

C. G. Conn: The Man (1844–1931) And His Company (1874–1915)

MARGARET DOWNIE BANKS AND JAMES W. JORDAN

NEARLY 5,000 PEOPLE awaited the arrival of Charles Gerard Conn at the Elkhart train depot. It was May, not the Fourth of July, although one might have thought the calendar wrong judging from the spectacle on Main Street:

The business district has taken on a gala appearance. . . . Store fronts were decorated with flags and bunting and large flaring banners bearing messages of welcome and good cheer greeted the colonel on his triumphant ride down Main Street between tiers upon tiers of men, women and children. . . . Autos and other vehicles also bore flags, and this afternoon white badges bearing Col. Conn's picture and the word, "Welcome," became conspicuous on coat lapels and dress bosoms. There was a general compliance with the suggestion to close business houses so that all might join in the welcome at the station and the escorting parade to Hotel Bucklen. . . . Never before in the history of Elkhart has such a popular demonstration been made.¹

Although this unanticipated and overwhelming display of sympathy and loyalty by the citizens of Elkhart undoubtedly helped to soften the stark realities that faced the sixty-six-year-old Conn following a civic reception at the Hotel Bucklen on May 26, 1910, one can only wonder what went through the man's mind when he saw the remains of his fire-ravaged musical instrument factory at 1101 East Beardsley Avenue and learned of the tragic death of his seventy-year-old night watchman, Royal Edgerly.² Perhaps he recalled the early morning hours of January 29, 1883—his thirty-

This article is an expansion of a paper presented at the fifteenth annual meeting of the American Musical Instrument Society held in 1987 at Colonial Williamsburg, Virginia. The results of additional research now being conducted by the authors concerning the history of the Conn Company from its origins to the present, Conn Co. patents, and specific models, will be published at a future date. The authors are indebted to John McCardle, Indianapolis, Indiana; Lillian and Stuart Caplin, New York City; Robert Ziems, Elkhart, Indiana; and The Shrine to Music Museum, The University of South Dakota, Vermillion, for permission to publish photographs of materials from their collections. We also wish to acknowledge the research assistance of *The Elkhart Truth* and the Elkhart Public Library.

1. "Unanimous Welcome is Warm" and "Col. Conn Unaware of Welcoming Fete," *The Elkhart Daily Review*, 26 and 27 May 1910.

2. "New Conn Factory to Rise from Ruins," *The Elkhart Daily Review*, 23 May 1910.

ninth birthday—when flames demolished his previous factory.³ Insurance payments in both cases covered far less than the estimated losses; in 1883, \$22,000 for a \$50,000 loss;⁴ in 1910, \$80,000 for a \$500,000 loss.⁵ In both instances, the apparently indomitable Colonel Conn sought to turn adversity into opportunity by immediately rebuilding bigger and better facilities. Signs of accumulated financial stress were evident as he entered his seventies, however, and, in 1915, Conn sold his interests in the million-dollar corporation.⁶ Shortly thereafter, he left his wife, daughter, and Elkhart behind, taking up permanent residence at his vacation home near Los Angeles, where he died—penniless—a few weeks before his eighty-seventh birthday.⁷

Ironically, C. G. Conn had once written that “debt is to be deplored when liabilities exceed assets. Under other circumstances, it may be justified. Men have laid the foundation of their fortunes through their ability to accumulate debts.”⁸ Having both made and then lost his fortune through the gradual accumulation of debts, Conn left his family too poor even to pay for his funeral. It was through the kindness of the Elkhart Masonic Lodge, which Conn had been instrumental in founding,⁹ that arrangements were made for the return of the body to Elkhart where it was buried in an unmarked grave in Grace Lawn Cemetery.¹⁰ Conn’s pauper’s grave remained unmarked for six years, until a memorial fund was established in 1937, by the Elkhart Chamber of Commerce and employees of C. G. Conn, Ltd., to “erect a monument honoring the late Col. C. G. Conn as founder of the band instrument industry.”¹¹

What kind of man could build a pioneering, million-dollar musical instrument manufacturing industry before World War I, engaging his competitors in literary combat in the process? What kind of man could evoke great outpourings of public support, as well as criticism, yet spend the last

3. “Conn’s Instrument Factory Destroyed by Fire,” *The Elkhart Daily Review*, 6 February 1883.

4. “Fire! Destruction of Conn’s Horn Factory,” *The Elkhart Daily Review*, 29 January 1883; *The Elkhart Daily Review*, 6 February 1883.

5. *The Elkhart Daily Review*, 23 May 1910.

6. Editorial, *C. G. Conn’s Musical Truth* 9 no. 18 (September 1915).

7. “Col. C. G. Conn, 86, Is Dead; Body Will be Brought to Elkhart,” *The Elkhart Truth*, 6 January 1931.

8. Advertisement, *Truth* 7 no. 8 (November 1908). See note 31 below.

9. *The Elkhart Truth*, 6 January 1931.

10. Barbara Clark, “C. G. Conn was Flamboyant Personality,” *The Elkhart Truth*, 6 November 1976; *The Elkhart Truth*, 6 January 1931.

11. “Appeal for Donations,” *The Elkhart Truth*, 5 February 1937.

fifteen years of his life a virtual recluse? What kind of man could write a book about achieving success¹² and yet die penniless? A patriot, veteran of the Civil War, grocer, silverware plater, rubber-stamp maker, cornet player, inventor, manufacturer, writer, publisher, engineer, mayor, state legislator, Congressman, businessman, fisherman, millionaire, pauper, philosopher, sailor, art collector, real estate investor—Charles Gerard Conn was all of these, and more.

The Young C. G. Conn

C. G. Conn was born on January 29, 1844, in Phelps, a small town in the Finger Lakes region of upstate New York.¹³ His parents, twenty-nine-year-old Charles J. Conn (1815–1887) and twenty-one-year-old Sarah Benjamin Conn (1823–1884), were farmers. The family decided to move westward in 1851, settling in Elkhart, Indiana, where Charles J. Conn became head of the village schools.¹⁴

Young Charles volunteered for service in the Union Army on May 18, 1861, at the age of seventeen. A cornet player, Conn was mustered into service as a private in the regimental band attached to Company B of the Fifteenth Indiana Voluntary Infantry. Fifteen months later, he was discharged (September 10, 1862).¹⁵ Determined to remain a member of the Union Army, Conn reenlisted with Company G, First Michigan Sharpshooters, in Niles, Michigan, on November 18, 1862,¹⁶ at the age of eighteen. Starting out as the Company bandmaster, Conn “advanced to sergeant, then to second lieutenant on August 8, 1863, and was the company’s captain at the age of 20.”¹⁷ Conn, who was later cited for bravery,¹⁸ was wounded and taken prisoner during the assault on Petersburg, Virginia,

12. C. G. Conn, *The Wonder Book: How to Achieve Success* (Los Angeles: Gem Publishing Co., 1923).

13. “Charles Gerard Conn,” *Biographical Directory of the American Congress 1774–1971* (Washington, DC: Government Printing Office, 1971), 774.

14. *The Elkhart Truth*, 6 January 1931.

15. *Biographical Directory*, 774.

16. *Ibid.* Conn may have bought property in Michigan at this time. An advertisement in *The Elkhart Daily Review*, 20 May 1874, indicates that Conn offered for sale “160 acres of good wood land in Wexford Co., Mich.”

17. *The Elkhart Truth*, 6 January 1931.

18. According to John C. Freund, “Sketches in the Trade: C. G. Conn, of Elkhart, Ind.,” *The American Musician* (January 26, 1889): 23, “it is said that on one occasion when his band was about to stampede, owing to a sudden onslaught of the enemy, he [Conn] rushed at them and shouted: ‘Play ye devils, play! Do you want to live forever?’”

July 30, 1864. Several attempts at escape were foiled, including one daring attempt at the time of Sherman's advance toward Confederate lines.

[When] the rebels shifted their prisoners from Columbia, South Carolina, Conn and Captain Dicey and Lieutenant Randall, both of Michigan commands, caused themselves to be buried by fellow prisoners, hoping to be left behind so they could rejoin the Union forces. But their ruse was detected.¹⁹

Conn remained a Confederate prisoner until the end of the war, at which time he was honorably discharged (July 28, 1865).²⁰

Later in his life, the issue of Conn's bravery during the war was taken up by a former Elkhart newspaper publisher, E. D. Fuller, who waged a strong anti-Conn campaign in his publication, *The Sunday Call*. It eventually gained national attention in the July 26, 1890 issue of *The American Musician*, forerunner of *The Musical Trades* magazine:

E. D. Fuller . . . has lately started another sheet called *The Sunday Call*, whose principal object it would appear is to vilify and traduce the Hon. C. G. Conn. . . .

In one of these issues he attempts to impugn the courage of Mr. Conn while a soldier in the army. Here is where he made a supreme ass of himself, for no charge was more easy of refutation, nor its falsity more easily shown by the late comrades of Capt. Conn. They one and all, from the regimental commanding officer down, pronounce the statement to be utterly false, and brand its author as a "liar, pure and simple."

The surviving officers of the First Michigan Sharpshooters, the regiment in which Conn served, do not mince matters, but use the plainest and most vigorous language. Says Capt. Ira L. Evans, in referring to the opinions of his old comrades: "They would place your name at the head of the column of the bravest men in the late war."

Lieut. Geo. Fowler writes, "I wish to say, never was there a braver man went from Michigan to the late war than Conn."

Lieut. Frank Whipple writes, as follows: "Among many brave men you were no coward when the battle was on, unless we were all cowards, and the list of casualties in the regiment shows that all were not cowards."

Brevet Major Geo. H. Murdock, U.S.A., states, "You were in the 'Crater' at Petersburg, Va., on the 30th July, and any man with the least intelligence knows that there were no cowards there. They remained in the ravine in the rear and did not get there."

John Hanover, late of Co. G, First Michigan Sharpshooters, remarks, "that the man who makes a charge reflecting on your courage is a poltroon and a liar, and there is no spark of manhood in him."

19. *The Elkhart Truth*, 6 January 1931.

20. *Ibid.*

Following the war, Conn married Elkhart native Katherine ("Kate") Mary Hazelton, on October 10, 1869. (They were married for more than forty-five years before Conn divorced her and at the age of seventy-five married Suzanne Cohn.²¹) To support himself and his first wife, Conn worked as a grocer alongside his father, who had given up teaching to run a grocery and bakery business.²² The younger Conn apparently sold ice for a time, a business he sold out in 1874.²³ The skills Conn learned on the side, however, occasionally making rubber stamps as well as plating and engraving silverware,²⁴ were soon to become the foundation for his career as a musical instrument manufacturer.

Conn's Elastic Face Mouthpiece

The direction of Conn's life was forever changed as a result of a fight with a fellow member of the Elkhart Silver Cornet Band, during which a blow to Conn's mouth resulted in his upper lip being lacerated so severely that it appeared his cornet playing days were at an end.²⁵ Determined to play again, Conn designed a rubber-rimmed cornet mouthpiece which conformed to and cushioned the abnormalities of his lip (figs. 1a–1c). Conn introduced his new mouthpiece to fellow members of the city band, and, according to a newspaper account of 1883,

21. *Ibid.* Conn and his first wife, Kate, had a daughter, Sarah (nicknamed Sallie) in 1878, according to Elkhart census records of 1880. Conn and his second wife, Suzanne, had a son, Charles Gerard Conn, Jr., in 1919, according to Clark (n. 10).

22. Conn's father, Charles J. Conn, is listed as a grocer and baker in an 1870 Elkhart census. He had two employees living with him, in addition to his wife and seventeen-year-old daughter, Ella. Girard [sic] Conn, 27, was also listed as a grocer. His new wife, Kate, 21, was listed as a house keeper. The census also reveals that Charles J. Conn was financially well to do, having an estimated \$17,000 in real estate holdings and \$5,000 in personal assets. No assets are listed for the younger Conn.

23. Advertisement in *The Elkhart Daily Review*, 20 May 1874: "To the citizens of Elkhart. I have turned over my ice trade to S. Mott, and I have nothing but Lake ice in store. C. Conn. I can furnish garden plants, etc."

24. *The Elkhart Truth*, 6 January 1931.

