



Chicago Housing Conditions, V: South Chicago at the Gates of the Steel Mills
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CHICAGO HOUSING CONDITIONS, V: SOUTH CHICAGO AT THE GATES OF THE STEEL MILLS¹

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That portion of South Chicago which lies near the Steel Mills more closely resembles the stockyards district than any other section of the city described in this series of articles. In both districts there is the community dominated by a single industry in connection with which the great majority of the neighboring, one may say almost dependent, population find their employment. In both districts the industry affects the neighborhood in physically offensive ways. In connection with the packing-houses there are suggestions of noisome processes connected with the slaughter of the animals from which a world market for food is supplied. Near the Steel Mills there is the sound of gigantic processes suggesting peril to life and limb, and mysterious accidents of which the public never learns. Here a pall of heavy smoke darkens the sky by day, while by night the lurid glare from the furnaces tells of unceasing toil.

During the thirty years that have passed since the incorporation of the South Chicago Rolling Mills, the humble progenitor

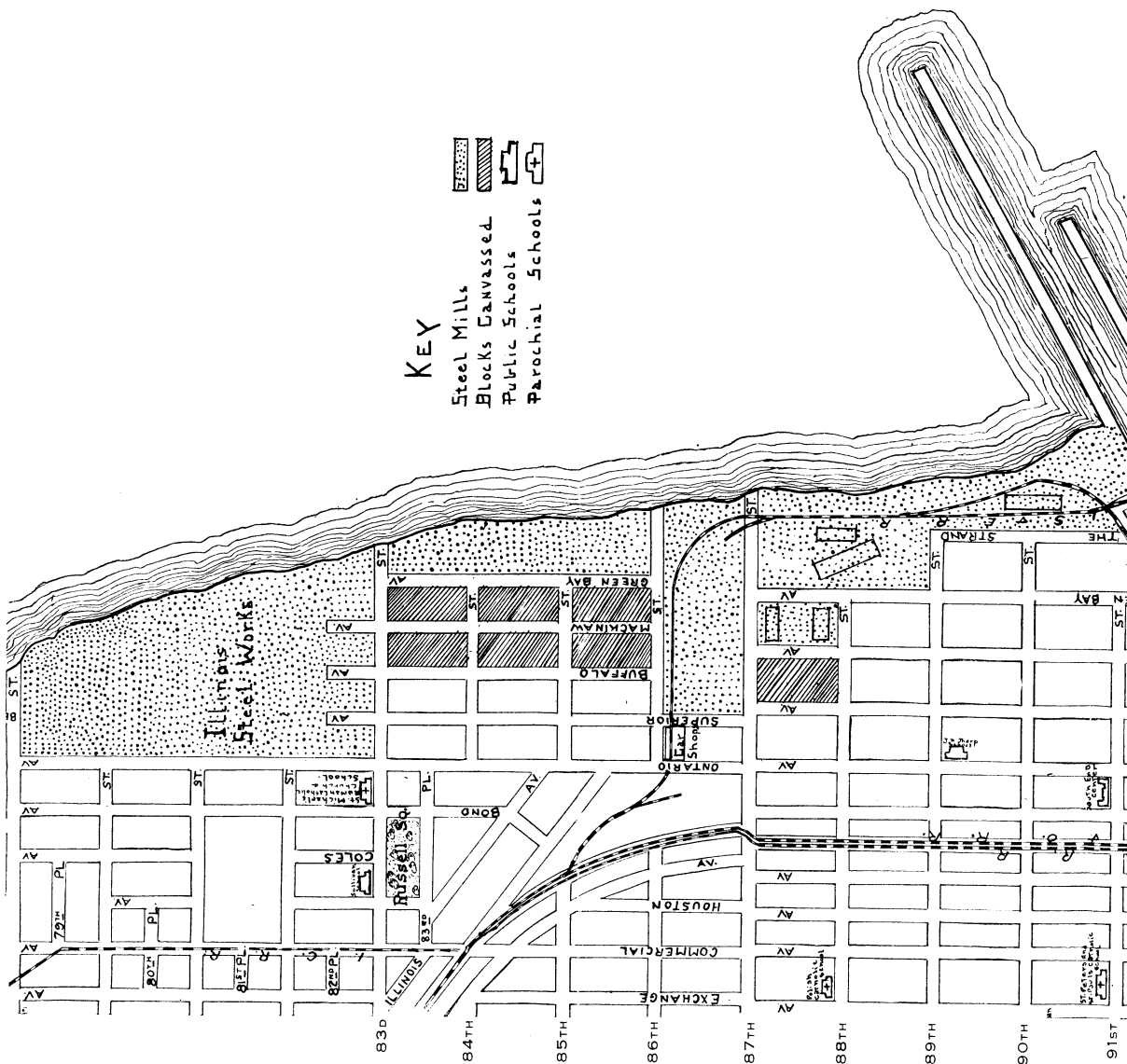
¹ This study is the result of a house-to-house canvass made by Jessie F. Bell, W. L. Chenery, Katherine S. Gedney, Ethel E. Hanks, H. K. Herwitz, M. B. Hunt, Estelle B. Hunter, Caro Bugbey MacArthur, and Paul Wander, Russell Sage Foundation research students, 1909-10. The map is by Grace Norton and Anne S. Davis, research students 1908-9. The work of tabulation was done by Grace Norton, Ina Rabb, and Ruby G. Stewart.

of the great "Illinois Steel Company," a large industrial community has been growing up about the gates of the mills. It would be perhaps more correct to say that several communities have grown up and passed on—for later tables will show that few of the men who live there today were there ten years ago. The tide of immigration ebbs and flows before the gates of the mills; the Irish, the German, the Scandinavian have come and gone, and the Pole who is there as a dominating force today is giving place to the Magyar, the Croatian, the Serb, and the Bulgarian—the vanguards of the army which will camp there tomorrow.

This district is a part of the Eighth Ward of the city of Chicago, a large territory of 21.28 square miles which is familiarly called South Chicago, and which is identical with the old suburb of this same name formerly belonging to the village of Hyde Park. The pioneers who formed a settlement at the mouth of the Calumet River in 1830, seven years before Chicago received its first charter, had eager hopes of its industrial possibilities and believed they had found an ideal place for a great city on the lake. The first bridge over the Calumet River, at the foot of what is now Ninety-second Street, was built in 1839; but the little settlement on the Calumet was soon outdistanced by its aggressive rival on the Chicago River, and it was not until 1856 that there were any evidences of permanent development. At that time real-estate dealers had sufficient confidence to lay out a considerable district. The speculative character of this venture is evidenced by the fact that three-fourths of the lots were bought up by a single purchaser, who later in 1869 was one of the founders of the Calumet & Chicago Canal Dock Company. This company was anxious to develop the district along both residential and industrial lines, and therefore allowed for wide streets and spacious avenues, and also undertook the work of draining the river and of constructing docks. The two purposes sought were, of course, incompatible, and the unforeseen success in the second undertaking spelled the failure of the first. As a result of the activities of this company there was, however, a very encouraging development, somewhat in the nature of a boom

KEY

- Steel Mills
- Blocks Canvassed
- Public Schools
- Parochial Schools





MAP SHOWING BLOCKS CANVASSED AND STEEL MILLS IN SOUTH CHICAGO

except that it was quite permanent. The school enrolment, for example, increased between 1871 and 1876 from 103 to 1,089.²

In selecting districts for a housing canvass, an important industrial community like South Chicago could not be overlooked. In 1901 the investigating committee of the City Homes Association discovered there "the most abominable outside sanitary conditions," but no attempt was then made to ascertain conditions within the houses. It was believed, therefore, that a detailed inquiry into housing conditions in a selected group of blocks near the mills would be an interesting feature of the new investigation.

