

Mission Briefing



Photograph Courtesy Franklin Delano Roosevelt Library

File #1: Women's Fashion Early 1900's



SEARS, ROEBUCK & CO. SEE OUR \$125.00 ORGANS FOR LESS THAN HALF. GUARANTEED 25 YEARS
CHICAGO, ILL.

LADIES' WHITE LAWN WAISTS

Lawn and Linen Waists, smart, dainty and up to the minute. Your money back if they fail to please you.

Sizes 28 to 42 inches bust measure. No longer or smaller sizes can be furnished. See page 181 for instructions on measuring, how to wear, etc.

No. 27800 **SMALL** 4-Button, double-breasted with long, narrow collar, long sleeves, buttoned cuffs, and a long, narrow skirt. \$1.00

No. 27801 **Color, white only.** Fine, double-breasted with long, narrow collar, long sleeves, buttoned cuffs, and a long, narrow skirt. \$1.00

No. 27802 **Color, white only.** Fine, double-breasted with long, narrow collar, long sleeves, buttoned cuffs, and a long, narrow skirt. \$1.00

No. 27803 **Color, white only.** Fine, double-breasted with long, narrow collar, long sleeves, buttoned cuffs, and a long, narrow skirt. \$1.00

No. 27804 **Color, white only.** Fine, double-breasted with long, narrow collar, long sleeves, buttoned cuffs, and a long, narrow skirt. \$1.00

No. 27805 **Color, white only.** Fine, double-breasted with long, narrow collar, long sleeves, buttoned cuffs, and a long, narrow skirt. \$1.00

No. 27806 **Color, white only.** Fine, double-breasted with long, narrow collar, long sleeves, buttoned cuffs, and a long, narrow skirt. \$1.00

No. 27807 **Color, white only.** Fine, double-breasted with long, narrow collar, long sleeves, buttoned cuffs, and a long, narrow skirt. \$1.00

No. 27808 **Color, white only.** Fine, double-breasted with long, narrow collar, long sleeves, buttoned cuffs, and a long, narrow skirt. \$1.00

No. 27809 **Color, white only.** Fine, double-breasted with long, narrow collar, long sleeves, buttoned cuffs, and a long, narrow skirt. \$1.00

No. 27810 **Color, white only.** Fine, double-breasted with long, narrow collar, long sleeves, buttoned cuffs, and a long, narrow skirt. \$1.00

No. 27811 **Color, white only.** Fine, double-breasted with long, narrow collar, long sleeves, buttoned cuffs, and a long, narrow skirt. \$1.00

No. 27812 **Color, white only.** Fine, double-breasted with long, narrow collar, long sleeves, buttoned cuffs, and a long, narrow skirt. \$1.00

A page from the 1909 Sears, Roebuck and Company catalog.

Six Wonderful Waist Values-Your Choice \$1.00

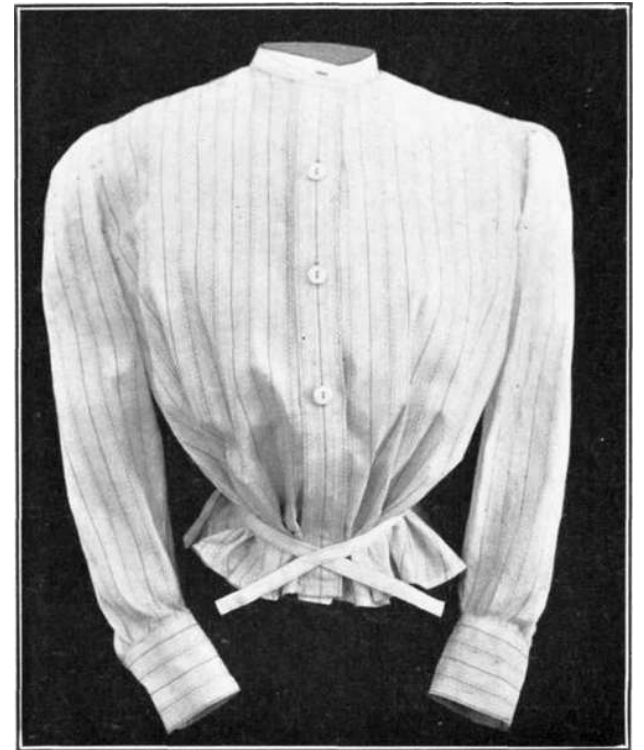
1700A

1702A

1704A

1705A

File #1: Women's Fashion Early 1900's



File #2: Working Conditions

Life in the Shop

By Clara Lemlich

Lemlich, executive board member of Local 25, sparked the 1909 walkout of shirtwaist makers with her call for a strike. This piece was first published in the *New York Evening Journal*, November 28, 1909.

First let me tell you something about the way we work and what we are paid. There are two kinds of work - regular, that is salary work, and piecework. The regular work pays about \$6 a week and the girls have to be at their machines at 7 o'clock in the morning and they stay at them until 8 o'clock at night, with just one-half hour for lunch in that time.

