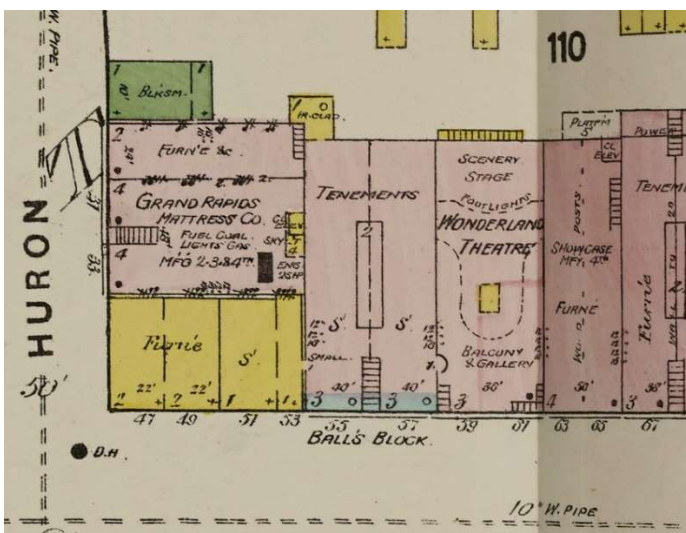
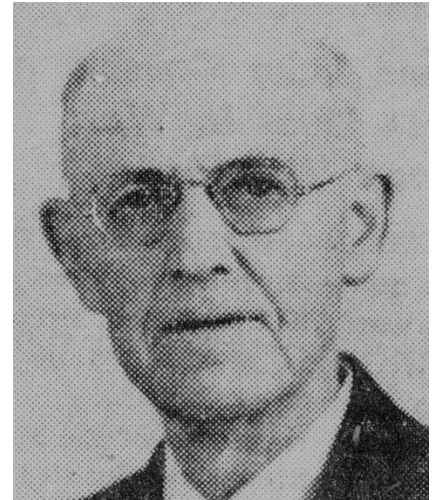


