

Isaac Fiske

Worcester, Massachusetts

- 1820 Fiske is born in Holden, Massachusetts (census).
- 1842 Isaac Fisk[e], musical inst maker, h.#9 Province Ct, Boston (Stimpson's directory, see note at bottom). Later started in Worcester at #77 Main St. (*New Langwill Index*).
- 1843 Fiske moves to #141 Main St. this summer (dir).
- 1846 Fiske moves to Litch's shop (dir).
- 1851 Fiske moves to #263 Main St (dir).
- 1854 His factory at the Merrifields Building burned.
- 1857 Fiske's Brass Band formed with Matthew Arbuckle (*MTR*).
- 1859 Fiske now at Cypress St (directory).
- 1860 Arbuckle leaves for the Gilmore band.
- 1860 Fiske has ten employees and a payroll of \$350 / month. A deed is recorded and dates to September 25 for a sale of 20 instruments for \$1,000 to the trustees of the National Band of Worcester; Alexander Marsh, O.F. Harris & Truman Bancroft; 14 German silver instruments are of his own make: (2) Eb cornets, (2) Bb cornets, (3) Eb Tenors, (2) Bb Tenors, (1) Bb baritone, (1) Bb bass, (1) Ab bass, & (2) Eb bass; other instruments are (2) brass French horns, (1) bass drum, (1) snare drum, (1) pair cymbals & (1) fife (deed).
- 1861 Fiske now on Foster St (dir).
- 1866 Fiske granted patent #59,204 for his first piston rotary valve design with three valves in a row.
- 1867 Fiske granted patent #70,824 for his method of forming pipe bends from one piece.
- 1868 Fiske granted patent #74,331 for improved valve passages and quick key change valve.
- 1871 Fiske moves to #13 Mechanic St, Crompton's block, & currently has about seven employees (dir).
- 1872 Frederick Beaumont leaves and tries selling his own copies of Fiske's patented design. Charles Anger (1847-?) is listed as an instrument maker in Worcester (census) probably working for Fiske.
- 1873 Fiske granted patent #138,389 for offset triangular valve alignment on his piston rotary valves. Fiske granted patent #143,134 for even triangular valve arrangement with improved air passages.



Photos page 1 from Robb Stewart except #4 from NMM.

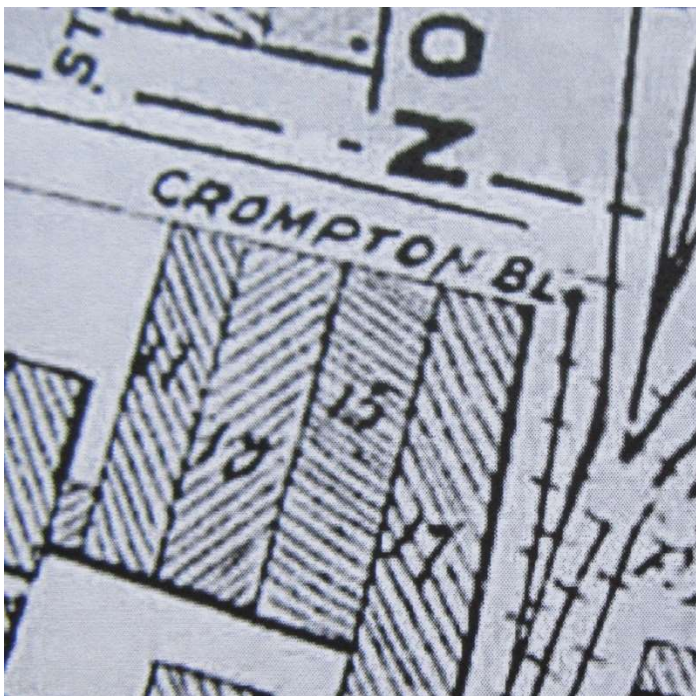
1887 Fiske has sold out (to Conn) (*MTR*, Feb). Conn opened its Worcester branch in January, 1887 (*A Hundred Years of Music in America*, 1889).

“I take great pleasure in announcing that I have purchased the Isaac Fiske Band Instrument Manufactory at Worcester, Mass, including all of its tools and machinery, which will enable me to fill all future orders of band instruments.” C. G. Conn, May 1, 1887

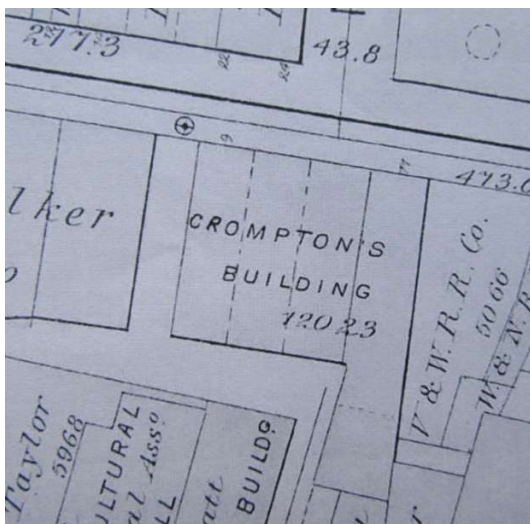
1894 Fiske dies on September 17 of apoplexy (*MTR*, Oct 6).