The shops. Well, there is just one row of machines that the daylight ever gets to - that is the front row, nearest the window. The girls at all the other rows of machines back in the shops have to work by gaslight, by day as well as by night. Oh, yes, the shops keep the work going at night, too.

The bosses in the shops are hardly what you would call educated men, and the girls to them are part of the machines they are running. They yell at the girls and they "call them down" even worse than I imagine the Negro slaves were in the South.

There are no dressing rooms for the girls in the shops. They have to hang up their hats and coats - such as they are - on hooks along the walls. Sometimes a girl has a new hat. It never is much to look at because it never costs more than 50 cents, that means that we have gone for weeks on two-cent lunches - dry cake and nothing else.

The shops are unsanitary - that's the word that is generally used, but there ought to be a worse one used. Whenever we tear or damage any of the goods we sew on, or whenever it is found damaged after we are through with it, whether we have done it or not, we are charged for the piece and sometimes for a whole yard of the material.

At the beginning of every slow season, \$2 is deducted from our salaries. We have never been able to find out what this is for.

Leon Stein, ed., *Out of the Sweatshop: The Struggle for Industrial Democracy* (New York: Quadrangle/New Times Book Company, 1977)

File #2: Working Conditions



File #3: The Triangle Walk Out



Turn over to see Union Meeting Account

<http://markmaynard.com/2011/03/remembering-the-triangle-factory-fire/>

File #3: Union Meeting Account, 1909

The Cooper Union Meeting of 1909 From *The Call*, with Samuel Gompers

The Triangle walkout, sparked by grievances common throughout the shirtwaist industry, exploded into a general strike. First published in *The Call*, November 23, 1909.

The decision to strike was reached yesterday at the Cooper Union meeting which was addressed by Samuel Gompers, president of the AFL. [American Federation of Labor]

Gompers was given an ovation when he was introduced by Chairman Benjamin Feigenbaum. The vast crowd rose to its feet and cheered him very enthusiastically for several minutes.

"A man would be less than human," said Gompers, in opening, "if he were not impressed with your reception. I want you men and women not to give all your enthusiasm for a man, no matter who he may be. I would prefer that you put all of your enthusiasm into your union and your cause."

Continuing, Gompers said: "I have never declared a strike in all my life. I have done my share to prevent strikes, but there comes a time when not to strike is but to rivet the chains of slavery upon our wrists." Speaking of the possibility of a general strike, Gompers said: "Yes, Mr. Shirtwaist Manufacturer, it may be inconvenient for you if your boys and girls go out on strike, but there are things of more importance than your convenience and your profit. There are the lives of the boys and girls working in your business."

Appealing to the men and women to stand together, he declared: "If you had an organization before this, it would have stood there as a challenge to the employers who sought to impose such conditions as you bear. This is the time and the opportunity, and I doubt if you let it pass whether it can be created again in five or ten years or a generation. I say, friends, do not enter too hastily but when you can't get the manufacturers to give you what you want, then strike. And when you strike, let the manufacturers know you are on strike! I ask you to stand together," said Gompers in conclusion, "to have faith in yourselves, to be true to your comrades. If you strike, be cool, calm, collected and determined. Let your watchword be: Union and progress, and until then no surrender!"

This was greeted with a storm of applause.

Clara Lemlich, who was badly beaten up by thugs during the strike in the shop of Louis Leiserson, interrupted Jacob Panken just as he started to speak, saying: "I wanted to say a few words." Cries came from all parts of the hall, "Get up on the platform!" Willing hands lifted the frail little girl with flashing black eyes to the stage, and she said simply: "I have listened to all the speakers. I would not have further patience for talk, as I am one of those who feels and suffers from the things pictured. I move that we go on a general strike!"

As the tremulous voice of the girl died away, the audience rose en masse and cheered her to the echo. A grim sea of faces, with high purpose and resolve, they shouted and cheered the declaration of war for living conditions hoarsely.

Leon Stein, ed., *Out of the Sweatshop: The Struggle for Industrial Democracy* (New York: Quadrangle/New Times Book Company, 1977), pp. 68-70

File #4: 9th Floor Testimonial

NINTH

Part One, Chapter Five (excerpt), page 54

The flames invaded the ninth floor with a swiftness that panicked most of the girls but paralyzed others. Pert, pretty Rose Glantz had been one of the first into the dressing room between the door to the Washington Place stairs and the windows facing the University. In high spirits she began singing a popular song, "Every Little Movement Has a Meaning All Its Own."

Some of her friends joined in and when the group finally emerged from the dressing room, giggling and happy, the flames were breaking the first windows on the ninth floor. Laughter turned to screams.

"We didn't have a chance," Rose recalls. "The people on the eighth floor must have seen the fire start and grow. The people on the tenth floor got the warning over the telephone. But with us on the ninth, all of a sudden the fire was all around. The flames were coming in through many of the windows."

