

THE TENEMENTS OF CHICAGO

1908-1935

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neighborhood a small-town appearance. The gardens are, for the most part, well cared for and attractive, offering some outdoor occupation to their owners, and perhaps a little saving in expenditure for food; but the keeping of animals is not infrequently a nuisance. One family said they had complained to the Health Department because a neighbor kept a horse on the rear of a vacant lot which he owned next door, but the Department said the neighbor could not be made to take the horse away. Attention has already been called to the unpleasant results—the filth and disagreeable odors that go with the keeping of animals in a tenement neighborhood. How far the keeping of animals or fowls is a nuisance depends, of course, upon the available land and upon the provision made for their care. One house with a very large side yard had chickens kept in the rear of the yard, which was very clean and well cared for. But there were complaints from neighbors about two pigs in a back yard, about a cow in another yard, about chickens and geese in the rear of another house.

PULLMAN

The history of the region called Pullman is too well known to be re-told here.⁸⁶ Work began in the spring of 1880 on what was to be an "employees' Utopia," the plant of the Pullman Palace Car Company and the town that was to house its workmen. In 1893 the town of Pullman was described as "a restful oasis in the wearying brick-and-mortar waste of an enormous city." A park with gardens and a band stand, the Green Stone Church, the Florence Hotel, the school building, and the Arcade, with its stores, theater, library, and bank, have often been described. The growing discord between the Pullman Company and the Pullman employees, the great strike of 1894, and the Illinois Supreme Court decision of 1898,⁸⁷ which held that the Pullman Company could not own the town of Pullman, need not be reviewed here.⁸⁸

⁸⁶ See Graham R. Taylor, *Satellite Cities*, p. 28.

⁸⁷ *The People v. Pullman Car Co.*, 175 Ill. 125.

⁸⁸ The Pullman Land Association, composed chiefly of company executives, was organized to arrange for the disposition of the property, and sold the houses to the Pullman employees according to a plan that was considered very fair. Opportunity to purchase a house was first offered the tenant who had been living in it for the longest period of time; if he did not wish to purchase it, and there were other tenants in the same dwell-

The few scattered Pullman residents of 1880 had increased to a population of more than 8,500 in 1885. The 1890 census showed a population of more than 10,000 of whom about one-third were American born, approximately one-fourth Scandinavian and another one-fourth German and Dutch, leaving 13 per cent British and about 6 per cent Irish. In addition, there were a few representatives of various other nationalities, especially of the so-called new immigration destined to increase rapidly in the following decade. Immigrants were attracted by the opportunities of employment not only in the Pullman works but in the other large industries which had followed the Pullman Car Company in establishing plants in or near Pullman, including the Sherwin-Williams Paint Company, the Griffin Car Company, and, in West Pullman, a plant of the International Harvester Company.

The present-day representatives of the older immigration who are still living in Pullman are chiefly Swedish, but some German, English, Scotch, and a few Irish are found. Most of these nationalities live in the better types of dwellings, and many of them own their homes. But the proportion of Northwestern Europeans had dwindled during the years of heavy Southeastern European immigration, and the newer immigrant groups—Poles, Slovaks, Serbians, Greeks, and Italians—became the chief workers in the Pullman Company and in other nearby industries. At the time of our canvass, Poles, Slovaks, and Italians in the order named were the immigrants represented in the largest numbers; but native-born Americans of foreign parentage now constitute the largest single population group.

In making a preliminary canvass to determine what would be a representative area for a housing canvass, it was found that there are three types of dwellings in the older portion of Pullman, aside from the residences built for the employees of the company in the higher-salary group. Most of the houses are built in long rows adjoining one another and architecturally similar, and a small sample of three

ing, they were given a chance to acquire it; and if none of the tenants wanted to buy the house, it was put on the market. More than half the houses were bought by the people living in them. Many of the families have still been paying for their houses, during the last decade, and social workers report that some families, who have not been able to meet their payments regularly because of some misfortune, have been allowed to go on for several years without making any payments on their property.

blocks of different types seemed adequate for the house-to-house canvass. West of the Illinois Central tracks in the area not included in the old town of Pullman a number of modern brick apartment buildings have been erected. In the original Pullman, however, there had been little change. The houses built by the company were sufficiently well constructed and have been kept in such good repair that they have not become dilapidated as have so many other tenement districts.

