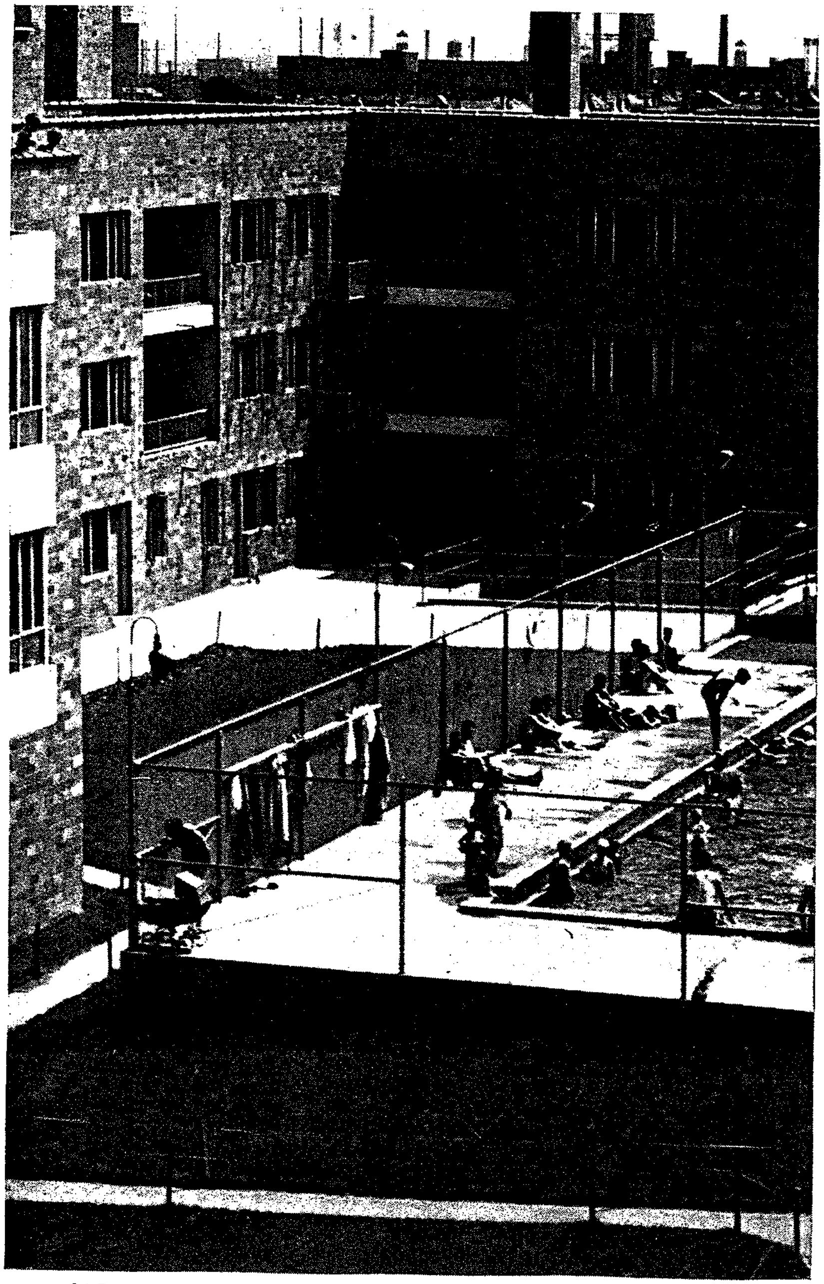

CARL MACKLEY HOUSES—Philadelphia's Limited-Dividend Project

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URBAN HOUSING

THE STORY OF THE P·W·A HOUSING DIVISION

1933–1936

BULLETIN No. 2

WASHINGTON·D·C·AUGUST 1936

Part III

HISTORY OF HOUSING DIVISION

Introduction.

The part played by the Government in urban low-cost housing has been twofold in character. The early developments of private low-cost housing in America, which are briefly taken up in the Appendix, were primarily of a limited-dividend type. They can roughly be divided into three categories: philanthropic, investment, and cooperative. In all cases profits were limited, even though projects were undertaken by private initiative on a self-liquidating basis. This type of project was continued under a new phase of government patronage with the establishment of the Reconstruction Finance Corporation in 1932. The execution of this program was subsequently transferred to the Public Works Administration in 1933. At present the limited-dividend type of housing is sponsored under a slightly different system by the Federal Housing Administration.

Direct responsibility by the government for housing had its beginning during the World War. The declaration of war in 1917 created a situation calling for direct Government participation.

War Housing.

War housing constituted the first efforts of the Government in the field of low-cost housing. The emergency situation created by the entrance of the United States into the World War made apparent the necessity for immediate

construction of suitable accommodations to house not only our armed forces but also the vast army of war workers who were concentrated in certain definite areas.