# J. W. York & Sons

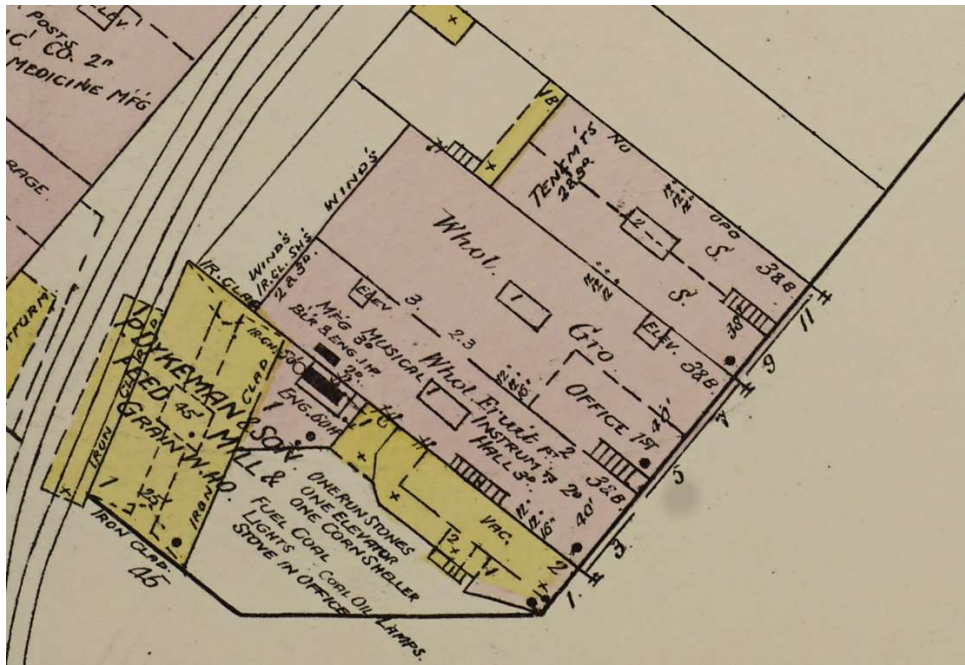
## Grand Rapids, MI

- 1839 James W. York (photo 1) is born in Exeter, NH to musician father Ezekiel and wife Nancy (census).
- 1850 The York family is in Haverhill, MA (census).
- 1860 York is now in Biddeford, ME (census).
- 1861 James enlists in the army as a musician (C War records).
- 1863 James is discharged from the army.
- 1867 James marries Josephine Swasey in Biddeford.
- 1868 James is in Biddeford, ME; musician. Son Frank Warren York is born on August 29 (birth record).
- 1872 James is working in Worcester, MA as a painter. Son Charles Edwin York is born on December 2 (birth record) (photo 2).
- 1870s Despite numerous claims to York working for the Boston Musical Instrument Mfy., he is not found in any directory.
- 1882 James moves to Grand Rapids, MI and opens a music store (1937 *Grand Rapids Herald* article says he started on lower Monroe Ave. where Heyman's store now stands.).
- 1883 York & Smith, #67 Canal St, James York & Christian J. Smith; music (dir).
- 1885 Opened factory with Frank Holton on Canal St (NLI).
- 1886 York & Holton, #57 Canal St., with Frank E. Holton; music & musical goods. Newell L. Thomas, engraver & William S. Bronson are working for them (City Directory).
- 1888 Sanborn map of Canal St. shows #57 & #67 as tenements.



1887 Now J. W. York & Son with Frank (age 19). The earliest instruments found so far have “York & Son” (photos 3 & 4, p.1 and photo 1 at right).

1888 Sanborn map has the second floor of #3 Ionia Ave. marked “Musical Instruments.”



1889 J. W. York & Son, #3 North Ionia Ave., manufacturer of band instruments & music publisher. William Bronson is now listed as instrument maker (dir).

1890 York is described as a repair plant that makes a few cornets and trombones (*Grand Rapids Herald*, 1937).

1894 8 men working at the factory (MI Dept. of Labor report).

1898 Alfred Johnson is working as a finisher, age 17 (dir).

1898 Now J. W. York & Sons with Frank & Charles, #3 N. Ionia (dir). Branch office in Chicago (ad). A complete line of brass is now made (1937 *Grand Rapids Herald* article).

1902 Henry Martin Sr & Jr are working at the York factory. Henry Jr is superintendent of the factory and they are making a new valve trombone (*Music Trades*).

1903 York is to move to the Raniville building at the corner of Campau & Lyon Sts with 11,000 sf on the 2<sup>nd</sup> floor. Currently 60 now employed at the #3-7 North Ionia St factory (*Music Trades*, July).

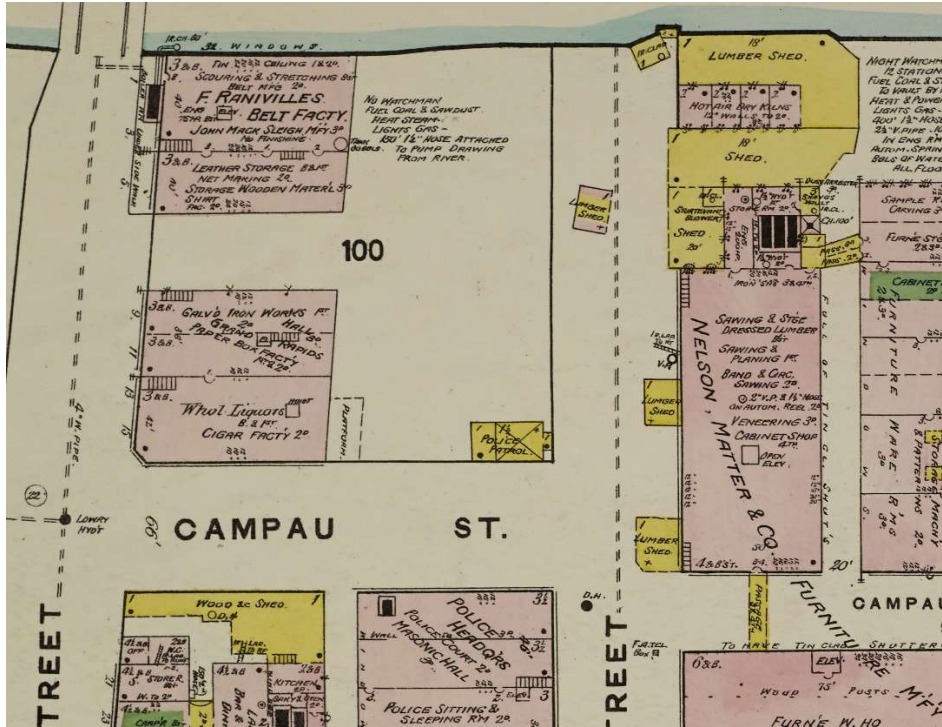
1903 Debut of “Professional” model cornet with Bb/A slide (*Music Trades*, August) (photo 6).



