

**Working Lives: A Guide to the Records of the New York State  
Factory Investigating Commission in the New York State  
Archives and Records Administration**

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## Introduction

The deaths of 145 employees of the Triangle Waist Company during a fire in the factory stunned New Yorkers and the nation. Public concern mounted as investigations revealed the locked stairwells, crowded conditions, and unsafe environment in which the employees, predominantly women, worked and subsequently died. The New York State Legislature responded by establishing the Factory Investigating Commission to study working conditions in a variety of industries and businesses.

The records of the Factory Investigating Commission provide researchers with a detailed view of early twentieth century working life. The majority of records are from the Wage Investigation and include information on thousands of individual workers' salaries, work hours, personal expenses, and family finances. They also reflect working conditions as reported by the investigators who visited various factories and businesses. Administrative records reflect the views of government agencies, businessmen, civic groups, and subject experts on working condition problems and potential solutions.

The records of the Factory Investigating Commission are part of the holdings of the New York State Archives. The Commission's records consist of over twenty series, totalling more than forty cubic feet. Most of these records have been microfilmed and the microfilm copies are available on inter-library loan. They are also available for purchase at cost of duplication. Microfilming of selected records and preparation of this Guide were supported in part by a grant from the National Endowment for the Humanities.

This finding aid provides a general history of the Factory Investigating Commission, describing the range of issues it studied, although surviving records are primarily from the Wage Investigation. Descriptions of each record series generated by the Commission are arranged in groups by general type or subject of the records. Finally, a list is provided of those record series which have been microfilmed and are therefore available on inter-library loan or for purchase.

The records of the Factory Investigating Commission are available to researchers at the State Archives. Research Assistance provides further information about the content or use of these or other State Archives holdings.

This finding aid was prepared by Elisabeth A. Golding, Senior Archivist.

## **History of the Factory Investigation Committee**

A fire at the Triangle Waist Company shirt factory on March 25, 1911 killed 146 employees, mostly women and girls. The public reacted with shock, and an immediate local investigation revealed the prevalence of unsafe and unhealthy conditions in factories, including lack of fire prevention measures or escapes, and inadequate sanitary conditions. The results of this investigation and public pressure following the Triangle fire convinced the Legislature that a full-scale investigation was warranted.

In response, the Legislature established the Factory Investigating Commission (Laws of 1911, Chapter 561). The President of the Senate, Speaker of the Assembly, and Governor appointed the nine-member Commission to study issues related to the health and safety of workers, the condition of the buildings in which they worked, and existing and additional necessary laws and ordinances. Commissioners included Senator Robert F. Wagner (Chair), Assemblyman Alfred E. Smith (Vice- Chair), and American Federation of Labor President Samuel Gompers.

Between 1911 and 1915 the Legislature charged the Commission with investigating factory sanitary and safety conditions, wages, and other related issues such as living conditions of workers. The Commission appointed directors for each investigation, and field agents were hired to carry out on-site inspections of factories and other work sites.

### ***Health and Safety Investigation***

Investigation of factory conditions began in the fall of 1911. The Commission selected Dr. George M. Price to direct the sanitation investigation. In September 1911, Price organized a group of field workers to carry out inspections. The Commission also chose H.F.J. Porter to direct field investigations related to fire hazards. While the inspections were being carried out, members of the Commission met in occasional Executive Sessions to make further plans for the investigation, receive reports of investigators, and agree on recommendations.

Commission staff issued questionnaires to businessmen, professionals, labor leaders, local government officials, engineers, fire department officers, and other individuals asking for suggestions for improving the conditions of and the laws and ordinances regarding manufacturing. The Commission solicited and received from such persons detailed comments concerning the issues under study.

Beginning in October 1911, the Commission conducted public hearings in New York, Buffalo, Rochester, Syracuse, Utica, Schenectady, and Troy, taking testimony from hundreds of city and state officials, manufacturers, labor leaders, and working men, women, and children. Information gathered from these hearings was used along with that collected through field investigations, questionnaires, and correspondence to draw conclusions about the conditions under which manufacturing was carried out and to develop recommendations to improve conditions. The Commission continued to hold hearings on issues under investigation until January 1915.

