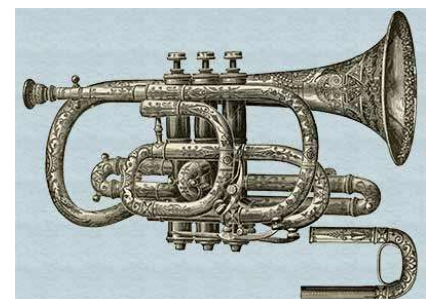
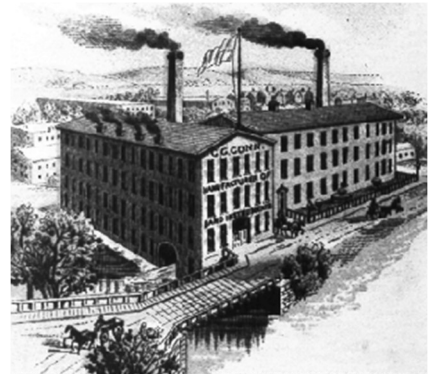
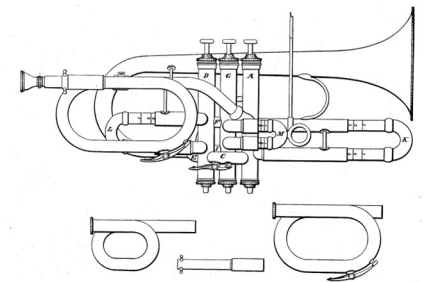
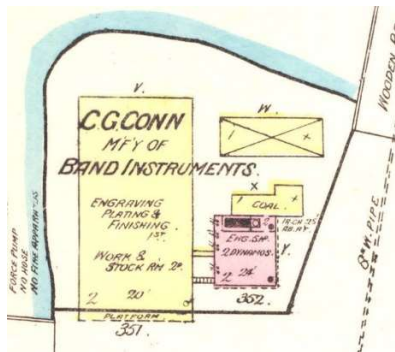


C. G. Conn

Elkhart, Indiana

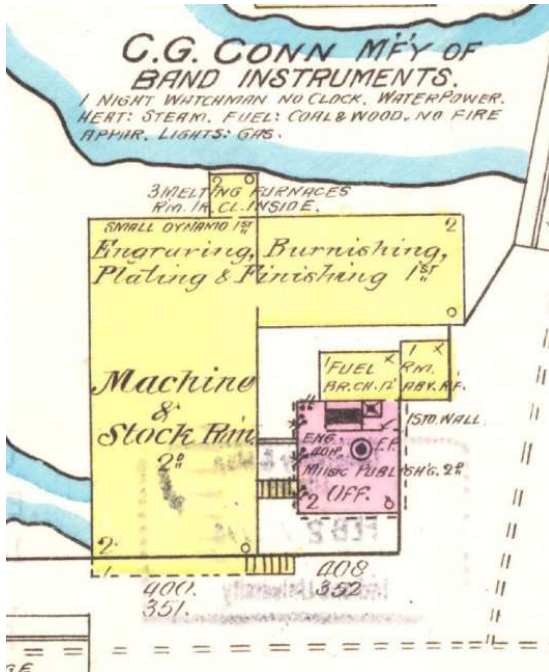
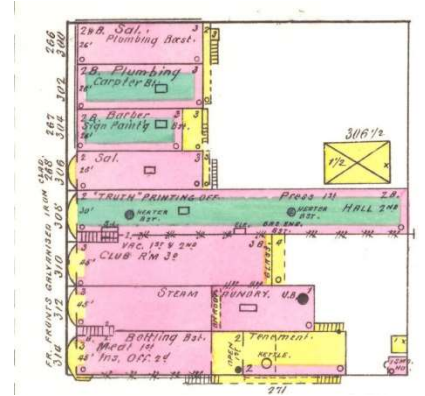
- 1860s Charles G. Conn (1844-1931, photo 1) starts a small grocery and bakery in Elkhart with a side business doing silver plating and rubber stamps (*A History of Band Instrument manufacturing in Elkhart*, Charles Reed).
- 1873 Following a lip injury, Conn starts developing a rubber-rimmed cornet mouthpiece using a lathe improvised from an old sewing machine frame (Reed).
- 1875 Conn is granted patent #160,164 in February for his rubber-rim mouthpiece design. He moves from above Kibbs Drug Store at #22 Jackson to the upper floor of McGregor & Son's woolen mill. A brass foundry was added nearby where the first one was produced in December.
- 1876 Conn partners with Eugene Dupont (1832-1881), a former employee of Henry Distin, to start instrument making (Reed).
- 1877 Conn applies with Dupont for the 4-in-1 cornet design in January. They purchase an old planing mill at the corner of Elkhart and East Jackson for their factory (Reed).
- 1878 Conn granted patent #199,516 (photo 2) for 4-in-1 design which plays in Eb, C, Bb & A (photo 3, Nick Decarlis). Conn employs 60 workers including fifteen French craftsmen from an English factory & John Martin (Reed).
- 1879 Conn & Dupont are granted patent #222,248 in December for a new valve design but their partnership ends this year.
- 1881 Conn granted patent #249,012 for clear bore valve design.
- 1883 The factory burns on January 29 and is rebuilt on the same site (Reed).