25. The date and details of this fight vary from source to source. Don Thorpe, "A Story of Progress," *Ameri-Conn* 4 no. 3 (March 1945): 3, for example, claims the fight took place in 1867 with an unknown assailant. In *The Elkhart Truth*, 6 January 1931, the fight is noted as having happened "during the late 1860's," but the assailant is specifically identified as Del Crampton, a fellow Civil War veteran and bass drum player in the Elkhart Silver Cornet Band, "a contemporary of Conn's who later became his fast friend." The fight is dated 1873 by Martin Krivin, "A Century of Wind Instrument Manufacturing in the United States," (Ph.D. diss., University of Iowa, 1961), 67.

FIGURE 1a.



FIGURES 1a, 1b, 1c. Rubber-rimmed cornet mouthpiece patented by C. G. Conn, February 23, 1875. Conn produced these mouthpieces throughout his career. Photograph by Gary M. Stewart, courtesy of The Shrine to Music Museum (catalog no. 1196).

Several of these cushioned mouthpieces were used by members of the Elkhart Silver Cornet Band. . . . All who used the invention were delighted. It was a blessing to the puffed lips of the horn player, which he recognized. The invention was patented. Its fame had preceded it in the locality contiguous to Elkhart, and orders came in from neighboring towns more rapidly than the patentee could fill them.²⁶

Initially, Conn produced his mouthpieces in a rented one-room building in the rear of the *Elkhart Daily Review* office near Jackson and Main streets,²⁷ the first ones on an improvised lathe made from the frame of a

26. *The Elkhart Daily Review*, 6 February 1883.

27. Carrie Mathias, "Elkhart—Band Instrument City of the World" (unpublished typescript, Elkhart, Ind., [ca. 1932]). Betty Flitcraft, of Elkhart City Historical Researchers, notes that the building was "on the alley, east side, located behind 115 North Main. The building was torn down in 1898 when Century Club built there" (letter from Robert Ziems, April 10, 1987).

FIGURE 1b.



FIGURE 1c.



sewing machine.²⁸ He employed three people to assist him²⁹ as orders increased, and, in 1874, the thirty-year-old businessman moved his shop to the second floor of 123 West Jackson³⁰ (fig. 2). Perhaps in order to finance his rapidly-expanding facilities, not to mention his new employees, Conn placed an advertisement in the May 20, 1874 issue of *The Elkhart Daily Review*, offering "160 acres of good wood land in Wexford Co., Mich. and a

28. *The Elkhart Daily Review*, 6 February 1883.

29. George W. Butler, "C. G. Conn, Manufacturer of Band Instruments," *The Manual of Elkhart* (Elkhart: n.p., [ca. 1888]).

30. Fliccraft notes that this building was torn down in 1967 (see n. 27).

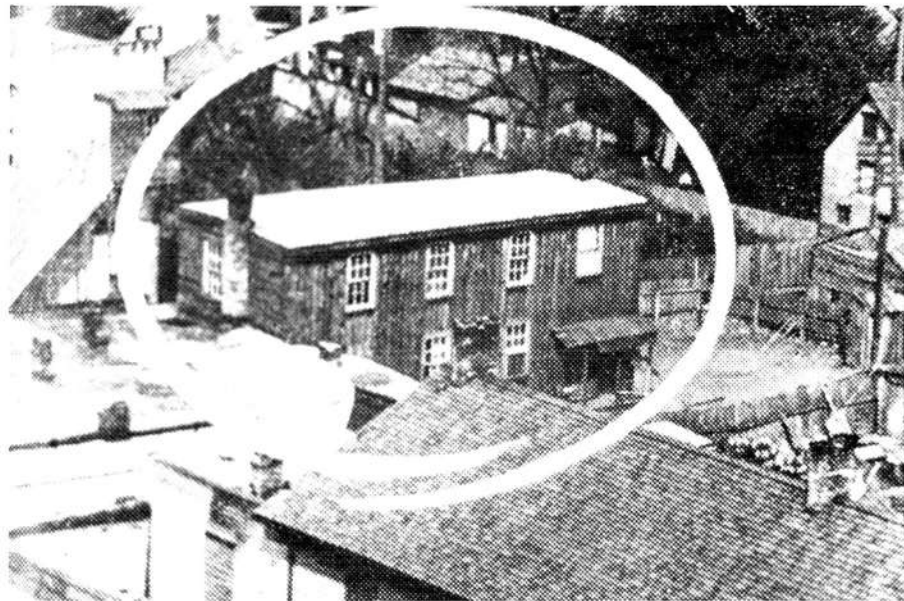


FIGURE 2. Conn's shop was located on the second floor of 123 West Jackson in 1874. From "A Story of Progress," *Ameri-Conn* 4, no. 3 (March 1945), 3. Courtesy of Robert Ziems, Elkhart.

fraction less than two acres near Strong's addition. Either one of the above named property will be sold for half its value. Inquire of C. G. Conn, Jackson St. opposite Elkhart House." Recognizing the potential value of his invention, Conn submitted a patent application for his "elastic face mouthpiece for brass instruments" on December 5, 1874, receiving patent rights (no. 160,164) less than three months later, February 23, 1875.

Both the state of Conn's business at this point and the demand for his rubber-rimmed mouthpieces are reflected in the article, "Conn's Instrument Factory Destroyed by Fire," published in the February 6, 1883 issue of *The Elkhart Daily Review*:

Mr. Conn was obliged to fashion his own models for tools with which to do his work, the enterprise being so entirely new in all its essential features. But these tools were fashioned, and men were taught to use them by the personal efforts of Mr. Conn. Soon after his removal to the new shop he began a systematic plan of advertising. He made it his business to inform musicians of the improvements he had made. As a result the demand for his little embouchure came from all parts of the country. The news was spread from Maine to Oregon, from Florida to Alaska, from London to Constantinople, England, France, Italy, Spain, South American states, all, began to call for rubber mouthpieces and musicians wondered how they had so long endured the hardness of brass without revolt. Patents were secured in nearly all civilized countries, and a systematic introduction of the invention was begun. Workmen were imported from France. The old world and the new were scoured to furnish skill for the enterprise.

Conn advertised the sale of his elastic face mouthpiece in his own publication, a monthly newsletter called *Trumpet Notes*.³¹

Conn and Dupont

Sometime during 1875, Eugene Dupont, a French musician and brass instrument maker, stopped by Conn's shop.³² The two men apparently be-

31. *Trumpet Notes*, founded about 1875, was renamed about 1894. It was variously published under the titles *C. G. Conn's Musical Truth*, *Musical Truth*, and *Truth*. These publications are an excellent source of socio-cultural information concerning the activities of musicians, both amateur and professional, of the day.

32. Twentieth-century accounts of Dupont's initial contact with Conn vary in their details. Most sources relate that Dupont stopped by Conn's shop to use his facilities to repair some horns. Conn supposedly watched Dupont work for a period of time, and then, in a "20-foot square" factory, Conn produced his first cornet. See, for example, *One Hundred Years of Conn* (Elkhart: C. G. Conn, Ltd., 1975) and "Elkhart Band Instrument Industry Led by Conn," *Indiana Business and Industry* (March 1966): 24.

gan to work together informally, repairing and eventually building cornets. A legal partnership was finally established between Conn and Dupont on July 22, 1876, in which they agreed "to annul all former agreements and contracts made previous to this date." They further agreed to "continue the art and trade of manufacturing and repairing band instruments under the title and firm of Conn and Dupont." Conn was designated as the company's business manager "with entire control of the finances, advertising, and all the business interests of the partnership." Dupont, on the other hand, agreed to be "superintendent of the manufacturing interests" and to give "his entire time, labor, experience, and inventions to the business of the partnership." The partnership was to continue for a term of twenty years "unless sooner dissolved by mutual consent."³³ A cornet bearing the signature "MADE BY / Conn AND Dupont / ELKHART / IND" (fig. 3), serial number 162, engraved for presentation in 1877, and preserved at The Shrine to Music Museum, Vermillion, South Dakota,³⁴ is representative of the earliest instruments produced by this partnership.

The following year, Conn and Dupont expanded their business by purchasing an idle three-story furniture factory located by the Elkhart River, "on the northwest corner of Elkhart Avenue and East Jackson Street,"³⁵ and, according to a contemporary account, "fitted it up for the manufacture of Brass Band Instruments upon the most extensive scale"³⁶ (fig. 4). In 1878 a second building was attached to this factory (fig. 5), and, according to the account in the February 6, 1883, issues of *The Elkhart Daily Review*, of the fire that later destroyed the building,

On Saturday, January 27th [1879], 18,000 square feet of floors were filled with busy men, busy machines, printing presses, and piled with band instruments. At this factory on that day over one hundred men were at work. Band instruments of every kind were in process of formation, from the mouthpiece of the leader's cornet to the bass drum, all the intermediate instruments included.

The new factory was run by hydraulic power.

33. Charles G. Conn and Eugene Dupont, "Act of Co-partnership" (dated July 26, 1876), Elkhart Miscellaneous Records no. 2 (1868–78).

34. This cornet, Shrine to Music Museum catalog no. 1196, bears the following presentation engraving: *Presented to / Mr. B. J. Sutton / Leader of the / Dexter Cornet Band / by his friends / Dexter / Aug. 29th 1877*. The Museum has a collection of more than 320 instruments manufactured by the Conn Company from its beginnings to the present, as well as a significant archive of historical documents relating to the company.

35. Flitcraft notes that the Elkhart Camera Store building was located at this site in 1987 (see n. 27).

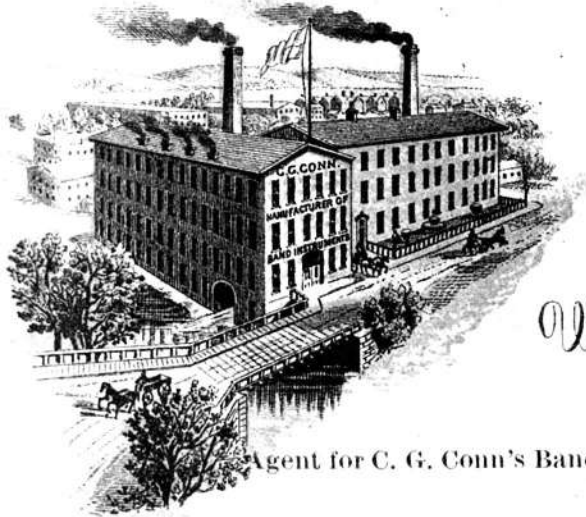
36. Butler.



FIGURE 3. Close-up of the Conn and Dupont signature on a cornet made ca. 1876. Photograph by Gary M. Stewart, courtesy of The Shrine to Music Museum (catalog no. 1196, cornet serial no. 162).



FIGURE 4. Conn's Four-in-One band instrument factory, located on the northwest corner of Elkhart Avenue and East Jackson Street, ca. 1877. From *Ameri-Conn* (March 1945). Courtesy of Robert Ziems.



Compliments of
C. G. CONN.
MANUFACTURER OF
BAND INSTRUMENTS.
ELKHART, IND.

Wm. H. Fitch,

Agent for C. G. Conn's Band Instruments

MOHAWK, N. Y.

FIGURE 5. The Conn factory in Elkhart following additions made in 1878. William H. Fitch, an agent for the Conn Company, is known to have been a piano tuner in Little Falls, near Mohawk, New York, in 1896, but this factory photo must date between 1878 and 1883. Courtesy of The Shrine to Music Museum.

The Conn-Dupont partnership lasted for only three of the twenty years suggested in their agreement of 1876; a document dated March 12, 1879, legally dissolved the enterprise. It was agreed that the thirty-five-year-old Conn would become sole owner of all the property rights and interests in the company, with the exception of rights to two patents for improvements in cornets (no. 199,516, Jan. 22, 1878, and no. 222,248, Dec. 2, 1879), which were to remain the joint property of Conn and Dupont.³⁷ Instruments made after Dupont's departure simply bear the inscription: *MADE BY / C. G. CONN / ELKHART IND* (fig. 6).

