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## Sievers Studio Collection

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English

Describing Archives: A Content Standard

Processing work on Series 3 was made possible in part by the National Historical Publications and Records Commission.



Processing work on Series 4, Series 5, Series 6, and Series 9 was made possible in part by the Institute of Museum and Library Services.



Missouri Historical Society, Photographs and Prints Department

Library and Research Center  
225 South Skinker Boulevard  
St. Louis, MO 63105

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URL: <http://www.mohistory.org>

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## Summary Information

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<b>Repository:</b>	Missouri Historical Society, Photographs and Prints Department
<b>Creator:</b>	Sievers Studio
<b>Creator:</b>	Sievers, Isaac, 1886-1954
<b>Creator:</b>	Sievers, Alvin Martin, 1920-2012
<b>Title:</b>	Sievers Studio Collection
<b>ID:</b>	P0403
<b>Date [inclusive]:</b>	1917-1989
<b>Physical Description:</b>	121.3 Cubic Feet (477 boxes; 185.27 linear feet; over 82,000 images) (Extent includes processed material only)
<b>Formats:</b>	Negatives; Photographs
<b>Language of the Material:</b>	English .

### Preferred Citation

Sievers Studio Collection, Missouri Historical Society, St. Louis

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## Biographical / Historical

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Sievers Commercial Photographers was founded in 1917 by Isaac Sievers as a general commercial studio based in downtown St. Louis. After World War II, Isaac's son, Alvin, joined the staff and continued to operate the studio under the name Sievers Photographers until its close in 1989. The studio was first located on Chestnut Street and later moved to Washington Avenue. Although Isaac and Al were the primary photographers, the studio employed several other photographers over the years, including Fred Delporte, Uranus Hord, Ed Meyers, and Harold Sneckner.

Isaac Sievers advertised as an all-purpose photographer with the tagline "I photograph anything." Staying true to that sentiment, the studio handled a wide variety of subjects,

including commercial, architectural, and portrait photographs and events such as banquets, conventions, and family celebrations.

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## Scope and Contents

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The Sievers Studio Collection contains the full surviving work of the commercial photography studio Sievers Studio. The collection documents everyday life in a major Midwestern city from the studio's opening in 1917 through its close in 1989.

Sievers Studio photographed a wide variety of subjects, including corporate groups, large and small businesses, conventions, family events, studio portraits, advertising photographs, new residential and commercial construction, and established residential and commercial areas. Isaac Sievers specialized in panoramic photographs, and much of the studio's earliest business consisted of panoramas showing groups of servicemen during World War I.

The bulk of the collection consists of negatives, although some prints are also included. Material from each photo shoot was stored together in a single job assignment file, usually including detailed information about client, subject, and date.

Materials from the 1930s (Series 3), 1940s (Series 4), 1950s (Series 5), and 1960s (Series 6) have been processed and are available for research. Loose prints dating from 1930-1979 have been processed as Series 9 and are also available for research. Processing work on the remainder of the collection is ongoing, and no other portion of the collection is open for use at this time. Material will become available as it is processed.

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## Arrangement

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Sievers Studio stored all material from a photo shoot together as a single job assignment file, usually including detailed information regarding the date, client, and subject. Material in the collection is arranged according to the job number assigned by Sievers Studio.

The first six series in the collection have been established, in addition to Series 9. Existing series are Series 1: Business Records, Series 2: Panoramas, Series 3: 1930-1939, Series 4: 1940-1949, Series 5: 1950-1959, Series 6: 1960-1969, and Series 9: Loose Prints. However, processing work is ongoing for Series 1 and Series 2, and material from these series will be opened as they are processed. Additional series for material created during the 1970s and 1980s will be established as material is processed.

The following series are fully processed and open for research:

- Series 3: 1930-1939
- Series 4: 1940-1949
- Series 5: 1950-1959
- Series 6: 1960-1969
- Series 9: Loose Prints

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## Administrative Information

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### Publication Statement

Missouri Historical Society, Photographs and Prints Department

Library and Research Center  
225 South Skinker Boulevard  
St. Louis, MO 63105

[photo@mohistory.org](mailto:photo@mohistory.org)

URL: <http://www.mohistory.org>

### Processing Information

Series 3 processed by Lauren Sallwasser, 2018; Series 4 processed by Sabrina Gorse, 2021; Series 5 processed by Sabrina Gorse, 2022; Series 6 processed by Sabrina Gorse and Brittany Long, 2023; Series 9 processed by Melissa Tucker, 2022.

### Sponsor

Processing work on Series 3 was made possible in part by the National Historical Publications and Records Commission ([www.archives.gov/nhprc](http://www.archives.gov/nhprc)).