Rose ran to the Washington Place stairway door, tried to open it, and when it stayed locked she stood there, screaming. But as the crowd began to thicken, she pushed forward toward the elevator door. "I saw there was no chance at the elevators. I took my scarf and wrapped it around my head and ran to the freight elevator side. I saw the door to the Greene Street stairs was open so I ran through it and down. The fire was in the hall on the eighth floor. I pulled my scarf tighter around my head and ran right through it. It caught fire. I have a scar on my neck."

She made it down the nine floors, meeting the first group of firemen as she neared the freight entrance at street level. There, firemen stopped her from going into the street as they were also doing in the Washington Place lobby with those who had come down from the eighth floor.

Finally, the firemen "escorted us out. I stood in the doorway of a store across the street and watched. I saw one woman jump and get caught on a hook on the sixth floor. I watched a fireman try to save her. I wasn't hysterical any more; I was just numb."

Leon Stein, *The Triangle Fire* (New York: A Carroll & Graf/Quicksilver Book, 1962), pp. 54-55.

File #4: 9th Floor Photograph

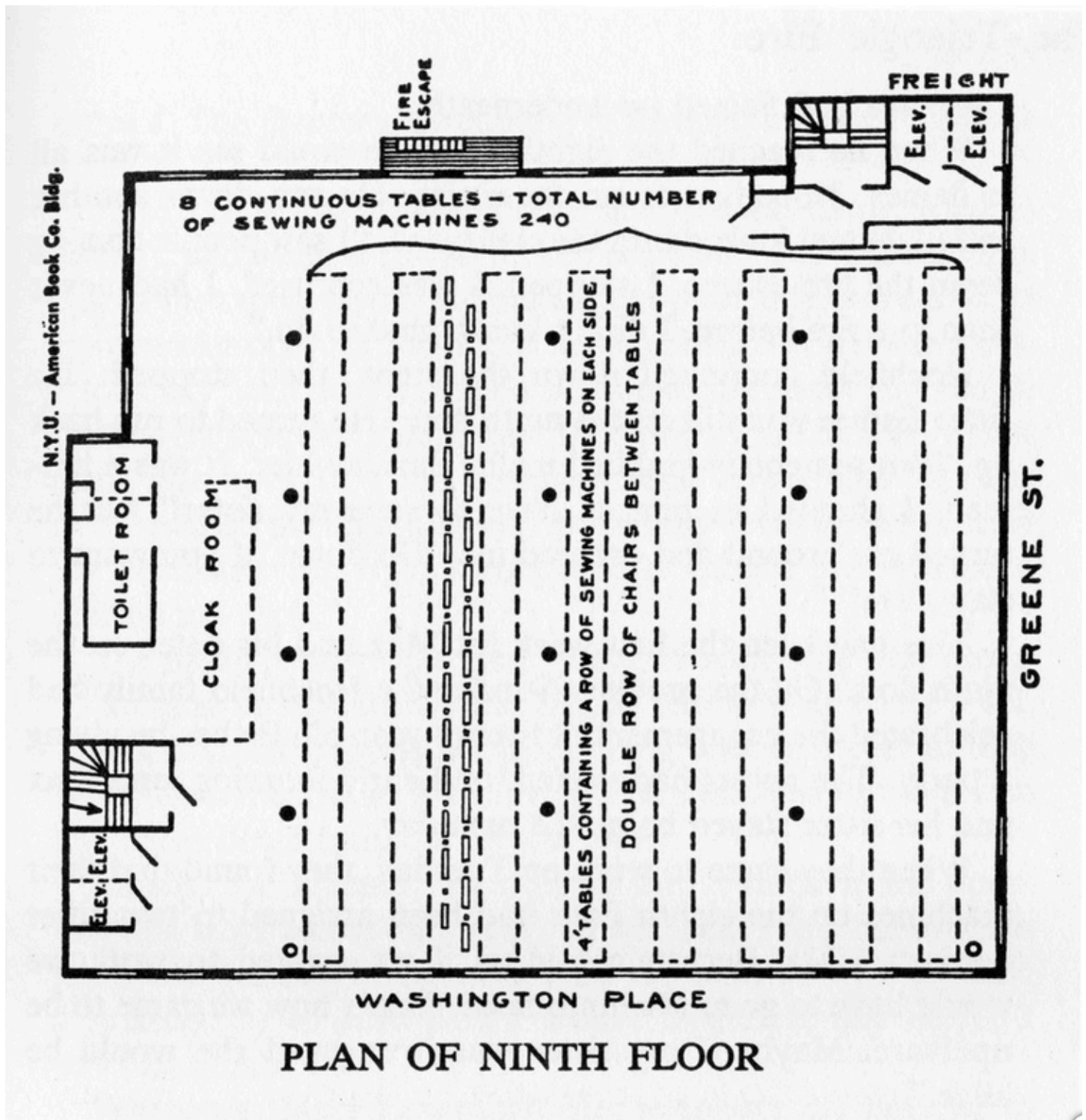


The 240 employees sewing shirtwaists on the ninth floor had their escape blocked by paired sewing machines on 75-foot long tables, back-to-back chairs and work baskets in the aisles. Walking space was so inadequate that many had to waste precious time climbing over tables to get to the stairs, fire escape, elevators and windows that might lead to safety.