Here is the 1885 Sanborn map of the factory, which shows it as a two-story wood structure.



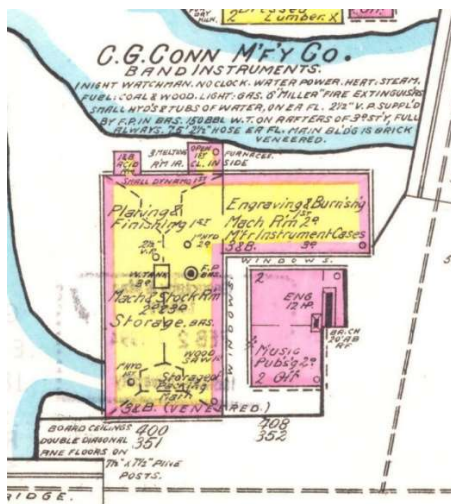
1887 In January, Conn purchases the Fiske factory in Worcester, MA (1889 Conn history) and introduces the Wonder model cornet (photo 2). The bells have both locations engraved (photo 3). Conn is granted patent #343,888 for the Wonder valve design.

1889 Conn granted patent #402,721 for valve passages and #405,395 for valve front design for bass horns. They are employing about 300 workers by the time of this Sanborn map below. An addition has been added in the rear.



1890 Conn with William Seidel, his factory supervisor until 1913, are granted patent #442,955 for key change slide. Conn starts the "Elkhart Truth" publication (1892 map at top right shows the location at #308 S. Main St). Conn makes the first double-bell euphonium (Reed).

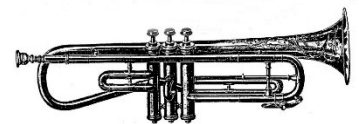
This 1892 map shows the change to a three-story building with a brick veneer and partially hipped roof.



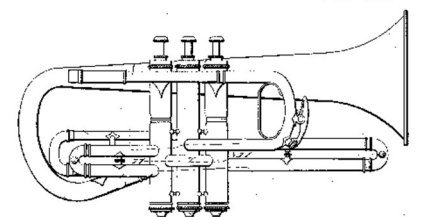
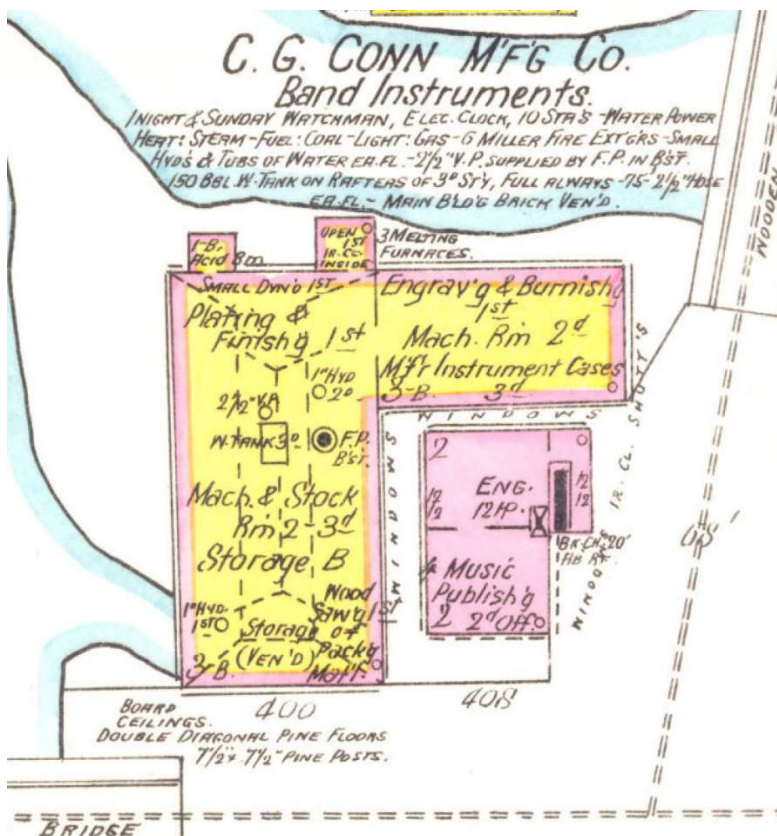
This photo matches the 1892, 1896 & 1901 maps.