Information collected by the Commission and staff was compiled into several reports, including the two main reports, "The Fire Hazard in Factory Buildings" and "Sanitation of Factories", published in the Preliminary Report of the Factory Investigating Commission (1912). To improve sanitary conditions, the Commission's report to the Legislature recommended registration of all factories with the Department of Labor, licensing of all food manufacturers, medical examinations of food workers, medical supervision in dangerous trades, and better eating, washing, and toilet facilities. To lessen the fire hazard, the Commission recommended an increase in stairwells and exits, installation of fire walls, fireproof construction, prohibition of smoking in factories, fire extinguishers, alarm systems, and automatic sprinklers. The Commission's other reports summarized investigations of and made recommendations concerning women factory workers, child labor in tenements, and occupational diseases such as lead and arsenic poisoning.

### ***Investigations of 1912 and 1913***

Through laws in 1912 (Chapter 21) and 1913 (Chapter 137), the Legislature provided for a continuation of the Commission's work. The Commission proceeded with its investigation of sanitary conditions and was assisted in its study of the fire hazard by Francis Perkins, then Executive Secretary of the New York Committee on Safety. Perkins wrote a report on the fire hazard in mercantile establishments for the Commission.

The Commission also began several in-depth studies. Investigators looked into child labor, including health and safety questions, schooling, and enforcement of the labor and education laws. Another study concerned night work of women, some of whom were found to have worked as many as 20 hours in a 24-hour period. The Commission also initiated a separate study of hours worked and physical conditions in department stores.

From its study of the deficiencies in the Labor Law, the Commission concluded the entire law needed reworking and that the Department of Labor should be reorganized. The Commission recommended creation of a Bureau of Inspection to centralize inspection work, a Division of Industrial Hygiene, and a Section of Medical Inspection. In 1913, a number of the Commission's recommendations became law, including reorganization of the Department of Labor, prohibition of night work for women, and fire prevention, safety, and health regulations.

Work continued through 1913 on: investigation of fire, safety, and health conditions; the proposed recodification of the Labor Law; a study of duplicative building inspection functions; and other studies such as one concerning prison contract labor in shirt manufacturing. The Commission's work resulted in more legislation in 1914, including laws relating to sanitary conditions and women and children's working hours in stores.

### ***The General Wage Investigation***

The legislation renewing the Commission in 1913 also presented it with a new charge: to study wages in all industries and recommend as to the advisability of establishing minimum wage or

other wage legislation. This became the Commission's most ambitious project, the General Wage Investigation.

In the summer of 1913, Howard B. Woolston and Albert H.N. Baron were appointed Director and Assistant Director of the wage investigation. Realizing that a complete study of all industries would be impossible in the time allotted, the Commission decided to study a few industries in depth and to study several others to a limited extent. As a result of the preliminary study of department stores the previous winter, the Commission chose to study the mercantile industry in depth. They also chose the confectionery, paper box, and shirt industries. These industries were characterized by a large proportion of women workers, low pay, and a large number of workers in relatively few establishments throughout the state (a large number of establishments would make field investigations more difficult). Limited studies were also done on a number of industries including silk mills, sugar refineries, umbrella factories, longshoring, dress pattern shops, and button factories.

A staff of field agents, statisticians, and tabulators was hired, and the field investigation began September 15, 1913 in New York City. Field agents compiled information on weekly and annual earnings from each firm's records; collected data cards from and interviewed employees for individual background and work data; and interviewed employers for general business information.

The New York City investigation continued through February 15, 1914. When the Commission was authorized to continue its work for another year (Laws of 1914, Chapter 110), field agents began a four month investigation of upstate firms. Once again the Commission sent out questionnaires and letters, this time seeking opinions on minimum wage legislation including recommended types of legislation, how it might be administered, what effects it might have, and what other government action might be taken. The Commission also continued to hold hearings on these issues through January 1915.

The Commission issued its final report in February 1915. While the wage investigation covered all workers, the findings presented in the report concerned mainly women and minors. The report maintained that wage legislation for men had generally been declared unconstitutional and that far more women than men received wages low enough to merit protective legislation. The report concluded that many women and minors received too low a wage to maintain a decent standard of living and recommended legislation to create a Wage Commission which would in turn establish Wage Boards to determine the amount of wage necessary for women and minor workers.

