

About the “Building America” Series

compiled and edited (for educational use only)

by Stefan Pasti, Founder and Resource Coordinator

The Community Peacebuilding and Cultural Sustainability (CPCS) Initiative

www.cpcsi.org

[Source for quotes and scans in Sections I. and III. below: “Building America: Illustrated Studies on Modern Problems” Volume 1 by Department of Supervision and Curriculum Development, National Education Association, Americana Corporation 1942]

Contents

I. Introduction.....	1
“Our people... must be willing to act intelligently on the important issues of our times.”	
II. Excerpt from a history of the “Building America” series.....	5
“In assembling these materials, concerning current socio-economic problems, Hanna and his associates had written to more than one thousand sources.”	
[From “History of a Civic Education Project Implementing the Social-Problems Technique of Instruction” by Robert Ernest Newman Jr. (Unpublished) dissertation submitted to the School of Education of Stanford University 1960 (excerpt from file of first 250 pages received by request from the Paul Hanna papers--Hoover Institution Library and Archives, Stanford University) (p. 29-31)]	
III. The complete “Housing” section from Volume 1 of the “Building America” Series.....	7
(included as an example section) (each page scanned into jpeg file, and copied into this document)	

I. Introduction

“Our people... must be willing to act intelligently on the important issues of our times.”

“The Society for Curriculum Study launched BUILDING AMERICA in 1935 as a non-profit making venture in education. In 1943 the Society for Curriculum Study and the Department of Supervisors and Directions of Instruction of the National Education Association were merged to form the Department of Supervision and Curriculum Development (NEA).” (p. viii in Volume 1, source cited above)

“BUILDING AMERICA is a series of pictorial study units on modern problems, sponsored by the Society for Curriculum Study, and for five years assisted by the Lincoln School of Teachers College, Columbia University, NY. It is designed for the use of schools, colleges, youth organizations, and the general public. It meets a long-felt need for visual as well as factual studies of basic contemporary problems.” (p. 28)

“The Editorial Board of BUILDING AMERICA believes that... if our own democracy is to work even more successfully, and if we are to achieve that cooperation with “men of good will everywhere,” our people must know the facts. They must know the range of expert opinion. They must be skilled in weighing the facts and in evaluating conflicting opinions. They must be practiced in working together cooperatively to solve their common problems of life. They must be willing to act intelligently on the important issues of our times.” (p. viii)

“The general approach to the fields covered in BUILDING AMERICA (with examples from “Housing” section included in Volume 1)--

1) *The problem is raised.*

Studies how that 44,000,000 people live in houses that are neither comfortable nor healthful, and that about three-quarters of these live in miserable hovels in urban and rural areas. We have the natural resources necessary to house our people decently, and the human resources for building. Who is talking the problem?

2) *The achievements are cited.*

A number of examples are given of what private and public groups have done to better housing conditions in the United States. The achievement under the war emergency are also cited.

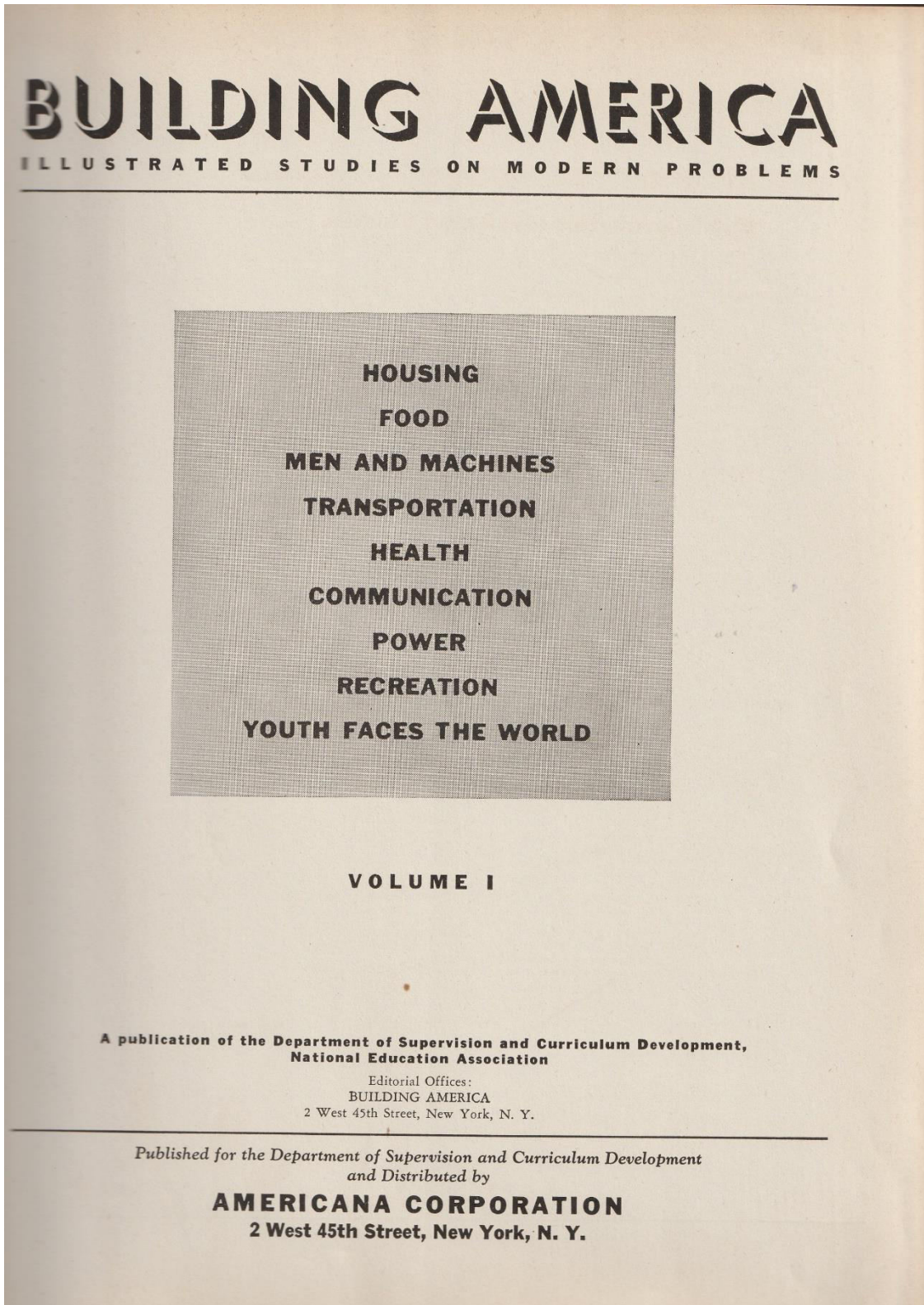
3) *The possibilities for bettering the situation are presented.*

Experts say that the post-war years present a double challenge and a double opportunity to the American people. Jobs in the building trades will be needed to help prevent a post-war slump. The need for building will be greater than ever because of limited construction and repair during the war. Out of these two conditions our slum dwellings may disappear.” (p. ix)

“The facts used in BUILDING AMERICA are gathered from the newest and best available sources. Students are given pertinent information about the problems considered, but are left free to draw their own solutions. This technique has many distinctive values. It vitalizes the problem through the consideration of conflicting opinions. It challenges the student to determine the relative merits of current opinions. It help him to understand how various groups of different interests and backgrounds are affected by proposals. It practices the student in making up his own mind regarding modern social controversies. In short, this technique helps students to develop habits and skills that they need as citizens of our democracy.” (p. ix)

“Each study unit is voluminously illustrated, about half the page surface usually being devoted to graphic material. These illustrations have been carefully selected for authenticity and variety; to attract the attention of students; and to convey information directly, simply, and concretely to them; to stir thinking. Photographs visualize what they may never be able to study at first-hand. With dramatic humor, cartoons summarize statistical data in a way which makes it easy to under important points.” (p. ix)

Below are copies of the Title page, and the summary of sections page



Building America Illustrated Studies

Available either as single units or as sets in the form of Bound Volumes. Volumes I, II, III, IV, V, VI, VII, and VIII are continuously available in bound form.

