

Novel Way of Teaching Piano Adopted by Lincoln Public Schools Demonstrated at the Nebraska Teachers' Convention in Omaha

By HENRIETTA M. REES.

This unique method by which piano classes are taught in the public schools in Lincoln was demonstrated by the originator, Miss Hazel Gertrude Kinsella, at the meeting of music section of the Nebraska State Teachers' association. We told, last week, of the great success which has attended the application of the scheme in the schools at Lincoln, how from an original class of 12 at one of the public schools, interest had grown until now there are 435 pupils enrolled and more waiting until additional teachers can be prepared for the classes.

In order to demonstrate the results of her methods, Miss Kinsella brought to Omaha two little girls, one of whom was 8 years old, I think both were. They had never had any other instruction except that which had been given in class work in 23 lessons, and one of them had never had a piano in the house until two weeks ago, her practicing being done entirely in the public school after hours. Incidentally, it may be mentioned in passing, that Mr. H. O. Ferguson, supervisor of music in the Lincoln public schools, says that many of the children gain their practicing this way, and that little ones will sometimes practice there until it is real dark and not be afraid because they are with the piano.

Girls Show Remarkable Skill.
Little Louise, the first child, demonstrated that she knew her keyboard thoroughly, her bass and treble notes, that she could read



music in both clefs, transpose little pieces to which ever one of the five keys she knew, play scales with the correct fingering and never for one

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Upper Panel—First Public School Piano Class to be organized in Lincoln; Hazel Gertrude Kinsella, originator of the "Lincoln Way" method of music, standing near the piano; H. O. Ferguson, director of music, Lincoln public schools, standing in rear.

Lower Panel—Miss Kinsella with two of her pupils demonstrating the new "Lincoln Way" of teaching piano.

minute be mixed up in the time values or rhythm. This little girl can play a Bach Minuet and a Bach two-part invention, a Kuhlau sonatina and "The Soldiers' March," by Schumann, as well as her study studies.

The second little girl, who, by the way, was most elaborately careful to fit her hands correctly, could do the same things little Louise could do and also gave a demonstration of ear training which showed her the possessor of absolute pitch. Exact rhythmic values seem to have no terrors for these children, and the left and right hands are equally skillful. They do remarkable work for 23 lessons, with only the expense of \$2.70.

Miss Kinsella uses cardboard keyboards in her class work, four octaves long, with black and white keys painted on them, the exact size and shape of those upon the piano. These and the little tables which support them are the only special equipment. But Miss Kinsella also uses a phonograph for rhythm

drills and the blackboard for illustration, for the children to write out notes and music and to mark rhythm in such a way as to vary the interest and to clinch the points in the lesson.

Every child studies the same music and during the class lessons while one child plays at the piano the other children in perfect time play the same piece upon the card keyboards. These keyboards are only used at the class lessons, however, as the children are allowed to practice upon the school pianos if they do not have pianos in their homes.

A class of 12 is not so large but that individual instruction may be given to each pupil, and yet it is large enough so that the fun of learning things together and doing the same thing simultaneously is not lacking.

Demonstrate Her Work.
Miss Kinsella illustrated her manner of conducting a class lesson by 12 children furnished her from the public schools here by Miss McEune. In a most interesting manner she taught them accent, the great staff, the treble and bass, and how to read and how to find middle C. She also put them through a rhythm drill, and the children as well as the listeners were sorry that the lateness of the hour could not have given them more time.

Miss Kinsella is an instructor in the piano department of the University School of Music at Lincoln. Aside from her own studies and teaching of piano, she had grown up in a school atmosphere, her mother having been a primary instructor for 25 years.

She has donated her services to the Lincoln schools. While she does not claim to have originated the idea of class instruction in piano playing, the method she worked out is practical and feasible, and although the scheme is still young it has succeeded wonderfully in the Lincoln public schools. It is known as the Kinsella method of the Lincoln way.

The method she worked out is the first method for piano instruction in public schools which has been presented, and during the summer Miss Kinsella held two institutes in Lincoln to prepare teachers to conduct classes, who came from all over the United States. There were representatives from Duluth and St. Paul, Idaho, Kansas, North and South Dakota, Iowa, Missouri, California, Texas and Nebraska.

Miss Kinsella feels that she has been very fortunate in the way of hand teaching, hand position and action, fingering, etc. These points are most carefully dwelt upon in these institutes for teachers, which cover every phase of 20 weeks work. Each lesson is thoroughly taken up, illustrated by Miss Kinsella and then in turn the teachers illustrate it to her, until she is thoroughly satisfied with the results.

