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UNIVERSITY OF KEELE

The Recording of the Non-Classic
Blues Genre, 1923-1942

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Abstract

It remains as historical coincidence that the invention of a recording and reproduction machine occurred at a time when the blues, as the first black American secular music, had developed to the stage where the term was in common parlance within black communities.

The irony of this coincidence is that an industry which steered close to the segregation and discrimination of white American society, had, in part, to turn to the discriminated to help it survive. In the decades that followed the industry grew to an incredible size, merging with other industries to become a powerful force in the entertainments industry of America. Such was the political and economic might that it occasioned Federal intervention on a number of occasions. For the black citizen two things changed: he/she moved from belonging to an audience in a small community to becoming a consumer in an industrial society and on a continental scale. As a performer, he or she had the potential of becoming totally absorbed in the white-controlled entertainment world. Because this entertainment was exclusively for members of its cultural group, the place of blacks living and working in a dominant culture cannot be ignored.

The basic understanding of this study is that music is more than sounds made to vibrate the air, that extra-musical forces acting on the music and its performer, its performance and its consumption are equally vital. The process of recording was a dynamic one. From embryonic

ignorance it learned quickly, reaching a position where it could return some of what it had assimilated. Yet once recording was a permanent feature on the musical landscape, that landscape remained forever altered.

Introductory Note

This study is presented in two parts. The first volume makes up the main body of the text whilst the second, accompanying, volume is an analysis of the Godrich and Dixon discography, Blues and Gospel Recording 1902-1942. The results are shown as a series of graphs, each one numbered and labelled.

With the exception of the first two, the graphs cover three topics:

- a) the performance of eleven recording labels, the total for each label, and the numbers for all the recording locations. They include recordings issued, recordings unissued, and the number of artists, for each year;
- b) the numbers marketed by the non-recording labels, where the material came from, and the number of artists, for each year;

and

- c) the level of recording activity in the twenty-nine known, and one unknown, locations, the number issued, the number not issued, and the number of artists, for each year.

The reference point for discussion is taken from the beginning of recording in 1923, because evidence of what kind of music and performance before this date is slight. Points made about the pre-recorded milieu are seen in the light of a recorded context.

Whilst the first five chapters document a kind of chronological history of the development of this blues genre with the mass communications industry, of which recording was a small part, chapters six and seven discuss the role of the music and performer/audience in a culture and cultural context.

CHAPTER I

The Recording Industry

Thomas Edison's failure to secure patent rights in America for his invention of the tin-foil cylinder phonograph gave rise to his first competitor, Alexander Graham Bell, and the eventual foundation of the Columbia record label.¹⁾ When Edison patented first in Britain, five months before doing so in America, in December 1877, the United States Patent Office disallowed his patent because of "... the then novel reason that the English patent covering the same claims

1) Bell received a \$25,000 award from the French Academy of Science for his invention of the telephone with which he set up the Volta Laboratory Association. He engaged his brother, and scientist, Charles Sumner Tainter, to work on the phonograph, basing their idea on the British Edison patent. By 1888, after a number of improvements, they set about manufacturing and marketing the new graphophones, which is what they named their machines. Details and information on the early development of the American Record industry taken from From Tin-Foil to Stereo; Oliver Read and Walter L. Welch, (Indianapolis, Howard W. Sarns & Co. Ltd., 1959).

constituted prior publication."²⁾ Whilst his original intention was to use the machine as a stenographers aid, distributing them on a rental basis, Bell immediately went into the production of machines to record and reproduce music. In 1886 he formed the American Graphophone Company in Bridgeport, Connecticut, and licensed two distribution operations: the Columbia Phonograph Company³⁾ with rights for sales in the three States of Virginia, Delaware and the District of Columbia; and the North American Phonograph Company for the rest of the nation. North American was owned by capitalist Jesse Lippincott who purchased the rights to some of Edison's patents as well as distribution. When, in 1893, Lippincott died, Columbia took control of total sales in the United States of its own company product as well as its rival Edison. It also bought out its parent company only to be repurchased two years later, with the same men controlling both. Bell's decision was fortuitous; by 1891, the only way companies were to remain in business was to turn to the field of entertainment. Indeed, one of the points raised at the first National Phonograph Association convention held in Chicago in May 28 and 29, 1890, was the trend for machines for entertainment purposes.

In 1895, what became Columbia's major industrial competitor Victor, entered with the manufacture of the disc record by Emile Berliner, who began experiments two years

2) Ibid., p.26.

3) Columbia, founded in 1888, incorporated the following year, was organised by a group of United States Supreme Court reporters. With the confusion and industrial rivalry of the early years, many cases went to court and Columbia skillfully used its legislative expertise and the lengthy hearings to its advantage.

earlier in Philadelphia. Berliner designed gramophones specifically to reproduce music, but, unlike his rivals, envisioned his apparatus as a toy. He set up the United States Gramophone Company and sought outside help to exploit his machines commercially.⁴⁾ A number of technical problems led him to the machine shop of Eldridge R. Johnson in Camden, New Jersey. Johnson was offered a partnership in a new company, the Berliner Gramophone Company, to manufacture the improved machines and disc records. By 1898 sales were high and American Graphophone entered the disc market. In 1899, Johnson formed the Consolidated Talking Machine Company to distribute his machines and discs. He ended his business relationship with Berliner the following year, when Berliner was given an injunction against marketing his products in the American market. Finally, in 1901, Johnson formed the Victor Talking Machine Company to manufacture his improved machines. Thus at the beginning of the twentieth century, Victor and Columbia became market leaders; by 1902 they held monopolies on the disc manufacturing process.

Developments in wireless communication were almost two decades behind recording and reproduction of sound. Yet the rapid progress and success of commercial radio after 1922 gave the recording industry unexpected and fatal competition. Indeed, the recording industry was looking for new markets; radio was one factor which acted as a catalyst. Radio,

4) Berliner was joined by Will and Fred Gaisberg, who raised a working capital of \$25,000 from Philadelphia investors. The Gaisbergs had previously worked in Bell's Volta Laboratory.

initially moved into the Southern music genre, particularly white rural music, before the record industry realised the potential of this market. The exploitation "... came at the precise moment when the record business as a whole was experiencing a sharp down turn of sales, due largely to the competition of radio. ... Business dropped off tremendously in 1923 and 1924 as radio became an established facet of American entertainment."⁵⁾ The transition from radio to broadcasting as a concept was not as simple as envisaged by David Sarnoff, one-time Marconi employee, and later vice-president of the Radio Corporation of America, R.C.A. Two months before the first commercial radio broadcast, Sarnoff wrote in June 1922 that broadcasting "... represents a job of entertaining, informing and educating the nation, and should therefore be distinctly regarded as a public service."⁶⁾ The principal difficulty was finance. Sarnoff wanted the money to come from "... those who desire profits directly or indirectly from the business resulting from radio broadcasting: manufacturer, national distributor, wholesale distributor, retail dealer, licensee."⁷⁾ Radio broadcasting did not become a public service and the industry failed to note Sarnoff's suggestion. It was to be financed by

5) Country Music USA, Bill C. Malone; (Austin, University of Texas Press, for American Folklore Society, 1968), p.37.

6) Letter to E.W. Rice, 17 June 1922. Quoted by Asa Briggs, The History of Broadcasting in the United Kingdom, Vol.1: The Birth of Broadcasting, (London, Oxford University Press 1961,)p.59.

7) Memorandum, June 17 1922. Quoted by Llewellyn White, The American Radio, (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1947) p.27.

advertising.⁸⁾

Marconi organised an American subsidiary four years after his first successful wireless transmission in Italy in 1895, which gave him a seven year lead over his American rivals. Yet by the end of the first world war, the three major telecommunications companies, General Electric (GE), Westinghouse, and American Telephone and Telegraph (AT & T), controlled significant technology, by individual research or through purchase of rights to basic patents. They were, nevertheless, all dependent upon each other and a number of Marconi devices; a position which the war itself, the American Government and the Navy Department, brought redress. The attempt by Congress to maintain a Government monopoly of wireless communication after WWI brought an outcry from amateur and private industry.⁹⁾ The alternative was the founding of RCA on October 17, 1919, after an idea by chairman of GE, Owen Young, which bought up Marconi's American interest, thereby eliminating foreign competition, and the manufacture and distribution of equipment was to be controlled by the three telecommunications companies, and RCA.¹⁰⁾ Such was the

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- 8) Advertising for broadcasting was frowned upon by the then Secretary of the Department of Commerce, Herbert Hoover, who stated, at the first American Radio Conference in 1922, that it was "... inconceivable that we should allow so great a possibility for service .. to be drowned in advertising chatter." Quoted by Asa Briggs, op.cit., p.63. Companies selling radio sets echoed equal protestations, arguing that "... broadcasting was being 'debased'". Llewellyn-White, op.cit., p.29.
- 9) Asa Briggs, op.cit., p.60.
- 10) GE and Westinghouse were to manufacture radio sets; RCA would distribute them; AT & T would manufacture, and lease or sell, transmitting equipment. Because of patent control, all broadcasters were compelled to use products of the four companies.

control of the market that the government filed an anti-trust suit against the four in 1930. GE and Westinghouse were forced to give up their RCA stock, and exclusive inter-licensing had to end.

Commercial radio broadcasting began in 1922¹¹⁾, but it took another four years for American radio to raise itself from the turmoil, despite internal and external attempts at some form of organisation. All the while it was making a huge income, such that by 1924, sales in radio receivers alone were approaching \$50m.¹²⁾

The phenomenal success of radio and Hollywood paralleled a sharp decline in the recording industry; the latter in partial response to the former, but also because the industry, to some degree, had become complacent with its own products and with the popularity of radio, which it believed to be short-lived. Radio also introduced the electric age to mass entertainment, which for a number of years the record industry could not compete with its acoustical product, and thereby suffered. Technical development, using electricity in 1926, and the introduction of all electric radio-phonograph stimulated sales in records, but also took away the lead radio technology had over the all acoustic technology of the record industry.¹³⁾ Both Columbia and Victor went bankrupt; in 1923 and 1926 respectively because their conservative

11) AT & T set up station WEAJ in New York City; Westinghouse had stations in Newark, Chicago, Philadelphia and Boston; RCA co-owned station WJZ in Newark, with Westinghouse; and GE owned station WGY in Schenectachy, New York State. Llewellyn-White, op.cit., p.13

12) Llewellyn-White, ibid., p.31.

13) Edward A. Kahn II, The Carter Family: A Reflection of Changes in Society. Ph.D.Thesis, Anthropology, UCLA 1970, pp.102-105.

approach added to the competition of the other media. The bankruptcy of Columbia and Victor came at a time when the American economy was experiencing one of its finest moments. After a two-year slump the whole of the 1920's up to 1929, was the 'prosperity decade', although not without minor blurs in 1924 and 1927.^{13a)} The Depression decade never really recovered until the outset of World War II, despite gradual improvement after 1933, and more so after 1937.

One important point about the 1920's prosperity is, in fact, highlighted by the way the two companies re-appeared and eventually dominated mass communications and entertainment. That point was the business ethic which introduced high materialism and consumerism as a virtue. Protected by the Harding/Coolidge administration, though no less so by Hoover's, private enterprise moved swiftly into company takeovers and mergers. "The war itself ... speeded both popular acceptance and acceptance in the business world of the virtues of large-scale amalgamated, oligopolistic industries ..."^{13b)}

In 1924, the English subsidiary of Columbia, bought the bankrupt parent company and re-organised it into the Columbia Phonograph Company Incorporated. It did so because the English Company was interested in the new technique of electric recording, which was being offered to Victor and the banking

13a) George Soule, Prosperity Decade (Holt, Rinehart and Winston, New York, 1962). Also Peter N. Carroll and David W. Noble, The Free and the Unfree (Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1977).

13b) William E. Leuchtenberg, The Perils of Prosperity, 1914-32 (University of Chicago Press, Chicago, 1958).

syndicate in control of the bankrupt American Columbia. GE, who controlled the rights, did not allow foreign use of the technique, and as the banking syndicate showed no interest, English Columbia acquired an American company to gain access to the process.¹⁴⁾ In April, 1928, Columbia affiliated with the United Independant Broadcasters (UIB)¹⁵⁾ and formed the Columbia Phonograph Broadcasting System, Incorporated, a short-lived venture for Columbia, who withdrew after financial losses. UIB bought outstanding stock and changed the name of its network to the Columbia Broadcasting System (CBS). In 1932 the English Columbia sold its American interests to radio manufacturers, Grigsby-Grunow Incorporated, who after amassing huge profits went bankrupt two years later. Columbia was bought by a banking syndicate, Sacro Enterprises and resold to the Brunswick Radio Corporation, a company owned by Consolidated Film Industries Incorporated. Finally in 1938, CBS bought Columbia from Consolidated Films and it became part of the Columbia Record Division.¹⁶⁾

The Victor Talking Machine Company, on going bankrupt, immediately went into the control of a banking syndicate.

14) John Godrich and Robert M.W. Dixon, Recording the Blues London, Studio Vista, 1970, p.35.

15) It was incorporated by radio program promoter George A. Coats and Arthur Judson, manager of the Philadelphia Symphony Orchestra after their attempt at forming a talent agency, the Judson Radio Program Corporation, failed. UIB bought radio time, sold it to advertisers and made programs for broadcasters. Llewellyn-White, op.cit., p.33

16) Llewellyn-White, op.cit., pp.33-35.
Read and Welch, op.cit., pp.290-295; p.404.

Three years later, in 1929, it was purchased by RCA, as part of its expansion and diversification program.¹⁷⁾

The same year of Victor's bankruptcy, RCA formed the first network radio system, the National Broadcasting Corporation, NBC, in which it held 50% of the shares, GE 30%, and Westinghouse, 20%; AT & T had left the syndicate for contractual reasons. RCA bought station WEAJ from AT & T for one million dollars, on guarantee that its former owner desist from broadcasting for seven years and that it lease its telephone lines to NBC. Until then, RCA had to rely on the inferior telegraph lines of Western Union and Postal Telegraph, which were never designed for human voice.¹⁸⁾

In 1928, RCA formed the Radio-Keith-Orpheum Corporation and entered into film production/distribution and theatre ownership for the next fifteen years. By 1930 it had total control of NBC and was manufacturing radio equipment, following agreement with GE and Westinghouse. In 1942 RCA Victor became the RCA Victor Division of RCA, producing "... radio sets, tubes, records, Victrolas, transcriptions and electronic and communications equipment."¹⁹⁾ Other, smaller, companies became interested in the recording part of the entertainment industry, which in most cases was an obvious direction for diversification. Their involvement in the entertainment or furniture business - and phonograph machines were thought of as pieces of household equipment and marketed as such - developed simply by setting up a record label and selling their products. Their inroads into production was much more dynamic than either Victor or Columbia;

17) The money came from the Rockefeller wing of AT & T, RCA, GE and Westinghouse. Read and Welch, op.cit., p.289.

18) Llewellyn-White, op.cit., p.32.

19) ~~Llewellyn-White~~, op.cit., p.32.

being small concerns they could be less inhibited about their public image and certainly more courageous and industrious in their zeal to capture some of the market.

The format for these smaller labels was threefold: companies found musicians/singers and recorded them for distribution on their own labels; companies establishing cheaper labels to sell products duplicated off their more expensive label; and those who arranged to sell recordings made by others, at a cheaper price and under their own company label. The latter, because of their principle business outlets, became known as the 'dime-store' labels.²⁰⁾ Both Victor and Columbia were forced to establish a cheaper label when the price of records saw them losing some of the market as competition sold at a lower cost. In 1933 Victor brought out its Bluebird label, and Columbia, as part of the Consolidated Films stable transformed one of its purchases, the Okeh label, into the cheaper label.

Two companies formed labels in 1915, Okeh and Gennett, although their entry into the blues genre was a little later. The Okeh label was financed by a German record corporation to gain access to the American market, and in fact, was the first of the two companies who began exclusively as recording companies. It lasted for eleven years when it was subsequently sold to Columbia, in 1926. General Phonograph, who owned Okeh, were unable to purchase rights to the electric recording process, which left them virtually unable to compete with either Victor or Columbia, and forced their sale to Columbia. For three years each label was managed sep-

20) Godrich and Dixon, op.cit., p.78.

erately before merging operations.²¹⁾ The Gennett label was owned by the Starr Piano Company of Richmond, Indiana. In 1925 the company formed their cheaper label, Champion, with which they made recordings as well as duplicating Gennett material. The company went bankrupt in 1934 and sold the Champion label, as well as some Gennett master recordings, to the Decca Company, the following year.²²⁾

The Paramount label, begun in 1916, belonged to the New York Recording Laboratories of Port Washington, Wisconsin, itself a subsidiary of the Wisconsin Chair Company of New York and Port Washington. Before its bankruptcy in 1932, it succeeded in establishing three cheaper labels, Bluebird, unconnected with Victor, National and Broadway.²³⁾

Also in 1916, the Vocalion label had been launched by the Aeolian Company, manufacturers of pianos and organs. Before it became involved with the blues genre it was sold to a competitor, Brunswick-Balke-Collender, who began by making billiard tables and bowling balls but expanded into the production of phonograph machines and records in 1920, and black music in 1926, with their Race Record Division. The company did, in fact, manufacture and market the first

21) Godrich and Dixon, ibid., p.41; Roland Clifford Foreman, Jazz and Blues Records 1920-1932, Ph.D.Thesis (University of Illinois, Urbana, 1968), p.210.

22) Despite the existence of its Champion label, Gennett issued seven recordings on another cheap label, Superior. Within a decade of bankruptcy, there was a short-lived attempt to revive the label. A music publisher, singer and 1920s music promoter, Joe Davis, negotiated to buy Gennett's pressing plant to use war-time shellac, which was heavily rationed. Only eight issues were released, some, old Gennett material, and some new recordings. The label's nomenclature changed to Joe Davis, but operations had ended.

23) Broadway duplicated Paramount material in the years 1924, 1926 to 1929, incl. All discographical information taken from Blues and Gospel Recordings 1902-1942; John Godrich and R.M.W. Dixon, (London, Storyville Publications Company, 1969).

electric radio-phonograph, in 1927. They were also unable to use electric recording techniques but their initial entry into radio-phonograph forced the other manufacturers to follow suit. By 1929 RCA gained control of this market.²⁴⁾ The two labels survived for less than a decade when, in 1929, they were sold to the movie company, Warner Brothers, who in turn, formed their cheap Melotone label to market duplicated Brunswick and Vocalion material. Two years later all three labels were sold to a second movie company, Consolidated Film Industries, who formed the Brunswick Record Corporation to control all their music business. Consolidated Film already held interest in the music industry through its purchase of the American Record Corporation (ARC) the previous year, in October 1930.²⁵⁾ The second company solely concerned with recording and marketing was Decca, formed with English capital in 1934.

Whilst all these companies were in competition, one issue held them together for a short time. In 1918 Victor issued a suit to the Starr Piano Company over infringements of certain rights for a method of cutting records. Emile Berliner had developed the lateral recording technique for his discs, whilst cylinders were recorded vertically. By 1902, Victor and Columbia, who controlled the market for lateral cut discs, sued other manufacturers who had to rely

24) Read and Welch, op.cit., p.270

25) ARC was formed in 1929 by the merger of the Plaza Music Company with its Jewel, Domino, Oriole, Banner and Regal labels, the Pathe Phonograph and Radio Corporation with labels, Pathe Actuelle and Perfect, and the Cameo Record Corporation and its Cameo, Romeo and Variety labels.

on the older technique which was of little use on Victor and Columbia phonograph. In the event of the 1918 court case, the Supreme Court ruled in favour of the Starr Piano Company. Because the ruling affected all other small companies, the case promoted friendly relationships between companies such that many labels used Gennett recording studios, at times exclusively, even when Gennett no longer issued material.

A number of labels were operated explicitly for the cheaper and less specialised end of the market, competing with each other, but to a lesser degree than the competition with the major record labels from whom they received and duplicated material. Thus, the American Record Corporation (ARC), within one year of organisation, distributed four labels to dime-store chains - Banner, Oriole, Perfect and Romeo, later Melotone was added in 1932. Chain stores saw a formidable rise in number. In ten years up to 1929 they had increased units from 29,000 to 160,000, providing a sizeable market for cheaper records. The retail store, Montgomery-Ward issued its own cheap priced label for six years between 1935 and 1940, using Bluebird material exclusively. The mail-order firm of Sears-Roebuck who "... aimed at the rural population ..." ²⁶⁾ sold its own labels, Silvertone, 1924 to 1927, using Gennett and Paramount material, Supertone, 1927 to 1933, using Gennett and Vocalion, and Conqueror, 1927 to 1941 using material from the Gennett, Vocalion, ARC, Okeh and Bluebird catalogues.

26) Bill C. Malone, op.cit., pp.106-107.

One final group of very short-lived labels appeared within the basic structure. The procedure was to acquire a number of master recordings and/or make a number of recordings themselves, and then they disappeared. The St. Louis Music Company set up a Herwin label in 1925 for sales principally through farm journals, taking all its product from larger companies. Despite a low retail price, sales were too low and with the Depression it had to sell out to Paramount five years later. The Chicago Record Company, founded by a former Paramount employee, issued a Black Patti label in 1927, but it lasted for less than one year with only thirteen issues, eight using Gennett material. In 1929 QRS Records, initially manufacturers of piano rolls, made twenty-two recordings.²⁷⁾ The Variety label appeared in 1939 by a former Victor employee as a contender for a major competitor to the Bluebird, Decca and Vocalion labels, but only managed to issue recordings previously made by Paramount, Gennett and Champion.²⁸⁾

Thus, until the end of the Depression, the company/market structure was forever changing, more because of the appearance and disappearance of the various companies and their labels, than market dynamics. But by 1934 three companies owned and controlled all the record labels - Decca,

27) The initials and other details of QRS remain a mystery. All that is known is that it had studios in Long Island City. Paramount later reissued some of their material.

28) Other labels who issued no more than a handful were: Verve 1924; Buddy 1925; Pathe and Tempo 1927; Wax Shop 1928; Century 1928 and 1930; Steiner-Davis 1929; Jewel and Savoy 1930; Asch 1941, 1942; RCA and Capital 1942.

RCA Victor, and Consolidated Film Industries. Even the sale of all its music holdings to CBS, by Consolidated Film did nothing to upset the equilibrium. Yet it was a structure with less than a decade of stability. In its first twenty-year period, over seven and a half thousand recordings were made by approximately three hundred product names; over one thousand never got issued and over fifteen hundred were duplicated onto dime-store and mail-order labels, as well as the cheaper subsidiary labels. At times the single recording was released sevenfold.

Data on annual sales figures, company income and expenditure are almost all unavailable, but some picture of the period can be traced. The relationship between record sales, prices and recording activity was not always linear, although, for example, did reflect the obvious low level of activity and thus income, during the Depression. Price changes were effected to recapture a fading market as well as increase competition. The consumer was helped in the market by introduction, and widespread use, of credit facilities, which then enabled companies to expand further. The prevailing attitude which went with credit was to look upon hardship "... as a thing to be avoided by living in the here and now, utilising instalment credit and other devices to telescope the future into the present."^{28a)} Advertising and the notion of obsolescence accompanied this attitude to raise the volume of durable products, and company profits even higher. Indeed, it rose to such a level that it had more than it needed because industry failed to re-direct profit into wages and its own investment at

28a) William E. Leuchtenberg, Perils of Prosperity, p.174

a practical rate.

By the end of 1921, when the economy was facing a slump, the black consumer had proved itself an economic force and the industry had its first year of exploiting a new product and a new market. Government requirements for WWI stimulated the economy which encouraged northern migration of southern Blacks. That, and continued industrial employment of unskilled labour after the war, provided a measure of wealth for black Americans, higher than they had previously experienced but always on a smaller scale of white employment. By 1920 the black population was about ten million and provided a sizeable market as an ethnic group.^{28b)} Sales from the early black recordings for this market were phenomenal, to the surprise of companies who remained impressed enough to record a music they always considered a risk but had surrounded them for years.^{28c)} Total sales from recording had passed the \$100m. mark²⁹⁾, a figure the industry never managed to repeat until the post-war period (see Graph No.1).

Records retailed at 75 cents, although when recordings of black female vaudeville singers were first sold to black

28b) Donald R. McCoy, Coming of Age (Penguin Books, Harmondsworth, 1973); Harold G. Vatter and Thomas Palm (eds.) The Economics of Black America (Harcourt, Brace, Jovanovich, Inc., New York, 1972).

28c) Perry Bradford, Down with the Blues (Oak Publications, New York, 1965).

29) Figures provided by the Recording Industry of America Association, New York.

consumers, they retailed at 85 cents. In 1922 Columbia and Victor cut their price to 75 cents, predicting sales of \$100m.³⁰⁾, a figure they never altered even at the sacrifice of the market; Okeh maintained this price level until 1932.³¹⁾ Gennett, who began at 50 cents, was forced up to market level because, unable to purchase rights to electric recording, could only pay a license fee which affected costs. Nevertheless, it brought out its Champion label to retail at 35 cents each, or three for one dollar. It was the norm for all the other companies. Decca's policy was to compete immediately in this end of the market, and three years later, in 1937, it lowered its prices to 25 cents, a move quickly followed by the other companies.³²⁾ All the dime-store, mail-order labels, except Perfect at 35 cents, retailed at 20 cents each with reductions for multiple orders at the time of the Depression.³³⁾ They began in 1926/27 at 39 cents but when Consolidated Film bought the ARC, Brunswick-Balke-Collender group of labels it made two changes; Vocalion now became the group's 35 cent label, and Perfect joined the rest of the dime-store mail-order price bracket. When CBS bought all Consolidated Film's music interests, it

30) John Hammond, "An Experience in Jazz History" from Dominique Rene de Larma, ed., Black Music In Our Culture, Kent State University Press, 1970 p.44.

31) R.C. Foreman, op.cit., p.190

32) Arnold Passman, Deejays (Macmillan & Co., New York, 1971) pp.27/28.

33) Samuel B. Charters, Sears Roebuck Sells the Country Blues from Record Research (Brooklyn, New York, Record Research Publications, 1960, March/April) No.27, p.3.

ended all their dime-store mail-order business.³⁴⁾

There were three peak periods during this recording era:

34) Figures showing actual sales of blues recordings and income derived are not available, except estimates for Victor and Columbia. Average estimated sales figures for Columbia were as follows:

mid	1924	10,000
early	1925	10,000
late	1925	16,000
early	1927	9,000
April	1928	7,000
late	1928	6,000
March	1929	5,000
March	1930	2,000
May	1931	600
mid	1931	400

Source: Dan Mahoney, The Columbia 13/14000-D Series: A Numerical Listing, 2nd edition, (Stanhope, New Jersey, Walter C. Allen, 1966).

Approximate dollar volume of sales for Victor as follows:

1921	\$51m.
1923	\$44m.
1925	\$20m.
1927	\$48m.
1931	\$22.5m.

Source: Godrich and Dixon, op.cit., pp.42, 76.
Read and Welch, op.cit., p.291

Read and Welch break down their 1931 figure thus: Victor 30m; ARC 17m; Brunswick 12.5m. By the end of 1932, sales were down to 10m. In 1938 it rises to 35.5m., with almost 10% taken by popular music, not defined, thus: Decca 12m; Victor 13m; Columbia 7m. op.cit., pp.290-297. These figures in fact contradict those provided by Recording Industry Association of America. Victor's increase in sales for the latter part of the decade was due, in part, to the introduction of its Orthophonic phonograph, their first electric machine which had a much improved sound quality. Foreman, op.cit., p.183.

in 1929, the highest; during and including the years 1935 to 1937; and 1941, each coinciding with the economic successes of the two decades. When the first three recordings were made in 1923³⁵⁾ the income derived from total record sales was falling until 1926 when it gradually increased: 1923, \$79.2m.; 1926, \$70.4m.; 1929, \$74.8m. At the 1929 peak, 754 recordings of the blues genre were made, with only 91 remaining on company shelves. After that, both recordings and total income fell sharply as the Depression hit the industry. Figures showing overall recording activity for each year are as follows:

<u>Year</u>	<u>Recordings Issued</u>	<u>Recordings Unissued</u>	<u>Total</u>
1923	3	0	3
1924	37	4	41
1925	31	5	36
1926	129	14	143
1927	269	135	404
1928	271	232	503
1929	546	208	754
1930	403	245	648
1931	260	69	329
1932	196	22	218
1933	178	0	178
1934	426	36	462
1935	579	117	696
1936	478	175	653
1937	534	102	636
1938	421	46	467
1939	336	63	399
1940	377	14	391
1941	530	3	533
1942	131	0	131

Table 1. (see Graph No.2)

35) Two recordings were made by Guilford 'Peachtree' Payne by the Okeh label in Chicago, about the end of October. One recording was made by J. Churchill for Paramount, also in Chicago, sometime in December.

By 1933, income was down to \$5.5m., the lowest the industry ever faced. Table II below shows percentage level of blues recording compared to the highest peak of 1929:

1923	0.3
1924	5.4
1925	4.5
1926	18.9
1927	53.5
1928	66.7
1929	100.0
1930	85.9
1931	43.6
1932	28.4
1933	23.6
1934	61.3
1935	93.3
1936	86.6
1937	84.3
1938	61.5
1939	52.9
1940	51.8
1941	70.5
1942	17.1

Table II.

Thus, at the height of the Depression recording was less than one quarter of the highest point. Each peak was followed by a sharp decline, and each was smaller than the previous one.

Although blues recording following the Depression was quite erratic overall, income from record sales rose annually, quite slowly for a number of years, from \$5.5m in 1933 to \$13.2m. in 1937, and then quite rapidly, due more and more to the rise of white popular music. Not all recordings made were issued. Overall, 14.1% never left the company stocks, and it was not always the case that the confident

periods resulted in a more exacting selection process. The three peak periods did have high rates of rejections, but it was during 1933 that the industry was most careful about releasing the product - the market had contracted enormously. All in all, there were two trends; the one leading up to 1933, the other following. Unissued recordings climbed until 1928, where it remained at a fairly even level, until in 1933 almost one-third of recordings remained on the shelves. With industrial re-adjustment following the Depression, the percentage of unissued recordings, particularly after the second peak, grew smaller and smaller.

The record labels can be considered as either functional recording or non. Because the chain-store, mail-order labels never actually did their own recording they belong to the latter - all their material came from other labels. In fact, only Champion, and later Bluebird, functioned as recording labels despite being cheap price labels of companies. The Starr Piano Company who owned Champion, discontinued its expensive Gennett label, from which initially all Champion's product was derived, in 1930. And for the next six years, the last two with Decca, it recorded its own material. Bluebird, on the other hand, functioned as a recording label from the outset. Table III below shows the number of recordings issued and not issued, and the percentage of issued to each total for the number of years in operation for each recording label:

	<u>Issued</u>	<u>Not Issued</u>	<u>Total</u>	<u>% Issued</u>	<u>Number of Years</u>
Vocalion	1,367	289	1,656	82.6	15
Bluebird	1,363	47	1,410	96.7	10
Decca	837	60	897	93.3	8
Okeh	653	100	753	86.8	18
Paramount	679	20	699	97.1	10
Columbia	445	112	557	79.9	18
Victor	413	68	481	85.9	11
ARC	300	260	560	53.6	10
Gennett	141	99	240	58.7	7
Brunswick	167	12	179	93.2	5
Champion	118	9	127	93.2	7

Table III

Quantitatively, of the above eleven labels, Paramount and Bluebird were the most impressive in terms of issued material, and both in the same time-span. For its contribution to the recorded blues genre Paramount stands alone and in one sense after bankruptcy, it was replaced by Bluebird as industrial forerunner, though never quite of the same calibre of material. But, by that time, the mid-1930s, the nature of recording and the audience/music milieu had changed to such an extent that direct comparison is not totally justified.

Paramount made 699 recordings in the ten years beginning 1923. It was the only label never to make recordings outside its own or hired studios. All the singers/musicians were brought or sent to studios in Chicago, New York and Grafton. Until 1929 all recordings took place in Chicago, whilst its Grafton studios were being constructed. During this period, Gennett's studios in Richmond were used. By 1930, Paramount's busiest year with 123 recordings by twenty-seven product names, Grafton was fully operational and all work was

carried out there, albeit for only two years. [See Graphs 3-7 for Paramount].

Because of the eventual purchasing of the Okeh, Columbia, Vocalion and ARC labels by Consolidated Film Industries, it is useful to compare activities of each before considering the details of recording patterns. Okeh not only pioneered the recording of the blues genre, but was the first to record singers/musicians outside their studio headquarters in the north. Columbia's purchase of its Okeh label in 1926 brought about a substantial increase in recording activity by both labels. Yet six years later when sold to Grimsby-Grunlow, recording virtually ceased. Recording performance improved only slightly when Consolidated Film took control; it was much better with CBS, in 1939 for two years. [See Graphs 8-16 for Okeh; 16-25 for Columbia]. For Vocalion and ARC, they ended activity with the re-emergence of Columbia and Okeh. Vocalion began blues recording in 1926 when part of the Brunswick-Baulke-Collander group; in fact it increased steadily and continued so after purchase by Warner Brothers. Only when Consolidated Films bought it did recording activity slow down during the Depression, as did ARC. And when Consolidated Film's policy of maintaining a low profile with Columbia and Okeh, did Vocalion and ARC work swiftly. In 1934 Vocalion reached its peak with over two hundred recordings, then getting progressively less active, to less than forty in 1940. From then on work ceased. ARC had a shorter life with a peak in 1936 of under 150 recordings. The following year it performed a little lower at 120, whereafter all recording ended. [See Graphs 26-41 for Vocalion; 42-54 for ARC]. Comparing each label with respect

to performance, ARC fared the worst, in fact, it had the worst record of all the companies with 46.4% of its recordings never being issued. In its first two years of operation, nothing was put on the market, and between 1933 and 1935, as much was withheld as was marketed. Only Okeh fell below the average non-issue rate of 14.1%; its level was 13.2% whilst Columbia kept 20.1% of its product and Vocalion 17.4%

Gennett had studios in Richmond, Indiana, where the major portion of its work took place, albeit for a short seven years. [See Graphs 55-60 for Gennett]. Its best years were all before the Depression, in 1927 and the two years of 1929, 1930, which is really when it ended recording. With the exception of four recordings released on the Gennett label in 1932, all its recordings were made for its cheaper Champion label. Each modest success for both Gennett and Champion was followed by a slump.

The label only travelled South once, to Birmingham, Alabama, in August 1927, for thirteen recordings, eight of which never got issued. Indeed, as a functioning record label Gennett was placed quite low, with 41.3% of its material never reaching the market. With Champion it was less selective, although the picture is a little complicated due to seven years of duplication of Gennett material and material taken also from Paramount masters, originally recorded at Richmond, as well as recordings made specifically for itself. When, in fact, the company issued all its material during and after the Depression there were no withholdings; it was no longer in a financial position to make choices. [See Graphs 61-67 for Champion]. The Brunswick label had the shortest

span of life, five years, between 1927 and 1931. It began slowly and reached a peak in 1929 very quickly, after which it was sold to Warner Brothers and recording came to a virtual standstill. When Consolidated Film bought Brunswick the label disappeared. In all it had a good level of activity, only 6.8% of material remained unmarketed. Before sale to Warner Brothers, Brunswick went South once, to New Orleans in December 1928 to record four songs by Bo Chatman. Warners sent a recording team during both years of ownership: to Memphis in September 1929 and February 1930; to Dallas and Kansas City in November 1929; and Dallas again in November 1930. Almost one quarter of Brunswick's issued material was recorded in the South. [See Graphs 68-75].

Decca's entrance in blues recording was very impressive. In its first year it had almost 13% of the market with 77 recordings - all but two were issued. In fact, its overall performance was equally impressive; overall, 6.7% of recordings remained unissued, less than half the average. The company basically operated between New York and Chicago. The latter was its first headquarters, then in 1936 they moved eastwards. The following year Decca had its most successful year as a label. The move, however, augered a fall in output. After 1937 Decca slowed down recording of blues until the end of the decade when its interest in recording moved to white popular music, particularly Bing Crosby. It too only undertook one journey South, in March 1936 to New Orleans to record four songs by Walter Vincson and three by Oscar Woods; all were issued. [See Graphs 76-80].

As two functioning record labels, Victor's efforts were

modest, whilst its cheaper label, Bluebird, was very impressive. Bluebird put on the market almost 97% of all its recordings and Victor 86%, the latter beginning blues recording in the year of its bankruptcy, 1926. Once RCA bought them its good start dwindled until it stopped in 1933, the year Bluebird was incorporated. For the next six years there was no activity on the Victor label and its return in 1940 made little impression on the market. Bluebird, on the other hand, began slowly, then had four very industrious years, followed by a two year recession - 1939 and 1940. The next four years were, in fact, its best; it too was followed by a sharp decline. [See Graphs 81-93 for Victor; 94-107 for Bluebird].

The four cheaper labels of Banner, Oriole, Perfect and Romeo had all issued a very small number of blues before their parent companies merged into ARC; all their material came from the Vocalion stock. In 1928 each label issued two recordings by Leroy Carr and one by Tampa Red. The following year they issued one by Tampa Red. Both these artists were very popular during this period, a trend the chain-store, mail-order labels adhered to. The year following incorporation and sale to Consolidated Films, they increased their marketing to forty; Banner the exception for this one year. Melotone was added to the stable in 1931, after sale by Warner Brothers and with a little adjustment, all five labels had basically the same output. Whilst all the functional record labels slowed down production during the Depression, these five labels, with Gennett's Champion label in 1932, increased their marketing, using Vocalion, and to a lesser extent, Victor

material.³⁶⁾ During the least active year, 1933, only Vocalion, with forty-eight releases from sixty-two recordings, ARC with two releases from thirty-six recordings, and Okeh with four, marketed product to compete against the cheaper labels, who were using already marketed material. The only other successful mail-order label was Conqueror, beginning to market in 1927, albeit at a very slow rate - no more than three annually for the next five years. It continued until 1941, comparatively quite long, with a succession of rises and falls in output. [See Graphs 102-152 for all the cheaper labels].

The number of known locations where recording took place was twenty-nine, in nineteen different states.³⁷⁾ Geographically, they were spread, with the exception of Hollywood, California, no further west than Illinois in the North and Texas in the South. Again, with the exception of California, the locations were spread over six northern states and twelve southern, with 81.5% of recordings taking

36) Except for 1931 and 1935, all their product came from previously recorded Vocalion material, recording in Chicago, New York and Memphis. Others came from six ARC New York recordings in 1931 and ten ARC New York recordings in 1935. In both cases both labels belonged to Consolidated Films. Melotone used all ARC material: two New York recordings in 1931; six Chicago recordings in 1934; and ten New York recordings in 1935.

37) One unknown location is listed, but could be one known location.

place in the north. Table IV below lists the locations, and their states, in order of marketed recordings:

Chicago	Illinois
New York	New York State
Memphis	Tennessee
Richmond	Indiana
Atlanta	Georgia
Aurora	Illinois
San Antonio	Texas
Grafton	Wisconsin
Dallas	Texas
New Orleans	Louisiana
Jackson	Mississippi
St. Louis	Missouri
Birmingham	Alabama
Fort Worth	Texas
Charlotte	North Carolina
Long Island City	New York State
Louisville	Kentucky
Hattisburg	Mississippi
Augusta	Georgia
Camden	New Jersey
Indianapolis	Indiana
Columbia	South Carolina
Cincinnati	Ohio
Streveport	Louisiana

Table IV

Recordings made on southern field trips were all sent back to parent companies, all located in the North. Whatever decisions were made regarding the marketing of recorded products the difference between unreleased recordings made in the North, and those in the South was small, only 3.3%. Table V below lists the state of issues and unissued recordings made annually, in the North - N, and the South - S:

	<u>Issued</u>		<u>Unissued</u>	
	<u>N</u>	<u>S</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>S</u>
1923	3	0	0	0
1924	22	4	15	0
1925	29	5	2	0
1926	114	14	15	0
1927	231	99	38	36
1928	237	187	34	45
1929	488	175	58	33
1930	340	213	63	32
1931	213	61	47	8
1932	171	22	25	0
1933	127	0	51	0
1934	337	33	89	3
1935	477	61	102	56
1936	404	151	74	24
1937	490	80	44	22
1938	378	45	43	1
1939	328	47	8	16
1940	364	12	13	2
1941	404	0	46	3
1942	99*	0	32	0

Table V

* includes two recordings from Hollywood, California.

Chicago, was the city where almost fifty percent of all recordings were carried out. In view of its association with a development of jazz, and all record companies, at some time, owning and hiring studios in the city, the figure may not appear too surprising. The pattern of recording in Chicago, did in fact, reflect the pattern of total operations [See Graphs 163-191 for Chicago and all other locations].

There were three periods of activity: from the beginnings in 1923 to 1932; 1932 to 1938; and 1938 to 1942. And as in the overall pattern, Chicago had peaks of activity in 1929, 1935

and 1941, each followed by a sharp decline; the difference though was that for Chicago each peak was higher than the preceding one. Despite most recordings taking place in 1941, it was the period of least selectivity of marketable product. It was a period of debatable creativeness, which, in part, explains the low ratio of issued to non-issued recordings. The highest unissued period was the immediate post-Depression period when the volume of recording activity was highest, whereas the pre-Depression had the lowest.

New York shares, with Chicago, the position of having all the companies record there at some time, although by no means at the same volume. Only 17.6% of all recording took place in New York, but more material remained unmarketed - at 21.3% it stood twice as much as Chicago. Recording was much more erratic in New York. It too can be divided into three periods but not in the same as Chicago: pre-Depression; Depression; and post-Depression.

In its first period, 1924 to 1930, there were two peaks in 1926 and 1929, with fifty and sixty recordings respectively. In 1930 the city had its lowest productivity, despite the heights which the market was then enjoying. Each peak, true in succeeding periods also, was followed by a sharp decline. During the Depression, however, recordings increased, rapidly in 1931 and 1932, more gradual in 1933 and 1934, the latter its highest peak at 145 recordings. Whilst the market was going through its second peak period, recordings in New York kept falling, except for two good years of 1938 and 1940. The decline in 1941 was very sharp, when, paradoxically, the market experienced its last pre-World War II peak.

The high level of productivity during and immediately after the Depression, unique to New York, was also a time of high unreleased product. The figures for unmarketed material during 1933, 1934 and 1935 are respectively, 32.5%, 44.8% and 42.5%, which were much higher than the market norm. The post-Depression figures did reflect market trends for the given period.

The activities in the other twenty-seven locations appear quite erratic. Aurora, Grafton and Richmond, all situated in the North, were associated with particular companies and labels. Gennett and Champion owned the Richmond studios, yet in 1929 Paramount had the highest productivity with over 120 recordings. Overall, recordings took place for eleven years. Aurora was used almost exclusively by Bluebird for over 300 recordings,³⁸⁾ in the two years of 1937 and 1938. Paramount had studios in Grafton, built in 1929, which it used exclusively, until its bankruptcy. Virtually everything recorded at Grafton and Aurora reached the market; Richmond recordings fared less well, approximately 25% remained on company shelves.³⁹⁾

In only five other locations did recordings number higher than one hundred - Memphis, Atlanta, San Antonio, New Orleans, and Dallas, - all in the South. These places, too, were associated with particular company labels, once field recordings took place.

Recording in the South, and to an extent the North, was basically carried out in two periods: between 1924 and 1932; and from 1934 to 1938, 1933 being the pivotal year - the year

38) Decca made two recordings in 1937, after which their studio headquarters had moved to New York. No one else used the Aurora studios.

39) The figures are Aurora 1.6%; Grafton 1.4%; Richmond 24%.

of least overall activity, and the year no field recordings took place. Post-Depression Northern recording actually had a second period, 1939-1942. And the relationship between different labels to Northern made and Southern made, recordings, during both periods is interesting. The industry relied much more on the South during the pre-Depression, for its products - almost one third penetration. The two largest and most conservative companies, Victor and Columbia, relied heavily on the South, deriving almost 75% and 60% respectively for their pre-Depression markets. Despite the lower contribution, unreleased material in pre-Depression South was higher than for Northern recordings, 16.4% to 13.3%. After the Depression, the South provided a much smaller contribution, almost one-third its pre-Depression level, whilst rejections rose to 20%. Productivity also revived once the industry picked up after the Depression, but it was in the North, particularly in the studio headquarters located in Chicago and New York, that precedence occurred. Table VI below lists the number of recordings made by the eleven labels in the pre- and post-Depression periods in the north and south:

	<u>Pre-Depression</u>		<u>Post-Depression</u>	
	<u>N</u>	<u>S</u>	<u>N</u>	<u>S</u>
Vocalion	499	56	782	207
Bluebird	0	0	1,172	238
Decca	0	0	890	7
Paramount	699	0	0	0
Okeh	211	236	298	4
ARC	73	0	385	70
Columbia	112	246	186	23
Gennett	204	13	0	0
Brunswick	137	43	0	0
Champion	70	0	57	0
Victor	66	359	45	0

For percentages of marketed material for each label see footnote 40⁴⁰⁾. Overall, 41.4% of recordings were made before the Depression with 69.7% recorded in the North. It was higher in the post-Depression period, 87.3% made in the North. The post-Depression North was also the highest in terms of marketing, when during the same period, material from the South suffered most.⁴¹⁾ Okeh's pioneering journey to Atlanta made a precedent which, all but Paramount, followed and created a pattern by systematic return journeys, also copied by other companies. Once Southern field recordings was established, the industry was becoming more confident and aggressive. For the two years, 1925 and 1926, Columbia and Okeh, both part of the Columbia group, held a monopoly of southern recordings, although, until 1929 they travelled and worked as separate labels, with material tending to remain with one of the two labels. Later, recordings were made without reference to particular labels, until it was marketed.

40)	<u>% Issued Pre-Depression</u>	<u>Post-Depression</u>
Vocalion	87.2	79.0
Bluebird	0	96.7
Decca	0	93.3
Paramount	97.1	0
Okeh	59.0	94.3
ARC	60.2	60.4
Columbia	80.4	75.1
Gennett	58.7	0
Brunswick	93.2	0
Champion	84.7	100.0
Victor	80.2	19.1

41) The actual percentages, given the average unissued rate of 14.1% overall, were: pre-Depression North, 13.8%; post-Depression North, 11.8%; pre-Depression South, 16.5%; post-Depression South, 22.4%.

Okeh and Columbia also had a virtual monopoly with Atlanta, as a recording centre. Visits were made twice a year; February, March, April, and August, September, October, usually the months taken up. In the good years of 1928 to 1930, the visits began earlier and ended later⁴²⁾ of course, with the Depression journeys South were cut to three months in 1931, and only one in 1932 - February, June and October for the former, conveniently spaced apart, and in February for the latter.⁴³⁾

Victor was the second company to journey South, in 1927; it was a necessary manoeuvre for its survival in the blues market. Gennett and Vocalion soon followed; Brunswick went first in 1928, then twice with Vocalion in 1929 and 1930. Victor went straight to Memphis and New Orleans, in direct competition with the Columbia group. Memphis had a great attraction for Victor for the next four years, visiting twice a year to exploit the jug band music particularly. Atlanta was also a favourite visiting place, twice in 1927 and once in 1928, 1929 and 1932. In fact Memphis and Atlanta were the principle centres for pre-Depression recording in the South, with Dallas, New Orleans and San Antonio having secondary interest.⁴⁴⁾

42) In 1929, February, May and July were spent away from Atlanta; in 1930 they were January, March and August.

43) The two labels also made the following journeys:
St. Louis in November 1925 and April/May 1927;
Memphis in February 1928;
Streveport in February 1930;
Jackson in December 1930;
New Orleans in April 1926 and December 1928.

44) Visits of comparative insignificance were:
St. Louis in 1925 and 1927, both by Okeh;
Charlotte and Savannah in 1927 by Victor;
Birmingham in 1927 by Brunswick;
Indianapolis in 1928 by Vocalion;
Knoxville in 1929 by Vocalion;
Streveport in 1930 by Okeh;
Louisville in 1931 by Victor.

Only two companies, RCA Victor with Bluebird, and Consolidated Film Industries with Vocalion and ARC, made any serious efforts at field recordings after the Depression. Decca travelled once to New Orleans in 1936 and CBS sent down a recording team to Memphis in July 1939 for material eventually issued on all its four labels. Bluebird had a virtual monopoly in San Antonio for five years but forayed into New Orleans in 1935 and 1936, Charlotte in 1936 and 1937, Atlanta in 1940, and Dallas in 1941. Consolidated Films concentrated on the Texas region, taking in San Antonio, Fort Worth and Dallas, until CBS bought up their labels.⁴⁵⁾

As recording policy developed the emphasis shifted when the economic climate moved into and out of the Depression. Geographically until the Depression the south-east and mid-west and the Texas region were primary locations for the industry⁴⁶⁾, with the south-west and Louisiana secondary. It altered after the Depression so that primary interest focused on Texas, particularly San Antonio, with New Orleans taking second place. Atlanta and Memphis held no importance whatsoever, except for the brief CBS Memphis visit. Table VII below shows the shift in numbers for the five major Southern cities before and after the Depression:

45) Between 1935 and 1937 Consolidated Films extended their Southern recording program to include Jackson, Augusta, Hattisburg, Birmingham, Columbia and Hot Springs.

46) Other small locations were:

Jackson 1935 and 1936	by Vocalion
St. Louis 1934	by Vocalion
Augusta 1936	by Vocalion
Birmingham 1937	by Vocalion
Columbia 1938	by Vocalion
Hotsprings 1937	by ARC
Hattisburg 1936	by ARC

	<u>Pre-recordings Pre-Depression</u>	<u>Post-Depression</u>
Atlanta	309	14
Memphis	133	69
San Antonio	99	144
Dallas	66	59
New Orleans	16	105

And whilst this shift in location occurred in the South, Chicago, remained, as ever, the principal northern recording centre in the whole country.

CHAPTER II

Music to the Companies

The music that eventually reached the recording companies was brought out of its rural and urban milieu by a small group of men, almost all of them white, who were employed directly as recording managers or indirectly, as talent scouts. A certain amount of rationalisation of material came under their work-load, and in effect these men, at times unconsciously, acted as artist and repertoire men, taking decisions about material and singer/musician. As an employee of General Phonograph and its Okeh label, Ralph Peer was the first to realise the potential of the black purchasing power when he first recorded Mamie Smith in July, 1920, although it was not without a struggle by Perry Bradford, who penned the songs Smith recorded. Peer's entrepreneurship exploited what he understood of economic changes which occurred in the rural South because of the first world war and its concomitant migration to the northern factories. But he also witnessed a measure of rising economic standards when cheap labour attracted some

industry to the South, "... the standard of living of all these people in the southern states was raised and then they could buy records - they could buy phonographs ..., because of this that accidental Negro recording by Mamie Smith got its tremendous start. We didn't know it, we didn't know where these records were going."¹⁾ Peer's naivety reflected the general naivety and lack of direction of the recording industry. It was, despite its age, still very immature and uncertain. There was indeed a great deal of searching for fresh products and new discoveries, to fill an expanding market and serve as a survival mechanism. Ultimately, it was the discovery of the music of the poor working class of black and white, of both urban and rural cultures, consciously Southern in derivation, which the industry exploited and effected direct, as well as influencing, stylistic changes. It then sold this music to the same socio-economic group.

Given the fact that recording techniques and reproduction were almost a generation in age, it remained simply a matter of time before the music of this group would be exploited, despite the stigma attached to a 'low-culture' classification of this type of American music. Peer perceptively understood this and was courageous enough to take on the risk: "Somebody had to discover it, and I did discover it and I figured that if I hadn't somebody else would have figured it out, because as the standard of living went up the people would notice there was a bigger demand for records and they'd eventually give them the artists they wanted."²⁾

1) Ralph Peer interview in The Carter Family: A Reflection of Changes in Society. Edward A. Kahn II. Ph.D. Thesis, Anthropology, UCLA, 1970 p.185.

2) Ibid., p.185

Ralph Peer initiated field recordings down South, following an announcement to his distributors of his company's decision to "... begin a series of vocal recordings in order to stimulate sales."³⁾ He was persuaded by their Atlanta wholesale distributor, Polk Brockman, to visit the South and record a local white singer/musician. This, his first authorised field recording, in fact, produced the first recordings to be released of black musicians outside the traditional centres of New York and Chicago.⁴⁾ An account of this trip was reported in the trade journal, Talking Machine World, prosaically entitled, "R.S. Peer Makes Atlanta Trip". The following issue wrote of "... special recordings ..." made.⁵⁾ It was Peer, as general sales manager, who made the decision whether recordings would, or would not, be released onto the market. His background gave him considerable experience to make that judgement, despite having no knowledge of music. He grew up in Independence, Missouri, where his father owned a retail store selling, amongst other things, records and phonographs. In his early teens he worked for the Columbia Record Company, with whom his father did business as a dealer. In 1926, after establishing a catalogue of black and white recorded material for the Okeh label, he became employed by the Victor label, who were

3) Ibid., p.98

4) Victor had earlier recorded rural musicians but "... their corporate image held back follow-up after April, 1923 release." Ibid., p.98.

5) R.C. Foreman, Jazz and Blues Records 1920-1932, Ph.D. Thesis (Urbana University of Illinois 1968) pp.150-153. The incident was also included in a short article in the Atlanta Journal, June 15, 1923.

struggling for a share of the market of black music.⁶⁾

When Columbia began recording this blues genre, the company hired a white impressario, Frank Walker, who, unlike Peer, had a fondness for both black and white music. Brunswick and Vocalion began by placing a former Columbia employee, Jack Kapp, in charge of their Race Record Division. Eight years later, in 1934, Kapp was put in charge of the newly formed Decca label. To locate and record black artists, Kapp hired Mayo Williams as talent scout⁷⁾, and both were fortunate to employ pianist Roosevelt Sykes who made suggestions and judgements about musicians with whom he came into contact. Williams was one of the few black members of the music industry who did not perform. He began his career as the recording manager for Paramount in Chicago and built up a very strong catalogue of black rural recordings, making it the most important company in the market in the pre-Depression period. In 1927, Williams embarked on his own Chicago-based record company, but lasted less than one year, when he was immediately hired as talent scout for Vocalion under Kapp. For the next seven years they built up an impressive catalogue of

6) Godrich and Dixon, Recording the Blues, (London, Studio Vista, 1970) p.43. Peer saw that competition in the classic blues market was hopeless for Victor, who were several years behind the other labels; therefore rural music was his only alternative. Kahn states that Victor were still afraid of damaging their public image by pursuing rural recordings. "... Peer informed them that they would not cost as much in technical quality as Caruso. They gave him \$60 to go to Bristol, Virginia; Charlotte, North Carolina; Savannah, Georgia." p.100.

7) Information concerning company employees from Godrich and Dixon, ibid.

of black music for the label and continued in the same vein for Decca.⁸⁾

These men, Peer, Walker, Kapp and Williams were directly involved with the industry. It was an involvement which provided them with a professional livelihood and as such, it remained their primary function. A secondary level of activity, vis-a-vis the industry, was established with the retail traders. They, more than anyone, kept a pulse on the music of a particular geographical region, and thus were able to provide the companies with material. In this respect there were two important agents for the discovery of rural music, each working in a different part of the South, both important stylistic regions.

Henry Speir was a white music store proprietor living and working in Jackson, Mississippi, who sent singers and musicians to studios in the north, and on occasion, was engaged in the recording itself. The full extent of his work was exemplary; in a twenty-year period he had delivered some of the finest Mississippi blues performers to every major recording location. Speir held no allegiance to any particular company or label, instead he "... sent artists everywhere, and tried to work with all companies, but ... probably did send the best artists to Grafton, Wisconsin - the Paramount Record Company ..."⁹⁾ He had a particularly

8) Williams also acted as a manager for some of the musicians he got recorded, though this appeared to be a minor role for him. In 1934 he managed two big selling artists, Amos Easton and Peetie Wheatstraw. He also managed Johnny Temple, by the fact that it ended in 1937. Godrich and Dixon, *ibid.*, pp.81-82. The authors do not indicate the kind of relationship or responsibilities, nor how long each lasted.

9) Gayle Dean Wardlow, "Legends of the Lost" from Back Woods Blues, ed. Simon Napier, (London, Blues Unlimited Publication, 1968,) p.26.

close working relationship with talent scout, Art Laibly.

John Baxter Long acted as a talent scout and artist and repertoire man, during the 1930s and 1940s, in the southeastern states, particularly North Carolina. He earned his living primarily as a manager of a chain-store in Kinston, North Carolina and later as the proprietor of his own store. In both cases, records and phonographs were part of his merchandise. He had a long association with ARC, and enjoyed very much the music he heard and sent to the studios.¹⁰⁾

One other figure of importance in the pre World War II period was Lester Melrose. From his birth in Olney, Illinois, he had had various store jobs before setting up, with his brother, a music store in South Chicago in 1922. He had early success in music publication, particularly with jazz music. In 1926 he sold his share of the business and began his career as an agent for the record companies.¹¹⁾ By 1930 he had become a recording director for ARC; in 1938 assumed the same role for RCA Victor's cheaper Bluebird label. Between March 1934 and February 1951 he had "... recorded at least 90 percent of all rhythm and blues talent for RCA Victor and Columbia records."¹²⁾ Melrose was primarily interested in his own music publishing business, "... promoting blues recording sessions seems to have been to enlarge the Wabash and Duchess Music catalogs he operated. In so doing, he became a powerful

10) Kip Lornell, "Living Blues Interview", Living Blues Publication XI.29, Chicago, J.B. Long, Sept.-Oct. 1976, p.13.

11) Arnold Shaw, Honkers and Shouters, (New York, Collier Books, 1978), p.24.

12) Mike Rowe, Chicago Breakdown (London, Eddison Press Ltd., 1973), p.17.

figure on the Chicago recording scene."¹³⁾

With the exception of Mayo Williams, the decisions taken by the companies as to who would or would not be recorded were all taken by white men. All but one of the companies were white financed¹⁴⁾, and a hierarchical structure bringing music to the companies, developed. At the apex was the musical director who made the final decisions about releasing a product on the market, decisions based on years of experience. The director relied upon his own paid talent scouts to locate musicians and singers, and they in turn, decided who to select and which songs were worth recording. Further down, and in greater number, were the store proprietors and semi-professional scouts. This was at grass roots level, often the best position to realise the popularity of different kinds of music of their location. Their position was an important one; those companies who did little or no field recording relied upon their knowledge of local

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- 13) Bob Koester, Lester Melrose, An Appreciation from The American Folk Music Occasional, Chris Strachwitz and Pete Welding, eds., (New York, Oak Publications, 1970), p.59.
- 14) The Black Swan label was the only black-owned record company, set up by Henry Pace in 1921. Pace was once a partner of the W.C. Handy music publishing business. Pace's philosophy was to exploit the black American market: "There are 12,000,000 colored people in the U.S. and in that number there is hid a wonderful amount of musical ability. We propose to spare no expense in the search for and developing the best singers and musicians among the 12,000,000." His intention to record all manner of black vocal entertainment fell because of economics, and he had to rely on blues, particularly female vaudeville artists. He broke with his philosophy in April 1922, when he recorded white musicians. Godrich and Dixon, op.cit., pp.14-15.

musical demand to supply them with product.¹⁵⁾

The dichotomy in decision making was between personal choice based upon individual taste and acting purely from business instinct, where taste left no impression or where none was needed. Judgement combined quality of performance with commercial possibilities, though at times, and particularly at the close of the period, in Chicago, commerce overruled performance integrity.

The kinds of relationship each level held with companies differed, for a number of reasons. It differed partly because those at, or near to, the top, were paid specifically to search out product to stimulate sales. Those lower down relied on another source of income and had a much freer and less exhausting time, where talent searching was more often left to chance and luck and not dictated to by pressure of work. Some, to their credit, were very industrious and devoted a great deal of time to their interest, one not always motivated by financial gain, although it was always awarded for their efforts. Success established informal relationships between company employees and field agents, which developed into a network of contacts and feedback and thereby issued confidence and credibility in the potential of new material. In turn, the field agents quickly learned what companies required and would accept. This fact gave them some recognition and respect in their particular locations.

15) Arnold Shaw cites two examples: Jesse Stone, a St. Louis music store proprietor who also acted as talent scout for Okeh Records, suggested Lonnie Johnson, after winning a singing contest at the Booker T. Washington Theatre. In 1929 pianist Roosevelt Sykes was discovered by the owner of the Deluxe music shop in New Orleans on whose piano Sykes often played. Arnold Shaw, op.cit., p.14.

It also gave them some degree of power which aspiring recording artists were subject to.

Equally varied were the relationships between performers and talent agents. At the local level it was much closer and more informal, often quite casual and not well defined. Interest and motivation overlapped, with certain precedents giving impetus to recording activity. Melrose in particular was especially concerned about his publishing house which would benefit by the musicians of his choice, as recording director, recording those songs his house held copyright for. Informality often affected a managerial type relationship with concern over material in its pre-recorded state. This was particularly evident in the Southern regions. In the North, however, company employees took on a quasi-managerial responsibility to certain recording performers which committed them to the respective label.

At first companies had no idea where and what to record. Peer took the advice of Brockman and sent down two engineers, Charles Hibbard and Pete Decker, from New York, with newly designed recording equipment. Field trips, however, were never undertaken for one particular music; blues, religious songs, sermons, white rural music, novelty pieces, and songs of the various ethnic groups made up the repertoire of master recordings.

Recording managers found their performers and material in a number of ways, but they all basically followed the same pattern. Brockman organised the search and recording schedule. With the first southern recording he relied upon the advice of local record dealers who "... knew what Brockman wanted. He would rent an empty room or vacant warehouse, audition the

people privately and arrange for his choice to be recorded at some other central place, sometimes as much as several months later."¹⁶⁾

His employer, Peer, exercised a number of other strategies to locate material, relying heavily on interested parties: local record dealers and wholesalers; the advice of previously recorded performers; radio station employees; and advertising in the local press. Advertising journalism became quite an effective medium, used by all the companies.¹⁷⁾

Frank Walker did virtually the same, relying on advertising before arrival, to stimulate interest, besides following up information given by musicians to whom he often gave credit. Auditions took place, and then selection, followed by recording. Walker preferred an informal atmosphere, reasoning that a better atmosphere was conducive to better recordings.¹⁸⁾ Recording units travelled around the southern states for two or three months at a time. One point Walker was ever at pains to minimise was any kind of racial intermix during sessions.

The bulk of the music and performers was found by the local agents and scouts, particularly before the mid-1930s, after which the small group of Chicago based musicians

16) Edward A. Kahn, op.cit., p.100.

17) An article from the Bristol News Bulletin headed "Mountain Songs Recorded Here By Victor Co.", told of the payments made to hillbilly singer, E. 'Pop' Stoneman. Stoneman had been offered \$100 for each day of recording whilst his accompanists received \$25. The story acted as a catalyst in the surrounding region and the event attracted many others. Ibid, p.102.

18) R.C. Foreman, op.cit., pp.161-162.

became prominent. J.B. Long's first involvement was actually with white musicians but his description throws light on his method:

"Well, anyway, the farmer was in a hurry to go back home after he sold his tobacco, and his wife tried to shop for the family. He'd always tell her to hurry up. Well, I got this old phonograph out and began to pile a few records in. They sat over there and their wives'd come and they'd say, "Come on, let's go". And he was listening to the record business there - a few records we had. So from that basis on I ordered a few records and they began to buy 'em and sell 'em there. Everybody thought that the radios'd kill the record business, but I satisfied so many people that I went ahead and ordered more and more.

And of course the big deal was that Lumberton Wreck, when the farmers were going to Lumberton to sell tobacco from Seven Springs. ... We had so many requests for 'Lumberton Wreck'. I notified all the record companies I could think of and know of and none of 'em had ever heard of it. So therefore I was sellin' so many records down there in Kinston and the American Record Company said they would be glad to record the song if I could find somebody that would make it. And so I decided then to pull a fiddler's convention and let 'em see who would be the best and then give 'em the song." (19)

In 1935 he was sent to manage another store in Durham, North Carolina, where he continued his interest in music and his search for musicians. His efforts to secure trading with the local farmers led him to a black blind singer/guitarist, Blind Boy Fuller, with whom a special and model relationship developed. Long's initial response was positive, "... he could sing ... I told him, I said, 'I'm down here at the United Dollar Store - departmental store. Come by and see me. I want to talk to you. You've got a pretty good voice and I'd like to talk to you about going in making records if you can do it.'"²⁰⁾

Long's interest went further and a working relationship developed which involved many other musicians. Having decided

19) Kip Lornell, op.cit., p.13.

20) Ibid., p.14.

the potential of a find he made contact with a recording company. For his first session in New York for ARC, he made sure he had enough musicians and songs to justify the journey north. He "... wrote in and told 'em I believe I had some talent that they could use and what it was."²¹⁾ His success acted as a nucleus to the surrounding region of blues performers. Auditions were few; singer and guitar player Brownie McGhee, simply walked into Long's store on heresay. "He ... told me that he had heard I could get him on the record company. I said, 'Well, I'll hear you', and he and his harmonica player, we went back in the back. I had a machine back there in the back and he played me 'Me and My Dog'. That sold me. He played three or so more and so I made it."²²⁾ His success strengthened his relationship with ARC such that "... whoever I'd recommend, they'd take ... they did that on that basis of what I'd say."²³⁾

Long never fully explained his assessment of a good performer or performance, nor the requirements of the companies. He was certainly more interested in what he considered to be a good voice than any musical accompaniment. His interest and encouragement for Fuller was because of Fuller's voice, "... somebody else could always play a guitar with him [i.e. of equal skill] but he can't sing. Half the guitar players can't sing."²⁴⁾ His only specific reference to voice

21) Ibid., p.14

22) Ibid., pp.14-15.

23) Ibid., p.19.

24) Ibid., p.18.

quality, although vague, was to the Reverend Gary Davis, "... he had a strain in it."²⁵⁾ Yet when the situation merited it, Long had the insight to match singer and musician, who in combination, would each "... make the other one come out ..."²⁶⁾

Long took great care that the musicians and performers had a repertoire, that they knew their songs and were well rehearsed. He wrote down the stanzas as a memory aid, and, at times, whispered lyrics to blind performers. Before an ARC session in New York for Blind Boy Fuller, Long rehearsed by "... writin' and talkin' to him. I'd get him to sing it and I'd put down No. 1, 2, 3, 4 [stanza order] you see, and then when the lights was gettin' ready to go off, you'd have to hold him like that - the tighter you'd hold him, so he'd know that was time to end it up."²⁷⁾ His extraordinary concern for the performers went to lengths of personal responsibility for delivery to studios, wherever they were located, even devoting his vacation periods, when his wife would take care of the store. His wife also involved herself with the performers; "... she got interested in 'em because when I brought 'em out here and she'd feed 'em, you know, and I'd make 'em practice and get ready to go and I got my outline of 'em."²⁸⁾

All this extra-musical welfare was nurtured by a strong belief in the value of the performers, reflected in the mutual

25) Ibid., pp.14-15. Long did not hesitate to dismiss those he felt were inferior, as in the case of two singers, Willie Trice and Floyd Council, who "... just didn't have it ... didn't have the expression ...". although they were recorded under different circumstances. Ibid., p.19.

26) Ibid., p.15.

27) Ibid., p.14.

28) Ibid., p.17.

respect held by performers who seldom gainsaid his instruction and recommendations, particularly his belief in the benefit of incessant practice and fresh ideas. Writing to ARC about Fuller he decided that "... this blues singer knew all the songs that everybody has, but if he could just get some new ones why he'd be one of the best singers that I believe they had on the market. And it took him about four months, maybe six months workin' before he really got to where I thought he was ready."²⁹⁾

Long's overall attitude was a combination of belief in, and commitment to, a performer, with his entrepreneurial inclination and business acumen - a mixture which he never selfishly exploited. He was never myopic in his dealings with performers and record companies, particularly when he saw prospects at any opportunity his advice was always to "... put on a good performance - a lot of these talent scouts are there."³⁰⁾

The informality of his relationships bore witness to trust which played down any managerial formality. He never produced contracts and informed companies that "... they had no authority to sign ... up ...",³¹⁾ which they did not challenge. Performers in their turn saw him as a kind of benefactor, socially and financially, though Long lent out money on the basis of future recordings. On a number of

29) Ibid., p.16.

30) Ibid., p.15.

31) Ibid., p.16.

occasions he acted as guarantor for those indicted for murder.³²⁾

What benefits did Long enjoy? He was a white Southerner and very fond of music, though never able to perform. His taste was catholic, able to absorb the different kinds of musical offerings of black and white, secular and religious, groups, in rural North Carolina, where he lived and worked all his life. He was also a business man, but unable to realise the opportunity of belonging professionally to any recording company, denying him his private ambition "... to have had four or five states, three or four states down South to do Scout work. And on the pay roll. ... I didn't know there was that much music in it, the field then, you see."³³⁾ Selling records was a part of his livelihood, sharing in the production, his interest. He realised the potential of recordings and his recruiting ability, with his personal taste, almost always guaranteed product. Pecuniary reward was small, for all his endeavours, though he managed to secure some money from copyright of recorded songs. He always insisted on non-ownership of songs and ignorance of the legal aspects of copyright lost him benefits which were duly his. Nevertheless, Long received the occasional sum from companies in gratitude of success; "... Two or three times, I got fairly good-size what you call bonus checks that way.... I got in two or three years on the stuff ... because when its dead [the song], its dead."³⁴⁾ Expenses, plus a little extra

32) Ibid., pp. 17 and 21.

33) Ibid., p.22.

34) Ibid., p.19.

were always given, averaging \$250 - 300.

Henry Speir was more dynamic and enterprising but did not equal the trust nor found as great a friendship with performers he found. He certainly had business connections with the major recording managers in the North, who accepted all his suggestions. Speir was much more organised in his searchings. On a specific visit, or checking a rumour, he would drive hundreds of miles to listen to performers. If impressed he would give encouragement and forward promises: "You sound pretty good. You know, I make records; if you keep practising and get your songs real good and come to Jackson in a couple of days, I see that you get recorded."³⁵⁾ Speir often ran tests on equipment he kept in his own home, which were later sent North. Otherwise he would drive musicians to recording sessions personally. He worked closely with a chain of local talent scouts throughout the Southern states, when for a number of years he ran a special train from Fort Worth in Texas, to New York, collecting performers along the way.³⁶⁾

Some of the performers Speir knew were often a source of information which gave results. One of his favourite discoveries, Skip James, described Speir's method of handling incumbents, 1931:

"... he heard of me playin' pretty good and he sent for me. I went and responded to his request, and so he asked me to play a piece or two for him. I played a piece - he said, well he was gonna have a contest tomorrow - "We've lots of musicians here, and we want to try to get

35) Gayle Dean Wardlow, "Legends of the Lost", from Back Woods Blues, ed., Simon A. Napier (London, Blues Unlimited Publications, 1968), p.26.

36) Ibid., pp.27-28.

some records made and how about signin' a contract to record that song?

He said, 'Have you recorded any?' ... I say I didn't think I was eligible or qualified enough. He said, 'Oh, I think so Come around here tomorrow and you'll go through examination'. So I went. Quite a few were there, and the first piece I played, he stopped me. I played about two verses of that song and he stopped me. He said, 'I think you made a pretty good hit, Skip. ... How about signin' a contract. ... Where you wants to go on to make these records?' I said, 'Where is your company ... your establishment?' He said, 'Grafton, Mississippi. ... How about goin' up there?' I said 'I don't care.' He said 'Well can you sign a contract for two years?' I told him 'Yeah'. He said, 'Well, we'll get ready then. Come by tomorrow, we'll sign a contract and everything - we'll get ready'." (37)

Speir would be paid for expenses and often remained on hand during the actual recording, although no details of his involvement are available.

Arthur Sotherby with whom Speir and Long both worked was employed as a talent scout for Columbia and Paramount, travelling throughout the South from 1925, to search for black and white material. Born the son of an Episcopalian minister in Bristol, England, he settled in America close to Port Washington home of the Wisconsin Chair Company,³⁸⁾ with whom he was employed for a number of years. Sotherby learnt his business from the bottom, beginning as a record wholesaler in various states, and finding dealers for the new label, particularly in the North. He was then placed in charge of Paramount's New York studios, when in 1929 he left to join the QRS label. His last employment until 1952 was with the Plaza Music Company, one of the companies which

37) Richard Spotswood, "Skip James Talkin'" from Nothing But the Blues, (London, Hanover Books Ltd., 1971) p.233.

38) Bill C. Malone, Country Music USA, Austin, University of Texas Press, for the American Folklore Society, 1968, p.178.

merged into ARC. In this role he assumed responsibility for many recordings, some he actually supervised. He certainly took the decision for acceptance or rejection of recommendations offered by his talent scouts, and the final marketing policies were his.³⁹⁾

Before acting as talent scout for Okeh, Polk Brockman worked in the phonograph department of his father's furniture store in Atlanta. By 1921 it outstripped the rest of the store and became Okeh's largest retail outlet, with branches in Richmond, Cincinnati, New Orleans, Memphis and Dallas. Brockman's interest was purely financial; the music meant little to him.⁴⁰⁾ Material was found in a number of ways: weekly attendance at Atlanta's main black theatre and churches; and approaching street musicians directly. He never met with refusal and always carried out test recordings freely. If any contract was signed, it was for a fixed sum of money and no royalties. Supervision of sessions was one of his roles although Brockman discouraged drinking in the studio, a policy almost unique to him. Performers were usually given free reign but when he felt it necessary, Brockman was "... not above putting words in their mouths on occasion."⁴¹⁾

Lester Melrose operated in Chicago, the largest recording centre, where he searched for material himself,

39) Bruce Bastin and John Carley, "Uncle Art's Logbook Blues", Blues Unlimited, (London, Blues Unlimited Publications, June-July, 1974), pp.12, 13.

40) Roger S. Brown, "Recording Pioneer Polk Brockman", Living Blues (Chicago, Living Blues Publication No.23., September-October, 1975), p.31.

41) Ibid., p.31.

or received direct requests for specific performers he was acquainted with. This was particularly so of ARC. He worked hard in his endeavours, systematically visiting clubs, taverns and booze joints, exploiting the end of Prohibition to great advantage: "... in February of 1934, taverns were opening up and nearly all of them had juke-boxes for entertainment."⁴²⁾ He occasionally journeyed South despite the chagrin of plantation owners who mistrusted his objectives and caused him endless problems. The owners were aware of the fact that the farm workers often refused to return to the plantation life, after experiencing life in the northern cities.⁴³⁾ He realised the need for recorded music to fill consumer demand and initiated commercial dealings with the two largest companies, RCA Victor and Columbia. To test their response he issued a proposal that he could provide "... certain blues talent ready to record and that I could locate any amount of rhythm-and-blues talent to meet their demands"⁴⁴⁾ The response was immediate and positive.

Melrose's commercial instinct strongly influenced his handling of musicians and recording sessions. When he selected songs to records he had only "... one thought in mind: the public."⁴⁵⁾ Yet his ignorance of the performance process provided him with his greatest difficulty, because he mistook each recorded take as a mistaken recording, not

42) Lester Melrose, "My Life in Recording" from The Folk Music Occasional, eds., Chris Strachwitz and Pete Welding. (New York, Oak Publications, 1970), p.60.

43) Pianist, Roosevelt Sykes made similar observations; Conversation with the Blues, by Paul Oliver (London, Jazz Book Club, 1967), p.15.

44) Lester Melrose, op.cit., p.61.

45) Ibid., p.61.

realising that each performance was an individual song [see last chapter]. His solution was to record a song at least four times and then to select what he considered the best verses before recording his final production, altering lyrics if he felt it necessary. His explanation was that "... that's the way I done and that's the way the rest of them done ... nobody perfect ..."46)

Much of the blues scene in pre-war Chicago was in the hands of Melrose, and he had considerable sway over many musicians and recording sessions. In fact, he organised a close-knit group to record on each other's recordings, going as far as paying rent for one of the most popular performers, Tampa Red thereby guaranteeing a permanent rehearsal place⁴⁷⁾. It was so tightly bound that Melrose was able to bring together a unit for a recording session within thirty minutes.

An element of sheer luck brought recording fame to quite a number of performers, though it appears likely, for the more remarkable ones, that it would have been simply a matter of time through systematic search or supplied information. The famous pre-Depression performer Blind Lemon Jefferson was recommended by a music store employee, and part-time musician, of a Dallas store to Mayo Williams in the Chicago Paramount studios in 1925.⁴⁸⁾ Five years later, singer/guitarist Booker White was seen carrying a guitar along a road, when he was requested to perform a song by a furniture store owner, Ralph Lembo, in Itta Bena, Mississippi. On the

46) Mike Leadbitter, "Big Boy Crudup", from Blues Unlimited, Nr. 75., (London, Blues Unlimited Publications, 1970) p.17.

47) Jim and Amy O'Neal, "Eddie Boyd Interview", from Living Blues No.36., (Chicago, Living Blues Publication, January-February, 1978), p.17.

48) Robert M.W. Dixon and J. Godrich, Recording the Blues, (London, Studio Vista, 1970), p.34.

strength of the song, White was offered a recording session and payment of \$800 for eight songs.⁴⁹⁾ Memphis Minnie was heard outside a barbershop in Memphis by a Columbia talent scout.⁵⁰⁾ And the gifted Robert Johnson was introduced to ARC recording engineer Don Law by a company salesman, Ernie Oerthe.⁵¹⁾ On occasion, the desire to record was strong enough to make personal requests for audition. Big Bill Broonzy eventually made his debut in 1926 for Paramount after persistent requests; the recordings, however, remained unissued.⁵²⁾

Speir, Long and Melrose carried out the bulk of their work in the post-Depression period, keeping basically to their respective regions - Mississippi, the South-East, and Chicago. Their relationships with the performers they discovered was of a much longer-lasting kind than occurred between Peer, Walker, the myriad of talent scouts and their discoveries. Peer and Walker, in contrast worked in the pre-Depression period and tended to record in the field more than occurred later.

49) David Evans, "Booker White". from Nothing But the Blues, ed. Mike Leadsitter, (London, Hanover Books, 1971), p.250. White recorded nine sides for Victor in Memphis, three were issued and he received \$240.

50) Arnold Shaw, op.cit., p.23.

51) Paul Oliver, The Story of the Blues, (Harmondsworth, Penguin Books Ltd., 1972), p.119.

52) Arnold Shaw, op.cit., p.23. Presumably the numerous talent scouts received some benefit for their efforts although no evidence reveals what kind. If a distributor "... would agree to take five thousand copies of the record ... the company [Victor] would record almost anybody." For Victor that was the minimum cost effective. Samuel B. Charters, The Country Blues, (London, Michael Joseph, 1959), p.71.

Time was an important factor between the two. Speir, Long and Melrose had the opportunity to develop a potential performer to fill the requirements of the industry, by then well established. For those starting at recordings and travelling South, meetings were brief and relationships could not be developed. Decisions following audition needed to be fast. Each recording unit spent a minimum amount of time at their stop-offs and much was recorded to justify expense and account for selection processes back at the studio headquarters. Methods in urbanised areas of the South showed no great difference to those of the North - clubs, taverns, street performances were all systematically sifted and the ubiquitous need for new discovery, fresh product. Even in small townships and rural parts the social/cultural requirements for entertainment provided ready outlets for performers to be sought out, although as Ralph Peer's efforts demonstrated quickly, the attraction that recording had acted as a magnet for potential recording talent.

CHAPTER III

What the Industry Required

The needs of the industry were invariably linked to the ways the music was discovered and marketed. This dictated the selection process both before and after recording. Whatever the time taken for the initial cutting of the disc, the finished product was never beyond the three to three-and-a-half minute threshold.¹⁾ That was of fundamental importance, originating out of the technical limitations of the cutting process. With the rise of the juke-box industry [see Chapter V] the time factor lessened considerably, to less than two minutes, so as to extract the highest possible financial return from a single recording. The necessity for such a short period greatly influenced stylistic changes to the music, and in the

1) Booker White explained recording procedure of "... just three minutes, and they had those lights to go on when you was to start, and a blue light which goes on when you know you've got to finish.", from Dick Flohil, "Bukka T. White, The Man from Mississippi", CODA, Vol.8 Nr. 11, (Toronto, January-February, 1969), p.4.

event of a song over-stepping the time limit, recording simply stopped at an appropriate point.

Commercial necessity stressed the need for "... four different original songs. By 'original' it was meant that none of the singer's four songs could show the influence of anything recorded or published previously. ... By the 'different' the companies meant that the singer could not duplicate any lyrics or musical figures in his songs."²⁾ This concept totally misunderstood the blues composition/performance process, particularly before recording was established; then again it was never strictly adhered to. When the industry had in its grasp a hierarchy of recording artists there developed a group of 'star' talent and it found that it had on its hands, performers quite able to produce much more than the required four songs. A consciousness arose within the companies which they wanted to exploit, and which brought about a new set of requirements to further influence succeeding recording needs. Thus, by the late 1920s, the companies "... had a desire to come up with new popular hits, rather than copies of older songs, for the latter rarely sold as well as original versions."³⁾ Considering the limited structure of the blues form, it meant a considerable undertaking, one which the industry seldom found successful.

In 1928, when Tampa Red and Georgia Tom had a success with their song "It's Tight Like That", the song was recorded by the two in a number of other versions to capitalise

2) David Evans, "Folk, Commercial and Folkloristic Aesthetics in the Blues", from Jazz Research/Jazz Forschung, III, (Graz, 1969), p.18.

3) Ibid., p.18.

on the first success⁴⁾; other companies also recorded their version of the song. Thus Lonnie Johnson with Spencer Williams recorded a version titled, "It Feels So Good"; The Mississippi Sheiks recorded theirs as, "Loose Like That".⁵⁾ A similar situation occurred with the Leroy Carr/Scrapper Blackwell recording of "How Long How Long" in the same year. Therefore, the concept of originality was in practical terms very flexible, adapting itself quite readily to commercial pressure. By altering the original wording the companies could satisfy the copyright laws and publish the songs themselves, eliminating royalty payments to the original 'composers'. And they held control of ownership of a number of key blues recordings all associated with particular performers, all of some stature, which could, and were, copied to fill a consumer demand, although the tendency was to over-saturate the market.

The over-riding and conscious need for new material

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- 4) Two unissued recordings of "How Long How Long Blues" by Carr/Blackwell were made in November 1928. The next month, two more - number 2 and part 3 were issued. The number 2 and the very first recording were issued as a single disc on the Banner, Oriole, Perfect and Romeo labels. In August, 1929, The New How Long How Long Blues was recorded, followed by part 2 in January 1931. In January, 1929, Tampa Red recorded as a single both It's Tight Like That and How Long How Long Blues as guitar solos, the last, in fact, of the recordings of the songs. Two months after the first success, It's Tight Like That was recorded by Tampa Red's Hokum Jug Band, with pno, kazoo, jug, washboard accompaniment. In January, 1929, Red recorded a solo version of the song, number 3, as well as another accompanied by Georgia Tom, number 2. Thus in five months, five different recordings of the song were marketed.
- 5) The song was also recorded by Clara Smith, Jimmy Noone and His Apex Club Orchestra, and McKinney's Cotton Pickers.

by the companies made heavy demands upon performers. Booker White, who in Chicago 1937 had a recording session with Vocalion, had such problems with the recording manager liking his voice but not his repertoire. They were considered old fashioned. White was provided with a meal ticket and a room for two weeks and requested to "... make up some original songs ... and came up with "Pinebuff, Arkansas", and "Shake 'Em On Down."⁶⁾ Sam Chatman suffered similar experiences, for the Okeh label in 1930 in San Antonio, Texas. With a number of other musicians in a studio set up in a hotel: "They didn't tell you what to sing and you never sang the same thing twice. Sometimes they tell you to make up a song about a table or something and you had to find the words to fit."⁷⁾

Of course, some performers needed no guidance from companies; "... many of these records that they made then, they didn't prepare. Some folks go in for audition, they sound so good, they said, 'Well, let's make the record now. We may not get 'em back.'"⁸⁾ Thus the fortunes of recording depended to some degree on luck, in a very hit or miss manner. For the industry it was an attitude of sheer naivety and great maleability, which in the pre-Depression period resulted in a high standard of marketed recordings. But it was,

6) David Evans, "Booker White", from Nothing But The Blues, (London, Hanover Books Ltd., 1971) p.250.

7) Robert Javors, "Sam Chatman", from Sing Out, Vol.26, Nr.1. (New York, Sing Out Incorporated, 1977) p.11. Chatham describes the studio "... locked tight. All the equipment was in the room and there was three lights above the door ... when the green one went on, you sang."

8) Jim and Amy O'Neal, "Georgia Tom Dorsey", from Living Blues, Nr.20, (Chicago, Living Blues Publication, March-April, 1975) p.21.

nevertheless, a new kind of music with much to offer the market, despite its maturity within the black communities.

The companies were quick to capitalise on the talents of some of the performers. Blind Blake and Lonnie Johnson were early accompanists employed regularly, Johnson often touring with recording units throughout the South. Thomas Dorsey, before his religious conversion, held a number of roles including making up and arranging tunes for others: "A guy'd come in with a song, and he'd sing it. He had nobody to arrange it, and put it on paper. So I put it on paper ... then the company would copyright it, see ..."⁹⁾

The hierarchy of recording talent held benefits for the industry, but eventually imposed a number of problems for performers of lesser talent, and benefits were fewer. The companies "... didn't pay you very much unless you were a real recording star ... that's where the money was. [For] little guys like us the money wasn't there ..."¹⁰⁾ By the time of the second recording peak, in the mid 1930s, companies were much less enthusiastic to search out new talent; their dependence upon the established recording performers was such that they had sown the seeds for their own downfall. By 1938, Henry Speir saw it as "... worst of all for new talent, the record companies just didn't want any more new talent for records."¹¹⁾

Innovation was a conscious manifestation of institutionalised entertainments industry yet when companies felt the need

9) Ibid., p.23.

10) Mike Rowe, "Joe Dean from Bowling Green", from Blues Unlimited, Nr. 127. (London, Blues Unlimited Publications, November-December, 1977), p.6.

11) Gayle Dean Wardlow, op.cit., p.27.

for market exploitation it foregoed that need. In 1928, T.G. Rockwell, director of recording for Okeh, sent a letter to Mississippi performer, John Hurt, dated November 8, concerning a number of recordings carried out previously, and the possibility of further recordings:

"We have been trying to get a hold of you for some time in order that we might make arrangements for you to come to New York for some recordings. ... If it is possible for you to make arrangements to get away from Avalon for a week and come to New York for recording, we will pay you \$20.00 per accepted selection and all your expenses to New York and return, for this week.

We would like to have you get together about eight selections at least four of them to be old time tunes, ... There are a great many tunes like these that are known throughout the South. We have written to Mr. Hughes Smith, Manager of the James R. Polk Inc., 3rd Floor of the McCall building, Memphis, Tenn., regarding you and if you will call on him he will buy you a ticket and give you some expense money to come to New York. ... I am sure that you will enjoy the trip and we will see that you are well taken care of when you are here." (12)

Thus in the period of the emerging emphasis of Chicago-based recordings, of the multi-copying of "It's Tight Like That" and "How Long How Long", fresh material was not the principle requirement. Rockwell wanted familiar songs and fresh material to market throughout the South, exploiting a gap between the Northern/Southern market regions.

Whilst the 'star' system developed out of the discovery of the talented with much more than the ubiquitous four recordings, there were many, the majority, who recorded one or two songs and never returned to the studio, else they recorded a number of songs, each for a number of years. Columbia's policy for field trips was one of amassing "... as extensive an inventory of master recordings as the recording team found possible."¹³⁾ Two hundred was the minimum and as, "... many

12) Dick Spotswood: "Mississippi John Hurt" from Nothing But the Blues, ed. Mike Leadbitter (London, Hanover Books Ltd., 1971), pp.245-6.

13) R.C. Foreman, op.cit., p.161.

performers ... were recorded during the tours as judgement of their promise and limitations of time or other necessities permitted."¹⁴⁾ Initial assessments were to be re-assessed in the main studios in the North, where judgement was made, based on recordings and not actual live performance audition.

The erratic recording pattern was not really controlled until the mid-1930s. But performers had equally erratic recording habits, going from one label to another and getting marketed under a host of names.¹⁵⁾ This was a common practice making a free-for-all situation and rationalisation through the issuance of a contract to one label became the policy by the end of the decade. Some order, of course, did occur and a number of performers remained loyal to one label.

Until 1926 almost all blues recording was of a small number, certainly not more than the four. The exception was made by Gennett in 1924, with six songs by 'Stovepipe N.1', May 16, and nine songs by 'Whistler and His Jug Band' in September 25, both sessions carried out at Richmond. Paramount, in 1924, found what was to be the first of the big name performers, Papa Charlie Jackson, really showman, whose repertoire included blues. Jackson was also the first major to wander from label to label. Two years later the company had the fortune of having two formidable Southern performers: Blind Blake and Blind Lemon Jefferson, on its lists. It was beginning to grow confident in its

14) Ibid., p.161.

15) Amos Easton, for example, recorded in 1934, 48 songs for four labels; in 1935 it increased to 65 songs for five labels.

efforts at recording and did so in higher numbers now that there were performers able to supply enough material. Okeh had found Lonnie Johnson in 1925 and though Johnson had a long recording career well into the post-war period¹⁶⁾ he did not record as intensely within the same period, nor was his repertoire limited to blues. In 1926 these three were recording sessions of eight songs, a commercial breakthrough. And what made Blake and Jefferson exceptional was their loyalty to Paramount. But for one occasion by Jefferson¹⁷⁾, their entire recorded repertoire was on the one label. Jefferson died in 1930 and Blake's career ended with Paramount's bankruptcy, although it was, by then, a time of transition for the music and Blake would have been considered an unmarketable product. As it was he was recording very little in the last three years. Johnson was just as loyal with Okeh, but after its takeover by Columbia, both labels marketed his product.

Until the Depression, ten recordings per session, excluding the number of different takes, was average for the established names. For the others who appeared once or a number of years, it was a combination of what they could offer and what was accepted. The single exception was an unprecedented seventeen, all issued, by Skip James, for Paramount in February, 1931, at Grafton.

The principal effect upon recording policy, brought on by the Depression, was delivered in a memorandum on June 16

16) It stretched up to 1963 but only 26 years did he actually record, the longest, shared with Roosevelt Sykes

17) In 1927 Okeh recorded eight songs by Jefferson, only two were issued.

1931, by Raymond R. Sooy, chief recording engineer for Victor: "Starting until date, only one wax to be processed ..."¹⁸⁾ Victor's performance was the least effective of the whole industry, averaging only half of what the others were doing, often only taking two takes per recording. The 1931 decision by Sooy did little to increase productivity. A further economy drive for the engineers was sent in instructions to "... make maximum use of the studio facilities and their own time."¹⁹⁾ It was a policy that both Decca and Columbia practised - in 1934 as soon as Decca began, and in 1938 with Columbia. Not only did this matter change policy for studio efficiency, companies drove to record as much as possible for each day of recording, and to increase the average per performer. Now, six and eight recordings per session was considered low for the established performers. In 1938 and 1939 Bluebird recorded eighteen songs in a single session by Bo Chatman in San Antonio, and Water Davis in Chicago. This was the zenith for pre-war recording efficiency. Victor now had an efficient recording pattern for its northern studios, restricting it to basically three times a year spread evenly, until in 1941 when the musicians union threatened strike action, it stockpiled recordings in panic. Consolidated Film recorded basically all year round, though it slowed down when CBS bought the group of labels. Decca worked hard, in need of a market, until it became interested

18) R.M.W. Dixon and J. Godrich, Recording the Blues, (London, Studio Vista, 1970) p.76.

19) Ibid., p.77.

in white popular music.

The chain-store/mail-order labels only needed product. They sold established names, seldom including an unknown. Montgomery Ward sold Walter Davis product mainly, less of Leroy Carr, Big Bill Broonzy, Jazz Gillum, Lonnie Johnson and Curtis Jones, all of whom did better with the Conqueror label. Broonzy was the most popular with all the cheap labels. Memphis Minnie, Tampa Red and Buddy Moss were all used heavily by Consolidated Films' stable of labels. The overall pattern of stability in the pre-Depression period was principally in the hands of the major labels controlling the market with a product of quite remarkable company loyalty by performers, but also a reciprocal loyalty and belief in material recorded by the industry to which it had recourse to return. Vocalion changed the whole face of recorded blues with its 1928 Blackwell/Carr, Red/Dorsey recordings. Vocalion pioneered the new trend in blues recording because it shifted the focus away from the rural solo performer, physically a part of the South. They brought together musicians who worked in Northern taverns, who were part of the northern entertainment milieu and who had very little to do with the rural South. From now the northern climate dominated recording and composition. The major labels stayed close to all their early discoveries, for almost five years. Paramount were content with their stable of Blind Blake, Blind Lemon Jefferson, and Papa Charlie Jackson, Okeh with Lonnie Johnson and Texas Alexander. Columbia had basically material from the Atlanta region particularly Curley Weaver, Charlie Lincoln, Walter Rhodes, Robert Hicks, and Peg Leg Howell. Victor held their

mainstay in the Memphis area with the Memphis Jug Band and its individuals recording separately.

The success of Vocalion's 1928 recordings pioneered a change of emphasis in the geography and milieu of recorded material, without neglecting the market's previous offerings. The new music came out of the Northern clubs and bars, all centred around Chicago. Vocalion continued with Carr and Red for the next five years, when it was bought by Consolidated Films. The following year Carr died and Red moved to Victor's Bluebird label, remaining until 1941. In 1930, Vocalion discovered a number of new faces which added to their stability - Peetie Wheatstraw from East St. Louis, Memphis Minnie and Joe McCoy from Memphis, and Charley Jordan. All these performers came under the wing of Jack Kapp, who, when given Decca's black music programme, took Minnie, McCoy and Jordan with him. Decca's speedy rise was partly due to the market penetration of these and other performers, including Kokomo Arnold, Amos Easton, Bill Gaither, John Estes, Roosevelt Sykes and Johnny Temple. Columbia with its post-Depression decline continued with its Atlanta based performers, adding Blind Willie McTell, who remained for three years then began wandering the labels.

RCA Victor's Bluebird label acted in the mid-thirties as Vocalion did in the late-twenties. It succeeded in releasing a new kind of recorded music, again of the bar and club milieu of the North, particularly Chicago. With most of the recordings of the post-Depression taking place in Chicago, Bluebird virtually controlled the market by the late-thirties, the only other competition, albeit at a much lower activity, coming from Decca and Okeh. Thus it is of

no great surprise to learn that many performers who began their recording careers with Bluebird remained exclusively, whilst others who changed to Bluebird remained. A small number recorded rather erratically whilst Walter Davis, beginning with the parent company in 1930, Joe Williams, John Lee Williamson, Big Maceo, Jazz Gillum, Tommy McClennan and Arthur Condup, were all long time associates. Tampa Red, Lonnie Johnson and Washboard Sam ended up on Bluebird, with Sam becoming quite a popular figure on the recording scene. Almost all were based in Chicago, many performed on each other's recordings and often associated with Lester Melrose.

Of the four other functioning labels, Brunswick, Gennett, Champion, and ARC, only ARC had a number of performers who remained loyal, until CBS ended it, and their cheap labels - Big Bill Broonzy, Blind Boy Fuller and Buddy Moss. Moss ended recording in 1936 but Fuller and Broonzy stayed with the parent company having products released on Vocalion and later Okeh. Apart from recording Robert Wilkins and Walter Vincson in Memphis in 1929 and 1930, Brunswick, like the rest, showed no pattern in their recording policy, despite Gennett and Champion, recording some of the established names - Thomas Dorsey, Broonzy, Blackwell, John Estes, Amos Easton, Roosevelt Sykes. With the exception of Dorsey who was at his height in secular recording, soon to be converted, all the others were beginning their recording careers, and, with companies soon caught by the Depression. They then moved on to more secure labels and careers.

Marketing requirements deviated little from other kinds

of music recordings except that it involved specifically a black consumer, and was thus influenced by that single fact. (The implications of this are discussed in the final chapter). The program involved a "... straightforward sequence of services:"

Advertising materials identifying blocks of new record issues and singling out certain discs for special attention were put into dealers' hands against a date - monthly, semi-monthly, weekly - on which the new records went on sale and would be demonstrated for interested patrons. In advance of the effective date of new-recorded sales, the trade press was furnished with news and advertising copy. Keyed to issues to be featured or special appeals to be made. Advertisements in the daily and periodical press informed the public about new issues.

The offers and distribution of new-record issues, to consumers depended upon the depth and regularity of recording activity, the screening and evaluation of new recordings against cataloguing and manufacture, and the transport of such issues to demonstration and sales locations. For the hundreds of new recordings from which a patron might choose each month, the visual cues of banners, streamers, hangers, posters, photographs, window displays, and lantern slides for theater use were intended to lead to statements of preferences. Optimistically, the dealer might be instructed to produce a particular record or group of records for immediate purchase. At the least, the dealer sought the opportunity to demonstrate the new release. (20)

In 1920 Arthur Satherley saw the potential of advertising in prominent black newspapers for the Paramount label, especially for their Northern market.²¹⁾ General Phonograph was the only other company to employ advertising successfully beginning in 1922 and with imagination, careful to fulfill the needs of the black consumer as well as its own. It reinforced social understanding of blacks as a race, "...

20) R.C. Foreman, op.cit., pp.95-96.

21) Bruce Bastin and John Cawley, "Uncle Art's Log-Book Blues", from Blues Unlimited, Nr. 108, (London, June-July 1974), pp.12-13.

pictorial and textual materials presented on behalf of appeals to Negro consumers had constituted vital summarisations about the needs, interests, and sales of Negro citizens as the managers of production, advertising, and sales were willing to have them recorded."²²⁾ Columbia, a much larger company, was neither as creative nor imaginative; they relied simply on pictures, photographs or drawings, juxtaposed with lists of recordings.

This wide spectrum of advertising efficiency throughout the industry did not measure up to the thoroughness of record selling which sought every possible avenue. "... Saloon bars, barbershop parlours, drug stores, cigar stands and Negro business establishments of every description sold the records and the companies were ever advertising for more representatives. Discs could be bought from wandering vendors or through mail-order catalogues of big-shipping forms ..."²³⁾

Thus the market was wide open for exploitation, but the industry never effectively knew how to penetrate it from its headquarters. Real market movement came from grass roots level, just as the understanding of the needs of consumers.

22) R.C. Foreman, op.cit., p.205.

23) Paul Oliver, Blues Fell This Morning (London, Cassell and Company, 1960), p.3.

CHAPTER IV

The Music and the Musicians

The movement of the recording industry into the milieu of the performers and their music within communities, instigated transition, as each changed and developed from a pre-recorded state to a recorded one. It is important to consider the relationship between the performer and the musical performance, which includes the consumer or audience, and then identify the effects of industrial interaction. Of course, the developments were not all linear. The actual creation and recreation of the music, the performers and industry were all compelled to change, bring about change, and radically influence each other. These issues beg the question of definition - discussed in a later chapter - and an appraisal of aesthetic values and needs of each interacting component within the structure, in all its stages of emergence.

What, then, motivated the first male blues performers

to permanently fix their words and music in specific time and space, and, unknowingly, execute stylistic changes in a relatively short period of time? It took almost four decades for this rural context music to reach the recording studios by the early 1920s but only one-tenth of that time to reach its peak, once the genre became a marketable product in 1926. Two years later, an industrialised milieu, basically urban, with its idiosyncratic forms of institutionalised entertainment demanding and creating novelty, released products for the market at such a rate as to make previous music genres appear dated, and, emphasising the comparative sophistication of the urban north, socially unacceptable. Although the rural context genre existed alongside the urban context genre, recorded well into the late 1930s, it carried the stigma of a Southern attitude and life-style, which soon became anathema for acclimatised, physically and psychologically, northerners.

Initially, the actual recording experience would have been novel for both performer and music, yet the enterprise was not. With respect to the consumer, which includes performers themselves, the enterprise was well-established. Phonograph players and records were retailed in the urban and rural South, although the actual purchasing power of blacks is unknown. Black entertainers had acted as recording talent on cylinders, but the product was aimed principally at the white market, until the first recordings by Mamie Smith in 1920.¹⁾ These recordings established a black product for a black market, exclusively.

1) Michael Taft, Draft of "The Use of the Computer to Facilitate the Structural Analysis of Afro-American Blues Lyrics", presented to author; dated 1977, p.2.

Some of the earliest male recording performers worked in the medicine shows, circuses and travelling shows that formed a staple employment situation for the female classic blues singers.²⁾ Medicine shows were popular avenues of selling medicine, usually bogus, to rural populations about the turn of the century. The salesman used musicians and dancers to attract an audience after which he began to play on their interest. It was also an environment into which recorded songs formed part of their stage repertoire. Thus, whilst lifestyles and performance situations differed between musician/singer of either sex, the cultural setting, the phenomenon of recording and its impact upon audiences/consumers readily presented itself to the unrecorded blues performers. The recording proper was the next step.

Pre-war male blues performers, who did not embrace the jazz fraternity, never achieved the status of the female vaudeville singers, the best of whom outsold the males in recordings volume. Their recording careers, however, sustained a much shorter life-span. The social position within the black, and white, communities was outlined by the cultural role each held as an entertainer; for the women, no matter the psychological attachment to the South, their lifestyles and employment practices were categorically northern and urban, people like Clara and Bessie Smith. Some eventually moved into other areas of mass culture. There were, naturally, a number of female singers who were recorded during southern field trips, but only one, Memphis Minnie, achieved the success of her male counterparts, and

2) Paul Oliver, The Story of the Blues, (Harmondsworth, Penguin Books Ltd., 1972) pp.58-73. Derrick Stewart-Baxter, Ma Rainey and the Classic Blues Singers, (London, Studio Vista,

whose genre of music she performed. In effect, the move towards recording by the female vaudeville performers was, despite prognostications of the worst kinds, a logical extension of market practice and enterprise. For the purposes of the industry and the rigours of racist attitudes, working against both black and white musicians, the vast majority of instrumentalists were male, mostly performing jazz and, for approximately a decade, accompanying the vaudeville singers. Only when it meant the survival of record companies were male blues performers given the opportunity to step into the market. And then, companies neglected the potential of their immediate proximity in the North, by searching the Southern states for the solution to their problem.

There was no musical or regional monopoly in the post-Civil War genesis of the blues form. Its geographical divergence satisfied a cultural need as well as impressing a social identity. And it spread with the various migration patterns, converging eventually onto Northern urban centres. Its articulation was mastered by a hierarchy of musicians, itinerate and non, ranging from the fully professional to interested amateur and whilst industry focused initially towards the South, the Northern element was not absent.

From the outset, the response to recording was impressive. Whilst the professional enlarged the status of performer within a community, in recognition of recording ability, the amateur now became an aspiring recording artist with all the hopes of a professional lifestyle, once that became an institutionalised reality. Thus, having established a particular socio-economic infrastructure, the

recording industry had inadvertently designed a standard against which performers could measure themselves and their credibility. That the majority failed to achieve the elusive goal did not destroy the dream, nor the reality of the situation for each individual. Consequently each successful recording managed to keep that standard constantly aflame.

Almost all, if not all, performers, wanted to record, and hear their own music, whatever the personal rewards. And during the uncertain early days, the many performers who satisfied the idiosyncratic tastes of company talent agents were as naive and immature as the companies themselves. Yet, ever responsive to commercial advantage, companies exploited the performers' own vanity. As an employee for Vocalion, Thomas Dorsey witnessed such moments when performers "... sound so good, they [the engineers] said, 'Well, let's make the record now. We may not get 'em back! ... they'd make the record, didn't have to pay for it like that, see. The artist was glad to make the record, get a chance to hear themselves.'"³⁾ In the pre-contract days of established recording industry was quite willing to exploit each other and performers moving from one label to another. Dorsey explains: "... You record under one name here and another name over there. It was the only way you could make any money, they didn't pay nothin' much for 'em ..." ^{3a)} Edwin Buster Pickens, a rural Mississippi performer testified that, "... in those days everybody was trying to

3) Jim and Amy O'Neal, "Georgia Tom Dorsey Interview", from Living Blues, No.20 (Chicago, Living Blues Publication, March/April, 1975), p.21.

3a) Ibid., p.27.

record ..."⁴⁾, whilst Frank Walker of Columbia, assessed the impact of a successful attempt as "... the next best thing to being President of the United States in their mind."⁵⁾

Johnny Shines, also from Mississippi, as late as 1941, had a repertoire of self-penned blues for acoustic accompaniment and was keen to get them recorded, despite his instrument liability, "...I had never done any recording and I was anxious to do some. ... But you had to have an electric guitar then."⁶⁾ Besides the necessity of amplification and a public address system which arrived during the late 1930s, Shines stresses the value attached to recordings in any development of a career as a professional blues performer. The impact of that innovation was more marked in an urban context, particularly in Northern cities where employment was to be found in the bars, clubs and taverns. This fact was especially true in the aftermath of Prohibition when houses holding the newly-acquired liquor licenses could benefit by featuring performers with an established, or a promising, recording career, to attract an audience. The repeal of Prohibition did mean more work for black performers. "...the clubs advertised the singers who were being featured and both they and the record companies found it advantageous to employ 'name' singers."⁷⁾ The formality

4) Paul Oliver, Conversation with the Blues, (London, Jazz Book Club, 1967), p.117.

5) R.C. Foreman, op.cit., p.164.

6) Pete Welding, "Ramblin' Johnny Shines", from Living Blues, No. 22, (Chicago, July-April, 1975), p.31.

7) Paul Oliver, op.cit., p.107.

of the clubs and taverns in the North acted as a deterrent towards under-aged attendance, whereas in the South, age meant little as a barrier to music in performance. In the less-formal format of house-rent party, a recording career was no pre-requisite to earning a living, although the two had a degree of compatibility. Success in earnings necessitated a performing repertoire and stamina large enough to prolong interest and maintain reputation.

There was no concentration of professional entertainment outlets in the rural South to compare with the Chicago nucleus, or to a lesser extent for this music genre, New York. And the degree to which a musician could attain professional status within a community was a comparative one. Blind musicians had no other employment prospects which accounts for the high number of itinerent blues musicians. Their professional status compared with street performers but included interstate travelling to earn money wherever the situation arose. Those who could earn a living as performers, in rural and urban environs, did so by various forms of patronage, differing in the levels of formality. For most rural blues musicians it meant combining a full-time alternative means of employment, and performing at leisure times.⁸⁾

The absence of that immediacy of an entertainments nucleus in the South prolonged the association of recording career and earning capacity as a professional musician.

8) David Evans, "Structure and Meaning in the Folk Blues," from, The Study of American Folklore, ed. Jan Harold Brunstand, (New York, W.W. Norton, 1978).

Even in the urban South, musicians had to go North to realise that option. The absence of a majority of rural musicians is a marked feature, as was their contribution to recording volume. Until the myth of success pre-occupied incumbent rural performers the initial benefit was pecuniary. Individuals had the opportunity of earning comparatively easy money for relatively little effort, performing a labour of love. Talent agents knew the lure of money, and in an environment where earnings were low for long hard work, it was an important inducement. Where money was offered there was the promise of future recordings. From the musicians point of view payment was more likely where talent agents or companies themselves initiated recording possibilities, although the promised fee usually fell short of the proposal. Those who approached recording agents were in a much higher position of exploitation because of easy self-gratitude, and a naivety of the marketing process.

During the 1930s in the Carolinas, J.D. Long knew his abilities at securing recordings could attract musicians and that the commercial offerings was one of the attractions. Long was also wise to the effect that record sales could induce musicians to make more money.⁹⁾ Thomas Dorsey, in pre-Depression Chicago, was equally adept at prognostication. His employment at Vocalion and Paramount included composition, arranging of music, acting as a session musician, besides recording his own music. His personal overview reflected

9) Kip Lornell, "Living Blues Interview: J.B. Long", Living Blues, No.29 (Chicago, September-October, 1976), p.15.

overwhelmingly the commercial aspect of his work; "... they'd want me on such-a-such recording, and if that group maybe were on a number with me, I'd want them on 'em with me, some of those kind of things. You got more money the more you played. The more records you made, the more money you got."¹⁰⁾ With a ready market for blues product, "... singers began to come in by the score. Well they had them before, but they had no place to sing them. ... And when they started to making those records, of blues singers, that was all we needed, the piano players, and the musicians and all. You'd do a session, didn't get much for it, but it was good, and you had a steady job, whenever there was a session, you knew where you had to go and what you had to do. You knew you'd be paid for it."¹¹⁾

Those with enough talent for the companies became studio session men; Blind Blake was one of the first, working for Paramount in their northern studios.¹²⁾ Lonnie Johnson was employed in this capacity by Okeh, and travelled around the South with recording engineers, accompanying on violin and guitar, a number of local singers and musicians. Brownie McGhee, followed in the 1940s.¹³⁾ By the 1930s in Chicago, the industry had, inadvertently, produced their own instrument - namely the studio session band. The first exploitation of

10) Jim and Amy O'Neal, op.cit., p.25.

11) Ibid., p.20.

12) Charles Fox, et al., Jazz on Record: A Critical Guide, (London, Arrow Books, 1960) p.47.

13) Barry Elms, "Sonny Terry and Brownie McGhee Interview", Living Blues, No.13, (Chicago, Summer, 1973) p.20.

this institutionalised company instrument was the 'Hokum' group by various labels, to capitalise on the success of the popular party type music of the late twenties and early thirties. It arose out of the success of 'Tight Like That', recording, adding just a few instruments to the piano/guitar accompaniment. It used only a few musicians, all recording together for the various labels who marketed the recordings. Paramount first began in December 1928 in Chicago, and for the next fourteen months recorded twenty-five such songs, all but two got released. Brunswick recorded two, Okeh six, and Gennett five, in the same period. In the post-Depression period peak of 1935-37 Vocalion revived the recordings, issuing fifteen from sixteen recordings under the label of the 'Hokum Boys', all recorded in Chicago.¹⁴⁾ ARC, in 1930, released twenty-one 'Famous Hokum Boys' recordings made basically by Georgia Tom and Big Bill Broonzy with piano and guitar accompaniment.

The Hokum syndrome was an industrially created model, copied for a short period of time by a number of labels, all taking place in Chicago. The first unique model created for industry and aspiring recording performers was established by the recordings of Blind Lemon Jefferson, a Texas blues performer of note, cited as a "... very formidable influence ... he completely transcended the limitations of regional styles which were to influence singers in rural and urban areas."¹⁵⁾ For the genre, Jefferson recorded a blues

14) The Godrich-Dixon discography was unable to identify the performers other than aural evidence.

15) Charles Fox, op.cit., p.188.

form which established the standard three-line stanza as the basic unit of the recorded blues verse, despite the many different forms later recorded. His recordings were extremely popular, and as such functioned as a particularly effective teaching device for neophytes in all geographical locations, such that "... thousands of ... blues had essentially a standard structure, tune, and even guitar breaks."¹⁶⁾ Jeff Titon cites Jefferson as the first commercial downhome blues performer who "... became the model followed by the record companies when they sent portable field equipment to southern cities or invited singers north to their home studios."^{16a)}

Example of his song style:

Black Snake Moan

Aaee, Ain't got no mama now
Aaee, Ain't got no mama now
She told me late last night, 'You don't need no mama no
how'.

Mmmm Black Snake crawlin' in ma room
Mmmm Black Snake crawlin' in ma room
An some pretty mama had better come an get this black
snake soon.

Ahaa That musta been a bedbug, you know a -
can't bite so hard
Ahaa That musta been a bedbug, you know a -
can't bite so hard
Asked my baby for fifty cents she said 'Lemon ain't a
child in the yard.'

Mama that's alright, mama that's alright for you
Mama that's alright, mama that's alright for you
Said, 'Baby that's alright, won't you do the way you do.'

Mmmm What's the matter now
Mmmm Honey what's the matter now
Tell me what's the matter baby I don't like no black snake
no how.

16) Harry Oster, "Background of the Blues", from Black Americans, ed. John F. Szwed, (New York, Basic Books, 1970)p.165

16a) Jeff Titon, Early Downhome Blues (Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 1977), p.63

Well, wonder where this black snake gone
Well, wonder where this black snake gone
Lord that black snake, mama, done drove my darlin' home.