VOLUME II

OUR CONSTITUTION
SAFETY
CLOTHING
SOCIAL SECURITY
STEEL
WE CONSUMERS
CONSERVATION
MOVIES

VOLUME V

OUR LATIN-AMERICAN
NEIGHBORS
COMMUNITY PLANNING
ADVERTISING
ARTS AND THE AMERICAN
CRAFTSMAN
CAN AMERICA STAY
NEUTRAL?
RAILROADS
FINDING YOUR JOB
POLITICS

VOLUME III

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OUR FARMERS
LABOR
EDUCATION
OUR FEDERAL GOVERNMENT
CHEMISTRY AT WORK
WAR OR PEACE?
SEEING AMERICA

VOLUME VI

WE AMERICANS
SHIPS AND MEN
BANKING
RUBBER
RADIO
OUR NORTHERN NEIGHBORS
AMERICA AND FOREIGN
TRADE
THE AMERICAN THEATER

VOLUME VIII

THE WAR AGAINST INFLATION
WINGED AMERICA
PLANNING FOR THE POST-WAR
WORLD
THE EAST INDIES
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PHOTOGRAPHY
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VOLUME VII

TOTAL DEFENSE
TRAINING FOR NATIONAL
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AMERICA'S OUTPOSTS
THE AMERICAN INDIANS
LIBRARIES
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II. Excerpt from a history of "Building America"

"In assembling these materials, concerning current socio-economic problems, Hanna and his associates had written to more than one thousand sources."

[From "History of a Civic Education Project Implementing the Social-Problems Technique of Instruction" by Robert Ernest Newman Jr. (Unpublished) dissertation submitted to the School of Education of Stanford University 1960 (accessed by request from the Paul Hanna papers--Hoover Institution Library and Archives, Stanford University) (p. 29-31)]

But how could students study the social-economic realities and controversial issues of the present? History books could not be expected to supply this current information and background data. As a partial answer to this question, the Department of the Social Studies requested that Paul R. Hanna, Assistant Professor of Education at Teachers College, Columbia University, present his collection of some of the available materials on current socio-economic concerns and display them at the 1932 Atlantic City N.E.A. Convention. In assembling these materials, concerning current socio-economic problems, Hanna and his associates had written to more than one thousand sources. The sources were principally groups which had free or inexpensive materials available for use in the schools to study the issues underlying many modern socio-economic problems. These organizations represented many differing viewpoints on issues of current national significance. Material was received from innumerable sources. The Chamber of Commerce of the United States sent pamphlets, monographs and other material. The labor unions seemed very willing to present their views on many complex problems of the day. The National Association of Manufacturers sent boxes of material. Fraternal groups, religious groups, the private power industry, the railroads, numerous government agencies, and special interest lobbying groups gave material which might be used as supplementary

←
highlighted
quote
←

resources in school programs centered on discussion and study of controversial socio-economic questions. Many books, photographs, and other pictorial materials were also exhibited.

Hanna reported that great interest, encouragement, and appreciation were expressed to him by the large number of N.E.A. delegates who perused the collection. However, many--including Hanna--felt that this type of material was not suitable for extensive use in the junior and senior high schools. Their principal reasons were the following: it was not sufficiently illustrated; about 90% of the material was written with a partisan bias underlying and permeating it; it was written for adult readers.¹ This approach, then, was not the answer, but just the beginning of an answer to the problem of providing material to stimulate free discussion and study of current and in many cases controversial socio-economic problems in the schools.

During 1953 Hanna continued to enlarge his collection of materials treating socio-economic problems. He also explored various ideas for creating a new and different type of instructional material which would overcome the inadequacies apparent in his collected pamphlets, books, brochures, et cetera. He was very active in a small but

influential group of educators interested in creating a well planned, effective educational program for United States schools. This organization was known as the Society for Curriculum Study.¹

III. The complete "Housing" section from Volume 1 (scanned into jpeg, and copied into this document)





COURTESY CITIZENS' HOUSING COUNCIL OF NEW YORK, INC.

Above. Housing for the Jim Smiths of our country. Here they can have enough light to see, enough air to breathe, enough room to move in. Here the children know that life is not bounded by high walls and narrow alleys.

The Housing Problem Is Important to All of Us

JIM SMITH, American, *knows* there is a housing problem. A few years ago he tried to move his family out of a slum in which they lived into a new federal Housing Project that was being built in his neighborhood. But he got there too late. "No more vacancies," he was told. Then, just before Pearl Harbor was attacked, Jim heard of a good defense job in another city. He got the job, but he could find no vacant apartment near his work. For three months he and his family lived in an auto trailer on the outskirts of the town. Two months later, the Smith family "got located" in one of the new victory housing projects. But no one has to tell the Smiths that America has a housing problem. They know!

OVER. COURTESY CITIZENS' HOUSING COUNCIL OF NEW YORK, INC.

Experts reported in 1941 that about 44,000,000 Americans (12,000,000 families) live in houses that fall short of being comfortable and healthful homes. According to Robert D. Kohn, a housing expert, about 30,000,000 people "are living in miserable hovels." Other housing experts say that our country is in urgent need of anywhere from 3 to 10 million low-priced homes. The shortage of good housing is one of the most serious problems confronting America.

Most Americans know there is a housing problem. Some have been hearing or reading about it for years. Like Jim Smith, many have been actually "living" it. Before 1941, the chief problem, stated simply, was this: How can the United States clear the ugly and unhealthy slums in its cities and rural areas, and provide decent homes for families of low incomes? By 1942, the most urgent problem was: How can the United States provide decent homes for war workers—fast?

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Something has been done about both these phases of the housing problem. In the early 1900's the housing problem was spot-lighted by welfare and other groups who began to take stock of the homes in which our people lived. They made distinctions between good and bad housing. Some of them drew up the standards which they believed were necessary for healthy, decent, and comfortable living.

Some communities set up standards that builders had to meet in erecting new houses. But many communities had no such standards and little could be done to make decent homes out of old slum dwellings. During the depression of the 1930's, the Federal government started a national program to tear down the slums and put up decent dwellings

for people with lower incomes. In 1940, when the national defense program was started, another kind of housing program was launched to take care of the families whose workers had jobs in defense plants. When war came, Uncle Sam was the largest real estate man in the world!

No one will deny that some progress has been made in solving America's housing problem. What are the facts? What has been accomplished so far? How far from our "decent housing" goal are we? Many things will be different after the war. What is being done to safeguard our housing gains and insure better housing in post-war America? These are some of the important questions discussed in this "Housing" unit of *Building America*.

Below. An "over-the-roof-tops" view of one of our country's slum areas. There are still too many areas such as this in our land, where

people live in houses without adequate fire protection, without sanitary facilities, without light or air.

COURTESY FARM SECURITY ADMINISTRATION, PHOTO BY MYDANS



Where Do the American People Live?

"THERE'S no place like home!" To the average person, home is a place of comfort and rest after a day of work. It is a place where he can enjoy the company of his family and friends. Home may also mean a great deal to him because he has struggled to save enough money to furnish it, or because he



COURTESY WPA

Above. Main Street of Smalltown, U.S.A. Millions of us live in small towns where everybody knows everybody's first name, where city and country often meet around a post office or a railroad station.

has spent time, effort, and money in planning, building, improving, and beautifying it. To him, as to all of us, a good home is among the most important things in life.

We, the 132 million people in the United States live today in 35 million different homes. Some of these homes are concentrated in urban centers of all descriptions—giant port cities, trading centers, coal and iron towns, automobile cities, shoe-making, textile and clothing centers, oil towns, and small agricultural villages. Other homes are scattered over rural areas in the wheat, the cotton, and the stock-raising belts, and in the dairy and fruit-growing regions.