The Perfected New York Wonder Trumpet,



Here is another map from 1896; unchanged from 1892.



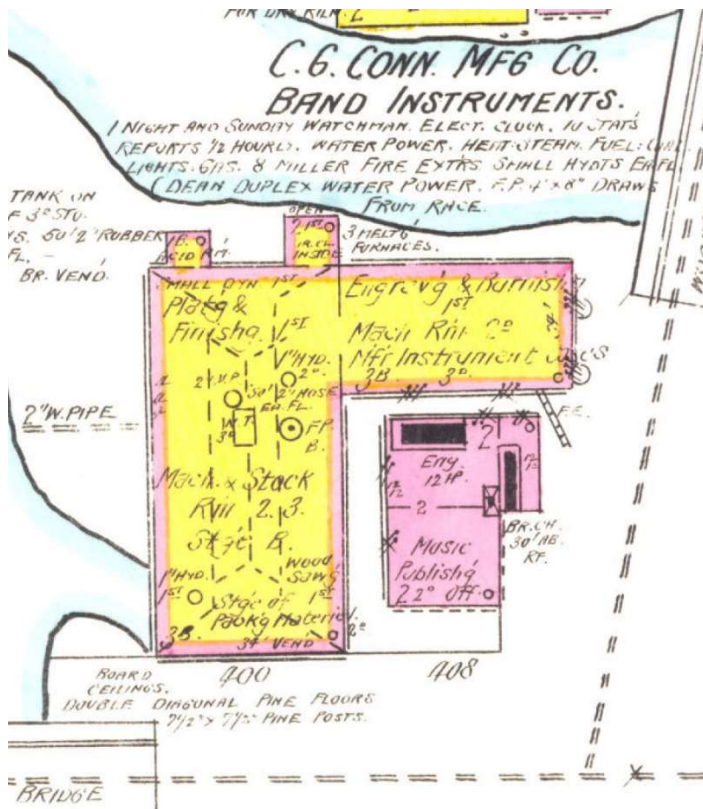
- 1896 James Boyer (1871-1934) becomes the head of the Conn harmony department. They have 150 workers (Reed).
- 1897 The New York store is opened, and the Worcester factory is phased out. NY Wonder cornets have the added location (photos 1 & 2).
- 1898 The first "Rain Catcher" tuba (photo 4) is built by Edwin Pounder (1874-1960) (Reed).

1900 The Conn Conservatory of Music is started and headed by James Boyer (Reed).

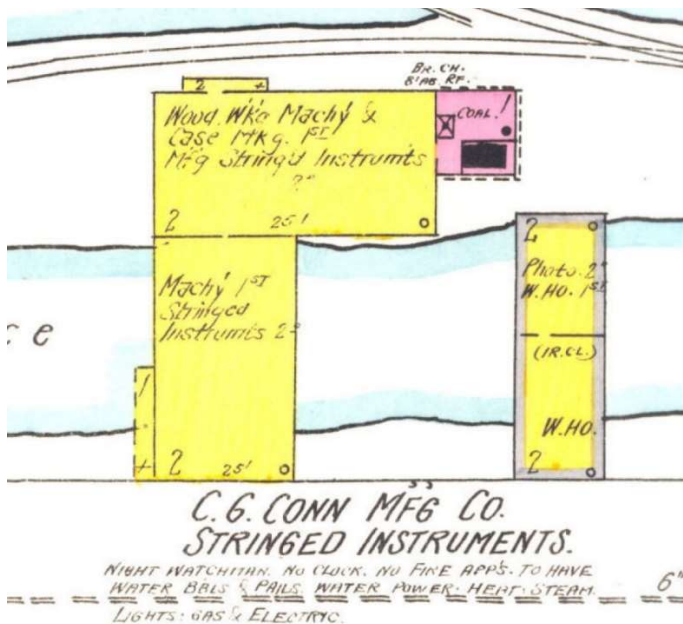
1902 The NY store is relocated and the bells lose the label.