The Pullman houses usually have five rooms, occasionally six. It is not easy to tell where one building ends and the next begins; two and sometimes three of these single-family residences are apparently included in one building, although on the inside the part belonging to each family is entirely separated from its neighbors. Some of these houses have been converted by their purchasers into two flats, a three-room flat downstairs, and a separate one of two rooms upstairs. The objection to this change is that the family living upstairs must either use an outside stairway in the rear or pass through the downstairs apartment when going in and out.

These rows of houses, all much alike, are on the whole neat, if somewhat monotonous, and are built on broad streets sheltered with trees. Most of the residents are also owners and therefore take pride in the care of their homes, with the front yards usually well kept, with shrubs and plants. They have the appearance of substantially built, neat, but not pretentious, dwellings.

Near the Pullman yards some of the so-called "block houses" are found. The block houses are very large tenements having from twenty-three to forty-eight apartments. There are three of these so-called block houses in a block, with the house in the middle of the block usually placed farther back from the street line than the two end houses. These houses have a rather desolate and unsightly appearance with old iron fire escapes in the front, and with the open spaces in front and on the side of the buildings littered with rubbish. The rear of the houses is back against the fences that inclose the switching tracks and yards belonging to the Pullman Company.

A third type of house is found in what is known as "foremen's row," in the block from Fourteenth Street to Fifteenth Street on Stephenson Avenue, extending down both sides of the street.

Why the foremen should have lived in these houses, if they ever did, is not easy to understand. The houses are certainly inferior in every way to the rows of one-family dwellings, although they are better than the block houses on Langley Avenue. These "foremen's row" houses are buildings with four apartments, three three-room apartments and one four-room apartment, including a room with a bay window. These apartments have no bath or toilet in them; the toilets are located in the front entrance hall, under the steps on the first floor. There is no crowding on the lot in the case of the row houses. While there is some yard space around the block houses, when the number of families living in them is considered, this yard space does not provide the children with adequate playground. All the houses in the blocks studied are located on the front of the lot. No basement or cellar apartments were found, so that the apartments of the Pullman Company workers are superior to those of the steel-mills districts in this respect.

On the whole, housing in Pullman is very much less deteriorated and presents a more substantial appearance than the smoke-dyed frame houses of the South Chicago area near the mills. The Pullman houses are brick, or occasionally brick and stone. The row houses visited by our investigators were reported in good repair. These are substantially built houses, erected at a time when construction costs for good material were not so high. During the time they were owned by the Pullman Company they were kept in good repair, and since that time they have been occupied by owners and have been well cared for. The block houses were also well built, although some of them were in a poor state of repair; but even the block houses in poor repair make much better homes to live in than the frame tenements of South Chicago.⁸⁹

⁸⁹ See Taylor, *op. cit.*, p. 38, in the comment that "the substantial original construction of brick and the architectural scheme still give the houses of Pullman a distinct stamp in contrast with the stretches of dingy frame houses characteristic of Chicago's poorer sections." However, Miss Faith Adams (Mrs. Perry), who prepared our report on Pullman, criticized the dark hallways, "dark even in the daytime," and the bad plumbing. She pointed out that although each apartment in the block houses had a separate toilet, the toilet was not located within the apartment. "These houses are divided into two sides and there are usually three apartments on each floor on each side. All three toilets and the only sink on each floor are grouped together at the end of

purposes. The number of houses left in the old Ghetto district was so small that percentages are not computed for this area. The numbers in the Pilsen district are small, but the housing in this district is

TABLE 30
PERCENTAGE OF APARTMENTS HAVING A SPECIFIED NUMBER
OF ROOMS; BY DISTRICTS

(Recanvass and Post-war Original Canvass Data)

