

MUNHALL HOMESTEADS
Longfellow Drive
Munhall
Allegheny County
Pennsylvania

HAER NO. PA-303

HAER
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PHOTOGRAPHS

WRITTEN HISTORICAL AND DESCRIPTIVE DATA

HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD
National Park Service
Department of the Interior
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HAER
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HISTORIC AMERICAN ENGINEERING RECORD

MUNHALL HOMESTEADS

HAER No. PA-303

Location: Longfellow Drive, Munhall, Allegheny County, Pennsylvania

Date of Construction: 1941

Builder: Allegheny County Housing Authority
Federal Public Housing Authority

Present Owner: resident cooperative association

Present Use: housing

Significance: Munhall Homesteads was a product of U.S. federal housing policy immediately preceding and during World War II. It was intended to relieve the severe housing shortage in the Pittsburgh area that threatened to disrupt vital industrial production. After the war it was sold to residents under the federal Mutual Home Ownership Plan and continues to operate as a successful cooperative housing complex.

Project Information: Documentation of Munhall Homesteads was prepared under the auspices of the U.S. Department of Defense Legacy Resource Management Program, cosponsored in 1994 by the Historic American Buildings Survey/Historic American Engineering Record, a division of the National Park Service, Department of the Interior. This report is part of larger study to document defense-related industrial and housing expansion in the Pittsburgh region during World War II. This study includes an overview history (HAER No. PA-343) and reports on Mesta Machine Company at Homestead Steel Works (HAER No. PA-301), and Aluminum City Terrace (HAER No. PA-302).

Historian: Jennifer B. Bannister

Defense Housing in Allegheny County:
Munhall Homesteads and Glen Hazel Heights

During World War II, urban areas across the United States faced severe housing shortages that threatened to disrupt industrial production vital to the conduct of the war. Due to greatly expanded employment opportunities, heavily industrialized areas quickly became powerful magnets for worker in-migration. As the site of extensive steel production and massive industrial expansion, the Pittsburgh region attracted a large number of people seeking employment. These people also sought housing.

In-migration was not the only tax on the local housing supply at the start of the war. As part of an expansion project funded by the Defense Plant Corporation, the Homestead Works of the Carnegie-Illinois Steel Corporation engulfed several acres of worker housing in the first and second wards of Homestead, Pennsylvania, dislocating over six thousand residents of the borough. A site of extremely low vacancies and high levels of substandard housing even before the onset of war, under these new pressures the housing situation in the Homestead area escalated from a problem to a crisis. Local and federal housing agencies recognized the threat this posed to national security and constructed several defense housing projects in the four county area surrounding Pittsburgh to house both defense workers and newly homeless Homestead residents.

This paper will compare two responses to the housing problem in the Pittsburgh area: Glen Hazel Heights and Munhall Homesteads defense housing projects. Built with federal funding under the Lanham Act, the two projects served both incoming defense workers as well as displaced Homestead defense families. After the war, the residents of Munhall Homesteads lobbied the federal government to convert their project into a housing cooperative, thus maintaining the sense of community that had grown there throughout the war. Although the residents of Glen Hazel Heights also tried to cooperatize, their efforts failed, and the community became a low income housing project as had been planned originally.

A comparison of these two housing projects offers an opportunity to analyze several aspects of US. federal housing policy. First, the two projects offer an insight on the administration of two local housing agencies, the Allegheny County Housing Authority and the Housing Authority of the City of Pittsburgh. Second, it permits an analysis of defense housing construction and disposal, as well as the effects of such policies on the social fabric of these unique communities. Finally, this comparison permits some exploration of successful and unsuccessful cooperatization of the defense housing projects

