



**Maker of the coin-op *Mechanic-Dynamic* and *Selectraphone* phonograph models**

The Western Electric Piano Co. was founded in 1924 by Axel F. Larson, Byron C. Waters, and Russell I. Wilcox. In fact it was based on the A. F. Larson Piano Co., and the founders knew each other from previous employment at the Marquette Piano Co., maker of the first and famous coin-operated Cremona 10-roll rewind piano. Also Axel F. Larson knew Justus P. Seeburg as a member of the Swedish immigrant industrialist circle, and Justus P. Seeburg bought a controlling part of the company very soon after it was founded. According to Noel Marshall Seeburg his father Justus Percival really wanted to stimulate competition among his dealers, who had exclusive territories, and he could do it that way by introducing highly competitive instruments. The fact that the J. P. Seeburg Corp. controlled Western Electric Piano Co. was kept a secret for many years.

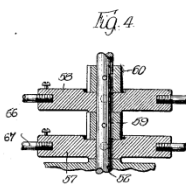
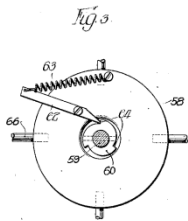
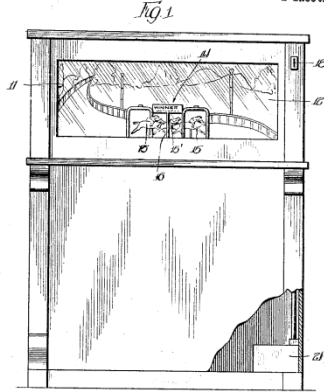
In July 1926 Western Electric Piano Co. moved the manufacturing facilities from 429 West Superior Street to 900-912 Blackhawk Street (side entrance of the Seeburg factory in Chicago) to get more space due to a real success with the 1925 "Selectra" 10-tune orchestrion and the new "Derby" model with built-in horse race (in fact a new gaming device) developed by Axel F. Larson, who was still leading executive in the company, and a good friend of Justus P. Seeburg. At the same time, in 1926, the company introduced its first (prototype) amplified selective phonograph called the "Electraphone" to be followed in 1927 by the known "Selectraphone" model housing the new 8-selection *Selectra* ferris wheel mechanism developed, refined, and patented by Axel F. Larson and Charlie W. Anderson (filed 1927 and granted 1932). In fact the company also used the simple 12-record push and slide mechanism patented by Arthur W. Wilson (filed 1921 and granted 1926) for the "Junior" *Mechanic-Dynamic* phonograph models around 1927 to gain a foothold on the market for coin-op phonographs. These models were not selective but played the records in sequence, first all the A-sides and then all B-sides. The records were pushed from the bottom and then flipped on top of the stack. These models with *Mechanic-Dynamic* mechanisms were cheaper to produce and therefore very competitive on the market against among others the Seeburg "Autophone" and "Audiophone" models. Some of these cheaper models were called in for service and operated again in rural areas by new dealers for the J. P. Seeburg Corp.; - even after the Western Electric Piano Co. went bankrupt in 1933 due to the difficult times for the whole mechanical music instrument business after the Wallstreet Crash in 1929. The executive offices of Western Electric Piano Co. were still located at the address 429 West Superior Street for several years, probably until the company closed in 1933.

Gert Almind

Feb. 7, 1928.

A. F. LARSON  
AMUSEMENT DEVICE  
Filed Nov. 30, 1925 2 Sheets-Sheet 1

1,658,131



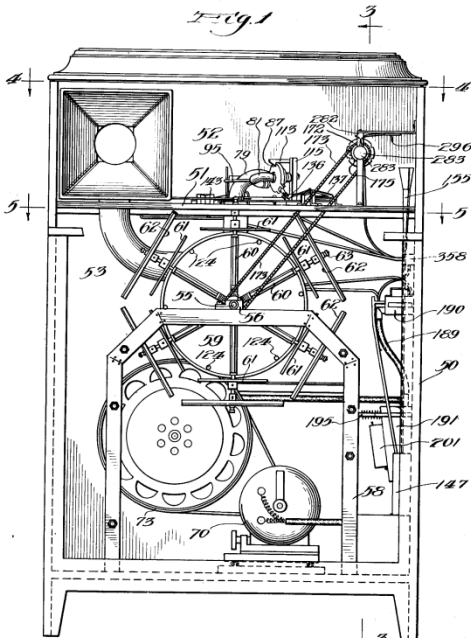
Inventor:  
Axel F. Larson,  
by Williams, Riddway, McElsie & Mickle  
Attys

The Derby orchestration with horse race gaming device (Larson).

Aug. 23, 1932.

