

## A.B.T. Manufacturing Corp. Chicago



\*) Walter Tratsch's association with the coin-op industry began in 1902 when he joined with Frank W. Mills (1868-1927), a brother of Herbert S. Mills (1870-1929), the founder of the Mills Novelty Co. and the man in charge of its East Coast operations, to run a penny arcade in Hoboken, New Jersey. Like slot machine manufacturer Ode D. Jennings (1874-1953), Walter Tratsch operated arcade machines at the St. Louis World's Fair in 1904, and he also partnered with Frank W. Mills to run Owl and Admiral slot machines in the years before Mills Novelty Co. began mass-producing the Liberty Bell. After operating machines in Panama and Argentina starting in 1908, Walter Tratsch came to Chicago in 1910 to open his first plant, which specialized in machine repair and parts fabrication for the coin-op industry. A trip out West to partner with Charles Fey (1862-1944) followed in 1913 before he returned East in 1915 to partner with an acquaintance first met when they were both running coin-op machines at the St. Louis World's Fair named Jack Bechtol, with whom he established the Diamond Confection Co. and the Southern Confection Co. in South Carolina to operate coin-op routes in the South. In 1919 the duo established a new company in Memphis that morphed into the A.B.T. Manufacturing Corp. when another long-time friend of Walter Tratsch named Gus Adler invested in the company. Gus Adlers, Jack Bechtols, and Walter Tratsch then took the first letter of their last names as the acronym that became the A.B.T. Manufacturing Corp., and finally moved to new office and manufacturing facilities at 715-727 North Kedzie Avenue in Chicago early in 1925. Around 1923/24 Gus Adler sold his interest in the company to William (*Bill*) George Gray (1872-1943), but he kept contact with his old friends and co-founders for many years. It is a sad ending story that Gus Adler, restaurateur and an excellent cook, died in a fire in his home in Asheville, North Carolina.

The A.B.T. Manufacturing Corp. at 3311-3319 Carroll Avenue mainly produced pinball games, arcade games, trade stimulators, and platform scales, and marketed about 90 games in a period of thirty years from 1920 until around 1950/51, when the company ceased making coin operated machines. In March 1952 Tratsch and his wife acquired the stock held by the Bechtol and Gray estate, and had full control of the A.B.T. Manufacturing Corp., and finally in December 1955 the A.B.T. Manufacturing Corp. became a division of the Atwood Vacuum Machine Co. founded 1909 by Seth Burton Atwood (1886-1980) in Rockford, Illinois.

\*) *Reference: Automatic Age, November 1934*

Almind/Jan-25





3311-3319 W Carroll Avenue (Sept. 2024)

**A. B. T. MANUFACTURING COMPANY**  
3311-19 CARROLL AVENUE CHICAGO, ILLINOIS



A.B.T. building rear, East Garfield Park (Sept. 2024)



## A.B.T. Manufacturing Corp.



Gustav Max Adler  
31/3 1879 – 17/4 1952



Calvary Episcopal Church Cemetery, Fletcher  
Henderson County, North Carolina

## A.B.T. Manufacturing Corp.



Archie Harrold Bechtol  
13/11 1883 – 12/5 1942



Daytona Memorial Park, Daytona Beach  
Volusia County, Florida  
Section A



Walter Albert Tratsch  
9/12 1879 – 4/11 1960



Memorial Park Cemetery, Skokie  
Cook County, Illinois



William George Gray  
21/4 1872 – 18/9 1943



(passed away in Syracuse, Kosciusko County, Indiana)  
(interred at Acacia Park Cemetery, Norwood Park, Illinois)