



Maker of the coin-operated *Selectraphone* and *Mechanic-Dynamic* phonographs

The company was founded in 1924 by the Swedish immigrant Axel Fredrik Larson, who came to the States in 1892, the Canadian born Byron Clyde Waters, naturalized American citizen 1904, and the inventor Russell Ira Wilcox. In fact, the company 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 its production facilities from 429 West Superior Street to 900-912 Blackhawk Street, the side entrance of the Seeburg factory, 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, a new gaming device, developed by Axel F. Larson, who was still leading executive in the company, and a close friend of Justus P. Seeburg.



At the same time, in 1926, the company introduced its first 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 the machine operator Charlie Anderson (1898-1977), a Swedish immigrant born Karl Otto Andersson, who came to the States in 1915. In fact, the company also used the simple 12-record push and slide mechanism patented by Arthur W. Wilson (1894-1965), filed 1921 and granted 1926, for the *Junior* alias *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

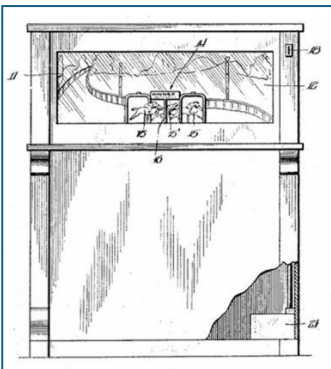
were pushed from the bottom and then flipped on top of the stack. These models with *Mechanic-Dynamic* mechanisms were cheaper to produce, and therefore competitive on the market against among others the *Seeburg Autophone* and *Audiophone* models. Some of the cheaper *Mechanic-Dynamic* models were called 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 Wall Street Crash in 1929. It is interesting to note, that the Capehart Corporation headed by Homer Earl Capehart entered a *friendly* suit against Western Electric Piano Company on the 31st May 1930 for infringement of the patents by Frank Joseph Seabolt (1874-1954) owned by the Capehart Corporation, manufacturer of the *Orchestrope* phonograph line. 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. According to information from the historian Arthur A. Reblitz, the amplifiers of both the early *Seeburg Audiophone* and the *Western Electric Selectraphone* had the brand name of the portable radio manufacturing company Operadio, also known as the Dukane Corp., founded in 1922 by John McWilliams Stone Sr. (1896-1970). A few of the *Selectraphone* models and at least two *Mechanic-Dynamic* phonographs have been preserved by collectors.

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Gert Almind/04-2010  
Revised/08-2024



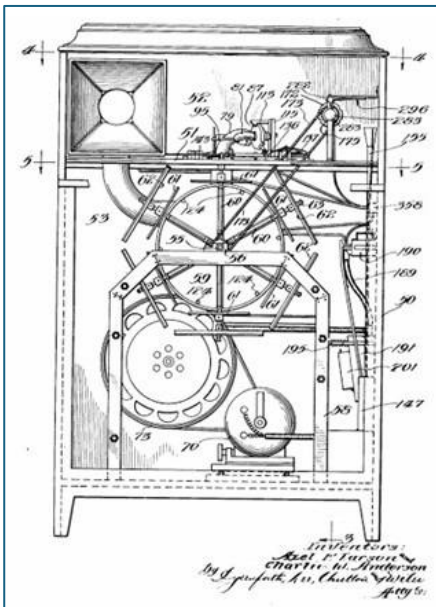
Orchestrion with *Selectra* unit, 10-tune selector (1925-26).



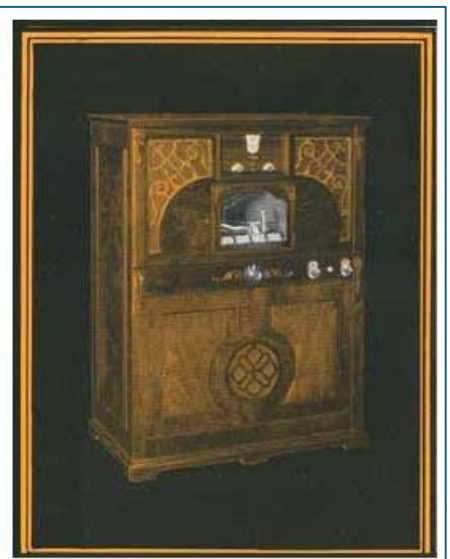
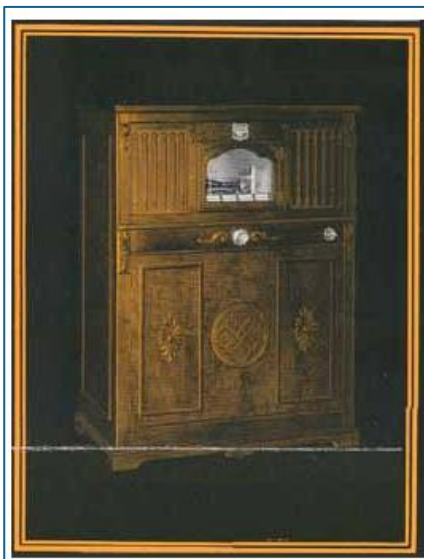
Patent for *Derby* orchestrion with gaming device (1926-28).



