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The Haynes (Powell?) Thermos Clarinet (Abstract)

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Through the years, the clarinet has been constructed from many different materials including wood, plastic, and ebonite. Metal has long been a favorite material with double wall models dating back to the mid 1800s, with the skeleton models particularly popular in the 1920s and 1930s. Metal clarinets were used by some musicians in the top orchestras in the United States, including aston Hamelin in the Boston Symphony Orchestra. They were also preferred instruments of some early jazz clarinetists.

One of the most fascinating, and unusual, metal clarinets developed was the "thermos" by the famous Boston flute maker Haynes. This clarinet, too, has been surrounded by some of the most interesting controversy. Without the turmoil that enveloped this clarinet, perhaps the instrument manufacturing world might be different today.

William S. Haynes established his own, independent flute making workshop in 1900. In 1913, after hiring Verne Q. Powell, Haynes started making a new model of silver flute. The only time the Haynes Company ever made anything except flutes commenced in 1926. This was the first year of production of a silver Boehm System clarinet. In total, 334 of these clarinets were made, the last produced in 1942. Verne Q. Powell, co-director of Haynes in 1926, claimed to have invented certain aspects of the instrument. Never having received any public credit ¶¶ his name is totally absent from the 1926 patent ¶¶ Powell resigned. Opening his own flute making shop in 1926, his business was firmly established by 1931.

This presentation will closely examine the unique features of the Haynes "thermos" clarinet. Slides will be used to carefully detail the intricacies of construction. The relationship between William S. Haynes and Verne Q. Powell will be explored, and particulars encompassing Powell's resignation will be discussed. Finally, one of the three Haynes "thermos" clarinets from the more than 1000 clarinets in the collections at the National Music Museum on the campus of The University of South Dakota in Vermillion will be demonstrated.