

Thompson & Odell, Standard Band Inst. Co., & Vega Co.

Boston, Massachusetts

- 1870 Ira Herbert Odell (1842-1928), music teacher, Boston.
- 1873 Woods & Odell, music teachers, #121 Court St., Boston, with J. H. Woods (directory).
- 1874 Woods, Odell & Thompson, music teacher & musical instruments, #121 Court St; adding Charles W. Thompson (1842-1903) (dir).
- 1875 Thompson & Odell, musical instruments, #86 Tremont St.
- 1880 Thompson & Odell now at #177 Washington & #78 Tremont (ad). (T&O Imperial cornet, photo 4, appears to be an imported stencil)
- 1884 Quinby Brothers musical instruments is purchased by Thompson & Odell and called Standard Band Instrument Co., #62 Sudbury St. (cornet #638 photos 2&3) [these often have great engraving and fancy cast joints & caps like those found on Missenharters and quite a departure from the plain Quinbys]. T&O still at #177 Wash. (dir).
- 1886 T&O moves to #186 Washington (dir).
- 1889 T&O now at both #186 & #523 Wash. (dir).
- 1890 Vega Co., #223 Commercial St., guitars, mandolins, zithers photo 5 c.1890), founded by Carl Linder Wilmot Nelson (1871-?, emigrated 1883) (photo 1) & brother Julius M. Nelson (1868-1920, emigrated 1889) from Sweden. Other founders are John Palm & John Swenson. T&O at #523 Wash. only (dir. & census). [Vega is Latin for one of the three stars in the Summer Triangle.]
- 1899 Vega Co. & SBIC are still at separate addresses (dir).
- 1900 Vega Co. & Standard Band Inst. Co. are now both at #62 Sudbury St; Carl & Julius Nelson (dir).
- 1903 Vega Co. is incorporated.
- 1904 Vega acquires A.C. Fairbanks for banjos.
- 1905 Thompson & Odell now at #749 Washington (dir). Their stringed instrument business is sold to Vega (Ayres).

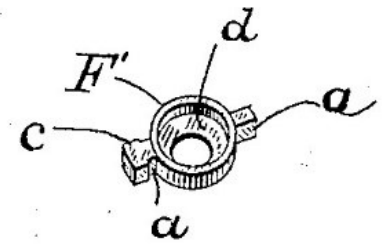


1909 Vega buys the Standard Band Instrument Co from T&O to add brass instruments to their offerings (Ayres). [Ayres indicates that this is the approximate year from her interview with Vega, yet they share a location as early as 1900. Serial numbers start around 1000 for SBIC brass with the added Vega inside a star (photo 1).]

Vega/SBIC cornet #2062 c.1912

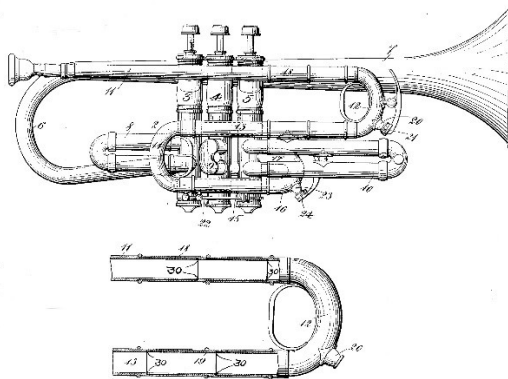


Fig. 3.



1910 Early Vega trumpets are marked with a July, 1910 patent date which is for Blessing patent #963,272 for a valve guide/spring base (photo 2).

1915 Carl Nelson granted patent #1,165,278 for cornet telescoping tuning slide; assigned to Vega (below).



This patent drawing matches #4392 below, #5962 (photos 3&4 at right) & #5019 (photo 7). These have a Sudbury address so predate 1917.



#1169



#3900



Design changes:

Early SBIC cornets have a single ring on the valve casing as on #638 below.



After Vega takes control, this changes to a smooth concave/convex band as in #2062 below.



This shortly changes to a design used for many years to come which is a sharper concave/convex band as in #3900. This has patent July, 1910 for the Blessing valves used.