(Blind Lemon Jefferson)

Recorded March 14, 1927, Chicago on Okeh, 8455.

Although Jefferson provided the first model, as a footnote, one ought not to neglect the influence of the classic blues singers upon the structure of recorded blues, with their three-line stanzas and characteristics call and response dialogue between vocal and instrumental. In fact the most important, Bessie Smith, was as popular as Jefferson and her recordings served effectively as didactic. No evidence reveals Jefferson's pre-recorded performance style, yet his repertoire shows no radical alteration in style from its beginnings. It is not known if he originated the style, nor what his influences were. Jefferson first recorded in 1926.^{16b)} Two years later two further models came into being.

In July 1928, Leroy Carr on piano with Scrapper Blackwell on guitar, recorded the 'How Long How Long Blues'; three months later Tampa Red on guitar and Thomas 'Georgia Tom' Dorsey recorded 'It's Tight Like That'. Both were recorded for Vocalion, the former in Indianapolis, the latter in Chicago. Carr and Blackwell were thereafter brought to Chicago to record and work, and as described in the previous chapter both titles were recorded a number of times in less than six months.

^{16b)} Two good examples of this model type are Lonnie Johnson and Blind Willie McTell.

How Long How Long Blues - Number 3

How long, babe How long
Must I sing my lonesome song
How long ah how long baby how long

I have been waitin' but the mailman leaves no mail
I'm just drifting like a ship without a sail
For how long ah how long baby how long

Sometimes I think you love me an I feel so glad
But you stay away baby an' then I feel so bad
For how long ah how long baby how long

Now then some day you find me baby six feet under the groun'
And you'll notice because you quit me for I'll have my face
turned down
For how long ah how long baby how long

You went an left me baby an I do the best I can
But if you had to quit me why steal some other woman's man
For how long ah how long baby how long

Last night I heard a hound dog babe an I felt so blue
Cause I dreamt he was at the graveyard lookin down at you
For how long ah how long baby how long

Sometimes I get to dreamin that you're comin back
An I go down to the station stan' gazin up the track
For how long ah how long baby how long

(Leroy Carr/Scrapper Blackwell)

Recorded December 20, 1928 in Chicago on Vocalion, 1279

It's a Fight Like That *

Now, right is right, wrong is wrong
Aint no harm to sing a little song
Its a fight like that. Beedle lam bam la
Fight like that Beddle lam bam
Cant you hear me talkin to you
It was a fight like that.

Uncle Bob went home, just like they said
Struck a match, caught a man in his bed
With a light like that. Beedle lam bam la
It was a fight like that Beedle lam bam
Cant you hear me talkin to you
Nothin but a fight like that.

If I go home 'bout half past ten
Put the key in the hole an cant get in
It's a fight like like Beedle lam bam la
Fight like that Beedle lam bam
Cant you hear me talkin to you
Gonna be a fight like that

Now Lucy came home with -
She left that tight but she come home loose
It was a fight like that, Beedle lam bam la
It was a fight like that Beedle lam bam la
Cant you hear me talkin to you
Nothin but a fight like that.

I had a little kitty, I called her mine
When in the night, I could hear her cryin
An it wasnt no rest Beedle lam bam la
Fightin my cat Beedle lam bam
Cant you hear me talkin to you
Nothin but a fight like that.

We were shootin a little dice tryin to have a little fun
Law walks up an away we run
It was quite like that Beedle lam bam la
Quite like that Beedle lam bam
Cant you hear me talkin to you
Nothin but a fight like that.

I asked a lady for a drink, this is what she said
'I dont have the white, but I have the red'
An how you like that Beedle lam bam la
How you like that Beedle lam bam
Cant you hear me talkin to you
Hear me how you like that.

Some folks see fit to call it a sin
To see women give money to men
But its right like that Beedle lam bam la
Right like that Beedle lam bam
Cant you hear me talkin to you
Nothin but right like that.

(Blind Ben Covington)

Recorded October 1928, in Chicago on Brunswick 7121

* Note change in title. Discussed later in section on copyrights.

The two songs presented models of polar character, very different kinds of recorded blues. The accompaniment of piano to vocal, and piano/guitar to vocals, was not novel. Many field recordings used piano accompaniment for many solo guitarists, but not until 1928 did the juxtaposing of piano and guitar with vocals become a permanent and popular recording combination. It was a combination indeed which many imitated, and grew out of the urban

industrial entertainment context. Dorsey prosaically explained his composition as "... just something that popped up at the right time, to make some money."¹⁷⁾, whereas 'How Long How Long Blues' was a carefully composed piece by Blackwell and his sister.¹⁸⁾ Textually, the songs deviated from the Jefferson model of the AAB stanza, using a chorus/verse structure, with the title forming the principal part of the chorus. Implicit sexuality was a feature of the 'Tight Like That' genre although sexuality, implicit or explicit, did not originate with the Red/Dorsey recordings. It was absent from 'How Long How Long Blues', which had a much slower tempo, a sombre mood much contrasted with the pace and exuberance of 'Tight Like That'. The relationship between 'Tight Like That' and 'Hokum' was pointed out earlier as the first industrial musical instrument and Red became a full-time studio session man long after the influence of his recording, becoming a prominent figure in Lester Melrose's circle. Carr died in 1935 at the height of his popularity.

The studio session band proper had its geographical focus in Chicago. Its circle was small but concentrated a few performers recording on each others sessions. Singers such as John Lee Williamson, Tampa Red, Washboard Sam, recorded on each others songs and all tended to sound alike. Its genesis was about the mid 1930s when Decca and Columbia were beginning to lose interest. With a

17) Jim and Amy O'Neal, op.cit., p.25.

18) Paul Oliver, op.cit., p.931 and p.934.

virtual monopoly for more than three years before the musicians' strike, RCA Victor became stuck in its own complacency which virtually destroyed all its later attempts at recording black secular music.

One important development which sprang out of session band milieu occurred in 1938, following the first recordings by John Lee 'Sonny Boy' Williamson. What he recorded was not as crucial as the instrumental line-up of his recording and performing group position. By bringing together harmonica, piano, guitar, bass and drums to accompany vocals, Williamson had established a fourth and last model which influenced the recording, and performing practice. This development had greater importance in the post-war blues of Chicago, especially, but also, all the other recording locations spread around America, although almost everything had changed radically.

Corresponding with the emergence of each recording model was the chronological introduction of the musical instruments. Whilst the guitar was the primary accompaniment instrument for performers, few pianists accompanied themselves on recordings. Yet after the Carr/Blackwell, Dorsey/Red recordings, the piano/guitar accompaniment was the commercial prime. In 1935 a string bass or imitation string bass became a featured instrument, but was never identified with a particular musician. It was actually used early in 1930 for some Vocalion recordings by Peetie Wheatstraw, providing rhythmic accompaniment to piano/guitar and vocals. The musician remains unidentified in this early exception.

1935 was also the year that the studios heard the

successful sounds of the washboard, normally a featured rural instrument. It was introduced, and remained associated with Robert Brown, professionally known as 'Washboard Sam', whose success as a recording star matched his demand as a studio session musician. Between 1935 and 1937 he had formed a recording band with Big Bill Broonzy on guitar, and Black Bob on piano, all three sharing in the vocals.

By 1938, drums were being included as a primary accompanying instrument, which with bass and washboard, extended the range of the rhythm section. Thus, in that year, and for a number of years to follow, Lonnie Johnson as guitarist and vocalist, had as standard accompaniment, piano, stringbass and drums, which other established recording performers, including Johnson himself, either added to, or subtracted from. In some sessions the stringbass had the same rhythmic function as the drums, in so far as some recording favoured the one, whilst others favoured the second. Yet, overall, the string bass held the dominant role.

Sonny Boy Williamson's 1938 recordings introduced the harmonica as a standard melodic instrument to the Chicago studios. It had actually been in common use by Sonny Terry at least one year previously, in recordings with Blind Boy Fuller. But it was Williams, not Terry, who initiated a style of performance which served as a model for aspiring blues harmonica players. Prominent musicians of the Chicago post-war period pointed to Williamson as mentor, but more important was the fact that he dispelled all doubts about the viability of the harmonica as a prominent melodic

instrument. In one sense he began a school of harmonica performers in the Chicago/Mississippi area. One further point, important to Williamson, was his idiosyncratic style of playing which gave him his unique and influential manner. It was his attempts at imitating the saxophone techniques of the late 1930s black performers, often with close links in the jazz fraternity, that "... helped to make him immensely popular with the Negro urban audiences."¹⁹⁾

One instrumental irrationality was the jug band grouping. Their origins date back to Louisville, Kentucky of pre - WWI .²⁰⁾ In almost isolation, they exhibited a range of musical instruments that left little influence upon most recordings, the exception being the Hokum recordings. It presented an array of home-made instruments with more conventional ones, as well as producing a number of vocal effects, including speech. Aurally the collected sounds were produced from guitar and/or guitars, harmonica, kazoo, banjo, mandolin, jug, washboard, sung and spoken vocals, spirited comments and sporadic shouts. Recording of jug bands began as early as 1927.

Conceptually, the commercial establishment of the instruments discussed above, excepting the jug bands, was urban and northern. The primary accompaniment for field recordings was the acoustic guitar, primarily played by the vocalist himself or herself. The piano was much less prominent as a solo accompaniment. Electric guitar was used occasionally, from the late 1930s onwards, but its

19) Charles Fox, op.cit., p.324.

20) Bengt Olson, Memphis Blues and the Jug Bands, (London, Studio Vista, 1970) p.22.

significance was in the post-war period. Amplification and public address systems were a phenomenon of the late thirties in the South, before it ever became dominant in Chicago, particularly in taverns around Memphis and St. Louis.²¹⁾

The individual most associated with the commercial use of the electric guitar was Aaron 'T-Bone' Walker, originally from Texas. It was as guitarist/vocalist for a number of south-western jazz bands that prompted amplification of his instrument. In several respects, Walker made an important forward leap for blues recordings at the close of this recording period, and as such, anticipated a number of post-war blues recording attitudes. In July 1942 he had made two recordings for a new company, the Capitol label. The importance of this was that Walker had pioneered a new genre of blues, somewhat before the market was ready for it, which was influenced by the jazz bands of the south-east, where blues was a major part of the repertoire. And as a performer he had "... developed a dazzling stage act."²²⁾, heralding the blues performer as a professional performer, away from the bars and taverns although they never lost their importance as areas of employment. Walker was pointing the way towards the arena of mass entertainment, which was denied to blacks throughout this period, and the eventual and

21) Michael Taft, op.cit., p.1

22) Charlie Gillett, Sounds of the City (London, Souvenir Press, 1971), pp.135, 154.

lucrative white teenage market.

As important was the fact that Walker had finally moved recording locations to the west coast, after almost two decades of blues recording. Pre-World War II migration patterns played its part in so far as a new and vast geographical region challenged the Chicago hegemony for recording, and it offered an untapped ready market to exploit.²³⁾

Walker, in fact, bridged the musical camps of jazz band, the small combo, itself an offspring of the jazz band, and the solo vocalist/guitarist. And whilst the first two used blues as part of their repertoire, their manner of performance and instrumental use of form had essential differences, which are outside the scope of this study. As for jazz musicians themselves, they had virtually no contribution to this genre; the notable exception was the addition of cornetist, King Oliver, to a 1928 recording session for Texas Alexander, on the Okeh label. It included

23) John Broven, "Roy Brown, pt.1, Good Rocking Tonight," Blues Unlimited No.123, (London, January-February 1977); and 'Roy Brown pt.2, Hard Luck Blues', Blues Unlimited, No.124, (London, March-June 1977). "Living Blues Interview Lowell Fulson", Living Blues Vol.2 No.5. (Chicago, Summer 1971) and Vol.2 No.6 (Autumn 1971). Jim and Amy O'Neal, "T-Bone Walker Interview", Living Blues No.11., (Chicago, Winter 1972/73). Arnold Shaw, Honkers and Shouters (New York, Collier Books, 1978). Lynn Summers and Bob Schier, "Little Milton Interview", Living Blues No.18 (Chicago, Autumn, 1974).

Clarence Williams on piano and Eddie Lang on guitar. The instruments more associated with the jazz musicians were seldom featured. Occasionally a small band would be featured with established names, varying the inclusion of clarinet, alto saxophones, trumpet, trombone - at times they acted as lead melody instrument.²⁴⁾ With the exception of Big Bill Broonzy, this short-lived musical phenomenon occurred during the years 1934 and 1935. Vocalion issued eight recordings made in March 1934 by Bumble Bee Slim and his Three Sharks, repeating this in July of the following year. In April Okeh recorded Texas Alexander and his Sax Black Tams, whilst Decca in August recorded Peetie Wheatstraw and his Blue-Blowers. In 1935 Decca issued recordings of Bumble Bee Slim and his Rhythm Riffers. Only Broonzy continued in this vein; in 1938 as Big Bill and his Orchestra, and as Big Bill and his Memphis Five in 1938 and 1939.

Although the development from one commercial model to the next was linear, it did not mean the demise of a previous one. They progressed in parallel and unique traditions, at times bearing some little influence upon each other. Indeed, models referring to one time/space context functioned quite easily in another. Thus in 1935 Blind Boy Fuller and Joe Williams began their careers with music referring to a pre-Depression point. In the same way Robert Johnson was recorded in 1936 and Booker White in 1937, both from Mississippi. Apart from Fuller, the

24) Paul Oliver, op.cit., p.115.

rest were not big sellers, despite the industry's efforts.²⁵⁾ These were, incidentally, recorded during the 1935-1937 peak period, when industry was expanding after the effects of the Depression. Booker White attempted to update his music and thereby make it more commercial, by "... borrowing Washboard Sam to play behind him in order to add the greater rhythmic base in fashion then."²⁶⁾

The many imitations of successive models were inevitable given the likely financial returns, but also an enamouring of status for performers of a community able to do so. Yet fusion of models proved unsuccessful. Shortly after the Carr/Blackwell recording, Paramount recorded Jefferson trying the same song with a piano accompaniment. It seemed a natural commercial venture for one of their best recording artists to market a very successful song. In what was Jefferson's only piano accompanied recording, there arose an inter-model instability and it highlighted the demands of juxtaposing two or more melodic/rhythmic instruments. Suddenly, it created a new set of values, of musical parameters and a different set of problem situations. For the self-accompanying performer, text existed as a personal issue, resolved by the individual's experience. And those elements which combine in musical discourse, e.g. tempo, tone, timbre, rhythm, became tempered by the needs of each performance and each recording, and the two need not always be similar. When, with the introduction of a second

25) John Hammond, "An Experience in Jazz History", from Black Music in Our Culture, ed. Dominique Rene de Larma (Kent State University Press, 1970). Giles Oakley, The Devil's Music, (British Broadcasting Company, London, 1976), p.197.

26) David Evans, "Booker White", from Nothing But the Blues ed. Mike Leadbitter (London, Hanover Books, 1971) p.251.

and other instruments, the major problem occurs in having to effect a balance between each performer and his/her instrument and/or voice. Sacrifice and control became necessary; on the one hand, dynamics became compressed and much simplified, to be superceded by a new set. Performance had to adapt itself to the psychology of more than one person. Pianist Henry Townsend, who performed for a short time with guitarist Robert Johnson, explained the meeting of ideas: "We did quite a bit of rehearsing. As time went on, we began to get together to try to iron out things. The purpose was to familiarise ourselves with one another, because, I had a kind of odd time in my playing, and at that time I couldn't convert away from it. I had to stick with it but I learned to come away from that and work with people."²⁷⁾

The most crucial effect of moving from a pre-recorded to recorded context was the performance dichotomy. Until the transition, a performer, or performers, had a repertoire of songs whose execution and creation was limited only by dynamics of creativity, and the performance context: singer/musician Son House explained that difference: "... we'd play different things we couldn't put ... on records ... Play all night with the people dancing, playing much longer than the three minute recorded limitation."²⁸⁾ That difference was to narrow down quite significantly as the

27) Pete Welding, "The Robert Johnson I knew: Interview with Henry Townsend", from Downbeat, (Chicago, October 31 1968) p.18.

28) Jeff Titon, "Son House, from Living Blues No.31. (Chicago, March-April, 1977), p.16.

the recording came to influence, more and more, the total composition/performance context: given the ubiquitous time limitation, the performers in their turn, exploited the situation. In 1940, Booker White had written a number of songs for a recording session and used a clock to "... time his songs for three minutes choosing the best words for each out of a large supply."²⁹⁾

For performance, the recording of songs had an incredible impact. What Son House described as playing much longer than the studio limitation was to be transformed into musicians performing in line with recording. White explained the difference between unrecorded and recorded songs in his repertoire: "I never sing a song the same way. I can make songs about almost everything ... But my records that I made, I still sing my old songs ... in pretty well the same way..."³⁰⁾ Henry Townsend, performing with Robert Johnson, emphasised that "...in most cases he held pretty steady to the original. Like the way he recorded ..." ³¹⁾

The actual recording context had different meanings for different performers, or groups of performers. Initially it presented a new and strange atmosphere, quite distinct from dances, parties and other social events. For the soloist audience was replaced by simple technology and audience feedback, which held great influences on performance,

29) David Evans, op.cit., p.251.

30) Dick Flohil, "Booker T. White: The Man from Mississippi", CODA, Vol.8, No.11 (Toronto, Coda Publications, January-February, 1969), p.5.

31) Pete Welding, op.cit., p.18.

was absent. A need for care and attention to uphold technical limitations inside a studio situation whatever its make-up "... greatly restricted ... the kinds of movements and gestures he could make to punctuate his song."³²⁾ The tension which resulted was resolved on numerous occasions by the dispensation of liquor, not only to ease the atmosphere, but also to create, or re-create one. Those recorded in groups had some psychological compensation in numbers and familiarity.

What changes, then, did this new medium, the studio, bring about? The studio was, in fact, anything from wire tape-recorders to a permanent site in a building. In key locations throughout the South, hotels were favourite spots where a make-shift studio could be easily organised. Yet in the north, besides ordinary studios, they acted as filters and depositories of a tradition, or traditions, of music.

The most radical change was the appearance of the record itself, because it completely transformed a plurality of relationships. Unlike any other moment in the history of the music, it brought a cultural break for the whole corpus of musicians; no longer were they physically or psychologically tied to a particular geographical area, or to an immediate body of performers. It is true that those who wandered around the country did not have this restriction, but recording did "... give solidity to groups of singers and musicians who would otherwise never have been brought

32) Michael Taft, op.cit., pp.3, 4.

together."³³⁾ The individual non-professional, with few recordings, was probably quite unaware of how far his or her recordings were marketed, or how well sales reached. The great concern for the initial recording fee was as much as they wanted and company employees appeared not to discuss the matter any further; royalties never seemed to enter into most agreements. Nor did any lack of performance experience provide obstacles for those who passed the initial tests. They could "... appear on records even without there being any demand for live performances."³⁴⁾

The records themselves were more than objects for entertainment, more than industrial merchandise. They were as much modules of information, transporting a set of values and transmitting musical genres across an orbit, far wider in fact, than any individual could physically manage in the same timescale. And as carriers of different musical and cultural values, they had influences which proved to be incredibly didactic. The swift emulation of each particular model was a certain indication (discussed in greater detail in final chapter).

William Ferris writing about the rich blues region of the Mississippi Delta shows how records influenced the local tradition: "The first is the influence of contemporary singers whose style is imitated by Delta singers who also hope to follow in their path to recording success. ...

33) John F. Szwed, op.cit., pp.274-5.

34) Ibid., pp.274-5.

Delta singers will ... listen to the records of their favourite bluesman and will imitate and rework their material so that they develop a similar sound which they feel will be well-received by both the recording industry and the general public."³⁵⁾

Ferris's remarks reveal the dialectics of a musical tradition in response to recording. In the pursuit of industry and audience attention, there was a willingness to dilute, or, ultimately, to disregard a regional tradition. Commerciality virtually monopolised a musical tradition, but as the total recorded opus illustrates, it never managed to destroy any tradition. The market certainly allowed each performer to be confronted by a number of models, each articulated in its own way, and all conceivably executed in the same time/space point. Yet the market influenced how the performer selected his or her information and pressurised those whose reputations and careers centred around recording activity. Release came partly from changes in musical fashion as well as competition from other music genres.

Whilst the recording became capable of destroying certain aspects of a culture, it was concurrently an instrument of acculturation, quite capable of adding to the stockpile of information each performer had accumulated. It remained within the confines of each individual performer and respective audience as to whether that information was of any cultural value. Indeed, as agents of information transmission recordings became "... among the most easily accessible and popular sources of music and song for ...

35) William Ferris, Blues from the Delta (London, Studio Vista, 1971) pp.8-9.

singers and musicians. The record has functioned like the printed broadside in aiding and accelerating the transmission of lyrics in ... repertoires, but has had the added effect of disseminating both tunes and style of performance to the singers who have heard them"³⁶⁾

Guitarist/vocalist John Jackson, from Fairfax, Virginia, cites a sales agent as his introduction to different kinds of recorded information: "They had a man used to come through selling victrolas and records, and whenever he came to collect his money, he'd sell us a few more records. We listened to all kinds of records - people like Blind Blake, Blind Lemon Jefferson, Bessie Smith, Barbecue Bob, the Carter Family, the old Jimmie Rodgers - just about everybody."³⁷⁾

As a tool to aid 'composition', records were just as effective. Evans cites the commercial influence upon 'folk' blues performers "... as the commercial recording of popular blues has increased over the years, many ... have been influenced by blues that they hear on records and have begun to compose blues of their own in the manner of the more commercialised pieces."³⁸⁾ Musician Eddie Burns developed his own style by "... listening to his grandmother's record collection, or to the itinerant musicians who roamed the Delta at cotton-picking time, ... going out to the local stores to blow a little harp for nickels and

36) Michael Taft, op.cit., p.1.

37) Bill Pollack, "John Jackson Good-Time Blues", from Living Blues No.37 (Chicago, March-April, 1978), p.26.

38) David Evans, op.cit., p.425.

dimes."³⁹⁾ Fred McDowell was more explicit: "It's like you hear a record or something; well, you pick out some words out of that record that you like. You sing that and add something else onto it ... as fast as you can get one word out something else will come in there."⁴⁰⁾ Blues performers did 'compose' songs in the accepted conventions of European penmanship, but an analysis of texts would reveal how far recordings of preceding performers influenced those who followed. That pre-recorded blues had existed for at least four decades meant that the industry had a considerable amount of potential product to fill their market. The extra-ordinary rate of extraction, as well as offerings by performers, of this finite material meant that the performers eventually had to supply the industry with new models, or else refurbish existing ones to allow for a measure of market novelty.

As a piece of property, the recording was subject to a number of forces, the primary one dealing with the matter of ownership and to channelling of money. The ubiquitous 'four original compositions' was primarily a safeguard for company copyright ownership, so as not to pay royalties to anyone if possible. Yet individual composition had to be guarded against others. Floyd Jones, who penned 'Stockyard Blues' eventually performing it around the streets of Chicago when "... this fellow Big Bill Broonzy said, 'You better play with me or somebody's going to

39) Mike Leadbitter, "Eddie Burns", from Blues Unlimited, No.90., (London, April, 1972) p.5.

40) Pete Welding, "Fred McDowell Talking", from Nothing But the Blues, op.cit., p.146.

take it.' So I didn't sing no more on the street."⁴¹⁾

The recording of a blues instantly fixed a particular song, especially a successful one, with a particular name. For non-professionals who used parts, or all, of a well-known recorded blues in a performance, it was a mark of respect not to change any of the 'borrowed' information, or extract.

For the performer within a community, a hierarchy inevitably evolved, with the most successful recording musicians resting on the peak. They remained as long as the market could support them. It meant that those with a reputation could take the most lucrative employment opportunities, and obviously be the first choice for employers. These provided those lower down in the hierarchy with material that associated their success with an audience, as well as aspirations of that success. Thus a pattern was set up. The position of Homesick James and Jimmy Walker in post-Depression Chicago illustrates that point. Performing at the Square Deal Club in Chicago, for five or six hours each night, receiving three dollars each, they played "... mostly Memphis Minnie numbers ... with the long-established artists like Big Bill, Tampa Red, and Memphis Minnie playing regularly at the bigger clubs, it was very hard for newcomers to break into the scene ..."⁴²⁾

These particular leading figures were, in fact, very

41) Mike Rowe, Chicago Breakdown (London, Edison Books Ltd., 1973), p.59.

42) Ibid., p.88

generous to newcomers looking for their first big break and gave much encouragement. "They would get their start by sitting in with the good-natured Big Bill, Lonnie Johnson or Sonny Boy and some other bar-owner would hear of them and book them into his club."⁴³⁾

The long association of blues with Chicago centres much around the life of the clubs and taverns, particularly after Prohibition. As principal employers of blues talent they shared as musical arbiters of market sense as well as aiding the decline of post-war blues associated with the Bluebird label and the incestuous group of performers who supplied most of the market with product. With audience demanding change, club-owners were compelled to employ a newer breed of jazz-influenced blues performers, finding "a wealth of semi-professional blues talent on their doorsteps ready and willing to play for \$12 a night."⁴⁴⁾

43) Ibid.

44) Ibid., p.110.

CHAPTER V

Extra Musical Conflict: Radio, the Juke-Box Industry,
ASCAP, BMI, AFM, and the Federal Government

Relationships between the record industry, radio, the juke-box industry, the American Society of Composers, Authors and Publishers (ASCAP), the Broadcasters Music Incorporated (BMI), and the American Federation of Musicians (AFM), were at times so complex as each struggled to establish and improve their interests that government and judicial intervention became necessary. When the recording industry had established its market, it feared the rise of radio, a justifiable alarm considering the speed at which it succeeded as the primary domestic entertainment machine. Yet the phobia over market loss was exaggerated by not realising the potential of radio as a mass medium and an ignorance of possible mutual benefit. But radio was, after all, in its infancy whilst the phonograph machines and recordings were familiar merchandise. Its growth rate, however, was astonishing, far greater than recording. RCA

incorporated in 1919 as a sales and distribution company, sold almost \$1.5m worth of radio sets; in 1922 it grew to \$11m; by 1924 it had reached the \$50m. mark. In 1926 RCA became the largest distributor of radio sets in the world.¹⁾

The incredible profits made by companies in the radio communication industry - including the manufacture and lease of transmission equipment -, coming at a time when the recording industry was losing its grip of its market, made the takeover of the latter by the former an inevitable process of diversification. And this took place in a period of increasing company mergers and takeovers throughout the entire business arena.²⁾

Diversification also led to investment in radio stations themselves and the financing of radio programming. The crucial point over finance was that it was very influential in radio station organisation, and therefore, power to control the business of radio communication and the residual effect upon the radio audience. As soon as it was understood that advertising was to pay for programming, network radio developed to exploit key population centres, i.e. the urban masses. At the same time, small independent radio stations slowly emerged lacking the economic base and the wattage of the giants.³⁾

The first acknowledged radio broadcast, by a Westinghouse employee, was of a piece of recorded music, an auger of

1) Thomas Parker Robinson, Radio Networks and the Federal Government (New York, Columbia University Press, 1943)pp.7-9.

2) William E. Leuchtenburg, The Perils of Prosperity 1914-32, (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1958), pp.178-203.

3) Arnold Passman, Deejays (New York, Macmillan & Co., 1971) p.32.

of the role recorded music was to play in the future of radio. The first commercial broadcast was given by radio station WEAJ of New York, on the roof of the Western Electric building, owned by AT & T, on August 16, 1922. An earlier attempt by the same company, one month before, failed because of bad acoustics. Success was followed almost immediately by externally imposed restrictions to establish and regulate standards of propriety. In the same month of the first broadcast, the radio division of the Department of Commerce set down a number of regulations, among which was a clause that "... prohibited the use of mechanically operated musical instruments, such as phonographs, for broadcasting purposes."⁴⁾ The next year the Association of National Advertisers, who set the standards of practice for its members ruled that "... radio advertising was limited to the institutional type and that direct appeals for the sale of particular products was prohibited."⁵⁾ In both cases the basic philosophy never held ground in the free enterprise world.

The use of recordings in broadcasting for the small, non-network stations with only a modest income, was the only viable solution. The networks had the financial security to broadcast live programs, or record transcriptions. The tactic of broadcasting records lead to disc jockey, a term the entertainments journal 'Variety' claimed origin during the late thirties. Its use, however, was pejorative,

4) Robinson, op.cit., pp.14. 15.

5) Ibid., p.17.

implying that "... such goings-on were snide tactics on the part of weak-voiced radio stations whose managers were too poor - or too miserly - to pay for bona fide actors and musicians."⁶⁾ This paternalist defensive stand was shared by the musicians union who felt threatened with unemployment of its members. That insecurity spread over into the recording industry, who worried about what they believed would be a drastic fall in consumption. They thought that "... audiences would get sick of the thing and refuse to buy it for home-playing."⁷⁾

As it turned out this early paranoia, though self-inflicted by ignorance of the outcome of music broadcasting, was restored by public acceptance of the novelty and the benefits thereafter accumulated by each interested faction. However, for blues recordings and performers, and, in fact, all black music, the most important feature of its relationship with radio, the unions and ASCAP, was segregation and racism. The juke-box industry was kinder in its operations, and both it and performers/consumers benefitted.

The juke-box industry grew up from the failure of the phonograph invention as an office machine. Salesmen and entrepreneurs had to turn to entertainment, yet whilst the recording industry turned to home entertainment, the embryonic juke-box industry entered a "... field of activity which was created, almost without their knowledge, by showmen at fairs and resorts demanding records of songs and

6) Hazel Meyer, The Gold in Tin Pan Alley (Westport, Greenwood Press Inc., 1977), p.124.

7) Ibid., p.125.

instrumental music."8) There was almost a twenty-year success period, from the first public exhibition of a coin-slot phonograph in San Francisco on November 23, 1889 by Louis Glass of the Pacific Phonograph Company. The next year, in February, the east coast heard music mechanically reproduced, in New York at the Automatic Phonograph Exhibition, by Felix Gottschalk, an employee of the Metropolitan Phonograph Company. Large sums of money were accumulated but by 1908 the public had tired of this kind of entertainment, and it disappeared.9)

The juke-box industry proper began in 1927 in the same way as did the smaller recording companies, by product diversification of initially three player-piano manufacturers. In 1925 the Automatic Musical Instrument Company was formed after sale of the National Piano Manufacturing Company, founded in 1909 in Grand Rapids, Michigan, was bought up by its own distribution, National Automatic Music. Interest here was stimulated by the developments in the electric phonograph machine, which they assumed, quite rightly, in retrospect, was to fundamentally change the direction of recorded music.10)

The Brunswick electric home phonograph introduced in 1926 also impressed J.P. Seeburg, manufacturer of coin-operated electric pianos in Chicago, who saw it as "... a major technical breakthrough that would effect the entire

8) J. Krivine, Juke-Box Saturday Night (London, New English Library, 1977) p.12.

9) Oliver Read and Walter L. Welch, From Tin-Foil to Stereo, (Indianapolis, Harold W. Sams & Co. Inc., 1959) p.98.

10) J. Krivine, op.cit., p.26.

automatic music industry."¹¹⁾ Immediately Seeburg, of Swedish origin and American adoption, set to manufacturing the "... all-electric multi-section coin-operated disc-playing phonograph."¹²⁾

The third company beginning at this time was the Mills Novelty Company of Chicago. It was the oldest firm originally making coin-operated amusement equipment.

The major competitors began after the slow industrial come-back of the mid-1930s, although they originally began business much earlier, and in other fields not too far unconnected with coin-operated technology. Their timing was extremely fortunate; Prohibition had ended and the opening of licensed houses created a tremendous demand for coin-operated machinery. The recording industry was having its second peak-period, but more important was the rise of white popular music, where the real profits came.

The Wurlitzer Company began juke-box operations in 1936. It actually went as far back as seventeenth century Saxony, when it made musical instruments. In 1853, Rudolph Wurlitzer arrived in America to organise an import and distribution business and eventually securing a Government contract to supply the Union army with bugles and drums. In 1880 they began manufacture of pianos, later organs. Wurlitzer did not escape the Depression and turned to make refrigerators and furniture to remain in business. A merger with piano-makers in 1933, the Packard Manufacturing Company

11) J. Krivine, op.cit., p.24.

12) J. Krivine, op.cit., p.24.

and Homer Capehart, later to enter Congress, was the beginning of a juke-box giant.¹³⁾

The fifth company was Rock-Ola. It started life as a weighing machine business by a Canadian. Rock-Ola turned to pin-ball machines in 1930 and juke-boxes five years later, to phenomenal success.

The close association between the juke-box and recording industries was obvious and each amassed huge profits until about 1939. By then, all the locations had been filled and manufacturers were holding onto stock they could not sell. The recession held until the war-time period when industry had an even greater period of productivity and profits. In 1934 there were approximately 25,000 machines; by 1938 it increased to 225,000 and to 300,000 at the outbreak of war.¹⁴⁾

By the end of the thirties, with improved recorded products, it became clear that radio would not destroy the demand for records. On the contrary, with the popularity of the juke-box to repeatedly play popular recordings, it proved that radio could and did stimulate sales. Radio and the juke-box enlarged the aural experience of a single recording.

ASCAP had a philosophy which excluded black songwriters and composers not explicitly because of any racist policy, rather, it "... took a dim view of Western, mountain, religious or what they called 'race' music ..."¹⁵⁾ It was formed

13) J. Krivine, op.cit., p.41.

14) Read and Welch, op.cit., pp.295-297.

15) H. Meyer, op.cit., pp.92-93.

in February 1914, after initial discussions five months earlier, by parties who furnished America with all the institutionalised popular music. The nine men¹⁶⁾ who attended the inaugural meeting sentenced that ASCAP serve to "... protect composers, authors and publishers of musical works against piracies of any kind; to facilitate the

16) The meeting took place at Lüchow's restaurant in New York City. Those who attended, not all invited turned up, reveal the breadth of interest in the field of popular music production and dissemination:

Nathan Burkan - lawyer
George Maxwell - New York representative of an
Italian music publishing company.
Raymond Hubbell - composer
Victor Herbert - composer
Glenn MacDonough - librettist
Jay Whitmark - publisher
Gustave Kerker - composer
Silvio Hein - composer
Louis A. Hirsch - composer

Two others joined though they were absent from the meeting:

John Golden - theatrical producer and lyricist
Gene Buck - lyricist.

The original idea stemmed from a remark made to Victor Herbert about the protection offered to composers in Europe which was totally ignored in America.

Lucia S. Schulz, "Performing-Right Societies in the United States", Notes Volume 35, No.3, (Quarterly Journal of the Music Library Association, Philadelphia, 1979) pp.512;513.

Also, ASCAP, The Facts (New York, ASCAP, no date).

administration of the copyright laws for the protection of composers, authors and publishers of musical works; to promote and foster by all lawful means the interest of composers, authors and publishers of musical works and to grant licenses and collect royalties for the public representation of the works of its members, and to collect and distribute such royalties."¹⁷⁾

Copyright in the nineteenth and early twentieth century was a fragile issue, whose weakness was the enforcement of rights given protection by Congress, first in 1897, for the protection of "... non dramatic works ... providing penalties for infringement of performing rights."¹⁸⁾ Twelve years later, the Copyright Act of 1909 dealt with the rights of ownership with respect to public performance for profit, but was basically ineffective.

What made copyright an issue was the transition of music entertainment from a non-technological and unrecorded context to a media-orientated and recorded one. Until the end of the second world war, the power and control of white American commercial popular music was in the hands of the music publishers, who derived their income from the sale of song sheets. Until this transition, public performance of songs was regarded as an advertising mechanism to promote song sheet sales.¹⁹⁾ With the change, a musical performance, whether live or mechanically or electrically produced or reproduced, or broadcasted over the radio, became a commodity, created by one group and usually disseminated by another.

17) Lucia S. Schulz, ibid ., p.513.

18) Ibid., p.511.

19) Hazel Meyer, op.cit., p.60.

It was the Supreme Court, in 1917, after reversing the lower court's decision against ASCAP's test case of the copyright laws - against a New York restaurant proprietor who included music to be performed live - which set the rules. It argued that the "... defendant's performances are not eleemosynary. They are part of a total for which the public pays. ... It is true that the music is not the sole object, but neither is the food. ... If the music did not pay, it would be given up. If it pays, it pays out of the public's pocket. Whether it pays or not, the purpose of employing it is profit, and that is enough."²⁰⁾ The courts also decided that music broadcast over radio constituted "... a performance for profit and that license fees were justified."²¹⁾ The Broadcasters contested the decision but were ultimately unable to alter the course of events. Interestingly enough their reasoning was similar to the original understanding of musical performance. They defended the right of privilege of "... music without cost on the grounds that music so used was a public service. ... authors, composers, and publishers should be grateful ..."²²⁾

ASCAP's real rise in power came from Hollywood acting in its own interest. With the popularity of filmed musicals, the studios bought up many ASCAP affiliated music publishing houses to protect song ownership and collect the royalties themselves. Thus by 1939 ASCAP had netted \$65m in royalties,

20) Lucia S. Schulz, op.cit., p.514.

21) Ibid., p.516.

22) Hazel Meyer, op.cit., pp.84/85.

60% coming from radio's income of \$171m. It was this huge profit from radio that ASCAP wanted to test its power and earning capacity when the two bodies were to renegotiate the renewal of royalty contracts at the close of the decade.

For twenty years ASCAP controlled "... society's monopoly on popular music,"²³⁾ and the radio broadcasters feared outright exploitation of royalty fees. They anticipated this trial of strength a number of years before the 1940 expiry date. In 1939 at its Chicago Convention, the National Association of Broadcasters (NAB) passed a resolution that "... in view of the foregoing, the creation of an independent source of music is a necessary measure, now, therefore, be it RESOLVED, that the NAB cause a corporation to be organised with broad powers to carry out the building of an alternative source of music suitable for broadcasting and to make such music available to broadcasters and others."²⁴⁾ In the next month, Broadcast Music Incorporated (BMI) was organised, and challenged ASCAP's monopoly in no unspoken terms. On January 1, 1941, the NAB imposed a ban on all ASCAP controlled music, and began a search for non-ASCAP material, a revolutionary move for American music.

Such was the fear of broadcasting non-ASCAP music that radio prepared itself for change firstly by playing non-ASCAP music between ASCAP music to prepare its audience; and secondly by actually setting up public relations offices

23) Lucia Schulz, op.cit., p.582.

24) Hazel Meyer, op.cit., p.91.

in case of a backlash from audience and sponsorship. There was no backlash, and loyalties remained.

However, support for BMI was slow in coming. It was thought that this new organisation would soon collapse but within less than a year the two royalty agencies had resolved their differences, and BMI "... had secured a firm footing in the entertainment world ... with a catalogue of over 36,000 copyrights ..."²⁵⁾, almost all by white composers. The fundamental difference between the two organisations was that ASCAP was controlled by, and existed for, creators and suppliers of music, whilst BMI was owned by the users of music. Yet when BMI was well-established it too benefitted creators and suppliers of music.

ASCAP's power during the 1930s did not escape Federal notice. As early as 1934, the Department of Justice tried unsuccessfully to curb ASCAP's control of the music supply with the indictment that "... through the combination and illegal pooling of their respective individual copyright monopolies, were alleged to have created in the society an instrumentality which has the power to, and does dictate to, and dominate the radio broadcasting industry."²⁶⁾

The Department moved again, six years later, in the BMI/ASCAP dispute, but extending criminal proceedings against, ASCAP, BMI, and the radio networks, CBS and NBC, the former owned by Columbia, the latter by RCA Victor. The indictment was for contravening the Sherman Act. The last of an eight-point list of charges accused ASCAP and BMI

25) Bill C. Malone, op.cit., p.188.

26) Hazel Meyer, op.cit., pp.96/97.

with mutual boycotting of material "... in order to obtain control of the supply of music, which boycotts threaten to restrain and destruct the rendition over the radio of about 90% of the desirable modern copyright music."²⁷⁾ Black music was thereafter allowed its opportunity in the mass media.

Despite the tight infrastructure of the entire entertainments industry, only the recording companies showed interest in black music and black consumers, until the outbreak of the war. Racism was important in understanding the reasoning, because whilst the industry worked with both black and white music, for black and white consumers specifically, they never attempted to expose one to the other. Jazz, particularly during the 1920s was, in a way, the exception. But whilst white intellectuals and society embraced the music, including the exotic value, the media shied away. This had two repercussions: firstly, whilst record companies recorded and sold product by black performers, they knew that "... the lyrics ... and the music associated with them could never be sold for use on radio or in films."²⁸⁾ Secondly, because of this discrimination of black music by radio, recordings and sales of black music were never as badly affected as those normally broadcasted over the radio, i.e., that controlled by

27) Eileen O'Connor, "Anti-ASCAP Legislation and Its Judicial Interpretation" from George Washington Law Review, Vol. IX, pt.6. (Washington, University of George Washington), p.721.

28) Neil Leonard, Jazz and the White Americans (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1962), p.104.

ASCAP.²⁹⁾

Not only were black radio audiences discriminated against, so were performers. There are few references of blues performers broadcasting over radio. The first, two musicians Houston Stackhouse and Robert Nighthawk performed on radio in Jackson in the early 1930s³⁰⁾, and in 1935 on radio KLCN, Blytheville, Arkansas, the quartet of Peck Curtis on drums, Calvin Frazier and Little Sonny Pitman on guitars, and Sonny Glisson on piano, were heard.³¹⁾

The first regular radio show by blues musicians for a black audience occurred in 1941 in Helena, Arkansas. On November 19, a small white businessman, Sam Anderson, set up the town's first radio station, RFFA.³²⁾ In his quest for programmes and sponsorship he actually broadcast the first black radio for a black rural and small town audience, a non-network radio. Sponsorship for a number of programmes came from the local flour companies and one, Interstate Grocery Company, who began advertising their King Biscuit Flour throughout the Mississippi Delta in 1939, sponsored the important 'King Biscuit Time' show.³³⁾

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- 29) J. Krivine, op.cit., p.22; and Steve Chapple and Reebee Garofalo, Rock 'n Roll Is Here To Pay, (Chicago, Nelson-Hall, 1977) p.55.
- 30) Jim O'Neal, "Houston Stackhouse", Living Blues No.17, (Chicago, Living Blues Publications, Summer, 1974) p.26.
- 31) David Evans, "Peck Curtis", Living Blues No.69., (Chicago, Living Blues Publications, January, 1970) pp.10/11.
- 32) Mike Leadbitter, "Bring It On Home", Blues Unlimited, 98 (London, Blues Unlimited Publications, January, 1973, p.4.
- 33) Paul Oliver, "Remembering Sonny Boy" from The American Folk Music Occasional, (eds.) Chris Strachwitz and Pete Welding, (New York, Oak Publications, 1970), pp.42/43. Oliver sets the date at 1938.

The programme's two performers, Alex 'Rice' Miller, and Robert 'Jr' Lockwood, initiated the idea and approached the radio station proposing that they could "... perform free for ten minutes or so every day, if allowed to plug their forthcoming gigs ..." ³⁴⁾ Thus whilst the flour company payed for the air time and provided promotional clothing for the musicians as they travelled around the Delta, the radio programme announced each day exactly when and where the performers would be. The shows provided no income for the performers. Houston Stackhouse, who broadcast over KFFA a short time later pointed out that "... we was makin' our money at ... dances every night somewhere We just stayed on the program so we could be advertisin' ourselves. ..." ³⁵⁾

The show was a daytime broadcast of fifteen minutes, Monday to Friday, starting at 12.45pm, and it "...sky-rocketed overnight". ³⁶⁾ It used musicians of a high calibre who performed the music a black audience wanted to hear, and for the first time. This novelty, and the novelty of amplified instruments - guitar and harmonica - stimulated much interest. A third factor was that Miller was broadcasting under his professional name, Sonny Boy Williamson, 'King of the Harmonica'; the original Williamson, John Lee 'Sonny Boy' was very influential and well-respected, with many popular blues recordings to bolster his reputation. That association, when it occurred, was beneficial.

34) Mike Leadbitter, op.cit., p.4.

35) Jim O'Neal, op.cit., p.29.

36) Mike Leadbitter, op.cit., p.4.

In 1942, the station owner Anderson, added drums, piano and washboard to the line-up and widened the sound to emulate the recorded sound of Chicago that was so popular in the late thirties, but was becoming quite commonplace in the city. These performers who broadcasted and performed around the Mississippi/Arkansas region took the music they learnt from Chicago recordings back to Chicago and the West Coast after the war. The format for the programme is vague. It opened and closed with a blues song advertising the sponsored product:

Good evenin', everybody, tell me how do you do.
Good evenin', everybody, tell me how do you do.
These King Biscuit Boys has come out to welcome you.

Every mornin' for breakfast, King Biscuit on my table.
Every mornin' for breakfast, King Biscuit on my table.
Invite my friends and all my next door neighbours.

Goodbye, everybody, if I never see you no more.
Goodbye, everybody, if I never see you no more.
Buy King Biscuit Flour, I don't care where you go.

Between were sponsorship messages, performers messages and other songs. The only reference to the music is to Robert Nighthawk's broadcast, "... blues, boogies, some love songs, and things like that."³⁷⁾

The greatest irony for this first regular broadcast for black audiences and performers, was that it took place in the South, in Mississippi, and in one the most racist regions of America. And it was sponsored by white finance who helped to spread blues in an extensively rural milieu. By breaking down the distance between performer and audience, even for such a short time, it provided

37) Jim O'Neal, op.cit., p.27.

an excellent public service, proving, as record companies learnt two decades before, that the black audience existed and that it wanted to hear its own music over the radio. It was a barometer whose readings were very slowly acknowledged by the media.

The musicians' union, for its part, did very little to improve the lot of black musicians. Indeed, performers and music industry employees have been very critical of its outright racist policy. John Hammond, an influential record producer wrote that the "... American Federation of Musicians has a lot to answer for in its dealing with black musicians, the greater part of whom were in separate and unequal locals. In all, except the American cities (even in so-called integrated locals in New York and Detroit) they were consistently discriminated against."³⁸⁾ He continues that "... practically no Blues musicians were in the union." Blues performers could rarely afford the fees; nor were they able to read music, one of the requirements. Record producer Steve Tomashefsky working in Chicago wrote of the AFM in Chicago as "... formerly, overtly racist. ... During this period, the leadership of the Black local were naturally more deeply involved in the affairs of black musicians, largely as dues - and tax-collectors, but also occasionally as a pipeline for jobs

38) John Hammond, Letter to Author dated October 9, 1979. Performer Johnny Otis, in personal correspondence (October 1979) wrote: "We were segregated with the white locals downtown operating as if we didn't exist and we in the ghetto locals picking up what crumbs the good white folks left us."

and session-work."³⁹⁾ As such the union did little beyond enforcing membership and insisting on employers to use union members on threat of boycott.⁴⁰⁾ Unions had much control of operations in Chicago, the city with the largest share of recording and one of the largest radio broadcasting centres and audiences, where union membership was vital for employment and recording. It was so strong by the late thirties that, in fact, it "... hastened a process of stylization of the Chicago blues that had already begun to take place with the use of a common pool of talent by the Chicago-based recording executives."⁴¹⁾

Its constitution for a trade Union Charter was proposed on October 19, 1896⁴²⁾, and it was almost half a century before it called for its first musicians' strike by its outspoken leader, James Caesar Petrillo. It gave one month's warning to the industry in July, 1942. The strike was a battle of power between the powerful radio corporations, the record companies, and to a lesser extent, the juke-box operators, coming just nine months after radio had settled its differences with ASCAP. In the same way that ASCAP wanted royalties for each broadcast and performance, the AFM who also observed the profits

39) Personal correspondence, September 15, 1979.

40) Kip Lornell, "Guitar Pete Franklin", Living Blues No.9. (Chicago, Living Blues Publication, Summer 1972) p.21.

41) Robert Koester, "Chicago: The Blues Scene", Rhythm and Blues, Vol.III, No.62., (Derby Connecticut, Rhythm and Blues Publications, October 1963) pp.6/7.

42) American Federation of Musicians of the United States and Canada, Music Is Your Business, (New York, undated and unpaginated).

incurred by the media, wanted part of the share. Petrillo argued that "... juke-boxes and broadcasting stations which used phonograph records were driving musicians out of work."⁴³⁾ He wanted the record companies to provide funds for unemployed musicians. He also wanted royalties from radio stations who used transcription discs, although his action in this instance was short-sighted. Small, non-network stations were in no position to hire performers for programmes, and transcriptions were one practical operation. The strike could not stimulate employment.⁴⁴⁾ Petrillo only allowed musicians to work who were "... used in war effort and at home."⁴⁵⁾

The immediate reaction by the record companies was to record as much as possible to try and defeat the unions. Pressure from Hollywood and the radio industry, who were losing money from loss of sponsorship and royalties from the musicals put pressure on the recording industry. But the latter held on; Decca agreed first and it signed so that it could survive as a company. Victor and Columbia, with much more support held out for another fourteen months. The only party to benefit was the union, rather than its membership. For the consumer, it meant a price increase.

43) Bill C. Malone, op.cit., pp. 188/189.

44) Robinson, op.cit., pp.133/134.

45) Hazel Meyer, op.cit., p.126.

CHAPTER VI

The Divergence of Definition

John Shepard, in his chapter 'Writing About Music', points out that a "...view of music in itself cannot be isolated from the formulation of the view as part of the social construction of knowledge and reality, because such isolation subscribes to the fallacy of form and context, whilst at the same time ignoring the efficacy of form."¹⁾ He further notes that it is "... because the materiality of symbolic communication is ignored that ideas may be isolated from the context of their creation."²⁾ Definitions of blues genre have gone little beyond that "context of creation," presenting them either as aural objects or extra-sociocultural artifacts outside the context of those who

1) John Shepard, Phil Virden, Graham Vulliamy, Trevor Wishart, Whose Music? A Sociology of Musical Languages (London, Latimer New Dimensions Ltd., 1977), p.63.

2) John Shepard, ibid., p.67.

formulate them. Moreover, these paradigms represent the viewpoint of a black/white literate group of a higher socio-economic sub-group, articulate and politically aware.

Formal definitions ascribe tonality as a function of harmonic movement, relating the chord progression, i.e. the movement of tonic to dominant to subdominant and return to tonic, specifically to particular lines in each blues verse. However, Trevor Wishart reveals the limitations of such a formula because, "... the blues musicians themselves probably did not understand their music in these terms."³⁾ His conclusion is that "... analysis in terms of tonality is invalid."⁴⁾ Content was analyzed as a simple explanation of the social and economic circumstances of post-Reconstruction blacks, usually masculine, in a white racist and male dominated culture. That explanation was for a long time understood as autobiographical and substantiated a number of beliefs that whites held over blacks, and which blacks, as an oppressed group, could monitor their social position, or "... implicit world sense."⁵⁾ Blues, as a rigid "... framework reflects the rigidity of an imposed social situation ... there is within this framework a rich and sophisticated articulation of the life and experience of the musicians."⁶⁾

Consider the difference between the emotional state, first described in early seventeenth century England⁷⁾, and

3) Ibid., p.172.

4) Ibid.

5) Ibid., p.173.

6) Ibid.

7) Shorter Oxford English Dictionary (Oxford, Clarendon Press,

a music of two-and-a-half centuries later, by Rubin Lacy, blues performer: "I've sung 'em as many a day and never thought I had 'em. What did I want to have the blues for, when I had everything I wanted, all the liquor, all the money I needed, and more gals than I needed? What did I need with the blues. I was playing 'em because everybody loved to hear me play 'em and I loved to play 'em. I could play 'em ..."8)

Lacy was able to perform to his own justification without the need to create or recreate a mood or personal feeling. His ability, with his fondness for performance, was shared by the desires of his audience. The lack of emotional state is rare. Two further statements about performing: "...the other day my wife asked me if I could play a blues for her. But I couldn't do it. I just didn't have the feeling."9); and "... when I sing the blues, when I'm singing the real blues I'm singing what I feel ... it comes from the heart. From here right in your soul, an' if you singing what you really feel it comes out all over. It ain't just what you saying, it pass out of you. Sweat running down your face."10)

In the first instance the emotional state is paramount to any performance and is a fundamental prerequisite. The second statement sets the criteria for 'real blues', i.e. a personal integrity and honesty. Truth towards personal feelings or personal statement is the highest value judgement possible, whether it be wholly autobiographical or

8) David Evans, "Rubin Lacy" from Nothing But the Blues (ed.) Mike Leadbitter, (London, Hanover Books Ltd, 1971) p.244.

9) Quoted by Robert Pete Williams from Feel Like Going Home Peter Guralnick, (New York, Outerbridge and Dienstfrey, 1971), p.114.

10) Paul Oliver, "Muddy Waters", from Nothing But the Blues

based on biography. The ambiguity here is whether the expression is dictated by the creation of a mood or feeling being, or becoming, influenced by it. Ostendorf accuses white authorship as having "... misinterpreted the blues as resulting from a mood ..."11) Rather he subscribes to the idea that "... bluesmen ... want to create a mood."12) A certain amount of emotional composure is necessary before a performance. Singer Jimmy Rushing: "Whatever kind of blues it is ... you've got to have the feeling when you sing them and play them. A good blues singer has to feel it."13) And a different mood may develop from the initial one, creating a second emotional/psychological state, often described as the cathartic process, but deeply embedded in the creative process. Singer/guitarist Booker White objectifies a balance of emotional states to further the creative element, keeping the subjective element integral: "Go into it with all your soul. Have a little something on the outside to kind of contain your mind while you're making them good blues. ... You don't want to be too worried, and you don't want to be satisfied either, but you want to have your mind a little mixed up just enough to keep from being too bothered or too happy. ... You got to be into music and have it in your soul."14)

Albert Murray warns of the extra-musical limitations of definition, that "... what it represents is the expression of

11) Bernt Ostendorf, "Black Poetry, Blues and Folklore: Double Consciousness in Afro-American Oral Culture, from Amerikastudien/American Studies 20/2, (Frankfurt, German Association of American Studies, 1975). p.239.

12) Ibid.

13) Nat Hentoff, "Jimmy Rushing: The Blues and How They Began", Downbeat (Chicago, Downbeat Publications, March 6 1957) p.20.

sadness."¹⁵⁾, a consensus going back half a century. White academics, Odum and Johnson, writing in the 1920s, characterised blues as possessing a "... tone of plaintiveness. Both words and music give the impression of loneliness and melancholy ... the theme of most blues is that of the love relation between man and woman ... the expression of self-pity. Often this is the outstanding feature of the song. There seems to be a tendency for the despondent or blue singer to use the technique of the martyr to draw from others a reaction of sympathy."¹⁶⁾ Roger Abrahams writing in 1970, said that "... 'blues' came to characterise the compositions of those singers, blues being the sense of alienation or psychological isolation in which life becomes unbearably anxious, and communication becomes impossible."¹⁷⁾ He goes on to say that the blues emotion "... is concerned with feelings of alienation, and thus, by extension, blues songs are ones that describe states and feelings from the alienated and rootless situation."¹⁸⁾

When Murray points out the "... good-time ... dance music" element¹⁹⁾ which Odum, Johnson and Abrahams neglect to mention, it appears as if blues recording had never taken place, and composition/performance, an impossible feat, a

15) Albert Murray, Stomping the Blues (McGraw-Hill Book Co., New York, 1976), p.57.

16) Howard W. Odum and Guy B. Johnson, Negro Workaday Songs Reprint of 1926 original (New York, Negro University Press, 1969), pp.19-20.

17) Roger D. Abrahams, Positively Black, (New Jersey, Prentice-Hall Inc., Englewood Cliffs, 1970), p.55.

18) Ibid., p.141.

19) Albert Murray, op.cit., p.57.

contradiction which appears with Abrahams's 'communication becomes impossible' theory set against all the recorded blues - a formidable communication medium. Communication is possible, as is creativity, inspired by that same emotional state. Singer, musician, composer, John Lee Hooker describes what he sings about as "... problems, yours and mine. It's something that comes in your life. ... In my opinion the blues is a thing; you have the blues about something. ... Blues came out of sadness, trouble, misfortune."²⁰⁾ Despite Hooker's work taking place in the post-war period his explanation is universal. Singer J.D. Short is equally explicit, "What ... makes the blues really good is ... a blues ... with a feeling, of things that have happened to so many people."²¹⁾ Finally, singer guitarist Furry Lewis credits the emotional state as providing all the ready stimulus for 'composition', "... when you write the blues and what you thinking about, you be blue and you ain't got nothin' hardly to think about. You just already blue, and you just go on and write."²²⁾

The viewpoint expressed by these three performers presents one side of the creative technique. Indeed, it provides one model or presentation of black musicians and singers, the myth which identifies the musician with a

20) Pete Welding, "John Lee Hooker: Me and the Blues", from Downbeat (Downbeat Publications, Chicago, October 3 1968), p.17.

21) Samuel Charters, The Poetry of the Blues (New York, Oak Publications, 1963), p.12.

22) Ibid., p.13.

stereotype profile: the lone miserable figure. That impression was less manifest in the recordings made by the industry. Thomas Dorsey was one figure to contradict that belief. His account, "Well, we wrote everything, just like we had variety; I wrote suggestive blues, well, you had to have something suggestive, or they wouldn't hit, in some places, the folks wouldn't want 'em. ... we put a lot of comedy in some of them."²³⁾ Dorsey was equally adept at what he called "... the low moaning type, you know, the heartbroken, the blues, where the man gone away ..."²⁴⁾ Between high comedy and melancholia blues song reflected many, not all, aspects of black American working class life. Subjects such as the injustice of discrimination are seldom mentioned; the few, often in code, meaningful only to black culture. Paul Oliver, in two works about recorded blues^{24a)} wrote much about blues lyrics in the context of black social and economic life. Others made their contribution though usually in an attempt to attach poetic values to the words.^{24b)} A major criticism of the analyses is that selection is random, made to fit concepts of aesthetics, and points of social history, rather than determining the full extent of subject matter.

Not too surprisingly, the performers say little about the content of their songs beyond generalisations of

23) Jim and Amy O'Neal, "Georgia Tom Dorsey Interview," Living Blues No.20 (Chicago, Living Blues Publication, March/April, 1975) p.24.

24) Ibid.

24a) Paul Oliver, Blues Fell This Morning (London, Cassell and Co., 1960); Screening The Blues (London, Cassell and Co., 1968.)

24b) Samuel Charters, op.cit., ; Parl Garon, Blues and the Poetic Spirit (London, Edison Books Ltd., 1976).

biography. The major problem in this respect is that almost all the documentation and interpretation was carried by whites, which usually created a barrier to trust. As a body the lyrics can tell their own story especially following major events such as the Mississippi Floods, the devastation of crops by the boll weevil, or the Depression. Even the commercial pressure to exploit the market influenced output of songs; at other times, implicit sexuality played a dominant role.

Ultimately the question remains as to "... whether the image of the blues revealed is an accurate one."^{24c)} As Oliver puts it, quite wisely, the answer is doubtful. Recording activity was erratic and there was a huge difference in the scale of recordings by performers. A few recorded nearly two hundred songs whereas the majority, less than half a dozen. These few were exploiting both their talents and the market for recorded blues.

With recording, blues composition became as much a studio technique, certainly influenced by studio operations. Companies needed new songs at a much faster rate than rural performers could provide. A constant source of supply was necessary to sustain the professional status of performers. Whether the source was self-penned or not it was immaterial to industry, consumer or performer. Neither did it prevent association of particular stanzas or musical phrases to a performer.²⁵⁾ A number of people specialised,

24c) Paul Oliver, 1968, op.cit., p.10

25) Arnold Shaw, op.cit., p.37.

or contributed, towards composing blues songs for the black consumer. These numbers did not lack the necessary talent. The jugband, the Hokum, had little sympathy with that stereotype, one which never really belonged to the urban context. Even the small band, the forerunner of the post-war electric band, broke away from that image. More important, were it not for the industry, the image of the blues performer would have changed little. It is almost as if that fact had been ignored. The overwhelming association of the blues to the rural context has acted as a catalyst to this attitude. And yet, as John Szwed succinctly put it, the "American rural South was the source of Afro-American music, not because it was rural but because that was where the Afro-Americans were."²⁶⁾ The industry did not escape totally. Its contemporary understanding of blacks influenced the early advertising that the stereotype portrait became a universal sign. Performers too believed that "... original blues ... came out of the cotton fields."²⁷⁾ Guitar Pete Franklin also believed that the "... modern type of T.Bone Walker and B.B.King, and all the rest," did not originate in some way in rural America. On the other hand, Booker White is emphatic about the rural origins of blues, "... it didn't start in no city, now. ... It started right behind one of them mules or one of them log houses, one of them log camps or the levee camps."²⁸⁾

26) John F. Szwed, "Negro Music: Urban Renewal" from Our Living Traditions. An Introduction to American Folklore, ed. Tristram Potter Coffin, (New York, Basic Books Inc., 1968), p.273.

27) Kip Lornell, "Guitar Pete Franklin", from Living Blues No.9, (Chicago, Living Blues Publication, Summer 1972)p.19

28) David Evans, 1971, op.cit., p.255.

The combination of the Reconstruction rural-isolated population and manumitted slaves returning to their former status but without paternalism providing survival mechanisms, is used to portray the image of the impoverished, inept, black sharecropper, having little control over personal affairs, which is carried right through into the twentieth century. Exploitation and institutionalised segregation were not new constraints, nor were they unique to the rural South. The Reconstruction period was also one which saw the beginnings of American industrialisation, centralised in the urban North, though it was not until the first world war that industries needed blacks in large numbers. The opportunity for economic freedom was duly exercised but did not end the social maladies openly practiced in the South and clandestine in the North.

Whilst the spiritual songs of black Americans succumbed to white patronage, its pre-industrialised secular counterpart hardly ever did. Yet as America moved from an agrarian based economy to an industrialised one with the urbanisation of the black American, then white patronage found its permanent position - in the form of dissemination, almost nationwide, albeit controlled by whites. Urbanisation and rural steadfastness always managed to co-exist with the former having greater influence on the latter. This meant that, psychologically, the black secular performer existed in both worlds at once, though at times, it was a physical reality.

The rural/urban dichotomy is an interesting point. It has led to a number of value judgements as to what constitutes excellence. High aesthetic values arise out

of the severest regime, with statements such as "... where the plantation system was its most efficient and segregation its most brutal, the blues are found at their purist ... tragic, hopeless and poignant."²⁹⁾ Such evaluation then places higher credibility on blues performed in the state of Mississippi to those in Texas, which is meaningless. Equally erroneous is the idea that Mississippi blues performances have "... the most authentic blues style."³⁰⁾ What posed for 'authenticity' put many constraints on the use and function of blues songs and blues performers, a process which recording broke down.

The problem lies in what is the contradiction between the entertainment evaluation of the urbanised context, and the attributed functional value, always almost rural. This canonisation gave ritual to rural usage, neglecting other functions in the same milieu, and debasing it when in an urban context, because it progressed into the professional arena. Leroi Jones: "Blues ... was largely a functional music, and it emerged from a music, the work song, that did not exist except as a strictly empirical communication of some part of the black slave's life. But the idea of the blues as a form of music that could be used to entertain people as a professional basis ... was a revelation."³¹⁾ It is inconceivable that, as music, it never entertained; even Jones admits this, although only

29) Ross Russell, Jazz Style and the Southwest (Los Angeles, University of California Press, 1971) p.34.

30) David Evans, "Rubin Lacy", p.255.

31) Leroi Jones, Blues People (New York, William Morrow and Company, 1968), p.98.

the "... early blues developed as a music to be sung for pleasure, a casual music ..., "32) where entertainment was either to oneself, or to a group, i.e. "... social music."33)

In both rural and urban social gatherings, the performer faced an audience not radically different in number. Where Ostendorf limits the audience in the rural context no further than "... friends, kin, prison mates ..."34), he ignores the peregrinations ones who performed on street corners to anonymous passers-by, at parties, in-and-out of doors, for both races. Non-rural blues emerged, not as Ostendorf submits, "citywood ... to the new locale, to the new audience - at once more anonymous and demanding - and to the media."35) Rural audiences were never less demanding and the music did not gravitate towards the media. Record companies sought rural music to survive and it quickly brought this music North.

The rural functionalism/urban entertainment evaluation permeated the non-musical function of blues, seeming to "... symbolise newly emerging social patterns during ... the transition from a land-based agrarian society, to one based on mobile, wage-labor urbanisms."36) For some authors that symbolism existed earlier, in fact, with emancipation "in its singular vigor and incisiveness, it bore the

32) Ibid., p.67.

33) Paul Oliver, The Story of the Blues (Harmondsworth, Penguin Books Ltd., 1972), p.6.

34) Bernt Ostendorf, op.cit., p.240.

35) Ibid.

36) John F. Szwed, "Musical Adaptation Among Afro-Americans from, Journal of American Folklore, Vol.82, No.2.(Boston, American Folklore Society, 1969) pp.117/118.

characteristic sign of a vast social achievement ... of the social and spiritual agony of an emancipation which brought relief from slavery without leading to social, economic and cultural recognition."³⁷⁾ The Marxist writer, János Márothy, incorrectly places this symbolism solely in the "... period of emerging big cities with the inevitable slum quarters ... of mass wandering from one camp to another, with large armies of labourers moving together."³⁸⁾ The symbolism is uppermost, optimistic, a point Márothy makes though ending on a naive assessment: "... their burden of woe and melancholy is dialectically redeemed through sheer force of sensuality, into an almost exultant affirmation of life, of love, of sex, of movement, of hope. No matter how repressive was the American environment, the Negro never lost faith in or doubted his deeply endemic capacity to live. All blues are a lusty, lyrical realism charged with taut sensibility."³⁹⁾ Ralph Ellison's articulate juxtaposition of 'burden of woe' with 'affirmation of life' presents an extremely powerful characterisation of the symbolism. He develops it further into a communion of the "... tragic and the comic aspects of the human condition and they express a profound sense of life shared by many Negro Americans precisely because their lives have combined

37) Ernest Borneman, A Critic's Look at Jazz (London, Jazz Music Books, 1946), p.

38) János Márothy, Music and the Bourgeois Music and the Proletarian, translation by Eva Róna (Budapest, Akadémia Kiadó, 1974), p.515.

39) James Marothy, ibid, p.517.

these models."⁴⁰⁾ This for him is its attraction expressing "... both the agony of life and the possibility of conquering it through sheer toughness of spirit."⁴¹⁾

Yet it always was an outward sign of accomodation, a sign of passiveness, relating to "... hardship and sadness ... that starkly relates experiences and feelings without generally offering any hope of future improvement."⁴²⁾ it reminded blacks that they were living in a white man's country, by his rules "Not only has the blues been condemned for preventing the black man from trying to break his chains, it has also been condemned for providing him a way to accomodate segregation ... and discrimination."⁴³⁾ Indeed, tension exists between cultural artifact and social unawareness or impoverishment, "... sounds of dismay, submissiveness, and acceptance of atrocious social conditions common to the existence of large number of black people ... though sometimes beautifully rendered ... is essentially

40) Ralph Ellison, Shadow and Act (New York, Random House, 1964), pp.256/257.

41) Ibid., p.94.

42) Michael Haralambos, "Soul Music and Blues: Their Meaning and Relevance in Northern United States Black Ghettos", from Afro-American Anthropology, eds. Norman E. Whitten Jr. and John F Szwed Jr., (New York, Free Press, 1970), p.372.

43) Robert Springer, "The Regulatory Function of the Blues", from The Black Perspective in Music, Vol.4, Nr.3. (New York, Foundation For Research in the Afro-American Creative Arts, Inc., Fall, 1976), p.280.

a music of accomodation."⁴⁴⁾ On two occasions was this attitude reversed with little effect: Big Bill Broonzy's recording of 'Black Brown and White Blues' was not released for several years because of its setting of racism in society; J.N. Lenoir's recording of 'Eisenhower Blues' or 'Korea Blues' criticised the war and was held back for some time. William Ferris wrote about racial repertoires in a rural community discussing coded lyrics about the white authority.⁴⁵⁾ Yet no matter how disparagingly coded lyrics spoke, they made no effect on the status quo.

Despite the first peak of blues recording a number of writers had given one date of origin at 1910, by virtue of its nomenclature: "They were at first called by several ... names, but by 1910 they had achieved enough of a seperate status to be known specifically as 'the blues' among many Southern Negroes."⁴⁶⁾ Folk song collector

44) William H. McClendon, "Black Music: Sound and Feeling for Black Liberation," from The Black Scholar, Vol.7 Nr.5 (Sausalito California, Black World Foundation, January-February 1976) p.20. See also "Black Art: Mute Matter Given Force and Function," from Black Poets and Prophets eds., Woodie King and Earl Anthony (New York, New American Library Inc., 1972).

45) William Ferris Jr., "Racial Repertoires Among Blues Performers," from Ethnomusicology, Vol.XIV, Nr.3 (Middletown Connecticut, Society for Ethnomusicology, September, 1970) and Delta Blues (London, Studio Vista, 1970).

46) Abbe Niles, "The Story of the Blues", from Blues: An Anthology by W.C. Handy (New York, Macmillan, 1972), p.20. Also, "Shout Coon Shout", John J. Niles, from The Musical Quarterly, Vol.XVI, No.4. (Washington, Journal of Research in Music Education, 1930), p.523.

Newman Ivey White, named the 'Joe Turner Blues' as the forerunner of all other blues, dating it around 1895;⁴⁷⁾ Big Bill Broonzy also claimed that as the first he recalled as a child, also dating it in the late 1880s⁴⁸⁾. Malone dates the "... most well-defined and distinct phrase ... in the period between 1885 and World War I."⁴⁹⁾ That fact is corroborated by performer Mance Lipscomb who regarded blues as "... a particular slow-tempoed dance that became fashionable around World War I."⁵⁰⁾ Its form and structure he dated to an earlier period, "that was old when my daddy was young but so far what was called blues, that didn't come till around 1917. One of the first pieces that was strictly a blues was 'Blues in the Bottle'. What we had in my coming up days was music for dancing and it was of all different sorts."⁵¹⁾

The origin cannot be dated and speculation, a fruitless task⁵²⁾ Indeed, as Lawrence Levine points out, "... when the blues was created is less important than when it became a dominant musical form among Negroes throughout the

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- 47) Newman Ivey White, American Negro Folksongs, (Cambridge Mass., Harvard University Press, 1928) p.388.
- 48) William Broonzy, Big Bill Blues (London, Cassell, 1955).
- 49) Bill C. Malone, Country Music USA (Austin, Texas University Press, 1968) p.80.
- 50) Mack McCormick, "Mance Lipscomb", from American Folk Music Occasional, Nr.1, ed. Chris Strachwitz (Berkeley, American Folk Music Occasional, 1964), p.63.
- 51) Ibid., p.64.
- 52) Harold Courlander, Negro Folk Music USA (New York, Columbia University Press, 1963) p.128. Also Early Jazz, Gunther Schuller (New York, Oxford University Press, 1968), p.34.

country."⁵³⁾ He also elaborates in the non-musical, or extra-musical function where blues can express the "... conscious, the attitudes, the experiences of large numbers of Negroes in America."⁵⁴⁾ That expression is a secular oscillation or the "double consciousness"⁵⁵⁾ of a faction of a minority race or culture having to exist inside the bounds of a separate or different race, with absolute economic superiority, and fastidious in its control of that minority. One orbit, movement within the mainstream culture, was significantly injected with mainstream paranoia, ironically holding some benefit for a number of blacks. Herskovits, in 1941, wrote of the misconception of the natural ability of black Americans: "It has long been held that the principal contribution of the Negro to the culture of the America's, and most particularly to the culture of the United States, lies in the expression of his musical gift."⁵⁶⁾ In 1925 Van Vechten expressed the opinion where the black was "... always prone to express his deepest feeling in song ..."⁵⁷⁾

Three decades later, Abrahams elaborated on the theme but went much further to explain the large number of black

53) Lawrence W. Levine, Black Culture and Black Consciousness (New York, Oxford University Press, 1977), p.221.

54) Ibid.

55) Bernt Ostendorf, op.cit., p.216.

56) Melville J. Herskovits, The Myth of the Negro Past, Gloucester, Mass., Peter Smith, 1970), p.261.

57) Carl Van Vechten, "The Black Blues", Vanity Fair, Vol.24, No.6. facimile edition (Ann Arbor, Mich., University Microfilms Inc., 1966), p.57.

Americans, in proportion to population figures, in entertainment, and how it also became the first major area in which they were dominant: "Many fixed conceptions about the Negro concern their entertainment abilities, their musical abilities, their musical sense, their ability to hold a tune, their rhythmic sense. Naturally, these are just as false as fixed conceptions about any group, but the fact that the white world has this view of the Negro has made it possible for certain Negroes to make a success in the entertainment field."⁵⁸⁾

The problem in discussing black culture is to overcome the belief that it expresses its values from the mainstream cultural orbit, that it reflects the "... disadvantaged place of Negroes in America ... widely accepted as a complete account of black cultural life, which consequently has often escaped analysis as a rich, subtle, and varied drama of collective life ... in which a social group puts form into its experience and thereby creates the symbols of a collective life."⁵⁹⁾ Sidney Mintz, whilst describing on the one hand, Afro-American culture as "... the sociology of prejudice, economic exploitation, and discrimination,"

58) Roger B. Abrahams, Deep Down in the Jungle (Chicago, Aldine Publications Co., 1970) pp.36/37. Also Edward Lee, Music of the People, (London, Barrie A. Jenkins, 1970), p.94; Urban Blues, Charles Keil (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1970).

59) Albert Lee Kreisling, "Making of Racial Identities in the Black Press: A Cultural Analysis of Race Journalism in Chicago 1878-1929"(Ph.D. Thesis, Champaign-Urbana, University of Illinois, 1973), pp.52/53.

goes on to stress that the significance is, rather "... what those who are Afro-Americans have done with it, not in whether its origins are demonstrably African."⁶⁰⁾ Contribution is of a higher premium than genesis.

Acculturation and cultural intercourse were inescapable, but the oscillation was one in which black consciousness stepped into the literate world of white culture, and back to the aural/oral world of black. Ben Sidran makes, quite justifiably, "... the investigation of black music ... also the investigation of the black mind, the black social orientation, and primarily, the black culture."⁶¹⁾ In 1958, Ralph Ellison wrote in one paragraph a summary of black culture, which, he declares most appropriately "... takes its character from the experience of American slavery and the struggle for, and the achievement of, emancipation, from the dynamics of American race and caste discrimination, and from living in a highly industrialised and highly mobile society possessing a relatively high standard of living and an explicitly stated equalitarian concept of freedom. Its spiritual outlook is basically Protestant, its system of kinship is Western, its time and historical sense are American, and its secular values are those professed, ideally, at least, by all the people of the United

60) Sidney W. Mintz, Foreword to Afro-American Anthropology, Norman E. Whitten Jr., and John F. Szwed Jr (eds.), New York, Free Press, 1970), pp.12/13.

61) Ben Sidran, Black Talk (New York, Holt, Rinehart And Winston, 1971), pp. xi/xii.

States."⁶²⁾

But culture of the 'Race' was not a pejorative term, nor a sign of cultural parasitism. Race as a concept gathered its own momentum. In fact, it was a nucleus around which black Americans could consciously and unconsciously act and react. The temporal development of race shifts from a static rigid framework to "... an ongoing dramatic and social process ... of ever-changing ... identity and status."⁶³⁾

For the recording industry, race identity was tentative and reserved, but by the early 1920s, when the size of its market forced a decision, it moved progressively forward. In the pre-war years of 1922 the term 'coloured' was the race expletive. In the 'Talking Machine World', a trade journal, Okeh advertised its new product, "For the Colored Catalog"; Columbia advertised product as "... song hits by colored entertainers..."; and the Black Swan Company declared itself the "...only colored company."⁶⁴⁾ Some degree of equivocation existed until the term race became universal. In 1920, the Pace and Handy music publishers pursued for race idealisation, advertising in the black newspaper, the 'Chicago Defender' in July 1920: "Lovers of music everywhere, and those who desire to help in advance of the Race

62) Ralph Ellison, op.cit., pp.262/263. Also expressed by Zelma George, "Negro Music in American Life" from The American Negro Reference Book, (ed.) John P. Davis (Englewood Cliffs, New Jersey, Prentice-Hall Inc, 1966), pp.731/732.

63) Albert Lee Kreiling, op.cit., pp.458/459. On page 59, Kreiling writes "... it is dramatised again and again in the blues music which has given ritualistic expression to that experience for so many blacks."

64) Clifford R. Foreman, op.cit., p.107.

should be sure to buy their record as encouragement to the manufacturers for their liberal policy and to encourage other manufacturers who may not believe that the Race will buy records sung by its own singers."⁶⁵⁾ In 1922, Paramount and Okeh advertised once using the term Race as a category⁶⁶⁾. By mid-1923, the transition from coloured to race was permanent. Okeh, in April, advertised, "All the latest Race records" and in the next month as, 'The World's Greatest Race Artists on the World's Greatest Race Records."⁶⁷⁾ Paramount followed with "Real Music, Latest Songs, Genuine Race Music."⁶⁸⁾ By June the term was a fixed category, becoming the "... standard term employed and displayed in Paramount's advertising and sales approaches to Negro customers."⁶⁹⁾

The appropriateness of the term reflects the circulation of the product, specifically produced for the black American market, and advertised in black newspapers and "... no effort was made to sell them to members of non-black cultures."⁷⁰⁾ Universal use and acceptance of the term by the industry paralleled the established market/product strong bond and also identified it with product patronage, without malice. From then on it would benefit from stimulating "... attention, enjoy understanding, and imply a producer's particular accommodation of the wishes of Negro patrons."⁷¹⁾ Profit was not

65) Quoted from Foreman, ibid., p.66.

66) Ibid., p.102-104.

67) Ibid., p.108.

68) Ibid.

69) Ibid., pp.110/111.

70) Michael Taft. Draft to the Use of the Computer to Facilitate the Structural Analysis of the Afro-American Blues Lyrics, 1977. Presented to author.

71) Foreman, op.cit., p.119.

the sole issue, the attention given by other record companies expanded the market, and the opportunities for performers. The two large companies were the most conservative in procedure and market association. Victor, who in 1923 hardly had a share of the market, advertised its product as made by "... colored artists."⁷²⁾

The second parameter of race identification/association was the adoption by companies of individual race series, as opposed to cataloguing product in a general domestic retail inventory, which was the initial procedure. Race series were devices at labeling, like data banks, "... through which the principal accomodation of the music and entertainment preferences of the Negro consumer would be managed. Setting up the series would involve decisions about the audience and the products now at hand, but the series designation was a fundamental instrument of inventory ... useful to both producer and patron."⁷³⁾ White America's mistaken belief about the natural musical ability of the race transposed itself to its own choice of pictorial representation which industry and commerce, as well as entertainment, chose. In fact, how record companies advertised the music and artists in caricature, lay in society's "... heritage of beliefs about and images of the Negro ... and in the manufacturer's evaluation, self-conscious or not, of the relative desirability of various applications of language and graphics."⁷⁴⁾ Precedence lay in the way minstrelsy was marketed and consumed and provided

72) Ibid., p.118.

73) Ibid., p.99.

74) Ibid., pp.257/260.

a valuable graphic tool, ever acquiescent of white America's need to prescribe its own strategy for black stereotyping.⁷⁵⁾

The figure of the blues performer in absolute terms is an anachronism, at least until the post World War II period. A stricter terminology would be the performer, male or female, of blues or more accurately, "... really black singers whose repertoires include blues."⁷⁶⁾ The emphasis is on repertoire, recorded or unrecorded, effectively interpreted as a "... body of songs that he or she performs at any one occasion or period of time."⁷⁷⁾ The definition may, but need not, include an audience or consumer, although in the absence of others the performer becomes simultaneously the audience, depending upon the context. The difference applies to whether or not a performance is a rehearsal.

For the black performer, the crucial factor with respect to repertoire, was the racial content of audience. There is no evidence of whites performing for black audiences, whilst the contrary occurred regularly. Jug bands played regularly to white audiences in Memphis⁷⁸⁾; for performers, the racial make-up influenced the

75) See Jeff Titon, Down Home Blues, (Chicago, University of Illinois Press, 1977), pp.225-269. Also Hans Nathan, Dan Emmett and the Rise of Early Negro Minstrelsey, (Norman, University of Oklahoma Press, 1962).

76) David Evans, "Tradition and Creativity in the Folk Blues", Ph.D. thesis, (Los Angeles, University of California 1976) p.226.

77) Ibid., p.227.

78) Bengt Olsson, Memphis Jug Bands, (London, Studio Vista, 1970).

repertoire.⁷⁹⁾ Eddie Boyd speaking of that difference attests to the fact that he "... couldn't play no blues all night for no white people in those days ... They called that race music and niggerism and all that kind of stuff."⁸⁰⁾ William Ferris, discussing the repertoires' differences between performances before different racial groups, shows how two musicians play different songs which affected performance style and technique. One performer performing principally for white audiences found difficulty altering the 3.4 tempo of the 'white' songs to the quadruple time of the 'black'.⁸¹⁾

Performers who eventually migrated to Chicago were just as prone to the clubland audience preferences. Curtis Jones played such songs as 'Marie', 'Danny Boy', 'Stardust', occasionally with an unsuccessful accompaniment of Johnny Shines. Daddy Stovepipe preferred songs such as 'The Tennessee Waltz' and 'South of the Border', and Little Walter enjoyed performing waltzes and polkas.⁸²⁾

79) Lowell Fulson, Living Blues, Vo.2 No.5., and No.6. (Chicago, Living Blues Publications, Summer or Autumn, 1971); Paul Garon, "Yank Rachel in Louisville," from Nothing But the Blues, ed. Mike Leadbitter; Pete Welding, "Transcripts: Interview with Reverend Robert Wilkins," from John Edwards Memorial Foundation Newsletter, Vol.II, part 3. (Los Angeles, University of California, June 1967).

80) Jim and Amy O'Neal, "Eddie Boyd Interview", Living Blues, No.35, (Chicago, Living Blues Publications, November/December 1977) p.15.

81) William Ferris, Racial Repertoires, pp.446/447.

82) Mike Rowe, Chicago Breakdown, (London, Edison Press Ltd., 1973), p.43.

An anonymous testimony confirms, "I could play Arthur Big Boy Condup's stuff and I could go back and get some of Charley Patton's and get some of Peetie Wheatstraw's stuff. When white people be standing around I play some of Roy Acuff's y' know hill billy stuff - I mix it up. That's how I got more money ... be 25-30 dollars".⁸³⁾

Recording, however, did not mirror these repertoire preferences. Nor were they ever meant to. As products solely for a black consumers market, white-associated material was excluded, even though the black performers were familiar with them. Frank Walker, during field recordings in the South, was careful to keep black and white musicians separate during sessions⁸⁴⁾, a normal practice. Segregation was total, despite interest shown by various members unable to overcome the prevailing attitude.⁸⁵⁾ There is no evidence of the industry wishing to exploit penetration of either market by the other race. In fact, it was very guarded. Except for the early cylinder recordings, regarded as novelty, made specifically for the wealthier white consumption, the different kinds of music were kept separate.

Implicit with repertoire is the understanding of blues as a song-form. Again, blues as a song is an anachronism, but it had enormous implications because of the demand for four different songs. That requirement was really an impossible bargaining position and revealed how little the

83) Ibid., p.157.

84) R.C. Foreman, op.cit., p.162.

85) Arnold Shaw, op.cit., pp. 264, 335/336; Colin Scott and Martin Hawkins, Catalyst: The Sun Records Story (London, Aquarius Books, 1973), p.51.

companies understood the music they preserved on shellac. The blues song was initially as much a method of composition, as it was an aural object. Even established recording performers who 'penned' blues songs in the studio did not totally abandon this practice, despite a concentration on a lyrical theme. Of course, a number of rules established the format from which blues were created, the most critical being the twelve-bar, three-line, stanza. This was the basic unit of recorded blues, established by Jefferson, with a small melodic range. Repertoires were produced in much the way that Charlie Patton created his blues, from a small number of melodies taking shape by joining "... a few stanzas about ... whatever the subject mentioned in the title."⁸⁶⁾ Lester Melrose in attempting to produce the best recording had to record a number of times to select, in his estimation, the best sections.⁸⁷⁾

Paramount with repertoire was the technique of composition and composition/performance. And the impact of recording on that technique, particularly in demonstrating the different attitudes between the urban entertainment/rural functional mythology, and the audiences who patronised each, becoming influenced by the media. For the established club and tavern performance context, employment was influenced by recording successes, and they in turn, identified the performer to his or her audience. The

86) Jeff Titon, "Review of Charley Patton, John Edwards Memorial Foundation Quarterly, Vol.II, part 3 (Los Angeles, University of California Press, June 1967), p.53.

87) Lester Melrose "My Life in Recording" from The Folk Music Occasional (eds.) Chris Strachwitz and Pete Welding (New York, Oak Publications, 1970) p.6.

performer was then in a vulnerable position vis-a-vis audience and employer expectations; to go far beyond one's recorded repertoire alienated loyalties, and affected each relationship. By this stage, all parties had been re-educated to accept these conditions nurturing another myth, that of performance satisfying a consumer appetite alone. The situation becomes a repertoire of recorded songs, those associated with the performer, or to others, and those not yet recorded.

In the rural milieu the situation tends to be more complex because of alternate circumstances, influencing composition, performance, performer, audience and repertoire, all inter-related:

Many folk blues singers do not learn or compose blues at some particular point in time and then repeat them the same way in all subsequent performances. Instead, each blues performance often produces a new song, one that may never again be performed by the singer. In such cases, composition and performance are identical and inseparable. The blues singer does not have a blues repertoire of distinct songs but a collection of lyric melodic and instrumental elements that he uses in various combinations to produce these blues performances. This collection of elements is the real repertoire of such a folk blues singer. (88)

Evans elaborates on the meaning of self-composition for a performer, "... he may simply mean that he has produced an 'original' combination of traditional elements, that he has given a piece a new tune, accompaniment, or arrangement, or simply that he has personalized a song through some meaningful association with the lyrics."⁸⁹⁾ One of those

88) David Evans, op.cit., p.236.

89) Ibid., p.238.

elements was the recording, which quickly influenced performers, whether they had recorded or not.

The content of the "... type of sorrowsong of the American Negro,"⁹⁰⁾ gave rise to the erroneous belief of strict autobiography, as opposed to race biography, or "... ritualistic expression ... for so many blacks."⁹¹⁾ Yet as Robert Wilkins asserted "... one need not personally undergo the experiences related in a blues song; the singer often can take as his song material occurrences that have befallen others, his friends and neighbours."⁹²⁾ Maud Cuney-Hare, in 1936, wrote that the "...large body of work songs in the making and the vulgar so-called social songs of the Negro underworld, now interesting a group of educators and writers, play little part in the history of Negro music. They are neither popular songs nor true folk songs of the race at large."⁹³⁾ Cuney-Hare spoke of the spirituals as the only authentic black folk music. The translation of the experience Wilkins speaks of, is missed by Cuney-Hare, and forms much of the total blues repertoire, but not all. Established and popular recordings combine stanzas of metaphors of experience with "... styles of other musicians who play the blues."⁹⁴⁾

90) Theresa C. Brakeley, Dictionary of Folklore, Mythology and Legend, Vol.I (ed.) Maria Lead (New York, Funk and Wagnalls Co., 1949), p.15.

91) Albert Lee Kreiling, op.cit., p.59.

92) Pete Welding, "Tapescripts: Interview with Reverend Robert Wilkins, John Edwards Memorial Foundation Newsletter, Vol. II, part 3 (Los Angeles, University of California Press, June 1967), p.55.

93) Maud Cuney-Hare, Negro Musicians and Their Music, (New York, Da Capo Press, 1974), first published 1936, p.78).

94) Albert Murray, The Hero and the Blues, (University of Missouri Press, 1973), p.83.

Indeed, lines of a stanza, or rhythmic, melodic phrases associated with particular performers were as freely made use of, and on occasion, became even more popular. The attraction brought on by the attention of a hit recording made song elements extremely fallible, and fuelled creative energy.⁹⁵⁾

A brief note about lyrical content about which much has been written in analysing the black social and economic situation.⁹⁶⁾ In a survey of blues content of songs recorded between 1920 and 1950, Leonard Goines cites ten general

95) Barney Pearson, "The Late Great Elmore James, Keystone Folklore Quarterly, Vol. XVII, No.4. (Pittsburgh, Penn., Pittsburgh Folklore Society, 1972) p.164.

96) Paul Oliver, Blues Fell This Morning (London, Cassell & Co., 1960); Screening the Blues (Cassell, 1968); Samuel B. Charters, The Poetry of the Blues (New York, Oak Publications, 1963); Iain Laing, Jazz in Perspective (London, Jazz Book Club, 1957); Harry Oster, Living Country Blues, (New York, Minerva Press, 1975); Paul Garon, The Devil's Son In Law, (London, Studio Vista, 1971); Blues and the Poetic Spirit, (London, Edison Press Ltd., 1975); Frederic Ramsey Jr., Been Here and Gone, New Jersey, Rutgers University Press, 1969); George Mitchell, Blow My Blues Away, (Baton Rouge, Louisiana State University Press, 1971); John W. Work, American Negro Songs and Spirituals (New York, Bonanza Books, 1940); Dorothy Scarborough, On The Trail of Negro Folk Songs, (Cambridge, Mass., Harvard University Press, 1925); Howard W. Odum and Guy B. Johnson, The Negro and His Songs, (Westport, Conn., Negro Universities Press, 1972), (originally published 1925); Negro Workaday Songs, (New York, Negro Universities Press, 1969), originally published in 1926.

topics "... in the lives of Black men, which appear to be consistently explored in the blues."⁹⁷⁾ In order of highest occurrence, Goines lists as follows, using his descriptions: sex and boasting; travelling and its problems; work and its problems; love and physical attractions; gambling, dances and stimulants; natural disasters and war; jail, work farms and wardens; big city life; death; fears and suspicions.

The single most crucial aesthetic consideration in blues lyrics is truth, or sounding "... right" ⁹⁸⁾, omnipotent in its piety. And as stanzas need not be autobiographical, nor need this truth. Indeed, the performer might sing "... something that is true to life, something that represents a typical experience or thought for people in the singer's community or audience ... even if the words of a folk blues represent a fantasy for their singer, they are reality for someone else close to the singer or a fantasy in which others can easily share."⁹⁹⁾ To the performer, it is incontestable; to the critic and cultural interpreter, it comes second to the catharsis cynosure. For the latter the debate falls into three camps: that the catharsis is purely a selfish activity; that the blues performer acts as shaman for the community, whether it be a local or national one; that the catharsis

97) Leonard Goines, "Blues as Black Therapy" from Black World (Chicago, Johnson Publication Co., November, 1973) pp.31-

98) Harold Courlander, op.cit., p.126.

99) David Evans, "Structures and Meaning in the Folk Blues" from The Study of American Folklore by Jan Harold Brunvan (New York, W.W. Norton, 1978) p.443.

is both individual and communal.

Writing in 1926, Odum and Johnson described blues as "... the expression of self-pity",¹⁰⁰⁾ which they described as the principal feature. They begin with self-catharsis then move to the audience: "There seems to be a tendency for the despondent or blue singer to use the technique of the martyr to draw from others a reaction of sympathy."¹⁰¹⁾ Sharecropper and performer share in the catharsis for the self, "Blues is a company-keeper. Picker can be out there or you can be out there working, in the fields, be lonesome out their working. And then things will run across your mind and you pick it up and go humming and singing. Your work comes easy to you. You gets pacified."¹⁰²⁾ The belief in the blues performer as shaman with the ability for "... release of sorrows"¹⁰³⁾ is strongest. When personal experiences or witness is shared by audience "... not only can blues function as self-expression, catharsis, and therapy for the singer, but they also fulfill the same needs for the audience."¹⁰⁴⁾ Should these needs be unfulfilled, audiences will shift patronage.

The shaman thesis widens for both performer and audience such that the performer becomes the leader and hero of

100) Howard W. Odum and Guy B. Johnson, op.cit., p.19. Also Carl Van Vechten, op.cit., p.57; David Ewen, Men of Popular Music, (Chicago, Ziff-Davis Pub. Co. 1944), pp.63-67.; Harold Courlander, op.cit., p.128.

101) Odum and Johnson, op.cit., p.20.

102) George Mitchell, op.cit., p.31.

103) Mike Rowe, op.cit., p.123.

104) David Evans, 1976, op.cit., pp.422/423.

the community, and the community becomes the whole "... black ego ... where pain of catharsis and the joy of assertion [of that ego] are not inconsistent and are both resolved in the blues."¹⁰⁵⁾ As leader and hero the blues performer is credited with the creativity of a song form which acts "... therapeutically to both the singer and his audience ..." ¹⁰⁶⁾ when at the same moment the capacity to do so, bestows that leadership, transcending therapy of a "... primarily personal music into ... a social one."¹⁰⁷⁾ That becomes important when migration from an agricultural community exposes the migrators to a community of individuals in an industrial landscape. Thus catharsis creates discourse and hero by manipulation of social, economic, and psychological hardship, " ... making victory out of what seemed like defeat."¹⁰⁸⁾ The universality of the form, its limited and rigid structure, and common pool of stanza elements enables "... almost any blues player to sit in with any other."¹⁰⁹⁾

A contrary opinion portrays the blues performer as the anti-hero, who is celebrated and chastised by opposing factions of the community - those who accept spiritual leadership and those who accept secular. The consensus within

105) Ben Sidran, op.cit., p.36.

106) Roger B. Abrahams, op.cit., p.56.

107) David Evans, 1976, op.cit., p.435.

108) Roger Abrahams, op.cit., p.56.

109) Peter Guralnick, op.cit., pp.21/22.

black and white communities is to approve of, and show respect for, the spiritual leader, whilst making the secular as a "...shadowy, sinful, aggressive, footloose wanderer, free to move between sexual partners and to pull up stakes as conditions call for it."¹¹⁰⁾ This point of view is in no small way sympathetic with one held by those who infer that blues is a simple statement of personal facts, unconcerned with audience or community¹¹¹⁾. In such light the blues performer denies the community its own ego; "... it does not speak for the community as an entity, whose progress is necessary for the advancement of its members, but deals with the community only as the sum of individuals who experience common trials and tribulations."¹¹²⁾

Leroi Jones wrote of blues as a "native American music, the product of the black man in this country ... blues could not exist if the African captives had not become American captives."¹¹³⁾ Echoing Ellison's words, it was a product sprung during the transition from legal bondage to illegal bondage of a particular social group, in a pre-recorded, pre-mechanical age. In extra-musical terms it had surpassed the "... transition from African slave to Afro-American."¹¹⁴⁾

110) John F. Szwed, op.cit., p.267.

111) Paul Oliver, 1960, op.cit., p.267.

112) Robert Springer, op.cit., p.285.

113) Leroi Jones, op.cit., p.17; Also Beatrice Landeck, Echoes of Africa (New York, David MacKay Co.Inc., 1961), p.156.

114) John F. Szwed, op.cit., p.118.

CHAPTER VII

Recording as a Cultural Object

In Understanding Media, Marshall McLuhan described the invention of the phonograph as "... an extension and amplification of the voice that may well have diminished vocal activity."¹⁾ As it turned out, vocal activity did not diminish; instead, as he pointed out earlier on, did "... initiate new ratios"²⁾, or, a metamorphosis, in the meaning of performance.

Recording evolved a number of contradictions. In so far as it permanently secured a piece of music in this instance, in time and space, it simultaneously destroyed that same item. It brought nineteenth century man into the twentieth, without totally halting the former. It also

1) Marshall McLuhan, Understanding Media (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1964), pp.275/6.

2) Ibid., p.53.

brought together a number of cultures, awkwardly classified, high, medium and low, in such a way that it confused the substance of object and consciousness of each culture, with their boundaries.

The principal factor was the cloning of objects by industrialisation - mechanical, later electrical, reproduction - or mass production. Object now becomes commodity. For music and song, this created a new sensibility and a comparable aesthetic, the isochronous musical performance. The transition from ritual to commercial exploitation³⁾ and dependence upon fallible technology also gave the twentieth-century a unit of time based on the tracking of a thermoplastic disc. When industry changed the playback speed from 78 revolutions per minute, its original speed, to 45, with appropriate reduction in size, the time scale remained unaltered, despite the capability. The displacement of mechanical technology by electricity, did little to alter the object; it increased frequency dynamics and aural sensitivity, a point record companies were not slow to exploit as a short-lived novel sales tactic.

Benjamin separates object into the polar extremes of cult and exhibitionist values, about which reproduction altered the emphasis. As cult object, he assumes "... what mattered was their existence, not their being on view."⁴⁾

3) Walter Benjamin, Illuminations (London, Jonathan Cape, 1970), p.239. Benjamin describes it as a move into the political arena, yet ignores the fact that ritual was not outside the bounds of politics.

4) Ibid., p.240.

Ultimately, exhibitionist gratification was immaterial, yet the overwhelming precept is exactly on public viewing, whether it approved or not was not important as object. Reproduction made public approval the most important requirement, for the market overruled cult immediacy.

The speed of urbanism through industrialisation coincided with what Charles Seeger named the 'Make America Musical' circle change and court the 'Sell American Music' lobby.⁵⁾ The importance of the spread of urbanism was that by the early 1920s "... urban values had long set the tone and defined the aspirations of American culture."⁶⁾

Urban values were imbued with the property of acculturation where the "... former world of experience no longer exists As a result of the breakdown of isolation, increase in literacy, in the growing importance of the press and other printed matter; the awakening interest of the people toward the movies, the radio, the juke-box, and general city ways."⁷⁾ And Marxist, János Márothy, equated urbanism of a particular kind with the rise of blues as a new kind of proletarian art. He described it as the period "... no longer the age of mass wandering from one work camp to another, with large armies of labourers moving together; it is the period of emerging big cities with the inevitable slum quarters."⁸⁾

5) Charles Seeger, "Music and Class Structure in the United States", American Quarterly, Vol. IX, part 3, (Philadelphia, American Studies Association, 1957), p.288.

6) Carl N. Degler, Out of Our Past (London, Harper and Row, 1970), pp.226-7.

7) Samuel C. Adams, Jr., "The Acculturation of the Delta Negro", from Motherwit from the Laughing Barrel, ed. Alan Dundes (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., Prentice-Hall Inc., 1973), pp.516-7.

8) János Márothy, Music and the Bourgeois Music and the Proletarian, trs. by Eva Bóna (Budapest, Akadémia Kiadó, 1974)

Edison named his phonograph invention after his original intention of storing telephone messages on paper. Literally it translated, from the Greek, as 'written sound'. His cylinder, and later Berliner's disc became, amongst other things, a store of music information, an early kind of data bank. The necessity to move from commerce to entertainment was one in which technology ineffectively serving industry, became one which industry exploited handsomely. And as an offspring of industrialisation, the mass communications industry and its associate membership - bankers, engineers, traders, manufacturers - when close to mortality, not only 'discovered' American music in one sense, but collected it, disseminated and decentralised it. All at once it created and destroyed the illusion of geographic exclusiveness of different genre's of music.

Location and aesthetic were important to performer, audience and performance within each community, where the community "... extends only as far as there extends an effectual transmission of information ... a measure of the effective size of a group is given by the size which it must have to have achieved a certain stated degree of autonomy."⁹⁾ Jan Vansina expressed similar opinions though stressing a functional approach: "... every tradition exists as such only in virtue of the fact that it serves the interests of the society in which it is preserved, whether it does so directly, or indirectly. ... It's significance

9) Norbert Wiener, *Cybernetics, or Control and Communication in the Animal and the Machine* (Cambridge, Mass., MIT Press, 1962), p.158.

in relation to society is ... its function."¹⁰⁾

Music, as one cultural parameter, informed of culture and cultural history of one community, to itself, and to others. In this case, the blues performance, recorded or unrecorded, is the sum of a number of specific secular relationships within a community, whether that be a small rural autonomy, or half the North American continent. Its effectiveness is maintained by communication and information exchange in essentially an oral/aural world. And one coexisting in a predominantly white literate-organised society.

Early dissemination of recorded product by newspaper with its high visual content, also affected autonomy of black and white communities, separately, and together. It instigated changes in performance evaluation, expectation, and function of performance. Writing about the effect of the invention of the alphabet on oral expression, Socrates mournfully believed, "... forgetfulness in the learners' souls, because they will not use their memories; they will trust to the external written characters and not remember of themselves."¹¹⁾

The analogy between the inventions of the alphabet and phonograph is pertinent. Recording displaced the performer from the pre-recorded performance context, a position to which return was no longer possible. The crisis encroaching performance-after-recording was one of rigorously

10) Jan Vansina, Oral Tradition, trs. H.M. Wright (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1965), p.78.

11) Quoted from Medium Is the Message, Marshall McLuhan and Quentin Fiore (Harmondsworth, Penguin Books Ltd., 1967) p.113.

applying attitudes and beliefs of pre-recorded and recorded-influenced blues, to recorded and reproduced blues performances. In so far as each occasioned similar ends along different means, the transition instigated inevitable differences; mechanical reproduction represented something new.¹²⁾ Audiences too were displaced. Recording educated them into becoming consumers of a new order. It did mean that they were physically immune to earlier entertainment because of segregation, but psychologically prepared for change. As consumer, expenditure was extensive, desire and market penetration was quite stable until saturation point reached by the late thirties. Relevant here is the changing understanding of consumption, from a state where "... satisfaction derived from goods and services ..." becomes "... the degree to which goods and services are desired."¹³⁾ Desirability with black consumers had special significance with racial identification and culture. Blacks were quite prepared to buy recordings at a price that did not match their, below white-American, wages. Cult association was indeed high-pitched.

The relationship of content to form and structure for a particular style, before and after recording, depended upon a number of priorities for each performance, which

12) W. Benjamin, op.cit., p.220.

13) Arthur Seldon and F.G. Pennance, Everyman's Dictionary of Economics (J.M. Dent and Sons Ltd., London, 1976), p.76.

included the performer no less. These priorities altered as recording influenced performance context, and mass entertainment increasingly took hold of the media. Initially the emphasis was on performance alone; it affected form and content by the manner content was to function, be it a solitary experience or social event, cathartic or otherwise. Structure was dynamic because content and form were variable, both differentials of time. The duration of the event depended upon success or failure with an audience. It was very much a direct and immediate system of feedback. Performance autonomy here was essentially limited to a conglomerate of communities, served sufficiently and successfully by local performers, and some peregrinatioous ones. And this conglomerate fashioned a high number of styles, although structure was a basic throughout. Indeed, the simplicity and limitations of structure was a prominent feature along such a horizon; details such as instrumentation or technique in musicianship did not radically affect structure or meaning.

With recording came a new set of priorities in which industry and its growth were governed by technical limitations. Content was at the mercy of form and structure, both becoming much less dynamic for each model. And with the change from audience to consumer, variability in content was predominantly in the hands of the performers and record producers, who, with the consumer, no longer had a choice in its duration. Implicit with these changes was a significant shift in the control and meaning of performance, performer, and a concomitant break-up of communities into

virtually one geographical whole. A successful recording commercially, rather than the success of a recording, had a magical effect, in that performer became a desirable and commercial property to be exploited with related recorded products. Black consumers, prepared for the change, totally absorbed the process, and the power to ascribe success or failure to a performance was realised in economic terms as significantly as it was on aesthetic evaluation. Aesthetic success did not, however, always match economic success.

Although industrialisation resulted in northern migration of parts of black communities, it did not physically break communities in the rural South. Records and recordings, however, did manage that task. Individuals, including performers, surrendered to styles outside their own autonomy, thus embracing other communities. This had occurred with performers wandering around the South picking up pieces of information for their own benefit. But now it was a time of great exchange of musical and cultural information. Despite a faster rate of urbanisation in the North, with its location of industrial centres, the first models and ideas came from the South. For less than five years Southern rural styles dominated the market. After that, two successful northern recordings forever eradicated autonomies for both consumer and performer. Not even the classic blues by the female vaudeville singers had such an effect, despite the tremendous popularity of Bessie Smith and Ma Rainey.

And yet it symbolised a particular kind of freedom.

When, in 1920, with the first recording, came the first secular expression by blacks on their own terms, despite the fact that it was a white owned and controlled industry. Although black performers were not new, previous appearances projected stereotypes of blacks to accomodate white psychology yet enable blacks to manoeuver effectively. It was not total freedom, however; industry, insecure at the start, continued using stereotyped imagery to sell its products. Later this changed to lists of recordings.

Because the market was solely black, and the rest of the media did not use black recordings of most of the performers, restrictions were fewer. Only one aspect dominated, commerciality. Keeping blacks into one segregated autonomy, content was not censored except for explicit sexuality in almost all cases and there was virtual freedom to put down whatever performers wished, or were advised to. Content was confined by the profit motive to safeguard the interests of white-owned copyright in most cases, and not with expression or communication.

The development and evolution of models was both synchronic and diachronic; one successful model was replaced by another following atrophy in the market. But each model continued to be recorded alongside the next, progressing along its own direction. And by altering performance meaning, recording essentially lead to a transformation of the song, most apparant in its mishandling of performance/ composition and total misunderstanding of the oral process. This was by far the most important instrument of change

which companies brought about because in the strictest sense each individual recording was a separate and new song. For the companies it was an attempt at producing the perfect commercial commodity. Melrose is a specific example of selecting "... the best verses ..." ¹⁴⁾ from multi-recording; Decca had the "... habit of recording a number, playing back the 'mother' ... so that the producers could find any weaknesses and then cutting another exactly the same." ¹⁵⁾ Of course, it never was exactly the same. The ambiguity was, in fact, communication of ideas and information, within each community. Once the concept of recording, and its pecuniary benefits had penetrated the community, it transformed it into one national autonomy and the emphasis shifted quickly in the direction of the studio performance context.

Pre-recorded black secular music has very strong associations with its rural background and is, in fact, heavily labelled as folk music by countless

14) Lester Melrose "My Life in Recording" from The Folk Music Occasional, (eds.) Chris Strachwitz and Pete Welding, (New York, Oak Publications, 1970), p.61.

15) Bruce Bastin, Crying for the Carolinas (London, Studio Vista, 1971) p.36.

writers.¹⁶⁾ Implicit is a notion of tradition and a belief in aesthetic authenticity because of its uncommercial origins. In 1931 Bartok wrote an essay on folk music basing his ideas on his own studies of Hungarian music. In it he equated folk music to a combination of popular art music and peasant music. It was a curious mixture of the three cultural labels of high, medium and low, which included the influence of the urban environment. He developed the idea of peasant music as "... a spontaneous expression of the musical feelings of that class."¹⁷⁾ That class was, in fact, the "... population employed in producing prime requisites and materials."¹⁸⁾ Bartok had pinpointed two parameters long held sacred for definition of the music, that it is the unconscious act of the illiterate and rural proletarian class.

16) Abbe Niles, "The Story of the Blues" from Blues: An Anthology, by W.C. Harply (New York, Macmillan, 1972) p.12.; Edgar Rogie Clark, "Negro Folk Music in America" from Journal of American Folklore, Vol. 64 No.253, (Boston, American Folklore Society, 1951), p.287; Bill C. Malone, Country Music USA, (London, University of Texas Press, 1968), p.23; George Herzog, "Song: Folk Song and the Music of the Folk Song". from Dictionary of Folklore Mythology and Legend (ed.) Maria Leach (New York, Funk Wagnalls Co., 1950) p.1033; Norman Charles, "Social Values in American Popular Songs 1890-1950", Dissertation in American Civilisation (Pennsylvania, University of Pennsylvania, 1958), p.3; Joseph Bernsman and Bernard Rosenberg, "Mass Media and Mass Culture", from America As a Mass Society, (ed.) Philip Olson (New York, Free Press of Glencoe, 1963), pp.116/117; Maud Karpeles, "The Distinction Between Folk and Popular Music", from International Folk Music Council Journal, Vol. XX (Urbana, Ill., University of Illinois Press, Yearbook, 1968), pp.10/11.

17) Benjamin Suchoff (ed.) Bela Bartok Essays (London, Faber and Faber, 1976), p.5.

18) Ibid., p.6.

Despite the almost impossible task at defining the music, the statement concerns itself with a small number of concepts. It recognises the music as property within a particular geographical spread and includes a specific form of communication, i.e., oral. Within the last decade the concept of performance has been recognised as an integral part, as the "... realisation ... of a social event ... transcendent of the ordinary course of events."¹⁹⁾ This last point brings into focus certain aspects of aesthetics and conditions of authenticity, hitherto unconsidered. What becomes apparent is the disparaging position recording is placed in, when discussing the music. In 1928 Newman Ivey White counted the blues of the period as "... secondary folk origin; their primary source is the phonograph record."²⁰⁾ John Lomax, four years later, believed that the "... Negro in the South is the target for such complex influences that it is hard to find genuine folk singing ..."²¹⁾

Ironically, but to their credit, Odum and Johnson, writing in 1926, did not discount the influence of recording; in fact, they perceptively saw it as part of the composition process:

When a blues record is issued it quickly becomes the property of a million Negro workers and adventurers who never bought it and perhaps never heard it played.

19) Dell Hymes "Breakthrough into Performance," from Folklore. Performance and Communication (eds.), Dan Ben-Ames and Kenneth S. Goldstein (The Hague, Mouton, 1975), p.13.

20) Newman Ivey White, American Negro Folksongs (Cambridge, Mass. Harvard University Press, 1928), p.390.

21) John Lomax, Letter written in application for funds from the Carnegie Foundation, quoted from Adventures of a Ballad Hunter, John A. Lomax (New York, Macmillan, 1947), pp.128-129.

Sometimes they do not even know that the song is from a record. They may recognise in it parts of songs long familiar to them and think that it is just another piece which some songster has put together. Their desire to invent a different version their skill at adopting stanzas of old favorites to the new music, and sometimes their misunderstanding of the words of the new song, result in the transformation of the song into many local variants. In other words, the folk creative process operates upon a song, the origin of which may already be mixed, and produces in turn variations that may later become the bases of other formal blues. (22)

Bill Malone, in 1968, considered folksong "... in the pure sense, as meaning a traditional song of unknown origin existing in the form of scattered variants ... the song could have come from the pen of a professional composer writing for contemporary tastes. ... If the folk accept a song, then it is a folksong regardless of its origin or quality."²³⁾ Such an outlook was a significant step forward, but to propose music as property suggests an awkward dialectic. It argues for ownership by the community as a whole, "... the songs must be in the possession of the folk, communally owned."²⁴⁾ Against that anonymity of origin, the same community will openly accept and call its own, a specific mechanical or electrical construct from a particular point in space and time.

When the collecting of white rural music was at its height, by the beginning of the twentieth century, Henry Krehbiel had theorised music as communal property, "... not

22) Howard W. Odum and Guy B. Johnson, op.cit., p.25.

23) Bill C. Malone, op.cit., p.23.

24) John Greenway, American Folksongs of Protest, (New York, Octogon Books, 1971), p.8.

only the song admired of the people but ... the song created by the people."²⁵⁾ This attitude became almost a credo for succeeding authors, even when recording was such a powerful force.

As communal property the song becomes the subject/object of a process of categorizing information about the community. It adheres more closely to the concept of "... unrecorded mentifacts. One of the corollaries is that no text as such is a real folkloristic item: texts are only records of mentifacts."²⁶⁾ The artifact is information about a community, or even a culture within a community. In reality there never is one such "... folk from the point of view of folk-lore, but instead many folk groups, as many as there are regional cultures or occupations or racial groups within a region,"²⁷⁾ or community, or autonomy.

The contradictions inherent in communal possession and creation are given in the following assertion about the performer of a community; "... he must not introduce ideas or concepts that are uncommon, nor may he indelibly impress his own individuality upon the song. His function is not that of a consciously creative artist, but that of a spokesman for the community. ... His impersonality of

25) Henry Edward Krehbiel, Afro-American Folksongs (New York G. Schirmer, 1914), p.2.

26) Elli Kõngäs Maranda and Pierre Maranda, Structural Models in Folklore and Transformational Essays (The Hague, Mouton 1971), p.16.