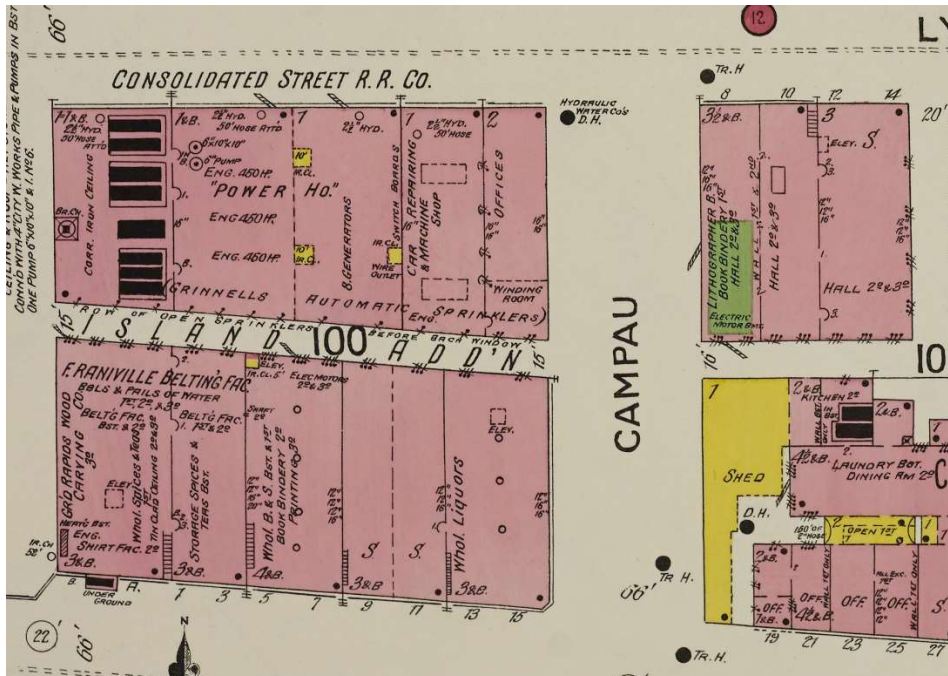
Photos are from auction sales & Horn-u-copia.net.

1903 York is now in larger quarters. The first six years were in small quarters on Canal St, then the last sixteen years on N. Ionia (about 1887). They purchased a factory site on S. Division St some time ago but conditions were not favorable to build then (*Music Trades*, August).

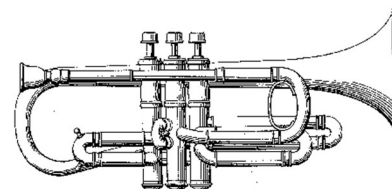
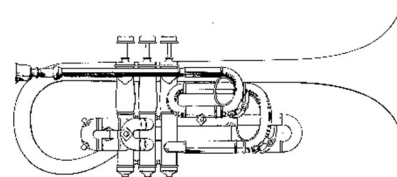
Here is the Raniville site mentioned in 1903. This view is from 1888 showing the Raniville Belt Factory.