1903 Conn granted patent #745,788 (photo 5) for the Conn-queror design (photo 6, Nick Decarlis).

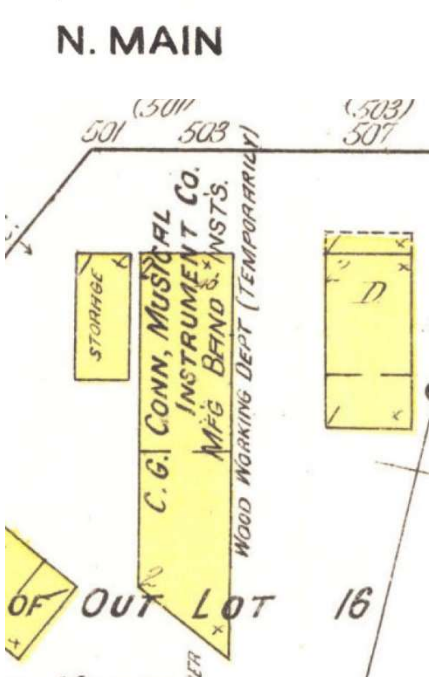
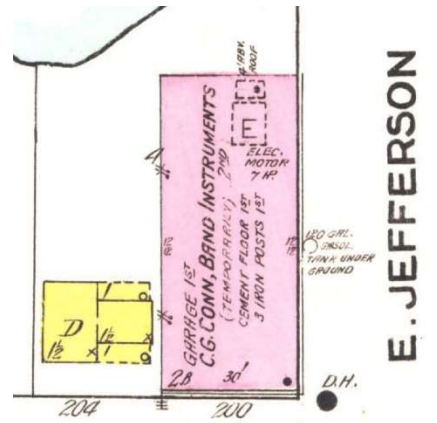
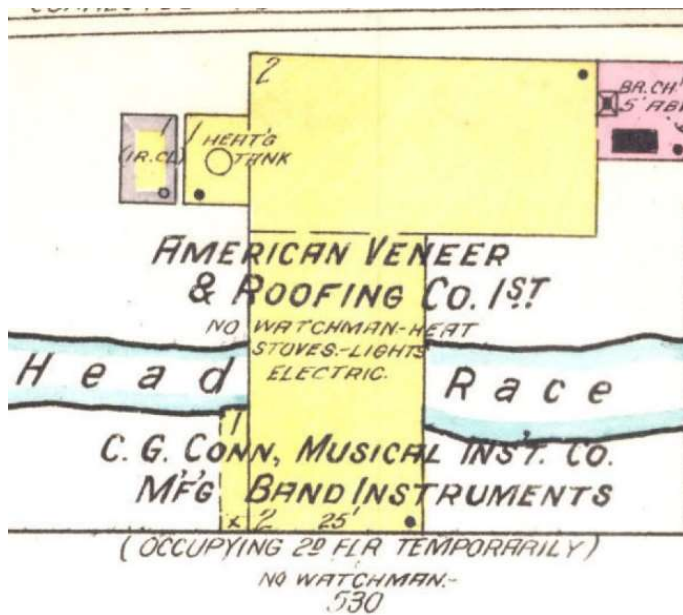
Here is the factory in 1901; still the same as 1892.



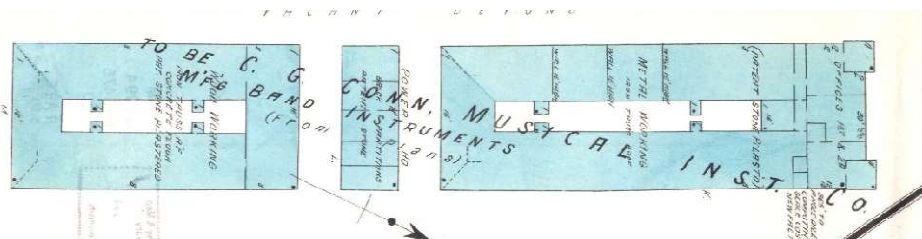
Sometime after 1896, Conn buys the old Elkhart Knitting Co. factory down the street and uses it for making stringed instruments (1901 map below).



