



A few blocks from the Statehouse in Columbia lies University Terrace, a federal housing project similar in many ways to that proposed for Greenville. Here is a view of a small section of the development, recorded by Harry Ashmore's camera. Other pictures on Page Eleven.

Columbia's Housing Project Is Nearing Second Birthday; Sponsors Hold It Is Worthy

48 Shotgun Houses Wrecked On Site Contained Only Two Bath-tubs; Plan More Projects

(Editor's Note: Feeling that the current discussion, pro and con, over the proposed federal housing project in Greenville has aroused much interest in low-cost slum clearance work, The Piedmont had a reporter survey University Terrace in Columbia, one of the first 52 low-cost projects built under the New Deal. The job there was done by PWA and WPA. Here it would be by the United States Housing authority.)

By **HARRY ASHMORE**
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COLUMBIA, April 7—When University Terrace celebrates its second birthday next August one of the New Deal's first ventures in furnishing decent homes for the ill-housed "third of the nation" will have reached maturity.

It has already been in operation long enough to permit weighing the results obtained against the \$760,000 the government sank in the project and to determine in some measure whether or not the returns have been worth the investment.

The Columbia housing authority, composed of leading citizens, is convinced that the Terrace is a very worthwhile idea indeed, and to prove it they have recently announced that work on two more federal housing projects costing a total of \$2,251,000 will begin immediately.

Built As Experiment

University Terrace was one of the first of the federal projects of that type and it was placed in Columbia as an experiment. The federal government, through WPA and PWA, paid in full for the whole thing.

Wrecking crews went into a slum area that lay on the side of steep hill just beyond Melton field at (Continued on Page 11; Column 1)

Cite Columbia Housing Facts

Project There Held Worth-while By Authority; Nears Second Birthday

(CONTINUED FROM PAGE ONE)

the edge of the University of South Carolina campus. They found a jungle of shotgun houses in which some of Columbia's toughest negroes dwelled.

There were two bathtubs among the 48 houses there, which gives you some idea.

The wrecking crew cleared the hillside and graded it, and on that muddy plot there arose a collection of neat red-brick buildings. Streets were paved and grass was planted.

By the time they were finished 822 persons had applied for accommodations. There were, however, only 122 units, enough room to accommodate 48 white families and 74 colored families comfortably, and the accommodations have to be comfortable, for the government expressly forbids crowding in any way.

Carefully Check Applicants

When the thing was finished the government leased the entire project to the Columbia Housing authority which promptly hired a young newspaperman named Bill Geddings to take charge as superintendent. His job was to fill the apartments and flats with the proper tenants, collect the rents, take care of the huge project, and build a community spirit among the occupants. He's done well.

Out of all the applications that came in he chose carefully to see that people who really deserved aid got it. All applications were double-checked. Only persons whose incomes were less than five times the rent of the unit they wanted to take, and persons who were living in sub-standard homes were acceptable. They had no trouble finding enough to fill the project and make up a waiting list of some six hundred acceptable families

The apartments for whites, separated from the negro quarters by a wide grass-covered incline and facing in a different direction, are split up into three-four, and five-room units. The rents, respectively, run \$22.70, \$27.60, and \$31.60. Rent includes heat and hot water, electricity, an electric range and an electric refrigerator. All the units are modern, airy, light, and convenient.

The negroes in the flats pay \$2.30 a week for two rooms, \$2.70 a week for three rooms, \$3.70 for four rooms, and \$4.30 for five rooms. They get no central heating, but are furnished with an electric refrigerator, a wood range, and electricity.

Hendley Expresses Views

W. S. Hendley, a prominent Columbia insurance executive who contributes a great deal of his time and energy to the project as chairman of the housing authority, frankly admits that rents in the white section are too high to benefit the lowest income brackets, but he believes that deserving persons occupy the apartments nevertheless.

In the colored sector he says the rents are about the same as other negroes pay for crowded, dirty shotgun houses, and he points with pride to the fact that four occupants of houses in the slum area that was cleared now live in the Terrace.

Bill Geddings collects \$24,000 a year in rents at the Terrace. After running expenses are paid the remainder is turned over to the federal government, which will have paid off the loan on the building in 60 years and will turn the buildings over to the city of Columbia as a gift.

The white tenants in University Terrace earn their livings in various fields. A few are even on relief. There are truck drivers, clerks, filling-station attendants, widows with children who work as stenographers and filing clerks; in the white section. Their average income is \$89 a month.

Among the negroes are a large

percentage of domestic servants and Mr. Hendley points out that many a Columbia white family, struck with the obvious advantage of having personal servants live in clean, sanitary quarters, are moving heaven and earth trying to get their maids and nurses into the flats. Average income among the negro families is \$65 a month.

Sponsor Social Activities

University Terrace is more than a mere place to live. It is a close-knit community. There is a white

tenant's association and a colored association. In both units there are large social and recreation rooms, and branch libraries are located in both.

The tenants sponsor community dances, lecture series which bring the most prominent speakers in the state to address them, current events classes, safety patrols, and there is even a monthly mimeographed bulletin which serves as a sort of community newspaper. All these things are done by the tenants themselves with the help of Bill Geddings, who maintains an office in the white unit.

Mr. Hendley reports that there has been no trouble yet in collecting the rents nor in maintaining law and order. A board of prominent Columbia negroes, physicians and educators passes on all colored applicants and also works with them in arranging their community projects.

Mr. Hendley himself gets no monetary reward for his services, but he gets a real pleasure from the community service he is rendering. And he figures there was a concrete reward last Christmas when 15 of the negro tenants came over to his house and stood on his lawn singing Christmas carols as a gesture of their appreciation.

Enthusiastic Over Plans

That's why he's so enthusiastic about the two new projects which his board will also handle. They will include 200 units for whites and 200 for negroes, and will be a still lower-cost housing project than the Terrace. Average rent in the new buildings will probably run around a dollar a week per room, cheap enough to benefit the very bottom bracket of Columbia's society.

There was some pretty stiff opposition to the Terrace in its early days, particularly from apartment house owners who saw in its potential competition. Mr. Hendley doesn't look for any more opposition from that quarter, for most of the owners found, he said, that the people who live in the housing project could not possibly pay their rents.

The only objections now come from the people with whom it actually does compete, the owners of negro property who have made large profits from renting their shotgun houses in the past and who will lose their tenants as soon as they discover that they can get infinitely better accommodations at the same price they now pay.

Some persons, fundamentally opposed to the New Deal, and government spending, have fought the government-subsidized housing projects, but Mr. Hendley has an answer for them, too.

"It doesn't make any difference whether or not you approve of what the government is doing," he tells them. "You can't stop it, so you might as well benefit as much as possible from it."