

Basic Detail Report



Alto ocarina

Date

1940-1945 ca.

Primary Maker

Fred Gretsch Manufacturing Company

Description

Transverse shape (or "sweet potato" shape), with duct and protruding mouthpiece; 10 fingerholes (2 originally sealed from factory; beginner instrument); plastic moulding compound of green mottled color. U.S. Patent nos. 2145605 (1939) and 2195992 (1940) both awarded to George A. Mausolf, assignor to The Waterbury Button Company, Waterbury, Connecticut. Although the term ocarina technically refers to a vessel style flute, ocarinas were commonly known in the U.S. as "sweet potatoes" because of their elongated shape. During World War II, the U.S. government issued plastic versions of the "sweet potato"---like this one---in the War Department's Special Service Entertainment Kits designed as morale boosters for soldiers. In 1943 alone, plastic ocarinas were manufactured at the rate of 60,000 per month under government contract. Millions of these instruments were also distributed by the military as good-will tokens to the citizens of occupied countries.

Dimensions

Length: 147mm (5-3/4in) Height: 70mm (2-3/4in) Depth: 32mm (1-1/4in)