27) Ian Russell, "Traditional Singing in West Sheffield 1970-2", Ph.D. Thesis, Department of English Language, Sheffield University, 1977, p.3.

authorship, ... anonymity of authorship, that is a requisite of genuine folksong ... the songs must be in the possession of the folk, communally owned, so that any member of the folk may feel that they are his to change if he wishes."²⁸⁾ To take the last point, that any member may change a song, the assumption about the performer always had been that each member of the community was a natural singer or musician. In actual fact, only particular individuals choose to become performers, either in their non-working time, or as professionals. This does not mean that many did not take part in performance, e.g. in work songs. The conscious decision, with or without a specific reason, was taken from the community for that very reason. Not every member is born with, or develops, the skills required to receive communal recognition. Approval of performance need not involve a common consensus; secular interests almost always clashed with spiritual. Long before recording, a small membership took to performing as a full-time occupation, particularly the blind. Recording separated this group even more and added to their status because of success as a recording artist.

The point about anonymity and impersonal rendering of songs as property is well refuted by David Evans²⁹⁾ in his discussion of the effect of recording. Authorship of songs, or more especially, stanzas and lines is difficult to pin down to specific individuals. This remains true at the first stages of recording. For example, to distinguish

28) John Greenway, op.cit., p.8.

29) David Evans, "Tradition and Creativity in the Folk Blues", Ph.D. thesis, University of California, Los Angeles. 1976).

between lines 'penned' by Blind Lemon Jefferson, and those he selected from his travels is almost impossible. Even later recordings used phrases or lines that could be traced back in time, though not to any performer. It is true that a number of successful recordings had very strong associations with performers, who were well respected to that achievement. The whole question became an issue because of economics and the ownership of copyright. But to other performers free and casual borrowing continued as before. Recording had not altered the composition process except that it radically speeded up the exchange of ideas and information over a whole new geography. As property, recording belonged to the industrial context. The distribution of soft-ware technology was simply a matter of time for consumers. As industrial autonomy extended, so did performers' autonomy, as far as each recording was reproduced. Industry did not attach folk nomenclature to the music of black and white Americans until the mid-1930s.³⁰⁾ To designate recorded object as property terms as race, jazz, blues, spirituals, sacred, old-time, mountain or southern were used. The term 'folk' was first bestowed upon music of European immigrants; in July 1925, the General Phonograph Corporation issued the first recording of a Cajun folksong.

Blues as a folk music has always been regarded in a rural context, and the prevailing attitude concluding that

30) Archie Green, Only a Miner (London, University of Illinois Press, 1972), p.46.

"... little folk music, if any, was created by the Negro in the city."³¹⁾ Further, "... new forms of social and political organisation which appear to be necessary concomitants of an industrial economy, and the material products themselves of such an economy, are not conclusive to the continuation of folk culture."³²⁾ Such beliefs negate the parameters of communication, as Maud Karpeles asserts, the texts belong to "... the pre-literate stage of mankind, when in the absence of written or printed records, or mechanical recordings, a song was not tied to a definite form. ..."³³⁾ What is here described is oral/aural transmission, but Karpeles is a little myopic by continuing "... the process ... have no opportunity of operating because the song is constantly being referred back to the original."³⁴⁾ Only those who produced the original may have the necessity of returning to it, those who begin from the original, determine their new form by personal changes unique to themselves. That process continues even when the subject matter is drastically cut by recording.

Communication in performance has several levels. It is either to the entire secular autonomy, or to the individual alone, through personal identification. Bernsman and

31) Edgar Rogie Clark, op.cit., p.287; Russell Ames, The Story of American Folk Song (New York, Gossett and Dunlop, 1960) p.264.

32) George M. Foster, "What is Folk Culture?", American Anthropologist, Vol. 55, No.2, part 1, p.171.

33) Maud Karpeles, op.cit., p.10.

34) Ibid., p.11.

Rosenberg envisaged a simplistic model for folk-society and its "... system of communication. The culture of a folk society is transmitted by direct contact through simple, all-embracing channels of communication. Every member of such a society is involved in that process. He communicates with his fellows on a one-to-one, face-to-face, direct, and personal basis ... carried out so comprehensively."³⁵⁾

Put another way, it is imbued with "... the power to communicate directly with everyone."³⁶⁾ Both these opinions share the idea of a limited size of autonomy, sparse population and a minimum of social-economic differentiation, i.e. a rural base.

Communication during performance carries a number of aesthetic properties and values which are unique to each kind of performance. In oral communication the process is not as Abrahams and Foss argue, a "... continuation of a tradition ... created by those who are much less conscious of the aesthetic principles."³⁷⁾ For blues performers the most important consideration of speaking a biographical or metaphorical truth, is a conscious declaration which never escapes performance, not even with recording. The value of function is one which is heavily loaded on oral communication; is one often neglected in literate orientated works. That

35) Joseph Bernsman and Bernard Rosenberg, op.cit., pp.166/7.

36) Gilbert Seldes, "The People and the Arts" from Mass Culture (eds.) B. Rosenberg and D. Manning White, (London, Free Press of Glencoe, 1964) p.79.

37) Roger D. Abrahams and George Foss, Anglo-American Folksong Style (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., Prentice-Hall Inc., 1968), p.6.

these function in different ways seems to be ignored. A painting exists for a completely different set of values and needs, to a recording of, for example, the 'How Long How Long Blues'.

The oral articulation of meaning and function is fundamental for the autonomies of blues performers. And despite a certain degree of literate adoptions - the use of black newspapers to advertise products in the North and South - it totally dominated the composition and learning technique. It dictated in the recording studio and even spread to other areas of the media industry. The phonograph, the radio, talking movies all existed independent of a written language. Personal meaning did not need literacy, the radio and phonograph was subject to the ear alone, the moving picture, even with words between scenes, to the illiterate eye.

Ruth Finnegan defined orality simply in terms of non-literate production and dissemination, "... distribution, composition or performance are by word of mouth and not through reliance on the written or printed word."³⁸⁾ In reality the worlds of oral and non-oral were never totally isolated, and were interchangeable in media and communication. Oral texts "... cross into the domain of written literature and the plastic and musical arts ..., oral circulation of songs and tales has been affected by print."³⁹⁾ Here, print

38) Ruth Finnegan, Oral Poetry (Cambridge, Cambridge University Press, 1977), p.16.

39) Dan Ben-Amos, "Toward a Definition of Folklore in Context", from Toward New Perspectives in Folklore (eds.) Americo Paredes and Richard Bauman, (Austin, University of Texas Press, 1972), p.14.

and recording are interchangeable.

Finnegan tends to keep apart composition, performance and transmission. To this end, each performance is unique and, she continues, "... an oral poem is an essentially ephemeral work of art, and has no existence or continuity apart from its performance."⁴⁰⁾ However, the mere fact of endless reproduction of a recording, alies itself to a different meaning for each performance. When she argues that the text outside of performance no longer fulfils the requirements of the oral process she misses the point of functions. Learning by rote is part of that process and is important, as is text identification outside the performance to an audience and the music industry.

A theoretical model of oral cultures is given by Bernt Ostendorf, whose overview stresses function and a personal and social immediacy. Important are "... performance and the attendant improvisational skills ... reception is immediate and patterned on collective ritual. ... Oral cultures have a different sense of past and present, ... they seem to operate in a perpetual present and incorporate all that is functional for everyday survival in a finite, but everpresent province of customs, beliefs and rituals, the aggregate of which is identical with the active memory of the group. Present needs are the memory filter. ... As a result the symbolic universe of oral

40) Ruth Finnegan, op.cit., p.28.

cultures never expands greatly beyond the horizons of the present collective. They are finite and sedentary ... conservative and nationalistic."⁴¹⁾ Performance in oral cultures, Ostendorf writes, is shrouded in both linguistic and theatrical meaning,⁴²⁾ and as each performance is a unique event, there never can be a rehearsal. The argument is that it serves no purpose, the resolution of each problem initiates another performance. Yet, a number of contradictions emerge. Blues performers recorded, and rehearsal in the sense that a selection process formed a hybrid blues, was important. What Ostendorf regards as a perpetual present becomes equally the perpetual past. New ideas are added to the information bank.

The education of industry and consumers brought a duality to the meaning of oral performance. Crucial was the ability to perform on each occasion as exact a replica of the recording which is impossible. It was more important to identify a recording with its composer/performer, for both cultural and commercial empathy. A rehearsal to achieve that end becomes a necessary measure. Whilst recording established performances and identification, the performer was free to go beyond the recorded time, given the approval of audiences. In this sense the successful recording was a liberating force for performance.

As Ostendorf claims, and as Sidran writes, the oral performer was "... forced to behave in a spontaneous manner,

41) Bernt Ostendorf, "Black Poetry, Blues and Folklore: Double Consciousness in Afro-American Oral Culture" from Amerikastudien/American Studies 20/2 (Frankfurt 1975) p.224

42) Ibid., p.223.

to act and react simultaneously ... at all times, emotionally involved."⁴³⁾ But spontaneity and a simultaneity of action and reaction are not unique to oral man.

What of performance and tradition, oral and/or folk? In oral tradition "... performance is a mode of existence and realization that is partly constitutive of what the tradition is. The tradition itself exists partly for the sake of performance; performance is itself partly an end."⁴⁴⁾ Recording attempts to establish, disestablish traditions, and therefore bring about new existences; by influencing one tradition, a new one springs forth. But it is not exclusively one-directional, rather a symbiosis. William Ferris wrote of the Delta blues of Mississippi and the influence of recordings: "... present and past styles ... are closely related to records and ... many of the verses in oral tradition are learned from records. Such verses are reworked to suit the needs of the singer and become a part of his oral repertoire, which is flexibly used without a conscious attempt to imitate accurately the entire song as performed on the recorded version."⁴⁵⁾ Recorded performances establish an original concept particularly for other performers and audiences in so far as particular songs become sovereign with performers, a point which is not lost by other performers. Recognition is important; it

43) Ben Sidran, Black Talk, (New York, Holt, Rinehart and Winston, 1971), p.3.

44) Dell Hymes, op.cit., p.19.

45) William Ferris, Jr., Blues from the Delta (London, Studio Vista, 1970), p.96.

establishes a sense of loyalty⁴⁶⁾ and tradition of survival, where audiences expect to hear popular recordings, rather than rely totally upon performer's choice of repertoire. Recording, as a product of mass production, was as much a victim of novelty, as it was in making it an issue. Yet despite a finite length of time the song remains fashionable, novelty does not reign in oral tradition as does in the market. Sense of time is altered and novelty is unimportant. Recognition and marketing of an aesthetic is no prerequisite for adaption and adoption. Indeed, whatever oral tradition takes from the market, each aesthetic is added and multiplied by further ones. One aesthetic does not have importance over another, except those governed by personal preference, for performer.

Two propositions which have historical ambiguities are, firstly, that black Americans are uniquely and exclusively, masters in oral traditions. The corollary is that they excel equally in media, which cohabit the oral world, as "... entertainers ... masters of sound, movement, timing, the spoken word."⁴⁷⁾ The second is that oral tradition is culturally inferior.

The delineation of cultural types into high, medium or low symbolised the convergence of each into the other, with the fears at the outcome. It presented a disconcerting overview by representatives of high culture who tended to

46) David Evans, op.cit., pp.243/7.

47) Charles Keil, Urban Blues, (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1970), p.17.

model all others from that position. Placed within an historical context, the analysis of this plurality of cultures was based on the European medieval system of patronage, where one was a reflection of those in control of power and wealth, the other, those who were controlled. The flow of wealth and power from aristocracy to the merchant class did not affect production of objects, it simply displaced patronage.⁴⁸⁾

Edward Shils named the three cultural labels as superior, mediocre and brutal⁴⁹⁾. Orality was for him at the "... lowest cultural level, where the symbolic content is most impoverished and where there is very little original creation in each generation, we come again to a greater, if much less self-conscious dependence on the past. ... the traditional element ... has been largely ... due to the relatively low creative capacities of those who produce and consume it ... until recently, there has been little professional production, machinery for preservation and transmission is lacking and oral transmission plays a greater part in maintaining traditions of expression and performance."⁵⁰⁾

For Shills, the highest cultural attainment was central to a "... seriousness of its subject matter ... to their truth and beauty."⁵¹⁾. He does not define his understanding

48) Herbert J. Gans, "Popular Culture in America: Social Problem in a Mass Society or Social Asset in a Pluralist Society?" from Social Problems: A Modern Approach (ed.) H.S. Becker (London, John Wiley, 1967) pp.549-620.

49) Edward Shils, "Mass Society and Its Culture" from Culture for the Millions (ed.) Norman Jacobs (New Jersey, D. Van Nostrand Co.Inc., 1961) p:5.

50) Ibid., p.6.

51) Ibid., p.5.

of truth and beauty but was astute enough not to ascribe class of author or consumer, as necessary prerequisites. Mediocre culture fell short of superior standards of any kind, "... depth of penetration is almost always negligible, subtlety is almost entirely lacking, and a general grossness of sensitivity and perception is a common feature."⁵²⁾

Whilst Shils is concerned primarily with content and emotional and intellectual perception, interpretation and expression, others have sought to differentiate in terms of transmission or dissemination. Ray Browne tenuously differentiates between elite, with its "... sophisticated avenues ...", popular, as "... less than mass ..."; mass, through mass media; and folk using "... oral or non-oral methods."⁵³⁾

Charles Seeger, on the other hand, is a little more simple in analysis. He provides polar distinctions between fine art, transmitted literally, and folk art, transmitted orally. Popular art he places as a hybrid of the first two, about equal in transmission methods,⁵⁴⁾ and impossible until nineteenth century industrialisation. The mistake which many attach to popular, mass and folk cultures is the "... functional quality ... related to the needs and familiar modes of expression of the people it served."⁵⁵⁾ But the process of dissemination and production had needs

52) Ibid.

53) Ray B. Browne, "Popular Culture: Notes Towards a Definition" from Popular Culture and the Expanding Consciousness (ed.) Ray B. Browne (New York, John Wiley & Sons. Inc., 1973), p.17.

54) Charles Seeger, "Music and Class Structure in the United States" from American Quarterly, Vol. IX, part 3, (Philadelphia, American Studies Association, 1957), p.282.

55) Oscar Handlin, op.cit., p.65.

and requirements which influenced respective cultures. To state simply, as Handlin does, that "... popular songs were to be danced to ..." ⁵⁶⁾ denies a relationship between a book, a poem, a painting, sculpture, a building or idea and the needs of consumption.

The relationship of creator to culture is given as a set of myths, where for high culture, the artist is separated from society whilst for oral culture, the artist is closely associated. The corollary is the notion of total freedom of expression for the former, which is a political anomaly. In either case, total isolation and total inclusion does not exist. ⁵⁷⁾ Furthermore, William Randle, Jr., proposes three requirements for the expansion of popular entertainment on a commercial level, "...a concentrated population, the development of an acceptable style of performance, and the availability of such performance to the population." ⁵⁸⁾ Such indicators are relevant to all three cultural levels.

David Evans separates folk and popular blues in a number of ways, but makes clear that they are not "... diametrically opposed entities but rather are two ends of a single spectrum." ⁵⁹⁾ And the aesthetic requirements exist side by side with little difficulty. He makes claims

56) Ibid.

57) Steve Chapple and Reebee Garofalo, op.cit., pp.217/218.

58) William Randle, Jr., "Black Entertainers on Radio 1920-1930", from Black Perspective in Music, Vol.5 No.1., (New York 1977), p.68.

59) David Evans, op.cit., p.xii.

for the traditional and rural concept of folk blues against popular blues, which he says are original and urban. Indeed, he goes further by claiming folk blues transmitted orally whilst the mass media transmit the popular.⁶⁰⁾ Finally, performance context is distinguished such that for folk blues the "... social context and their structure both reflect the small, fairly close-knit community, while the context and structure of popular blues reflect a more complex technological society, where the distance is greater between spokesman and audience and where the risks of dissatisfaction are greater."⁶¹⁾

His distinction between folk and popular as a consequence of transmission merge so that the "... item of folk music can also be considered popular music."⁶²⁾ However, the two are never thought of as being compatible; popular blues or recorded blues "... should not be viewed as lacking the characteristics of folk blues but simply as having them to a lesser degree in the sense that they are usually less traditional than folk blues."⁶³⁾ Whilst acknowledging the coexistence and mutual influence, Evans does not consider the transition period in so far as all the first recordings were folk by his definition. Yet the big selling records of Jefferson and Blake, before the Chicago based recordings, would immediately become popular, because of the media. It poses ambiguities as to when folk becomes popular. Recordings by non-urban performers

60) Ibid., p.6.

61) Ibid., p.327.

62) Ibid., pp.12/13.

63) Ibid., p.4.

continued until the end of the period, albeit with less authority than the Chicago recordings, as well as field recordings of unknown continued. The difference lies in the exploitation of the studio as an instrument, whether that be specifically part of the company complex or someone's apartment. Here, commercial blues were constructed, whilst those performers considered folk, had a repertoire which once recorded and exhausted, were left alone. This was the case long after fashion had penetrated the market, and new models were necessary. Such a position requires all recordings to be described popular; they were all part of the mass media, whether recorded in a small township or the urbanity of Chicago. All the songs not recorded would therefore be considered folk. The dichotomy here is that very little of what was not recorded as songs specifically, actually did get recorded as verses and stanzas. It is quite conceivable that all blues verses and stanzas ended up being recorded as part of a collection of songs, or in continuation of the composition process. It is a point Andre Malraux makes when he suggests that folk art "... no longer exists because the 'folk' no longer exists. The modern masses, bound even in rural places to urban civilisation, are as different from the craftsmen and the peasants of the great monarchies as from the people of the Middle Ages."⁶⁴) It represents differences of Degler's urbanisation.

64) Andre Malraux, "Art, Popular Art and the Illusion of the Folk", Partisan Review, Vol. XVIII, No.5., (New York, 1951), p.490.

This development was not linear, nor exclusively rural to urban in the way that Keil and others explain the evolutionary progress of blues as country to city to urban.⁶⁵⁾ Migration and industrial needs supported such an explanation. Yet whilst the most popular recordings were made in the North, primarily Chicago, those who had migrated there, or already lived and worked there, provided recordings and enough data to stir Southern interest to create new models. Transformation of styles occurred also because of the differences of ages in performers, "... younger singers who had less contact with the older styles and more with the newer commercial styles ... sounded considerably different from the performers of ... a previous generation."⁶⁶⁾

The evolution of blues, as it moved from rural to urban, has also been expressed as a reduction of the musical parameters to fit Blacking's division of labour.⁶⁷⁾ In fact, by delegating parts of the blues structure to an increased number of instruments, the view is a transition from a dynamic to a static construct. Melody "... became stylized. Harmonically, it became adapted to the concept of a chord sequence. Rhythmically, it moved away from the irregularities the unpredictabilities of the guitar blues. Metrically, it moved away from the eight, nine, eleven or

65) Charles Keil, op.cit.

66) Bill C. Malone, op.cit., p.104.

67) John Blacking, How Musical is Man? (London, University of Washington Press, 1973).

thirteen bar structure.⁶⁸⁾ A realistic view ought to be of a separate dynamic.

Important for industrialisation was a consciousness in design, "... the producer or artist was compelled, as never before, to study the effect of his art."⁶⁹⁾ Not only that, but the media themselves judge what enters the market-place and which market-place because of "... economic organisational and social and political attributes and limitations."⁷⁰⁾ Their role in patronage, or rather their shifting of patronage structure and power was curtailed by its own limitation of reinforcing "... already existing behaviour and attitudes, rather than to create new ones."⁷¹⁾ The disparaging overview of popular songs simply as "... commodities designed to provide monetary diversion ... written by men whose major concern is usually commercial ..." ⁷²⁾ applies to many recorded blues. Design was initiated by industry in the first instance but from then on quickly influenced performers without any further intervention.

The disassociation of blues from mass market, mass media and mass culture, is primarily because of the market itself, and the position of blacks in American society. Those who evaluated musical taste disclaimed both black and

68) Ernest Borneman, "Black Light and White Shadow", Jazz Forschung/Jazz Research, Vol.2. (Graz, 1970).

69) Marshall McLuhan, The Gutenberg Galaxy, (London, Routledge and Kegan Paul, 1962) p.275.

70) Joseph Bernsman and Bernhard Rosenberg, op.cit., p.116.

71) Herbert J. Gans, op.cit., p.562. Also N.Charles, op.cit.p.6

72) Norman Charles, op.cit., p.6.

white music not belonging to Tin Pan Alley. They held power over the Sell-American-Music group and therefore in their interests excluded all other competition. Racism excluded black composers from joining Tin Pan Alley forces. Black recordings were never intended for any other market but its own; any crossover was accidental and made no impression in this period. To describe the recording as folk music, as it continued, was a form of paternalism⁷³⁾. Amongst the secular black consumer, recorded blues was indeed a popular cultural product, but within the boundaries of the North American continent, it was of minority interest. This fact, ironically, was one of the prerequisites of elitist, or high culture.

What is relevant here is extra-musical meaning of music. It is what Alan Merriam wrote of as music being more than sound alone, that each culture or autonomy "... decides what it will and will not call music."⁷⁴⁾ John Blacking argues further for a musical style having terms which are at the same time, the terms of society and culture, that "... there ought to be a relationship between patterns of human organisation and the patterns of sound produced as a result of human interaction."⁷⁵⁾ And yet, Blacking,

73) S.I. Hayakwa, "Popular Songs vs. the Facts of Life" from Mass Culture. The Popular Arts in America (eds.) Bernard Rosenberg and David Manning White (New York, Free Press of Glencoe, New York, 1962), pp.393/4.

74) Alan P. Merriam, The Anthropology of Music (Evanston, Northwestern University Press, 1964), p.27. Also R. Byrnside, "The Formation of a Musical Style: Early Rock" from Contemporary Music and Music Cultures by Charles Hamm, Bruno Nettl, R.Byrnside, (Englewood Cliffs, N.J., Prentice Hall Inc., 1975), p.160.

75) John Blacking, op.cit., p.26.

taking his terms of reference from his studies of Venda music and society overestimates the general aspect of a sociology of music. He writes "... Music ... is a reflection of and response to social forces and particularly to the consequences of the division of labor in society."⁷⁶⁾

Meyer, rather obviously, discussing the inter-relationship between art, culture and human activity in his theory of style change indicates where Blacking fell short. He writes "... changes in style are a direct and necessary result - are caused by - specific changes in other areas and facets of culture. Social, particular economic changes; scientific and technological discoveries, changes in physical environment; shifts in population ... are all used, either singly or in combination, to 'explain' or account for changes in style."⁷⁷⁾ Furthermore, "... social context, the cultural attitude, the rhetorical situation, and the individual aptitude are variables that produce distinct differences in the structure, text, and texture of the ultimate verbal, musical or plastic product."⁷⁸⁾ These very parameters dictate to the creative process, based upon a selection of a finite number of variations.

For the blues performance/composition and recording, the "... number of fundamental ideas is remarkably small ... abundance (exists) only in variations."⁷⁹⁾

76) John Blacking, op.cit., p.104.

77) Leonard D. Meyer, Music, the Arts and Ideas (Chicago, University of Chicago Press, 1973) p.108.

78) Dan Ben-Amos, op.cit., pp.4/5.

79) B. Szabolcsi, op.cit., p.179.

In the selection process, it is a balance between contradiction i.e. change taking place, and stasis being prominent. And whilst cultural determinants, social, economic and political, affect the equilibrium, the industry never defined that process. It remained, ever observant of the market and subordinate to it.

CHAPTER VIII

Conclusion

When America entered World War II, the recording industry was faced with a severe cutback of shellac, the material used in the manufacture of discs. For blues recording it meant a slump, but other reasons were involved. White popular music was making its impact, and, greater profits. Recorded blues, by the early 1940s, centred in Chicago, was becoming complacent and reached a creative nadir. Not only that, but the musicians union was threatening the whole music industry with its first national strike. This led to a rush in studio activity, but the causes of the strike made little difference to black performers.

It was during this period that radio was gradually accepting blacks as entertainers in some strength. They too realised that blacks made an impressive market and one

worthwhile exploiting. Of course, on white radio stations, programmes for blacks often came out at unsociable hours, usually late at night. The establishment of BMI, meant amongst other things, that black composers had the first real opportunity of owning their own copyright for their own creations and that their music would be broadcast.

One of the most important changes by 1942 was the make-up of the entertainments industry, before the advent of television. The recording industry had become part of the multi-structured communications industry and thereby diminished in stature. In the early 1920s control in manufacture of product, wholesale distribution, selection processes deciding who did or did not end up in a recording studio, rested in an oligarchy of a small number of companies and a small number of their employees. In some way this was anticipated by the control of technology needed to exploit the invention of the telephone. General Electric, American Telephone and Telegraph, and Westinghouse, held ownership of basic processes and expansion was made possible by further invention which stimulated new industries, or else modification of existing structures. With the phenomenal rise of movies and radio, particularly network radio, it took less than two decades for the completion of a complex structure, creating, stimulating and exploiting an appetite for a predominantly oral/aural form of entertainment. Such was the control of business that Government had to break up monopolies and generate competition. Ultimately the control of power spread out a little further but the oligarchy remained virtually unscathed.

For the performer and audience transition from a pre-recorded to recorded state brought irreversible change. Audience became consumer, with a power to dictate over a performer's repertoire, based upon successful recordings. However, as consumers, black Americans were always segregated in the entertainments world, excluded from clubs during Prohibition, and given almost nothing from radio.

The consumer caught the industry unawares. It payed high dividends after the initial risk of recording a black performer/or black consumer. Yet the companies had partly to rely on them to survive. The consumer was a loyal one and readily payed the price for a product when it received less in income compared to whites. The value attached to its own cultural product was significantly high.

The consequence of cultural segregation by radio and movies was that the music was not compelled to change to suit the needs of the media. It could survive when other musics were threatened. The performer underwent metamorphosis as success pushed towards professional entertainment. Success for the few inspired the many to aspire to their own success; failure did not totally shatter any illusion.

Whilst this professionalism came about at a time of urbanisation and industrialisation, distribution of recordings broke down communal autonomies. Musical ideas, information, moved about at greater velocity creating virtually a national community.

Successful recordings paradoxically turned the three-

minute limitation into a freedom of performance. A popular song was immediately sought after by audiences, until the next fashionable production. This liberation in performance ironically was the state existing before recording left its mark. The market created a need for novelty, a turnover of music styles, well provided for except during the Depression.

To state simply that the industry and the performers were only interested in making money is to argue myopically. There was money to be made by all parties and even exploitation by companies did not deter performers. Incumbents received a little, and only ignorance of the facts, usually withheld, spoiled the flow of royalties.

An industry careful of profit was careful about material and performer. Not all involved shared an interest in the music, but many did. Many wanted performers with potential to reach the studio, and the new ones were groomed to meet requirements of company employees. The industry grew up quickly, but so too did the performer. A successful recording gave an added status to a performer within a community, and that respect was shared by the lesser talented.

Whether it realised it or not, the recording industry had sought out and preserved, in time and space, a fundamental music force of black American culture, one to have enormous implications for the course of worldwide twentieth century music.

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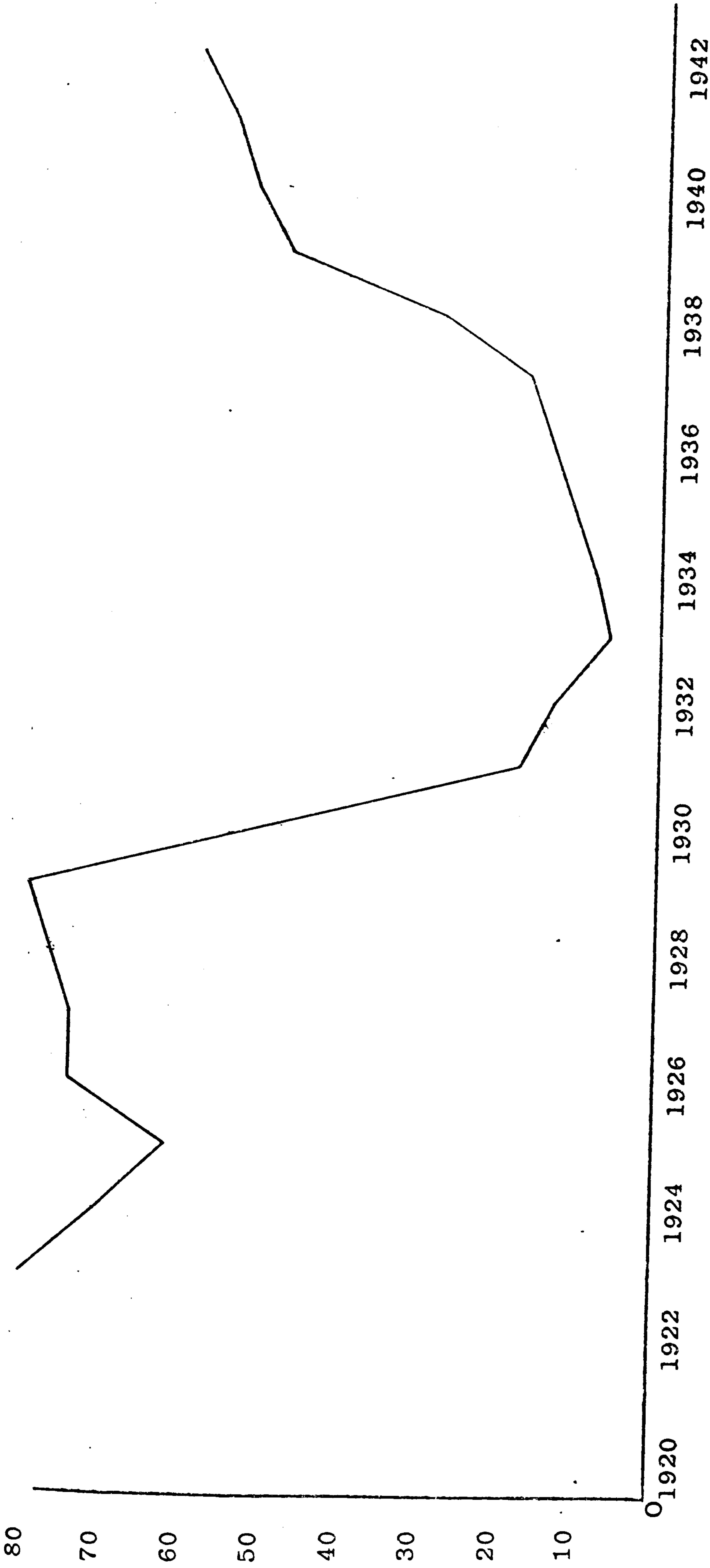
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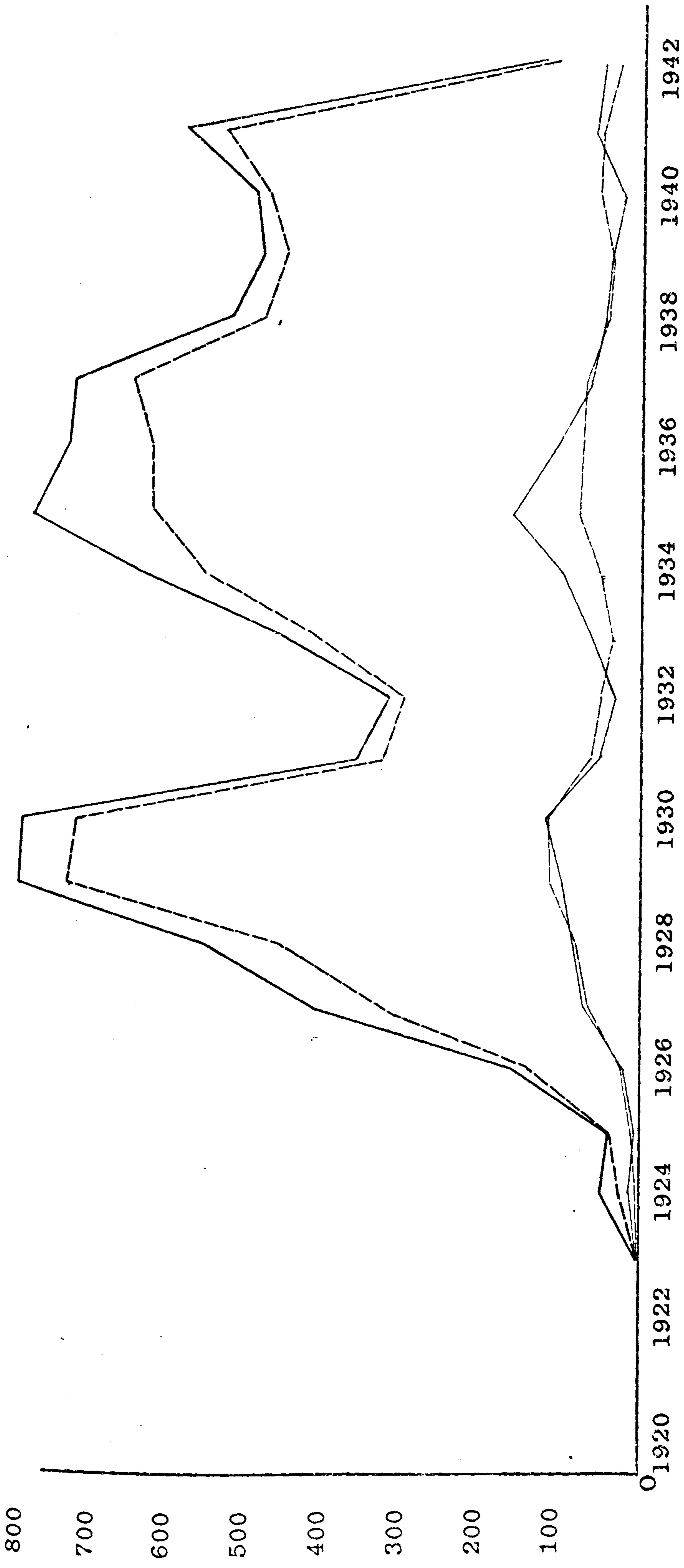
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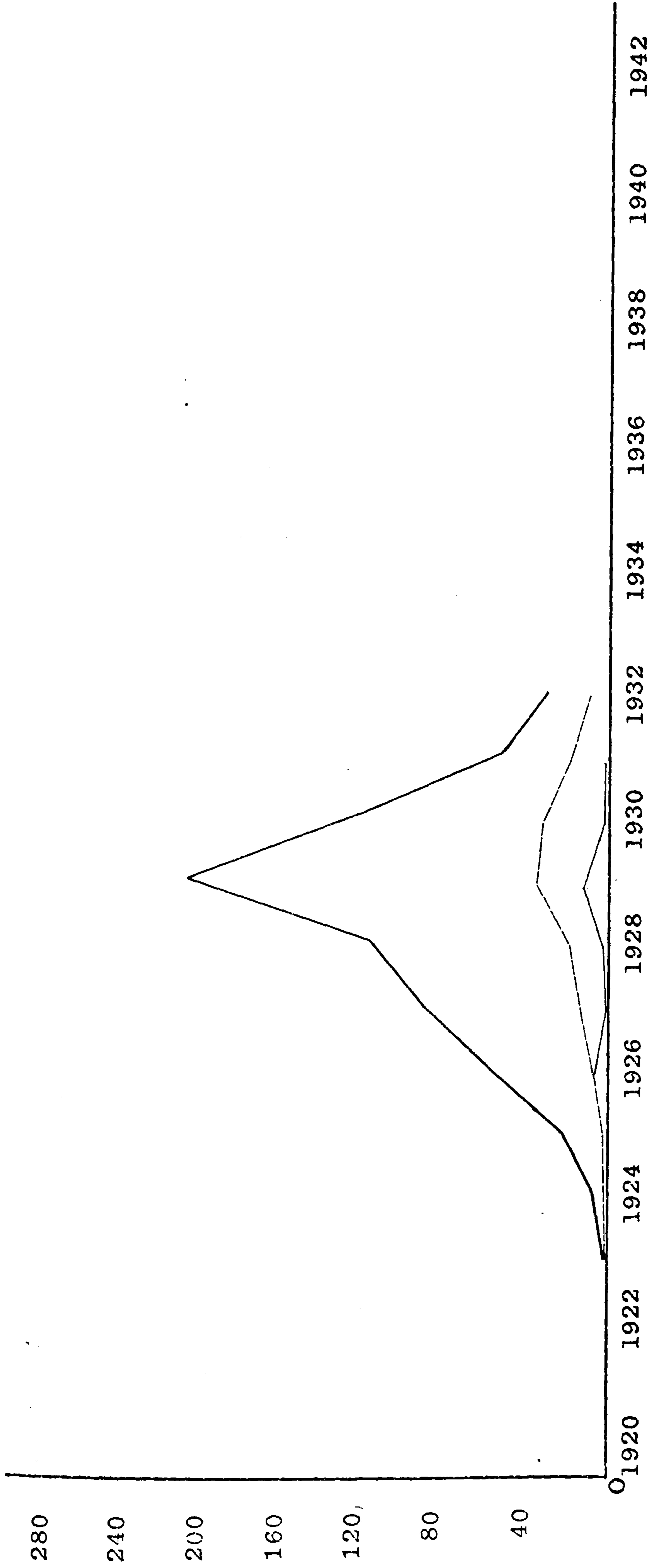


1. Total Sales of Recordings in \$m.



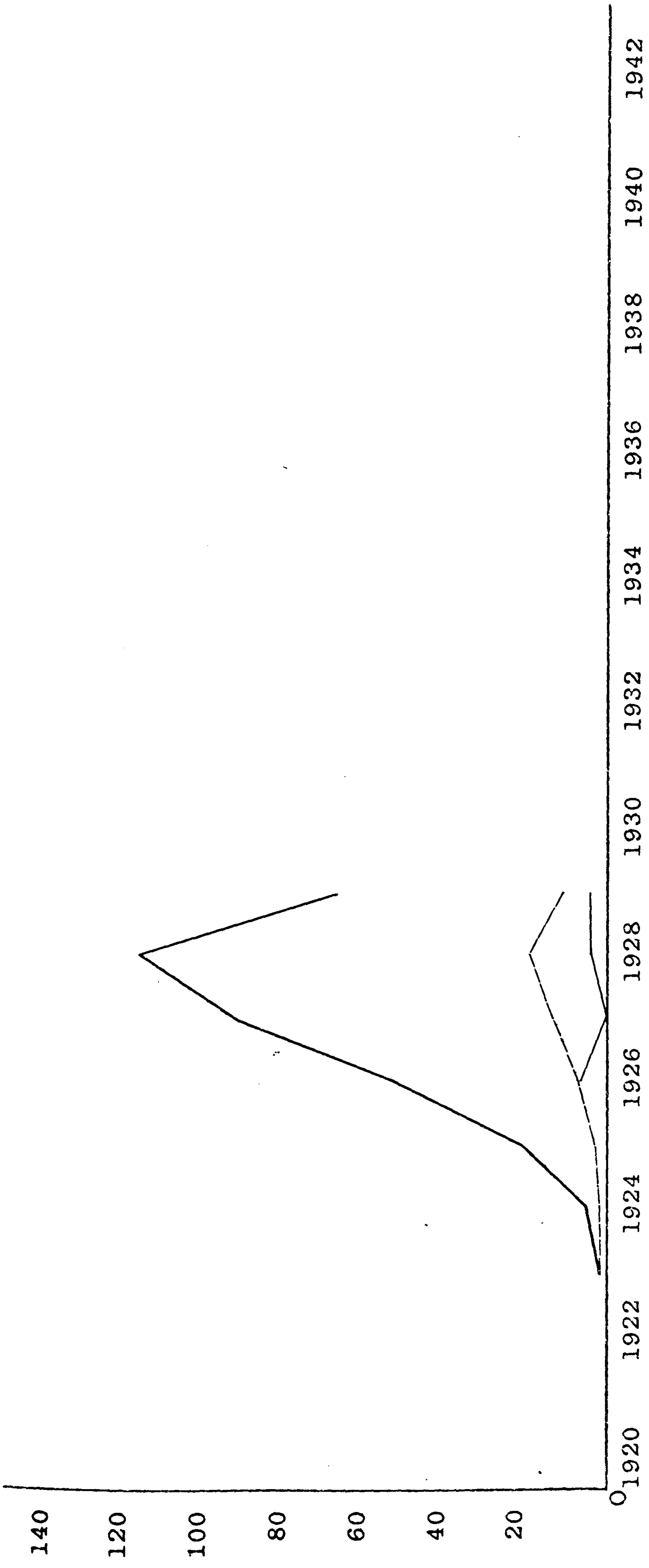
2. Totals of Blues Recordings

Total Recordings Made - _____ Total Recordings Not Issued - _____
 Total Recordings Issued - _____ Number of Artists - _____



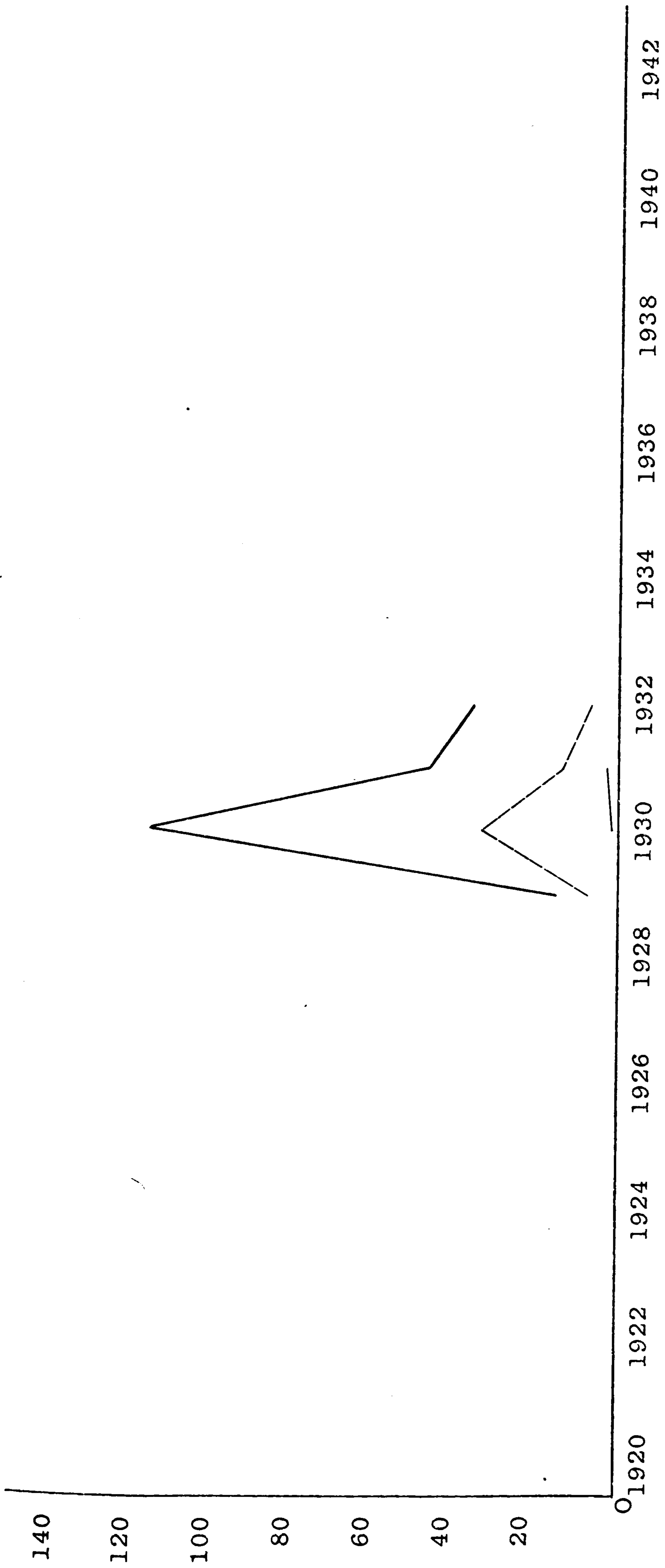
3. Paramount Totals

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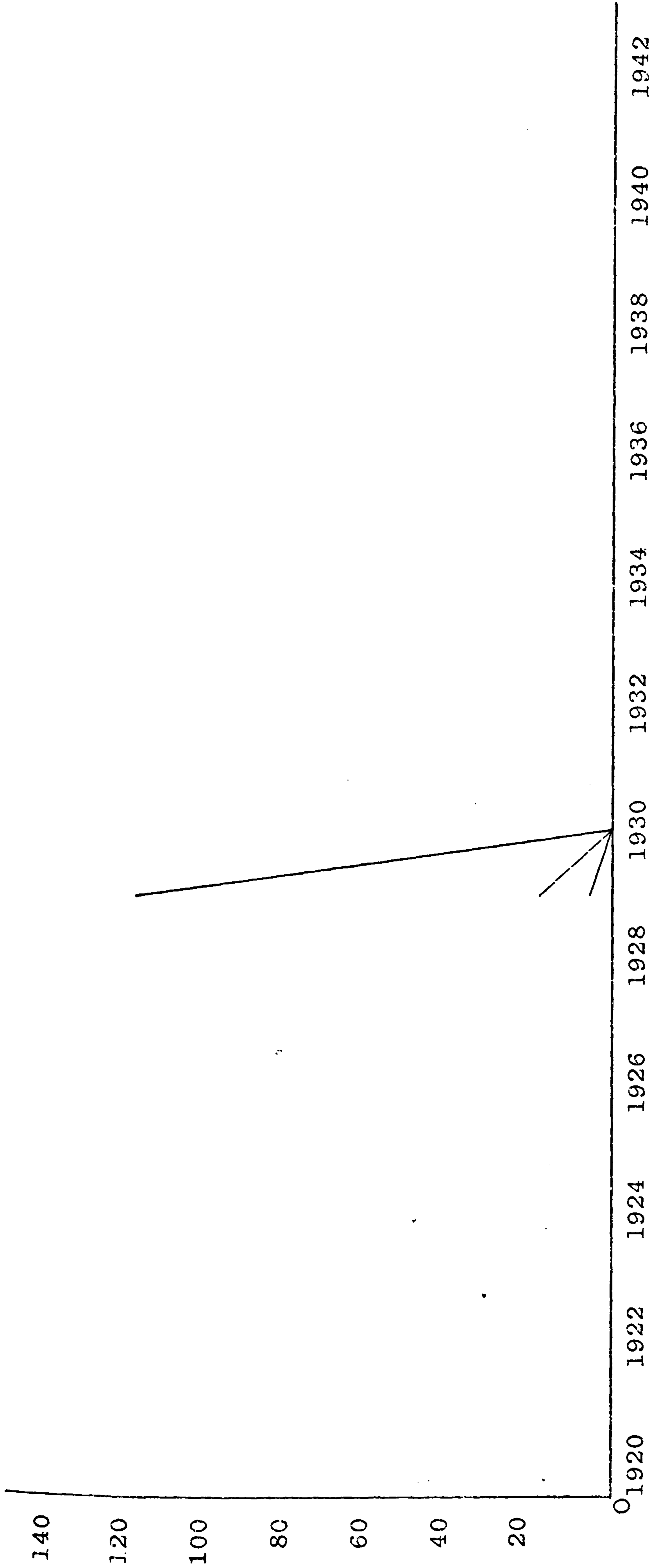
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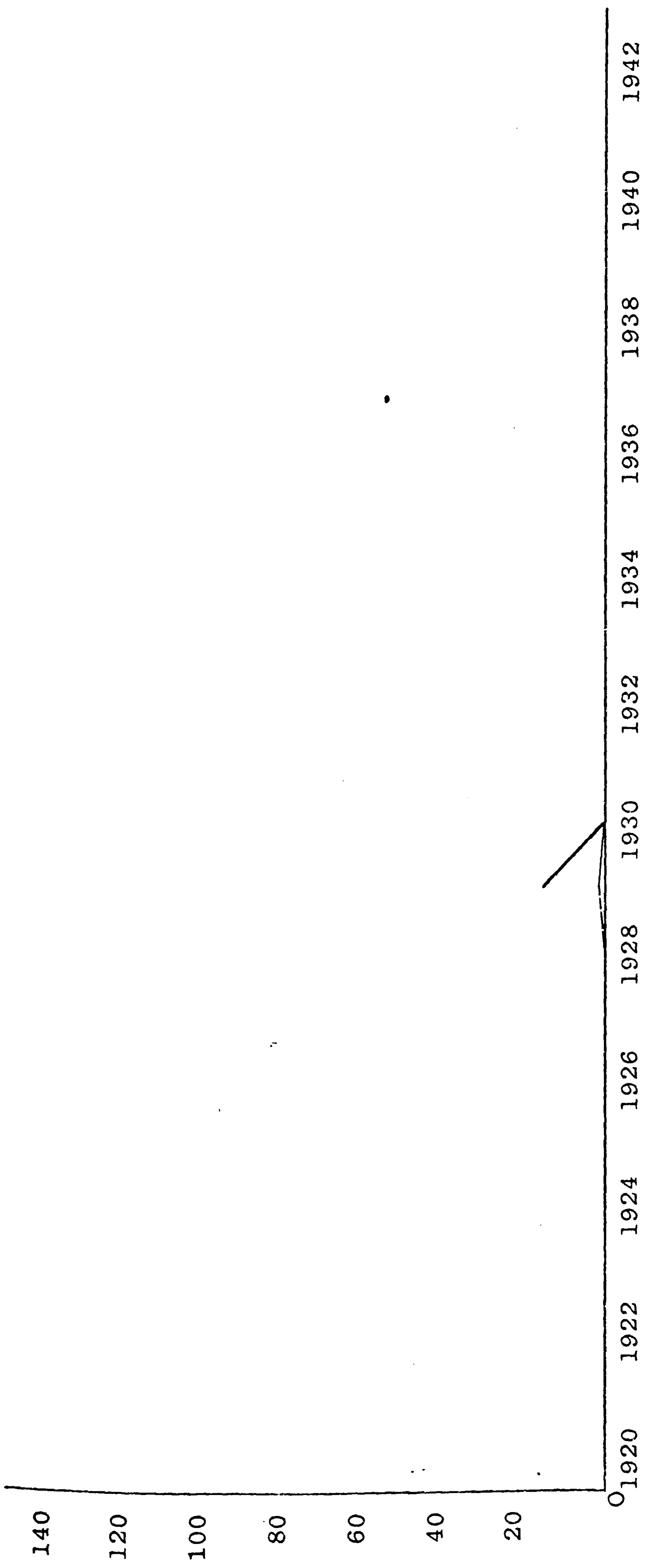
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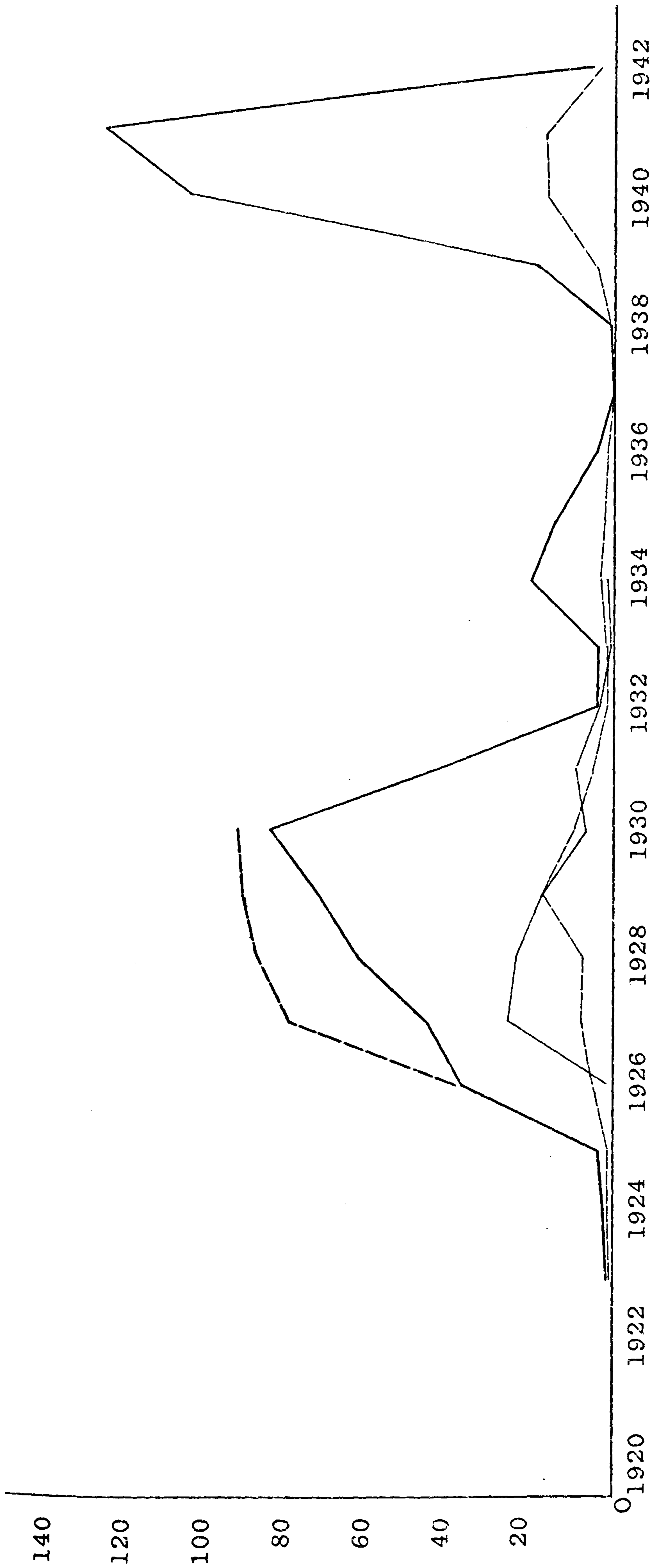
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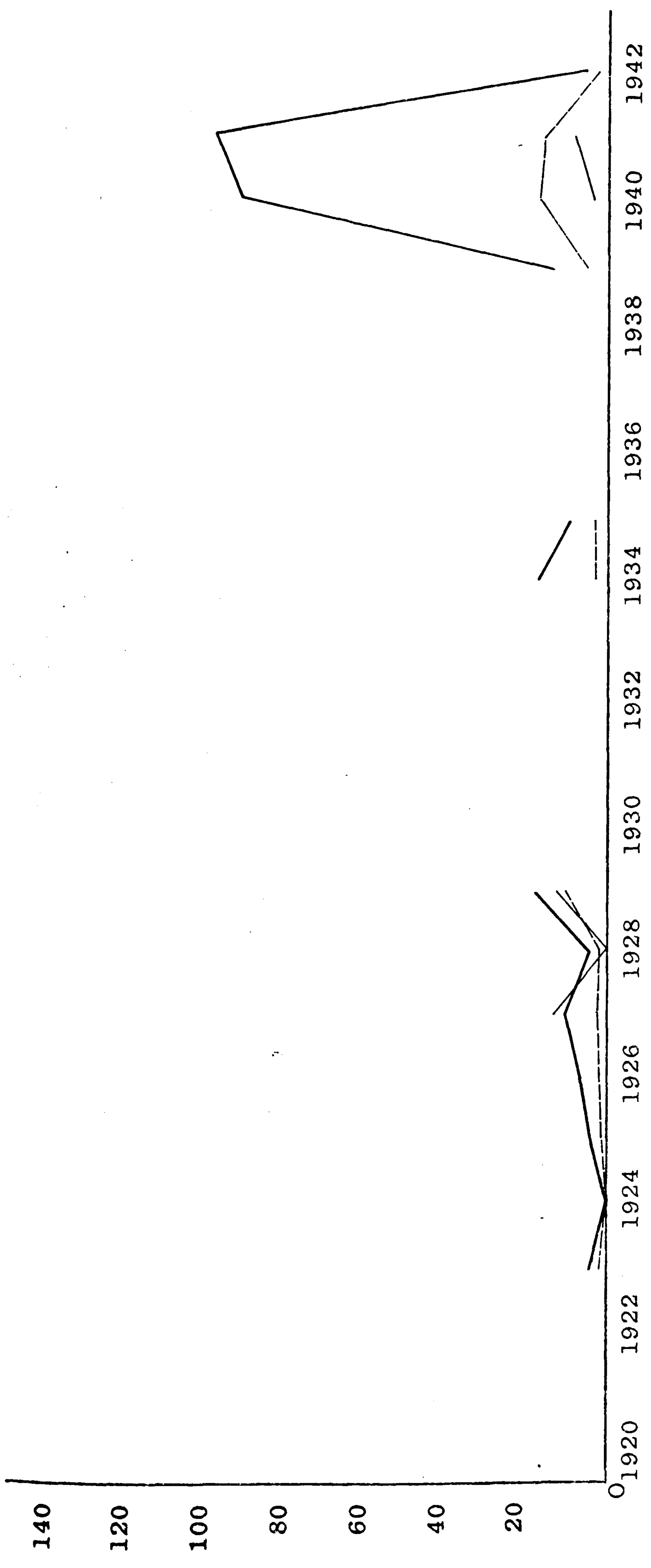
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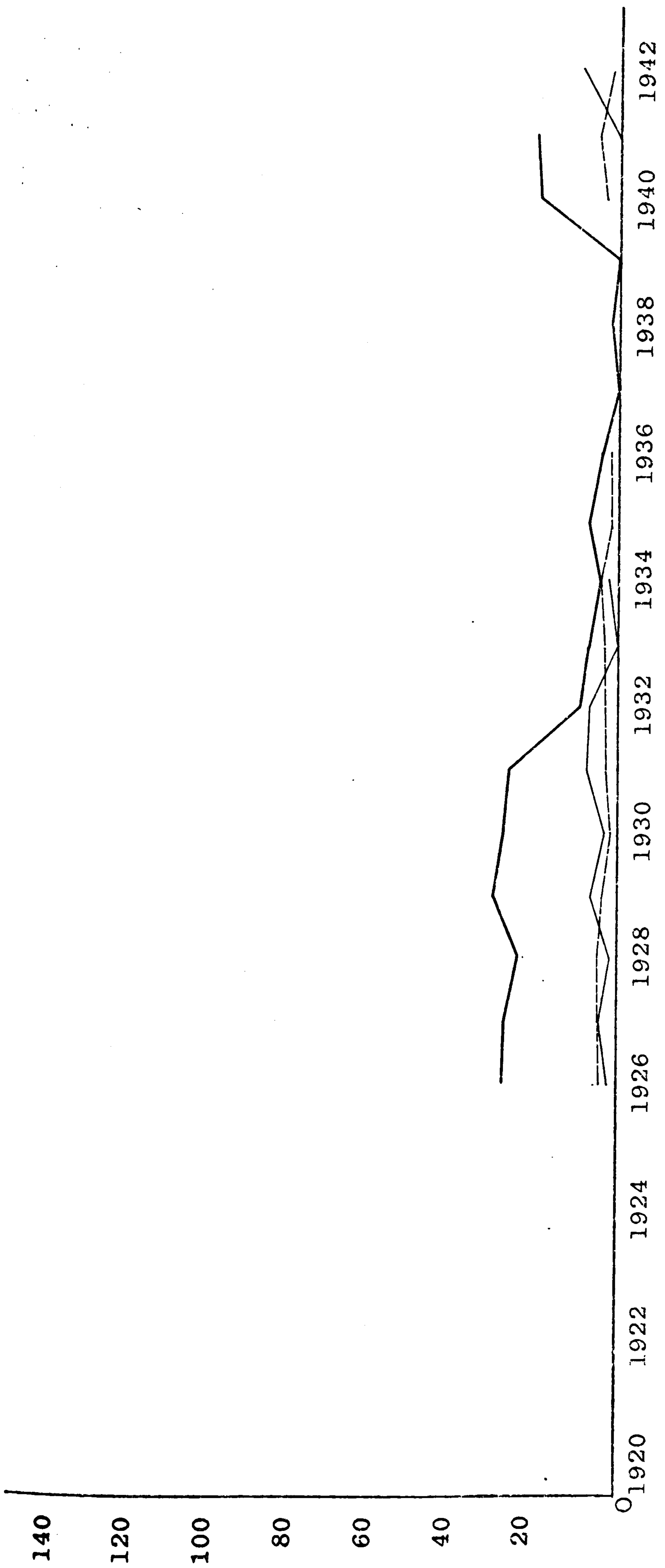
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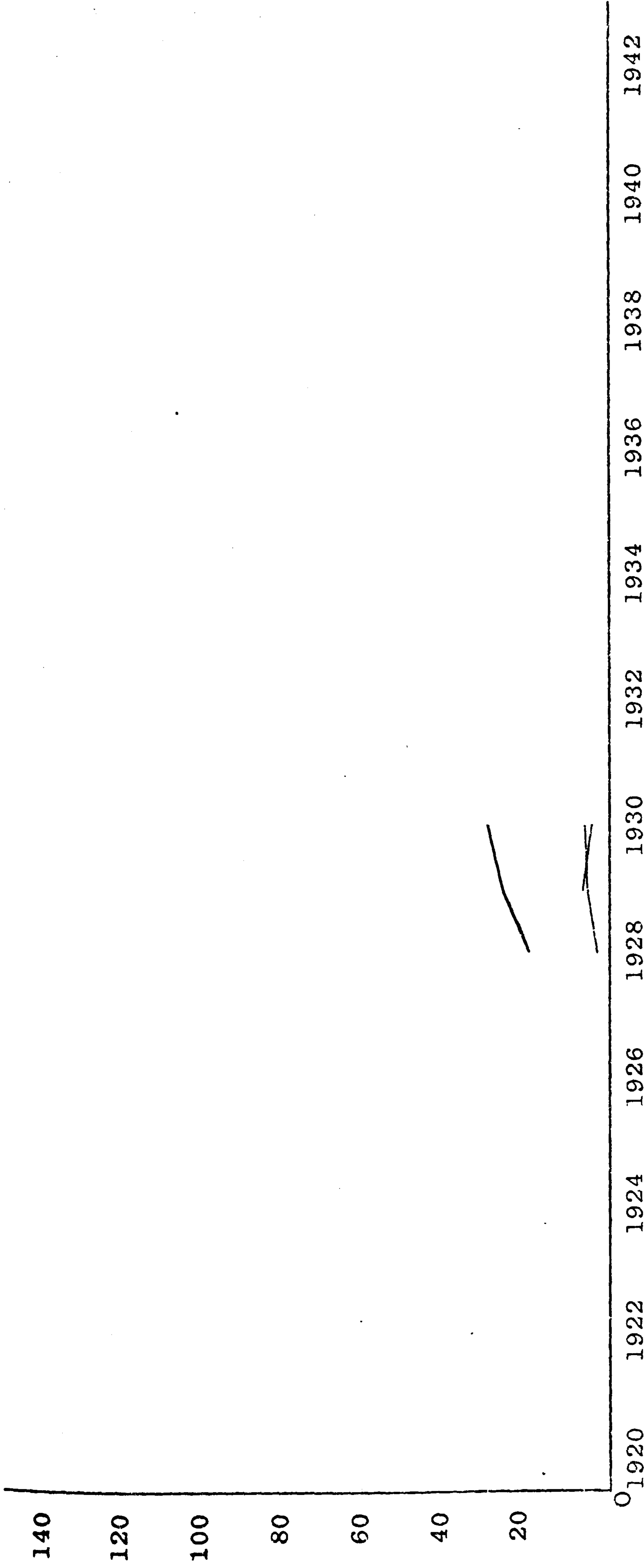
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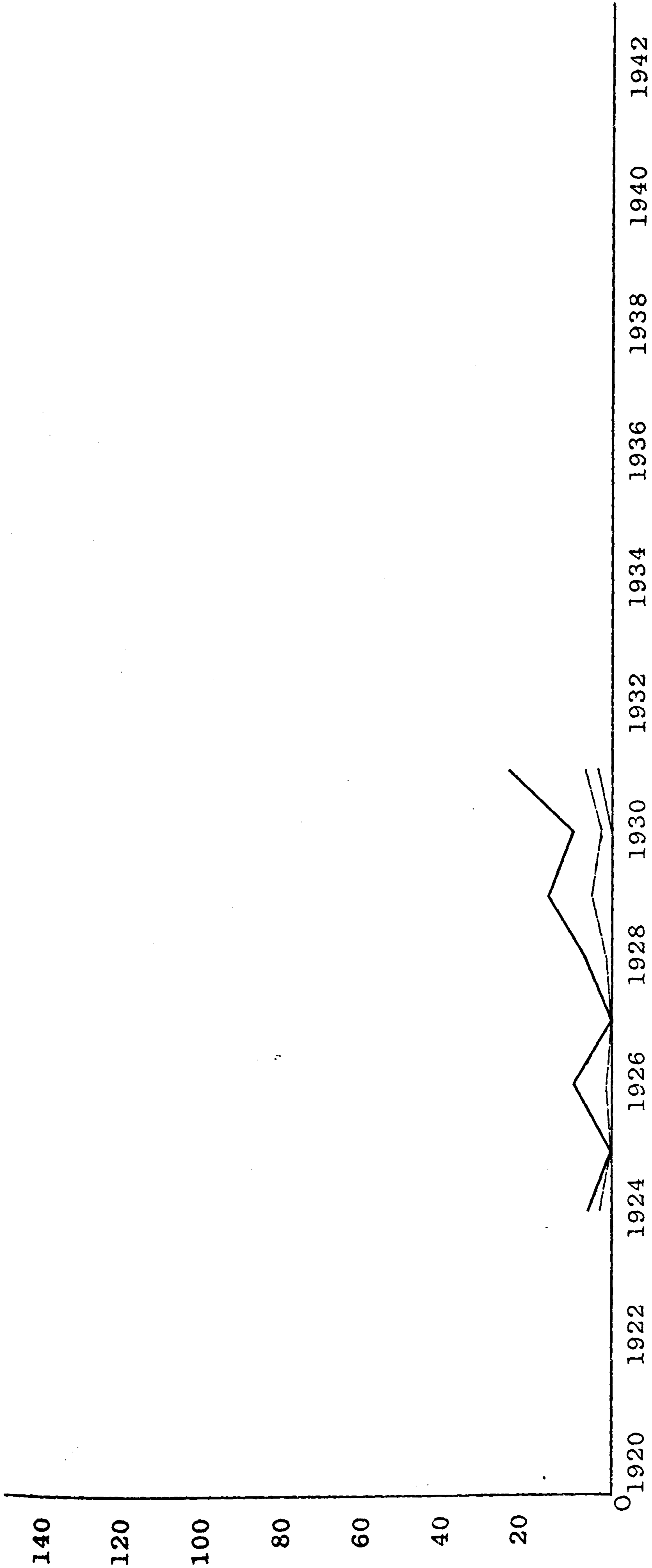
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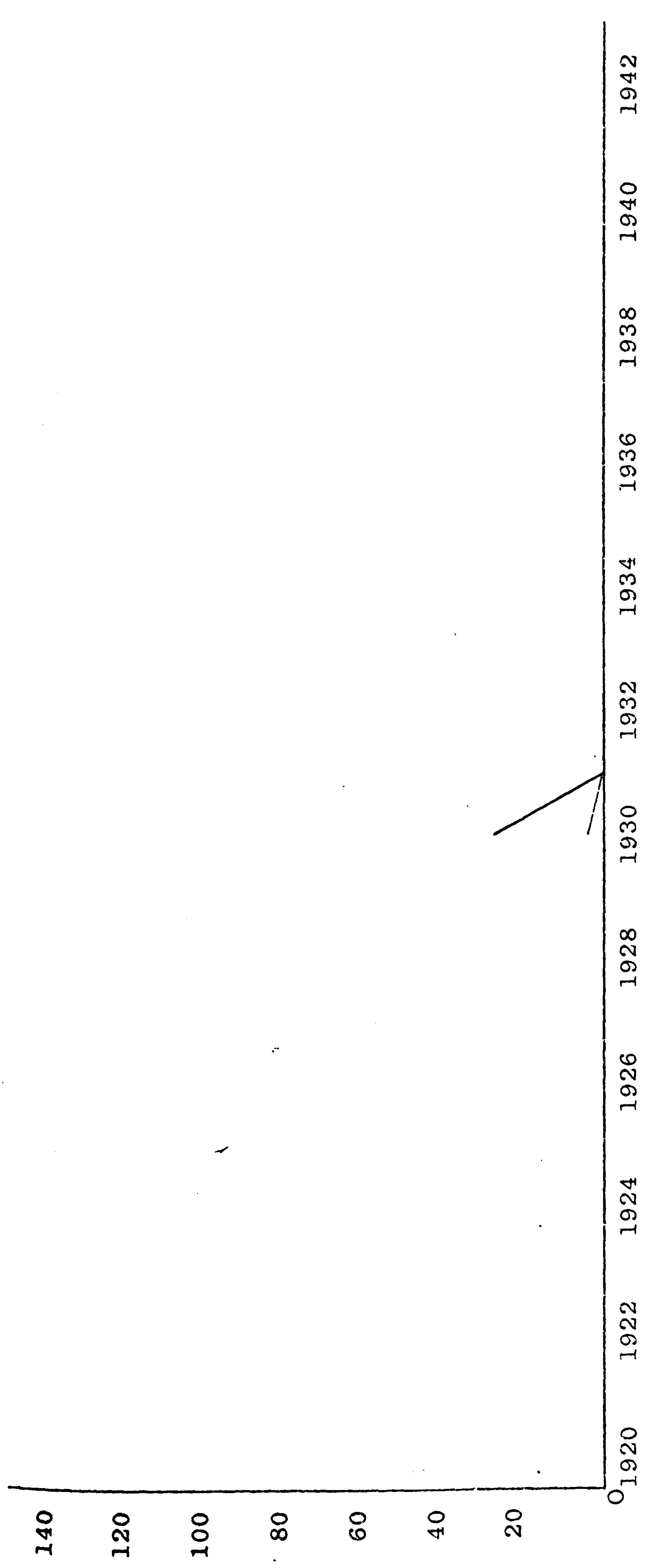
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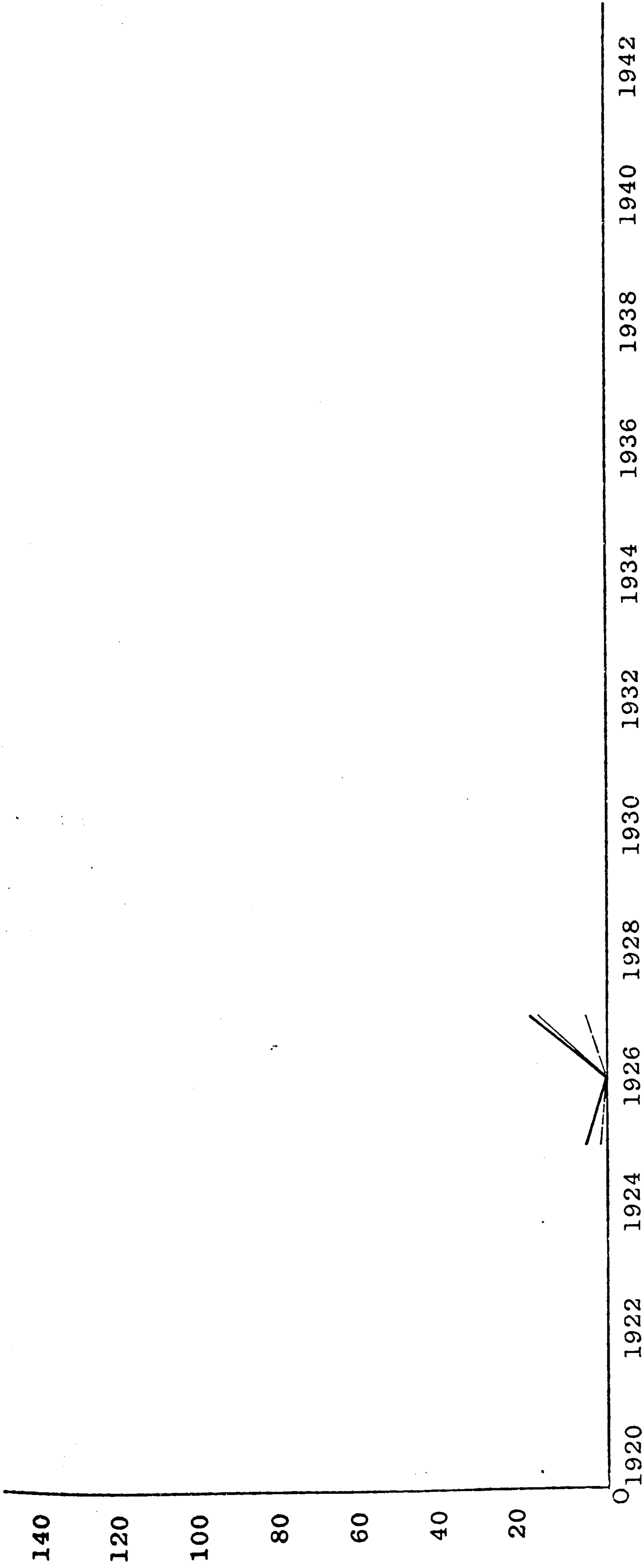
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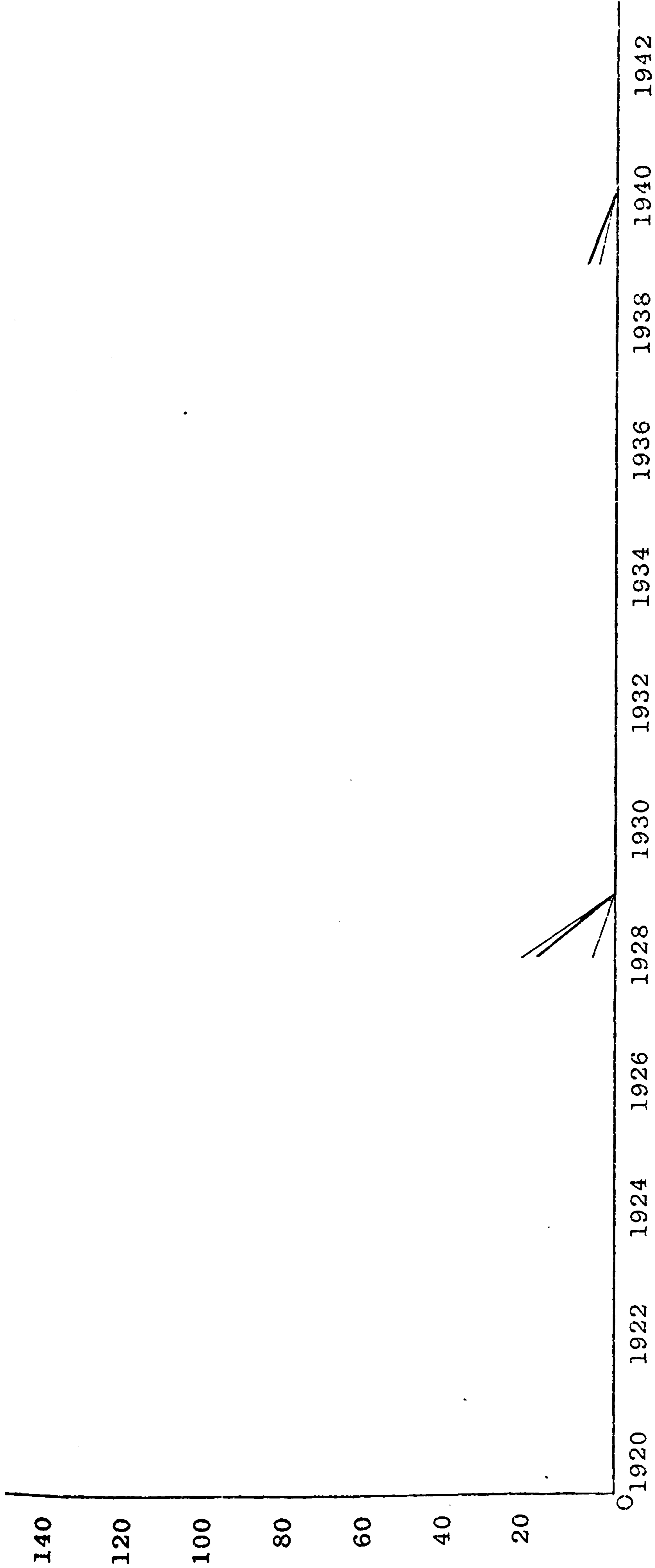
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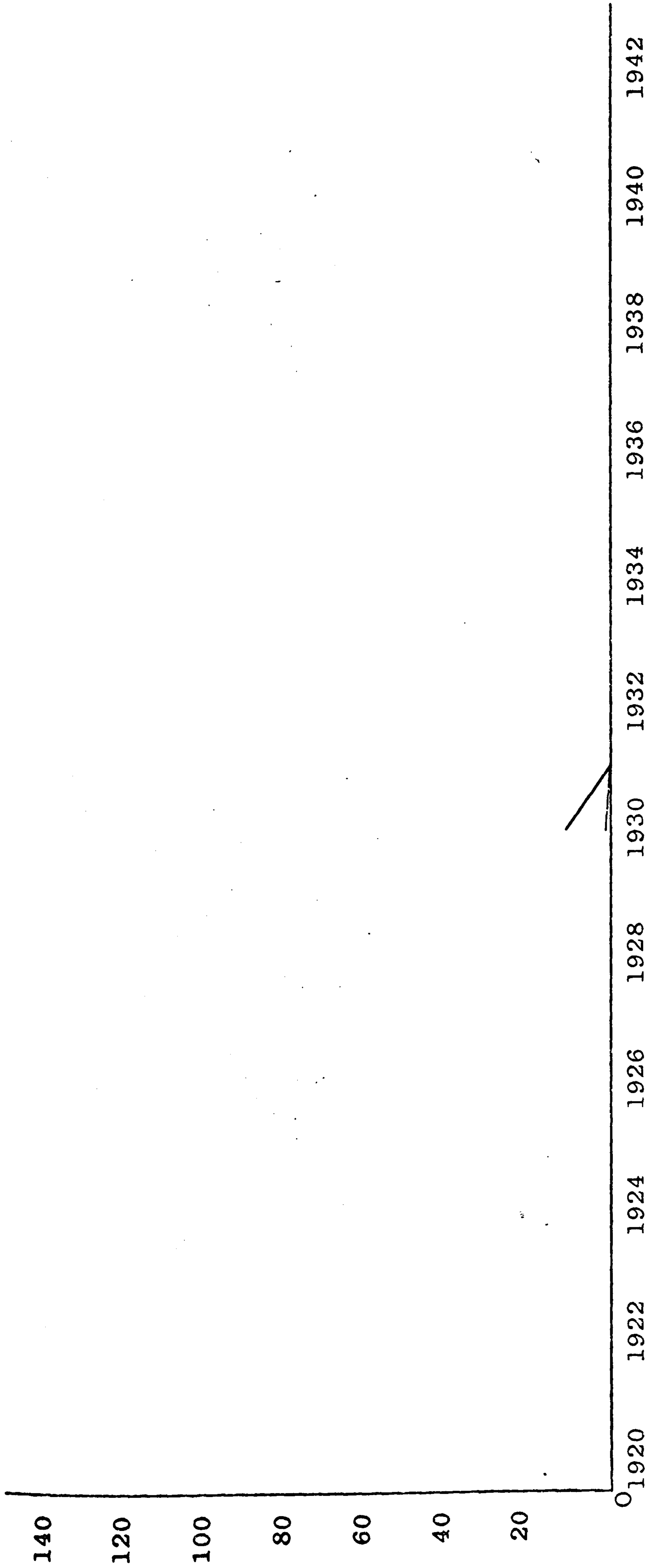
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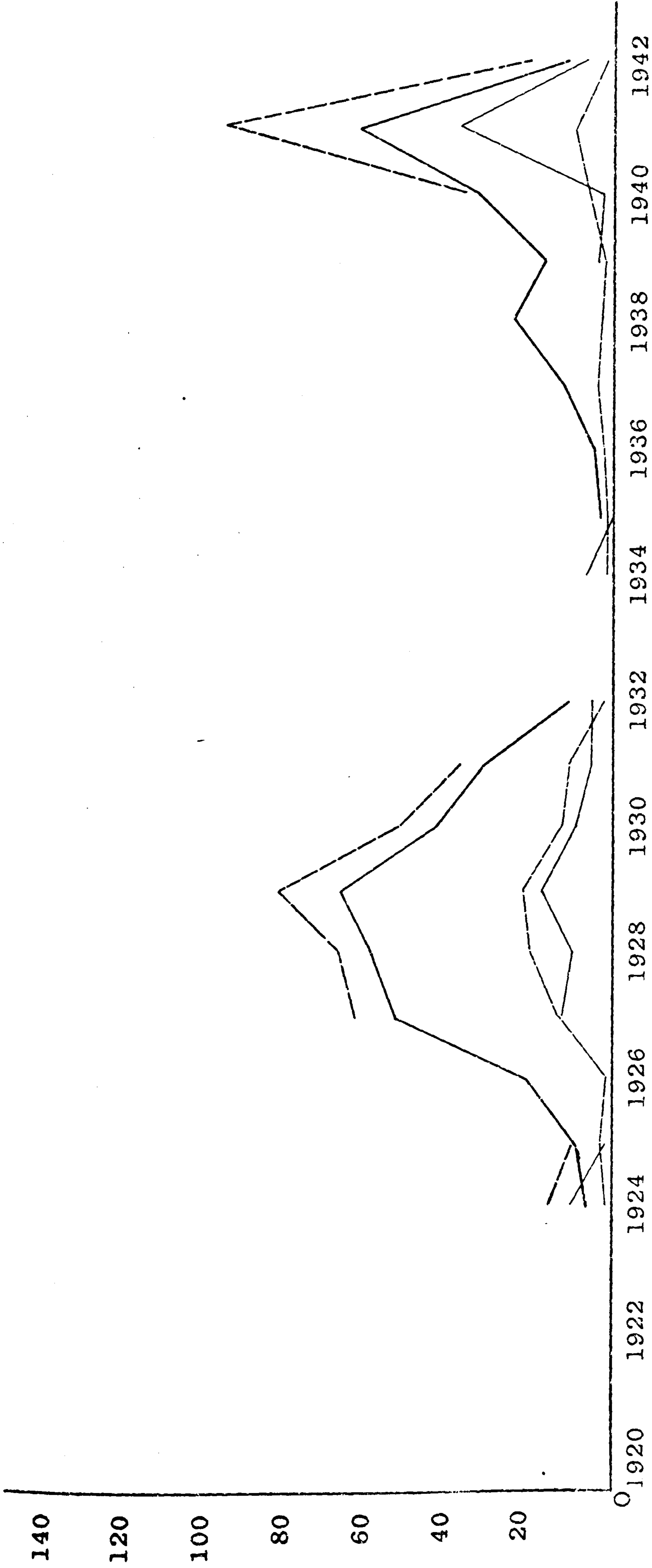
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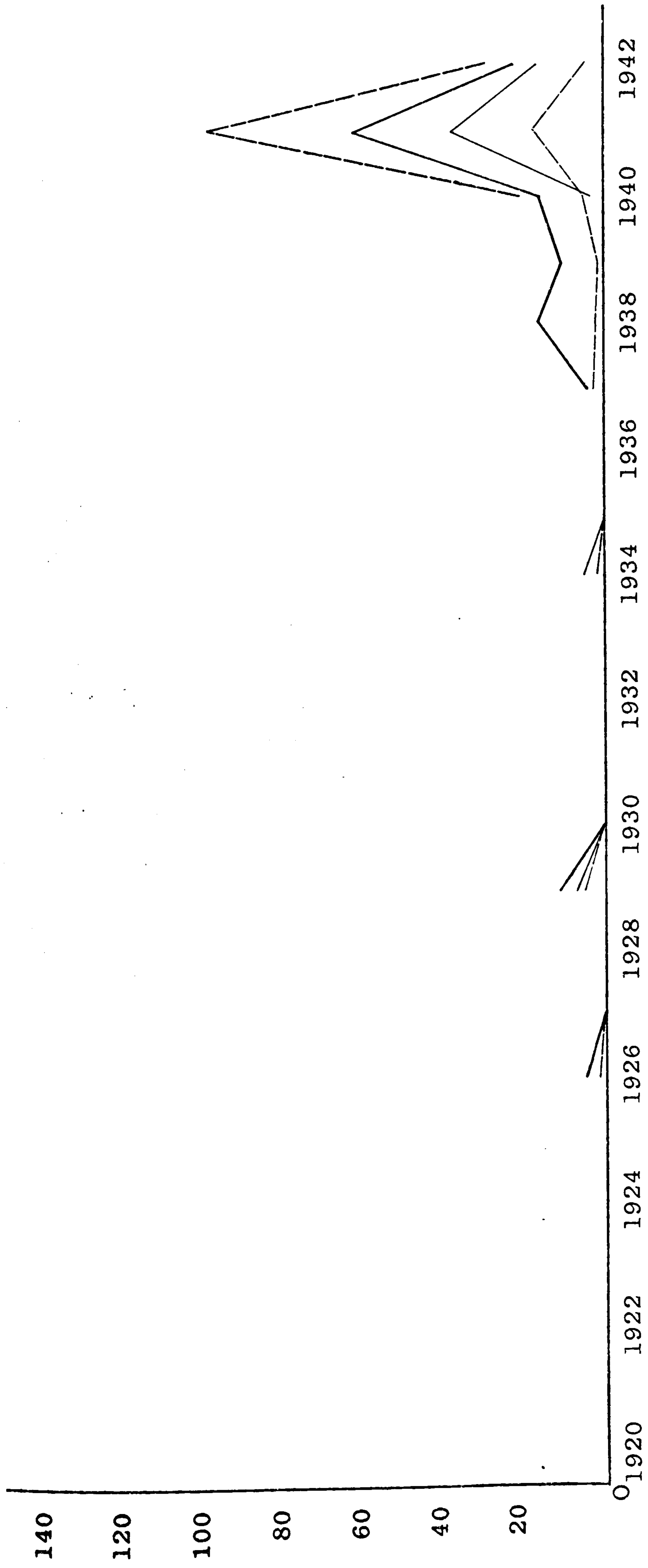
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Total Recordings Issued	-	Number of Artists	-



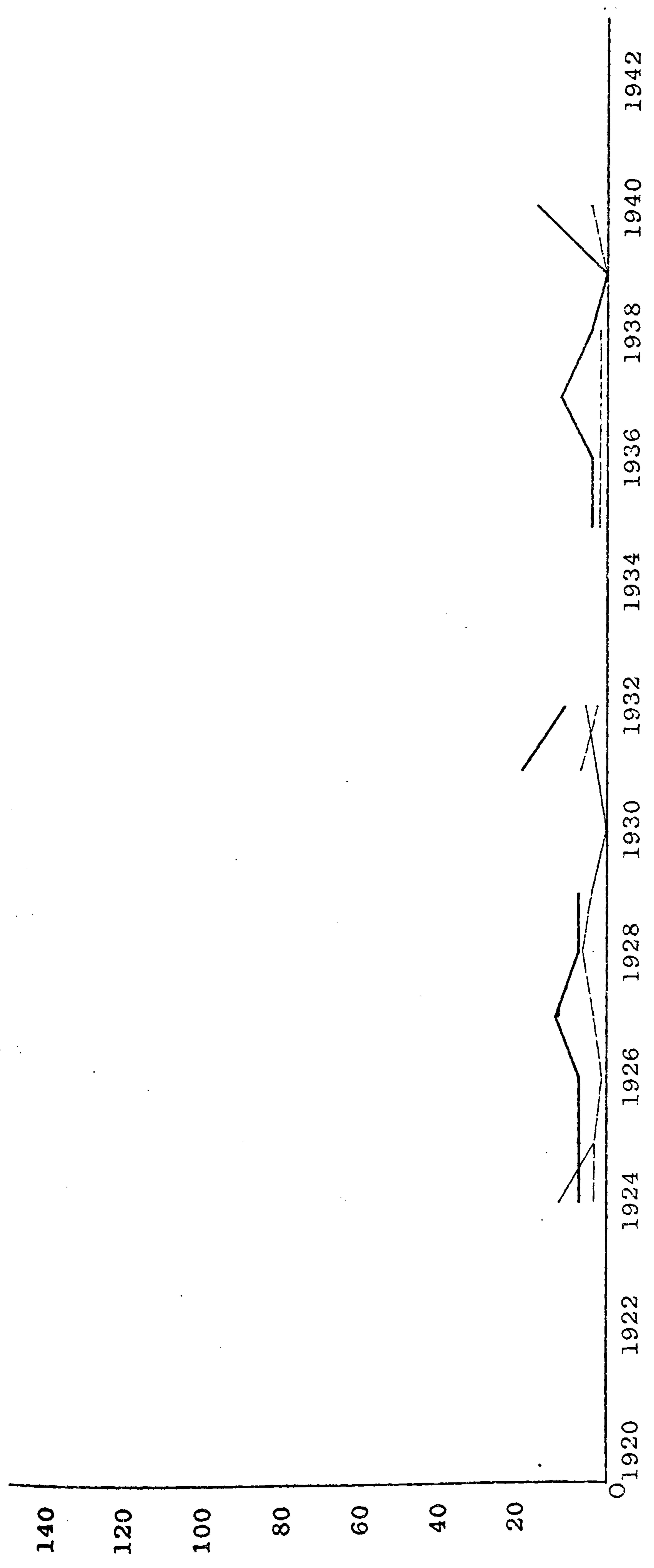
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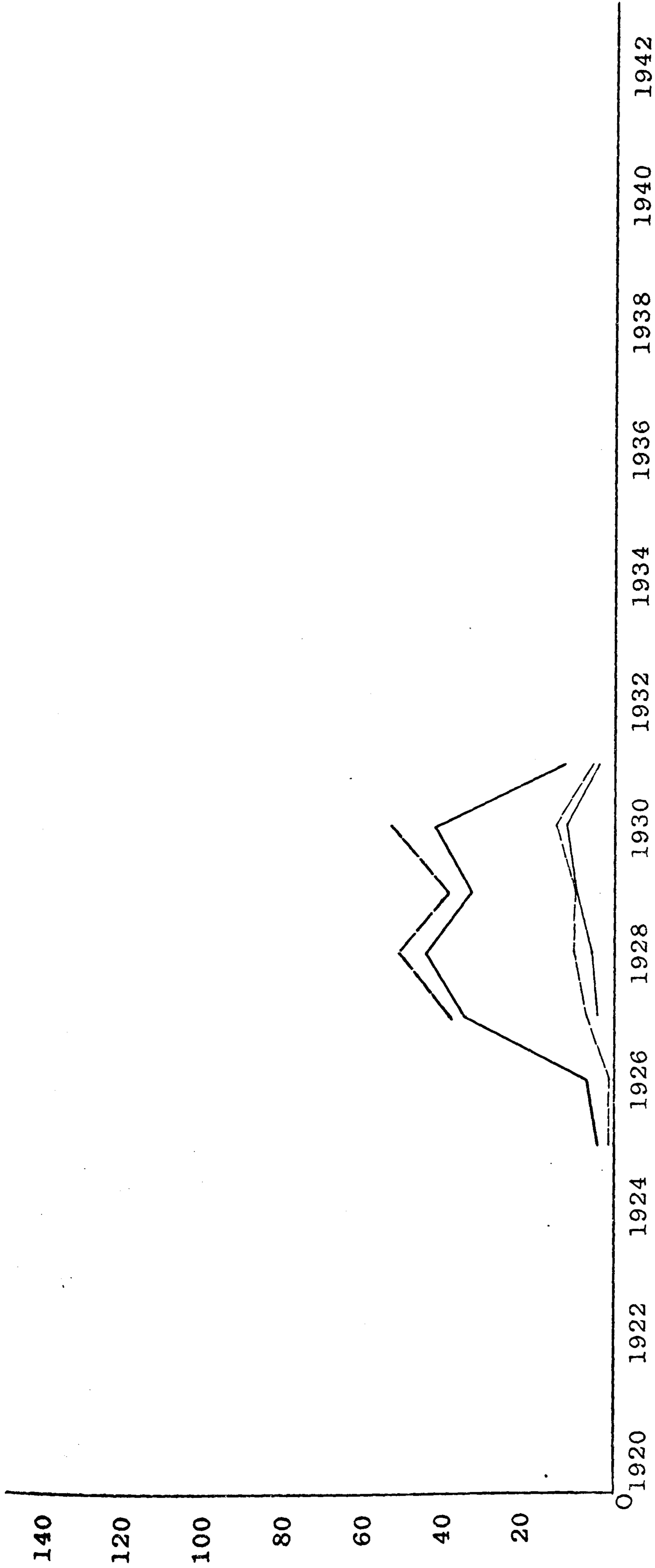
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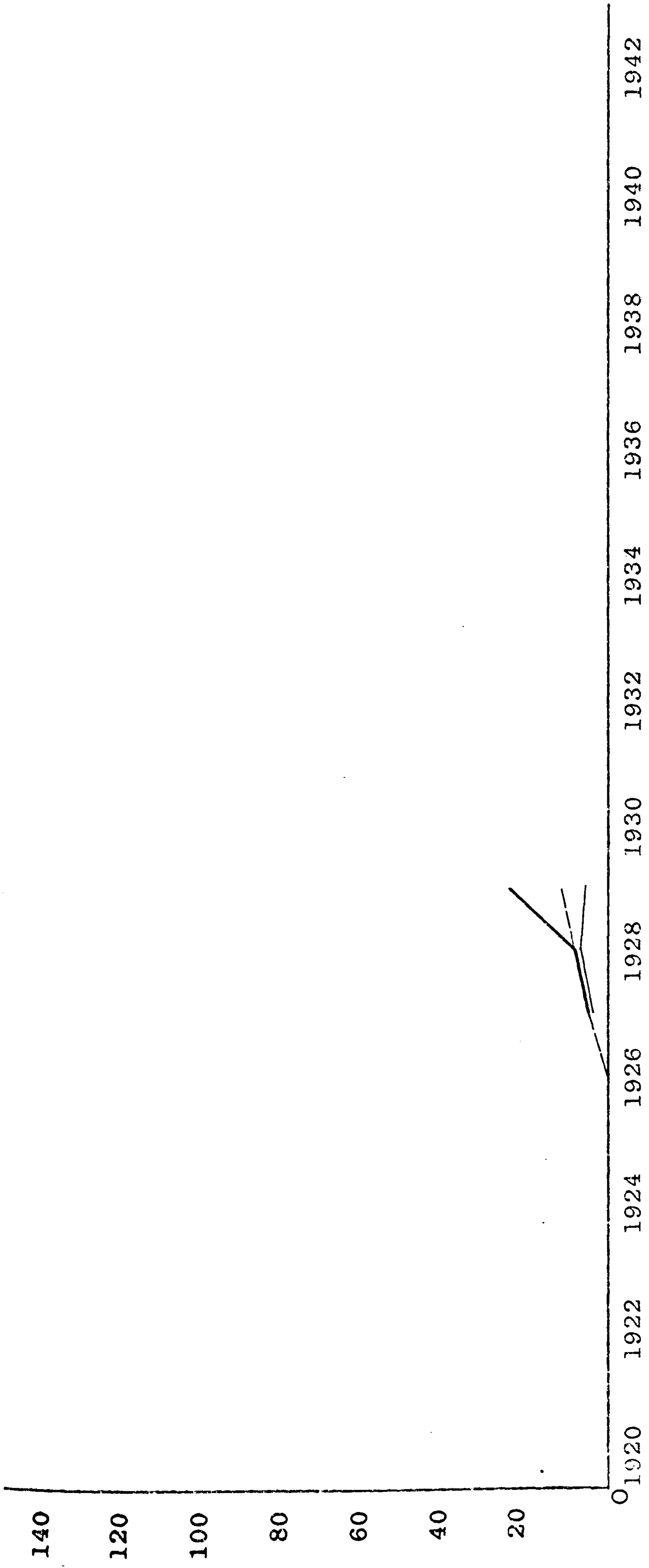
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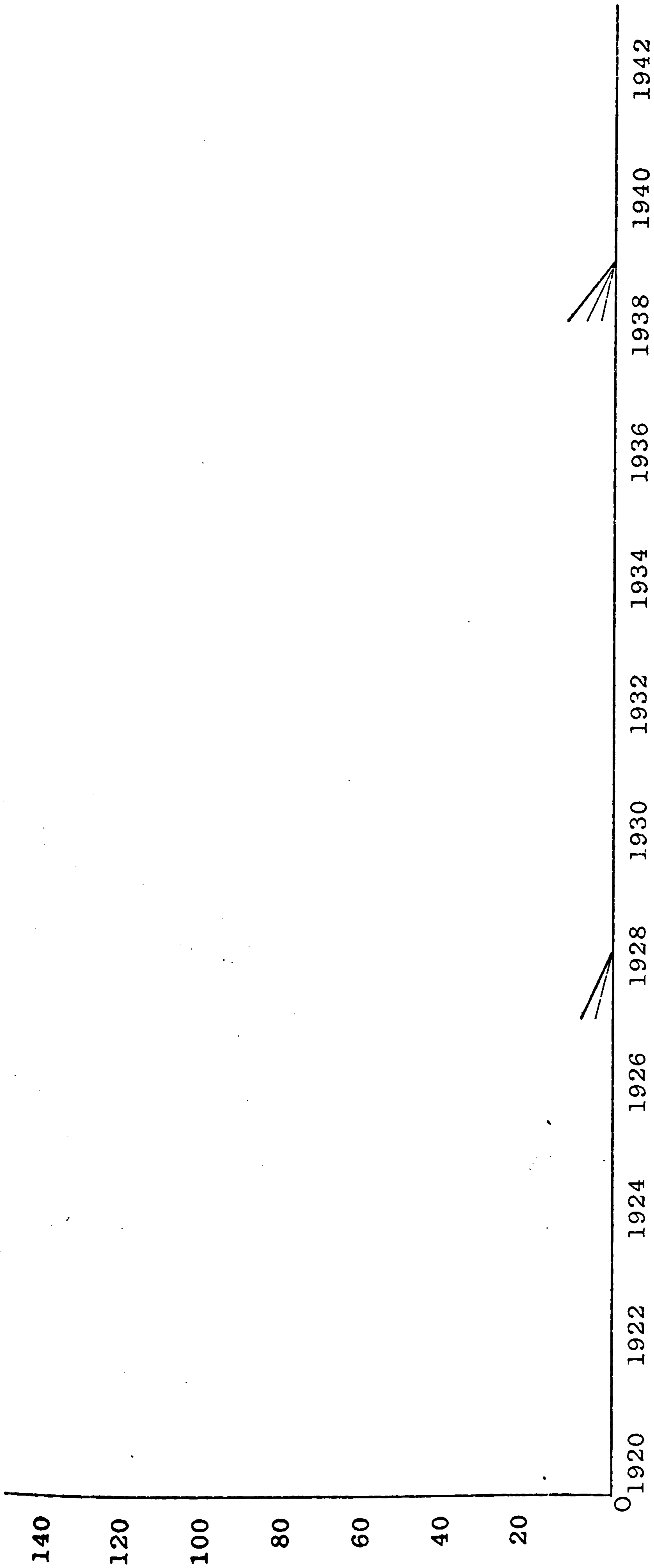
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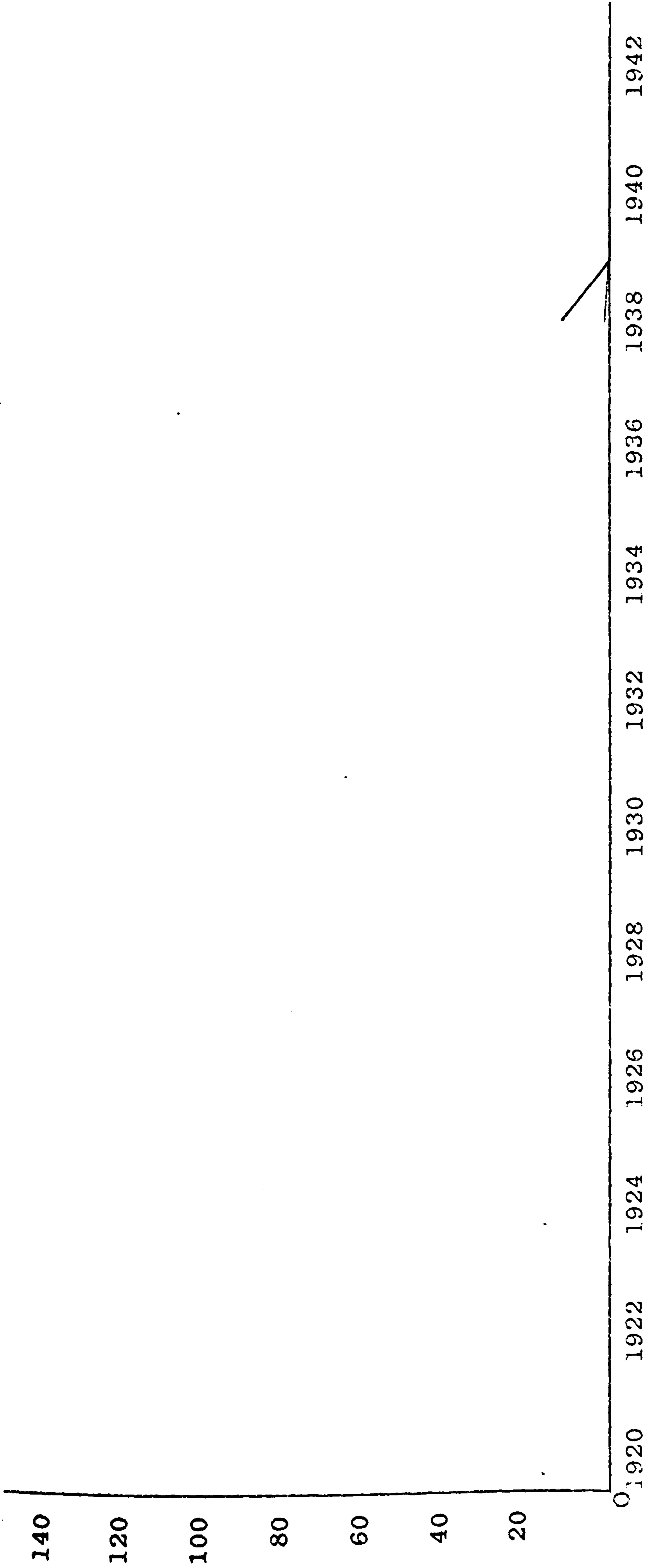
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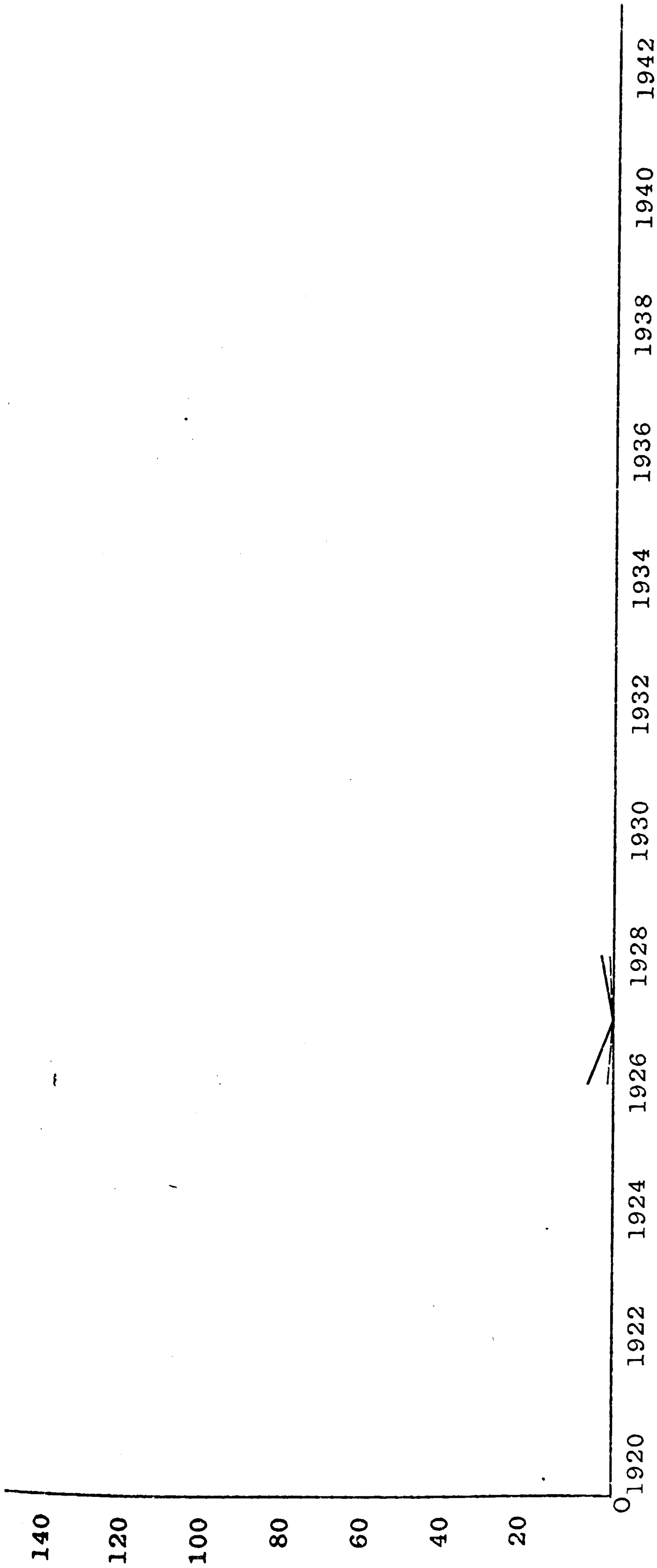
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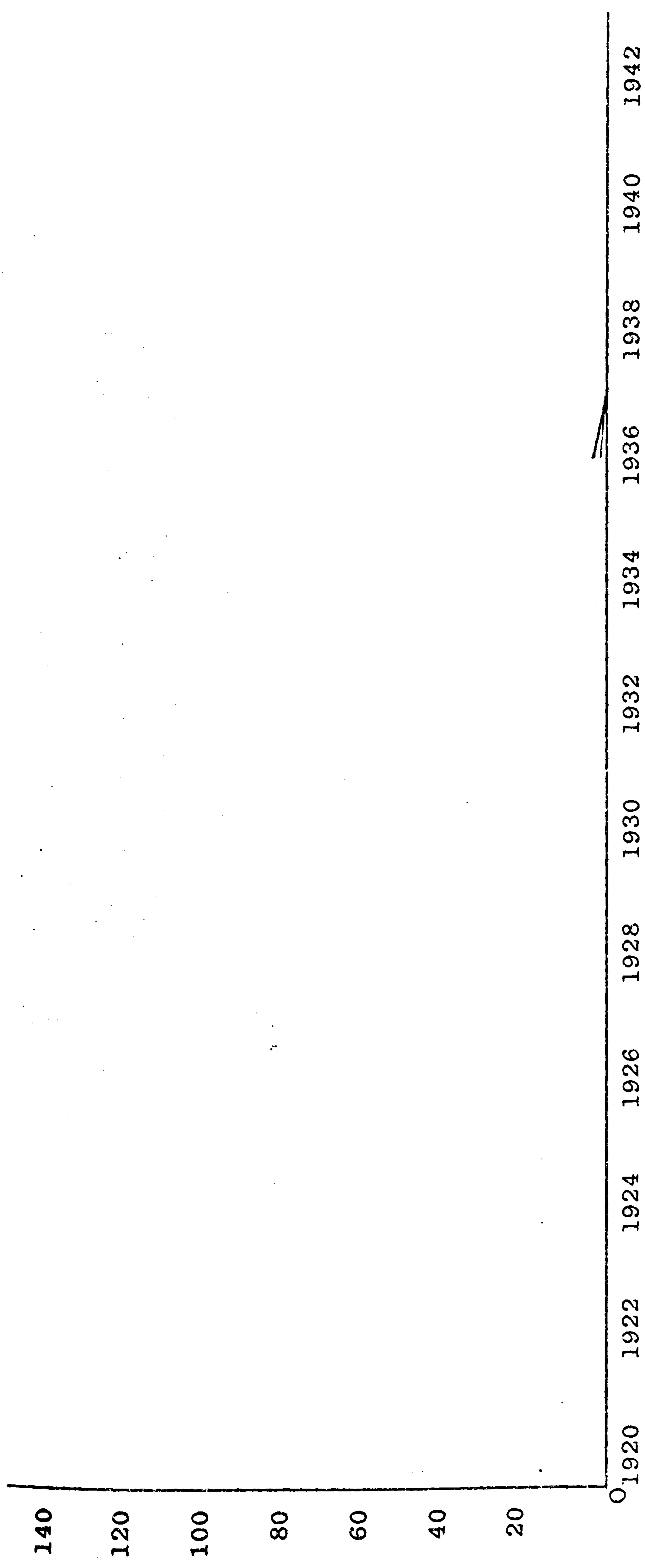
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24. Columbia Recordings in New Orleans

