

P P 630

NEGRO HOUSING SURVEY

OF

CHARLESTON, KEYSTONE, KIMBALL,
WHEELING AND WILLIAMSON



BUREAU OF NEGRO WELFARE AND STATISTICS

ISAAC M. CARPER, Director

CHARLESTON

1938

Library



West Virginia University

~~647~~
~~326.73~~
~~W52 h1~~
~~cop 1~~

NEGRO HOUSING SURVEY

OF

CHARLESTON, KEYSTONE, KIMBALL,
WHEELING AND WILLIAMSON



WEST VIRGINIA UNIVERSITY
LIBRARY
CHARLESTON, W. VA.

Prepared and Issued by

BUREAU OF NEGRO WELFARE AND STATISTICS

of the

STATE OF WEST VIRGINIA

1938

ISAAC M. CARPER, Director

LIBRARY OF THE
MUSEUM OF
NATURAL HISTORY

WP
326.73
W52h1
exp. 1

JARRETT PRINTING COMPANY, CHARLESTON, W. VA.



FOREWORD

Since the publication and distribution of the Negro Housing Survey of Charleston, hundreds of requests have been made from all sections of the State, federal agencies and from housing commissions and boards of other states, for copies of this study.

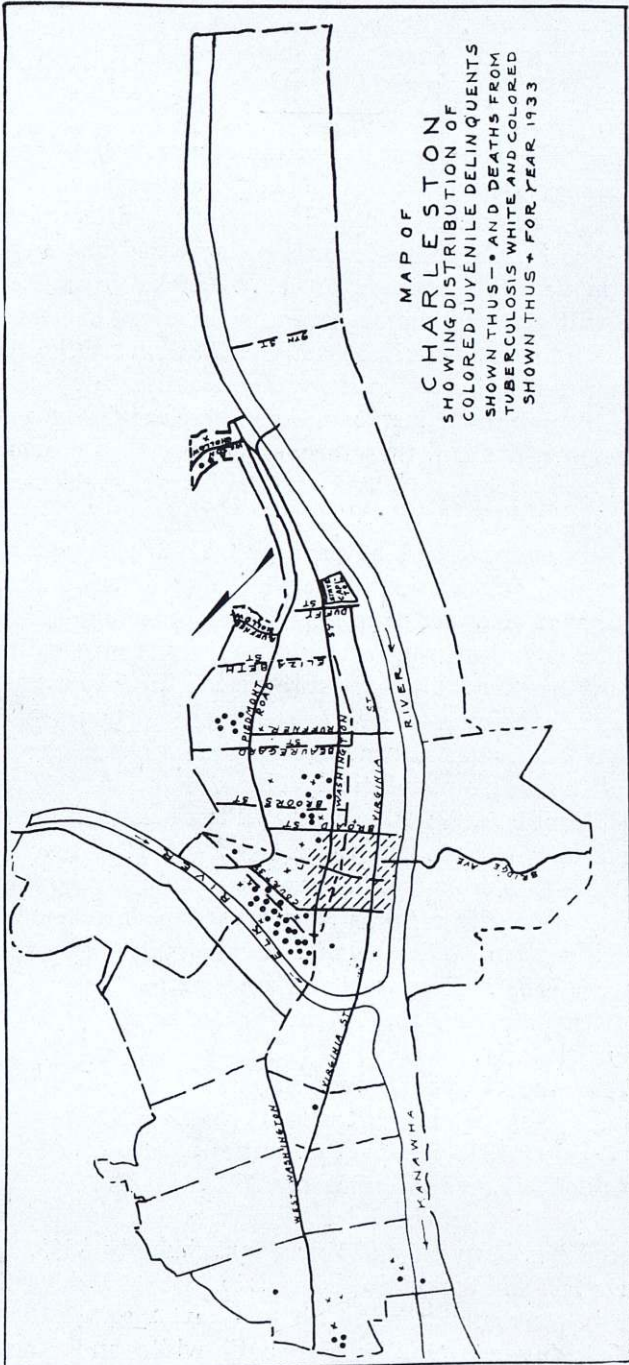
Therefore, in an effort to make accessible as much information as possible concerning the living conditions of the Negro population in West Virginia, the Bureau of Negro Welfare and Statistics, is presenting a combined report of housing surveys of Charleston, Kimball, Wheeling and Williamson. The first section is devoted to an analysis of housing problems in Charleston.

The data contained in this study are by no means complete. However, it is hoped that the facts presented will serve as a guide to various municipal housing boards, and to private companies and associations in providing better homes for Negroes.

STANDARD SURVEYING INSTRUMENTS

PART I.