The Commission's recommendations for minimum wage legislation were not enacted in law, nor was its proposed recodification of the Labor Law. In fact, wage legislation was not enacted until 1933. However, the Commission was directly responsible for the passage of a number of laws, including laws concerning physical examination of children before authorizing their employment; prohibition of employment of children under age 14 in canneries or tenements; compulsory education; manufacturing in tenements; working hours for women and children; fire alarms and fire drills; automatic sprinklers; fire prevention methods; fire escapes and exits;

sanitary eating, washing, and toilet facilities; cleanliness, lighting, and ventilation in the workplace; and building inspections.

The work of the Factory Investigating Commission brought the inadequate conditions in which thousands of workers labored to the attention of the public and the government. The Commission's work represented a new level of government involvement in, and regulation of, labor conditions. Their reports and recommendations resulted in legislation raising standards for health and safety conditions, ultimately affecting all workers throughout the state.

## Description of Records

### ***General Administrative Records***

#### **A3019. Correspondence of the Commission, 1912-1916, bulk 1913-1915. 3 cubic feet.**

Arrangement: Chronological within record type.

This series consists of incoming and outgoing letters, memoranda, and telegrams relating to the Commission's administrative activities, plans for and methodology of investigations, and proposed solutions to the problems under investigation. Correspondents include government agencies, businessmen and organizations, employee and civic groups, and various subject experts. Correspondence concerns: fire prevention and fire exits; building inspections; Labor Law violations; methods of determining workers' "real earning capacity," i.e. value added to the product by their labor; and opinions of proprietors in states with minimum wage laws on the value of such laws and their effect on business and employees.

Available on microfilm.

#### **A3018. Financial Records of the Commission, 1912-1914. 2 cubic feet. (7 volumes)**

Arrangement: By record type (e.g. vouchers, ledgers), then chronological.

This series contains vouchers, typed financial statements, and ledgers, recording expenses of the Commission for: salaries; office supplies; rent; and travel. The records generally provide information on: payment date; to whom paid; purpose of payment; and amount paid. Two of the ledgers also provide lists of employees' names, addresses, and phone numbers.

Available on microfilm.

#### **A3022. Press Releases Concerning Commission Hearings or Statements, 1914-1915. .1 cubic foot.**

These press releases, mostly undated, announce hearings on: proposed Labor Law recodification-  
-manufacturers, real estate owners, and workers were invited to testify; fire hazards in stores; and wage legislation. Some press releases are statements of the Commission's Chief Counsel Abram I. Elkus and Chairman Robert F. Wagner concerning: the difficulty and necessity of enforcing



laws relating to factories and stores; and owners' complaints of multiple building inspections by various agencies (e.g. Fire Department, Building Department, Health Department).

Available on microfilm.

**A3023. Press Clippings Concerning Commission Activities, 1911, 1913-1914. .1 cubic foot.**

Arrangement: Chronological.

These clippings from news and trade publications concern: scheduled hearings; hearings held in Schenectady, Troy, Syracuse, Rochester, and Buffalo, often quoting or summarizing testimony given at the hearings; witnesses testifying at the hearings; descriptions of the Commission's investigation of factory and store health and safety conditions, wages, and cost of living; and descriptions of actual conditions in factories and stores relating to danger from unguarded machinery, inadequate fire escapes and fire prevention, inadequate sanitation, ventilation, and lighting, low wages, child labor, and night work.

Available on microfilm.

## ***General Wage Investigation Records***

### **A3011. Wage Investigation Planning and Research Files, 1913- 1914. 1.8 cubic feet.**

Arrangement: By topic or activity.

These files contain correspondence, memoranda, minutes of staff meetings, staff reports, questionnaires and responses, research notes and rough statistical tables, and draft copies of forms relating to the Wage Investigation. The files include minutes of staff planning meetings; summary reports on staff work; reports on interviews with employers and employees; lists of firms investigated; statistical data compiled from employee questionnaires; reports of the Commission counsel; announcements and agendas for public hearings; transcripts of portions of hearings (no dates or locations given); drafts of data collection card forms and samples of forms used in similar investigations in other states; blank job application forms from various businesses; correspondence regarding plans for the investigation; research notes and reports for general studies of wages and working conditions in wood, pipe, and umbrella manufacturing industries, which were not part of the in-depth investigation; and responses to questionnaires sent to labor representatives, economists, lawyers, and other professionals.

