

This fabulous tuba was reportedly designed by Bill Johnson, design engineer for the J.W. York Band Instrument Company of Grand Rapids, Michigan. According to the story, Leopold Stokowski, conductor of the Philadelphia Orchestra in the 1930s, approached the orchestra's tubist, Phillip Donatelli, and requested that he obtain a tuba that would provide a true organ like quality to the bass register of the orchestra. Mr. Donatelli consulted with the York Instrument Company, a firm noted for excellent tubas. Two instruments pitched in CC were built to order. These incorporated a medium-large piston valve section (larger than any built today!) and a large bore rotary fifth valve into the body of a Kaiser tuba with a 20-inch bell diameter.

As fate would have it, Mr. Donatelli did not feel comfortable with these instruments. One reason for this was the very short leadpipe used on the instruments. Mr. Donatelli was overweight to the point that when he breathed, the instrument was forced away from him. There was no room on the chair for the two of them! Consequently, the instruments were sold.

One instrument was sold to Arnold Jacobs, a student at Curtis Institute, for the price of \$175, to be paid off at a rate of \$5 per week. Mr. Jacobs and his tuba were so well liked by the orchestra director at the Curtis Institute - Fritz Reiner - that a limousine was sent on rehearsal days to collect the two of them from home. The other instrument, owned by the Philadelphia Orchestra as a "back-up," was sold to the University of Oklahoma. In later years, Mr. Jacobs purchased the other York tuba from The University of Oklahoma, reuniting the pair.