Photographer: Brown Brothers, 1911

http://trianglefire.ilr.cornell.edu/primary/photos/illustrations/slideshow.html?image_id=744&sec_id=3#screen

File #5: Floor Plan

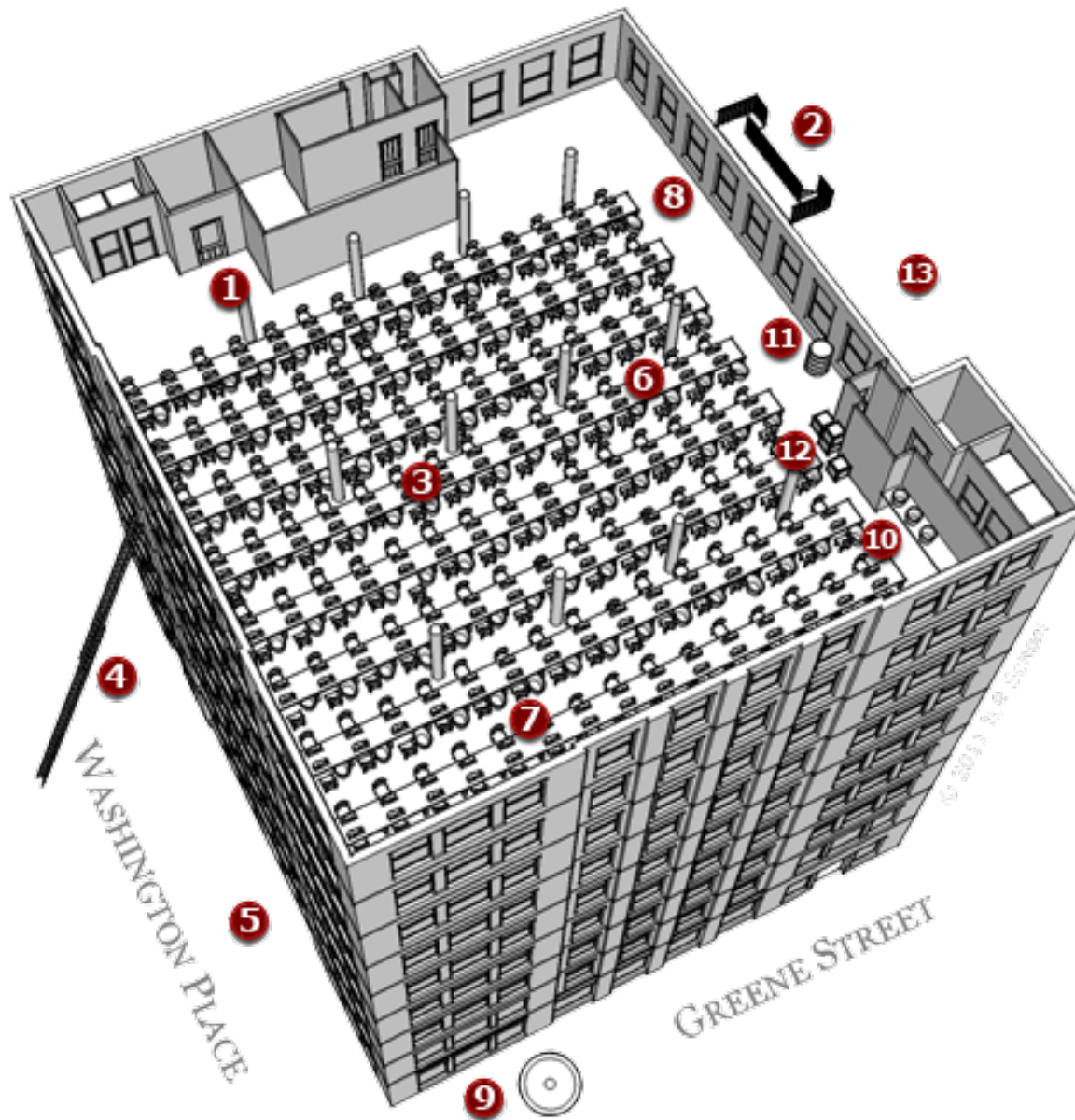


The floor plan of the Asch Building's 9th floor, on the corner of Greene Street and Washington Place, shows the layout of eight, long tables in relation to the cloak room, windows, fire escape, elevators, and stairs. High ceilings included in the space-per-person calculations, allowed owners to employ 240 people in a relatively-small area resulting in the rapid transmission of illness among workers and leaving little space for moving safely through the room.

