

## John Heald Company Springfield, Massachusetts

John Heald was a maker of high-quality brass instruments in the late 19<sup>th</sup> and early 20<sup>th</sup> centuries. Always a small volume maker, his rare cornets and trumpets are sought after by collectors today. This history is an attempt to put together every known instrument and piece of information in order to better know this maker.



John was born in Laconia, New Hampshire in July of 1843 to Paul Heald, a keyed bugle player and the original owner of the “Permutation Trumpet” made by Nathan Adams in 1825. By the time John moved to Manchester, NH in 1861, he was known as a keyed bugle and cornet player. He then moved to Worcester, Massachusetts in 1863.

The great brass instrument maker Isaac Fiske, of Worcester, hired John in 1867 to work in his store and this must have been when he learned how to make them. He couldn't have picked a better teacher than Fiske. Heald later said of Fiske that “no man ever lived who would sacrifice more than he to gain a good result.” I have one Fiske cornet from about 1873, with his patented rod controlled rotary valves, that has a wonderful sound quality.

At this time John was also involved in brass bands and in 1880 was part of Kibbe & Heald's Orchestra located at 12 Front Street. By 1880, John was also listed as a separate musical instrument maker with a shop at 85 Mechanic Street. Isaac Fiske was just a few doors down at 13 Mechanic Street; sharing a building with the William Ellis Music Store.

In 1881, John moved to Springfield, Massachusetts and started working for the C. W. Hutchin's Music House. He was probably having a difficult time on his own in Worcester so may have moved here to gain an outlet for his cornets. In July of 1882, John applied for a patent for his lever action water key which was granted in October. This patent was assigned to Hutchins since he was working for him until 1888. Below is the patent drawing (figure 1) and an example of a Hutchins matching instrument (figure 2).

Figure 1: 1882 Patent Drawing

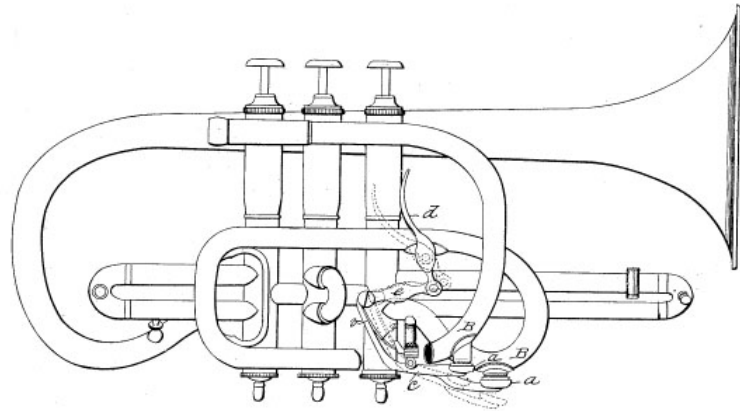


Figure 2: Hutchins Cornet #5284 c.1885 (Robb Stewart photos)





These cornets are a close copy of the Courtois Emerson model and the valves match with Courtois so may have been made by them or their supplier.

John's second patent comes in 1884 for another water key lever. This one is a simpler design that extends up to near the lead pipe and eliminates the mechanical lever. Perhaps the first proved too difficult to operate or were not popular with buyers. Figure 3 shows the patent drawing for the new design.

