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# PUBLIC HOUSING

## Weekly News

FROM AMERICAN COMMUNITIES ABOLISHING SLUMS AND BUILDING LOW-RENT HOUSING



Vol. 1, No. 34

Federal Works Agency, U. S. Housing Authority—Nathan Straus, Administrator

April 2, 1940

### Sun Heats Water For Tenants in Miami

Tenants at Edison Courts, 345-unit low-rent housing project in Miami, Fla., have hot water night and day the year 'round, with never a stove or a furnace. The sun heats it. Result: No fuel bills, no smoke, no unwelcome fires to heat water on scorching summer days, plenty of hot water, and more living space inside. Reason: The entire heating apparatus is outside, on the roof.

Solar heat is not new. The sun has been heating our part of the universe for about 500,000 centuries. But the idea of utilizing the sun's rays to heat water for domestic use has been developed only in the last quarter of a century.

The system generally employed is simple. Shallow, glass-covered trays are built into the roof surface so as to obtain a maximum of sunlight exposure. Inside the trays are tubes of copper (an excellent heat conductor) resting on a copper base. The tubes run from the heaters to a well-insulated storage tank, also on the roof. Water, sun-heated in coils, is stored in the tanks.

(Continued on page 2)



Above is a laundry unit at the Miami project. The glass-covered heating tray, containing the coils which circulate water to the storage tanks, occupies about one-half the roof area. The chimneylike structures at either end of the roof enclose the storage tanks. In the picture at the right, heaters and storage tanks are clearly visible. Solar water heaters are used extensively in both Florida and southern California. Buildings are constructed of 8-inch concrete blocks, stuccoed. Roof covering is cement shingle tile.

### Rehousing of "Smith Family" Costs USHA \$6.30 Monthly, Booklet Shows

#### Maximum Federal Contribution Not More Than 30 Percent of Rental

A question uppermost in the minds of many people is "What Does the Housing Program Cost?" USHA's latest publication, which bears that title, contains a practical demonstration of what the costs are, and who pays them, in a typical USHA-aided project.

Part III of the booklet is entitled, "The USHA Plan: A Family Example." It presents a cost break-down of the new dwelling of the Smith Family in the Anytown Housing Authority's project. The Smith home has an over-all cost of \$4,500. To amortize it over a period of 60 years and pay taxes, utilities, operating costs, maintenance, repairs, replacements, etc., would mean that the economic rent, including utilities, would total \$35.25 per month. Although a very low rent for a \$4,500 house, this is still too high for the Smith Family, who are now paying all they can, about \$21 a month.

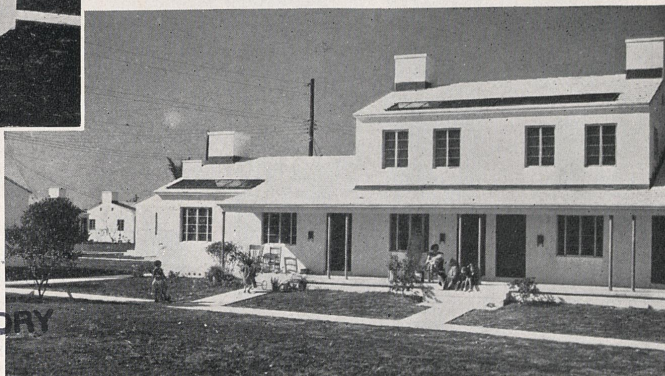
Therefore, the Federal Government and the local government supply contributions to make up the difference. The share of the Federal Government is \$10.50 per month (with a net cost of \$6.30); that of the local government (through tax exemption),

\$5.50. Thus, of the total rent (\$35.25), the Smith Family pays \$19.25, or 55 percent. The locality pays 15 percent, and the USHA pays 30 percent. However, due to a profit on the loans (USHA borrows at 1 1/2 percent; lends at 3 percent), the net cost of USHA's share may be as low as 18 percent, instead of 30 percent.