1891 ad

1916 Vega Co., #62 Sudbury, Julius pres, Carl tres (dir).

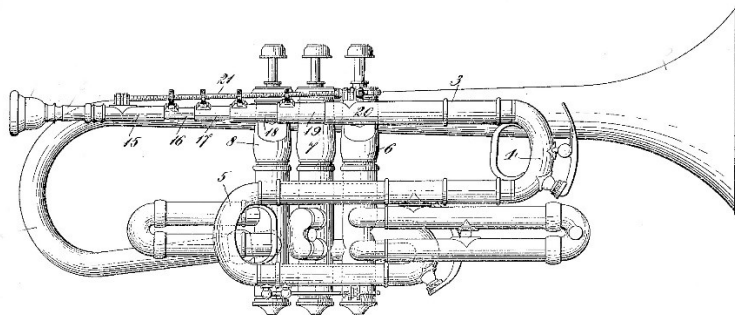
1916 ad showing Sudbury address

THE VEGA CO., 62 Sudbury St., Boston, Mass., U. S. A.

Vega Instruments on Sale at

JOHN WANAMAKER, New York City GRINNELL BROS., Detroit, Mich. VOLKWEIN BROS., Pittsburgh, Pa.
 DENTON, COTTIER & DANIELS, Buffalo, N. Y. GOLDSMITH'S MUSIC STORE, Columbus, Ohio.
 LYON & HEALY, Chicago, Illinois. CRESSEY & ALLEN, Portland, Me.
 SOUTHERN CALIFORNIA MUSIC CO., Los Angeles, Calif. KOHLER & CHASE, San Francisco, Calif.

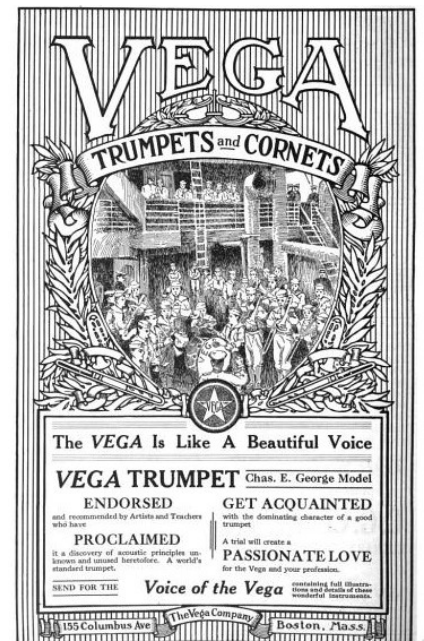
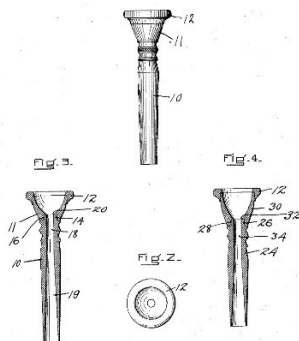
1917 Carl Nelson granted patent #1,232,069 for cornet telescoping lead pipe (below) with assignment to Vega. [I have not found an example of this design, yet the patent date appears on some instruments.] They move to #155 Columbus Ave (photo 1) in June; serial # c.6500.



1917 Trumpet #6571 has the 1910 and 1915 patent dates but not one from July, 1917, yet has the new Columbus address, so should date to this time (below & photo 2 by author). (photo 1 is #155 Columbus in 2017).



This first trumpet offering by Vega corresponds with their move to Columbus Ave and the model is named after Charles E. George (1871-1954), an orchestra musician and teacher in Boston. He received patent #1,178,513 in 1916 for this mouthpiece design that interchanges rims between cornet and trumpet.



1919 ad



#5962 w/old address

1920 Julius dies in July from pneumonia. Ira Odell is retired and son Herbert (1872-?) is music store owner (census). David Day is secretary (news report).

