Brua C. Keefer Manufacturing Co.

Williamsport, PA

- 1888 The Henry Distin Mfg. Co. is chartered with \$25,000 capital (*History of Lycoming Co.*, 1892, p.366). Distin plays the Eb tuba with Gilmore's Band in Williamsport and he may move his factory there from Cressona (*The British Bandsman*, Feb. 1889).
- 1889 Distin accepts a deal on Sept 17th to move his brass instrument factory to Williamsport, PA. W. J. McCormick, the president of Distin, supervises the move. McCormick resigns soon after due to his health and capital is increased to \$50,000.
- 1890 Production at the new factory in Williamsport starts on January 1st with Sen. Luther Keefer (1834-1908) (photo 1), president & Brua Keefer, Sr.(1859-1927) (photo 2), secretary-treasurer. At the corner of Walnut St. & Louisa Ave., the factory is a converted former grandstand at the Old Oak Park racetrack (below). Serial numbers start at a little over 6000 and overlap with some from Philadelphia. A cornet is the first instrument made and is displayed at the D. S. Andrus Co. music store.



A similar grandstand in Williamsport in 1911.



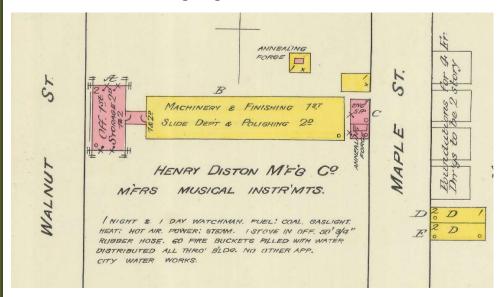


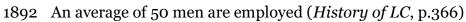




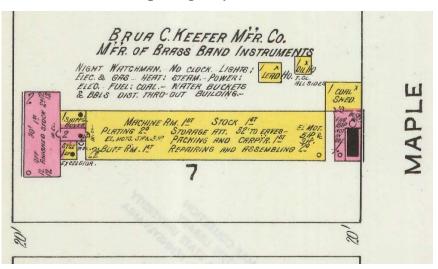


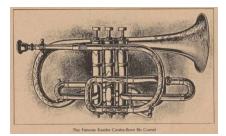
- 1890 Henry Distin retires in July; home at 819 Tasker St, Phila.
- 1891 The Sanborn Fire Insurance Map below shows the factory between Walnut & Maple streets. There is a 25' x 50' two story brick office on Walnut St connected by a narrow passage to a 2-1/2 story 30' x 140' wood-framed factory. A small building to the north and another on Maple St. are labeled "annealing forge".





- 1903 Henry Distin dies on October 9.
- 1908 Luther Keefer dies on July 28th at home due to a stroke suffered in April. A receiver for the company is appointed in December. An article in the June *Metronome* claims that Distin is the largest brass maker in the country.
- 1909 Brua Keefer, Sr. buys the company on Mar. 1st and renames it the Brua C. Keefer Manufacturing Co.
- 1912 The Sanborn Fire Insurance map shows only slight changes from 1891 with coal and oil sheds added and the area around the passageway filled in (below).









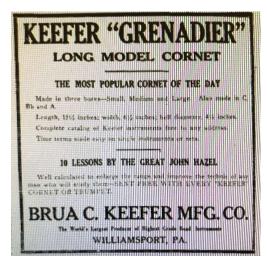




1913 "After passing the acute tests of our regular test men, every Keefer cornet and trumpet is again tested by John Hazel. He tests for many things besides accuracy, intonation, responsiveness, evenness, cross finger tone comparisons, power, action of the slides; in fact everything a good professional would think of and many things a virtuoso would think of. The simple fact is, every Keefer cornet and trumpet is "certified" by John Hazel before it can go out."

This was from a Keefer ad in April. Hazel came to Williamsport in 1907 and would test cornets & trumpets for Keefer until they stopped making them in 1941. His last cornet from Keefer was a "Solotone" model in silver with gold trim and is now in the local museum. (John Hunsinger) (Hazel top photo on right)

- 1915 Keefer joins the Metal Polishers' union with 21 workers.
- 1917 Brua Cameron Keefer Jr. (1892-1973) is the secretary and business manager at Keefer and lists the business as manufacturing army supplies (draft).
- 1918 Keefer listed with metal polishers' union; gone by 1919.
- 1920 The Grenadier cornet (ad below) was made in three bores.