A small district of six blocks was selected for a house-to-house canvass in the section known as "The Bush," which is surrounded by the railroad tracks and the mills on three sides. On the north, the great Catholic Church and Parochial School of St. Michael dominate the humble dwellings in the vicinity and suggest the mediaeval European village rather than the modern American industrial community. The blocks selected are believed to be typical of the poorest section of South Chicago. Care was taken to avoid the worst streets, such as "The Strand," where conditions of vice exist, since the purpose of the whole inquiry has been to study housing conditions in neighborhoods in which respectable poor families live. A seventh block beyond "The Bush" and across the railroad tracks was added to the group because we had been told that conditions there might be different. No essential difference was found, however, and therefore no other blocks in the neighborhood were canvassed.

Throughout the district the streets are wide and the blocks are divided by 20-foot alleys. Here, as in most other sections of the city, the shoe-string lot is found, 25 feet wide and 140 feet deep; and, as later tables will show, here, as in other districts, the long, narrow lot has meant narrow passageways between the houses and dark, ill-ventilated rooms. There are still some vacant lots in the neighborhood, and Table I shows

² It is of interest that the boundaries of this school district are the present boundaries of the Eighth Ward—that is, 71st and 138th Streets on the north and south, the lake and the Indiana state line on the east, and Torrence Avenue on the west. The school attendance of this same district in 1910 was 14,681.

that even in the case of those which are used the buildings cover a relatively small percentage of the lot, and there is often a large space unoccupied. In the blocks visited it was found that in 134 out of 218 premises (61 per cent) less than half the lot was covered; and there were only 31 lots (14 per cent of the entire number) which were covered 70 per cent or more.

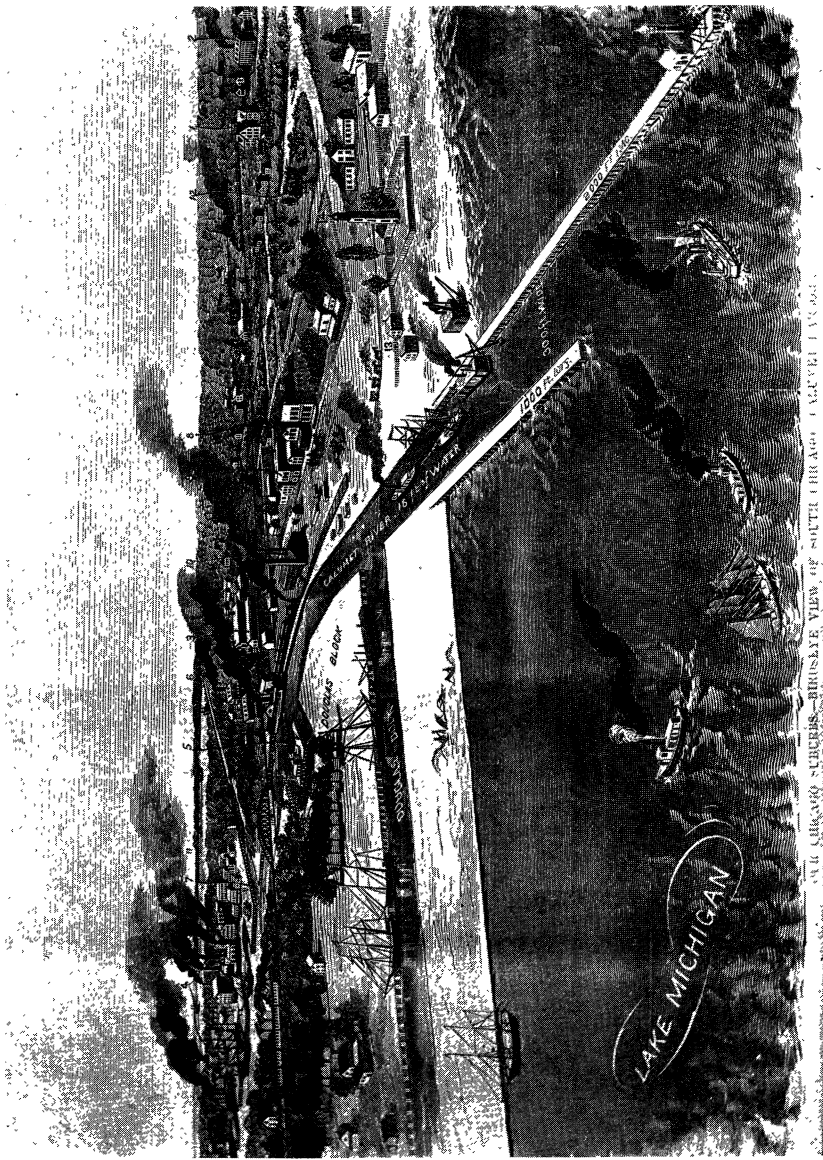
TABLE I
PERCENTAGE OF LOT COVERED

Percentage of Lot Covered	Number of Lots	Percentage of Total Number
Less than 50.....	134	61
50 and less than 60.....	12	6
60 and less than 70.....	28	12
70 and less than 80.....	15	7
80 and less than 90.....	12	6
90 or more.....	4	2
No report.....	13	6
Total.....	218	100

Table II shows an interesting contrast between this and the other districts investigated; that is, there is here even less crowding on the land than in the stockyards district, where only 43 per cent of the premises were covered less than 50 per cent, and there is striking contrast with conditions found in the Polish, Bohemian, and Jewish quarters on the West Side, where the corresponding figures are 15, 9, and 4 per cent.

TABLE II
PERCENTAGE OF LOT COVERED IN FOUR OTHER DISTRICTS

PERCENTAGE OF LOT COVERED	STOCKYARDS 13 BLOCKS		JEWISH 1 BLOCK		BOHEMIAN 1 BLOCK		POLISH 10 BLOCKS	
	Number	Per-centage	Number	Per-centage	Number	Per-centage	Number	Per-centage
Less than 50.....	248	43	2	4	4	9	67	15
50 and less than 60.....	65	11	5	11	.	.	54	12
60 and less than 70.....	92	16	.	.	13	30	117	25
70 and less than 80.....	75	13	12	26	6	14	131	29
80 and less than 90.....	56	10	6	13	6	14	55	13
90 or more.....	25	4	22	46	14	33	25	5
No report.....	21	3	.	.	.	.	6	1
Total.....	582	100	47	100	43	100	455	100



MOUTH OF THE CALUMET RIVER, 1871

A photograph of the portion of South Chicago included in the map opposite p. 147

(Reproduced by courtesy of the Chicago Historical Society, to whom the original belongs)

It was therefore to be expected that the density of population here would be less than in any one of the other sections described, and that this is true is shown by Table III, from which it appears that in only one of the blocks visited were there more than 200 people to the acre, while in five of the seven there were less than 150 to the acre.