CHARLESTON SURVEY



MAP NO. 2

THE PRESENT NEGRO HOUSING PROBLEM

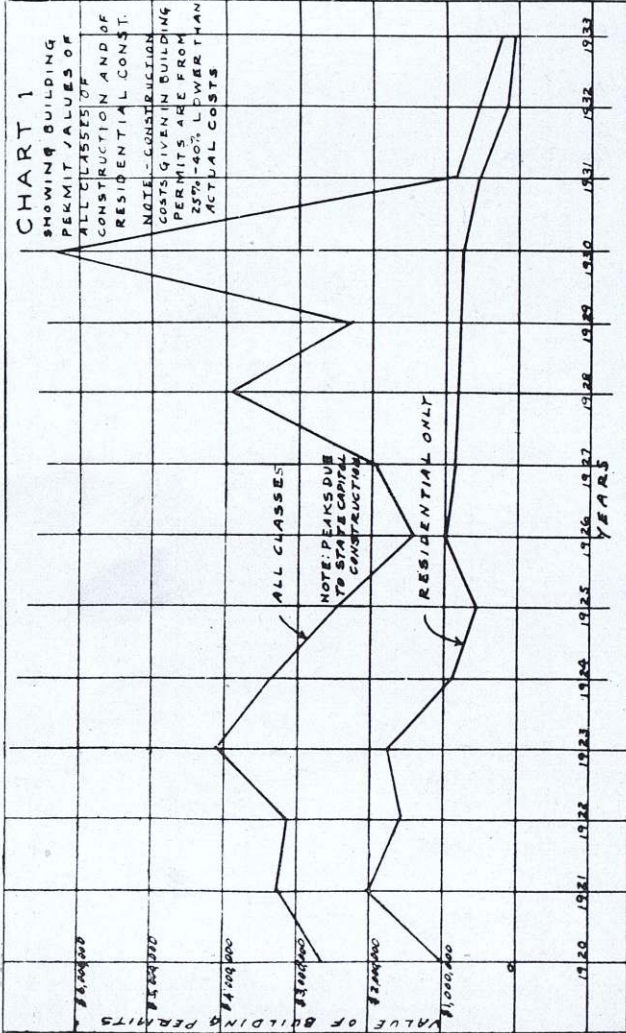
Housing is a true barometer of the economic condition of any people. Henry George in his book, "Progress and Poverty," says: "The man who now uses coarse food and lives in a small house will, as a rule, if his income be increased use more costly food and move into a costlier house. . . . If he grows richer and richer he will procure houses, servants, gardens, his demand for the use of land constantly increasing with his wealth." Although this was written in 1879 it still applies to present-day conditions, and conversely when a man's income decreases he moves into a smaller house. We can, therefore, safely say that economic conditions of the occupants determine the state and condition of housing.

The downward trend of economic conditions which began about 1924 and culminated in the present depression, and its attendant lack of new construction, depreciation and disrepair of existing homes and over-crowding caused by these conditions are amply shown in the following survey made in Charleston by this Bureau with reference to Negro housing conditions.

Map No. 1 is an outline map of Charleston showing the location of the Negro population. This population which, according to 1930 census, was 6,734 or 11% of the whole population, has since that time increased at the rate of 5% per year, and now comprises 1,900 families. The great bulk of this population as shown on the map lives fairly close to the business section, with the greater portion of the balance divided into two parts. One part lives in Wilson Hollow at the extreme east end of the city, and the other lives near the Patrick Street bridge at the extreme west end of the city.

In 1920 the Negro population consisted of approximately 1,025 families (in the survey the family will be taken as a unit). Up to the end of 1933 the Negro families have increased to 1,900 an increase of 875 or approximately 85%. At the same time the number of families provided for by new construction during the same period has been only 235 or approximately 23%.

Charts 1, 2 and 3 explain themselves. Chart 1 shows the general drop in construction since 1923. Chart 2 shows the general drop in housing construction for both white and Negro. An