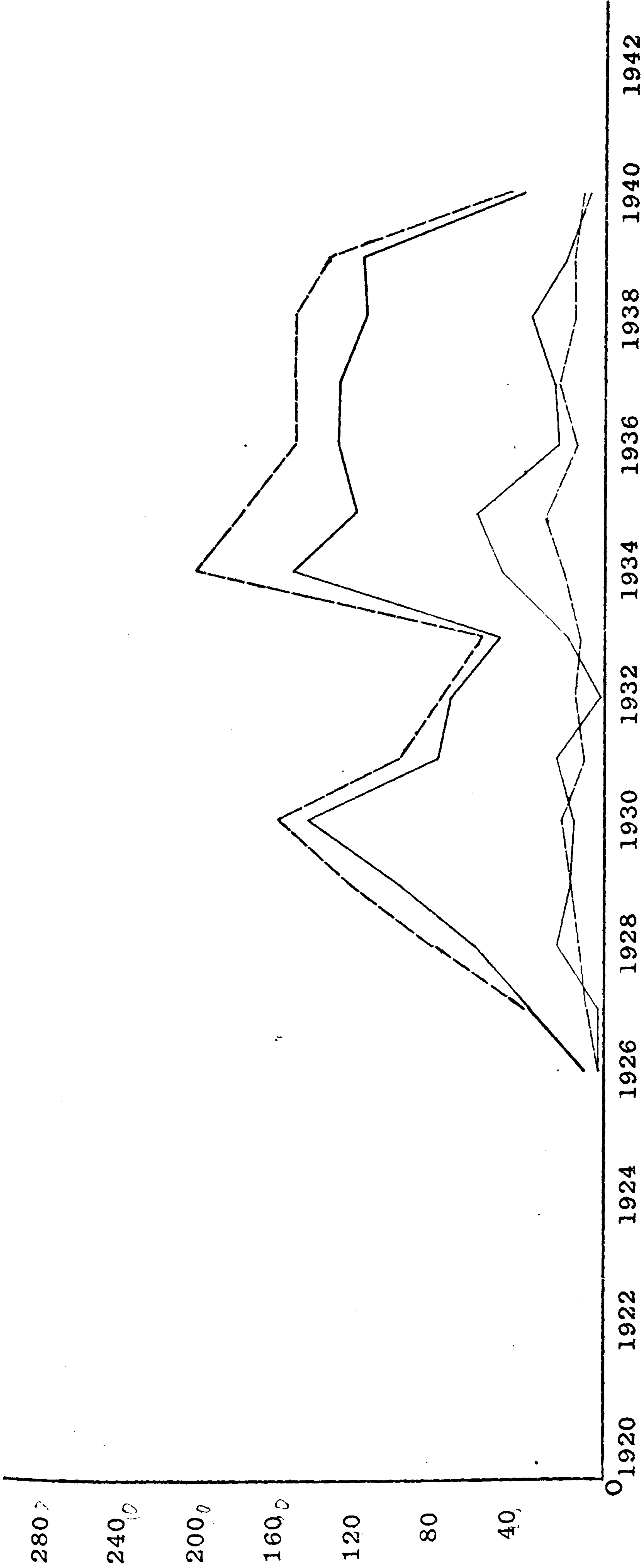
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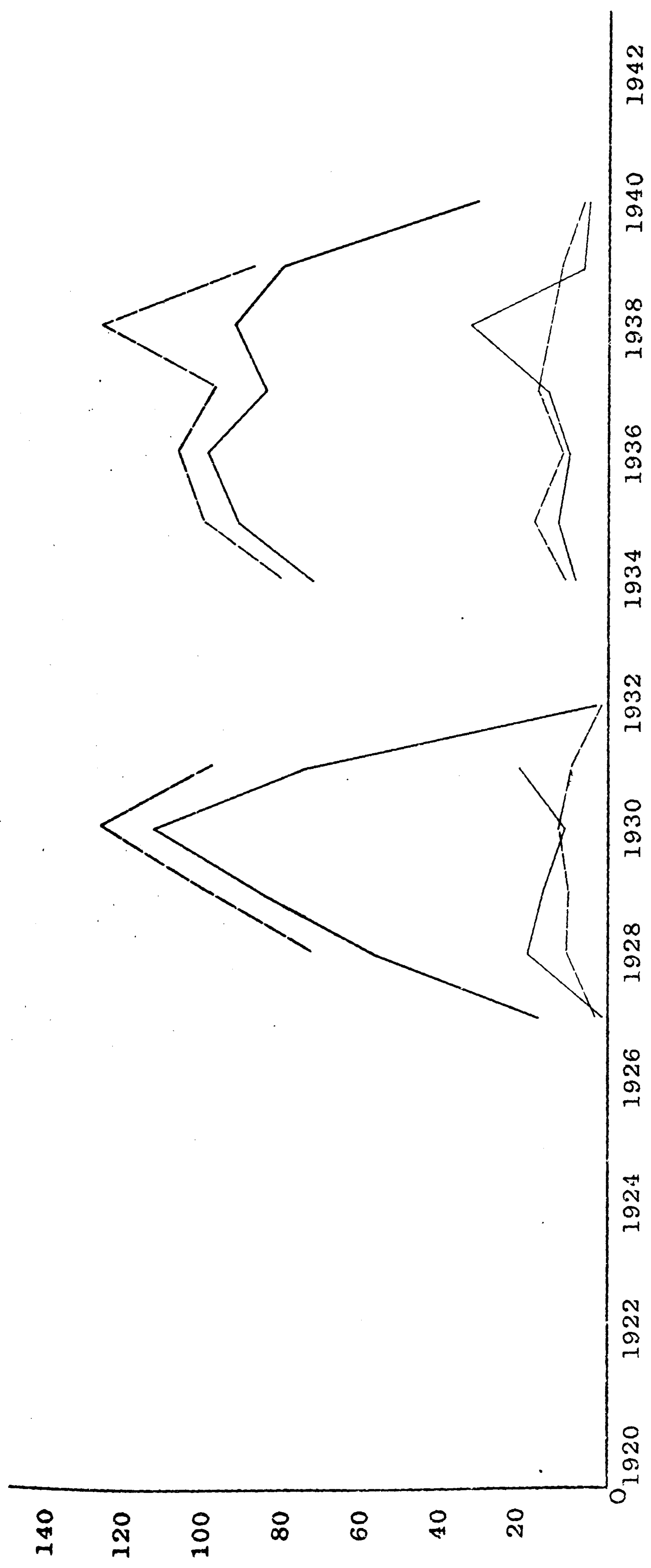
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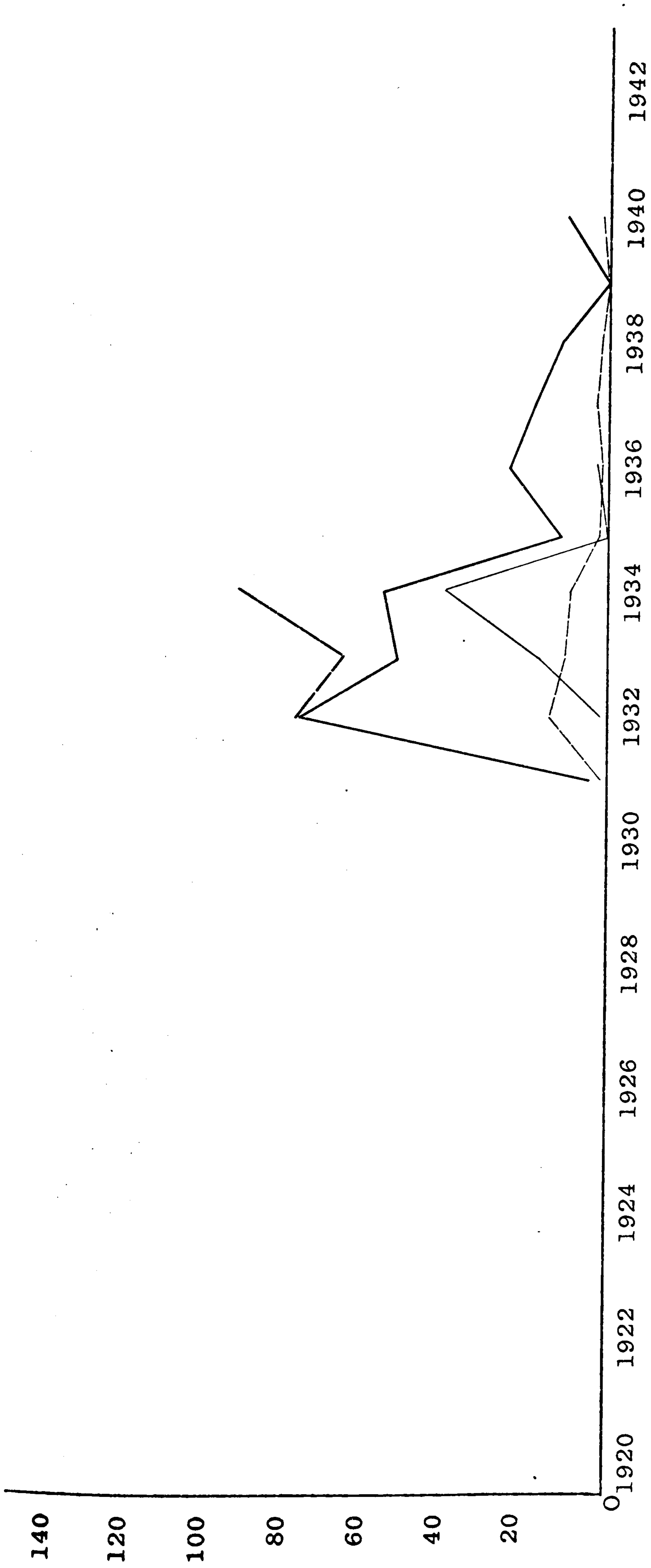
26. Vocalion Totals

Total Recordings Made - ---- Total Recordings Not Issued - ----
 Total Recordings Issued - ---- Number of Artists - ----



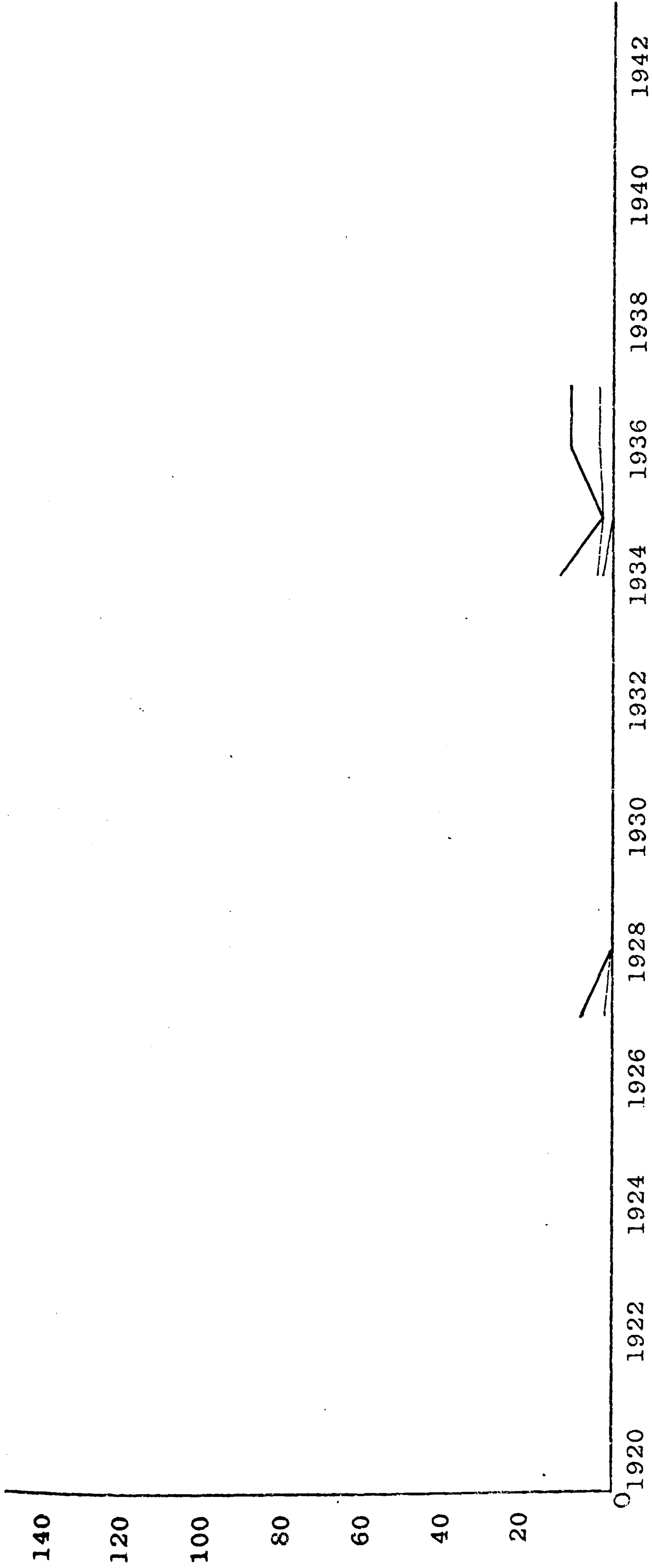
27. Vocalion Recordings in Chicago

Total Recordings Made - - - - - Total Recordings Not Issued - - - - -
 Total Recordings Issued - - - - - Number of Artists - - - - -



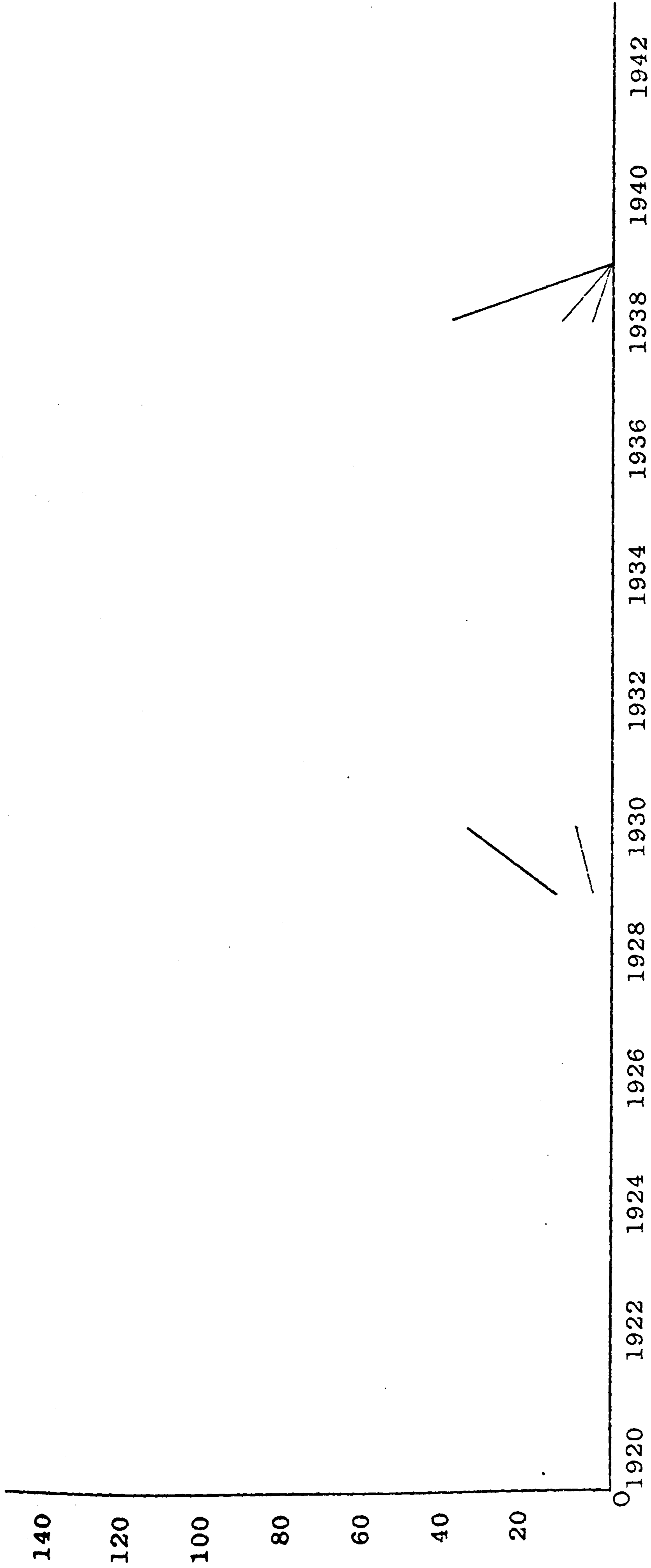
28. Vocalion Recordings in New York

Total Recordings Made - - - - - Total Recordings Not Issued - - - - -
 Total Recordings Issued - - - - - Number of Artists - - - - -



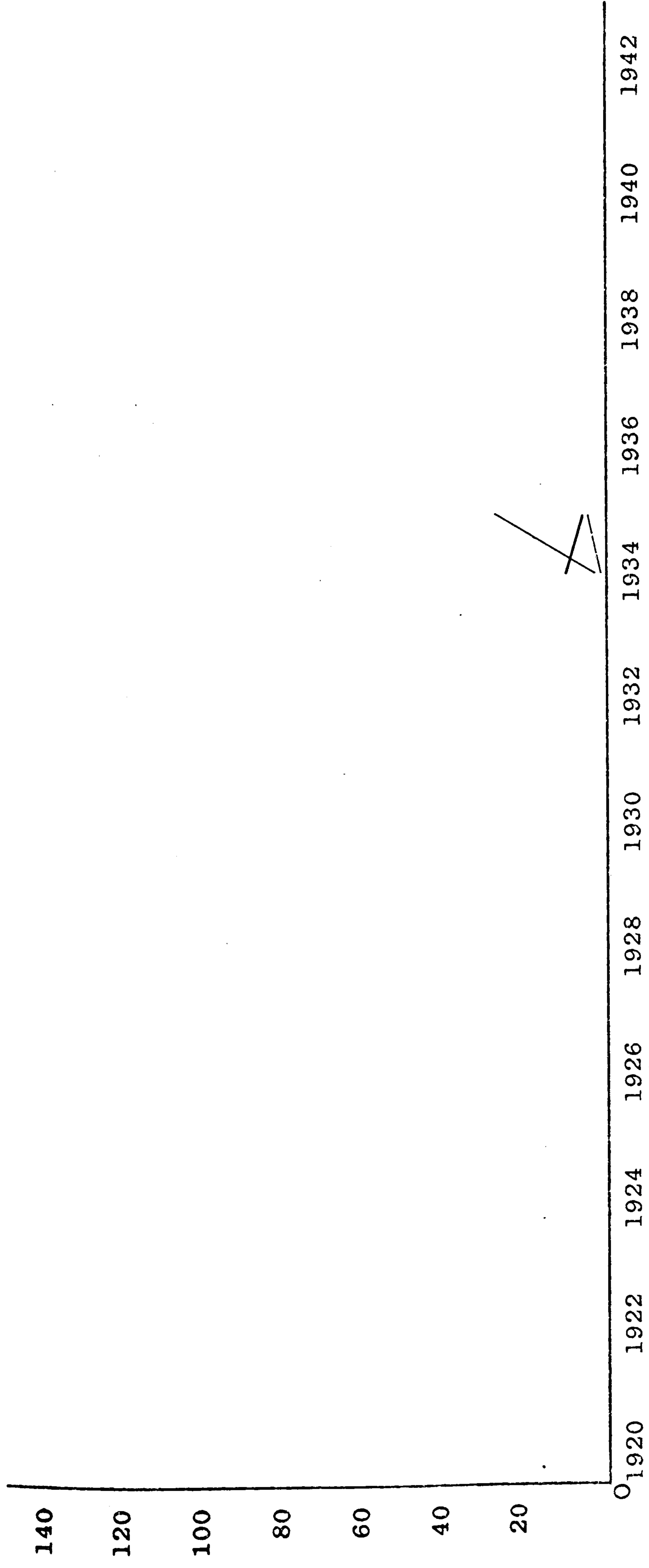
29. Vocalion Recordings in San Antonio

Total Recordings Made - - - - - Total Recordings Not Issued - - - - -
 Total Recordings Issued - - - - - Number of Artists - - - - -



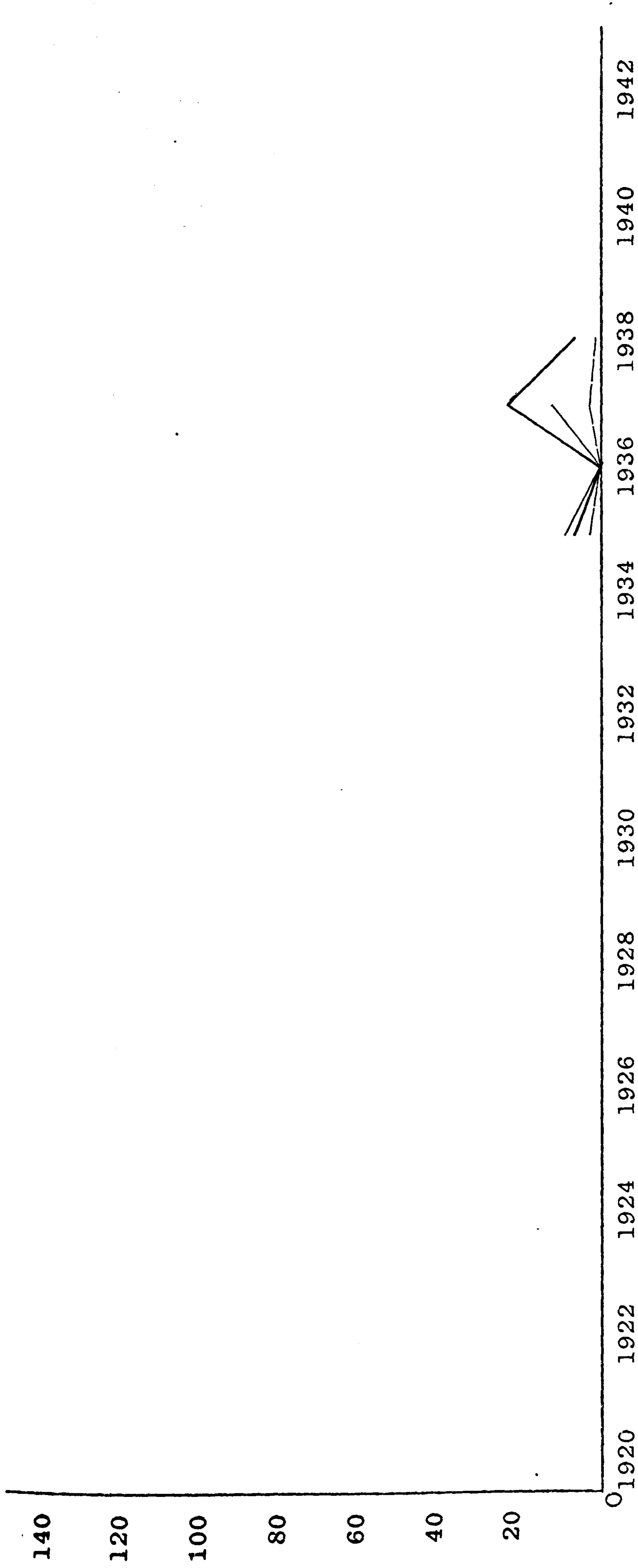
30. Vocalion Recordings in Memphis

Total Recordings Made - - - - - Total Recordings Not Issued - - - - -
 Total Recordings Issued - - - - - Number of Artists - - - - -



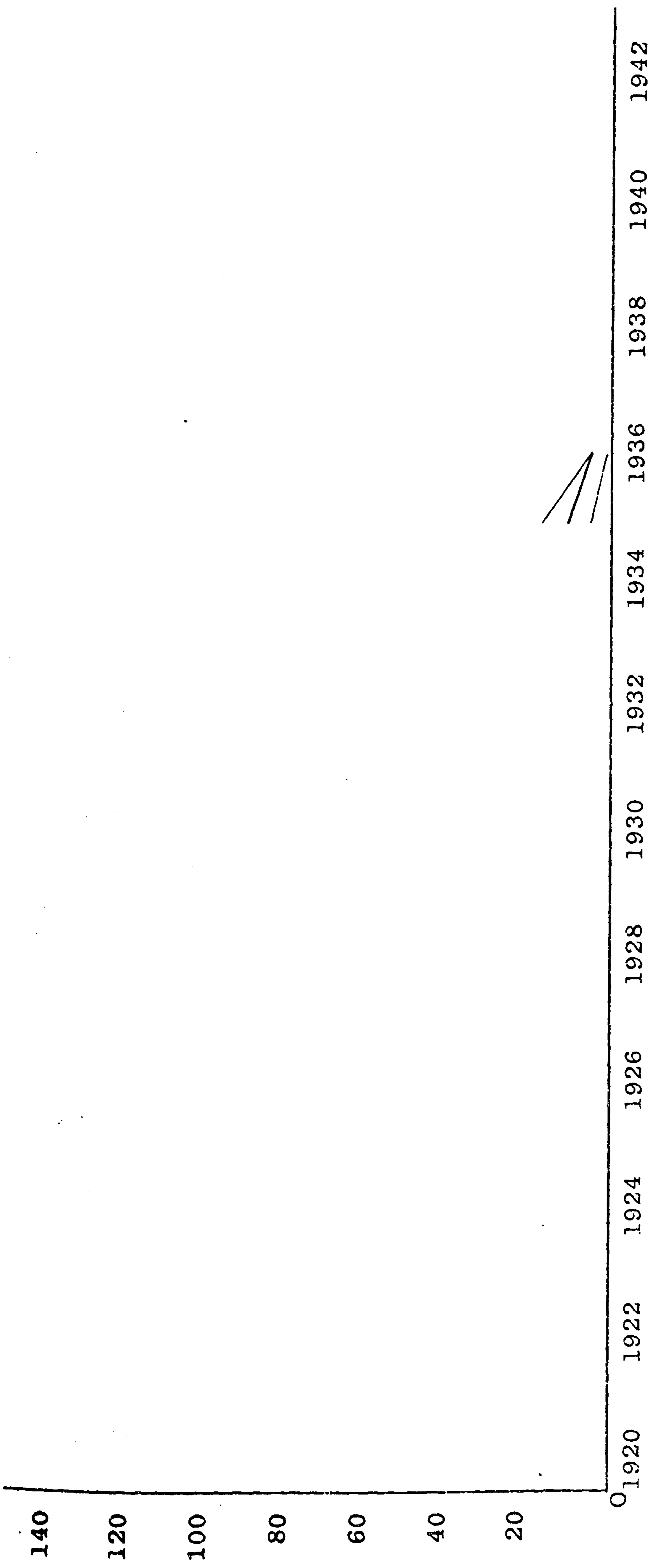
31. Vocalion Recordings in Fort Worth, Texas

Total Recordings Made - - - - - Total Recordings Not Issued - - - - -
 Total Recordings Issued - - - - - Number of Artists - - - - -



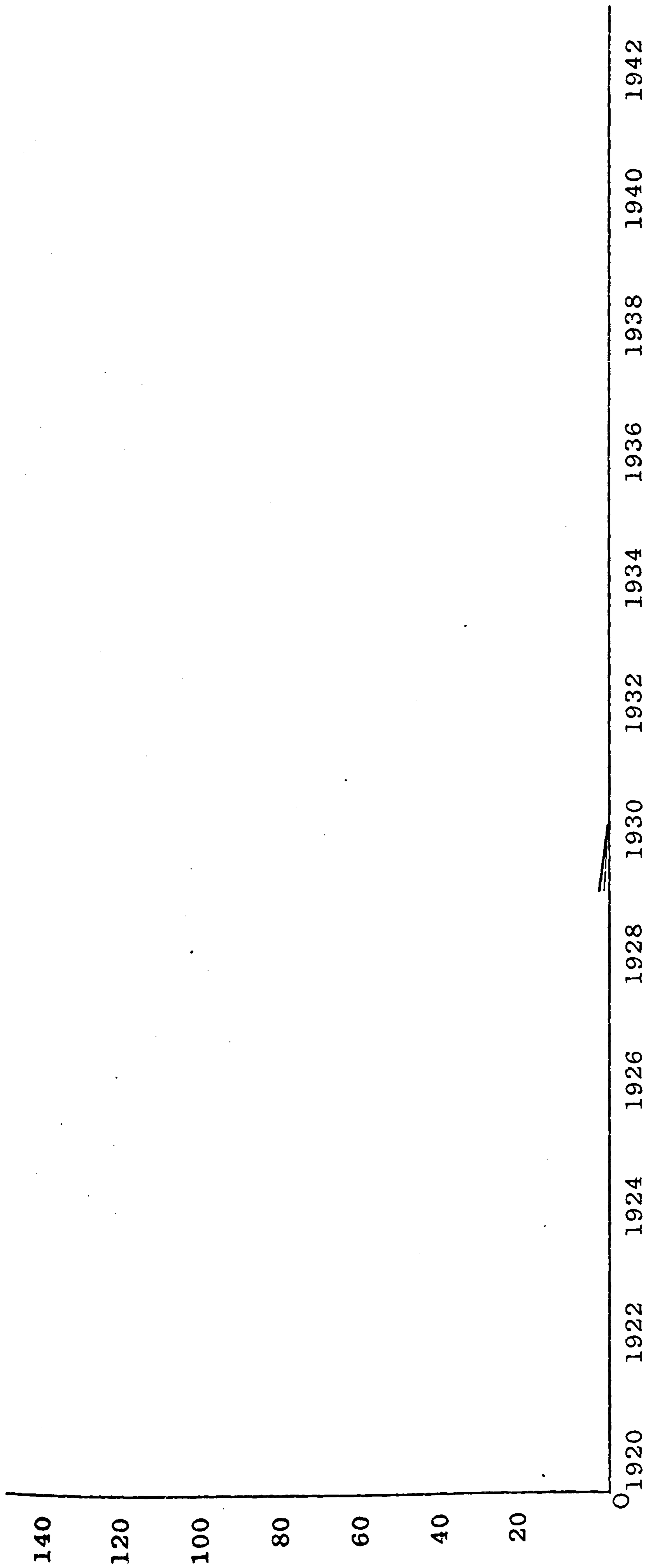
32. Vocalion Recordings in Dallas

Total Recordings Made - - - - - Total Recordings Not Issued - - - - -
 Total Recordings Issued - - - - - Number of Artists - - - - -



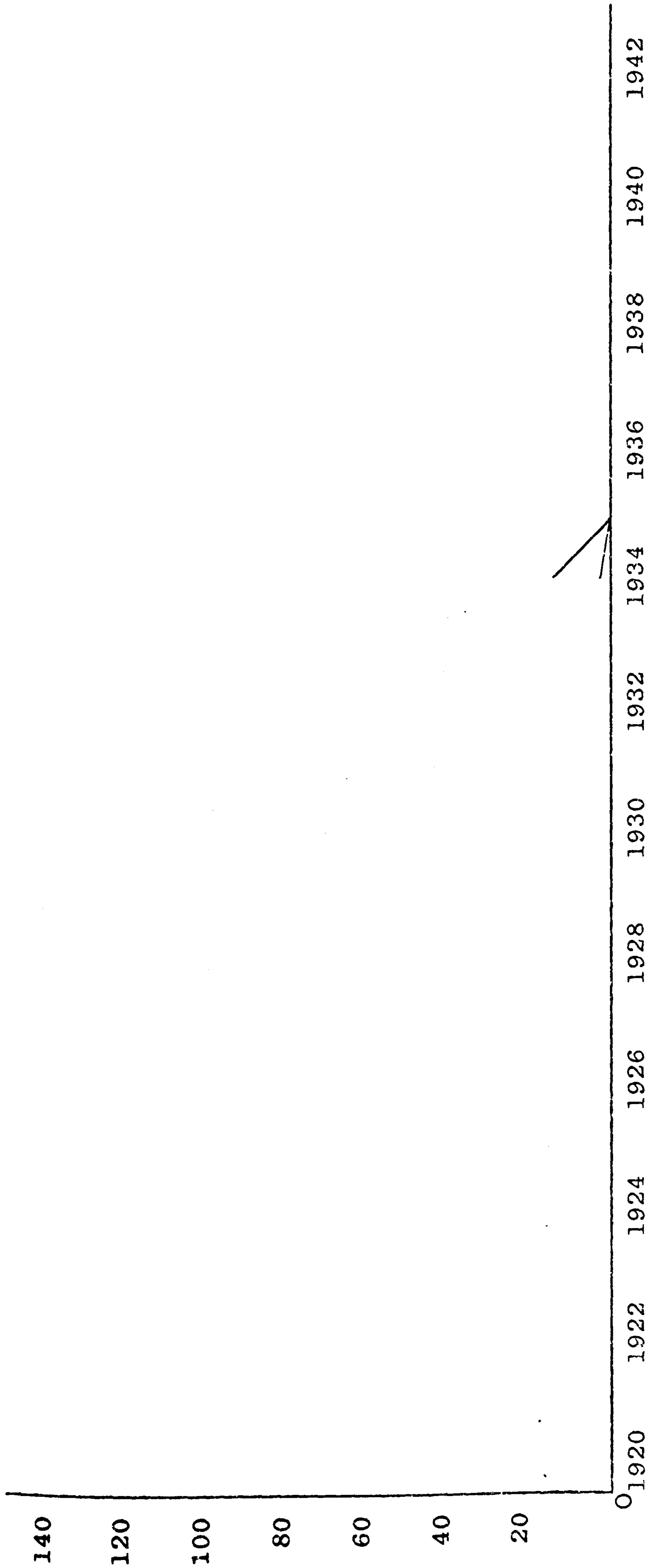
33. Vocalion Recordings in Jackson, Mississippi

Total Recordings Made - - - - - Total Recordings Not Issued - - - - -
 Total Recordings Issued - - - - - Number of Artists - - - - -



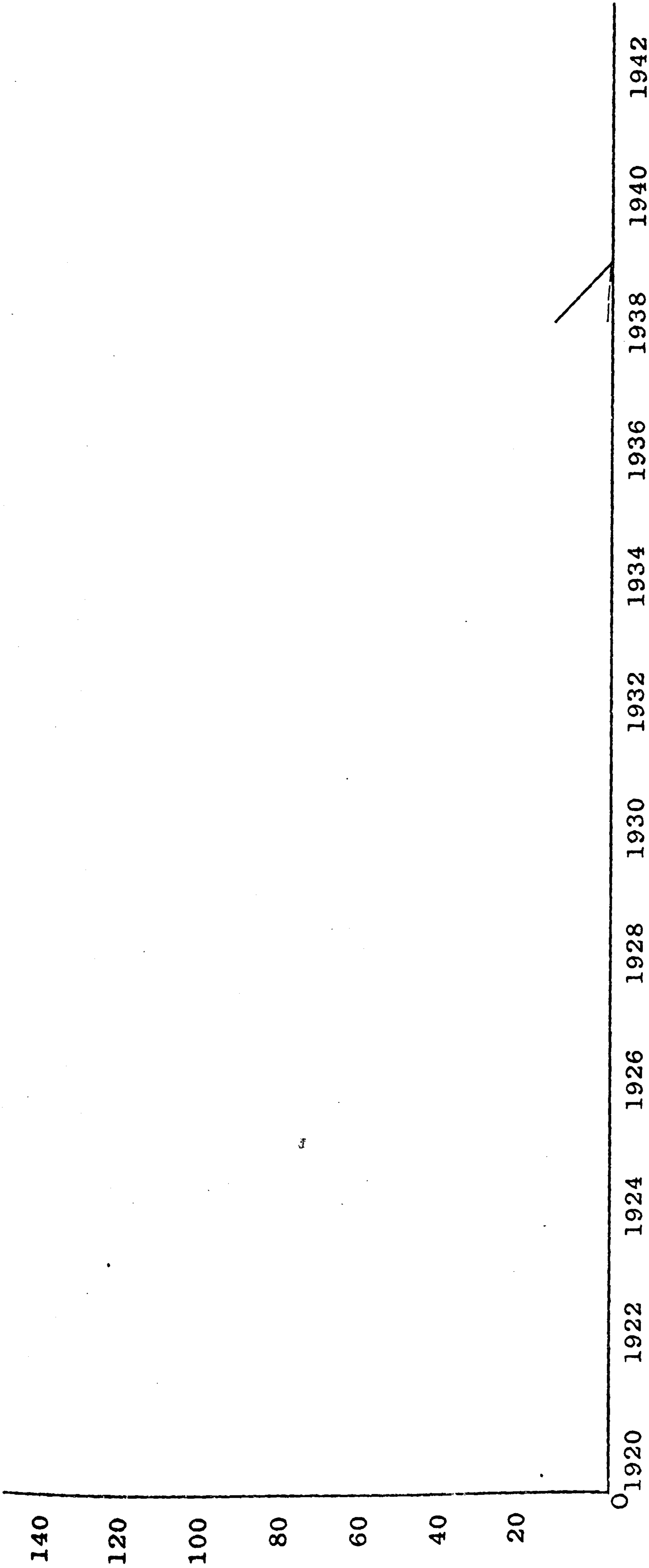
34. Vocalion Recordings in Richmond

Total Recordings Made	-	Total Recordings Not Issued	-
Total Recordings Issued	-	Number of Artists	-



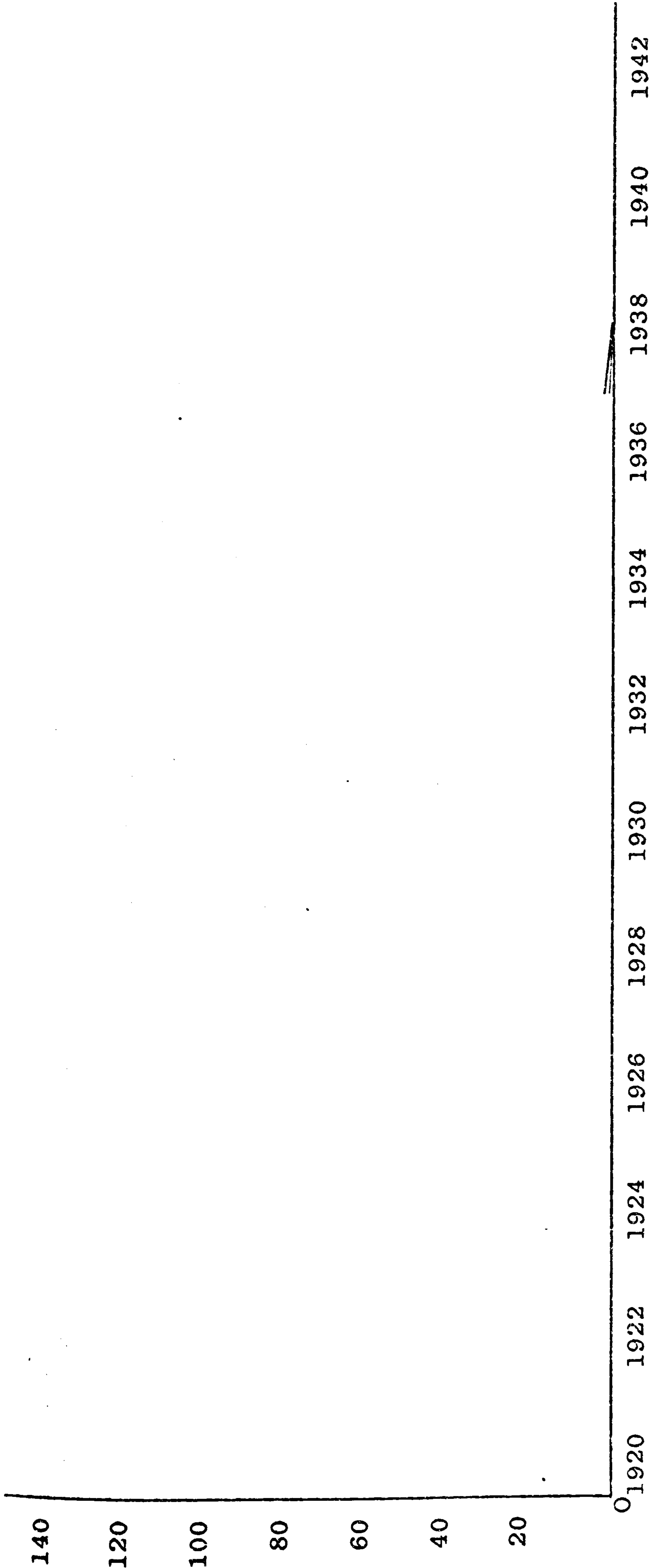
35. Vocalion Recordings' in St. Louis

Total Recordings Made - - - - - Total Recordings Not Issued -
 Total Recordings Issued - - - - - Number of Artists - - - - -



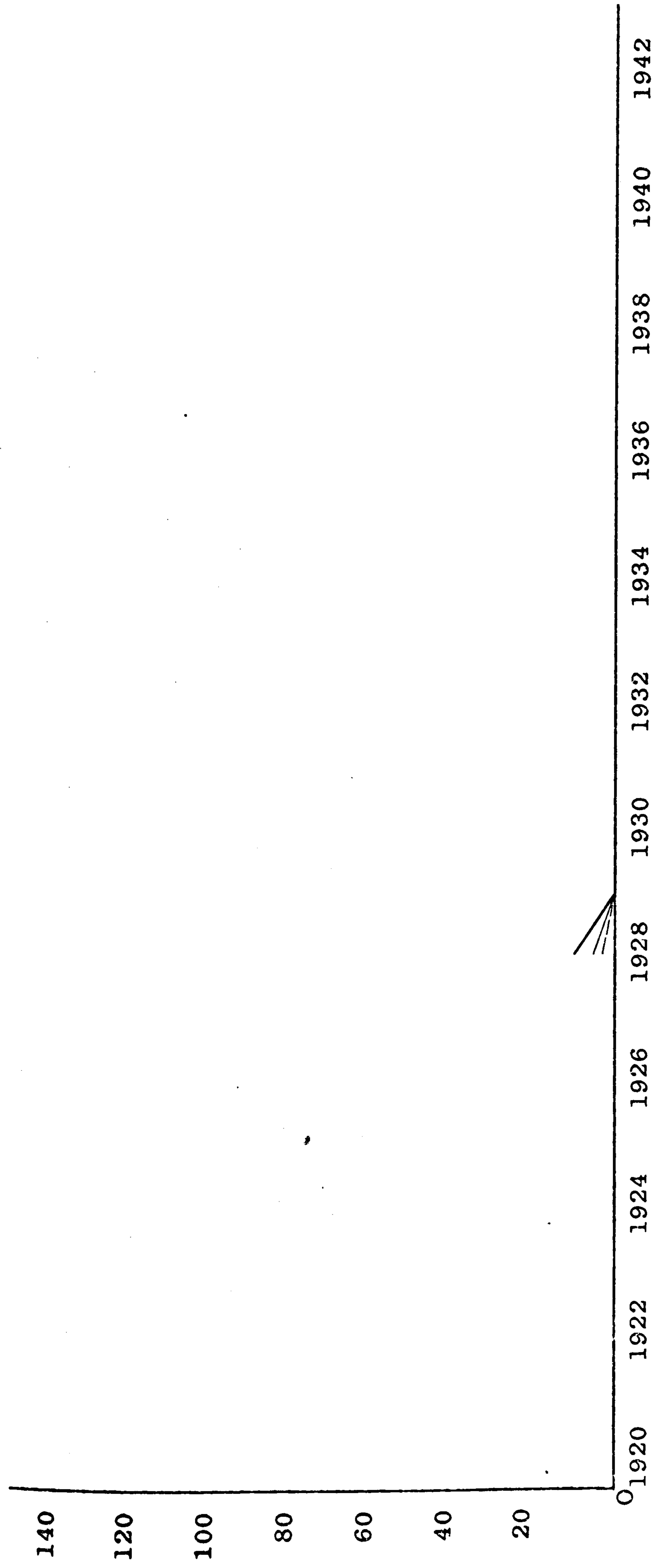
36. Vocalion Recordings in Columbia, S. Carolina

Total Recordings Made - - - - - Total Recordings Not Issued -
 Total Recordings Issued - - - - - Number of Artists - - - - -



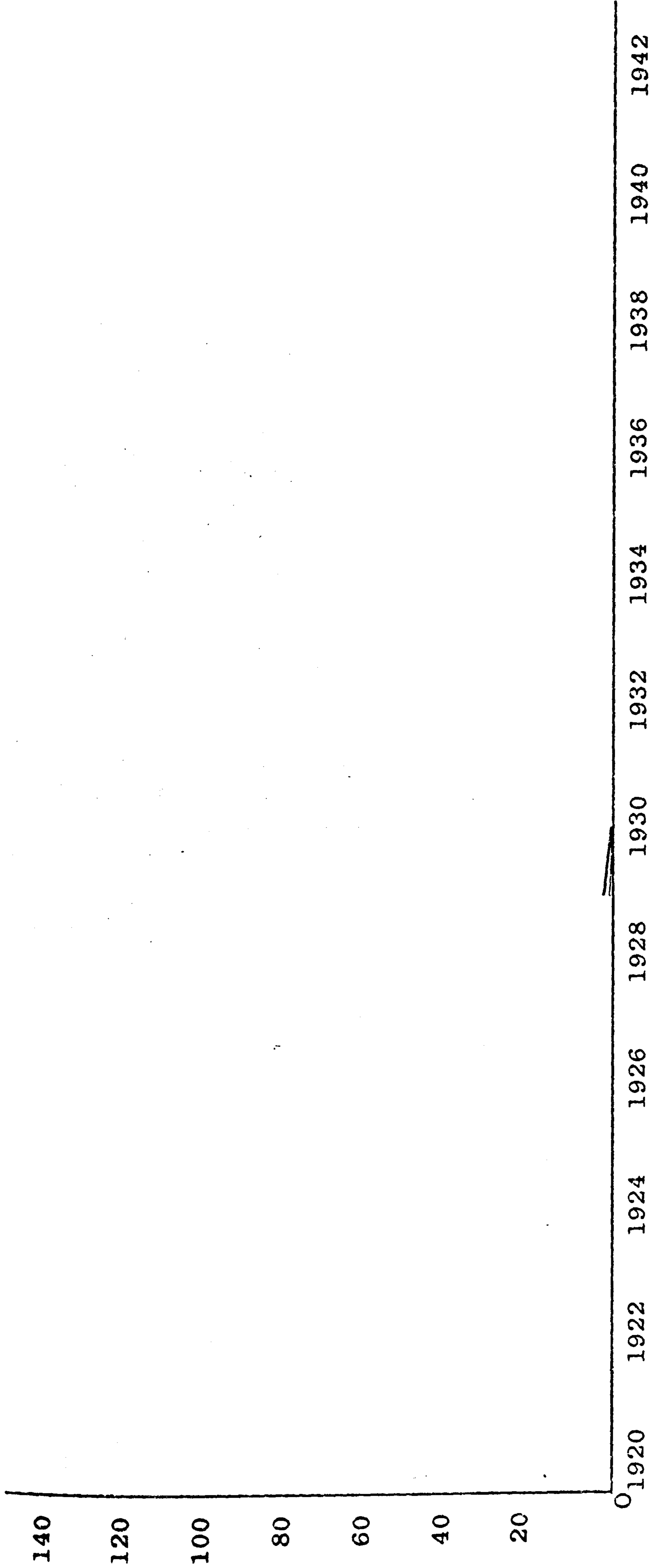
37. Vocalion Recordings in Birmingham, Alabama

Total Recordings Made - - - - - Total Recordings Not Issued -
 Total Recordings Issued - - - - - Number of Artists - - - - -



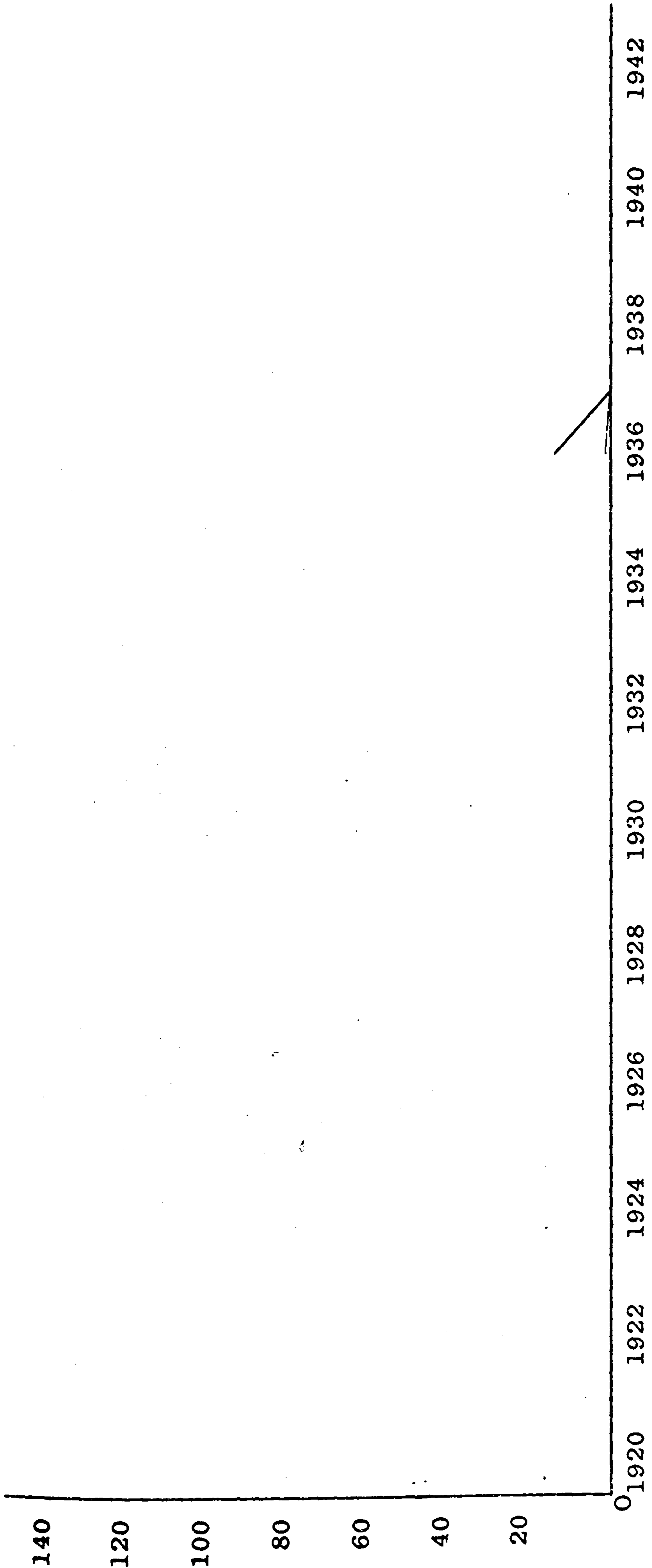
38. Vocalion Recordings in Indianapolis

Total Recordings Made - - - - - Total Recordings Not Issued - - - - -
 Total Recordings Issued - - - - - Number of Artists - - - - -



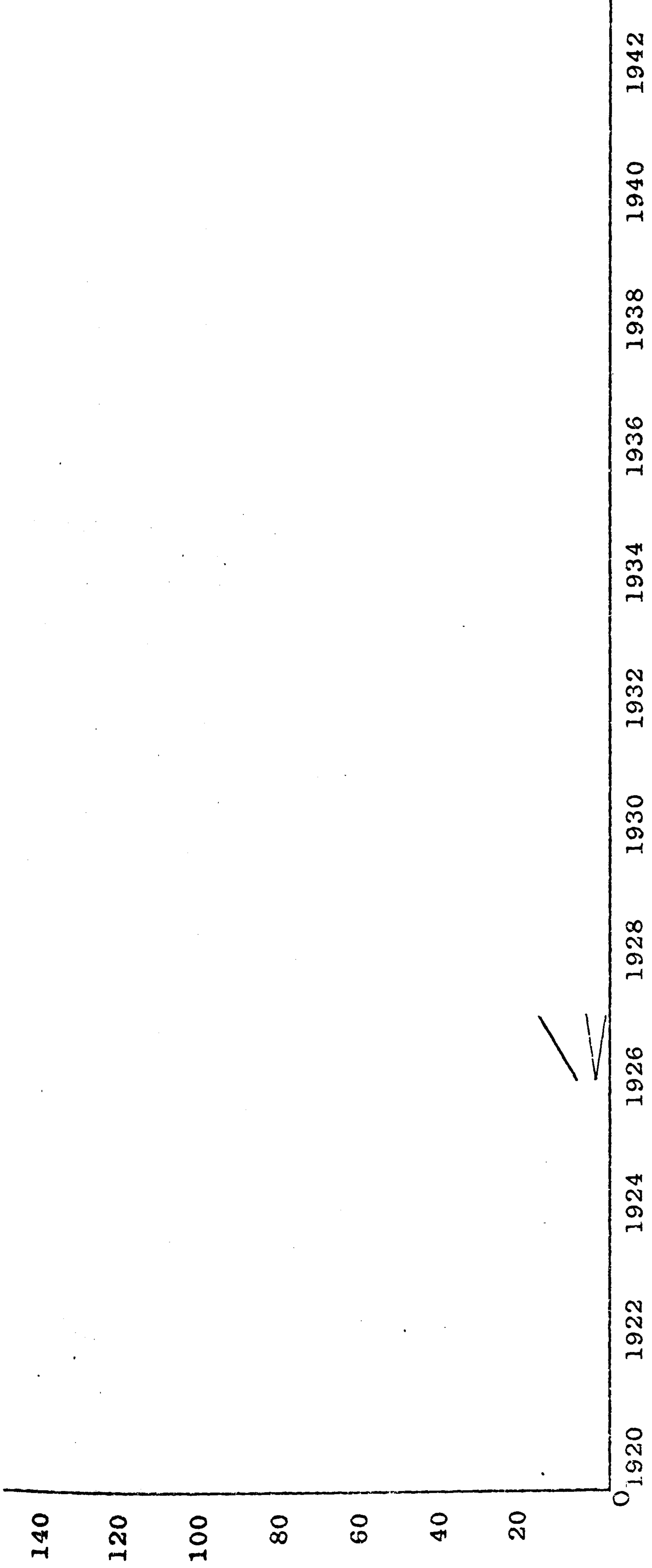
39. Vocalion Recordings in Knoxville, Tennessee

Total Recordings Made - - - - - Total Recordings Not Issued - - - - -
 Total Recordings Issued - - - - - Number of Artists - - - - -



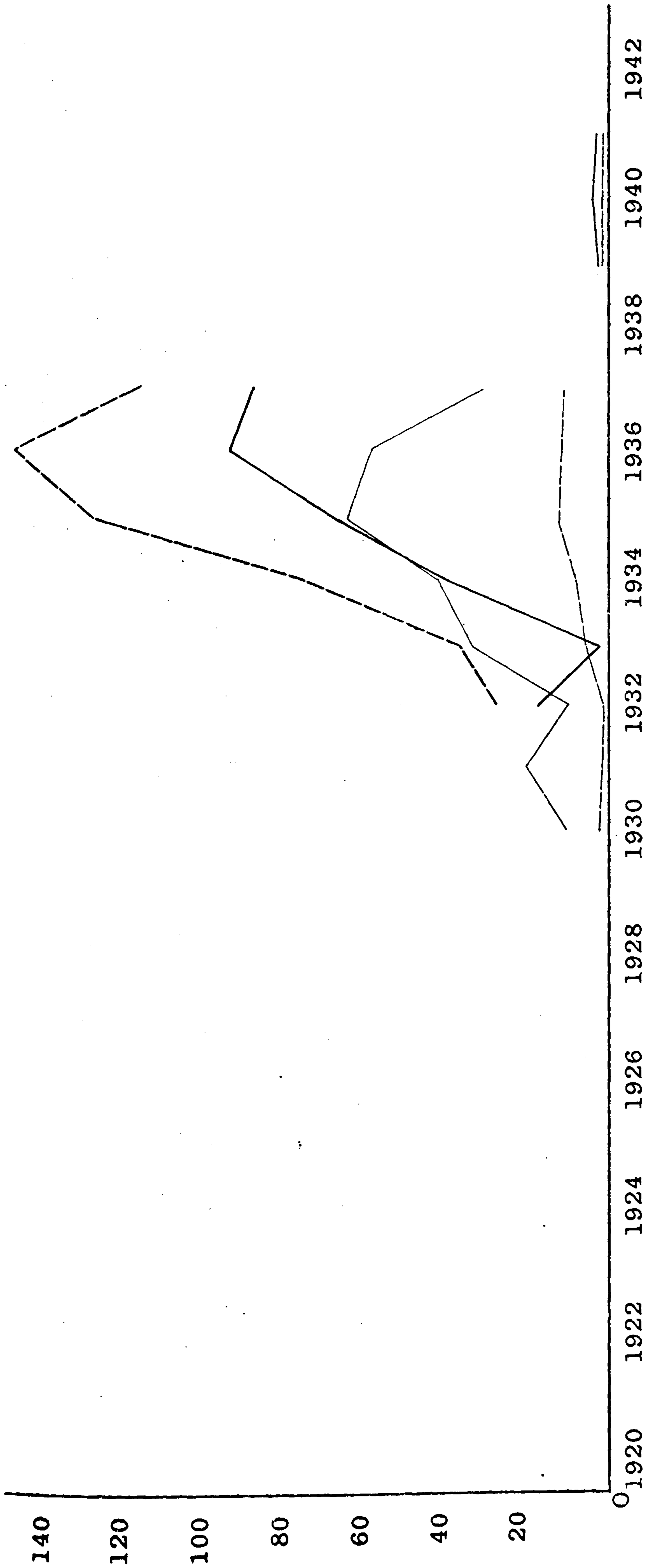
40. Vocalion Recordings in Augusta, Georgia

Total Recordings Made - - - - - Total Recordings Not Issued -
 Total Recordings Issued - - - - - Number of Artists - - - - -



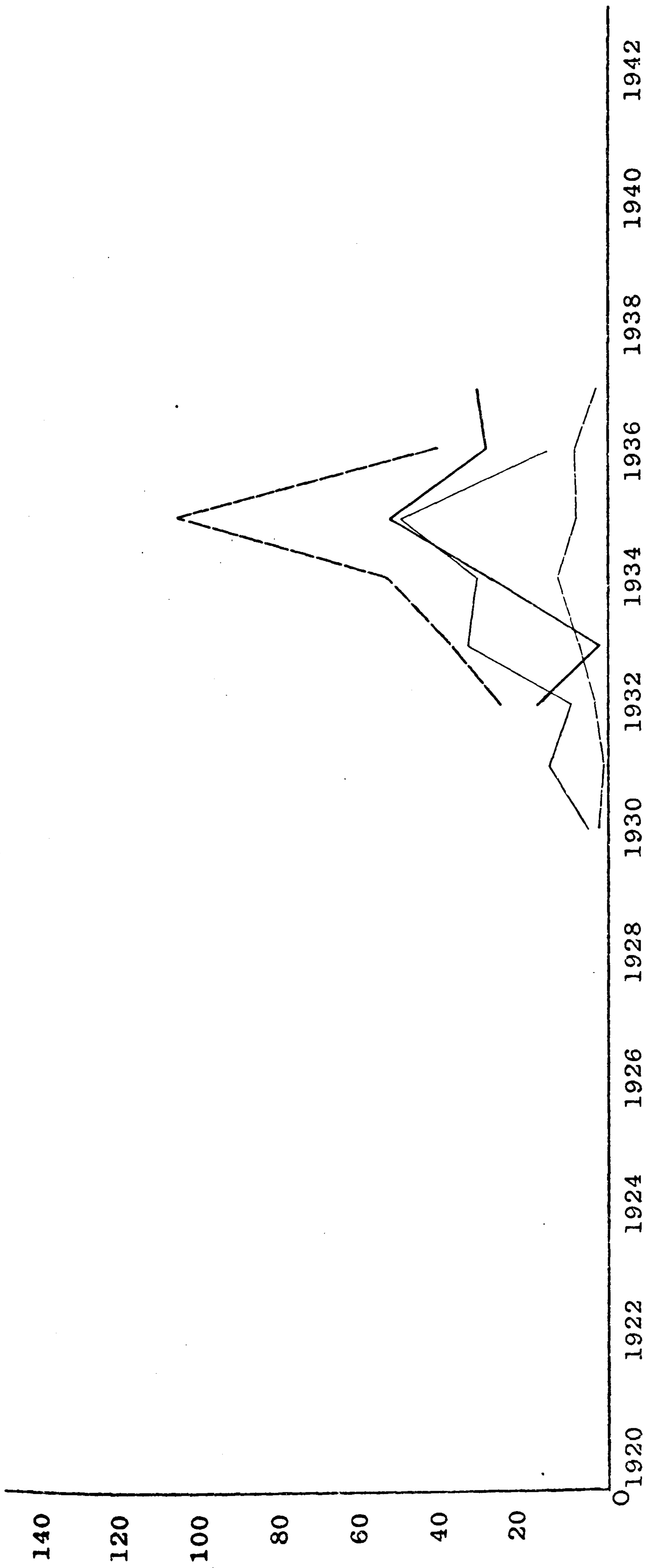
41. Vocalion Recordings in Unknown Location

Total Recordings Made - - - - - Total Recordings Not Issued - - - - -
 Total Recordings Issued - - - - - Number of Artists - - - - -



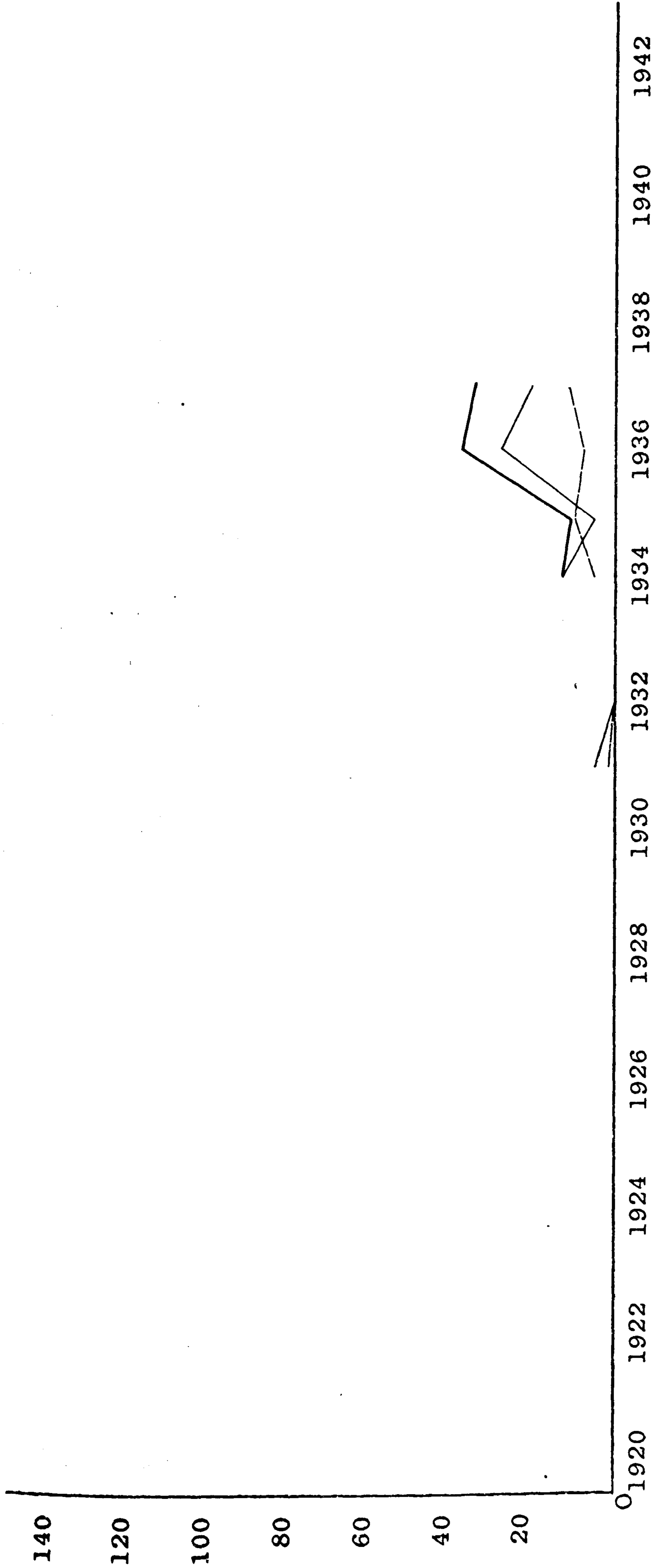
42. ARC Totals

Total Recordings Made - - - - - Total Recordings Not Issued - - - - -
 Total Recordings Issued - - - - - Number of Artists - - - - -



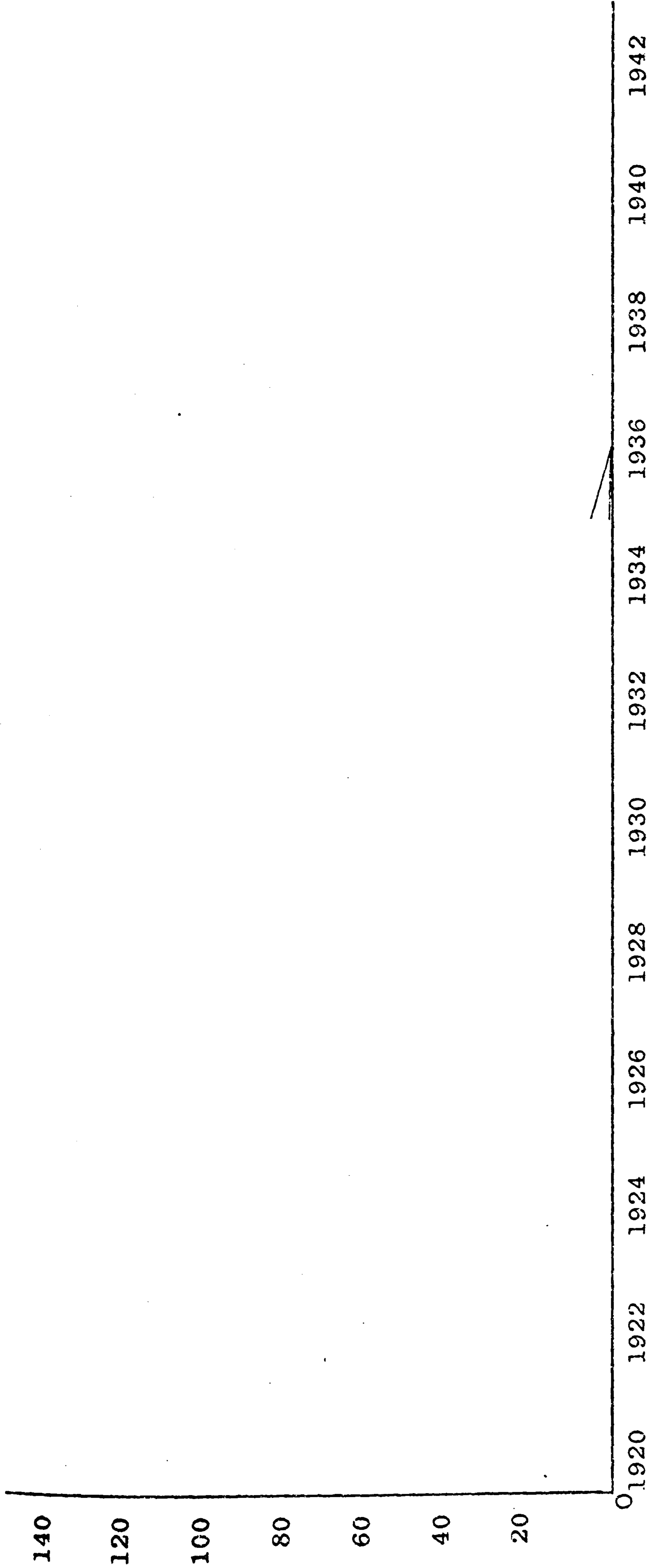
43. ARC Recordings in New York

Total Recordings Made - - - - - Total Recordings Not Issued - - - - -
 Total Recordings Issued - - - - - Number of Artists - - - - -



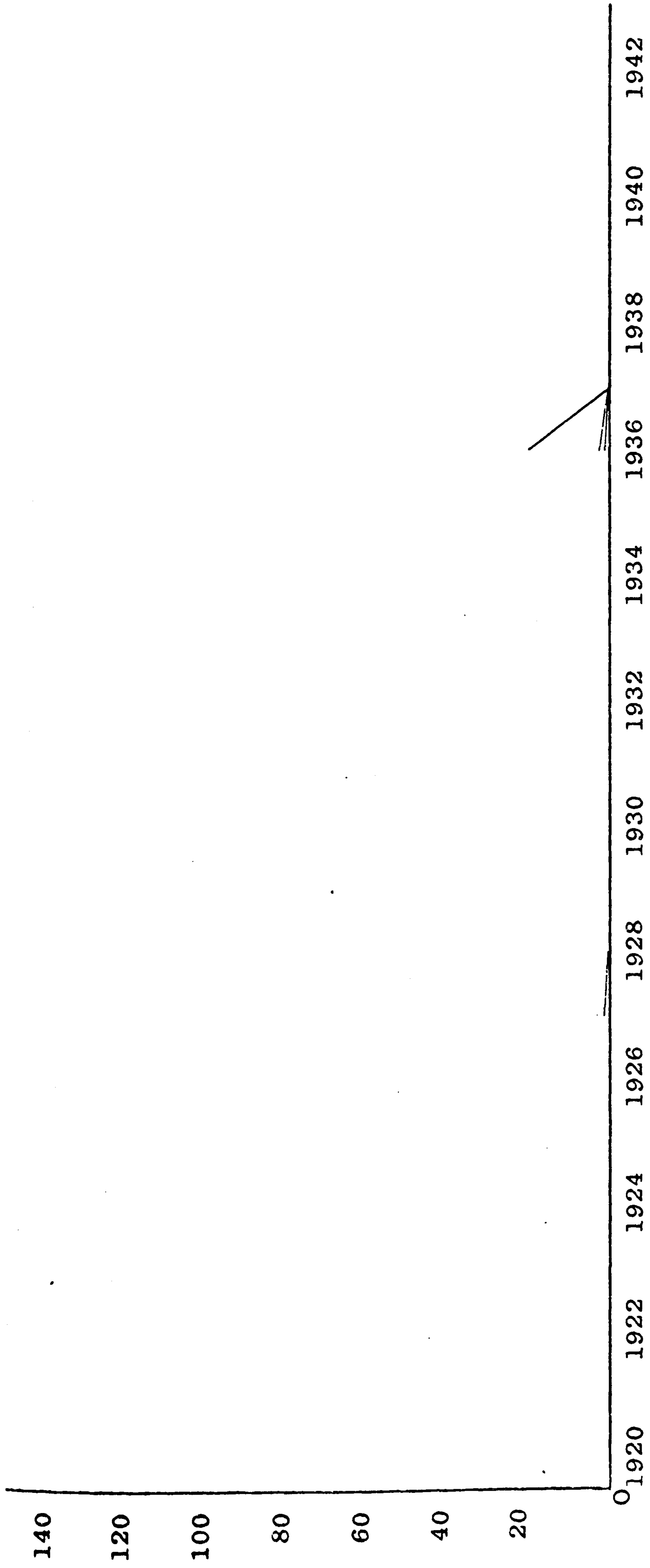
44. ARC Recordings in Chicago

Total Recordings Made - - - - - Total Recordings Not Issued - - - - -
 Total Recordings Issued - - - - - Number of Artists - - - - -



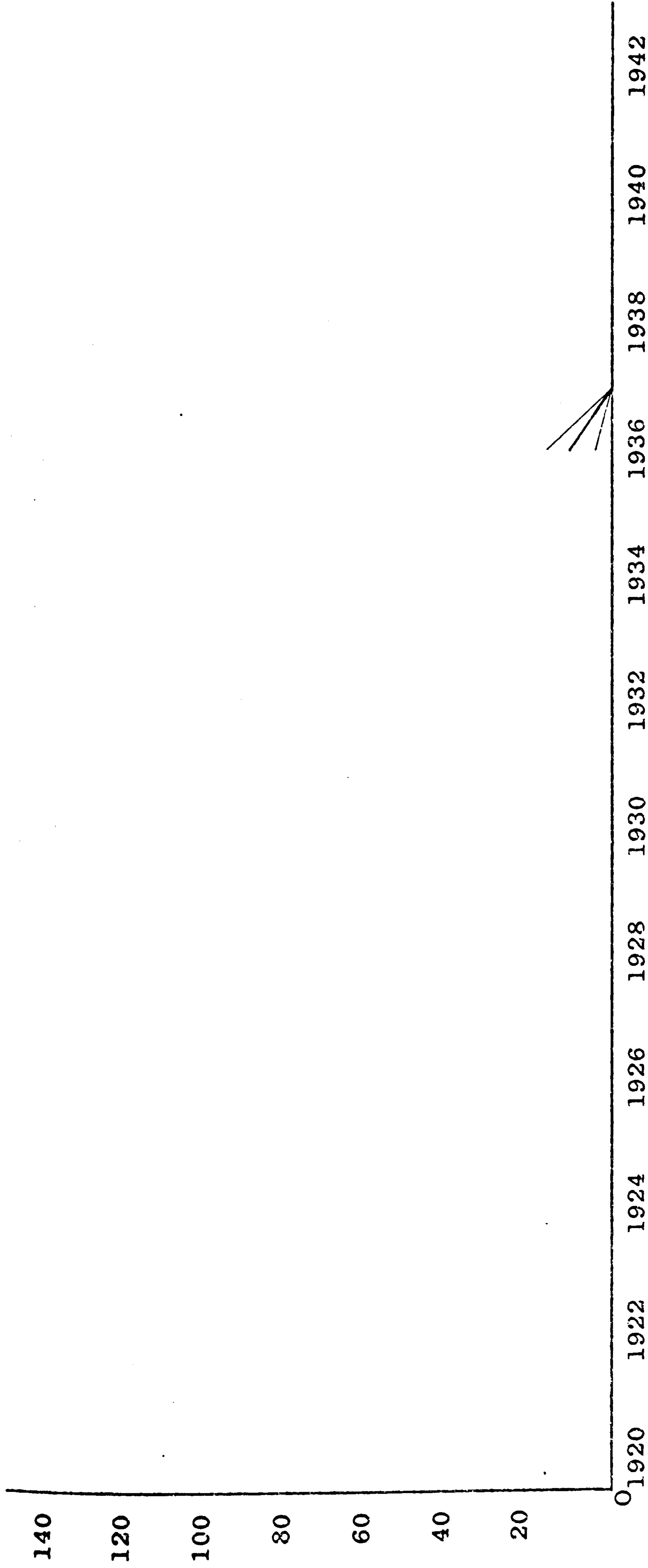
45. ARC Recordings in Fort Worth, Texas

Total Recordings Made - - - - - Total Recordings Not Issued - - - - -
 Total Recordings Issued - - - - - Number of Artists - - - - -



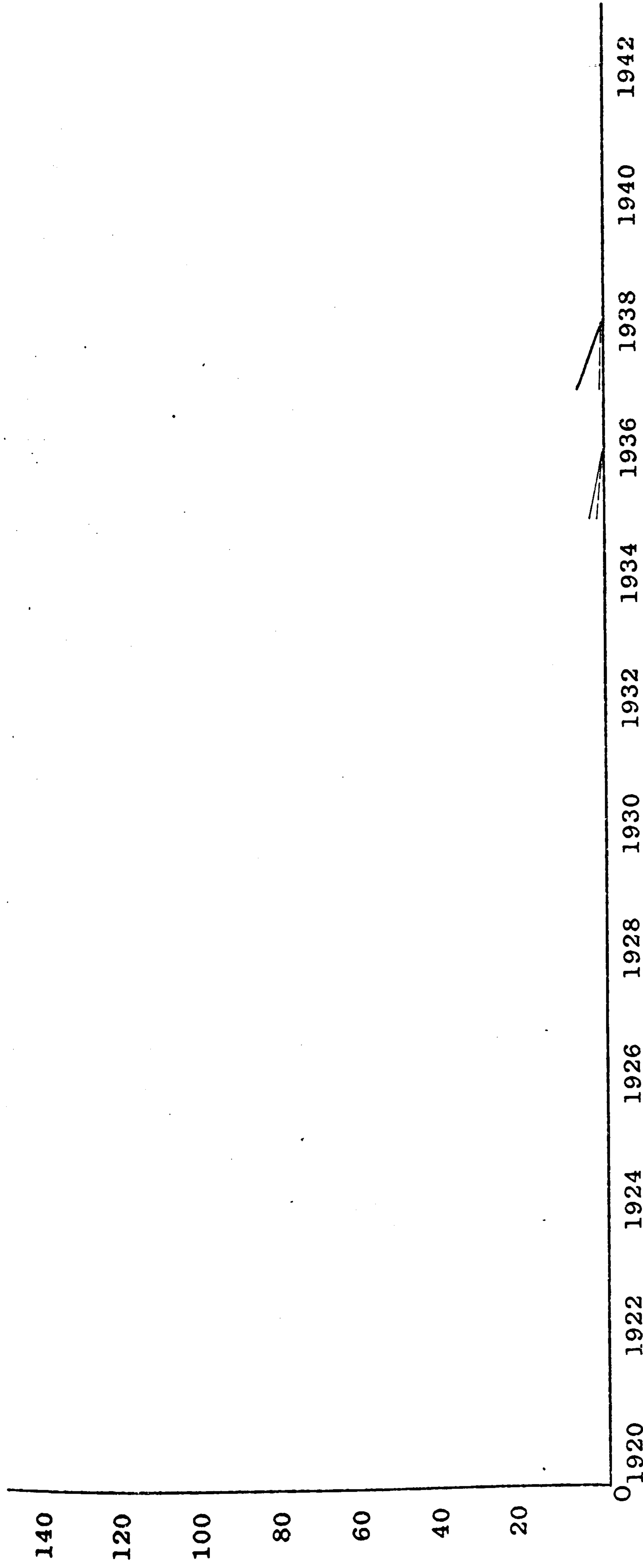
46. ARC Recordings in San Antonio

Total Recordings Made	-	Total Recordings Not Issued	-
Total Recordings Issued	-	Number of Artists	-



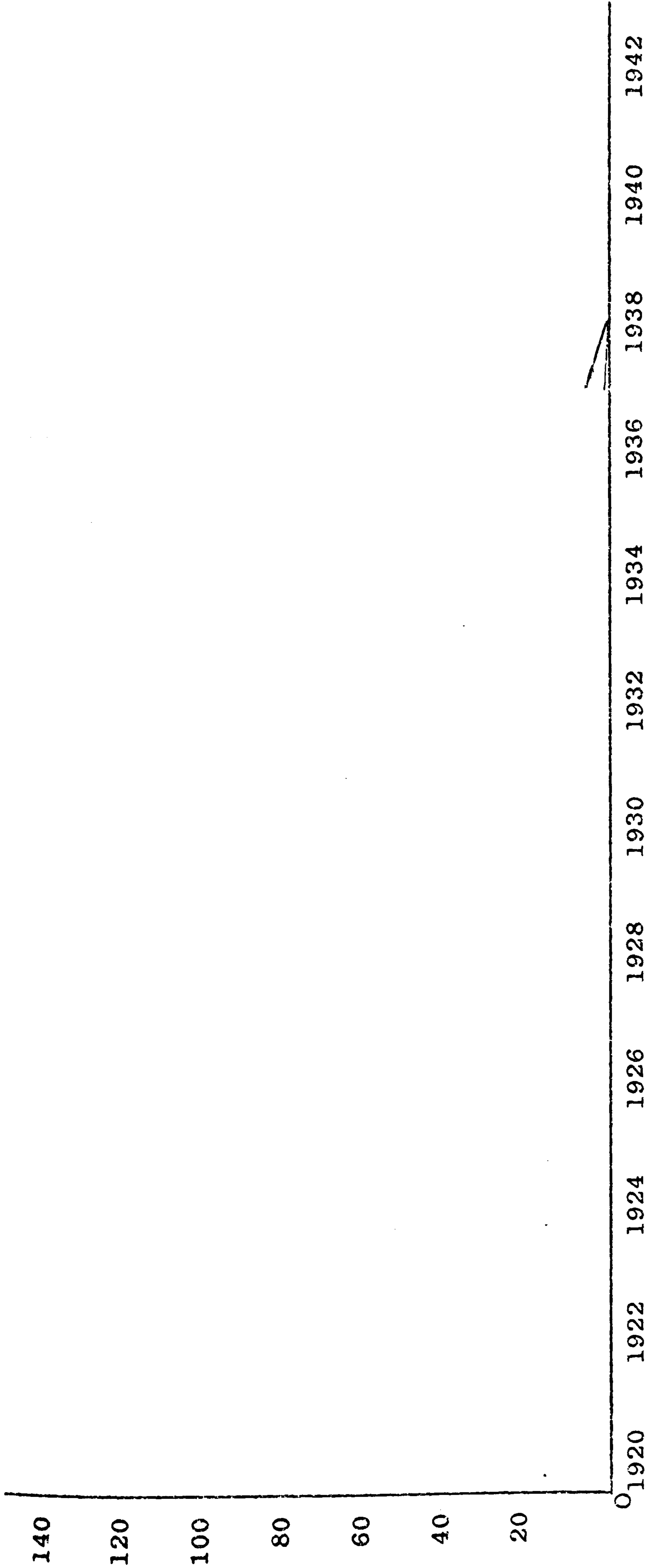
47. ARC Recordings in Hattisburg, Mississippi

Total Recordings Made - - - - - Total Recordings Not Issued - - - - -
 Total Recordings Issued - - - - - Number of Artists - - - - -



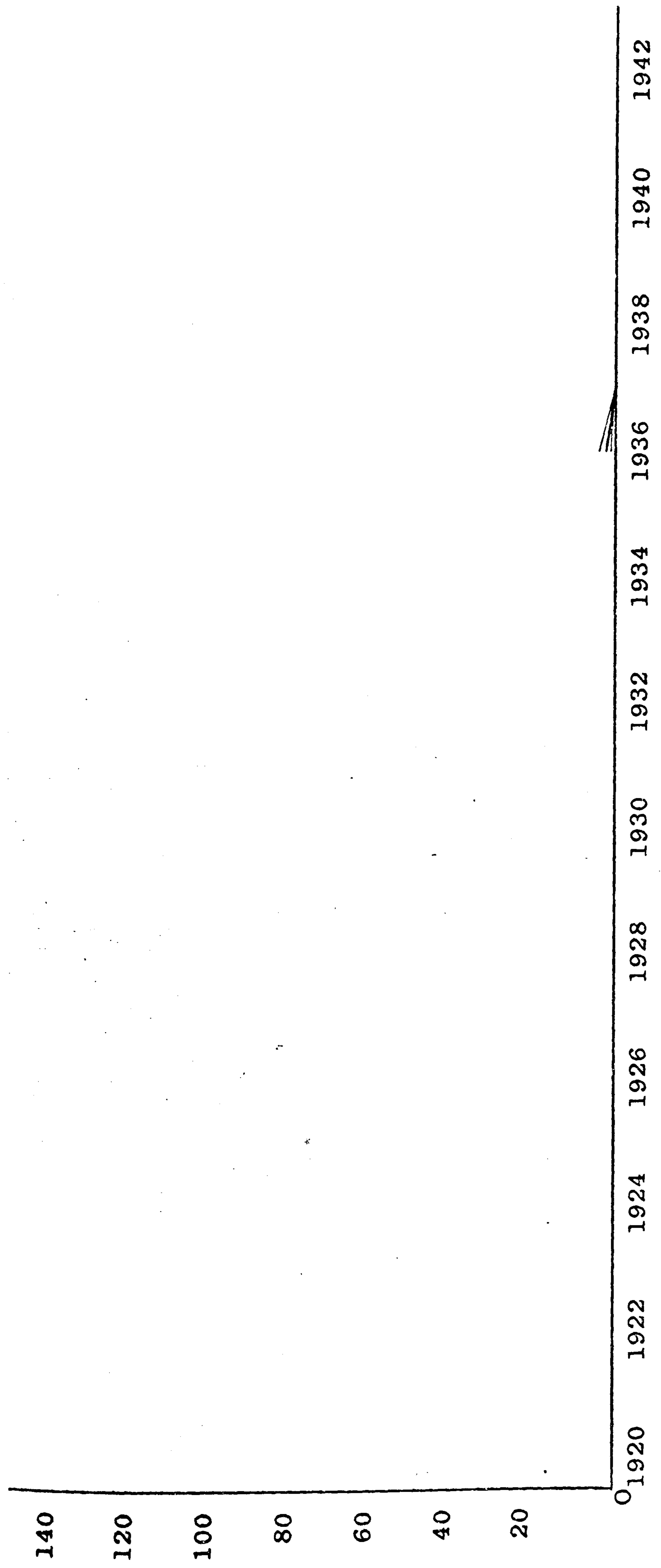
48. ARC Recordings in Dallas

Total Recordings Made - - - - - Total Recordings Not Issued - - - - -
 Total Recordings Issued - - - - - Number of Artists - - - - -



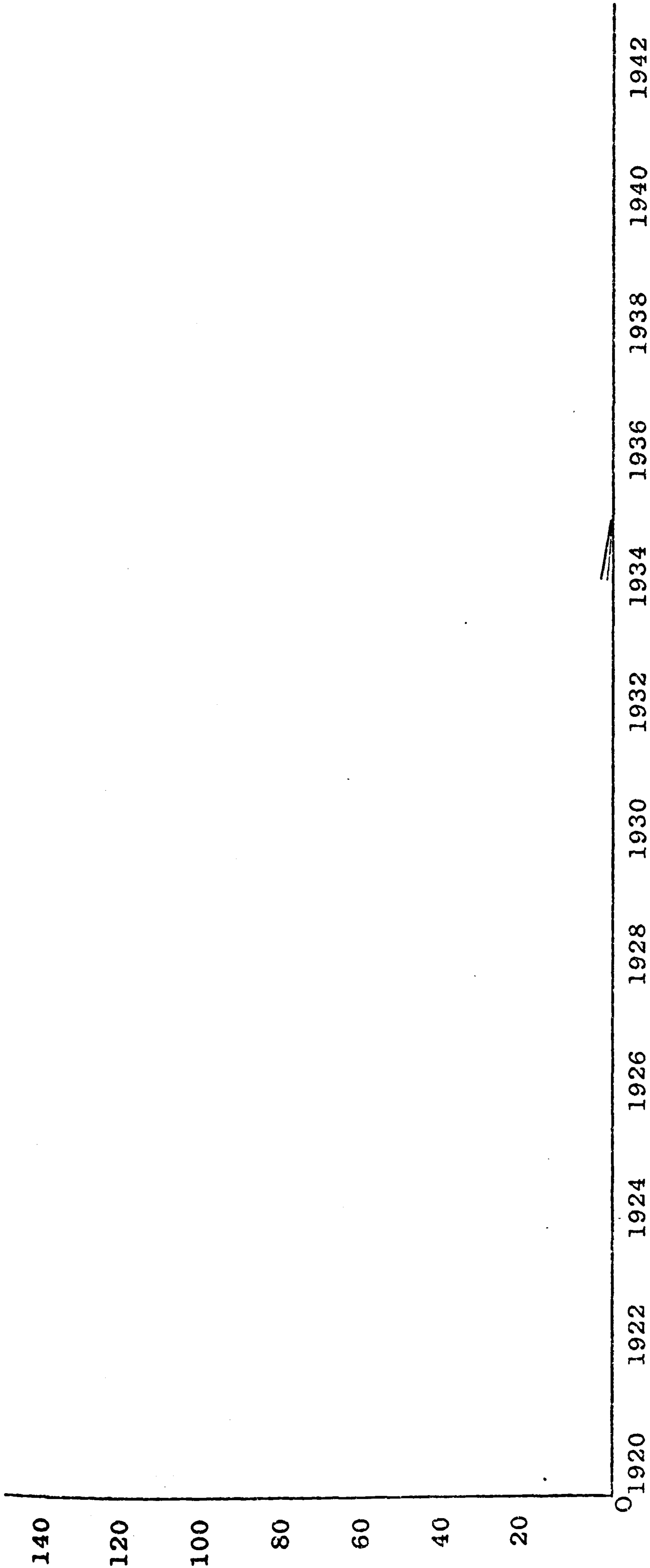
49. ARC Recordings in Hot Springs, Arkansas

Total Recordings Made - - - - - Total Recordings Not Issued -
 Total Recordings Issued - - - - - Number of Artists - - - - -



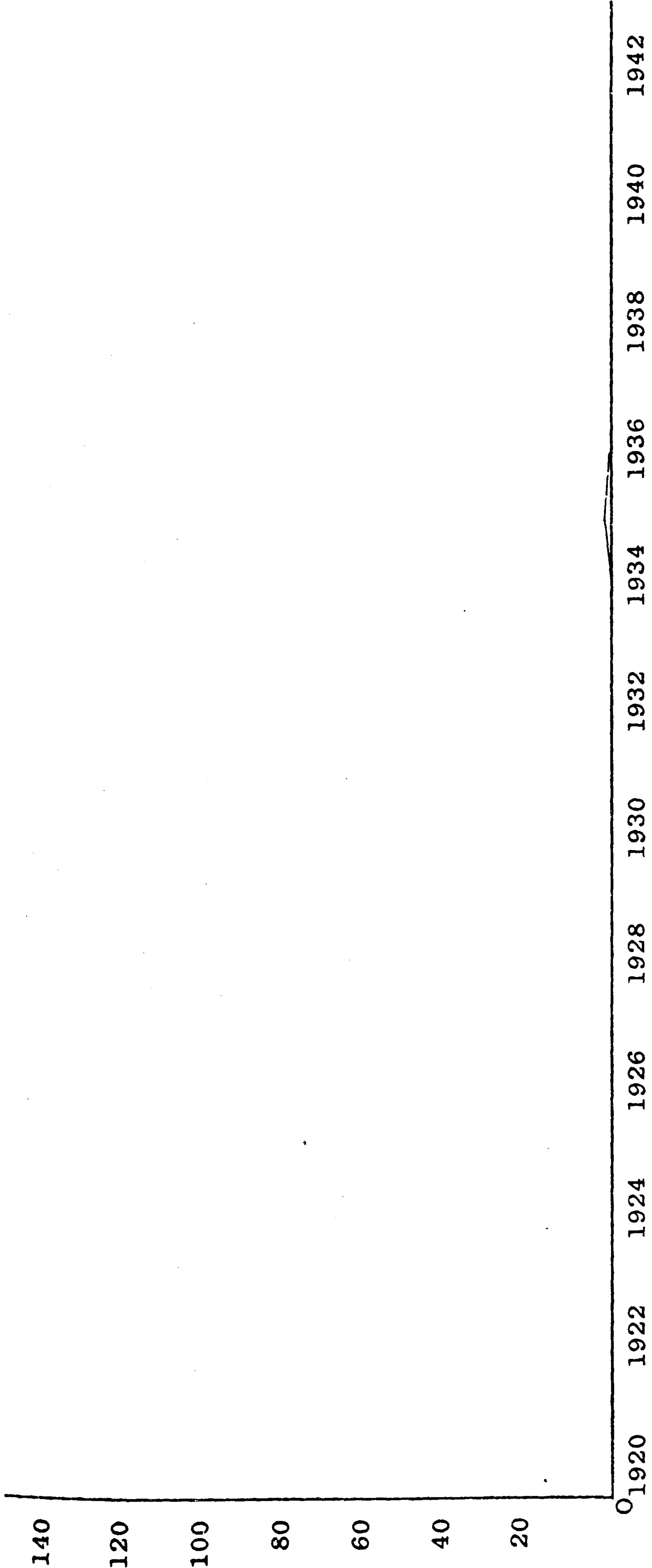
50. ARC Recordings in Augusta, Georgia

Total Recordings Made - - - - - Total Recordings Not Issued - - - - -
 Total Recordings Issued - - - - - Number of Artists - - - - -



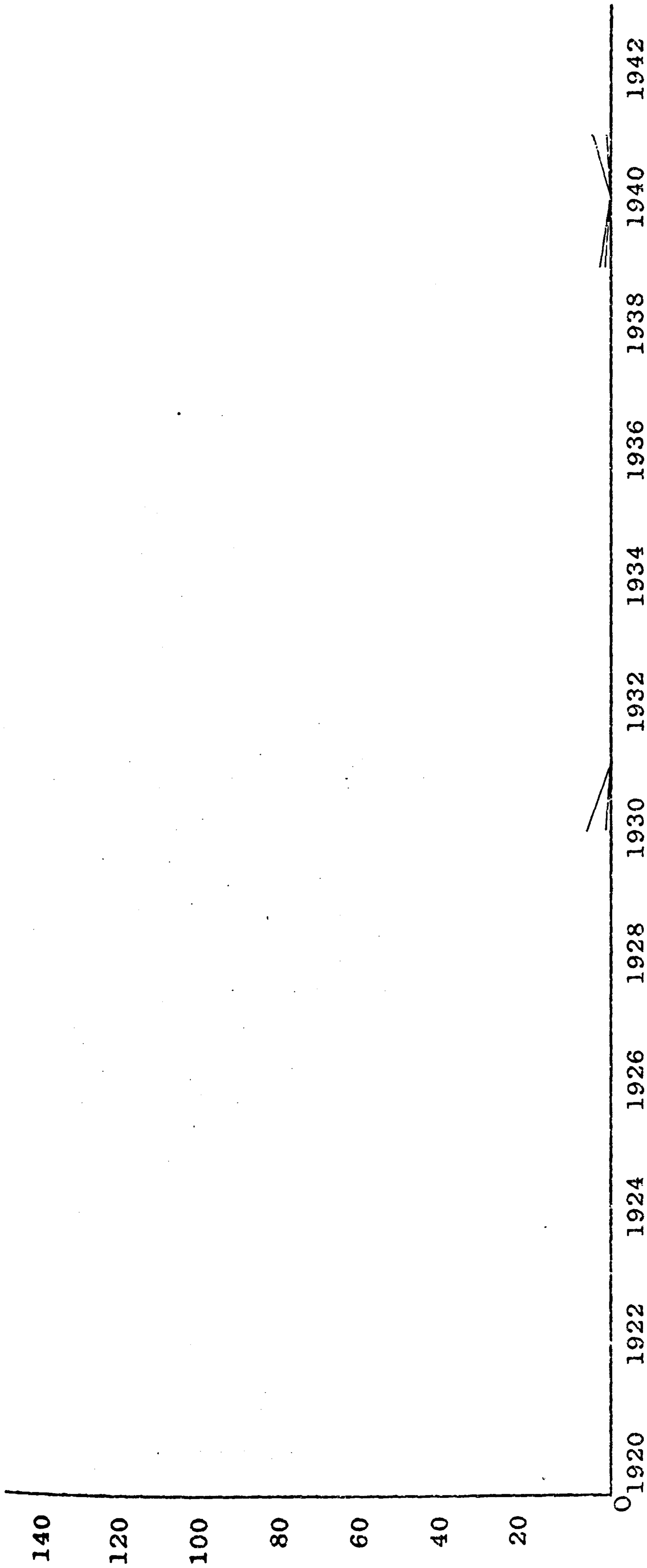
51. ARC Recordings in St. Louis

Total Recordings Made	-	Total Recordings Not Issued	-
Total Recordings Issued	-	Number of Artists	-



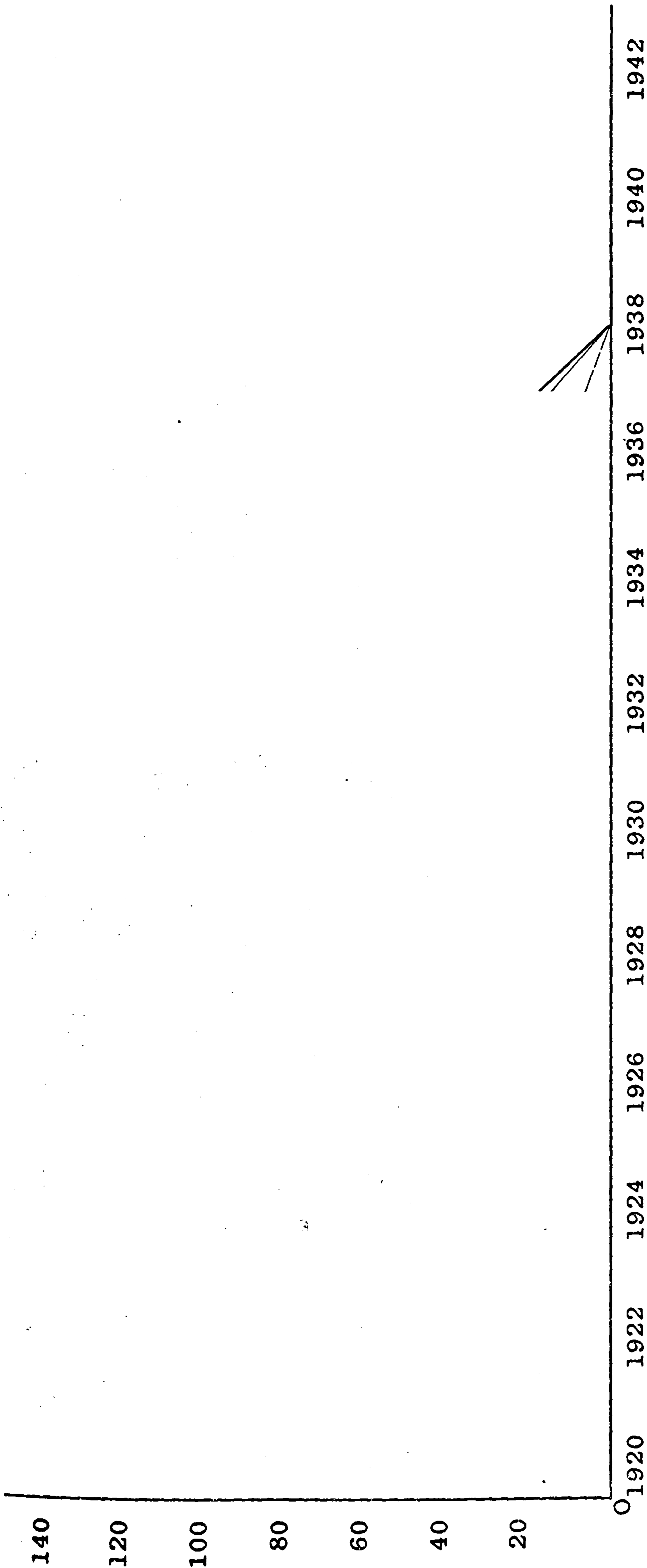
52. ARC Recordings in Jackson, Mississippi

Total Recordings Made - - - - - Total Recordings Not Issued - - - - -
 Total Recordings Issued - - - - - Number of Artists - - - - -



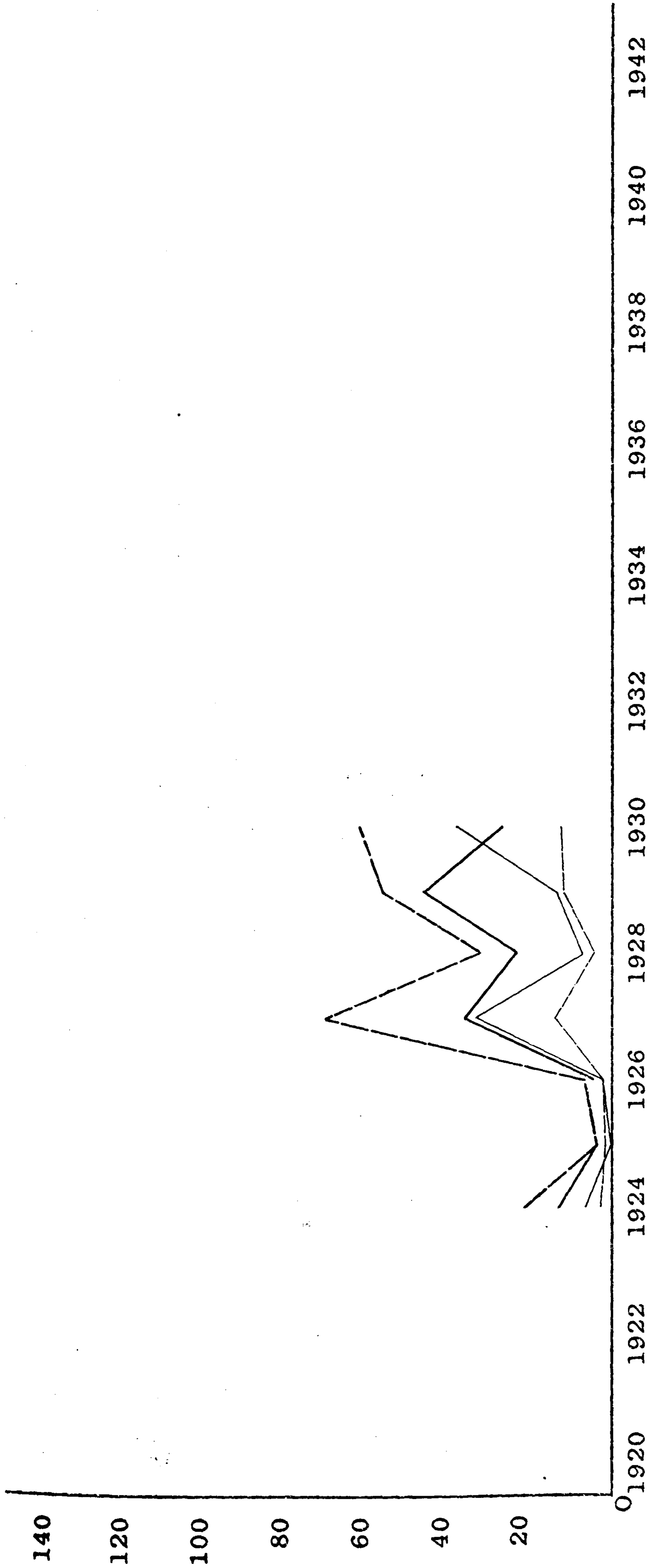
53. ARC Recordings in Memphis

Total Recordings Made	-	Total Recordings Not Issued	-
Total Recordings Issued	-	Number of Artists	-



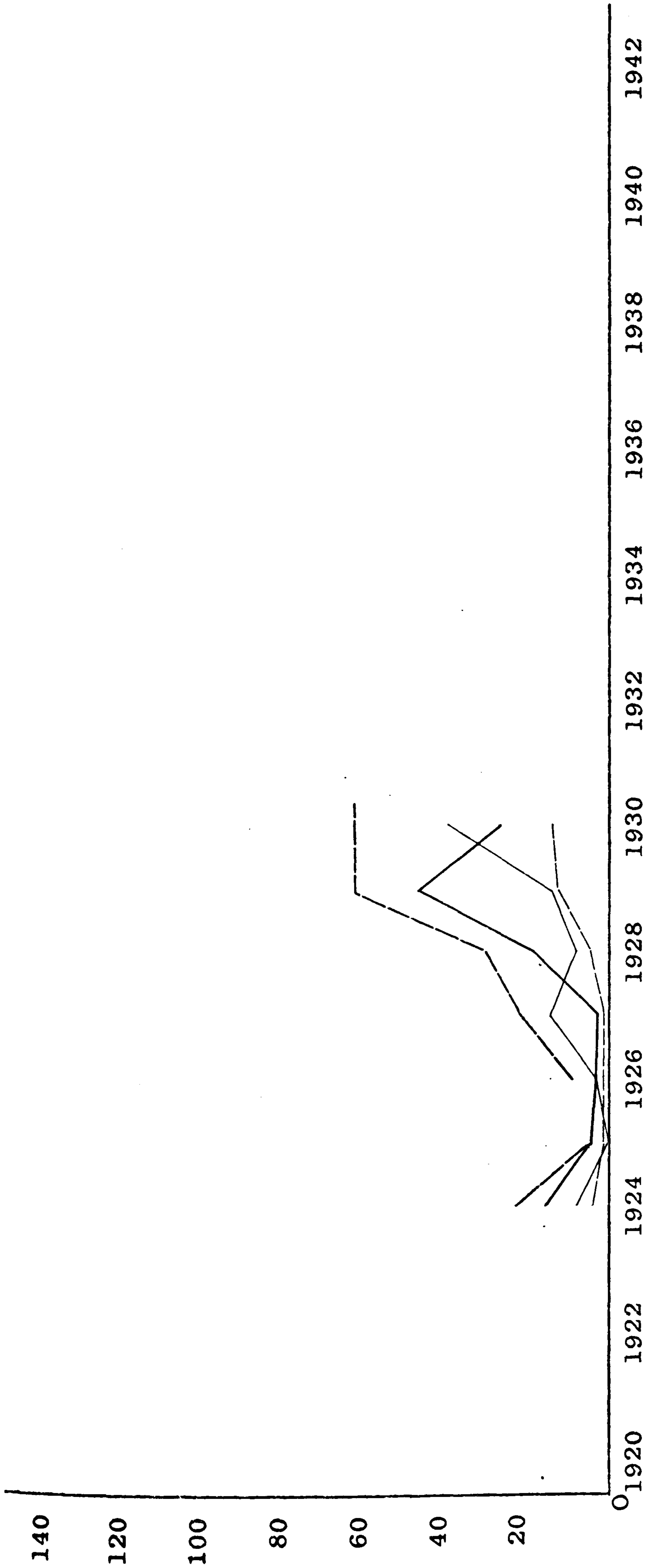
54. ARC Recordings in Birmingham, Alabama

Total Recordings Made - - - - - Total Recordings Not Issued - - - - -
 Total Recordings Issued - - - - - Number of Artists - - - - -



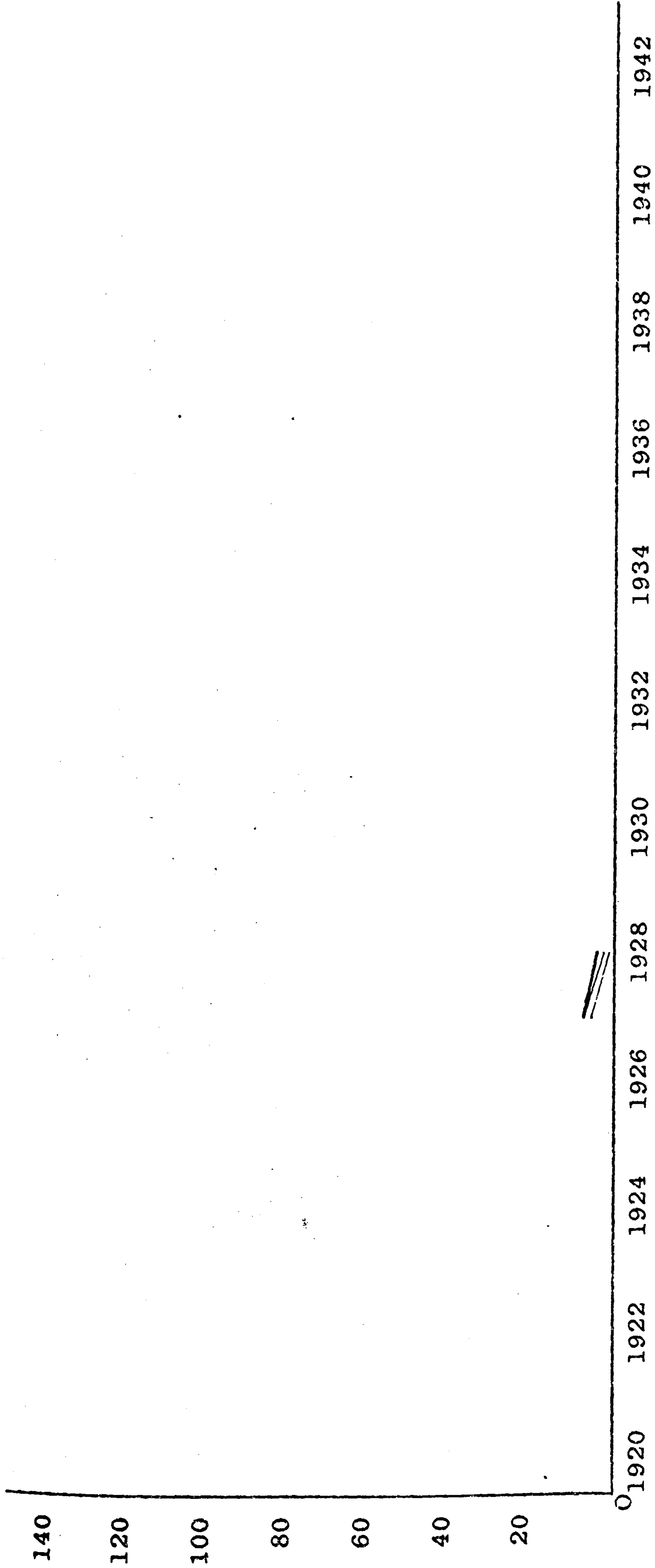
55. Gennett Totals

Total Recordings Made - - - - - Total Recordings Not Issued - - - - -
Total Recordings Issued - - - - - Number of Artists - - - - -



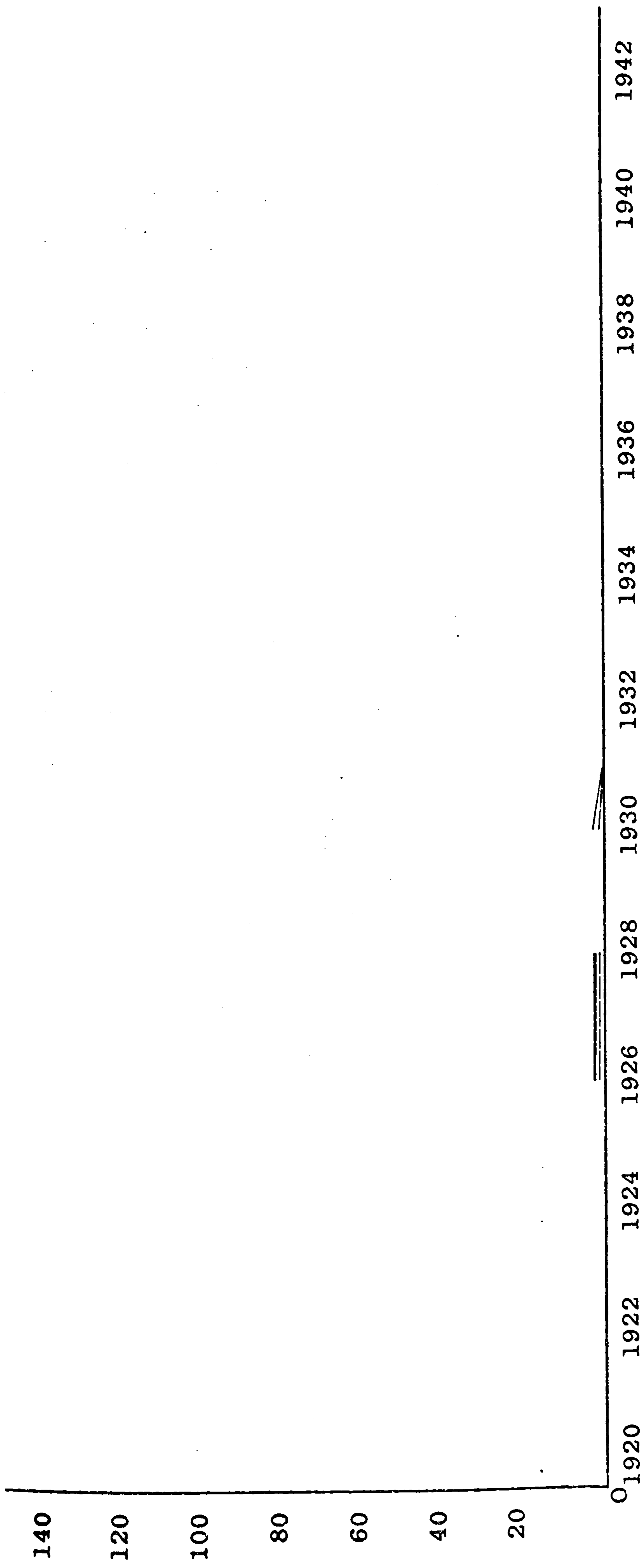
56. Gennett Recordings in Richmond

Total Recordings Made - - - - - Total Recordings Not Issued - - - - -
 Total Recordings Issued - - - - - Number of Artists - - - - -



57. Gennett Recordings in Chicago

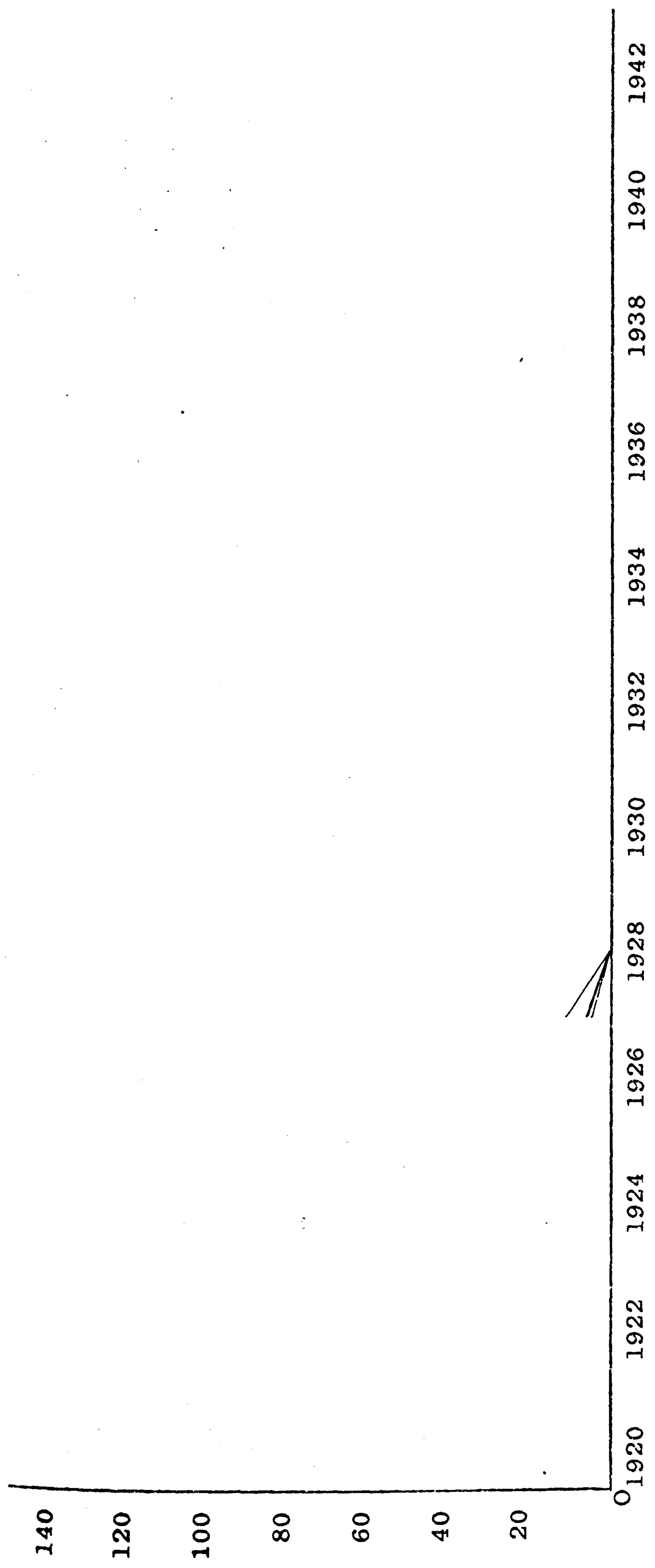
Total Recordings Made	-	Total Recordings Not Issued	-
Total Recordings Issued	-	Number of Artists	-