1922 Vega Co. & SBIC at #155 Columbus Ave; Herbert F. Odell & Co., music publisher, #165 Tremont room 31 (dir.).

1922 ad

GOOD PROFITS

BANJOS	V E G A	TRUMPETS
MANDOLINS		TROMBONES
LUTES		SAXOPHONES
GUITARS		CLARINETS

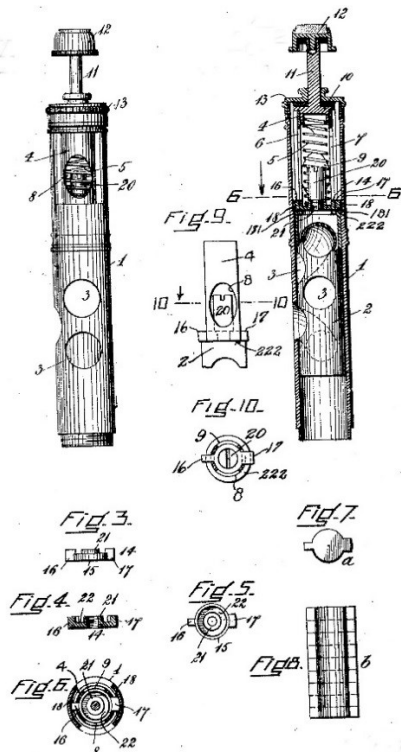
New Catalogs—Just Out

THE VEGA COMPANY

155 Columbus Ave. Boston, Mass.



1923 Peter Tottle applies for a patent on a variation of the Blessing valve guide (below) which adds a center post for keeping the spring centered (photo 3 by author from Power model #40037). He was granted patent #1,547,272, with assignment to Vega, on July 28, 1925 and later instruments using this guide are marked with "Patd".



- 1925 Vega takes over the music publishing business H.F. Odell Co. (sold later in 1931) (Ayars). Catalog has trumpet models Standard (with #1, 3 or 4 bell), Large bore (with #5 bell) & C; cornet models Supertone & Coloratura (rare); trombone models Perfection, Standard & Orchestra Grand; Bb Baritone & bass models Bohemian Sousaphone, Sander, & Thompson & Odell.
- 1925 Peter Tottle is granted patent #1,547,272 for valve guide design assigned to Vega Co.
- 1926 Artistone model trumpets are selling in NYC (MTR).
- 1927 Vega trumpets are selected for the US Navy band (MTR).
- 1928 Vega has a new medium bore orchestra trumpet (MTR). Walter M. Smith praises the new medium bore trumpet and uses them with his students (MTR).
- 1928 Ad at right mentions the #4 and Artistone models; address is #161 Columbus Ave.

**Successful Dealers
Push and Profit by—**

VEGA

DEALERS who make a success are those who take advantage of nationally known and nationally advertised products. The field that you are interested in is led by that renowned musical instrument manufacturer, VEGA. The Vega Dealer takes advantage of this popularity and profits by pushing Vega for HE knows that these instruments are of the Artists' Choice, used in the leading orchestras, recording, broadcasting, Vitaphone, Movietone and other features.

The latest banjo creation is the Vegavox. The deep resonator is the main feature responsible for its popularity. This extra depth gives greatest space for sound development, clarifies the tonal quality and creates a new style in banjo construction. Get behind this new development, it means dollars and cents to every dealer. Every banjo player is a prospect and a trial will convince him that it is "the most beautifully voiced banjo in banjo history."

When you talk sales, talk Vega—for nearly a half century Vega has had an undisputed reputation as manufacturer of the finest line of fretted instruments. Its latest guitar development is the Arched Top and Back Guitar, with a tonal quality as beautiful as "an old master."

If you are not pushing VEGA, get further details on these instruments that have founded the success of others.



Illustrated
**VEGAVOX
STYLE II**
\$250

—and



ALL BAND INSTRUMENTS

YOU profit more by selling instruments that satisfy. Vega Trumpets are made in six distinct styles to suit the taste of every player, and each has a tonal quality that has the endorsement of leading players. Sales arguments are won from every angle when you sell with a VEGA.

Get a copy of the illustrated catalog.

