

Chilton Catalog and Directory, April 1929 listed Joy-Kelsey Corp., 542 N. Parkside Ave., Chicago, Ill. "Speedy" as a supplier of painting equipment.

Joy-Kelsey Corporation reorganized and changed its name to Oxford Radio Corp. in early 1929, with Guy A. Joy as President. Located at 3200 W. Carroll Ave. Chicago, their main product was loudspeakers. (39)

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