Available on microfilm.

### **A3007. Establishment Survey Assignment Cards, 1913-1914. .1 cubic foot. (ca. 750 cards)**

Arrangement: By industry, then by location, then alphabetical by firm name.

Staff recorded their appointments to conduct surveys on these cards. The cards have information on: owner's name; establishment name; address; establishment code number; date of scheduled visit (occasionally marked cancelled, noting reason); and agent assigned.

Finding aids: List of establishments by number.

### **A3008. Staff Daily Work Reports, 1913-1914. .3 cubic foot. (ca. 1400 cards)**

Arrangement: Roughly alphabetical by last name, then reverse chronological order.

Field and office staff used these cards to report: establishment visits (if applicable); kind of work done; and expenses (e.g. postage, carfare).

Available on microfilm.

## **A3010. Lists of Businesses, Occupations, and Code Numbers Used in the Wage Investigation, ca. 1913-1914. .1 cubic foot.**

Arrangement: Arranged roughly by type of business or type of occupation.

These are handwritten and typed lists of establishments and occupations. Establishment lists provide: code number; name; address or city; and number of various card forms completed or which card forms were completed for each establishment. Occupation lists provide: industry (e.g. department stores); general type of work (e.g. office, stock and sales); occupations under each general type of work (e.g. under office: stenographer, bookkeeper, etc.); and sometimes occupation code numbers (added to Employee Background and Wage Data Cards, forms #2 and #2A, series A3000, General Wage Investigation Data Cards). These notes provide agents with information on the recording and coding of business establishments and occupations. The series also contains a report on candy manufacturing work done by men or women and the wages paid for each type of work.

## **A3000. General Wage Investigation Data Cards, 1912-1914. 14 cubic feet. (ca. 70,000 cards)**

Arrangement: By subseries according to type of data card. Most subseries are arranged numerically by business establishment identification number.

Field agents interviewed employees and employers and consulted company records to compile information entered on one or more of twelve card forms. According to Commission records, over 200,000 data cards were filled out. Of these, only about 70,000 remain. Most of the cards contain information relating to New York City area factory employees; relatively few data cards remain from outside the City.

The cards are arranged in seven subseries, each of which is briefly described below. Additional information about the General Wage Investigation, including a detailed description of how the cards were used to compile and collate data into statistical reports, is contained in the Fourth Report of the Factory Investigating Commission, Volume II, Appendix IV: Report of the Wage Investigation, pages 1-50.

### **Subseries 1. Employee Background Cards, 1913-1914. ca. 6,700 cards.**

Arrangement: By business establishment identification number.

These cards (designated form #1 and form #1A) contain information on an individual employee's personal background, work experience, and housing arrangements. Form #1 was used in New York City. Form #1A, revised to provide more specific information on housing arrangements, was used upstate. Although 87,011 cards were originally compiled, only about 6,700 remain. Most of the extant cards relate to New York City employees.

### **Subseries 2. Employee Background and Wage Data Cards, 1913- 1914. ca. 50,000 cards.**

Arrangement: By business establishment identification number.

Field agents compiled employee background data or transferred all background information from forms #1 and #1A to these cards (which were designated forms #2 and #2A) and then used company payroll records to enter each employee's pay rate, number of hours worked weekly, and total weekly earnings. As in subseries 1, forms #2 and #2A differed in the specificity of information about housing arrangements in New York City or upstate areas. Only about 50,000 cards remain from among 104,516 originally compiled. Most of the extant cards relate to New York City employees.

**Subseries 3. Individual Annual Earnings Cards, 1912. ca. 2,400 cards.**

Arrangement: By business establishment number, then by employee number.

These cards (form #5) contain the following information compiled by agents from company payroll records: employee's occupation; pay rate; days and hours worked weekly; weeks worked per year; total annual earnings; and average weekly earnings. Of 6,172 cards originally compiled for selected employees in all four industries, only 2,400 remain from New York City confectionery factories.

