

UNITED HEBREW RELIEF ASSOCIATION
OF PITTSBURGH, PA.

May 26, 1916.

ROOMS: 602-603-604
WASHINGTON TRUST CO. BLDG.

CHARLES I. COOPER
SUPERINTENDENT

OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

AARON COHEN, PRESIDENT
JACQUES WEIL
MRS. JOSIAH COHEN } VICE-PRESIDENTS
ROBERT LEWIN, TREASURER
A. J. DERROY, SECRETARY
LOUIS I. AARON
MRS. S. L. FLEISHMAN
PETER GLICK
DAVID H. GOLDMAN
M. M. KANN
MRS. SOL LAVINE
IRVIN F. LEHMAN
MRS. A. C. LEHMAN
A. L. RAUH
HUGO SIDENBERG
KASKEL SOLOMON
EUGENE B. STRASSBURGER
MRS. CASS SUNSTEIN
ELIAS SUNSTEIN

Mr. Louis I. Aaron,
370 Winebiddle Ave.,
Pittsburgh, Pa.

Ref. To No.

Dear Mr. Aaron:

The enclosed is a copy of a report presented by a Special Committee on Housing to the Board of the United Hebrew Relief Association at the May meeting, held Sunday, May 21, 1916. The recommendations contained at the end were adopted and a standing Committee on Housing consisting of five members was created in order to carry out the said recommendations.

It was the request of the Executive Board that a copy of this Report be sent to each member.

Respectfully yours,

Charles I. Cooper
Superintendent.

Enc.

UNITED HEBREW RELIEF ASSOCIATION OF PITTSBURGH, PA.

Rooms: 602-603-604
WASHINGTON TRUST CO. BLDG.

A REPORT ON HOUSING CONDITIONS

CHARLES I. COOPER
SUPERINTENDENT

OFFICERS AND DIRECTORS

- AARON COHEN, PRESIDENT
- JACQUES WEIL
- MRS. JOSIAH COHEN } VICE-PRESIDENTS
- ROBERT LEWIN, TREASURER
- A. J. DERROY, SECRETARY
- LOUIS I. AARON
- MRS. S. L. FLEISHMAN
- PETER GLICK
- DAVID H. GOLDMAN
- M. M. KANN
- MRS. SOL LAVINE
- IRVIN F. LEHMAN
- MRS. A. C. LEHMAN
- A. L. RAUH
- HUGO SIDENBERG
- KASKEL SOLOMON
- EUGENE B. STRASSBURGER
- MRS. CASS SUNSTEIN
- ELIAS SUNSTEIN

At the last meeting of this Board a Committee of three was appointed by the President, consisting of Messers. Sidenberg, Glick and Lehman, with the latter as Chairman, with the commission to enquire into housing conditions in this city in the section inhabited by the poorer Jews. Such enquiry we understood to have special reference to the feasibility of building model dwellings out of the funds of the Association. Our committee had several meetings and made a number of tours in the Hill District, each time accompanied by the Superintendent, Mr. Charles I. Cooper. We made it our business to see conditions at first hand and to arrive at independent conclusions without being prejudiced by observations made or conclusions arrived at by previous investigators in this or in any other city.

It was out conviction at the outset that this Board wanted a survey of the problem at hand in a practical and business like manner, and not a thesis by an extremist or sentimentalist.

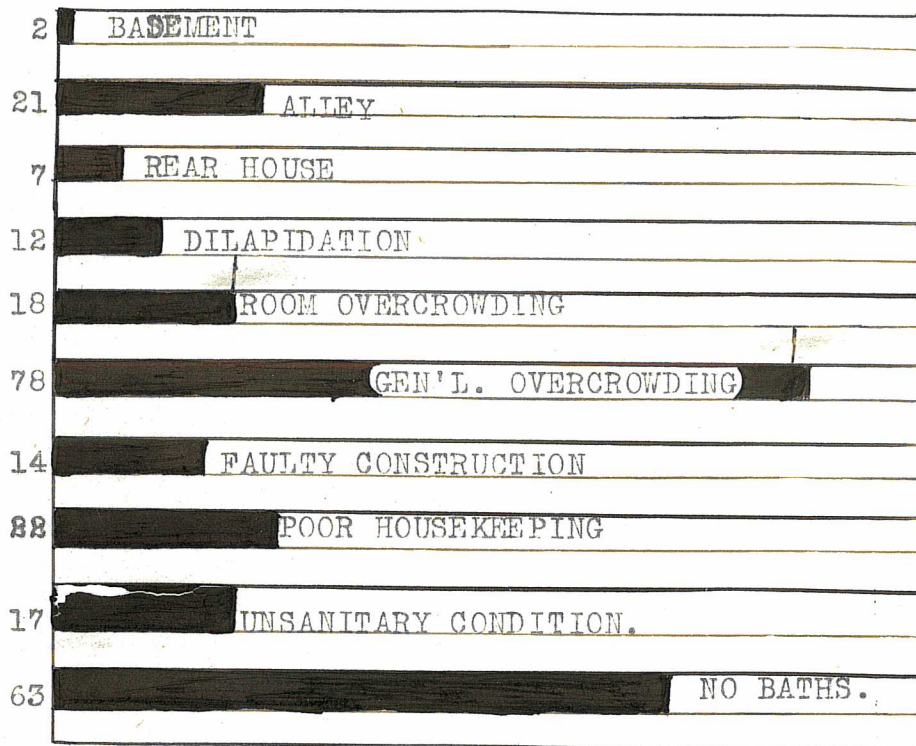
REF. To No.