In this new departure our efforts would have been of the pure barrack variety had it not been for the quality and type of developments built by the British, designs and plans of which were brought back to this country by Frederick L. Ackerman in 1917. The Council of National Defense appointed a committee in 1917 to deal with the housing problem caused by mobilization of fighting forces and industrial war workers. During 1917 and up to July 1918, $175,000,000 was allotted for this purpose and the United States Housing Corporation was created under the Department of Labor to proceed with this work in conjunction with the previously formed Shipping Board Committee, the Division of Transportation and Housing. The former built and administered directly, the latter lent money to realty companies incorporated by ship-building companies, with loans secured by blanket mortgages covering land (provided by the ship building companies) and improvements. The Housing Corporation carried out some 44 projects in 28 localities, the Shipping Board 35 projects in 24 localities. The latter developments included 8,949 houses, 1,119 apartments, 19 dormitories and 8 hotels, with total accommodations for 27,732 men. These projects were similar to the familiar plans for corporation housing. The Housing Corporation's activities on the other hand were of greater scope and permanence; were owned, built, and managed by the Government. In all, the Corporation's construction provided 6,148 family units, 452 of which were transferred to other Government departments after the war and the remainder sold to individuals.

Besides serving a wartime need, these two housing bodies, by means of good technical assistance and sufficient funds, produced better standards of design and subdivision than had before been evidenced; raised the standard of living among war workers, and showed that the Government could intelligently attack the problem without endangering the Constitution or in any way undermining our concepts of democracy.

Reconstruction Finance Corporation.

In 1932 the Reconstruction Finance Corporation was set up with power to issue building loans for limited-dividend projects subject to State or municipal housing board approval. This step was considered possible, due to the creation of the New York State Housing Board, and the further anticipation that sufficient local organization in other parts of the country would correspondingly be forthcoming. This move constituted the first entrance into the housing field by the Government since war days, albeit under a different type of program. No loans were granted until 1933 when the Fred F. French Corporation of New York, obtained a loan for housing construction on a slum block of the lower East Side. The result was Knickerbocker Village under the New York State Housing Board.

Federal Housing Administration.

The passage of the National Housing Act in 1934, created the Federal Housing Administration. In addition to the Modernization Credit Plan under Title I of the Act a mutual mortgage insurance policy, known as the "single mortgage system", was introduced under Title II. Under this latter policy the insurance of mortgage loans on large scale housing projects was included with the more prevalent type of home mortgage loan.

The housing program called for projects privately conceived, privately financed, and privately constructed. A project on submittal to the Federal Housing Administration is qualified as to soundness and if approved an operating company is authorized to negotiate a mortgage up to 80 percent of the total cost. The mortgage is insured by the Federal Housing Administration which collects an insurance premium and maintains supervisory control. Projects constructed under this system approximate in type and rentals those that were privately constructed under the limited-dividend policy of the Public Works Administration as well as other earlier limited-dividend projects purely local in character. They are designed to house those who can afford adequate accommodations constructed without subsidy and

should not be confused with the public housing projects of the Public Works Administration.

In June 1936, two projects were in the process of construction (Meadeville, Pa., and Wilmington, Del.), and one, "Colonial Village", at Clarendon, Va., was completed. Several other projects have been approved for construction.

This Government interest in housing matters evidenced by the Emergency Relief and Construction Act of 1932 brought about subsequent housing laws in other States.

Limited-Dividend Legislation.

Following that of New York State, legislation providing for limited-dividend housing corporations with the power of eminent domain had been enacted in Arkansas, California, Delaware, Florida, Kansas, New Jersey, Ohio, North Carolina, South Carolina, and Texas prior to the transfer of the limited-dividend program from Reconstruction Finance Corporation to the Public Works Administration in June of 1933. Illinois and Massachusetts followed in July with enabling legislation and soon thereafter, Virginia.

Typical State Boards of Housing.

The earliest of these above laws relative to housing was enacted in Ohio on October 3, 1932. This act created a State Board of Housing consisting of the Director of Public Welfare, Director of Public Works, Director of Commerce, and four members appointed by the Governor with power to study housing conditions and regulate housing corporations whose dividends are limited to 6 percent.

Another typical form of housing legislation is the Illinois law of July 12, 1933. This act created a State Housing Board appointed by the Governor with the consent of the Senate, with power to study housing conditions and regulate housing corporations whose dividends are limited to 6½ percent. Other acts are roughly similar to these.

History of the Housing Division.