More than half our population lives in towns and cities. A few of our large cities each has as many residents as have thousands of villages combined. About 12 per cent of the American people live in 5 metropolitan centers, each with a population of 1 million or more. Our 194 large cities with populations ranging from 50,000 to 1 million, take care of 23 per cent of the people. In 3,265 small cities, each with a population of 2,500 to 50,000, live 21 per cent of our people. The remaining 44 per cent live in more than 13,000 villages and on millions of farms.*

America is a land of sharp contrasts in housing. At one extreme are good homes owned or rented by families whose incomes amount to \$5,000 or

*See "Seeing America," "Our Farmers," and "Community Planning" in the *Building America* series.



more a year. At the other extreme are poor homes inhabited by families whose annual incomes have never equalled more than \$1,000.

The best homes are located in sections or communities which are far from mills, factories, and railways. Many possess an ample lawn with shade trees and shrubbery. Most of them are well-designed, and in good repair. Each dwelling has rooms for special uses—sitting room, dining room, bedroom, and bath—and is large enough to accom-

modate comfortably every member of the family. All are equipped with modern plumbing, electric lights, a gas or an electric stove, and adequate heating. These houses of the better types have everything that makes for good living.

The worst homes, however, lack the barest essentials for a decent existence. These homes can be found almost anywhere in America—along the pushcart boulevards of large cities, and in the tumbledown houses which blight many farm areas.



Left. Everything that money can buy in the way of housing. This luxurious \$15,000,000 estate is a palace set in the midst of 300 acres of garden. The cost of running and keeping up this estate totals more than \$100,000 a year.

ACME NEWSPICTURES

Right. One of America's rural slums. The houses do not have a single modern improvement. Whole families live in a single filthy, shabby room. These dilapidated unsanitary shacks lean crazily against each other. There is lack of any semblance of playground space for the children who call them "home."

COURTESY FARM SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

Left. Chicago, metropolis where over 3 million people live and work. From an airplane the city stretches almost as far as the eye can see, thousands upon thousands of buildings—offices, factories, apartments, and small homes. Some people live near their places of work; others live in suburbs many miles from the main business center.

ACME NEWSPICTURES



What Is Poor Housing in Rural America?

A FARMER crawls out of bed, lights a kerosene lamp, and sleepily pulls on his clothes. The sun has not yet risen. He gropes his way to the barn by the light of a lantern to begin his daily chores. The barn is set too close to the house, but all the water for the animals and for the cooking and washing in the house must be drawn up by hand from the well and carried in pails. The family toilet is outdoors and is too close to the well for health's sake. There is no drain to take waste water from the kitchen, so it is dumped anywhere on the ground near the house and makes a breeding place for insects. A bath at the end of the day in the small, round tub used for washing clothes means extra work—more trips to the well and perhaps a newly-

Below. The farm house shown below is an example of poor farm housing but by no means the worst. The house, poorly constructed to

ACME NEWSPICTURES

made fire in the kitchen stove to take the chill off the water.

The walls and roof of the house are thin, old, and unpainted. The place is hot in the summer, drafty in winter, and leaks like a sieve when it rains. Even at midday the rooms are not light, for there are too few windows. Windows and doors lack screens, too; so flies, mosquitoes, and other insect pests swarm in as soon as the weather is warm. This farmer, his wife, and their two children live in a rural slum.

One authority states that "It is a conservative estimate that one-third of the farm families of the nation are living on standards so low as to make them slum families." Robert D. Kohn, housing expert, believes that we have worse slums in little towns of 5,000 and in cities of 100,000 than most of the big towns ever saw.

If standards that are generally considered necessary for city homes were used in judging farm homes, we would find 80 per cent of all farm homes substandard. According to the 1940 census, 82.3

begin with, is badly in need of repairs. Inside the house there are no sanitary facilities for the farmer and his family.





COURTESY FARM SECURITY ADMINISTRATION, PHOTO BY LEE

Above. Two children of the tenant farm family that occupies this sorry shack gaze sadly out of the only window their "home" affords.

per cent of all farm homes have no running water. Even with advances made in bringing electricity into the rural areas during the past decade, there are still 68.7 per cent of farm homes without electric lighting. Nearly one in every 10 farms in this country is without any kind of toilet at all. Only 12 per cent of farm homes have indoor toilets, more than 2 per cent of which were in need of major repairs.

The Federal Farm Housing Survey of 1934 showed that 15,200,000 major repairs were needed on the 7,360,212 occupied farm homes covered by the Survey. These repairs were: Foundations, 26.9 per cent; walls, 19.3; roofs, 26.6; chimneys, 16.1; doors and windows, 23.8; screens 20; paint, 21.9; interior walls and ceiling, 28.1; floors, 19.9; and stairs, 3.9.

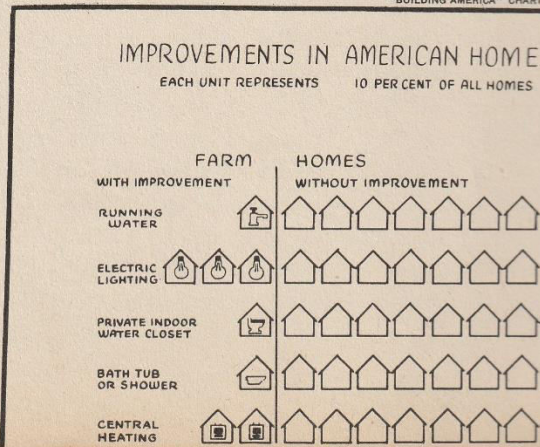
Many people think of overcrowded homes only in connection with city apartments. But in 1940 while only 6 per cent of urban dwellings had more than 1½ persons per room, 16 per cent of farm homes had more than that number per room. One room per person has been judged necessary for

"decent and respectable living," by the United States Department of Agriculture, which has set minimum requirements for farm dwellings.

Experts agree that overcrowding—whether in city or farm homes—is not only socially undesirable, but is a very real menace to the nation's health.

Below. As the chart shows, the great majority of farm homes in our country are still without essential improvements.

"BUILDING AMERICA" CHART





EWING GALLOWAY

What Is Poor Housing in Urban America?

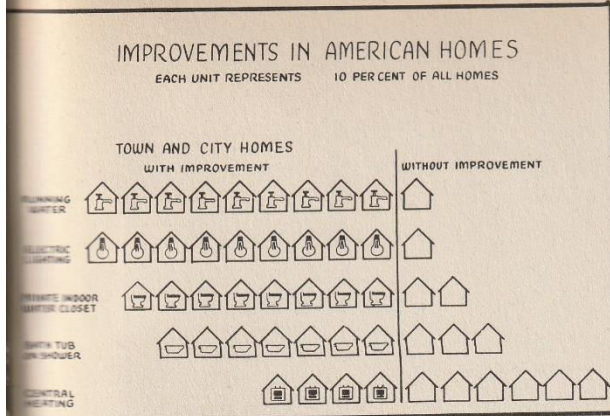
Above. Streets like this are the tenement dwellers' "great outdoors." In New York City there were, in 1942, nearly 500,000 families living in substandard dwellings. Most of these houses had inadequate fire protection, primitive sanitary facilities, and insufficient light and air.

IS the city slum home better than that found in rural areas of America?

Here are city streets swarming with people. Row on row of drab apartment houses, set one against the other. The hallways are narrow, dark, and full of stale odors. The apartments are small and dark. The kitchen in which the family eats, bathes, and washes clothes has but one window and that is on a narrow two-foot airshaft. There is no refrigerator to keep food fresh. There are no closets for pots and pans or for clothing, and no wall space large enough where they could be built in. Each family must heat its own rooms and whatever water is needed for washing and bathing. The toilets in the halls are shared with other families, and they often leak for days before the superintendent of the building can get around to give them attention.

This description of slum housing applies to many dwellings in many large American cities. In New York City, for example, it is reported that nearly two million people or about one-fourth of the population still live in miserable tenements built in a manner declared illegal since 1902, or in other unsafe or unsanitary dwellings. These tenements have 200,000 dark rooms where sunlight never enters.