Your Committee undertook to observe closely a small group of houses, which would be considered as fairly representative of the average type of house inhabited by the beneficiaries of the United Hebrew Relief Association. We consequently selected all the residences of the families whom the association assisted during the months of January, February, and March, 1916, with money to pay the whole or part of the rent for either one or all of the three months. In these ninety-two residences are included two residences which have been given to the Association free of rental for the last three years.

We have made an actual count of the number that have no private bath as the first classification; then we counted those that have no bathing facilities at all (you will notice below that in some houses there is a bath tub for the use of more than one family). We counted the number of residences in basements, the number in alleys, the number built in the rear of other houses, and the number of houses that were dilapidated. The question of overcrowding we studied from two angles:--'overcrowding per room', which term is definitely understood now. Persons require on an average four hundred cubic feet of air space during sleeping hours in order to enjoy proper health. Houses wherein families use the kitchen and the dining room for sleeping quarters at night, but wherein there is a sufficient amount of privacy and light, we did not regard as overcrowded. Overcrowding per city block was a classification of doubtful

CHART NO. 1.

SHOWING FINDINGS IN 92 HOMES GRAPHICALLY
REPRESENTED.



value, because it was a fault applicable to most houses in this study. It has, however, a justifiable place here because of the decided influence it has on the rearing of children. Our next classification deals with faulty construction of buildings. Ordinarily the absence of a bath tub would be considered faulty construction. We have, however, for obvious reasons confined ourselves to phases of tenement and one-family dwelling buildings wherein are rooms without sufficient light or air space, or proper ventilation, or where the walls are damp. The next classification we style 'poor housekeeping' and is self-explanatory. The members of the committee have given this particular phase of the housing problem very careful consideration and have found that a great deal is being contributed to poor housing conditions by careless housekeeping. We are not here making a sweeping condemnation of the Jewish housewife, in the poor district, nor are we blind to the fact that under the conditions that the average poor woman lives it is very difficult to pay attention to neatness, cleanliness, etc., and yet we must emphasize the fact that a good deal can be done to improve the housing condition by teaching the women good housekeeping. The next classification deals with unsanitary condition due chiefly to bad plumbing or insufficient water supply, etc. The results of this study we beg to submit in graphic form. (See Chart One)

The above chart aims to show the relative quantity of the various elements of the housing problem as compared with one another. Our Committee has set out to make a preliminary study which may pave the way should you desire, to a more comprehensive study of the entire problem as it confronts the United Hebrew Relief Association. Being limited in scope therefore, we have set it as our aim to start the members of this Board to think of the housing problem. At this time we want to point out that the various elements of the housing problem cannot all be remedied by some one measure. Faults of sanitation are not in the hands of a charitable society, but are clearly within the function of the Board of Health. We can merely serve as the agency who brings to the attention of the Board of Health the various remediable conditions. Should it be found that the Board of Health has not the desired legal authority to remove certain conditions, then it is the business of the Association to bring communal pressure to bear through some such agency as the Housing Conference, of which Conference we are a member, in order to amend the laws in such a way as to bring relief. The classifications known as 'overcrowding per room' and 'poor housekeeping' are situations that can best be remedied by proper case work through the ordinary functions of the relief Association. It may be questioned fairly whether housekeeping may be considered properly as an element in good or bad housing. Our committee is convinced that good housekeeping should be emphasized because it affords a condition removable with greater ease than possibly any other phase of the problem we are considering. At the beginning of this study we asked our Superintendent and Secretary of this committee to furnish us with a small list of the worst

Chart #2.