in the years after World War II.¹

Housing Reform Movements in Pittsburgh

At least three housing reform efforts in Pittsburgh and Homestead in the decades before World War II focused primarily on slum clearance. Homestead first became a center of Progressive Era concern when Margaret Byington studied the households of Homestead for the 1907 Pittsburgh Survey. Byington's work and other sections of the survey described horrendous living conditions in the industrial slums in and around the city of Pittsburgh. Although the city's slums attracted attention and infamy, very little was done to rectify squalid conditions until the following decades. The next housing reform group in Pittsburgh was organized in 1928 and continued as an advocacy organization at least through the 1950's. The Pittsburgh Housing Association dedicated itself to slum clearance, housing sanitation, code enforcement, and neighborhood improvement, although the organization had no legal power. A third push for reform came in 1934, when the Bureau of Business Research at the University of Pittsburgh conducted a quantitative study of real property values in Pittsburgh and Allegheny County. The study was done in cooperation with the US. Department of Commerce and in coordination with Federal work-relief surveys in other cities. Both the Pittsburgh Housing Association and the Bureau of Business Research concurred with Byington's 1907 study and found housing in Allegheny County to be old, decrepit, and substandard, and all advocated strong policies of slum clearance for the city. The Bureau of Business Research estimated that 40 percent of families in Allegheny County lived in substandard housing conditions.²

The Depression created two more housing organizations in the Pittsburgh region which shared this ideology of slum clearance. In 1937, the Housing Authority of the City of Pittsburgh (HACP) and the Allegheny Housing Authority (ACHA) received funding from

¹ See also Lori Cole, unpublished Ph.D. dissertation, Carnegie Mellon University, 1994. At the time of writing this report, Cole's work was unavailable.

² Margaret Byington, *Homestead: Households of a Mill Town* (Pittsburgh: 1974, reprint of 1911 edition); Pittsburgh Housing Association, *Housing in Pittsburgh, 1934-1937* (Pittsburgh, n.d.), 4; Bureau of Business Research, *Real Property Inventory of Allegheny County* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh, 1937), passim; Housing Authority of the City of Pittsburgh, *Slum Clearance and Low-Rent Housing in Pittsburgh* (Pittsburgh: c1940), n.p. For a recent study of working class family life and gender relations in Homestead and Pittsburgh, see Susan J. Kleinberg, *The Shadow of the Mills: Working Class Families in Pittsburgh, 1870-1907* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1989).

the United States Housing Authority (USHA) to begin programs of slum removal and subsidized housing. USHA served as a lending agency only; all power to plan, execute, and administer public housing rested with local authorities.³ Both the HACP and the ACHA participated in defense housing during World War II, but slum clearance by the housing authorities decreased, due to labor shortages and other wartime priorities.⁴

The Neighborhoods

"The Ward," as the contested area between the banks of the Monongahela River and the railroad tracks was called, was a heterogeneous, working class community. This area, reaching six blocks along and about nine blocks up from the river, was populated predominantly by recent immigrants of Eastern-European descent. The Ward was a working class neighborhood, with the neighboring Homestead Steel Works the primary employer. By the turn of the century, many older and more established immigrant groups had left lower Homestead to move up the hill, away from the smoky mill, dirty streets, and foreign faces that had come to characterize the area below the railroad tracks. Well before World War II, housing in upper Homestead consisted predominantly of single family homes, while lower Homestead was characterized by boarding houses and multi-family dwellings. Lower Homestead was considered an industrial "slum."⁵

The two neighborhoods selected by the HACP and the ACHA for defense housing projects for the dislocated Homestead residents were distinctly different from each other economically and socially. Just up the hill and to the east of the "slums" of lower Homestead lay the borough of Munhall. Incorporated in 1901, Munhall embraced the Homestead Steel Works along the Monogahela and was a much wealthier borough, in property values and population, than neighboring Homestead. Many supervisors at the Homestead Works moved to the hillsides of Munhall, beyond the crowded, dirty roads of Homestead abutting the mill.⁶ Just west

³ Kristin Szylvian Bailey. "Defense Housing in Greater Pittsburgh, 1945-1955," *Pittsburgh History* 73 (Spring 1990), 19; Housing Authority of the City of Pittsburgh. *Slum Clearance and Low-Rent Housing in Pittsburgh* (Pittsburgh: c1940). n.p.

⁴ Max Nurnberg. *Housing Survey of Pittsburgh and Allegheny County . Part I* (Allegheny County Community Development: July 1946). 73.

⁵ Curtis Miner and Paul Roberts, "Engineering an Industrial Diaspora: Homestead, 1941," *Pittsburgh History* 72 (Winter 1989). 8.

