

# Courtois History & Dating Guide

This is an attempt to summarize all the dating information that I have been able to put together for the Courtois name.

There are no serial number lists available so there are a number of factors that are used to determine the date of a particular horn. I will try to combine them all here including bell markings, inscription styles, street address changes, serial numbers and styles of manufacture.

## **1789-1803 “Courtois”**

This is the date range for the first Courtois in Paris with an unknown first name. The shop was on rue de Mazarine so any instrument found with this address would be from this time. You are not likely to find one outside of a museum.

## **1803-1862 “Courtois Neveu Aine”**

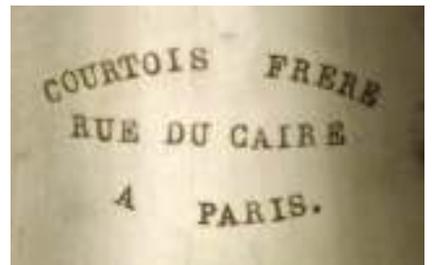
This is one of the companies that split from the original and is translated “Courtois’ oldest cousin”. The first two photos show instruments labeled “Courtois Neveu Aine Rue Des Vieux Augustus A Paris”. Dating these would be based on the style and an educated guess.

## **1803-1844 “Courtois Freres”**

This is the other company that split from the original and is translated “Courtois Brothers”. Until 1819 they were located at #25 rue du Caire in Paris. At that time they moved to #21 rue du Caire. The two-valved cornopean (3<sup>rd</sup> photo) is dated 1833 and labeled “Courtois Rue Caire A Paris”. The keyed bugle (photos 4 & 5) and serpent horn (photo 6) are labeled “Courtois Frere” which would mean just one brother; probably Denis Antoine Courtois Sr. (1770-1855)

## **1844 to Present “Antoine Courtois”**

1844-1855 located at #21 rue du Caire in Paris and owned by Denis Antoine Courtois Jr. (1814-1880); he is making trumpets, slide trombones, flugelhorn, & ophicleides; the circular Koenighorn (below L & R) dates to c.1855 (#351); “Brevete” means “patented” and is found on most horns after 1851 when valve improvements were patented



1856-1930 located at #88 rue des Marais St. Martin in Paris;  
most instruments from 1855 and later are marked with a  
list of award dates which help narrow down the date of  
manufacture; cornets from 1856 should have a serial  
number under the third valve cap of around #2400