DISTRICT	TOTAL NUMBER OF APART- MENTS	PERCENTAGE OF APARTMENTS HAVING A SPECIFIED NUMBER OF ROOMS						
		1	2	3	4	5	6	7 or More
Total.....	15,556*	0.6	5.6	12.3	49.2	16.2	12.0	4.1
West Side:								
Old Ghetto.....	54	†	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....	.....
Pilsen.....	281	.....	5.0	42.3	42.3	5.7	3.2	1.5
Lumber Yards.....	639	1.0	9.7	20.8	40.0	14.2	9.1	5.2
Hull-House.....	1,328	0.2	6.0	19.1	36.9	20.6	11.0	6.2
Polk Street.....	360	.....	3.9	13.9	50.5	17.8	10.5	3.4
St. Stanislaus.....	2,332	0.7	4.6	8.2	73.2	7.0	4.7	1.6
Division Street.....	1,324	0.7	7.8	11.2	57.1	9.6	11.1	2.5
Ancona.....	470	0.6	9.2	18.5	48.5	14.9	7.5	0.8
South Side:								
Near South Side.....	924	0.2	3.1	13.7	44.0	16.2	14.6	8.2
Back of the Yards....	1,508	0.7	7.7	9.4	62.1	10.9	6.4	2.8
Stock Yards, South....	264	0.8	20.4	15.1	47.3	9.8	5.0	1.6
Southwest (Lithuanian)	993	0.2	3.7	7.1	50.3	22.1	12.1	4.5
South End:								
Burnside.....	406	0.2	2.0	7.4	35.2	35.5	16.0	3.7
South Chicago (East Side).....	560	1.4	4.1	7.0	60.2	9.0	16.2	2.1
South Deering.....	205	0.5	2.4	9.8	35.1	18.0	22.4	11.8
Pullman.....	244	0.4	14.8	35.2	27.9	18.0	3.7	.....
North Side:								
Lower North.....	1,168	0.3	3.9	12.1	44.7	19.4	15.9	3.7
Upper North.....	314	.....	4.1	8.6	42.0	26.8	14.0	4.5
Olivet district.....	507	0.4	2.2	8.3	36.0	29.0	20.5	3.7
Negro districts:								
Dearborn.....	426	1.4	2.1	7.1	24.2	27.7	29.1	8.4
La Salle.....	534	1.3	3.8	9.8	30.1	26.6	20.0	8.4
Upper Federal.....	542	1.9	5.0	12.0	32.6	17.3	25.3	5.9
Walnut (West Side)...	173	0.6	1.7	5.2	19.1	33.5	24.3	15.6

* Omitted from this total are 556 apartments for which the number of rooms was not reported.

† No percentages worked for base of less than 100.

This is, however, only an average based on approximately 15,000 apartments found in the twenty-three districts canvassed. The

TABLE 32
NUMBER AND PERCENTAGE OF APARTMENTS BELOW THE STANDARD
OF ONE ROOM PER PERSON
(Recanvass and Post-war Original Canvass Data)

District	Total Number of Apartments Visited	Apartments† Overcrowded	Percentage of Apartments Overcrowded
Total.....	14,925*	5,509	36.9
West Side:			
Old Ghetto.....	54	22	40.7
Pilsen.....	280	75	26.8
Lumber Yards.....	628	202	32.2
Hull-House.....	1,228	431	35.1
Polk Street.....	353	142	40.2
St. Stanislaus.....	2,276	972	42.7
Division Street.....	1,322	569	43.0
Ancona.....	436	182	41.7
South Side:			
Near South Side. . .	873	284	32.5
Back of the Yards. .	1,430	646	45.2
Stock Yards, South.	251	116	46.2
Southwest (Lithua- nian).....	984	328	33.3
South End:			
Burnside.....	405	196	48.4
South Chicago (East Side).....	533	267	50.0
South Deering. . . .	200	95	47.5
Pullman.....	222	65	29.2
North Side:			
Lower North.....	1,034	300	29.0
Upper North.....	300	67	22.3
Olivet district.....	493	113	23.0
Negro districts:			
Dearborn.....	405	104	25.8
La Salle.....	510	99	19.4
Upper Federal. . . .	540	205	38.0
Walnut (West Side).	168	29	17.3

* Omitted from the total are 997 vacant apartments and 190 other apartments for which the number of rooms was not reported.