Parts I and II of the booklet explain the financial provisions of the USHA program at present and as called for in pending legislation. An interesting feature of Part II is the bar chart comparing various types of annual Federal expenditures. It shows that the annual cost of the USHA program, as expanded under pending legislation, would be only \$35,000,000 in a peak year, an infinitesimal amount when compared with \$2,182,000,000 annual expenditure for Relief, Welfare, and Social Security, or \$1,610,000,000 for National Defense, or \$1,000,000,000 for Agriculture and Natural Resources. Another interesting chart compares the annual per capita cost to the Federal Government of providing funds for one CCC boy, one person on relief, one veteran pension to one person, agricultural benefits to one farmer, decent housing, under the USHA plan, for one person. (See chart on p. 2.)

Part IV discusses seven fallacies concerning the financing plan of the USHA, and Part V reviews the positive benefits of the program to the Nation, the City, and the individual.

Copies are available upon application to the United States Housing Authority.



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# Construction and Maintenance Costs Are Lowered by Using Cement Floors

Approximately 63 percent of the 163 USHA-aided projects on which contract awards had been authorized by January 1, 1940, will have cement finish floors. The comfort and livability of dwelling units with floor surfaces of this type, particularly in the South and West, have been indicated by a general acceptance on the part of tenants in a number of projects, such as Liberty Square (PWA) in Miami; Chalmers Street, Rosewood, and Santa Rita in Austin, Tex.; Westlake Terrace in Youngstown, Ohio; and Brewster Addition in Detroit.

The use of cement finish floors permits savings in construction and maintenance costs, which are reflected in lower rent schedules. Cement finish floors are lower in first costs than concrete floors covered with other finishes such as wood, linoleum, or asphalt tile, and when properly constructed they require practically no maintenance or repairs.

From the health point of view, concrete floors are considered equally as satisfactory as other types. There is no evidence that well constructed concrete floors will disintegrate and dust sufficiently to make them troublesome. Resilience tests made by the National Bureau of Standards indicate that there is not a great difference between concrete, asphalt, or hardwood surfaces. In this connection, fatigue is closely associated with psychological reactions and is dependent on shoe materials to a much greater extent than on the walking surface. Floor surface temperature is directly related to the conductivity of the materials used, and there is no great difference in the conductivity of concrete and wood floors in corresponding types of construction.

Preconceived opinions and experience with poorly constructed cement floors have resulted in some opposition to their use. Today satisfactory living conditions plus attractive treatment of concrete floor surfaces with integral colors, granolithic finishes, etc., are rapidly altering unfavorable attitudes.

Whatever may be the objection to concrete floors, it is interesting to note that a definite majority of tenants cover the floors with rugs or linoleum mats regardless of the type of flooring.

Actual experiences at several of the projects with concrete floors are interesting. One Negro tenant in the Anson Borough Homes project in Charleston, S. C., explained "I don't care what the floors are; they suit me fine because there ain't no cracks for the wind to blow through." The Resident Manager at Westlake Terrace in Youngstown, Ohio, lives in one of the dwelling units and reports that his two small children have never been uncomfortable playing on the cement finish floor and that they notice no appreciable difference between the floor and room temperature. Three hundred applicants for a Columbus, Ga., project were interviewed in one of the dwelling units in which the rental office had been set up to give applicants a chance to examine a sample unit. Not a single applicant raised an objection to the cement finish floor. A similar experience was encountered in Macon, Ga.

Objections to concrete floors are often due to experience with poor construction or inferior materials. Unfavorable experience on two projects was traced to faulty construction. In the face of this experience, but understanding the causes, the local authority is planning to use cement finish floors in a third project. The difficulties

with the first two projects emphasize the importance of careful preparation of, and rigid adherence to, specifications. Such care is essential for producing a finished job which will be satisfactory from both an economic and an occupancy standpoint.

An initial installation of cement finish floors in no way restricts subsequent placing of an additional floor covering should this prove highly desirable. Covering material can be added after occupancy at little more expense than would have been involved during initial construction.