58. Gennett Recordings in New York

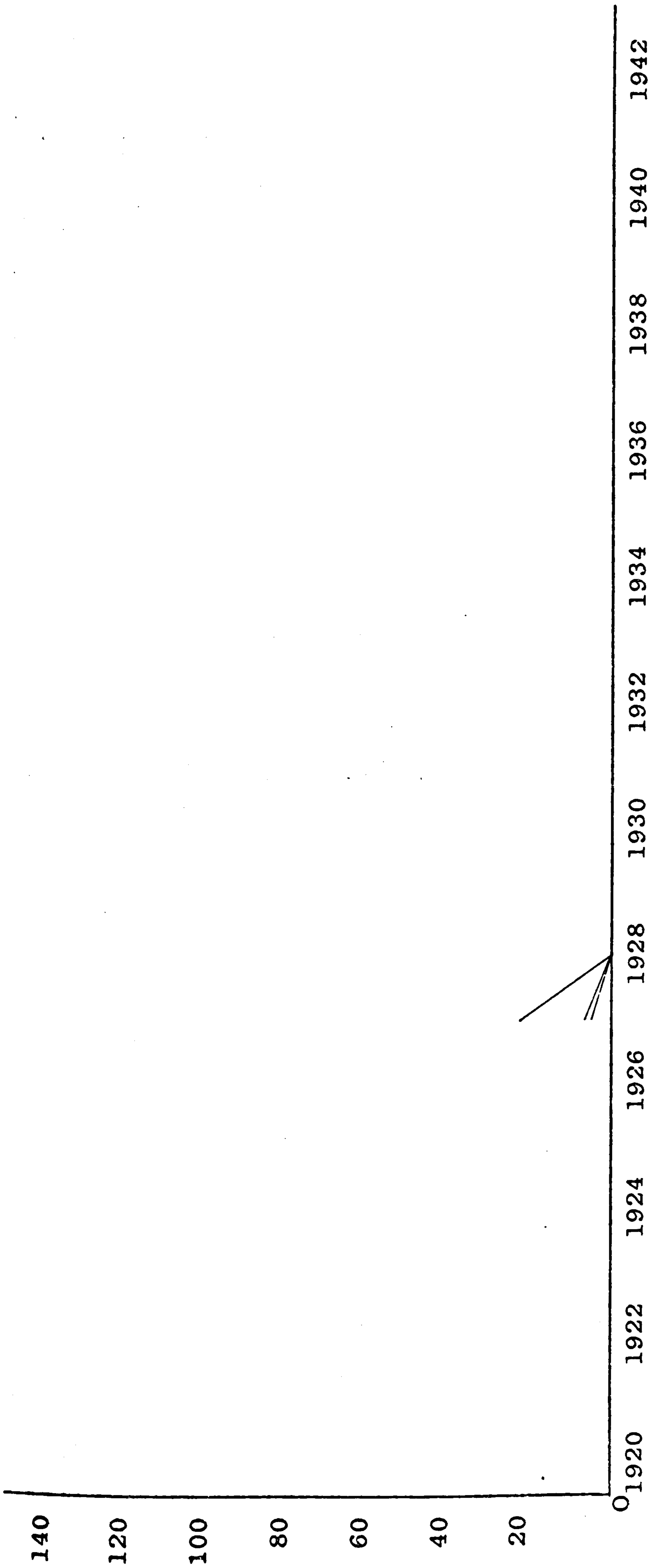
Total Recordings Made - - - - - Total Recordings Not Issued - - - - -

Total Recordings Issued - - - - - Number of Artists - - - - -



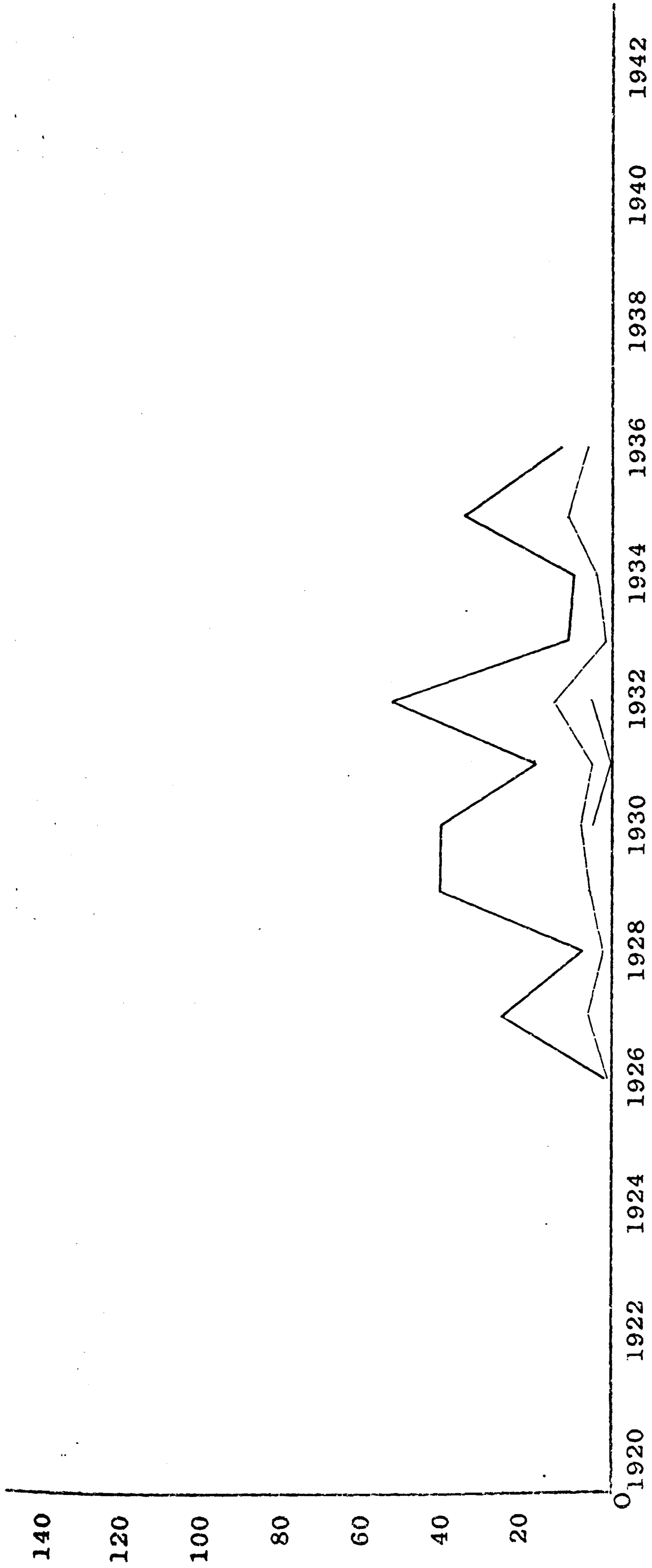
59. Gennett Recordings in Birmingham, Alabama

Total Recordings Made - - - - - Total Recordings Not Issued - - - - -
 Total Recordings Issued - - - - - Number of Artists - - - - -



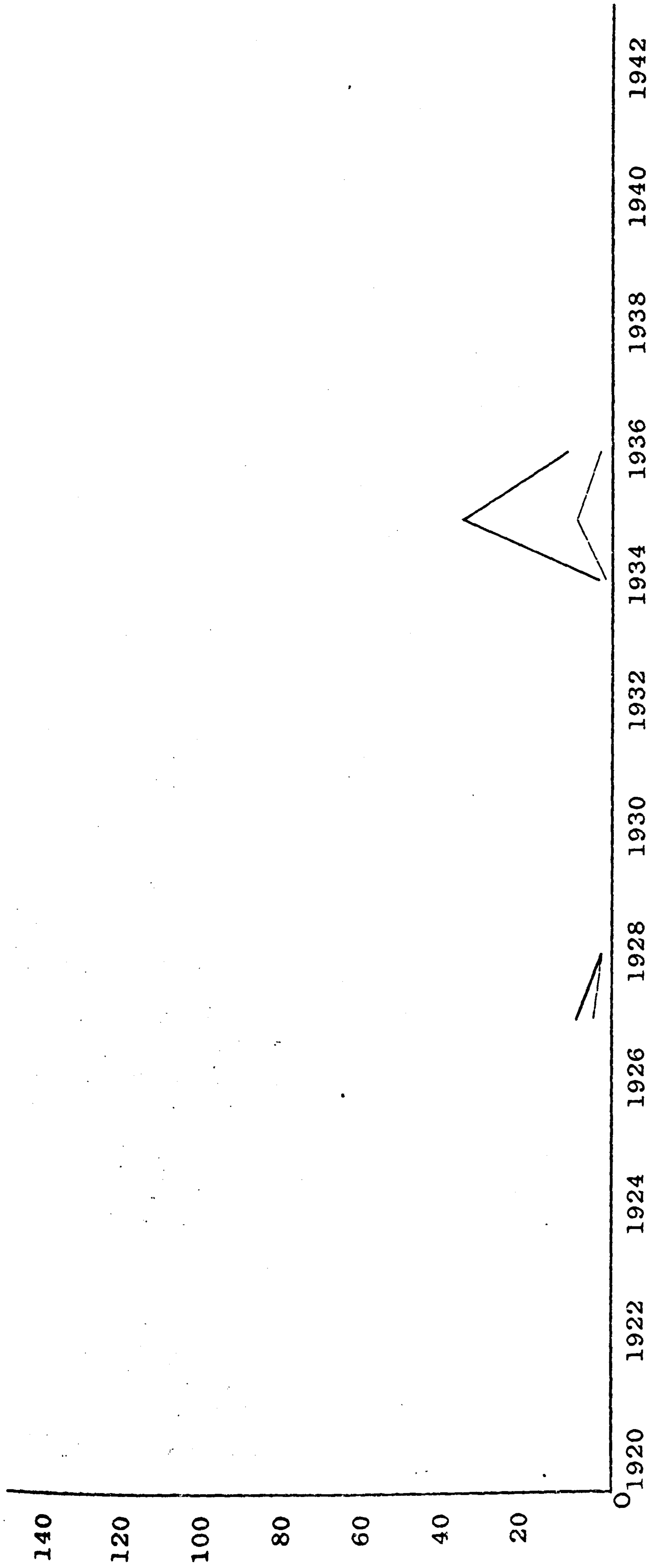
60. Gennett Recordings in Unknown Location

Total Recordings Made - - - - - Total Recordings Not Issued - - - - -
 Total Recordings Issued - - - - - Number of Artists - - - - -



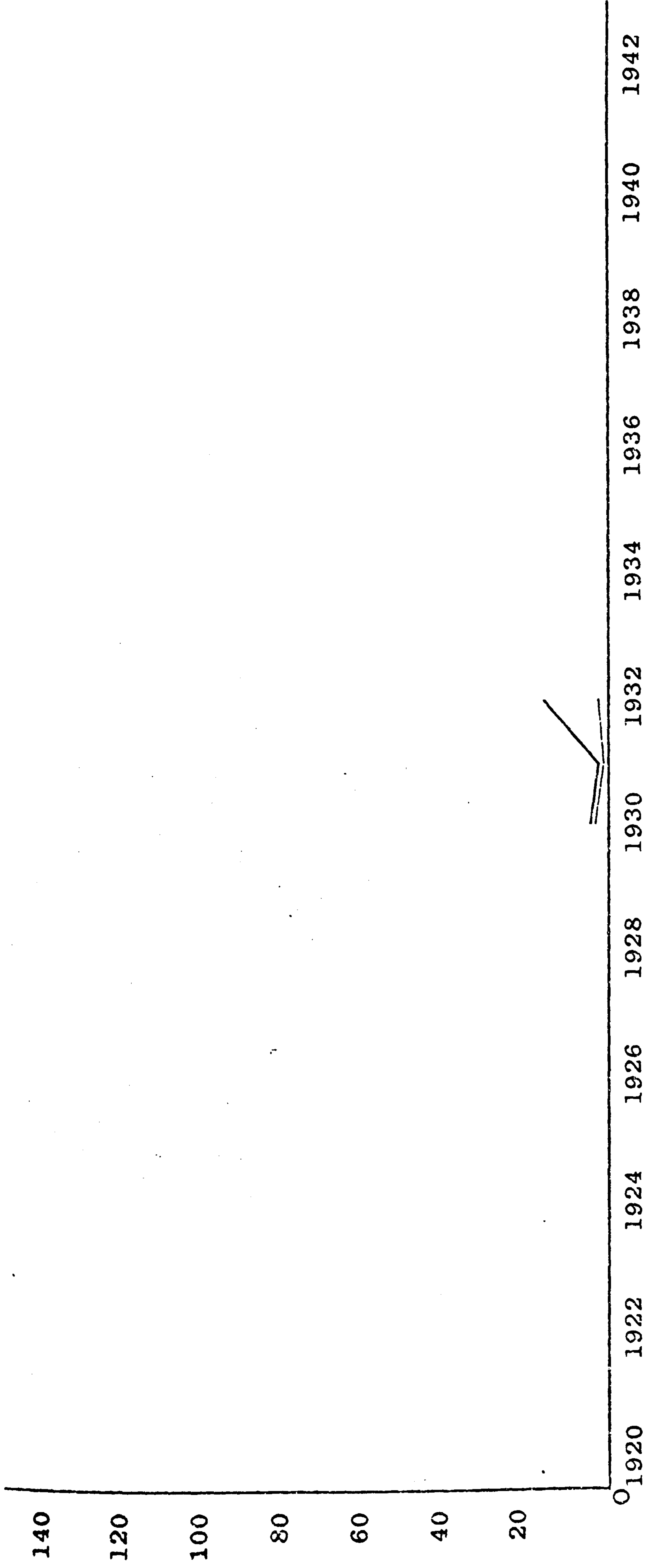
61. Champion Totals

Total Recordings Made - - - - - Total Recordings Not Issued - - - - -
 Total Recordings Issued - - - - - Number of Artists - - - - -



62. Champion Recordings in Chicago

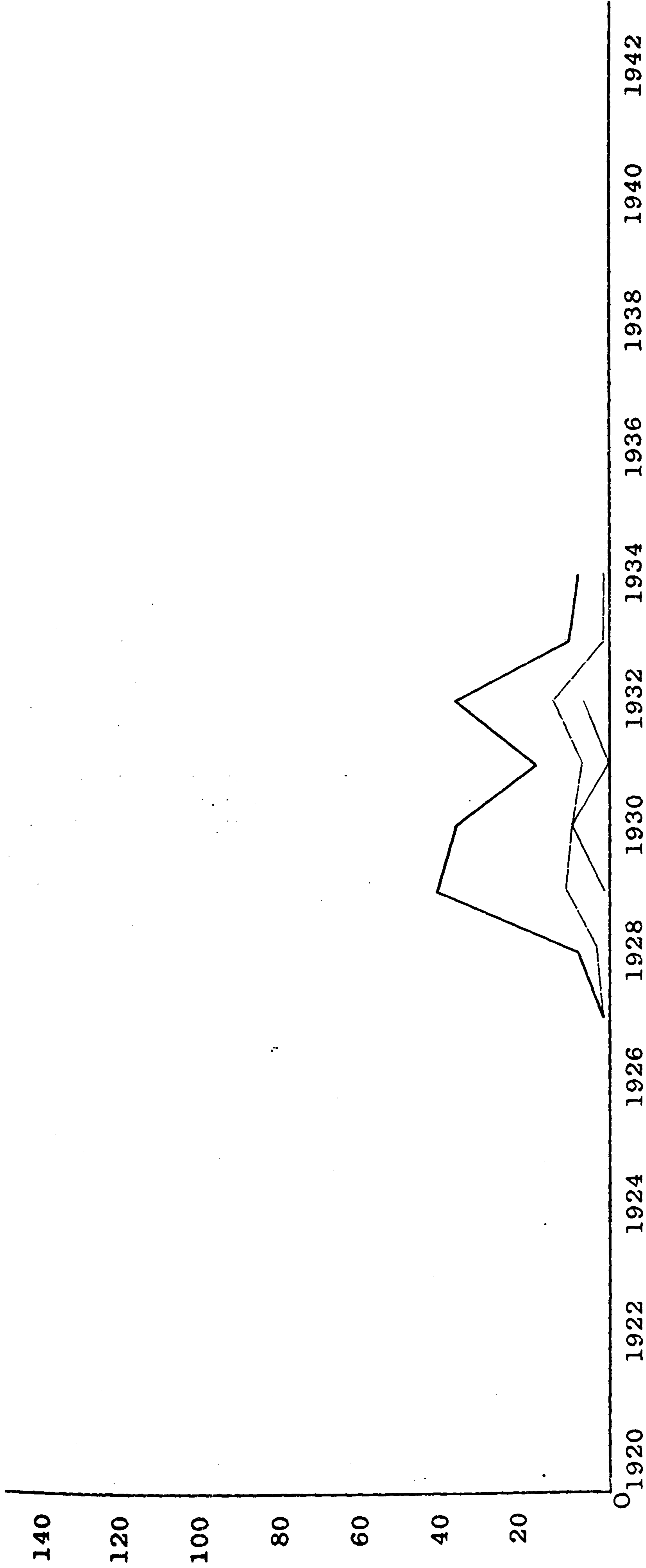
Total Recordings Made	-	Total Recordings Not Issued	-
Total Recordings Issued	-	Number of Artists	-



63. Champion Recordings in Grafton, Wisconsin

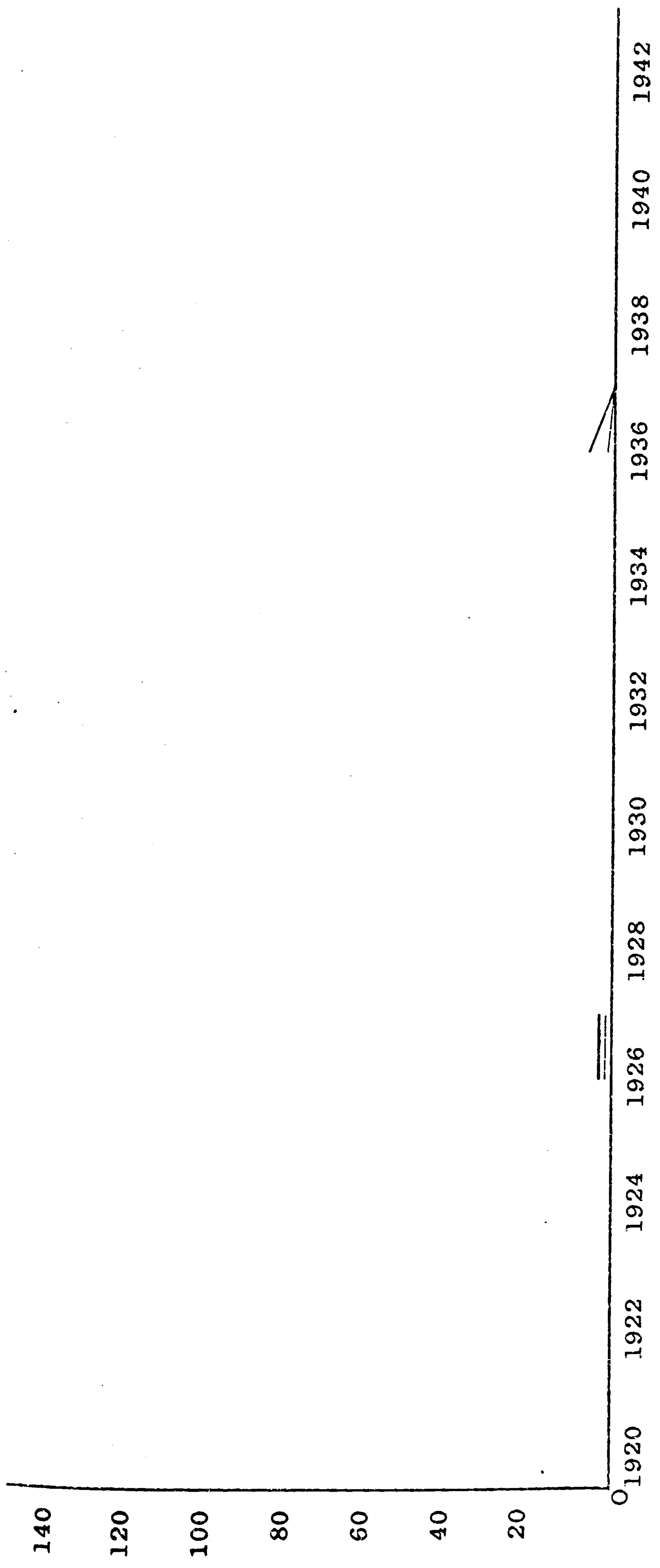
Total Recordings Made - - - - - Total Recordings Not Issued -

Total Recordings Issued - - - - - Number of Artists - - - - -



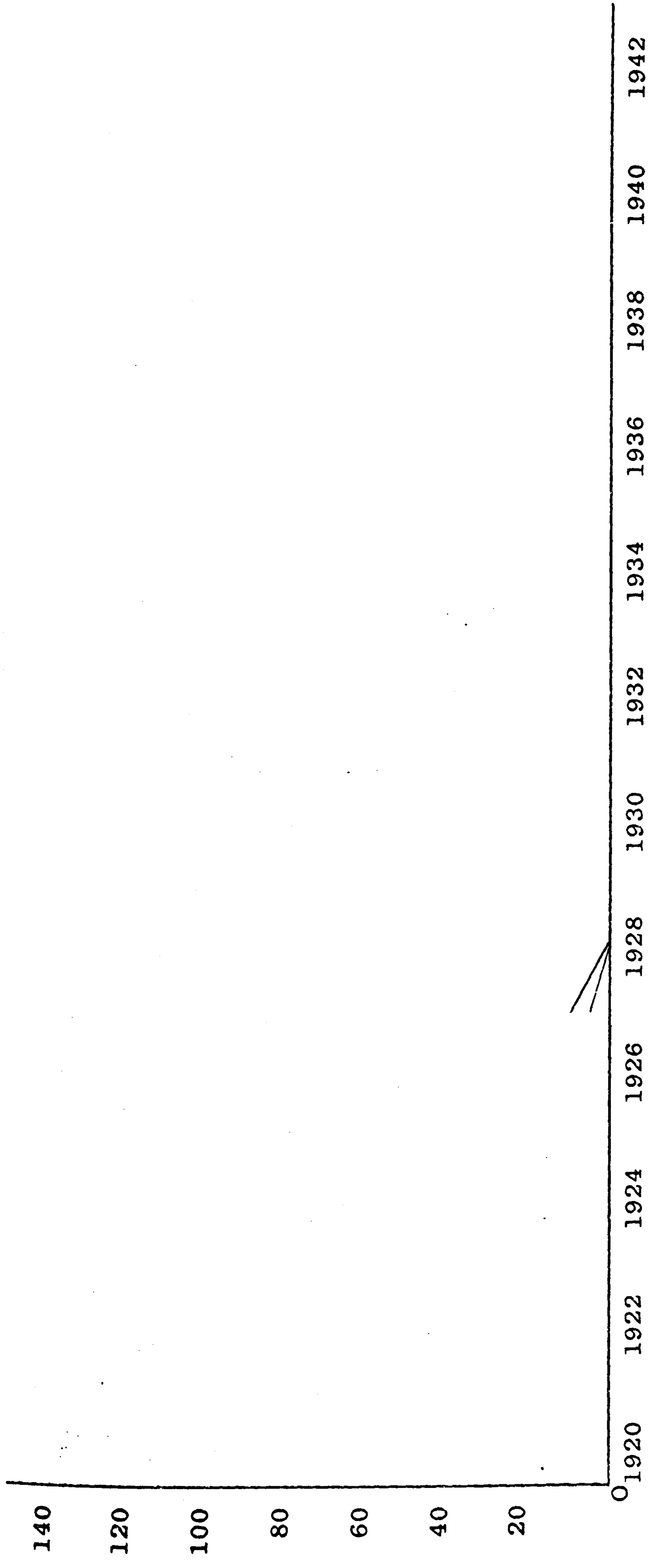
64. Champion Recordings in Richmond

Total Recordings Made - - - - - Total Recordings Not Issued - - - - -
 Total Recordings Issued - - - - - Number of Artists - - - - -



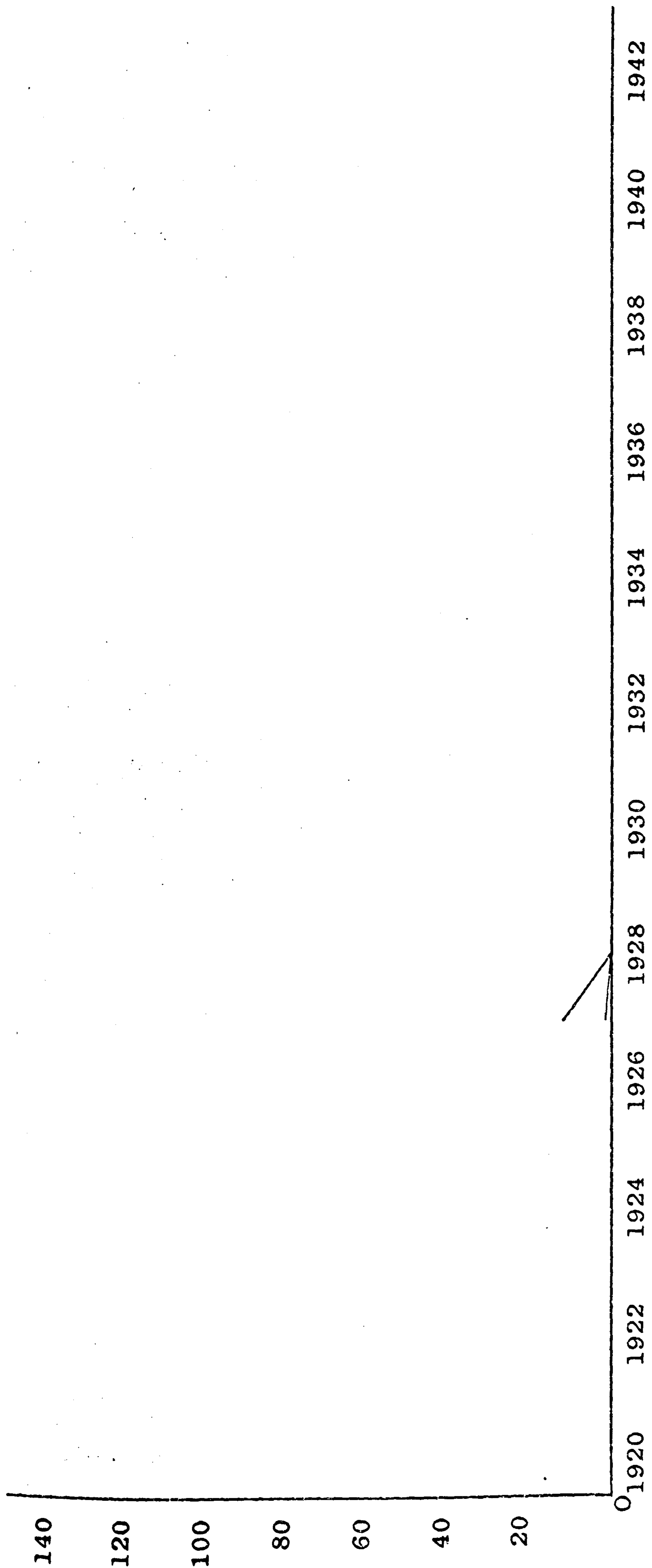
65. Champion Recordings in New York

Total Recordings Made - - - - - Total Recordings Not Issued -
 Total Recordings Issued - - - - - Number of Artists - - - - -



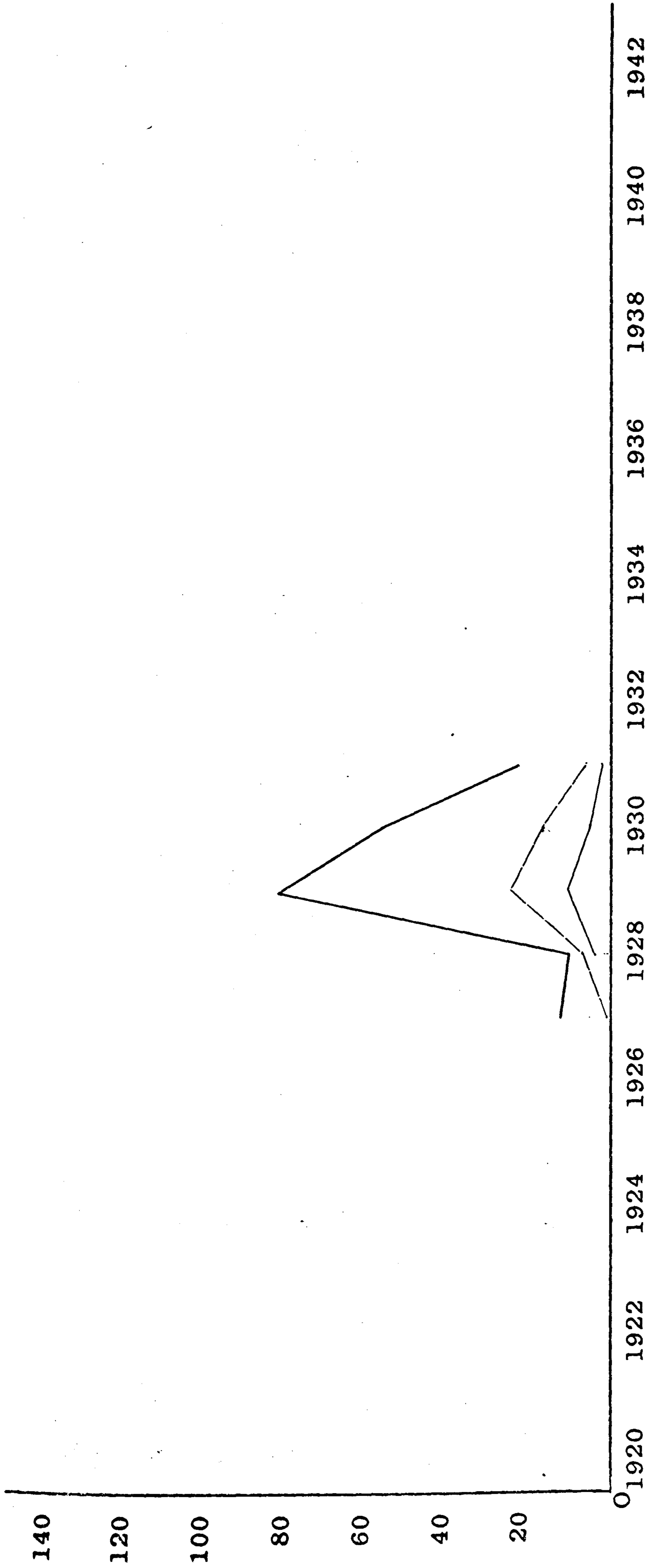
66. Champion Recordings in Birmingham, Alabama

Total Recordings Made - - - - - Total Recordings Not Issued -
 Total Recordings Issued - - - - - Number of Artists - - - - -



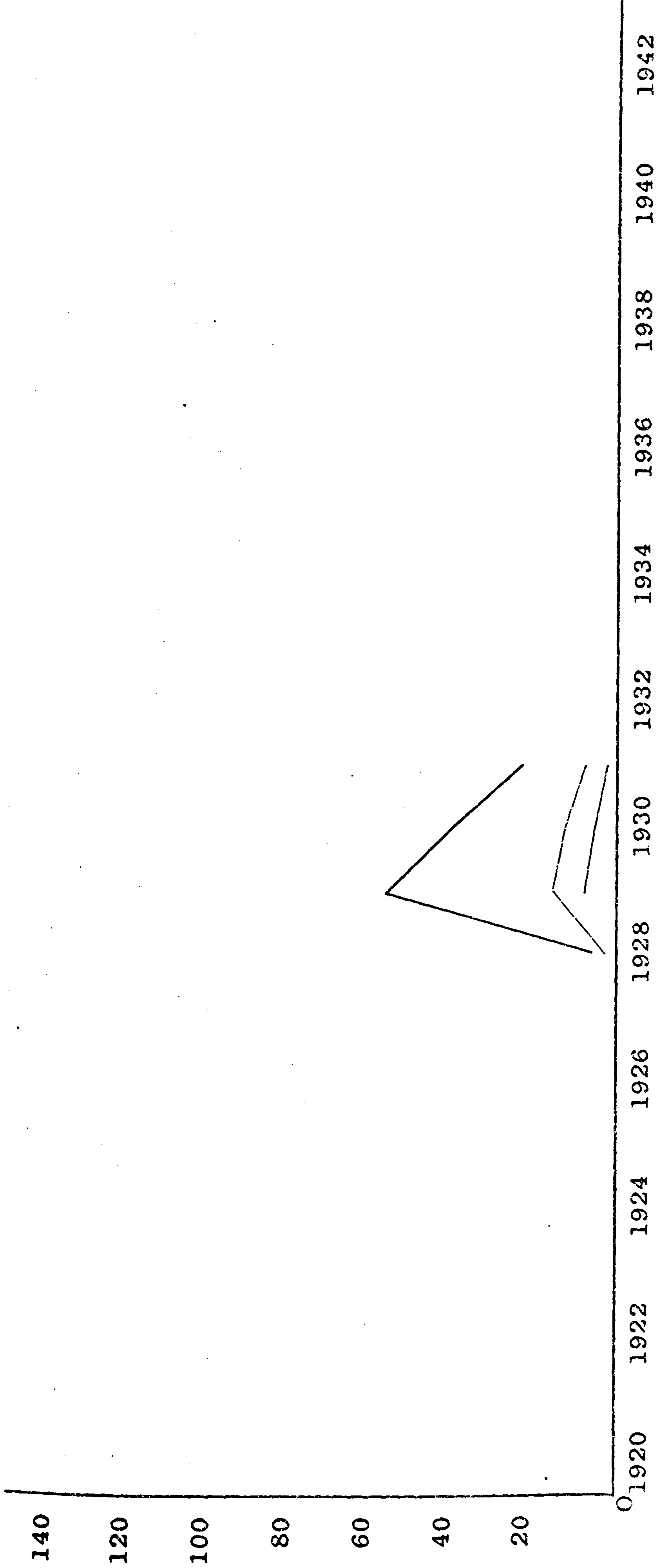
67. Champion Recordings in Unknown Location

Total Recordings Made - - - - - Total Recordings Not Issued -
 Total Recordings Issued - - - - - Number of Artists - - - - -



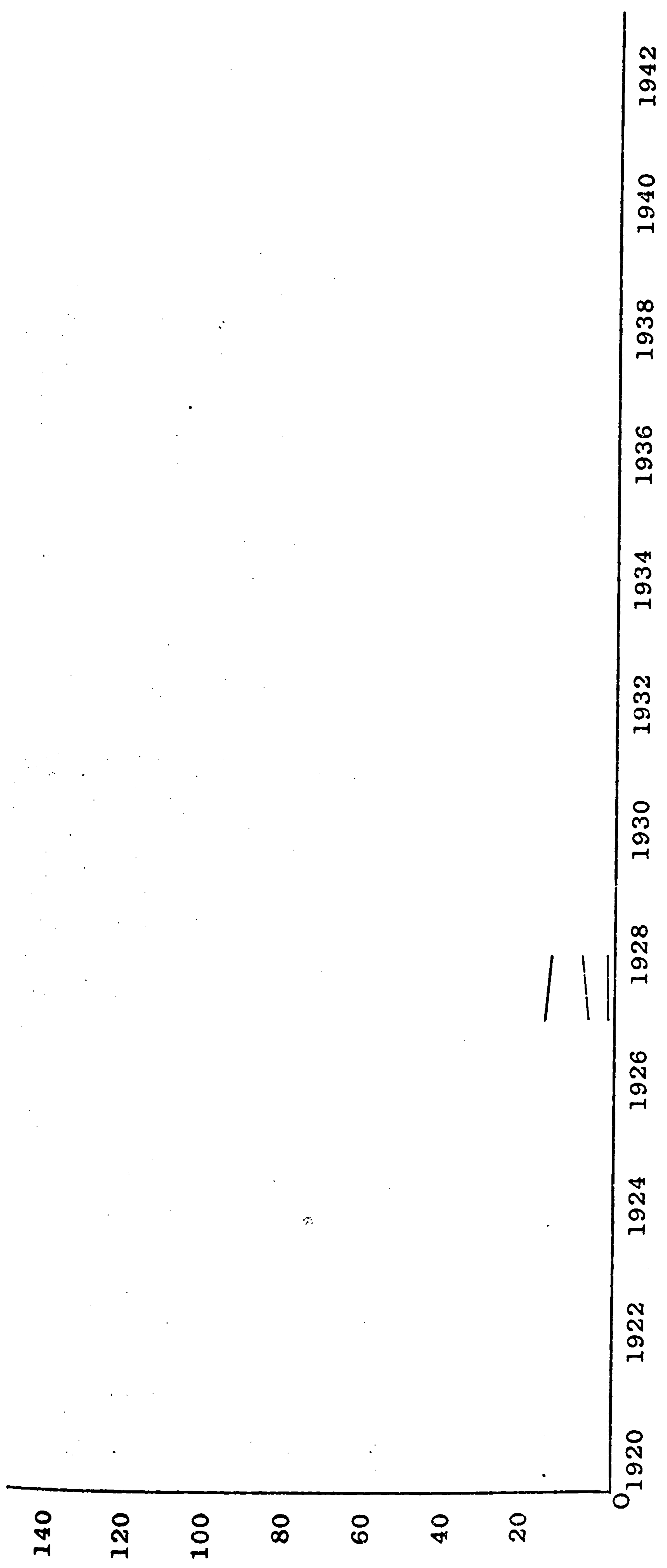
68. Brunswick Totals

Total Recordings Made - - - - - Total Recordings Not Issued - - - - -
 Total Recordings Issued - - - - - Number of Artists - - - - -



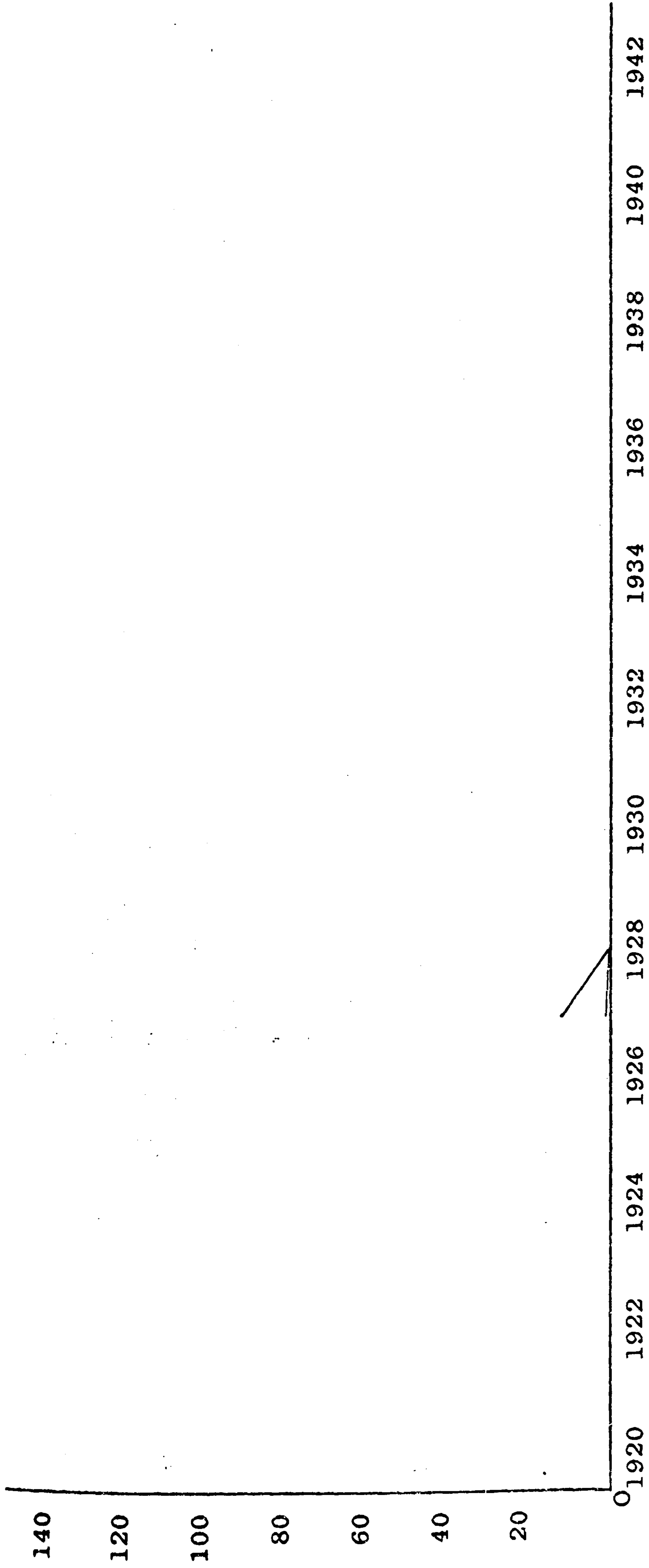
69. Brunswick Recordings in Chicago

Total Recordings Made - - - - - Total Recordings Not Issued - - - - -
 Total Recordings Issued - - - - - Number of Artists - - - - -



70. Brunswick Recordings in Memphis

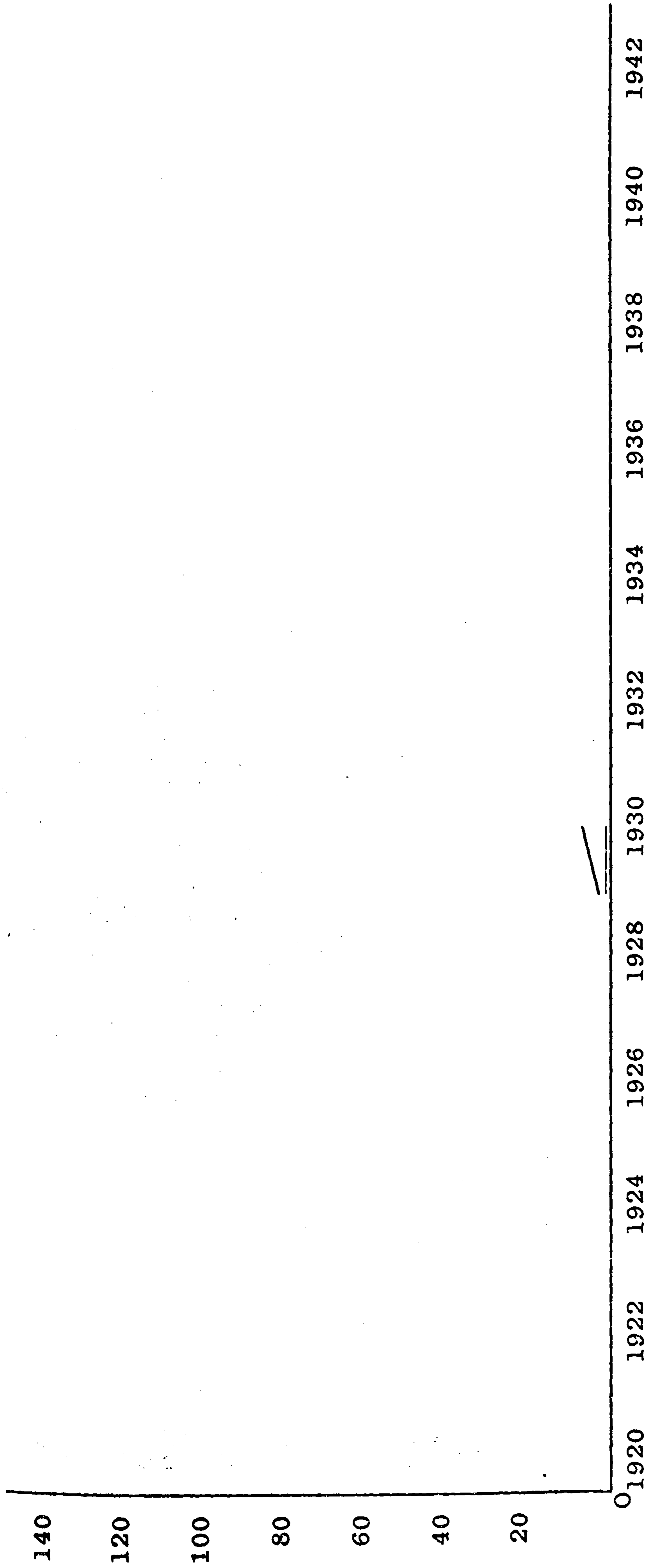
Total Recordings Made - - - - - Total Recordings Not Issued - - - - -
 Total Recordings Issued - - - - - Number of Artists - - - - -



71. Brunswick Recordings in Camden, New Jersey

Total Recordings Made - - - - - Total Recordings Not Issued - - - - -

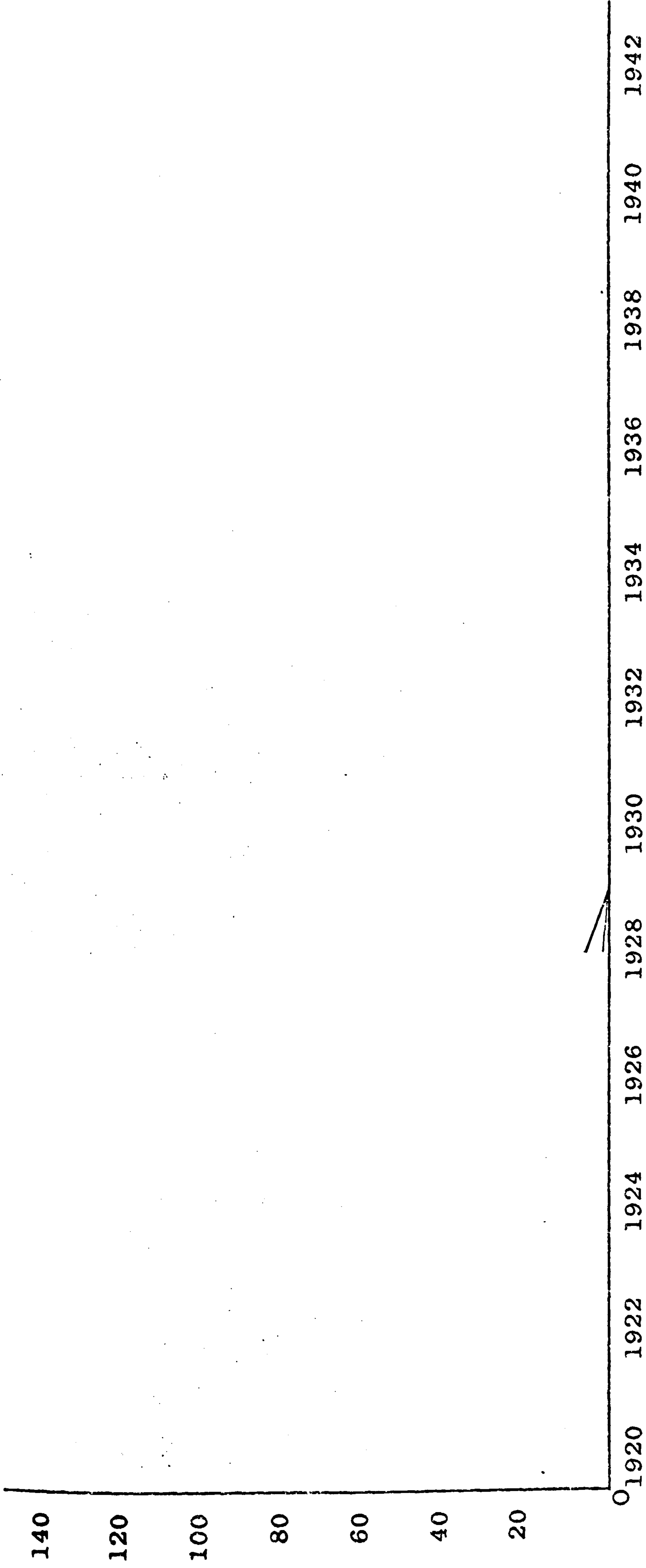
Total Recordings Issued - - - - - Number of Artists - - - - -



72. Brunswick Recordings in Dallas

Total Recordings Made - - - - - Total Recordings Not Issued -

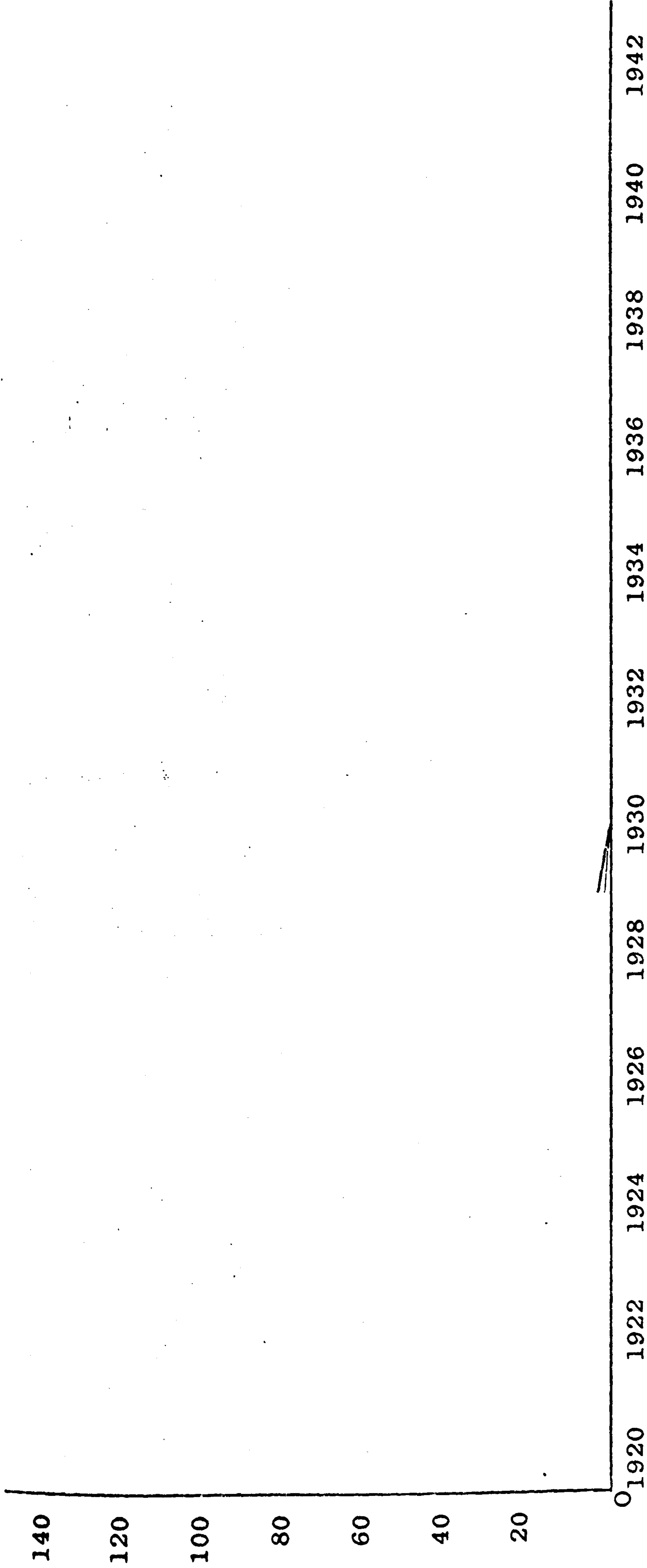
Total Recordings Issued - - - - - Number of Artists - - - - -



73. Brunswick Recordings in New Orleans

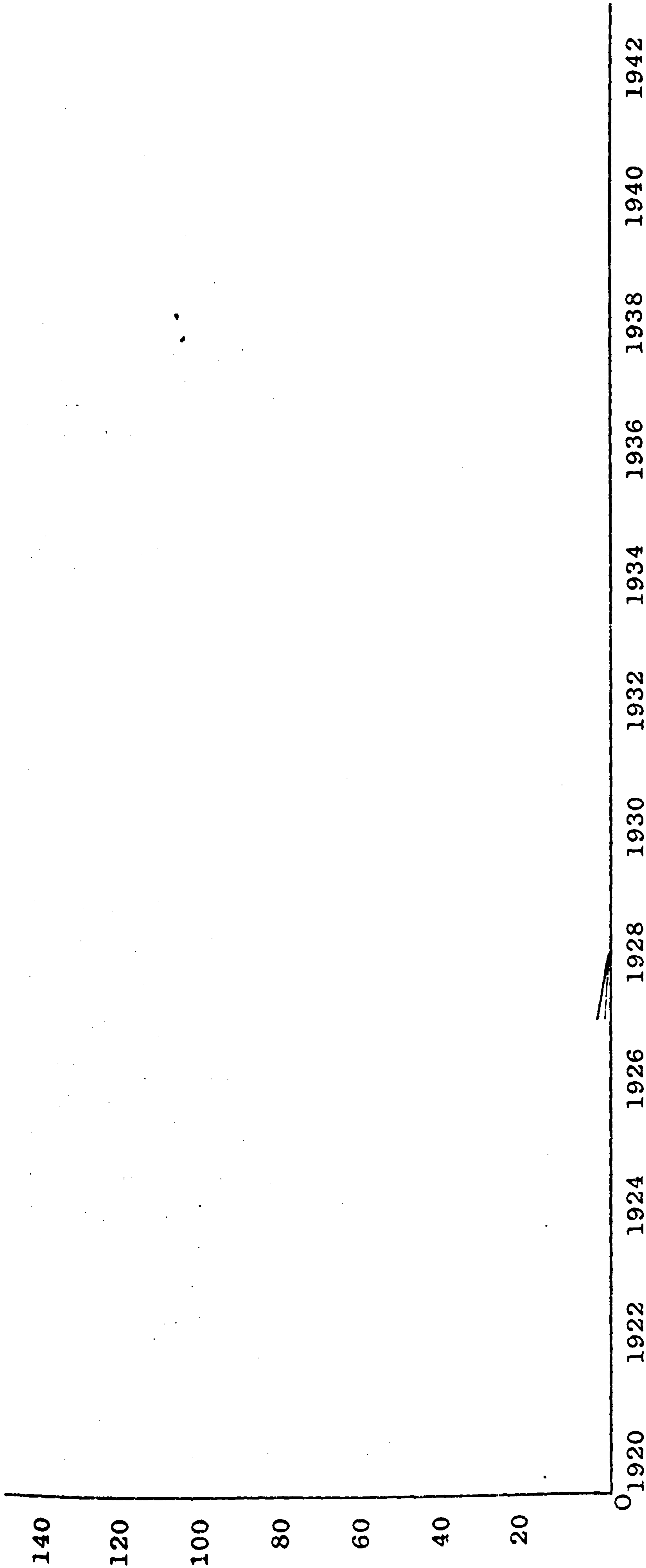
Total Recordings Made - - - - - Total Recordings Not Issued -

Total Recordings Issued - - - - - Number of Artists - - - - -



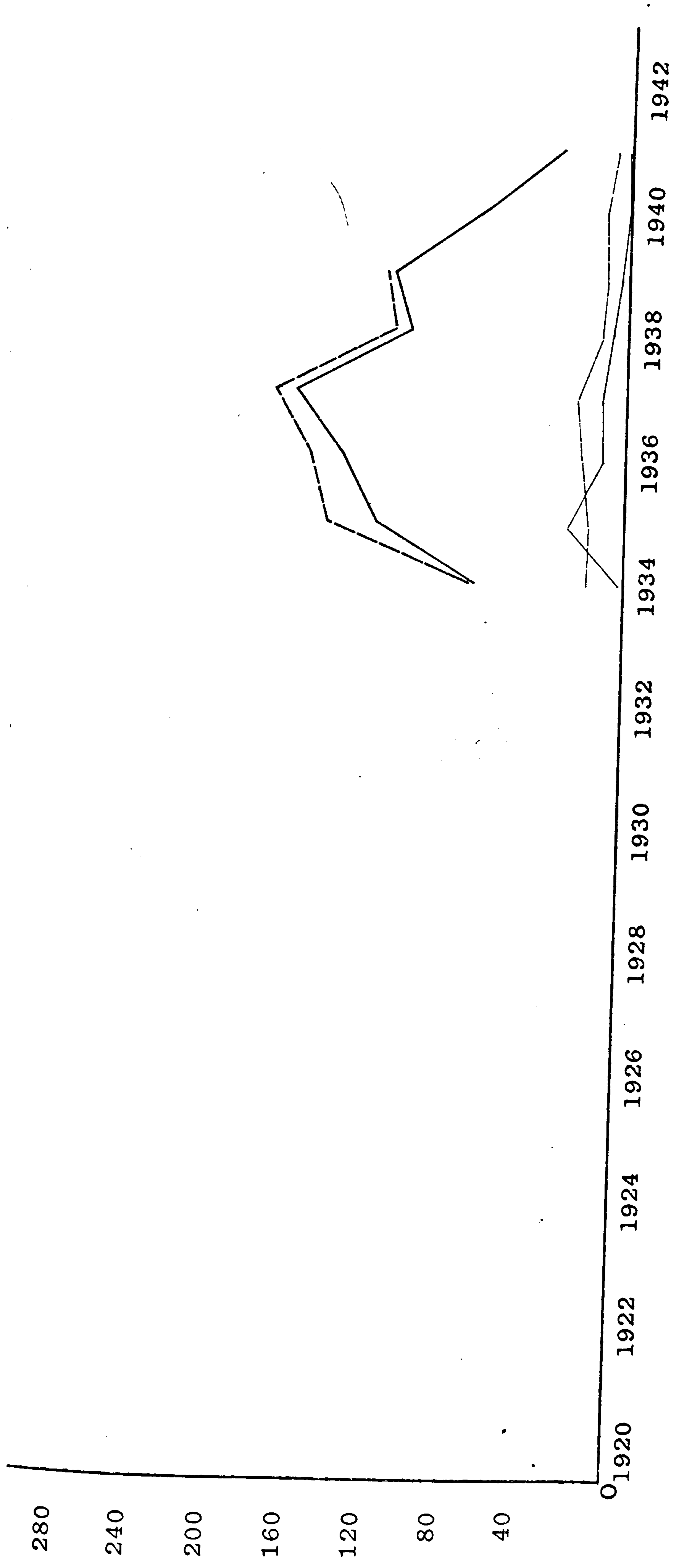
74. Brunswick Recordings in Kansas City

Total Recordings Made	-	Total Recordings Not Issued	-
Total Recordings Issued	-	Number of Artists	-



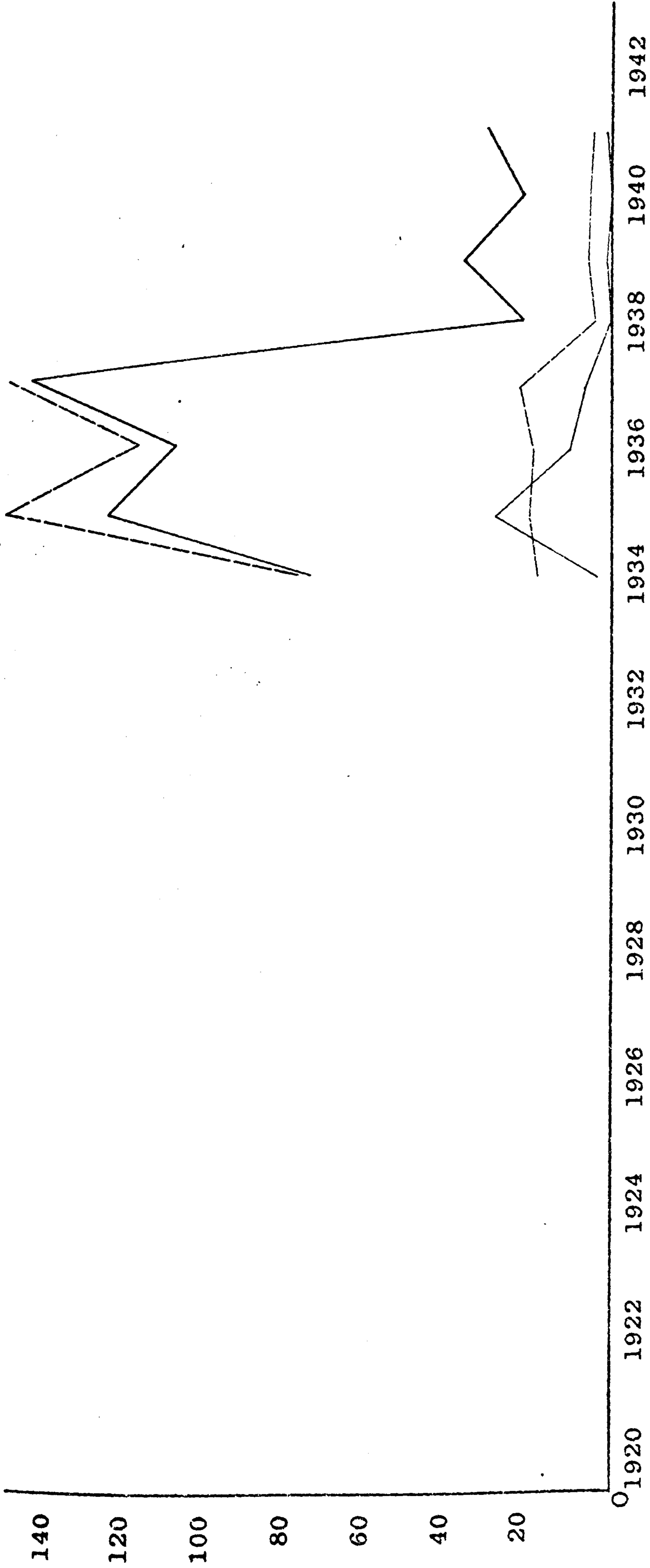
75. Brunswick Recordings in New York

Total Recordings Made	-	Total Recordings Not Issued	-
Total Recordings Issued	-	Number of Artists	-



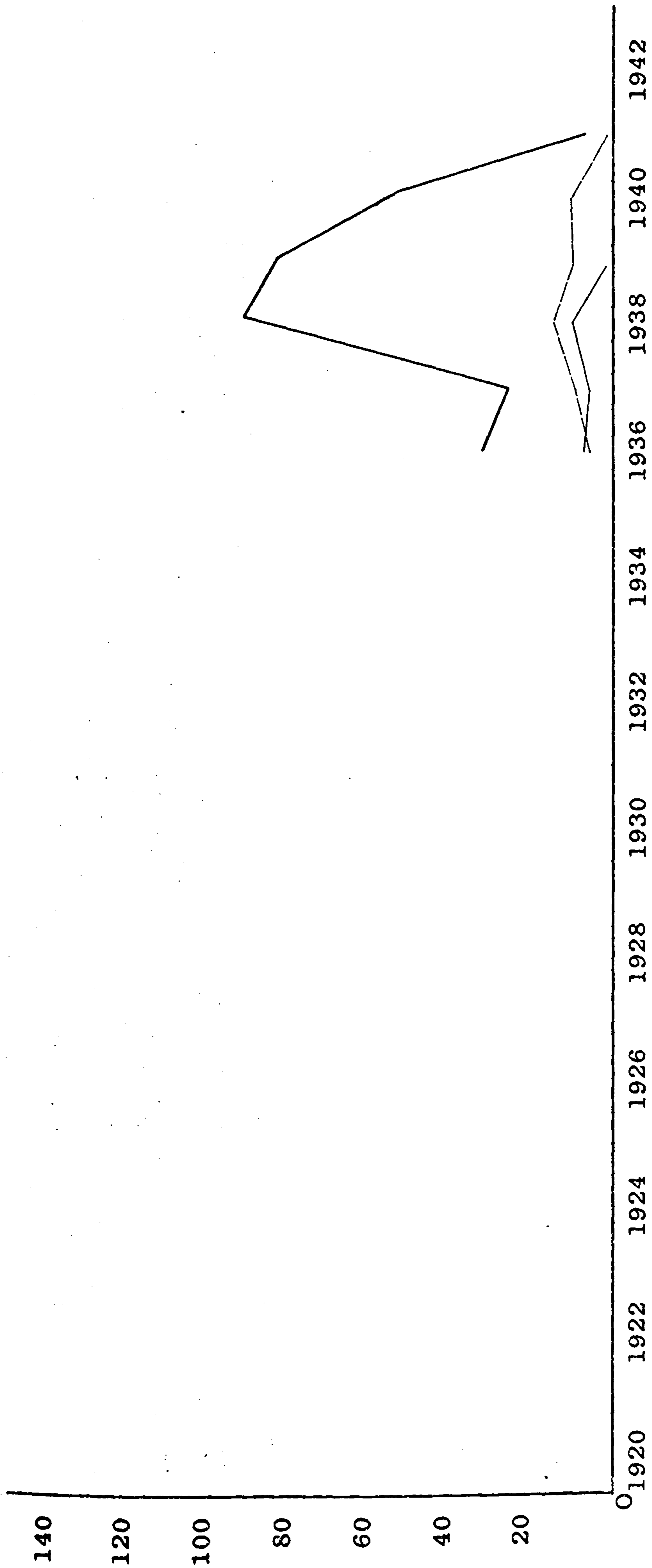
76. Decca Totals

Total Recordings Issued - - - - -
Number of Artists - - - - -



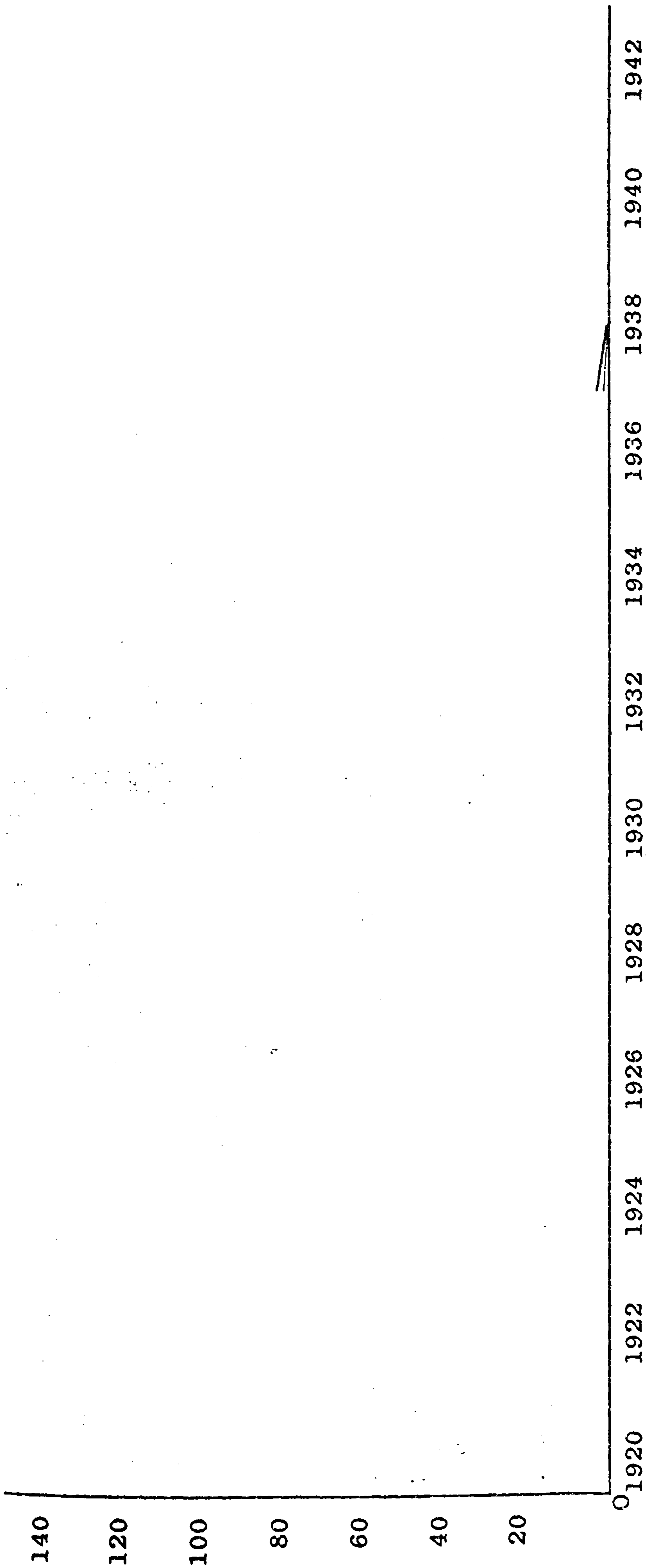
77. Decca Recordings in Chicago

Total Recordings Made	- - - - -	Total Recordings Not Issued	-
Total Recordings Issued	- - - - -	Number of Artists	-



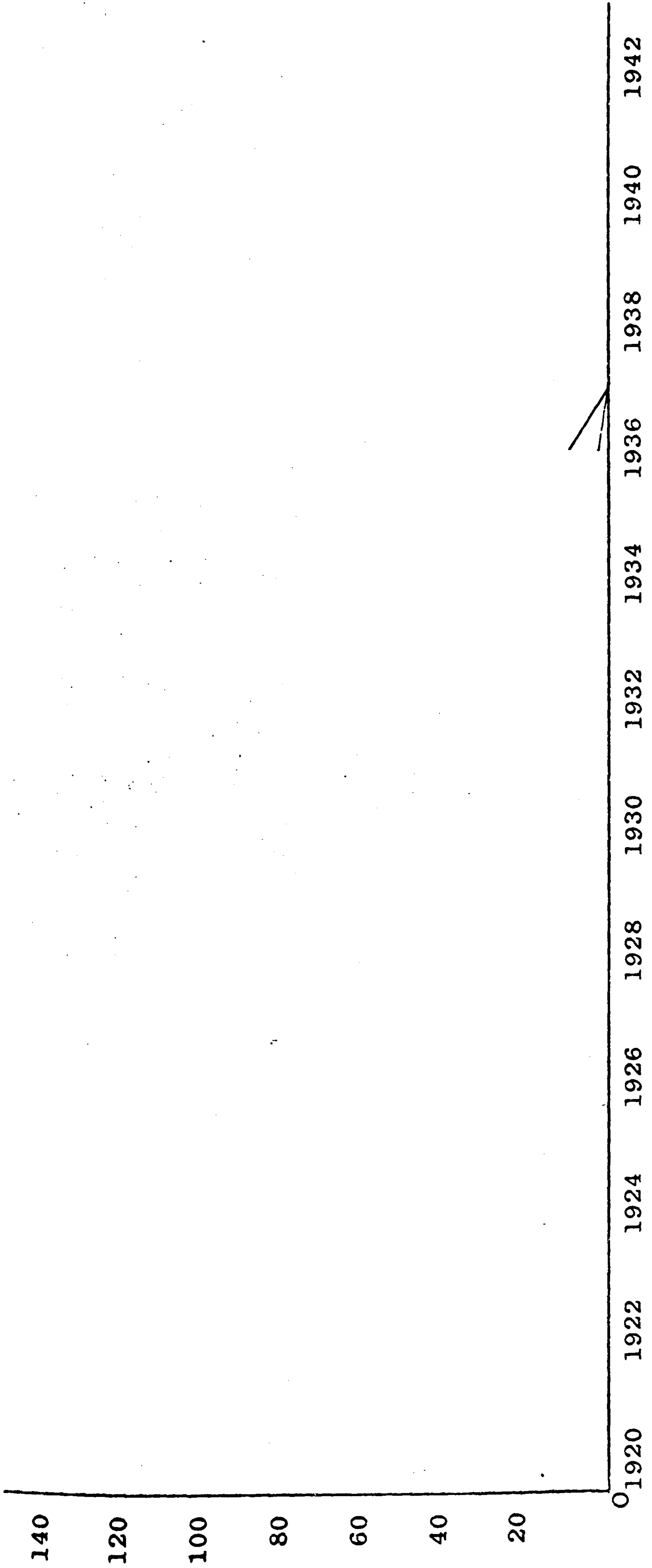
78. Decca Recordings in New York

Total Recordings Made	-	Total Recordings Not Issued	-
Total Recordings Issued	-	Number of Artists	-



79. Decca Recordings in Aurora, Illinois

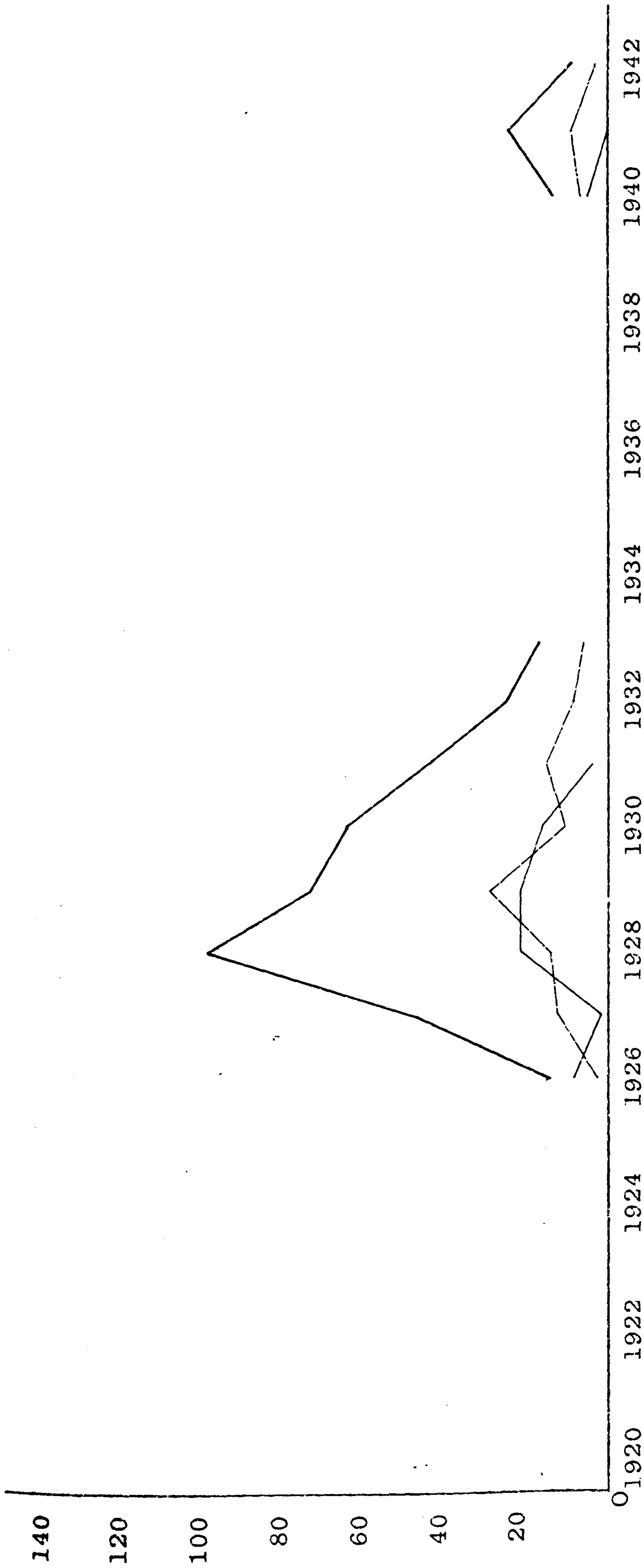
Total Recordings Made	-	Total Recordings Not Issued	-
Total Recordings Issued	-	Number of Artists	-



80. Decca Recordings in New Orleans

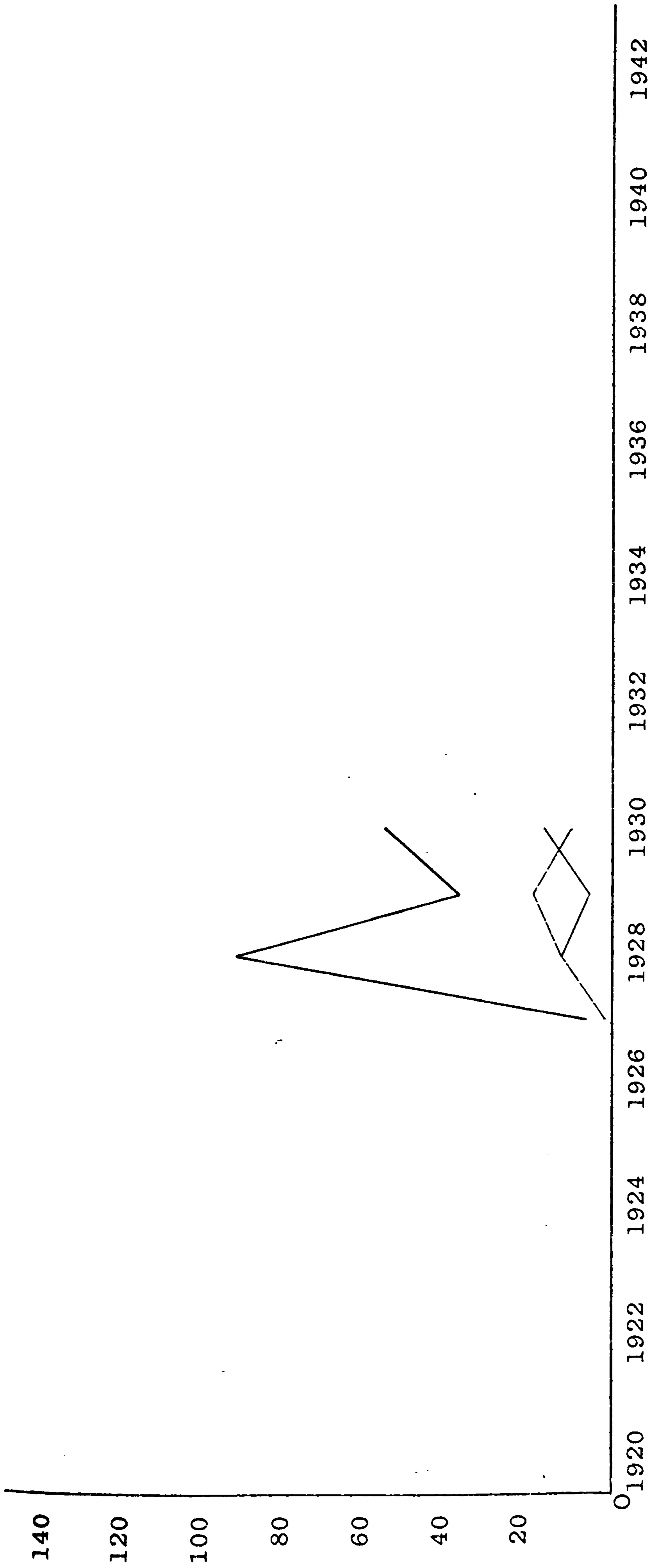
Total Recordings Made - - - - - Total Recordings Not Issued -

Total Recordings Issued - - - - - Number of Artists - - - - -



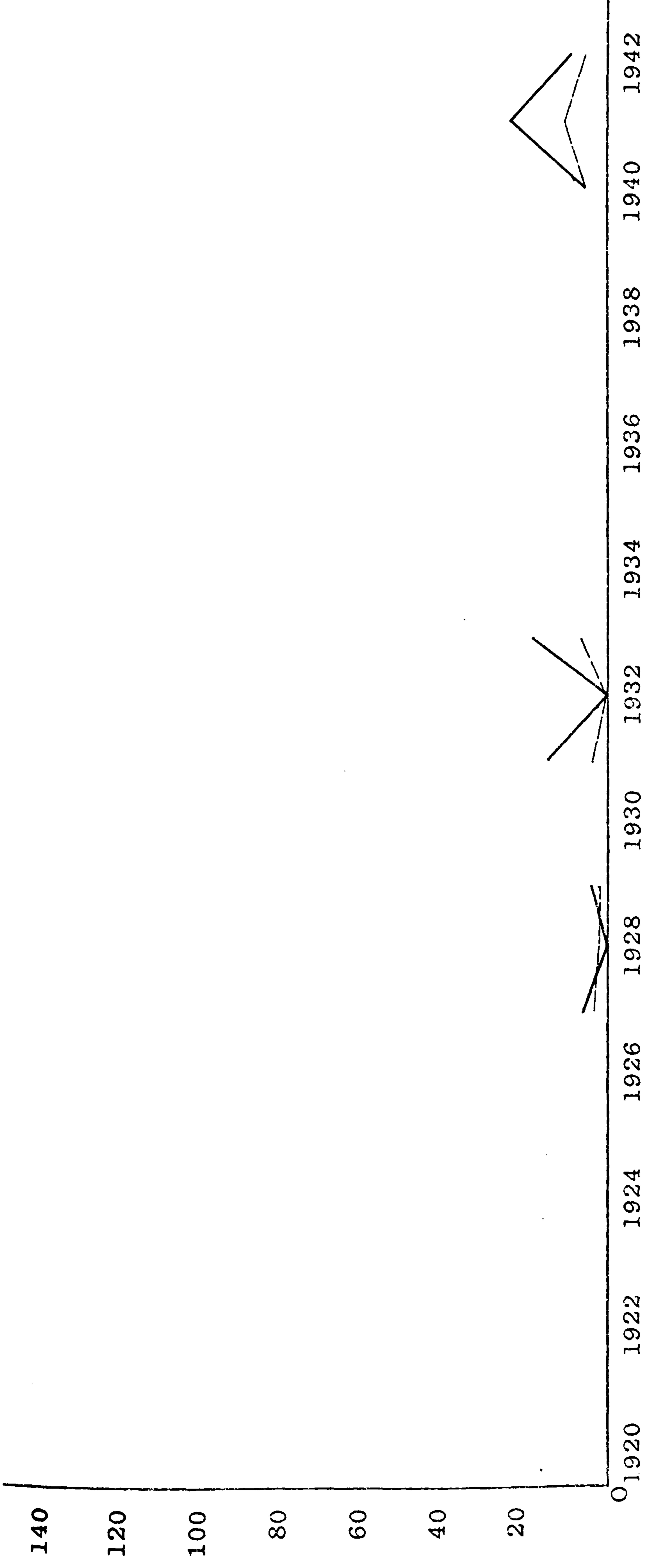
81. Victor Totals

Total Recordings Made - - - - - Total Recordings Not Issued - - - - -
 Total Recordings Issued - - - - - Number of Artists - - - - -



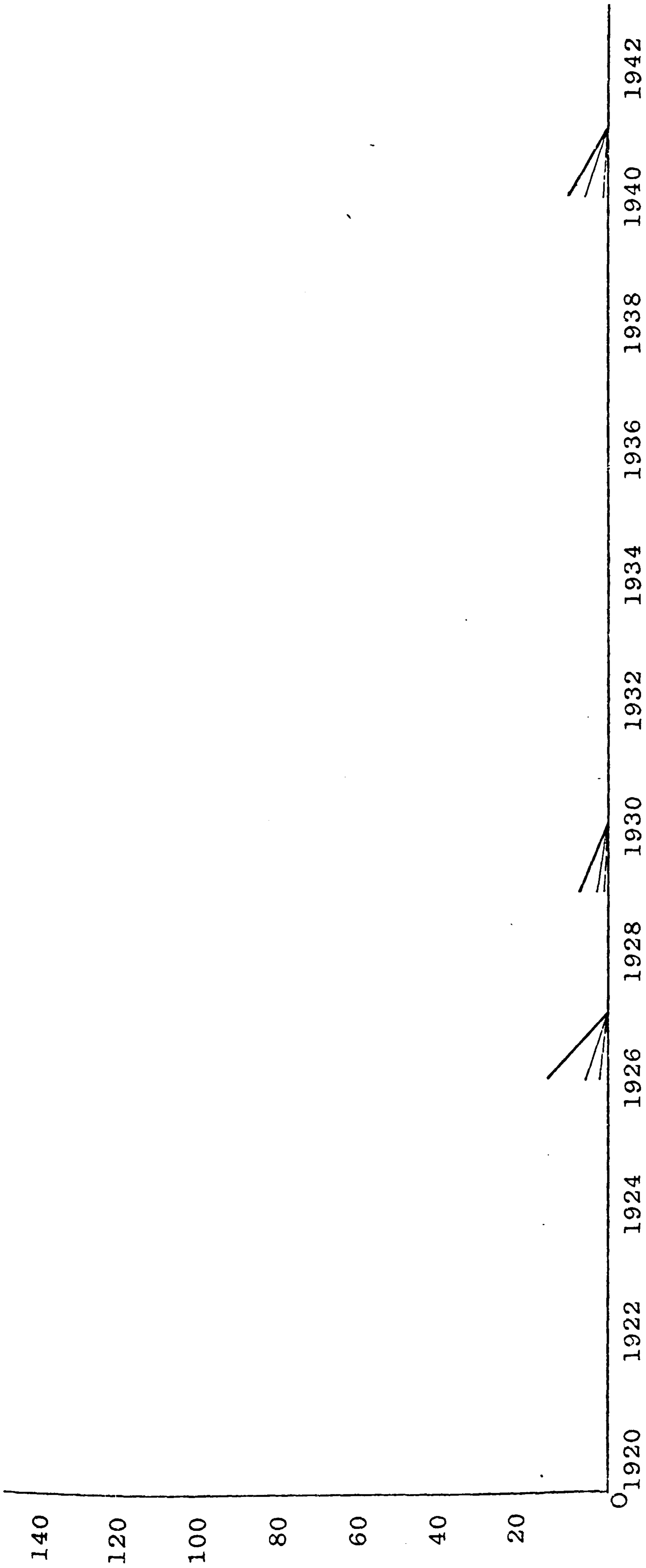
82. Victor Recordings in Memphis

Total Recordings Made - - - - - Total Recordings Not Issued - - - - -
 Total Recordings Issued - - - - - Number of Artists - - - - -



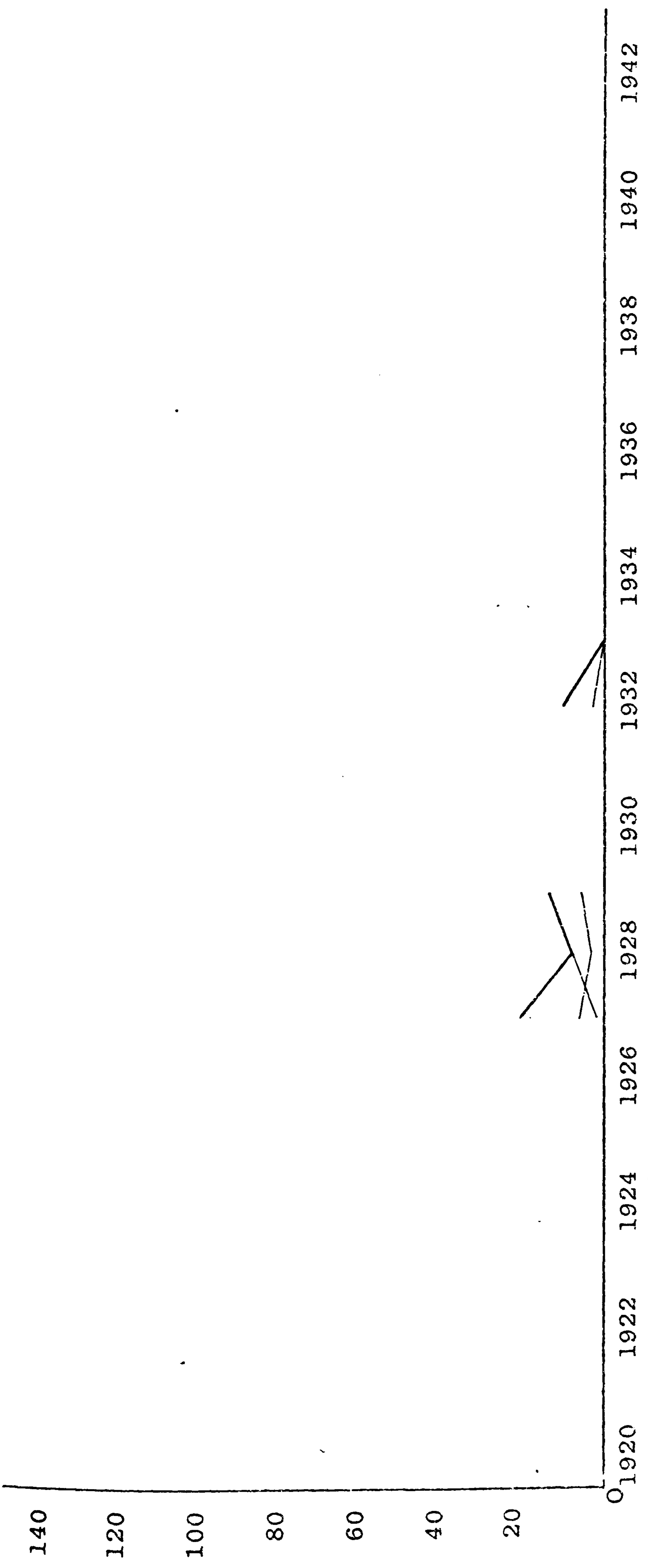
83. Victor Recordings in Chicago

Total Recordings Made - - - - - Total Recordings Not Issued - - - - -
 Total Recordings Issued - - - - - Number of Artists - - - - -



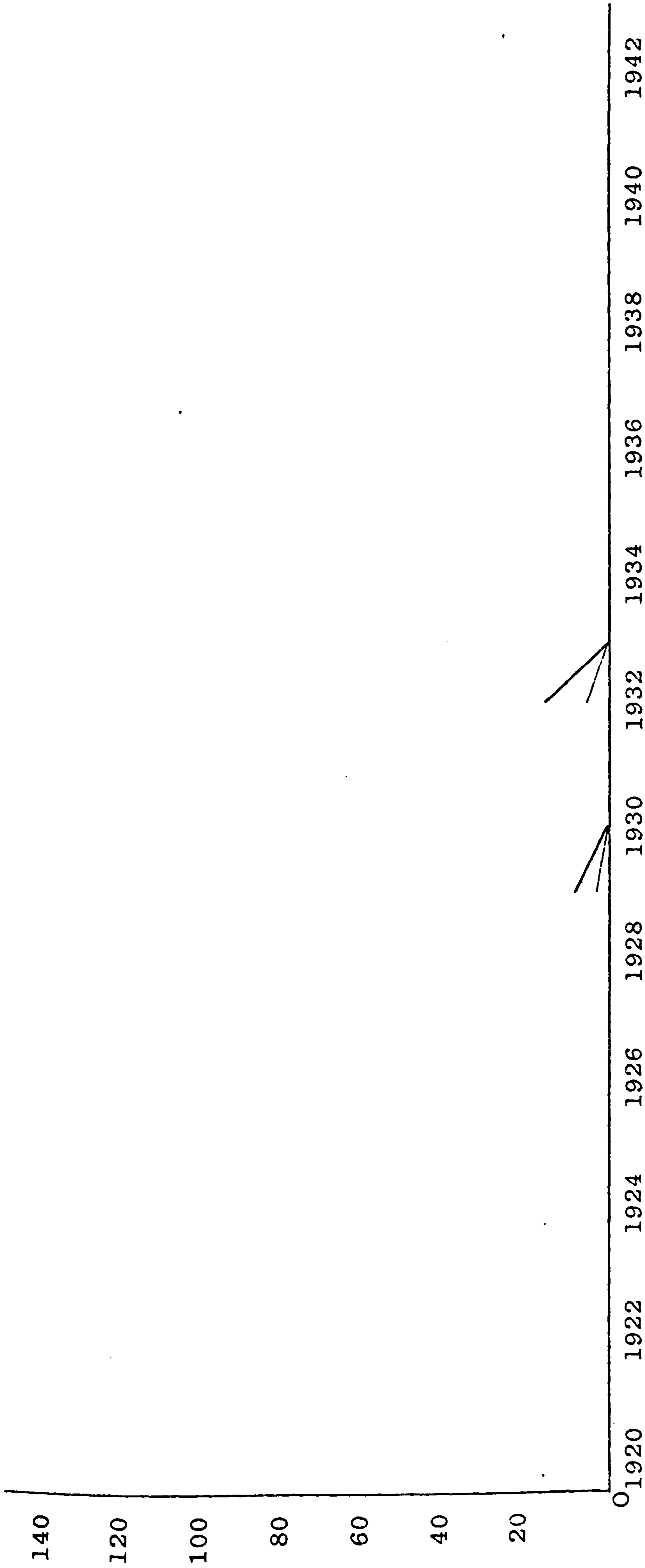
84. Victor Recordings in New York

Total Recordings Made - - - - - Total Recordings Not Issued - - - - -
 Total Recordings Issued - - - - - Number of Artists - - - - -



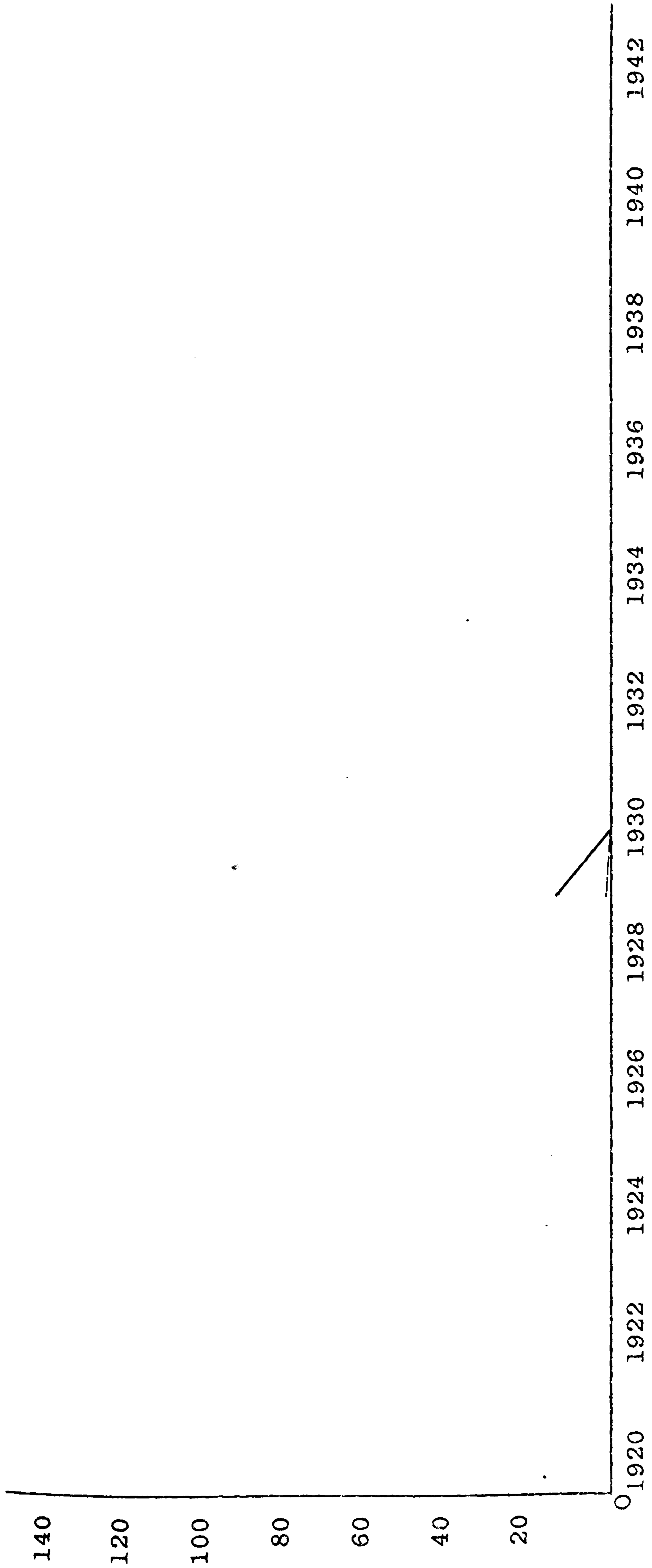
85. Victor Recordings in Atlanta

Total Recordings Made - - - - - Total Recordings Not Issued - - - - -
 Total Recordings Issued - - - - - Number of Artists - - - - -



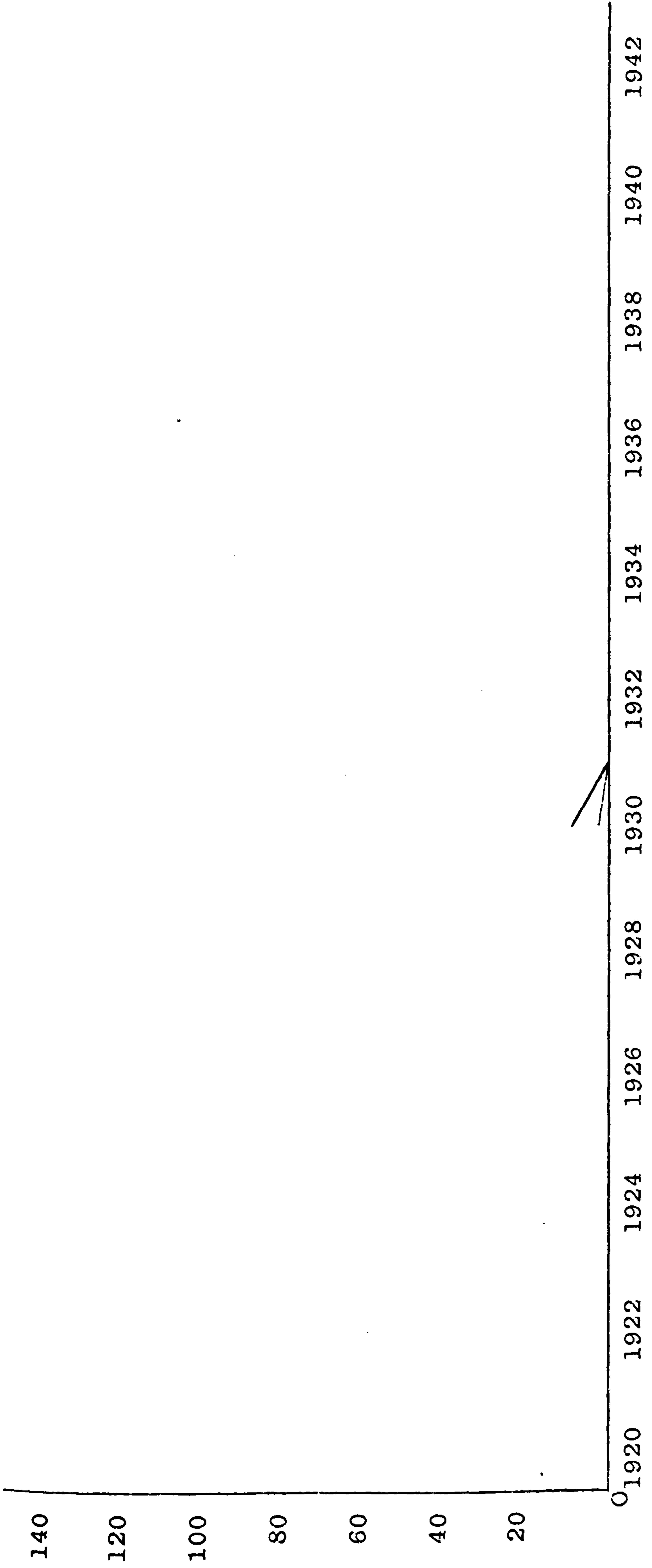
86. Victor Recordings in Dallas

Total Recordings Made	-	Total Recordings Not Issued	-
Total Recordings Issued	-	Number of Artists	-



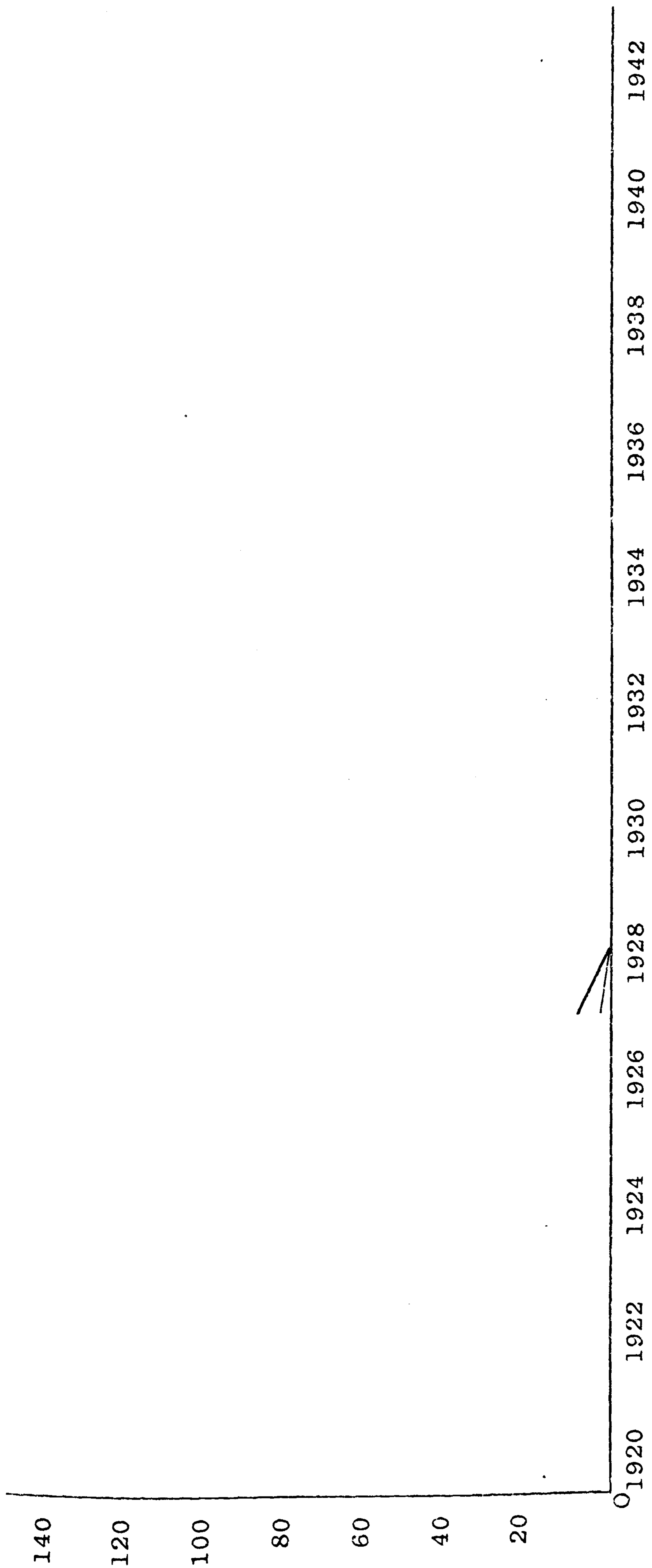
87. Victor Recordings in Long Island City, New York State

Total Recordings Made .. Total Recordings Not Issued -
 Total Recordings Issued - ---- Number of Artists - ----



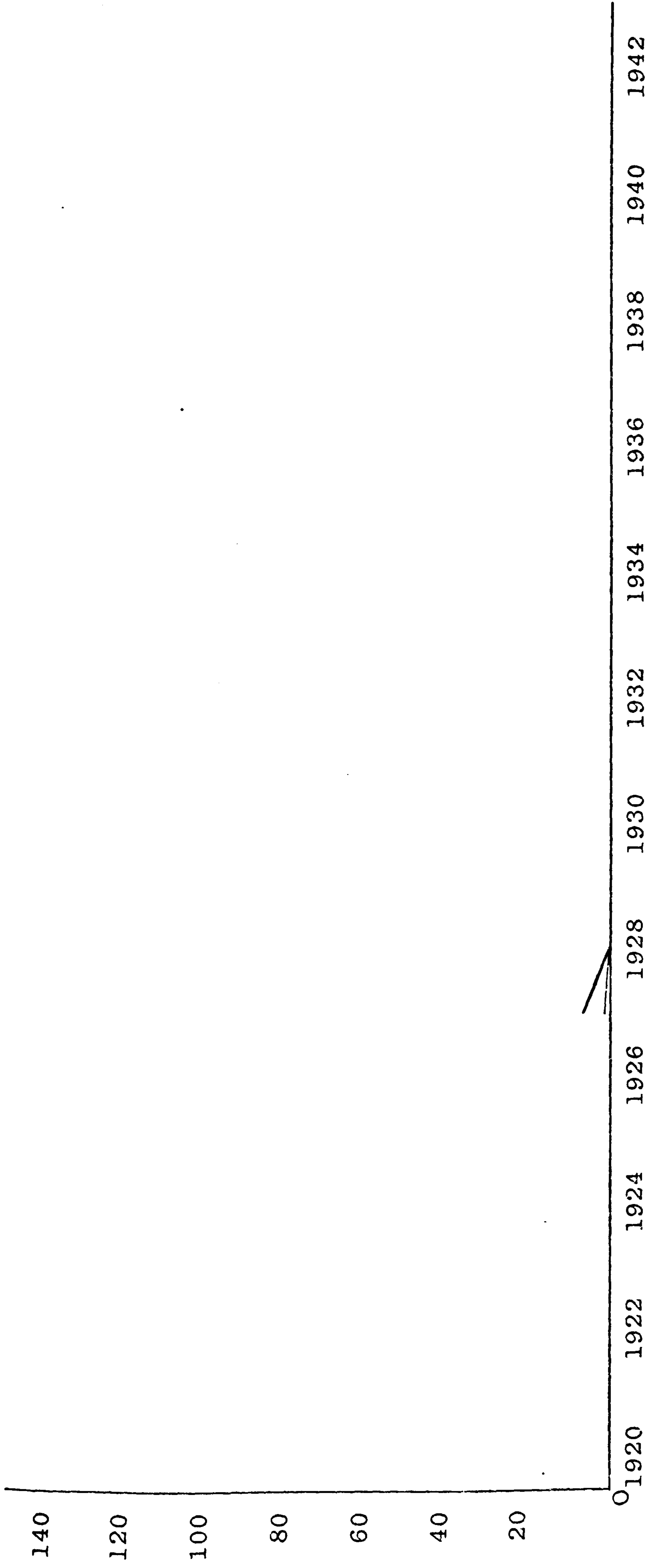
88. Victor Recordings in Cincinnati

Total Recordings Made - - - - - Total Recordings Not Issued -
 Total Recordings Issued - - - - - Number of Artists - - - - -



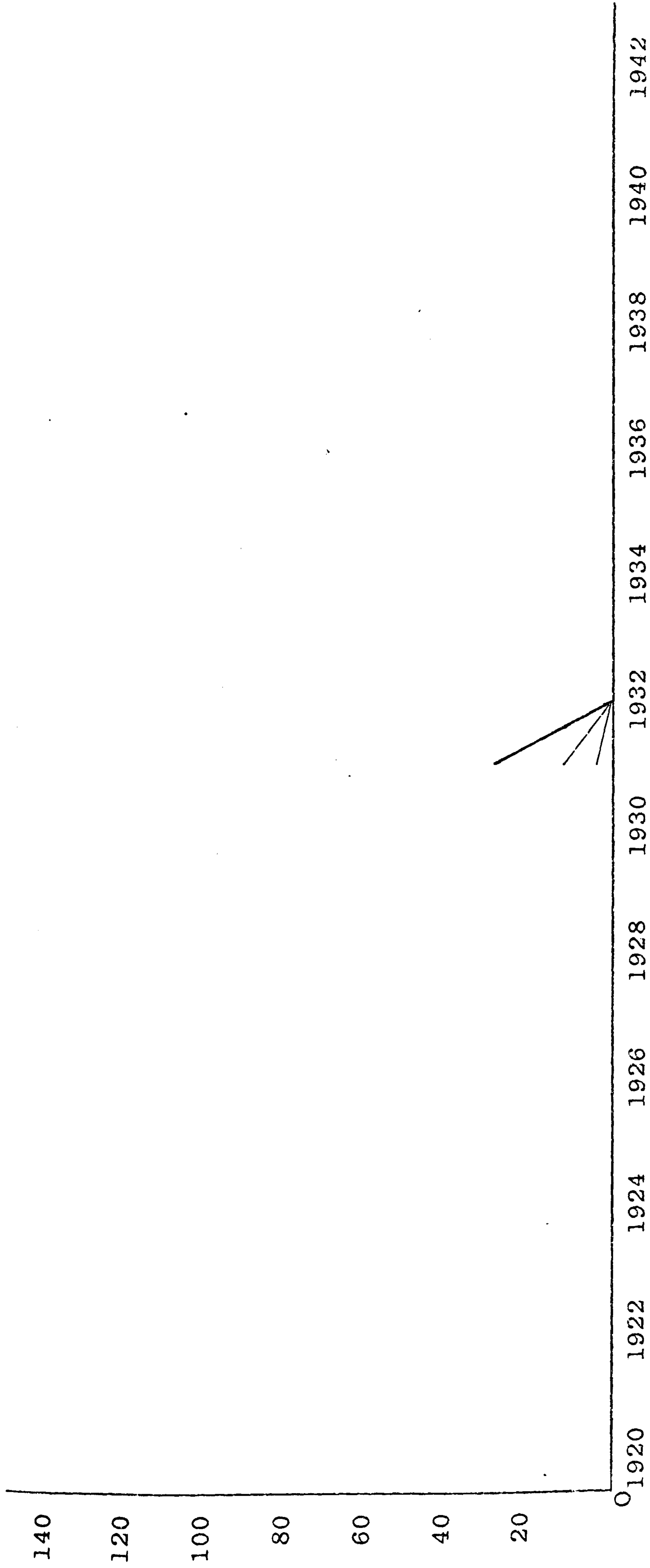
89. Victor Recordings in Charlotte, N. Carolina

Total Recordings Made - - - - - Total Recordings Not Issued -
 Total Recordings Issued - - - - - Number of Artists - - - - -



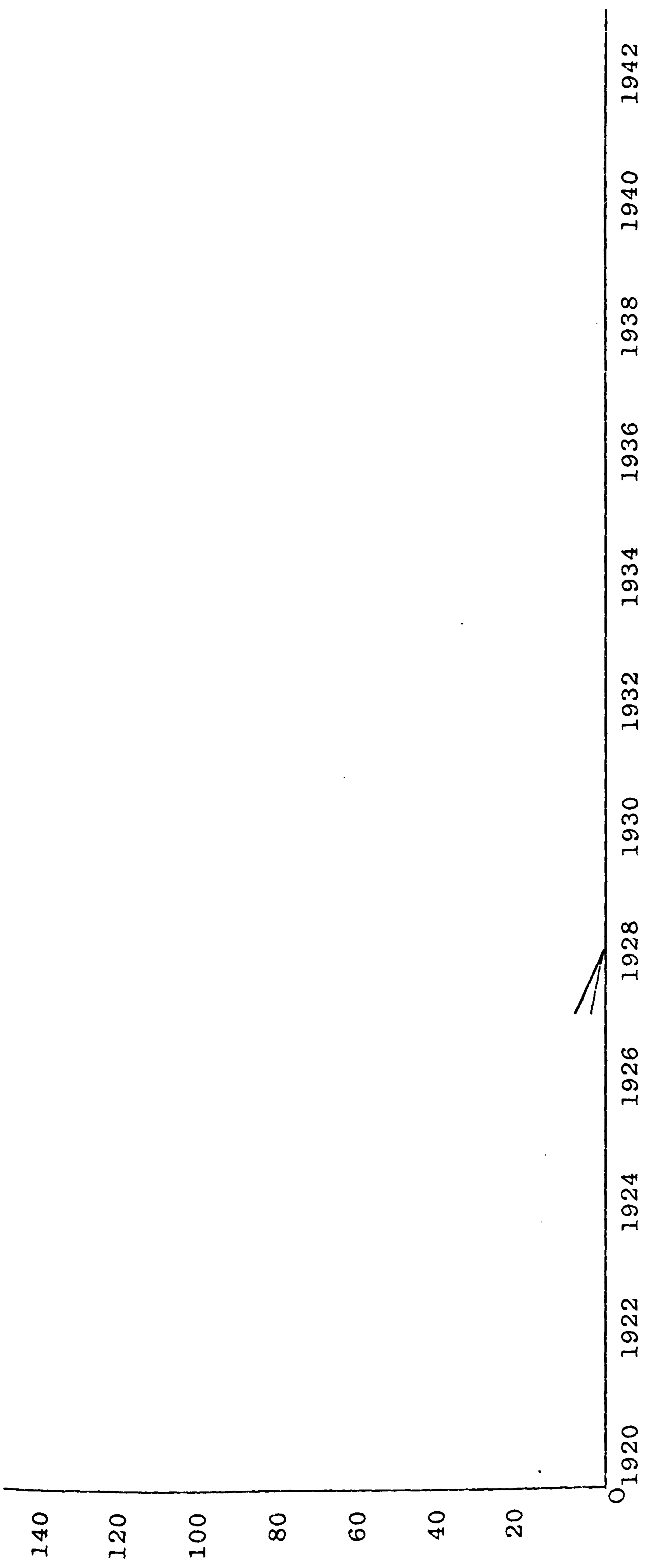
90. Victor Recordings in Savannah

Total Recordings Made	-	Total Recordings Not Issued	-
Total Recordings Issued	-	Number of Artists	-