The Fire of 1883

Conn's outstanding success as a leader in the Elkhart business community did not go unnoticed by the town's 6,939 citizens. In 1880, at the age of thirty-six, C. G. Conn was elected mayor of Elkhart. He was the city's fourth mayor, its first Democratic mayor, and the first to be reelected to a second two-year term of office.³⁸

Conn resigned during his second term, however, to attend to the rebuilding of his instrument factory, which was destroyed by fire on his thirty-ninth birthday, January 29, 1883. The alarm was turned in by a night watchman at about 3:30 a.m.; the fire had begun in the packing room. Lacking a city water system, firemen had to cut through an estimated eighteen inches of ice on the river to get water with which to extinguish the fire. Their efforts were further hampered when the hose burst as the icy river water was pumped through it. According to accounts of the fire in the January 29 and February 6, 1883 issues of *The Elkhart Daily Review*,

Nothing was saved, all the work of several years being razed to the ground. Machinery of almost inestimable value, much of it imported, and some which his most skilled workmen had been engaged for years in making, was destroyed in a few minutes. In connection with his manufactory was a complete printing office, the entire capacity of which was devoted to the publishing of his popular musical periodical, *Trumpet Notes*, and the turning out of his regular advertising. This department, which recently inventoried at \$2,500, was completely wiped out of existence by the devouring element. The February number of

37. Charles Gerard Conn and Eugene Dupont, "Agreement" (dated March 12, 1879), Elkhart Miscellaneous Records no. 3 (1878-1885).

38. Clark. Conn was elected by a vote of 810 to 614 over Republican George W. Stevens (*The Elkhart Truth*, 6 January 1931).



FIGURE 6. Close-up of the signature on a Conn cornet made after Dupont's departure in 1879. Photograph by Gary M. Stewart, courtesy of The Shrine to Music Museum (catalog no. 3698, cornet serial no. 3071, ca. 1879).

Trumpet Notes . . . was nearly ready for binding when the fire destroyed the office, together with the last forms, containing the personals, wants, new testimonials, etc. This will necessitate a delay of a few days, after which the magazine will be mailed as usual. Mr. Conn would be pleased to receive the names and address of subscribers, as well as those who desire sample copies. The entire mailing list was destroyed in the fire.

The city newspaper reported that Conn's loss was estimated at \$55,000. His insurance coverage was less than half of that—\$22,000. Reporters from *The Elkhart Daily Review* who interviewed Conn at the site of the fire noted that

Mr. Conn felt his loss very acutely, but manifested his characteristic pluck in the assurance that in two weeks he would be in running order again on the same site. He has already taken possession of Danforth's machine shop, and some of his most efficient workmen are busily engaged in making tools with which to resume operations. Mr. Conn saved the contents of his safe, thus securing the accounts. . . . The correspondence on file and destroyed by fire in Conn's factory aggregated somewhere in the neighborhood of 100,000 letters, any one of which could have been referred to by the complete system of filing, in a few minutes' time. This loss is in itself a serious one to Mr. Conn.³⁹

Within one week, Conn provided *The Elkhart Daily Review* (February 6, 1883) with details concerning the building of a new and larger plant on the same site, among which were the following observations:

[The new factory will be] capable of accommodating two or three times the number of workmen that could have found room in the buildings destroyed. The new factory will be devoted exclusively to the construction of his latest and best system of valve instruments only, and will include the new Ultimatum Solo cornet, the Four-in-One Cornet and the celebrated Equa-Tone Valve Clear-Bore band instruments, all secured under Mr. Conn's patents. Proportions, measurements and all calculations that go to make up the perfections in the instruments made by Mr. Conn have been preserved.

Workers received notice to resume work in the new plant on March 26, less than two months after the fire.⁴⁰

The new factory was enlarged in 1884 (fig. 7). According to a contemporary account,

39. *The Elkhart Daily Review*, 29 January 1883. In this same account of the fire, it is noted that one Ellis Chester "suffered the loss of his Cremona [probably a violin] in the fire, and mourns as one who will not be comforted." This suggests that the Conn Company may already have dealt with the repair and/or sale of stringed instruments.

40. This date of work resumption is based upon the recollection of William Lloyd, a Conn employee at the time of the second fire in 1910. See *The Elkhart Daily Review*, 23 May 1910.

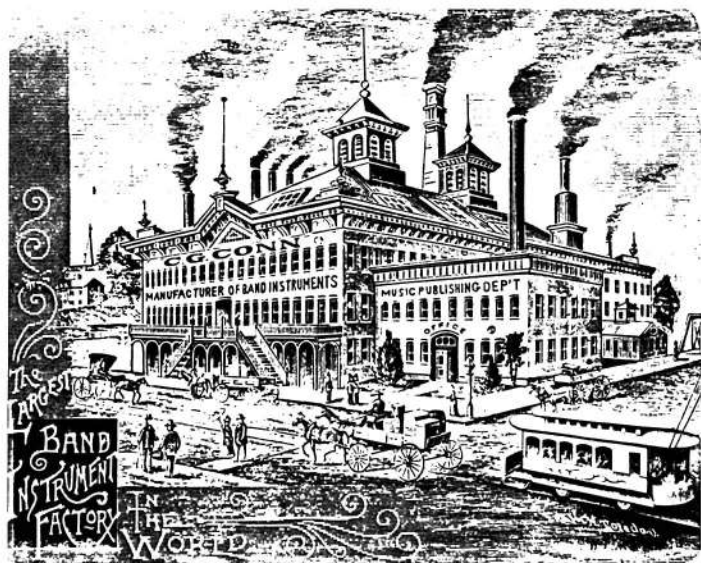


FIGURE 7. The C. G. Conn factory built in 1883–84. Woodcut by Joe K. French, Toledo, Ohio, ca. 1894. From George W. Butler, *The Manual of Elkhart* (ca. 1888). Courtesy of The Shrine to Music Museum.

In 1884 [Conn] added an engine house and a handsome two story music publishing-house. The main building is four stories high, 50 x 90 feet, the other two stories, 30 x 50; the different floors covering an area of 12,000 square feet, the machinery being run by water and steam power. Upwards of 130 skilled hands here find steady employment in the manufacture of the famous “Wonder” Cornets, “Wonder” equa-tone Valve Band Instruments, and a vast variety of other instruments and specialities.⁴¹

41. Butler. Conn published and sold music, along with musical instruments, from this factory. His *Popular Music Journal for Military Band or Orchestra* contained five compositions and was published monthly. The yearly subscription rate for the sixty compositions was \$20. In 1896 the Colonel opened the Conn Conservatory of Military Band and Orchestra Music in Elkhart, employing professional musicians such as Jules Levy, “the greatest cornetist in the world,” to teach. See *Thematic Catalogue of Publications for Military Bands, Orchestras, Students, and Soloists*, 19th ed. (Elkhart: C. G. Conn, [ca. 1899]).

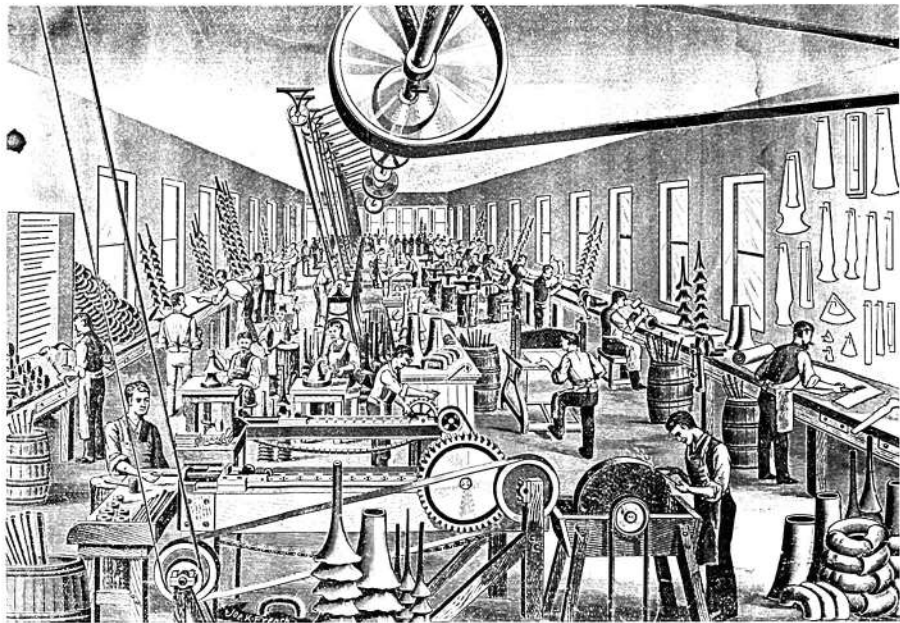


FIGURE 8. The bell room in the Conn factory, ca. 1894. Woodcut by Joe K. French. Courtesy of Lillian and Stuart Caplin, New York, New York.

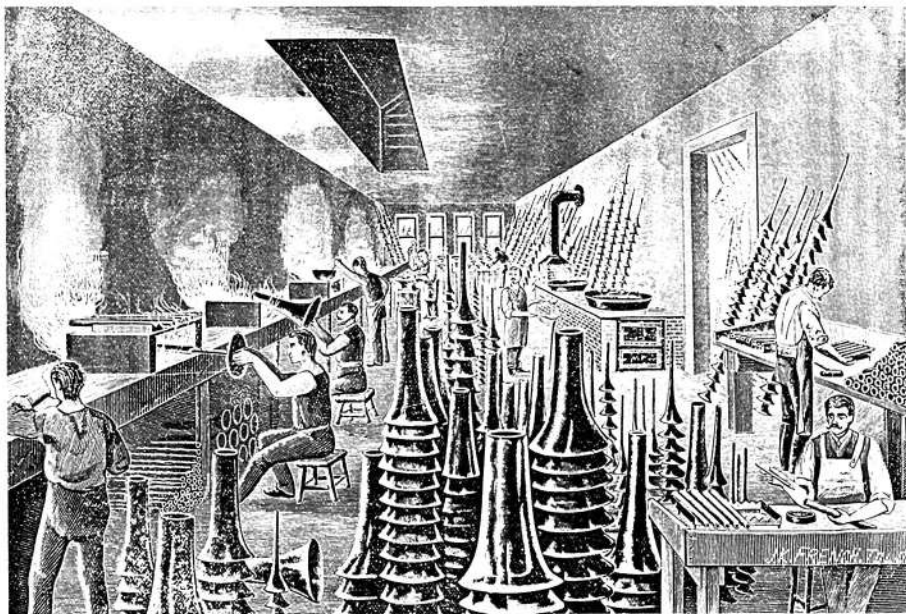


FIGURE 9. The forge room of C. G. Conn's factory, ca. 1894. Woodcut by Joe K. French. Courtesy of Lillian and Stuart Caplin.



FIGURE 10. The horn-making department in the Conn factory, ca. 1894. Woodcut by Joe K. French. Courtesy of Lillian and Stuart Caplin.

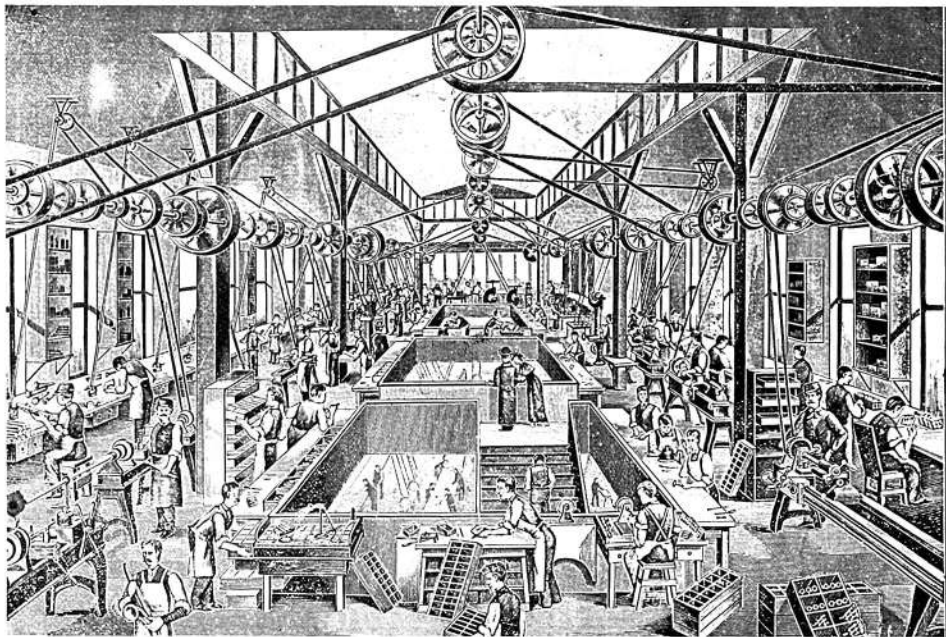


FIGURE 11. The lathe room in the clarinet, flute, and saxophone department, ca. 1894. Woodcut by Joe K. French. Courtesy of Lillian and Stuart Caplin.