On June 16, 1933, the National Industrial Recovery Act, passed by the Seventy-third Congress, was signed by the President, creating the Federal Emergency Administration of Public Works. Under Title II of this Act, provision was made for "construction, reconstruction, alteration, or repair under public regulation or control of low-cost housing and slum-clearance projects." The Hon. Harold L. Ickes, Secretary of the Interior, was subsequently appointed Administrator of Public Works.

A primary purpose in the creation of the Public Works Administration was to afford employment in the building trades. Residential construction was particularly hard hit by the depression. The Bureau of Labor Statistics states that, in 257 cities where homes were built for 244,394 families in 1929, only 25,879 were built in 1933. This decrease, which can be regarded as typical for the whole country, amounted to 89.5 percent. As a part of the "priming" process, therefore, a Housing Division was a natural adjunct to the Public Works Administration.

Limited-Dividend Program.

The small staff of experts who were charged with launching the housing program had two distinct objectives. The first was to afford employment as quickly as possible. The obvious way to reach this goal was to loan money to private agencies. The second was to demonstrate the possibilities of slum clearance and low-rent housing. To achieve this end, regulation and control were essential since knowledge of the problems involved and technique of solution were not general in character but involved expert opinion. To have loaned money indiscriminately would undoubtedly have put men to work, but the products of their work in most cases would not have been a valid solution of the problem.

Financial Policy. The Division determined to establish a clear cut financial policy, to sketch the general standards required for planning, and then to make interpretation as liberal as possible. Successful applicants were to receive a loan of 85 percent of the estimated cost of a project. They were to provide 15 percent in true equity. The loans bore 4 percent interest and were to be amortized in 30 years. The Government's interest was a first mortgage

that preceded all interest, both on equity and stock of the applicant.

Applications. With the announcement of this policy applications began to flood the Housing Division office. The small staff worked until past midnight 7 days a week for months. By the end of 1933 a total of well over 500 applications had been received. They fell naturally into a number of categories. The first and most numerous contained those in which the applicant had—perhaps in good faith—attempted to create an equity out of whole cloth. Architects' and contractors' fees, for instance, which would not be earned until the project was built were to take the place of tangible equity. It is true that few persons in 1933 had liquid assets and those who had were wary of putting them in any building enterprise however conservative. Yet it seems reasonable that the Division should have required such an evidence of good faith—and continuing interest. This type of application was immediately ruled out.

A second category of application was that which, along with housing, called for hotels, stores, theaters, or any one of a number of other unrelated enterprises. Most of these were fundamental misconceptions of the program and, even with the elimination of the nonconforming uses, could not qualify. Among other variations of this type were a tourist camp, a twelve-story hotel in the desert of Arizona, and a summer colony subdivision.

A third type—and one which usually seemed plausible at first sight—was that calculated to unload frozen assets on the Government. When the depression came, a great number of optimistic speculators found themselves holding real estate on which they could not only realize no profit, but which were definite liabilities. They saw a way out through offering their holdings as equity for a loan, usually at fictitious prices. Such proposals never withstood analysis.

Federal Program.

Examination of the 500 applications disclosed a distressingly small number which could meet the liberal standards of the Division. The fact that only seven finally qualified for loans indicated that the country was not yet housing conscious. It indicated further that if housing were to be an effective part of the recovery program it must be handled, for some time at least, directly by the Housing Division.

Abandonment of Limited-Dividend Program. In February 1934 the Division announced the suspension of the limited-dividend loan policy and concentrated on the initiation, financing, and construction of projects under its own responsibility. Applications had come from a number of cities such as Atlanta, Indianapolis, Cleveland, and Montgomery which could easily be converted from the limited-dividend to the Federal type. Their only weakness had been a lack of equity. If the Division was to take over these projects completely this weakness disappeared. Such projects formed a nucleus, but they were far too few to round out completely the new program.

Local Initiative. It was obvious that the Division would have to go into the field and to create projects. Such a procedure presented many difficulties, and a complete new technique was necessary to solve them. Immediately recognized was the danger of foisting upon a community projects which were not wanted or were accepted passively without any sense of obligation. The cities had to want housing and had to stand behind the projects which the Division was prepared to give them.

In March 1934 the Director of Housing, Mr. Robert D. Kohn, made an extensive tour of the country to assess the cities' desire for housing. He found that it far exceeded the most optimistic hopes for a supply.