Processing work on Series 4, Series 5, Series 6, and Series 9 was made possible in part by the Institute of Museum and Library Services. (<https://www.imls.gov/>).

### Donor Information

Collection donated by Al Sievers in 1996 and 2009.

## Conditions Governing Access

No viewing restrictions.

## Conditions Governing Use

Copyright restrictions may apply. The user assumes full responsibility for conforming to the laws of copyright.

## Existence and Location of Copies

Digital copies and item-level records of select images are posted as they are created and can be accessed through the Online Collections on the Missouri Historical Society website <http://collections.mohistory.org/resource/140214>.

Digitized images are generated from the original item whenever possible and files are adjusted only to ensure an accurate representation. Master files are saved in TIF format and JPEG viewing files are automatically generated from the master files.

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## Controlled Access Headings

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- Photographers -- Missouri -- Saint Louis

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## Additional Indexes

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See job file index for complete listing of photo shoots.

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## Physical Characteristics and Technical Requirements

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Some film stored in freezer.

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## Collection Inventory

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### Series 3: Job Files, 1930-1939

Physical Description: 43 Linear Feet (112 boxes)

#### Scope and Contents

Series three contains material created during the 1930s. As in the collection as a whole, the 1930s material includes a wide variety of clients and subjects.

Of special interest in this series are images documenting the Great Depression, including the Hooverville on the St. Louis riverfront, lines of men waiting for work, exterior views of Father Dempsey's Hotels, fundraisers for the Welcome Inn, and the Welcome Inn splash pool for children.

Sievers Studio captured many activities of daily life including family celebrations such as holidays, anniversaries, birthdays, weddings, and religious rites of passage; events held by churches, synagogues, clubs, and fraternal organizations; banquets and dinners; and funerals. Funeral photographs mostly show open caskets surrounded by large floral arrangements. Of note are photographs showing activities in the Jewish community, including Confirmation classes and other activities at local synagogues, families celebrating Passover Seder, and the visit of Rabbi Stephen S. Wise, an influential figure in the development of Reform Judaism and an early leader in the U. S. Zionist movement. Sievers Studio also shot portraits of individuals and groups, both in the studio and on location. These include graduating classes and other school groups; sports teams, including company sponsored teams and school teams; and employees and other business groups.

Photographs in this series document growth and change in many businesses and industries, particularly the automobile industry. These photographs show the spread of service stations and repair shops and the activities of prominent St. Louis automobile dealerships, such as the Weber Implement and Automobile Company, L. M. Stewart, Mount City Motors, Arthur R. Lindburg, and Fred F. Vincel, Inc. Photographs also show employees, executives, and vehicles from Chrysler and General Motors. Other business-related photographs show the growth of the film industry and local theaters such as Loew's State Theatre, Fox Theatre, and others; the alternative products sold by Anheuser-Busch during Prohibition; and Monsanto employees and facilities in the company town of Monsanto, Illinois, later renamed Sauget. In addition, photographs show many smaller businesses such as grocers, clothing stores, shoe stores, bakeries, drugstores, bars, and taverns. Product shots depict the growth of new household appliances such as radios and refrigerators, as well as shoes, clothing, and other consumer goods.

Sievers Studio captured many of the physical changes happening to the cityscape in the 1930s, particularly the development of new residential areas in south St. Louis City, including St. Louis Hills, as well as in the inner-ring suburbs surrounding the city of St. Louis. Photographs also show new downtown buildings, including the Municipal Auditorium (later renamed Kiel Auditorium) and the construction of the U. S. Court and Custom House. In addition, street views and other architectural photographs taken throughout St. Louis City and St. Louis County show a variety of established residential, commercial, and industrial areas.

Sievers Studio also specialized in photographing large exhibitions and conventions and in taking photographs for insurance purposes. Exhibitions and conventions include car shows; fraternity and sorority conventions; professional conventions; and the Greater St. Louis Flower Show. These

photographs often show group portraits of attendees, as well as exhibit booths and banquets. Insurance photographs often show damage resulting from automobile accidents.

Also of note in this series are photographs showing visiting celebrities, including Amelia Earhart, Jimmy Doolittle, Secretary of Labor Frances Perkins, Betty Grable, and Helen Kane. Many of the celebrities were film, radio, or vaudeville stars.