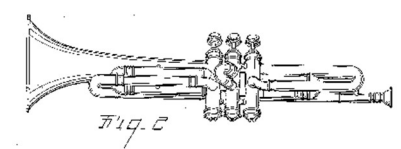
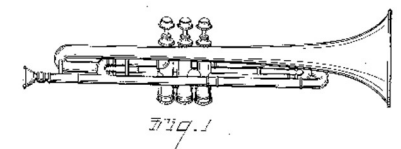
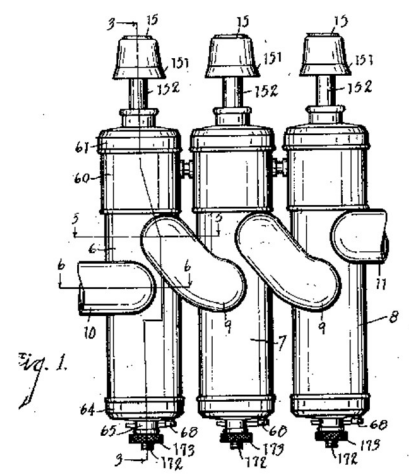
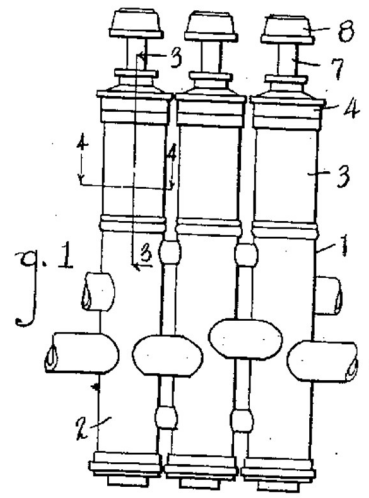
By the 1895 Sanborn map, we can see the large building on the corner of Campau & Lyon Streets that York moved to.



- 1903 York is now fully in new factory. York's "Musical Herald" was just issued (*Music Trades*, November).
- 1904 York at #2-20 Lyon St.; George Jackson recently joined the company (*Music Trades*, April).
- 1905 York had to re-occupy the old Ionia factory to build cases and drums (*Music Trades*, March).
- 1905 York adds 7,000 sf to their factory, which is devoted to brass and silverplate band instruments. They now have 100 employees (*Music Trades*, July).
- 1906 York is incorporated (*Grand Rapids Herald*, 1940).
- 1907 A York Wizard cornet with #16220 is stencilled for Grand Rapids Musical Co. which was a local music store from 1904 until 1913 (dir).
- 1908 York moves into their new factory at #1600 S. Division St. (photo 1 at right). They have 130 employees making 300 instruments per month (*Grand Rapids Press*, December).
- 1909 Edward J. Butler is granted patent #916,530 with assignment to York & Sons for a tubing bender.
- 1910 Alfred Johnson is granted patent #963,768 with assignment to York & Sons (High/Low pitch slide). Frank W. York is secretary & treasurer of York. Charles is listed as band instrument manufacturer (census).
- 1911 The Grand Rapids Band Instrument Co. is established, same owners and address as York (1917 Michigan factory inspection report). James pres, Charles vp, Frank sec. (dir)
- 1912 Alfred Johnson is granted cornet design patent #42,919 with assignment to York & Sons (photo 2). GRBIC joins brass workers' union in Nov. that York is already a part of (union records). GRBIC, Andrew Fyfe pres, C.P. Shepherd vp, Frances Campbell sec-tres; 503 Grandville Ave (directory). Karl Shinkman (1888-1974) starts at York (obit).
- 1913 Edwin S. Conrad & Charles P. Shepherd are granted patent #1,055,445 with assignment to Grand Rapids Band Inst. Co., for valve spring design.
- 1913 Alfred Johnson is granted design patent #45,091 with assignment to York & Sons; Al-Tru cornet (photo 4).
- 1913 York announces that by May they have made 60,000 instruments since their beginning (*The Metronome*). They also show the "Metropolitan" trumpet in an ad.



