

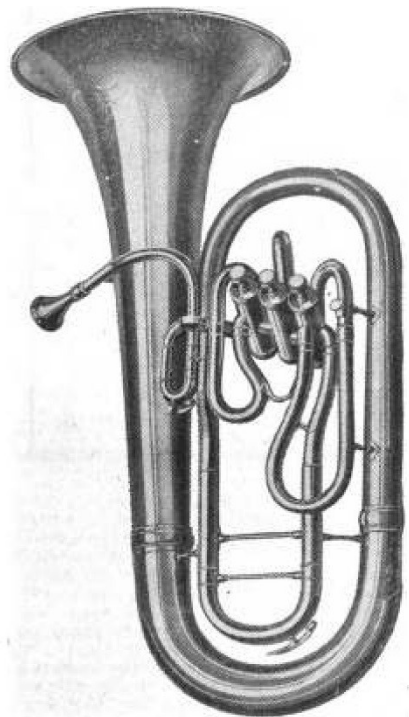
Couturier Band Instrument Co.

LaPorte, Indiana

- 1869 Ernst Albert Couturier born in Poughkeepsie, NY
- 1881 EAC starts learning to play the cornet
- 1885 EAC enters the New England Conservatory of Music
- 1888 EAC is cornet soloist at Eastman College
- 1893 Julian Jordan (EAC's future father-in-law) & his concert company, with EAC on cornet, are playing in Mt. Vernon
- 1894 the Couturier Concert Company is playing in New Rochelle, NY in October; it consists of EAC on cornet, two singers, piano, and violin
- 1895 EAC and Grace Gavette are performing in Glens Falls, NY; he is said to be formerly with Gilmore's Band
- 1896 EAC is living in Easton, PA in January and working as the manager of Reigel's piano house as well as the leader of Couturier's Concert Band; in January he marries Grace in Mt. Vernon, NY
- 1898 EAC is elected leader of Gilmore's Band in January
- 1900 EAC living at #118 S. 7th St. in Mt. Vernon; he is the leader of Gilmore's Band and wants to move to New Orleans to establish a symphony orchestra there; he has lived in Mt. Vernon several years
- 1901 in February, EAC is cornet soloist in Philadelphia and is said to be the former leader of Gilmore's Band
- 1902 November; EAC is currently the leader of the St. Louis Exposition Band; he bought the Gilmore music library "some time ago" for a few hundred dollars
- 1903 in May, EAC is the leader of the fifty piece band at Delmar Garden, the largest summer resort in St. Louis
- 1905 Couturier is in Elkhart having some work done at the Conn factory (*Music Trade Review*, Oct 21)
- 1906 EAC is to make a tour of Europe as cornet soloist
- 1907 EAC working with Holton as a consultant in cornet design and helps to produce the Couturier model sold from 1909-1912
- 1910 living at #156 S. 3rd Ave, Mt. Vernon and listed in the census as a traveling dry goods salesman



