

Basic Detail Report



Alto saxophone, E-flat, high pitch

Date

1892

Primary Maker

C. G. Conn

Description

Two sections: neck and body with attached bell. Low keys located on left side of bell. Gold-plated, rose-gold brass. Mother-of-pearl touchpieces. Ebonite rollers. Single octave key. Bis Bb key. Side Bb key. Forked F# key. Side C key. This is the oldest known American-made saxophone! This sax, bearing serial number 16, was made, developed, and designed for Conn between 1890 and 1892 by Ferdinand August (Gus) Buescher (1861-1937), then the "foreman of clarinet, flute, saxophone, drum, valve, and mouthpiece departments" at Conn's Elkhart, Indiana, factory. To prepare for making the first saxophone, Conn and Buescher spent a few years studying European

saxophones, experimenting, creating new tooling for both high and low pitch instruments, and testing prototypes. The well-known French-born/American immigrant saxophonist, E. A. Lefebre (1834-1911), to whom many erroneously credit making of Conn's first saxophone, wrote in January 1892, that "A prominent manufacturer of brass band instruments [in Elkhart, Indiana] has asked me to superintend the works and to test the instruments. My new solo instrument, which is being made at the factory will be heavily plated with gold. I shall kiss its lips in a few days." Based upon that dating of the first saxophone, completed in early 1892, a dating of 1892 for the NMM's saxophone is reasonable. This saxophone is gold-plated and ornately engraved in the pattern of large leaves, sumptuous flowers, and scrolling covering the bell and bow sections, a common engraving pattern used during this time period.

Dimensions

Total height straight line - 591 mm (23 1/4") Total height curve from above from neck to bottom - 721 mm (28 3/8") Total height of body straight line - 521 mm (20 1/2") Bell diameter - 125 mm (4 15/16") Height of bottom to bottom of bell - 253 mm (10") Height of bottom to top of bell - 303 mm (11 15/16") Length of neck straight line - 153 mm (6") Length of neck curve from above - 208 mm (8 3/16") Length of bell's flare from inside bell - 10 mm (3/8") Length of bell's flare from outside bell - 10 mm (3/8") Width of bottom straight line, from key guard but not including key guard - 123 mm (4 13/16") Width of outside of bottom bow, from ferrule to ferrule - 249 mm (9 13/16")