**Subseries 4. Individual Estimated Annual Earnings Cards, 1912- 1914. ca. 2,900 cards.**

Arrangement: By business establishment number.

These cards (form #7) were used to compile employee wage information for companies lacking adequate payroll records to fill out Individual Annual Earnings Cards. Agents checked off the weeks during a year when a person was employed, and then entered the pay rate and earnings for the first and last weeks. Of 6,900 cards originally completed, only about 2,900 remain, primarily from New York City confectionery and paper box factories.

**Subseries 5. Individual Employment and Financial History Cards, 1913-1914. ca. 5,100 cards.**

Arrangement: By type of card (employment history and financial history) and then by industry.

These cards were filled out by agents who interviewed a sample of employees selected to represent all workers in certain branches in an industry or to represent all workers of a certain age group or wage level in each industry. Two cards were filled out for each selected employee. The first card (form #8, Employment History Card) contains information on work history and on work hours and wages. The second card (form #9, Financial History Card) contains information about job training, personal expenses, and personal and family income sources. Together, the two cards were used to compile a detailed description of the financial circumstances of selected employee groups. All cards in this group have survived.

**Subseries 6. Cards Distributed to Clients by Social Welfare Agencies, 1913-1914. 87 forms (cards and paper forms).**

Arrangement: By social welfare agency.

The Commission asked agencies such as settlement houses, church organizations, schools, and consumer league offices to assist in collecting data. These agencies distributed a card (form #10) to their clients or members who were employed by one of the four industries. The cards contain entries for information about work history, wages, and personal and family income and expenses. Although thousands of forms were distributed, so few were returned that the Commission decided not to use the data.

**Subseries 7. Business Establishment Profile Cards, 1912-1914. ca. 3,800 cards.**

Arrangement: By business establishment identification number.

Agents used four card forms to record information about each business establishment that was a subject of the investigation. The cards for each business establishment were kept together to provide a complete profile of the site. The information entered on each card was as follows:

- a. Wage Classification Cards (Form #3): rates of pay for each occupation in the firm
- b. Hours of Work Cards (Form #4): information on working hours for each occupation or department in the firm
- c. Wages and Number of Employees Cards (Form #6): weekly averages and totals of wages paid to all employees for one year
- d. Supplemental Cards (Form #12): information or comments gathered from interviews with employers concerning:
  - quality of employer's record keeping
  - products manufactured
  - rate of employee turnover
  - number of male and female employees and salary ranges
  - rates of pay by occupation
  - bonus and promotion practices
  - working conditions
  - employer's cooperation in investigation
  - lists of ephemera collected at the establishment: report forms, time cards, application forms, rule books, brochures, catalogs

Profile cards exist for almost all of the establishments visited. Often there are only two or three of the four card forms for a business establishment, but the Supplemental Cards exist for most establishments.

Indexes: List of establishments by number.

Available on microfilm.

### **A3014. Establishment Financial Analysis Reports for the Wage Investigation, 1912-1913. .2 cubic foot.**

Arrangement: By industry, then alphabetical by establishment name.

Field agents prepared financial statements for a number of establishments. The reports, based on information obtained by discussions with company representatives and studies of company records, were used to help determine whether industries were able to increase wages. Financial statements contain information on: gross revenue; manufacturing costs; selling expenses; other expenses; and net profit. Some reports include schedules providing details on: net sales; miscellaneous earnings (e.g. interest income); labor costs; other manufacturing costs; selling expenses; office expenses; and other expenses. Transmittal letters from field agents to the Commission contain additional information on: name of firm; availability and sources of information; and comments on the accuracy of figures supplied by the firm.

Available on microfilm.

### **A3009. Statistical Tables Compiled for Report on Wage Investigation, 1914. 13 cubic feet.**

These are tables compiled from data cards collected by field agents providing statistical information on employees in various firms or industries studied in the Wage Investigation. Each table provides employee statistics compiled according to various combinations of the following variables: wages, age, sex, years worked for wages, years worked in trade, years worked in firm, if native or foreign-born, occupation, days and hours worked, marital status, and living arrangements (e.g. if boarding, retired, private home). Sample blanks of these tables, some numbered differently, are published in Fourth Report of the Factory Investigating Commission, Vol. II, pp. 29-46 (1915).