About a decade later, Joe K. French, an artist from Toledo, Ohio, was commissioned to create a series of woodcuts of the exterior as well as ten interior views (figs. 8–11) of this new Conn plant for use in the company's advertising. These remarkable woodcuts provide fascinating insight into the processes of musical instrument manufacturing in the late nineteenth century.

Worcester and New York Operations

Conn was always thinking one step ahead of himself, and, after his 1883 factory fire, he publicly announced his vision of establishing outlets for his products in various large cities around the world.⁴² Naturally, this alarmed the citizens of Elkhart, who thought that Conn might remove his Elkhart operation altogether. To convince him of their support for his business, the townspeople "induced [Conn] to stay by the payment of a large sum raised by popular subscription."⁴³ Conn remained, but satisfied his desires to expand his operations by opening a subsidiary plant in Worcester, Massachusetts, buying out Isaac Fiske's operations there upon Fiske's retirement, in January 1887. The Colonel ran this eastern branch of his business at 13 Mechanic Street for eleven years,⁴⁴ signing instruments produced there *Made by / C. G. CONN / ELKHART, IND / WORCESTER / MASS* (fig. 12). Conn's venture eastward did not go unnoticed in the trade. Just five months after Conn established his operations near Boston, Alfred Balch noted in the May 28, 1887 issue of the *The American Musician*:

The trade in musical instruments has grown steadily in the United States for many years now. The greater part of the instruments in use are imported to this country from Europe, as the duty of twenty-five per cent is not sufficient to make it possible to manufacture them here to any very great extent although Mr. Conn, of Elkart [sic] and Worcester, and the Boston Musical Instrument Co., are making grand progress in this direction.

On October 20, 1897, shortly before discontinuing his Worcester operations, Conn opened a retail store in New York City at 23 East 14th Street. An advertisement in the November 1897 issue of *The Dominant* announces the opening and reiterates Conn's fifteen-year-old dream that in order to "meet the extraordinary demand for his instruments C. G. Conn proposes to establish retail depots in all the large cities." This vision, however, was

42. *The Elkhart Daily Review*, 6 February 1883.

43. *The Elkhart Truth*, 6 January 1931.

44. Butler; Robert E. Eliason, *Early American Brass Makers*, Brass Research Series no. 10, Stephen L. Glover, ed. (Nashville, Tennessee: The Brass Press, 1979), 51.



FIGURE 12. Close-up of the Elkhart and Worcester signature used on Conn's instruments manufactured in Massachusetts between 1887 and 1898. Photograph by Gary M. Stewart, courtesy of The Shrine to Music Museum (catalog no. 4114, cornet serial no. 14450, ca. 1888).



FIGURE 13. Close-up of the Elkhart and New York signature on a Conn instrument sold through his New York City store after 1897. Photograph by Gary M. Stewart, courtesy of The Shrine to Music Museum (catalog no. 2484, echo cornet serial no. 60090, ca. 1900).

never fulfilled while the Colonel owned the company. Conn's New York outlet was an immediate success, according to the article "The Lounger in the Trade," published in the January 1898 issue of *The Dominant*:

On the ground floor above Bachr [sic] & Bro's. old quarters is the handsome wholesale and retail establishment of C. G. Conn, which is fast becoming the new quarters of the leading band and orchestra musicians of New York. At no time of the day can you visit the place without meeting a half-dozen at least of the leading professionals of New York and vicinity either engaged in musical discussion, or testing the merits of the "Wonder" instruments. If I was hunting any particular individual in the musical line, the first place visited would be Conn's and the chances are about even that I would find him. The location is central and is away ahead of the "Old Homestead" in that particular, and I venture to predict will before long be one of the recognized institutions of the metropolis. All hands from Conn down are congenial and pleasant and make every one feel that he is heartily welcome.

Instruments sold from the New York store bear the inscription: C. G. CONN / MAKER / ELKHART, IND / AND / NEW YORK (fig. 13).

Conn's Civic Interests and Political Aspirations

With his Elkhart factory running smoothly, operations in Worcester winding down, and the New York store becoming a veritable mecca for professional east-coast musicians, Conn could turn his attention to other interests: civic matters and politics. Back home in Indiana, he organized the First Regiment of Artillery in the Indiana Legion, a group which would eventually become the Indiana National Guard. He became its regimental colonel, "a rank he also held as a member of the military staff of Governor Isaac P. Gray."⁴⁵ It was because of his rank in these positions that Conn was known as "Colonel." At about the same time, Col. Conn helped found and was the first commander of the Elkhart commandery of the Knights Templar, an order of the Freemasons. He was elected and reelected commander of the Elmer Post of the Grand Army of the Republic, now known as the Frank Baldwin Post, and was a member of the Loyal Legion, an association of officers who served in the Union Army.⁴⁶

In 1888, Conn invested \$300,000 in a corporation to develop an hydraulic system for a large portion of the city of Elkhart. As part of the pro-

45. Rolland E. Friedman, ed., *Indiana Review* (Indianapolis, 1938). Gray (1828–95), a Democrat, was the nineteenth governor of Indiana, holding office in 1885–89.

46. Butler; *The Elkhart Truth*, 6 January 1931.

ject, he purchased several hundred acres of land in and around the city and built ten cottages for employees of the project.⁴⁷ Apparently having plenty of money to spare, Conn purchased the equipment of *The Elkhart Daily Review* on October 15, 1889, and changed the name of the paper to *The Elkhart Truth*, a name it retains to this day. The principles upon which the newspaper was founded reflected Conn's own philosophical and political orientation:

[It was] democratic in politics, devoted to the interests of the workingmen, freedom of speech, and freedom at the polls, and it has always strictly adhered to these principles, advocating and being successful in bringing about many local reforms.⁴⁸

Conn's political activities during the last two decades of the century reached an almost feverish pitch. His political appetite whetted by his term and a half as mayor of Elkhart, Conn was drafted, in 1888, only ten days before the election, to run for the post of Democratic state legislator for the joint district composed of Elkhart, Noble, and DeKalb counties. He was elected, overcoming a decidedly Republican majority.⁴⁹ Four years later, the forty-eight-year-old Democrat was elected to the fifty-third Congress, from the Thirteenth District of Indiana.⁵⁰ He served his two-year term (March 4, 1893–March 3, 1895) under the administration of Democratic President Grover Cleveland, who had defeated the Republican incumbent, Benjamin Harrison, in a campaign waged largely over tariff issues. An amusing personal glimpse of Conn's congressional campaign appeared in the April 1894 issue of *The Dominant*, phonetically recorded by one Andy Smith, of North Judson, Indiana:

Daddy went down tu Elkhart tu a big demmokrat meetin tu hear mister Conn who wus runnin fur congrus in this deestrick tell how he wus going tu pull down sum hi terruf and mash mister Harisuns whight plug hat fur him. i calculate daddy and mister Conn had a grate time that da cos when he cum home he had a long tin whissel. mister Conn giv it tu him. Dad sez Con had a much as a hull waggun lode of em and toted them out bi the arm lode fur the lamp lite parade.

While in Washington, Conn did not forget his own interests back home, "introducing a bill calling for the reorganization of U.S. Army Regiment

47. Butler. Conn was also involved in the development of electric lights in Elkhart, in competition with the Indiana and Michigan Electric Co., which bought Conn's interests at a great financial loss to the Colonel.

48. Clarence W. Lee, ed., *Illustrated History of Elkhart, Indiana: Art Souvenir Edition of The Elkhart Daily Truth*, 26 September 1900.

49. Butler; *The Elkhart Truth*, 6 January 1931.

50. Lee.

Bands. [Conn] described in detail the required instrumentation—a move which resulted in increased sales of Conn instruments.”⁵¹

Conn relinquished his editorial position with *The Elkhart Truth* while serving in Congress, but he did not entirely lose touch with his interests in the publishing industry. The Congressman bought *The Washington Times* in 1894, about six months after it was founded “by a group seeking to provide work for unemployed printers. The four-page issue was the first daily paper published by organized labor in the United States.”⁵² However, Conn’s association with the paper ended abruptly the next year, following his personal campaign against vice in the nation’s capital. The Colonel was indicted for libel after “directing his attack first upon the police association and the police force, arousing public attention to the existing conditions and, after bitter conflict, overcoming the inertia of the powers for law and order.”⁵³ He was acquitted at his trial, however; and he eventually traded the newspaper for a piece of Washington real estate.⁵⁴

Although he was renominated for Congress by his district, Conn declined the nomination when the party would not accept his platform reforms.⁵⁵ He also declined a call from Indiana labor organizations for his nomination as the Democratic vice-presidential candidate in 1896. An article in the Chicago publication *The Presto* noted that

Mr. Conn is prominent in National labor circles by reason of the profit-sharing horn-industry and his well-defined views on questions and legislation affecting labor. He is active in the organization of the Knights of Labor in the East, and is known to be politically ambitious. He is reputed to be immensely rich, and this year distributed \$15,000 among his employees. Mr. Conn has distinctly declined to allow his name to be used in connection with any political office, but the *Presto* immediately “caught on” as it were, and pays Mr. Conn the compliment of editorially indorsing [sic] in the following manner, the movement to secure his nomination as Vice-President: “Think of the effect of Hon. C. G. Conn’s nomination on the presidential ticket. He has in his “Wonder” Cornets a power almost sufficient to insure his election. Aside from his individual merits, the host of horn blowers throughout the land would set up such a tooting as never was known before. And with his enormous factory back of him he would

51. Susan Berdahl, “The First Hundred Years of the Boehm Flute in the U.S.: 1845–1945” (Ph.D. diss., University of Minnesota, 1985), 351–52, citing “Foreign Flautists Interested in the Wonder Flutes,” *C. G. Conn’s Truth* (April 1899), 9.

52. Steve Bibler, “C. G. Conn Tried Hand at Newspapering in Washington,” *The Elkhart Truth*, 25 July 1981. *The Washington Times* was founded on March 18, 1894.

53. Bibler, citing *History of Elkhart County* (Chicago: C. C. Chapman, 1881; reprint, Evansville, Ind.: Unigraphic, 1971).

54. Bibler.

55. *The Elkhart Truth*, 6 January 1931.

almost inevitably be blown into the office as by a cyclone. And seriously there are not many names in the Democratic ranks that would fill in, or more euphously fit in, to round out the national ticket for the coming campaign.⁵⁶

Conn's political aspirations were dampened both in 1908, when he was unable to win a bid for the gubernatorial nomination in the state of Indiana, losing to Thomas R. Marshall, and in 1910, when he failed to gain the nomination for senator from Indiana.⁵⁷

Perceptions of Conn's Personality and Business

As a result of Conn's political ambitions, both his business and his personality came under careful public scrutiny. Many articles and testimonials were written in his defense, however. From these personal observations, one can learn a great deal about the perceptions people had of Charles Gerard Conn during his lifetime. For example, after spending several days in Elkhart observing C. G. Conn and his operations firsthand, John C. Freund described the businessman's personality and characterized his physical features in an article written for the January 26, 1889 issue of *The American Musician* as follows:

One of the most distinguished instances of reckless Irish activity, of Irish hospitality, of Irish good nature and good humor and of Irish indomitable pluck that I ever met in all my life is C. G. Conn. . . . I once spent three days with him, and it took me three weeks to entirely recover. Personally Mr. Conn is a tall, handsome man, with clear cut features, somewhat spare in build, but of great wiry-ness. His energy and activity are almost unlimited. He is good nature personified and is a magnificent type of the American citizen in whose dictionary there is no such a word as "fail."

To many in his day, Conn and Elkhart were synonymous, as is witnessed by George Butler, who wrote about the forty-four-year-old industrialist in *The Manual of Elkhart* (ca. 1888):

The Colonel is a good liver, modest and retiring in his manners, and is one of the few who everybody likes to meet, never [so] hurried that he has not time to talk Elkhart, and though absent from the City in body, he never is in mind; indeed his fondest hopes and wishes are of his City for whose glory he spares nei-

56. *The Presto* (1896), cited in *C. G. Conn's Truth* 3 no. 5 (January 1896): 27. The Democratic party split in the election. Republican William McKinley defeated the Democratic candidate, William Jennings Bryan. Would Conn's presence on the ticket have made any difference?

57. *The Elkhart Truth*, 6 January 1931.

ther time, attention nor money. No stranger ever enters our gates without seeking the colonel, and him sought, Elkhart is seen, for he has known it from a hamlet; and is a walking directory and cyclopedia of all she was, what she is, and can predicate her future more nearly correct than any man. . . . [Conn is] a pioneer so to speak . . . a man before his generation, spending a well ordered life on great projects that those who follow may enjoy their fruits.

