

M8A1 SCABBARDS PRODUCED AT THE PENNSYLVANIA WORKING HOME FOR THE BLIND

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This article is not a definitive work, but fills some of the gaps in what is understood about production of M8A1 scabbards at the Pennsylvania Working Home for the Blind (Working Home). While not intended to be a treatise on the Working Home, the article begins with some history to place M8A1 scabbard production in context with events influencing the Working Home's operation. The article incorporates information from government contract reports; a history on the Pennsylvania Working Home for Blind Men compiled in 1990 by George H. Kettell, PhD; and, a 1967 Management and Operating Study on the Working Home by Arthur C. Kaufmann & Associates, Inc. (Kaufmann Report).

The Pennsylvania Working Home for the Blind

Founded in 1874 at Philadelphia as the Pennsylvania Working Home for Blind Men, the Working Home served as a model of its type. During the U.S. Civil War 1861-65, Pennsylvania raised 337,936 soldiers for the Union Army, more than any other state save for New York.¹ This left Pennsylvania with a large population affected by wartime injuries, including Hinman Hall who had been blinded during the war. Hall began as a student and later served as an instructor at the Pennsylvania Institute for the Instruction of Blind Men. An academic institution, the Institute had little to offer in the way of employment training. Many of the men blinded during the War already possessed a trade, but were not employable in the community.

Although the concept of a sheltered workshop is viewed somewhat negatively today, the Working Home's incorporation in 1874 was quite progressive for its time. Dr. Kettell described the Working Home's choice to remain a sheltered workshop throughout its 105 years of

operation, stating: "the Working Home maintained a policy of providing employment for blind men without selectivity as to those who were productive and those who would continue to require subsidies." The workshop included dormitory facilities, although many of the blind men employed there maintained their own housing in the community.

With Hinman Hall as its superintendent, the Working Home was quite successful in its first 20 years, competing effectively against commercial producers of corn brooms. Although successful day to day, the Working Home failed to establish an endowment in its early years which set the stage for financial struggles that began with the Depression of 1893 and beset the organization repeatedly until its eventual bankruptcy in 1978. The Working Home's failure to keep up with advances in manufacturing technology resulted in a gradual loss of competitive advantage to more modern commercial manufacturers, thus exacerbating its financial issues.

Beginning in the 1950s, a series of mergers occurred, reflecting a growing societal debate about services for persons with blindness and other disabilities. Due to continuing disagreements within the merged organizations, these mergers often existed at the corporate level for legal or funding purposes, while at the working level the organizations largely retained their separate identities. Internal desire to maintain legacy organizational identities and inconsistencies in government contract documentation account for the many variations in how the Working Home has been described in what has been written to date.

Corporate and Contractor Names

Table 1 documents the five corporate identities of the Working Home in the period leading up to and during production of M8A1 scabbards (1965-1970):

Table 1

Pennsylvania Working Home for the Blind Corporate Identities		
Effective Date	Event	New Identity
January 23, 1874	Incorporated as the Pennsylvania Working Home for Blind Men.	n/a
September 15, 1955	Merger with the Philadelphia Committee for the Prevention of Blindness, Inc.	Pennsylvania Working Home for the Blind, Inc.
February 13, 1963	Merger with the Pennsylvania Retreat for Blind Mutes and Aged and Infirm Blind, Inc.	Pennsylvania Working Home and Philadelphia Association for the Blind, Inc.
December 30, 1966	Name change only	The Working Blind, Inc.
January 30, 1970	Merger with the Pennsylvania Home for Blind Women, Inc.	Center for the Blind, Inc.