Figure 3: 1884 Patent Drawing

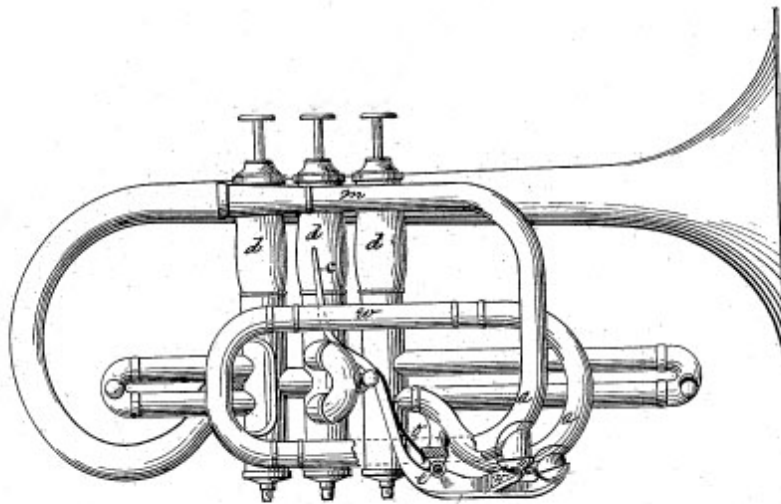




Figure 4: Cornet lever following the 1884 patent (auction photo)



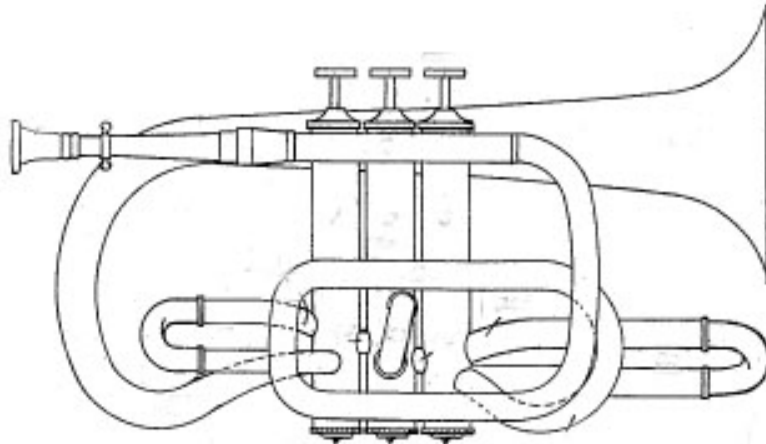
I have not been able to find a cornet to match exactly the 1884 drawing with the straight parallel tubing on the first and third slides that is common to most cornets of the period. One other thing to note is that the patent is not assigned to Hutchins even though he was still supposed to be working for him.

Sometime around 1889, Heald forms the John Heald Cornet Company in Springfield located at #23 Taylor Street. In this same year he is granted patent #408,972 for his design of air passages through the valves for better flow. This pattern can be seen in Figure 4 where the upper section on the first and third valve slides comes out at an angle. This will show up on all of his cornets and trumpets until 1921. Figure 5 below shows the patent drawing for this.

At this point another feature to note, if the patent drawing is correct, is that the ferrules connecting the straight slide tubing to the knuckles are still a single band. All later patent drawings show the triple banding design which appears on almost all his instruments. This could help in determining a date when a cornet was made.



Figure 5: 1889 Patent Drawing



In 1890, Heald is granted patent #434,270 for a quick-change tuning design which has two tuning slides attached to a rotating plate which allows the player to change from Bb to B. Figure 6 shows the patent drawing for this.