† That is, overcrowded on the standard of one room per person.

percentages of overcrowded dwellings according to this standard vary greatly from one district to another. The total number of

\$5.00 had almost disappeared; 82.0 per cent of the apartments rented for amounts between \$10 and \$30, and 10.6 per cent rented for \$30 or more. Although only four of the entire number of apart-

TABLE 47
NUMBER OF RENTED APARTMENTS WITH SPECIFIED MONTHLY
RENT; BY DISTRICTS
(Later Canvass and Recanvass)

DISTRICT	NUMBER OF RENTED APARTMENTS WITH SPECIFIED MONTHLY RENT													\$60 and Over
	Total Rent- ed	Less than \$5	\$5 and Less than \$10	\$10 and Less than \$15	\$15 and Less than \$20	\$20 and Less than \$25	\$25 and Less than \$30	\$30 and Less than \$35	\$35 and Less than \$40	\$40 and Less than \$45	\$45 and Less than \$50	\$50 and Less than \$55	\$55 and Less than \$60	
All districts.....	11,751	28	852	2,552	3,597	2,270	1,220	513	385	150	97	55	10	22
West Side:														
Old Ghetto.....	49		8	5	5	15	12	3	1					
Pilsen.....	230		49	120	51	8	1	1						
Lumber Yards.....	441	5	130	155	101	26	16	4	3					
Hull-House.....	1,005		52	174	252	225	107	54	39	42	40	11	2	7
Polk Street.....	255		3	28	81	87	43	4	9					
St. Stanislaus.....	1,905	13	157	516	750	315	82	29	19	15	4	4	1	
Division Street.....	1,061		45	168	295	326	142	36	35	5	3	3	2	1
Ancona.....	372		23	75	107	70	33	4						
South Side:														
Downtown.....														
Near South Side.....	685	1	43	160	217	131	64	32	24	7	3	2		1
Back of the Yards.....	1,077	1	90	343	426	158	37	11	5	2	1	3		
Stock-Yards, South.....	206	1	72	72	48	10	2	1						
Southwest (Lithuanian).....	647	1	27	114	201	102	118	36	20	5	9	7		7
South End:														
Burnside.....	156		5	27	44	34	26	15	5					
South Chicago (East Side).....	383	1	28	93	164	68	18	7	3	1				
South Deering.....	118		2	18	35	20	7	4	1	1				1
Pullman.....	194		36	111	10	7	16	7	5	2				
North Side:														
Lower North.....	970	4	54	205	323	198	114	51	19	1	1			
Upper North.....	231		2	28	55	76	44	18	6	1	1			
Olivet.....	352		2	29	88	94	57	38	33	7	1	3		
Negro districts:														
Dearborn.....	375	1	3	21	67	91	91	41	36	14	8	1		1
La Salle.....	402		9	9	85	71	80	58	74	34	22	12	5	3
Upper Federal.....	427		8	70	104	100	68	41	26	3	1	6		
Walnut (West Side).....	150		4	11	28	29	29	15	19	10	2	2		1

ments rented for \$50 or more during the period 1909-19, 87 ranged from \$50 to \$75 in the later period. The median rental for all apartments had increased from \$9.00 to \$18.

How far from typical these rents are of rented homes throughout the city of Chicago may be indicated by a comparison between Table 48 and Table 49. In Table 49 the United States census report

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lodgers constituted more than 20 per cent of the family household population; these districts were Southwest, South Chicago, Back of the Yards, Dearborn, and the old Ghetto.