Land Acquisition. During this time the Division took its first steps in the difficult work of land acquisition. The assembling of many small parcels of land remains after 3 years the most unpredictable element of urban housing. The Housing Division's technique, as described in part II, was developed in the purchase of sites for the Techwood Homes and University projects in Atlanta. In these two

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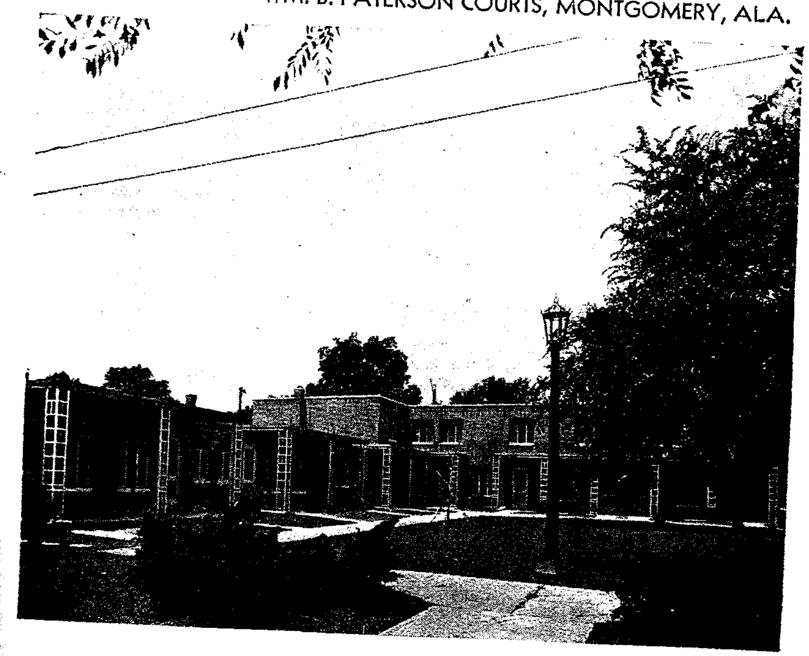
WM. B. PATERSON COURTS, MONTGOMERY, ALA.



undertakings the Division recognized the absolute necessity of the right of eminent domain for the successful development of slum clearance projects. This right was specifically accorded to the Public Works Administration in the National Industrial Recovery Act. The Housing Division invoked it not so much to force sale by recalcitrant owners or to beat down asking prices as to expedite the clearance of title. It is almost universally true that the greatest percentage of defective property titles exists in the slum areas of a city. To acquire such areas with clear title would often take a year or more if the customary procedure were followed. The technique developed by the Public Works Administration consisted in securing options from the apparent owners by friendly agreement and then placing a blanket condemnation on the whole area. The consequence was that title was transferred to the Government and the long drawn out details of title clearance could be worked out subsequently. By operating in this manner the Housing Division could be assured of its slum clearance program and could proceed expeditiously. For more than a year it went ahead effectively. Two sites in Atlanta, one each in Cleveland, Indianapolis, and Montgomery were completely acquired and purchase of 22 others was well under way.

When the accepted procedure was attempted in Louisville, however, a property owner protested on the grounds that it was unconstitutional. On January 4, 1935, a judge of the Federal district court ruled that the Housing Division could not condemn property for housing. In the judge's opinion, housing did not constitute a "public use." The decision was appealed to the circuit court. On July 15, 1935, the Sixth Circuit Court of Appeals in Cincinnati upheld the previous decision by a two to one majority. The appeal was carried on to the Supreme Court but was withdrawn when it became apparent that pending legislation would obviate the need of the power of eminent domain by the Federal Government.

The effect of the Louisville decision and the subsequent confirmation was to make extremely difficult the achievement of slum clearance. The Housing Division was forced to abandon this phase of its program except in cases where slum sites were held in few and willing ownerships. Slum clearance had been the more dramatic and popular practice. Yet the Division's-duty was to provide housing. If it could not be done in connection with slum clearance it must be built on vacant land. The ultimate program contained 50 projects of which—despite great obstacles—27 were built on slum sites.

If the acquisition of land presented the major difficulties encountered, it was not the only serious problem. The number, location, size, and type of projects to be built called for the greatest ingenuity on the part of the Division.

There was no precedent for such planning in the country. The Division sought out men with some experience in city planning and some knowledge of housing. Combining the two fields, they developed a technique of site selection and project design which is destined to have considerable influence on standard practice.

Expansion. By the spring of 1934 it was evident that if the Division were to handle effectively the program as outlined, considerable expansion and reorganization would be necessary. The work to date had been confined largely to examination of applications and to a study of procedure for the development of the Federal type of project. Now that the course was charted and policies outlined, the Division should take the form of a huge production office. Col. Horatio B. Hackett, of Chicago, had a notable record of achievement in large-scale construction. With Mr. A. R. Clas as assistant, he was appointed Director of Housing on June 15, 1934, and proceeded to expand the Division from its staff of approximately 40 persons to the hundreds necessary to handle the volume of work.