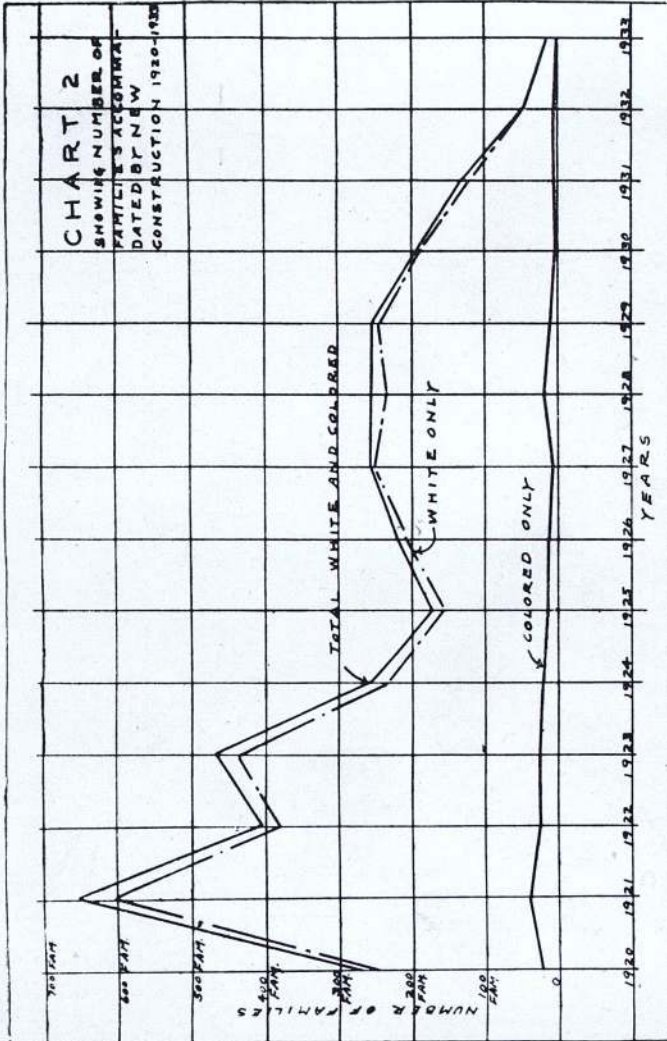


CHART 3

FIGURES 1, 2 & 3 SHOW NUMBER OF FAMILY ACCOMMODATIONS SHORT OBTAINED BY SUBTRACTING FROM THE INCREASE OF POPULATION BY FAMILIES FOR THE YEARS 1920-1933 THE TOTAL FAMILY ACCOMMODATIONS BUILT IN THOSE 14 YEARS

FIGURES 4, 5 & 6 SHOW THE PERCENTAGE THE HOME SHARE IS TO THE WHOLE POPULATION



FIG 1

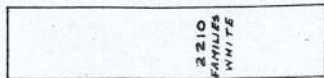


FIG 2



FIG 3

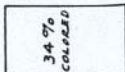


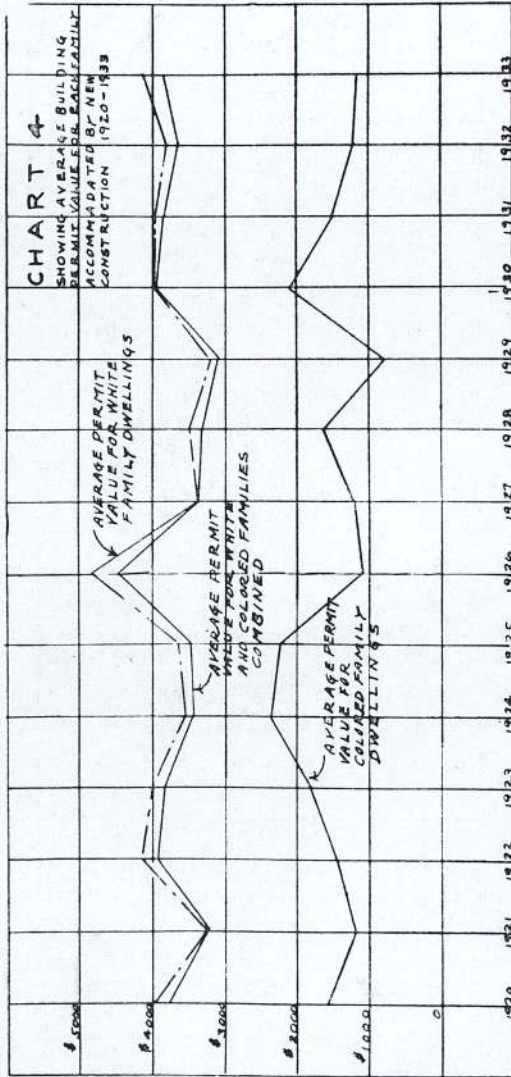
FIG 4



FIG 5



FIG 6



analysis of Chart 2 shows that although the Negro population is about 11% of the whole population, and the Negro families are 13% of the total number of families, it has increased as rapidly in proportion with the whole population. The number of Negro families provided with houses through new construction during the years 1920 to 1933 has averaged only 6% of the total provided for white and Negroes.

Chart 3 shows that during the years 1920 to 1933, inclusive, there has been an increase of 640 Negro families more than the increase in building of houses for the Negro. It also shows the percentage of the whole Negro population for which no provisions have been made.

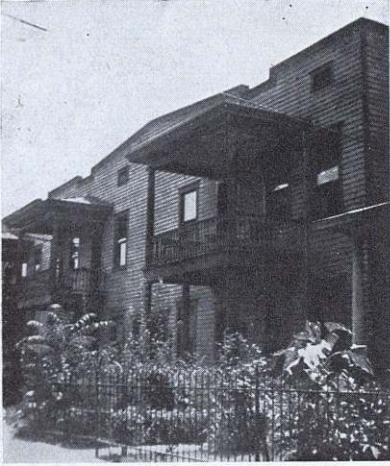
Chart 4 shows the unwholesome conditions caused by the lack of an adequate number of new houses, and added to this was the cheapness of construction of those built. The average permit value of a Negro resident runs as low as \$980, and never exceeds \$2,500. While that of the whites ran as high as \$4,800 and never lower than \$3,300. A further examination revealed that the accommodations for white families average nearly six rooms per family. The average Negro residence was around four rooms per family.

The class of construction built during the period 1920 to 1933 to rent to Negroes is shown in pictures A, B and C, while those built to sell to Negroes are shown in pictures D, E and F.