- 1911 EAC is in Chicago by December and no longer with Gilmore's Band
- 1913 granted patent #1073593 for cornet; living in Chicago
- 1913 working with J. W. York in Grand Rapids, Michigan; produces the "Couturier Wizard" cornet
- 1916 November 18th; articles of incorporation have recently been filed at Albany by E. A. Couturier Company Ltd with \$300,000 capital; #98 W. Lincoln Ave, Mt. Vernon; at this time Couturier records several cornet solos with Edison records including "The Rosary", "A Dream", "Serenade", and "Lullaby"
- 1917 "It is said that E. A. Couturier, of New York, has gone to Elkhart for the purpose of starting a new band instrument factory." (*MTR*, Aug 18)
- 1917 stock offering advertised in April for the E. A. Couturier Co. Ltd, #149 W. 35th St., NYC or M. C. Lathrop at #98 West Lincoln Ave, Mt. Vernon (NY newspaper ad)
- 1918 living in Elkhart in April; he had recently purchased the William Seidel Band Instrument Co. of Elkhart (started in 1913); receives design patents for cornet & trumpet; later this year (possibly in October) sets up his factory on the upper floor of the Palace Garage in LaPorte at the corner of Chicago St. and the Lincoln Highway (top photo p.3)
- 1919 living in LaPorte; receives design patent for mouthpiece; 1919 models shown at right; the Sanborn fire insurance map from November shows the building at #1202-1204 Lincoln Way, 80' x 120' two story brick building with office, case shop and polishing on the 1st floor and factory on the 2nd floor (see image on last page)
- 1920 living at #702 Perry in LaPorte in January; musical inst. manuf. (census); the E. A. Couturier Band Instrument Company is incorporated with \$500,000 capital; directors EAC, E. G. Greenman, & O. L. Sutherland
- 1921 living in LaPorte; granted patent #1,385,202 for a trombone conical bore slide; an article calls him "The Arpeggio King", able to play six octaves on the cornet; he also developed an Eb cornet that would play in tune
- 1922 granted patents #1,425,318 for mute; #1,436,085 for quick change valve & #1,438,363 for valve design; music trade publications praise his high quality instruments, a new C/Bb/A trumpet designed by EAC, a new saxophone introduced in July, & a new bell front helicon bass; Charles Newlin joins Couturier in Oct. as Sec/Tres; demand for the



COUTURIER CONICAL-BORE BARITONE



COUTURIER CONICAL-BORE FRENCH HORN IN F



new saxophone by December swamps the factory, forcing a plan to double production to 1,000 per month under supervisor Otto Ziegler

- 1922 Whaley, Royce & Co. becomes the Couturier distributor in Canada; Fred Gretsch becomes distributor in eastern US
- 1923 Sept. announces new baritone & C soprano saxes; Couturier goes into receivership on October 4th; EAC is starting to lose his eyesight; trumpet #1026 is stolen from a dealer (*MTR*)
- 1924 Lyon & Healy buys the Couturier company (*MTR*, Jan 14); the Couturier Co. newly incorporated (*Presto*, Feb 23)
- 1924 the LaPorte city directory lists the Couturier Co. with F. L. Lemm manager & Otto Ziegler superintendent; band instrument manufacturer at #1202 Lincoln Hwy.
- 1925 “A new deluxe model Lyon & Healy trumpet is the latest addition to the Couturier line.” (*MTR*, Jan 3)
- 1926 & 1927 EAC, music teacher, #525 W 43rd, LA (directory)
- 1928 EAC living in Mt. Vernon, NY in June and working as a music teacher, #106 Haven Ave.; L&H closes the Couturier plant (due to lack of profit) and makes arrangements with Holton to make their line. All machinery, tools, & patterns were transferred to Holton who will make them for L&H (*MTR* & *Presto*, March 10th)
- 1929 granted patent #1,729,568 for valve design
- 1930 #438 S. 4th Ave, Mt. Vernon, music teacher (census)
- 1940 #438 S. 4th Ave, Mt. Vernon; music teacher (census)
- 1950 EAC dies on February 28th; listed as a graduate of the New England Conservatory of Music (Eastman), a resident of Mt. Vernon since 1928 & teacher of brass students at his home; another account says that he died in Wingdale at the Harlem Valley Psychiatric Center due to a mental breakdown

Dating Couturier Instruments:

1909-1912 Holton New Proportion Couturier model cornets found have serial numbers in the 16,000 to 19,000 range which date these to the 1911 – 1912 period. These were made by Holton in Chicago with design input by E.A.Couturier. The bell below shows the added “Couturier model” mark above the engraving.