To browse catalog records and digitized images from this series visit our Online Collections: <https://mohistory.org/collections/item/P0403-S03>

For a map of photo shoot locations, visit our 1930s Sievers Google Map:

[https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/1/viewer?hl=en&mid=1gQ\\_IUs-TI4eW5p9\\_7nVAcL\\_8Q9lwAxe&ll=26.369034592509994%2C-44.68302840000001&z=2](https://www.google.com/maps/d/u/1/viewer?hl=en&mid=1gQ_IUs-TI4eW5p9_7nVAcL_8Q9lwAxe&ll=26.369034592509994%2C-44.68302840000001&z=2).

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## Series 4: Job Files, 1940-1949

Physical Description: 76.94 Linear Feet (201 boxes)

### Scope and Contents

Series 4 contains the materials created by Sievers Studio in the 1940s. This content includes negatives, photographs, inventory sheets, notes, pamphlets, and forms. Although most of the photographic materials cannot be attributed to any single photographer employed by Sievers Studio, those named include Isaac Sievers, Fred Delporte, Harold Sneckner, Alvin Sievers, Leo C. O'Brien, and Andy Stark. Overall, the series represents a diverse number of topics and clients. These materials were created throughout St. Louis, Missouri, and neighboring towns and counties in Missouri and Illinois.

Prominent photographs in the series are those recording the lead up to, advent of, and aftermath of World War II. The studio captured images on the home front showing how local businesses transitioned to wartime manufacturing; how local government and organizations sponsored booths and rallies to sell war bonds and stamps or collect scrap metal; the activities of such organizations as the Red Cross and the United Service Organizations; and the presence of servicemen stationed or passing through the city. Photographs dating from the late-1940s show the beginning of the postwar era, including images of veteran organizations' activities and the conversion of the automobile industry from wartime to civilian production.

The studio actively shot photographs documenting the daily lives of people living in the St. Louis area. Such images capture varied aspects of peoples' personal lives, including birthdays, weddings, anniversaries, holidays, religious rites of passage, and funerals; events sponsored by religious institutions, clubs, and fraternal organizations; public and parochial school activities; amateur sports; and banquets. Much of the funeral photography consist of postmortem photographs and images of funeral services and cemeteries. The studio also photographed studio portraits and group portraits. Of special interest are images photographed for such organizations as the B'nai B'rith, the Elks Club, and the Mexican Benefit Society of St. Louis, and such schools as Dupo High School, St. Rita's Academy, and the H.F. Epstein Hebrew Academy.

The studio also captured photographs of commerce in St. Louis. These photographs document different industries and businesses in the city area through images of their buildings, show windows, and displays; their employees; and the events - such as dinners, conventions, and teaching demonstrations - they sponsored. Significant businesses named include Boyd's and the Chevrolet Division of the General Motors Company. Labor unions and their activities, including meetings, strikes, and demonstrations, figure



prominently as well. Major labor unions named include the International Ladies' Garment Workers' Union (ILGWU) and the United Electrical, Radio and Machine Workers of America (UE).

Of significant interest are photographs of politics in St. Louis and Missouri. The images record the activities of St. Louis's mayors Bernard F. Dickmann, William D. Becker, Aloys P. Kaufmann, and Joseph M. Darst, and the effects of local, state, and national elections. Photographs that figure prominently include those of the 1940 presidential election and then senator Harry S. Truman and his family's visits to the city.

Other topics include photographs for insurance activities; local and visiting celebrities; buildings, including houses, apartment houses, churches, synagogues, schools, and commercial buildings; street scenes; construction and renovation; and transportation.

To browse catalog records and digitized images from this series visit our Online Collections: <https://mohistory.org/collections/item/P0403-S04>

For a map of photo shoot locations, visit our 1940s Sievers Google Map: [https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?ll=39.35155333419587%2C-90.025667&z=8&mid=1L6\\_oMRVDz64BtQirkNSfUFda8dWVlsvS](https://www.google.com/maps/d/viewer?ll=39.35155333419587%2C-90.025667&z=8&mid=1L6_oMRVDz64BtQirkNSfUFda8dWVlsvS)

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## Series 5: Job Files, 1950-1959

Physical Description: 32.25 Linear Feet (73 boxes)

### Scope and Contents

Series 5 comprises the materials which Sievers Studio created during its operations from 1950 to 1959. This content includes black-and-white and color negatives, photographs, transparencies, inventory sheets, and documents such as receipts, business cards, and correspondence. Most of the photographic materials cannot be attributed to any single photographer employed at Sievers Studio. The series overall represent a variety of topics and clients primarily in St. Louis, Missouri, and surrounding towns and counties in Missouri and Illinois.