The charts alone will indicate over-crowding and bad housing conditions. If we add to this fact that practically all dwellings now occupied by Negro families which were in existence prior to 1920 are of frame construction of the cottage type and very cheaply built, and upon whose repair and upkeep very little has been done, the results from a decent housing standard can better be imagined than described.

DOOR TO DOOR SURVEY

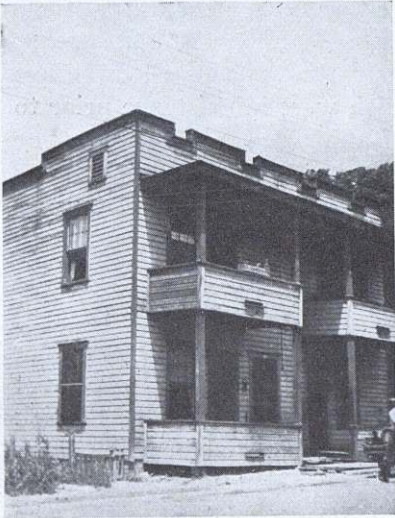
In order to get a better picture of housing conditions, a door to door survey was made in the district bounded by Court Street and Elk River, around Jacob and Lewis Streets and in the Patrick Street section. The number of families included in this survey was 490, which represents 26% of the total Negro population and consisted of 85 families who own their homes and 405 families who rent homes. The families who rent live as follows: 34% live in



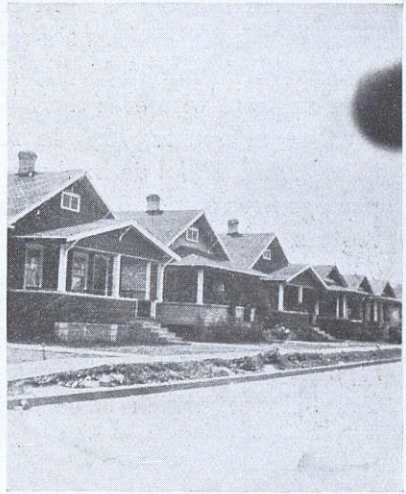
A



B



C



D



E



F

three-room houses, 32% in four-room houses, 23% in five-room houses, and 11% live in six-room houses. The average number of people per room is 1.2 or about five persons living in four rooms. Among those who own their homes it was found that 11% live in three-room houses, 15% in four-room houses, 35% in five-room houses, and 39% live in six-room houses. The average number of persons per room is 0.8 or about three persons in four rooms. The renters, therefore, are 50% more crowded than home owners and 50% more crowded than decent living standards require.

It was further found that 31% of the houses were in a bad state of repair, requiring either total demolition or very extensive repairs, while 35% were in fair condition requiring a few repairs. The balance, which is 34%, are in good condition with a few minor repairs necessary. The survey also discloses that 35% of the houses are without baths, 3% without toilets, 20% without gas, 41% without electricity, and 10% without water.

CROWDED CONDITION OF DWELLINGS

In addition to the conditions stated above, the Negro population is the victim of another form of over-crowding which is a menace to the health and well-being of the community, and that form is the building of houses too close together. The Charleston area is comparatively large. The average number of persons living in its territory per acre is 13 or approximately three families per acre. The section inhabited by the middle class of white people averages 22 persons per acre or about five families per acre, while that inhabited by the Negroes averages around 36 persons per acre or about eight families per acre.

The following is the average number of persons living in fairly densely settled wards of the city:

Ward 2.....	25 persons per acre
Ward 4.....	32 persons per acre
Ward 7.....	40 persons per acre
Ward 8.....	32 persons per acre
Ward 11.....	26 persons per acre
Ward 12.....	31 persons per acre
Ward 13.....	19 persons per acre

It is to be noted that the bulk of the Negro population live in wards 7, 8, 11 and 12.

This crowded condition is partly due to the unprecedented boom in real estate between the years 1917-1923. During this

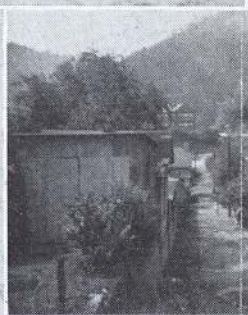
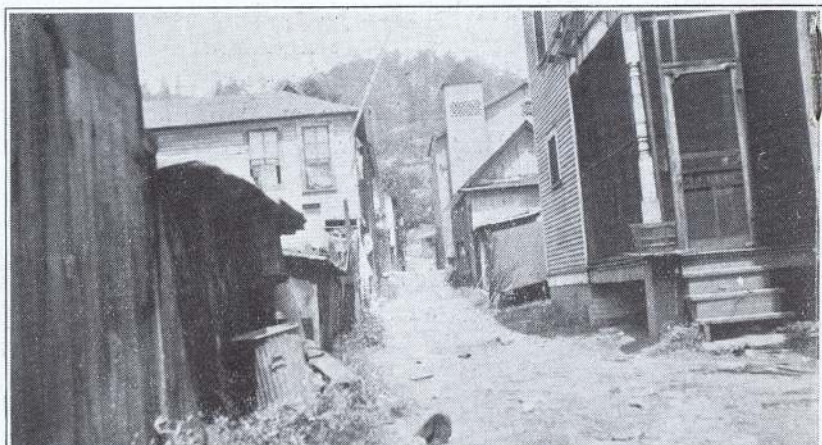
period it was believed that all property between Elk River and Broad Street, and between Kanawha River and Piedmont Road was business property and part of the Negro population lived in this territory. Being potential business territory led many to believe that lots there were worth as much as \$75 a foot and a large number of the owners hoped to sell at figures even greater. Holding on as they did after the boom began to recede they endeavored to earn as much from the property as possible, and the only way by which this could be accomplished was to crowd as many buildings on the lots as they could possibly stand. Those who now own the property occupied by Negroes have very exaggerated ideas of its value, and as the ability of the occupants to pay rent is not great, rents must necessarily be low. Therefore, owners are not receiving a return on their property sufficient to pay the insurance, taxes, upkeep and a return on the assumed investment. Since insurance and taxes must be paid, the landlords are reluctant about making repairs, which results in bad housing conditions.