Photographer: Artist unknown, ca. 1911

http://trianglefire.ilr.cornell.edu/primary/photos/illustrations/slideshow.html?image_id=744&sec_id=3#screen

File #5: 9th Floor 3-D Diagram



- 1 Locked door to the stair well
- 2 Rusty fire escape that collapsed
- 3 Cluttered work spaces
- 4 Short ladders only reached 6th floor
- 5 Not enough water pressure
- 6 Long wooden tables became obstacles
- 7 Wicker baskets full of scraps
- 8 Oily floors spread the fire quickly
- 9 Fire nets failed to catch jumpers
- 10 No sprinkler system, only pails of water
- 11 Flammable barrel of oil
- 12 Boxes crowding the exit
- 13 Lack of a required third staircase

File #6: Survivor's Interview

Pauline Pepe's Interview Transcript

Q: Sorry, go ahead. Go ahead. All right, how many hours a week did you work?

Pepe: Oh, I think eight hours.

Q: Eight hours a day. And then did you work six days a week or five days a week?

Pepe: Seven. We went on Saturday. This was a Saturday when the fire started. We got off at four o'clock. Yeah, we got off at four o'clock.

Daughter: She worked six days, forty-eight hours.

Q: For twelve dollars.

Pepe: Yeah, twelve dollars. Can you imagine? Now they must get a hundred.

Q: You worked there for a year. Can you - can you describe what the room looked like? The room that you worked in.

Pepe: It was a very big place. Oh, my God, I couldn't even - just a big place with machines and windows and - a lot of windows with shades. That's what they had.

Q: And you were all very close to each other? The machines were right next to each other?

Pepe: We had a big row of machines, sure. Oh, yes. We had a big row of machines. There was plenty of machines. Oh, yeah. I happened to be right near where the cutters were - see? They used to have tables full of material, that very fine lingerie, you know. They used to make beautiful blouses.

David: Do you remember what happened after the fire? Was there a big funeral for it? Do you remember that?

Pepe: A big what?

David: A big funeral after the fire.

Pepe: I don't remember anything. I never went back anymore. I went home - the man took us home. He was very nice. We were both crying, you know, so he asked us where we lived and we told him. And they took us right home.

When we got home, my God, my mother, my father, they didn't know what happened. I was all - no coat, no - no jacket or nothing. And my sister got St. Vitus' dance; she got so scared. It was terrible. My mother says, "Uh-oh."

And they didn't - I said I hope they don't find out, you know. The - right away, you know, the news.

Q: Yes, right. Right.

Pepe: Oh, but I . . .

Q: But you never went back to the company?

Pepe: No.

File #6



DRESSMAKING-ROOM.

Some firms have dressmaking departments such as this in their own buildings; others have distinct plants in town or outside the city. Several hundred people are employed in this way by many of the large firms.

File #7: Casualties

10231

Place of Burial, Calvary

Date of Burial, March 28th 1911

Undertaker, Domenico Bonomo

Residence, 294 Elizabeth St.

TO CORONERS AND CORONERS' PHYSICIANS.

The Department of Health may, from time to time, fix and define the time of making, and the form of returns and reports to be made to said department by the coroners of The City of New York, in all cases of post-mortem inquests, or viewing of dead bodies held by them or any of them; and the said coroners are hereby required to conform to the directions of said department in the premises, and it shall be the duty of every coroner at once, and before holding any inquest, upon being called upon to hold an inquest as aforesaid, or notified thereof, to immediately transmit and cause to be delivered to the secretary of said Department of Health, written notice of the fact of such call, in which shall be stated every particular then known to said coroner as to said call, the body, the place where it is and the reported cause of death. If at any time said department, or the sanitary superintendent, shall deem the protection of the public health to demand, it may as soon as the coroner's jury or physician may have viewed the dead body, and an autopsy thereof shall have been made, provided the coroner deems the same necessary, order the immediate burial of any dead body, or if he or it deems that the public health demands an immediate removal of said body from the place of death to another place for inquest, may likewise, at any time, order said removal, and shall have power to cause such orders to be obeyed and executed.—Sec. 1203, Chap. 466, Laws 1901.

TO UNDERTAKERS.

1. No burial permit can be obtained without a proper certificate.
2. Certificates must be written throughout in black ink.
3. No certificate will be accepted which is mutilated, illegible, inaccurate, or any portion of which has been erased, interlined, corrected or altered, as all such changes impair its value as a public record.

THE CITY OF NEW YORK. STATE OF NEW YORK. No. of Certificate, 10231

CERTIFICATE AND RECORD OF DEATH

OF Rosaria Maltese

Age 14 Yrs. 14 Mos. 14 Days

Sex Female Color White Place of Death 27 Washington Sq.

Character of premises, whether transient, private, etc. If hotel, hospital, or other institution, state full title

Single, married, widowed or divorced Single

Occupation Operator Father's Name Serafino Maltese

Birthplace Italy Father's Birthplace Italy

How long in U. S. if foreign born 4 yrs. Mother's Maiden Name Catherine Maltese

How long resident in City of New York 4 yrs. Mother's Birthplace Italy

This is to certify that I, James E. Winterbottom Coroner in and for the Borough of Manhattan City of New York, have this 25th day of March 19 11 taken charge of the body of deceased found at murder in the 21 Ward of said Borough, and that an inquest thereon is pending.