⁶ Pittsburgh Regional Planning Association. *Steel Valley District: A Long Range Development Plan* (Pittsburgh, 1961), 3.

of Homestead along the Monongahela, Hazelwood (one of Pittsburgh's twenty-one "neighborhoods") more closely resembled Homestead than Munhall: heavily industrialized, a constant haze of smoke and grime emanating from the nearby Jones and Laughlin steel mill, multi-family dwellings, and high percentages of Eastern and Southern European immigrant-workers and recent African-American in-migrants from southern areas of the United States.⁷

Responses to Housing Crisis: Federal and Local

On June 4, 1941, the *Homestead Daily Messenger* announced that the War Department planned to invest \$75 million in the expansion of the Homestead Steel Works for defense purposes. The expansion would destroy 120 acres of Lower Homestead. Property-owners would be reimbursed, but their move was not voluntary. Housing projects already planned for the surrounding areas would offer inexpensive housing for all defense industry workers, with special priorities for displaced Homestead residents. Although some residents initially objected to their forced relocation, the federal government held the power to condemn property and bought out both the willing and the unwilling residents. Of the 2700 Homestead families forced to relocate, 1450 families --slightly more than the number of families employed in defense production-- moved to public housing.⁸

Federal administration of housing programs was chaotic for much of the early defense housing program. The government had learned late in the World War I that housing shortages could lead to disastrous bottlenecks in industrial production. However, isolationism, general resistance to government intervention, and faith in the private sector stalemated government initiative during the years leading up to US involvement in the World War II.⁹ Many agencies competed for funds, personnel, and sites, until the passage of the Lanham Act in 1940. This act, also known as the National Defense Housing Act, gave the Federal Works Administration (FWA) full discretion over \$150 million for housing construction for workers and their families involved in

⁷ Edward K. Muller, "Metropolis and Region," from Samuel P. Hays, ed., *City At the Point: Essays on the Social History of Pittsburgh* (Pittsburgh: University of Pittsburgh Press, 1989), 202-204.

⁸ Allegheny County Housing Authority, *Victory on the Homes Front: A Report and a Blueprint, 1938-1944*. (Pittsburgh: c1944.), n.p.

⁹ "Backdrop: World War I," *Architectural Forum* 73:5 (November 1940), 329; Charles Abrams, *The Future of Housing* (New York: Harper and Brothers, 1946), 297.

defense production.¹⁰ Although the Lanham Act centralized funding and administration of defense housing, the FWA farmed out many defense housing projects to agencies both inside and outside of the FWA.¹¹ In 1942, the creation of the National Housing Administration (NHA) further centralized the control of war housing. A constituent agency of the NHA, the Federal Public Housing Administration (FPHA) assumed the administration of Lanham Act defense housing until 1947. Under a postwar reorganization of the NHA in 1947, the newly formed Public Housing Administration (PHA) assumed the responsibility for the disposal of defense housing.¹²

Both Glen-Hazel Heights and Munhall Homesteads were Lanham Act defense projects, as was much of the new construction in the United States during the early war years. Of the 700,000 permanent dwelling units built during World War II, approximately 167,700 units were Lanham Act housing.¹³ Under presidential authorization, Allegheny County was to receive 5000 new homes, including 1000 in the city of Pittsburgh (in Hazelwood) and 400 in the borough of Munhall.¹⁴ Many local housing authorities across the country, including the Housing Authority of the City of Pittsburgh and the Allegheny County Housing Authority, consciously shifted their attention to defense housing projects and Lanham Act funds as a means to achieve federal funding for public housing.¹⁵

The Lanham Act established conditions for defense housing

¹⁰ John F. Bauman, *Public Housing, Race, and Renewal* (Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 1987), 62-63.

¹¹ Divisions of the FWA involved in defense housing included: the Public Building Administration, the Division of Defense Housing, and the Division of Mutual Ownership Defense Housing. Agencies other than the FWA involved in defense housing included: the USHA, the TVA, and the armed forces. Kristin Szylvian Bailey, *The Federal Government and the Cooperative Housing Movement, 1917-1955* (Carnegie Mellon University, Ph.D. dissertation, 1988), 43.

¹² Bailey, *The Federal Government and the Cooperative Housing Movement*, 46, 66.

