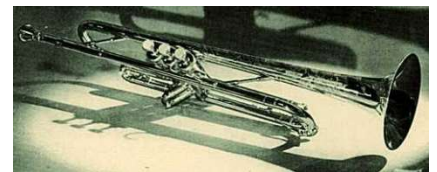


# F. E. Olds & Son

## LA & Fullerton, CA

- 1861 Frank Ellsworth Olds (photo 1) is born May 19 in Medina, NY (obit).
- 1870s Frank learns to play trombone & wants to build them (1927 Catalog).
- 1880 Frank moves to Elkhart to work for Conn (probable).
- 1885 Frank moves to Los Angeles (obit).
- 1886 Frank is listed as silver plater (voter registration).
- 1887 Frank works at the LA Tool Works (R. Dale Olson).
- 1890 Frank E. Olds, plating & novelty works, 110-112 W. 5<sup>th</sup>; residence 135 South Hill. William Rice is a repairer working for him (city directory).
- 1892 Frank Ellsworth Olds, manufacturer (voter registration); work starts on making trombones (1947 catalog).
- 1893 FE Olds, silver plater, 208-212 W. 5<sup>th</sup> St (city directory).
- 1895 Pacific Cycle Co. Inc., ER Brainerd pres, FE Olds superintendent, manufacturer of bicycles, 620 S. Broadway (city directory).
- 1896 F E Olds, manager of Pacific Cycle Co (voter registration).
- 1897 FE Olds, Pacific Cycle Co, 206 W. 24<sup>th</sup> (city directory).
- 1899 Son Reginald Birdsall Olds (photo 3) is born on Sept 11 (birth cert.).
- 1900 Frank is a Locomobile agent, #206 24<sup>th</sup> St (census).
- 1902 FE Olds, home at 206 24<sup>th</sup> St, working as a machinist for Locomobile of the Pacific (city directory).
- 1904 FE Olds, foreman for Auto Vehicle Co at 943 N. Main St (city directory).
- 1910 Frank E. Olds, manufacturer of musical instruments; #206 W. 24<sup>th</sup> St, Los Angeles (census). He worked in a shop behind his home called the "barn" (Olson).
- 1912 Olds licensed trombone patent #1,021,890 by Riblet.
- 1913 Olds perfects his trombone design (1927 catalog).
- 1922 Olds moves production to #1914 Raymond Ave (photo 2) (Olson). Son Reginald likely starts working full time with him now [Reginald is listed as "no occupation" in the 1920 census and "student" in a 1921 passport application for a



European tour but was likely put to work there whenever he was home.]

- 1924 Olds starts making ivory mouthpieces and engraving their trademark “Golden Bear” on trombone bells (Stewart). They become F.E. Olds & Son (News Tribune, 1959).
- 1928 Olds begins the design for their trumpet (Olson). Frank dies October 9 of heart failure while on a ship (obit) and Reginald begins full management (Olson).
- 1929 Olds produces their first trumpets on February 5<sup>th</sup> (photo 4, p.1) (Olson).
- 1935 Fluted trombone slides were advertised in September. They also have a new French model trumpet (Chicago Musical Inst.).
- 1936 Catalog shows Standard, Self-Balancing, Military & Super model trombones, Standard, Military and the new French model trumpets, and Standard & Military model cornets.

French model #6059 c.1939



- 1937 The new Super model trombones, trumpets, & cornets were advertised in December (Chicago Mus. Inst.).
- 1939 Catalog shows Standard, Super, Featherweight, & Bass model trombones, Standard & Super model trumpets, and Standard & Radio model cornets. A November ad says that new models are the Featherweight trombone, The Olds French Horn, and the Radio cornet (Chicago Mus. Inst.).
- 1941 Catalog shows Special, Standard, Super, & Recording model cornets and trumpets.
- 1942-1945 Olds converts to military production of aircraft parts such as gun sights (Olson).
- 1946 R.B. Olds testifies to the US Senate about their struggles obtaining capital for war contracts and post-war civilian demands. The Philadelphia quartermaster had requested as many instruments as they could build during the war and now prices were being regulated. They currently have 150 workers and need 100 more if they can get loans. Their (office?) address is 1710 W. Washington Blvd.