PERCENTAGE OF LOT (INTERIOR) OCCUPATION PERMISSIBLE IN

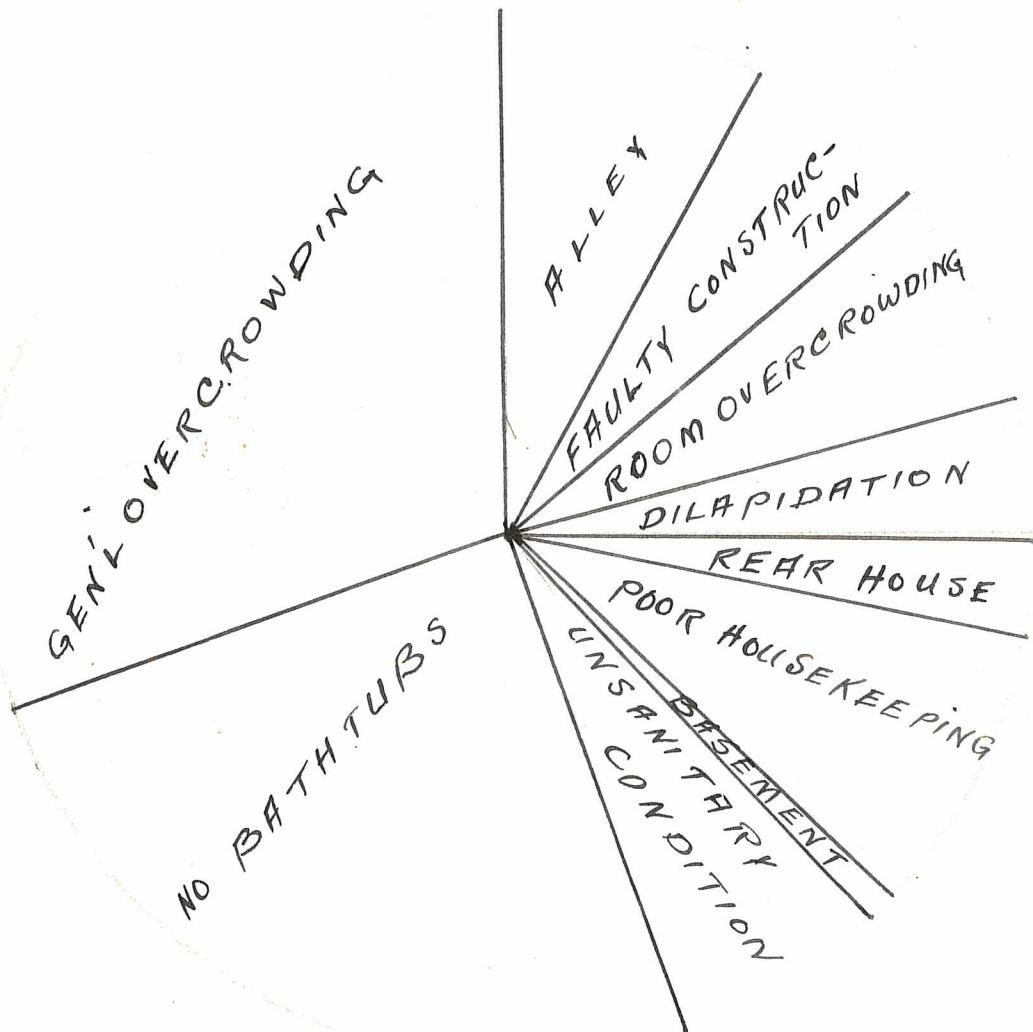
Massachusetts	50%
Grand Rapids	
Not over 60 ft. in depth	60%
60-105 Ft.	50%
105	40%
Columbus	60%
Duluth	60%
New York (2nd class cities)	
More than 60 ft.	60%
Less than 60 ft.	70%
Indiana	65%
New York (1st class cities)	
More than 105 ft.	65%
70-105 ft.	70%
Baltimore	70%
Detroit	70%
Louisville	70%
St. Paul	70%
Seattle, on 1 street	70%
On 1 street and alley	75%
On 2 streets	77%
Connecticut	
More than 60 ft.	70%
Less than 60 ft.	75%
New Jersey	70%
Chicago	75%
Milwaukee	75%
Minneapolis	75%
California	75%
Washington, D. C.	75%
Pittsburgh	80%

housing conditions that he knows. The members of our committee were agreeably surprised after the first visit because they found conditions better than they expected. The houses were dilapidated, some were constructed in great ignorance, the sanitary conveniences in others were very poor and yet the general appearance was much better than we expected to find. And here is the reason. This happened to be on Saturday afternoon, two days before the Passover holidays, just after these houses had been given their annual cleaning in strict conformity with the rabbinical laws. The cause of 'overcrowding per block' can only be remedied through legislation forbidding the occupancy of the building by a large portion of the lot. In this connection Chart #2 will interest you.