Conn's Advertising Methods

Conn was the type of person who could elicit both the highest praise and the sharpest criticism from others, particularly from those in the industry. Judging from some of his advertising, it would appear that Conn actually wanted to provoke controversy so that he could turn it to his own advantage. An advertising card entitled "The Argument," printed by Conn between 1887-98, for example, seems to beg Conn's competitors to respond to his charges:

Other manufacturers claim, without reason, to manufacture the best band instruments in the world, when their products show not the slightest improvements in the past twenty years. Compare the instruments made by Boosey, Besson, Higham, Courtois and hundreds of other makers of less reputation and it will be seen that they all use the same old style of valves; the same antiquated wind passage, full of obtuse angles and reverse turns, and the same model of cornet they manufactured years ago. Does this go to show that these manufacturers have followed in the footsteps of the inventors of the telegraph, telephone and other inventions and improvements that mark this age of progress? Can any argument that such makers advance convince the careful investigator that their instruments are the best when no improvement has been made on them for many years?

Needless to say, Conn then goes on to extol the virtues of his "Wonder" line of instruments. Another advertising card of the same period puts it more succinctly, to the tune of "Auld Lang Syne":

I used to play the old corned [sic] and thought it very fine but now the *wonder* is my pet since the days of old Lang Syne. Since the days of old Lang Syne my lad that old cornet I pass and found its voice so very bad that it sounds just like an . . . [flip the card over and find a large picture of a jackass!].

To demonstrate the veracity of his advertising claims, Conn actively recruited testimonials from his customers, whether they were amateurs or the leading musicians of the day. In return for endorsements from professionals, he often outfitted soloists as well as whole bands with his instruments. Sousa's band, for example, was provided with a set of sixty-two gold-plated Conn instruments as was Hi Henry's minstrel band; soloist Li-

berati was given a gold and jewel-encrusted Conn cornet, said to have been worth \$5,000 in 1899; and Patrick Gilmore received an elaborately-engraved cornet on a visit to Elkhart.⁵⁸ In the opinion of many professional musicians, Conn's products were indeed superior to those produced by other manufacturers or imported from Europe.⁵⁹ Tom Clarke, cornet soloist with many of the leading bands of the day (including Gilmore's Twenty-Second Regiment Band and Innes' Thirteenth Regiment Band), after comparing Conn's and Pepper's instruments, wrote the following in a letter to Conn in 1896:

The first one [of Pepper's instruments] was so clumsily made and so heavy to carry that it would require an athlete in perfect training to fulfill an ordinary day's engagement with it. Hence this cornet was condemned by every professional man in New York. The second cornet submitted for my approval by Mr. Pepper's agent was made so light that there was no tone in it at all. So you will see that the Pepper cornets were a miserable failure. It is true that I signed a testimonial for him the same as nearly every professional man in New York did, but I can vouch for it and say to you truly that not one of them wrote the testimonials. The testimonials were prepared by Mr. Pepper or his agent and were only signed by the musicians, many of them probably not taking the trouble to read them. . . . Some of the musicians who favored Mr. Pepper with their signatures to his "ready-made" testimonials are entirely incompetent to pass judgment upon the merits of a wind or brass instrument. . . . You will readily agree with me that a pianist, drummer, violinist, or string double-bass player has no practical knowledge of what constitutes perfection in a brass instrument, and some of the portraits and testimonials published by Mr. Pepper are from such musicians, . . . having never blown [a band instrument] in their lives. I will say that your instruments are regarded by the best musicians in New York as the standard.⁶⁰

Clarke, like many others, allowed his portrait to be used in Conn's advertising. He is pictured, for example, along with some seventy other "celebrated band masters and world famous soloists," on the back of some of Conn's company stationery (fig. 14). Conn's own portrait, as well, could sometimes be found in the company of his endorsers (fig. 15). Even Uncle Sam was

58. "The Incomparable Colonel," *ConnChord* 19 no. 1 (March 16, 1976) and *One Hundred Years of Conn*. According to the former source, Liberati "carried the [jewel-encrusted cornet] while passing his band in review before President McKinley at a Grand Army of the Republic reunion in 1899."

59. Conn's instruments were awarded highest honors at the 1893 World's Columbian Exposition in Chicago and in 1904 won the Grand Prize at the Louisiana Purchase Exposition in St. Louis, "a distinction conferred upon no other American manufacturer of musical instruments at any World's Fair" (Conn letterhead, 1906).

60. *C. G. Conn's Truth* (January, 1896): 27.



FIGURE 14. Endorsers' portraits on the back of the Conn company letterhead in use during 1905. The practice of printing portraits on company stationery continued into the 1920's, long after C. G. Conn sold the company. Courtesy of John McCardle, Indianapolis, Indiana.



FIGURE 15. Advertising card with portraits of endorsers surrounding C. G. Conn himself, ca. 1887–98. On the back of the card is printed the text of “The Argument” in favor of the Wonder cornet. Courtesy of John McCardle.

pictured endorsing Conn's cornets; the figure was often used in the advertising, accompanied by the caption, "Yes, by thunder! I play the Wonder."

The Buescher Company, for one, did respond to Conn's incessant needling of his competitors, referring to the Conn company, in the January 1907 issue of *The Dominant*, as a "jealous competitor." Conn's dramatic response, published in a company circular, "The Mouse 'Squeaked' and Then Ran for its Hole" (1907), vehemently counterattacked the Buescher Company, whose founder, after all, had received his training and had been a foreman in the Conn factory. Furthermore, Buescher had worked closely with Frenchman E. A. Lefebre, whom Conn had hired in 1888 to design the first saxophones built in the United States.⁶¹ Conn boldly responded to Buescher's attack:

Jealous of what? Jealous because the Buescher Company is a reorganized bankrupt? Well, hardly! . . . No, we are not jealous of them or their unenviable reputation. Business men sometimes fail in an excusable manner and retain the respect of the public, but John L. Collins and F. A. Buescher, managers of the defunct Buescher company, also of the Buescher infant industry, which is still sucking the "pap bottle," are not of the kind who excite our envy.

On the contrary, Conn continues,

No financial reverse or unbusinesslike methods have ever disgraced the management or reputation of the Conn factory. From a small beginning it has grown to be the largest and most influential establishment of its kind in the world. Mr. Conn always has been a kind and considerate employer and is recognized throughout the country as an upright, conscientious business man, deserving of public support. . . . Had his would-be imitators in the manufacturing world been compelled to follow Mr. Conn's footsteps in carving out their own destinies . . . they would have been compelled to work for whatever improvements they have *filched*. Nearly all of the great improvements now employed in the construction of band and orchestra instruments originated in the Conn Factory, and most of them are Mr. Conn's inventions. Other instrument makers are endeavoring to copy these improvements and to adopt Mr. Conn's unique methods and ideas, but the fact that none of them have succeeded shows conclusively that they lack Mr. Conn's genius and practical business ability. . . . [Conn's] reputation, both as a successful business man and captain of his line of industry, has never been questioned, nor has there been a smirch or blemish on his lifetime integrity. . . . The C. G. Conn Company is one of the most solid financial institutions in the country and its guaranty is as good as gold.

61. Advertisement in *C. G. Conn's New York Catalogue Illustrating and Describing the Wonder . . . Band and Orchestral Instruments* (New York: C. G. Conn, 1897).

Conn's Innovations

The improvements to which Conn refers in his 1907 tirade reflect forty-two years of creative engineering and are detailed in nearly fifty patents which include items such as the following: the elastic face mouthpiece; numerous improvements to the cornet and other brass instruments; double-wall clarinets and flutes; drum head tighteners; a music folio for outdoor use; a warehouse truck; improvements in gramophones; a folding, portable reed organ; a drum and cymbal beater; cornet mutes; and improvements in mouthpieces for brass instruments. In addition to his patents, Conn claimed a number of other industry innovations including: the first saxophones built in the United States (1888; fig. 16); a drum with corrugated metal shell, guaranteed not to buckle (ca. 1888; figs. 17a, 17b); the bell-up BB-flat bass sousaphone, nicknamed "the Raincatcher," designed to Sousa's specifications (1898; fig. 18); and the first bell-front BB-flat bass sousaphone (1908).

Conn's contributions to the industry were not confined to innovations in musical instruments. According to the union rulebook, *Plan for the Betterment of the Working Conditions of the C. G. Conn Factory*, published by the company on November 15, 1906, Conn's was the "first factory of its kind in the entire world to open its doors to the exclusive use of union labor." A strong supporter of labor, Conn wholeheartedly opened his factory doors in that year to Local No. 335 of the Metal Polishers, Buffers, Platers, Brass Moulders, Brass and Silver Workers' International Union of North America. According to union rules, workers were required to put in a fifty-four hour work week—nine-hour days, six days a week. Workers received time and a half for overtime work and double time for Sundays and legal holidays. The union label (fig. 19) was stamped on instruments produced by C. G. Conn for about a decade, from 1906 until 1916, when the company came under new management.

Conn's Affluence in the Early 1900's

Shortly after 1900 Conn remodelled his primary residence in Elkhart, the former Samuel S. Strong home (built in 1874), to resemble a Southern mansion, with two-story pillars, fanlight window and broad lawns.⁶² He maintained a summer home on his farm at Bristol-Osolo as well as a vaca-

62. Amos G. Gott, "The Home of C. G. Conn," *A Portfolio of Drawings of Elkhart and Vicinity* (Elkhart: n.p., [ca. 1950]).

C. G. CONN CO.'S WONDER IMPROVED SYSTEM SAXOPHONES

With Single Automatic Register Key and extra Eb Key. Used by all Successful Saxophone Soloists.

Comprising Soprano in Bb; Alto in Eb; Melody in C; Tenor in Bb; Baritone in Eb; Bass in Contra Bb.

THE WONDER SAXOPHONES are full keyed, having all modern improvements, with a compass from 15 below the staff to 15 above the staff, except the Alto and Tenor which extend two spaces below. The key system is superior, very simple, having no extra buttons below the staff, the little finger of each hand, and the key of every key is kept constant throughout the instrument. A comparison of the Wonder Saxophones with any other will sufficiently demonstrate their superiority. They will be shipped to any address on the United States or Canada on the same terms prevailing for its point of all Wonder Instruments, viz.: Express charges prepaid with privilege of trial, money to be refunded if instruments do not prove satisfactory in any respect.

They Are Supplied Regularly in Four Styles of Finish as Follows:

FIGURE 1. **Highly polished nickel**, which protects and does not scratch, the lacquered the finger hole and joint parts and lacquered with pearl paint.
 FIGURE 2. **For the same finish of nickel** with outside of lacquered pearl paint.
 FIGURE 3. **Highly polished nickel** with outside of gold plated.
 FIGURE 4. **Highly polished nickel** with outside of silver plated.

NET CASH PRICE LIST

25 Percent on the Gross Price and Postage.

| | FIGURE 1 | FIGURE 2 | FIGURE 3 | FIGURE 4 |
|--------------------------|----------|----------|----------|----------|
| Soprano (Nickel-White) | \$ 74.00 | \$ 74.00 | \$ 74.00 | \$ 74.00 |
| Alto (Nickel-White) | 84.00 | 84.00 | 84.00 | 84.00 |
| Melody (Nickel-White) | 94.00 | 94.00 | 94.00 | 94.00 |
| Tenor (Nickel-White) | 104.00 | 104.00 | 104.00 | 104.00 |
| Baritone (Nickel-White) | 114.00 | 114.00 | 114.00 | 114.00 |
| Bass (Nickel-White) | 124.00 | 124.00 | 124.00 | 124.00 |
| Soprano (Nickel-Gold) | 84.00 | 84.00 | 84.00 | 84.00 |
| Alto (Nickel-Gold) | 94.00 | 94.00 | 94.00 | 94.00 |
| Melody (Nickel-Gold) | 104.00 | 104.00 | 104.00 | 104.00 |
| Tenor (Nickel-Gold) | 114.00 | 114.00 | 114.00 | 114.00 |
| Baritone (Nickel-Gold) | 124.00 | 124.00 | 124.00 | 124.00 |
| Bass (Nickel-Gold) | 134.00 | 134.00 | 134.00 | 134.00 |
| Soprano (Nickel-Silver) | 94.00 | 94.00 | 94.00 | 94.00 |
| Alto (Nickel-Silver) | 104.00 | 104.00 | 104.00 | 104.00 |
| Melody (Nickel-Silver) | 114.00 | 114.00 | 114.00 | 114.00 |
| Tenor (Nickel-Silver) | 124.00 | 124.00 | 124.00 | 124.00 |
| Baritone (Nickel-Silver) | 134.00 | 134.00 | 134.00 | 134.00 |
| Bass (Nickel-Silver) | 144.00 | 144.00 | 144.00 | 144.00 |

Special Prices upon Application for all Gold-Plated Saxophones.