TABLE III
DENSITY OF POPULATION IN SEVEN BLOCKS IN THE EIGHTH WARD

Block	Area in Acres	Population	Density per Acre
1	3.39	270	80
2	3.39	729	215
3	3.31	349	105
4	3.39	459	135
5	3.39	372	110
6	3.39	618	183
7	3.89	302	75

These figures are in striking contrast to those presented in an earlier article showing density of population in some of the West Side wards.³ Even in the stockyards district, which is not considered a congested neighborhood, one block was found

TABLE IV
BLOCK POPULATION OF SEVEN BLOCKS

BLOCK	MEMBERS OF FAMILY GROUPS				LODGERS			TOTAL BLOCK POPULA- TION
	Persons over Twelve		Children under 12	Total	Male	Female	Total	
	Male	Female						
1	78	57	100	235	35	..	35	270
2	150	139	200	489	235	5	240	729
3	57	77	76	210	137	2	139	349
4	101	103	138	342	108	4	112	454
5	91	98	104	293	76	3	79	372
6	117	118	194	429	188	1	189	618
7	83	84	84	251	50	1	51	302
Total number . .	677	676	896	2,249	829	16	845	3,094
Percentage . . .				73			27	100

³ See this *Journal*, XVII, 3.

having a density of 306, and the average density in the blocks canvassed in that neighborhood was 208.

Table IV, showing the distribution of the block population, is of interest at this point. The lodger, which this table shows to be an important factor in the housing problem in South Chicago, will be discussed at a later point in this article. Of greater interest here, however, is the fact that the population of this district is not, as is commonly thought, a lodging-house population. It appears, for example, that in these seven blocks the number of children under twelve years of age was consid-

TABLE V
NATIONALITY OF HEADS OF HOUSEHOLDS

Block	German	Hungarian	Irish	Magyar	Polish	Other Slavic	Swedish	Miscellaneous	Nationality Unknown	Total
1.....	2	..	..	..	33	2	7	2	..	46
2.....	12	6	1	2	50	27	14	..	3	115
3.....	1	12	..	8	11	11	9	..	..	52
4.....	1	..	..	1	74	3	1	..	..	80
5.....	4	..	..	..	52	8	8	..	2	71
6.....	7	..	..	17	52	18	1	1	18	114
7.....	3	..	10	2	12	3	31	4	2	67
Total..	30	18	11	30	284	69	71	7	25	545

erably in excess of the number of lodgers taken. There should then be no misunderstanding of the fact that the housing problem in this district is a problem of proper living conditions for families with children. The nationality of these families is also a question of interest. As in the stockyards district, while the industry draws workers from many nationalities, the population is now predominantly Slavic and very largely Polish. As Table V shows, 284 heads of households, 52 per cent of the entire number, are Polish, a large number are from other Slavic countries, while only 112, or 20 per cent, are from Ireland or Western Europe. Moreover, as the region has always been, in fact, devoted to industrial purposes, the houses are almost uniformly old

frame houses not more than one or two stories high.⁴ In the blocks canvassed only 26 houses (10 per cent of the whole number) were more than two stories high, while 105, or 40 per cent, were only one story high.

The region is too modern to admit of such old dwellings as are found in the Jewish quarter or in the section of the city now given over to "furnished rooms." Table IX shows that only 77 of the 513 families in the seven blocks had been there ten years or more, and 58 of these owned the houses in which they lived. That is, in this, as in other similar districts, those who have lived a long time in one neighborhood are for the most part those who own their own homes and who find it difficult to move. The presence of Irish families in a Slavic colony is frequently explained in this way. On the other hand, out of the 263 buildings under consideration only 16 have been erected within the last ten years and are, therefore, subject to the provisions of the building code adopted in 1901.

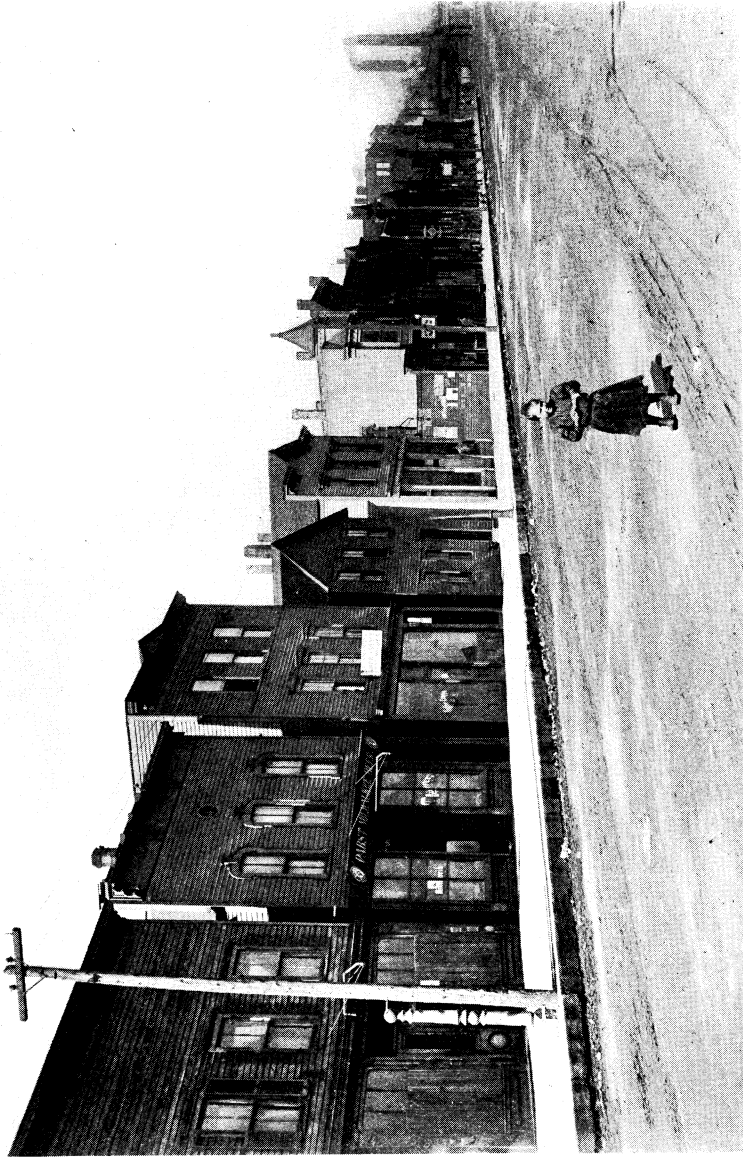
Unlike the West Side districts, the alley tenement is an inconspicuous feature of the housing problem in South Chicago as it was in the stockyards district, and the number of lots on which there are middle buildings or more than two buildings to

TABLE VI
NUMBER OF HOUSES OF SPECIFIED NUMBER OF STORIES

Number of Stories	Number of Houses	Percentage
One story	105	40
Two stories	132	50
Three stories	26	10
Total	263	100

TABLE VII
NUMBER OF BRICK AND FRAME HOUSES

Material	Number of Houses	Percentage
Brick	13	5
Frame	249	95
Partly brick or partly frame	1	Percentage so small as to be negligible.
Total	263	100



SOUTH CHICAGO HOUSES IN WHICH FAMILIES WITH CHILDREN LIVE

TABLE VIII
NUMBER OF HOUSES BUILT UNDER THE OLD AND THE NEW LAW

Kind of House	Number of Houses	Percentage
"Old Law"	245	93
"New Law"	16	6
No report	2	1
Total	263	100