Of primary interest are the studio's photographs depicting the daily lives of people living and working in the St. Louis area. These photographs cover a wide range of topics, including weddings, funerals, religious rites of passage, anniversaries, and holidays; retirement parties; events sponsored by religious institutions, clubs, fraternal organizations, and associations; veteran organizations and services; school and college activities; and portraits. Of special note are the St. Louis Institute of Music, Big Brother and Sister Council, Harris Teachers College, and National Gold Star Mothers.

Another subject of significance is the studio's photographs of commerce and industry in St. Louis. These photographs record the activities of industries and businesses throughout the region. Such images include those of employees; show windows and merchandise displays; studio views of commercial products; business meetings, professional development activities, and dining events; and advertising, including billboards and advertisements on local television broadcasts. Major companies named include Boyd's, the Chevrolet Division of the General Motors Company, the Guaranty Cycle Company, and the Automobile Club of Missouri. Photographs documenting trade associations and labor unions are also present in the series. These materials tend to record their meetings, conventions, and strikes. Prominent organizations named include the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America, Missouri Retail Hardware Association, and National Education Association of the United States.

Other topics covered include awards and award presentations; buildings such as houses, apartment houses, religious institutions, industrial facilities, and commercial buildings; construction, renovation,

and demolition; copies and reproductions of art, photographs, and documents; photographs for insurance activities; local and national politics; street scenes; television broadcasts; and transportation.

To browse catalog records and digitized images from this series visit our Online Collections: <https://mohistory.org/collections/item/P0403-S05>

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## Series 6: Job Files, 1960-1969

Physical Description: 31.35 Linear Feet (67 boxes)

### Scope and Contents

Series 6 contains Sievers Studio's materials created during its operations from 1960 to 1969. This content includes black-and-white and color negatives, filmstrips, transparencies, photographs, inventory sheets, and documents such as receipts, invoices, business cards, and letters of correspondence. Most of the photographic materials cannot be attributed to any single photographer employed at Sievers Studio. Overall, the series' contents cover a wide range of topics and clients and were created primarily in St. Louis, Missouri, and surrounding towns and counties in Missouri and Illinois.

A prominent theme in the series are photographs picturing daily life in the St. Louis area. These images depict different aspects of people's personal lives, such as weddings, anniversaries, holidays, religious services and events, and funerals; bar and bat mitzvahs; retirement parties; events sponsored by religious and fraternal organizations; public and parochial school and college activities; sports; and portraits.

Another topic of significance is the commercial and industrial environment in St. Louis. Such photographs document the rise and fall of businesses and industries throughout the city area through images of their buildings; their employees and their work; and events – including dinners, award presentations, and conventions – that they either sponsored or participated in. Recurring businesses named are the St. Louis Car Company, Chevrolet, Alpha Tank and Metals Manufacturing Company, the G.L. Tarlton Contracting Company, Southwestern Bell Telephone Company, and Greyhound Lines. Trade associations and their activities also figure prominently in the series; those represented include the Associated General Contractors of St. Louis and the National Electrical Contractors Association.

Construction projects are of special note in the series as well. Of particular interest are photographs depicting the construction of the Busch Memorial Stadium; the Gateway Arch; the Council House Apartments for Senior Citizens; and the Metropolitan Sewer District (MSD) Bissell Point Wastewater Treatment Plant.

Also of distinction are images depicting politics in 1960s St. Louis. These photographs include those depicting the work of St. Louis City Mayors Raymond R. Tucker and Alfonso J. Cervantes, East St. Louis Mayor Alvin G. Fields, and St. Ann Mayor Clarence Tiemeyer; volunteer work conducted in support of the Borough Plan of 1962; and the political campaigns of Joseph L. Badaracco and John Claggett Danforth.

Other topics covered include copies and reproductions of art, photographs, and documents; award presentations; architecture, especially commercial, residential, industrial, and religious structures; photographs created for insurance purposes; dedications and ribbon cutting ceremonies; streets scenes; and transportation.

To browse catalog records and digitized images from this series visit our Online Collections: <https://mohistory.org/collections/item/P0403-S06>

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## **Series 9: Loose Prints, 1930-1979**

Physical Description: 9.29 Linear Feet (20 boxes)

### **Scope and Contents**

Series 9 contains material created by photographers from Sievers Studio from the 1930s through the 1970s. This is a collection of loose prints that do not have any date information or job numbers. They are sorted topically into 36 categories, including: Animals, Award Ceremonies, Dances, Dinners, Exteriors, Families, Funerals, Groups, Interiors, Machinery, Medical, Pageants, Portraits, Products, Religious Events, Restorations, Speaking Events, Sports, Weddings, and Vehicles. Some photos are hand colored.

Of special interest in this series are two folders containing photographs of both Alvin Sievers and Isaac Sievers, as well as the Sievers Photography Studio.

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