*Derby Orchestrion*

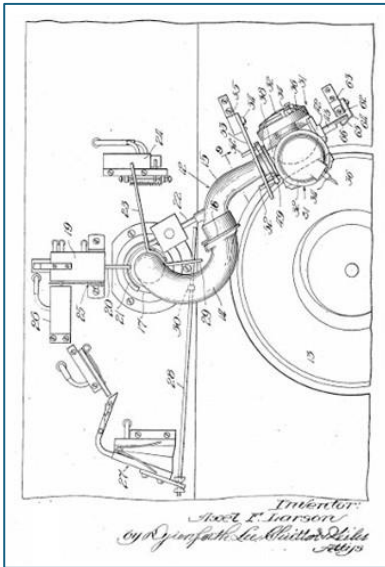


Patent for *Selectraphone* by Larson and Anderson (1927-29).

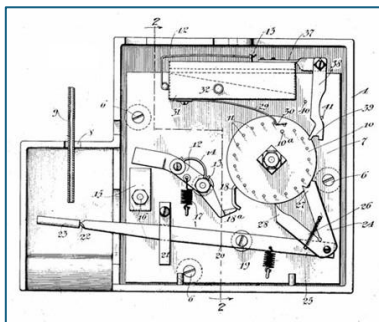


*Selectraphone*

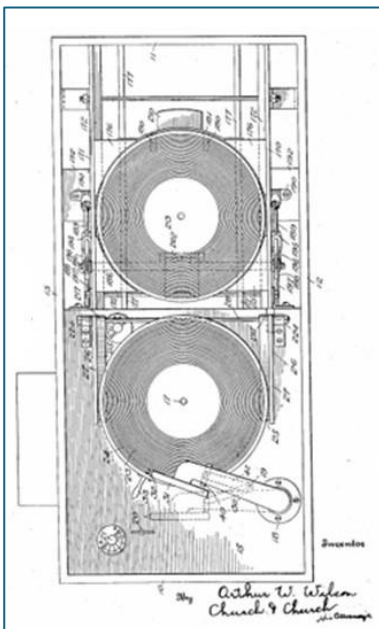




Patent for improved sound-box system by Axel F. Larson.



Patent for improved coin mechanism by Axel F. Larson.



Left: Capehart 28G - Right: Western Electric Junior

Patent for the *Mechanic-Dynamic* changer by 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.

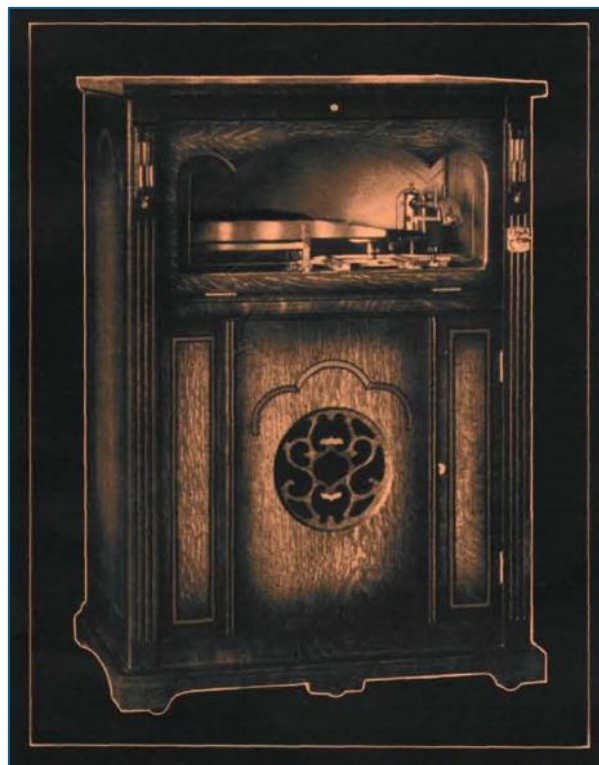
See it at THE DRAKE, ROOM 320

**WESTERN ELECTRIC PIANO CO.**

850 Blackhawk St.

Chicago, Ill.