Figure 6: 1890 Patent Drawing

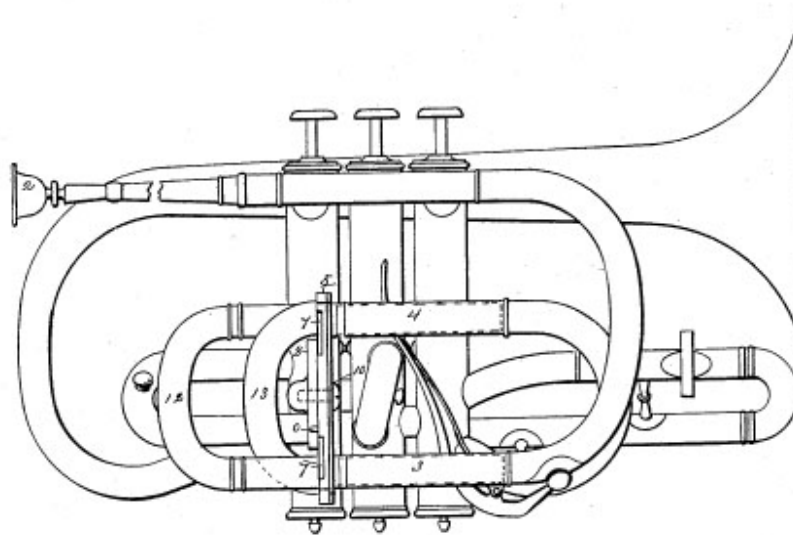
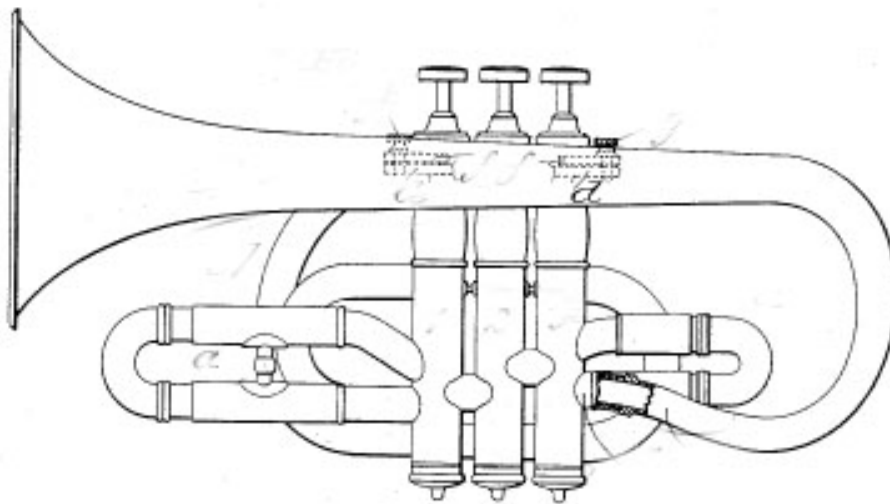


Figure 7: Cornet with 1890 Patent Device



The next patent granted is #543,015 for his design that allows a player to change his cornet bell. This is an idea that does not show up on any instrument that I could find. This used two screws to attach the bell to the valves. Below is the patent drawing for this idea.

Figure 8: 1895 Patent Drawing



His next invention is a telescoping tuning slide with a rod to quickly change the pitch. This was patent #620,450 and dates to 1899. He used this patent for his trumpets as well and all examples found have a rod in the center of the tuning slide. Below is the patent drawing and photos.