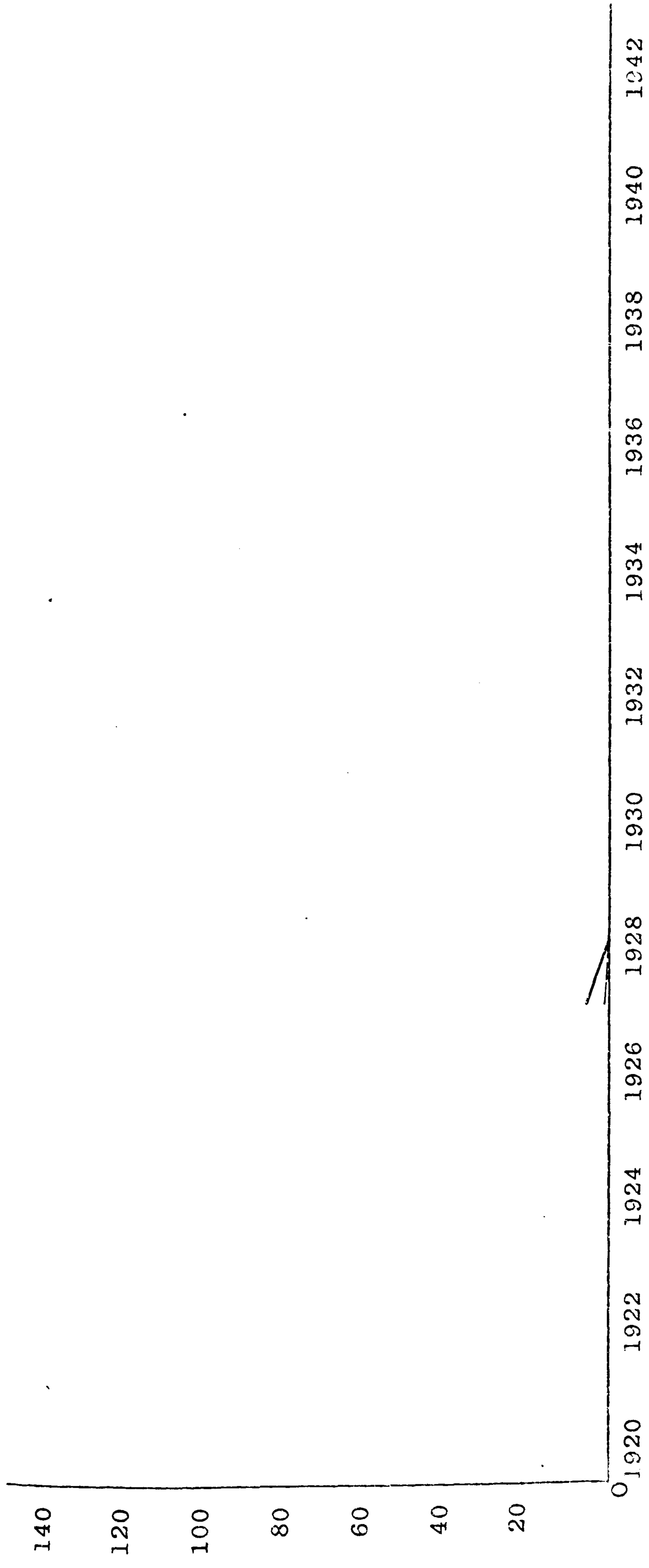
91. Victor Recordings in Louisville, Kentucky

Total Recordings Made - - - - - Total Recordings Not Issued - - - - -
 Total Recordings Issued - - - - - Number of Artists - - - - -



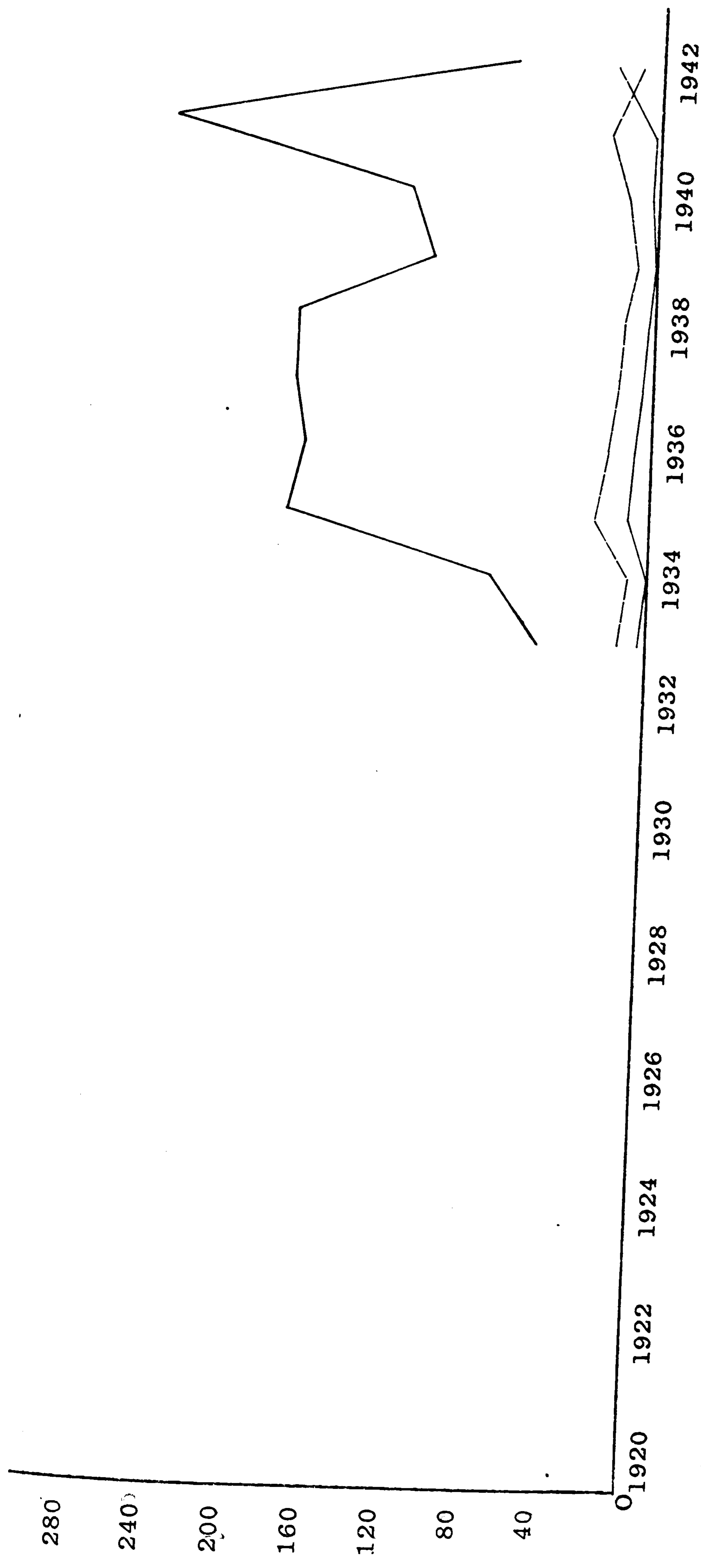
92. Victor Recordings in Camden, New Jersey

Total Recordings Made - - - - - Total Recordings Not Issued -
 Total Recordings Issued - - - - - Number of Artists - - - - -



93. Victor Recordings in New Orleans

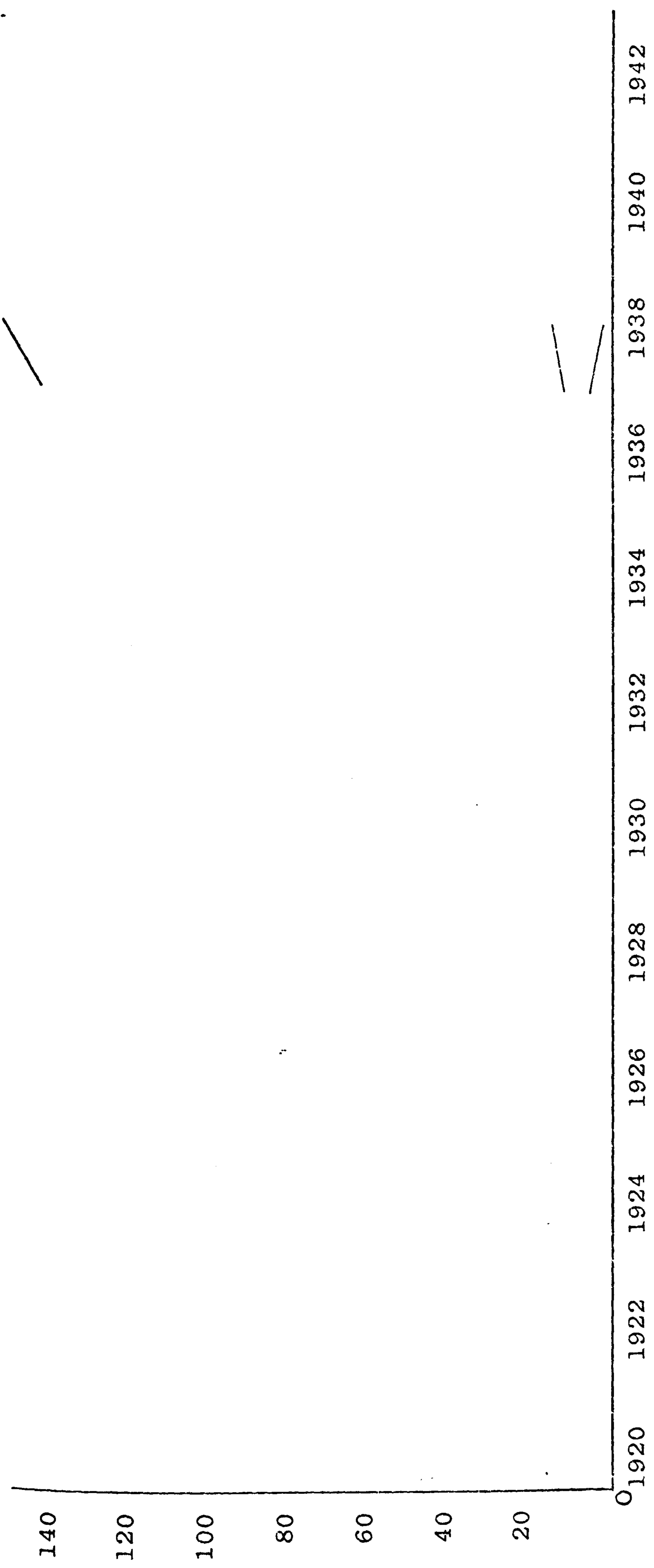
Total Recordings Made - - - - - Total Recordings Not Issued -
 Total Recordings Issued - - - - - Number of Artists - - - - -



94. Bluebird Totals

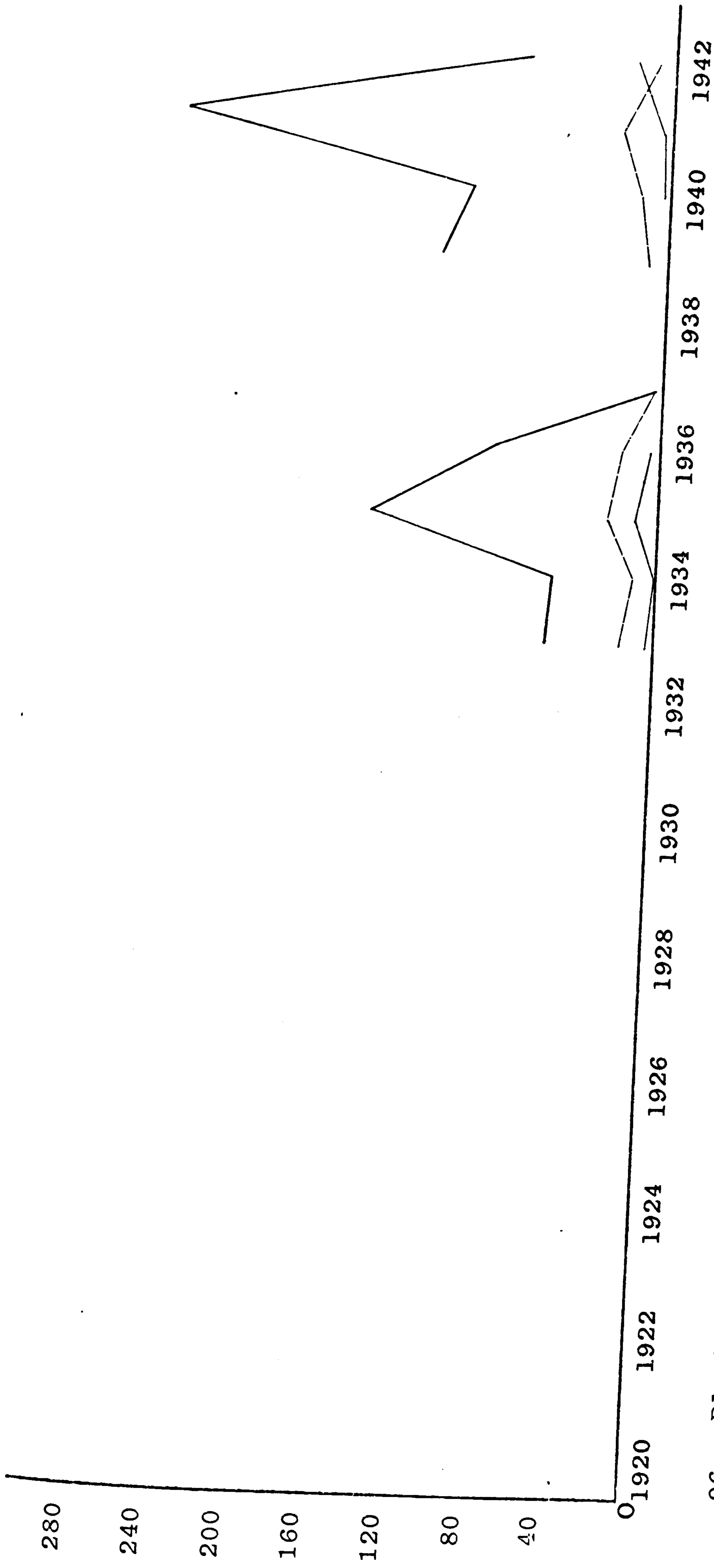
Total Recordings Issued - ————

Number of Artists - - - - -



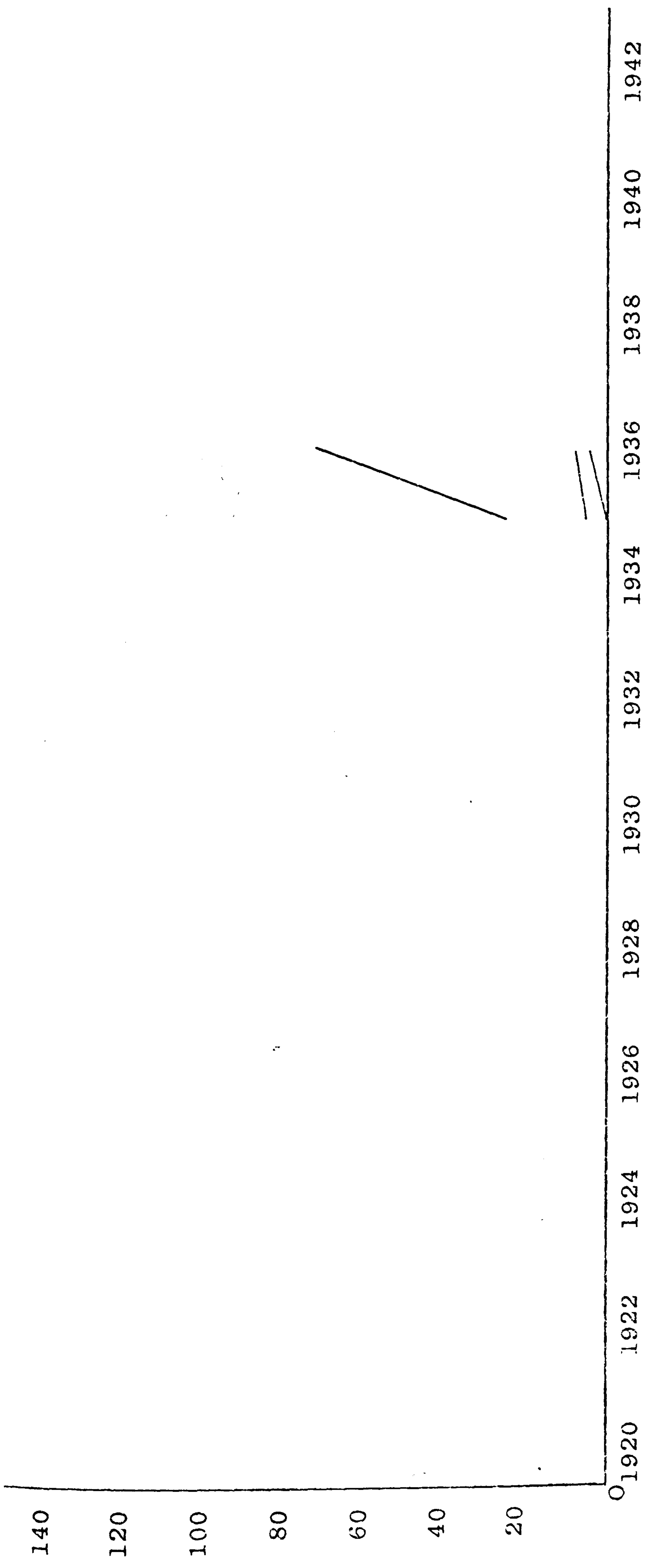
95. Bluebird Recordings in Aurora, Illinois

Total Recordings Made - - - - - Total Recordings Not Issued - - - - -
 Total Recordings Issued - - - - - Number of Artists - - - - -



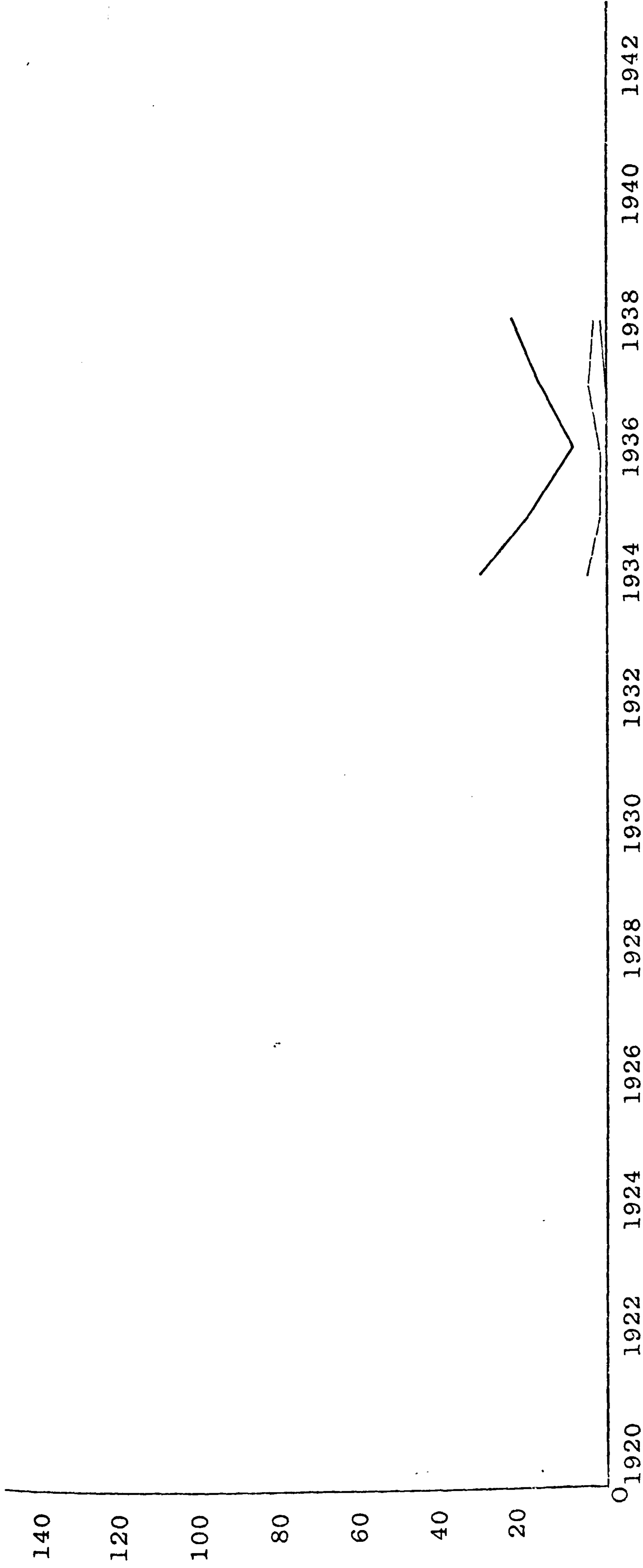
96. Bluebird Recordings in Chicago

Total Recordings Issued - ——— Number of Artists - - - - -



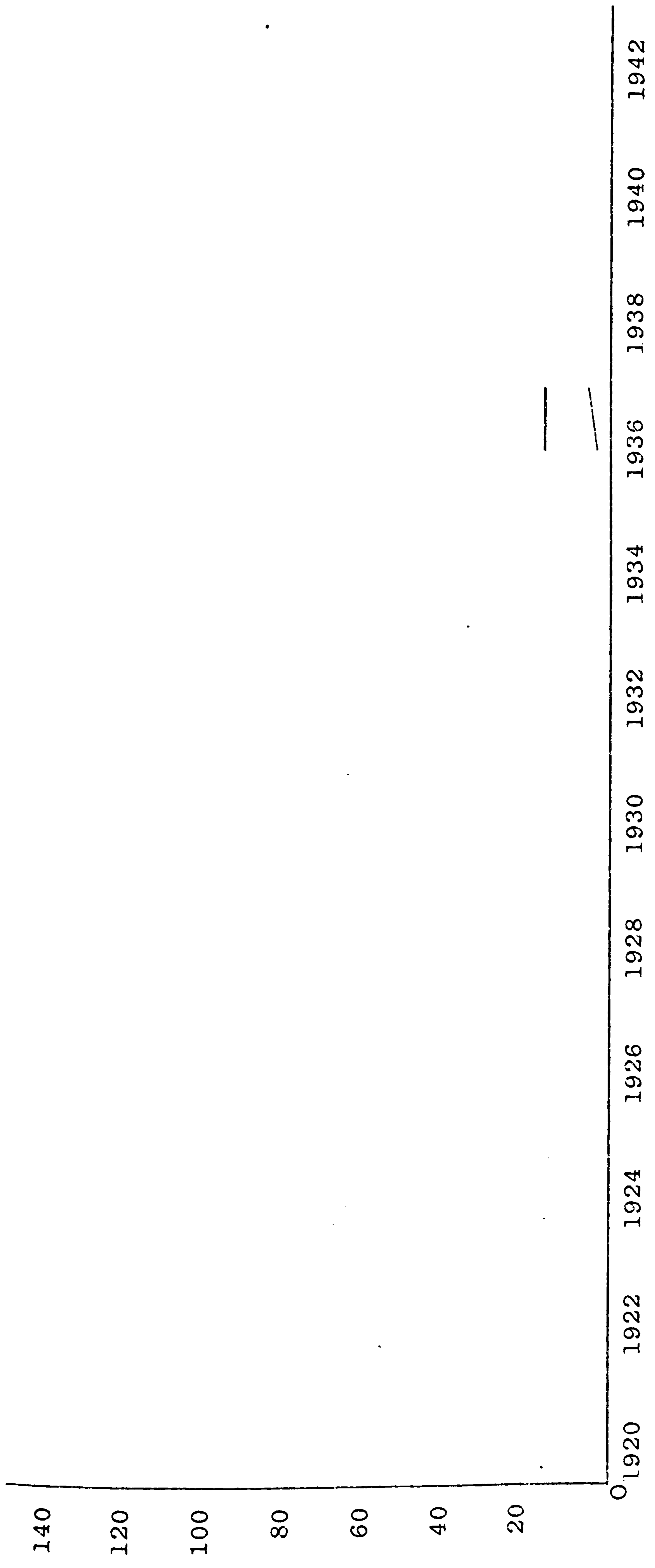
97. Bluebird Recordings in New Orleans

Total Recordings Made	-	Total Recordings Not Issued	-
Total Recordings Issued	-	Number of Artists	-



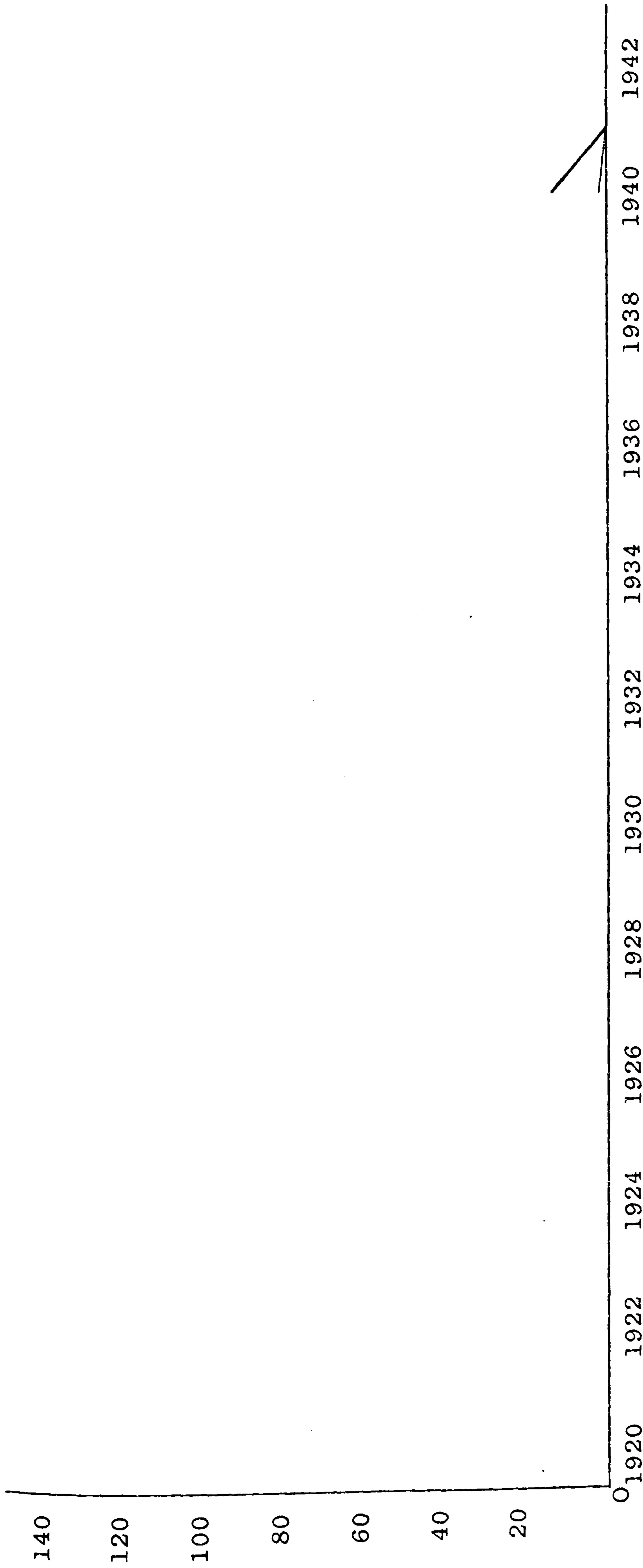
98. Bluebird Recordings in San Antonio

Total Recordings Made	-	Total Recordings Not Issued	-
Total Recordings Issued	-	Number of Artists	-



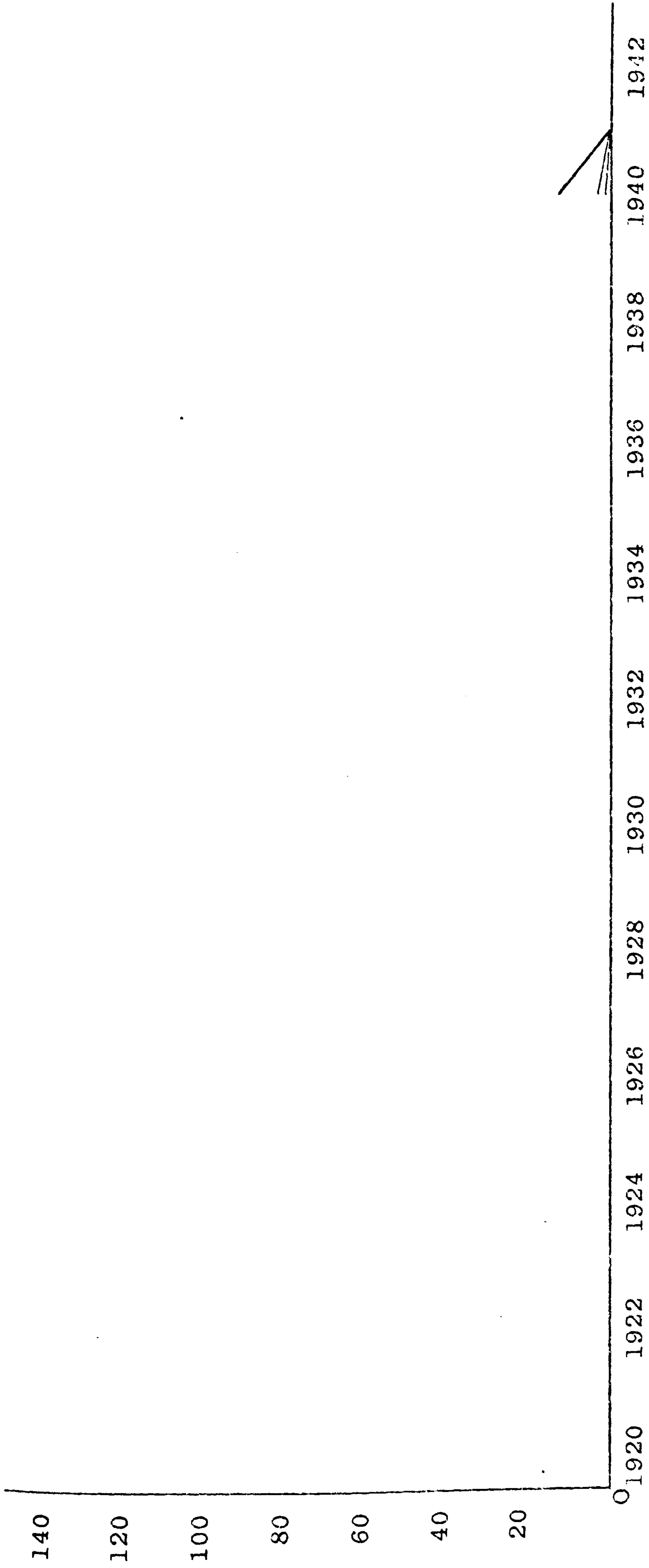
99. Bluebird Recordings in Charlotte

Total Recordings Made - - - - - Total Recordings Not Issued -
 Total Recordings Issued - - - - - Number of Artists



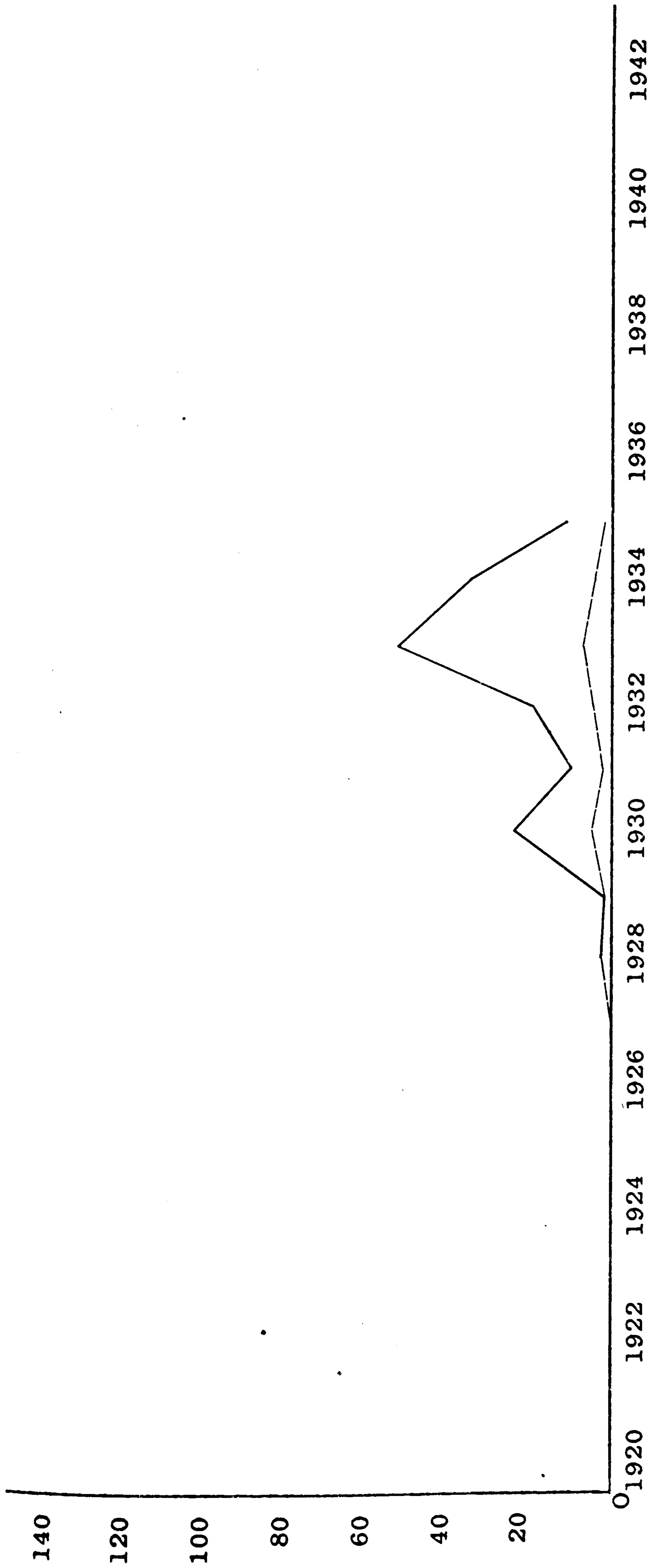
100. Bluebird Recordings in New York

Total Recordings Made	-	Total Recordings Not Issued	-
Total Recordings Issued	-	Number of Artists	-



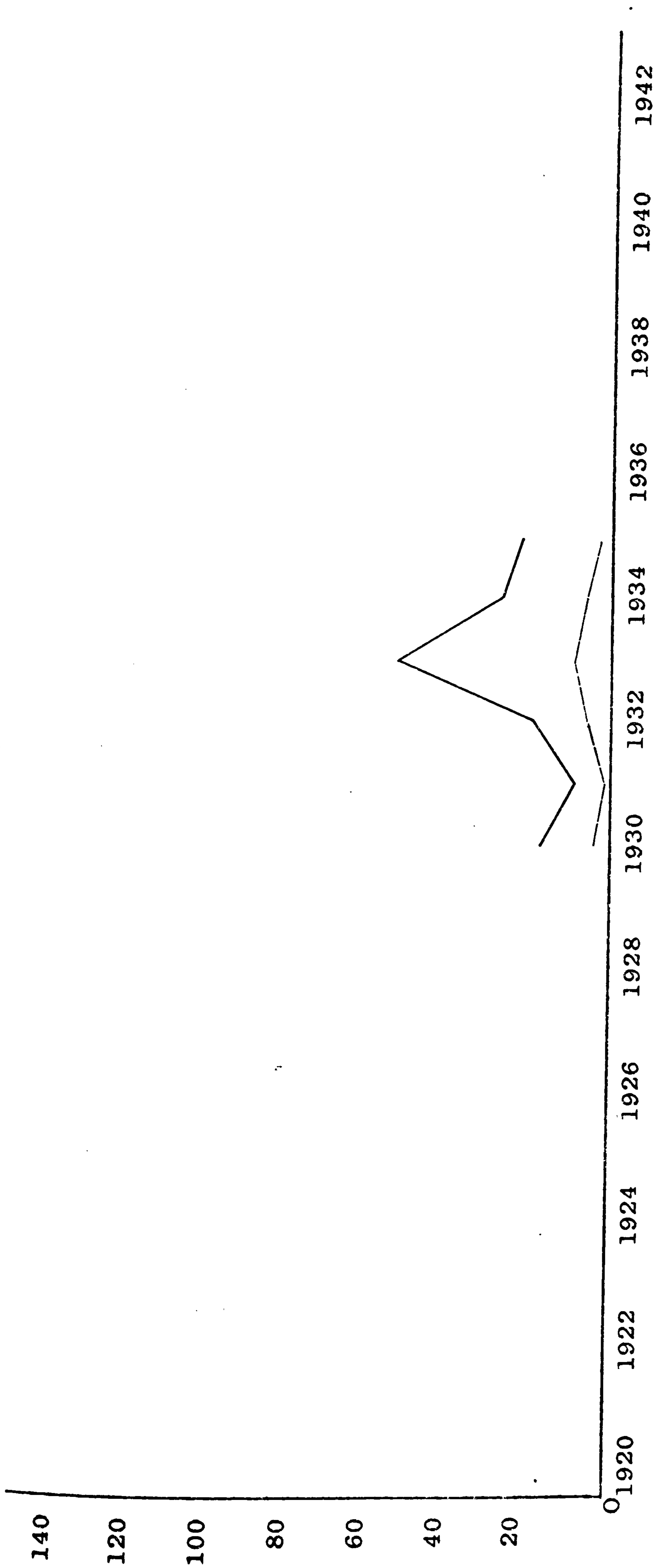
101. Bluebird Recordings in Atlanta

Total Recordings Made	-	Total Recordings Not Issued	-
Total Recordings Issued	-	Number of Artists	-



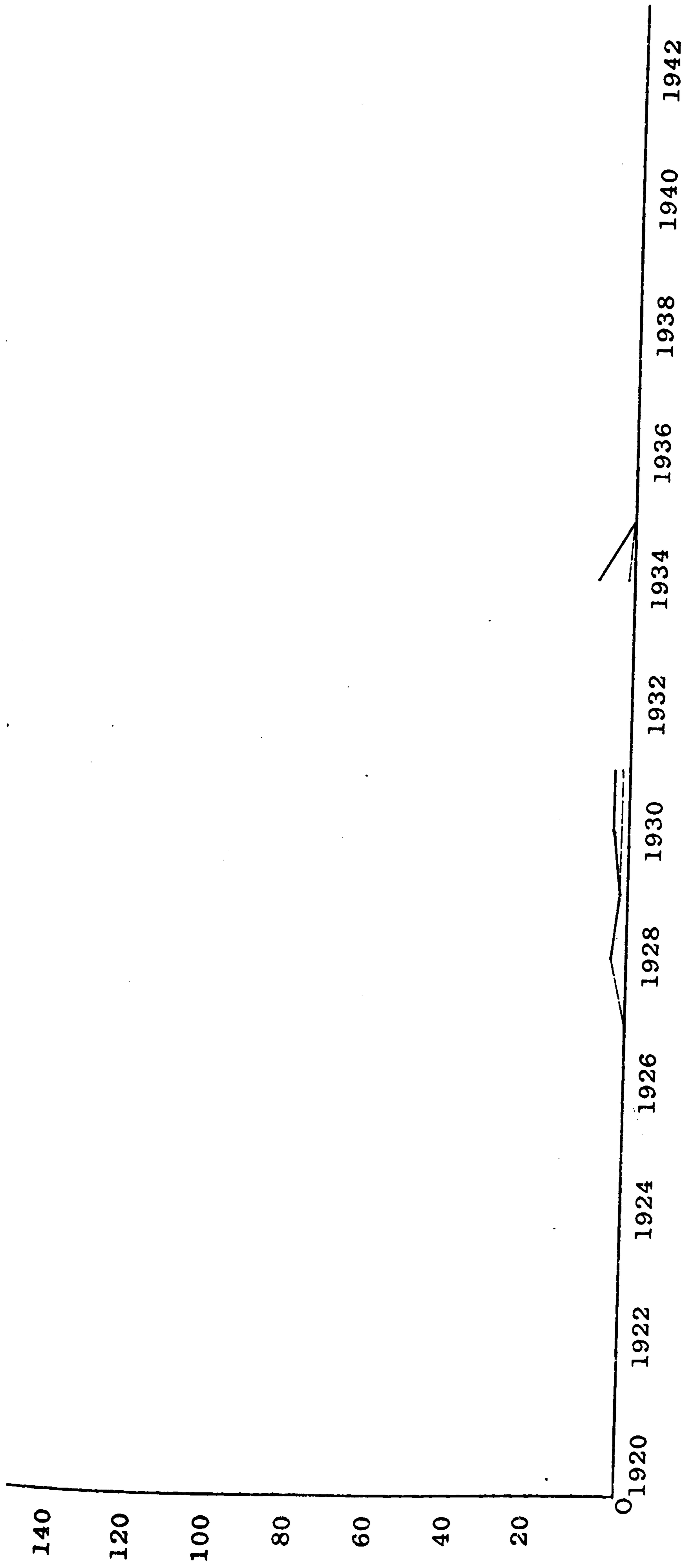
102. Banner Totals

Total Recordings Issued - —— Number of Artists - - - - -



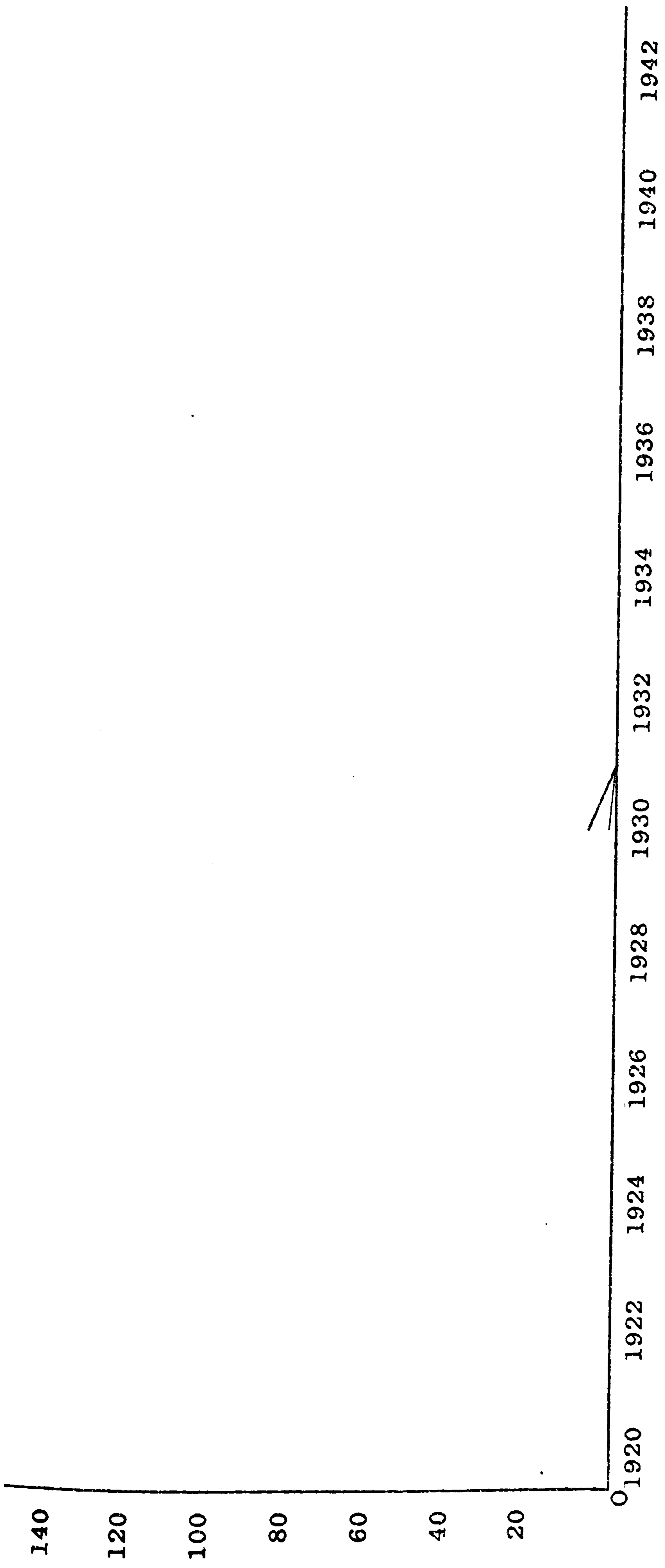
103. Banner Recordings From New York

Total Recordings Issued - _____ Number of Artists - _____



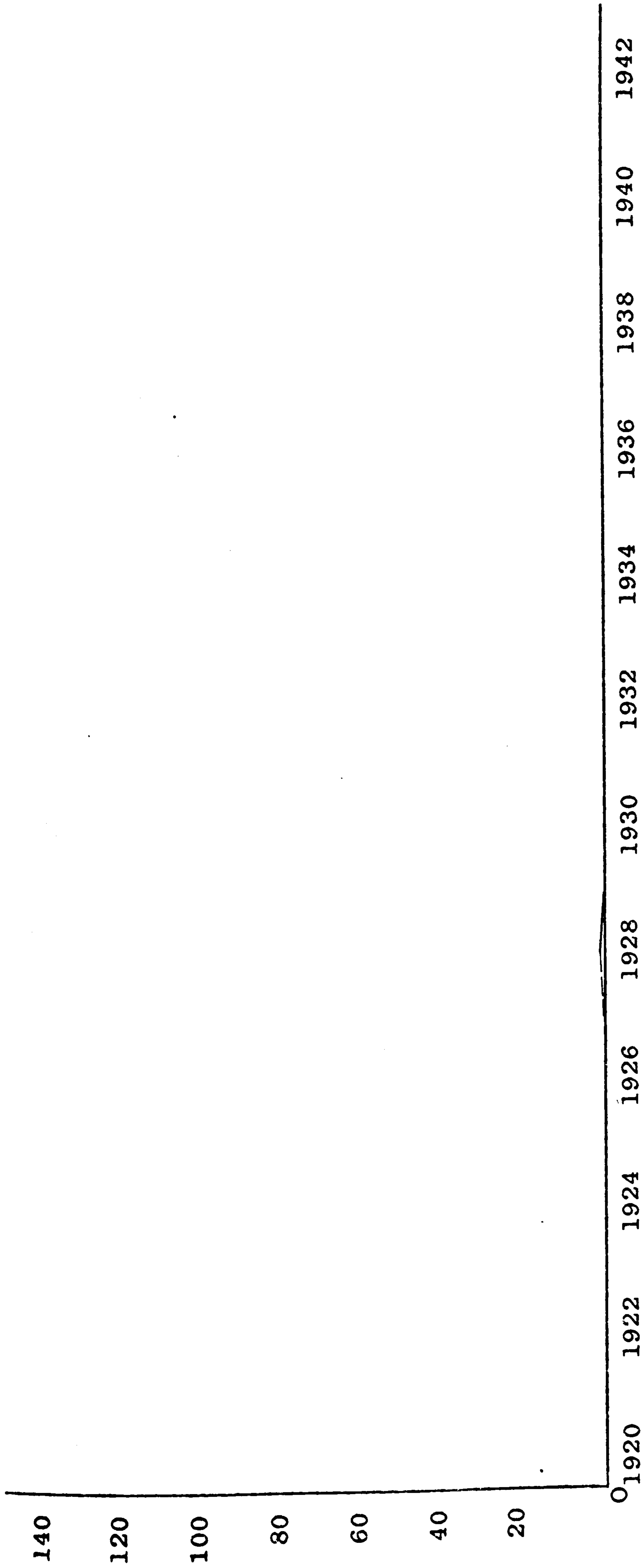
104. Banner Recordings From Chicago

Total Recordings Issued - --- Number of Artists - ---



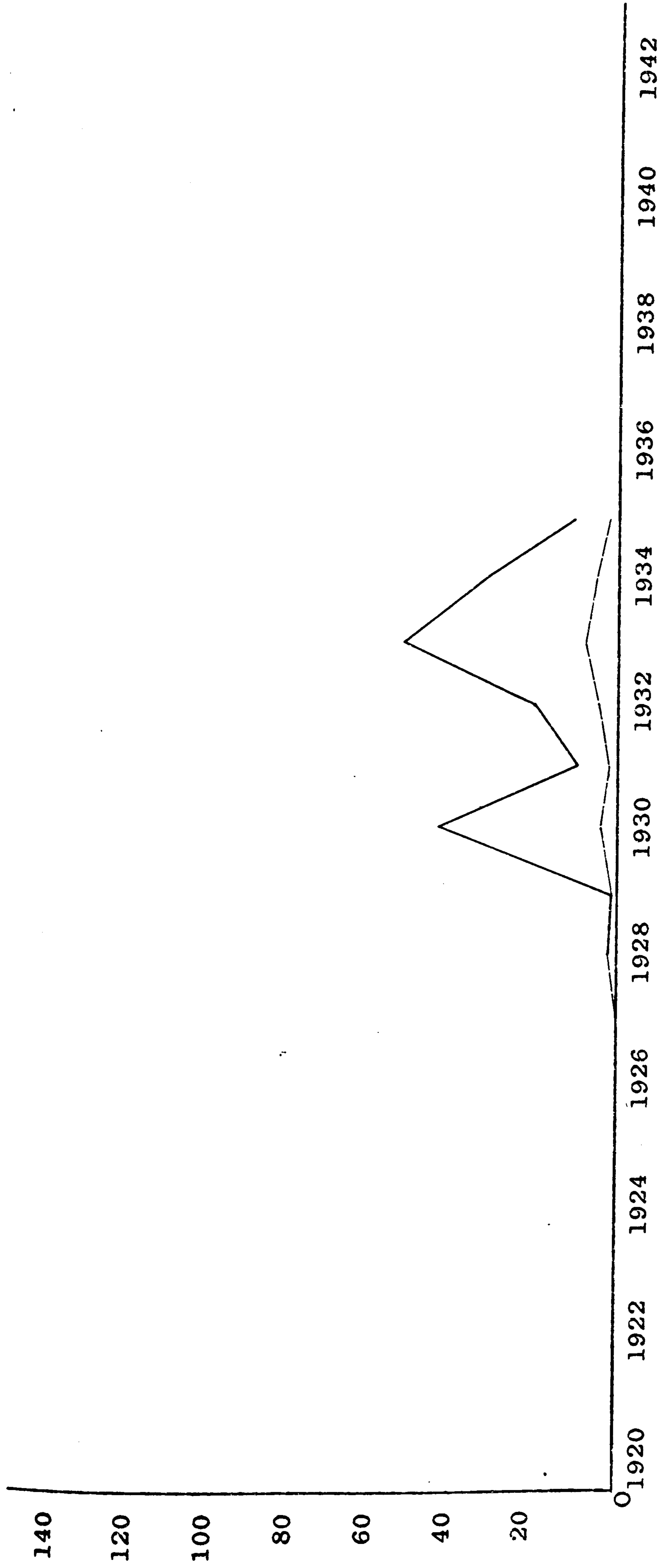
105. Banner Recordings From Memphis

Total Recordings Issued - ----- Number of Artists - -----



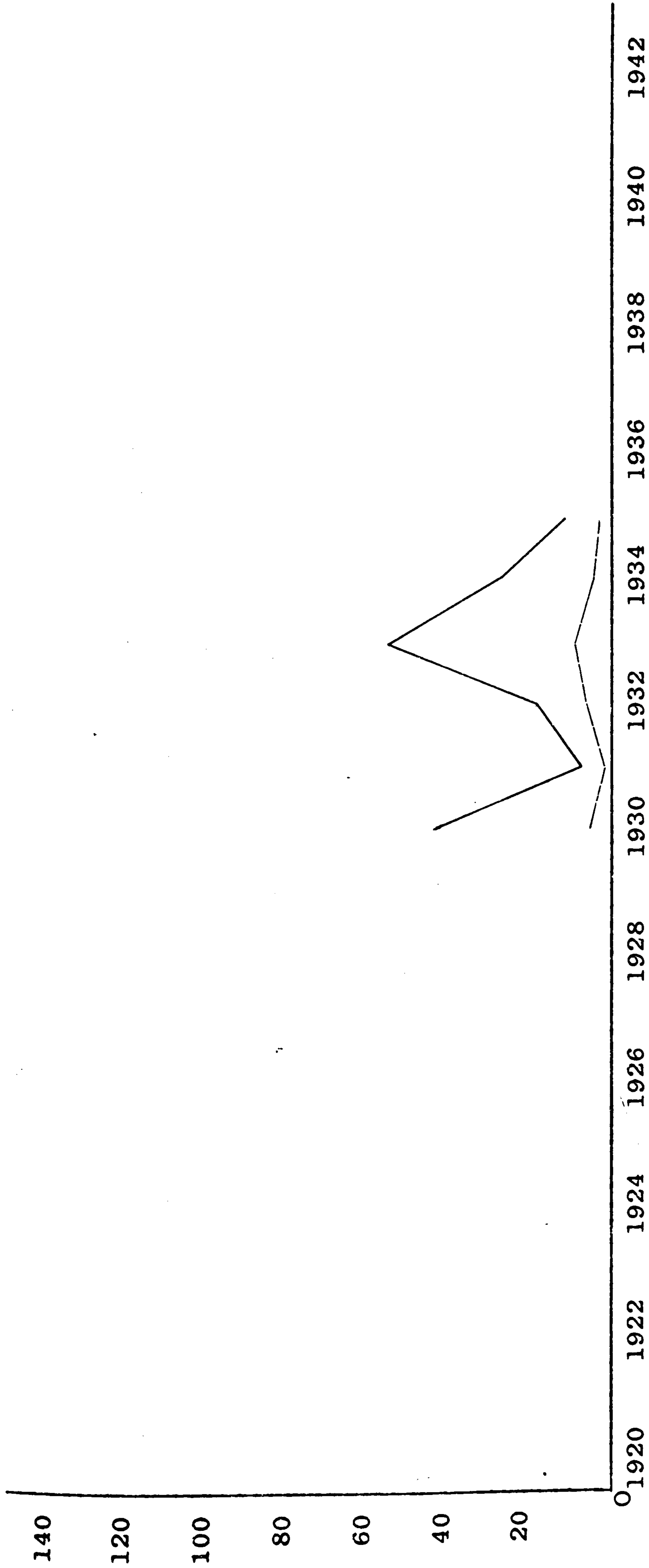
106. Banner Recordings From Indianapolis

Total Recordings Issued - ----- Number of Artists - -----



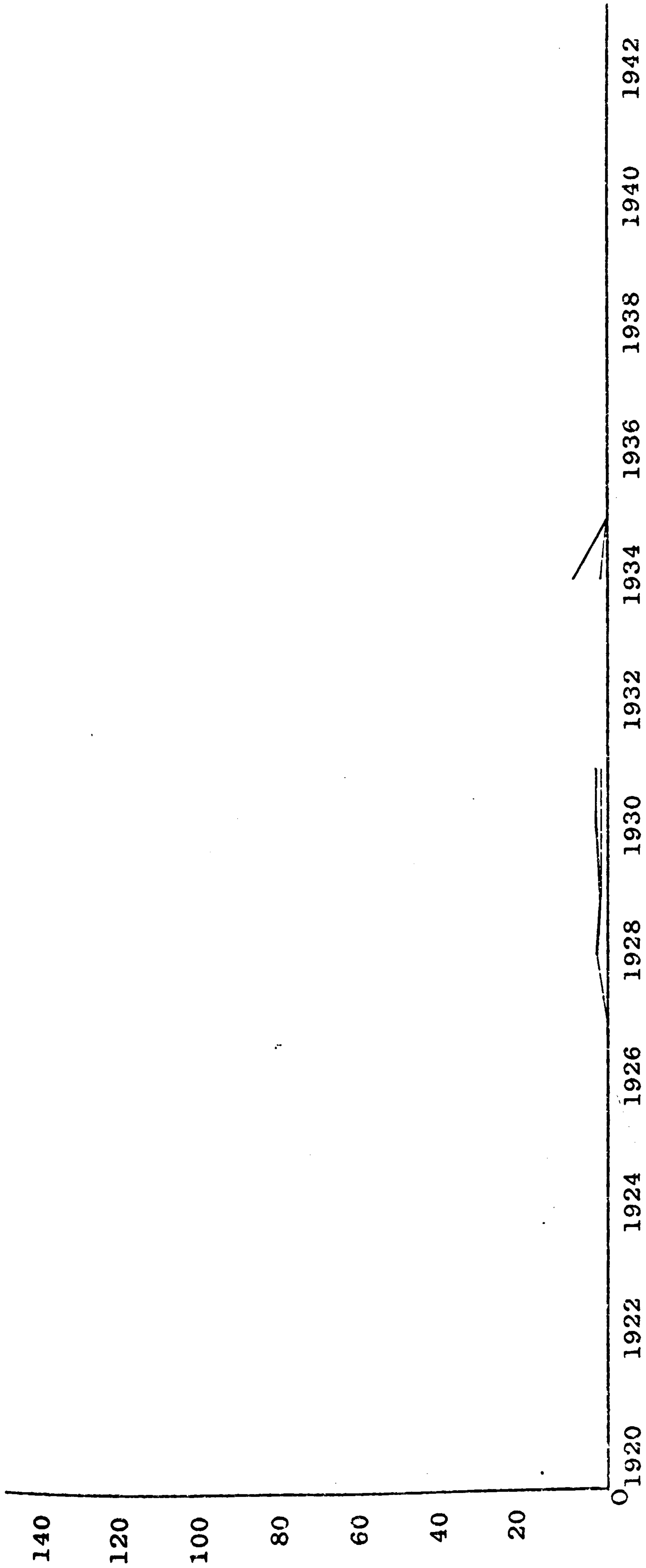
107. Oriole Totals

Total Recordings Issued - - - - - Number of Artists - - - - -



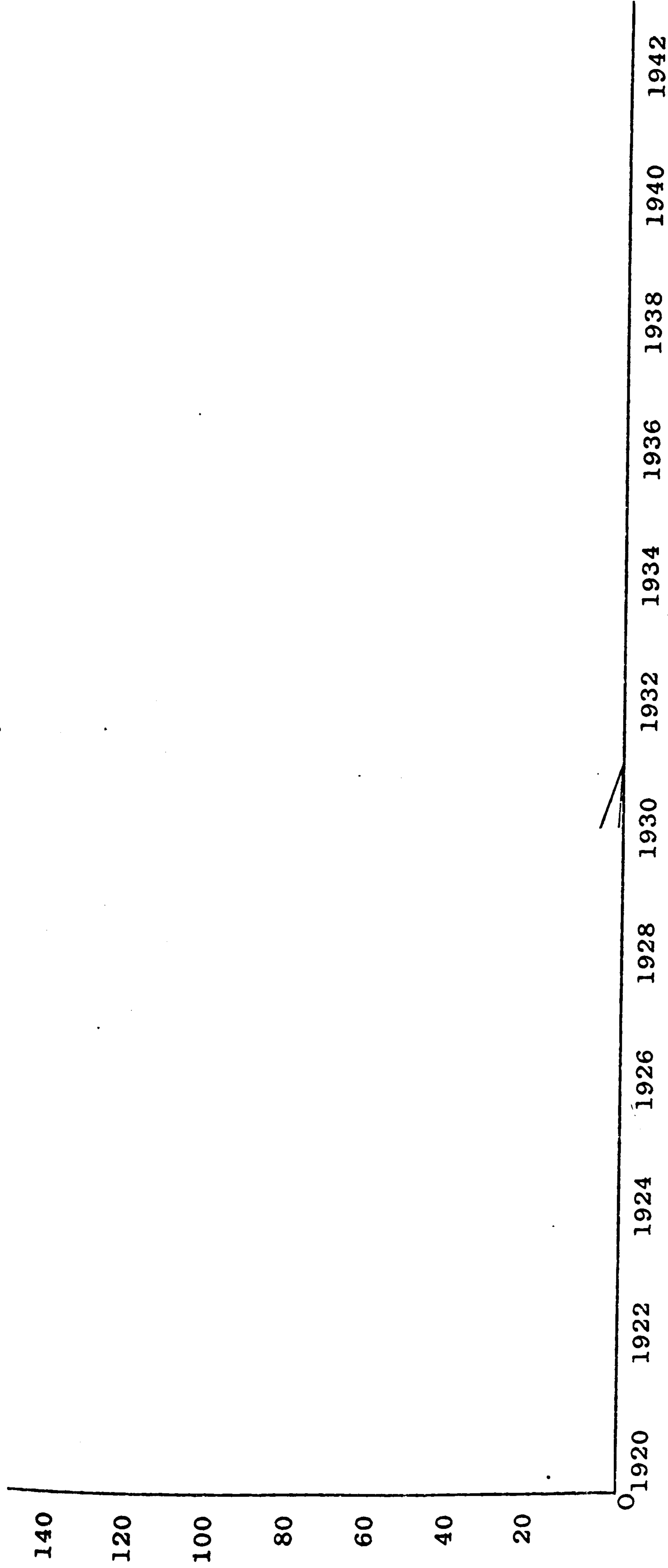
108. Oriole Recordings From New York

Total Recordings Issued - ——— Number of Artists - - - - -



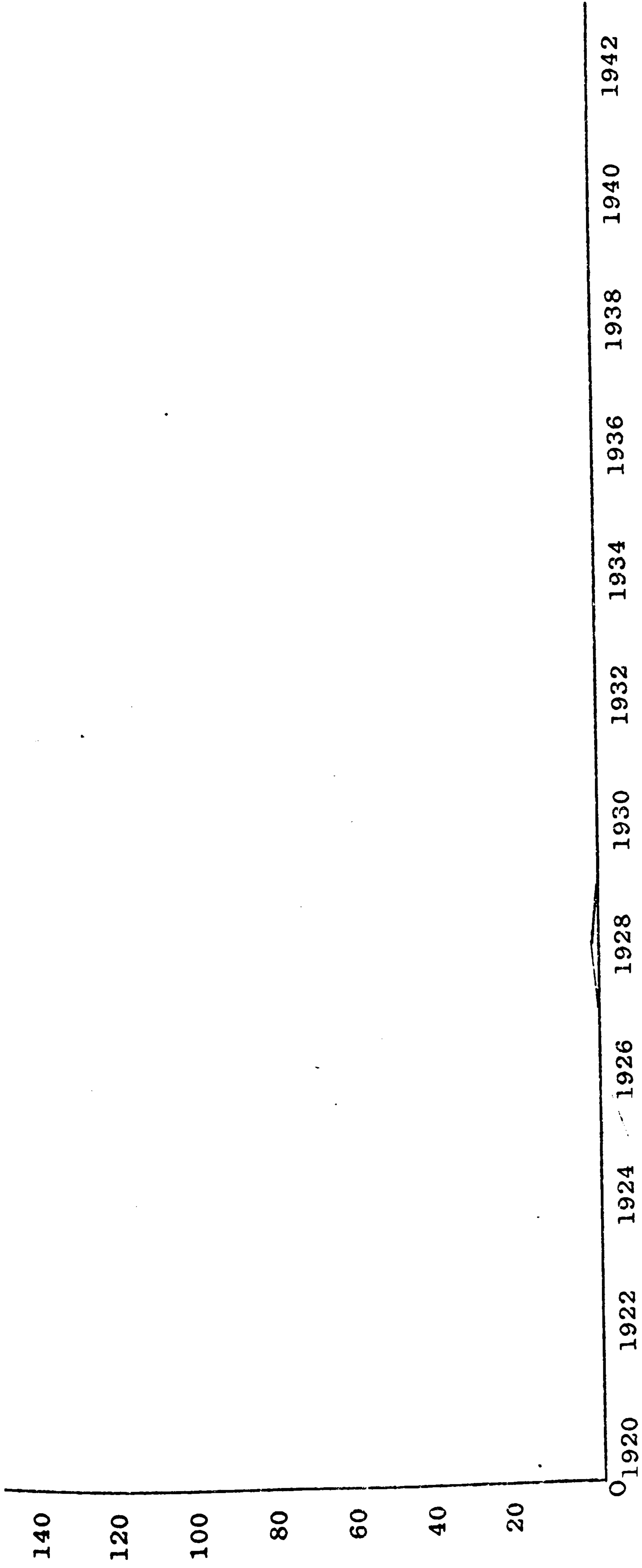
109. Oriole Recordings From Chicago

Total Recordings Issued - --- Number of Artists - - - - -



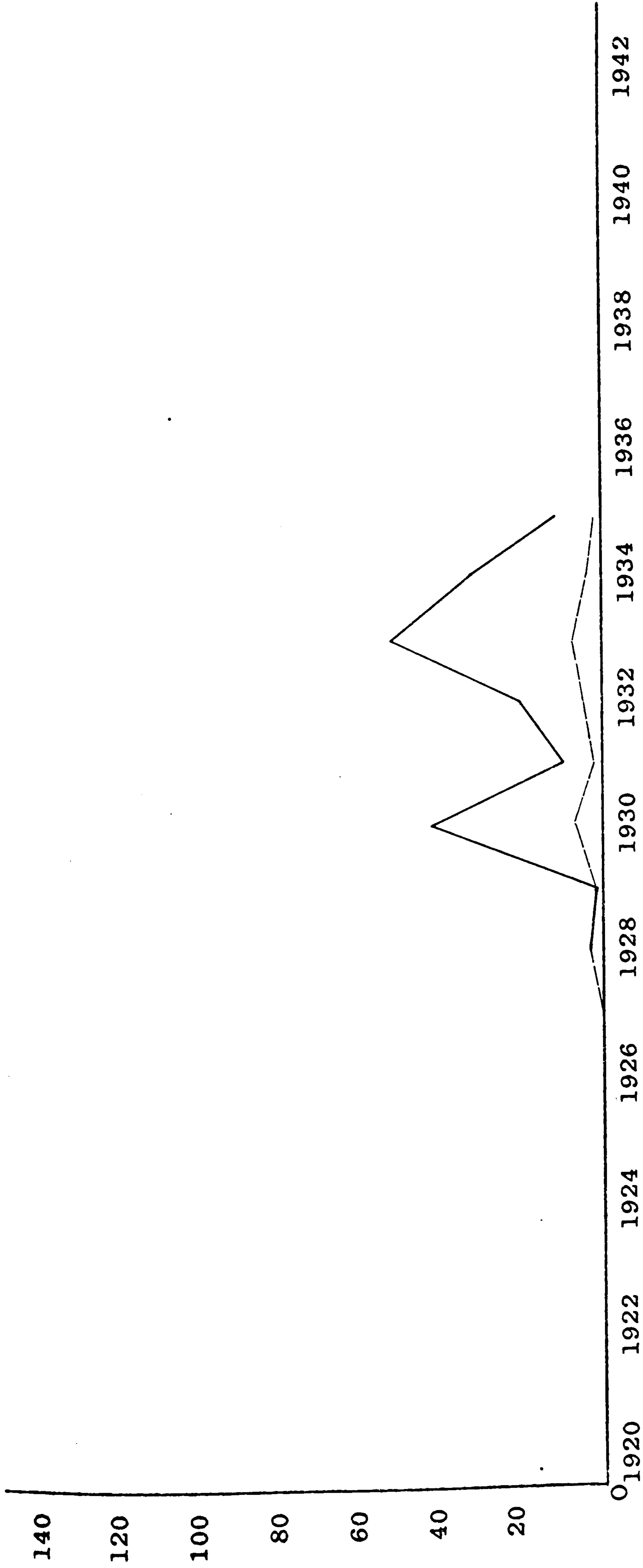
110. Oriole Recordings From Memphis

Total Recordings Issued - ----- Number of Artists - -----



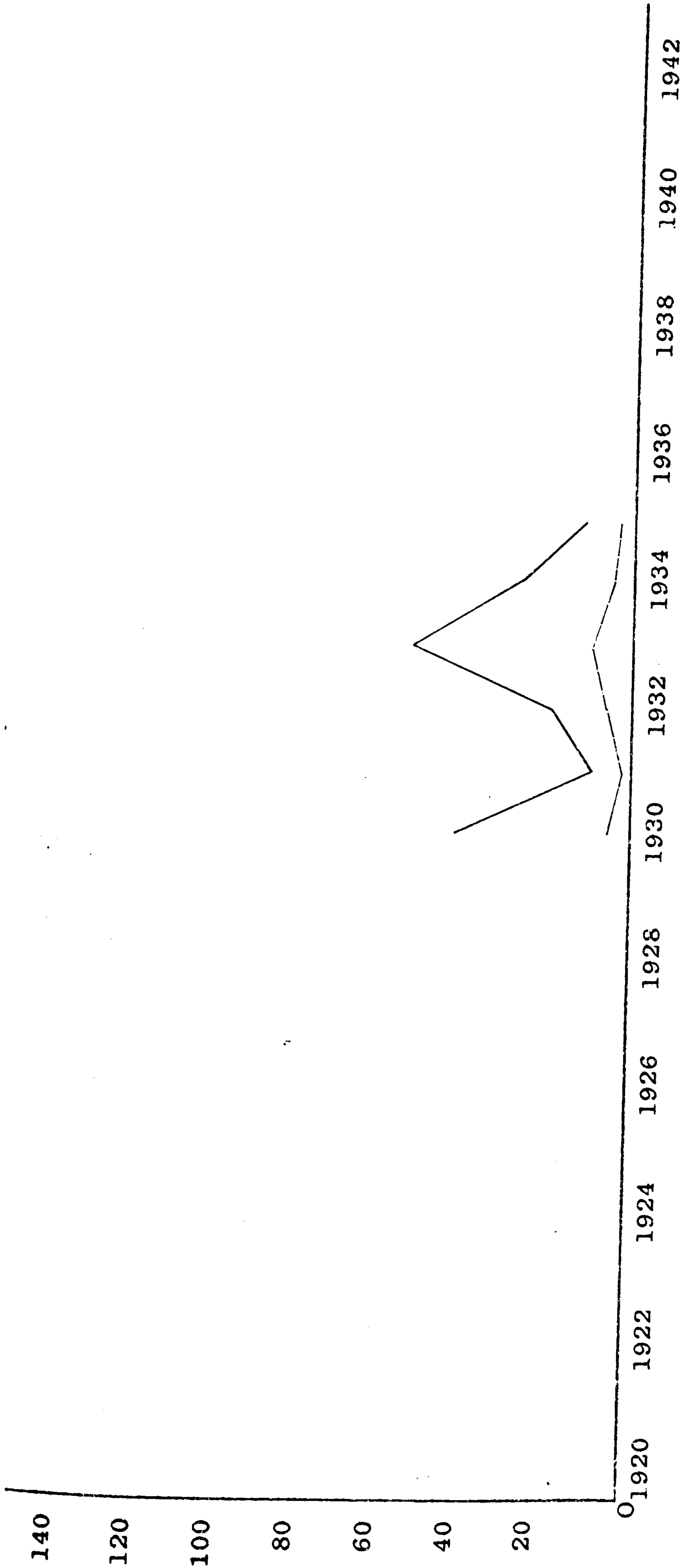
111. Oriole Recordings From Indianapolis

Total Recordings Issued - ---- Number of Artists - ----



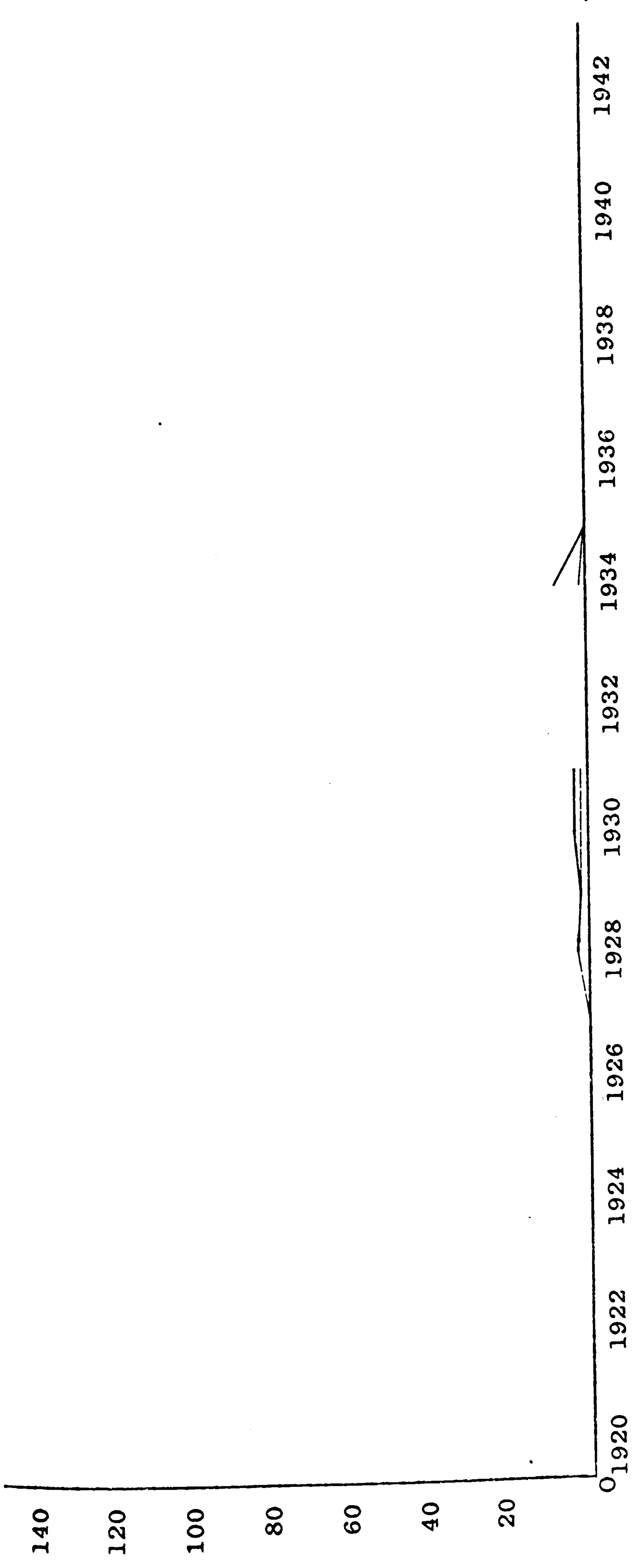
112. Perfect Totals

Total Recordings Issued - —— Number of Artists - ----



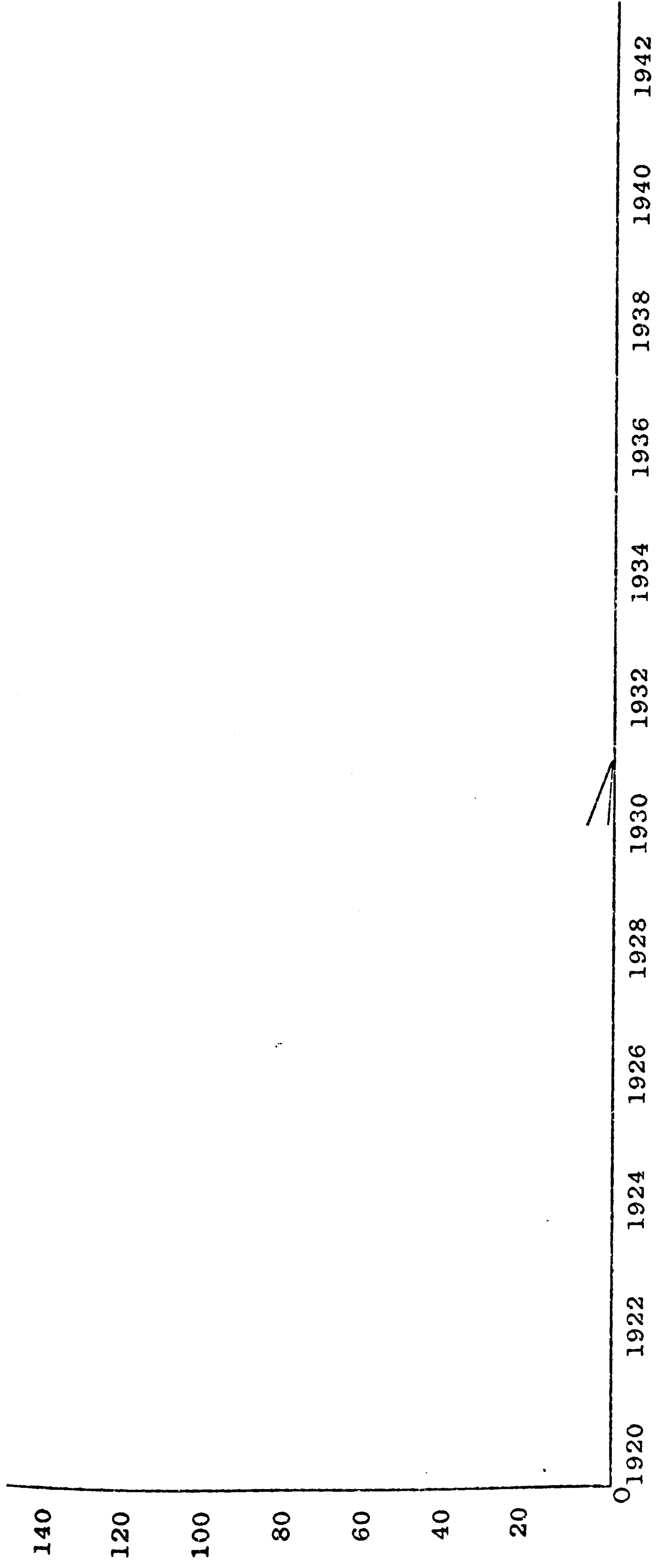
113. Perfect Recordings From New York

Total Recordings Issued - ---- Number of Artists - ----



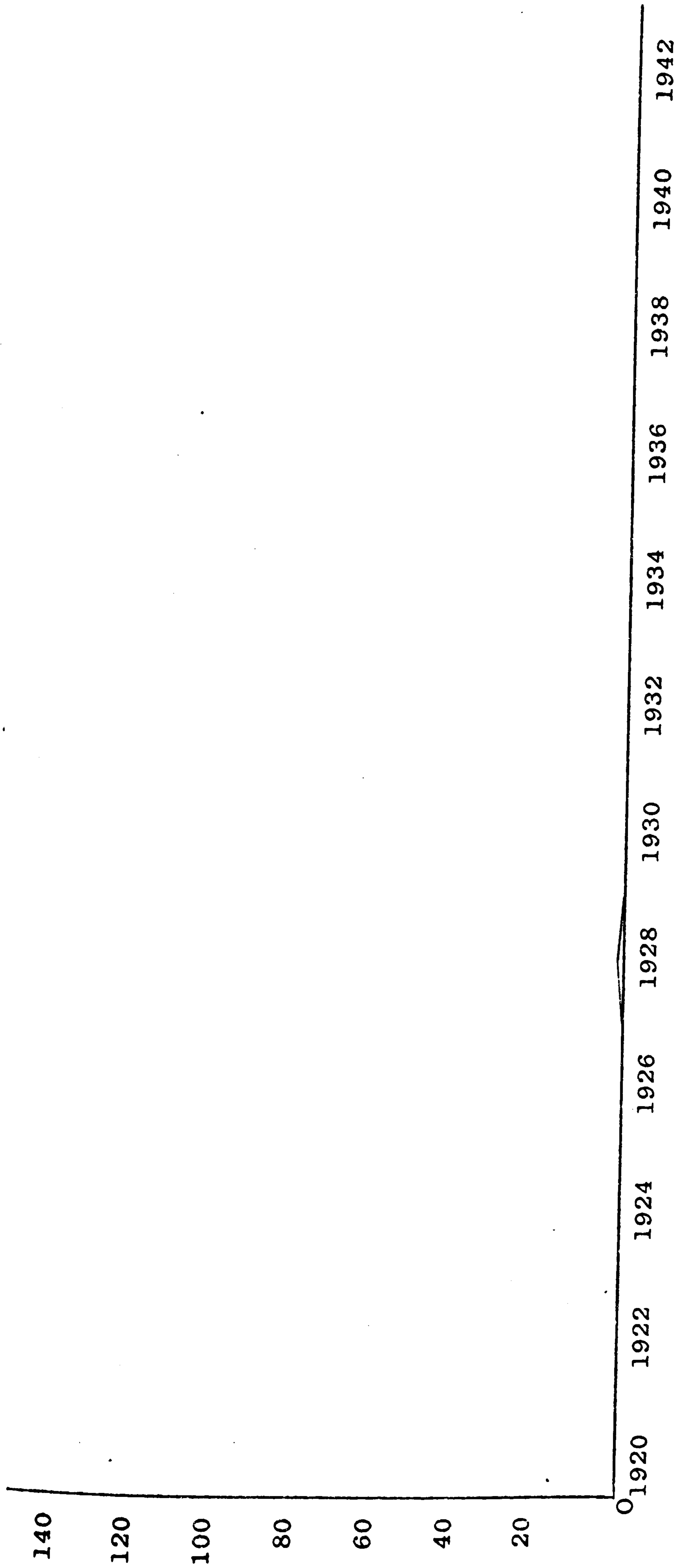
114. Perfect Recordings From Chicago

Total Recordings Issued - ---- Number of Artists - ----



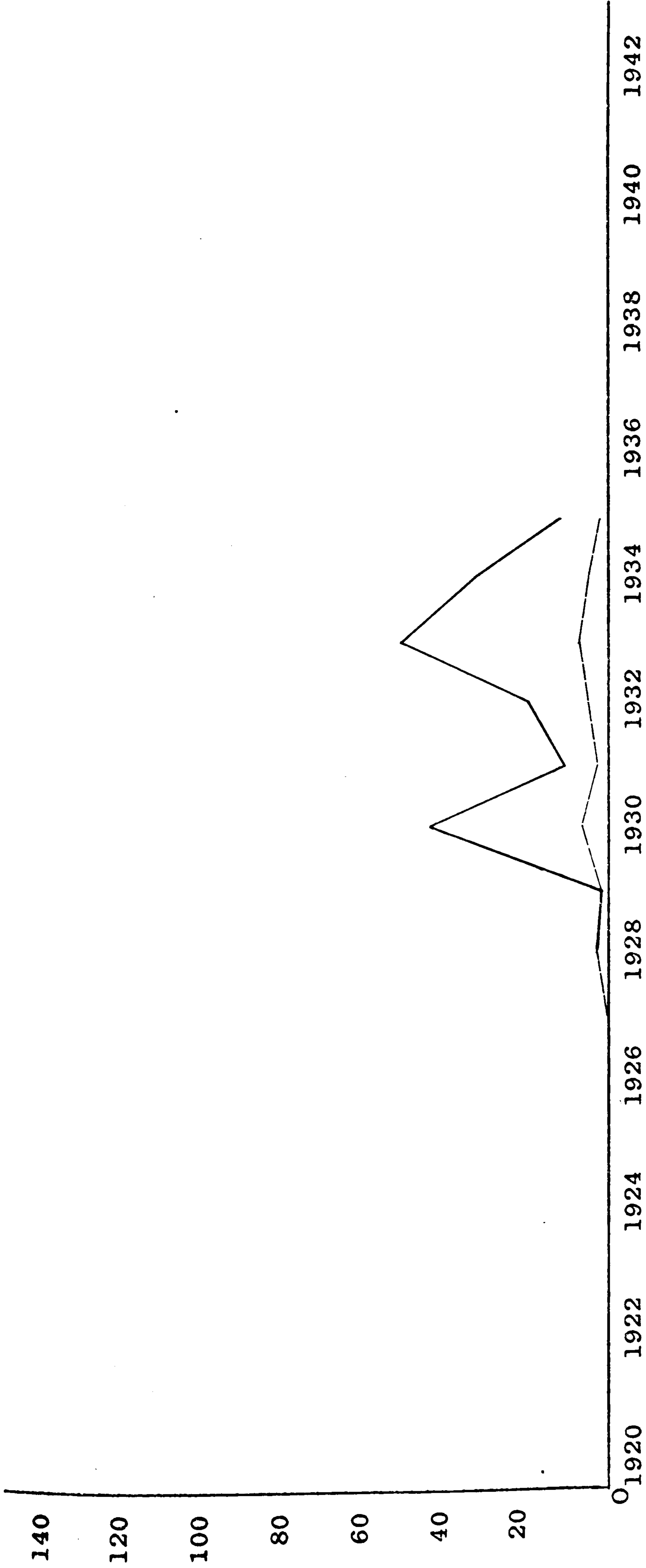
115. Perfect Recordings From Memphis

Total Recordings Issued - ----- Number of Artists - -----



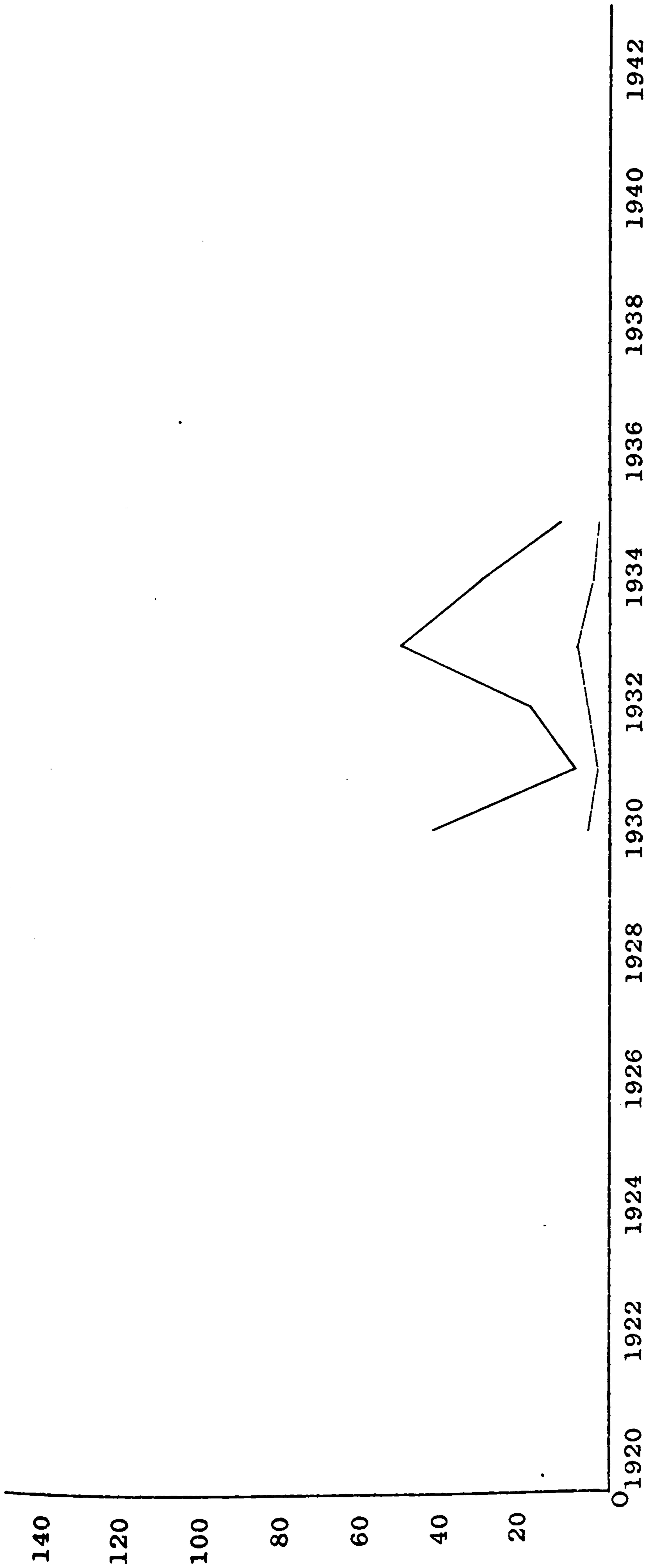
116. Perfect Recordings From Indianapolis

Total Recordings Issued - ----- Number of Artists - -----



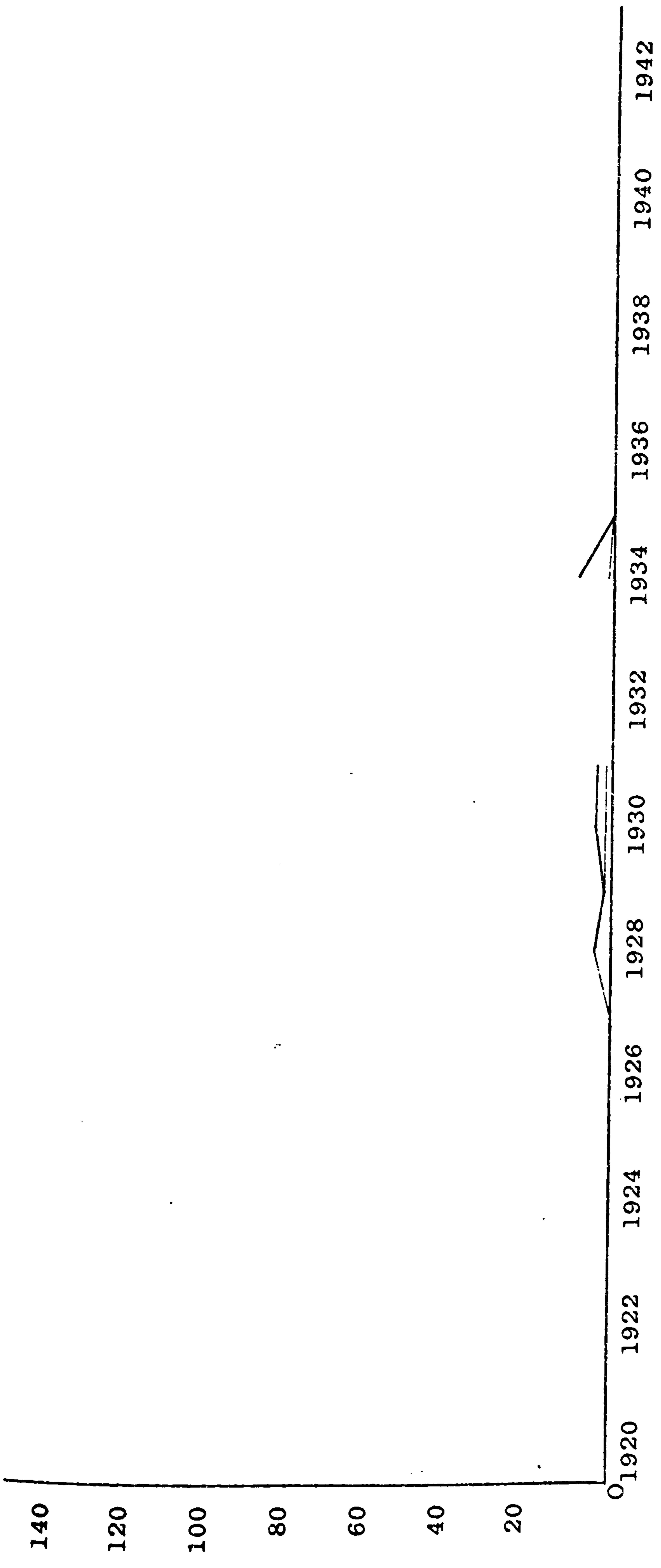
117. Romeo Totals

Total Recordings Issued - - - - - Number of Artists - - - - -



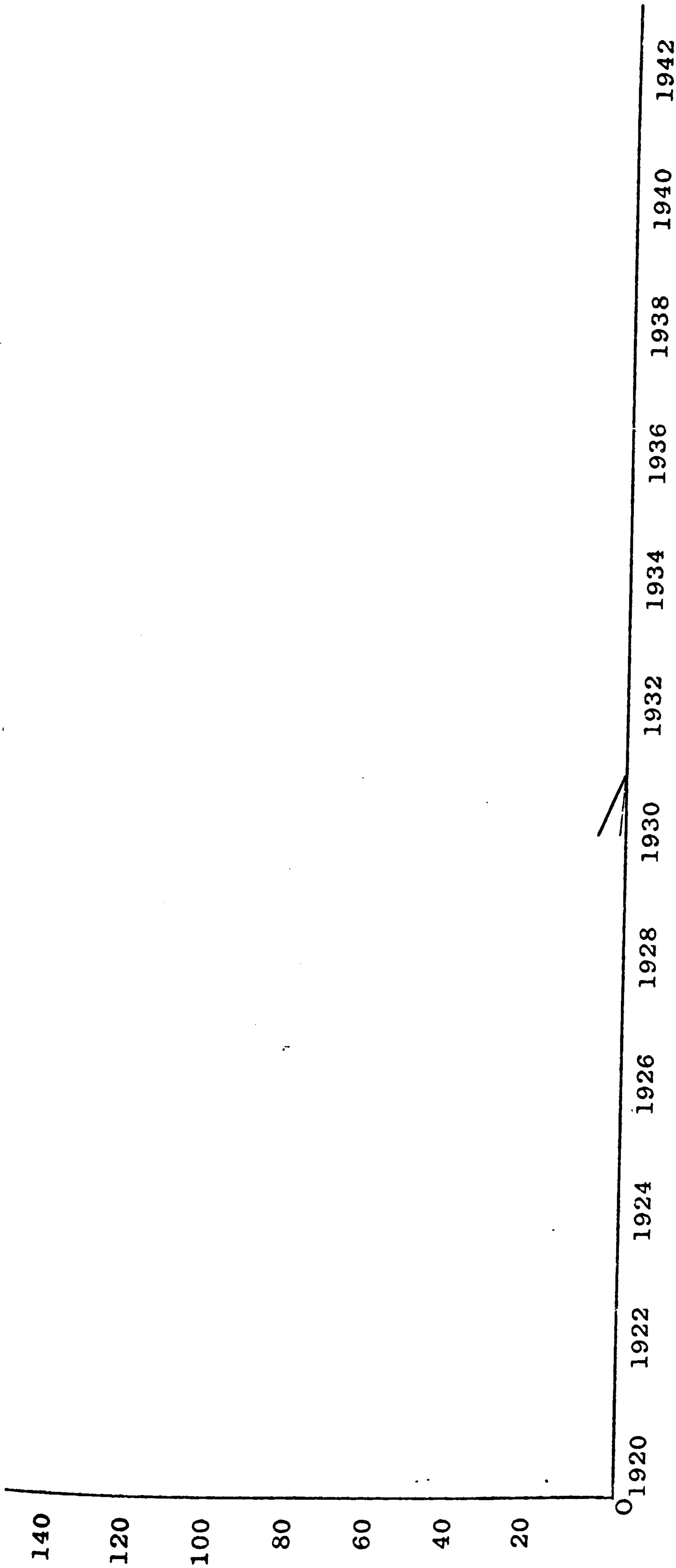
118. Romeo Recordings From New York

Total Recordings Issued - - - - - Number of Artists - - - - -



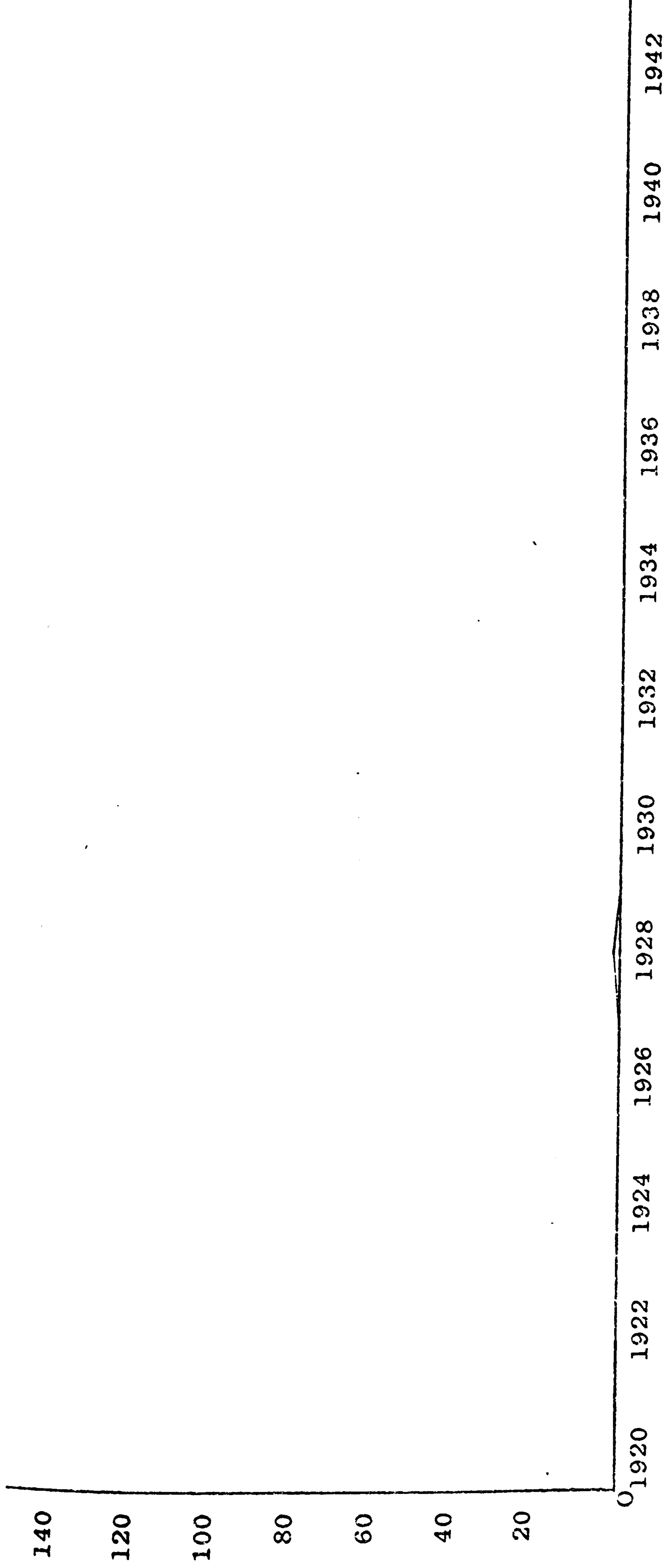
119. Romeo Recordings From Chicago

Total Recordings Issued - - - - - Number of Artists



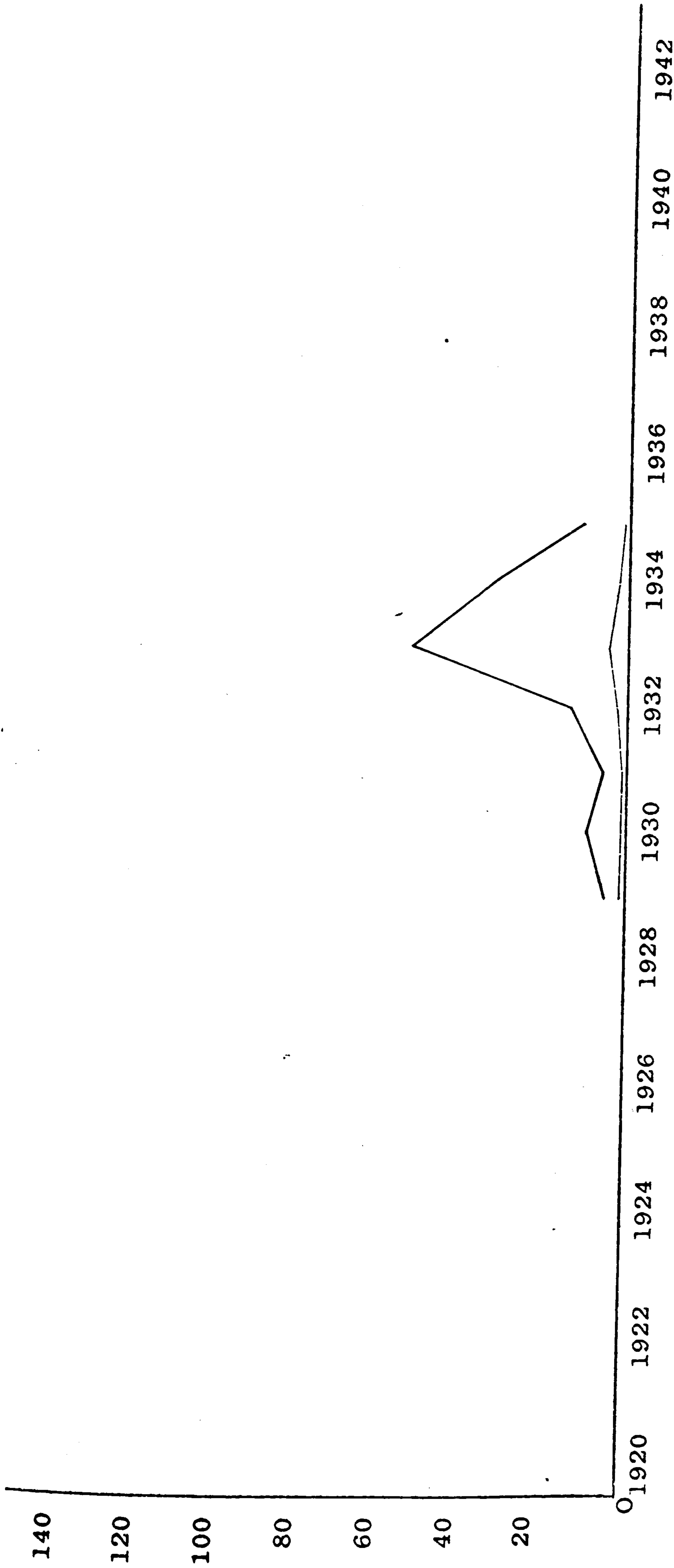
120. Romeo Recordings From Memphis

Total Recordings Issued - _____ Number of Artists - _____



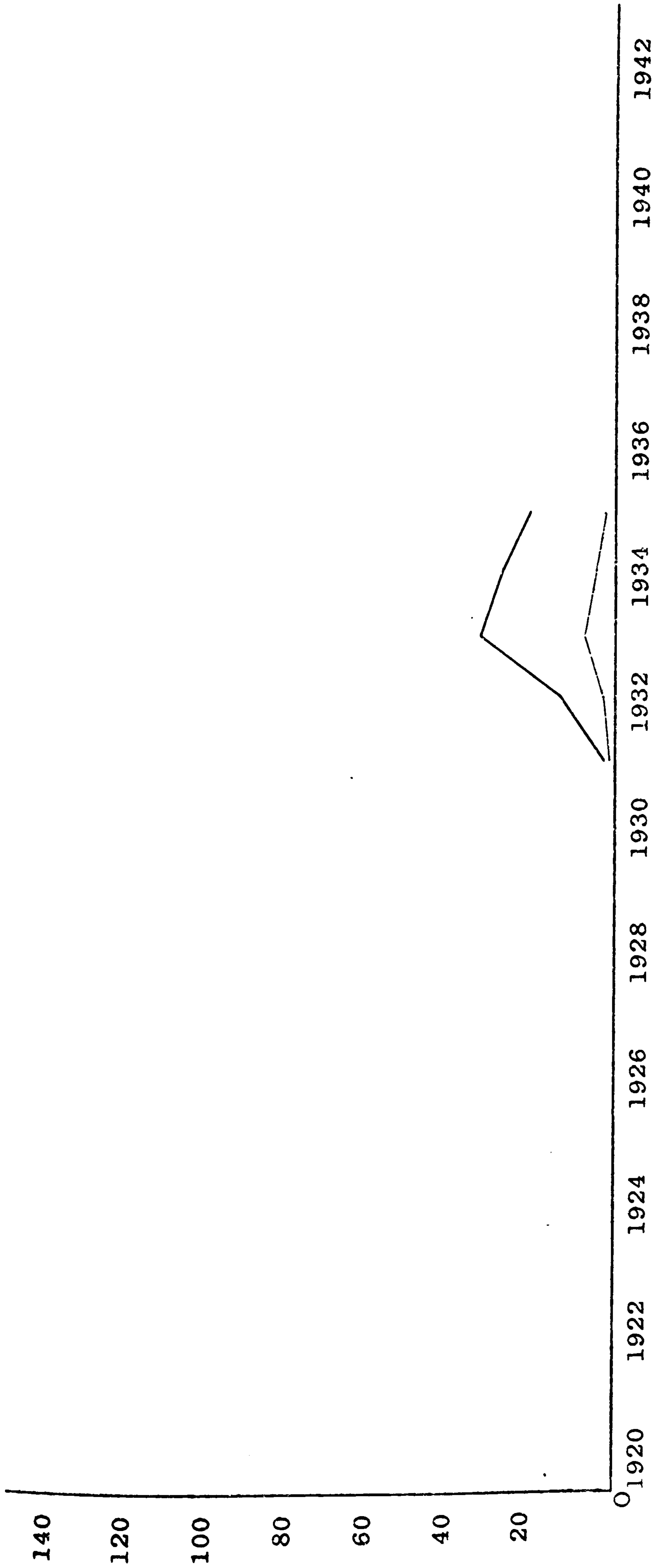
121. Romeo Recordings From Indianapolis

Total Recordings Issued - ----- Number of Artists - -----



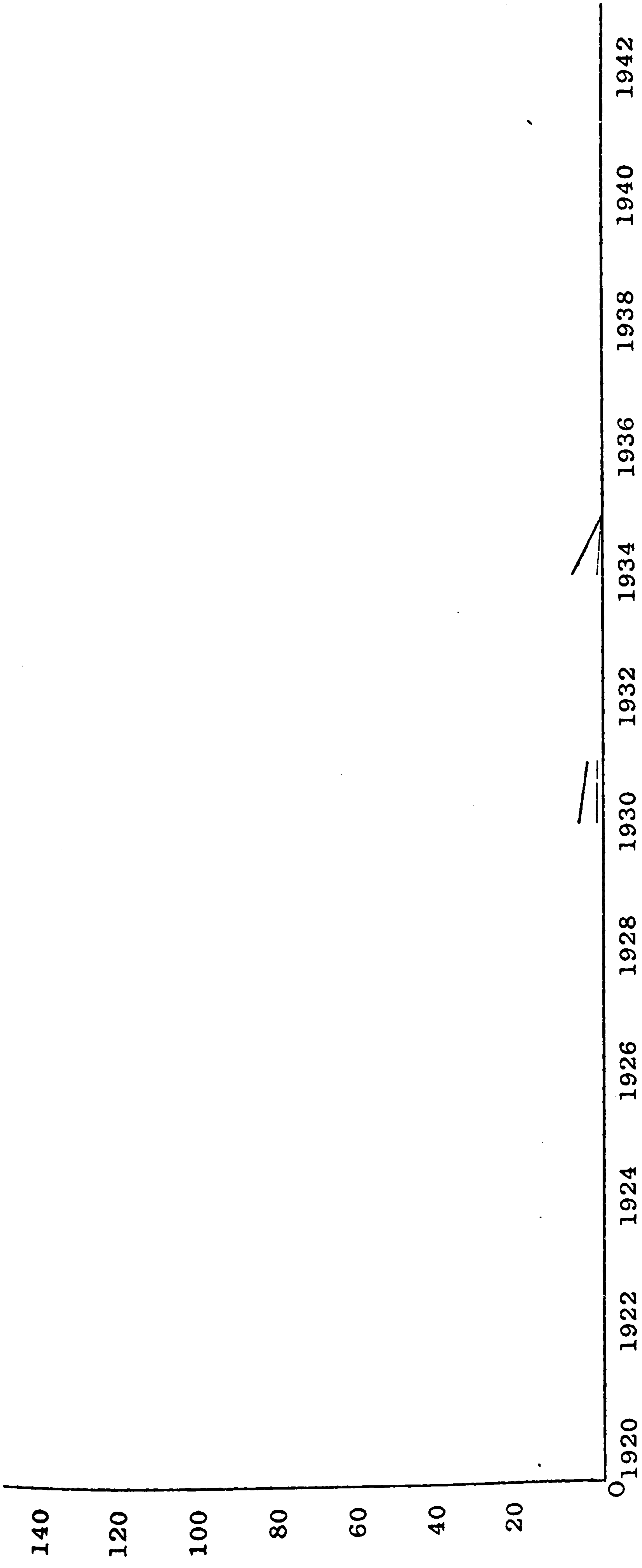
122. Melotone Totals

Total Recordings Issued - ---- Number of Artists - ----



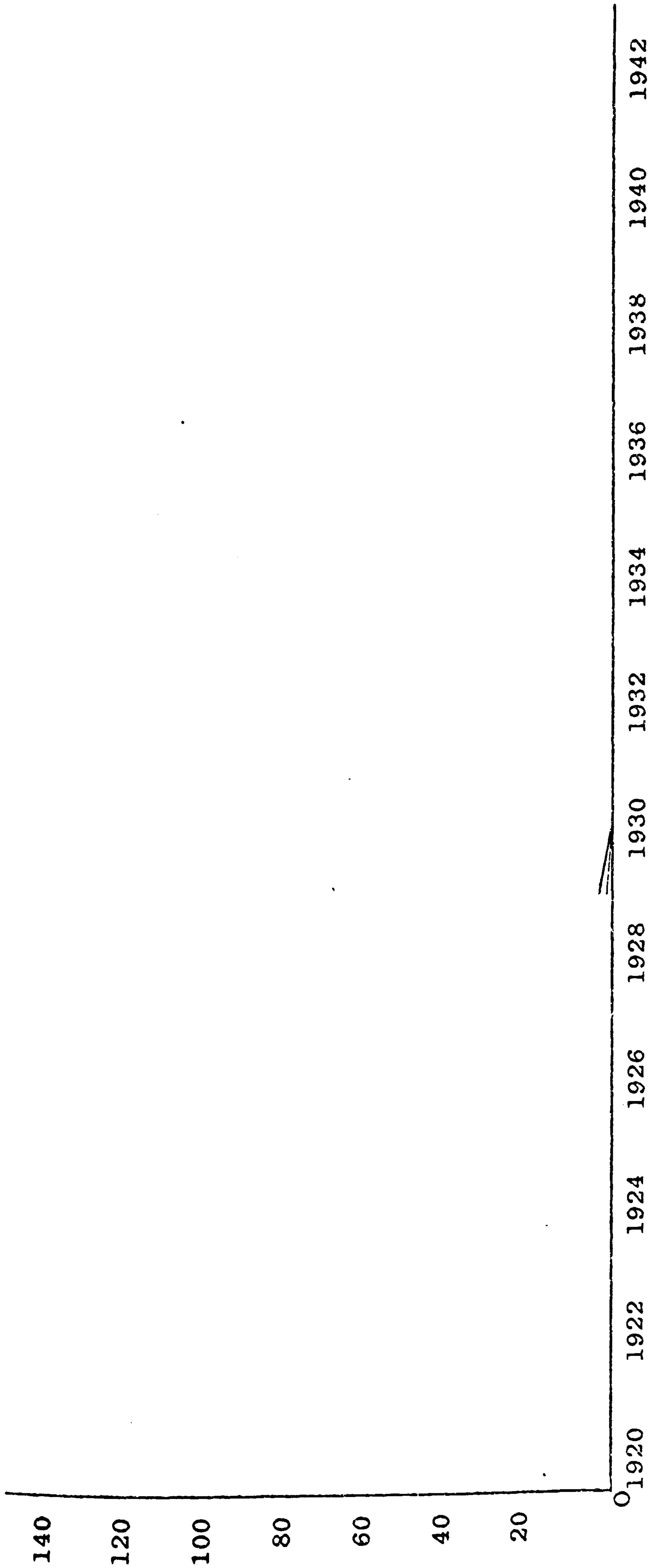
123. Melotone Recordings From New York

Total Recordings Issued - —— Number of Artists - - - - -



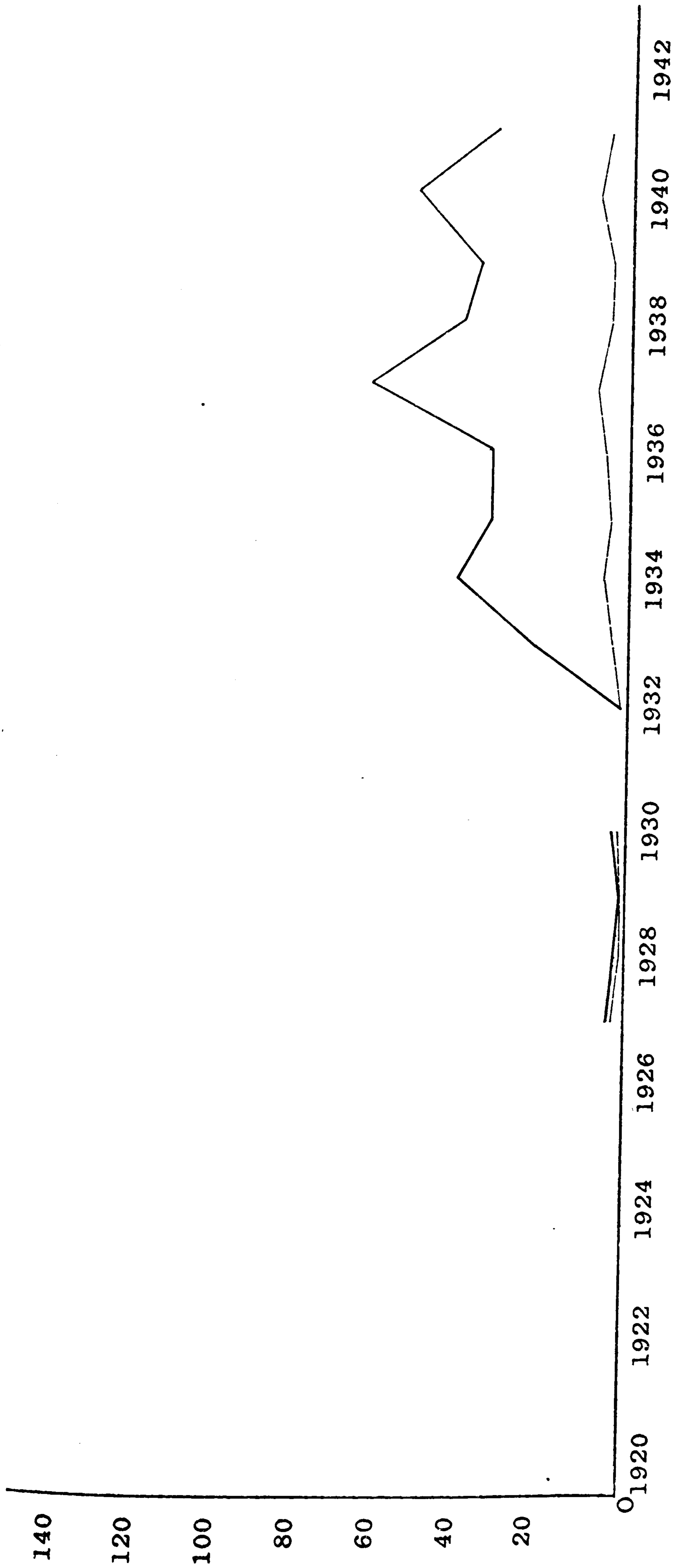
124. Melotone Recordings From Chicago

Total Recordings Issued - ---- Number of Artists - ----



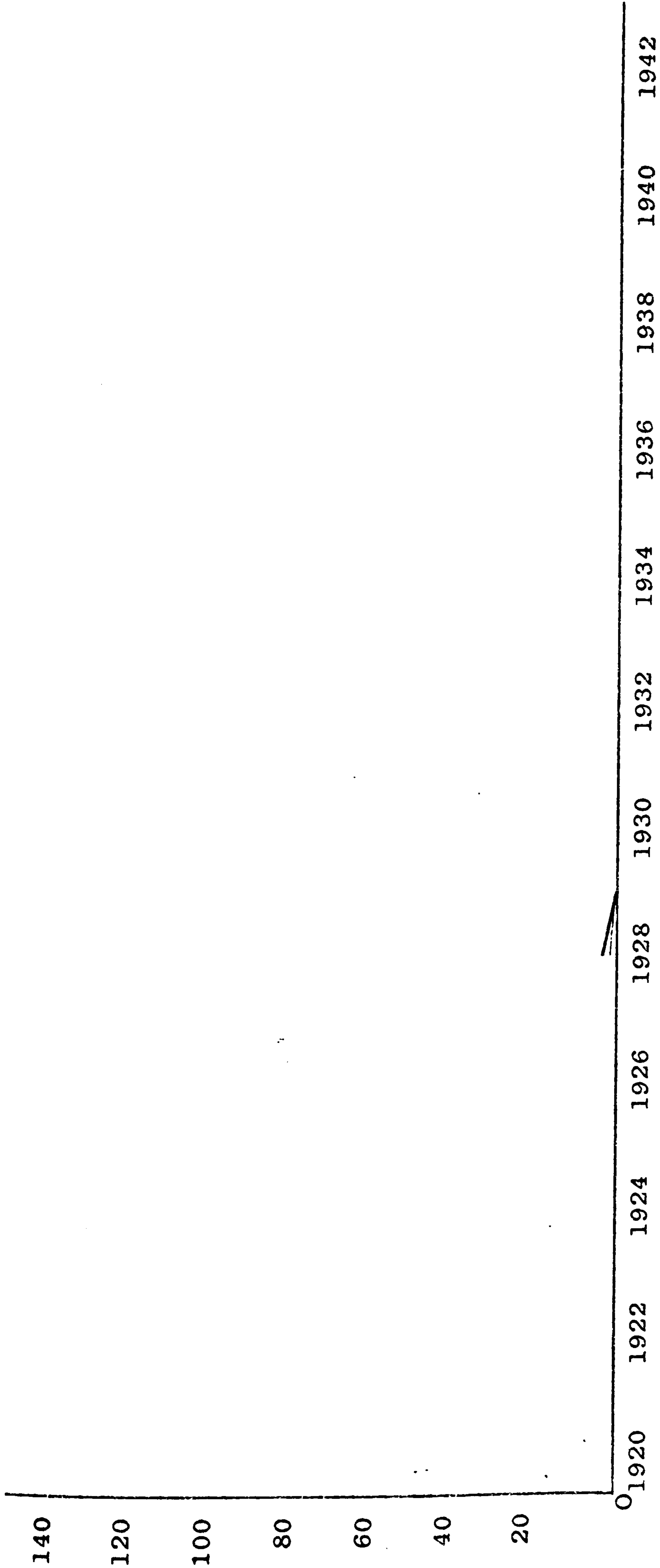
125. Melotone Recordings From Memphis

Total Recordings Issued - ----- Number of Artists - -----



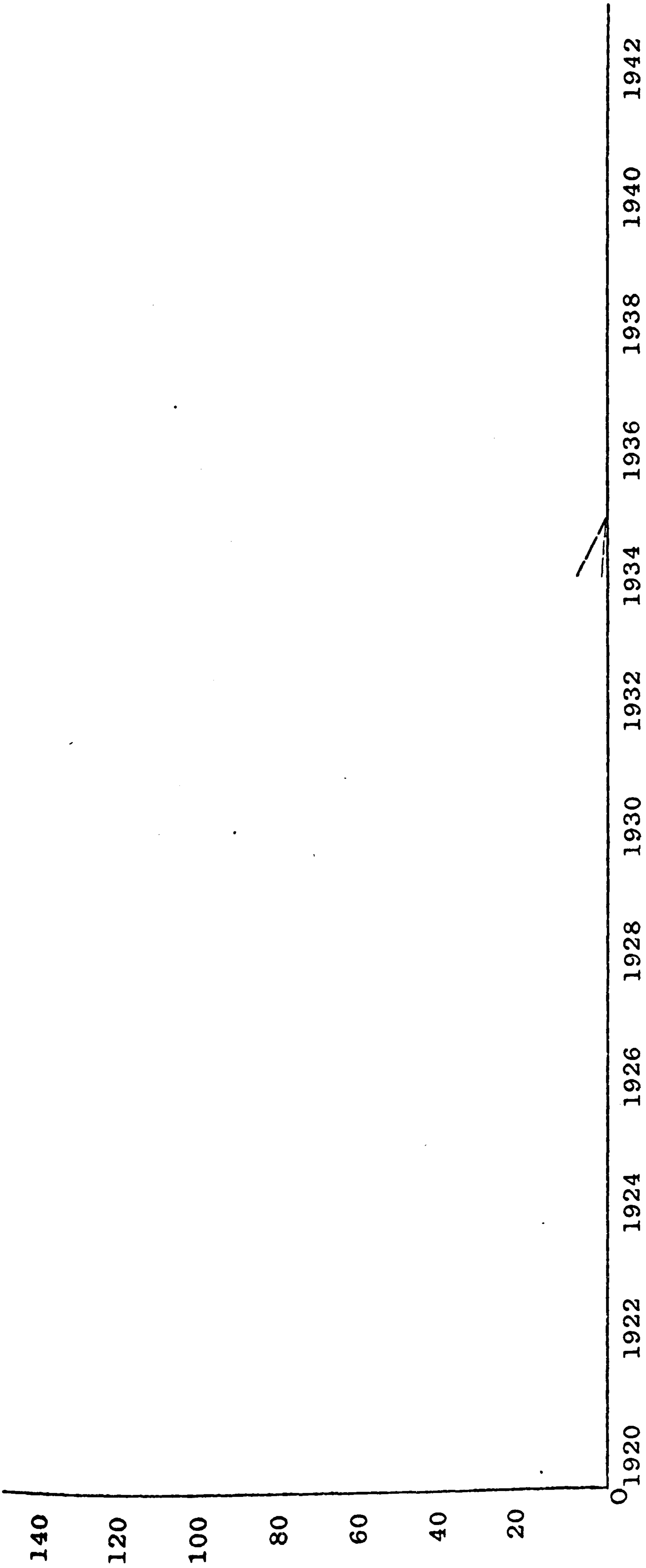
126. Conqueror Totals

Total Recordings Issued - _____ Number of Artists - _____



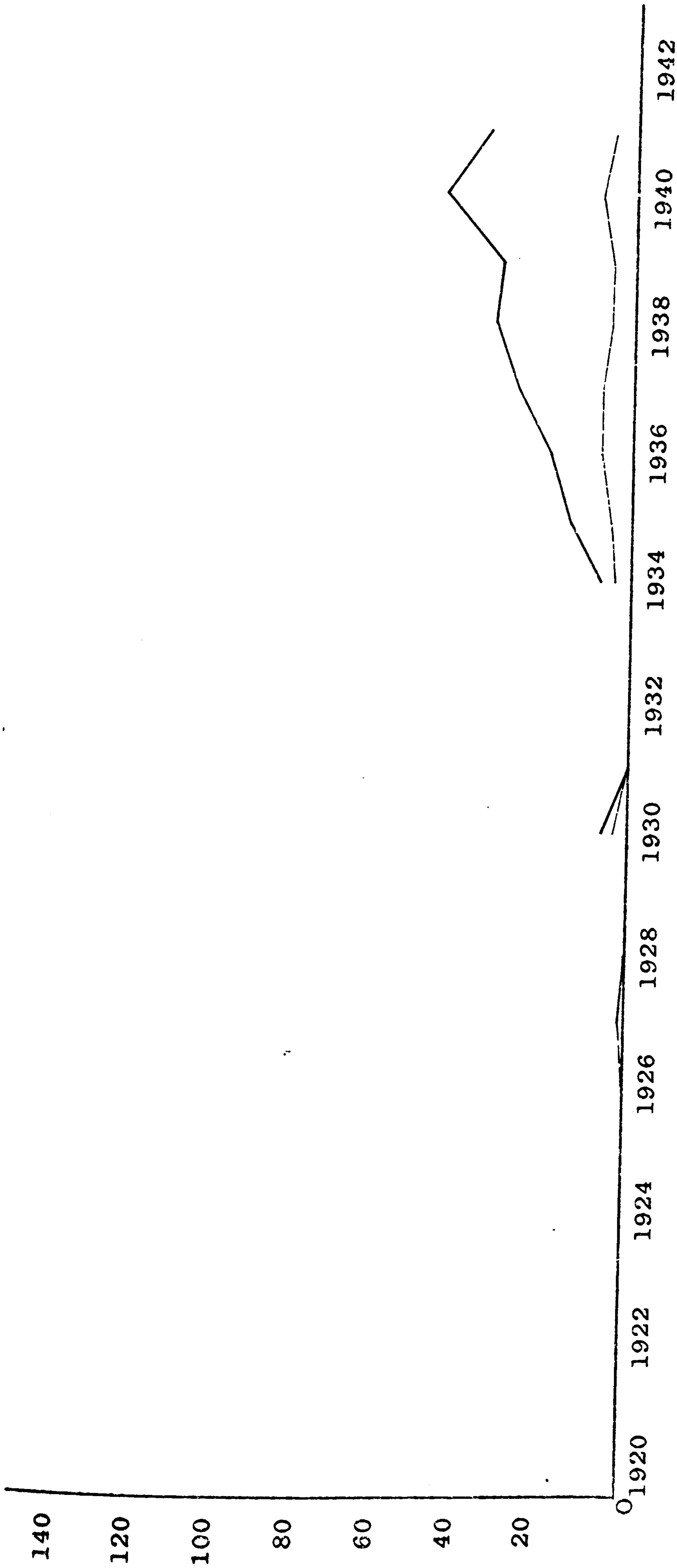
127. Conqueror Recordings From Richmond

Total Recordings Issued - ----- Number of Artists - -----



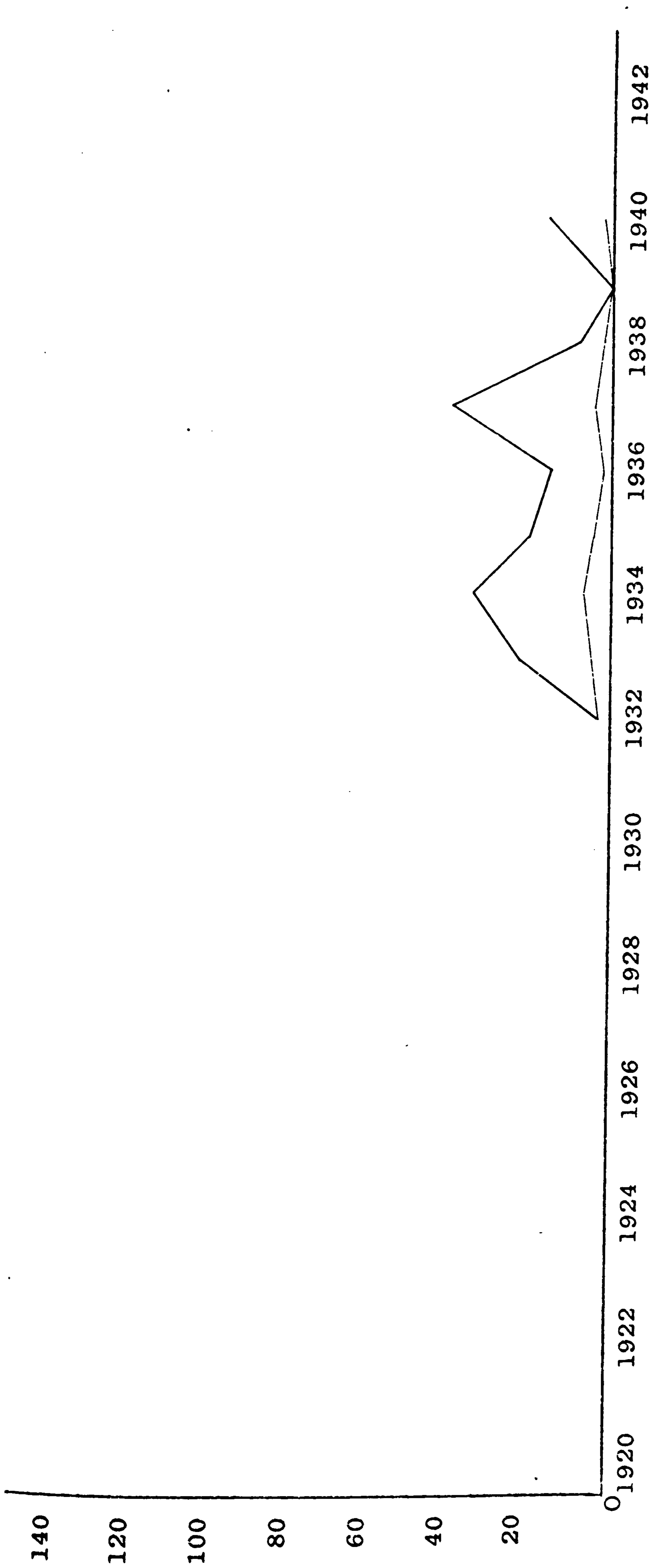
128. Conqueror Recordings From St. Louis

