

SELLING MUSIC GOODS IN NEW YORK

Incidents of a Week of Activity in Piano Factories and Retail Stores Are Told in Interesting Collection of Short but Newsy Items.

By HENRY MAC MULLAN.

"Some people have been complaining that piano business is flat, but I can't see it," said J. C. Henderson, general wholesale representative in the East of the Wurlitzer Grand Piano and the Rudolph Wurlitzer Mfg. Co., 120 West 42d street, New York. Mr. Henderson says the Wurlitzer Treasure Chest instruments are satisfying the exacting demands of a most particular public, and he has great confidence in the ability of the great Wurlitzer organization to produce the finest instruments in sufficient quantities to meet the constantly growing demand for just such instruments. Mr. Henderson says there is no real depression in the piano industry and trade when rightly conducted and that the Wurlitzer interests have been doing very well indeed in the piano business of late.

Adjustment Necessary.

Edward Forshay, secretary of the Milton Piano Company, 626 West 51st street, is a wide-awake factory man who has been doing a little observing in the piano business lately. He said this week: "The average piano dealer needs to readjust himself to his business and to readjust his business. He doesn't know just where he stands nor where his business stands; he's letting it slide.

"In his territory he ought to know every prospect and every piano chance; but does he? We would all be doing a great deal more business if dealers would rise to their responsibilities and do their work actively and systematically.

"We are going to have a fine exhibit at the convention—a new line of Art models and Art designs in both the Milton and the Davenport & Tracy."

Mr. Forshay believes that the South is approaching a period of the most wonderful development—a land greatly favored by climate over the bleak North. Manufacturing of the textiles has gone South largely of late years, and that and the oil and iron industries is but a beginning in the opinion of this keenly-observant New Yorker.

Allen Back from the South.

George W. Allen, president of the Milton Piano Co., has just returned from a trip into Georgia, Florida and to Cuba. He brought back cheerful reports of a much livelier outlook in several sections of the South.

Daylight Saving Time in New York.

Daylight saving time became operative at 2 a. m. Sunday, April 29, in New York city and other communities which have adopted the custom. The clock was set ahead one hour.

Outlook in New Jersey.

Presto-Times Eastern correspondent had as seat-mate on Sunday of this week from Philadelphia to New Brunswick, N. J., a farmer, whose broad, flat acres lie near Vineland, N. J. He was a real "dirt" farmer, not the debutante kind whose agricultural experiences are limited to backyard gardens, so it was enlightening to listen to him. He reeled off the most

amazing figures of New Jersey's crop possibilities, and every big item in the rich resources naturally suggested possibilities of piano sales. Of course, the temptation was to ask a few leading questions.

"How about the piano and the radio?"

"I'm glad you asked me that question," he said. "We had both piano and radio in our home, but lately we discarded the radio—disposed of it—because we found the children were neglecting their piano lessons and listening to the radio. Wife and I found there was only one thing to do in order to save our children from being dummies at the piano—get rid of the radio, and we did that."

There will be plenty of chances to sell pianos to the agriculturists of New Jersey this year. Fruit crop in peaches and apples will be light, however, on account of freak weather in December and again this spring, the Vineland farmer said.

Tonk Piano Used

The Tonk piano made by William Tonk & Bros. Inc., New York, is used by Bernie Cummins and his orchestra, now playing at the Biltmore Hotel in that city. In addition to being a good conductor, Mr. Cummins also understands the value of timely advertising for his programs. An announcement this week tells of the presentation by the orchestra of its recent recordings for Brunswick records.

The Celco Corp. Headquarters.

It is possible the temporary headquarters in New York of the Celco Corp., Norwalk, O., at Room 3036, Salmon Tower Building, 11 West 42nd street, will be changed this week for permanent ones. "Our location will be somewhere in the 42nd street district, where we will carry a full line of A. B. Chase, Emerson and Lindeman & Son pianos," said J. H. Shale, president of the corporation, this week.

Memorial for I. E. Bretzfelder.

The Piano Club of New York has been presented with a Westminster chimes clock in mahogany by Mrs. I. E. Bretzfelder, widow of I. E. Bretzfelder, president of Krakauer Bros., who was one of the organizers of the club and foremost in its activities up to the time of his death. On the clock is a plate bearing this inscription: "In memory of the many pleasant hours enjoyed at the Piano Club by I. E. Bretzfelder."

RICHARD L. ATKINS DIES.