(1929)

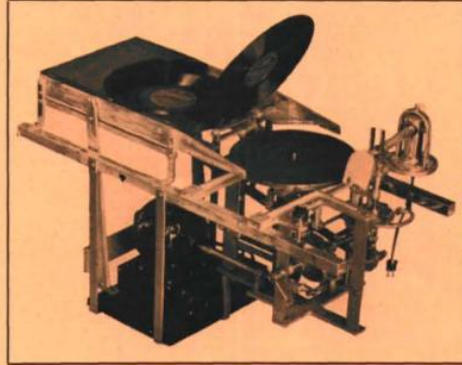


*Mechanic-Dynamic (1930)*

Entirely Mechanical  
True and Positive in Operation

## PLAYS 30 SELECTIONS

The new WESTERN Mechanic-Dynamic will play 15 records continuously on both sides. However, it is possible to load 1, 2, 4, 10, or 15 records and this instrument will operate perfectly. This is a desirable feature as there are many locations that do not require 30 selections and will reduce record expense.



COMPLETE MECHANISM

*DEALERS, here is your opportunity to get a line that is going to sell. Like a new poker player it is going to clean up. Remember, WESTERN gives exclusive territory.*

# Western Electric Piano Company

*Mechanic-Dynamic (1930)*



*Model 90 (1931)*

*(radio, 15-record player, microphone, 21 speakers available)*



**WESTERN ELECTRIC  
PIANO CO.**  
*Specialists in Sound Reproductions*



1909



**Axel Fredrik Larson**  
29/12 1868 – 6/6 1936

Oak Hill Cemetery, Blue Island  
Cook County, Illinois




1926

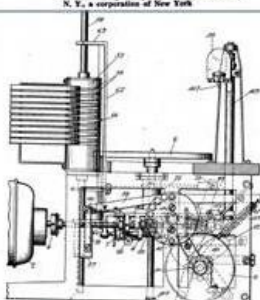



**Byron Clyde Dewolf Waters**  
3/12 1874 – 16/7 1952

Mount Hope Cemetery, Chicago  
*(lot number unknown)*

**UNITED STATES PATENT OFFICE**

**5,952,331**  
**AUTOMATIC PHONOGRAPH**  
Russell I. Wilcox, Bellwood, Ill., assignor, by  
series assignments, to Republic Warburton  
Manufacturing Company, South Tomsboro,  
N. Y., a corporation of New York





**Russell Ira Wilcox**  
27/11 1879 – 29/09 1957

Mount Auburn Memorial Park, Stickney  
Cook County, Illinois

REGISTRATION CARD—(Men born on or after February 17, 1897 and on or before December 31, 1921)

SERIAL NUMBER 1243 NAME (Given) CHARLES OTTO ANDERSON ORDER NUMBER 10601

UNITED STATES PATENT OFFICE

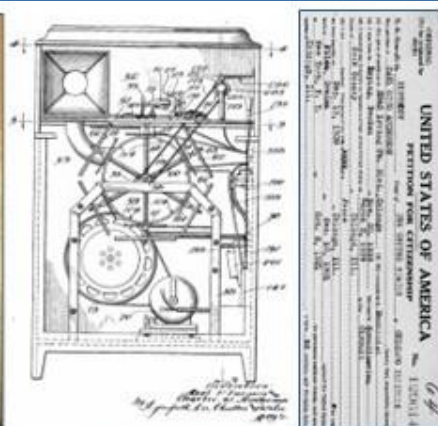
WESTERN ELECTRIC PIANO CO. 832-850 Blackhawk Street CHICAGO

DATE OF BIRTH NOV. 20 1898 PLACE OF BIRTH SWEDEN

2333 NELSON ST. CHICAGO

Charles Otto Anderson

Charles (Charlie) Anderson  
20/11 1898 – 2/2 1977



(Karl Otto Andersson, Sweden)  
Moss Lakeside Chapel, Clearwater  
Florida



Arthur W. Wilson  
10/1 1894 – 10/9 1965



New Silver Brook Cemetery, Anderson  
South Carolina



Francis (Frank) Joseph Seabolt  
7/11 1874 – 11/8 1954



Vale Cemetery, Schenectady, New York  
Plot F-2-17