Frank Holton & Co.

Chicago & Elkhorn

1857  Frank Ezra Holton is born in Allegan, MI
1870s Holton apprentices as a blacksmith in Allegan
1879  Holton marries Florence in Allegan
1880  Holton in Kalamazoo working as a blacksmith for Cahill & House making carriages (photo 1)
1883  Holton wins first prize for a trombone solo in a state tournament in Detroit
1885  Holton partners with James York to form York & Holton in Grand Rapids, MI, #57 Canal St. (directory); ends in 1886
1892  Holton joins the Sousa band as a trombone player
1896  Holton is with Brook's Second Regiment Band in Chicago and starts selling a slide oil that he developed

1898  Holton rents a third floor room in a building at the corner of Clark & Madison St. selling oil, musical supplies, and used instruments
1899  Holton produces his first instrument, the “Special” trombone
1900  Holton moves to larger quarters renting two rooms at #70 Madison St. at corner of State; he adds cornets to his line (#318 at right from c.1901); Florence is a music teacher
1902  Holton at #70 E. Madison St., band instruments (dir); he now has 14 workers
1904  incorporates as Frank Holton & Co., moves to #107 E. Madison St, rents a full floor (Holton) [Cornet #316 has case banner marked “Frank Holton & Co. 104 E Madison”]
1906  Holton now has 100 workers and is building a new factory at #2638-2646 Gladys Ave. (bottom photo from c.1915)
1907 The first half of the factory is running; E. A. Couturier starts working with Holton to promote the Couturier model cornet (photo 1)

1909 introduction of the Holtonphone tuba (photo 2); Holton is granted patent #932,704 for a trombone design

1911 the second half of the factory is finished; Frank Holton & Co., #2638-2646 Gladys Ave. & third floor #207 S. Wabash Ave., Holton pres, Arthur Davis sec, Harold DeBray tres (directory)

1911 Holton granted patent #1,005,972 for his “New Proportion” cornet developed back in 1906 (photo 3 & below)

1914 Holton granted patent #1,089,876 for mouthpiece and design patent #46,501 for the “Revelation” cornet

1915 Holton granted design patent #48,319 for cornet (below)
1916 Holton granted patent #1,236,173 for trombone counterbalance; starts advertising the “Revelation” cornet & trombone (below & right)

1918 Holton moves to the new factory at #320 N. Church St. in Elkhorn, WI in April; they had 200 workers and moved 85 car loads of machinery; the Herbert Clarke model cornet is introduced based on the New Proportion design

1919 start of “Revelation” trumpet design

1920 Holton granted patent #1,330,806 for trumpet tuner and #1,330,831 for trombone slide
1920 Holton introduces the “Revelation” trumpet

1921 Holton granted patent #1,512,023 for trumpet tuner

1923 over 300 workers & recently doubled factory space (MTR)

1924 Holton granted patent #1,652,306 for trombone tuner

1920s stencil some less expensive “Pertin” & “Beaufort” instruments for students (photos 7 & 8)

1929 Holton introduces the “Collegiate” student models

1934 Holton granted patent #2,027,340 for trombone slide

1938 Holton retires and sells controlling interest to Fred Kull (1872-1944)

1939 now down to 106 workers

1942 Frank Holton dies on April 16th

1944 Fred Kull dies and is succeeded by his brother Grover Kull (1885-1977) and former sales manager Elliot Kehl
1956 the Farkas model French horn is introduced (photos 1 & 2)
1964 controlling interest is sold to Leblanc Co.
2004 Holton is sold to Conn-Selmer
2008 all production in Elkhorn ends at the end of summer with 70 workers left; production to continue in the old King plant in Eastlake, Ohio

**Elkhorn Factory:** aerial view in 2017

instrument photos from Horn-u-copia.net & auction sales
Holton cornet #316 with “Frank Holton” on the bell and “Frank Holton & Co / 107 E. Madison St / Chicago”.

Photos from internet auction