

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

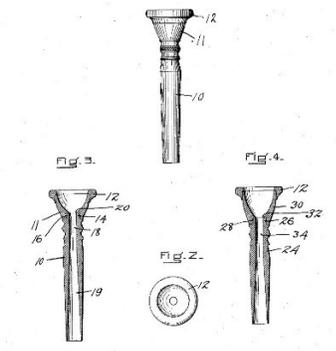
Boston, Massachusetts

- 1870 Ira Herbert Odell (1842-1928), music teacher, Boston
- 1874 Woods, Odell & Thompson, music teacher & musical instruments, #121 Court St.; adding Charles W. Thompson (1842-1903) (dir)
- 1875 Thompson & Odell, musical instruments, #86 Tremont St.
- 1880 Thompson & Odell now at #177 Washington & #78 Tremont (ad)
- 1884 Quinby Brothers musical instruments is purchased by Thompson & Odell and called Standard Band Instrument Co., #62 Sudbury St. [SBIC cornet (photo 2) and rare trumpet (photo 3)]; T&O still at #177 Wash. (dir)
- 1886 T&O moves to #186 Washington (dir)
- 1889 T&O now at both #186 & #523 Wash. (dir)
- 1890 Vega Co., #223 Commercial St., guitars, mandolins, zithers photo 5 c.1890), founded by Carl Linder Wilmot Nelson (1871-?, emigrated 1883) (photo 1) & brother Julius M. Nelson (1868-1920, emigrated 1889) from Sweden, other founders are John Palm & John Swenson; T&O at #523 Wash. Only (dir. & census) [Vega is Latin for one of the three stars in the Summer Triangle]
- 1899 Vega Co. & SBIC still at separate addresses (dir)
- 1900 Vega Co. & Standard Band Inst. Co. are now both at #62 Sudbury St, Carl & Julius Nelson (dir)
- 1903 Vega Co. is incorporated
- 1904 Vega acquires A.C. Fairbanks for banjos
- 1905 Thompson & Odell now at #749 Washington (dir); their stringed instrument business is sold to Vega (Ayres)
- 1909 Vega buys the Standard Band Instrument Co from T&O to add brass instruments to their offerings (Ayres) [Ayres indicates that this is the approximate year from her interview with Vega yet they share a location as early as 1900. Serial numbers start around 1000 for SBIC brass with the added Vega inside a star]



- 1910 early Vega trumpets are marked with a July, 1910 patent date which indicates use of the Blessing patent #963,272 for a valve guide/spring base
- 1915 Carl Nelson granted patent #1,165,278 for cornet telescoping tuning slide; assigned to Vega
- 1917 Carl Nelson granted patent #1,232,069 for cornet telescoping lead pipe with assignment to Vega [I have not found an example of this design yet the patent date appears on some instruments]; they move to #155 Columbus Ave in June; serial # c.6500

The first trumpet offering by Vega corresponds with their move to Columbus Ave and the model is named after Charles E. George (1871-1954), an orchestra musician and teacher in Boston. He received patent #1,178,513 in 1916 for this mouthpiece design that interchanges rims between cornet and trumpet. (George model 2 photos 1 & 2; model 1 in photo 3)



- 1920 Julius dies in July from pneumonia; Ira Odell is retired and son Herbert (1872-?) is music store owner (census); David Day is secretary (news report)
- 1922 Vega Co. & SBIC at #155 Columbus Ave.; Herbert F. Odell & Co., music publisher, #165 Tremont room 31 (dir.)
- 1923 Peter Tottle applies for a patent on a variation of the Blessing valve guide (below) which adds a center post for keeping the spring centered. He was granted patent #1,547,272, with assignment to Vega, on July 28, 1925 and later instruments using this guide are marked with "Patd".
- 1925 Vega takes over the music publishing business H.F. Odell Co. (sold later in 1931) (Ayars); catalog has trumpet models Standard (with #1, 3 or 4 bell), Large bore (with #5 bell) & C; cornet models Supertone & Coloratura (rare cornet #20197 photos 3&4), trombone models Perfection, Standard & Orchestra Grand, Bb Baritone & bass models Bohemian Sousaphone, Sander, & Thompson & Odell
- 1925 Peter Tottle granted patent #1,547,272 for valve guide design; assigned to Vega Co.
- 1926 Artistone model trumpets are selling in NYC (MTR)



1927 Vega trumpets are selected for the US Navy band (*MTR*)

1928 Vega has a new medium bore orchestra trumpet (*MTR*); Walter M. Smith praises the new medium bore trumpet and uses them with his students (*MTR*)

Walter M. Smith quote from 1928

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

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

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

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

1936 William is Vega president, #155 Columbus Ave., 40% of business is brass instruments making all but French horns and bass brass, about 1,000 trumpets made per year with a total of 30,000 to date (Ayars); around this time they introduce the Advanced Triumphal trumpet

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

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

1940 William Nelson, musical inst. manager (census)

1942 William leaves temporarily for the war effort and the company is run by John A. Allen (*AcousticMusic.org*)

1948 ad for new “Power Model” trumpets

1950 John Allen is GM; William is treasurer

1959 no listing for Vega in directory

Mouthpieces this page are trombone “S”, trumpet “2”, trombone “12” and trumpet “C3” from #385xx c.1941.



- 1961 Vega Co. Inc., #155 Columbus 2nd floor, musical inst. manuf., William W. Nelson pres. (dir. & census); later this year they move to #40 Leon St, Boston
 - 1966 Vega Inst. Co. Inc., #40 Leon, Wm. W. Nelson pres. (dir); later this year they move to #155 Reservoir Rd, Needham Hts and drop all brass sales (AcousticMusic.org)
 - 1970 #40 Leon is vacant (dir); Vega is purchased in March by C.F. Martin Co. for their banjos; they had 18 employees left at this time (AcousticMusic.org)
 - 1979 Martin sells Vega to Sun Pyo Hong, president of Galaxy Trading Corp. (AcousticMusic.org)
 - 1983 William W. Nelson dies in Cambridge; Vega is purchased by Deering Banjos (AcousticMusic.org)
- Mouthpieces at right are trumpet Forsell model, trumpet #2, and trumpet D1 from #4003x c.1946 (author's collection).



Berman model B-1 trumpet below



Berman model B-2 trumpet



The Berman models were named after Fred Berman (1902-?) who was a Boston player and teacher. B-1 model below



Vega C3 trumpet mouthpiece at right (author's collection)

Trombone model V27 below from the same era (auction)



Older tuba model S