¹³ Kristin Szylvian Bailey, "Defense Housing in Greater Pittsburgh, 1945-1955." *Pittsburgh History* 73 (Spring 1990), 20; Bailey, *The Federal Government and the Cooperative Housing Movement*, 44.

¹⁴ The other 3600 units were distributed as follows: 200 in Harrison Township, 250 in Shaler Township, 250 in Stowe Township, 250 in Dravosburg, 450 in Mifflin Township, 200 in North Braddock, 750 in Clairton, 600 in Turtle Creek, 200 in Scott Township, and 200 in McKeesport.

¹⁵ Bailey, "Defense Housing in Greater Pittsburgh, 1945-1955," 19-20.

which all participating housing authorities were required to honor. Lanham Act housing could only be constructed in those areas where the federal government determined that private investment would not serve adequately the needs of the community. All contracts with builders were to be on a cost-plus-fixed-fee basis, and the maximum per unit cost was set at \$3000, excluding administrative expenses, cost of land, public utilities, and community facilities.¹⁶ Also, the act stipulated that the cost of community facilities be capped at 3 percent of the total cost of the project, and labor be paid prevailing wages plus time-and-a-half for work beyond an eight hour day. Once these projects were built, the FWA (and later the FPHA) authorized local housing agencies to maintain, operate, and administer them. The federal government fixed rents for the projects so that they would be within reach of local defense families. Rents did not have to meet the economic rents for the project; federal subsidies would make ends meet during the war.¹⁷ As federally-owned property, defense housing projects were not subject to local property taxes. In lieu of actual taxes, the FWA paid townships fees of no more than 15 percent of the total rent collected at the project. Although the FWA relinquished much control to local agencies, architectural designs and contractors' bids had to be approved by the central administration. Commonly, defense housing units were multi-family buildings, with each unit consisting of a living room, a kitchen, a dining space (usually combined with either the kitchen or the living room), and one to three bedrooms.¹⁸

The Federal Works Administration worked in conjunction with local agencies to determine the population of their defense project. The FWA defined a defense worker broadly, as an employee engaged in any level of work at a company involved in production for the defense of the nation. The FWA established that in-migrant families and families in which the primary wage-earner had to travel more than two hours to work be granted preference to gain residence in defense housing.¹⁹ Munitions, chemicals, machinery, ordnance, and shipbuilding were classed as

¹⁶ This was later raised to \$3500, with the additional \$500 to be used for masonry construction of walls.

¹⁷ "Housing Demand," *Architectural Forum* 73:5 (November 1940), 64.

¹⁸ "Defense Housing," *Architectural Forum* 73:5 (November 1940), 58.

¹⁹ Harold Trobe, "The Functions of the Tenant Selection Board," in Housing Authority of the City of Pittsburgh, *Selective Service Replacement Training Schedule* (Pittsburgh: c1943-1944), 2.

industries at once the most essential and shorthanded.²⁰

Although final approval rested with the FWA, local housing authorities retained significant power over selection of tenants and administration of individual projects. At Glen Hazel Heights, the maximum annual income for tenants was set at \$2600, but the HACP announced that no family would be admitted to the project with an income over \$2000 to ensure that the project did not compete with private real estate agents. Applications to Glen Hazel Heights were sorted according to a published priorities list: first preference was given to Homestead defense families forced out of their homes; second to defense families facing eviction because of other plant expansions; third to defense families forced to move for reasons not their own; fourth to incoming defense families unable to find suitable living quarters; fifth to defense workers living too far from their place of employment; sixth to skilled defense workers living outside the district whose employers want them to live closer to the workplace; and seventh to remaining defense families whose housing needs were deemed "greatest" by the HACP.²¹

The Projects: Construction, Administration, Disposal

The ACHA and the HACP encountered different obstacles and challenges in the organization and construction of the two defense housing projects. Glen Hazel Heights faced little or no opposition from surrounding residents but was plagued with serious construction faults, water seepage, and even mine subsidence. Munhall Homesteads, on the other hand, experienced fierce opposition from the borough-governments of Munhall and West Homestead, the owners of the land in question, and surrounding residents. The hostility with which the residents of Munhall Homesteads were greeted may have galvanized feelings of camaraderie and community at the project and encouraged tenants to cooperatize their community after the war when the federal government disposed of Lanham Act projects.

