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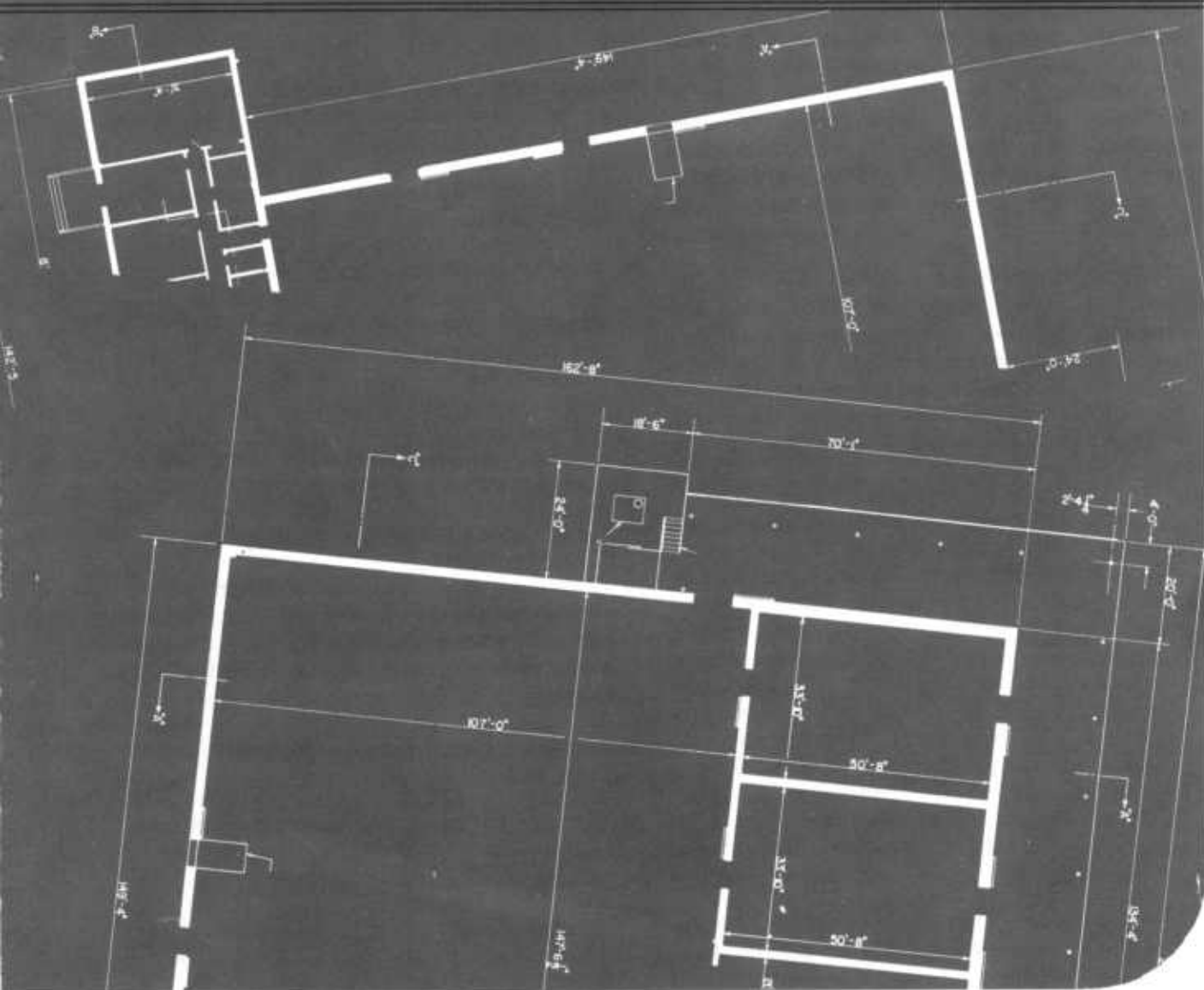
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CURRENT SERIAL RECORDS

HOUSING FOR SEASONAL FARM WORKERS

designs and design suggestions



HOUSING FOR SEASONAL FARM WORKERS: Designs and Design Suggestions

By Archie A. Biggs, Agricultural Engineering Research Division, Agricultural Research Service

Since the development of commercial farming, migratory workers have played a prominent role in agriculture by providing the seasonal labor needed to harvest crops. Often these workers come from areas where employment opportunities are limited; consequently they must travel from one place of employment to another. This continued living on the road creates a host of problems; housing is one that concerns both grower and farm laborer. More and more, however, housing for farm labor is being viewed as one of the integral costs of commercial farming with the result that adequate living quarters are receiving greater consideration as a means of attracting and keeping labor. Housing codes applicable to quarters for migrant farm workers have been extended and are being more strictly enforced. Thirty States now have such laws or regulations.