The Federal Supply Code for Manufacturers was used from the early 1950s to 1974. Table 2 documents the four contractor names and contractor codes used on the Working Home’s government prime contracts for M8A1 scabbards. The first three names were used concurrently, as shown by the contract dates:

Table 2

Contractor Numbers and Names Used in M8A1 Scabbard Contracts		
Contractor Number	Contractor Name	Contract Date(s)
675142	Penn Working Home Phila Assn Blind	December 1965 March 1966 May 1966
675360	Pennsylvania Assn For The Blind	July 1965 September 1965 (2 contracts) May 1966 (Navy contract) March 1967
675900	Pennsylvania Working Home Blind	July 1966 (Navy contract)
968875	Working Blind	January 1969

According to the National Archives and Records Administration (NARA): “... it is NARA’s understanding that the code numbers assigned to a contractor did not change with renaming of a company. Thus once the code number is identified by reference to the Contractor Name data element, it can be used to track a company’s contracts over time.” However, this does not appear to have been the case with the Working Home. It is unclear whether government administrators or the Working Home’s managers were responsible for the contractor name and contractor code inconsistencies.

The Working Home’s rather cumbersome corporate name in 1965, Pennsylvania Working Home and Philadelphia Association for the Blind, Inc., likely resulted in different government contractor numbers being issued under different abbreviations of the organization’s proper name. Abbreviations were likely an expediency, as it is doubtful that a typewriter could place such a lengthy contractor name into the space provided on government contracting forms. Figure 1 illustrates the upper portion of the Department of Defense (DOD) Form 350, where the contractor names were found.

INDIVIDUAL PROCUREMENT ACTION REPORT			REPORT CONTROL SYMBOL			DD-I&L (M) 1014		
1A. REPORT NO. (Current)		1B.	1C. REPORT NO. (Previous)		2. CONTRACT NO. (Army only)			
					A. Dept.	B. Activity	C. FY.	
					D. Serial No.		E. RO	
Item 3 Code	3. CORRECTION OF PRIOR DD FORM 350 Number _____ Item(s) _____			4. MOD. NO. AND OTHER IDENT.				
	1. Corrected entry							
	2. Reversing entry							
Item 5 Code	5. PURCHASING OFFICE							
Item 5A Code	5A. SOUTHEAST ASIA (Actions of \$200,000 or more)							
	1. In support of SEA			Ø. Not in support of SEA				
Item 6 Code	6. CONTRACTOR IDENTIFICATION							
	Company Name:							
	Division Name (if any):							
	Number and Street:							
	City and State or Country:							
Item 7 Code	City	State	7. PRINCIPAL PLACE OF PERFORMANCE (City and State or Country)				7A.	7B.

Figure 1: Upper portion of the Individual Procurement Action Report, DOD Form 350, from which NARA transcribed the documented contractor numbers and contractor names attributed to the Working Home.

Although the corporate name, The Working Blind, Inc., was adopted beginning with the 1967 tax year, it was not used on the scabbard contract dated March 1967. Its only appearance on a scabbard contract was two years later, in January 1969. This was the government’s final M8A1 scabbard contract with the Working Home, which probably accounts for the relative scarcity of “TWB” marked scabbards versus the more commonly encountered “PWH” markings.



Figure 2: Four M8A1 scabbard marking variations attributed to the Working Home.

Beginning in 1974, the Federal Supply Code for Manufacturers contractor code was replaced by the Commercial Activity Government Entity (CAGE) Code. Table 3 documents the CAGE Codes used to identify the Working Home and successor organizations:

Table 3

CAGE Codes Associated with the Working Home and its Successors			
Company Name	CAGE Code	Established	Status
Pennsylvania Association For The Blind	86450	June 17, 1974	Cancelled/Replaced by: 83421
National Industries For The Blind	83421	October 20, 1984	Active Record, last updated December 24, 2009
Pennsylvania Association For The Blind	0LXV0	June 26, 1990	Active Record, last updated February 7, 2006

There is no evidence that M8A1 scabbard contracts were associated with the above CAGE Codes.

Scabbard Contracts

Research by Gary Cunningham clearly establishes that Beckwith Manufacturing Co. was the sole prime contractor for M8A1 scabbards that preceded the Working Home. After cessation of M8A1 scabbard production, a successor firm, Beckwith & Arden, Inc., received three small contracts, totaling \$81,000, for Federal Supply Class 1095 - Miscellaneous Weapons, in 1966 - 1967.

Federal Supply Class 1095 - Miscellaneous Weapons, includes: Line Throwing Guns; Catapult Guns; Bayonets; Saluting Guns; Signal Guns; Flare Guns; Barrage Balloons; Accessories, not elsewhere classifiable, for weapons in this group; Expendable Bomb Dispensers.

