

Church Model Cornet by Leland & Son

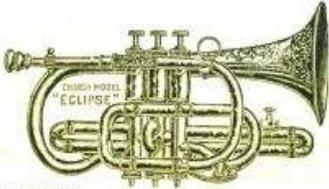
In 1894 and 1895, Leland & Son ran ads for the "Church" model Eclipse cornet. I then had to wonder who this Mr. Church was? As it turns out, this man was well known in his time and was considered by Herbert Clarke to be one of the best six cornet players of the 19th century.

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The only difference between the artist's drawing and the real thing is the main tuning slide is a "D" shape rather than a "C". The photo on the right is Eclipse cornet #536 which dates to circa 1894. The ad on the left is from 1895. The "Church" name does not appear on the instrument, just in the ad. These are the fanciest cornets Leland ever made with the decorative lead pipe socket and joints as well as the wonderful bell engraving.

Bowen Church (1860-1923) was the cornet soloist in Reeves' American Band of Providence, RI starting in 1878. He first started studying under Reeves at age nine and had his first recital at eleven. By age eighteen he was the featured soloist with the band and went on in this capacity until Reeves' death in 1902 when Herbert Clarke took over the band. Apparently Church suffered from occasional drinking so perhaps Clarke did not want to deal with this. Church was an outstanding cornet player and also served as the assistant conductor. Church purchased one of Leland's Eclipse cornets soon after they came out in 1886 and in October of 1888, Church wrote the following letter to Frank Leland.

"Friend Leland: I use the Eclipse you have made for me exclusively, and of all the beautiful instruments I have ever played I think yours exceeds them all. It has the brilliant tone of Courtois and the body of Besson, and better in tune than any I have yet tested. I have played over a hundred different solos on it, and I must say I am very well pleased with it. The action is very beautiful and it blows very easy. Have thoroughly tested it in military band and orchestra and shall use nothing else. I thought at first you might make the instrument a little less in price for me but I suppose if you did for one you would have to for all. I am glad I shall not have to buy any more imported instruments, as I believe we have better ones at home now. Accept my congratulations on your success. Yours, Bowen R. Church"

In 1912 Church moved to Jersey City to direct the orchestra of the Atlantic & Pacific Tea Company. He died there in 1923. His friend William James funded a bronze statue to be made in his likeness and it was installed at Williams Park in Providence, RI on August 26, 1928. It was created by Artistide Berto Cianfarani and cast at Gorham Manufacturing Company.



The bell looks a bit long but in other respects it does match the "Church" model cornet by Leland. The likeness on the right is from 1893 as part of a Conn Wonder cornet ad.