The Wonder Soprano Saxophone in Bb. The Wonder Alto Saxophone in Eb. The Wonder Melody Saxophone in C. The Wonder Tenor Saxophone in Bb. The Wonder Baritone Saxophone in Eb. The Wonder Bass Saxophone in Contra Bb.

FIGURE 5. **Highly polished nickel** with outside of gold plated.

FIGURE 6. **Highly polished nickel** with outside of silver plated.

FIGURE 7. **Highly polished nickel** with outside of nickel plated.

1907 MODELS

FIGURE 8. **Highly polished nickel** with outside of nickel plated.

FIGURE 9. **Highly polished nickel** with outside of nickel plated.

FIGURE 10. **Highly polished nickel** with outside of nickel plated.

FIGURE 11. **Highly polished nickel** with outside of nickel plated.

C. G. CONN: THE MAN AND HIS COMPANY

FIGURE 16. Advertisement for Conn's line of Wonder Saxophones from *Musical Truth* 7 no. 8 (November 1907). The Conn factory built the first American-made saxophones in 1888. Courtesy of John McCordle.

FIGURE 17a.

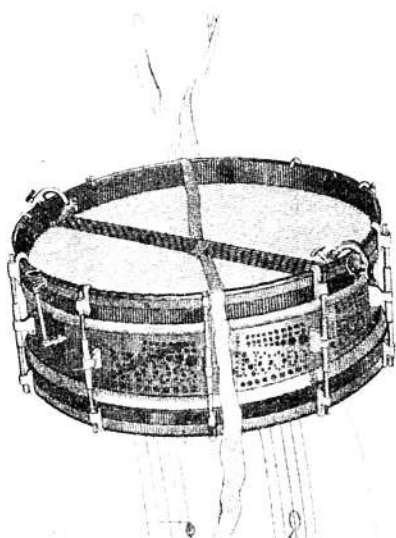
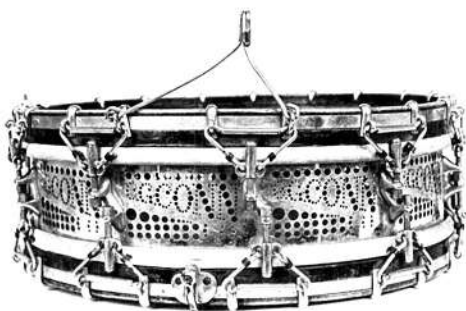


FIGURE 17b.



FIGURES 17a, 17b. Conn's popular corrugated metal shell snare drum, first produced in 1888, was pictured on company stationery well into the 1920's. Stationery courtesy of John McCardle; photograph of snare drum by Gary M. Stewart, courtesy of The Shrine to Music Museum (catalog no. 2996, ca. 1904).

C. G. CONN CO'S TRUTH, ELKHART, INDIANA



THE WONDER MODEL MONSTER Bb BASS

C. G. CONN CO.'S GREAT
1907 Model
Double Bb
BASSES

The Standard
"TUBA GRANDS"
Of The World

Used by the Bass Sections of Sousa's, Innes',
Liberati's, Ellery's, Phinney's, Brooke's,
Rocoretto's, Sorrentino's, Rosati's and
all the Famous Bands of America.

Monsters that in the hands of men care are easy to
manage, convenient to carry, and require no more effort
to produce their thunderous tones than does the ordinary
Bb Bass.



THE AMERICAN MODEL MONSTER Bb BASS

FOR DESCRIPTION OF FINISH AND PRICES SEE PAGE 24.

Address all Orders to C. G. CONN CO., Elkhart, Indiana.



THE CONN HELICON MODEL Bb BASS



THE GREAT SOUSAPHONE Bb BASS

With Adjustable and Detachable Bell

FIGURE 18. Advertisement for Conn's line of BB-flat basses, including the "raincatcher" sousaphone that the company designed in 1898. Printed in *Musical Truth*, November, 1907. Courtesy of John McCordle.

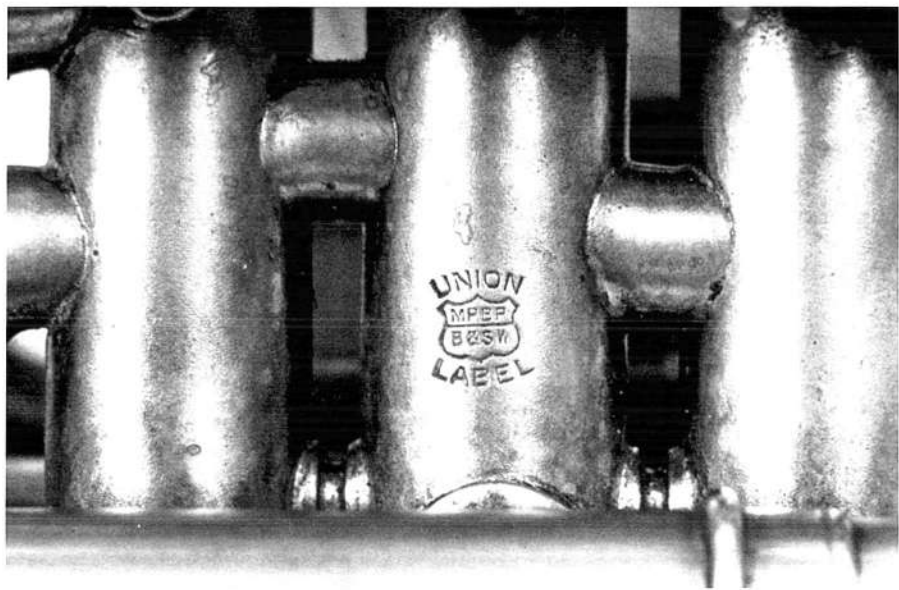


FIGURE 19. Close-up of the union label on a Conn parlor/pocket cornet, serial no. 129600, ca. 1912. Photograph by Simon P. Spicer, courtesy of The Shrine to Music Museum (catalog no. 3340).

tion home on Santa Catalina Island in California.⁶³ He collected valuable oil paintings⁶⁴ and owned three yachts, one of which ("Speedy") cost him \$35,000 and required a crew of fifteen men to sail. He is said to have used it "to take lengthy voyages in the Mediterranean . . . throwing lavish parties for musicians."⁶⁵ Another yacht, the "Comfort," was used for a first-of-its-kind, two-month, five-day cruise down the west coast of Lower California and into the Gulf of California. The excellent rod and reel fishing, shooting, and other sports enjoyed on the cruise are all described in a flyer, "The Cruise of the Comfort," published with the October 25, 1908 issue of *The Elkhart Truth*.⁶⁶ Conn also "claimed to have been the first man to drive an automobile, a White Steamer, from the Midwest to the West Coast" early in the century.⁶⁷ Although Conn wrote that moderation should be observed in the use of alcoholic drink,⁶⁸ one wild story survives concerning his apparently excessive indulgences: "Come Sunday morning on a dry day, passersby might see the Colonel assuaging a hangover in the old Jackson Hotel bar, having gotten in by backing his horse to the door and kicking it in."⁶⁹ Another story describes Conn "riding his horse right into the lobby of the fashionable Golden Hotel, and even up the stairway."⁷⁰

The Fire of 1910

While the Colonel was vacationing in southern California, disaster struck Conn's factory for the second time, shortly after midnight on May 22, 1910. A fire, variously attributed to arson, crossed electric wires, spontaneous combustion resulting in an explosion of accumulated wood-mill dust, or the careless use of a lighted gas jet by the night watchmen, totally

63. Robert Ziems, Elkhart, Indiana, personal communication (1987); and Mary Elizabeth Hix, "Incomparable Colonel," *ConnChord* 4 no. 1 (January 1961): 9.

64. Some of these paintings were destroyed in the 1910 fire. In 1916 Conn published a book based upon his collection: *Paintings that Possess Hypnotic Power: An Illustrated Catalog of Rare and Valuable Oil Paintings from the Easels of G. Romney, Ferdinand Bol. . . : The C. G. Conn Collection of Paintings* (Los Angeles: n.p., 1916).

65. Clark; Hix, 8-9.

66. Conn wrote another booklet at about this time, *How the Blue Button was Won: Tuna Fishing at Catalina Island, California* (Elkhart: Truth Publishing Co., ca. 1909).

67. Clark.

68. Charles Gerard Conn, *The Sixth Sense, Prayer* (Elkhart: Truth Publishing Co., 1916), 38.

69. Hix, 9.

70. Elmer Lehman, "C. G. Conn and Selmer Inc." (unpublished typescript from the files of *The Elkhart Truth*, November 1975).

destroyed the Conn plant and killed one security guard. An attempt was made by nearby residents, employees, and firemen, to save some items, but only a few desks, typewriters, and a few finished clarinets and horns were rescued. The contents of two safes were later retrieved from the ruins. As had been the case with the fire of 1883, firemen had difficulty with the water supply. A broken valve led to a failure of the city's water pressure during the crucial hours when the fire began; city engineers were unable to correct the situation before the factory had burned to the ground. Firefighters noted that had it not been for overcast skies and occasional rain showers (which also obscured the Elkhartians' view of Halley's comet that night), many private homes in the neighborhood might also have been destroyed.⁷¹

According to insurance adjusters interviewed by *The Elkhart Daily Review*, the factory had been a poor fire risk. Although its basic structure had been built in 1883, several large additions had been made over the years to keep up with the demands of the rapidly-expanding industry; and the interior of the factory was wood covered with asbestos paint. Similar institutions might not have qualified for insurance at any price, but, according to the paper, it was "Col. Conn's integrity, the careful management of Mr. Gronert and the profitable nature of the business [which] made it a better risk than [it would have been] in other hands."⁷² Conn's insurance covered only \$80,000 worth of his \$500,000 in losses, however, which included a number of valuable oil paintings stored in an upstairs room.⁷³

Following his return to Elkhart to the overwhelming reception of the citizenry, despite his incredible financial losses Conn decided to rebuild. Some of the 300 plant employees were able to resume work immediately: about fifty men labored to retrieve rolls of brass, patterns, mandrils, and other nonperishable items from the charred ruins; about sixty to seventy-five men worked at a temporary shop in the Elkhart garage building; office workers and stenographers set up temporary quarters in downtown Elkhart;⁷⁴ and still other workers were located in seven other makeshift shops. Offers of assistance and temporary workspace came from many sources, including Conn's Elkhart competitors, the Buescher and the Martin Band Instrument Companies.⁷⁵ Offers of free buildings as an entice-

71. *The Elkhart Daily Review*, 23 May 1910.

72. *Ibid.*

73. *Ibid.*

74. *Ibid.*

75. "In the Good Ole Days," *The Elkhart Truth*, 10 December 1983. Photographs of the plant, before and after the fire, are included in the article.



FIGURE 20. Postcard with a picture of the Conn factory at 1101 East Beardsley Avenue, after August 15, 1910. Courtesy of John McCardle.



FIGURE 21. C. G. Conn in his private office in 1913. One of a series of forty-four postcards with photographs of the interior of Conn's factory. Calendars in several of the photographs reveal that the series was taken during the months of February, March, and April 1913. Courtesy of John McCardle.



THE HOME OF THE CELEBRATED CONN INSTRUMENTS

This latest illustration of the New Wonder factory shows where the best instruments in the world are manufactured. The factory employs 303 wage earners, of whom 250 are men and 53 are women. No boys or girls are employed. The men work nine hours per day and the women eight hours per day. The output of this factory averages about 800 instruments per month, not counting Bugles, Drums and Musical Traps and Accessories.

The Conn instruments are used and recommended by all great musicians and they will improve the playing ability of any performer at least twenty five percent.

ADDRESS, C. G. CONN, INC., ELKHART, IND.



