



Key Moment

Did I ever tell you that I used to own a hotel 😊: the Ice Hotel Quebec-Canada! Quebec is also the head office of Tip&Go 😊. Ice hotels are probably the only hotels in the world that have no keys for their rooms!!!

Origins of Keys^{1,2,3}

The first locks and keys appeared in ancient Babylon and Egypt, some 6000 years ago. Both were made from wood and the key itself was bulky and heavy. The oldest examples of ancient locks, dated 704 BC, were found in Nineveh, the capital of ancient Assyria. Egyptians were the first to give a symbolic and sacred meaning to keys. The ankh is an ancient Egyptian symbol also known as crux ansata (Latin for “cross with a handle”) symbolizing “the key of life” a mystic sign connected to sex, the sun and other esoteric concepts. The gesture of inserting a key in a patch certainly conveys a highly erotic meaning therefore it is no coincidence that it has often been used in movies to increase sexual load 😊.

Romans improved on the Egyptian lock to protect their belongings. They used metal rather than wood, favoring iron and bronze which were some of the strongest metals available. The introduction of ‘wards’ into locks changed keys from large flat structures with pins at the end to ‘Skeleton keys’ – simple cylindrical shafts with a single, thin rectangular tooth (or bit). Keys were no longer so large that they could not be carried around. In fact, affluent Romans started wearing them as rings on their fingers. These rings signaled their wealth and prestige. The skeleton key was in use for 17 centuries after the fall of the Roman Empire. Even today, it can be found in houses built before the 1940s!

Still, locks that had wards were relatively easy to break into. This is why their design evolved considerably since then, to give way to more secure devices.

- 1778: Robert Barron invents the revolutionary double-acting lever tumbler lock.
- 1784: Joseph Bramah improves Barron’s design with his patented cylindrical key system that used a series of wafers to allow retraction of the bolt.
- 1851: America’s domination of lock & key design begins at the Great Exhibition of 1851 when Alfred C. Hobbs, an American locksmith, wins a cash prize for picking both the Barron and Bramah designs.

¹ https://en.wikipedia.org/wiki/Lock_and_key

² <http://www.historyofkeys.com/keys-history/history-of-keys/#:~:text=History%20of%20keys%20started%20at,pins%20and%20unlock%20the%20blot>

³ <https://www.affordablelock.ca/post/the-history-of-keys>

- 1861: Linus Yale Jr. receives his first patent for the Yale pin tumbler cylinder lock, drawing from his father's handmade bank lock design.

Hotel Room Keys⁴

The modern hotel era began shortly after Yale's first patent. The chief concierge at *Le Grand Hotel Paris* noted that as far back as 1862, hotel rooms were secured by metal keys that were attached to a big key-ring, which was hung on a board at the concierge office. Those large rings were used to increase hotel security but were not convenient for guests who could not leave the property with them.

Up until the mid 1970s, hotel rooms were still equipped with conventional iron keys and locks. In 1975, Norwegian inventor Tor Sørnes created the so-called 'punchcard' which allowed hotel guest to have their own unique key formed by a pattern of 32 holes on a plastic card.

In the 1980s, punch cards gave way to magstripe cards, which are still used in many hotels today. Originally created for data storage, this was the technology that also enabled credit and debit cards. The weakness of magstripe cards became apparent when hackers were able to gain access to rooms, transfer loyalty card points, and other types of theft.

In the 2000s, hotels turned to Radio Frequency Identification keycards which contain a small chip and open a lock by contact. This technology solved the demagnetization problem of magstripe cards and was more convenient for both hotels and guests. In 2014, to increase security and convenience for guests, *Starwood Hotels* created mobile keyless entry. Mobile keys allow guests to check-in remotely prior to arrival and receive a secure encrypted key directly on their smartphone.

⁴ <https://www.openkey.co/2019/04/17/the-evolution-of-hotel-keys/>

Now, pardon the pun but last week, Tip&Go had a few 'key moments' of its own 😊: among others, we **opened** Tip&Go USA, we officially registered our name in the USA and we now have a trademark on the Tip&Go name and logo.

Tip&Go, The face behind your comfort!

Francis Léonard CEO



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