- 1947 Catalog shows Standard, Super & Special models of trombones, Recording, Super, Standard & Special model trumpet (in descending price order), and Recording, Super & Special model cornets.
- 1948 Olds meets with the Chicago Musical Instrument Co., a long-time distributor, about the future of Olds, and the Ambassador line was developed to meet the student market demand. CMI buys a majority of Olds stock and brings Foster Reynolds (photo 2) out of retirement to run the factory. Because of him, the shop unionizes (Olson). [A 1973 US tariff report says that CMI bought Olds in 1945 but this does not match with the 1946 testimony of financial troubles.]
- 1948 Olds adds 12,000 sf of factory space by buying the adjoining corner building previously shown as a welding and steel shop. Their office address changes to 1788 W. Washington Blvd, which is on end of this building (*Western Metals*).
- 1949 Catalog shows Recording, Super, Studio, Special & Ambassador model cornets & trumpets.
- 1951 Don Agard starts working for Olds (news article, 1979).
- 1952 Zigmant (Zig) Kanstul (photo 1) starts work at Olds (Olson).
- 1954 Agard has the serial numbers for all instruments merged at 100000 in January\* (Agard). Production is moved 40 miles away to a new factory at #350 S. Raymond St in Fullerton, CA. Each department moved separately and there was no break in production (Olson).
- 1959 Sousaphones have been made since 1955 and a new Flugel horn was being developed. They have 180 workers making 50 models (News Tribune article).
- 1960 Reynolds dies while working at the plant.
- 1961 R. Dale Olson (photo 3) joins Olds in January as a designer and Director of Research to work on the trumpets (Olson).
- 1965 Reginald retires (obit.).
- 1969 CMI now becomes a division of Norlin Industries (1973 US tariff report) [see conflict with 1973 statement below].
- 1970 Reginald Olds dies on July 9<sup>th</sup> (obit.).
- 1971 All Olds & Reynolds instruments are now made in Fullerton (1973 US tariff report).



- 1972 Zig Kanstul leaves Olds and leaves a large hole in management of the factory (Olson)
- 1973 CMI is purchased by Norlin Corp. One of the cost-cutting measures tried was to reduce the number of steps in fitting the valves. This resulted in the valves being too tight and many instruments returned. The quality issue lost them many dealers (Chuck Madera).
- 1974 Olds has 400 workers (news article, 1979).
- 1975 Competition with Yamaha, reduced school budgets, and problems with quality all contribute to a reduced workforce to 200 (news article, 1979).
- 1979 Olds production ends on July 13 and the plant closes in November. A buyer for the firm was sought but the asking price was not met. Don Agard turned out the lights for the last time on December 7<sup>th</sup> (news article & Olson).
- 1980 The rights to the Olds name were purchased by the National Educator's Music Co. and some trumpets and cornets were made in the Netherlands by Schenkelaars in collaboration with a Mario Marconi. These can also say "Chicago".
- 1988 Schenkelaars folds and production changed to Blessing stencils from Elkhart (photo 1).
- 2005 Instruments are made by Blessing and Amati.
- 2019 The Olds company is based in Mountainside, NJ with instruments made in the Czech Republic (Amati) & Asia.

Ambassador #595941 c.1967 (author's photo)



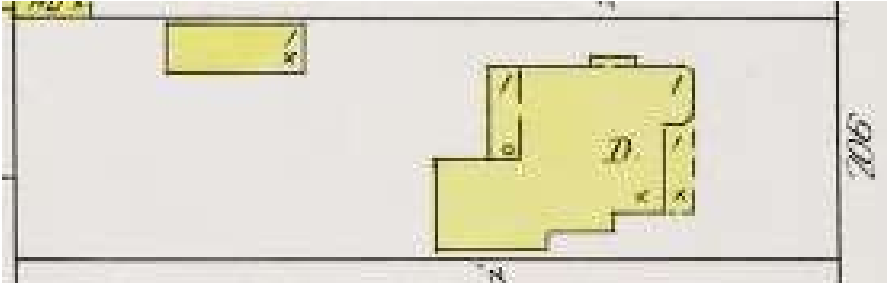
Super Recording



## Olds Factories

### 1910-1922: 206 West 24<sup>th</sup> St, Los Angeles

The first shop was in a barn behind his home as seen in this Sanborn Fire Insurance map from 1907. This is shown as a one-story wood-framed structure.