James E. Winterbottom Coroner.

I hereby certify that I have viewed said body, and from Examination and evidence, that he died on the 25th day of March 19 11 at 5:30 P.M., and that the cause of his death was severe burns in burning building.

Special INFORMATION required in deaths in hospitals and institutions and in deaths of non-residents and recent residents.

Former or Usual Residence, 35-29th

How long Resident at Place of Death, _____

A. Winterbottom M. D. Coroner's Physician.

Rosaria Maltese

Gender: Female

Marital status: Single

Religion: Catholic

Address: 35 2nd Avenue, New York, NY

Rosaria Maltese was 14 years old at the time of the fire. Born in Italy, she had lived in the U.S. for 4 years. She was buried in Calvary Cemetery on March 28, 1911.

She was the daughter of Serafino Maltesa and Catherine Maltese.

File #7: Casualty List

[Adler, Lizzie, 24](#)
[Altman, Anna, 16](#)
[Ardito, Annina, 25](#)
[Bassino, Rose, 31](#)
[Benanti, Vincenza, 22](#)
[Berger, Yetta, 18](#)
[Bernstein, Essie, 19](#)
[Bernstein, Jacob, 38](#)
[Bernstein, Morris, 19](#)
[Billota, Vincenza, 16](#)
[Binowitz, Abraham, 30](#)
[Birman, Gussie, 22](#)
[Brenman, Rosie, 23](#)
[Brenman, Sarah, 17](#)
[Brodsky, Ida, 15](#)
[Brodsky, Sarah, 21](#)
[Brucks, Ada, 18](#)
[Brunetti, Laura, 17](#)
[Cammarata, Josephine, 17](#)
[Caputo, Francesca, 17](#)
[Carlisi, Josephine, 31](#)
[Caruso, Albina, 20](#)
[Ciminello, Annie, 36](#)
[Cirrito, Rosina, 18](#)
[Cohen, Anna, 25](#)
[Colletti, Annie, 30](#)
[Cooper, Sarah, 16](#)
[Cordiano, Michelina, 25](#)
[Dashefsky, Bessie, 25](#)
[Del Castillo, Josie, 21](#)
[Dockman, Clara, 19](#)
[Donick, Kalman, 24](#)
[Driansky, Nettie, 21](#)
[Eisenberg, Celia, 17](#)
[Evans, Dora, 18](#)
[Feibisch, Rebecca, 20](#)
[Hochfeld, Esther, 21](#)
[Hollander, Fannie, 18](#)
[Horowitz, Pauline, 19](#)
[Jukofsky, Ida, 19](#)
[Kanowitz, Ida, 18](#)
[Kaplan, Tessie, 18](#)
[Kessler, Beckie, 19](#)
[Klein, Jacob, 23](#)
[Koppelman, Beckie, 16](#)
[Kula, Bertha, 19](#)
[Kupferschmidt, Tillie, 16](#)
[Kurtz, Benjamin, 19](#)
[L'Abbate, Annie, 16](#)
[Lansner, Fannie, 21](#)
[Lauletti, Maria Giuseppa, 33](#)
[Lederman, Jennie, 21](#)
[Lehrer, Max, 18](#)
[Lehrer, Sam, 19](#)
[Leone, Kate, 14](#)
[Leventhal, Mary, 22](#)
[Levin, Jennie, 19](#)
[Levine, Pauline, 19](#)
[Liebowitz, Nettie, 23](#)
[Liermark, Rose, 19](#)
[Maiale, Bettina, 18](#)
[Maiale, Frances, 21](#)
[Maltese, Catherine, 39](#)
[Fichtenholtz, Yetta, 18](#)
[Fitze, Daisy Lopez, 26](#)
[Floresta, Mary, 26](#)
[Florin, Max, 23](#)
[Franco, Jenne, 16](#)
[Friedman, Rose, 18](#)
[Gerjuoy, Diana, 18](#)
[Gerstein, Molly, 17](#)
[Giannattasio, Catherine, 22](#)
[Gitlin, Celia, 17](#)
[Goldstein, Esther, 20](#)
[Goldstein, Lena, 22](#)
[Goldstein, Mary, 18](#)
[Goldstein, Yetta, 20](#)
[Grasso, Rosie, 16](#)
[Greb, Bertha, 25](#)
[Grossman, Rachel, 18](#)
[Herman, Mary, 40](#)
[Maltese, Lucia, 20](#)
[Maltese, Rosaria, 14](#)
[Manaria, Maria, 27](#)
[Mankofsky, Rose, 22](#)
[Mehl, Rose, 15](#)
[Meyers, Yetta, 19](#)
[Midolo, Gaetana, 16](#)
[Miller, Annie, 16](#)
[Neubauer, Beckie, 19](#)
[Nicholas, Annie, 18](#)
[Nicolosi, Michelina, 21](#)
[Nussbaum, Sadie, 18](#)
[Oberstein, Julia, 19](#)
[Oringer, Rose, 19](#)
[Ostrovsky, Beckie, 20](#)
[Pack, Annie, 18](#)
[Panno, Provindenza, 43](#)
[Pasqualicchio, Antonietta, 16](#)
[Pearl, Ida, 20](#)
[Pildescu, Jennie, 18](#)
[Pinelli, Vincenza, 30](#)
[Prato, Emilia, 21](#)
[Prestifilippo, Concetta, 22](#)
[Reines, Beckie, 18](#)
[Rosen \(Loeb\), Louis, 33](#)
[Rosen, Fannie, 21](#)
[Rosen, Israel, 17](#)
[Rosen, Julia, 35](#)
[Rosenbaum, Yetta, 22](#)
[Rosenberg, Jennie, 21](#)
[Rosenfeld, Gussie, 22](#)
[Rothstein, Emma, 22](#)
[Rotner, Theodore, 22](#)
[Sabasowitz, Sarah, 17](#)
[Salemi, Santina, 24](#)
[Saracino, Sarafina, 25](#)
[Saracino, Teresina, 20](#)
[Schiffman, Gussie, 18](#)
[Schmidt, Theresa, 32](#)
[Schneider, Ethel, 20](#)
[Schochet, Violet, 21](#)
[Schpunt, Golda, 19](#)
[Schwartz, Margaret, 24](#)
[Seltzer, Jacob, 33](#)
[Shapiro, Rosie, 17](#)
[Sklover, Ben, 25](#)
[Sorkin, Rose, 18](#)
[Starr, Annie, 30](#)
[Stein, Jennie, 18](#)
[Stellino, Jennie, 16](#)
[Stiglitz, Jennie, 22](#)
[Taback, Sam, 20](#)
[Terranova, Clotilde, 22](#)
[Tortorelli, Isabella, 17](#)
[Utal, Meyer, 23](#)
[Uzzo, Catherine, 22](#)
[Velakofsky, Frieda, 20](#)
[Viviano, Bessie, 15](#)
[Weiner, Rosie, 20](#)
[Weintraub, Sarah, 17](#)
[Weisner, Tessie, 21](#)
[Welfowitz, Dora, 21](#)
[Wendroff, Bertha, 18](#)
[Wilson, Joseph, 22](#)
[Wisotsky, Sonia, 17](#)