### **A3032. Charts, Graphs, and Tables Prepared for Publication in the Commission's Reports, 1913-1914. 4 cubic feet.**

Arrangement: Arranged by the order items appear in published reports.

Manuscript worksheets, mockups, and proofs provide statistics and trends in wages, hours, and employment practices in industries studied by the Commission. These were prepared for, and most were published in, either the Third Report of the Factory Investigating Commission (1914) or the Fourth Report of the Factory Investigating Commission (1915).

The series includes charts, graphs, and tables concerning the mercantile, shirt, paper box, confectionery, and millinery industries; mockups of charts published in "The Relation of Irregular Employment to the Living Wage for Women" in Volume II of the Fourth Report; and tables 53-228 (p. 757-1030) of the statistical tables published in Volume III (Appendix V) of the Fourth Report.

**A3030. Notes and Tables for a Study on "Dependence and Wages," 1914. .2 cubic foot.**

These records document the preparation of a report on the relationship between wages and dependence on charity. The Charity Organization Society, the Association for Improving the Condition of the Poor, the United Hebrew Charities (all in Manhattan), and the Brooklyn Bureau of Charities transcribed case file records created from January through March 1914 onto cards (Form #11; no original cards extant) supplied by the Commission.

This series contains the following records created using those data cards: manuscript draft of "Dependence and Wages" discussing method of investigation and significant data in the statistical tables drawn from the data cards; rough notes outlining variables and data on the statistical tables; and statistical tables (drafts and final manuscripts) detailing the relationship of such variables as gender, occupation, size of family, number of wage earners per family, weekly income when family takes in boarders, etc. Apparently no final report was produced, and the study was not discussed in the Commission's published reports.

## ***Records Relating to Other Investigations and Issues***

### **A3026. Organizational and Planning Files Concerning Advisory Committees on the Proposed Labor Law Recodification, 1907-1914. 1 cubic foot.**

Arrangement: Rough chronological order.

This series contains correspondence, memoranda, notes, and printed material concerning the New York City and Upstate Advisory Committees on Recodification of the Labor Law. The series contains: correspondence and memoranda regarding suggested committee members; lists of committee members, some by sub-committee; lists of members planning to attend or be absent from meetings; lists of persons to receive proposed recodification; lists of additions, deletions, and rewording of the Labor Law relating to health and safety of buildings, especially fire hazards, work hours and breaks for meals, and child labor; and extracts from reports on night work of women. The Commission appointed the two committees to obtain views and suggestions of representative persons from all sections of the state on the Commission's proposed recodification of the Labor Law.

Proposed recodification, summary of committee work, and list of committee members are published in Fourth Report of the Factory Investigating Commission, Volume I, 1915.

Available on microfilm.

### **A3016. Cost of Living Report, Draft, and Background Notes, 1914. 0.5 cubic foot.**

This series contains a draft of a "Report on the Cost of Living" and notes used in preparing the report. The report, by Frank Hatch Streightoff of DePauw University, has sections on:

- cost of living to single women, including information on homes of factory workers in New York City; board and lodging costs; the importance of savings; availability of spending money for "incidental expenses" such as health care, amusements, and night school; low wages and slow advancement; cost of living estimates from other states; and cost of living estimates prepared by social workers
- cost of living to single men, including information on cost of living estimates prepared by social workers and cost of room and board
- cost of living for a family (defined as a working father, a mother keeping house, and three unemployed children) including information on food prices and nutritional standards; cost of a house; type of housing available in New York City, Buffalo, Syracuse, and Troy; fuel and light costs; clothing costs; and carfare, insurance, health, furnishings, education, recreation, and other costs
- workers' living conditions, standards, and apartment floor plans
- statistical tables on earnings and expenditures



The series also contains typed notes from interviews with workers, mostly women, used as background material for various sections of the report. The notes generally provide information on cost of living, living arrangements, and wages of individuals.

This report was published in the Fourth Report of the Factory Investigating Commission, Volume IV (1915). The published report differs somewhat in the numbering of pages and appendixes.

Indexes: Table of contents in Fourth Report of the Factory Investigating Commission, Vol. IV, Appendix VII (1915).