We do not believe it is necessary to add more proof than that stated above and in the several pictures included to prove that the time is not far off when steps will have to be taken to improve the housing conditions of the Negro, if not that of the whole population.

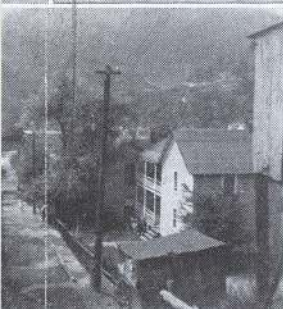
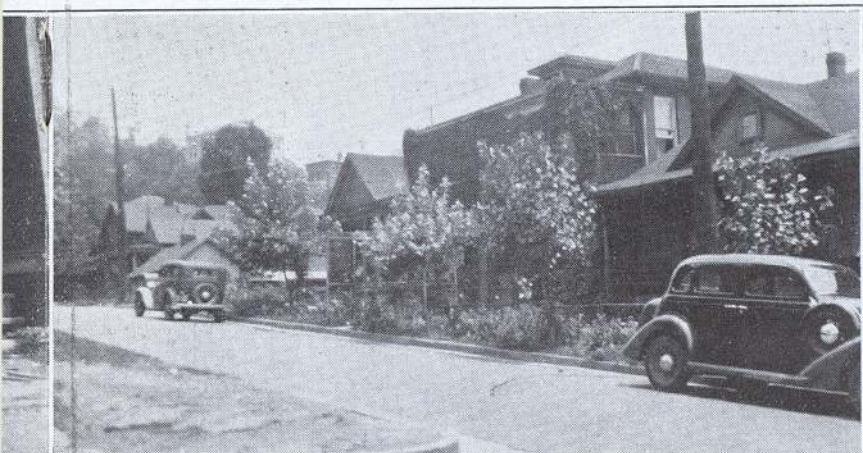
INCOME AND RENT

The income of any family determines the amount of rent it can pay. Usually the rent should be not greater than 30% of the income and preferably not more than 25% of the income. The survey discloses that 26% of the Negro families have incomes less than \$60, 12% have incomes between \$60 and \$80, 17% have incomes between \$80 and \$100, 17% have incomes over \$100 per month, and 30% have no regular incomes. The occupations engaged in by the Negroes are as follows:

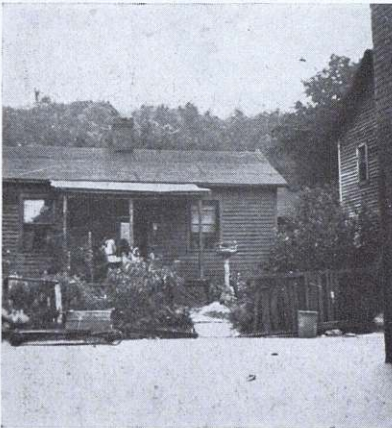
- 35% employed in domestic service
- 21% employed in miscellaneous service
- 11% employed as janitors and porters
- 9% employed as miners
- 8% employed as laborers
- 6% employed as chauffeurs
- 5% employed in governmental service
- 5% employed as construction mechanics