- 1904 Conn is incorporated.
- 1905 The Perfected Wonder S-lead pipe cornet is introduced (photo 1).
- 1906 Workers join the metal polisher's union and add the stamp to the instruments (Reed).
- 1907 Conn granted patent #848,726 for 3rd slide improvement.
- 1909 Conn granted patents #923,812 for a rotary-piston valve, #931,039 for dual-port rotary valves, and #931,273 for bass horns with bell front design.
- 1910 The main factory burns on May 22 and a new one was built in about four months at the corner of Elkhart & Conn Streets. Photos just prior to the fire (1&2) show a much-enlarged factory since the 1901 map, which must have been built over the old hydraulic raceway. At the time of the 1910 Sanborn map, after the fire, Conn is in three temporary locations. #200 N. Main (photo 3), #503 E. Jackson (photo 4) and #530 E. Jackson, their old stringed instrument plant (photo 5 below).



The new factory is already in planning stages (Sanborn map).



Not much remains of the old factory.



1911 The Wonderphone models continue (photos 1&2) from 1909 and the New Invention Circus bore models are introduced (photo 3) (advertising).

James Boyer becomes the sales manager (Reed).

1913 Conn is granted patents #1,050,344 for a mouthpiece and #1,061,885 with Frederick Todt for a sliding key-change valve.

1914 Conn granted design patent #45,555 for a cornet design (photo 4).

1915 Conn sells the company to Carl Greenleaf (1876-1959) for \$400,000. Now C. G. Conn Ltd starting on Aug 15 (Reed).

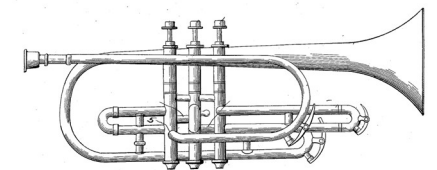
1917 The plant is expanded, and the Pan American line of student instruments is started (Reed). Now 550 workers.



1918 Greenleaf is fighting the Metal Polisher's Union strike.

1919 Beginning of model numbers stamped on the lead pipe.

1921 Ora Dotson for Conn is granted design patent #58,727 for a double French horn.

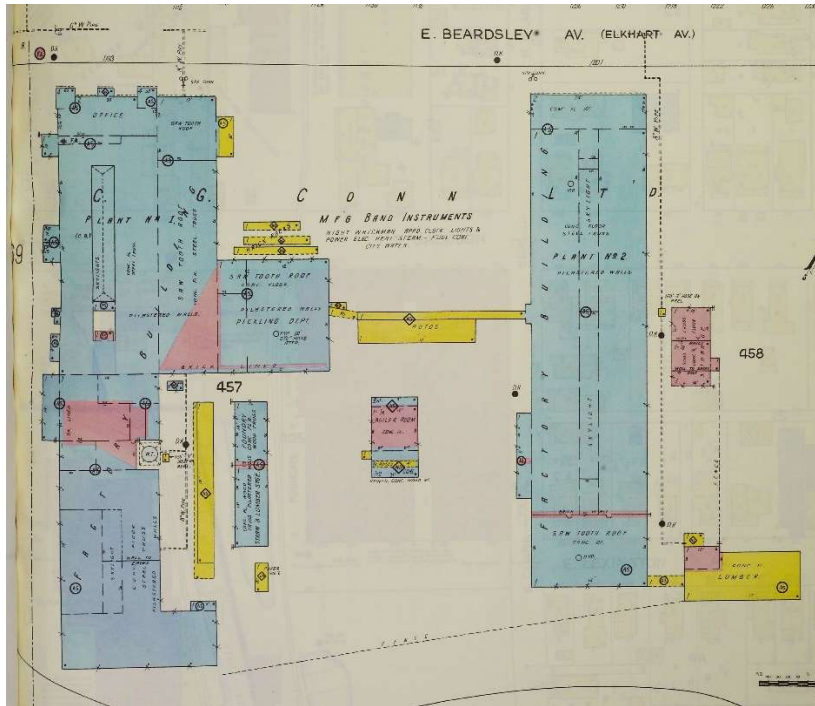


1923 New stores in Boston & Kansas City. New “French” trumpet case with flairs for bell on both sides (*MTR*).

The Conn factory has 180,000 sf (Moody’s Investor’s Service).

The Conn National School of Music opens in Chicago under Fred Innes (*Musical Truth*, 10-26).

1927 Sanborn map of Conn factory.



1928 The Conn research department is started & they offer the first narrow trumpet design (Reed). New Fluegelhorn out.

1929 Edward Gulick for Conn granted patent #1,740,013 for the visible embrochure mouthpiece (photo 7 last page).

Conn buys the Leedy Manufacturing Co, the largest drum maker, and moves them to Elkhart in 1930 (Reed).