Figure 9: 1899 Patent Drawing

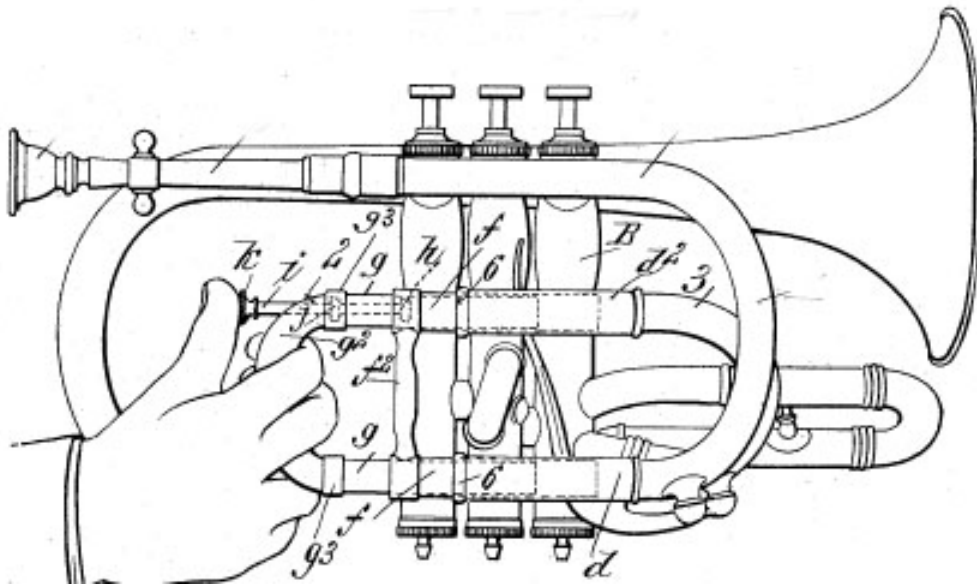


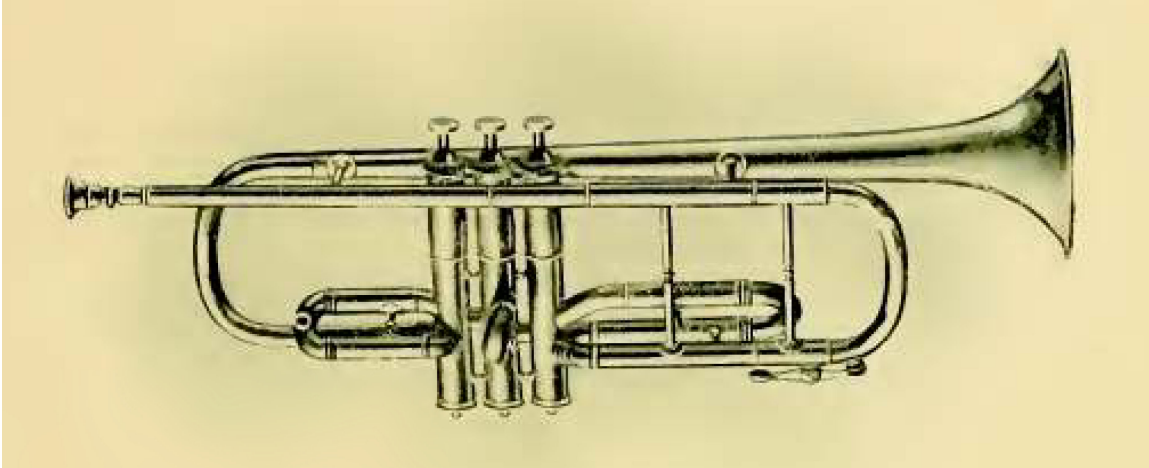
Figure 10: Cornet #2228 with telescoping slide c.1899; this one is stamped with the 1889 patent but not 1899 so may have been made between the design filing in 1896 and the granting in 1899 (auction photo)





Any cornets found with this device likely date to after 1899 but they don't all have to have them. In his 1903 catalog, this tuning device was an option. At this point he is also starting to make trumpets and figure 11 shows a drawing of one in the 1903 catalog.

Figure 11: 1903 Trumpet illustration



I have not found an example of a trumpet built exactly like this. They all have curved cross braces for the bell and a rod in the center of the tuning slide for a quick change to A. This design doesn't change until 1921 when he narrows the spacing on the 1<sup>st</sup> and 3<sup>rd</sup> slide tubing.

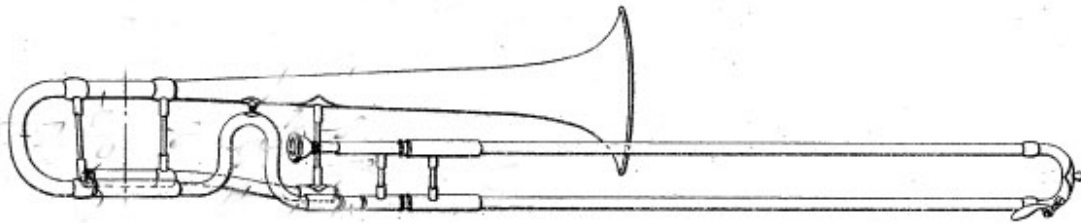
Figure 12: Trumpet #37956 (Horn-u-copia.net photo)



I saw one Heald trumpet played on YouTube that has serial #13 yet still has this same design so he may have never made one as shown in the 1903 catalog. All trumpets have the 1899 patent date so he probably started making these around 1900. By 1903 he was located at #275 Main Street.