- 1913 John & James Duffy along with Alfred Johnson form a stockholding company and purchase York & Sons.
- 1914-1916 E. A. Couturier is a consultant in cornet design (photo 5 last page is the Couturier model).
- 1915 Both York and GRBIC are gone from the brass workers' union list.
- 1916 James York is still listed as a band inst. manuf. James Duffy is York president, John Duffy tres, James F. Campbell sec. (dir).
- 1917 James York retires and moves to California.
- 1917 The Michigan factory inspection lists York & Sons with 118 total workers & established in 1882. Grand Rapids Band Inst. Co. has 22 workers & established in 1911.
- 1919 The Michigan factory inspection lists York & Sons with 245 workers; 69 of whom are women.
- 1920 The Michigan factory inspection lists York & Sons with 283 total workers; 86 of whom are women. Charles York is listed as Violin factory president in GR (census).
- 1922 York and Grand Rapids Band Inst. Co. share the same address (dir).
- 1923 Still listed as J. W. York & Sons (dir).
- 1924 Ross Hickernell patents a trumpet design and has them produced by York. Serial numbers are in the 3300 to 3800 range so do not match with regular numbers. [The first examples were made by Nuss Mfg in Harrisburg, PA.]
- 1926 Their name changes to York Band Instrument Co with no change in ownership or employees (*MTR*, April 17).
- 1927 James York dies in LA on August 2<sup>nd</sup>.
- 1928 Alfred Johnson is granted patent #1,674,398 with assignment to York & Sons for valve design (photo 1). He is also granted patent #1,673,195 for a sax tone hole. Cornet #70878 is stolen from a dealer (*MTR*).
- 1929 Johnson is granted patent #1,735,576 for sax key stop.
- 1930 Grand Rapids Band Inst. Co. no longer appears in the city directory.
- 1931 Johnson is granted patent #1,789,589 with assignment to York Band Inst. Co. for a trombone slide. Johnson granted patent #1,821,641 for a spiral valve design (photo 2) & also granted #1,826,077 for drawing tubing.



- 1933 Johnson is granted patent #1,922,685 for valve design.
- 1936 Karl Shinkman (photo 1) becomes president (obit).
- 1937 Karl B. Shinkman is pres & treas; Alfred Johnson is vice-pres; L. E. Butler is sec. (*Grand Rapids Herald*).
- 1940 Johnson is granted design patent #119,755 for the York Air Flow trumpet (drawing & photos at right, p.5). Charles York is retired and living in Ft. Lauderdale, FL (census).
- 1940\* York is sold to Carl Fischer Musical Instruments in December for \$300,000. They currently have 90 workers and plans are to double capacity (*Grand Rapids Herald*).
- 1944 York is a division of Fischer with wartime contracts for parts used in aircraft, PT boats, guns, ordnance, & gliders (Fischer ad in *Music Trade Review*). York is also making the USA line, Grand Rapids, and Baronet band instruments (*MTR*, June).
- 1946 York and Blessing band instruments are sold through Carl Fischer (*MTR*, July). The post-WWII trumpet models 15, 17, & 18 with the tuning slide adjusting nut were likely made by Bohm & Meinl of Germany; a source for many of Fischer's instruments. They were only building student-grade brass at York (Lou VanKoeving).
- 1947-53 York Feather-Touch cornets & trumpets are made by Blessing (Ray Noguera). The Master model low brass were made by Bohm & Meinl in Germany (Lou VanKoeving).
- 1951 York now has 120 workers (*Grand Rapids Press*, 1971).
- 1953 Serial #186549 is sold.
- 1950s York makes several models of cornets and trumpets under the ACME and Hallmark labels. Serial numbers date these from the mid to late 1950s.
- 1956-1959 York makes 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary models. Valves on cornets & trumpets of this model match Muck Citation model trumpets from this period (also owned by Fischer), and were made in Germany by Bohm & Meinl.
- 1970 The York name is sold to Tolchin Instrument Co. and the factory is closed in 1971 (*Grand Rapids Press*, 1971).
- 1972 The York office moves from 1600 N. Division to #615 Griswold St., Detroit (source?). The March catalog has their address at 14 Bixley Heath, Lynbrook, NY.
- 1973 Now York Musical Instrument Co. Inc., #55 Marcus Drive, Melville, NY (source?).