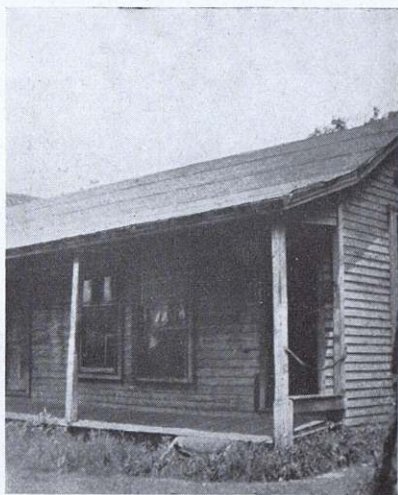
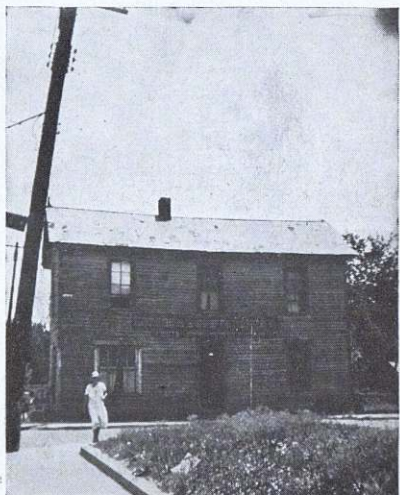
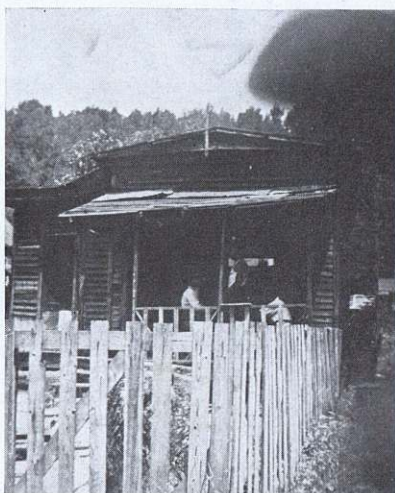
WILLIAMSON, WEST



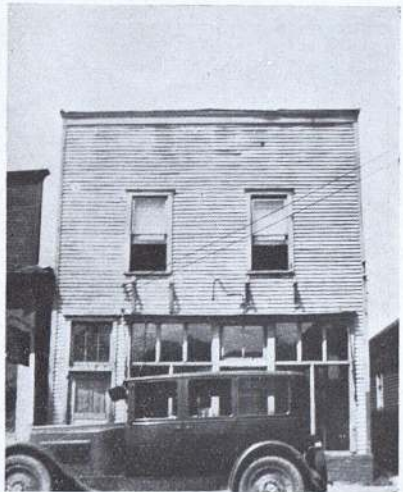
ON, WEST VIRGINIA



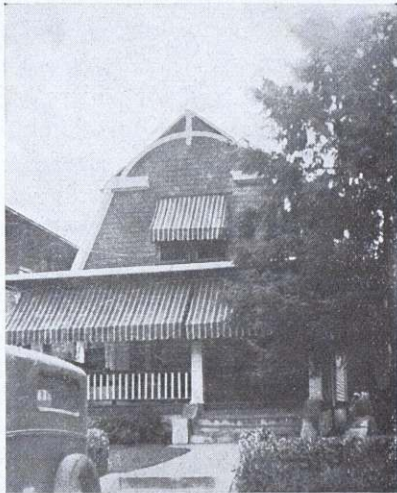
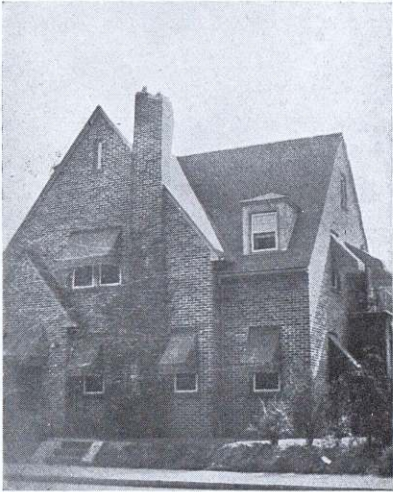
BAD HOUSING IN CHARLESTON



UPPER RIGHT WITHOUT TOILET, WATER OR ELECTRICITY



IN NEED OF REPAIR



A GROUP OF MODERN HOMES

The lowness of the income is borne out by the rent paid; 15% of the renters pay less than \$10 per month, 36% pay between \$10 and \$15 per month, 36% pay between \$15 and \$20 per month, 7% pay between \$20 and \$25 per month, and 6% pay above \$20 per month. The average amount paid per room per month is \$3.67. With 1.2 persons occupying one room, the average rent paid per month per room per person is \$3.30.

The average Negro family consists of 4.1 persons and the average number of rooms required for decent housing for a family of four people is five rooms. By multiplying the average number of persons per family (4.1) by the average amount paid per month per person per room (\$3.30) determines the amount the average Negro family can pay per month for rent.

The desideratum is five families per acre of ground, which means in general one family to a lot 50 by 150 in a five-room house paying from \$12 to \$15 per month rent. This would eliminate slums and improve the health of the Negro population.

SUMMARY OF HOUSING IN CHARLESTON

It is evident that low cost housing must be provided for the Negro. The question naturally arises, How can low cost housing be provided in the territory now occupied by the bulk of the Negro population?

The survey shows that in the territory occupied by the Negroes the number of vacant dwellings is 4% of the total. Most of these vacant dwellings are not available to Negro renters, as they are reserved for whites. The percentage of vacant dwellings for the use of the Negro is almost negligible, being less than 2%, which further emphasizes the fact that, as time goes on, with the Negro population increasing at the rate of 5% per year, steps must be taken to house the Negro properly in the very immediate future.

Construction must be increased to provide for normal population increase, to take care of the normal obsolescence of buildings, and to make up the deficit caused by lack of construction of the last eight years. To safeguard the community from a health or fire menace standpoint, the demolition of obsolescent homes should be brought about by legal steps if necessary. There are many homes which could be rebuilt to provide better accommodations.