His next patent is #771,012 from 1904 which is for a key change design on a trombone. One could change the pitch by removing the tuning slide and inserting it into a parallel tube. Below is the patent drawing for this.

Figure 13: 1904 Patent Drawing



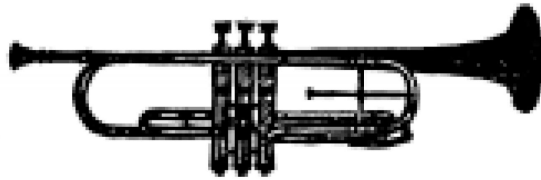
So far I have only found a few examples of Heald trombones. This one has the 1899 patent stamped on it which would refer to a telescope tuning slide but perhaps it pre-dates 1904 since it does not follow that design (Figure 14).

Figure 14: Heald Trombone (Horn-u-copia.net photo)



In looking at a series of ads from 1920 through 1922, the trumpet illustration changes design slightly between the August and September 1921 ads. The August ad shows a trumpet as shown in Figure 12 then the September ad shows a narrower spacing between the parallel tubing on the first and third valve slides (Figure 15).

Figure 15: 1921 Trumpet Design Change



This design change shows up on trumpets with serial numbers 48XXX as shown below on #48187 (Figure 16).

Figure 16: Trumpet design from 1921 (Horn-u-copia.net photo)



The question remains as to why he would change the design so late in his career since he is 78 by this time and six years away from selling the company. Perhaps he was buying the valves from another maker and was forced into the change. (see note on valves on serial number page)

Another slight design change shows up on trumpets #67399 and higher (Figure 17). These now have the lead pipe entering the valves straight in instead of curving down. I have found five examples of this which are detailed below.

One ad from 1920 shows him still at #275 Main Street and says, "Players who are well Heald stand in the front line."



Figure 17: Late Trumpet Design (auction photo)



The last patent he receives is #1,634,355 in 1927 for his unique “Concert Horn” which has a bell on the bottom which can be rotated as needed. So far I have found only one example of this. He filed for a patent in 1923 but it was not granted until 1927 so this horn dates to that period (Figure 19). At the time of the 1923 filing, his address was at #1617 Main Street (the same location as the old 275).

Figure 18: Patent Drawing for Concert Horn

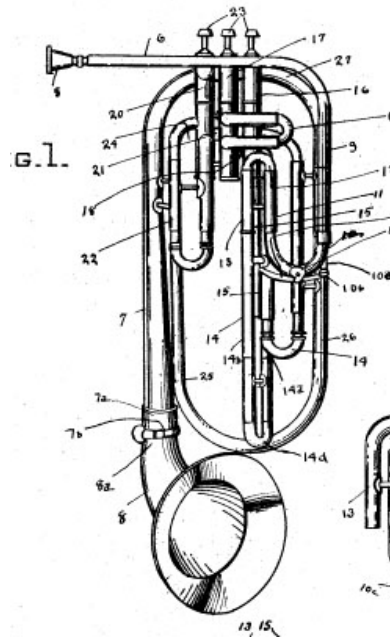


Figure 19: Concert Horn (auction photo)



In 1927, Heald sells the company\* which becomes the Springfield Band Instrument Company. I have only found one alto horn (below, Horn-u-copia photo) with this name. This company ended in 1930 probably due to the market crash. On March 10<sup>th</sup>, 1934, John dies at age 90 in Springfield. He was living at #92 Florence Street and had been there since at least 1896.



Compare the font above to the Hutchins cornet and see that they match.

\*One item that would contradict the 1927 sale is a listing in the 1929 *International Musician* magazine which still lists the John Heald Co. at #275 Main Street, makers of cornets and trumpets.

### **Other Instruments:**

Here are some other instruments found.