Beauty of tone and proper hand position are given attention, as well as notes and note values. In the children's classes, drill is given in taking position, leaving position, etc., and the friendly competition and keen enthusiasm of the children help in attaining results. This is one of the most important parts of piano teaching, and correct instruction in the beginning is essential. It is often a sadly neglected part, even in private teaching.

lations of the public school piano classes in our sister city:

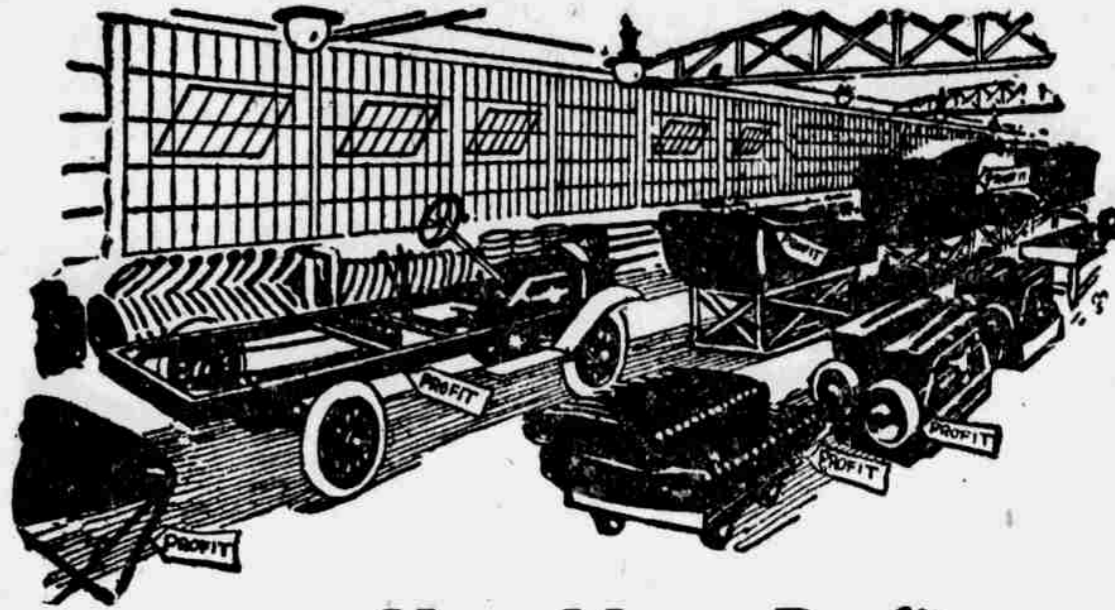
1. Public school piano classes may be organized in any Lincoln grade school desiring them and meeting the conditions outlined below.
2. Classes may be organized by the principal at any time a sufficient number of pupils make application. (Pupils accepted from grades 3, 4, 5 and 6 only for the present.)
3. Upon the organization of a class the principal shall make application to the supervisor of music for a teacher.
4. The minimum number in a class shall be eight pupils and the

maximum number shall be 14. The ideal and desired number is 12 pupils per class.

5. Class lessons shall be held once each week in the school building and each lesson shall be payable to the principal in advance. No money shall be refunded except in case of protracted illness or removal from the city.
6. Music used shall be purchased by the pupils and the cost of same shall not exceed \$1.25 per term of 18 lessons.
7. No child shall be eligible to the public school piano classes who has been a private student of any teacher of piano in the city within

a period of three months prior to the date of his application.