FIGURE 22. Postcard showing the exterior of the Conn plant in 1913. Courtesy of John McCardle.

ment to relocate his business came from numerous places, including Indianapolis, Terre Haute, Fort Wayne, Joliet, and even Pittsburgh.⁷⁶

Within three months, the new Conn factory at 1101 East Beardsley Avenue was built and occupied, with all departments reunited under one roof on August 15 (fig. 20). The architectural style of the buildings, which covered 66,000 feet of floor space, was of the mission type, ornamented with Spanish tile. At the front, facing the south side of Elkhart Avenue, was the two-story office building, 40 x 100 feet in size, with towers on the front corners housing separate entrances for employees and customers. Conn's private office (fig. 21) was located in one of the towers. The building immediately behind the offices (fig. 22) was used entirely for the manufacture of metal musical instruments. It had 28,000 square feet of floor space and was built in two wings extending back from the office building, each 40 x 200 feet, with a power plant at the rear. The metal factory was laid out in such a way that the raw materials could be received at the front, northeast corner,

and after passing progressively through the different stages of manufacture will have been carried around the entire floor space to the shipping and stock rooms in the northwest corner of the building, to then be placed at the disposal of customers as finished products.⁷⁷

(See figs. 23, 24, and 25). The same organizational concept was applied to the woodworking factory behind the power plant (fig. 22). Wood and other raw materials entered at the north end and emerged at the south end as finished "Wonder" violins, violas, cellos, double basses, and bows (figs. 26a, 26b). The remainder of this building was used for the manufacture of musical instrument cases (fig. 27) and housed the drum-making department (fig. 28).⁷⁸

Conn spared no expense getting the factory back on its feet in 1910 following the financial loss from the fire, which he described as "severe, but not embarrassing."⁷⁹ However,

In April, 1911, Col. Conn and wife [Kate] executed a trust deed for \$200,000 covering all their possessions for the purpose of bonding the Conn indebtedness and securing working capital, the longest bond to mature in 10 years. The deed included, in addition to the horn factory and what was then known as the Angledile Scale factory and *The Truth*, some 60 descriptions of real estate in

76. *Elkhart, 1910: A Complete and Comprehensive Description of the City of Elkhart, Indiana* (Elkhart: Truth Publishing Company, June 1910), 23.

77. *C. G. Conn's Truth* 9 no. 7 (September 1910).

78. *Ibid.*

79. *Ibid.*

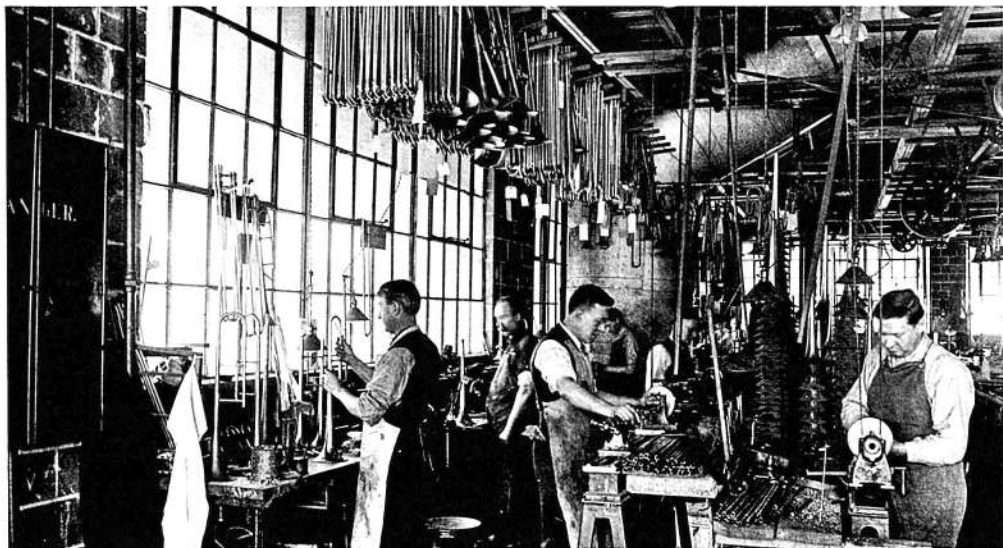


FIGURE 23. The trombone department, pictured in a postcard from the 1913 series. Courtesy of John McCardle.



FIGURE 24. Herbert Clarke, well-known cornet soloist of the time, inspecting instruments in the cornet and trumpet testing department of the Conn factory in 1913. Courtesy of John McCardle.

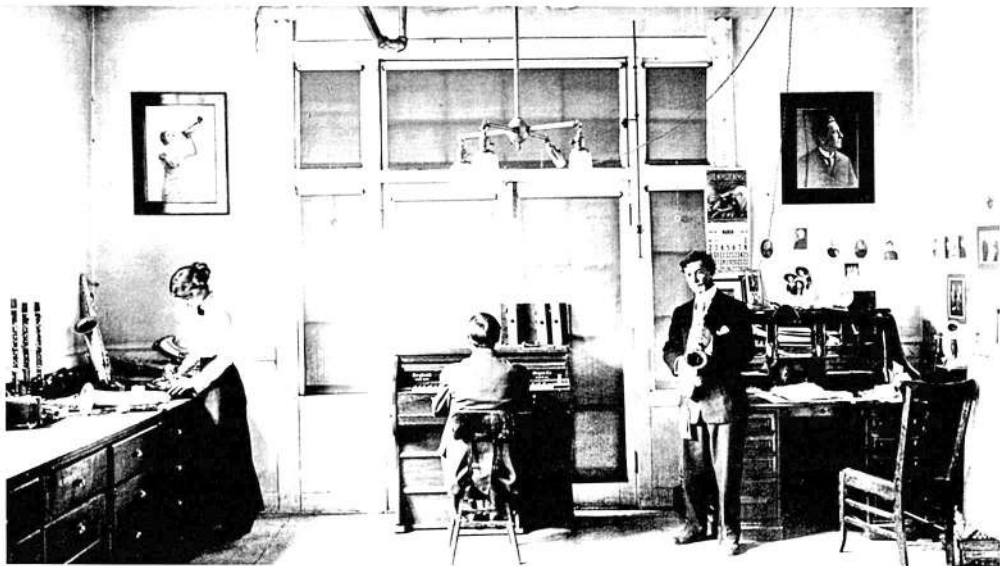


FIGURE 25. Benne Henton, whom Conn believed to be “the world’s best saxophone expert,” holds a saxophone in the reed instrument testing department in Conn’s factory. The calendar behind Henton indicates that this photograph was taken in March 1913. Note the picture of C. G. Conn on the wall to the right of Henton. Courtesy of John McCardle.

FIGURE 26a.

C. G. CONN CO'S TRUTH, ELKHART, INDIANA.
C. G. CONN CO., WONDER VIOLINS

1907 MODELS



**Best Modern Violins
 Manufactured.**

They are better than nine-tenths of the Cremona Violins. Powerful and brilliant in tone and compare favorably with the best products of Stradivarius or Guarnerius. They are recommended by all the great artists who have given them a trial.

The Wonder Violins are made from wood over a century old and are certainly without equals among modern instruments. For use in the orchestra and ball room they have no superior. Their sweet mellow tone renders them extremely desirable both in the parlor and as solo instruments.

The Wonder Violins are made in two models, viz: The S. redivivus which is a full-sized violin suitable for professional solo playing or leading in orchestras and the Guarnerius model which is smaller, especially in the neck and width of finger board and is better adapted for the use of lady violinists or for those with smaller hands and shorter reach than the fully developed man.

Both models are pronounced by competent judges superior to any other American made violins and equal to most of the genuine Cremonas now in existence, and at the reasonable price at which they are sold they represent better value for the money than any other violins on earth. The Wonder Violins are sold complete with two bows and all accessories in an elegant plain lined leather case, nickel plated lock and trimmings, and will be sent in any address prepaid for trial and comparison with any other violin.

Either on a cash basis at \$75.00 or on the lease plan at \$78.75.

The C. G. Conn Co., Violin repair department is provided over by a skilled violin maker and is equipped with the latest tools and machinery especially adapted for repairing work on valuable violins in the most artistic manner at reasonable prices. Special attention is given to re-plating violins and applying the C. G. Conn Wonder Violin varnish. This varnish is made after a special recipe, the formula of which is carefully guarded, and can be supplied at \$1.00 per four ounce bottle.

BARGAINS IN VIOLINS

Ranging in price from four to one thousand dollars. First class first served. The values described herein cannot be duplicated in quality at the prices indicated when present stock is exhausted.

TERMS.

Any of the above described violins will be sent C. O. D. by express with privilege of three days' trial unless except to exhibit case to preference in exchange with the person ordering it provided for sale.

The following are New Wonder Violins. Stradivarius Model with slight defects in material or work have been repaired at a price well below the market. These defects do not impair the serviceable qualities or tone of the instrument in the slightest degree. Each violin will be sent complete with two bows and all accessories, in an elegant plain lined leather case, nickel plated lock, spring catches and trimmings.

- 1 New Wonder Violin, dark red finish, with very small check in top, perfectly repaired, extra value, A grade, \$60.00
- 2 New Wonder Violin, dark amber finish, with very small check in top, perfectly repaired, extra value, A grade, each, 60.00
- 2 Wonder Violins, light red finish, with small check in back, perfectly repaired, extra value, B grade, each, 55.00
- 3 Wonder Violins, light red finish, with two small checks in top, perfectly repaired, extra good value, C grade, each, 50.00

OLD VIOLINS

Complete with one bow and all accessories in an elegant plain lined leather case, nickel plated lock, spring catches and trimmings. Extra good value.

- 1 Genuine Joseph Guarnerius Violin, full size, made in 1742, the back is removed from one piece of hand-cut curly maple, the sides to match. This instrument is in a perfect state of preservation, \$1,000.00
- 1 Guarnerius Model Violin, 1/2 size, believed to be genuine, the back is removed from one piece of curly maple, sides to match. It has a fine, strong tone, perfectly repaired, a splendid instrument for a lady violinist. A great bargain, 200.00
- 1 Genuine August Stradivari Violin, full size, the back is removed from one piece of curly maple, sides to match. In a very fine state of preservation, having only two small cuts in top, perfectly repaired. Has a well developed tone and is an instrument fit for an artist, 325.00
- 2 Old German Violin, 1/2 size, the back is removed from two pieces of curly maple and varnish renewed, 100.00
- 1 Old French Violin, full size, the back is removed from one piece of lead or rose maple, sides to match. High arch, tone well graduated in all respects. Top fine, perfectly repaired, varnish renewed. Worth double the list price, 125.00
- 1 Old German Violin, full size, the back is removed from two pieces of curly maple, sides to match, varnish renewed, perfectly repaired, extra good value, 75.00

OLD VIOLINS, COMPLETE IN WOOD CASE WITH ONE BOW AND ALL ACCESSORIES.

- 1 Old German Violin, two piece back, perfectly matched, good strong tone, in good condition, varnish renewed, \$50.00
- 1 Old Violin, Stradivari Model, large size, in very fine condition, well made instrument with a very strong tone, extra value, 40.00
- 2 Old German Violins, medium size, medium tone, made in the best condition with well developed, powerful tone, each, 35.00
- 1 Old "Violin Artist" Violin, stamped on scroll Stradivarius model, in good condition, sweet tone, 25.00
- 2 Violins, Stradivarius model 1/2 size, golden brown finish, fine curly maple back with small check in top, perfectly repaired, very strong tone, extra value, each, 25.00
- 1 Violin, Guarnerius model, full size, dark amber finish, fine curly maple back and sides, with small check in top, perfectly repaired, a good instrument for orchestra work, 20.00
- 2 Violins, Amati Model, medium size, good varnish, fine curly maple backs, good mellow tone, with small check in top perfectly repaired, extra good value, each, 18.00
- 1 Violin, Maggini Model, full size, light amber, varnish, two rows of purfling good tone, with small check in top, perfectly repaired, good value, 15.00
- 2 Violins, Stradivari Model, 1/2 size, red varnish, stained finish, high arch, fine tone, small check in top, perfectly repaired, good value, 10.00

NEW IMPORTED VIOLINS, COMPLETE WITH ONE BOW IN WOOD CASE WITH ALL ACCESSORIES

- 4 New Violins, Amati Model, full size, medium varnish, lightly polished, the backs are removed from one piece of curly maple, sides to match, \$40.00
- 2 New Violins, Stradivari Model, full size, dark amber finish, lightly polished, good strong tone, 35.00
- 1 New Violin, Guarnerius model, full size, dark amber varnish, well made, well made, 30.00
- 2 New Violins, Maggini model, full size, dark amber varnish, double purfling, well made, good tone, 25.00
- 4 New Violins, Stradivari model, 1/2 size, red varnish, high arch, well made, a good instrument, 15.00

NEW GERMAN VIOLINS WITH ONE BOW AND NO CASE. GOOD VALUE.