In some of the slums of Pittsburgh as many as 11 people are to be found living in two small rooms. In Chicago and Philadelphia dirty backyard toilets are shared by many families. Slum sections of many other cities lack city water supply, bathtubs and other sanitary conveniences. Hardly any American city from New York to San Francisco escapes the blot of some poor housing.



SOURCE: 1934 REPORTS OF U. S. DEPT. OF COMMERCE & U.S. DEPT. OF AGRICULTURE 1934

Housing experts call homes unsuitable or "sub-standard" when they lack facilities for the health and safety of the occupants. According to United States Housing Authority, minimum standards for decent, safe, and sanitary housing in the cities include the following:

Every home should have plenty of direct sun light and ventilation; running water, a toilet, and a bathtub or shower inside the house for the exclusive use of the family; enough rooms for comfort and privacy; central heating; devices for fire protection; and facilities for the disposal of waste. Homes should be close to transportation facilities to free and adequate schools, and to recreation areas. The number of families per acre and the amount of ground covered by buildings should be limited to avoid overcrowding and allow for light, air, and recreation space.

According to these standards, approximately one-third of our population enjoys good housing; one-third, or nearly 12 million families, are ill housed, and the remaining third live in homes that may be rated only fair.

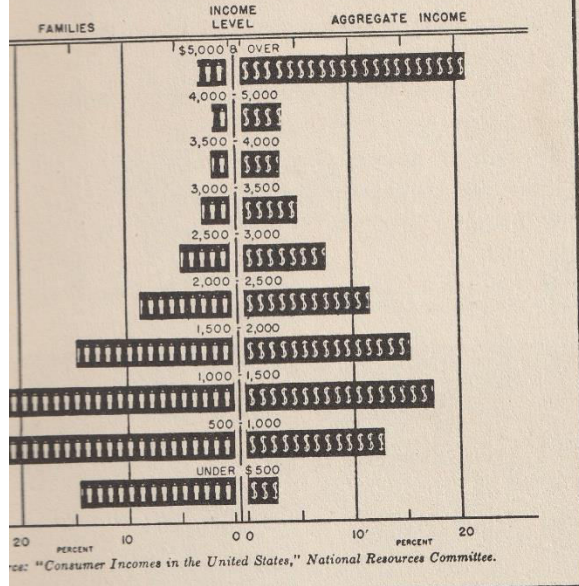
Below. Housework in a cluttered kitchen, sleeping in a dark inside room—this is the hard lot of thousands of slum dwellers.

COURTESY CITIZENS' HOUSING COUNCIL OF NEW YORK, INC.



What Are the Causes and Effects of Poor Housing?

DISTRIBUTION OF FAMILY INCOME IN THE U. S.
BY INCOME LEVEL, 1935-36



Above. Thousands of families throughout the country live in the slums because their incomes are too low to afford anything but slum dwellings. The chart above shows what family incomes were in 1935-36.

THE chief cause of poor housing in America is that a majority of the people cannot afford to live in good homes. The incomes of most families are too low.

In the prosperous year 1929, one-third of America's families had incomes under \$1,200, one-third received \$1,200 to \$2,000, and one-third received over \$2,000. The families with incomes below \$1,200 a year could not afford to buy or rent good homes.

Budget experts believe that a family should spend no more than one-fourth of its income for rent, or no more than twice its yearly income to purchase a home. In 1929 the average city family had an income of \$1,900. Accordingly, it should have paid at most \$40 a month in rent, or \$3,800 to buy a house.

This average family could have rented a home, but it would have found it difficult to buy one. The average rental in 1929 for all rented homes—both urban and rural—was about \$27 a month. The average value of owned homes was \$4,780, which was far above what this average family could pay.

A nation-wide business depression began in the summer of 1929. In the following years, wage-earners in many families lost their jobs or had their wages cut. In 1935-36, according to a report of the National Resources Planning Board, 23 per cent of our families got between \$1,000 and \$1,500, and another 42 per cent got less than \$1,000.

If all the families in this last group had received incomes of \$999 for the year (and many of them did not) the income, divided on a budget plan of one-quarter for rent, one-quarter for food, and one-half for all other expenses, leaves only about \$20 a month for housing. Is good housing available to the average family of four on this budget figure? Can good houses be purchased for \$2,000?

Most good housing is expensive. The reasons for this are many and complex. Among the factors involved are land cost; cost of building materials; cost of labor; taxes; and the cost of upkeep such as repairs and assessments for improvements in streets, sewage, etc.; and profit to the investors.

What are the effects of poor housing? Wherever there is bad housing there is liable to be a high rate of illness and death. Overcrowded homes have higher infant death rates than roomy ones. Darkness tends to develop rickets in young children. Lack of air and sunlight, and of proper sanitation and heating, also help to spread head colds, tuberculosis, infantile paralysis, diphtheria, typhoid fever, and other diseases. Many crimes and disastrous fires are also traceable to poor housing conditions.*

A housing expert has estimated that the total cost of poor housing to the American people in death, illness, and crime amounts to at least \$4,250,000,000 a year—a huge waste which might be prevented in large part by the erection of modern sanitary and fireproof dwellings.

*See "Health," "Crime," and "Community Planning" in the *Building America* series.



COURTESY FRED F. FRENCH CO.

Above. This gang of boys is gambling in the street. These boys live in overcrowded slums which force them to play outside their homes. Experts have found that slums cause gambling, stealing, and other forms of crime.

Left. A fire swept the interior of this building, took the lives of two women, and forced twenty families into the street. Every year fires due to poor housing injure or kill hundreds of people and destroy \$150,000,000 worth of homes.

ACME NEWSPICTURES



COURTESY FARM SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

Above. This woman and her child live in a rural slum. Both are in ill health and the conditions under which they live make it hard for them to regain their health.

Below. Poor housing adds to the number of people who need treatment in hospitals, like the one shown here. Lack of modern conveniences in the home helps to spread dangerous diseases. Lack of play space causes children to play on the street where all too many of them are injured by speeding automobiles and trucks.

EWING GALLOWAY



Have We the Nature



MC LAUGHLIN AERIAL SURVEYS, INC.

LAND—America has an abundance of land on which to build communities of modern dwellings. This stretch of vacant land, thirty minutes from the heart of New York City, is ideal for home building. Nearly every American city has land on its outskirts which is available for building.

RAW MATERIAL—Our country has acres of forests, and rich beds of stone, iron, copper, tin, lime, clay, and sand—all the raw materials needed to build thousands of homes. This tractor is "snaking" a huge log through a forest to the nearest stream. It will be floated down the stream to a sawmill.



...es to House Our People?



This Pittsburgh steel mill produces girders and other steel parts required in the construction of skyscraper apartments and small homes. Hundreds of mills and factories are equipped to turn out steel, lumber, glass, tile, paper, paint, appliances, and other processed materials for building modern homes. In 1942 many of these mills and factories were producing war materials but they are a part of America's resources that will produce materials for homes after the war, as they did before it.

EWING GALLOWAY

TRANSPORTATION—Mile on mile of cars loaded with iron ore, stand in a yard near Duluth, waiting to be hauled to the nearest blast furnace. Trains, boats, and trucks are at hand to transport building materials over a nationwide network of railways, waterways, and highways.

EWING GALLOWAY



Do We Have the Human Resources to House Our People?

AMERICA has the largest and best army of skilled building trades workmen of any country in the world. In normal years there are about 3,000,000 workmen directly engaged in the building industry in America. The photographs on these pages show a few of the occupations of men who work in the building trades.

