

THE MINI KEY TELEGRAPH SPEED KEY

Designed and built by W. R. Smith (2006)

One day, Tom Perera showed an e-mail picture of an Ultimate 73 key made by the Los Angeles Transmitter Company many years ago. According to his picture of the key by a ruler, it measured 2-1/2" long. I thought it would be fun to see if I could build a working speed key smaller than that. So I set about the task.

I always strive to avoid copying the work of others. However, any short, right angle speed key that has the pendulum vibrating on a mainspring forces the paddle to be at

the left and end of the base. Thus, I had to place it there.



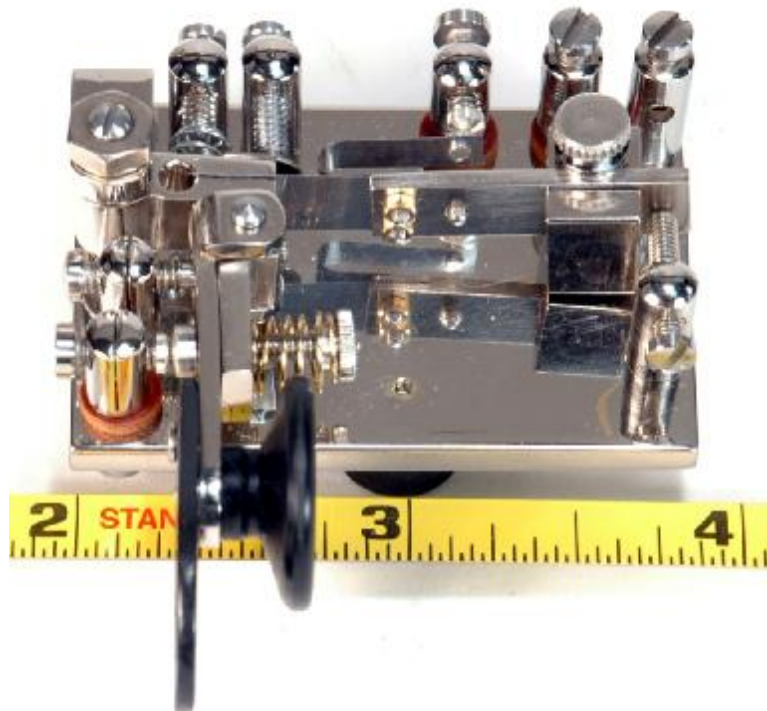
The resulting key is shown at left. It has silver contacts, all of the adjustments found on a normal speed key and functions well on the ham bands. The speed range is from about 15 to 35 WPM.

The binding posts for attaching a cable for keying the transmitter are the two posts in the upper right hand corner.

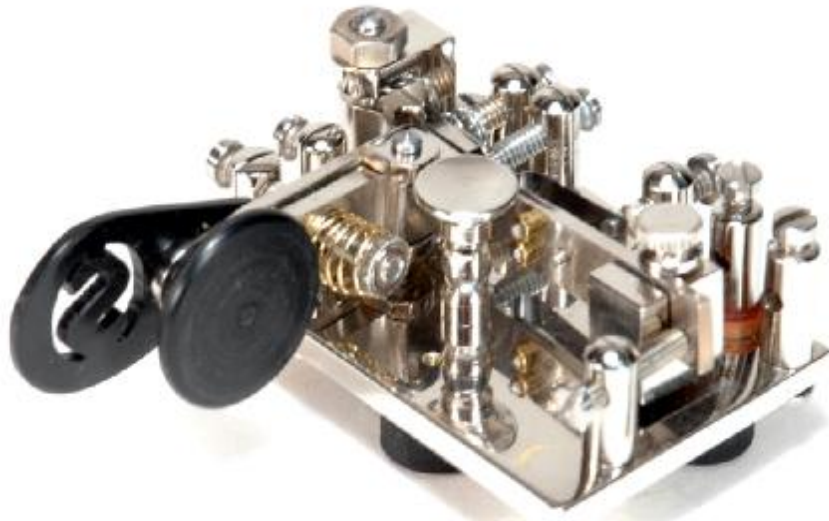
The key has three rubber feet and all metal parts are nickel plated. To save space, I designed the posts so they grip the screws to retain their setting and avoid the need for thumbnuts. The mainspring is held in place by 0 – 80 pan head screws and nuts.

The picture of the key beside a ruler shows that I have managed to beat the size of the Ultimate 73 key length of 2-1/2" by a considerable amount.

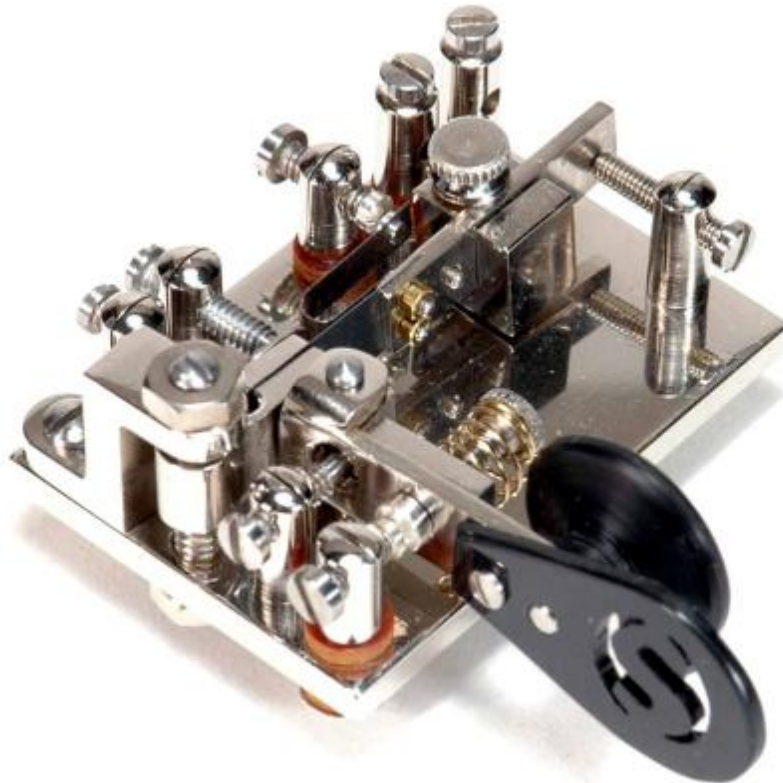
The two pictures shown are of the key as first made. However, I soon discovered that it was very difficult to hold it still without interfering with the function of some of the parts while sending. There is almost no place to grasp it. To solve the problem, I machined



an ornate post and a finger pad, plated them and installed them as shown in the next picture. In use, one places a finger on the pad and presses down to lock the little key to the table top.



Reflections in the highly polished, nickel plated surfaces make it difficult to see some of the parts. Note the signet paddle with the "S" for Smith.



The picture above was made before the finger pad was installed.

I enjoyed making the key very much and it has become an interesting conversation piece. I managed to find a finger ring box in which it would just fit. This makes it easy to

carry in the pocket. I also quite often give viewers a set of 4" x 6" photographs of the key so they can prove to others that they are not fibbing about what they have seen.

As might be expected, there has been considerable interest in the key among hams. However, I have been quite surprised at the interest shown by the general public. Here is the little key in its ring case.