These contracts were most likely for production of M1917 scabbards or M7 scabbards and are not believed to be associated with production of M8A1 scabbards.

Spanning a period from July 1965 to January 1969, the government entered into ten weapons program contracts with the Working Home for Federal Supply Class 1095 - Miscellaneous Weapons, totaling \$5,886,000. While defense procurement contracting with blind organizations was commonplace, weapons program contracts were rare. Of 1,953 prime contracts with blind organizations from July 1, 1965, through June 30, 1975, only 18 were associated with weapons programs (10 of which were with the Working Home). Table 4 documents that eight of the Working Home's weapons program contracts were for the Army and two small contracts, totaling \$39,000, were for the Navy:

Table 4

Working Home Scabbard Contracts Issued July 1965 to January 1969					
Contractor	Name	Contract No.	Dept	Contract Date	Amount
675360	Pennsylvania Assn For The Blind	A11199600255	Army	July 1965	\$126,000
675360	Pennsylvania Assn For The Blind	A11199600264	Army	September 1965	\$256,000
675360	Pennsylvania Assn For The Blind	A19058601473	Army	September 1965	\$148,000
675142	Penn Working Home Phila Assn Blind	A11199600267	Army	December 1965	\$636,000
675142	Penn Working Home Phila Assn Blind	A11199600294	Army	March 1966	\$1,061,000
675142	Penn Working Home Phila Assn Blind	A11199600307	Army	May 1966	\$662,000
675360	Pennsylvania Assn For The Blind	N00150608142	Navy	May 1966	\$14,000
675900	Pennsylvania Working Home Blind	M001507C0003	Navy	July 1966	\$25,000
675360	Pennsylvania Assn For The Blind	X00000X00000	Army	March 1967	\$1,391,000
968875	Working Blind	A0AF01908756	Army	January 1969	\$1,349,000

Total \$5,668,000

The Kaufmann Report indicates that, in 1966, scabbard production accounted for approximately half of the Working Home's revenue, and that scabbard revenues were accelerating during 1967. The Kaufmann Report cautioned the Working Home's managers that the increasing percentage of revenues from scabbard production was such that cancellation or discontinuance of the government contract could cause serious financial problems. The circumstances that led to the ending of scabbard production at the Working Home, in 1970, are not clear (the expected completion date of the Working Home's final M8A1 scabbard contract was May 1970). After the Working Home's M8A1 scabbard contracts ended, the government continued contracting with the Working Home for brooms, mops, rugs, and other household goods.

It appears that Viz Manufacturing Co. of Philadelphia, PA, was the successor to the Working Home, with a \$69,000 contract dated May 1969 which ran concurrently with the final Working Home contract. This appears to be the only contract with Viz Manufacturing Co. for Federal Supply Class 1095 - Miscellaneous Weapons.

Viz Manufacturing Co. received an earlier and much larger \$406,000 contract for Federal Supply Class 8465 - Individual Equipment.

Federal Supply Class 8465 - Individual Equipment, includes: Musette Bags; Duffel Bags; Ammunition Belts; Pistol Belts; Handcuffs; Packboards; Sleeping Bags; Knapsacks; Hikers' Packs; Sunglasses; Skis; Snowshoes; Swords with Scabbards. Excludes: Toilet Articles, Mess Gear, Public Utility Containers.

Information in this section has been superceded by new discoveries and further reasearch.

Where the M8A1 scabbard contracts were under Army and Navy Department weapons programs, this contract was under the Defense Supply Agency's Textiles, Clothing & Equipage Program. This contract was most likely for machete scabbards, which Viz Manufacturing Co. is also known to have produced. This contract, dated June 1966, concludes with the following statement by former Viz Manufacturing Co. employee, Mary Friedman, who stated in a telephone interview given to the author by the author's son, William Friedman, Jr., in 1966 and 1967. The Kaufmann Report, dated May 31, 1967, contradicts this assertion, indicating that "the workshop of the Working Home is the sole producer of M8A1 scabbards."