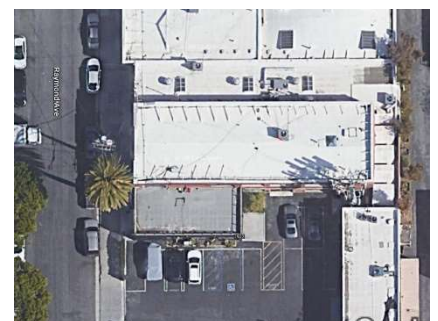
### 1922-1954: 1914 Raymond Ave, Los Angeles

Olds built this new factory in 1922.

1939 Catalog image

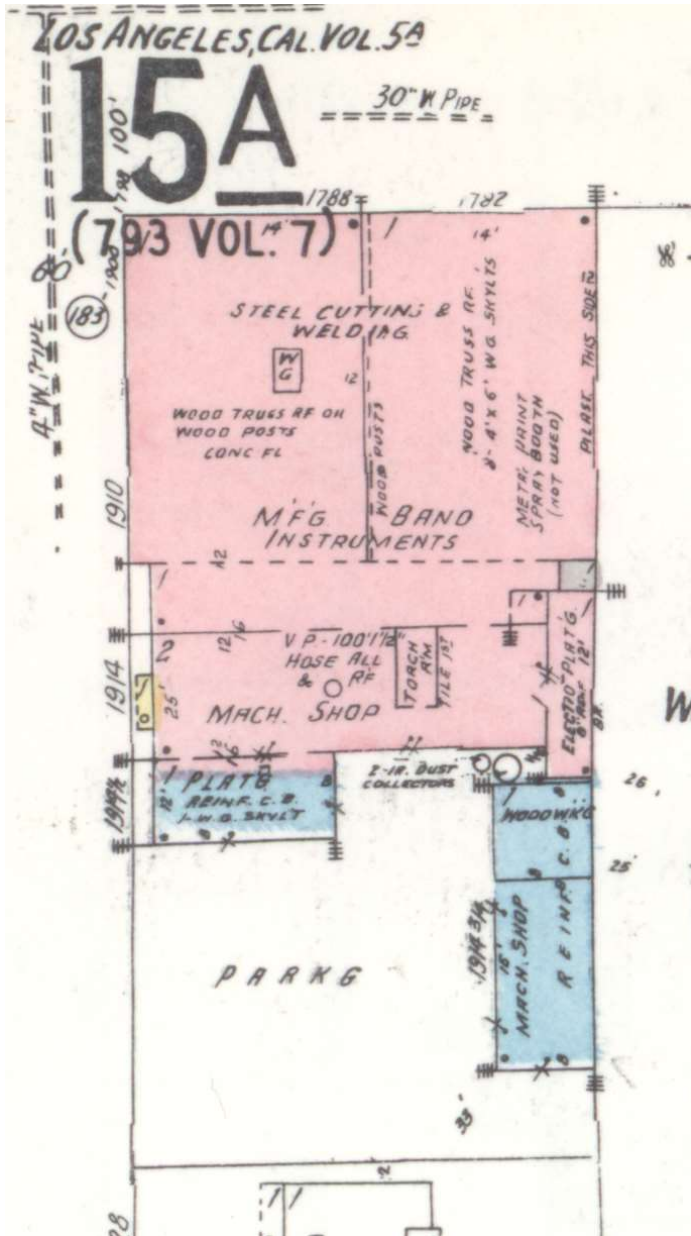


2023 Google images showing later additions



2023 Google image

Sanborn map updated to 1954.



**1954-1979: 350 South Raymond Ave, Fullerton**

The tiny factory was replaced with this new one 40 miles away in Fullerton in 1954. They stayed here until the end.

c.1957 image



2023 image



Aerial view in 2023



\*So far, evidence would suggest that serial numbers were merged just after WWII, rather than the 1950s. More examples are needed before this transition is fully known. In an interview with Alan Rouse in 2002, Agard said that when he merged all instruments at 100,000 in January 1954, trombones were at 48000 and trumpets/cornets were at 68000. Since serial numbers for all instruments can be found up to 100000, this would seem to be a mistake in memory.

Agard did say that the move to Fullerton happened between March and July of 1954 with new bell markings taking quite a while to change.