1930 Gulick granted patents #1,759,824 for 3rd slide spring action and #1,764,562 for quick key change valve. Phillip Burkle for Conn granted patent #1,837,201 for key change on a bugle.

Conn buys Ludwig & Ludwig drums (Groves).

1931 Cavalier line starts under Pan American. Conn dies in Los Angeles.

1932 The rimless Voca Bell is introduced (photos 1&2); often with Pan engraved on the bell. The Conn School of Music ends (Reed).

1934 Short-action valves are introduced.



- 1938 The Coprion bell is introduced. Alfred L. Smith is vp.
- 1941 Conn has 988 workers on December 31 (Moody's).
- 1942 Civilian instrument production ends on June 1 with remaining stock to be used for the military (Reed).
- 1943 Conn has 1,850 workers on December 31; all devoted to military contracts (Moody's).
- 1946 Civilian instrument production begins again (Reed).
Conn has a 15-week union strike during the winter with no production (Reed).
- 1947 Conn has 1,305 workers (Moody's).
- 1949 Carl Greenleaf (photo 3) retires and is replaced by president Paul Gazlay (1897-1966). All subsidiaries are merged into Conn Ltd and run as divisions (Reed).
- 1950 Production is reduced due to government restrictions for the Korean war (Reed).
- 1951 Conn had 956 workers (Moody's). Engraver Julius Stenberg (photo 3) retires after 64 years of service (Reed).
- 1952 Conn operates three factories of 250,000, 52,000, and 24,000 sf (Moody's Investor's Service). The Federal government limits them to 35% of the copper they were using in 1950 (Reed). Engraver Charles Stenberg (photo 4) retires after 72 years of service (Reed).
- 1953 Brass restrictions are ended in February and normal production can resume (Reed).
- 1955 The Pan American line is ended and the Connstellation model is introduced.
- 1958 Carl chooses Leland B. Greenleaf (1904-c.1978) to be the president of Conn and brother Charles (1914-1987) to head Buescher. This causes some family tension as Charles wanted to run Conn (Peter Perez).
- 1960 The fiberglass Sousaphone is introduced (photo 4, last page).
- 1963 Brass instrument #1 million is built.
- 1967 Peter Perez (married to Leland's daughter Carroll) joins Conn doing market research for the band department as well as the new electric organ division (Perez).
- 1968 A hostile takeover by Donaldson, Lufkin & Jenrette is attempted which forces Leland Greenleaf and the board to



find an alternate buyer. Conn stock was not doing well, and the family still owned about one third of the stock, but they had no strong family candidate to take over leadership (Perez).

- 1969 Leland Greenleaf sells Conn to Crowell-Collier MacMillan Co in April (Conn). Jack Latter becomes the first non-family president of Conn and moves the offices to Oakbrook, Illinois. They were having problems with the union and wanted to separate production from management (Perez).
- 1971 Conn ends domestic student instrument production and starts buying 75% of their inventory from Yamaha in April (1973 US tariff report). Conn buys CMI plant in Abilene.
- 1972 Brass production moves to the former Reynolds plant in Abilene, Texas (below) which was built in 1964. The newer brass plant in the Elkhart industrial park is sold to Selmer and the 1910 factory is sold to Coachmen Industries (Conn).



- 1974 Peter Perez becomes president. He finds that the move to Abilene was a fatal decision as the labor market was bad there (Perez).
- 1977 Perez leaves to work for CBS Musical Instruments, which owns Steinway and eventually buys Lyon & Healy and Gemeinhardt (Perez).
- 1979 Most of the 1910 factory is razed.
- 1980 Conn is sold to Daniel Henkin, owner of Gemeinhardt Flutes, who brings the headquarters back to Elkhart.
- 1983 Henkin buys King Musical Instruments.
- 1985 Henkin sells to Swedish group Skane Gripen in October, and they form United Musical Instruments under the direction of Bernhard Muskantor (Conn).
- 1986 The Texas plant is closed, and brass production is moved to the King plant in Eastlake, Ohio and Nogales, Arizona.



1912 Booster cornet above
(author's photos)



2000 UMI is purchased by Steinway Musical.

2002 UMI is merged with Selmer to form Conn-Selmer.

Conn New York Symphony Special (author's photo)



Marching man logo trademarked in 1938 with first use in 1933.



2023 The last remaining portion of the 1910 factory is to be demolished. It will cost \$250,000 for the demolition and another \$4M for site remediation (Aug 15 WSBT news report).