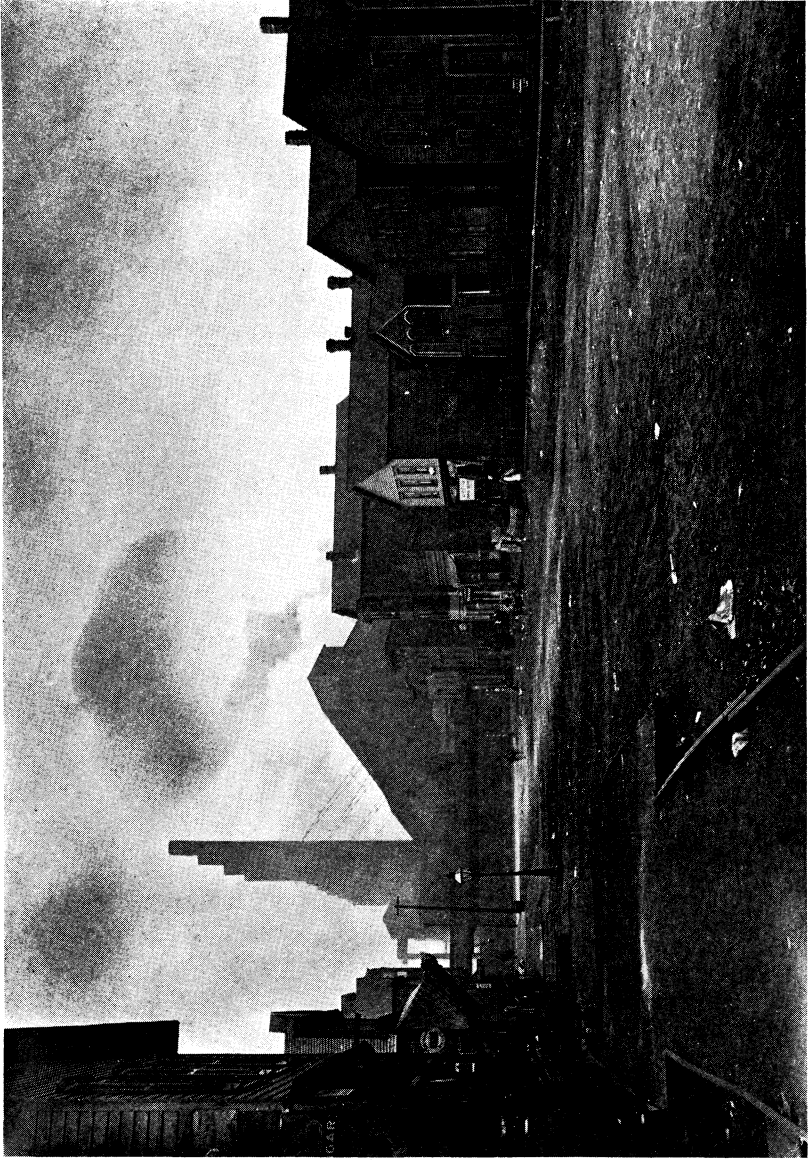
TABLE IX
LENGTH OF TIME 513 FAMILIES HAD LIVED IN APARTMENTS OCCUPIED

	Number of Families Who Had Lived in Their Apartments
Less than one month	20
One month and less than three	51
Three months and less than six	64
Six months and less than one year	70
One year and less than two years	77
Two years and less than three years	56
Three years and less than four years	41
Four years and less than six years	26
Six years and less than eight years	23
Eight years and less than ten years	8
Ten years and over	77 ⁵
Total	513
Vacant and no report	32
Total number of apartments	545

⁵ The following table shows how many of the old residents had bought property:

TABLE X
LENGTH OF TIME OWNERS HAVE LIVED IN APARTMENTS

Less than two years	10
Two years and less than four years	11
Four years and less than six years	5
Six years and less than eight years	8
Eight years and less than ten years	5
Ten years and less than fifteen years	11
Fifteen years and less than twenty years	22
Twenty years and less than twenty-five	15
Twenty-five years or more	10
Total	97
No report	3
Total number of owners	100



LOOKING NORTH ON GREEN BAY STREET

TABLE XI
NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF REAR OR ALLEY DWELLINGS IN SOUTH CHICAGO

Location on Lot	Number of Houses	Percentage
Front	218	83
Middle	3	1
Rear	42	16
Total	263	100

the lot is very small. Here, according to Table XI, 16 per cent of the buildings were alley buildings; Table XII shows that near the stockyards the alley dwellings were only 12 per cent of all the houses, while in the Jewish district 20 per cent, in the Bohemian block 32 per cent, and in the Polish neighborhood on the Northwest Side 33 per cent of the houses were rear or alley tenements.

TABLE XII
NUMBER OF REAR OR ALLEY TENEMENTS IN OTHER DISTRICTS

LOCATION ON LOT	DISTRICT			
	Stockyards	Jewish	Bohemian	Polish
Front	539	47	47	490
Middle	7	1	1	8
Rear	73	17	23	245
Total	619	65	71	743

The condition of repair in which the buildings were found is worse than in any other section except the conspicuously dilapidated Jewish quarter. In the stockyards district more than half of the houses were reported as being in good repair, while the corresponding proportions for the Bohemian and Polish districts were 57 per cent and 71 per cent. On the other hand, Table XIII shows that in South Chicago the number reported in good repair is only 26 per cent of the whole number, while 23 per cent are positively in bad condition. In the other districts the number of dilapidated buildings was relatively small, in the stockyards and Bohemian districts 11 per cent, and only 5 per cent in the Polish district.

A large proportion of the houses in this district have only

one apartment; that is, they are private dwellings and not tenements.⁶ In contrast with conditions on the West Side, where only from 3 to 5 per cent of the houses visited were one-family dwellings, Table XIV shows that 38 per cent of the houses near the mills had only a single apartment. In many cases, of course, the family had a very large number of lodgers so that the number of

TABLE XIII
STATE OF REPAIR OF HOUSES INVESTIGATED

State of Repair	Number of Houses	Percentage
Good	73	28
Fair	126	48
Bad	61	23
No report	3	1
Total	263	100

TABLE XIV
NUMBER OF HOUSES OCCUPIED BY SPECIFIC NUMBER OF FAMILIES

Houses Containing	Number	Percentage
No apartment	8	3
One apartment	100	38
Two apartments	83	32
Three apartments	29	11
Four apartments	33	12
Five apartments	2	1
Six apartments	7	3
Seven apartments . . . . .	...	...*
Eight apartments	1	...
Total	263	100

* Less than 1 per cent.

persons occupying the house might be greater than the number in several different families. Unfortunately, however, these houses are technically classed as "private dwellings" and are governed only by the provisions of the Building Code relating to "Class III" houses, instead of by the stricter regulations of the sections of the code dealing with Class VI or tenement houses. Insanitary housing conditions, however, are just as bad for the single

⁶ In Chicago, according to the definition of the code, a house is not a tenement and is not governed by the provisions of the Tenement Code (*Code*, secs. 59-246, provisions governing Class VI houses) unless it "is used as a home or residence for two or more families living in separate apartments."

family in a so-called private dwelling as for two or more families in a house that is called a tenement, although the law may not be technically violated in the former case. Children who sleep in rooms crowded with immigrant lodgers or who are forced to use unfit toilet accommodations suffer, and should be protected by the standard which the community has set, whether the house is occupied by one, or more than one, family group. It is important to remember, however, that the following tables relate

TABLE XV
NUMBER OF APARTMENTS HAVING SPECIFIED NUMBER OF ROOMS

Apartments Having	Number	Percentage
One room	1	*
Two rooms	35	6
Three rooms	32	6
Four rooms	327	60
Five rooms	60	11
Six rooms	72	13
Seven rooms	9	2
Eight or more	5	1
Number of rooms not reported.	4	1
Total	545	100