From its inception in April of 1941, the board members of the HACP intended Glen Hazel Heights to be an addition to the stock of low-income housing in the city.²² Situated on 290 acres in the Hazelwood section of the city, Glen Hazel Heights contributed one thousand family dwelling units to the war workers of

²⁰ "Defense Housing." *Architectural Forum* 73:5 (November 1940). 439.

²¹ "Glen Hazel Registration Opens Today," *Homestead Daily Messenger*, December 1, 1941. 1.

²² *Board Meeting Minutes, Housing Authority of the City of Pittsburgh* (Hereafter *HACP Minutes*). March 19, 1941, 305 and April 7, 1941.

neighboring industries, primarily Mesta Machine Company and the Homestead Works of the Carnegie-Illinois Steel Corporation. The HACP also offered priority placement to Homestead defense workers and their families displaced by the mill expansion. Of the one thousand units, about seven hundred were earmarked for Pittsburgh defense families and about three hundred for families from outside the city limits.²³ Homes at the project ranged from three to six rooms and housed between two and nine people.²⁴

Glen Hazel Heights, like many hurriedly constructed defense housing projects across the country, was plagued by construction delays and a lack of quality control. Even in the initial planning stages, board members and architects argued over construction materials. Even though all agreed that exterior construction of brick veneer, like that of Munhall Homesteads, was vastly superior to the cheaper alternative of a wooden clapboard exterior with asbestos shingles, economy won out.²⁵ Although justified at the time, this decision later dearly cost the HACP, the FWA, and the residents of Glen Hazel Heights in time, money, and aggravation. Just five years after construction began at the project, wooden framing around windows had shrunk, and the wooden sills and moldings had become detached, allowing rain to enter the walls. In some cases, the damage was so severe that the tenants could not open the casement windows. The cost of the repairs was estimated at \$15,000.²⁶

Warped exterior walls were just one of the many construction and site problems at Glen Hazel Heights. Residents complained that rainwater from the streets drained towards gutterless buildings and lay there for days.²⁷ Drainage problems also led to wet crawl-spaces, buckled floors, and leaking walls.²⁸ While many of the more serious problems, such as the buckled concrete floors, were rectified before tenants moved in, many lesser problems were left unattended until after the war. The site itself suffered from mine subsidence, which threatened the foundation of one residential building, a problem demanding a

²³ HACP Minutes, February 11, 1942, 184.

²⁴ Homestead Daily Messenger, December 1, 1941, 1.

²⁵ HACP Minutes, May 26, 1941, 414 and June 14, 1941, 434.

²⁶ HACP Minutes, October 7, 1946, 271.

²⁷ HACP Minutes, April 24, 1944, 166.

²⁸ HACP Minutes, June 17, 1941, 383-384.

\$25,000 solution.²⁹

Repairs and improvements added significant costs to Glen Hazel Heights. The final accepted bid for general construction of Glen Hazel Heights was \$3,825,041, which included site improvements, plumbing, heating, electricity, and landscaping. Utilities, including sewer, water, and gas cost an additional \$635,000.³⁰ The Lanham Act set a spending limit of \$3500 per unit, but site improvements, landscaping, and utilities were not calculated as part of the per unit cost. Estimating \$1 million of the general bid to be costs beyond actual construction of dwelling units, the per unit cost of Glen Hazel Heights falls well below the Lanham Act cap, to approximately \$2825.³¹ While exact figures for Glen Hazel Heights are not available, this information reveals that the initial construction costs of Glen Hazel Heights were certainly well within federally proscribed limits. The project needed extensive repairs, however, which required substantial investment and added significantly to the real cost of the project. While figures on repairs actually completed at Glen Hazel Heights are not available, HACP board minutes reveal numerous requests to the Federal Works Administration, the Federal Public Housing Administration, and after 1947 the Public Housing Authority for funding for repairs.³²

The HACP argued that the federal government was obliged to pay for some of these repairs and improvements, since it had been the FWA's, and later the FPHA's, stinginess and lack of strict inspection routines that had created many of the serious problems at Glen Hazel Heights. Dr. Hovde, board member of the HACP and director of the Pittsburgh office of the FWA from April to November of 1941, estimated the cost of improvements in 1944 at

²⁹ HACP Minutes, October 7, 1946, 274.