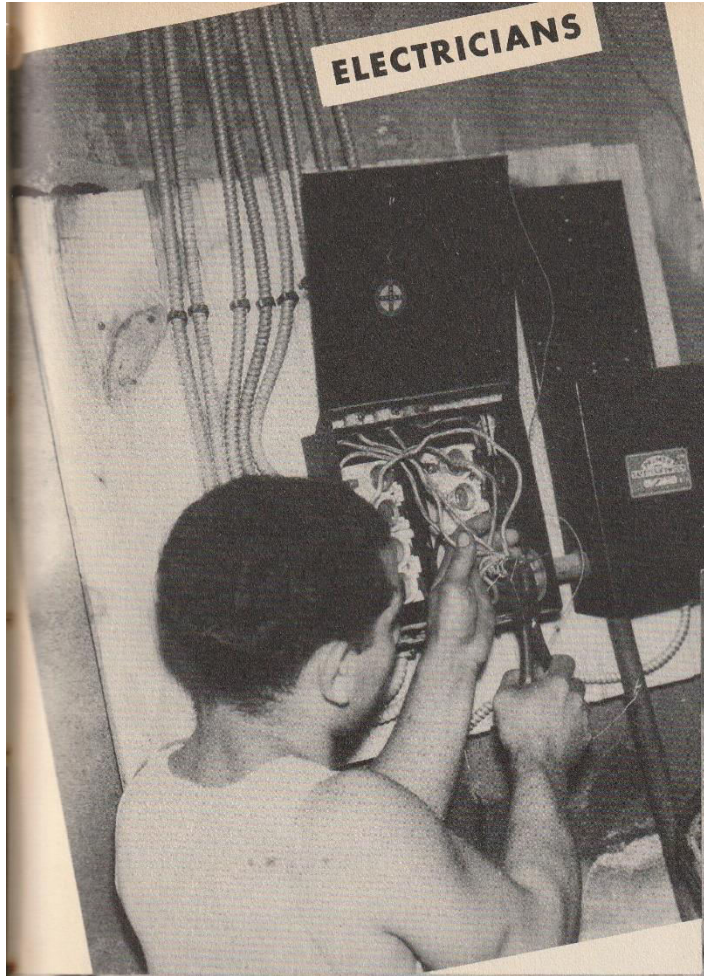
In the past century there have been important changes in the jobs of home builders. Years ago one man alone sometimes built a house from bottom to top. He was a jack-of-all-trades. As time went on, the jack-of-all-trades was replaced by the

master-of-one. Today each workman in the building industry has a job which requires special training and skill. As a result, he must cooperate with many other skilled workmen in order to complete a dwelling. The future holds even more striking changes in building jobs. The builders shown in these photographs are using very simple tools—a saw, a pair of pliers, a pipe-wrench, a trowel, and a hod. No man is employing a modern machine to help him do his work. The carpenter, for example, might produce more and better work with the aid of a power-driven circular or band saw. Mass production in factories of large sections of houses ready to be put in place (prefabrication), ready-made plumbing and electrical units, and paint-spray guns, speed up, improve, and ease the work of many of these laborers.

Experts say that factory prefabrication of parts of homes and the introduction of power machines in building would reduce the cost of housing.



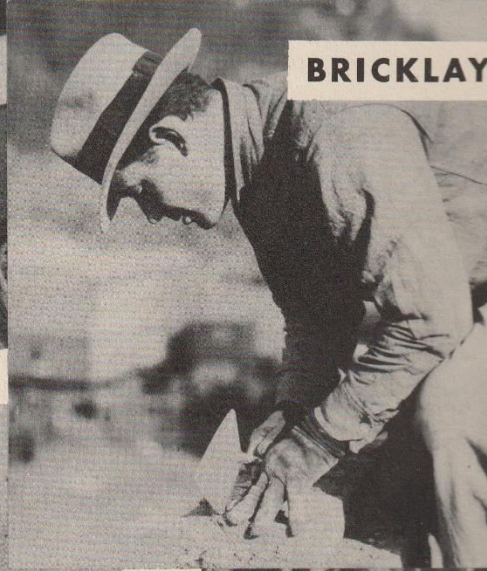
CARPENTER



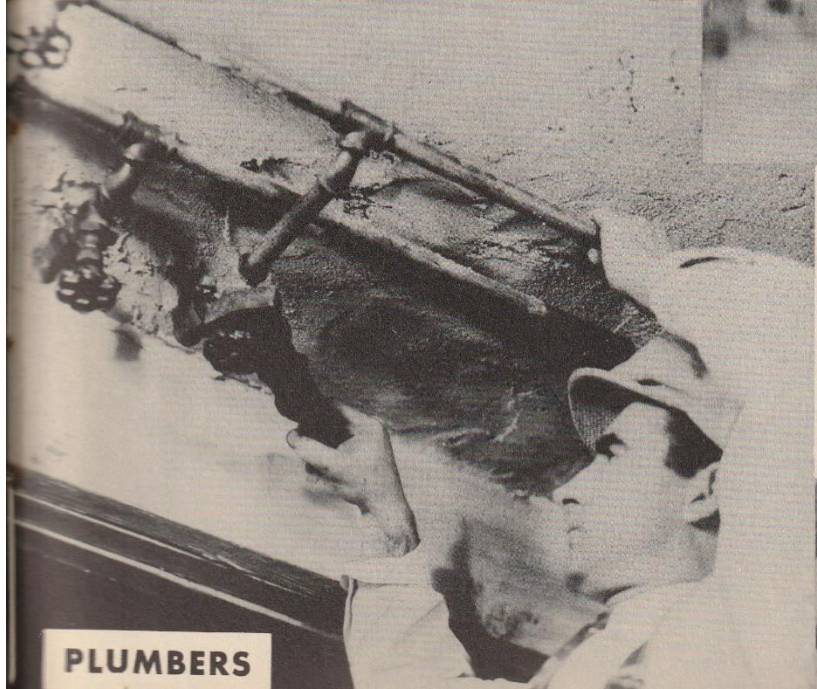
ELECTRICIANS



PLASTER



BRICKLAY



PLUMBERS



GENERAL LABORE



COURTESY THE BUHL FOUNDATION

Above. One of the units in the Buhl Foundation's model housing development in Mt. Washington, Pittsburgh, Pa. The houses face garden courts where children can play, safe from traffic. Every room has outside light and air and all modern conveniences.

What Have Private Groups Done to Improve Housing?

VAST material resources, an abundance of modern skills necessary to use those resources—all these have been available to improve housing conditions. How have they been used?

Some of our people are able to buy land and build the kind of homes they want. Private individuals and companies have erected comfortable modern homes for sale or rent to the most prosperous third of our population; that is, for nearly 12,000,000 families with yearly incomes of \$2,000 or over. Some interested people have tried to provide better housing for middle-income families. Private business enterprises have erected a number of "developments" where well-planned modern dwellings have been constructed for people with moderate incomes to buy or rent.*

In New York City, John D. Rockefeller, Jr. loaned large sums of money at moderate rates of

*See "Community Planning" in the *Building America* series.

interest to several housing projects. One of these for Negro families is the Paul Laurence Dunbar Apartments. These homes rent for \$14.50 per room per month.

In Chicago, moderate-cost apartments have been constructed for white families by the Marshall Field Estate, and for Negro families by Julius Rosenwald. In Pittsburgh, the Buhl Foundation built Chatham Village, a garden community. Homes in the Village rent for an average of \$11.35 per room per month.

Slum-clearance projects and homes for families with moderate incomes have been built by "limited dividend" corporations. Under State or Federal laws, the owners of these housing projects do not have to pay taxes on them for a stated period. In return, they limit their dividends (profits) on the enterprises. An example of limited dividend housing is Knickerbocker Village, in New York City built by the Fred F. French Company. This company secured an \$8,000,000 loan from the Federal government. By limiting profits, it obtained exemption from New York taxes for 20 years. The

site of the development had been a slum area known as "the Lung Block" because of the high rate of tuberculosis among its former residents.