Bugle made for the Massasort Cycle Club in Springfield



Pocket Cornet



Cornet #35964 with fixed lead pipe



Figure 20: Heald Cornet (auction photos)



This cornet is unique in many ways and may date back to the 1890s before he started using the triple-band joints. It looks to be in Bb with a change valve to A.

Another trumpet that I found a photo of is one marked "W H Brittain Springfield" and is almost identical to the last Heald trumpets made. William H. Brittain worked for Heald and appears in the US census of 1920 and 1930 as a musical instrument repairer in Springfield. He was born in England in 1858 or 1859, emigrated to the US in 1886, and was naturalized in 1893. He may have died in California in 1947. Since he is still listed as an instrument repairer in 1930, could he have bought the business from Heald? He would have been 72 in 1930 so it's possible. Below are some photos of this trumpet (Figure 21).

Figure 21: Brittain Trumpet (auction photos)



There are only a few slight design changes from the Heald #70391 so my guess is that this was made between 1927 and 1930.

## Serial Numbers:

One difficult thing about Heald is trying to figure out his serial numbers.

Cornets: almost all have a number in the 2,000 range

#107: with patent water key

#1137: fixed lead pipe matching #35964

#2050: last patent date of 1889, mid-1890s

#2270: lowest number with 1899 patented telescoping tuning slide; has name "Robert Coombs" engraved on it; he is listed in the 1903 catalog as "L.R. Coombs, West Derry, NH" so probably made before then

#2304

#2470: with telescope slide

#2435: with patent water key, 1889 patent date

#2500: with telescope slide

#2554: highest 2K number found, Artistone model has newer design for the bell entering the valves

#35964: later design with fixed lead pipe

Trumpets: all have the 1899 patent for the tuning slide rod

#13: lowest number found and only one without 5 digits

#31913: lowest 5 digit number found; first with "American Premier"

#36090

#37956: lowest number with fancy block letters for "John Heald"

#37987: lowest number with "John Heald Co. Makers" adding the "Co." and the plural, all previous instruments just have "Maker"

The 37K range are the only ones with the fancier lettering for his name.

#48187: lowest number found with the design change from 1921, Amer. Prem.

#48291: last number found with the 1921 design change

#67399: next number found, lowest number with design change to lead pipe straight in; c.1924 if these use a King valve block

#70391: same design as #67399

#73880, #89012, #108735 (highest number found)

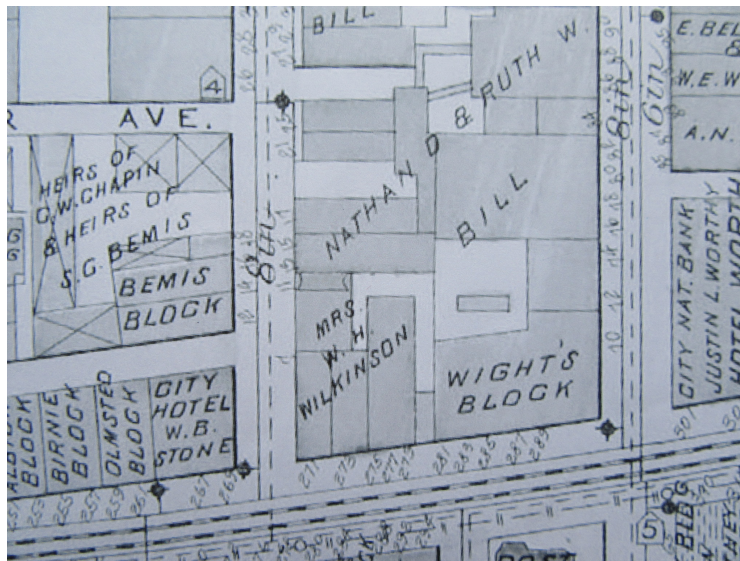
I have read that the later trumpet valves were likely made by H. N. White / King and if that's the case, the serial numbers match very well with the dates that Heald was making these. If this is the case, then he may have purchased a block of valves at a time which would answer why there are large gaps in the serial numbers and why he has a 70,000 serial number when he never could have made that many. Perhaps he bought a number in the late teens (32-38k), a second



batch in 1921 (48k), and a third in 1924 (67-70k). If this is the case, then where are the earlier ones? Perhaps he made his own early on then later bought them to save on cost.