The most significant progress in farm labor housing has been made since 1954 when the President appointed an Interdepartmental Committee on Migratory Labor. In 1956 the Committee issued suggested minimum standards for the construction, operation, and maintenance of labor camps housing five or more seasonal or temporary workers.

The Housing Act of 1961 authorized the Farmers Home Administration to make direct loans to farmowners and to insure loans to farmowners, associations of farmers, States or political subdivisions, and public or private nonprofit organizations for the purpose of construction or improving farm labor housing. This Act was amended in 1964 to authorize grants to any State or political subdivision thereof or any public or private nonprofit organization to finance low-rent housing and related facilities for domestic farm workers. The applicant would be required to furnish at least one-third of the development cost.

The Economic Opportunity Act of 1964 included authority to assist States, political subdivisions of States, public and nonprofit agencies, institutions, organizations, farm associations or

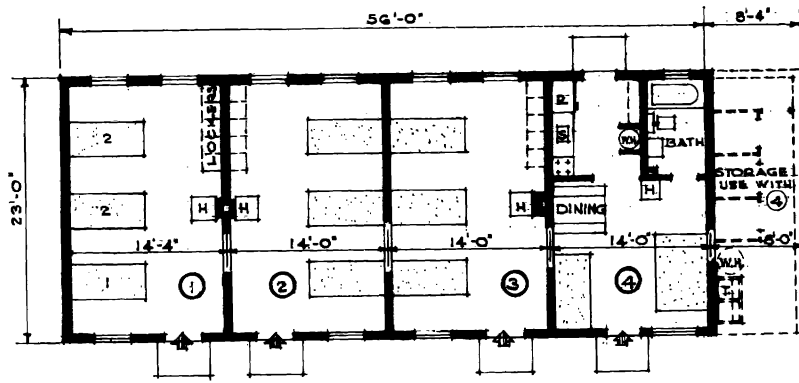
individuals in establishing and operating housing and sanitation programs for migrants and other seasonally employed agricultural employees and their families.

The plans illustrated in this publication are based to a large extent on the criteria suggested by the President's Committee on Migratory Labor and also on the experience of other agencies in migratory labor housing.¹ In developing the plans, the following basic considerations were used:

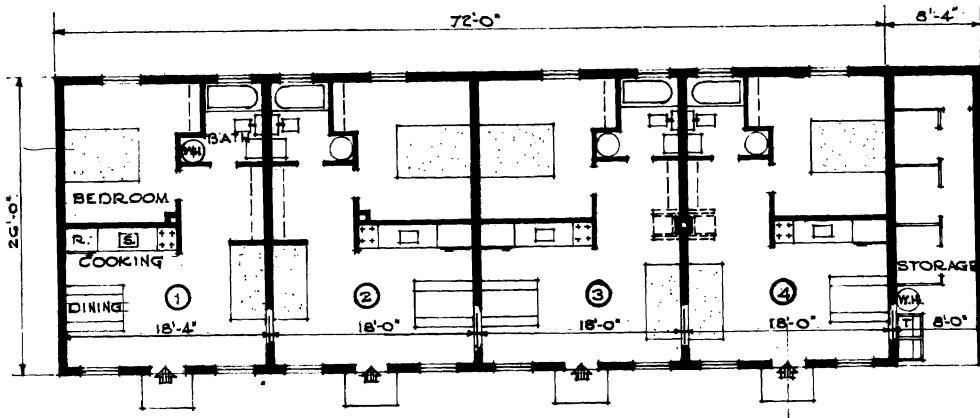
- Rooms designed for sleeping are based on 70 sq. ft. for the first occupant and 50 sq. ft. for each additional occupant.
- Each habitable room has a minimum ceiling height of 7 ft.
- Each habitable room has at least one window opening directly to the out-of-doors. The minimum total window area is 10 percent of the floor area of such room. The openable window area is equal to 45 percent of the minimum window area size.
- Flues are indicated so that all living quarters may have heating equipment of adequate capacity to maintain a temperature of at least 70° F. during the period of occupancy.
- Each bathroom is partitioned off and is large enough to provide a lavatory, water closet, and tub or shower stall. To reach the bathroom, it is not necessary to pass through a sleeping room.
- A laundry tray is provided for every 25 occupants or less.
- Kitchens are separate from sleeping areas and are provided with sink, refrigerator, stove, cabinets, and working surface.