PART II.

KEYSTONE, KIMBALL, WHEELING AND
WILLIAMSON SURVEY

PART II.

KEYSTONE, KIMBALL, WHEELING AND WILLIAMSON SURVEY

One perhaps can obtain the best idea of the housing conditions in Williamson, Kimball and Keystone by keeping in mind the types of industries which surround these towns together with the topography of this section of the State. When we break up the industries, we find for the most part that the Negroes are employed chiefly in the mining and railroad industries with the greater portion in the former. With the recent retrenchment of these industries which culminated in the present economic crisis, the average weekly wage of those gainfully employed is from \$15 to \$20.

77 homes were visited in Kimball, 98 in Williamson and 105 in the Keystone section. In studying the physical aspects of the Negro housing, it was found that the housing in general is inadequate. Negroes were found in some instances living in shanties built of wood, always unpainted, out of repair, lacking many modern conveniences and unsupplied with sewerage, running water and indoor toilets. However, certain coal operators provide very comfortable homes at a reasonable rental rate for their employees.

During the last twenty years there has been a very marked movement of Negroes from states further south seeking employment in the industries in this section of the State. This movement has not been confined entirely to Negroes, however, and it is primarily a result of a combination of factors, first among which is the desire to leave the farm sections of the south and a hope to earn larger incomes.

In most of the districts in and around Keystone and Kimball the houses are of a ramshackle appearance. They are situated along the railroad tracks, on the side of hills and in isolated districts. The streets are unpaved. Three to five room cottages of the "shot-gun" type in many instances are predominating. These houses are heated by open grates.

The professional class of Negroes in Keystone, Kimball and Williamson and others who have comparatively large incomes live and have purchased property in better residential sections of the towns. In many cases these homes range from the small bungalow type of residence to the large house. In most cases they are heated by furnaces, and are equipped with other modern conveniences, and often surrounded by yards with shrubbery and flowers.

SUMMARY TABLE OF HOUSING IN KIMBALL (RENTED)

- a. Located in oldest residential sections.
- b. 4.7 persons to the average family.
- c. 4.6 rooms to the average home.
- d. 42.1 per cent of homes without bath, toilet and lights.
- e. 70.6 per cent of homes without bath or toilet.
- f. 98 per cent of homes in need of repair.
- g. \$9.39 is the average monthly rent paid.

SUMMARY TABLE OF HOUSING IN KIMBALL (HOMES OWNED)

- a. This group comprises 18.2 per cent of the 77 homes surveyed.
- b. 4.6 persons to the average family.
- c. 5.9 rooms to the average home.
- d. 51 per cent of homes in poor state of repair.
- e. 93.3 per cent of homes without bath or toilet.
- f. 49 per cent of homes in fair state of repair.

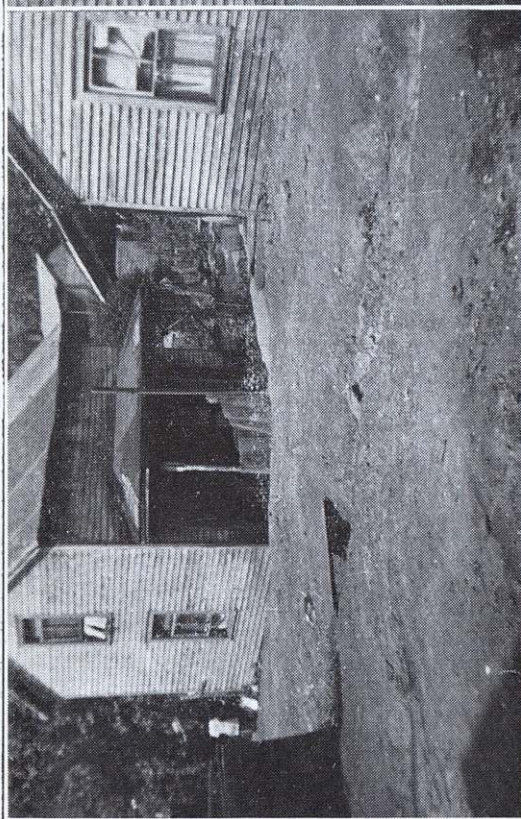
SUMMARY TABLE OF HOUSING IN WILLIAMSON (RENTED)

- a. 5.8 persons to the average family.
- b. 3.7 rooms to the average home.
- c. 43.6 per cent of homes without bath or toilet.
- d. 97 per cent of homes in poor state of repair.
- e. \$8.90 is the average rent paid per month.