1921 The letterhead below was printed in 1921 and shows a three-story factory, but this was always just two. 75 years of experience would make Distin's start in 1846.





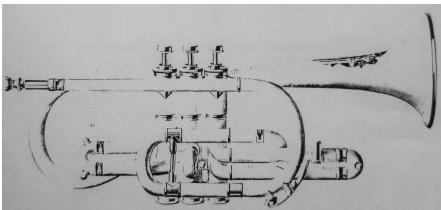




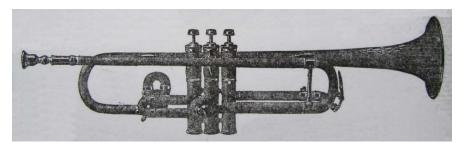


- 1921 Keefer announces the new Septor slide trombone.
- The Keefer catalog highlights the "Grenadier" cornet (below), Stentor trumpet, and new Eb trumpet. Brua Sr. says he has been with the business since 1887 (with Distin in Cressona). Brua Jr. is listed as vice-president (catalog).





Stentor Trumpet from 1922 Catalog



Trumpet #12733 c.1923



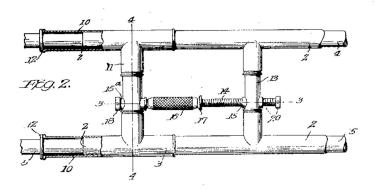
The Keefer factory is flooded with orders for large bass Wagnerphones and they have increased their facility. (*Music Trade Review*, May 26)







- 1924 The 1924 catalog now has the new Harmonic series trumpets in three styles. Frost & Stone, #51-53 Berger St, Brooklyn, is making instrument cases for Keefer. They have been in business for 14 years. (*MTR*)
- Brua Jr. and Eugene W. Galetti, with assignment to the Keefer Mfg. Co., are granted patent #1,555,986 for a tuning slide adjustor (below). These show up on trombones and trumpets from this period.



#24589 below & photos 1 & 2 at right c.1925



1925 At this time Keefer begins endorsement partnerships with trombone player Gardell Simons (1878-1945) of the Philadelphia Orchestra and trumpet player Ernest Williams (1881-1947) formerly of the Philadelphia Orchestra (advertising). (trumpet bell at right)

Keefer – Simons Trombone



1926 Raskin & Hoffman, Philadelphia, are dealers for Keefer. George E. Brennan, former owner of Seattle Band House, has established the Pacific Coast Keefer Co. at #277 Eddy St in San Francisco. (*MTR*, June)

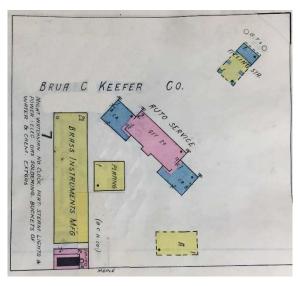






- 1927 Brua Sr. dies on February 10th at the Presbyterian Hospital in Philadelphia where he had been since the 3rd. He had undergone an unknown operation. He was born on November 28th, 1859 in Schuylkill Haven, PA (next to Cressona where the earlier Distin factory was located), director of the Lycoming Trust Co., president of the Community Discount Co., president of the Keefer Mfg., and a member of the 1st Presbyterian Church. (*Gazette & Bulletin*, Feb. 11)
- 1927 "The Pacific Coast Keefer Co., 227 Eddy Street, San Francisco (started in 1926), has been displaying the new Keefer-Williams cornet. The instrument has been attracting wide attention." (*Music Trade Review*, March 12) [I have never found a K-W cornet so they probably mean trumpet.]
- 1928 The Pacific Coast Keefer Co. has moved to #244 Eddy St with the Frisco Mfg Co. (drummer's supplies). (*MTR*)
- 1930s John Hazel amazed young Brua Keefer III (1921-1996) by suspending two instruments from the ceiling on ropes and playing bugle calls on both at the same time. (Hunsinger)
- c1941 Keefer lost his source of imported brass due to the war so had limited production after this (Hunsinger).