8. No child who shall enter a public school piano class shall be allowed to take private lessons of the same teacher who is in charge of the public school piano class of which he or she is a member, for a period of six months after leaving the class.
9. For the sake of uniformity in methods and results the "Kinsella Method" shall be the authorized course of study in all public school piano classes.
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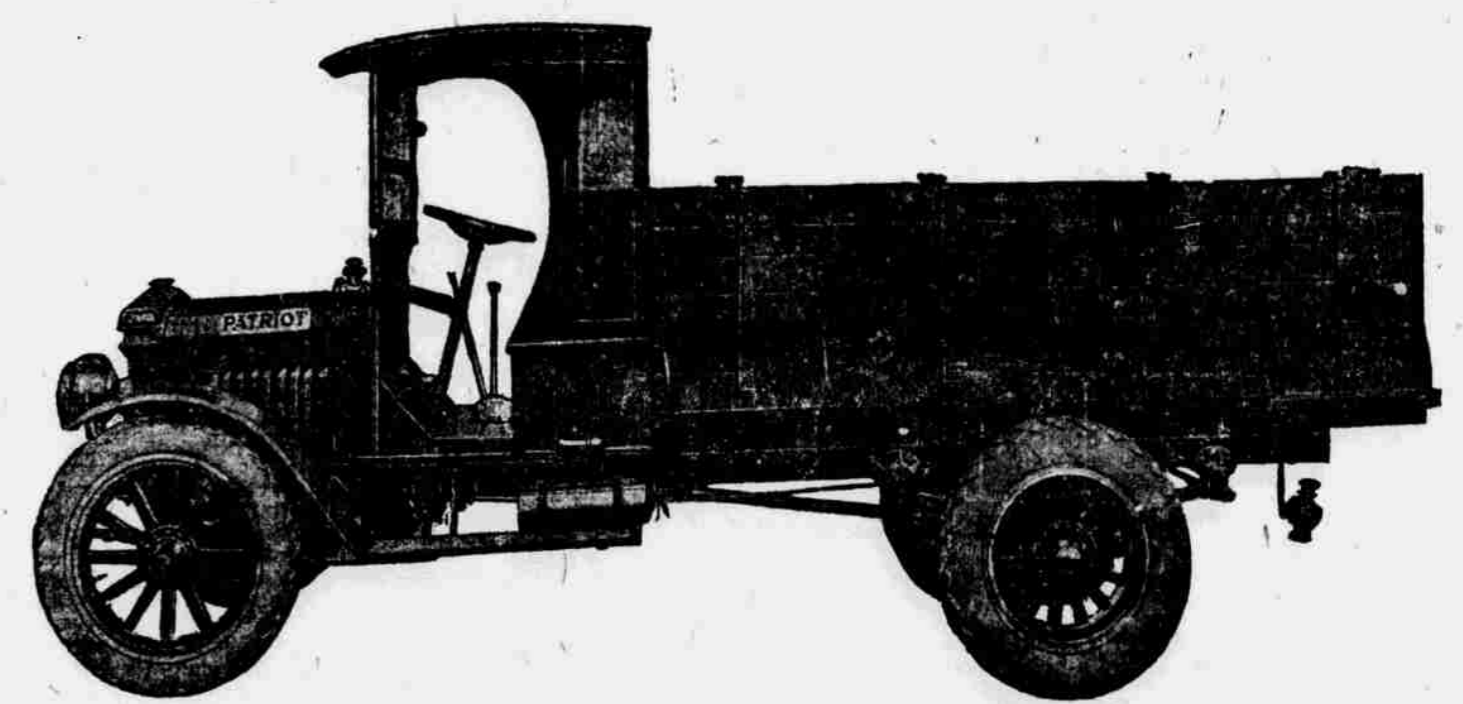
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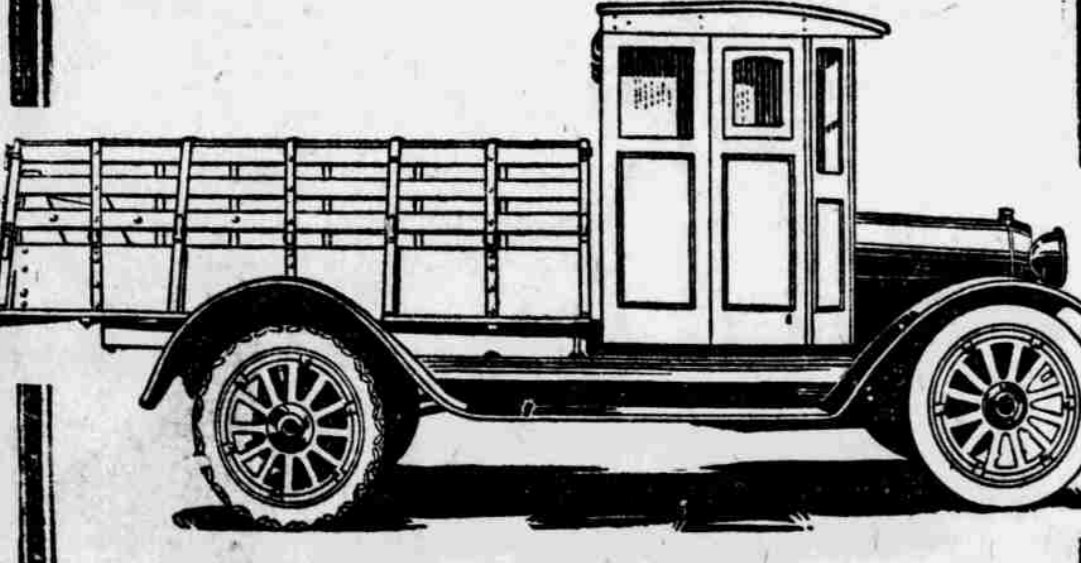
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