The other question is why did he suddenly change from labeling the bell “John Heald Maker” to “John Heald Co. Makers” on trumpet #37987? Was this a change from John actually making them to others in his shop? Using King serial number dating this would have occurred around 1920 when John was 77 so this is certainly possible. Perhaps William Brittain was the actual maker at this time.

**This 1899 map shows his store at #275 Main St. as well as the former location at #23 Taylor St, less than a block away. 275 later becomes 1617, the center entrance in the 2023 photo below.**



Cornet - no serial # - c.1890 (author's collection)





**Cornet #107**



**Cornet #1137 with 1899 patent slide (auction photo)**



**Cornet #2050 (auction photo)**



**Cornet #2187 with 1899 patent slide (auction photo)**



**Cornet #2228, the lead pipe has changed slightly (auction photo)**



**Cornet #2270 (Robb Stewart)**

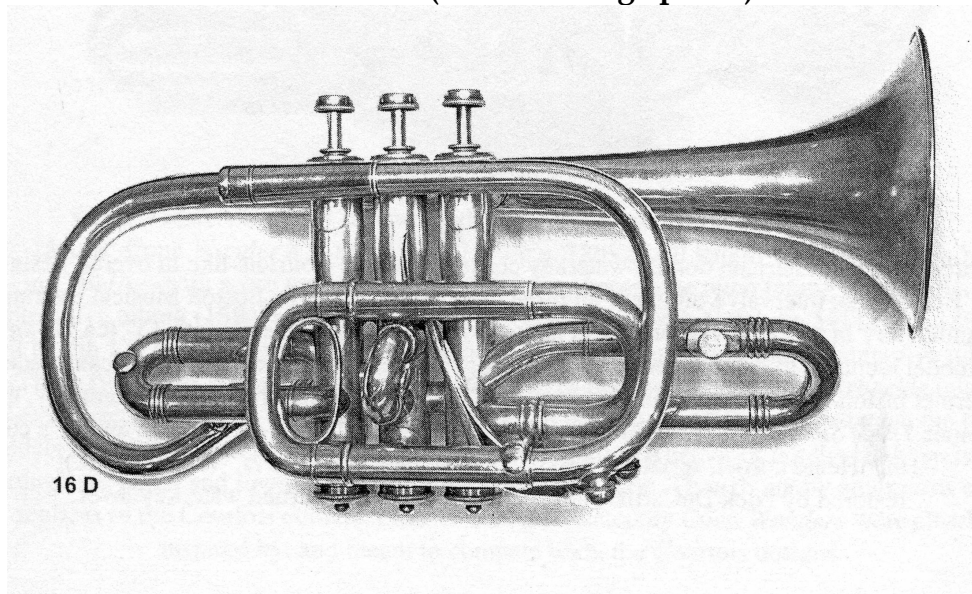