The VEGA Co.
161-3 Columbus Ave.
BOSTON, MASS.



Quality

VEGA TRUMPETS



the kind dealers like to sell—built by master craftsmen, and of selected material, used by the leading professional trumpet players and considered the finest made by those who know.

Ask about the Number Four and Artistone Models

**Convention
Headquarters
Room 772**



VEGA BANJOS
proclaimed the Artists' choice the world over, not because of high pressure advertising, but because banjoists demand VEGA. Every dealer should profit by it.

**VEGA SPECIAL
VEGAPHONE
VEGAVOX**
Models

Catalogs on request

The VEGA Co.
161 Columbus Avenue
BOSTON, MASS.

George model #22386 c.1922 (author's photo)



Walter M. Smith quote from 1928:

“Quality is an essential for success. The trumpet must have irresistible qualities of encouragement, and I have found no better trumpet to fulfill this essential for success than Vega trumpets. [They] are made of the finest obtainable material and assembled by craftsmen with years of experience in constructing trumpets of superior quality.”

1929 “The Vega Co., Boston, Mass., has just announced the Vega Triumphal, a new trumpet for 1930, which will retail at \$125 and up. The trumpet is equipped with two Vega mouthpieces, Vegaloid mute, music lyre, and a new improved case.

“Regarding this trumpet the Vega Co. states the new improved “stream-line” trumpet is light, balanced, and graceful in design. The counter-sunk valve top cap feature gives a speedy, accurate and more comfortable fingering. Other features are new non-corrosive nickel valves, single piston guide, lower valve action, shorter valve casings, third slide with finger hook, two water keys, and a hand-hammered one-piece bell.” (*Music Trade Review*, Oct.)

Triumphal #29100, c.1930, is earliest I have found so far.



1930 Carl has no occupation; William is Vega owner (census)

1936 William is Vega president, #155 Columbus Ave. 40% of business is brass instruments making all but French horns and bass brass. About 1,000 trumpets made per year with a total of 30,000 to date (Ayars). Around this time, they introduce the Advanced Triumphal trumpet (#33091 at right, #33091 below & photo 2 at right). [This has “Pat Apld For” yet I have not found a patent at this time.]





These have bottom-sprung valves which accounts for their “single piston guide” and “lower valve action” but hardly a selling point as this is a cheaper way of building it.

1936 Carl Fischer becomes the sole Vega national distributor in November (AcousticMusic.org).

1937 Carl’s son William Waldo Nelson (1903-1983) is president of Vega.

Power Model Trumpet:

Most Advanced Triumphal model trumpets have a 33000 to 34000 serial number range which are then followed by the Power model starting in the 35000 range.

Triumphal model #34081



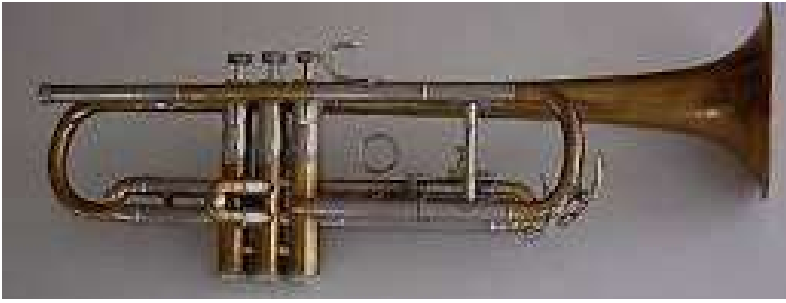
Power model #35165



c.1926 Artistone model. #25539



Power model #36146



Power model #37027



Power model #38057



Power model #38509 – seems to be made from another source



- 1940 William Nelson, musical inst. manager (census).
- 1942 William leaves temporarily for the war effort and the company is run by John A. Allen (AcousticMusic.org).
- 1948 Ad on page below for new “Power Model” trumpets used by Stan Kenton’s band. #155 Columbus Ave. The photo below is too small to be certain, but this probably is the change from the old style as shown in #41068 at right with the traditional Vega bell braces, concave/convex design on valve casings, and vertical tuning slide brace.