Available on microfilm.

### **A3028. Correspondence, Drafts, and Printed Material Related to Commission Investigation of Fire Hazards in Stores, 1914. 0.1 cubic foot.**

These reports concern the Commission's preparation of proposals and reports on fire hazards in stores. The series contains: letters answering questionnaires on fire safety precautions in stores; memos regarding construction and maintenance procedures to reduce the risk of fire; lists of persons who would or would not attend a hearing on the fire hazard; lists of stores inspected and store representatives seen; printed floor plans of the Binghamton Clothing Company (in New York City) (published in Third Report of the Factory Investigating Commission, 1914); printed Senate bill to amend the Labor Law to require certain fire safety precautions; letters between the commission, architects, door manufacturers, and store proprietors regarding "panic-proof revolving doors"; Subcommittee on Definitions report on specifications for fireproof building construction; description and blueprints for "Dunne's Fire Tower" fire escape; printed general specifications for factory fire alarms, prepared by the New York State Industrial Board; and typed outline of part of the "Maintenance" section of Frances Perkins' published report on fire hazards and safety devices and exits (or lack of) in store restaurants, kitchens, factories, and workrooms. Available on microfilm.

### **A3029. Glass Plate Negatives and Photographic Prints of Factory and Housing Conditions, 1911-1912. 0.5 cubic foot.**

These are mostly views of conditions inside factories, usually showing workers. Views of chemical, food, glass, clothing, and other industries illustrate conditions such as:

- inadequate ventilation or exhaust systems
- dirt and animals contacting food products
- unguarded machinery
- overcrowding of machinery and narrow or obstructed aisles
- young children working
- excessive heat and humidity

- inadequate lighting
- inadequate sanitation and other unhealthy conditions
- structural deficiencies in buildings and other physical dangers

There are also views of workers' houses, working women and their children outside their homes, and exteriors and interiors of workers' apartments. Many of these views were published in the Preliminary Report of the Factory Investigating Commission, Vol. I (1912), Second Report, Vol. II (1913), and Fourth Report, Vol. IV (1915).

The series also includes a typescript "Lists of Photographs, 1911-1912" describing many of the views in this series, others that were published but not included in the series, and some that were not published or included in this series.

Available on microfilm.

### **A3025. Research Files on Contract Prison Labor, 1900-1914. 0.1 cubic foot.**

Arrangement: By record type: correspondence and typed notes and reports; federal publications; state publications; articles and clippings.

This series concerns the prison contract labor system for the manufacture of shoes and shirts in various states, the U.S. as a whole, and other countries. The series contains: letters comparing prison labor to free labor in the shoe industry; answers to questionnaires sent to prisons outside New York State, providing information on number of convicts involved in contract labor, productivity, receipts from prison labor, and convicts' earnings; copies of contracts between manufacturers and prisons; extracts from editorials and statements by public figures; letters to unions and manufacturers urging support for legislation to end the contract prison labor system; reports and notes on contract prison labor policy in various states and individual institutions, and on proposed legislation; reports on hearings on prison labor before U.S. House and Senate subcommittees, some with transcripts of testimony; bill concerning prison labor, and Congressional Record (March 4, 1912) including a debate on the bill; lectures, news clippings, and articles on prison labor in the U.S., France, and Germany, mostly opposing contract prison labor; and a broadside urging people to wear union-made clothing instead of prison-made clothing.

Available on microfilm.

### **A3027. Questionnaires, Drafts, and Printed Material Relating to Commission Proposals to Consolidate Building Inspection Agencies in New York City, 1912- 1914, bulk 1914. 0.1 cubic foot.**

These records concern the Commission's preparation of proposals to consolidate New York City building inspection agencies to reduce the number of inspections necessary. The series contains: draft invitation to a conference on the issue; leaflet of questions on what type of legislation

should be enacted; extracts of answers to a questionnaire regarding the establishment of a separate building inspection agency (the questionnaire and complete answers are published in Preliminary Report of the Factory Investigating Commission, Vol. I, 1912); draft letter arguing against establishing a separate inspection agency; plans and bill proposals to consolidate inspection agencies and minimize the number of inspections necessary; articles on building inspection or construction; and lists of questions, one with answers included, prepared by the New York Society of Architects to ask of the Bureau of Buildings. Early in its investigation of factory working conditions, the Commission became aware of the inadequacies in the system of inspection of buildings. Many of the Commission's recommendations for improvement became law in 1916 (Chapter 503). The Commission's proposals and a summary of its study of building inspections was published in Fourth Report of the Factory Investigating Commission, Volume I (1915).