## Sun Heats Water

(Continued from page 1)

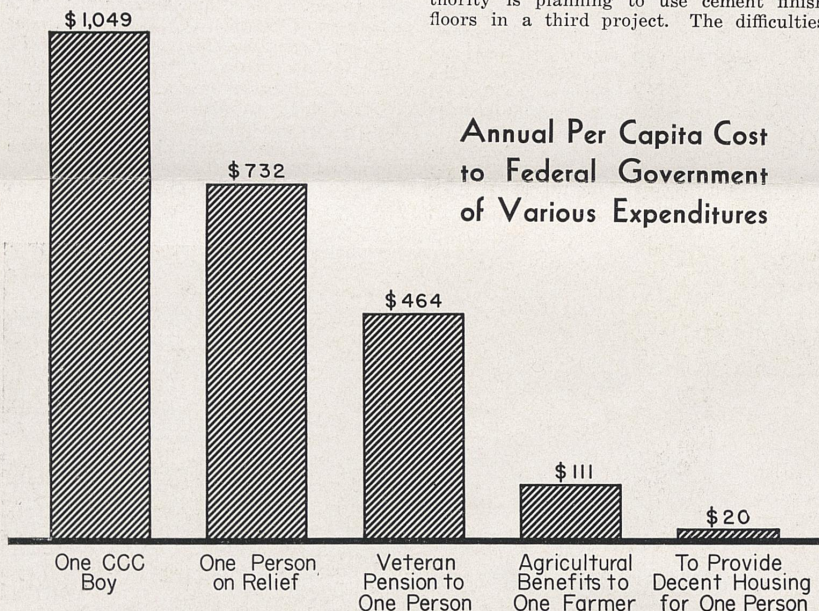
Each heater serves only one family. Tenants report excellent results. Only during extremely long periods of cloudy weather (unusual in Miami) would there be any shortage of hot water. Because of the efficient insulation around the tank, hot water is available both day and night.

The heaters not only provide for the immediate needs of the family but also heat water for central laundry units. So successful have the heaters proved in Miami, that other housing authorities in the South and Southwest are studying the possibilities of using them.

The Miami authority was not experimenting when it installed the sun heaters in its first project. They had already been installed in some 18,000 private homes in the city.

The Miami project was opened last December, with average shelter rents of \$11.90 per month. It serves families whose annual incomes average \$750. The dwellings are one-story row houses and two-story flats. Individual lawns and back yards facilitate a high degree of tenant maintenance. The project was built on vacant land, at an overall cost of \$4,119 per unit. Cooking, lighting, and refrigeration are by electricity. The average cost to the tenant for rent plus all utilities is \$15.95.

Edison Courts is one of three projects in Miami. The other two are now under construction.



From *What Does the Housing Program Cost?* (See story, page 1)

## Index Now Ready

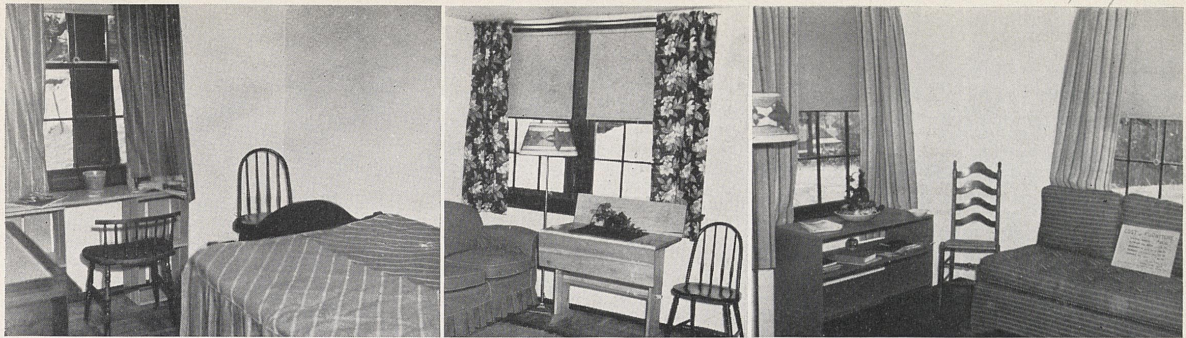
An index of material appearing in PUBLIC HOUSING from August 11, date of the first issue, through February 6, date of issue No. 26, is being distributed with this issue. Printed on heavy buff paper, and punched to permit filing in folders with regular copies of the weekly, it is being sent to all regular receivers of PUBLIC HOUSING.