 Instruments have serial numbers up to around 31000. The 1922 catalog says that they used "French Trumpet" brass.
- 1942 Brua C. Keefer Jr., self-employed in factory at Rural Ave and Walnut St., home at #912 W. 4th St. (draft)
- 1943 Brua C. Keefer III, mechanic & repairman for airplanes, born June 1, 1921 (WWII enlistment card). A later news article says that he was employed by the Aviation Corp, Lycoming Division, and was engaged to Lura Anderson.
- 1943 Sanborn map showing added service station and the removal of the office end of the factory. By now they have shortened the factory and added a plating building.







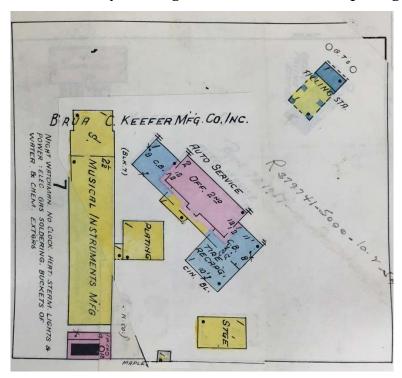


1951 Keefer runs an ad for keyboards. (MTR, August)



Sanborn map with additions to service station and factory. The single-story factory addition was added after 1943 for the retail music business. [In 1960 Keefer said it was added 20 years ago but it may have been just after the 1943 map.]

At this time Keefer had a music store, ran a music school and was selling, renting, and repairing instruments. James Keefer says that a few instruments were still made to order at this time by Art Magliocco and 2 women did plating.



1955 A news article from the Williamsport Music Club Scrapbook mentions the Keefer School of Music and that Brua Jr was president of the Williamsport Symphony Society.

1950s Keefer was a Conn dealer selling electric organs and Conn trumpets in the late 1950s (James Keefer).

1960 The factory burned November 25th and all business ended.
 1960 Fire photos from the Collection of the Lycoming County Historical Society and Thomas T. Taber Museum





Article from the Williamsport Gazette, 11-26-1960:

"A grass fire near the southwest corner of the 88-foot long frame building of the Brua C. Keefer Musical Instrument Co. and the School of Music was blamed for the estimated \$115,000 loss in a spectacular blaze at Rural Avenue and Walnut Street yesterday afternoon.

"Mr Keefer said he plans to rebuild. He said he is thinking of a one-story cinder block, fireproof building with studios, showroom, and office. He said it will be constructed as soon as possible. [this never happened] About 80 percent of the loss is covered by insurance.

"Bandaged about his forehead and with a large blister on his left hand, Mr. Keefer said that within minutes after the fire was discovered, the western section of the building was in flames. He believed it had started from a grass fire which he himself had fought about 10 minutes earlier along the south side of the building near the front office. "The front part of the building, which was constructed by Mr. Keefer about 20 years ago, was the office for the retail music business. [He said] that more than 5,000 students have attended the School of Music over the past quarter century.

"The 88-foot long, two-story frame building was originally the grandstand of the Half-Mile Track at old Herdie Park. The music firm occupied the premises about 1888. On the first floor were several music studios and the silver-plating business. On the second floor were the reception room, a large rehearsal room, and several more studios. "Mr. Keefer explained he only had several employees,

including his son, Brua C. Keefer III, a secretary, and a maintenance man to fire the boiler and clean up. He pointed out that the silver-plating business was leased and when he rebuilds, this part of the business will be dropped. A new boiler installed on the Maple Street side of the plant was not damaged."

- 1961 Brua III spends a year closing out the business then works for D. S. Andrews Music, a former competitor (J. Keefer).
- 1973 Brua C. Keefer Jr died in March.
- 1996 Brua C. Keefer III died October 12th.

Other Items of note:

Woodwinds: One woodwind website says that Keefer clarinets and saxophones were made by Pruefer Manufacturing Co. of Providence, RI. Gustav Pruefer started making woodwinds in 1893 in Providence then later under the ownership of M. F. Scungio. (*NLI*)

Distin started a monthly publication in December of 1891 called "The Band World" (*History of LC*, p. 388). I have not found one or know how long this lasted.