### Award Dates on Bells:

1851 Londres, prize medal (shown on trombone bell top R)

1855 Paris, medaille d'argent

1862 Londres, prize medal

1867 Paris, medaille d'argent

1872 Moscou, grande medaille d'or (bell shown below)

1878 Paris, medaille d'or

1883 Boston, croix de Boston & diplome

1885 Londres, medaille d'or

1885 Anvers, grand diplome d'honneur

1889 Paris, medaille d'or

1893 Chicago, hors concours

1900 Paris, premier medaille d'or

1901 Glasgow, grande diplome

1904 St. Louis, hors concours

1905 Liege, deux grands prix

1910 Bruxelles, grand prix

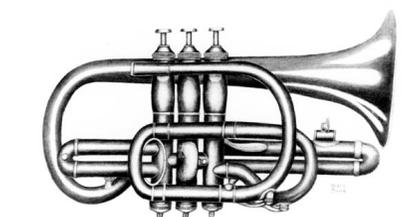
1911 Turin, grand prix

1927 Geneve, grand prix



Bell from 1872-1878 period

- 1854 Nouveau model cornet #712 from c.1854 (top R)
- 1856 August Mille (1838-1898) starts working for Courtois
- 1858 cornets should be near serial #3200
- 1860 Koenig model cornet #4730 from c.1860 (2<sup>nd</sup> photo)
- 1863 cornets should be near serial #6500
- 1870 Koenig model cornet #7811 from c.1870 (3<sup>rd</sup> photo)
- 1873 cornets should be near serial #8400; bell engraving changes this year from "Facteur Du Conservatoire Imperial" to "Facteur Du Conservatoire National"; having both "Imperial" and the Moscow award date would mean it comes from the 1872-1873 period
- 1878 August Mille becomes the factory foreman
- 1880 cornets should be near serial #12000; Antoine Courtois dies without an heir and Mille becomes the successor; Antoine Courtois & Mille is formed in July
- 1885 Arbuckle model cornet #15548 from c.1885 (4<sup>th</sup> photo)
- 1889 Walter Emerson model cornet #16793 (5<sup>th</sup> photo)
- 1890 cornets should be near serial #18500
- 1892 Mille is granted US patent #468,025 for trombone slide
- 1895 Emile Delfaux & Amadee Legay become successors
- 1900 cornets should be near serial #20000; Levy model cornet #20081 shows that the F. Bechtel Music Store is a US agent, this is pre-1905 when Bechtel retired (6<sup>th</sup> photo)
- 1902 Trumpet #199 has the 1900 medal but not 1904 so c.1902



This starts a mystery on the beginnings of the trumpets. With this trumpet I am led to believe that trumpet production started around 1900 yet later trumpets have varying medals shown. Two trumpets have no serial number and no medals. The one shown in the bottom L&R photos has valve caps with corks and acorns on the bottom caps which match c.1900 cornets but why no award dates?



The Bb/A valve was popular on US trumpets in the early 1900s but when did it start in France? The lettering style on this one was used for a long time so I can't go by that.

Trumpet #215 (1<sup>st</sup> & 2<sup>nd</sup> photos) has just the 1855 medal listed and was sold by Selmer in NYC. This gives us a very good idea of when it was made as the history of Selmer in NY can be traced.

### **A Brief History of Selmer in New York City:**

1909 Alexander Selmer opens a store in NYC, #150 E. 86<sup>th</sup> St.

1917 Selmer now at #1579 3<sup>rd</sup> Ave., musical instruments

1919 George Bundy buys the NYC Selmer store and incorporates as H&A Selmer Inc. in March, 1919; one ad from 1919 shows the new Courtois trumpet that matches #215 (3<sup>rd</sup> photo), these are said to use French brass in the body & bell and have phosphor bronze valves

1920 Selmer moves to #117-119 W. 46<sup>th</sup> St. in July

1921 one ad claims Selmer is the sole US agent for Courtois and another shows the new trumpet (4<sup>th</sup> photo) with the only change being the water key location. This matches trumpet #300 (5<sup>th</sup> photo)

1922 Selmer is the sole US & Canada agent for Courtois.

All this tells me that the serial numbers actually start following WWI and perhaps to when Courtois was purchased by Gaudet in 1917.

### **Back to Courtois history:**

1902 cornet #19773 has a presentation date of 1902 with Foote the sole US agent in NY (6<sup>th</sup> photo)

1905 cornet without serial # dated 1905 with Sherman Clay & Co. of San Francisco the sole US agent (7<sup>th</sup> photo)

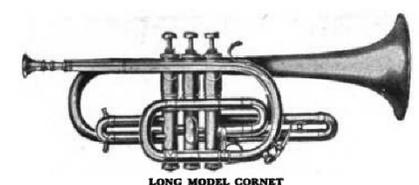
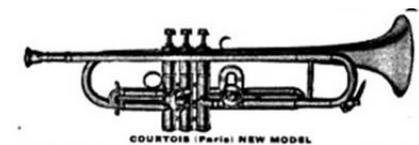
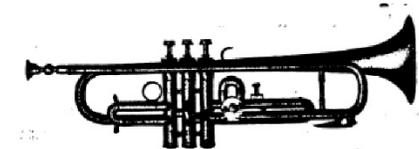
1908 Delfaux's sister Marguerite becomes owner with Legay

1909 Courtois becomes the exclusive supplier for the Ministry of Beaux Arts at the Paris Conservatory

1917 music publisher Emmanuel Gaudet (1860-1933) buys the company and Emile Deslaurier is hired as the director; trumpet production probably started at this time

1919 Selmer ad shows the long model cornet (bottom photo) but these must not have been too popular as I have not been able to find any cornets from this time period.