Consultants were called upon to develop plans of group houses, flats, and apartments. These men produced hundreds of variations of the small dwelling unit to take care of every conceivable local precedent. Representatives were sent into the field to select sites for projects. Others investigated the merits of architects, engineers, realtors in scores of likely cities, for Colonel Hackett had insisted on the participation of local men in the program.

The Housing Division's First Project. The seven limited-dividend projects, all under construction, were pushed and in September 1934 the Division announced the completion of its first project, Alta Vista in Virginia. It is interesting to note the modest beginning. The Alta Vista project consists of 50 small houses in a small mill town. From the day of their opening they have been in constant demand. When a vacancy occurred in the spring of 1936, the mangement had 49 requests for it on the first day. In sharp contrast to this modest project is Hillside Homes, a limited-dividend project in the upper Bronx with 1,416 apartments, 4,948 rooms, or the Ten Eyck Federal project now under construction in New York containing approximately 5,658 rooms.

Activity. In November of 1934 investigations were being made in over 70 cities by members of the Branches of Initiation and Land Acquisition who reported on conditions and possibilities, tentatively selected sites, interviewed architects, consulted with local sponsoring groups and municipal bodies in answer to applications which had already been submitted to the Division.

During this period of activity emphasis was placed on a consideration of slum sites. In most cities, local sponsoring, municipal, planning, and other groups, had made tenative surveys of possible sites. These were reviewed by representatives, their possible ease of acquisition studied, their relation to a planned city growth, to more immediate physical elements such as schools, employment, transportation, parks, etc., carefully considered. The Branch of Initiation representative working from the physical aspect of sites, i. e., their general character and relation to existing conditions, cooperated with the land acquisition man who studied the problem from the aspect of acquirability. In this way the field of possibilities was narrowed down and a definite preference in some cases self-imposed. The accumulation of options on property under multi-ownership and the clearing of titles proved to be a slow and painstaking performance. However, by the end of December 1934, out of a total of 27 approved projects, 5 sites had ~~been~~ entirely acquired and land acquisition was in varying stages of progress on the remainder.

Local Sponsorship. The Housing Division required representative and enthusiastic sponsorship in each city where a project was under consideration. Unless such sponsorship was apparent, the Division did not feel justified in pushing its activities there. In most of the larger cities complete surveys and local recommendations had been prepared and proved of immeasurable assistance in the rapid initiation of a project. Sentiment did not originate in Washington. It was generated in progressive cities like New York, Atlanta, Cincinnati, Cleveland, Milwaukee, Indianapolis, and Chicago (to name only a few), whose studies antedated the Housing Division itself. Subsequently many cities, profiting from the pioneer work of those mentioned above, developed excellent material.

Sometimes such sponsorship originated in the city government; sometimes in official housing committees, in chambers of commerce, or groups of civic-minded citizens acting under the advice and cooperation of architects, city planners, and other professional men. Representatives from the Housing Division contacted the sponsoring groups upon arrival in cities and worked with them during the early stages of the initiation and recommendation of projects.

Except where a lack of funds or of information on the purposes and aims of the Division precluded active local support, a mass of pertinent material was made available in the form of surveys and other related data. In most cases interest in housing made an explanation of purpose and policy sufficient to produce thorough cooperation. A certain amount of education in housing matters on the part of representatives of the Division was of course necessary.

The financial condition of some municipalities precluded their allotting funds for certain purely technical purposes. Where surveys were to be made, maps prepared, and a great deal of pertinent material assimilated, city finances were often unable to bear the burden of the additional expense.

In such cases local bodies, such as city planning commissions, chambers of commerce, school boards, and other committees were often helpful in cooperating toward this end. Often other Government agencies, such as the Civil Works Administration and Federal Emergency Relief Administration, were helpful in preparing real property inventories and in gathering together other related data. In general, the lack of funds to be used for such purposes tended to delay the development of projects in their early stages. In the interest of expediting their initiation, a good deal of the preliminary work had in some cases to be done by Housing Division representatives. As time went on and a more thorough understanding of the problems involved was reached locally this material became increasingly more available.

By the end of March 1935 projects totalling $31,558,500 were being rapidly pushed ahead. Further applications had been studied from other cities on additional projects totalling some $110,000,000. These latter had reached a stage of development where they could be carried through with the minimum of delay on further allocation of funds.

Emergency Relief Appropriation Act. It was obvious during the winter of 1934–35 that a new relief bill would be passed by Congress. Although conditions throughout the country were improved, direct Federal aid to the unemployed was still considered of prime importance. The size of appropriation necessary, the manner in which it should be dispensed, and the form of organization which could handle the job efficiently and expeditiously, were problems which taxed the utmost ingenuity of the Administration and which called for thorough investigations.