SUMMARY TABLE OF HOUSING IN WILLIAMSON (OWNED)

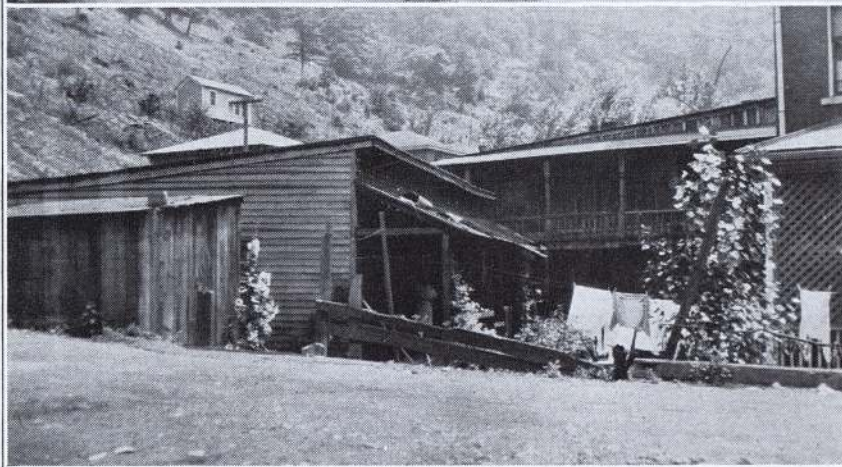
- a. 4.6 persons to the average family.
- b. 4.7 rooms to the average home.

KIMBALL, WEST VIRGINIA



SUMMARY TABLE OF HOUSING IN KEYSTONE

- a. 6.7 persons to the average family.
- b. 5.1 rooms to the average home.
- c. 16.1 per cent of homes without bath, toilet, water or lights.
- d. 51.6 per cent of homes in bad state of repair.
- e. \$13.29 is the average rent paid per month.



KEYSTONE, WEST VIRGINIA

The Negro in Wheeling has been more adversely affected by bad housing than any other group. The several pictures and table are presented as visual evidence of the existing conditions of housing.

The survey of Wheeling covered 195 homes.

103 homes in poor state of repair (rented).

67 homes in fair state of repair (rented).

9 homes in good state of repair (rented).

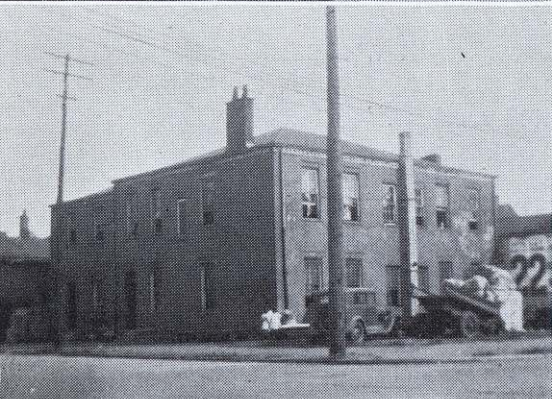
16 homes in fair and good state of repair (owned).

Most of the homes in the first group are in such bad state of deterioration that either total demolition or extensive repairs are necessary. The state of repair of the houses visited may be due to three factors. First is the age of the houses. The occupants moved into these neighborhoods where houses have served several generations of tenement dwellers. The second factor is the unwillingness of landlords to make repairs on houses of this class, and the third factor is the carelessness of tenants themselves.

A large number of the owners of the deteriorated property have very exaggerated ideas of its value and the ability of the Negro to pay rent for the little value received. The amount of rent paid per dwelling (see table) seems small, but when it is considered in relation to the income of the families and the meager quarters obtained for the money, it is evident that rent assumes a central place in the budget of these people.

WEST VIRGINIA TRAVEL
DEPARTMENT
INCORPORATED

WHEELING, WEST VIRGINIA



WHEELING, WEST VIRGINIA

SUMMARY TABLE OF HOUSING IN WHEELING

- a. Homes located in "blighted sections."
- b. 5.7 persons to the average family.
- c. 3.9 rooms to the average home.
- d. 64 per cent of the homes without bath, toilet, lights, or water.
- e. 73 per cent of the homes without bath or toilet.
- f. The dwellings are out of date, and very difficult to repair.
- g. \$9.25 is the average rent paid per month.

CONCLUSION

Without better housing for such an under-privileged group, the future increase in population can result in nothing but complete degeneration, and improving the general housing situation, one of the most fundamental approaches appears to be that of raising the standard of the poorest housing in a locality. This happens to be a housing problem, and for Negroes principally, because of their economic condition.

Any constructive recommendation for improving the general character of housing conditions among Negroes in the immediate future should be to create among Negroes themselves, a desire for the maintenance of pleasant and attractive homes. Improved housing conditions demand the cooperation of the occupant. This can be secured only as a result of training. The award systems developed by housing associations and employers who foster plans of industrial housing have succeeded in many instances in creating a better plane of living for their occupants. The education of the community or any particular segment of the community in home improvement or home making is eminently a matter of neighborhood concern. We are urging property owners to make available to Negro tenants good houses rather than many dilapidated structures that are now offered them.

It is further recommended that the municipalities provide better zoning protection for Negro neighborhoods in supplying improvements that will make the areas occupied by Negro home owners as good as those found in other sections of the city, that proper health and building ordinances be passed and enforced, and that those communities who have concerned themselves with the housing plans and low cost housing projects through federal grants, or whatnot, undertake to rid the community of the unsightly and unhealthy living conditions as found among the Negro group.