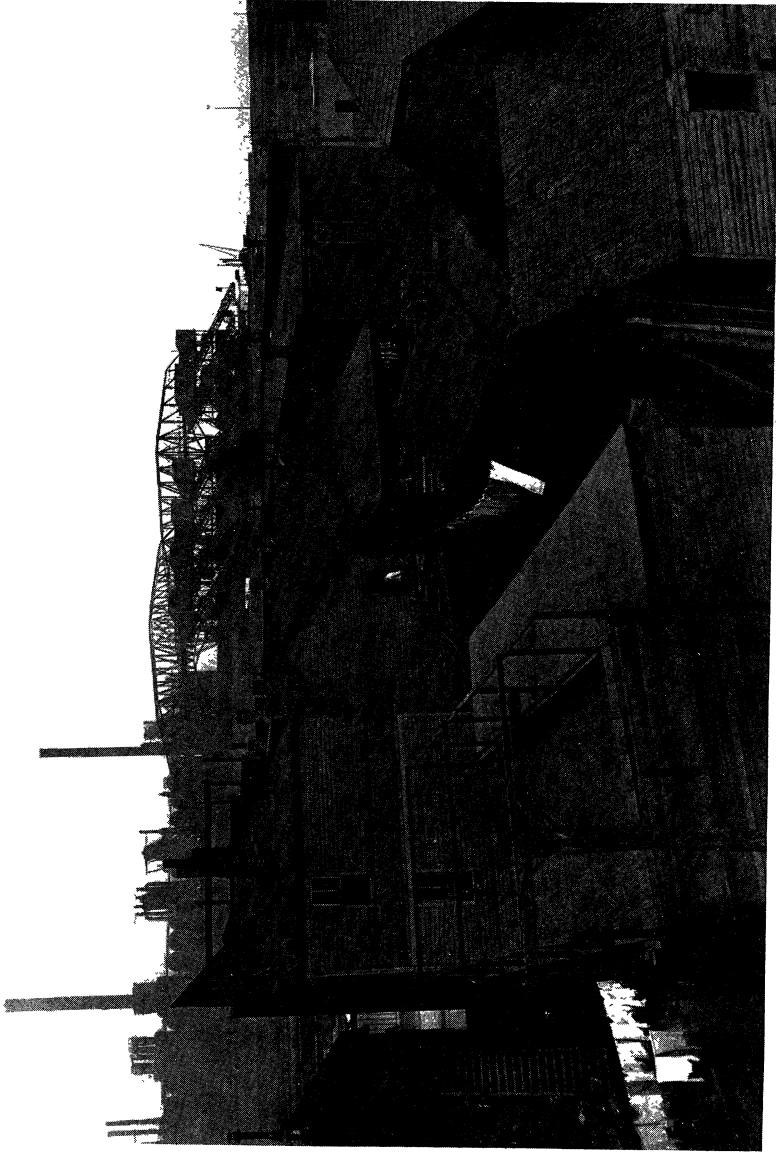
* Less than 1 per cent

both to private dwellings and tenements and that the bad conditions set out are therefore not uniformly illegal.

The question of the number of rooms in the apartment is an important one. Table XV shows that here, as in the other districts visited, the one-room apartment is the very rare exception and the four-room apartment is typical. Only one apartment was found in this section which contained only a single room. Another apparently favorable aspect of the housing problem in South Chicago is the absence of the cellar apartment.⁷ Un-

TABLE XVI
LOCATION OF APARTMENT

Location	Number
Cellar	1
Basement	26
First floor	291
Second floor	215
Third floor	21
Attic	2
Total	556
Counted twice	11
	545



REAR VIEW OF HOUSES NEAR THE STEEL MILLS, SOUTH CHICAGO

fortunately, however, the streets had not been paved when this investigation was made, and it is very probable that the paving which has been done since then has raised the street grade enough to bring a considerable number of apartments into the cellar class.⁸ Another explanation of the small number of cellar apartments which were found may lie in the fact that the land is very low and badly drained and that apartments below the street level are peculiarly insanitary in this district. The City Homes Investigating Committee reported in 1901 that this whole district lay in a swamp, that the houses were built "on land about eight feet below the city datum," and that there was so much standing water about that the occupancy of basement apartments was dangerous.⁹ In some instances, in fact, the houses are built without foundations but rest upon supports, leaving a vacant space underneath the dwelling. In addition to being damp and insanitary, this space was frequently found to be utilized as a shelter for fowls. In one case, for example, 50 chickens and ducks were so sheltered under the house in which the family lived.

Marked progress is being made here as in other parts of the city in the removal of the privy vaults. In 1901 the City Homes Association reported that the outlawed vault was "in general use" in South Chicago. In the recent canvass twenty-six privy vaults were found in two of the seven blocks. It was reported that fifteen of the vaults were no longer in use but they had not been removed, and almost uniformly remained an offensive

⁸ It should be recalled that the code makes a careful distinction between cellar and basement apartments. A "cellar" is a story more than one-half below the level of the street grade, while a basement is a story partly but not more than one-half below this level.

⁹ See *Tenement House Conditions in Chicago*, p. 181. Although the district still seems dreary and neglected, extracts from this report show that conditions ten years ago were far worse. The report, for example, continues: "There is no sewerage, unless that name is given to a system of gutters by which a certain amount of sewerage is carried off. There is usually an odor from the foul waste matter which accumulates in these places. The land is undrained and in some cases the water stands for months under the houses and upon vacant lots. In certain places there was a green scum upon the water, which showed that it had been standing stagnant for some time. There are no water-closets and the outlawed privy vault is in general use. The yards, streets, and alleys are indiscriminately used for the disposal of all sorts of garbage and rubbish. Almost no garbage boxes were found. None of the streets are paved, and the whole district is filthy beyond description. The atmosphere of the neighborhood is clouded with smoke, and the district is extremely dreary, ugly, and unhealthful" (p. 182).

nuisance. In many cases no adequate substitute had been provided. On one lot two of these unused vaults were still standing open in a most shocking condition, overflowing, and the wood rotting. There were four families with fourteen children under twelve years of age and five lodgers living in this house, and the two dirty hall closets that were supposed to take the place of the old vaults must have been a source of demoralization. In another case where there was a saloon on the front of the lot there were four offensive vaults on the premises which, although they were in such condition that they could not be used, still constituted a public nuisance. A Hungarian saloon-keeper with his wife and three children lived on the first floor of a small tenement on the rear of the lot. There was neither cellar nor basement, but in a low space under the house 30 chickens and 20 ducks were kept. The family on the floor above had two children and eight lodgers. The only toilet accommodations except the four noxious vaults was a single hall closet. The saloon-keeper thought his wife and children could just as well use the closet provided for the patrons of the saloon, and did not think the situation objectionable.