During the course of study for this work relief bill, the Housing Division officials and other experts in housing administration were constantly called upon to estimate the potentialities of public housing programs. The reports submitted, aside from any definite action produced, served to crystallize the Division's thoughts of what public housing could and should accomplish. Much of what has followed in the way of programs and legislation can be directly traced to the reports made for the preparation of this bill. The Emergency Relief Appropriation Act was signed by the President after spirited debate in Congress on April 6, 1935. It called for an appropriation of $4,880,000,000 of which $450,000,000 was to be allotted for "housing", although the specific housing agencies were not mentioned.

Change of Administration. Colonel Hackett was appointed Assistant Administrator of Public Works Administration on May 13 and Mr. A. R. Clas, former Assistant Director of Housing, was appointed Director in his place.

Three days later the Administrator presented to the Advisory Committee on Allotments, which in turn recommended to the President, a program consisting of 79 projects aggregating a total expenditure of $249,860,000. This program was informally approved by the President by the end of May with the request that applications for each project be submitted separately for approval as funds were needed. This procedure was followed in the intensive work which was to follow.

On July 9 the Division was officially notified that the first allotment of funds from the Emergency Relief Appropriation account was approved and made available. This action enabled the Division to proceed with the acquisition of sites and to contract for services.

Projects for which preliminary work in the field had already been completed were pushed forward rapidly. Options were accepted and architects set to work on the plans. Representatives from the Initiation and Land Acquisition Branches were sent to other cities from which applications for projects had been received. An intense period of study and accumulation of data followed. Projects in many cities throughout the country were initiated, recommended, and given preliminary approval. Personnel of the Division in Washington worked overtime for weeks digesting, correlating, and developing the information and material brought in from various cities.

Curtailment. By September 15, 1935, preliminary plans had been consumated for a list of 95 projects totaling $264,720,000 and applications had been filed with the National Emergency Council. As a result of the Cincinnati decision, however, not all of these projects were, by reason of land acquisition problems, in a position to be completed with minimum delay. The President accordingly ordered the program confined to those projects which could be put into construction expeditiously.

Final Program. A final program of 50 projects, totaling approximately $130,000,000, was subsequently approved.

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Part IV

PRESENT PROGRAM

Deadline.

The President, by a letter released on August 26, 1935, set September 12, 1935, as the date on which all applications for projects should be submitted to the National Emergency Council. October 22 was set as the date when the Housing Division should be prepared to take bids on the construction of all projects or to proceed with construction of projects on a force account basis. On December 15, 1935, contracts on every project were to be awarded and signed.

With these definite schedules set, the Housing Division proceeded at high speed to fulfill its requirements.

Procedure.

A true comprehension of the task faced by the Housing Division in the planning and execution of its vast program involves an understanding of the steps that must be taken and the average time that each requires. Even assuming that the development of a project meets with no extraordinary delays, approximately 21 months are normally required as a minimum for the initiation of a project; the acquisition of the site, the preparation of drawings, the letting of contracts and subsequent construction. This period of time can be broken down as follows: 3 months for initiation and approval of a project; 4 months for the optioning, clearing of title, and purchase of a site (which runs concurrently with the designing of the project and the preparation of drawings); 2 months for the advertising of

bids, acceptance and letting of contracts, and 12 months for construction.

This is an optimistic estimate and does not take into account various difficulties that may be encountered. The most upsetting obstacles are produced by land acquisition. Delays or hold ups in this work wreck not only the land schedule but also that of the architects.

In the initiation of a project the steps involved, as stated in part II, include the preparation locally of adequate surveys and other related data, the organization of sponsorship, the approval of an allocation, the selection of a site, selection of architects, preparation of a working program (which involves the physical type of project to be constructed, number of rooms, type of equipment, other facilities, etc.) and the approval of the project as proposed by the Administrator of Public Works.

Acquisition of sites has proved to be the most complicated and perhaps the most interesting phase of the development. Where a site has been held under one ownership the optioning, clearing of title by the Legal Division, and purchase has been accomplished with no delay. The majority of sites, however, were under several ownerships. A myriad of details were encountered in the clearing of titles, closing of streets, rezoning, relocation of utilities, etc. While steps in land acquisition are taken up in part II, it is interesting to note the type of difficulties that were sometimes encountered in the purchase of some $19,000,000 worth of real estate.

One property was found to be owned by a "lodge" of some 200 members. This association had not been incorporated and no one thus had authority to deed the property. To find and secure the signature of these 200 persons, needless to say, was difficult.

Heirs of deceased owners were often many in number and scattered all over the country, many of them with children for whom guardians had to be appointed by the courts to protect their interests. The failure of persons to record their papers in connection with former transfer was another source of tribulation. Divorces made further complications. Holders of title sometimes had to be traced through many States.

