

# Omaha Women Who Release Men for War By Operating Elevators in Big Buildings



By RUTH B. WHITNEY.

Many new lines of work have been opened to women by the scarcity of men due to the war, but into none have they flooded as they have into the work of operating elevators. There are 321 licensed elevator operators in Omaha at the present time and 53 of them are women. Up to the end of last July there were only two women operators, Mrs. Mary Schiabe, who has been at the Methodist hospital seven years, and Mrs. Nellie Felton, who has been at the Douglas block eight years.

On July 26, 1917, Bessie McMullen appeared before the examining board and secured a license, the first one issued to a woman under present war conditions. She has been at work in the State Bank building ever since. "I am going to keep right on with this work, even after the war is over," she says. "They won't ever use men on elevators again, anyway. It's a lazy man's work and they can't get the right kind of men to do it. They are finding out now that it is a woman's job by rights." Asked how she happened to go into this work she said, "I was doing office work and my health was suffering from lack of air and exercise. I've been much better since I started to do this and it is much more interesting work. The tenants in this building treat us fine. From what I have heard I should think they are much nicer to us than they used to be to the men. Probably it is just because we are girls, though."

**Men Are Scarce.**  
Miss Peterson, secretary to the manager of the City National Bank building, says there are three girls there now who have been there from the time they started to use girls. "We have had to make several changes," she said, "as it is necessary to get the right class of girls or they are not at all satisfactory. We simply had to stop using men, as good operators were getting scarce and the poor ones are so very poor. We pay the girls the same we used to pay the men, and they seem to appreciate it. Most of our girls come from factories or stores and they like the elevator work much better."

Some of the girls have become in-



Mrs. Nellie Felton Verne Grove

## Women Succeed As Lift Conductors

There are 321 licensed elevator operators in Omaha. Fifty-three of these are women. Women will finally crowd men out of this work. They are more careful than men. They like the work and the people like them. Only "nice girls" are successful. It is more healthful than office or factory work.

terested and gone into the work owing to newspaper stories of the opportunity that was now open to them. Christine Mischka, at the Brandeis Theater building, says she had never worked before outside of her home. "I have been doing this five weeks and intend to keep on with it," she declared. "The levers are sometimes hard to pull, but one gets used to that. At first sometimes people tried to be funny about my being here, but now they don't particularly notice me

any more. I guess they are used to seeing girls do this kind of work."

### Safety First.

The work of the girls in the Brandeis buildings varies somewhat from that of the ordinary office

building. Owing to the presence of the department store, there are many women and children riding on these elevators, and the motto followed by the girls is "Safety First." They are very particular about obedience to the rules and will not operate the cars unless the passengers are facing the front and are a safe distance away from the opening. They watch particularly to see that the little children do not get hurt.

I. Kaplan, starter at the First National bank building, says he had rather have a first-class man than the best woman operator he has seen, but he says that really first-class men are practically impossible to get nowadays and girls are far preferable to the ordinary man. "We have to be particular what kind of girls we have," Mr. Kaplan says. "We can't use the kind that run around late nights and are too worn out to know what they are doing in the daytime." The girls in this building wear a khaki-colored one-piece uniform dress that is very becoming and they all seem to like the work.

**Better Than Bookkeeping.**  
"I have been here seven months," said one of these girls, Pearl McClaren, and one of the other girls has been here nine months. We like it fine. I worked in an office as bookkeeper before I came here, and I like this much better. Lots of people think it would be monotonous to ride up and down like this all day, but it isn't. There is something interesting almost every trip. The people treat us fine and are scarcely ever cross or impatient with us."

Mrs. Felton, the operator in the Douglas block, says she learned the business' years ago in Milwaukee. "just for fun," she said. "I never ex-

pected to do it for a living. Eight years ago I was working here in the building and they had two boys as elevator operators. They had a lot of trouble with the boys, they were so careless. One day one of them was talking to a girl and not paying much attention to what he was doing. A lady was leaving the elevator and, without closing the door, he started the car upward before she was out. She was caught between the next floor and the floor of the car and badly hurt. It was two hours before she regained consciousness. Later in the same day, in some way he caught the car door and tore it off. That was enough for him. Mr. McCafferty didn't know what to do. Finally he said to me, "You can run it, Nel." At first I wouldn't have anything to do with it, but he kept on until he persuaded me to run the elevator and I have been doing it ever since."

### Goodby Men.

Mrs. Felton is pleased to see so many girls going into this work. "I

don't believe they will ever use men again," she says. "After people get used to women they like them better, as they are much more careful as a general rule. I have never had an accident of any kind in all my years of service."