- 4 Violins, with one bow and no case, lightly polished, good tone, \$10.00
- 3 Violins, with one bow and no case, dark amber varnish, well made, high arch, 8.00
- 1 Violin, with one bow and no case, medium size, medium tone, dark amber varnish, 7.00
- 2 Violins, with one bow and no case, medium size, medium tone, dark amber varnish, 6.00
- 2 Violins, with one bow and no case, medium size, medium tone, dark amber varnish, 5.00
- 2 Violins, with one bow and no case, medium size, medium tone, dark amber varnish, 4.00

Address all Orders to C. G. Conn Co., Elkhart Ind.

FIGURES 26a, 26b. Advertisement for Conn Wonder-model violins from the November 1907 issue of *Musical Truth*. The company not only made new violins, but also sold used ones. Note the "genuine Joseph Guarnerius violin made in 1742" offered for \$1,000. Courtesy of John McCarden.

FIGURE 26b.

OLD VIOLINS

Complete with one bow and all accessories in an elegant plush lined leather case, nickel plated lock, spring catches and trimmings. Extra good value.

| | | |
|---|---|-----------|
| 1 | Genuine Joseph Guarnerius Violin, full size, made in 1742, the back is formed from one piece of beautiful curly maple, the sides to match. This instrument is in a perfect state of preservation | \$1000.00 |
| 1 | Guarnerius Model Violin, $\frac{3}{4}$ size, believed to be genuine, the back is formed from one piece of curly maple, sides to match. It has a fine, strong tone, perfectly repaired, a splendid instrument for a lady violinist. A great bargain | 200.00 |
| 1 | Genuine August Glass Violin, full size, the back is formed from one piece of curly maple, sides to match. In a very fine state of preservation, having only two small cracks in top, perfectly repaired. Has a well developed tone and is an instrument fit for an artist | 125.00 |
| 2 | Old German Violins, $\frac{3}{8}$ size, the backs are formed of two pieces of curly maple. They have a very strong and mellow tone, perfectly repaired and varnish renewed, each | 100.00 |
| 1 | Old French Violin, full size, the back is formed from one piece of bird's eye maple, sides to match, high arch, new neck grafted in old scroll, fine tone, perfectly repaired, varnish renewed. Worth double the list price | 125.00 |
| 1 | Old German Violin, full size, the back is formed from two pieces of curly maple has a fine mellow tone, varnish renewed, perfectly repaired, extra good value | 75.00 |

Elkhart and vicinity, various real estate mortgages, 125 shares of stock in the Simplex Motor Car Co. of Mishawaka, a sea-going yacht, a lake motor launch and much valuable personal property.⁸⁰

Conn the Philosopher

Conn's writing style after the 1910 fire starts to take on a philosophical and almost evangelistic fervor, and includes many religious images. Reflecting upon the events of 1910 in the *C. G. Conn Band and Orchestra Instruments Catalog* of 1912-13, Conn writes:

The disastrous fire of two years ago, that entirely destroyed Mr. Conn's old factory plant and nearly put him out of business, enabled some of his competitors to "grab off" some of his business and sequester some of the prominent musicians who were devoted to the Conn interests. But they are all coming back. Once a Conn enthusiast, always a Conn enthusiast. . . . They may wander temporarily from the fold, but they all come back. There is room in the Conn bandwagon for all. How do you stand with Conn? The day of judgment is near at hand, and your own convictions will soon cause you to jump into the Conn band wagon and play a Conn instrument. . . . Get ready . . . make your peace with the great instrument maker.

Believing that he had finally made the "perfect" cornet by 1914, Conn wrote in a flyer, "Explanatory Letter from Mr. Conn—the New Wonder

80. *The Elkhart Truth*, 6 January 1931.

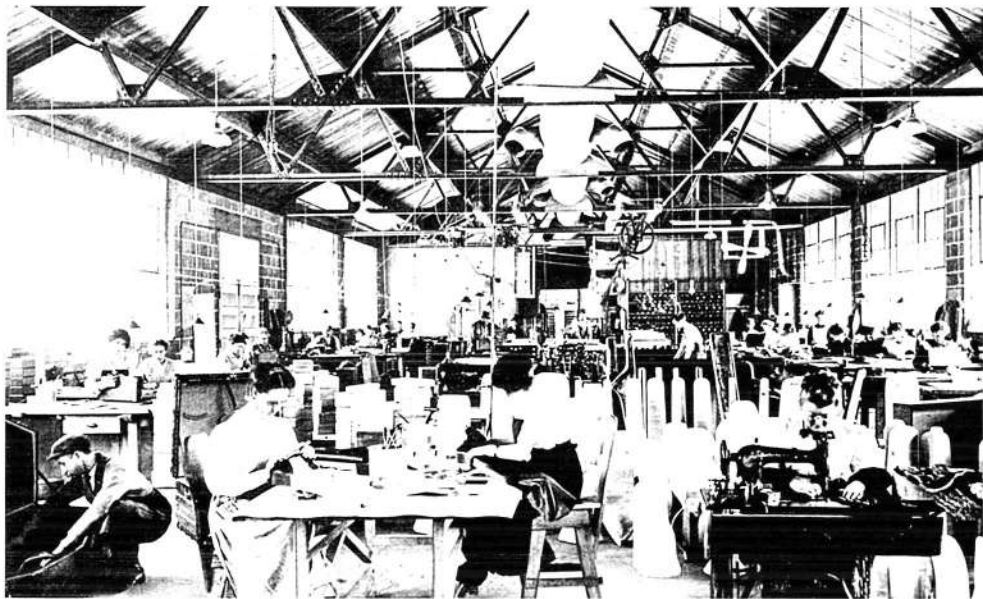


FIGURE 27. The case-making department in the Conn factory in 1913 was staffed primarily by women and produced more than 700 handmade cases per month during that year. Courtesy of John McCardle.

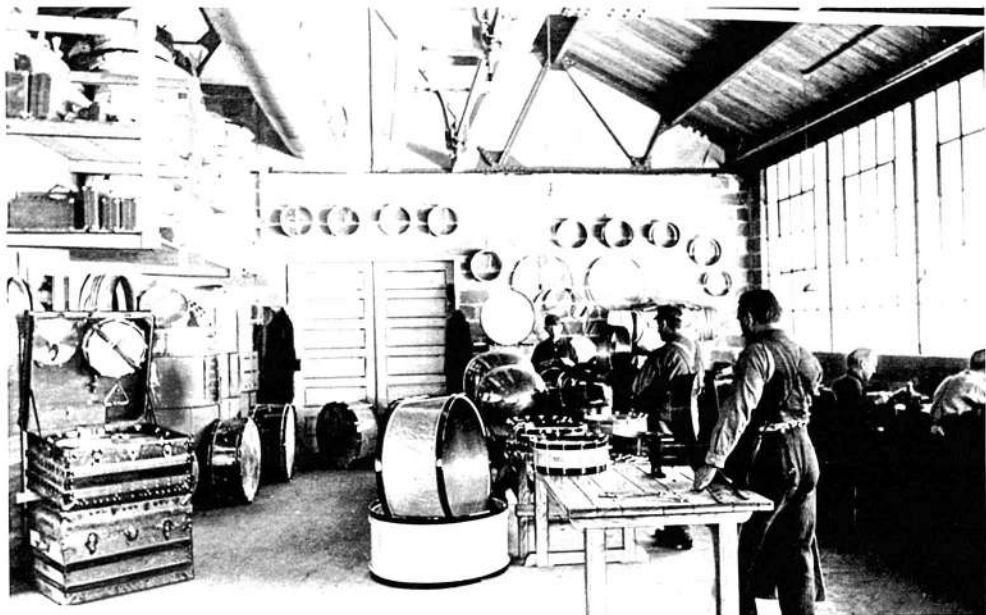


FIGURE 28. The drum-making department was located in the woodworking factory along with the stringed-instrument and case departments. Photograph from the 1913 series. Courtesy of John McCardle.

Cornet" (October 15, 1914), that "Gabriel's day has not yet arrived and that last Trumpet-call will probably not be sounded on any other than the present instrument, if ever sounded at all." An advertisement in the March 1914 issue of *C. G. Conn's Musical Truth* notes that "cornet players are surely entering their millenium, for ere long the Conn cornets will play themselves."

The ultimate expression of Conn's philosophical reflections came in a book written when he was seventy-two entitled *The Sixth Sense, Prayer*, published in two editions in 1916.⁸¹ The greatly enlarged second edition, published in California, bears the revealing subtitle, *Brain Cell Reformation*. In this book, Conn develops his own theory that man has a sixth sense which he describes as being able to "arouse into mental activity thought functions with creative power, such as invention, so-called inspiration, force for concentrating the mind and similar brain cell energies." The means for developing this "sixth sense," which separates men from animals, is prayer. According to Conn, prayer results in the formation of new, "good" brain cells and destroys the old, "bad" brain cells with which we are born. He notes that

Prayer has been the means of building up the mentalities of all of the world's greatest minds. It will continue to be the source of man's reformation, spiritual guidance, inspiration and final salvation.

Conn's definition of prayer, however, is unorthodox. He believes that prayer to a "Divine Father" should be

A heartfelt mental petition for strength to do right, to be guided and to be made worthy. . . . The object of prayer is to awaken mental forces that will protect the devotee from evil, that will safeguard him against his own baneful inclinations, that will give him strength of mind and body, and that will arouse new and better brain cell activities. Prayer for right thinking, right doing and right living alone is desirable. Prayer for other things in life, except for good health, is not advisable.

Conn goes on to state that

Mankind owes its present state of enlightenment almost entirely to prayer, and with that intellectual advancement has come the conquering of the wilderness, the multitude of mechanical devices and architectural and other improvements for the convenience of this and other generations, also, all else that we own and

81. The first edition, published in Elkhart, was fifty-one pages long. The second edition, *The Sixth Sense, Prayer; Brain Cell Reformation* (Los Angeles: G. Rise and Sons, 1916), was 203 pages long! Conn wrote another such book, this one 236 pages long, a few years later: *For the Good of the World, Finding the Real God* (Los Angeles: G. Rise, 1919).

enjoy. Prayer will not prevent misfortune nor avert public disaster. Prayer is simply a method of mental uplift. It affects the mind only and it cannot be made to interfere in any way with natural conditions.

The Sale of C. G. Conn, Inc.

The Sixth Sense was published the year after C. G. Conn transferred his holdings in C. G. Conn, Inc., valued at \$1,000,000, "to a group of capitalists headed by Carl D. Greenleaf of Wauseson, Ohio."⁸² The company was incorporated under the title "C. G. Conn, Ltd.," and instruments produced after 1915 bear this new name. The editorial page of the September 1915 issue of *C. G. Conn's Musical Truth* explains that the transfer of ownership was made "owing to the increased demand for Conn instruments and the need of capital necessary for expansion." Years later, C. G. Conn, Ltd. literature explained that when Greenleaf purchased the Conn factory, "it was in a business slump because of [a] changing instrument market as well as inadequate machine and tool facilities which were sorely needed in an age of improved mechanization."⁸³ Greenleaf secured not only the musical instrument factory, but also Conn's holdings in *The Elkhart Truth* and his Elkhart property. The Strong Avenue residence, however, was reserved for the use of Conn's first wife, Kate, whom the Colonel divorced shortly thereafter.⁸⁴ Following the transfer of the company, Conn's brilliant career as the foremost American musical instrument manufacturer abruptly ended. He moved permanently to his home in southern California, where he remarried, fathered a son at seventy-five, wrote his book about achieving success, and died, totally impoverished, on January 5, 1931.

Conn's own words, from an advertisement in the November 1907 issue of *Truth*, make an appropriate epitaph:

Fame is but a fitful flame, which must be coddled or 'twill flicker and fade. Hard to ignite, it is yet harder to maintain with that fervid brilliancy, which illumines the life and era of the genius who kindles the spark.

The Shrine to Music Museum, The University of South Dakota

The University of Wisconsin at Madison

82. *The Elkhart Truth*, 6 January 1931.

83. *Conn: History and Growth* (Elkhart: Conn Corporation, [ca. 1960]).

84. *The Elkhart Truth*, 6 January 1931.