1898 Conn sells the Fiske plant, ending production there.

**This 1878 Beers Atlas shows his location at #13
Mechanic St. in Crompton block.**



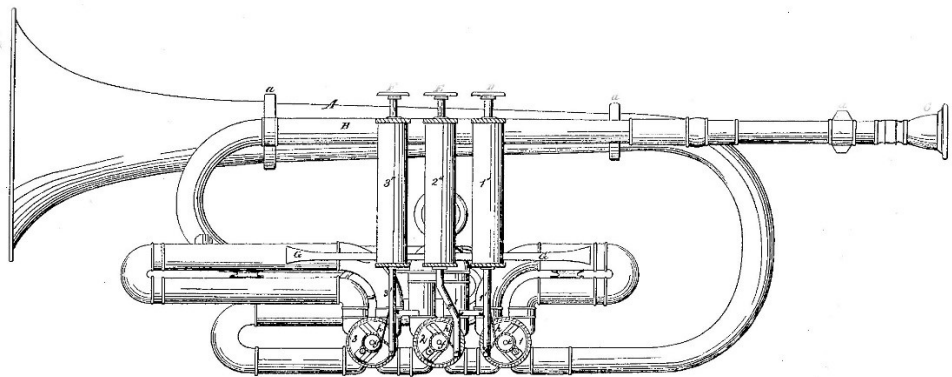
Another map from 1886 shows this unchanged



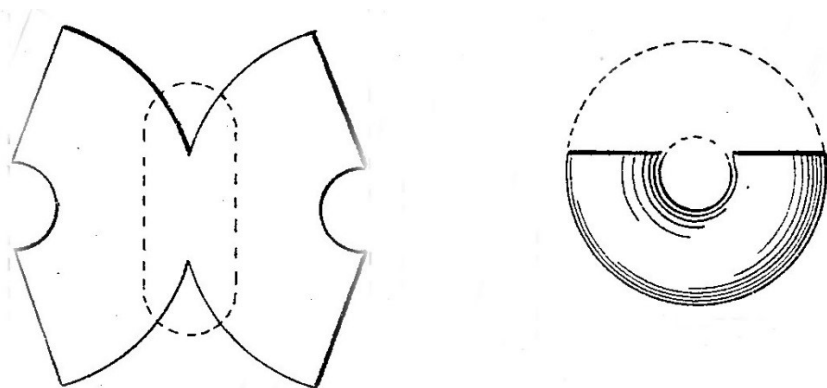
Photos 1 & 3 from National Music Museum; #2 from auction sale

Fiske Patents:

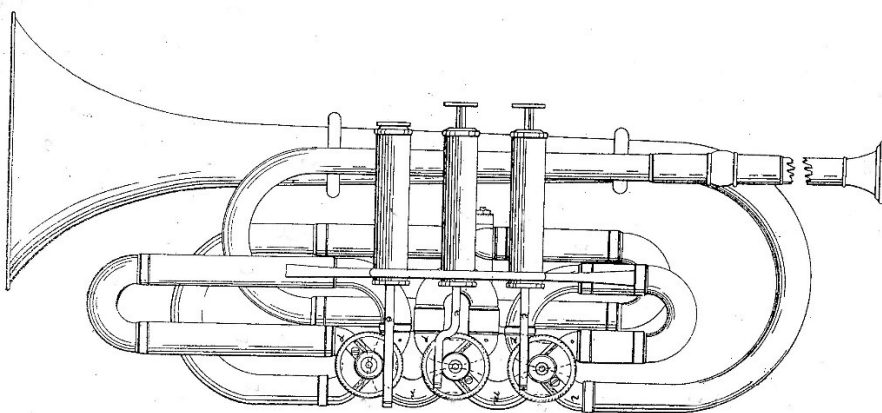
1866: the first push rod rotary valve design



1867: making slide turns from one piece; you can see the seam on the photo at right of my 1871 Bb cornet