- 1976 York is sold to Boosey & Hawkes (*Song & Wind*, 1996).
- 2006 Besson is sold to the Buffet-Crampon Group (Buffet).
- 2007 B-C is making Preference & Eminence model brass under the York name and are made by Schreiber & Keilwerth in Germany (Trumpet Herald discussions).
- 2010 The York brand is discontinued (Trumpet Herald).

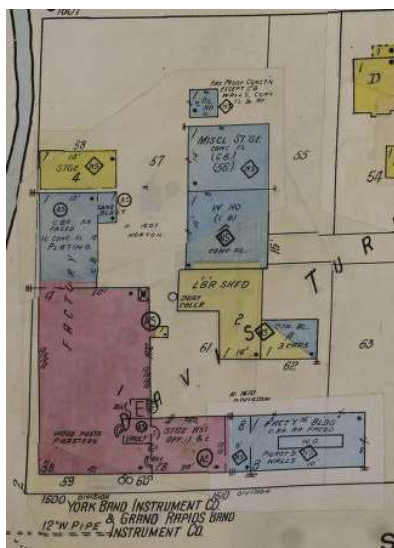
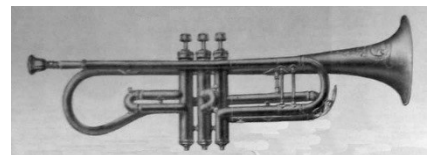
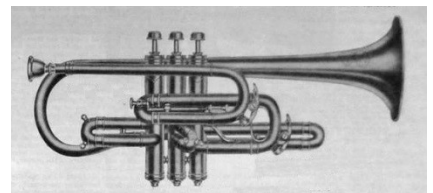
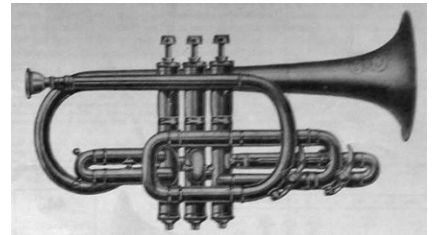
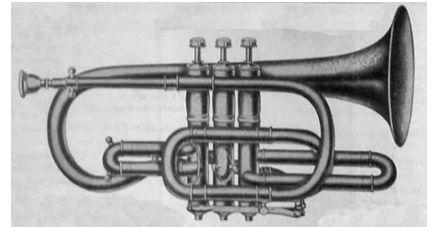
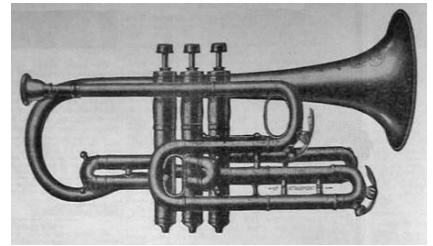
**Inventor & Superintendent Alfred Johnson:**

- 1882 Born in Grand Rapids in March (census).
- 1898 Finisher; York & Sons (dir).
- 1902 Instrument maker; York & Sons (dir).
- 1903 Horn maker; York & Sons (dir).
- 1905 Musician (marriage form)
- 1910 Musician for musical industry (census).
- 1911 Alfred W. Johnson, musician (dir). [This is a bit of a mystery as the directories have “W” yet the patents all have “J” for his middle initial starting in 1912. “W” would sound more likely since his nickname was Bill.]
- 1916 & 1919 Superintendent (dir)
- 1930 & 1940 Superintendent of band factory (census).
- 1972 Johnson dies December 23.

Photos from auction sales or Horn-u-copia.net unless noted.

1910 catalog illustrations at right are C/Bb/A, Monarch, Professional & new Perfec-Tone cornets then trumpet.

This Sanborn map updated to 1948 shows the factory at #1600 South Division St.; undated photo at right c.1980.



1940 \*After the sale to Fischer, professional horns were made by Boehm & Meinel in Germany and student horns at the York factory. This probably started after WWII ended and was confirmed by an employee from the early 1950s, Louis VanKoeving. The exception would be the Master model trumpet which is said to have been made by Blessing.

York Eminence Cornet c.2008 (auction photos below & right)