**Cornet #2304 (Horn-u-copia.net)**



**Cornet #2306 (Niles Eldridge photo)**



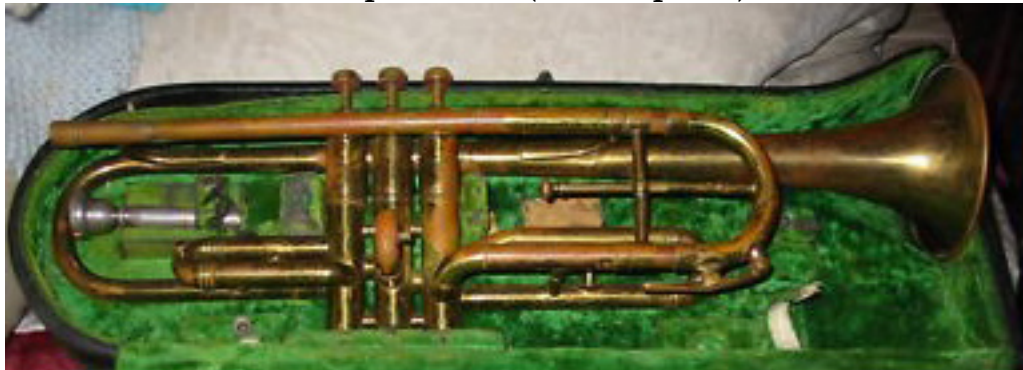
**Cornet #2435 (auction photo)**



**Cornet mouthpiece (author's photo)**



**Trumpet #31913 (auction photo)**



**Trumpet #36090 (Horn-u-copia.net)**





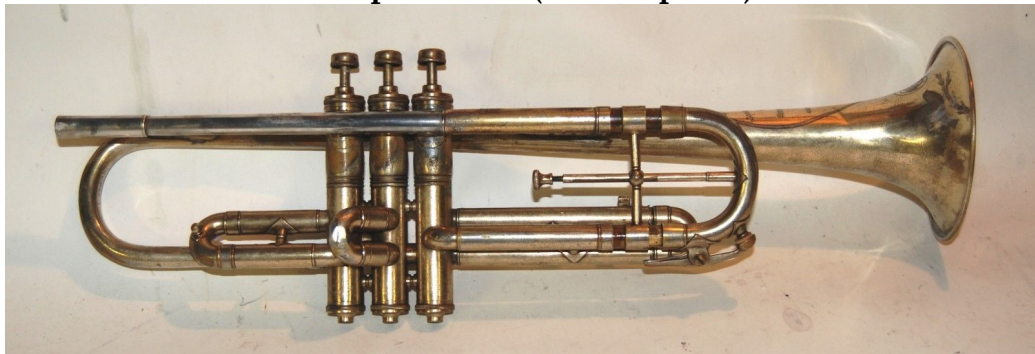
Trumpet - serial #37987 - c.1921 (author's photos)



**Trumpet #48187 (Horn-u-copia.net)**



**Trumpet #57846 (auction photo)**



**Trumpet #67399 c.1923 (auction photo)**



**Trumpet #70391 (auction photo)**

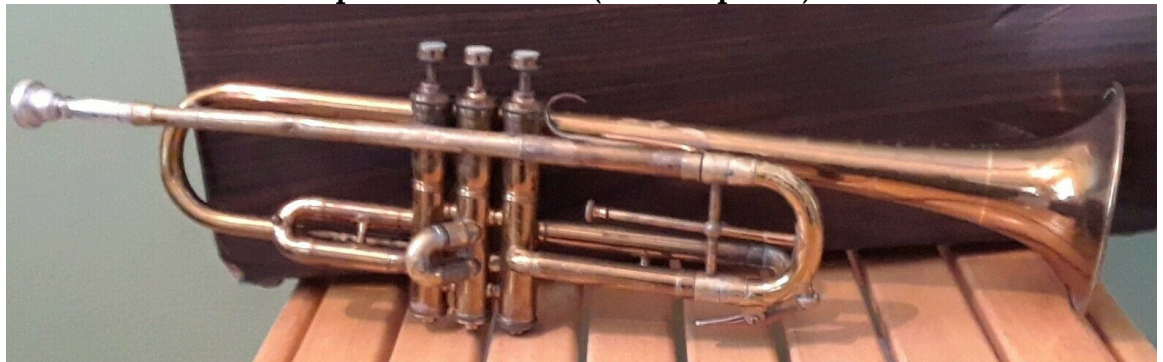




**Trumpet #73880 c.1924 (auction photo)**



**Trumpet #89012 c.1927 (auction photo)**



**Trumpet #108735 c.1928 (auction photo)**



**Trombone, number not known, marked "John Heald Makers" so probably after 1920 (auction photo)**

