



New York State Archives

**New York State Commission for the Blind Photographs of
Occupations, Programs, and Activities for the Blind A3309**

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Overview of the Records

Repository:	New York State Archives
Summary:	These photographs and text documenting blind persons in training, at work, and in recreation may have been intended to publicize training and vocational rehabilitation or demonstrate how the working lives and opportunities for the blind had changed. They show blind and visually impaired individuals working in office, sales, and factory settings; walking with seeing-eye dogs or canes; reading Braille; in classroom and training settings; and engaged in recreational activities such as roller skating, swimming, and card playing.
Creator:	New York (State). Commission for the Blind
Title:	Photographs of occupations, programs, and activities for the blind
Quantity:	0.5 cubic feet
Quantity:	approximately 260 photographs
Quantity:	1 35mm microfilm roll(s)
Inclusive Date:	1923-1963
Series:	A3309

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Scope and Content Note

This series consists of black and white photographs, photographic negatives, and a very few pages of textual information documenting blind persons in training programs, work environments, or recreational activities. They may have been intended to publicize the major program areas of the Commission for the Blind, especially training and vocational rehabilitation, or to form a retrospective of changes in the working lives and opportunities of the blind since the 1920s.

The presence of cropping marks on many of the photographs indicates that they were used to illustrate the work of the blind, perhaps in publications or exhibits. Folder headings indicate that the series may have been brought together from a number of sources to publicize the work of the commission, most specifically during the 1939 World's Fair and to celebrate the commission's 50th anniversary in 1963.

There are approximately 260 photographs, some of which are duplicate prints. There are negatives for only some of the prints. The bulk of the photographs are 8 x 10" prints, with a lesser number measuring 5 x 7" (a few of irregular size have apparently been cut down). Many of the photographs bear stamps or manuscript annotations on the verso. Such information may include some or all of the following: name of photographer (studio); name of organization/business credited with the photo; date; captions (such as name of the person pictures or the type of work being done); and details of the operation/production depicted. Several photographs of the 50th anniversary celebration include separate typed captions.

The photographs emphasize blind men and women working, some as home workers and others doing manufacturing or assembly work in factory settings. They depict leather makers, weavers, typists, broom makers, cobblers, last pullers, drill pressers, and Dictaphone operators. Scenes of factory work include blind workers splitting mica in a plant making spark plugs for the U.S. Army, making jigsaw puzzles, stretching curtains, cleaning paint from clamps, stuffing cushions, doing armature work, and making buttons.

Other examples of subjects/events depicted in the series include: guide dogs with their owners in the workplace (there are also several photographs credited to The Seeing Eye of Morristown, New Jersey of guide dogs working outside the workplace); vending stands from locations around the state (sites at government offices or private companies, and some of outdoor sites in the 1920s) shown stocked and set up as well as with the blind vendor posing; teaching/reading braille and the use of braille machines; sale shops managed by the commission to sell articles made by the blind, including shots of the transportation of wares, shop set-up, and purchasers displaying items (including a unique photograph of Helen Keller talking with a deaf-blind mute at a 1940 Christmas sale); blind children, shown in training (navigating streets with canes, eating at table) and at play; and commemoration of the 50th anniversary of the Commission for the Blind, including award presentations by Mrs. Nelson Rockefeller for winners of a poster contest.

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Other Finding Aids

Available at Repository

Folder list is available at the repository.

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Use of Records

Access Restrictions

There are no restrictions regarding access to or use of this material.

Alternate Formats AvailableAlternate Formats Available

Microfilm is available for use at the New York State Archives or through interlibrary loan.

Alternate Formats Available

Items Online

Selected photographs from this series have been digitized and are available in State Archives Digital Collections.

[Photographs of occupations, programs, and activities for the blind, 1923-1963](#)

Access Terms

- Blind children
- Blind--Employment
- Photographic prints
- Morristown (N.J.)
- Assisting blind
- Blind--Services for
- Vocational rehabilitation
- New York (State)
- Guide dogs
- Photographs
- Blind--Education
- Blind--Government policy
- Rehabilitating blind
- People with visual disabilities
- Vending stands
- Negatives (photographs)
- Providing vocational guidance
- New York (State). Department of Social Services
- Rockefeller, Nelson A., Mrs.
- New York (State). Department of Social Welfare
- Keller, Helen, 1880-1968

- **Seeing Eye, Inc.**