TABLE XVII
NUMBER OF FAMILIES DEPENDENT ON SPECIFIED TOILET ARRANGEMENTS

Provision	Number	Percentage
Privy vault	9	2
Yard closet	302	55
Basement or cellar closet	41	8
Hall closet	48	9
Private (within the apartment)	135	25
No report	8	1
Total	545	100

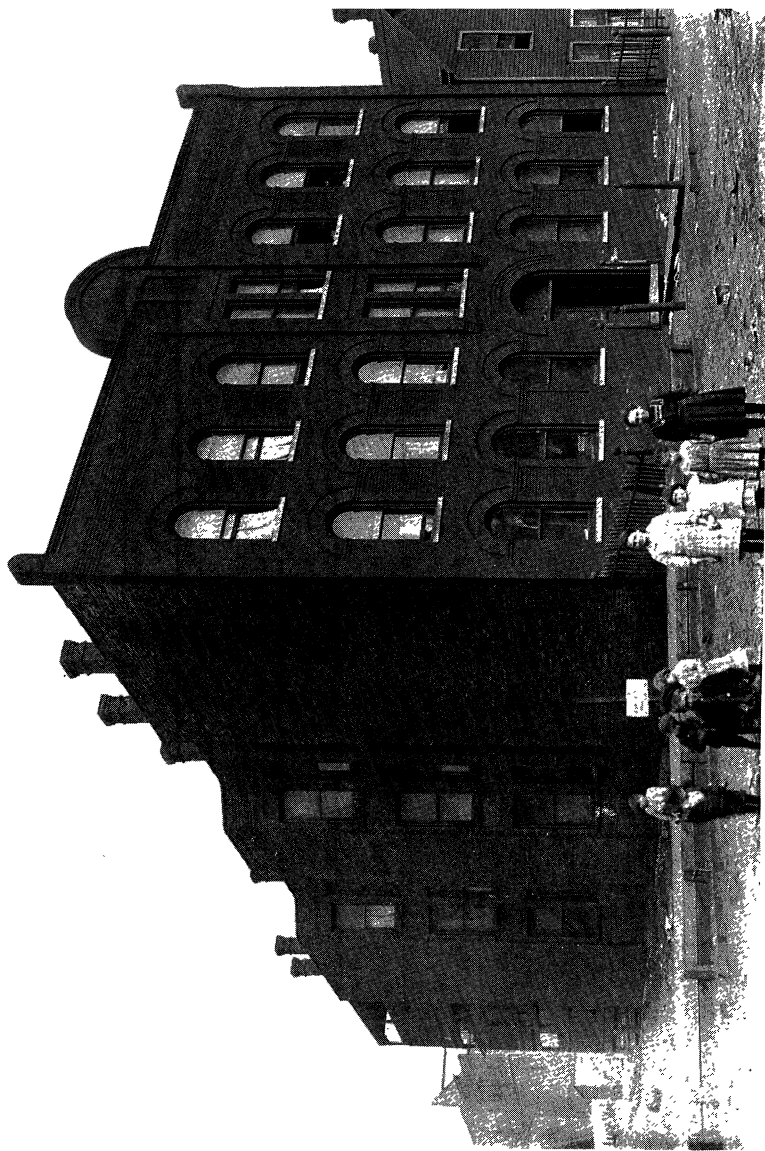
Toilet facilities in general were most unsatisfactory; 1,730 persons were dependent on the yard water-closet, 207 persons were using basement or cellar closets, and 280 persons were using closets in public halls. Table XVII shows that out of 545 apartments the families in 410 were dependent upon these semi-public sanitary provisions; that is, fewer than one-fourth of the families living in these blocks had closets within the apartment. One

lot, entirely covered by a tenement containing four apartments and a butcher shop, had a building at the rear used as a combined stable and smoke-house which was in a very insanitary condition, the floor covered with all sorts of garbage and rubbish. The owner of the premises, who kept the butcher shop, lived in the small apartment in the rear of the shop with three grown-up children and one lodger. A married son and his wife, both of whom worked in the shop, lived with one child and three lodgers in a very dirty three-room apartment above. The toilet facilities for all of the people in these two apartments were in the cellar, a dark, damp, and very dirty place where 24 ducks and 12 chickens were kept.

In the earlier articles in this series, attention was called to the fact that the yard water-closet, although more sanitary than the old vault, is still a very unsatisfactory arrangement. Modern standards of decency and sanitation demand that each family shall have private toilet facilities within its own apartment. The tenement-house law requires that all apartments in "new-law" houses, except those with only one or two rooms, shall contain such provisions. The old public or semi-public closets in the yards, halls, or basements have been practically condemned by this provision of the code which prescribes that "in every new tenement house there shall be a separate water-closet, in a separate compartment within each apartment."¹⁰ It is recognized that the public closet is not only more frequently out of repair and less frequently clean, but that it is also a moral menace. When it is recalled that the table giving the block population showed that there were 896 children under twelve years of age in this district where less than one-fourth of the families have toilet facilities within their apartment, it becomes apparent that the community is subjecting these children to grave moral dangers.

Other articles in this series have called attention to the frequent violations of the provisions in the ordinance which govern

¹⁰ *Tolman's Municipal Code*, sec. 434. There is, of course, the exception for one- or two-room apartments. This part of the code is as follows: "In every new tenement house there shall be a separate water-closet in a separate compartment within each apartment, without passing through any other apartment, provided that where there are apartments consisting of only one or two rooms there shall be at least one water-closet for every two apartments."



TENEMENTS SOUTH OF DISTRICT CANVASSED

Occupied by non-family groups of men

light and air and minimum cubic air space. The ordinance requires, for example, that in every tenement house, whether erected under the old or the new law, every room shall have 400 cubic feet of air for each adult person "living or sleeping" in the room and 200 cubic feet of air for each child under twelve years of age. This provision was carefully tested with regard to sleeping-rooms by an actual measurement of the rooms in every apartment visited. It proved, of course, to be impossible in many cases for the investigator to ascertain the number of persons who actually slept in the apartment. The lady of the house usually insisted that mattresses rolled under the bed or piled one on top of the other (the "sanitary couches" or cots) were not in use, although she might acknowledge that they had been used at some time before the investigator's visit. Frequently even the beds, when there was more than one bed in a room, were declared to be unused. In many other cases where there were both day and night lodgers—a frequent occurrence near the mills—the investigator was told that the beds were occupied only by those seen there in the day-time. Here, as in other districts, questions as to the number of lodgers stimulated a rumor that lodgers were to be prohibited and led to subterfuges and evasions of many kinds. Investigators were instructed in all cases of doubt to report the minimum number of occupants, and all tables relating to the number of persons sleeping in a room, therefore, are an under-estimate and present the situation in an unduly favorable light. Even this under-estimate has revealed a shocking state of overcrowding in every district visited. In the thirteen blocks back of the Yards, 1,981 sleeping-rooms (53 per cent of the entire number) had less than the minimum amount of cubic air space required by the ordinance; in the one block in the Jewish district there were 229 sleeping-rooms (51 per cent of the whole number) in which more people slept than the law regulating cubic air space allowed; in the Bohemian block 298 sleeping-rooms (54 per cent of the entire number) were illegally crowded; in the ten Polish blocks on the Northwest Side 3,328 rooms, or 69 per cent of the whole number, were crowded beyond the legal limit. Bad as are the conditions in these other districts, over-

crowding in South Chicago is even worse. In Table XVIII all of the numbers above the heavy line represent cases of overcrowding. The table therefore shows that in 72 per cent of all the sleeping-rooms visited the occupants had less than the minimum amount of cubic air space prescribed by the tenement-house

TABLE XVIII
NUMBER OF PERSONS SLEEPING IN ROOMS OF SPECIFIED CUBIC CONTENTS

CONTENTS OF ROOM IN CUBIC FEET	NUMBER OF ROOMS OCCUPIED BY									TOTAL	
	One Child	One Adult*	One Adult and One Child	Two Adults	Two Adults and One Child	Three Adults	Three Adults and One Child	Four Adults	Four Adults and One Child		Five Adults or More
Less than 400.....	..	7	..	8	1	2	..	..	..	..	18
400 and less than 600	1	59	15	91	30	26	4	4	..	..	230
600 and less than 800 .....	..	72	19	116	60	76	20	34	4	2	403
800 and less than 1,000	1	27	4	81	26	43	20	34	7	5	248
1,000 and less than 1,200	2	19	2	35	6	16	6	6	1	1	94
1,200 and less than 1,400	3	7	2	9	10	4	..	7	..	2	44
1,400 and less than 1,600	1	14	4	9	..	7	..	7	3	2	47
1,600 and less than 1,800	2	10	2	12	1	..	..	4	..	1	32
1,800 and less than 2,000 .....	..	10	2	6	1	..	..	..	1	4	24
2,000 and more.....	1	1	1	3	..	1	..	1	..	..	8
Total	11	226	51	370	135	175	50	97	16	17	1,148†

Total number of overcrowded rooms: 824 (72 per cent)

* In this table one adult means one adult or two children under twelve; that is, the term one adult is used whenever 400 cubic feet of air are required.