TABLE 66
COMPOSITION OF HOUSEHOLDS, BY DISTRICTS
(Recanvass and Post-war Original Canvass Data)

DISTRICT	NUMBER OF PERSONS IN HOUSEHOLDS					
	Total	Members of Families			Lodgers	Adults in Non-family Groups
		Total	Adults	Children		
All districts.....	65,143	59,938	36,062	23,876	3,167	1,934
West Side:						
Old Ghetto.....	237	193	131	62	17	27
Pilsen.....	965	920	660	260	16	29
Lumber Yards.....	2,503	2,340	1,431	909	74	89
Hull-House.....	5,371	4,907	2,989	1,918	195	269
Polk Street.....	1,604	1,541	759	782	12	51
St. Stanislaus.....	9,936	9,614	5,222	4,392	235	87
Division Street.....	5,914*	5,638	3,350	2,288	161	106
Ancona.....	1,870	1,717	780	937	72	81
South Side:						
Near South Side.....	3,876	3,579	2,326	1,253	97	200
Back of the Yards.....	6,521	5,856	3,351	2,505	382	283
Stock Yards, South.....	1,096	833	509	324	83	180
Southwest.....	4,274	3,906	2,429	1,477	323	45
South End:						
Burnside.....	2,122†	2,004	1,143	861	64	.....
South Chicago.....	2,716	2,527	1,509	1,018	120	69
South Deering.....	1,124	893	512	381	133	98
Pullman.....	784	647	438	209	33	104
North Side:						
Lower North.....	4,211	4,034	2,394	1,640	104	73
Upper North.....	1,148	1,095	669	426	22	31
Olivet district.....	1,980	1,923	1,182	741	42	15
Negro districts:						
Dearborn.....	1,720	1,344	965	379	331	45
La Salle.....	1,911	1,588	1,270	318	291	32
Upper Federal.....	2,597‡	2,251	1,582	669	305	.....
Walnut (West Side).....	663	588	461	127	55	20

* Classification not reported for 9 persons included in total.

† Classification not reported for 54 persons included in total.

‡ Classification not reported for 41 persons included in total.

The later canvass also showed striking differences between the districts studied at that time. Thus in the "Burnside triangle" 59.1

TABLE 74
PERCENTAGE OF HOME-OWNERS; BY DISTRICTS
(Pre-war Canvass Data, Recanvass and Post-war Canvass Data,
Compared with U.S. Census Data, 1930)

DISTRICTS	CANVASS BEFORE 1920			CANVASS AND RECANVASS AFTER 1923			HOME OWNERSHIP IN CENSUS TRACTS (1930)		
	All Heads of House-holds	Home-Owners	Per-cent- age of Owners	All Heads of House-holds	Home-Owners	Per-cent- age of Owners	Total	Home-Owners	Per-cent- age Owned
All districts. . .	14,779	2,017	13.6	15,115	2,720	18.0	35,874	7,317	20.4
West Side:									
Old Ghetto.	200	17	8.5	54	2	3.7	141	13	9.2
Pilsen.	295	35	11.9	281	33	11.7	2,934	519	17.7
Lumber Yards.	854	148	17.3	640	124	19.4	1,972	455	23.1
Hull-House.	1,984	208	10.5	1,255	171	13.6	1,709	241	14.1
Polk Street.			*	355	65	18.3	989	186	18.8
St. Stanislaus.	2,785	355	12.7	2,296	267	11.6	1,809	307	16.2
Division Street.	1,416	186	13.1	1,347	210	15.6	1,367	242	17.7
Ancona.				439	55	12.5	2,769	455	16.4
South Side:									
Near South Side.	950	141	14.8	878	178	20.3	1,578	276	17.5
Back of the Yards Stock Yards, South.	1,567	298	19.0	1,455	317	21.8	2,206	674	30.6
Southwest.	273	29	10.6	254	47	18.5	370	65	17.6
Southwest.	1,013	241	23.8	992	272	27.4	3,039	934	30.7
South End:									
Burnside.			*	411	243	59.1	709	432	60.9
South Chicago.	545	100	18.3	536	147	27.4	1,538	479	31.1
South Deering.			*	200	64	32.0	629	295	46.9
Pullman.			*	222	48	21.6	965	423	43.8
North Side:									
Lower North.	1,438	116	8.1	1,036	138	13.3	2,893	317	11.0
Upper North.	372	69	18.5	306	53	17.3	1,392	262	18.8
Olivet district.			*	509	102	20.0	1,704	233	13.2
Negro districts:									
Dearborn.	428	17	4.0	413	24	5.8	750	32	4.3
La Salle.	416	36	8.7	511	48	9.4	1,677	126	7.5
Upper Federal.			*	555	97	17.5	1,922	277	14.4
Walnut.	243	21	8.6	170	15	8.8	662	74	11.2

* This district included only in the later canvass.