Since most negotiations with property owners were beyond the control of the Housing Division it was extremely difficult to expedite land acquisition. Owners had to "think it over", or frequently were obliged to confer with a "cousin who lived in Seattle." Much of the property was held by estates and could be transferred only by court order. Hearings had to be conducted according to court calendars and were often subjected to exasperating delays. Some conception of the magnitude of the program is contained in the number of individual transactions necessary—3,943; the amount of land purchased, 48,008,927 square feet; and the number of owners, mortgage holders, etc., with whom the Division had to deal—upwards of 11,000.

While the acquisition of the site was in progress the architects were at work on the site and unit plans. These were checked and approved in Washington and were followed by working and shop drawings.

Upon completion and approval of drawings and purchase of site, bids were called for, estimates were prepared by local contractors, submitted to Washington, approved, and contracts let. A minimum of 2 months was required for this work. Construction then began.

Contracts.

The period of great activity which followed, saw general, foundation, demolition, and architectural contracts being let on all projects. On three sites demolition was undertaken by the Works Progress Administration and on one site, in Lexington, it was done by the grantor. Three projects in the Virgin Islands were developed on a force account basis and one project in San Juan, Puerto Rico, was designed by Housing Division representatives in the field.

At the date of the dead line, December 15, 1935, all projects had been qualified by demolition, foundation, or general construction contracts awarded or by work actually proceeding on the site. By May 1st, 23 demolition, 28 foundation, and 13 general or superstructure contracts had been let, or bids had been accepted. The majority of the demolition contracts had been completed.

Architects.

At the peak of activity some 2,200 architects, engineers, draftsmen, and landscape architects in 35 cities were employed in the preparation of drawings. It had become apparent at the time of early submissions that a general unfamiliarity with housing technique was common with the majority of architects throughout the country. Nor was this difficult to comprehend in the light of the paucity of experience in construction of planned low-rent housing. During the early days of the Division, consultants had been called to Washington to prepare a general basis for architectural treatment and approach. After a thorough study a unit plan book had been prepared which laid down certain minimum standards of planning and arrangement, room sizes, window openings, etc. This book was used by architects as a guide in the designing of projects although a latitude of interpretation and improvement was encouraged. In no cases were these plans forced on an architect against his better judgment. They were purely educatory and offered to obviate impossible or widely divergent conceptions of plan and treatment.

Despite this material it was considered advisable, in order to insure a minimum of delay and a soundness of design, to conduct a short period of training in housing for all architects under employment in the execution of the program. Accordingly in the summer of 1935, the chief architects on all approved projects came to Washington and were put through an intensive course on housing problems. The result of this period of training was apparent in the character of drawings subsequently submitted. In all cases fine cooperation between the architects and the purposes and aims of the Housing Division has been apparent.

Construction.

Fifty projects in 35 cities of the United States and its insular possessions are now (July 1936) in construction. Several of them are nearing completion. Techwood Homes in Atlanta has been completed and opened to tenants.

The University project in Atlanta and Wm. B. Paterson Courts in Montgomery will be finished in a very few months. General construction on three projects in Cleveland, one in Indianapolis, and a second project in Montgomery, Ala., is rapidly nearing completion. By December 15, 1935, general construction had been commenced in St. Thomas, Virgin Islands, followed later in the month by Atlantic City, N. J., and in January of 1936 by Miami, Fla., and Milwaukee, Wis. With foundations completed, work on superstructure had commenced in May on San Juan, P. R. By the middle of June foundations on the Jane Addams project in Chicago, and on projects in Dallas, Tex.; Jacksonville, Fla.; Louisville, Ky. (College Court); Stamford, Conn.; and Washington, D. C.; were completed. On projects in Boston, Mass.; Louisville, Ky. (LaSalle Place); Buffalo, N. Y., Camden, N. J.; Charleston, S. C.; Chicago, Ill. (Julia C. Lathrop Homes and Trumbull Park Homes); Columbia, S. C.; Lexington, Ky.; Nashville, Tenn. (Cheatham Place); New York City (Ten Eyck Houses and Harlem River Houses); Philadelphia, Pa.; Schenectady, N. Y.; and Wayne, Pa.; the construction of foundations was well under way.

On other sites in Birmingham, Ala.; Cambridge, Mass.; Chicago, Ill. (Jane Addams Addition); Cincinnati, Ohio; Detroit, Mich.; (Brewster and Parkside); Enid, Okla.; Evansville, Ind.; Memphis, Tenn. (Dixie Homes and Lauderdale Courts); Minneapolis, Minn.; Nashville, Tenn. (Andrew Jackson Courts); Omaha, Nebr., and Toledo, Ohio, demolition was completed or under way.

Administrative Change.