† Occupants of one room not reported.

law; that is, 400 cubic feet for each adult, and 200 cubic feet for every child under twelve sleeping in the room; and it should, perhaps, be emphasized once more that this is a conservative report.

Again, as in the other articles, it must be pointed out that this table, although it shows that a large proportion of the sleeping-

rooms are overcrowded, gives no adequate impression of what this overcrowding means. In one case the father, the mother, and five children were crowded in a room containing only 744 cubic feet, although the law required 1,800; in another case a lodger slept with the father, mother, and two children in a room containing 800 cubic feet, although 1,600 cubic feet were required; in another case a room containing only 841 cubic feet was occupied at night by a man and his wife, their one child, and three lodgers, while four other lodgers occupied the same room during the day.

In a small rear house in which there were two bedrooms containing 764 and 772 cubic feet, a man and his wife, a child under 12, and a grown daughter occupied the one which contained 764 cubic feet, although the legal minimum was 1,400 cubic feet; two grown sons and two lodgers, who should have had 1,600 cubic feet of air, occupied the other bedroom, which contained only 772 cubic feet. In this case the man, who was a railroad laborer, was nominally the owner of the premises. He had, however, a large mortgage to pay; he therefore rented the front house and crowded with his family into the rear apartment of the rear house. At the time the house was visited, during a cold week in December, the family were keeping two pigs and fifteen chickens in the basement. In another small apartment in a rear basement, where all of the rooms were dark except the kitchen, a man, his wife, and child occupied a room containing 447 cubic feet, one lodger slept in the parlor and three lodgers in the other dark bedroom which contained only 611 cubic feet. The family had seven pigeons which at that time they were keeping in the house. It is of interest to note that six families lived in this house and together they had twelve lodgers and six children under twelve years of age, but the only toilet accommodations for the entire house were two filthy yard closets.

The effect of such overcrowding cannot correctly be understood without some further statement regarding lack of light and ventilation and other violations of the standards of proper housing which have been set by the law. With regard to the size of the room, for example, it is prescribed that in new tenement houses (that is, houses built after 1902) all rooms used for living



ROOMING-HOUSES OCCUPIED BY MAGYAR WORKERS IN THE MILLS

purposes shall have not less than 70 square feet of floor area,¹¹ that ceilings must be 8½ feet high, that every habitable room must have windows opening directly upon a street, alley, yard, or court, and that the window area must be not less than one-tenth of the floor area.¹² Although these provisions apply only to "new-law" houses, it must not be forgotten that rooms which are small and dark or inadequately lighted and ventilated are quite as objectionable in old houses as in new ones. In order to emphasize the necessity of giving some attention to the improvement of conditions in old houses, it has seemed worth while to ascertain how far all houses, old as well as new, fall short of the requirements set in the law. In the seven blocks canvassed

TABLE XIX
DARK AND GLOOMY ROOMS

	Number	Percentage
Light	1,855	80
Dark or gloomy	460	20
No report	3	...
Total	2,318	100

* Percentage so small as to be negligible.

375 rooms, 17 of which were in "new-law" houses, and 365 of which were sleeping-rooms, contained less than 70 square feet, and 449 rooms, 11 of them in "new-law" houses, had ceilings lower than 8½ feet, the minimum height. Six windowless rooms were found, two of them in "new" houses, and 60 other rooms in which the window area was less than 10 per cent of the floor area. In South Chicago, however, as in the other neighborhoods investigated, the window area is a much less important factor in the problem of light and ventilation than the question of whether the window opens upon a yard or a court of sufficient size or upon a passage-way so narrow that the adjoining building can shut out all light and air. Table XIX shows that 20 per cent of the rooms visited were dark or gloomy, and Table XX shows

¹¹ Bathrooms are of course excluded. This section of the *Code* (417) was quoted in full in an earlier article in this *Journal*, XVI, 451.

¹² See sec. 413 of the *Code*, also quoted in this *Journal*, XVI, 453.

that here, as in other parts of Chicago, the dark room is caused by the almost insuperable difficulties in the way of constructing on our long and narrow lots houses that have any light rooms except those with front or rear windows. That is, of the 462 dark and gloomy rooms, 388 were interior rooms in which the only windows were on a so-called "passage-way."¹³

TABLE XX
OUTLOOK OF WINDOWS IN DARK AND GLOOMY ROOMS

Outlook	Number	Percentage
Alley yard street	26	6
Porch or covered stairway	33	7
Shaft or wall	9	2
Passage	388	84
No window	6*	1
Total	462	100

* Two of these rooms had windows opening into other rooms but had no direct communication with the outer air.

The question of rent is, of course, always a most important aspect of the housing problem. Of the 545 apartments visited, 100 were owned by the people living in them and 441 were known to be rented. The monthly rentals paid by 398 of these tenant families were ascertained and are presented in Table XXI, together with the number of rooms occupied. A study of this table shows that more than half of these families pay a rent of \$9 a month or less, that only 50 families pay more than \$10 a month, and that none pay more than \$15.

It is of interest that, although in all of the other districts there were some rents higher than \$15—the highest rent paid here—the poorer people pay relatively higher rents here than in any other section studied; that is, in the Polish district on the Northwest Side, and in the Bohemian district on the West Side, half of the people pay only \$7.50 or less, in the stockyards district \$8 or less, in the Jewish district \$8.50 or less, whereas it appears that in South Chicago the median rent is \$9. One ex-

¹³ It may be recalled that this term is merely used to describe the space between two parallel houses and in the great majority of cases it is much too narrow to serve as a bona fide passage-way.

planation of high rents is the lodger. It is, of course, frequently said that the practice of taking lodgers is due to the high rents. It would probably be nearer the truth to say that lodgers are frequently a cause of high rents. Landlords and agents are keen to see an opportunity to charge higher rents if the family

TABLE XXI
NUMBER OF APARTMENTS FOR WHICH SPECIFIED MONTHLY RENTALS ARE PAID
TOGETHER WITH NUMBER OF ROOMS

RENT PER MONTH	NUMBER OF ROOMS						TOTAL
	1	2	3	4	5	6 or more	
\$3.....	..	2		..	..	..	2
\$4.....	..	3	1	..	..	..	4
\$4 50.....	..	1		..	..	..	1
\$5.....	..	13	4	2	..	..	19
\$5 50.....	..	3	2	..	..	..	5
\$6.....	..	6	5	5	..	..	16
\$6 50.....	..		1	2	..	..	3
\$7.....	9	17	2	1	29
\$7 50.....	10	..	..	10
\$8.....	1	54	4	1	60
\$8 50.....	5	..	..	5
\$9.....	1	58	9	5	73
\$9 50.....	13	1	..	14
\$10.....	1	82	12	12	107
\$10 50.....	2	..	..	2
\$11.....	1	4	2	9	16
\$12.....	1	5	11	17
\$13.....	7	7
\$14.....	5	5
\$15.....	1	..	2	3
Vacant or rent unknown	1	6	2	24	6	4	43
Number of apartments rented.....	1	34	28	280	41	57	441
Number of apartments owned.....	..	1	4	47	19	29	100
No report.....	4
Total.....	1	35	32	327	60	86	545

can increase its ability to pay by taking lodgers. A study of Table XXII furnishes some interesting evidence on this point, for it appears that the districts which have the largest proportion of lodgers are also the districts of high rents. In South Chicago the unique system of adding an extra fifty cents to the rent for every lodger taken was found to be a common practice among landlords.