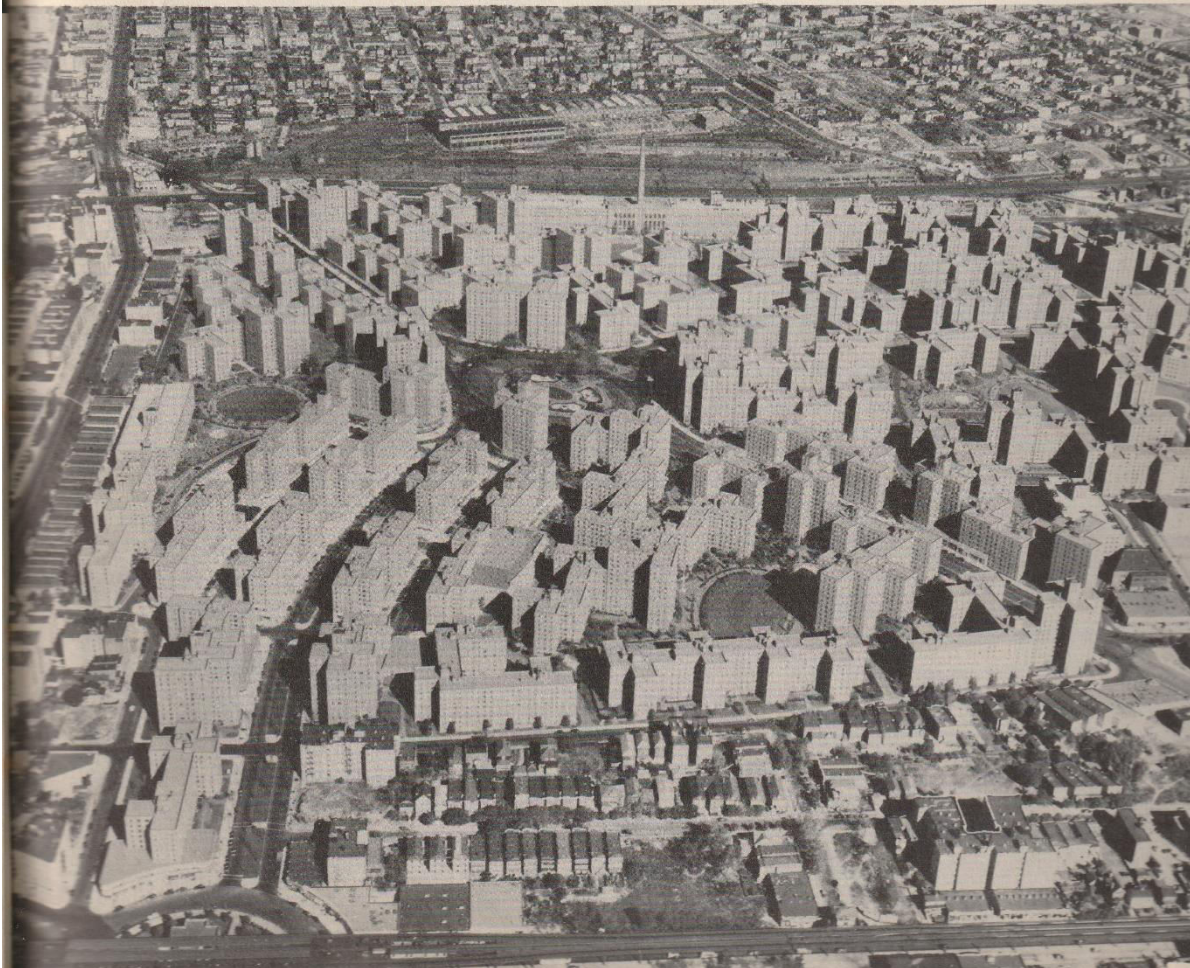
Other private groups have provided "investment" housing. In this type of housing the builder investor gets a limited, but safe income from his investment rather than a quick but less sure profit. One of the most interesting current experiments of this type is the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company's Parkchester development in the Bronx, New York. This company has invested \$50,000,000 for what is said to be the largest housing development in the world to be built as a single operation. This project can house 40,000 people of the middle-income group. The 51 buildings in the development are completely occupied.

Experiments in cooperatives and mutual home ownership companies have also been tried. Before 1930 the Amalgamated Clothing Workers of America had built two large cooperative apartment houses in New York City. Each family in them owned its own apartment and shared the running expenses of the buildings.

All these efforts of private individuals and groups to give America better housing have helped to provide us with experience in planning, in the use of space and materials, and in cost and in management. But they have not been able to provide houses for the average worker who earns less than \$30 a week. In the early 1930's it became apparent that some form of government aid was needed to provide better housing for this group.

Below. An airview of Parkchester, the Metropolitan Life Insurance Company's housing development in New York City. The 51 apartment

buildings are from 7 to 13 stories high and contain 12,272 apartments for families of moderate incomes.





What Does Government-Financed Housing Look Like?

COURTESY U.S. HOUSING AUTHORITY

Above. Up to 1941 over \$128,000,000 in wages had been paid to laboring men who worked on the 408 USHA projects under construction or completed by that year. Additional millions of dollars have been paid to men making and transporting the building materials for USHA homes.



Right. Only low-income families live in USHA homes. They pay rents averaging less than they formerly paid for substandard quarters in the slums. The difference means more money for food and clothes and a healthier people.

COURTESY U.S. HOUSING AUTHORITY



COURTESY FEDERAL HOUSING ADMINISTRATION

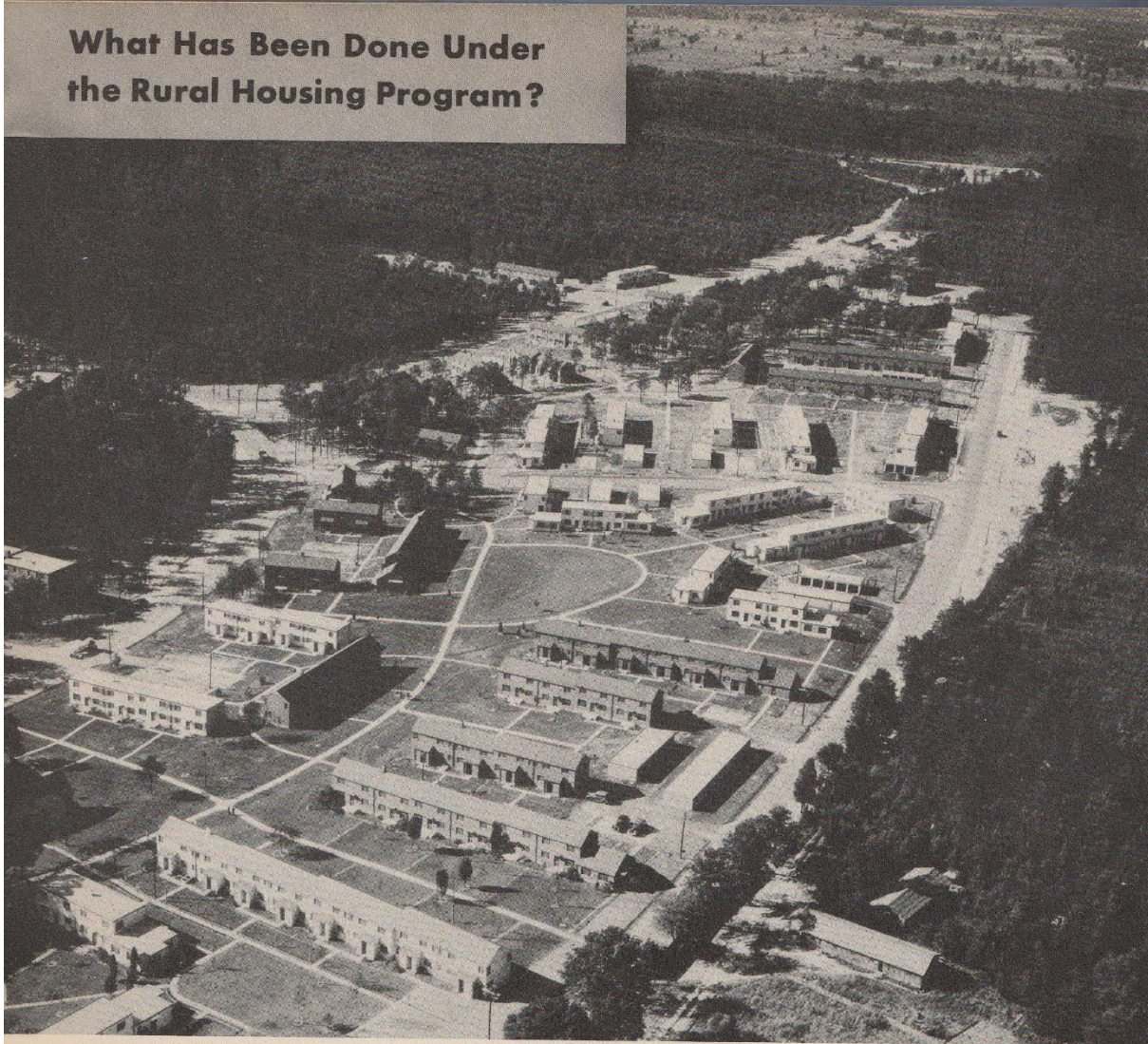
Above. Believe it or not, the old-fashioned house at the left was made over into the attractive modern house shown right. This is one of the many homes in the country that have been modernized under the FHA.