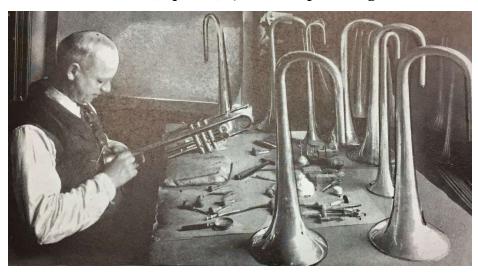




Employees of note:

Charles Frederick Otto was a long-time engraver for Distin then Keefer. He was born in August of 1874 in Williamsport and is listed in the census of 1900 through 1930 as an engraver of band instruments. His obituary says he engraved for 40 years. For a long time lived at #1407 Cherry St. in Williamsport. He died in 1966.

Charles Otto at work, April 16, 1922 (examples at right)



Eugene W. Galetti was born in Cressona, PA in 1896 and by 1917 was working as a brass turner for Keefer. In 1920 he is listed as machinist and in 1925 received a patent with Brua Jr for a trombone tuning mechanism. By 1930 he is listed as a foreman for Keefer but by 1942 is working for the Aviation Corp. He died in 1969 in Williamsport.

Probably Emil Magliocco at the factory; April 16, 1922.







The Williamsport hospital purchased property next to Distin in 1893 and it is still their current site. They added a three-story office on the site of the Keefer factory in 1972.

Keefer-Williams Special model trumpet #25521 below was made close to the end of production. (author's photo)



Distin / Keefer employees from Census & draft records:

1889 Emil Magliocco (1857-1937), in Cressona as instrument maker for Distin; he was born in Philadelphia so may have worked with Distin for Pepper

1900 Edward C. Stahl (1878-1953), bell maker, band inst. Alfred W. Bidet (1871-?), silver finisher Charles Otto (1874-1966), engraver (photo 2) Charles A. Brügel (1861-1906), band inst maker Elizabeth Koch (1884-?), laborer in band factory John Stanton (b.1853 in England), brass horn mounter Emil Magliocco (1857-1937), brass finisher [probably photo 3 at right in 1922] Charles E. O'Brian (1874-1920), brass turner Ernest Featherstone (1886 England-?), brass finisher

Alfred W. Bidet, band instrument electro plater 1910 Walter L. Betts (1884-1958), laborer, horn factory Herbert J. Cowden (1879-1917), horn factory burnisher (photo 1 at right; he died in WWI) Raymond Strailey (1867-?), horn maker Edward Stahl, bell maker at horn factory J. Howard Probst (1886-1918), mounter at horn factory; died 3 months after his draft registration in 1918 John Snyder (1857-?), commercial salesman for musical instruments; also son Albert with same occupation Grover C. Edwards (1884-1965), tuba maker for Distin Johanas Lose (1869-1957), engineer at horn factory Emil Magliocco, cornet finisher Arthur Magliocco (1892-1968), cornet finisher Charles Otto, engraver

1915 Keefer had 21 employees when they joined the union.

1917 James Howard Probst, band inst maker for Keefer Walter Lewis Betts, band inst maker for Keefer







James Bidet (b.1896, son of Alfred above) is with A. Bidet & Son, an electro plating shop at their home at #416 Rural Ave; possibly doing work for Keefer Orie Kriner (1895-1958), machinist for Keefer Grover Edwards, band inst maker for Keefer Arthur Magliocco, horn factory, Keefer John R. Ross (1883-1976), plater & burnisher for Keefer Eugene Galetti (1896-1969), brass turner for Keefer