BULGARIAN LODGING-HOUSE

Occupied by ten men beside the boss and his family

There are in South Chicago, as in other parts of the city near great industrial plants, non-family groups of working men—unmarried immigrants temporarily separated from their families—who find the cheap American “hobo” lodging-house intolerable and who attempt to solve their housing problem by organizing crude lodging-groups of their own. An earlier article in this series¹⁴ dealt with this subject and attempted to show how much needless discomfort these men suffered and how much the community lost by its failure to give its newly arrived immigrants an opportunity for decent living. Those who are familiar with those sections of the city where the immigrant lodgers with “no

TABLE XXII

RELATIVE NUMBERS OF LODGERS AND MEMBERS OF FAMILY GROUPS IN FIVE OF THE DISTRICTS INVESTIGATED

DISTRICT	MEMBERS OF FAMILY GROUPS		LODGERS		TOTAL
	Number	Percentage	Number	Percentage	
Stockyards (13 blocks)	6,348	73	2,383	27	8,731
Jewish (1 block)	813	79	220	21	1,033
Bohemian (1 block)	1,183	95	56	5	1,239
Polish (N.W. Side) 10 blocks	12,657	96	574	4	13,231
Polish (South Chicago) 7 blocks	2,249	73	835	27	3,084

place to go” are taken in by some family of their own nationality know how keenly all the members of the heterogeneous group feel the discomforts of their life. To them, however, it is like the discomforts of the ocean voyage—one of the hardships to be endured by those who would share the “promise of American life.” Too much emphasis cannot be laid upon the importance of providing immigrant lodging-houses near the great industrial plants. If the industries which depend upon the labor of these immigrant men continue to neglect the duty of providing for them, it is to be hoped that some philanthropic organization will undertake the work. No one can walk along “The Strand” in South Chicago, or “Whiskey Row” in “Packingtown,” or make a canvass in the poor homes of these neighborhoods, without realizing that the housing problem can never be solved so long as

¹⁴ See this *Journal*, September, 1910, pp. 145-70.

we leave the newly arrived, helpless, immigrant laborer to be cared for in the families of those who have been here only a few years longer and are themselves still struggling and helpless.

A factor in the housing problem in South Chicago which should not be overlooked is the keeping of animals—goats, pigs, ducks, chickens, geese, pigeons, and rabbits. This seems to be due not merely to the fact that the majority of the people are European peasant immigrants, but to the wide unoccupied lot spaces, and still more, perhaps, to the presence of grain elevators and railroads in the immediate vicinity. Sending the children out to sweep the emptied grain cars and bring back the sweepings for the poultry has become a well-established custom. It has, however, two unfortunate aspects: The first is, that the children are tempted to commit depredations and take grain from the full cars if there are no “empties,” and the second is, that the families are often tempted in the winter months to keep the animals in the house. During the house-to-house canvass which was made in December it was discovered that this practice is not confined to the people of any one nationality, nor to the poorest people. An Irish policeman who lived with his wife and five children in a six-room cottage kept twelve ducks in his basement, which was in a condition so insanitary as to constitute a nuisance. A Swedish family who owned a neat cottage with a large yard kept nine rabbits in a basement, which was in a filthy condition, although the house and yard were clean. A very respectable German and his wife who had no children and claimed to have no lodgers were keeping four live geese in one of their two bedrooms. A German contractor who owned the house in which he lived was keeping two ducks and twelve chickens in the basement. A Polish laborer's family kept seven goats in a basement, where the only water-closets in the house were located, and the neighbors complained to the investigator that the goats were a great nuisance, especially in the early morning. By another Polish family two pigs and fifteen chickens were being kept in the basement. A long list of similar cases might be given. The attic was utilized almost as frequently as the basement for a shelter for animals of all sorts. In one case pigeons, in another

a goat, and in another twelve geese, ten chickens, and twelve pigeons were kept in the attic. In many cases, of course, sheds were provided for fowls or animals outside, the yards were clean, and there was no objection to their presence. The peculiarly trying cases seemed to be those of families who had acquired goats or pigs or fowls when they had suitable places to keep them in, and then perhaps moved into a house without a yard, or a house with a yard already monopolized, and much preferred using the attic or basement or cellar for the animals to parting with them.

In conclusion it should be said that it is difficult to visualize conditions in this district from the tables that have been presented. On the one side, shutting out the lake, are the huge mills behind high paling fences, the great chimneys belching forth dense masses of smoke which hang over the neighborhood like clouds of darkness and pollute the atmosphere so that no whiff of the air comes untainted from the great lake so near on the one side, nor from the river and meadow lands which lie just to the south and southwest. Within these barriers and under this pall stretch out the wide streets, unpaved and unkept. On either side of these are the dreary succession of small frame dwellings, dull in color, frequently dilapidated, uninviting, and monotonous. One cannot walk these streets without a weird impression of the fulfilment of an old prophecy that here men are the slaves of machines and that machinery has ceased to be the servant of its makers. The stranger within the gates of South Chicago is overwhelmed with the fact that the world is made for industry, not for men and women and little children; that with magnificent enterprise on the one hand there is a hideous waste of human life on the other. The men who feed the furnaces and send the products of their toilsome labor to a world market sleep in these miserably overcrowded houses; they have no decent places for recreation and frequent the low saloons and dives along "The Strand"; there are no decent lodging-houses for the unmarried men or the newly arrived immigrants who have come out alone hoping to earn the passage money for their wives and children when they have found a job. No work is too hard for them, no conditions of living are too sordid if they spell the promised



THE STRAND, THE WHISKEY ROW OF SOUTH CHICAGO

reward. With no lodging-houses provided they crowd into the small homes of their fellow-countrymen and innocently become a demoralizing influence in the family life.

We have called attention in the other articles to the fact that the community is not doing its part: first, because the housing code is inadequate; second, because of the failure to provide the Department of Health with a staff of inspectors sufficient for the enforcement of such legislation as has been enacted. All that has been said on this subject with reference to other sections of the city applies with equal force to South Chicago. Here, as in the other districts, are the same offensive and outlawed toilet accommodations; here, in house after house, are families with little children living in damp basements, in dark and gloomy rooms, and in a horrible condition of overcrowding. Many of the buildings in the district investigated were old houses not subject to the "new law," or one-family cottages, often filled with lodgers, but covered neither by the provisions relating to the construction of tenements nor by those governing lodging-houses. There were, however, some buildings whose construction should have been regulated by the code and there was legislation governing the use of all dwellings, and the facts we have set out show how futile these provisions were and how uniformly the law was disregarded. But it must be acknowledged that no building law, however comprehensive and well enforced, can meet the needs of this neighborhood. It is not our purpose to discuss the conditions under which the work is done in the mills, the perils to which the workers are exposed, the long working-day, the low wages paid to unskilled labor. It is important, however, to call attention to the fact that neither in the stockyards district nor in South Chicago can the housing problem be solved until those responsible for the great industries upon which the men depend for employment, and which in turn depend on the men for existence, realize the necessity of so altering industrial conditions that decent standards of family life may be maintained. It is fair neither to the workers nor to the community as a whole that a great and powerful industry should be allowed to blight the neighborhood at its gates.