<http://trianglefire.ilr.cornell.edu/victimsWitnesses/victimsList.html>

List compiled by independent researcher Michael Hirsch.

File #8: New York Times

New-York



Tribune.

VOL. LXX. No. 22,506. NEW-YORK, SUNDAY, MARCH 26, 1911.—FIVE PARTS—SIXTY PAGES. PRICE FIVE CENTS.

MORE THAN 140 DIE AS FLAMES SWEEP THROUGH THREE STORIES OF FACTORY BUILDING IN WASHINGTON PLACE

DIAGRAMMATIC SKETCH OF THE SURROUNDINGS OF YESTERDAY'S FIRE HORROR
Bodies of some of the workmen who jumped from the windows, lying where they struck the pavement.



Scores of Girls Leap to Death in Streets Ten Stories Below Them.

HAD NO CHANCE FOR LIFE

Unable to Reach Elevators or Stairways, Employees Rush to Windows.

CROKER BLAMES ESCAPES

Keen on Outside of Building, Says Fire Chief, Saying That Is Reason for Fearful Loss of Lives in Disaster.

ELEVATORS SAVE HUNDREDS

Frightful Panic as Trapped Workers Fight Like Furies for Place in Cars, Almost the Only Means of Escape, as Flames Sweep Through the Workmen.

HUMAN BRIDGE BREAKS

Weight of Fugitives Crossing Over Men's Bodies Too Great.

CENTRE MAN'S BACK BREAKS

The Other Two Men Lose Their Grip on Window Sills and All Fall to Death.

Fourteen firemen, including three of the best, were seen jumping out of windows of the burning building in the Washington Place, and the sight that they saw when they reached the street was a scene of horror. The bodies of the men who had jumped from the windows were lying on the pavement, and the firemen were carrying them to the hospital. The fire was so intense that the men were unable to reach the elevators or stairways, and they were forced to jump from the windows. The fire chief said that the loss of life was due to the fact that the building was not equipped with fire escapes.



TELLS STORY OF FIRE

Samuel Levine, on Hospital Cot, Describes Horror.

SLID DOWN ELEVATOR ROPE

Several Girls Who Leaped Told How They Got Down After Him Met In. Last Death.

One of the last bodies reported by the fire chief was that of a woman who had jumped from the windows of the burning building. She was found lying on the pavement, and her body was carried to the hospital. The fire chief said that the woman had jumped from the windows because she was unable to reach the elevators or stairways. The fire was so intense that the woman was unable to reach the elevators or stairways, and she was forced to jump from the windows. The fire chief said that the loss of life was due to the fact that the building was not equipped with fire escapes.