Total Recordings Issued - ---- Number of Artists - ----



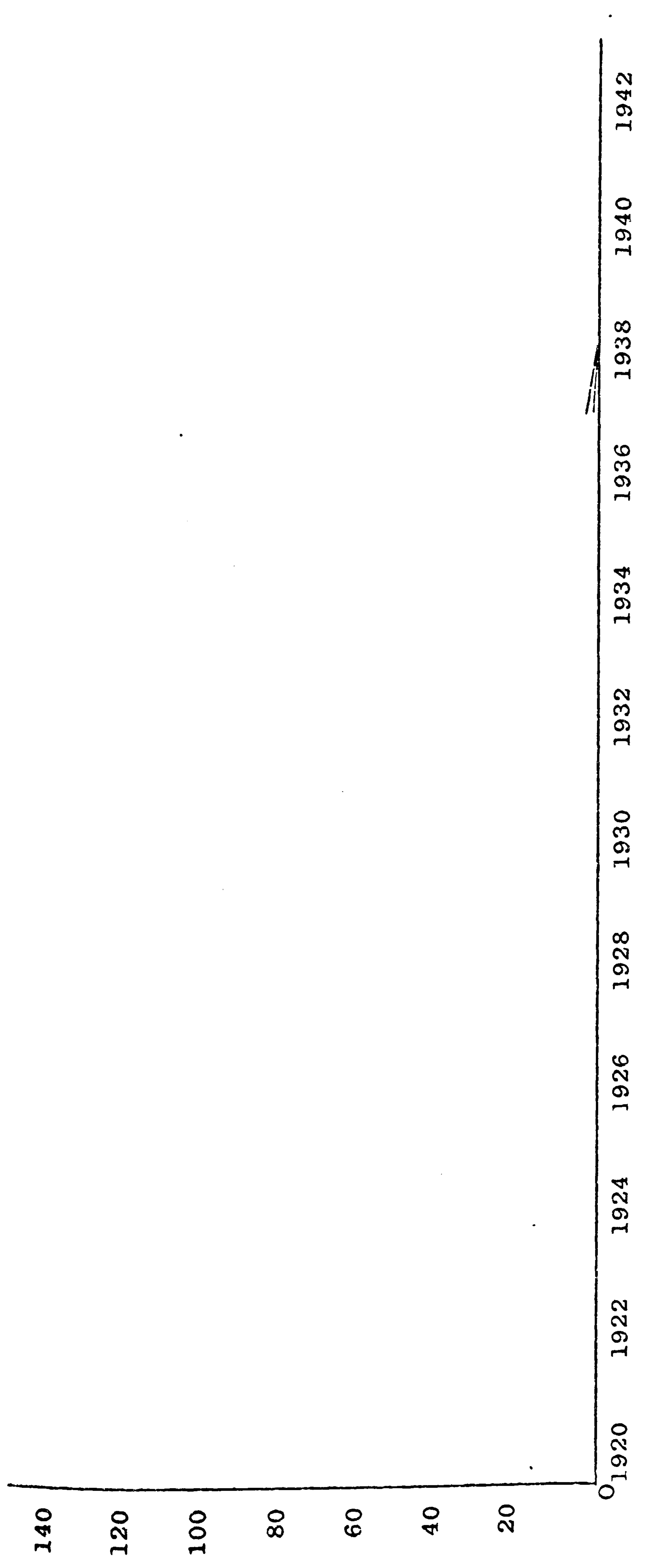
129. Conqueror Recordings From Chicago.

Total Recordings Issued - ---- Number of Artists - ----



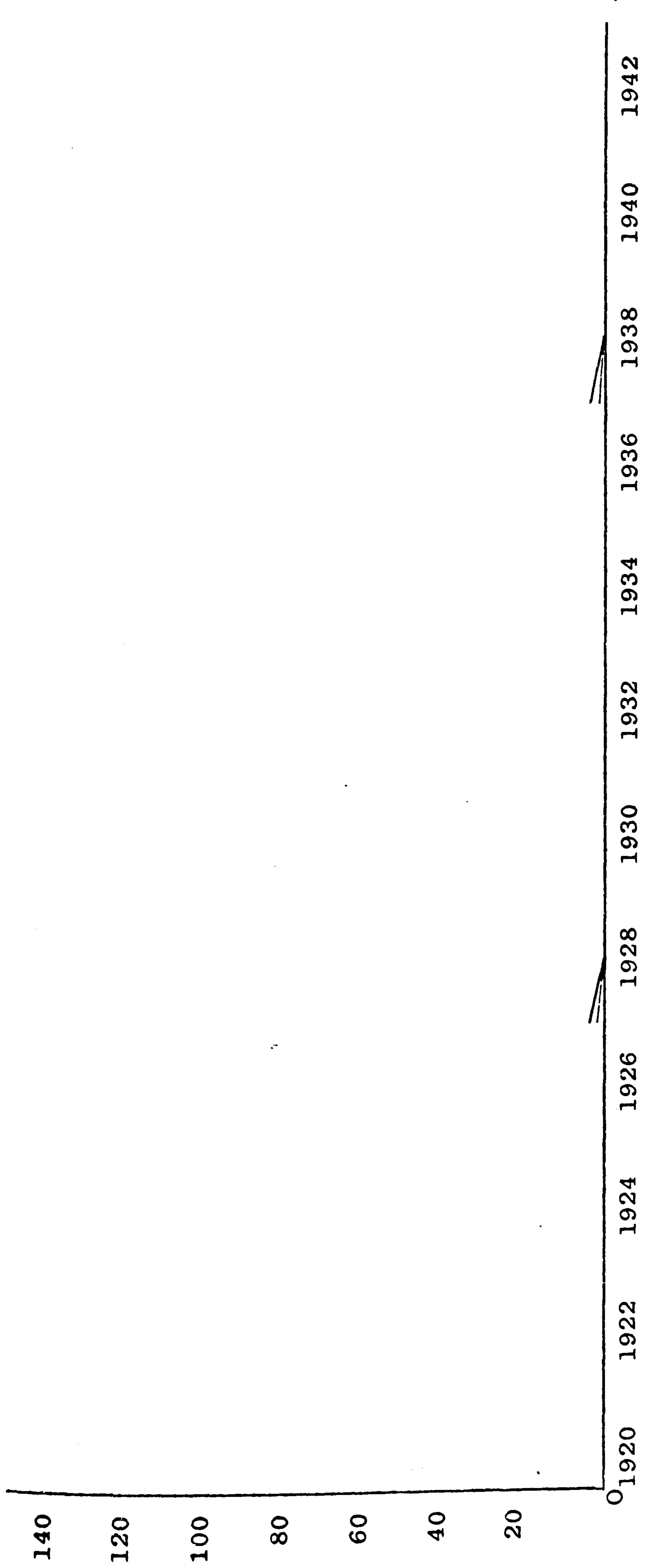
130. Conqueror Recordings From New York

Total Recordings Issued - —— Number of Artists - - - - -



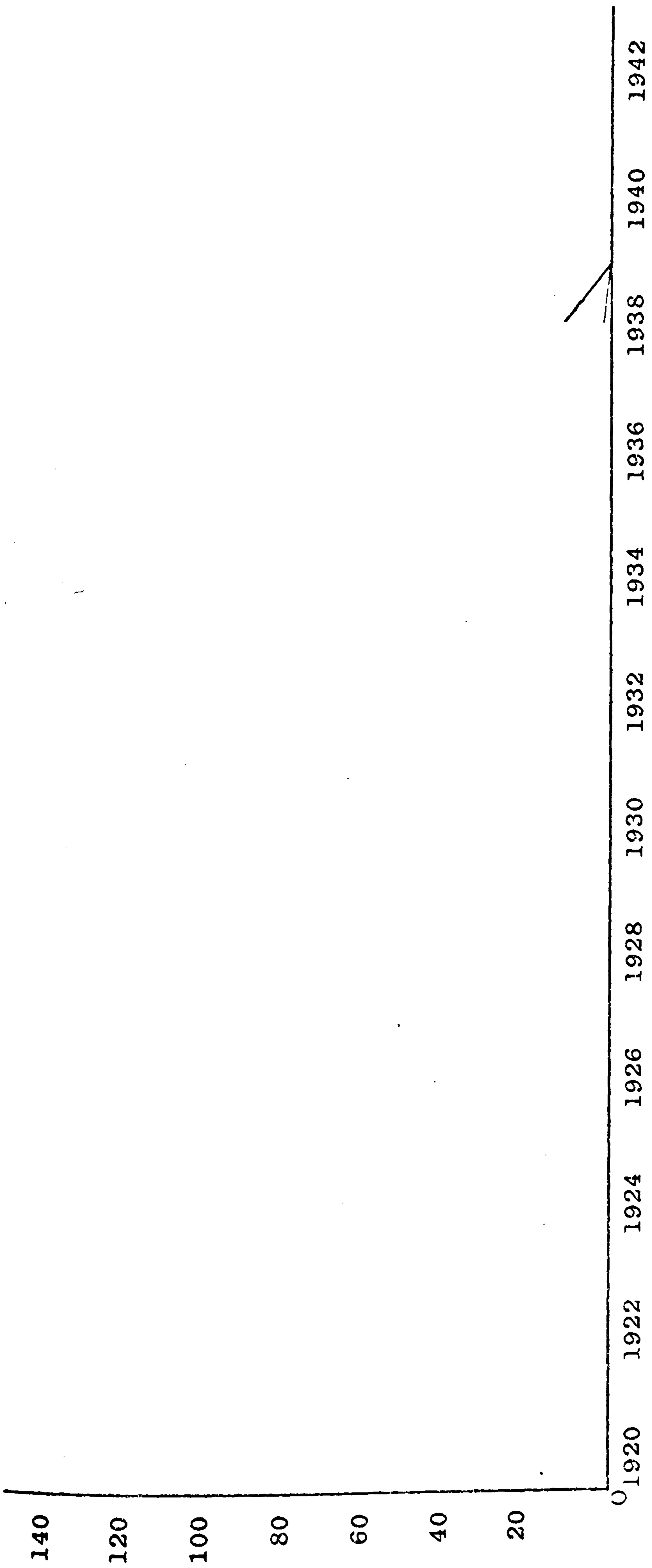
131. Conqueror Recordings From Dallas

Total Recordings Issued - ----- Number of Artists - -----



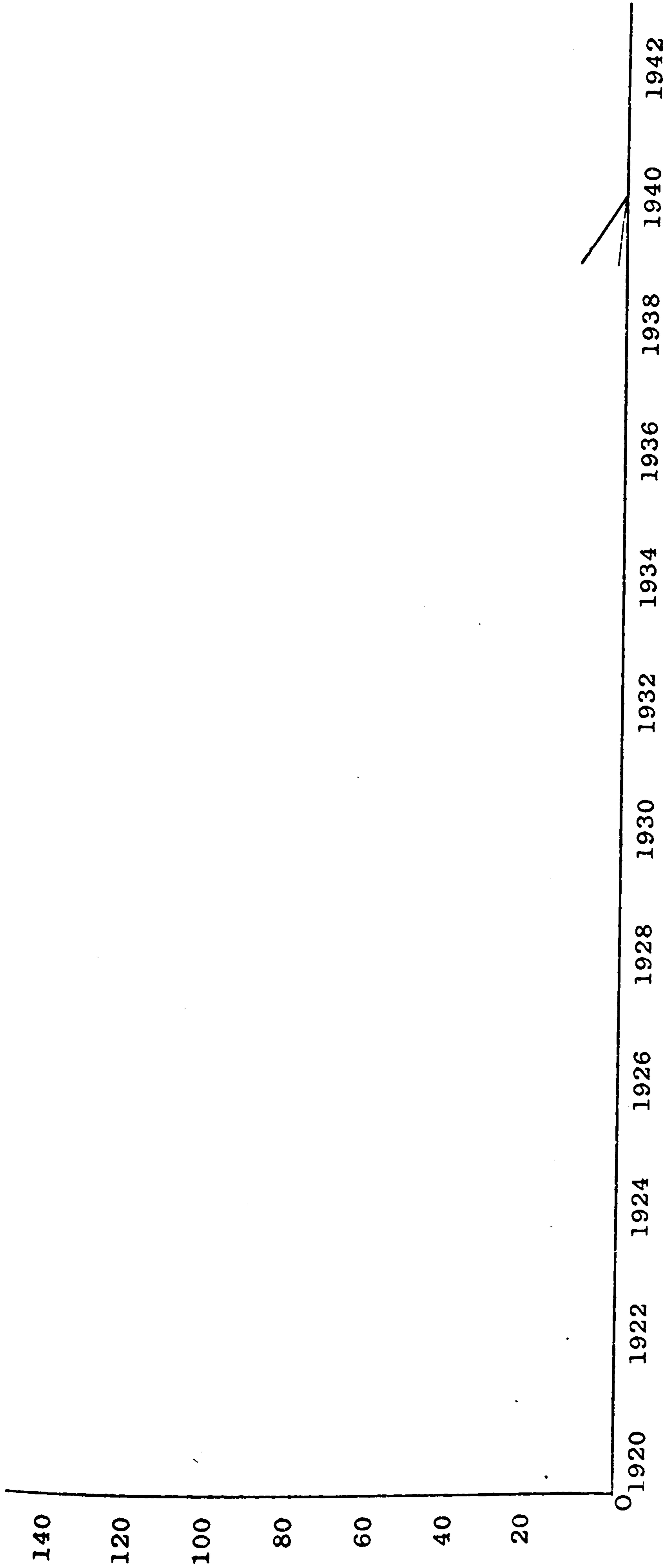
132. Conqueror Recordings From Birmingham, Alabama

Total Recordings Issued - ---- Number of Artists - ----



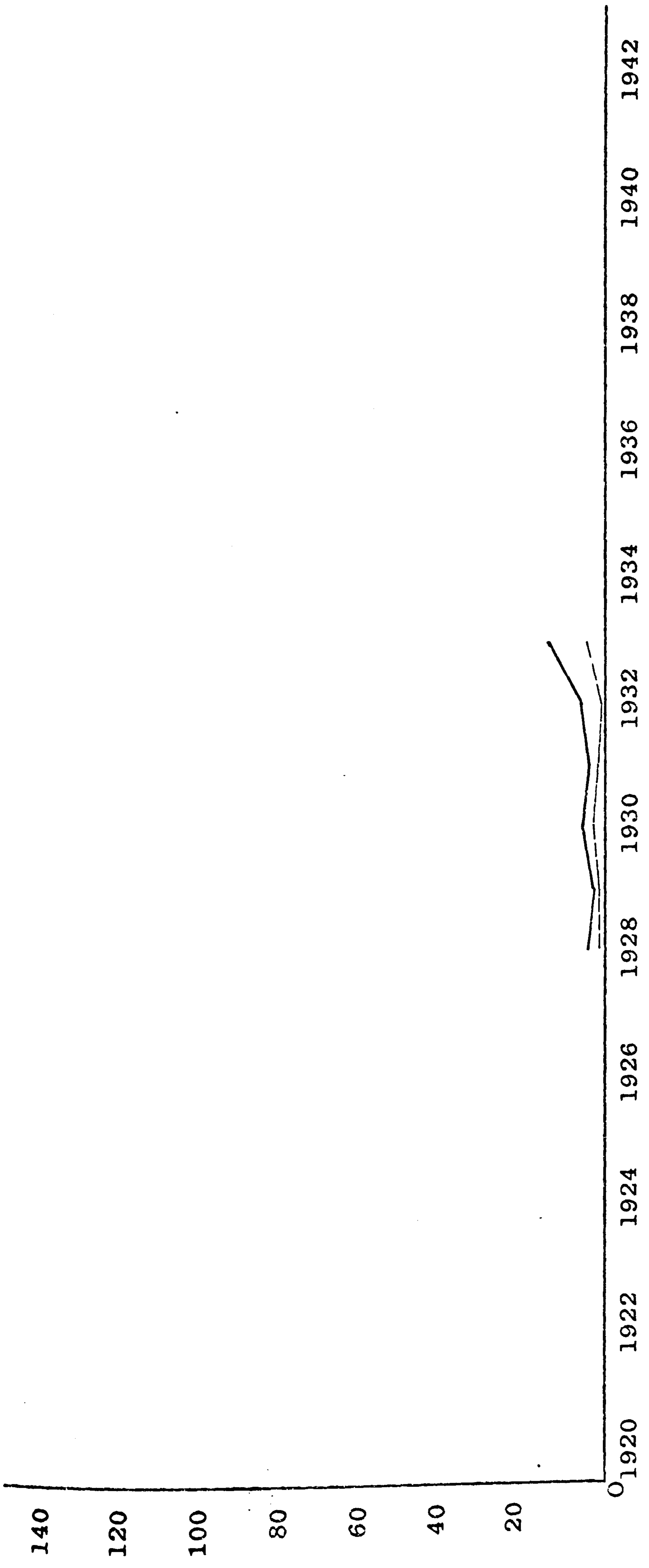
133. Conqueror Recordings From Columbia, S. Carolina

Total Recordings Issued - - - - - Number of Artists - - - - -



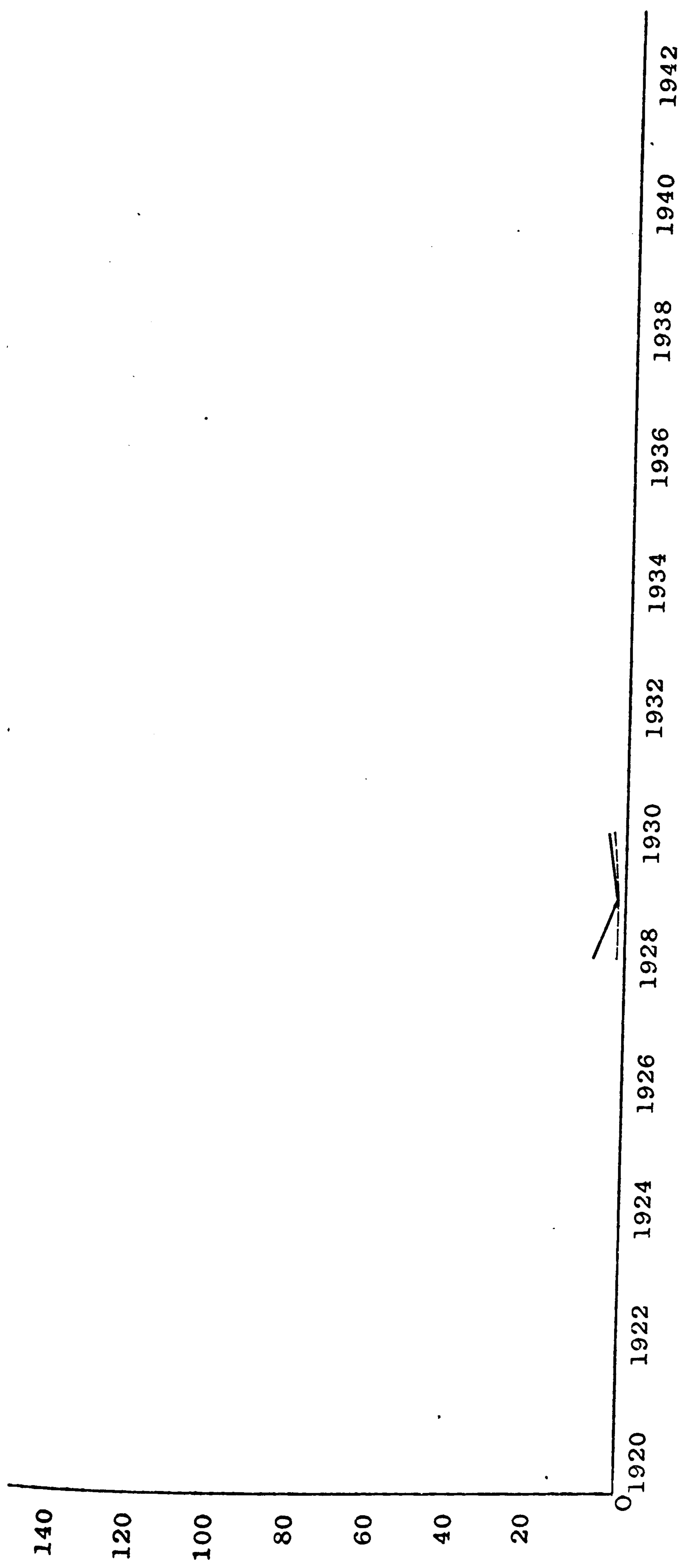
134. Conqueror Recordings From Memphis

Total Recordings Issued - ---- Number of Artists - ----



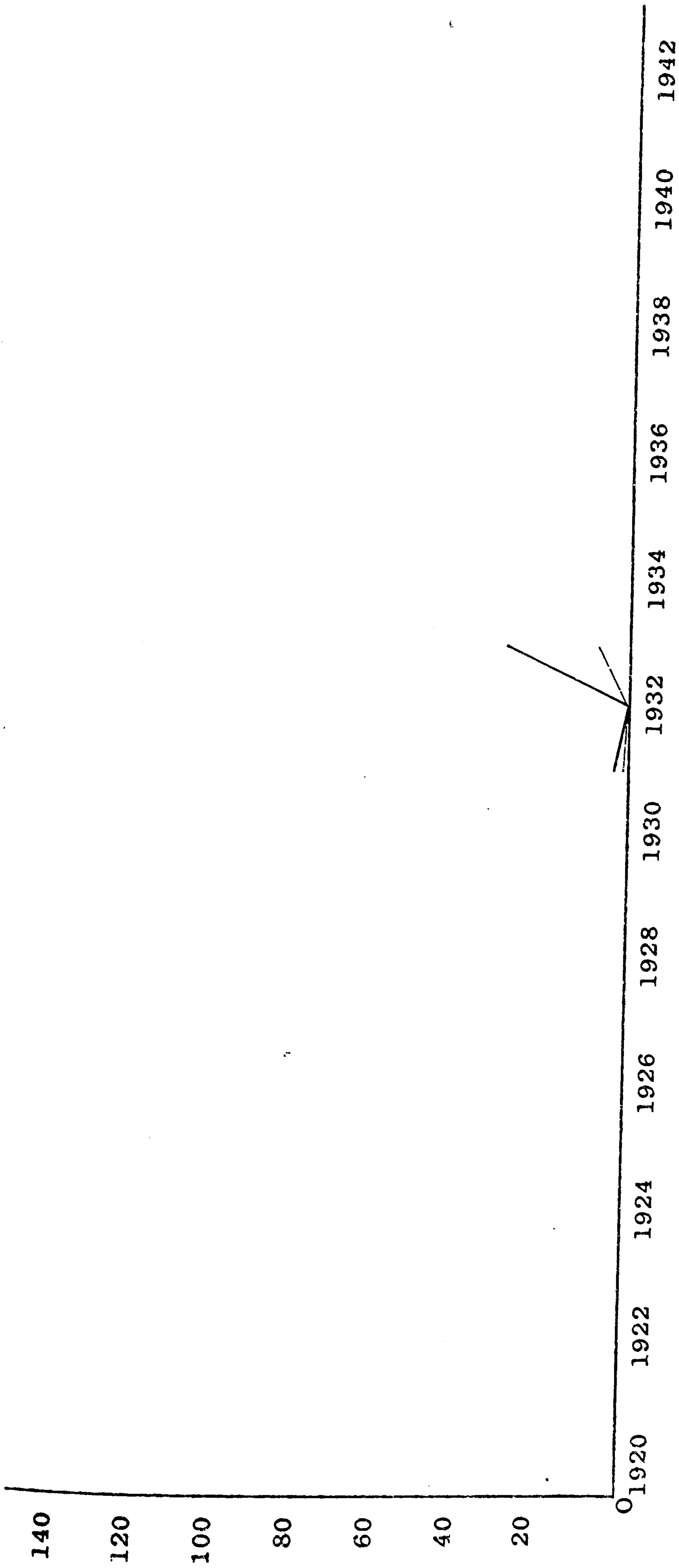
135. Sunrise Totals

Total Recordings Issued - ----- Number of Artists - - - - -



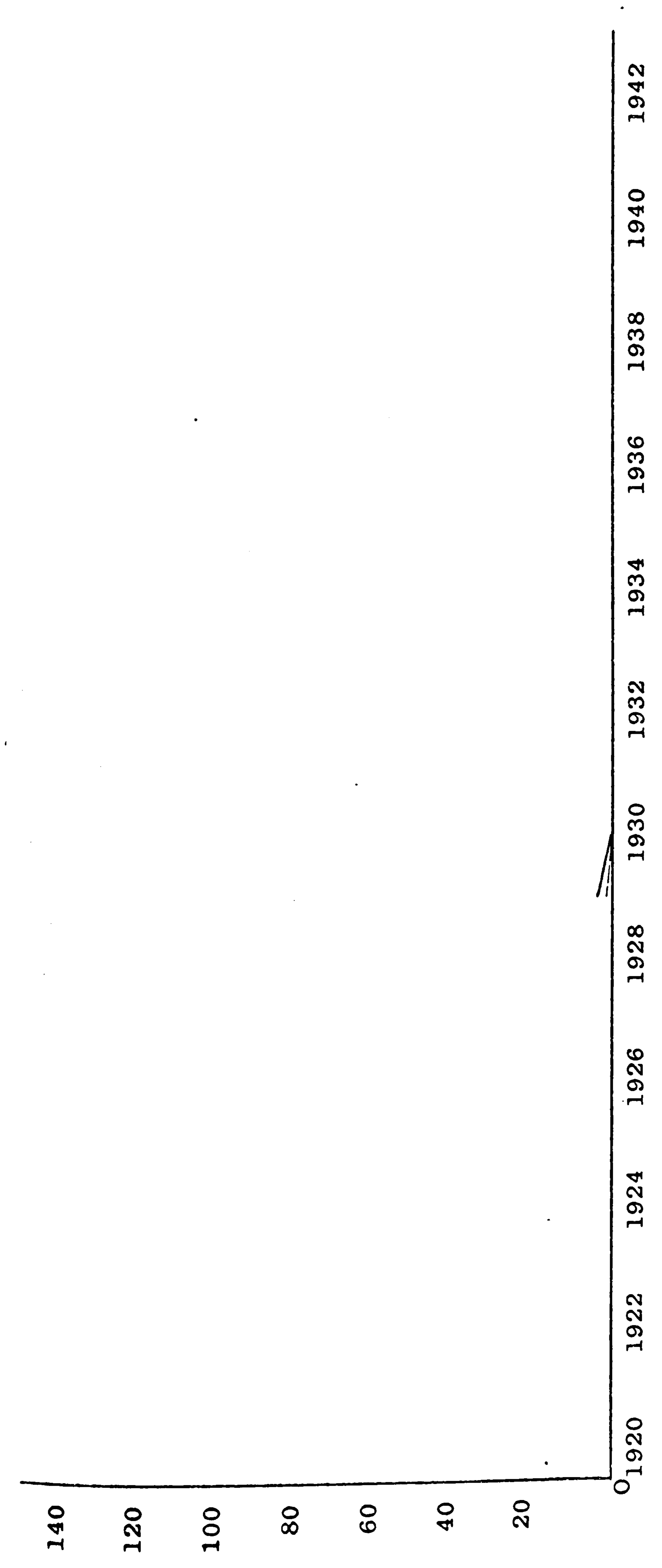
136. Sunrise Recordings From Memphis

Total Recordings Issued - ----- Number of Artists - -----



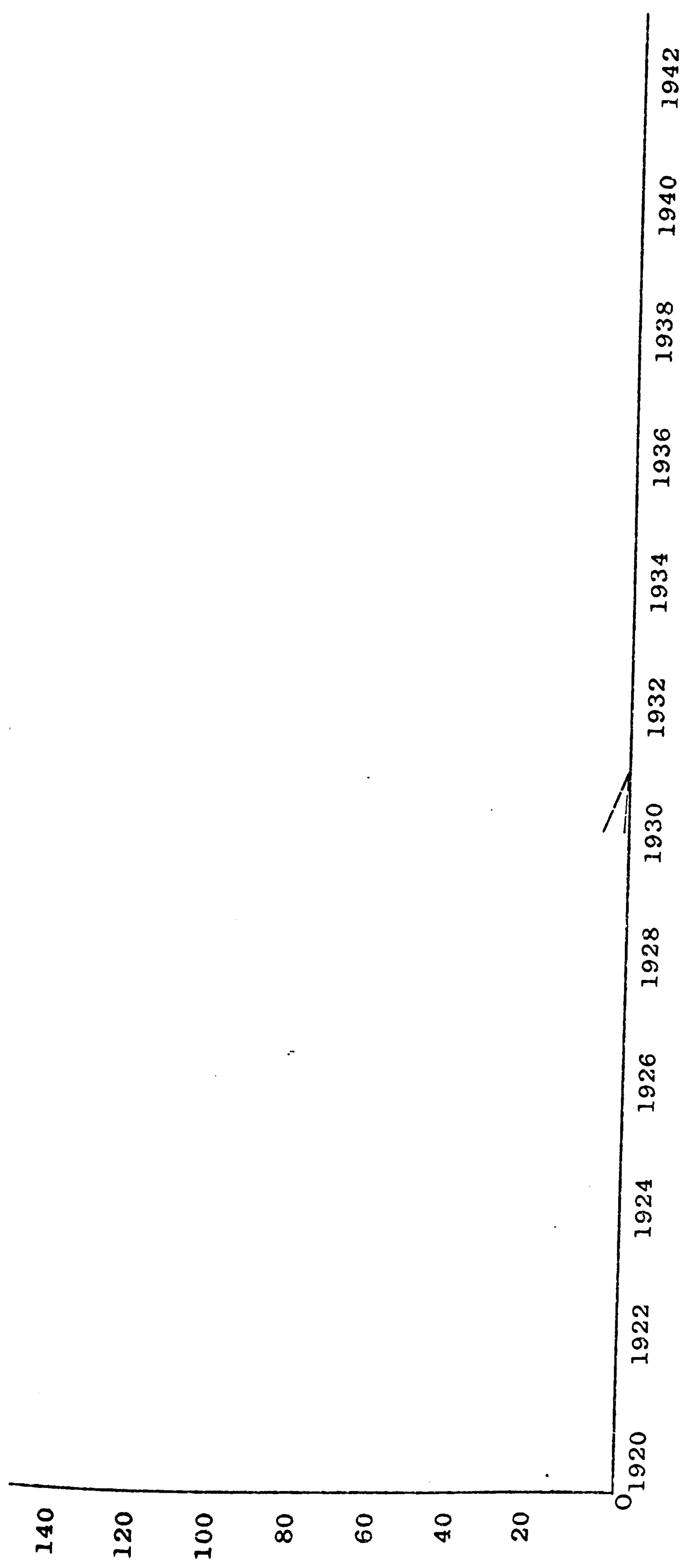
137. Sunrise Recordings From Chicago

Total Recordings Issued - ----- Number of Artists - - - - -



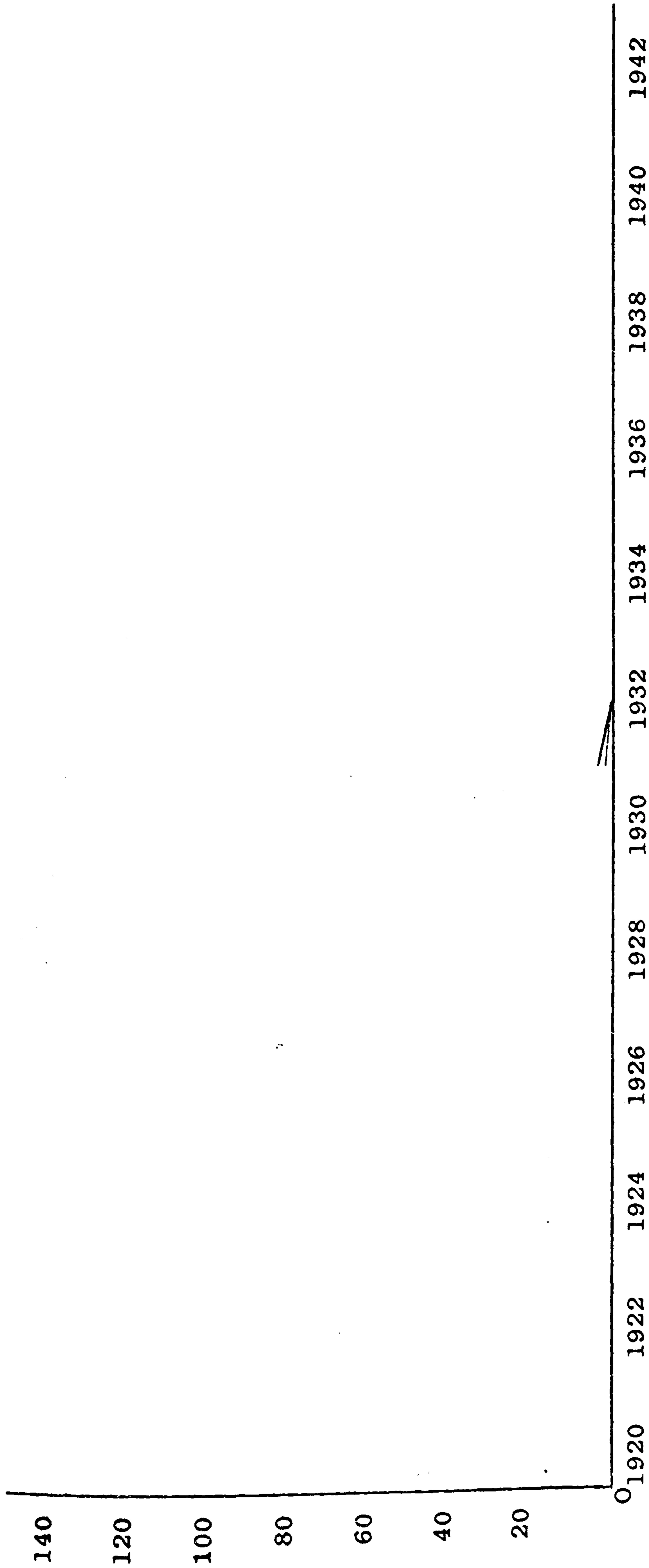
138. Sunrise Recordings From Long Island City, New York State

Total Recordings Issued - - - - - Number of Artists - - - - -



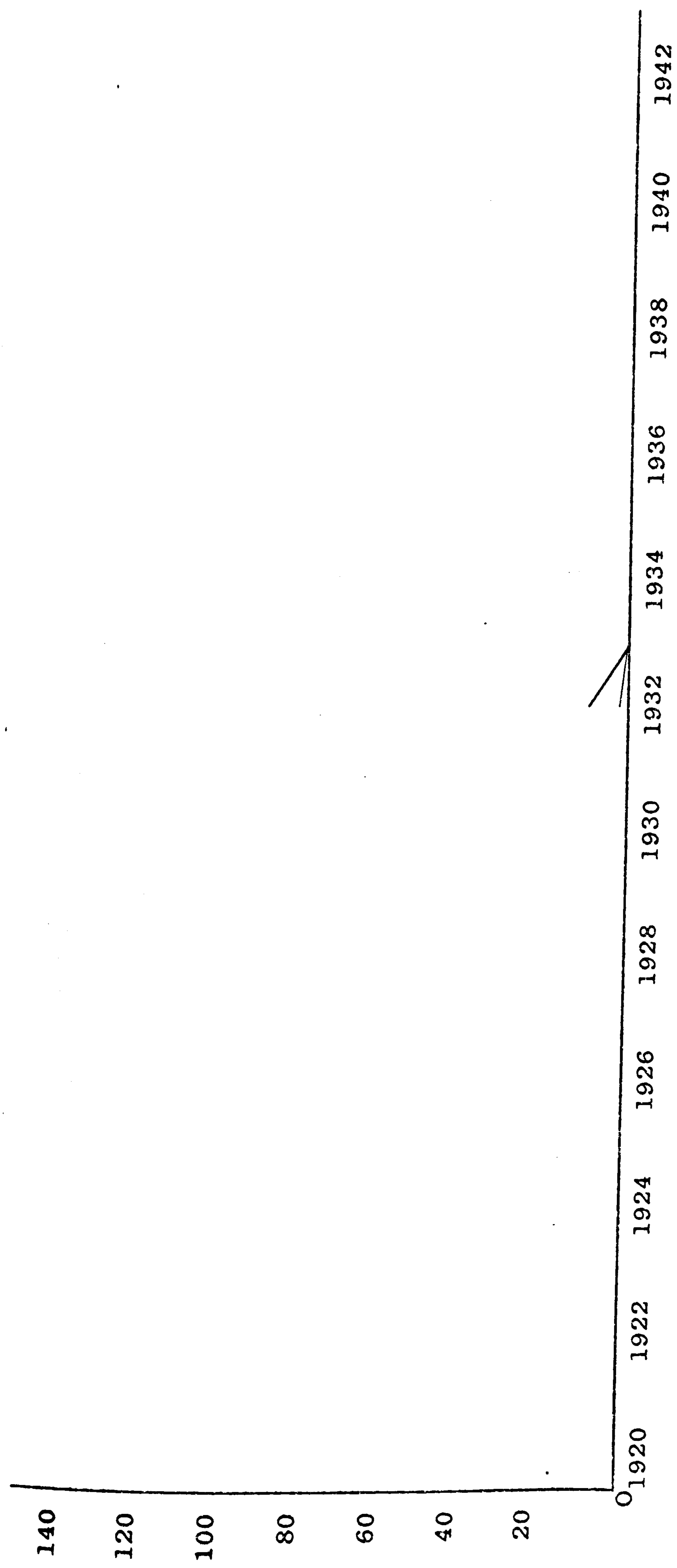
139. Sunrise Recordings From Cincinnati

Total Recordings Issued - ---- Number of Artists - ----



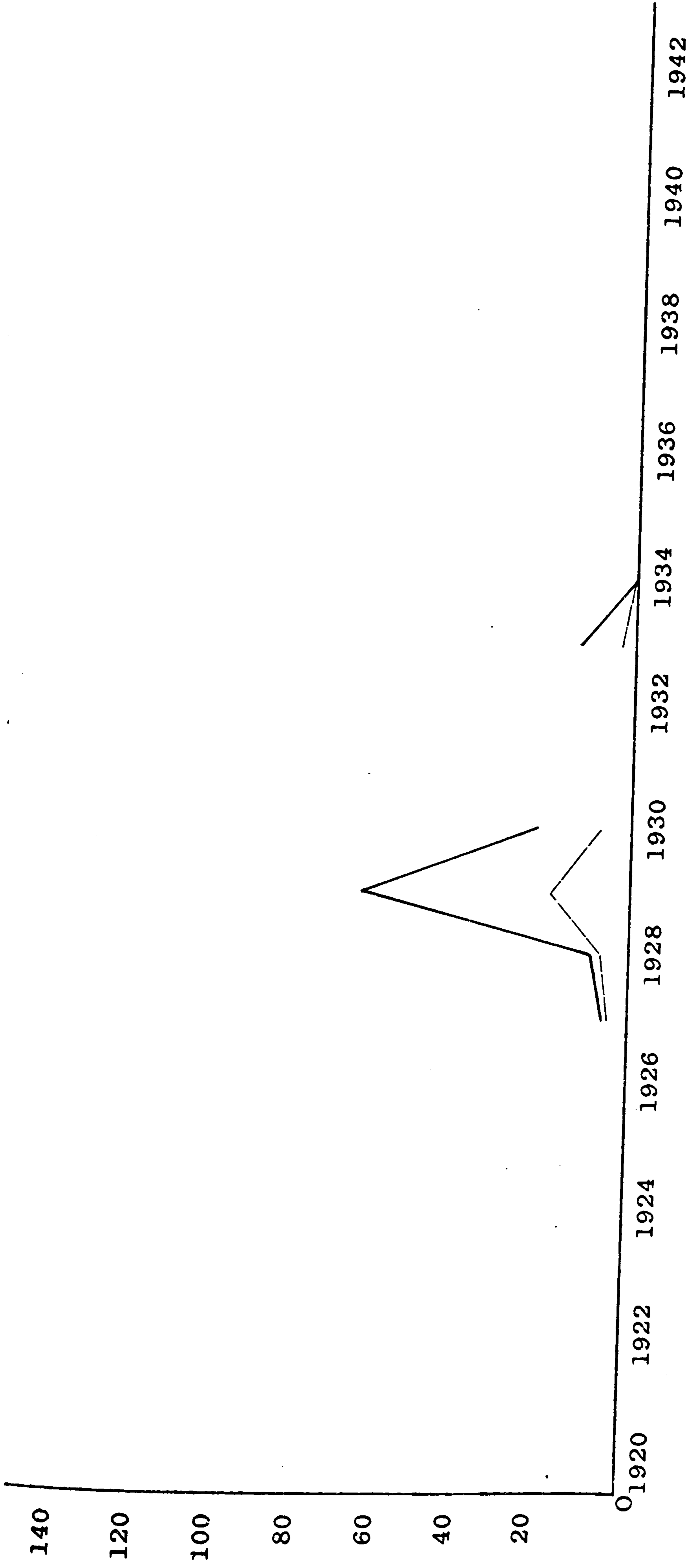
140. Sunrise Recordings From Louisville, Kentucky

Total Recordings Issued - ---- Number of Artists - ----



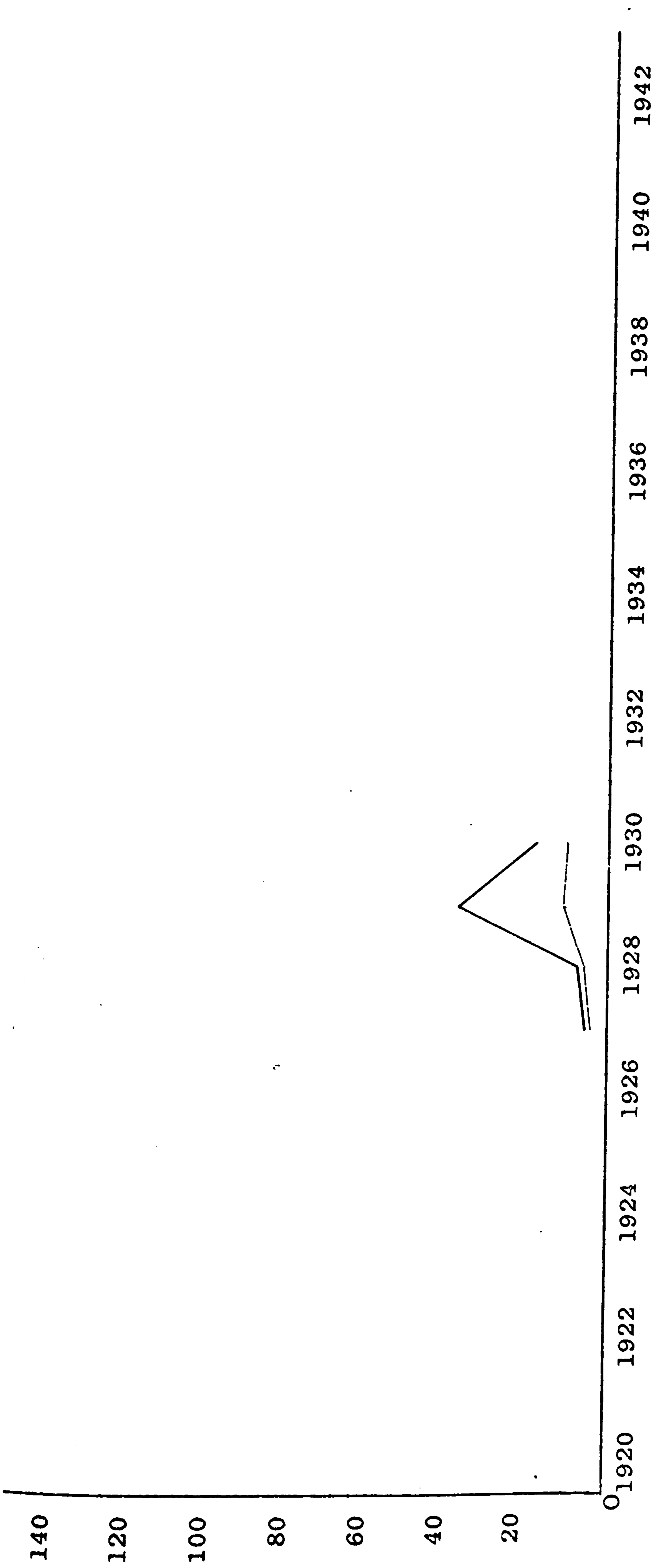
141. Sunrise Recordings From Dallas

Total Recordings Issued - ---- Number of Artists - ----



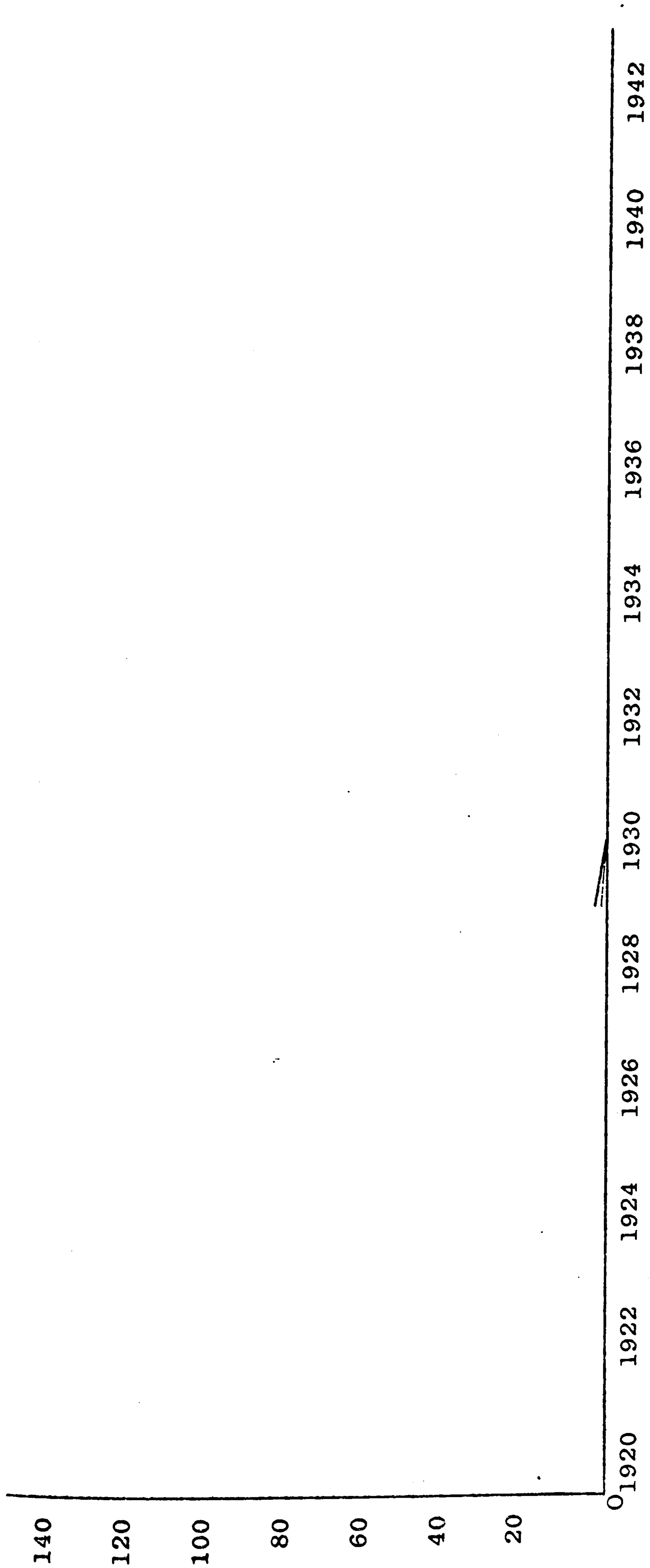
142. Supertone Totals

Total Recordings Issued - - - - - Number of Artists - - - - -



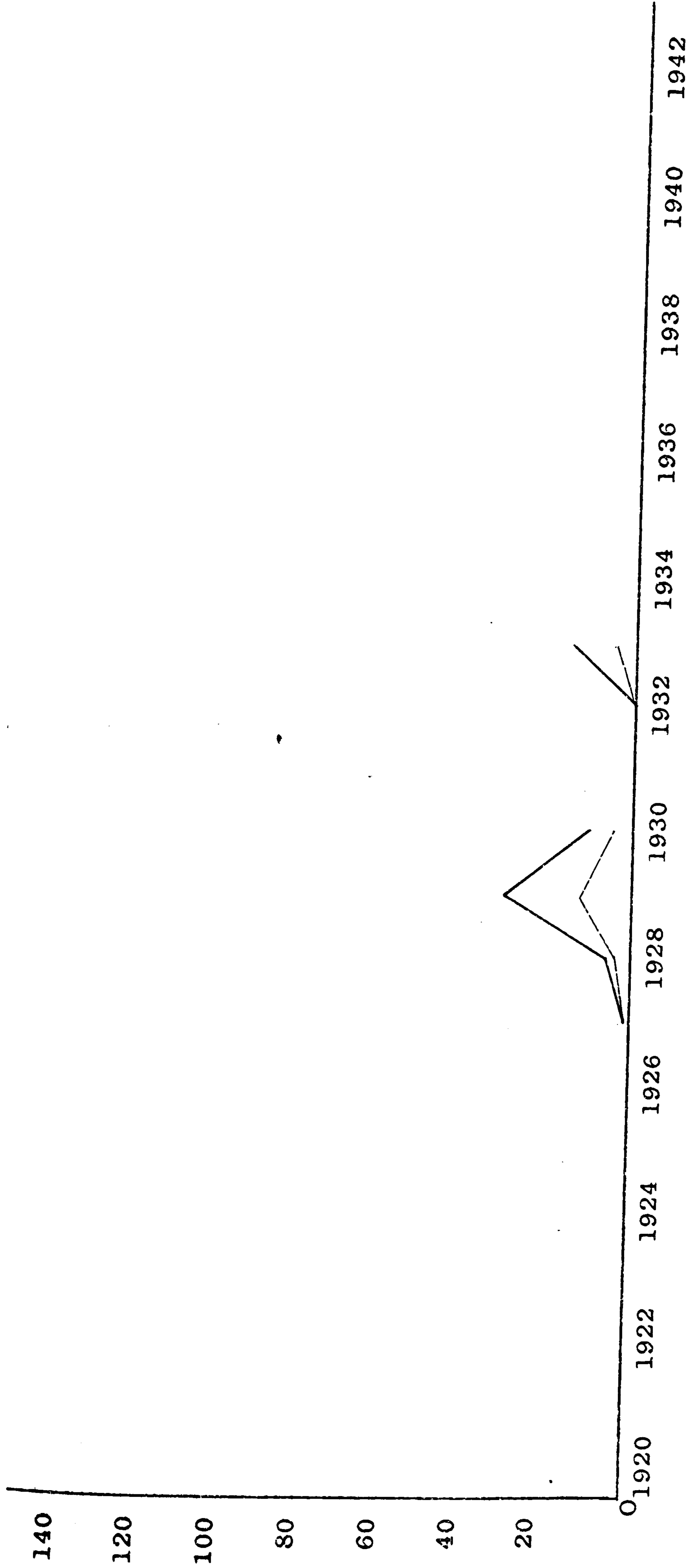
143. Supertone Recordings From Richmond

Total Recordings Issued - —— Number of Artists - - - - -



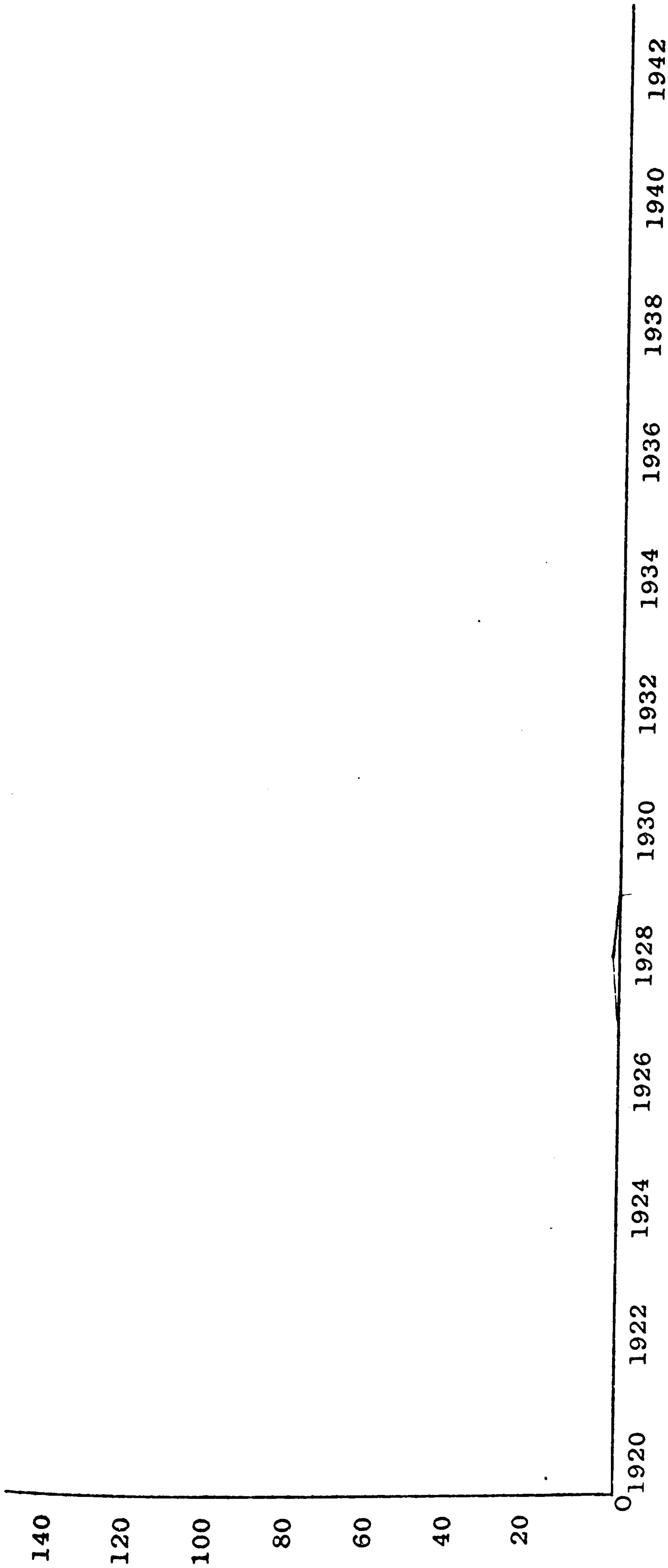
144. Supertone Recordings From Dallas

Total Recordings Issued - ---- Number of Artists - ----



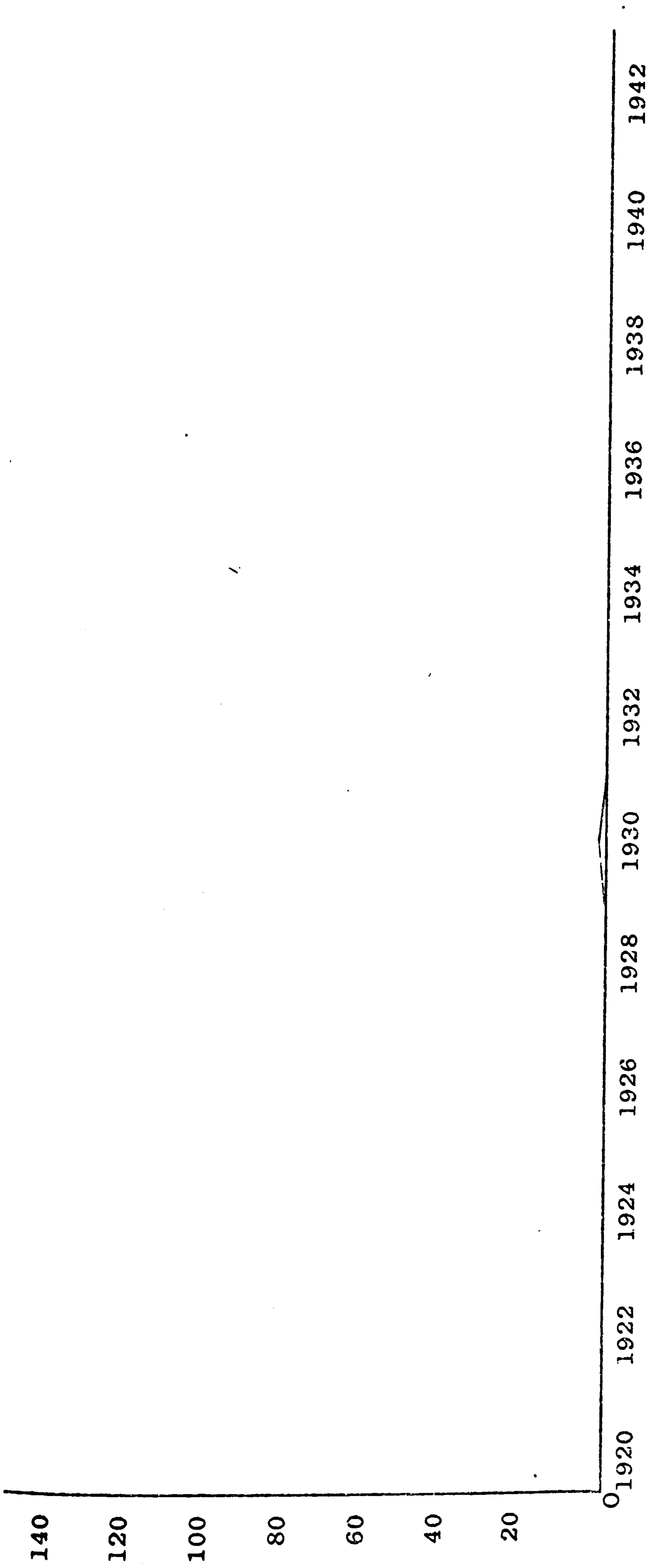
145. Supertone Recordings From Chicago

Total Recordings Issued - ——— Number of Artists - - - - -



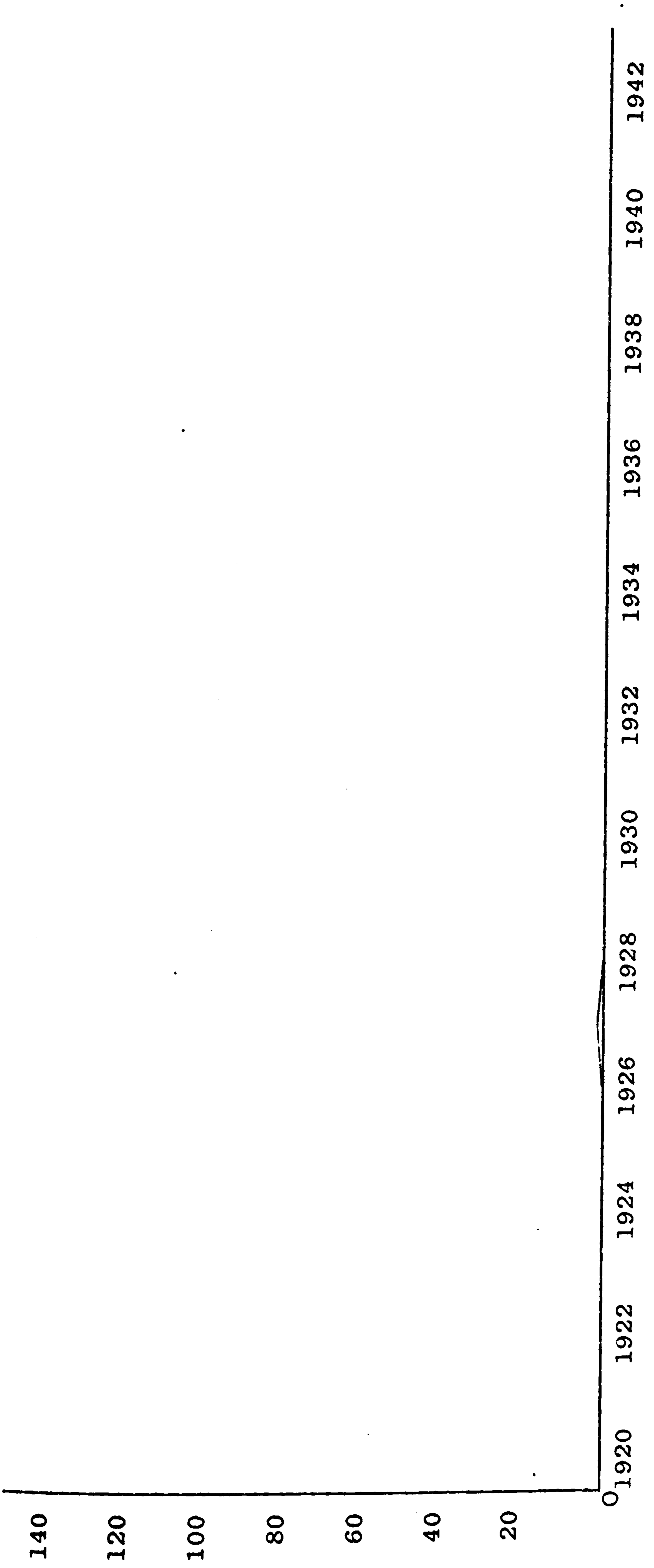
146. Supertone Recordings From New Orleans

Total Recordings Issued - ----- Number of Artists - -----



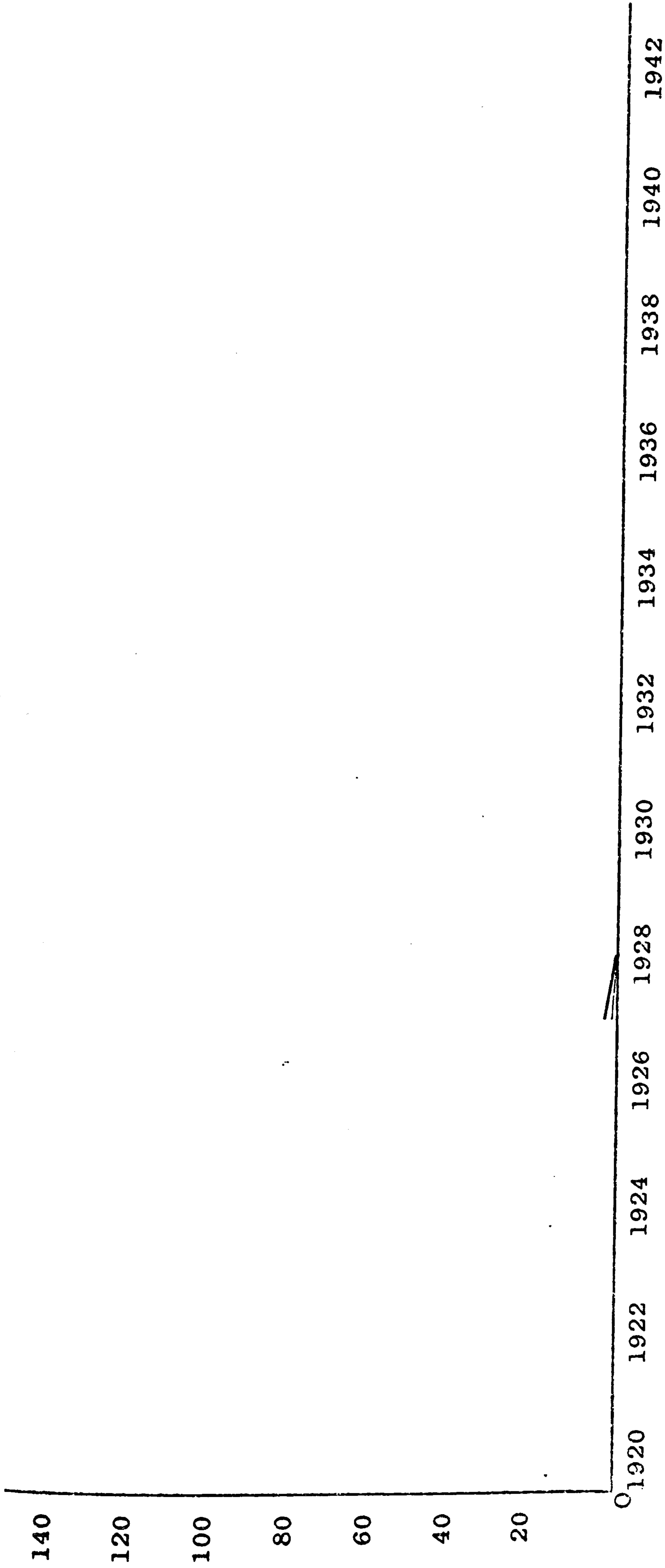
147. Supertone Recordings From New York

Total Recordings Issued - ---- Number of Artists - ----



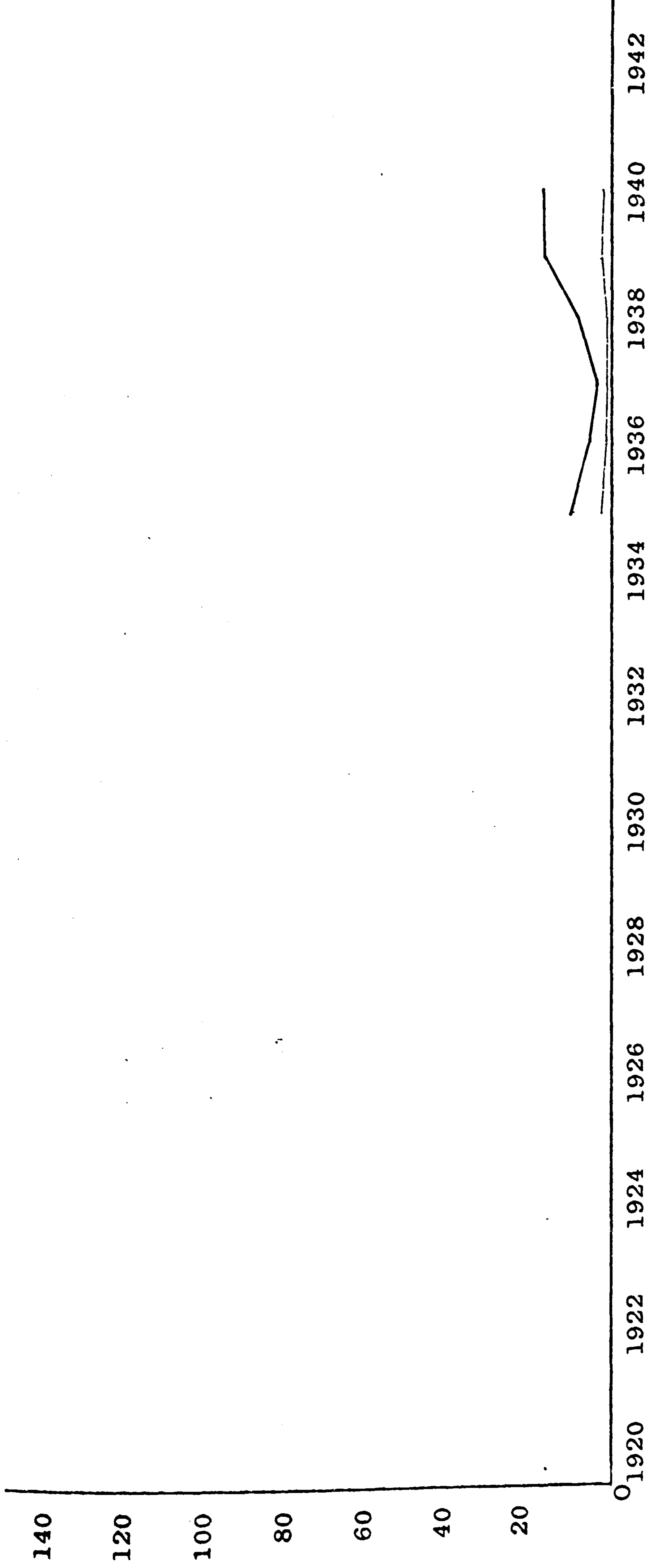
148. Supertone Recordings From Birmingham, Alabama

Total Recordings Issued - ----- Number of Artists -----



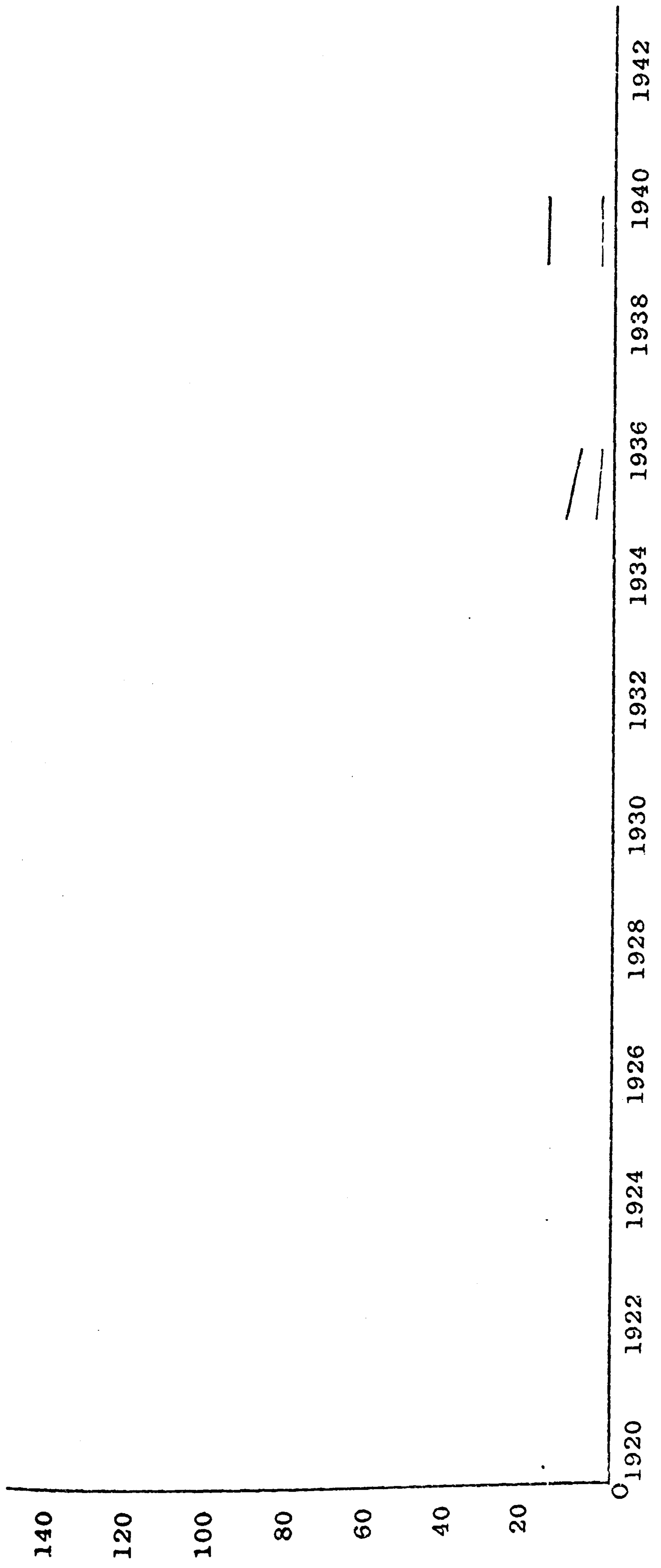
149. Supertone Recordings From Unknown Locations

Total Recordings Issued - ----- Number of Artists - -----



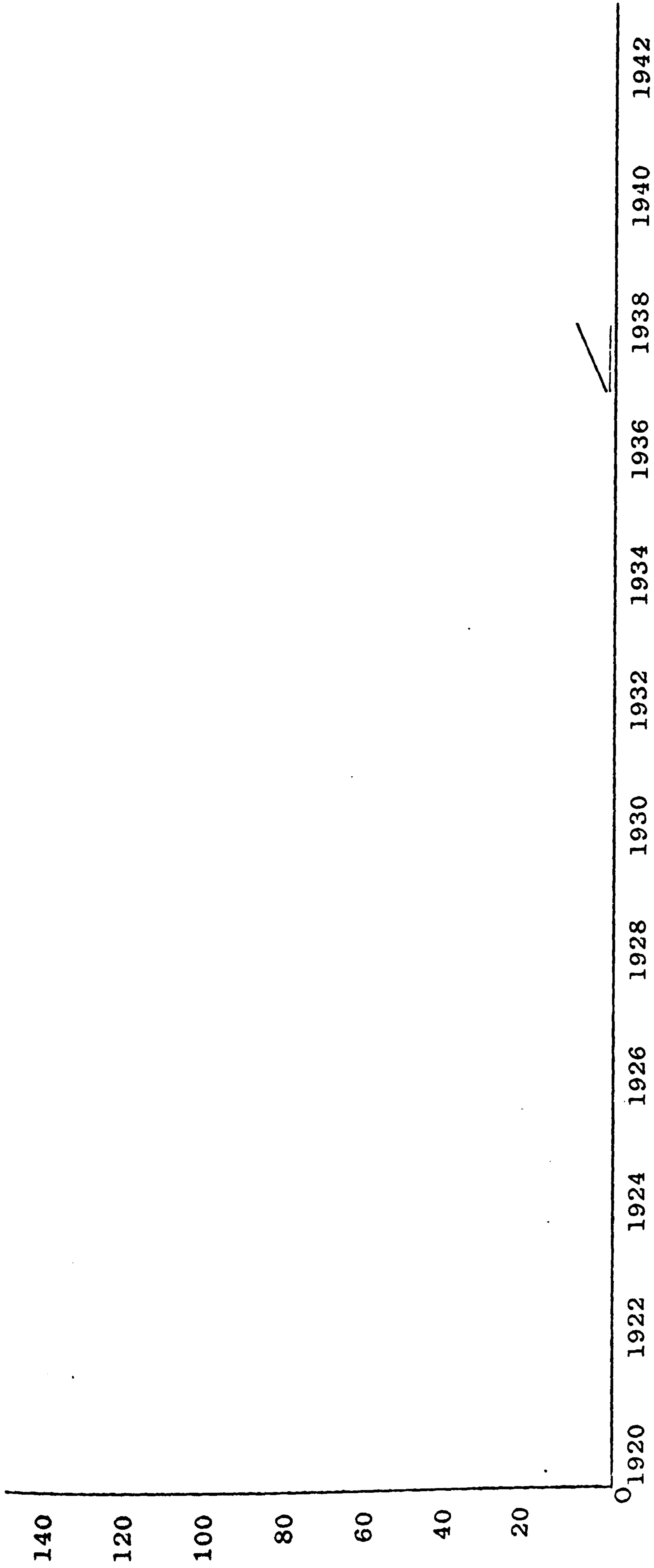
150. Montgomery-Ward Totals

Total Recordings Issued - ----- Number of Artists - ----



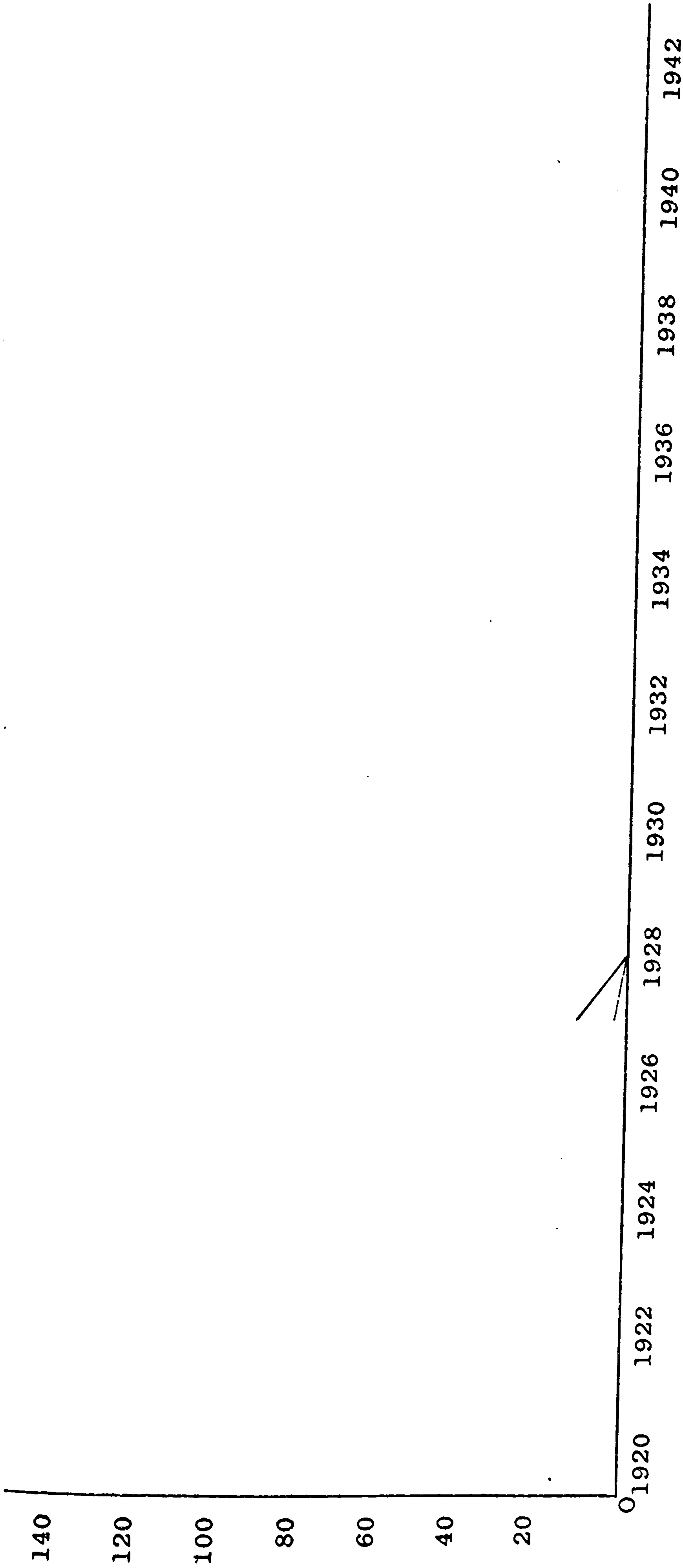
151. Montgomery-Ward Recordings From Chicago

Total Recordings Issued - ----- Number of Artists - -----



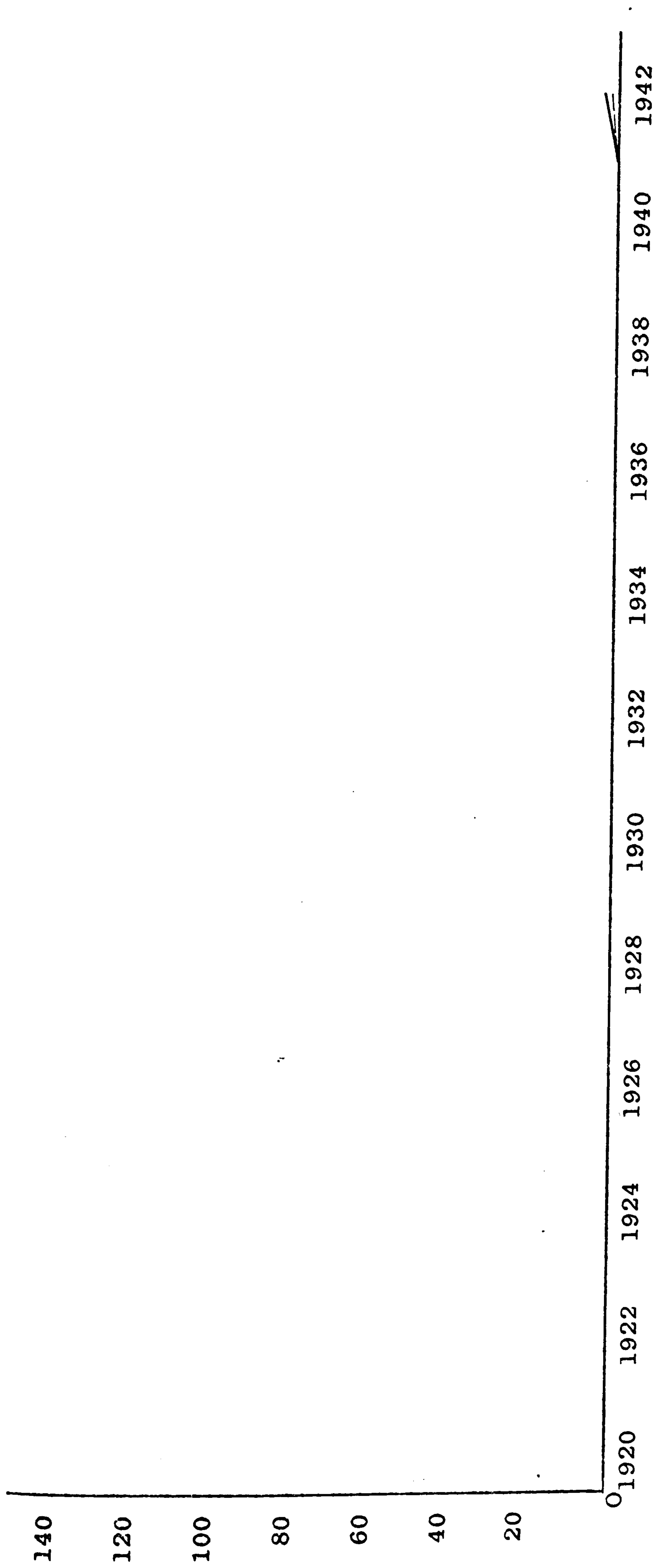
152. Montgomery-Ward Recordings From Aurora, Illinois