Edward Stahl, bell maker (by 1930 doing insurance) 1920 Albert C. Fry (1899-1975), brass worker, band inst factory Fred J Rabich (1860-?), laborer in horn factory Charles C. Figgles (1848-1938), helper & polisher J. E. Eversole (1880-?), manager of music company John R. Ross (1883-1976), plater at horn factory Earl M. Kriner (1897-1951), helper in horn factory Orie E. Kriner (1895-1958), helper, cousin to Earl William E. Hoffman (1872-?), clerk, musical instruments Jonas Lose, laborer in horn factory Delbert Van Rouk (1878-?), valve maker George Beals (1894-1933), laborer in horn factory William Gould (1879 England-?), commercial traveler for musical instruments Fred P. Heisley (1853-1938), polisher at horn works Emil Magliocco, finisher at horn works Arthur Magliocco (1892-1968), repairman at horn works Eugene Galetti, machinist for horn factory Charles Otto, engraver at horn factory Grover Edwards, brass finisher at horn factory

1924 Delbert Van Rouk, valve maker (marriage record)

Eugene Galetti, foreman at horn factory
Emil Magliocco, cornet maker
Arthur Magliocco, cornet maker & repairman
Earl Kriner, laborer at horn factory
Dilbert Vansant (1880-?), band instrument maker [same person as Delbert Van Rouk?]
William C. Friedel (1851-1933), assembler in band factory
George A. Johnson (1876-?), polisher, band instruments
William Haefner (1895-?), laborer, Distin horn factory
John R. Ross, plater at Keefer horn m.

Due to vague job descriptions, these are just possibilities: Elmer Hang (1894-?), repairman, musical instruments Harry Fischler (1881-?), salesman, band instruments Abbott Counts (1894-?), salesman, musical instruments Mabel Cline (1885-?), secretary, musical instruments George Kilgus (1880-?), repairman, musical inst.

These two are in South Williamsport so worked for either Keefer or the local Imperial Band Inst Co:









Raimond D. Stoniley (1887-?), foreman, horn factory Ralph W. Ball (1906-?), laborer, horn factory

John R. Ross, plater for musical co.
Arthur Magliocco, horn repair at horn factory [James
Keefer remembers Art working in the factory in the 1950s.
He was able to put together a trumpet from various parts
lying around the factory and could repair anything. Art
was one of the nicest persons that he ever met.]
Howard S. Bartlow (1868-?), watchman at horn factory
Brua Keefer Jr, manufacturer, horn factory

John R. Ross, plater for Keefer. [James Keefer knew him but he was no longer working for Keefer in the 1950s. At that time, two women were doing the plating.]



#13350 with unique trigger c.1924









Keefer Biographies

Luther Reily Keefer: (photo 1)

- 1834 Luther Keefer is born in Littlestown, PA (another source says Harrisburg) on March 5th to Andrew and Catherine (Brua) Keefer.
- 1849 Luther starts four-year apprenticeship at the Colebrookdale Iron Works, W. W. Weaver, prop.
- 1853 Luther returns home to start an iron & brass foundry and machine shop with his father Andrew and brother John Brua Keefer in West Haven (now Cressona). They supply items for the Mine Hill and Schylkill Haven Railroad at Cressona.
- 1855 Luther marries Anna Osler of Pottsville.
- 1875 Luther leaves the foundry and serves as a State Senator from 1877 until 1896.
- 1886 Musical instrument maker Henry Distin forms the Distin Manufacturing Co. on March 12th with his factory in Cressona (photo 2 from 1888).
- 1890 Luther Keefer becomes president of the Distin Co. with their move to Williamsport and the resignation of W. J. McCormick. Henry Distin retires to Philadelphia.
- 1908 Luther suffers a stroke in April then later dies on July 28th at his home in Reading, PA where he was living with his daughter Alice and her husband Ambrose Goodrich.

Brua Cameron Keefer, Sr.: (photo 3 c.1924)

- 1859 Brua Keefer is born on November 28th in Schylkill Haven (next to Cressona) to Luther & Anna Keefer.
- 1883 Brua is admitted to the bar on September 3.
- 1887 Brua starts working for Henry Distin in Cressona, probably to help manage the business, as that was not Distin's strong point.
- 1889 Brua marries Charlotte S. Saylor (1867-1915).
- 1890 Brua moves to Williamsport with Distin Co. and is listed as the secretary & treasurer.
- 1909 Brua buys the Distin Co. on March 1st and re-names it the Brua C. Keefer Manufacturing Co.
- 1917 Brua does a lot of work locally for the war effort.
- 1919 Brua marries 2nd wife Lulu Deemer (1880-?); home at #427 West 4th St, Williamsport (photo 4)
- 1927 Brua dies on February 10th in Philadelphia following a hospital surgery.