The index has been prepared in response to many requests from readers who have found the magazine valuable for reference purposes, and who desired a quick method of locating articles in which they were interested.

Only a limited supply will be available, and difficulty in obtaining extra copies is anticipated. For that reason, and because such an index will become increasingly important as time goes on, it is suggested that precautions be taken to avoid losing individual copies.

With the completion of Volume 1 of PUBLIC HOUSING, in August of this year, a second edition of the index will be distributed in similar fashion.

4/11/40



## Knoxville Authority and Tennessee U. Cooperate in Home Demonstrations

How to furnish a 5-room dwelling with attractive and useful furniture for as little as \$134.71 was demonstrated recently at Western Heights and College Homes, USHA-aided projects in Knoxville, Tenn. The Knoxville projects, soon to be opened, have been the objects of special study by the University of Tennessee.

Under the direction of Miss Jessie Harris, head of the Home Economics Department of the University of Tennessee, two demonstration units were set up in each of the Knoxville projects. At College Homes, Negro project, the demonstration units were in one-bedroom dwellings; i. e., living room, kitchen, and bedroom. Total costs of furnishing these units were \$91.77 and \$75.31, respectively. At Western Heights, white project, each unit contained a living room, kitchen, and three bedrooms. Total furnishing costs were \$134.71 and \$146.62, respectively.

In the four demonstration units the average cost of furniture per living room was \$37.98; per kitchen, \$15.05; and per bedroom, \$29.89. In every case the figures represent the cost of acquiring and remodeling or making the furniture, draperies, pictures, pillows, etc.

Apartment No. 1 at Western Heights (living room, kitchen, and three bedrooms) was completely furnished for \$134.71. The cost of furnishing the living room (see picture upper right) was \$35.95.

This included a studio couch, rust with beige stripes; draperies of seersucker, striped orange, green, and yellow; bookshelves, enameled aqua; 1 high backed settee (from kitchen set) enameled aqua; 2 ladder back chairs, stained maple; 1 floor lamp; 1 picture made from scenes cut from tourist map; and 2 pillows of blue floral print.

The bedroom at Western Heights Apartment No. 1 (see picture upper left) was furnished at a cost of \$25.78. Furniture consists of 1 double bed in walnut finish; bedspread and drapes in brown denim with orange stripe; chest in walnut finish with green oilcloth cover; Windsor chair in walnut with green oilcloth pad; bookshelves made from orange crates and enameled red-orange; closet curtains of red-orange crash; and braided rug in brown, white, and orange.

The living room at College Homes Apartment No. 1 (see picture upper center) was furnished at a total cost of \$45.78. Furni-

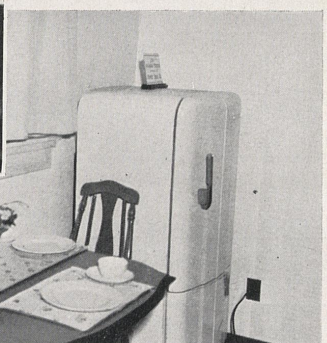
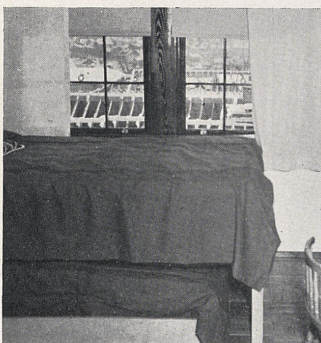
ture included 1 couch and easy chair, slip covered in small check of green and orange; 1 desk and 2 ladder back chairs stained maple; 1 square table and 1 drop-leaf table—natural finish with covers of green denim; blue glass bowl with ivy on table near windows; draperies of cretonne in black, green, and rust floral pattern; 1 floor lamp; and rug of green chenille. On walls, 1 pictorial road map mounted and 1 pictorial textile mounted.