All plans should conform to local codes or regulations affecting construction, heating, plumb-

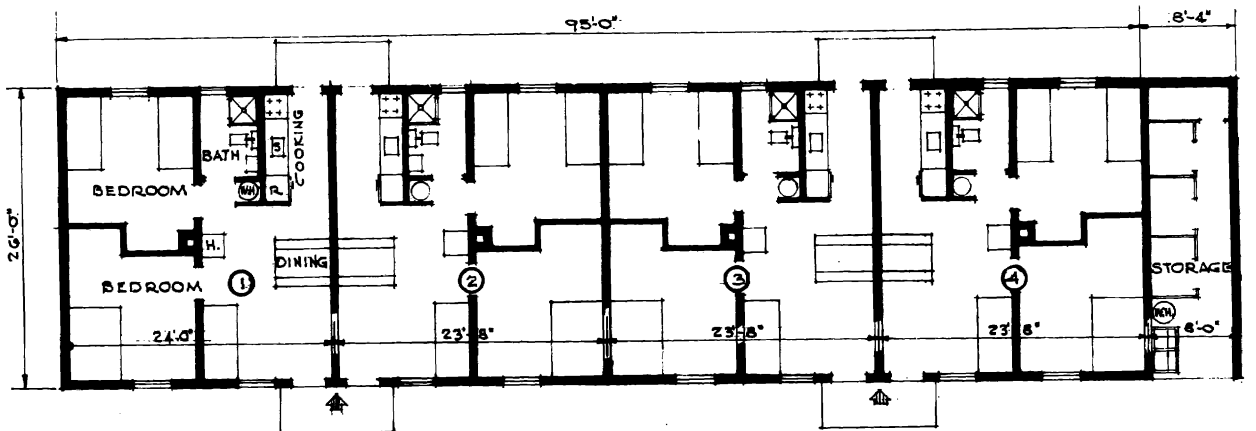
¹ Only design suggestions are given here; no working drawings are available.



PLAN #1. DORMITORY QUARTERS FOR 5 PERSONS PER UNIT. UNIT ④ IS AN ALTERNATE EFFICIENCY TYPE APARTMENT FOR FAMILY WITH CHILD UNDER 10 YEARS.



PLAN #2. TWO ROOM QUARTERS FOR A SMALL FAMILY WITH ONE OR TWO CHILDREN. UNITS ③ & ④ SHOW ALTERNATE FLUE LOCATION WHEN SEPARATE HEATER IS USED IN LIEU OF SOLID FUEL COOK STOVE.



PLAN #3. TWO BEDROOM APARTMENT TYPE FOR FAMILY WITH 2 OR 3 CHILDREN.

0 5 10 15 20
SCALE IN FEET

Figure 1

Three housing plans for farm labor.

ing, electric, fire prevention, sanitation, and lot improvement.

In this design study, consideration has been given mainly to family housing since most migrant laborers now travel in family groups. All plans are for one-story buildings though two-story buildings are common in the South where occupancy may extend for the greater part of the year.

Figure 1, Plan No. 1, can be adapted to dormitory-type units with double deck bunks, efficiency apartments, with kitchen and bath, or a combination of the two. An apartment could accommodate parents and a child under 10 years of age. If the building is used as a dormitory, eating, bathing, and toilet facilities would be centrally located. Plan No. 2 is for one-bedroom units suitable for families with one or two children. Plan No. 3 shows two-bedroom apartments that can accommodate a family with two or three children.

The latter two plans are complete with kitchen facilities and bathrooms. The kitchen provides sink, refrigerator, stove, cabinets and shelves for food storage, and working surfaces. Bedrooms

have storage space for clothes and personal belongings. Each of the plans provides for a storage area, enclosed on three sides for protection from sun and rain. This area contains a laundry tray and water heater, and a screened storage compartment for each family. The three plans shown have four units each. The number of units built together may vary because of need or the grade of the building site.