Richard L. Atkins, aged 94, who manufactured melodeons in Cincinnati in the early '50's, died last week at his home at 4903 Padock avenue.

Mr. Atkins first manufactured melodeons on Fifth street, between Main and Syracuse streets, in the early '50's. Later the shop was moved to Fourth street, opposite the old Pike's Opera House. Here a retail business also was done under the name of the C. M. Murch Piano Company. The firm name later was changed to R. L. Atkins & Co., and continued an active unit in the music business in Cincinnati until Mr. Atkins retired in 1883.

MOVES IN SEYMOUR, IND.

A formal opening of the new store of the Estel H. Hancock Music & Radio Company, Seymour, Ind., was held last week. The firm was established in 1914, representing the Packard Piano Co.'s line, and has continued the agency to the present time. Gulbransen registering pianos have been added to the line as well as the Brunswick phonograph and records. A full line of sheet music is carried at the new store.

CLOSES DISCUSSION ON COMMISSIONS

Correspondent Who Claimed Anonymity in Replying to Elmer Armstrong on the Subject of Remuneration for Piano Salesmen Fires Parting Shot.

The final contribution of the anonymous correspondent to discussion on the fairness or otherwise of a commission plan of recompensing salesmen in piano, phonograph and radio deals is printed herewith. It is at once a direct reply to the letter of Mr. Armstrong printed in Presto-Times of April 21 and a summing up of his arguments.

For legitimate reasons the correspondent claims the privilege of anonymity, and Mr. Armstrong accepted them. He is a music dealer in a large way, who has ably managed one of the oldest music businesses in one of the largest cities in the country, and in that way presented arguments based on experiences. The "parting shot" follows:

THE PARTING SHOT.

Just as a parting shot, here are a few thoughts engendered in my mind when I read the article on page 11, April 21st issue, headed "No Wisdom in Commission Plan." In that article our energetic friend, Mr. Armstrong, is talking a different language than that I use.

The writer's advocacy of the ten-eight commission plan was (as heretofore stated) and is for use in the larger centers of population, by reputable, reliable piano dealers, who sell only nationally-known, nationally-priced pianos, phonographs and radios, and who back up their organizations with all possible selling aids. I am talking of the best of the two kinds of dealers he mentions. He is illustrating his points with the opposite dealer.

Any firm firing loyal, hard-working salesmen after one week's or one month's employment for no further reason than that they didn't make a sale is not in my opinion a reputable, reliable firm. At \$35 a week (his illustration) my firm will keep a loyal, hard-working salesman on the payroll for quite a few months, even if he doesn't make a sale. Reputable, reliable firms have no conflicts nor serious misunderstandings on commissions due, nor selfish strife among the salesmen. My firm maintains a prospect system that absolutely protects both salesmen and firm fairly.

Cites Experience.

Prior to our adoption of the commission plan we remunerated with salary, plus bonus and expense. In 90-odd per cent of the cases we found our "salesman percentage cost" always running beyond 10 per cent—8 per cent, so much so that we were profiting very little by their employment, or were actually losing money by employing their services. Since adopting the commission plan, which allowed the salesman the highest share of our share (mark up) of the possible gross percentage profit on a sale, we have all had more peace of mind and all have earned more.

As our firm charges off the weekly drawing account each week as a salary and considers excess earnings over the drawing account as EXTRA REMUNERATION, our salesmen are never in debt to the firm. Each salesman's services have been paid for every Monday. Our plan holds a salesman's maximum cost to his drawing account, unless he has the ability to earn more. In that event, he gets his "excess earnings" in cash every 10th day of the month.

Gate for Time-Killers.

Likewise our plan automatically discontinues the employment of unsuccessful salesmen. There is more incentive to a salesman on our plan to make 10 per cent—8 per cent excess earnings and commission over his drawing account than the usual paltry 1 per cent, 2 per cent or 3 per cent bonus.

Retail piano salesmen have not been driven from the ranks of the service in the sale of pianos "LARGELY THROUGH THE COMMISSION METHODS," as Mr. Armstrong states. They have voluntarily, with wide open eyes, deserted the piano industry to sell automobiles, electric ice boxes, real estate, etc., etc., on commission—and on the same or similar commission that is paid on pianos.

I know "the army in the piano field is depleted" largely by desertions, and the cause is that dealers and salesmen have been foolishly throwing away or wasting their profits, instead of keeping them for the benefit of the family.

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