1919 It's likely that the first trumpets were being made at this



time as #215 matches with an ad from 1919 as illustrated above. One thing to look for on the first trumpets made is that the ends of the tuning slide brace have oval flanges then by #300 they have diamond flanges. Another characteristic of the early trumpets are the curved bell braces (1<sup>st</sup> photo); these survived into the late 1920s.

In comparing the early trumpets to the earliest flugelhorn that I could find (#372, 2<sup>nd</sup> photo), it would seem that this is from the same era and possibly the same serial number sequence. This has the same rounded finger buttons found on some of the early trumpets and the same style of oval name stamp (3<sup>rd</sup> photo) with the letters curved.

1920s The trumpets from this time period, #300 c.1921 through around #1500 c.1927, often only have the 1904 medal date shown even though they would have been made after the 1911 Turin medal. The only exception that I have found is trumpet #885 (c.1923) which has all the awards up to 1911.

1926 A catalog page from 1926 shows four models of trombones with the contrabass shown at right (4<sup>th</sup> photo). These all have a distinctive knob on the end of the slide which was used back in the 1850s but also on bass trombone #539 (5<sup>th</sup> photo). The problem with trombone serial numbers is that they seem to jump around. Using the award dates listed, #539 dates to the 1889-1893 period so the design must have not changed at all into the late 1920s.

1927 The Geneva award helps the dating as this leaves us a three year period with instruments listing the 1927 award yet still having the Marais address that ends in 1930. At this time the trumpet bell braces change to a "Z" shape. The one trombone from this period that I have found has serial #3620 and would date to c.1928 (6<sup>th</sup> photo).

Flugelhorn #1934 (7<sup>th</sup> photo) is one of the few I could find from this period with the Marais address and the 1904 award date so dates to before 1927.

1930 Courtois now moves to 8 rue de Nancy in Paris. The lowest serial numbers I have found with this change are #2650 for trumpet (bass, 8<sup>th</sup> photo), #3738 for flugelhorn, and #5795 for trombone (bottom photo). There are so few of the last two that many more examples are needed to determine what number is close to 1930. I found no examples for cornet so they are very hard to determine the age.

1934 after the death of Gaudet, his son Paul becomes co-manager with Emile; Gaudet's widow Catharine-Marie becomes a part owner



1937 Paul Gaudet now becomes the head of Courtois

c.1938 Paul enters WWII and the factory closes

Top photo shows the new style logo with the stretched letters that probably starts after the move in 1930. The lowest numbers I have found are #3368 (2<sup>nd</sup> photo) for trumpet and #3738 (top photo) for flugelhorn; again leading me to believe that they are sharing serial numbers.

Instruments from this time and the new Nancy address have an updated bell inscription with the 1927 award and a scroll design at the bottom (3<sup>rd</sup> photo). This switches to all block letters and looks cleaner than the old design.

1945 The plant opens again with the return of Paul Gaudet. A new logo probably comes out at this time (photo 5) and used in the 4000 to 7000 range for flugels & trumpets.

c.1950 cornet #34836 from this time; Gaudet model (4<sup>th</sup> photo)

1951 trumpet #4898 is said to have been purchased new

1956 a new factory in Amboise opens this year

c.1960 a new script bell engraving starts about this time; between flugelhorn #6878 & #7996 (6<sup>th</sup> photo)

1967 Jacques Gaudet starts working for his father Paul

1970 trumpet #15600 is said to have been new this year

1978 Courtois still has at least some part of their operation at rue de Nancy in Paris; piccolo trumpet #21766 is said to be from the late 1970s; Delmotte model

1980 Jacques becomes the head of Courtois

1982 trumpet #58294 has a warranty dated 1982

1994 Courtois purchased by JA Musik

2005 the "Courtois Paris" name is registered on December 9<sup>th</sup> with an address of 104 rue Bretonneau, Amboise

2006 Courtois purchased by Buffet Crampon Group

2009 the "Legend" trumpet is introduced

2013 Buffet buys B&S in Markneukirchen, Germany and moves Courtois manufacturing there

2016 now making only trombones, flugelhorns & baritones

2016 the "Courtois Paris" name is cancelled on November 7<sup>th</sup>; they were active for ten years as a musical instrument manufacturer with 20 to 49 employees