The perspective, figure 2, includes units of each of the three plans in a hypothetical grouping to illustrate the outward appearance of the various plans in one composite view. A composite plan may fill the needs of some growers. Most of them would probably want to choose one of the three plans and change the number of units to suit their needs.

Figures 3 and 4 show outside views of two apartment-type housing units for families.

In the fruit growing regions of Virginia and West Virginia the use of male labor is desirable because of the weight of the baskets of fruit and the short harvest season in which time and effort of each worker must be used to the greatest advantage. Workers usually do not have their

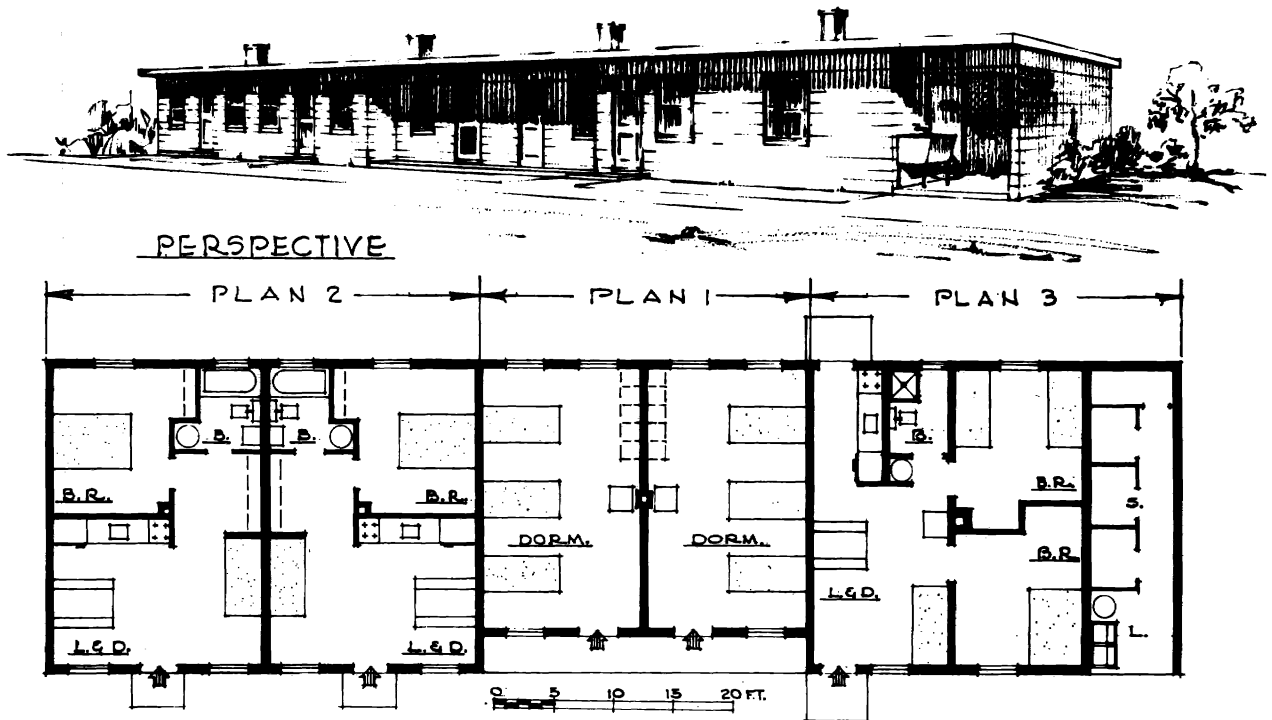


Figure 2

A composite plan combining features of the dormitory and apartment plans shown in figure 1.



Figure 3



Figure 4

Housing units for migrant families in vegetable growing regions of south Florida.

families with them and dormitory or crew housing is needed (figure 5).

Figure 5 shows a recently constructed masonry block structure with concrete floor and low pitched gable roof with a 4 ft. overhang. Showers, wash basins, toilets, hot water heater, and heating unit are contained in one unit and the four remaining units each provide dormitory housing for a maximum of 20 laborers. These units have an area of approximately 1,500 sq. ft., which allows 75 sq. ft. per occupant. This allowance of space is ample for health and comfort and provides for footlocker storage. Heating ducts extend from the heater to the dormitories. A separate building provides kitchen, mess, and recreation areas.