1913-1916 J. W. York & Sons Couturier Wizard model cornets found have two serial number sequences. The first 100 start with 10,000 and appear to be a separate sequence than the other York instruments and probably date to 1913. Those with the patent from September, 1913 would have been made after that date. The second follows other Yorks and range from 39,400 up to 40,782. These probably date to 1914. Serial numbers found would indicate production probably ending in 1915. (photo 1 & below)



1916-1920 Couturier filed for incorporation as the "E. A. Couturier Company, Ltd." in November of 1916 in Albany, NY since his home was in Mt. Vernon. By April, 1917, he was offering company stock for sale so was trying to raise the money needed to start his own company. In April, 1918, he had recently purchased the William Seidel Band Instrument Co. of Elkhart, Indiana so finally had a factory to start production (see 1917 map below). Any instruments



See bottom of article for #1019 marked "New York"



that have the “Ltd” in the inscription should date to the 1918 to early 1920 period. Instruments with “Elkhart” should all be from 1918 (photos 2 & 3 at right, #1100 to 1400 range). In October, 1918, he moves production to LaPorte, Indiana above the Palace Garage. (photo 4 bell)

1920-1923 In February of 1920, it was reported that, “The E. A. Couturier Band Instrument Company, LaPorte, has been incorporated with \$500,000 capital.” Were they already running out of money and bringing in new investors to keep them going? This brings a change in the bell inscription removing the “Ltd” but never adding the “Band Instrument” part. (photo 1) This change shows up in serial numbers around 2700 yet can appear either way into the low 3000s. After this, serial numbers continue up to just over 10,000 by the end of 1923. Production of saxophones alone was up to about 500 per month by December, 1922.

Short Lead Pipe Design: In September of 1921, Couturier applied for a patent on a new design for a short lead pipe on any instrument that went directly to the first valve. This was to minimize the bore size at the valves and shorten the valve stroke, one complaint of his original design. The cornet (photo 2) and trumpet (photo 3) are very rare and should date to 1921 or 1922. The patent was granted on December 12th, 1922 so patent markings on the second valve should give an idea of when it was made. Two trumpets have serial numbers 7062 & 9142.

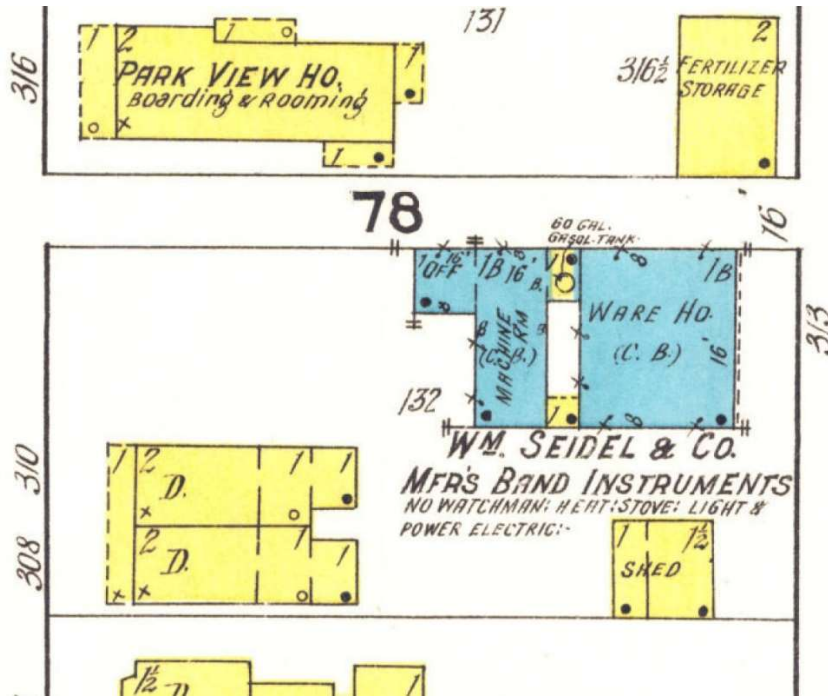
1924-1928 The factory closes for a few weeks at the end of December, 1923, due to the receivership. Production continues in January with the purchase by Lyon & Healy of Chicago. Their main focus seems to have been making the saxophones as they had become very popular. Trumpets found from this era have serial numbers in the 13,000 to 17,000 range so may be a continuation of earlier ones. The design is more traditional so they may have dropped the conical bore design all together. (photos 4 & 5) Saxophones from this time share the same serial number sequence.