Below. A large modern housing project in New York City built with USHA loans. Today the people who occupy these houses live in clean, airy, weathertight homes. Yesterday they existed in shacks and slums.

COURTESY U.S. HOUSING AUTHORITY



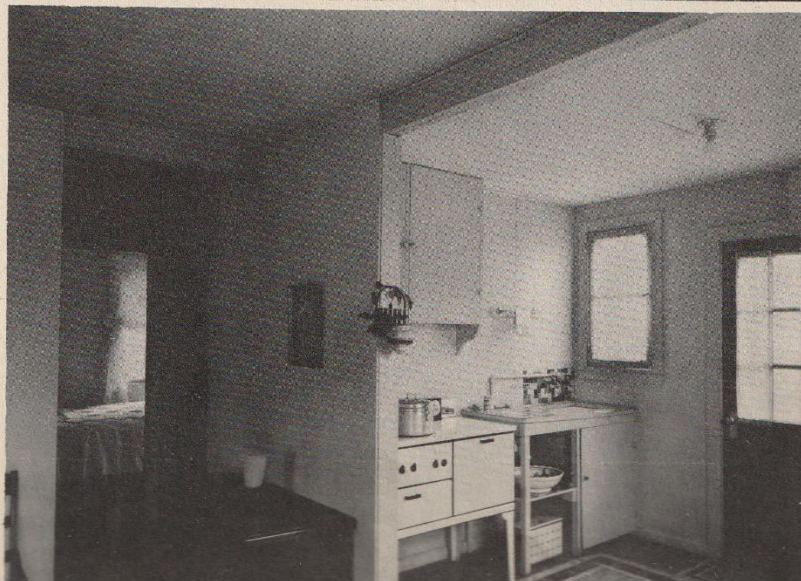
What Has Been Done Under the Rural Housing Program?



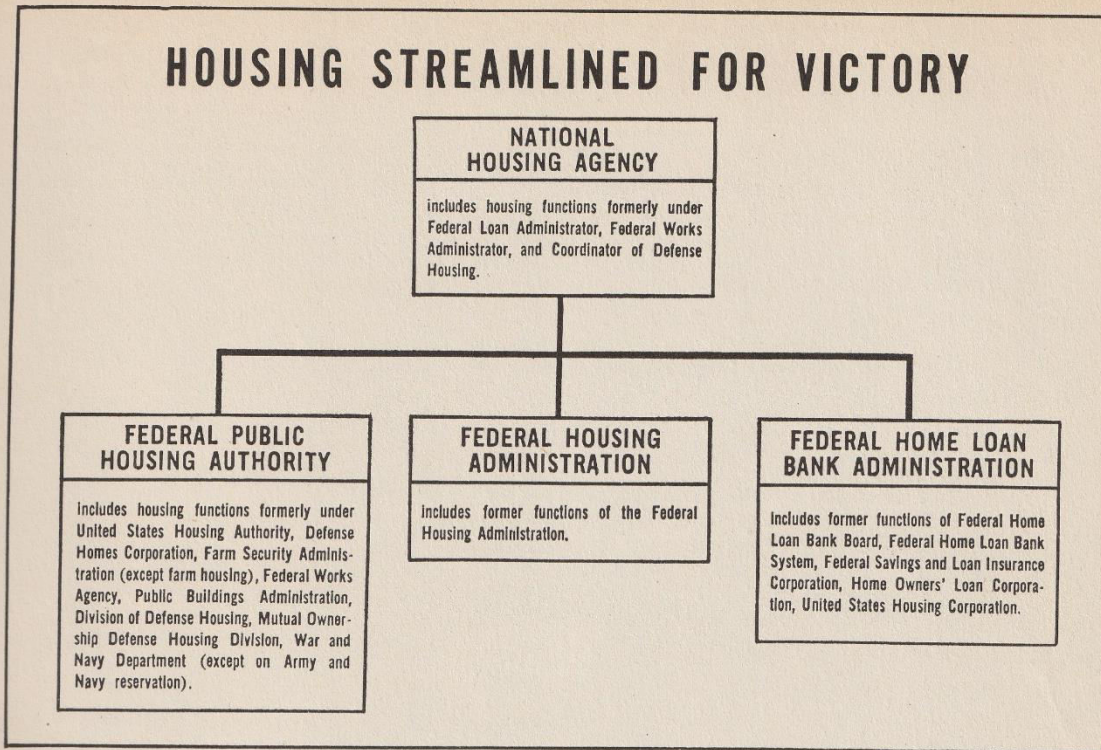
COURTESY FARM SECURITY ADMINISTRATION

Above. An airview of Greenbelt, the planned community built in Maryland by the Farm Security Administration. Some 1,000 families live here in a community which combines city conveniences and country beauty.

Right. The interior of a low-cost house in North Carolina built with the aid of a government loan. This is one of many attractive small homes built by families throughout the country who have received help from one of the government's housing agencies.



HOUSING STREAMLINED FOR VICTORY



Housing Goes to War

THE war put a "new face" on America's housing problem in 1940. Industrial plants long idle hired men by the thousands. New plants were built, old plants were enlarged, and many peacetime industries were converted to war production. Millions of workers and their families migrated to war production areas, sometimes thousands of miles

Below. The trailers shown here are stopgap shelters, quickly supplying homes needed for a short time only. Tires are demounted for re-use and the trailer is jacked-up.

COURTESY U.S. HOUSING AUTHORITY



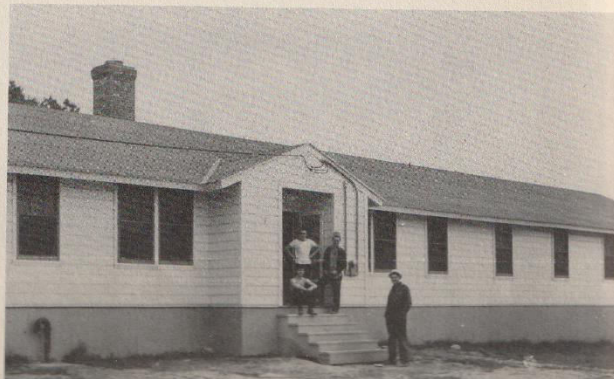
away, to get jobs.* Homes had to be found for them. When America entered the war, Commissioner Herbert Emmerich of the Federal Public Housing Authority stated:

"We have only one job—to produce homes for war workers fast. We must see that war production is not bottlenecked by a shortage of homes . . . Until the victory has been won, the slum clearance program is definitely out. We don't have building materials for homes outside of defense areas."