By July of 1936 the construction program was entirely under way. The work of initiation, planning, and development begun by Colonel Hackett and ably administered by Mr. Clas was complete. To carry on the building activities of the Division, Mr. Howard A. Gray was appointed Director of Housing on July 23. Mr. Gray, for 2 years Director of the Inspection Division, had intimate knowledge of construction in general and of the field work on housing projects. Mr. Clas succeeded to the position of Assistant Administrator in charge of investigations.

Relocation.

A great problem in the process of demolition and development of built-up sites has been the relocation of tenants who were displaced. The total number of families to be removed from their homes was 8,947. The total number of persons involved approached 30,000. It was as if you were to pick up bodily the whole population of Baton Rouge, Pensacola, or Bloomington and move it to a new city. Nor was this the whole problem. Accommodations had to be found which were not inferior to, and better if possible than, those from which they had been moved and yet of the same rental scale. Of the total number of families, only 245 are now remaining (June 1936) on the 36 built-up sites that have been acquired. In most cases this job has been handled by Housing Division representatives, sometimes with the assistance of W. P. A. workers, local relief agencies, or Housing Authorities. They have conducted occupancy and vacancy surveys and prepared lists of available accommodations.

In many cases a change in dwelling was made by tenant at his own initiative. Less fortunate families or those on relief were frequently moved to new quarters at the expense of local relief agencies, the city, or a housing authority. Jobs were frequently found with the Works Progress Administration or with other Federal or local agencies for many of those on relief. In some cases the relocation office made arrangements with landlords of desired accommodations for a period of free occupancy in return for work on necessary repairs. Where tenants were listed with Federal employment offices or other similar agencies with preference for jobs, such credit was often accepted by new landlords as well as by transfer people doing the moving. Many families listed as "requiring aid" were moved by friends and neighbors. In some instances families, previously reported as destitute, were able to make their own arrangements due to the fact that the head of the families had secured a W. P. A. or other job. Owners of property were paid a "fair and not a distressed" price and were in almost all cases glad to be relieved of houses, most of which were in a state of comparative dilapidation and to be able to purchase other houses in better condition and in many instances in a superior location. As a whole, the accommodations to which these families have moved are in better condition and have more adequate facilities than the homes which they have left. Rents in general have been slightly higher. There are a great number of families who have moved into temporary quarters in the neighborhood of projects in anticipation of obtaining permanent homes in the projects. The fine work of relocation and the cooperation that the Housing Division has enjoyed locally has greatly expedited subsequent construction.

Completion.

It is anticipated that the general construction on all projects now under way will be substantially completed by 1937. The unusually severe winter of 1935–36 handicapped work, especially on excavation and foundations. Other unpredictable difficulties have been encountered. But in spite of this, construction is proceeding rapidly with University project in Atlanta, William B. Paterson Courts and Riverside Heights in Montgomery, Cedar-Central Apartments in Cleveland, and Lockefield Garden Apartments in Indianapolis scheduled for completion the end of this summer.

Management.

Coincident with the development of the housing program and its increasing importance as projects neared completion, was the question of management. Two plans of operation were possible: (1) lease to a legally constituted housing authority, and (2) direct operation by the Federal Government.

In defining management policies, the Division outlined its desire to relinquish responsibility and control to local housing authorities as soon as they were qualified to act. However, the comparative lack of such bodies and the inexperience of the majority existing necessitates in most cases direct operation by the Government for the time being. A policy for each project is being evolved as that particular project nears completion.

Whatever form the management policy ultimately takes, the importance of having personnel thoroughly trained in large scale management was always apparent. The responsibilities and duties of management were recognized to be many and varied.

Late in 1935 a management training school was started in Washington under the auspices of the National Association of Housing Officials to train men in the administration of Housing Division and Resettlement Administration projects. Applicants for this school were recommended by local advisory committees and sent to Washington for the intensive course. After a period of training they were sent into the field to visit and acquaint themselves with the operation and management of projects already existent, later returning to Washington to discuss their experiences and to formulate definite convictions on policy. It is anticipated that these men will be called on to administer projects upon completion in their particular localities.

Due to the success of this school a second course has been proposed. A similar training in project management was carried on at the University of Chicago in June 1936 by the National Association of Real Estate Boards.

Employment.

Figures on architectural employment show a total of 320 architects who have received compensation for services on all projects. Approximately 1,700 draftsmen have been employed, 45 landscape architects, and 145 engineers, or in all a total of some 2,200 persons engaged in the designing and execution of projects. It has been estimated that 50,000 carpenters, masons, bricklayers, plasterers, glass and iron workers, etc., will be employed and an additional 50,000 persons will be engaged in the fabrication and transportation of materials to be used on projects.