A 3-room unit at College Homes (pictures below) was completely furnished for only \$75.31. Furniture for the living room (lower center) cost \$33.67. This pays for black leather couch; easy chair, slip covered in green plaid; morris chair with natural linen cover; draperies of red, black, natural woven plaid; 2 fern stands enameled black; 1 bookcase desk with ladder back chair (both natural finish); square corner table, mahogany finish with cover of fringed feed sacking; and floor lamp. On the walls were: 1 picture above desk; 1 mirror above couch; and 1 plaster plaque (made by students). On the couch, 2 gold colored pillows.

The bedroom (lower left), furnished at a cost of \$27.50, has: Trundle bed, chest, and stool, stained gray; dressing table and beds covered with blue crash; curtains of unbleached spun rayon; closet curtain of blue and gray plaid; textile picture above dressing table; mirrors for dressing table (3 individual mirrors placed together); rag rug of blue and white plaid; and pillow, hand blocked on feed sack.

Furniture for the kitchen (lower right) cost \$14.34, and includes: Table and 5 chairs enameled chinese red with black trim; high chair; curtains of unbleached spun

(Continued on page 4)



These three pictures show furniture in the living room, bedroom, and kitchen of a 3-room apartment at College Homes, completely furnished for \$75.31.

## Building Permits Up 30.9 Percent in Feb.

Building permits issued in 2,123 principal cities of the United States during February provided for 22,472 dwelling units, according to a recent release of the U. S. Department of Labor. This total shows an increase of 30.9 percent over the 17,172 dwelling units included in the January building permits.

USHA-aided projects for which building permits were taken out in February will provide 3,932 homes for low-income families—an increase of 34 percent over the preceding month's total of 2,935. The following tabulation shows the cities in which building permits for USHA-aided projects were taken out during February, the number of dwelling units included, and the permit valuations (contractors' base construction bids).

Augusta, Ga.	278	\$672,000
Austin, Tex. (2 projects)	146	478,000
Bristol, Va. (2 projects)	204	586,000
El Paso, Tex.	311	846,000
Harrisburg, Pa.	236	683,000
Hattiesburg, Miss.	120	300,000
Holyoke, Mass.	167	578,000
Laredo, Tex.	272	540,000
McKees Rocks, Pa.	288	970,000
Nashville, Tenn.	332	919,000
New Orleans, La.	896	3,062,000
Norwalk, Conn.	136	444,000
Tampa, Fla.	328	797,000
Washington, D. C.	218	680,000
<b>Total, 16 projects</b>	<b>3,932</b>	<b>\$11,555,000</b>

## Knoxville Demonstrations

(Continued from page 3)

rayon; luncheon set of oilcloth, cream with red figures; wastebasket with pattern of oilcloth; dishes, cream earthenware; vinegar bottle and prune juice bottle used for ivy containers.

Miss Harris' associates did an especially competent job, since they have already had considerable practical experience in such work. The University of Tennessee trains students to go into the mountain country and teach. They were, therefore, already familiar with the needs and means of low-income families. Miss Harris plans to prepare a similar demonstration for a third Knoxville project, scheduled to open some time next autumn. She hopes to make it the basis for a summer course for her students, many of whom are Farm Security Administration Management Supervisors. After the projects are occupied, the University plans to follow up with instruction in homemaking.

## Weekly Construction Report

Item	Week ended March 22, 1940	Week ended March 15, 1940	Percentage change
Number of projects under construction	187	186	+ 0.54
Number of dwellings under construction	72,590	72,285	+ 0.42
Total estimated over-all cost <sup>1</sup> of new housing	\$323,690,000	\$322,452,000	+ 0.38
Average over-all cost <sup>1</sup> of new housing per unit	\$4,459	\$4,461	- 0.04
Average net construction cost <sup>2</sup> per unit	\$2,801	\$2,801	No change

<sup>1</sup> Includes: (a) Building the house, including structural costs and plumbing, heating, and electrical installation; (b) dwelling equipment, architects' fees, local administrative expenses, financial charges during construction, and contingency expenses; (c) land for present development; (d) nondwelling facilities.

<sup>2</sup> The cost of building the house, including structural, plumbing, heating, and electrical costs.

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## Two New Booklets By Public Affairs Comm.