*See "Total Defense" and "Training for National Defense" in the *Building America* series.

Below. Dormitories for single persons contain simple rooms and common sanitary facilities. Furniture, bedding, and towels are furnished. Buildings are to last for the duration of the war.

COURTESY U.S. HOUSING ADMINISTRATION



The housing picture in this war is a much different one than that of World War I. In 1918, the government's experiment in building homes for shipyard and other war workers was just taking shape when the Armistice was signed. This time machinery was available for a victory housing program. Our entrance into the war had been preceded by a year and a half of defense housing and 10 years of government activity in the housing field.

Our public housing program was streamlined in 1942. President Roosevelt created the National Housing Agency which consolidated the sixteen Federal groups dealing with housing into three divisions—the Federal Housing Administration, the Federal Home Loan Bank Administration, and the Federal Public Housing Authority. The first two of these help private concerns finance and build war housing. The FPHA, through local housing authorities, uses Federal funds to construct public housing for war workers and their families.

The houses built under this war program include several different types to meet the various kinds of housing needs. Stopgap shelters, temporary housing, and permanent homes are being erected in war production areas.

Where the housing shortage for war workers is most critical, "stopgap" shelters are provided. These consist mainly of trailers located in parks that are like miniature cities. These parks are equipped with gas and electric connections, running

Below. Demountables are built where there may not be a permanent need for houses; they can be removed after the war. Demountables are usually prefabricated at the factory.

COURTESY U.S. HOUSING ADMINISTRATION



water, garbage stations, and central buildings with toilets, showers, and laundry tubs.

In areas where additional housing is needed only for the war period, "temporary housing" is provided by "dormitories" and "demountables." The dormitories have furnished rooms for single persons and are intended to last only for the duration of the war. The demountables are houses built in sections which could be set up in one place and when no longer needed there, taken down, moved, and used for other purposes.

In areas where it is felt that the need for additional housing will continue after the war, permanent houses are constructed. These permanent houses are built by local housing authorities to meet the needs of their particular communities.

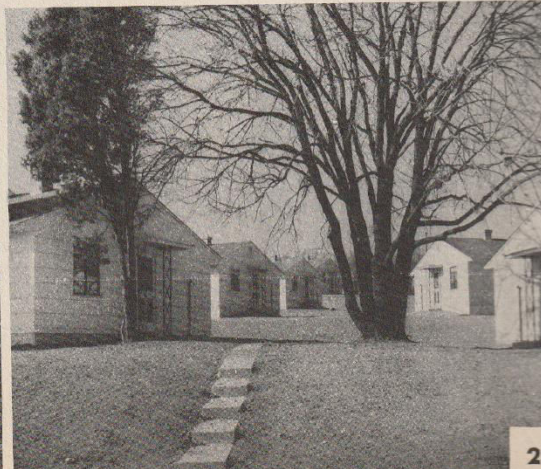
It has been planned that after the war some of these permanent houses would become part of the public low-rent housing program and that families from slum areas could move in when war workers move out. Other houses were to be sold to private persons.

It was not only public housing that went to war. All housing was affected. Private building was limited to the construction of homes for war workers, and to repairs necessary for the protection of health and safety.

The whole program of homes for war workers has been planned with an eye to the future, so that the housing constructed will help to provide adequate housing in peacetime and not, as after World War I, become the "slums of the future."

Below. Permanent housing is built where additional homes will still be needed after the war. Some will become part of the public slum clearance program; others will be sold to private persons.

COURTESY U.S. HOUSING ADMINISTRATION





Can Housing Be a Post-War Opportunity for America?

WHAT will the "House of Tomorrow" look like? Experts disagree. They are unanimous, however, in predicting that there will be a gigantic housing program after the war. This program, they say, will offer plenty of opportunity for both public and private activity.

The National Resources Planning Board places housing high on its list of desirable public works recommended to take up the slack in employment when war industries shut down. "The end of the war will offer the people of the United States a chance to rebuild American cities . . . We shall emerge from war with more skilled workers than

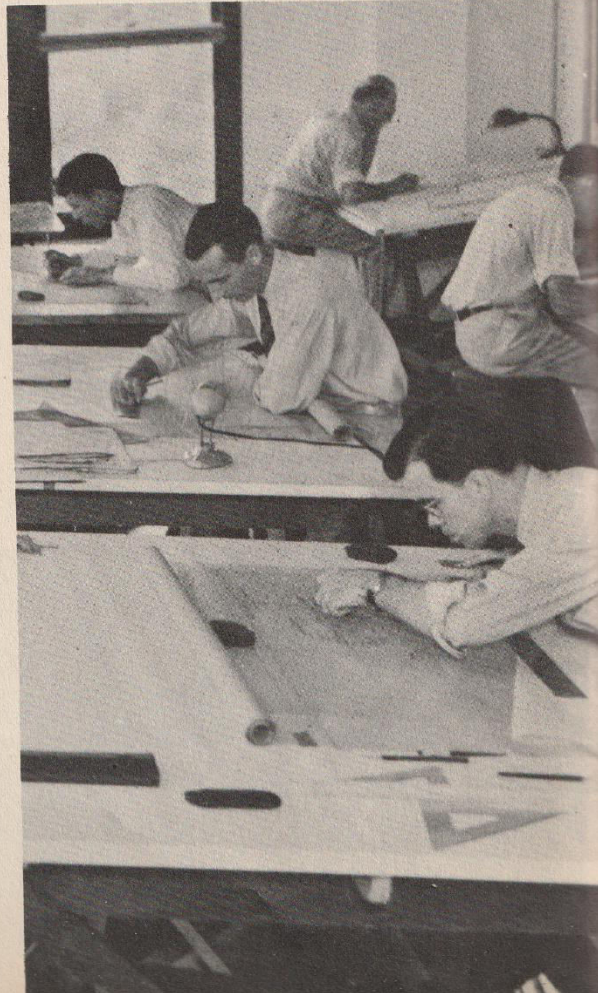
ever before, with more power, more steel and aluminum, with new plastics—with the greatest industrial plant in our history. We must keep it at work, because only by full employment can we be assured of that freedom from want and fear which provides the basis for the other freedoms for which we are fighting."*

Housing experts point to an additional factor which will create a demand for enormous quantities of post-war housing. Never during the past twenty-five years, they say, have we reached a level of building construction high enough to keep pace with the annual need for new houses. With limited construction during the war, the need for new housing will increase even more.

*Charles S. Asher, *Better Cities*, National Resources Planning Board, April, 1942, p.1.

Plans for post-war America's housing program are slowly but surely taking shape. Millions of the country's poorly housed families look

COURTESY CITIZENS' HOUSING COUNCIL OF NEW YORK, INC.



Rural housing offers an almost limitless field for expansion during the post-war years. The need for repairs, improvements, replacements, and additional homes is so great that rural housing, say the experts, can absorb any amount of money and building power available.

Nathan Straus, former administrator of the USHA, foresees a gigantic post-war public housing program. "Of course, the major portion of home building when the war is over, will be done by private enterprise," Mr. Straus says. "But, in spite of all the stories you hear about pre-fabricated houses and mass production of homes, private enterprise has produced practically no decent housing within the means of families with incomes of less than \$1,400 a year. Thus, all

hopefully ahead for the slumless America that is sure to come. And as the walls of the slum houses are torn down there will rise from the debris the decent housing that America can have.

private home building is for the top income half . . . I propose that we resolve to do the job of wiping out every slum, rural and urban, in the U.S.A."**

The post-war period will certainly give us the opportunity to "catch up" on housing. But the building of houses alone is not enough. "Plans for housing should be developed concurrently with plans for needed schools, utilities, streets, transportation, recreation facilities and whatever is necessary for making a community in which people can live."***

It will be up to the American people to make the most of the housing opportunities available to them in the future.

**Quoted in the *New York Times*, May 22, 1942.

***From Sidney Maslen, *Recent Trends in Housing in the United States*, a mimeographed address.