Photos 1, 3 & 4 on last page are Power model #40037 (author's photos) with original case c.1947.



Power model #42583 with new design c.1948 below and photos 1 & 2 at right (internet auction).



These were probably a stencil from another maker.

1950 John Allen is GM; William is treasurer.

1959 No listing for Vega in the city directory.

- 1961 Vega Co. Inc., #155 Columbus 2nd floor, musical inst. manuf., William W. Nelson pres. (dir. & census). Later this year they move to #40 Leon St, Boston.
- 1966 Vega Inst. Co. Inc., #40 Leon, Wm. W. Nelson pres. (dir). Later this year they move to #155 Reservoir Rd, Chestnut Hill, and drop all brass sales (AcousticMusic.org).
- 1970 #40 Leon is vacant (dir). Vega is purchased in March by C.F. Martin Co. for their banjos. They had 18 employees left at this time (AcousticMusic.org).
- 1979 Martin sells Vega to Sun Pyo Hong, president of Galaxy Trading Corp. (AcousticMusic.org).
- 1983 William W. Nelson dies in Cambridge and Vega is purchased by Deering Banjos (AcousticMusic.org).

Power Special model #71473, below & top right



Standard model #86317, below & 2nd right



Power Special model #97525



Odell model #52186 (a Pedler & Sons stencil)



Cornets:

Triumphal model #31035 c.1932 (author's photo)



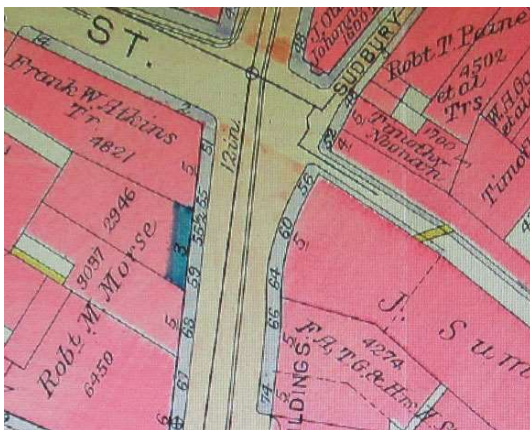
Power model #36000, below & top right



Triumphal #86808 (author's photo)

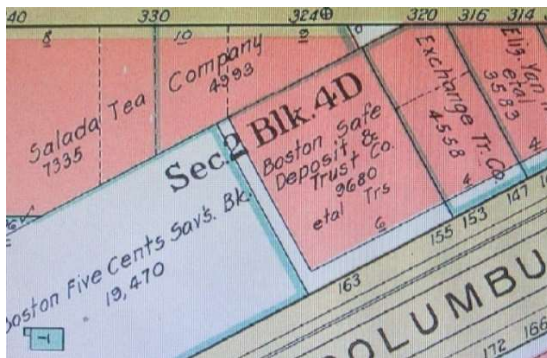
Store Locations:

#62 Sudbury Ave. (1917 map below)



155 Reservoir Rd

#155 Columbus Ave. (1938 map below, 2017 photo on R)



Origins of late model brass:

Trumpets into the 41000 range in serial number (except for the Triumphal models & new Berman Power model starting around 38500) have a consistent valve casing design. After this we get large jumps in serial numbers found from 50k to 80k, then the 90000 range with only a few examples. Is Vega still in production or are they just stencils? Even the serial number stamp is inconsistent between models indicating different makers.

Power model #40037 valves (photo 1 by author)

Power model #42583 below



Power Special model #71473 (photo 2 at right)

Standard model #86317 (photo 3 at right)

Power Special model #97525 below matching #71473



If Carl Fischer is still involved, then they could have been made in the old York plant or outsourced to a foreign maker. Please email jrpatton68@gmail.com if you have any information on these later horns.

Photos from internet or Horn-u-copia.net unless noted.

c.1949 Power Model #40037 (author's photos). A rare example in silver plate with its original case and mouthpiece. 0.458" bore, 4.75" bell, 19" long.