1928-1930 Lyon & Healy sells the factory to Holton in May who continues to make saxophones for L&H until 1930. The 1930 Federal Census from April 9th still lists Otto Ziegler as the works manager for an instrument factory so it would have shut down some time after that. At some point the serial numbers change and saxophones made in the Couturier design have a 200,000 to 203,000 range so perhaps this change is in 1928. The “Artists Super Tone” is said to be from 1928 with serial number around 202,000.

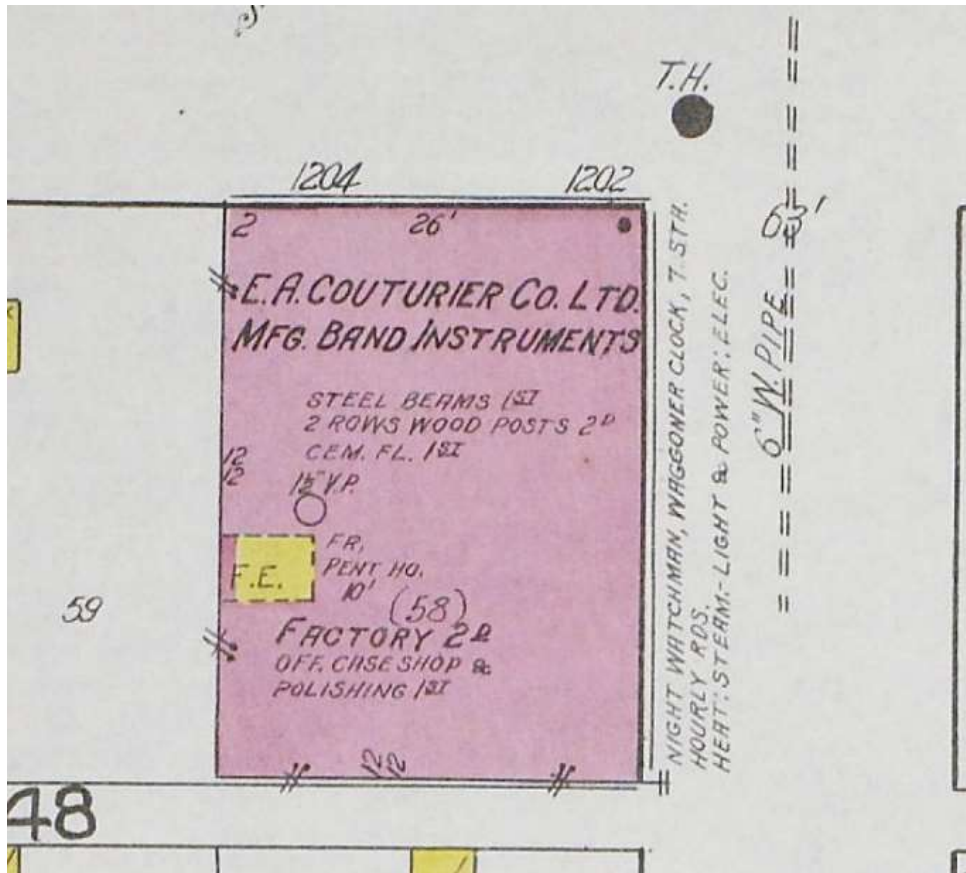
Photos from Horn-u-copia.net or auction sales unless noted



Elkhart Factory: from 1917 Sanborn map, #312 N. Main St.