Changes in home-ownership percentages between our earlier and later canvasses are interesting. Going back to Table 74 and comparing column 3 with column 6, some of the changes are quite striking. In South Chicago, for example, at the time the first study was made, there were 100 resident owners and 445 tenants in the seven blocks; that is, 18.3 per cent of the residents were owners. Fifteen years later, the recanvass showed such an increase of home-ownership that 27.4 per cent of the 536 resident households were then owning the houses in which they were living. As in other tenement districts of Chicago, some of these owners had purchased the old single-family cottages still to be found in such a neighborhood, but the majority were trying to pay for tenements a part of which could be rented, thus providing a helpful means of completing payments on the house.

Exceptional conditions as regards home-ownership existed in some of the neighborhoods. The condition in Burnside, for example, has already been discussed in the chapter in which the district itself is described.⁶ In Pullman conditions are also exceptional,⁷ and at the time of our recanvass, just before the depression, home-ownership varied greatly according to the block that happened to be chosen for investigation. One of the incidents in the history of Pullman was that the Pullman Company offered to sell houses to the occupants at a selling price equal to one hundred times the rent per month, and the company made liberal terms as to payments. In the three blocks in which our house-to-house canvass was made, it did not appear that more than half of the occupants had taken advantage of this offer. The number of home-owners in these three blocks was approximately 22 per cent of the total number of householders. However, two of the blocks were very unusual; there were only six houses, including 143 households, so that it would have been impossible to find a high percentage of ownership in these blocks unless the tenements were owned co-operatively. As it was, two of the three buildings in each block were really owned by persons living in them. One of these houses had recently been purchased by an American who was making plans for installing electricity and for re-

⁶ See chap. iii, "The Tenement Areas," pp. 151-55.

⁷ See Graham R. Taylor, *Satellite Cities*, pp. 28-67.

painting and in other ways modernizing his purchase. Another was owned by a Greek who took very great pride in his property.

The extent to which homes were owned in Pullman was ascertained more accurately from the returns from the third block, which was a block of row houses. Here forty-four out of seventy-nine houses were owned by the occupants; so that the number of home owners here was more than half of the total number of householders. In this block none of the separate dwellings had been divided and sublet as were some of those visited in the more northern districts. While ownership of the home seemed to be very desirable for many families in Pullman, it apparently was not invariably so. Some of the men who had not worked regularly since the steel cars had replaced the old woodwork processes were reluctant to seek new employment either in the districts to the north or downtown or farther out in the industrial section of the south end, because of the inconvenience and time-loss involved in living so far from work. But either they could not dispose of their homes in Pullman or they were unwilling to give them up. So they continued to live there and to accept part-time work, although, according to their wives, they found their employment unsatisfactory and their earnings precarious.

In South Deering 26.6 per cent of the houses were owned by resident landlords who had lived on the premises for less than two years. Nearly half the owners had been living in their houses less than four years. Nearly 19 per cent had lived in houses which they had owned for over ten years. One American owner had lived in the same house for forty years. A Croatian who had been living here for twenty years had finally become the owner not only of his own dwelling but also of the house next door, which, of course, he rents.

In the Negro districts conditions are also exceptional both because of the poverty of the people and because of the pressure for housing accommodations before the depression, owing to the migration from the South and the old policy of segregation. The Negroes, in fact, were for a time almost driven to buy homes on account of the substantial increases in rent, which at times were as much as 50 per cent. The Chicago Commission on Race Relations thought that high rents were the primary factor in the widespread buying of