FIRE CHIEF CROKER.

DOOR CLOSED, CROKER SAYS

Thinks Access to Stairway May Have Been Barred.

CROKER SAYS LACK OF FIRE ESCAPES IS CAUSE

Fire Department Official Says Building Is One of Seven Thousand in Like Peril.

DISASTER EASY TO REPEAT

Former State Labor Official Says Report Gave Warning Against Just Such a Disaster Weeks Ago.

"This calamity is just what I have been predicting. There were no outside fire escapes on this building. I have been advocating and arguing that fire escapes be put on buildings just such as this. The large loss of life is due to this neglect." The statement given Chief Croker

Yesterday, one hundred and fifty lives were lost in a fire that swept through the three upper stories of a ten-story factory building at the northeast corner of Washington Place and Grace street at 1 o'clock yesterday afternoon, escaped by the Triangle Waist Company and a clothing house. At midnight 142 bodies had been taken to the morgue.

Fire Chief Croker said: "This calamity is just what I have been predicting. There was no outside fire escapes on this building. I have been advocating and arguing that fire escapes be put on buildings just such as this. The large loss of life is due to this neglect."

Thirteen of the victims were men, 127 were women and girls. The cause of the fire is unknown. No one has tried to do more than guess at it.

Scores of almost indescribable horrors attended the catastrophe. Scores of girls leaped from windows eight, nine and ten stories above the street to their death. In one place so many bodies fell that the glass and iron ledges in the pavement were broken.

A fire escape in a light shaft proved a veritable death trap. More than fifty girls were found dead at the bottom of the shaft.

Many fire escape operators saved hundreds of lives. When one man abandoned his car one of the doorkeepers crowded in the street and through the police lines, reached the elevator and ran the car for five more trips, saving nearly six hundred more lives.

It was just 4:30 p. m. when the alarm of fire was first raised in the big ten-story building. That was the only time before closing time, and most of the girls employed in the building were putting on their hats and coats. It is not known who first discovered the fire, or what caused the outbreak, but within thirty seconds after the cry of "What" had been raised the girls nearly all of those present, took a mad rush for the two passages and two flight stairways.

When the crowd that they could not all escape by the use of the elevators, the panic-stricken women turned and looked for the windows on the Washington Place side of the building. The windows were closed or broken, and the women, terrified, rushed out on the narrow ledges in front of each window. That happened before

the three upper floors of the building were completely cut off by the fire. The Triangle Waist Company's employees, and their families, were crowded out of the burning building they managed to reach their way to the roof of the American

Trust Company building and their way

File #8: New York Times

141 Men and Girls Die in Waist Factory Fire; Trapped High Up in Washington Place Building; Street Strewn with Bodies; Piles of Dead Inside

New York Times, March 26, 1911, p. 1.

Three stories of a ten-floor building at the corner of Greene Street and Washington Place were burned yesterday, and while the fire was going on 141 young men and women at least 125 of them mere girls were burned to death or killed by jumping to the pavement below. The building was fireproof. It shows now hardly any signs of the disaster that overtook it. The walls are as good as ever so are the floors, nothing is the worse for the fire except the furniture and 141 of the 600 men and girls that were employed in its upper three stories. Most of the victims were suffocated or burned to death within the building, but some who fought their way to the windows and leaped met death as surely, but perhaps more quickly, on the pavements below.

All Over in Half an Hour

Nothing like it has been seen in New York since the burning of the General Slocum. The fire was practically all over in half an hour. It was confined to three floors the eighth, ninth, and tenth of the building. But it was the most murderous fire that New York had seen in many years.

The victims who are now lying at the Morgue waiting for some one to identify them by a tooth or the remains of a burned shoe were mostly girls from 16 to 23 years of age. They were employed at making shirtwaist by the Triangle Waist Company, the principal owners of which are Isaac Harris and Max Blanck. Most of them could barely speak English. Many of them came from Brooklyn. Almost all were the main support of their hard-working families. There is just one fire escape in the building. That one is an interior fire escape. In Greene Street, where the terrified unfortunates crowded before they began to make their mad leaps to death, the whole big front of the building is guiltless of one. Nor is there a fire escape in the back.

The building was fireproof and the owners had put their trust in that. In fact, after the flames had done their worst last night, the building hardly showed a sign. Only the stock within it and the girl employees were burned.

A heap of corpses lay on the sidewalk for more than an hour. The firemen were too busy dealing with the fire to pay any attention to people whom they supposed beyond their aid. When the excitement had subsided to such an extent that some of the firemen and policemen could pay attention to this mass of the supposedly dead they found about half way down in the pack a girl who was still breathing. She died two minutes after she was found.

The Triangle Waist Company was the only sufferer by the disaster. There are other concerns in the building, but it was Saturday and the other companies had let their people go home. Messrs. Harris and Blanck, however, were busy and ?? their girls and some stayed.

http://trianglefire.ilr.cornell.edu/primary/newspapersMagazines/nyt_032611.html