Houses in which the construction is poor and tenement houses which have no bathing facilities, or houses that are dilapidated are clearly such situations that only the community at large can deal with. The problems of basements, occupied houses in alleys, and houses built in the rear of other houses are problems certainly not within the scope of work of the Relief Association unless it be established as the definite policy of the relief committee of the Association not to permit any of the families under our care or any others over whom we may have influence to live under such conditions. Our committee has made it its business to visit various portions of the city where better houses are available, but which houses are not occupied to any large extent by our poorer Jewish families for various reasons. A permanent housing committee of the Relief Association could make an active campaign through the ordinary channels of the organization to remove our people into those portions of the city.

CHART NO. 3.

SHOWING THE HOUSING PROBLEM IN THE 92 HOUSES AS A UNIT, AND
THE VARIOUS ELEMENTS OF THE SAME GRAPHICALLY REPRESENTED



We have reference largely to the Bedford Avenue district near Herron Avenue and to the district known as Schenley Heights in the vicinity of the Herron Hill Basin. Such measures on the part of the Relief Association would entail a considerable expenditure, but it is a constructive measure on the part of the community that should not be overlooked or postponed.

We are not unmindful of the fact that such work has its limitations. For if we remove a family from an unsanitary house, and help such family to better its circumstances elsewhere, some other family moves into the first house, and we thus have our work to do over again. This fact ^emerly points out that housing is a problem to be dealt with by the entire city in co-operation; and does not argue against energetic family rehabilitation work to better living quarters.

Chart #1 does not present a picture of our housing problem as a totality. We have therefore prepared Chart #3.

Chart #4.

AVERAGE RENTAL FOR APARTMENTS IN

CITY	2 RMS.	3 RMS.	4 RMS.
Indianapolis	\$5.00	\$8.00	\$10.00
Buffalo		8.50	11.00
St. Louis	6.00	10.00	13.00
Cincinnati	7.50	10.00	13.00
Chicago	7.00	10.00	13.00
Baltimore	5.00	7.50	9.00
Pittsburgh	10.00	14.50	19.00

This chart is open to the criticism of being unscientific, which fact we have considered very carefully, but submit it to you as being as accurate a picture of the housing problem as we could present. An accurate graphic presentation would make it necessary to obtain a unit as the basis to determine the elements that make up poor housing. From the available data it was impossible to secure such a unit. For instance it is not possible to determine in a given house whether the fact that six people sleeping in two rooms has an equally negative effect upon the welfare of that family, as does the fact that the house is situated in an alley or that the house-keeping is not what it ought to be. However, though possibly incorrect mathamatically, there is in this chart a lesson as to the relative quantity of each element of the housing problem in relation to the whole.

Another phase of the housing problem, which properly belongs in Chart #2, but which it was not possible to include therein because of the fact that this particular element does not lend itself to corresponding mathamatical evaluation, is that dealing with high rents. For this purpose we have drawn up a third chart after having secured from other cities the information regarding the average rental in those cities, per two-three-and four-room apartments for families ordinarily in charge of the Relief Association. (See Chart #4).

High rentals is beyond the question the most serious phase of our problem, and yet we can afford to dismiss it with only a brief reference, for the cause of high rentals, taxation, is not within the province of this survey nor within the scope of the work of the United Hebrew Relief Association to remedy. Wherefore we beg to offer the following recommendations:

(a) That this Board appoint a permanent committee on housing to consist of five members to study this question in its larger bearings, to meet regularly, and to work consistently with the paid staff of the Association with a view of carrying on remedial measures in order to improve housing conditions of those who are dependent upon the Association.

(b) That the Association employ, as soon as is feasible, a visiting housekeeper to work under the direction of our Superintendent, to perform such duties as the term 'visiting housekeeper' implies.

(c) We do not recommend the building of dwellings or tenements out of the funds of the United Hebrew Relief Association.

Respectfully submitted,

Irvin F. Lehman,
Chairman.

Hugo Sidenberg.

Peter Glick.

Charles I. Cooper,
Secretary.