See Working Paper (July 2022) : Scabbards Produced by Viz Manufacturing Co. and Wilson-Duggar Co. for updated information regarding Scabbards Produced by Viz Manufacturing Co. and Wilson-Duggar Co.

It is not clear why Viz Manufacturing Co. did not continue producing M8A1 scabbards, as the timing of their contract seemed to signal that the government was seeking a successor to the Working Home. Viz Manufacturing Co.'s single M8A1 scabbard contract helps explain the scarcity of "VIZ" marked scabbards. The appearance of "VIZ/WD" marked scabbards where it appears that the "WD" was added as an afterthought, suggests that there may have initially been an expectation that Viz Manufacturing Co. would produce more scabbards for a longer period of time than occurred.

The identity of the manufacturer represented by the marking "WD" remains unknown.

Scabbard Production at the Working Home

Manufacturing processes performed in the Working Home's factory appear to involve fabrication of the web belt hanger, attachment of the belt hanger to the metal throat piece, and its final assembly on to the plastic scabbard body (which was supplied from elsewhere).² Work was performed by a mix of blind and sighted employees, including both men and women.³ Operating hours were 7:45 a.m. to 4:20 p.m., five days per week. Approximately 100 workers and 3,500 square feet of workspace were allocated to what the Kaufmann Report refers to as "Strap Assembly." Operations were overseen by a foreman, assistant foreman, and five quality control inspectors. Packaging and shipping was performed by the Working Home's Shipping and Receiving Department.

As of May 1967, the production line employed only 75 workers due to an insufficient supply of plastic scabbard bodies. There were 25 men (23 blind & 2 sighted); and 50 women (19 blind and 31 sighted). At this level of supply and staffing, production was 108,000 scabbards per month. However, the government desired production of 150,000 scabbards per month "since a substantial long-term commitment requires this acceleration." (A rather interesting euphemism for the Vietnam War, reflective of 1967 when public opinion began to turn sharply against it.)

The unit cost is not reported in either the contract summaries or the portion of the Kaufmann Report I obtained.⁴ Based on financial data in the Kaufmann Report, unit cost for scabbard assembly extrapolates to approximately \$1.36 each.⁵ Based on this figure, the Working Home's production during the period July 1965 to May 1970 is estimated at approximately 4,167,647 scabbards. Table 5 summarizes the estimated production of M8A1 scabbards by the Working Home and Viz Manufacturing Co. during this period:

Table 5

Estimated M8A1 Scabbard Production July 1965–May 1970			
	Marking	Estimated Production	Percentage
	PWH	3,175,735	75.28%
	TWB	991,912	23.51%
Working Home Total		4,167,647	
	VIZ	50,735	1.20%
Grand Total		4,218,382	

Conclusion

While this article does not answer all of the existing questions regarding production of M8A1 scabbards at the Pennsylvania Working Home for the Blind, it provides context, clarifies organizational identity, and links both the “PWH” and “TWB” scabbards to the Working Home. It also provides a very brief glimpse into the workshop organization that produced M8A1 scabbards. Lastly, it places Viz Manufacturing Co’s. M8A1 scabbard production in proper context, near the end of the Working Home’s tenure as prime contractor. Future research could aim to identify the manufacturer associated with the marking “WD.”

See Note on Prior Page

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Endnotes

1. Frederick H. Dyer, *A Compendium of the War of The Rebellion* (Des Moines, IA, 1908), p. 11.
2. I have not uncovered anything documenting which firm or firms supplied plastic scabbard bodies to the Working Home, only that they were supplied to the Working Home.
3. The blind women workers would have either lived in the community or at the nearby Pennsylvania Working Home for Blind Women. Established in 1868, the Pennsylvania Working Home for Blind Women was the only such organization older than the Pennsylvania Working Home for Blind Men.
4. The Temple University Library worker copied the Kaufmann Report section that directly dealt with scabbards, but was unwilling to copy the whole report. I offered twice to pay a copying fee to obtain the entire report. However, the bottom line was that the library worker simply didn’t want to do the job.
5. The Kaufmann Report indicates that scabbard revenues for 1966 were \$953,587. Using the cited production volume of 108,000 scabbards per month, this works out to a unit cost of \$1.36.