A. F. LARSON ET AL  
TALKING MACHINE  
Filed Aug. 19, 1927 18 Sheets-Sheet 1

1,873,432



Inventors:  
Axel F. Larson,  
Charles W. Anderson,  
by J. J. G. Smith, Jr., Counselors  
Attys

The 8-selection Selectraphone model 1927-1929 (Larson).

March 18, 1930.

A. F. LARSON  
TALKING MACHINE  
Filed Nov. 2, 1927

1,751,162

4 Sheets-Sheet 1

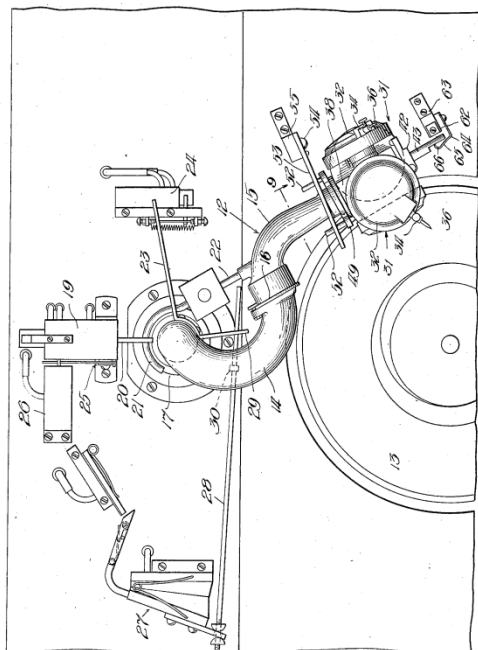


Fig. 1.

Inventor:  
Axel F. Larson  
By *Wm. J. ...*  
Attys.

Patent for improved sound-box system by Axel F. Larson.

Aug. 25, 1936.

A. F. LARSON  
COIN CONTROLLED DEVICE  
Filed Jan. 19, 1929

2,051,952

2 Sheets-Sheet 1

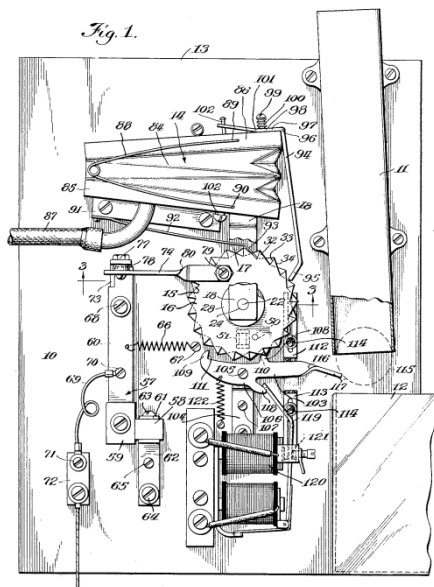


Fig. 1.

Inventor  
Axel F. Larson  
By *Williams, Reed & ...*  
Attys.

Patent for improved coin mechanism by Axel F. Larson.



1925 Orchestron with *Selectra* unit (10-tune selector).

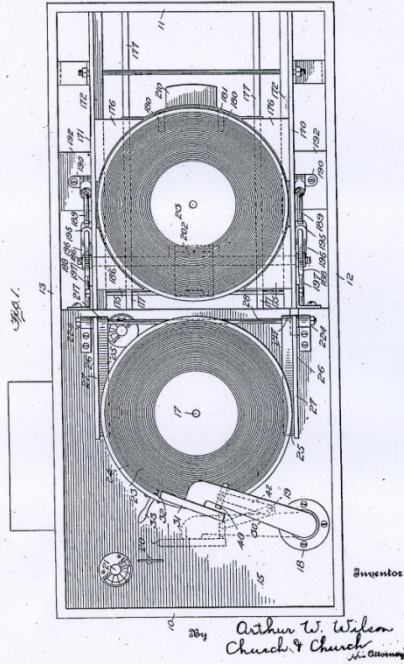


Junior *Mechanic-Dynamic* phonograph (1927-1928).

July 20, 1926.

1,593,112

A. W. WILSON  
AUTOMATIC PHONOGRAPH  
Filed Nov. 18, 1921 7 Sheets-Sheet 1



Patent for the *Mechanic-Dynamic* mechanism (Arthur W. Wilson)

*Don't Fail to See*

# THE SELECTRAPHONE



The Outstanding Features of this Marvelous Instrument Make it a Leader in the Automatic Phonograph Field—and a Tremendous Asset to your Business. Individual Selection of Records, Electro-Dynamic Speaker, Alternating or Direct Current—a truly Sensational Instrument.

See it at THE DRAKE, ROOM 320

## WESTERN ELECTRIC PIANO CO.

850 Blackhawk St.

Chicago, Ill.

1929: Advertisement for the *Selectraphone* coin-op phonograph.