Total Recordings Issued - ---- Number of Artists - ----



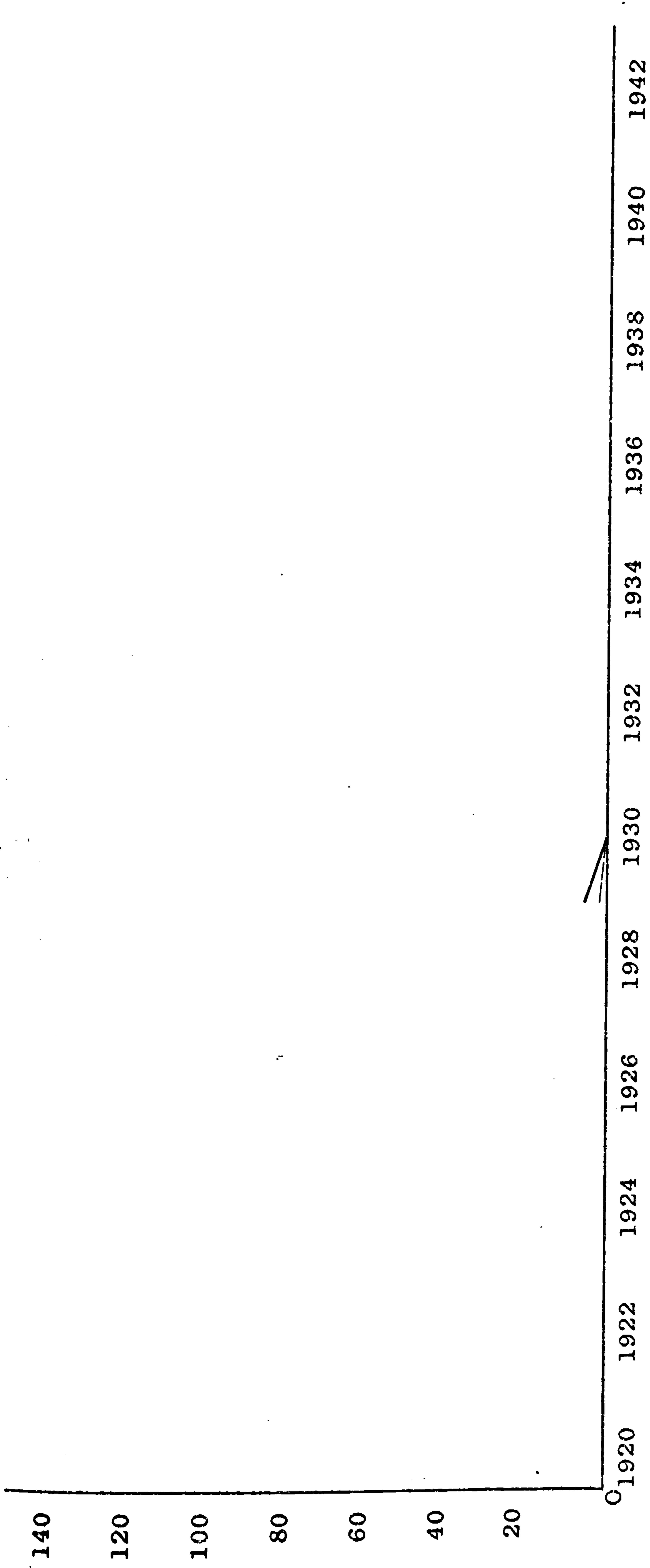
153. Pathe Totals

Total Recordings Issued - ---- Number of Artists - ----



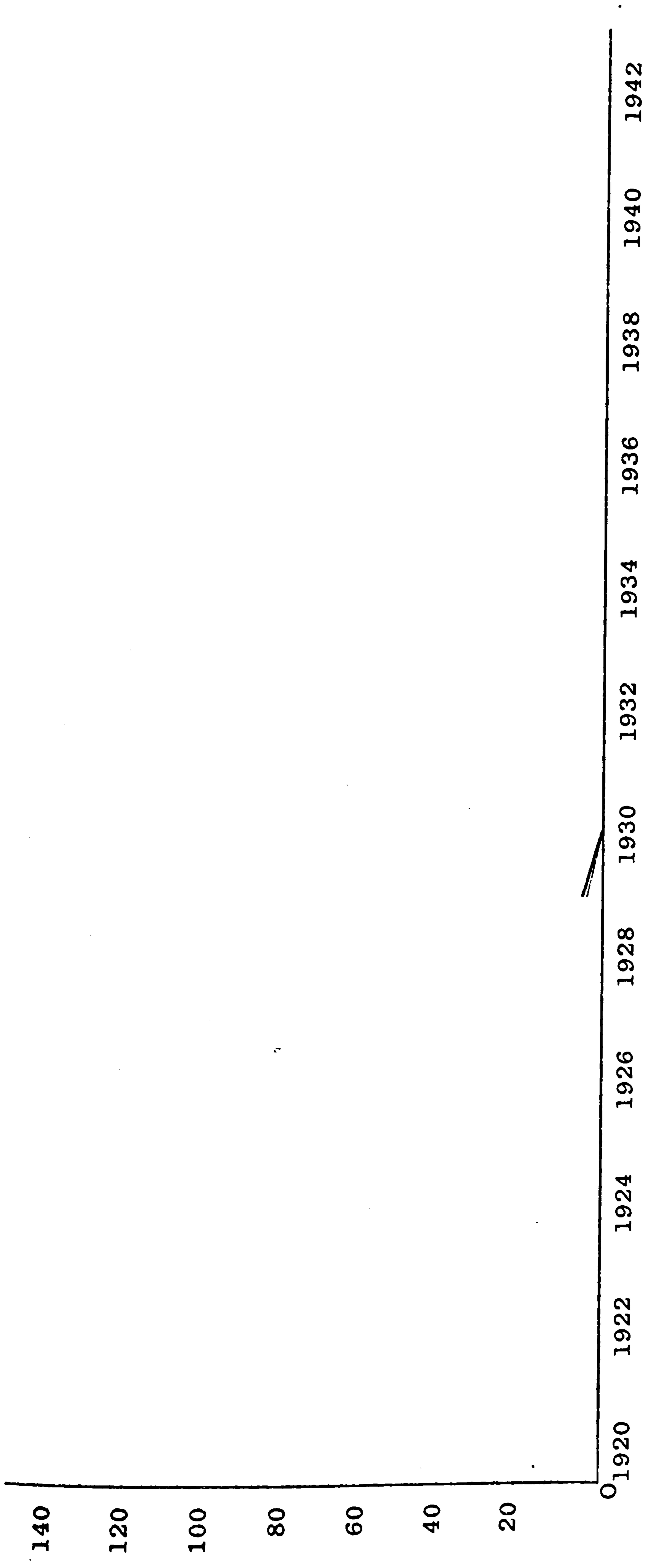
154. Capitol Totals

Total Recordings Issued - ----- Number of Artists -----



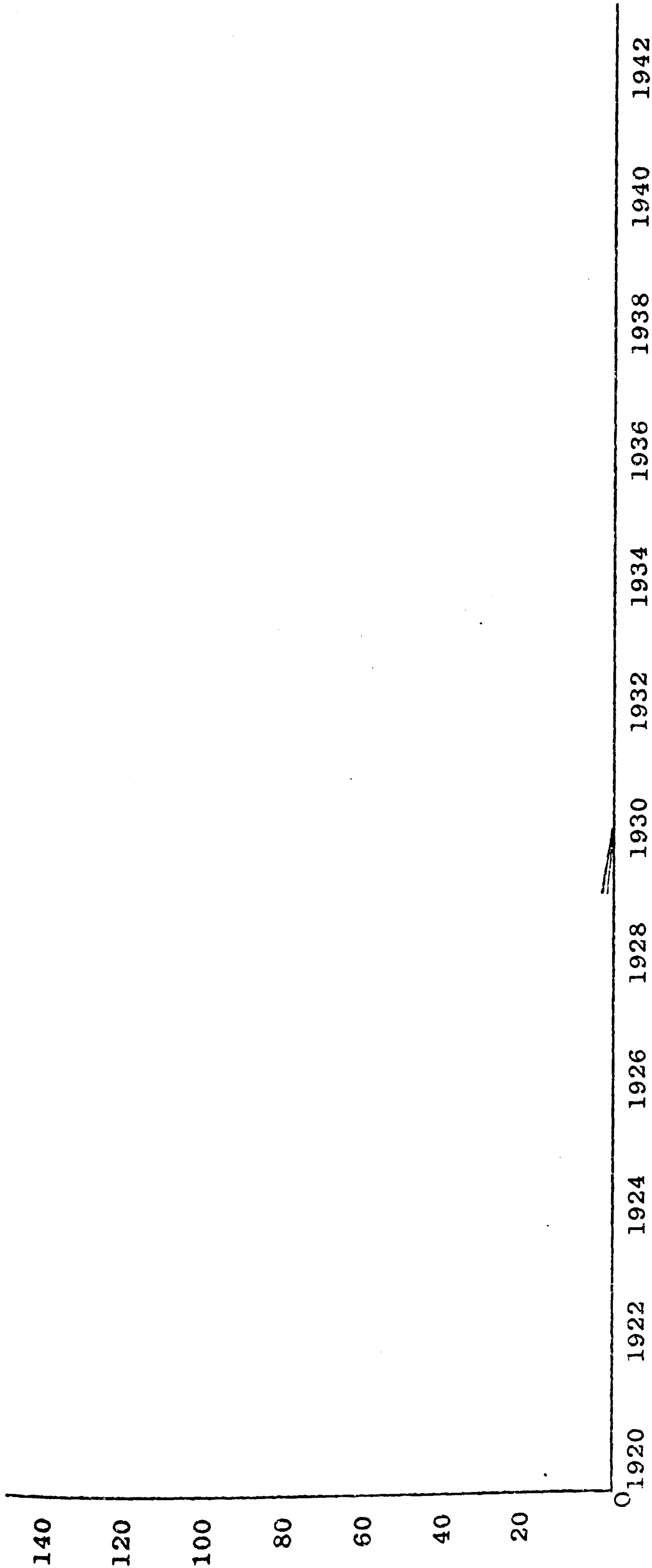
155. Herwin Totals

Total Recordings Issued - ----- Number of Artists -----



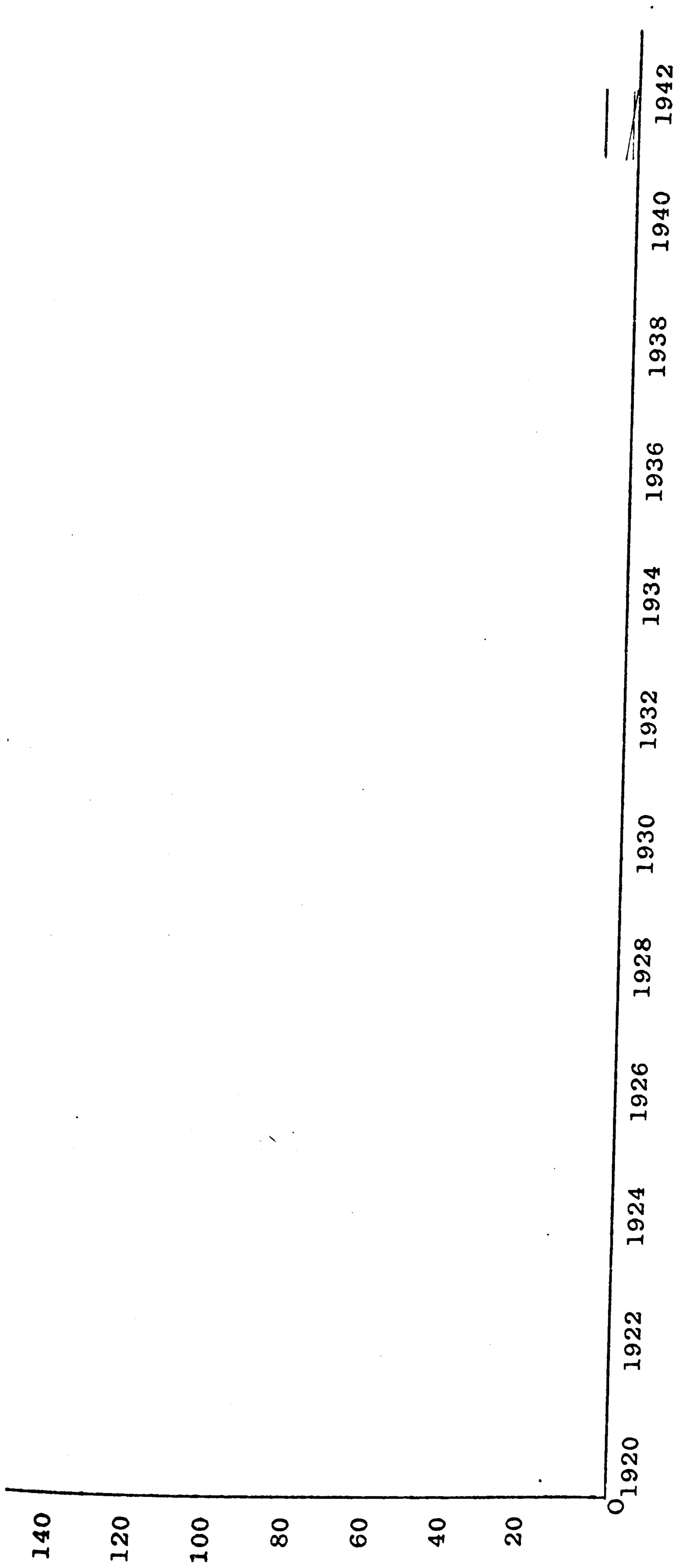
156. Herwin Recordings From Richmond

Total Recordings Issued - - - - - Number of Artists - - - - -



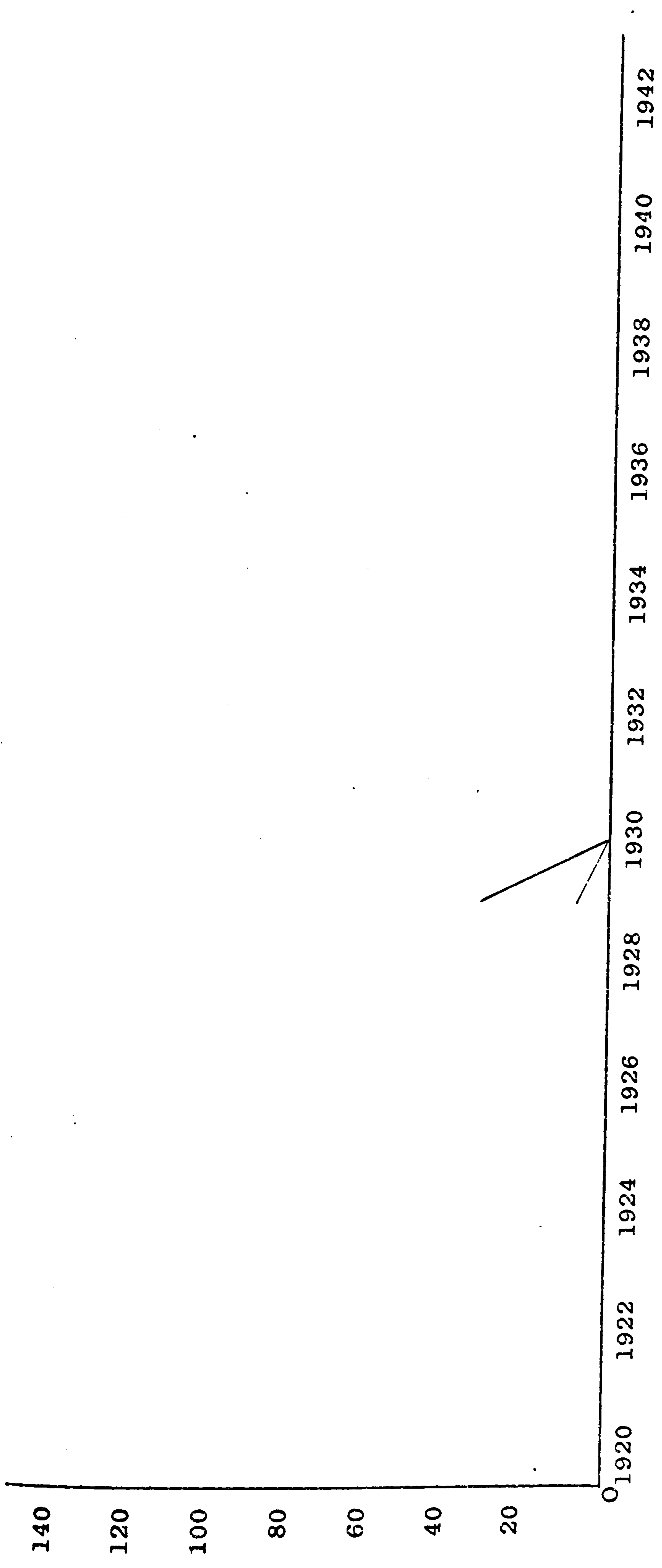
157. Herwin Recordings From Chicago

Total Recordings Issued - - - - - Number of Artists - - - - -



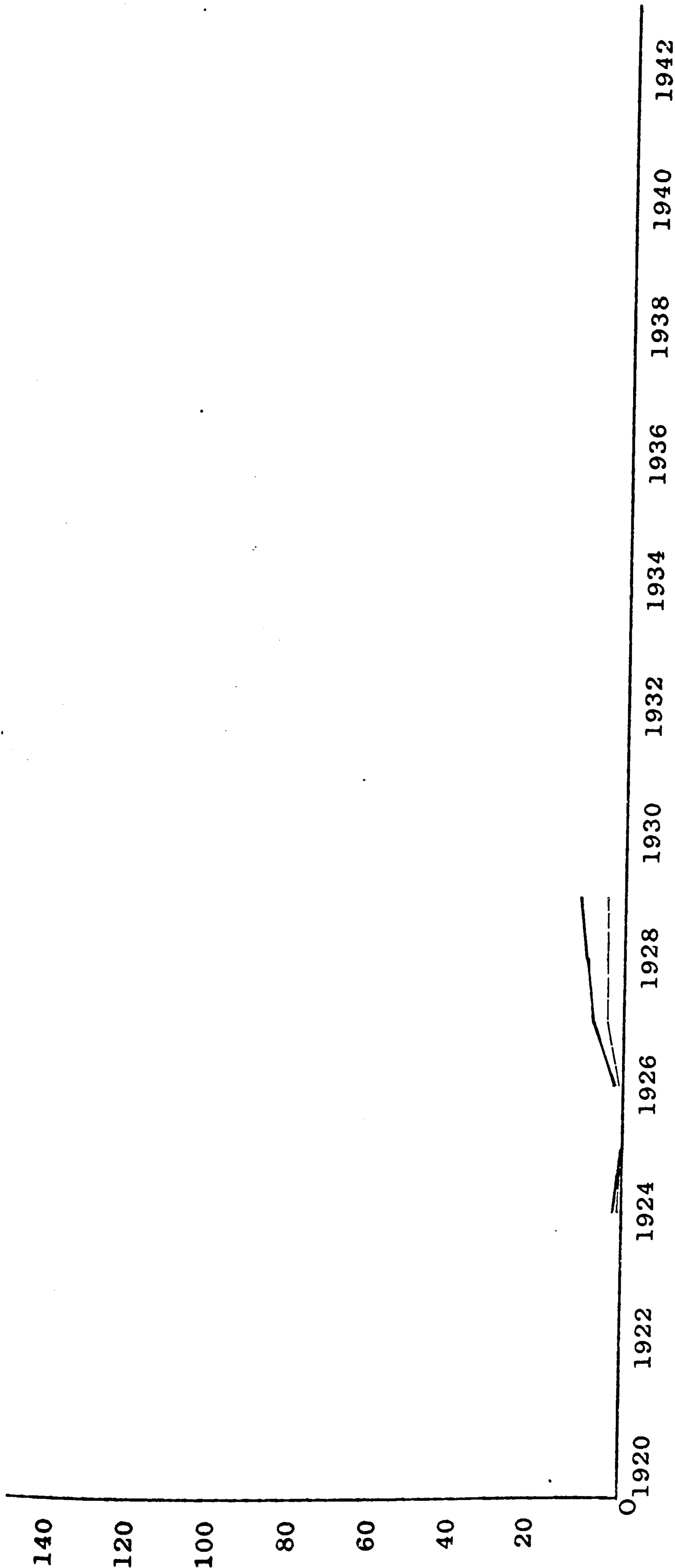
158. Asch Totals

Total Recordings Issued - ----- Number of Artists - - - - -



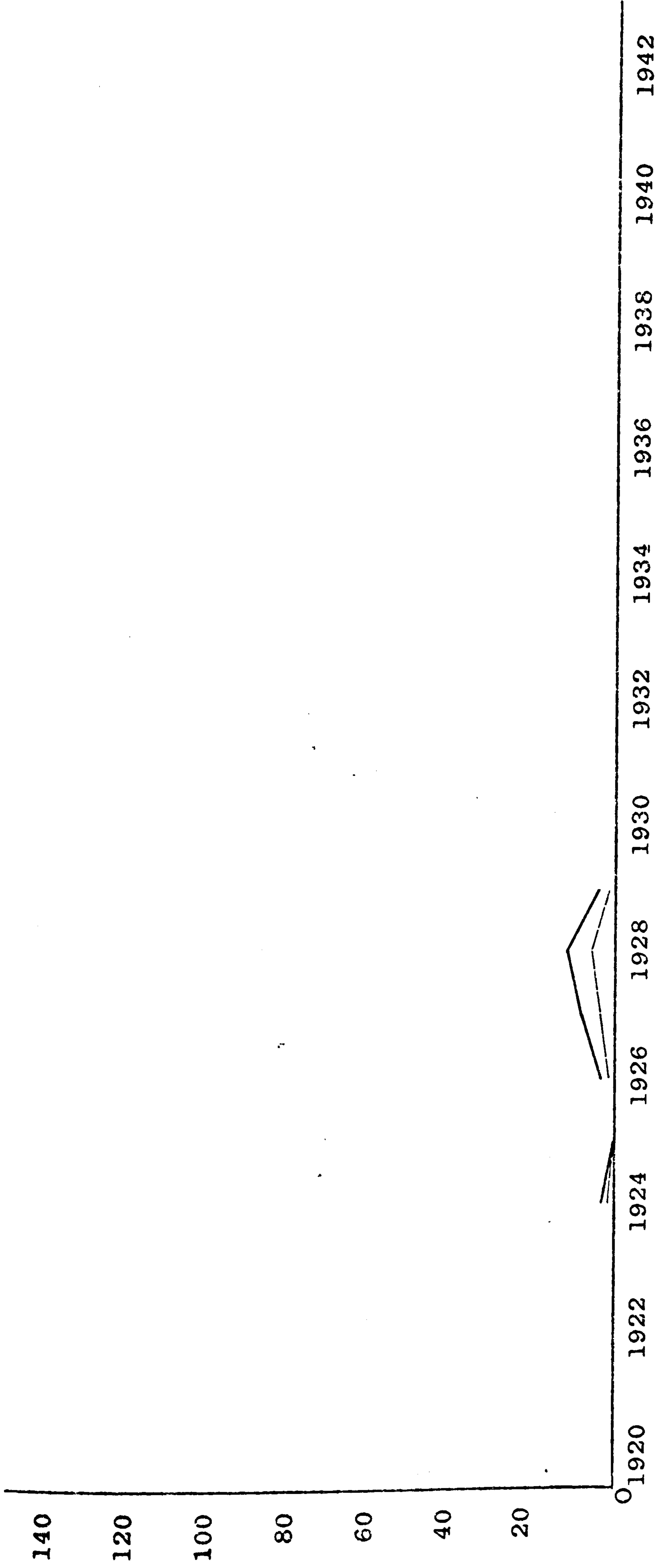
159. QRS Totals

Total Recordings Issued - ---- Number of Artists - ----



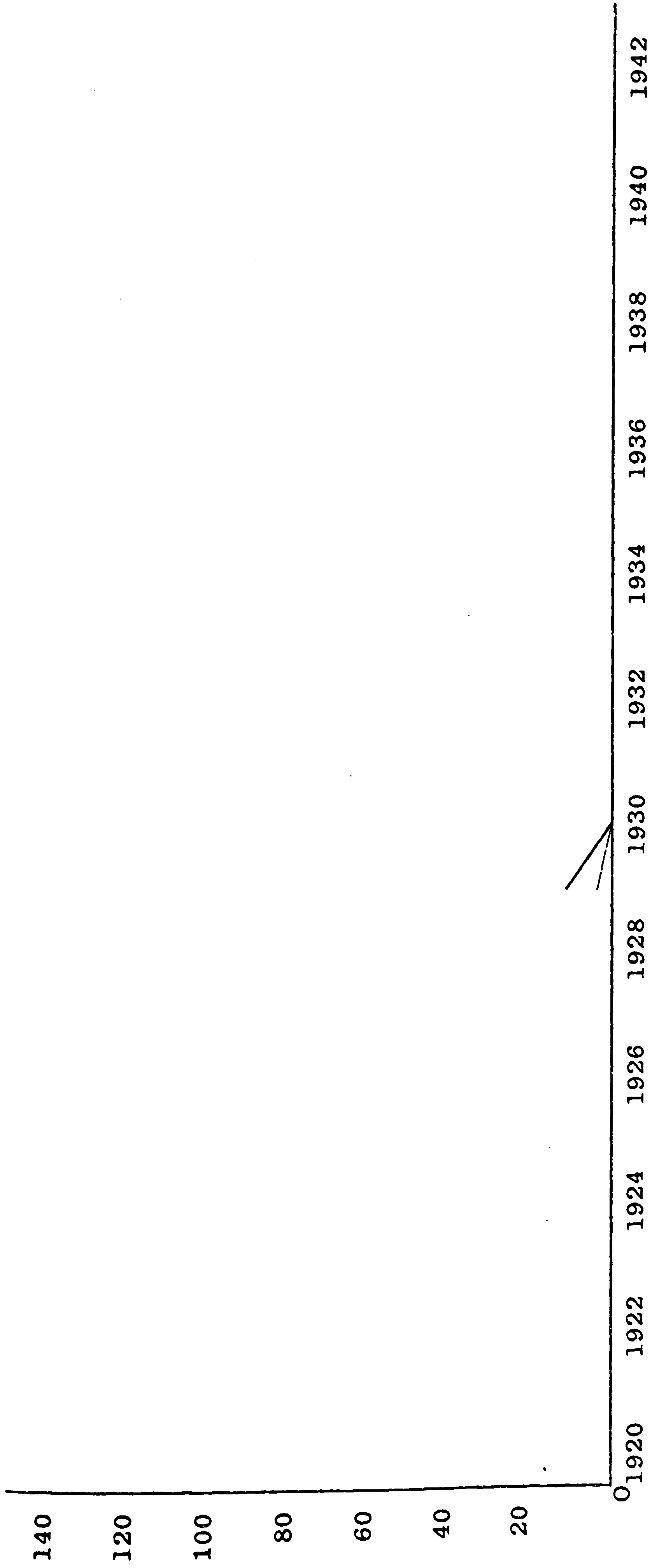
160. Broadway Totals

Total Recordings Issued - --- Number of Artists - - - - -



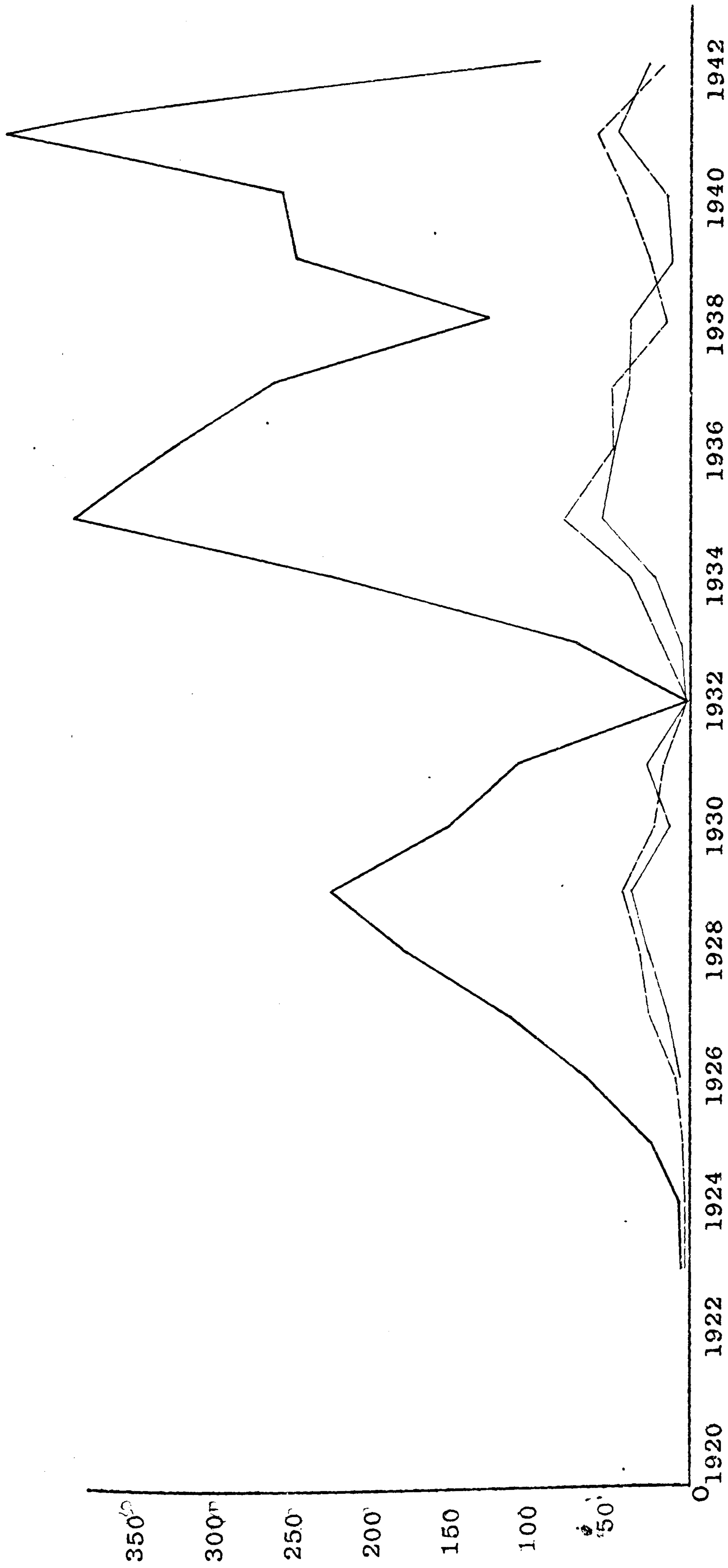
161. Broadway Recordings From Chicago

Total Recordings Issued - ——— Number of Artists - - - - -



162. Broadway Recordings From Richmond

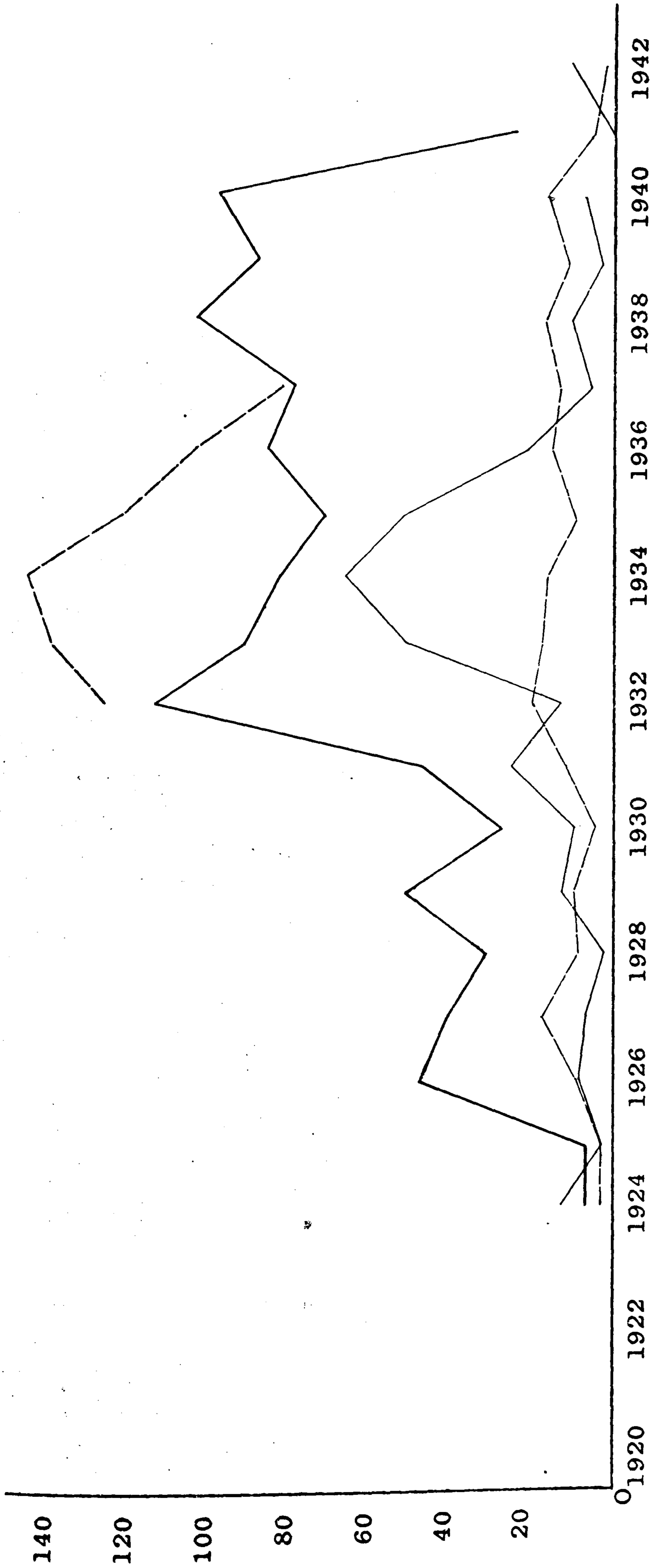
Total Recordings Issued - ---- Number of Artists - ----



Total Chicago Recordings

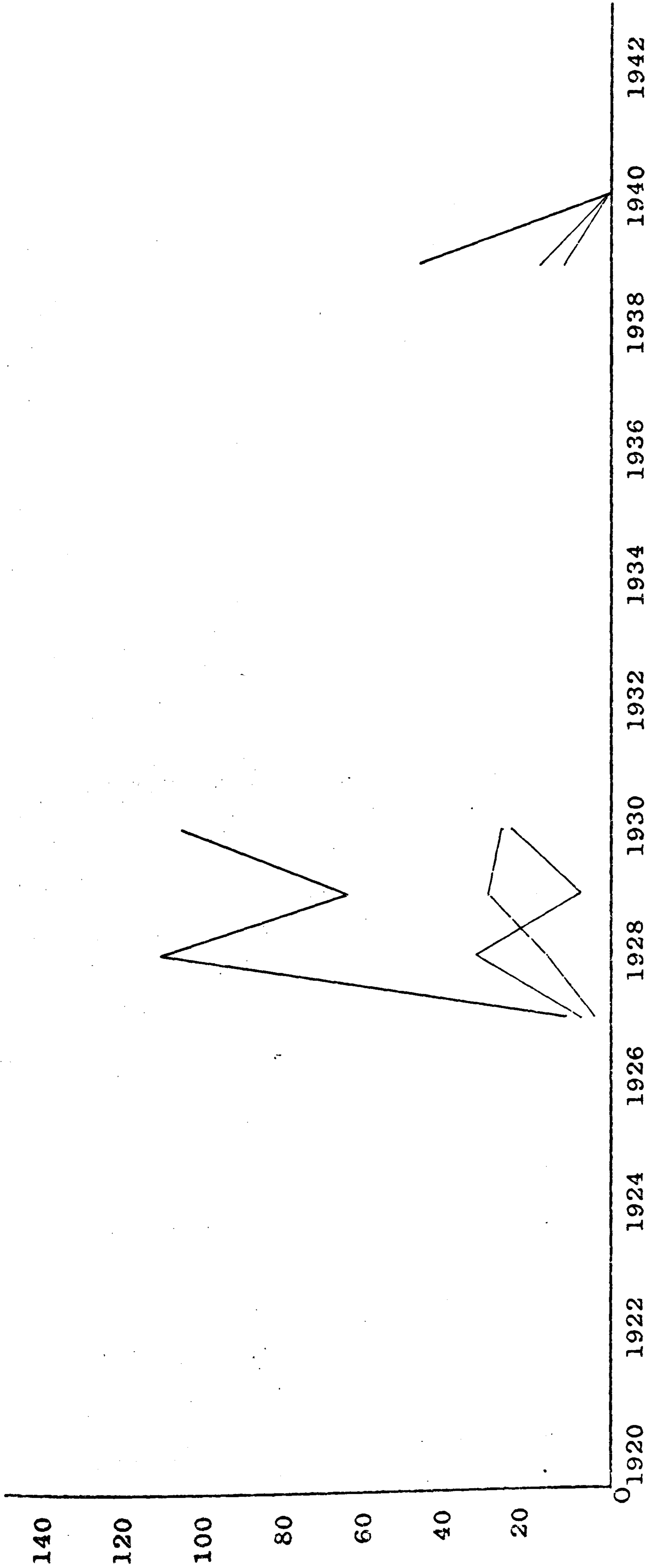
Total Recordings Not Issued - - - -

Total Recordings Issued - - - - - Number of Artists



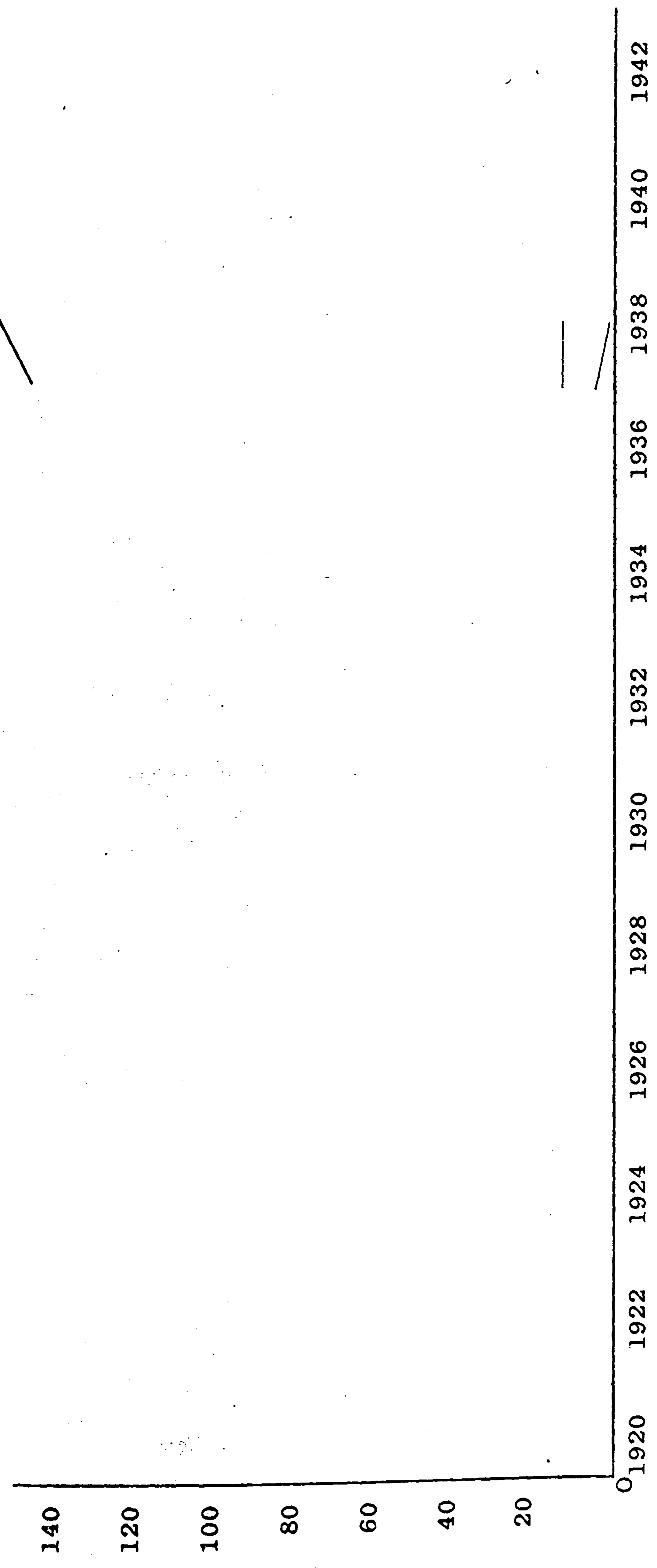
164. Total New York Recordings

Total Recordings Made - - - - - Total Recordings Not Issued - - - - -
Total Recordings Issued - - - - - Number of Artists - - - - -



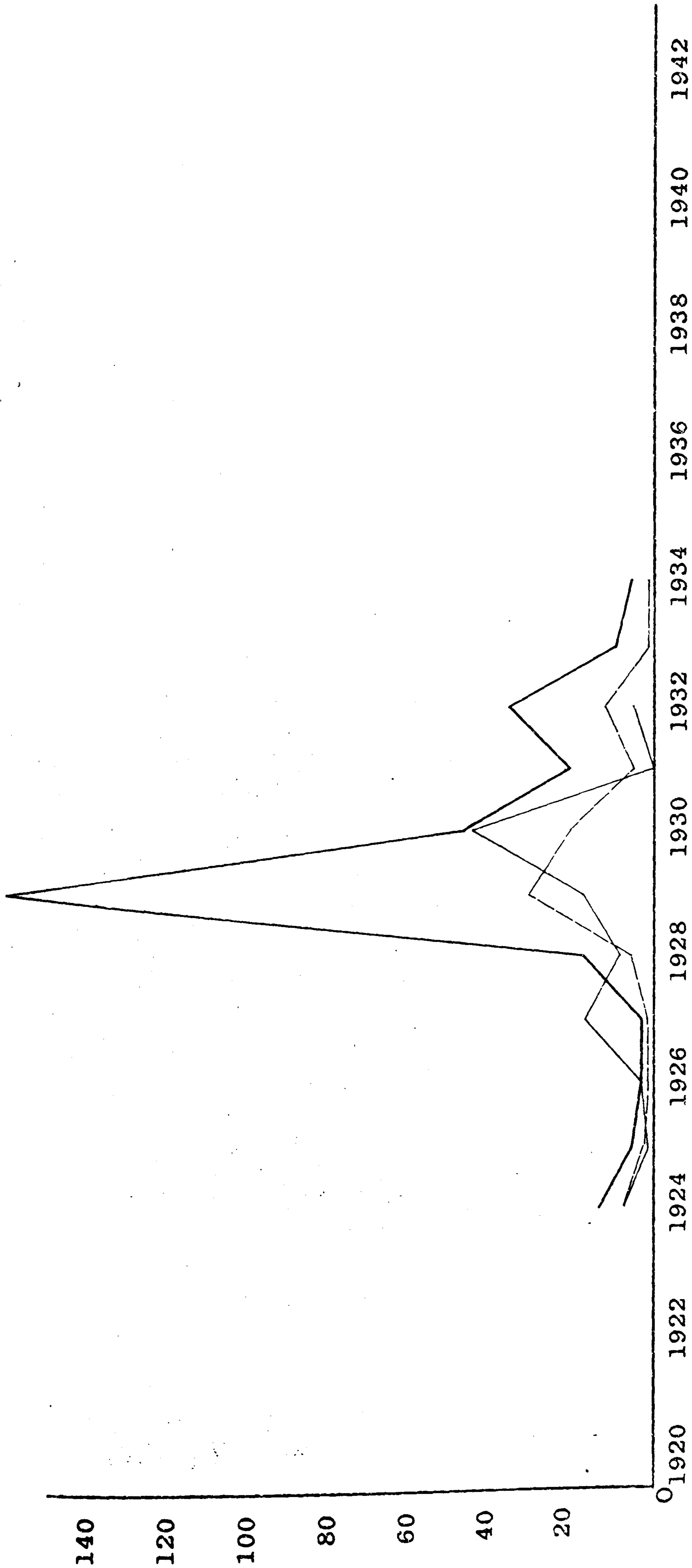
165. Total Memphis Recordings

Total Recordings Made - - - - - Total Recordings Not Issued - - - - -
 Total Recordings Issued - - - - - Number of Artists - - - - -



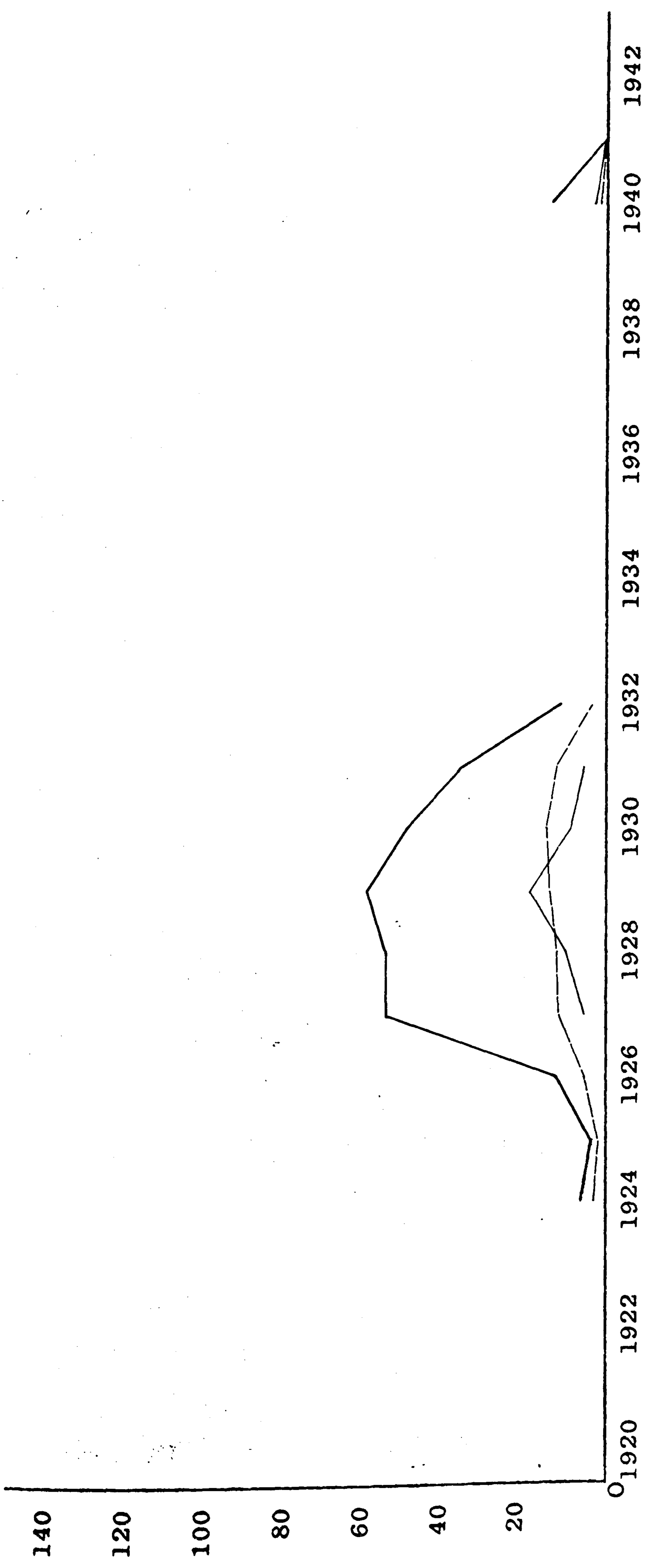
166. Total Aurora Recordings

Total Recordings Made - - - - - Total Recordings Not Issued - - - - -
 Total Recordings Issued - - - - - Number of Artists - - - - -



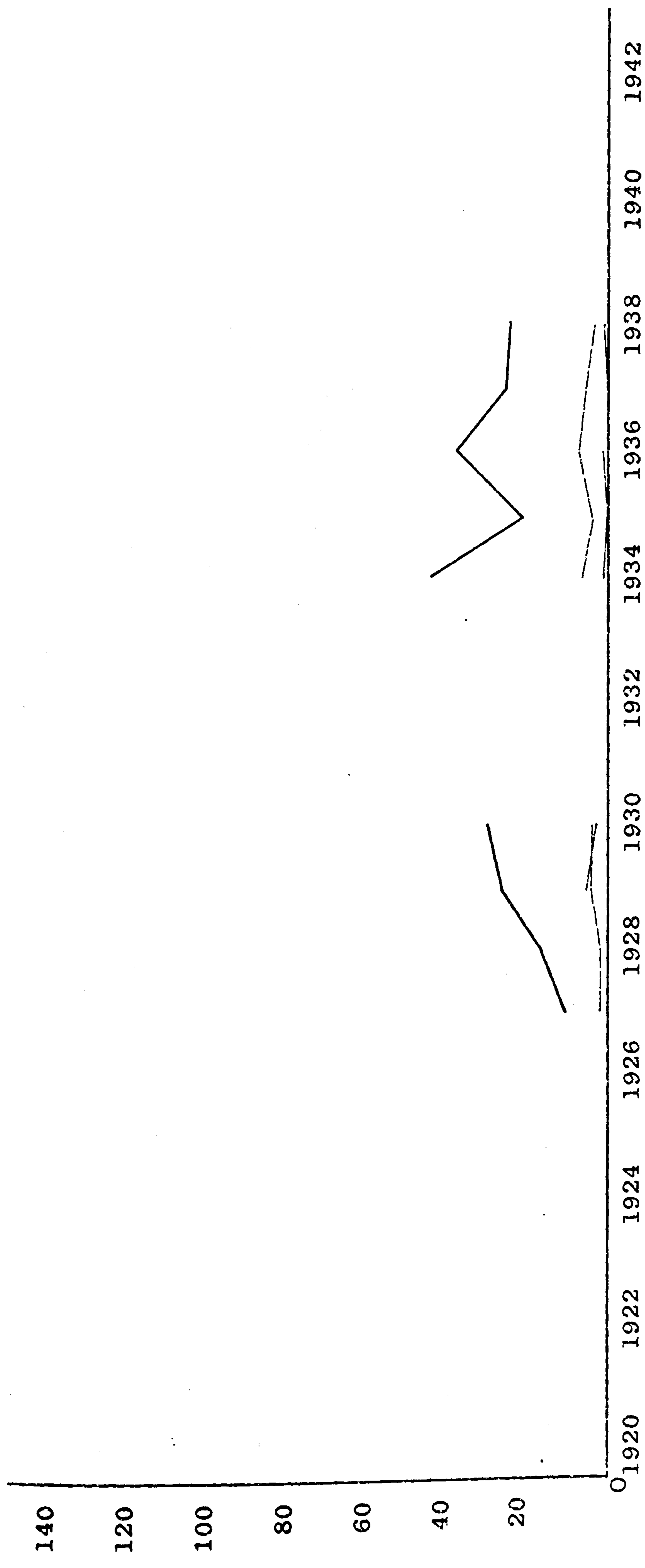
167. Total Richmond Recordings

Total Recordings Made - - - - - Total Recordings Not Issued - - - - -
 Total Recordings Issued - - - - - Number of Artists - - - - -



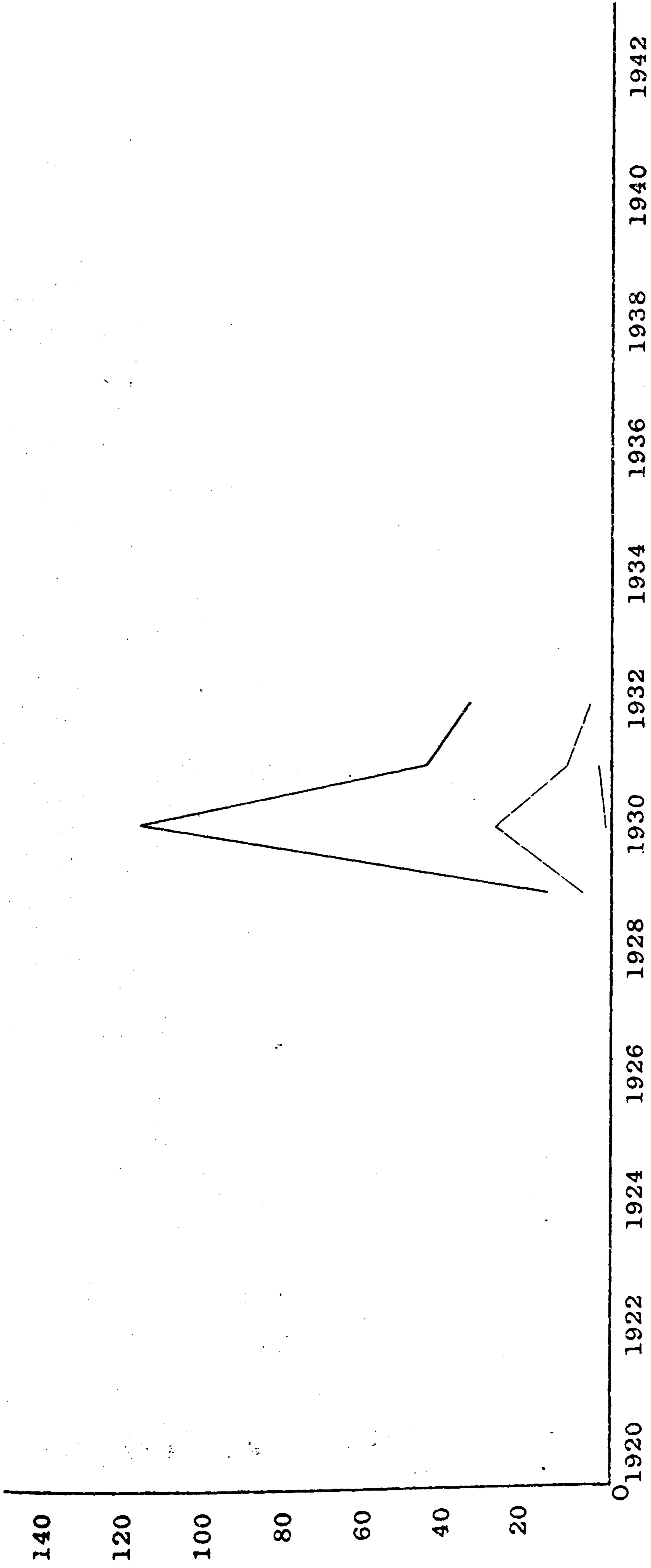
168. Total Atlanta Recordings

Total Recordings Made - - - - - Total Recordings Not Issued - - - - -
 Total Recordings Issued - - - - - Number of Artists - - - - -



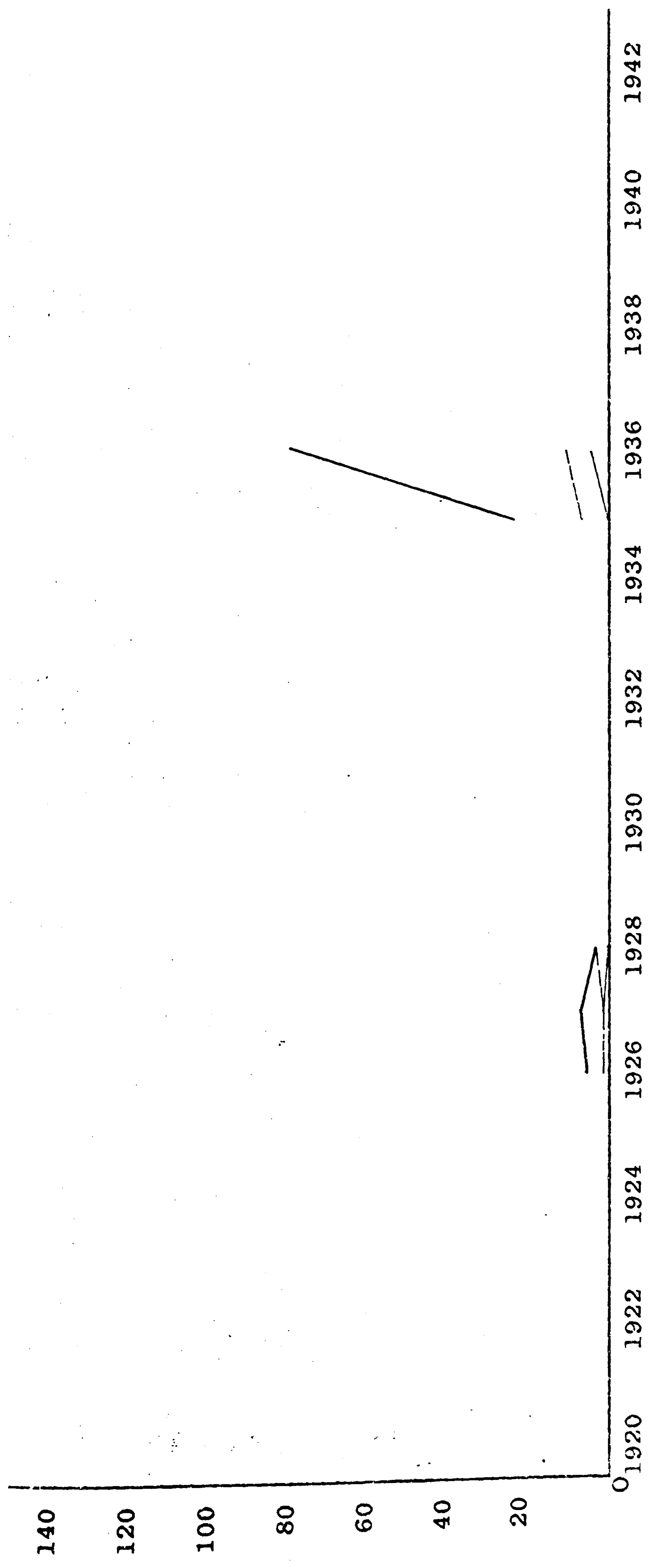
169. Total San Antonio Recordings

Total Recordings Made - - - - - Total Recordings Not Issued - - - - -
 Total Recordings Issued - - - - - Number of Artists - - - - -



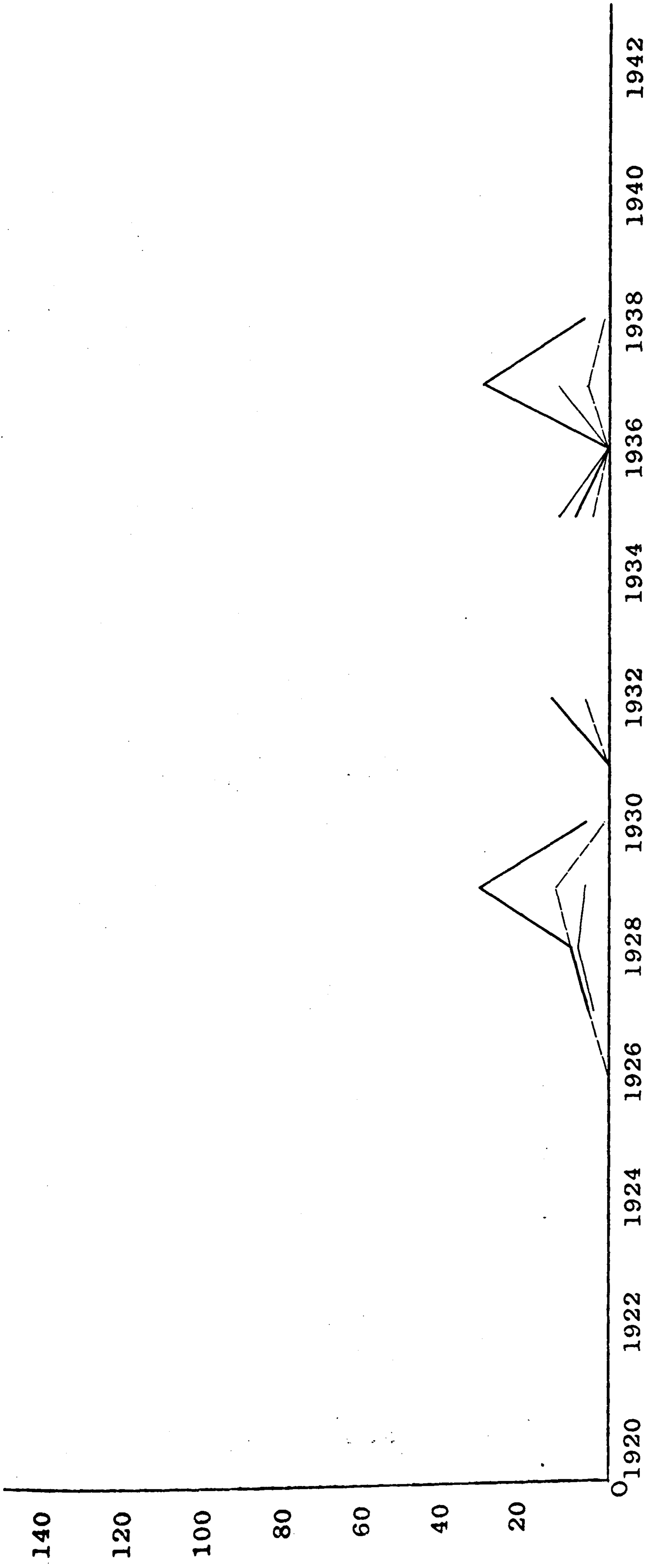
170. Total Grafton Recordings

Total Recordings Made - - - - - Total Recordings Not Issued - - - - -
 Total Recordings Issued - - - - - Number of Artists - - - - -



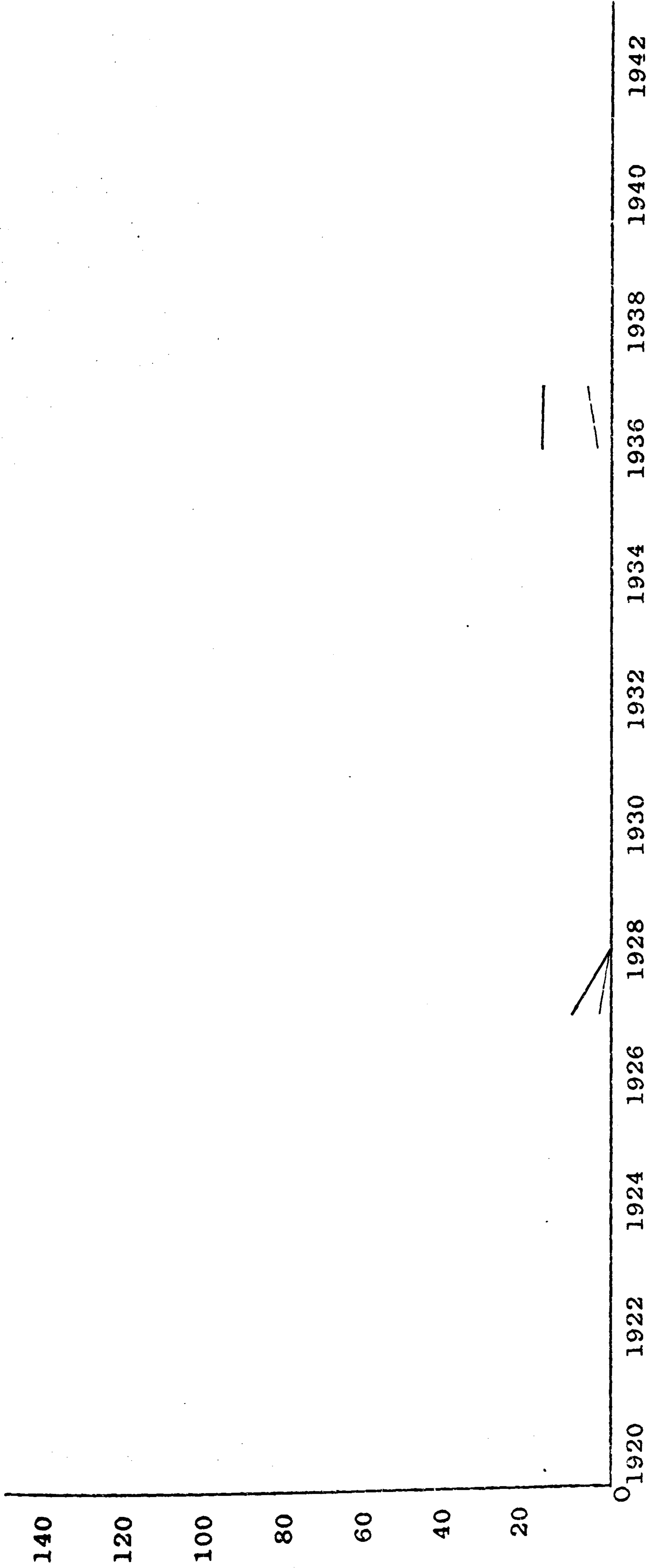
171. Total New Orleans Recordings

Total Recordings Made - - - - - Total Recordings Not Issued - - - - -
 Total Recordings Issued - - - - - Number of Artists - - - - -



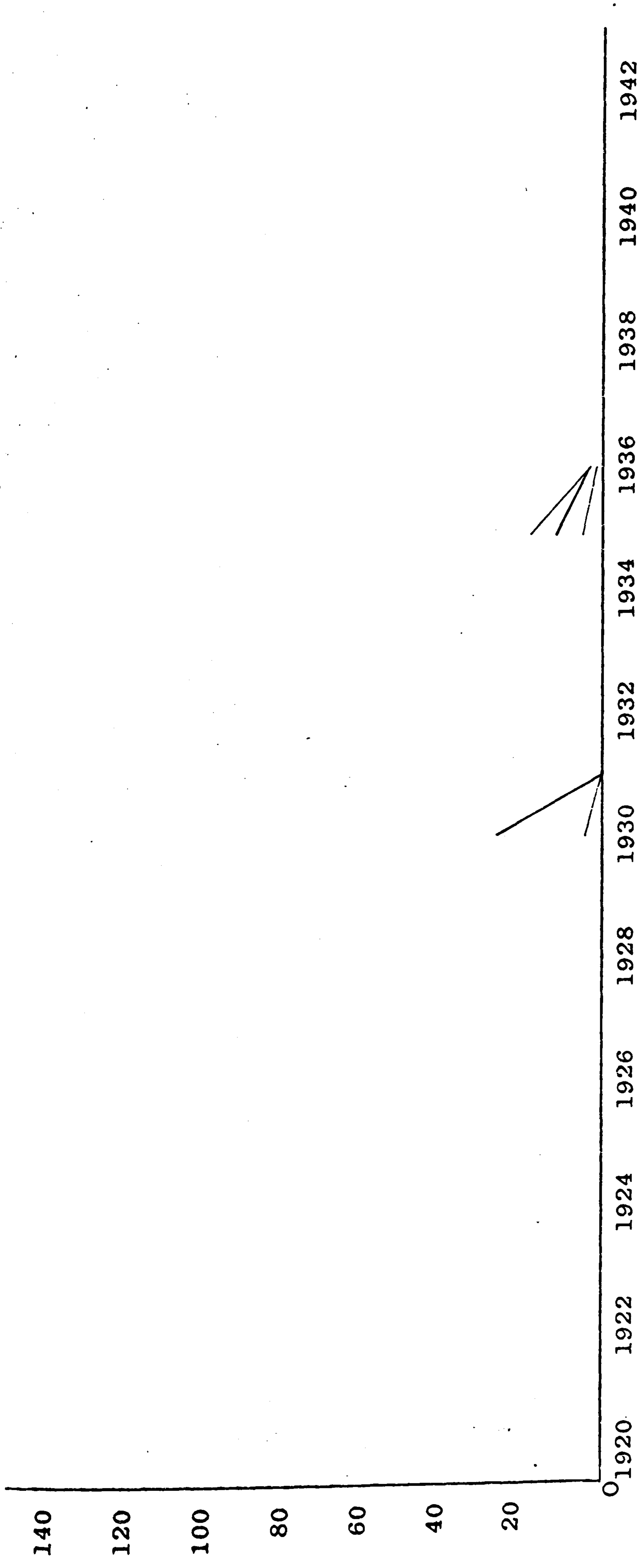
172. Total Dallas Recordings

Total Recordings Made - - - - - Total Recordings Not Issued - - - - -
 Total Recordings Issued - - - - - Number of Artists - - - - -



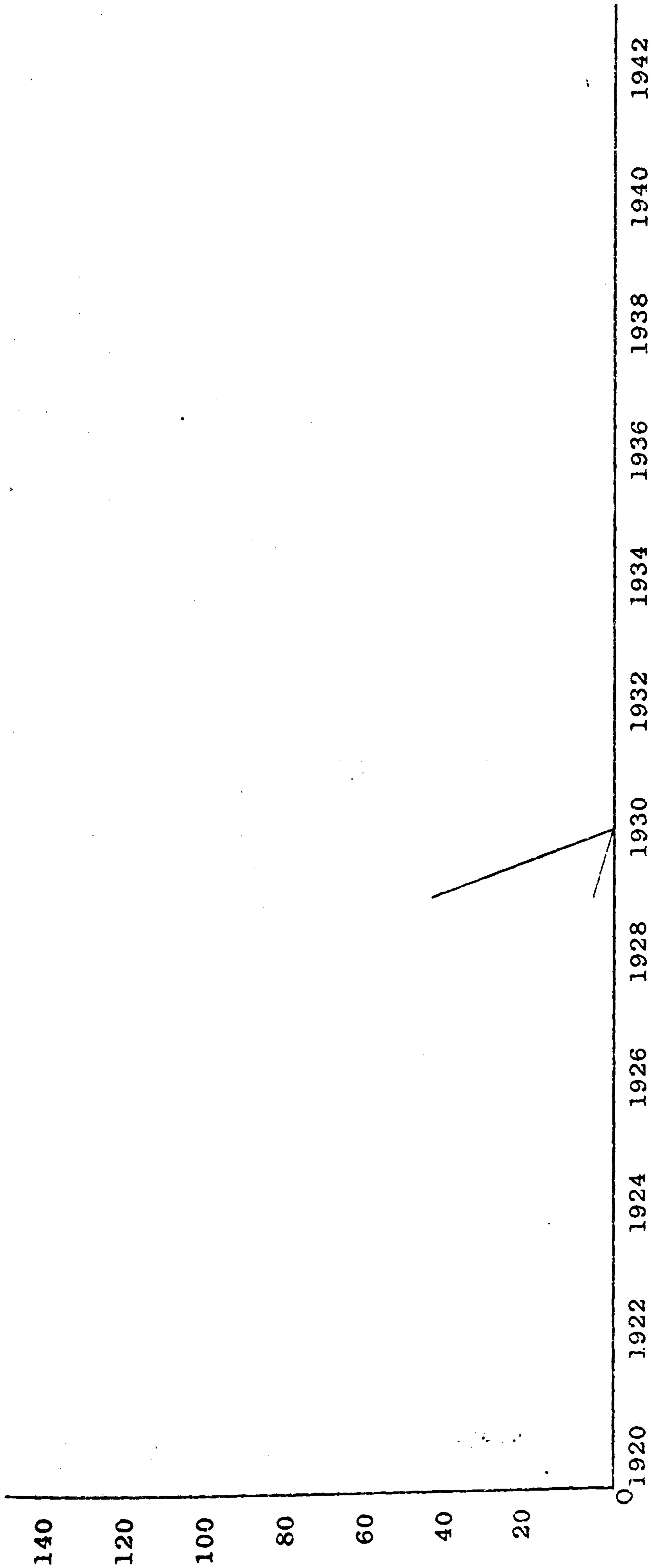
173. Total Charlotte Recordings

Total Recordings Made	-	Total Recordings Not Issued	-
Total Recordings Issued	-	Number of Artists	-



174. Total Jackson Recordings

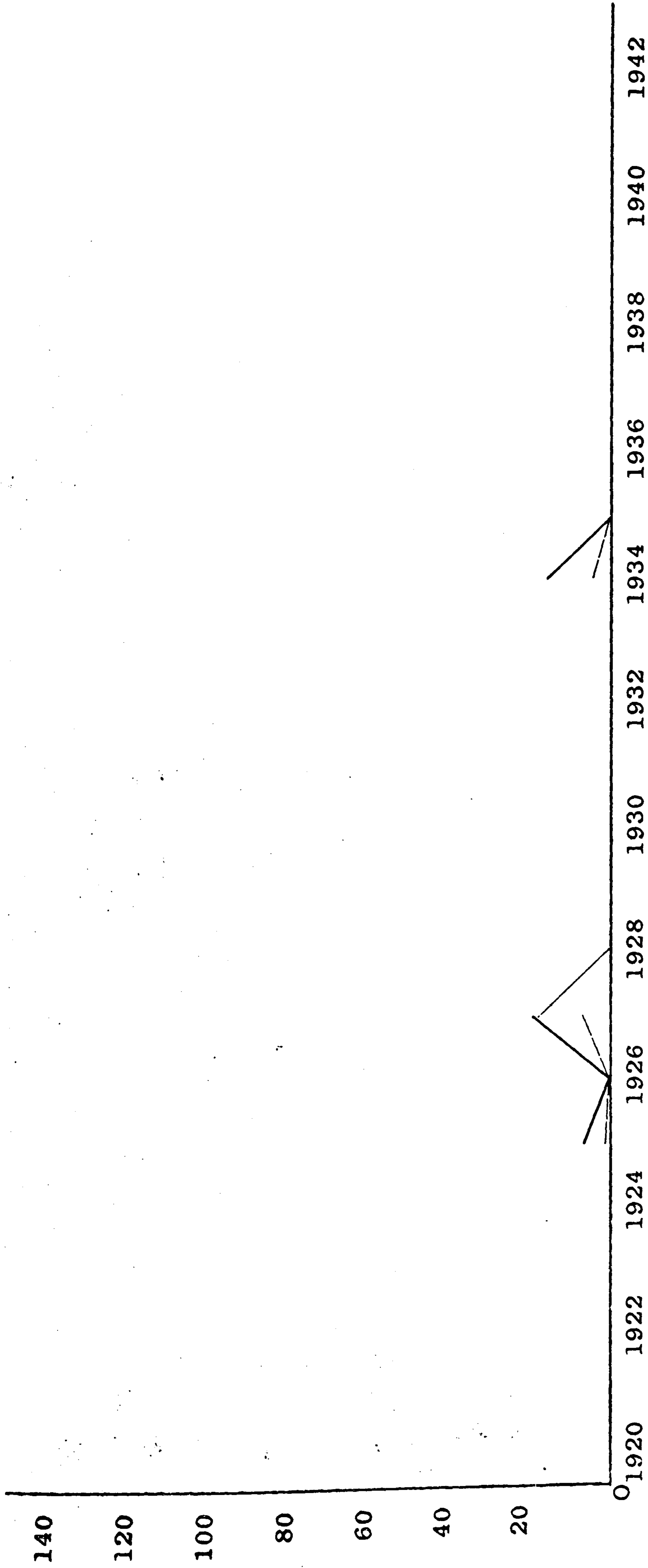
Total Recordings Made - - - - - Total Recordings Not Issued - - - - -
 Total Recordings Issued - - - - - Number of Artists - - - - -



175. Total Long Island City Recordings

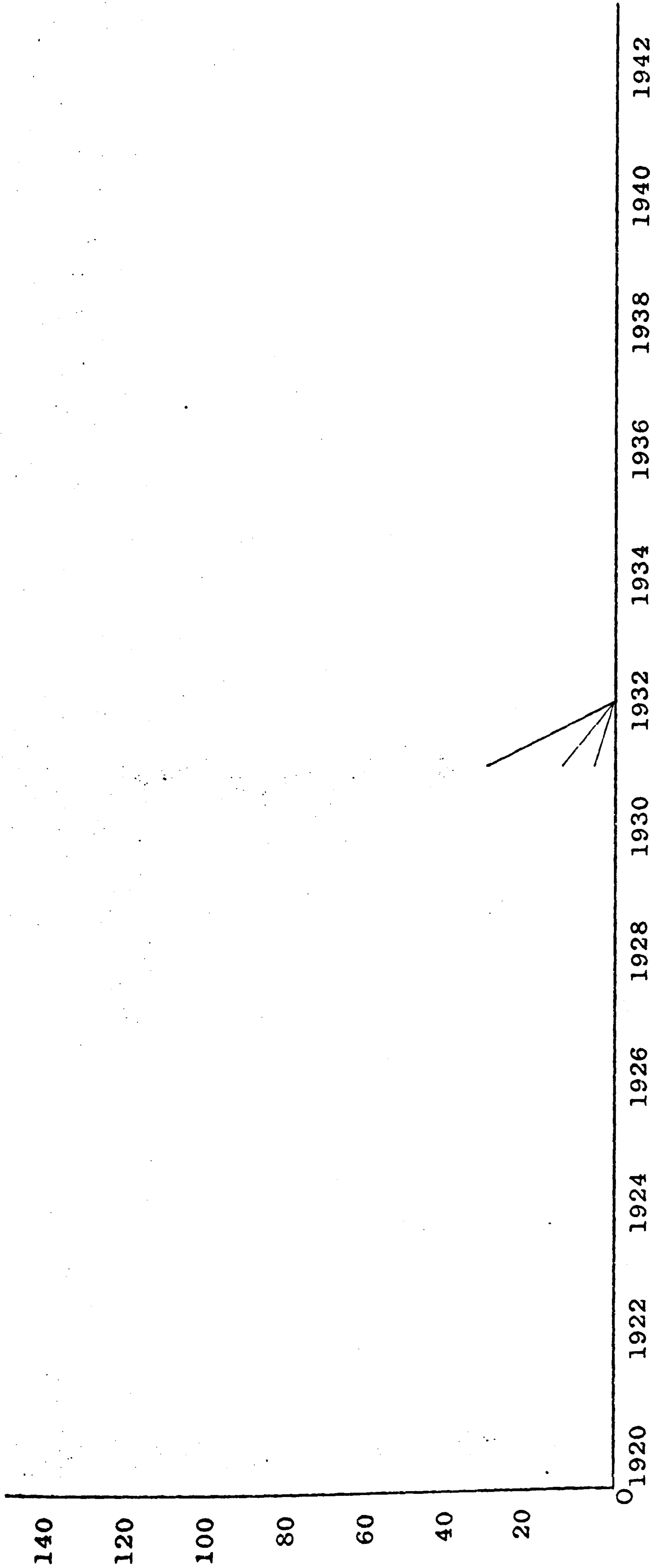
Total Recordings Made - - - - - Total Recordings Not Issued -

Total Recordings Issued - - - - - Number of Artists - - - - -



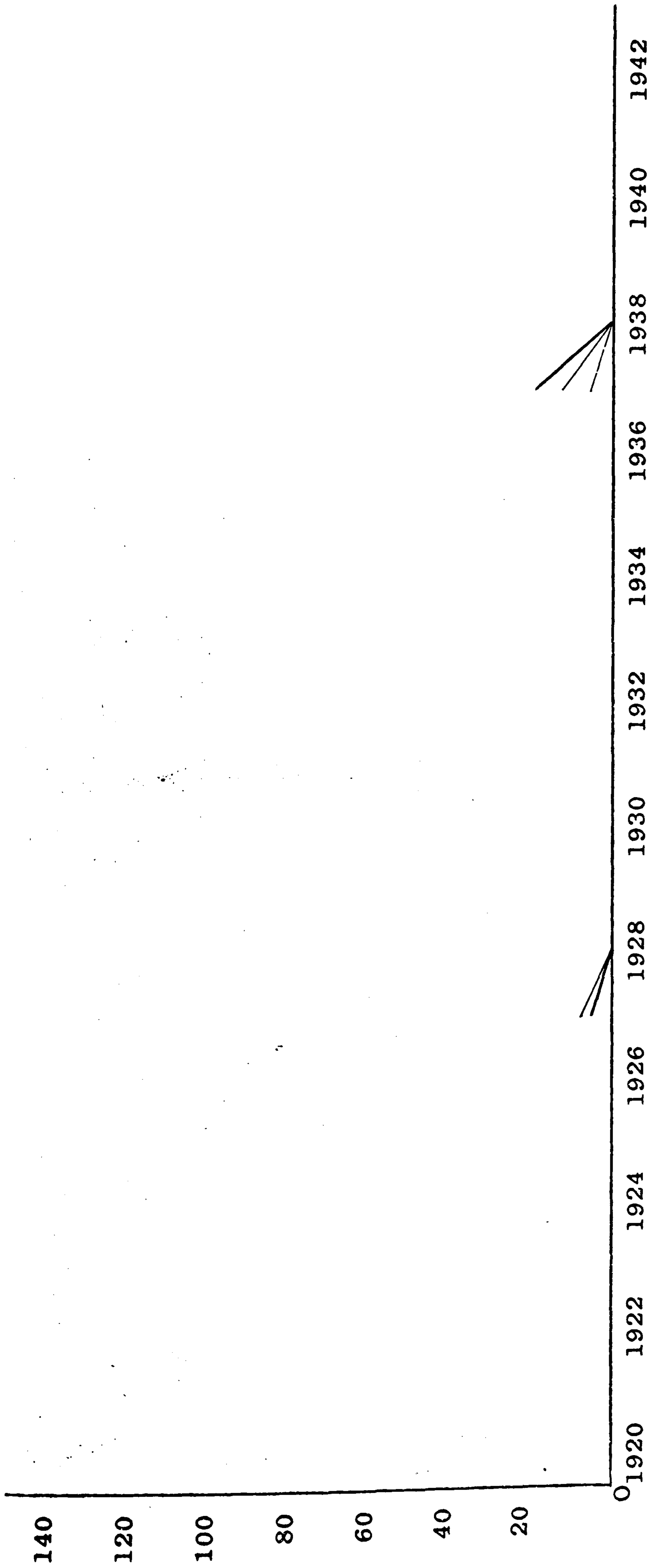
176. Total St. Louis Recordings

Total Recordings Made - - - - - Total Recordings Not Issued - - - - -
 Total Recordings Issued - - - - - Number of Artists - - - - -



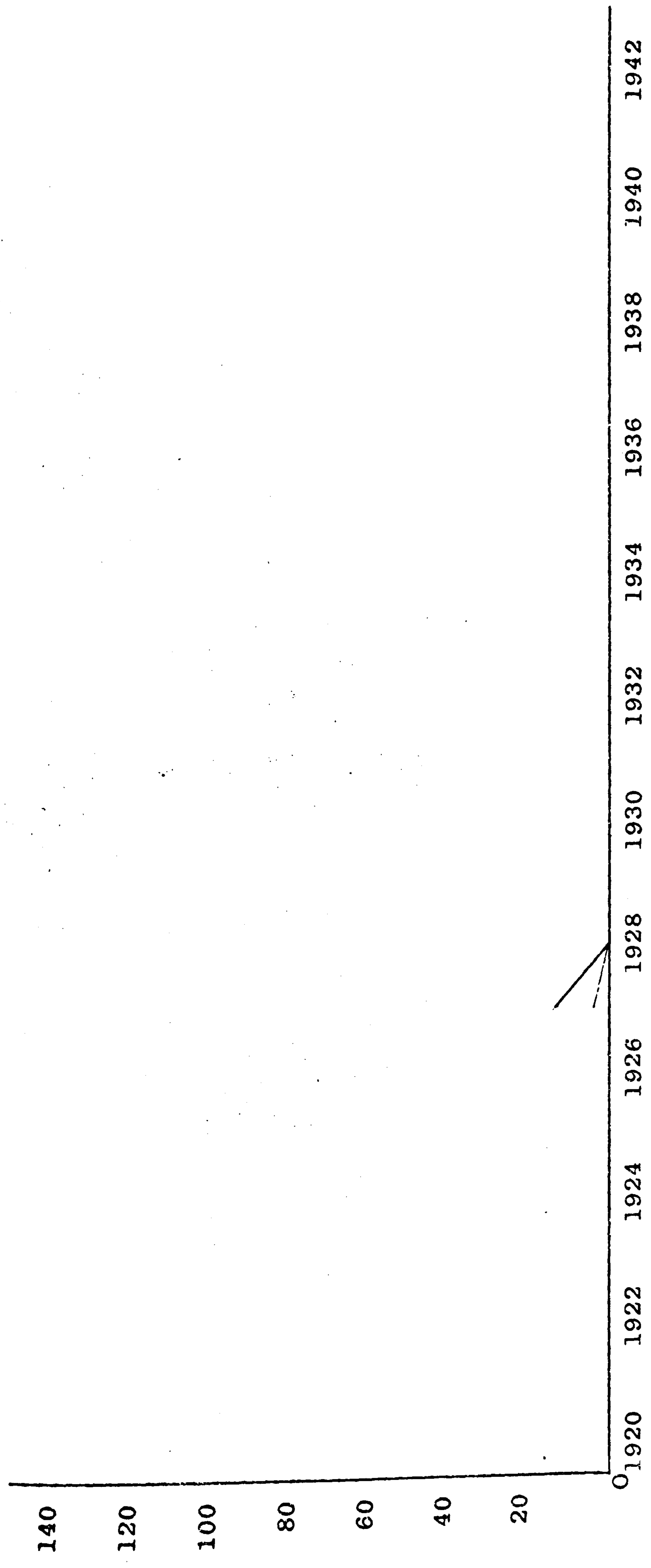
177. Total Louisville Recordings

Total Recordings Made	-	Total Recordings Not Issued	-
Total Recordings Issued	-	Number of Artists	-



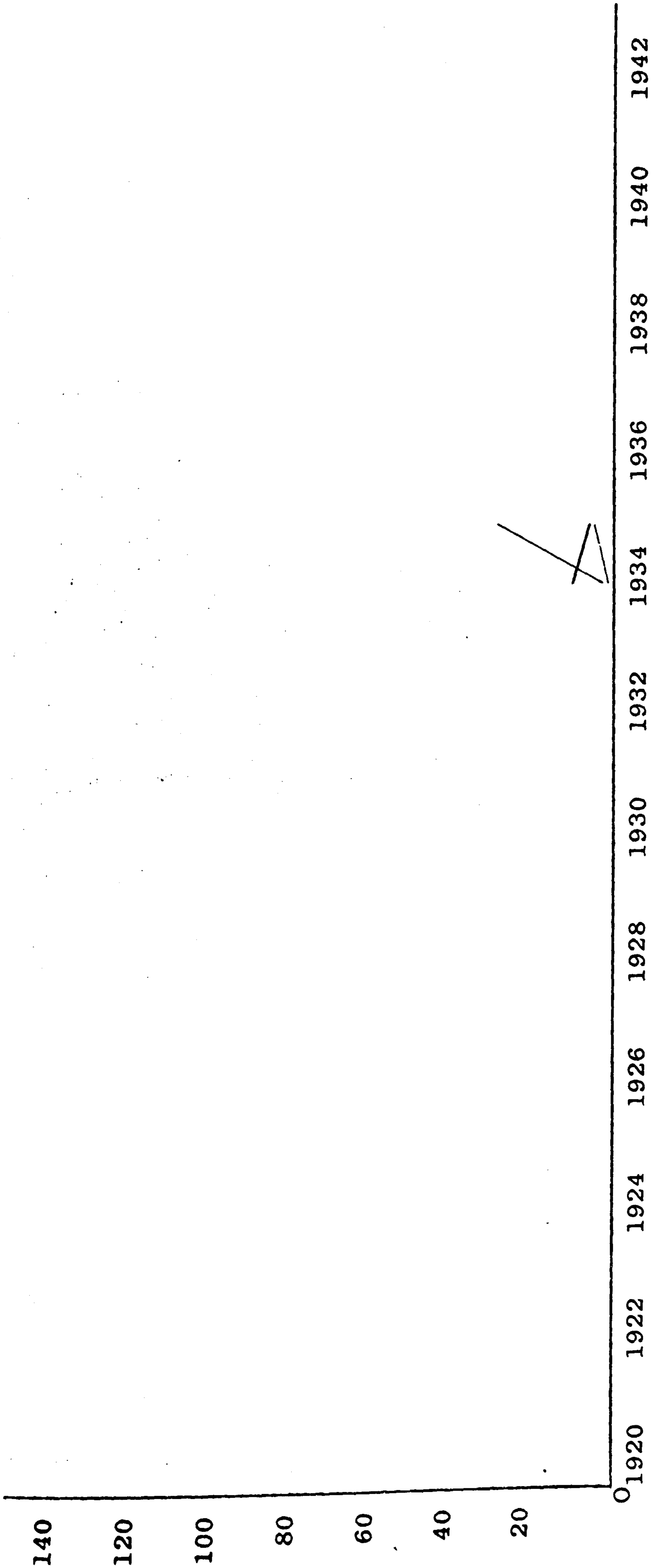
178. Total Birmingham Recordings

Total Recordings Made - - - - - Total Recordings Not Issued - - - - -
 Total Recordings Issued - - - - - Number of Artists - - - - -



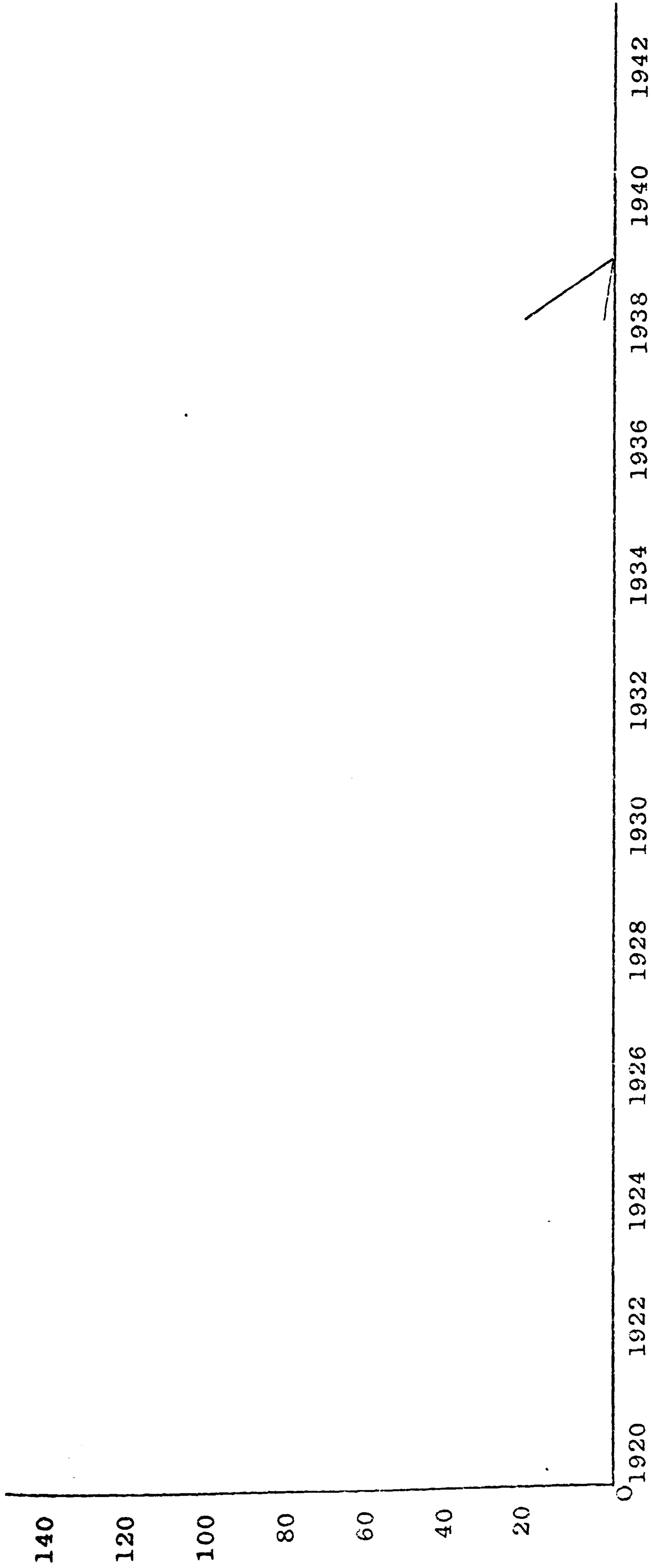
179. Total Camden Recordings

Total Recordings Made - - - - - Total Recordings Not Issued -
 Total Recordings Issued - - - - - Number of Artists - - - - -



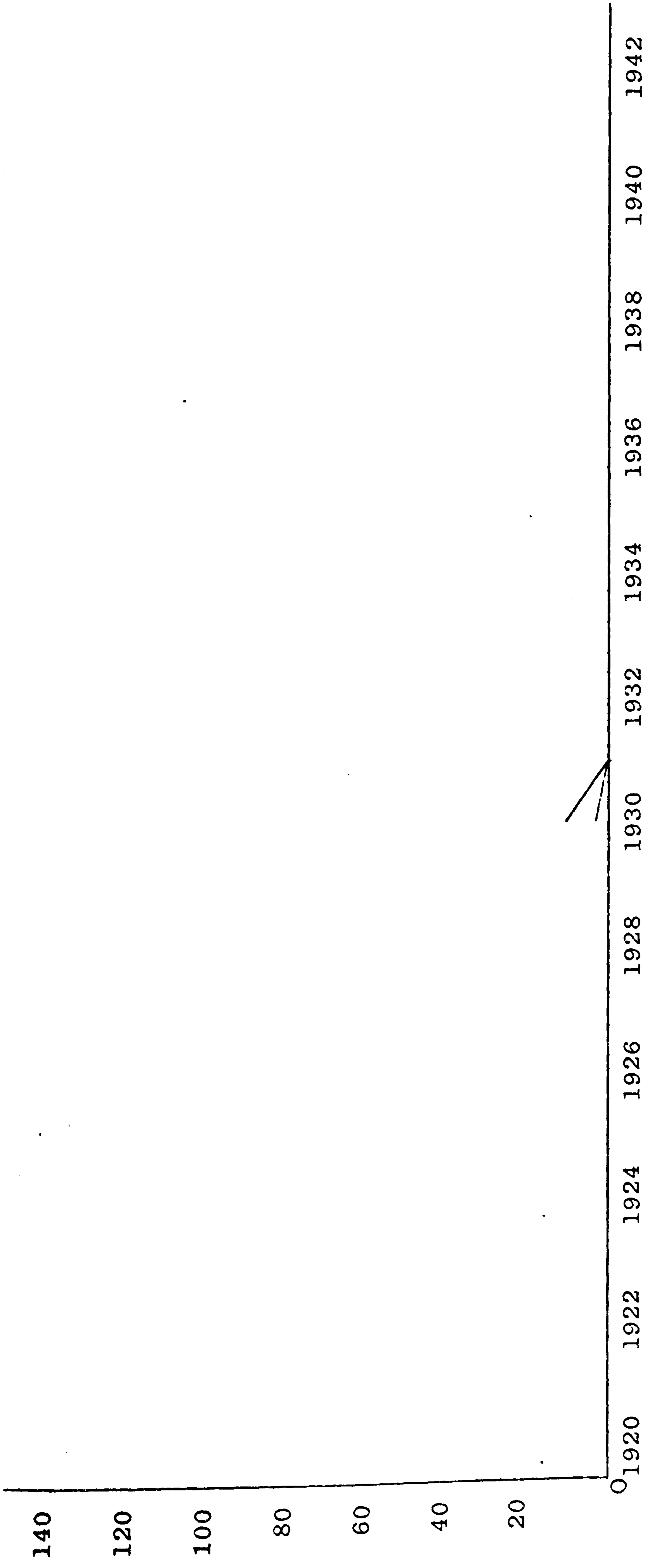
180. Total Fort Worth Recordings

Total Recordings Made - - - - - Total Recordings Not Issued - - - - -
 Total Recordings Issued - - - - - Number of Artists - - - - -



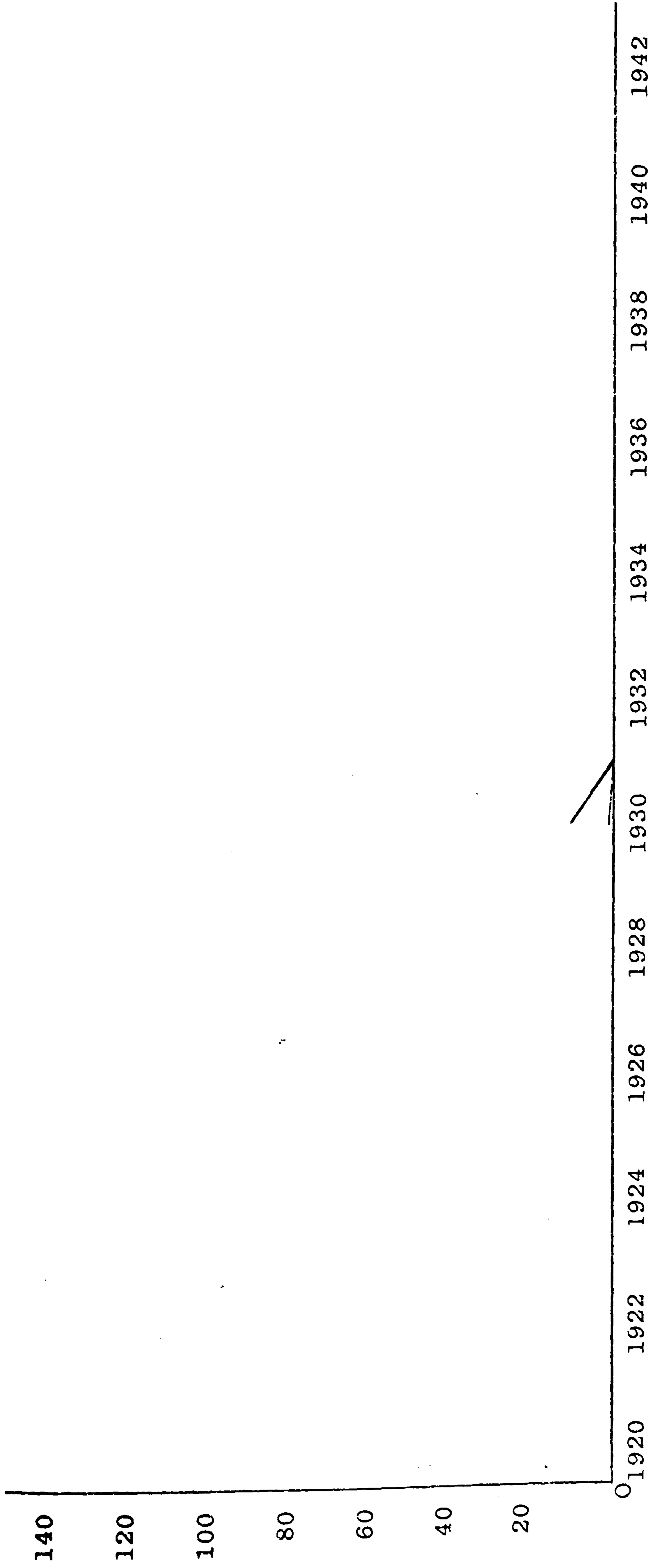
181. Total Columbia, S. Carolina, Recordings

Total Recordings Made	--	Total Recordings Not Issued	-
Total Recordings Issued	-	Number of Artists	-----



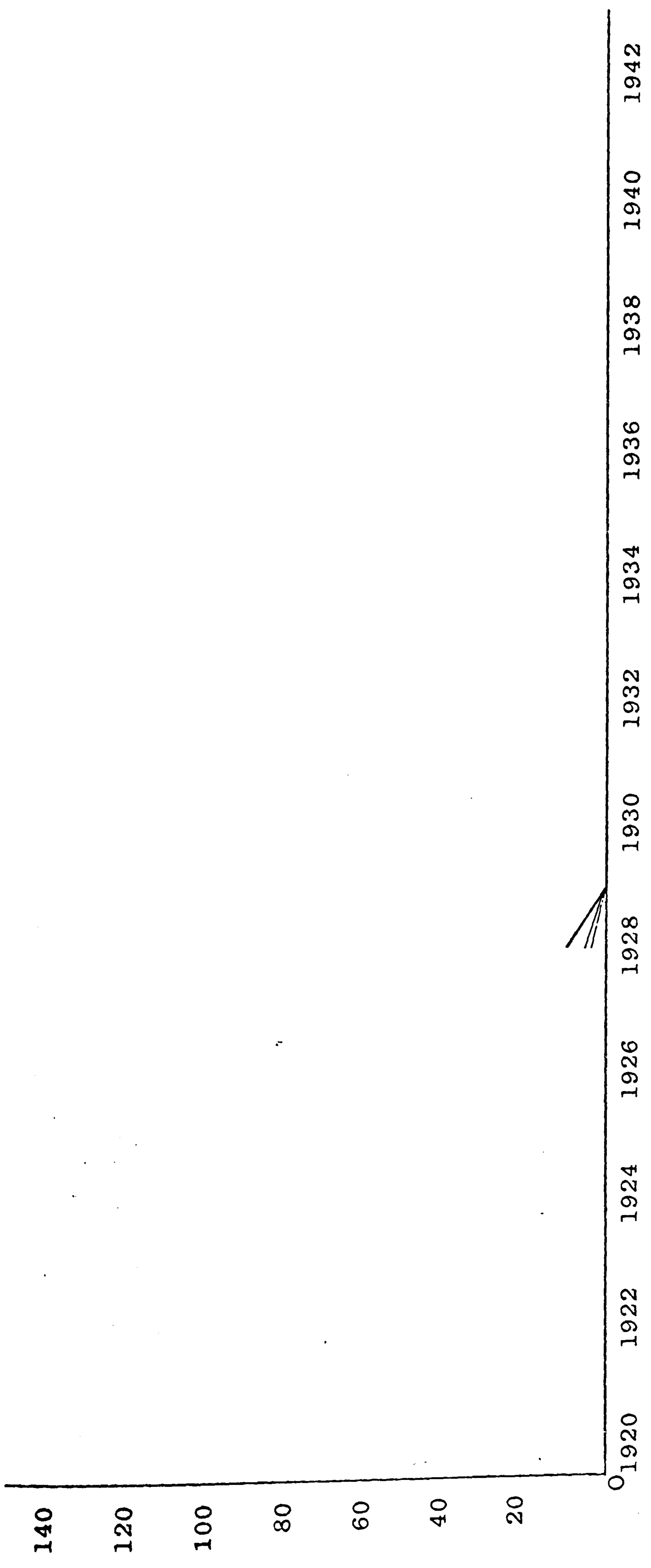
182. Total Cincinatti Recordings

Total Recordings Made	-	Total Recordings Not Issued	-
Total Recordings Issued	-	Number of Artists	-----



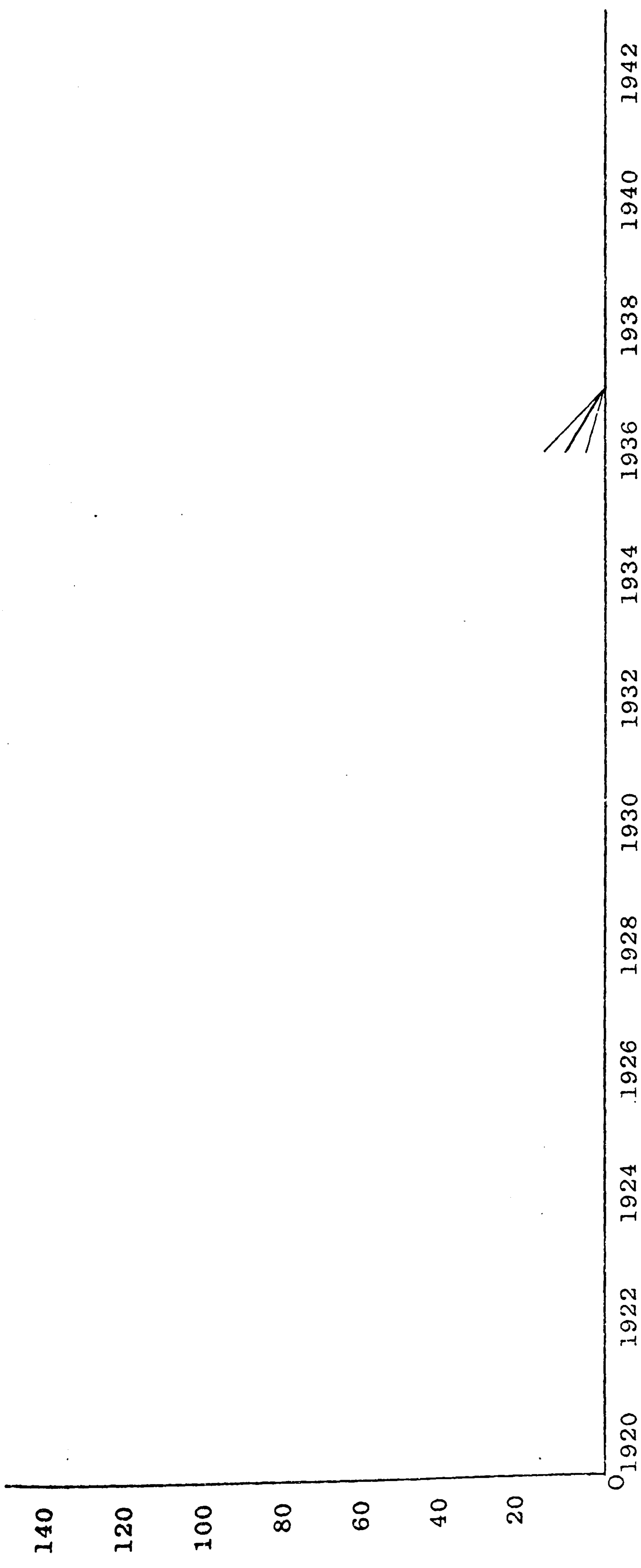
183. Total Shreveport Recordings

Total Recordings Made	-	Total Recordings Not Issued	-
Total Recordings Issued	-	Number of Artists	-



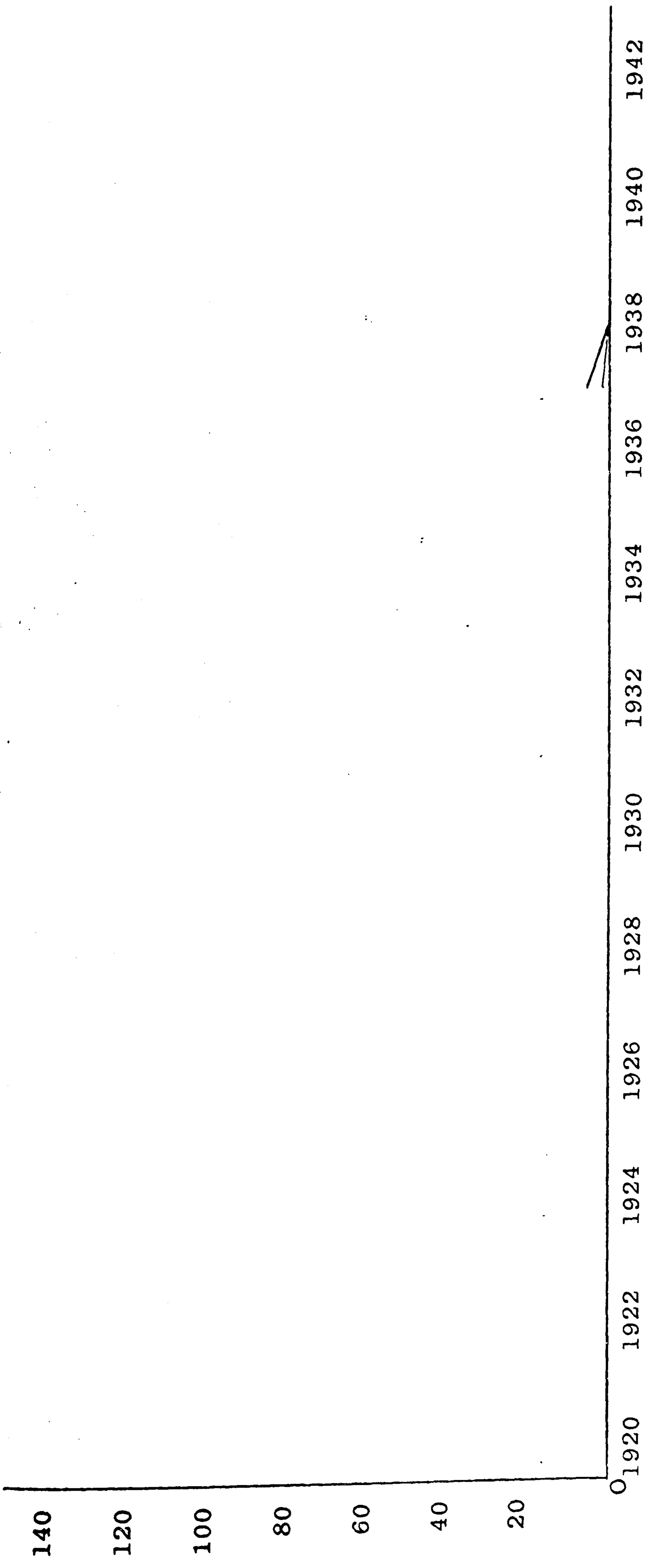
184. Total Indianapolis Recordings

Total Recordings Made - - - - - Total Recordings Not Issued - - - - -
 Total Recordings Issued - - - - - Number of Artists - - - - -



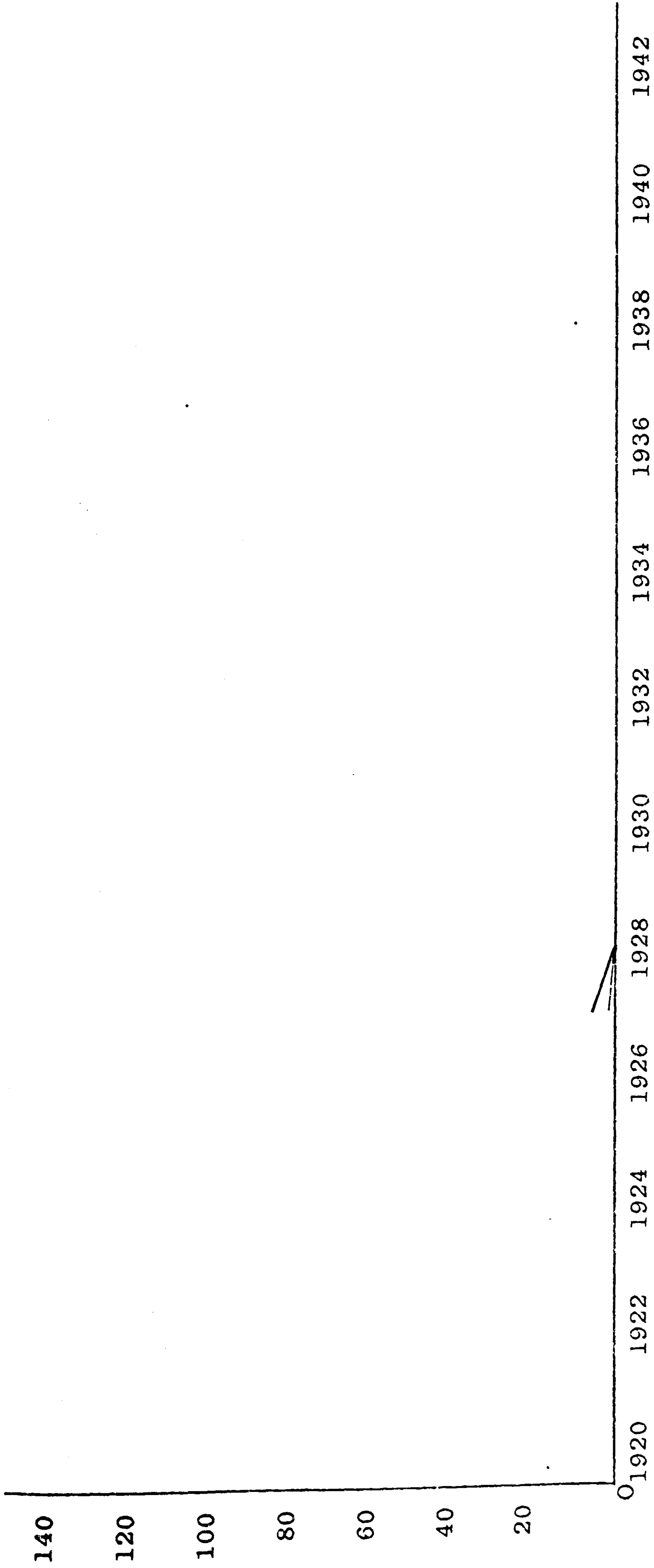
185. Total Hattisburg Recordings

Total Recordings Made	-	Total Recordings Not Issued	-
Total Recordings Issued	-	Number of Artists	-



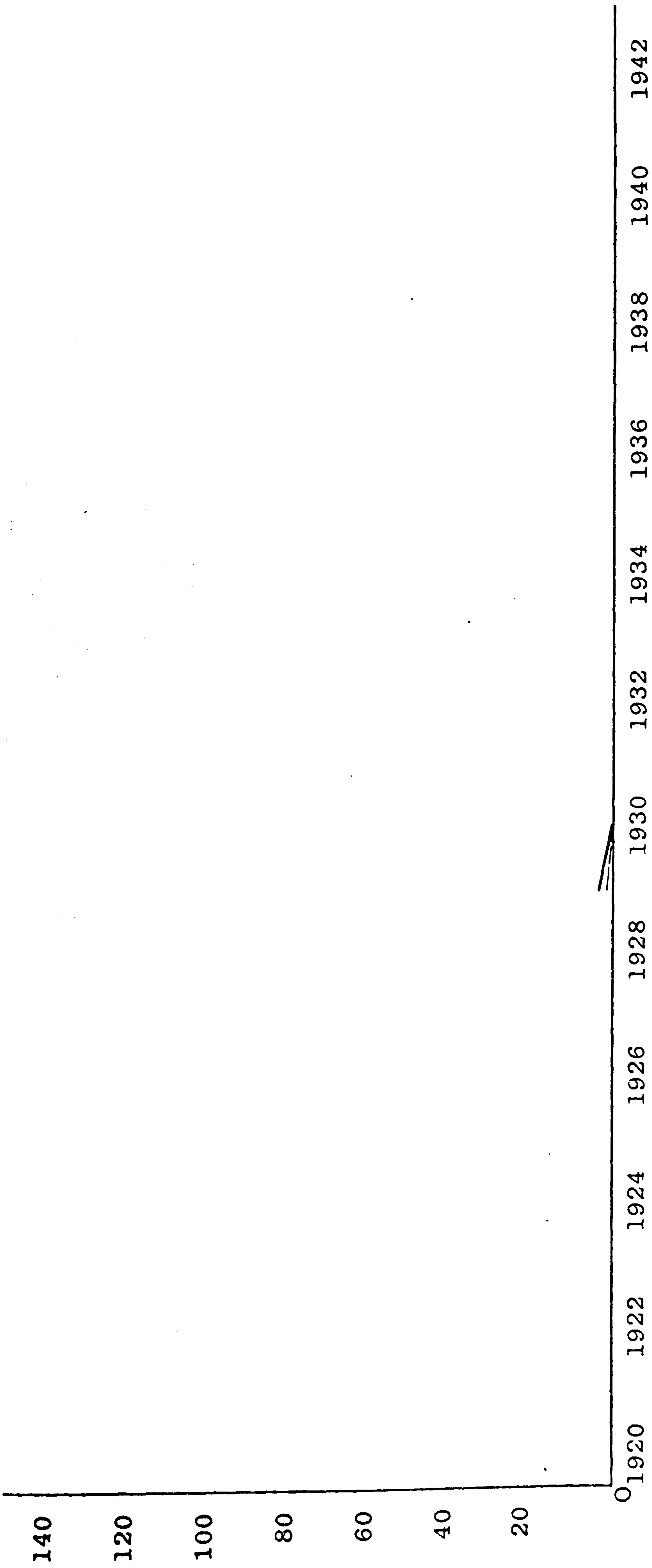
186. Total Hot Springs Recordings

Total Recordings Made	-	Total Recordings Not Issued	-
Total Recordings Issued	-	Number of Artists	-----



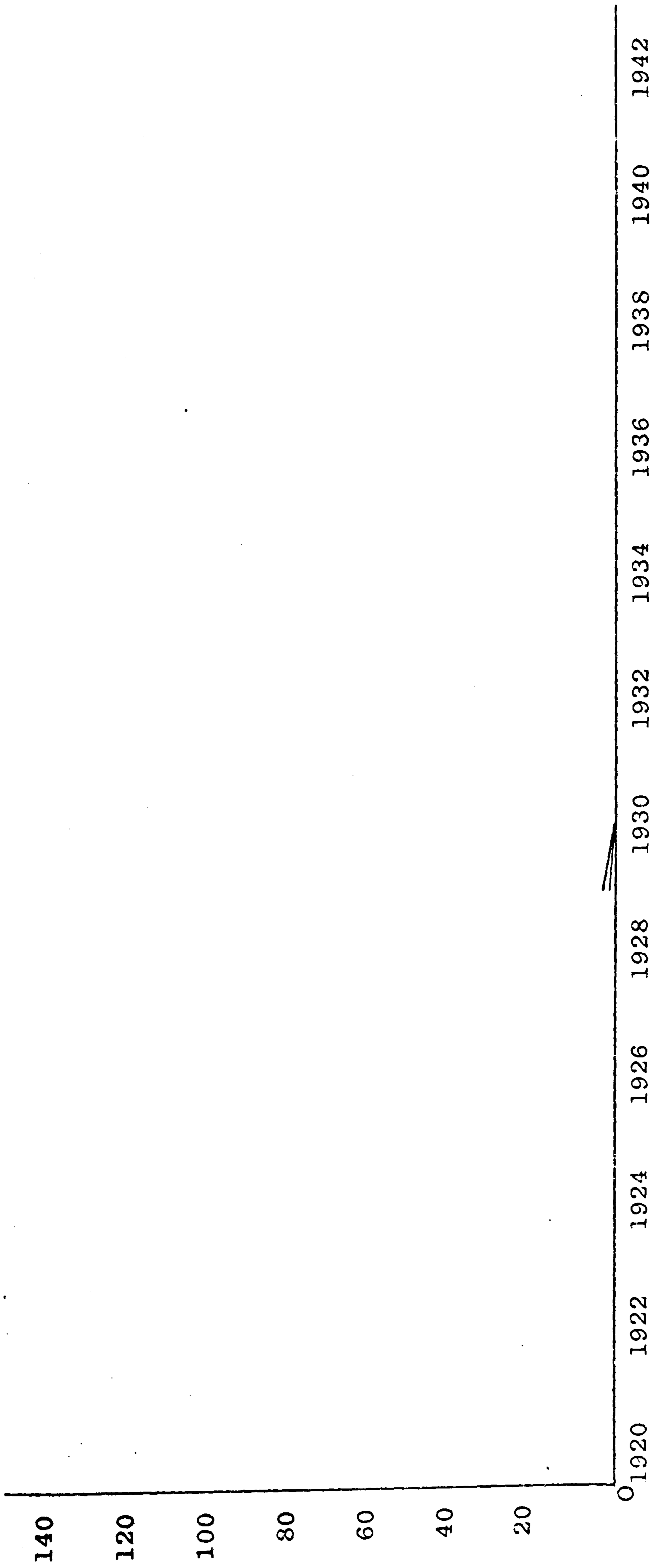
187. Total Savanah Recordings

Total Recordings Made	-	Total Recordings Not Issued	-
Total Recordings Issued	-	Number of Artists	-



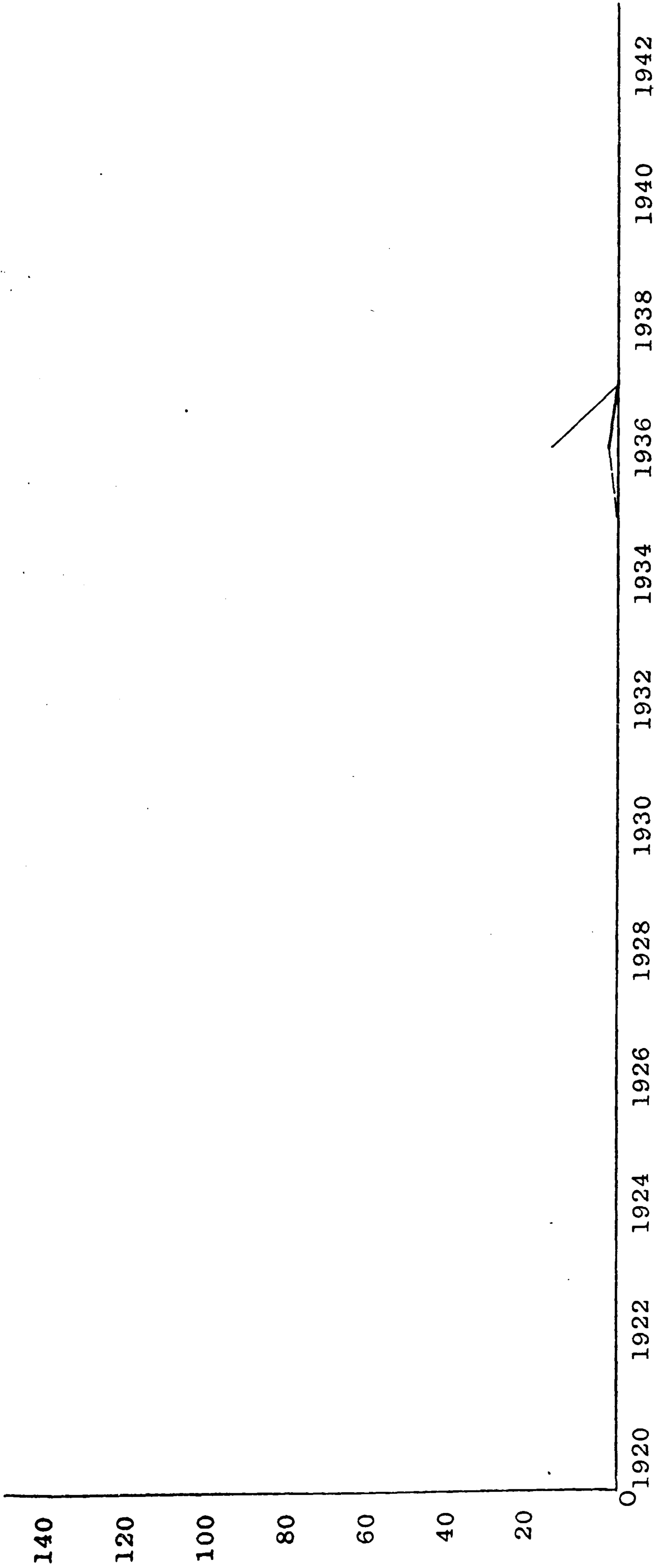
188. Total Kansas City Recordings

Total Recordings Made	-	Total Recordings Not Issued	-
Total Recordings Issued	-	Number of Artists	-



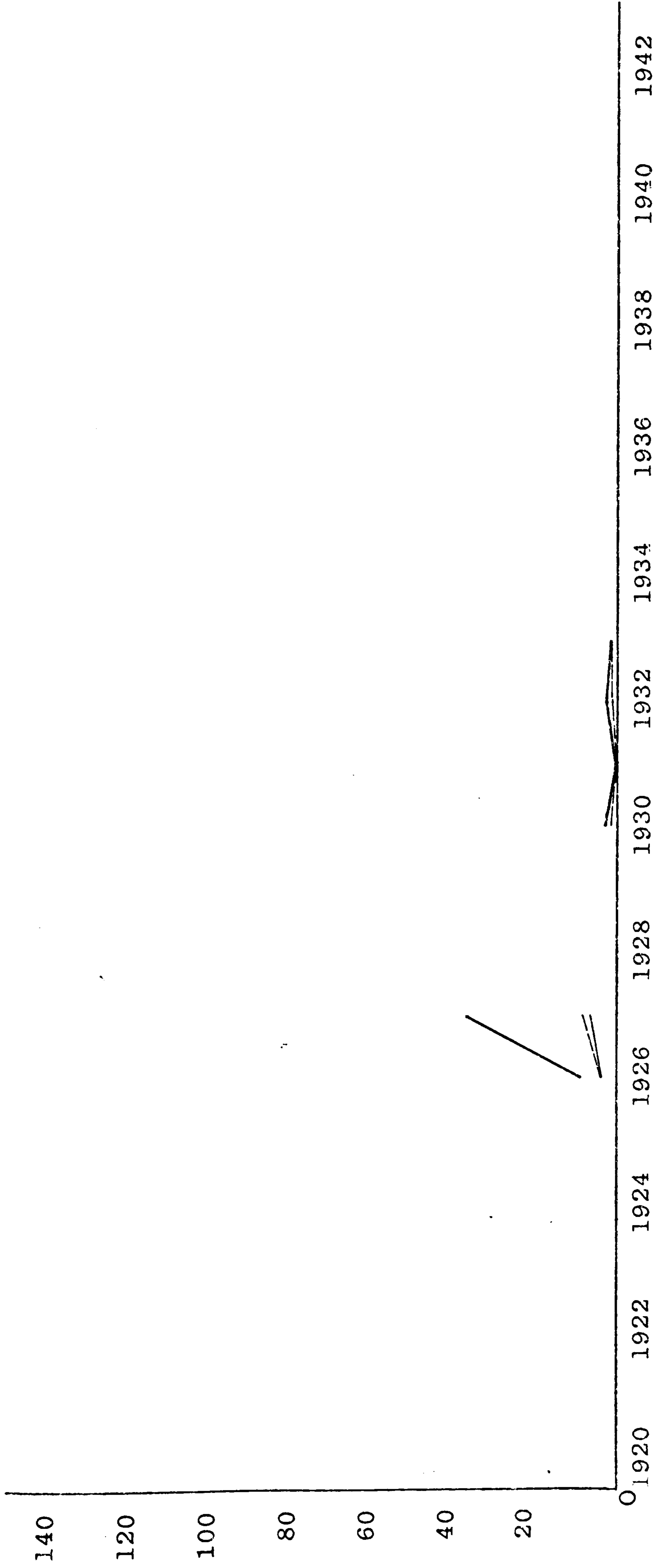
189. Total Knoxville Recordings

Total Recordings Made	-	Total Recordings Not Issued	-
Total Recordings Issued	-	Number of Artists	----



190. Total Augusta Recordings

Total Recordings Made	-	Total Recordings Not Issued	-
Total Recordings Issued	-	Number of Artists	-



191. Total Unknown Recordings

Total Recordings Made	-	Total Recordings Not Issued	-
Total Recordings Issued	-	Number of Artists	-