Figure 6 shows structure adaptable to crew

housing as illustrated by the floor plan (figure 7), slightly modified to meet labor-camp standards. The first unit serves as kitchen and mess. The second unit is partitioned to provide quarters for the cook and crew leader. Succeeding units each house ten men and the last bay provides storage, showers, toilets, and wash-up facilities. The flexibility of this plans permits housing for crews of various sizes by increasing dormitory bays accordingly and adding showers, toilets, urinals, and wash basins as necessary to conform to labor-camp standards.

Buildings should be attractive and economical to maintain and operate. Concrete or cinder block walls are indicated in these designs. Block should be painted with a waterproof paint to cut down on dampness during wet and humid periods. Floors are concrete slab with finish



Figure 5



Figure 6

Outside views of dormitory housing for male laborers in fruit growing regions.

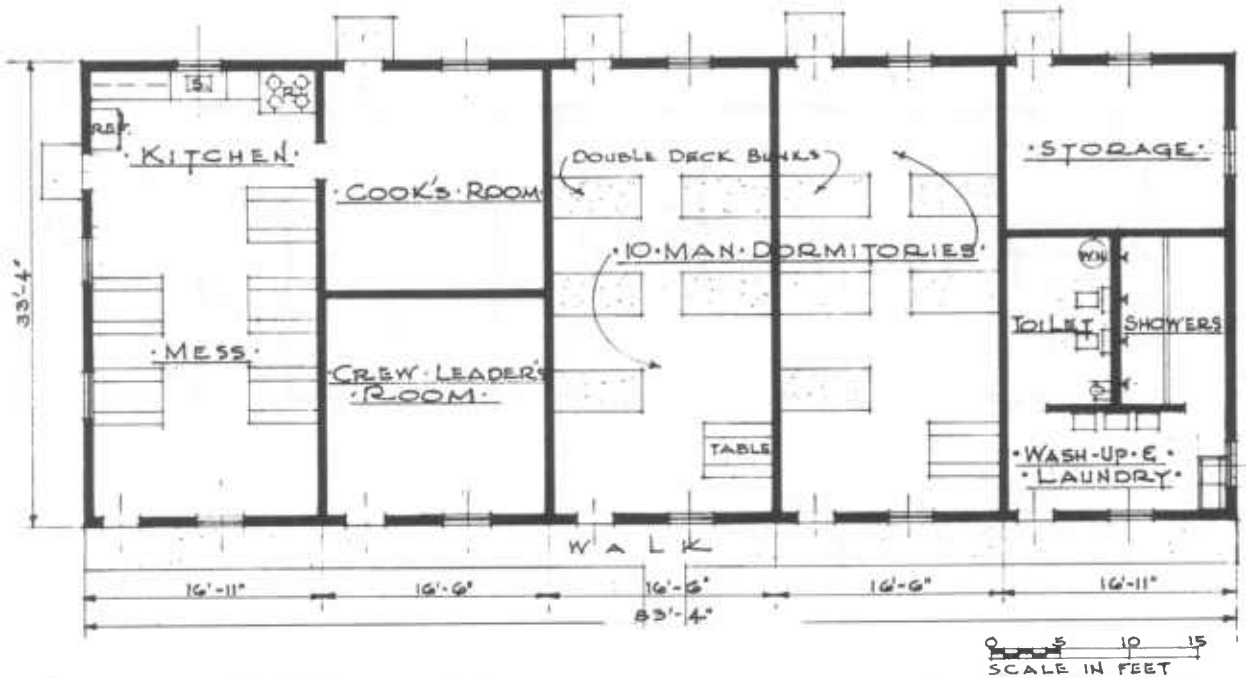


Figure 7

Plan for crew housing that meets labor-camp standards.

continuing through doorways to eliminate sill and threshold. This permits easier cleaning as walls and floors may be washed down after workers vacate the premises. A built-up roof with single pitch on standard length rafters is most economical.

Good housing attracts reliable help, and migrants tend to return to work for growers who provide suitable living quarters. Over a period of a few years it costs less to provide better housing than it does to operate without good help.

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