Available on microfilm.

### **A3017. Background Report on Buffalo Department Stores Employees Strike, 1913. 0.1 cubic foot (1 item)**

Esther Packard, later a Wage Investigation field agent, interviewed strikers and wrote this report. The report deals mainly with wages, although in addition to higher wages, strikers were demanding Saturday night closing of stores, an eight-hour day, and better sanitary conditions. The fifteen- page typescript report has information on: wages paid to various workers; difficulties of individual workers trying to support themselves or their families on low wages; prostitution of many women unable to support themselves or their children on their store pay; and sexual harassment of female employees by store managers. Packard's report recommended that the Factory Investigating Commission hold a public hearing on the issues raised by the strikers. However, there is no evidence from the Commission's records or published reports that a hearing was held concerning these issues.

Available on microfilm.

### **A3024. Proofs of Brief Supporting the Conviction of Jacob Balofsky, 1914. 0.1 cubic foot. (2 items)**

The Commission submitted a brief in the case of *The People of the State of New York v. Jacob Balofsky*. Balofsky, a coat manufacturer, was convicted of a violation of Section 104 of the Labor Law for contracting with a woman to finish coats in a tenement residence. The Commission's brief argued against Balofsky's appeal of his conviction, providing information on: the Commission's legislative mandate regarding manufacturing work conditions in the state; previous legislation relating to manufacturing in tenements; the Commission's investigation into and final report on manufacturing conditions (published in Second Report of the Factory Investigating Commission, Vol. I, 1913); commission findings concerning unsanitary conditions, disease, child labor, and long hours; legislation recommended by the Commission; and legal arguments for upholding the conviction.

The final version of the brief, incorporating editorial changes made on these proofs, was published in Fourth Report of the Factory Investigating Commission, Volume I, 1915.

Available on microfilm.

## **Microfilm**

Some of the most significant records from the Factory Investigating Commission have been microfilmed. Copies are available through inter-library loan or by purchase. Inter-library loan copies may be obtained by providing the requesting library with the following information:

Request copies from:

New York State Archives  
Cultural Education Center Albany, NY 12230

Corporate author: Factory Investigating Commission

Item requested: Cite title exactly as given in Section III, including dates, series number, and reels requested. Use following reel guide to determine relevant numbers.

To purchase copies, contact the New York State Archives directly, citing the same information needed for interlibrary loan.

<b>Reel Number</b>	<b>Title</b>	<b>Numbers</b>
A3019	Correspondence of the Commission	A3019-1 to A3019-5
A3018	Financial Records of the Commission	A3018-1 to A3018-2
A3022	Press Releases Concerning Commission Hearings or Statements	A3022-1
A3023	Press Clippings Concerning Commission Activities	A3023-1
A3011	Wage Investigation Planning and Research Files	A3011-1
A3008	Staff Daily Work Reports	A3008-1
A3000	General Wage Investigation Data Cards	A3000-1 to A3000-22
A3014	Establishment Financial Analysis Reports for the Wage Investigation	A3014-1
A3026	Organizational and Planning Files Concerning Advisory Committees on the Proposed Labor Law Recodification	A3026-1
A3016	Cost of Living Report, Draft, and Background Notes	A3016-1
A3028	Investigation of Fire Hazards in Stores Correspondence, Drafts, and Printed Material Related to Commission	A3028-1
A3029	Glass Plate Negatives and Photographic Prints of	A3029-1

	Factory and Housing Conditions	
A3025	Research Files on Contract Prison Labor	A3025-1
A3027	Questionnaires, Drafts, and Printed Material Relating to Commission Proposals to Consolidate Building Inspection Agencies in New York City	A3027-1
A3017	Background Report on Buffalo Department Stores Employees Strike	A3017-1
A3024	Proofs of Brief Supporting the Conviction of Jacob Balofsky	A3024-1