"I never saw a street car nor an elevator until three weeks ago," averred Verne Grove, a smiling little operator at the Omaha National bank building. "And now she is one of the best little operators we have," added an enthusiastic tenant of the building. "I like it fine," Miss Grove said, "and all the people here are just grand to me. I have always lived in the country about 500 miles from Omaha, until three weeks ago, when I came here with my mother, who is trying to get well. I heard that one could find work here and determined to try. I learned right away. It isn't a bit hard and it is lots of fun."

The girls all think that women will be permanent in this line of work, and their employers generally concede that they are more careful and

reliable than the general run of male operators.

### Kansas Wheat Prospect Brightest in Many Years

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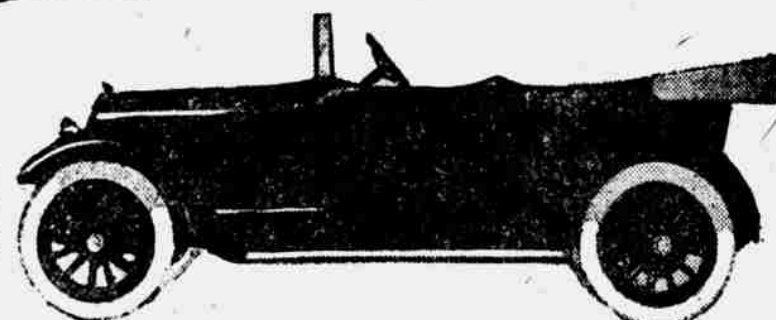
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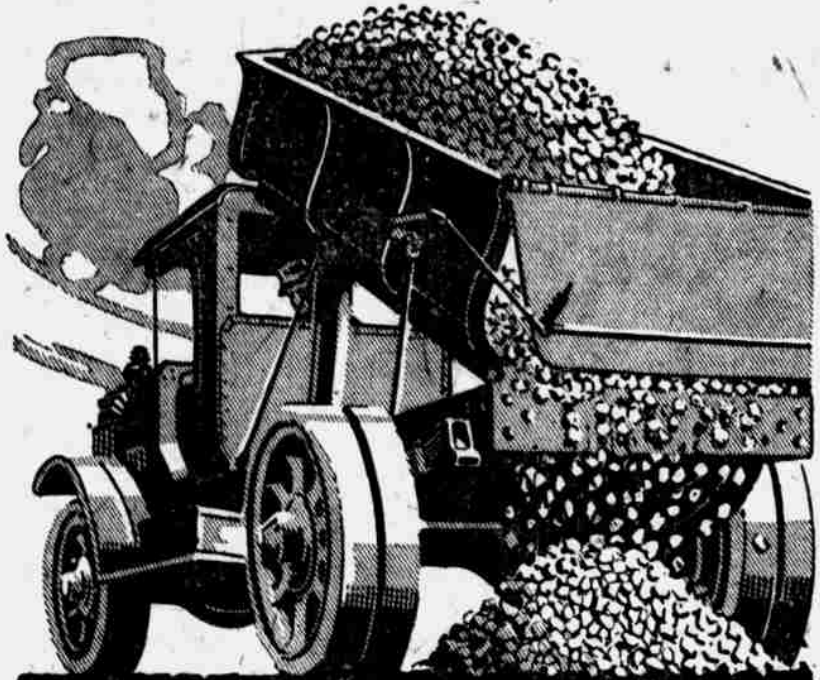
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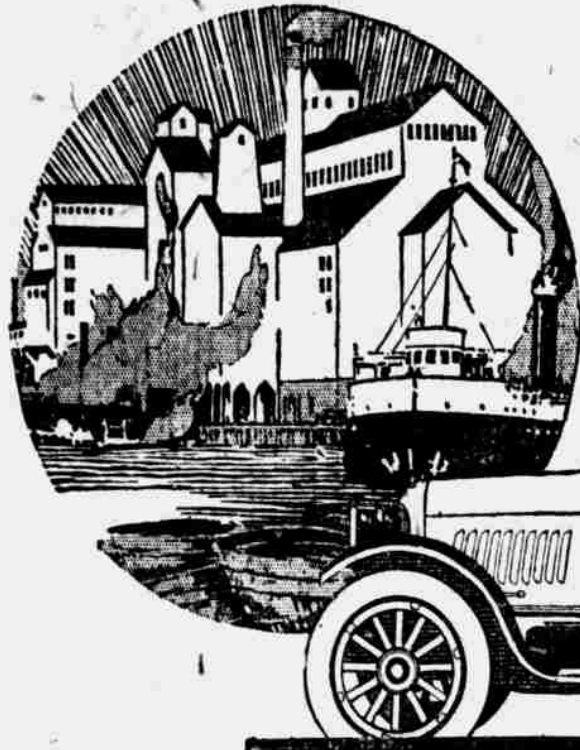
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