LaPorte Factory: from 1919 Sanborn map

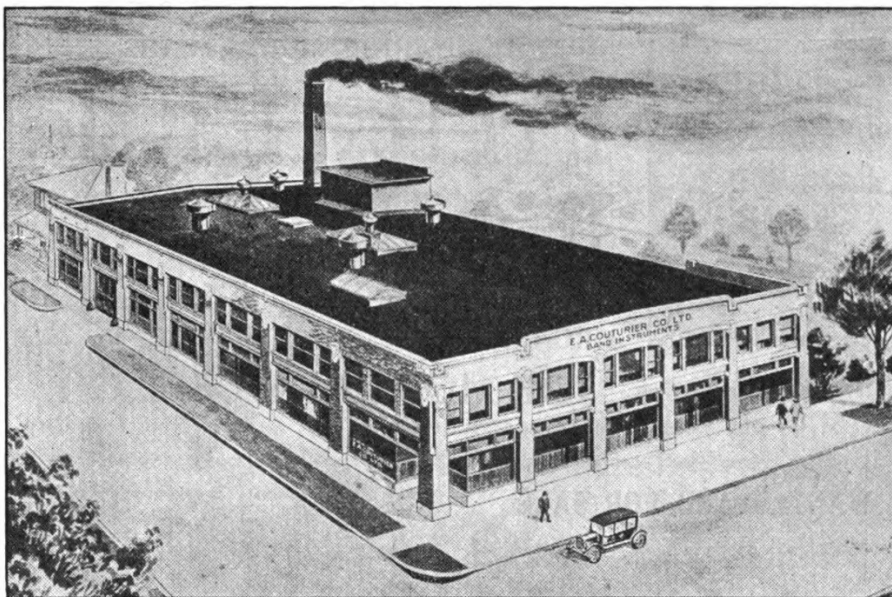


Photos 1-3 are trumpet #5505 from author's collection



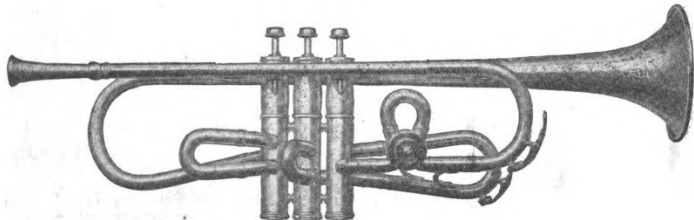
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1919 factory view from ad



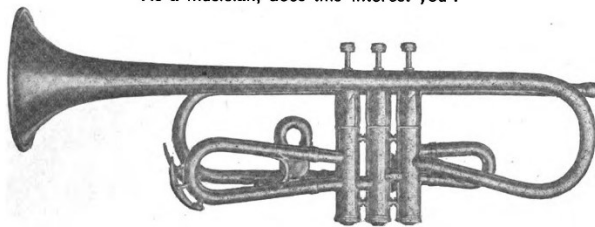
HOME OF COUTURIER CONICAL BORE

COUTURIER
CONICAL BORE
 THE INSTRUMENT



THE MODERN CONICAL-BORE TRUMPET

GUARANTEED to be in perfect tune in either B \flat or A without favoring or artificial fingering.
 No "SLIDE TROMBONE" attachment on the third valve tube.
 This is a **REAL TRUMPET**—not an elongated cornet.
 Trumpeters claim it is in better tune than the Boehm system wood-winds.
 As a musician, does this interest you?



Back view of **COUTURIER CONICAL-BORE TRUMPET**, showing perfect hand-hold and graceful lines of model.

If you play Trumpet, you will eventually play a **COUTURIER CONICAL-BORE**.
 Do n't argue. Send at once for "Couturier's Own Story of His Invention."

DEPARTMENT A. E. A. CCOUTURIER CO., Ltd. LA PORTE, IND.



This cornet appeared for sale on the internet in 2019 with serial #1019 and a New York label. The “Co. Ltd” name dates this to the 1916 to 1919 period and suggests a possible serial number start at 1000. (author’s collection)