Brua Cameron Keefer, Jr.: (photo 1 from 1924)

- 1892 Cameron B. Keefer is born on May 27th in Williamsport.
- 1917 Brua is the secretary and business manager at Keefer.
- 1920 Brua Jr is still listed in the census as Cameron B. so may have changed to Brua Jr. later. He marries Rebekah Foresman (1885-1970) this year.
- 1922 Brua Jr is now vice-president and involved in the design of cornets and trumpets.
- 1927 Brua Jr takes over as president at his father's death in February.
- 1960 The factory burns down; ending the music business.
- 1973 Brua Jr dies in March (photo 2 from 1966).

Brua C. Keefer III:

- 1921 Brua III is born on June 1st in Williamsport.
- Brua III is working for the Aviation Corp. and engaged to Lura Anderson (1921-1998) in September. He ran the test section of Lycoming Motors and was a brilliant mechanic. During WWII, he served with the 8th Air Force (James Keefer).
- 1960 Brua III is working for Keefer and then the D. S. Andrus Co, a long-time music store in town.
- 1996 Brua III dies on October 12th in Montoursville.

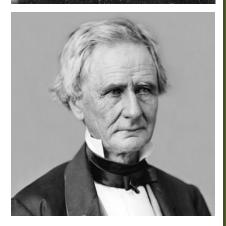
The name "Brua" was the maiden name of Luther Keefer's mother. The middle name "Cameron" came from a distant relative, Simon Cameron (photo 3), Lincoln's first secretary of war.

Keefer Trumpet #30097, one of the last ones made. (author's photo)









1920

KEEFER "GRENADIER"

LONG MODEL CORNET

THE MOST POPULAR CORNET OF THE DAY

Made in three bores-Small, Medium and Lurge. Also made in C. Bb and A.

Length, 15th inches; width, 614 inches; bell diameter, 414 inches,

Complete catalog of Keefer instruments free to any address.

Time terms made easy on single instruments or sets.

10 LESSONS BY THE GREAT JOHN HAZEL

Well calculated to enlarge the range and improve the technic of any man who will study them-ShNT FREE WITH EVERY "KEEFER" CORNET OR TRUMPET.

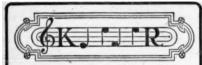
BRUA C. KEEFER MFG. CO.

The World's Largest Producer of Highest Grade Band Instruments WILLIAMSPORT, PA.

October 1920



On right: 1930, 1935, 1935, 11-1935, 1939, 1940



It Is a Mark of Distinction to Play a KEEFER INSTRUMENT

For nearly a century they have been the choice of Music Masters

Write for illustrated circular I, and price list

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Write for Price List
BRUA C. KEEFER MFG, CO.
Box 326 WILLIAMSPORT, PA.

EXPERT REPAIRING

Band and Orchestra Instruments Moderate Charges

Fast Service

Write for Price List

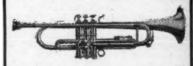
BRUA C. KEEFER MFG. CO. Box 326 Williamsport, Pa.

Expert Repairing

Band and Orchestra Instruments Fast Service -- Moderate Charges



Gold and Silver Plating and Lacquering Write for folder covering prices BRUA C. KEEFER MFG. CO. WILLIAMSPORT, PA.



A century of continuous experience in the manufacture of high grade Cornets, Trumpets and Trombones; hand made throughout; known the world over.

BRUA C. KEEFER MFG. CO. Williamsport, Pa.

BRUA C. KEEFER, President

Write for catalog and complimentary tone exercise by Paris Chambers.

1942 – This ad ran in *International Musician* from 1937 through 1948.

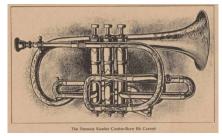


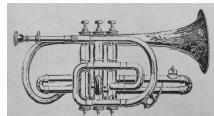
Case tag from trumpet #30097.















At right: 1921, 1920, 1910 (3)

1954 telephone ad at right 1958 telephone ad below



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brua c. keefer

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