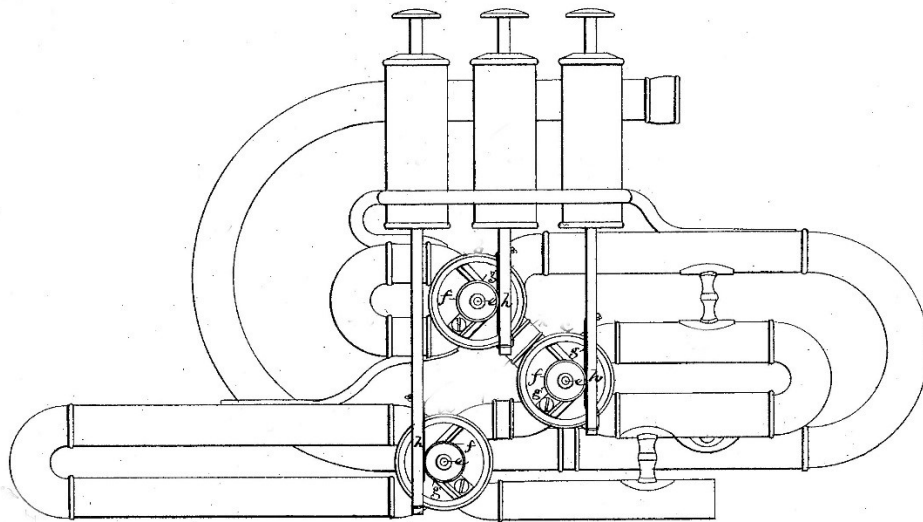


1868: Fiske changed the air passages for improved flow



Photos 1 & 2 from auction sale; #3 by author; #4 & 5 from Horn-u-copia.net

1873: Fiske changes to a triangular pattern for closer valves



1873: later that year the triangle changes form again to improve air flow

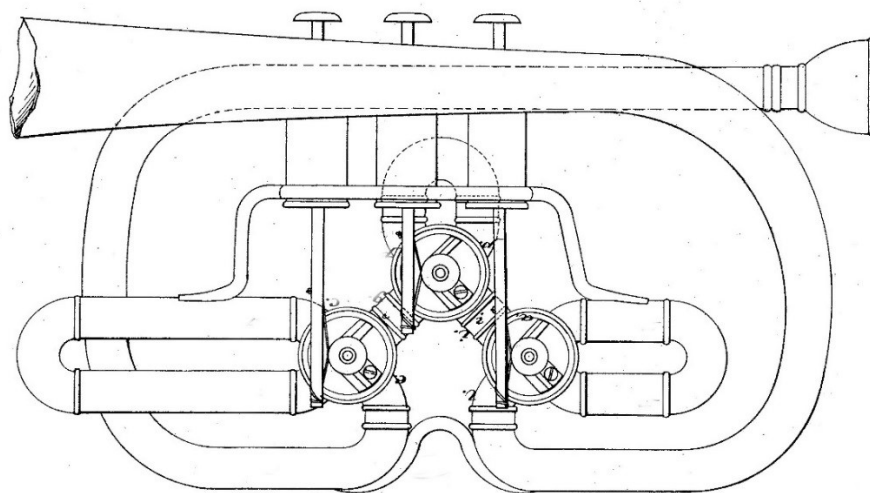
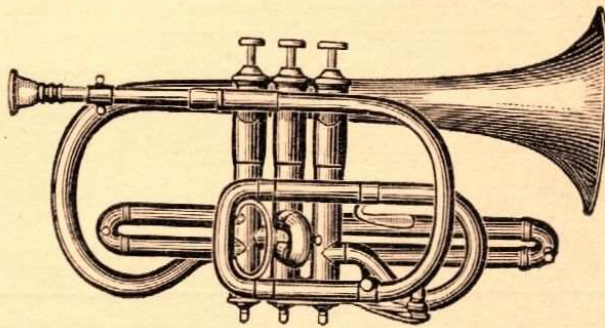


Photo 1 by author; #2 from auction sale; #3 & 4 from NMM



1879 This ad below shows a piston valve cornet. The bottom example at right has the brace from tuning slide to third slide as shown in this illustration.



If you want to be sure of getting the
BEST INSTRUMENT
In the World,
For less than its TRUE VALUE, order of
Isaac Fiske
WORCESTER, MASS.,

And you will not be disappointed. I have been in this business for *37 Years*; have spent all of my time and all of the money I could make in experiments for the improvement of Instruments, and I now have the satisfaction of knowing that the best judges place *MY INSTRUMENTS*

At the Head of all Others

For superior workmanship, perfect tune and tone.
Send for Catalogue.

ISAAC FISKE,
Worcester, Mass.



Photos 1 – 3 from Robb Stewart; #4 & 5 from Horn-u-copia.net

Fiske in Boston – 1842:

It's often a mystery where early brass makers receive their training. One clue for Fiske is that he appears in only one Boston city directory in 1842 living at #9 Province Ct but no business address. The only other makers in town the same year were J. Lathrop Allen at #2 Bay St and E. G. Wright on Bromfield St; Wright the only one being listed the year before. Allen is quite a distance from Fiske but Wright is just one block away at #8 Bromfield (see map below from 1874). It's possible that Fiske joined Wright after the May 1841 directory came out and stayed until he left for Worcester in 1842. Not much experience but it's a start.



c.1870 Cornet (author's photo)