The two recent publications of the Public Affairs Committee seem designed as "question and answer." "Can America Build Houses?" is the title of Miles L. Colean's pamphlet. "The Homes the Public Builds," by Edith Elmer Wood and Elizabeth Ogg, is almost a specific retort to the query. Attractively printed little 32-page booklets selling for 10 cents a copy, these latest additions to the series of Public Affairs Pamphlets should prove useful in acquainting a wide audience with housing problems and housing accomplishments in this country.

"Can America Build Houses?" is an analysis of the nature and extent of the housing problem, followed by a discussion of various national and local solutions. The respective spheres of public and private activity in the housing field are examined and delimited. Mr. Colean concludes that "both forms of operation are needed." "Such a happy balance," he says, "has been established in England, where a tremendous volume of private construction has proceeded undeterred and unafraid alongside the public authority building program proportionately in greater amount than any yet contemplated in this country."

"The Homes the Public Builds" is a short story, or novelette, having to do with the family of Michael Grady (which was admitted to a low-rent housing project) and the family of Bill Johnson (which couldn't get in because the total family income was too high). As the reader follows these characters through all the episodes of the narrative he learns a great deal about how projects are planned, built, tenanted, and managed. We leave Michael Grady happily settled in Blue Ridge Houses, actively participating in the community life of the project. Bill Johnson recovers from his first discouragement and is reconciled to waiting his turn.

Both booklets feature graphic illustrations which add to the popular appeal of the text. Mr. Colean has utilized pictorial statistics to summarize "American Housing Conditions" and to contrast "Workers' Earnings" with the cost of residential construction. Mrs. Wood employs a similar technique frequently.

## Schedule of Bid Opening Dates<sup>1</sup>

Local authority and project number	Number of units	Date of bid opening
Atlanta (Ga.-6-4)	598	4-9-40
Baltimore (Md.-2-5)	397	4-10-40
Birmingham (Ala.-1-3)	614	4-13-40
Birmingham (Ala.-1-3-A)	292	4-13-40
Birmingham (Ala.-1-4)	432	4-25-40
Cincinnati (Ohio-4-1)	750	4-25-40
Detroit (Mich.-1-2, Pt. II)	183	4-24-40
Frederick (Md.-3-2)	50	4-3-40
New Bedford (Mass.-7-1)	200	4-11-40
Washington (D. C.-1-4)	310	4-23-40

<sup>1</sup> There is usually a 30-day period between bid advertising and bid opening.

## Calif. Housing Authorities Organize State Association

Meeting in Sacramento recently, representatives of five California housing authorities formally organized the California Association of Housing Authorities.

Two officers were elected: Mr. Albert J. Evers, Executive Director of The Housing Authority of the City and County of San Francisco, President; and John T. Long, Secretary-Treasurer. Four vice-presidents will be nominated by The Housing Authority of the County of Los Angeles, the Housing Authority of the City of Oakland, the Housing Authority of the City of Los Angeles, and the Sacramento Housing Authority, in the order named.

There are at present eight local housing authorities in California, five of which have earmarkings and/or loan contracts from the United States Housing Authority. Commitments for the State total \$43,400,000. The \$27,633,000 under loan contract call for the construction of 16 projects to provide homes for 6,521 low-income families.

## Columbus Project is Named For Great Negro Minister

Poindexter Village, 426-unit project soon to open in Columbus, Ohio, will bear the name of one of Columbus' best known ministers.

James P. Poindexter was born of mixed blood—Negro, Indian, and white, and the story of his life is a testimonial to the fact that even during the latter part of the last century a man of outstanding intellect and ambition could rise above racial prejudice. Poindexter's formal schooling was halted at the age of 10, but his "informal" education continued throughout his life. Barber, clergyman, politician, were among the vocations pursued by this outstanding man. His interest in the ministry, however, never wavered during the more than 60 years of his service to the Baptist church.

Salmon P. Chase, William McKinley, Rutherford B. Hayes, and many other outstanding Americans called the Reverend Poindexter "friend." But he wasn't just a friend to those who were prominent, he championed the cause of the poor and oppressed regardless of race, because he had a deep in-dwelling sympathy for them. Reverend Poindexter died in 1907.