³⁰ HACP Minutes, August 11, 1941, 556; July 9, 1941, 486.

³¹ This estimate is based on averages of the architects' estimates and the lowest bids received for general landscaping and grading, which total approximately \$820,000. The other \$180,000 is estimated for purchase of the land and the cost of constructing utilities services, including heating, plumbing, and electricity. This estimate is probably low, considering that land for Munhall Homesteads cost \$900 per acre and even half that price brings the cost of land (290 acres) for Glen Hazel Heights up to \$130,500. See HACP Minutes, June 16, 1941, 443-445; August 11, 1941, 556; *Victory on the Homes Front*, n.p.

³² The HACP made the following requests to the FWA for money to repair and improve Glen Hazel Heights: \$186,000 in 1942; \$300,000-\$400,000 in 1943; \$317,170 in 1944; and \$35,000 in 1946. It is not clear whether these requests were ever granted.

\$317,170.³³ This sum would pay for some waterproofing, building garbage enclosures, surfacing of playground areas, installation of playground equipment, moving thermostats, planting slopes, and grading gutters. Hovde explained that most of these repairs and facilities had been included in original plans for the project but had been deleted by the FWA to lower the budget for this project below that set by the United States Housing Authority.³⁴ Although the improvements listed by Hovde were certainly necessary for quality of life, some deletions from early plans may have been justified by the need for speed and economy of construction during the war.

Although war might have justified some degree of "sacrifice" on the part of the tenants, conditions did not improve much at Glen Hazel Heights after the war was over. The FPHA (and later the PHA) saw no point in improving projects it would soon no longer own, and townships saw no point in improving projects that they did not yet own. Only the residents lost out. In January 1953, the Housing Authority of the City of Pittsburgh took over the administration of Glen Hazel Heights from the federal government. As part of the purchase price, the HACP requested a \$1 million loan from the federal government for necessary improvements and repairs to the site.³⁵

What the FWA and the HACP sacrificed in quality, they at least partly regained in pace of construction. Although the explicit goal of the Lanham Act was to add to the permanent housing stock of America's industrial cities, the overriding concern in 1941 was to house incoming and displaced war workers and ensure the continuance of vital industrial production; builders' contracts contained a one hundred-day maximum for project construction.³⁶ At Glen Hazel Heights, construction flew along. In December 1941, the *Homestead Daily Messenger* reported that the HACP expected the first 200 families to move into the project in

³³. "Dr. Hovde Quits Defense Housing," *Homestead Daily Messenger*, November 29, 1941, 1..

³⁴. *HACP Minutes* March 13, 1944, pg. 128-129. Hovde's remark reveals something of the rivalry which existed between the USHA and the FWA during the early days of defense housing. As the sole recipient and distributor of Lanham Act funds, the FWA effectively usurped the power of the USHA.

³⁵. *HACP Minutes*, November 5, 1953, 37.

³⁶. "Local Defense Housing Project Will Be Completed by October," *Homestead Daily Messenger*, July 7, 1941, 1.

January of 1942, with 250 following each month until April.³⁷ Although this ambitious schedule was not met, by late May of 1942 the project was almost complete and 80 percent of the project was leased to 432 families.³⁸

Rents were often a point of contention between the Housing Authority of the City of Pittsburgh and the tenants of Glen Hazel Heights. Chart 1 shows the original rent scale for Glen Hazel Heights and Terrace Village (another HACP managed defense housing project) adopted by the FWA and the HACP in September of 1941. Discussion of a graded rent schedule, one that tied rental fees to family income, touched off a two year argument between the HACP and the tenants of Glen Hazel Heights. Residents refused to sign lease renewals under the new plan adopted in 1943.³⁹ After much disagreement and debate with the tenants, the HACP decided to lower rents, and gear rental rates to both family income and number of bedrooms. Although the official justification was the lack of amenities at the Glen Hazel Heights project, a scathing article in the Pittsburgh Post-Gazette on the million dollars in profits garnered by the HACP and the ACHA on defense housing may also have influenced the board members. The embarrassment of having the neighboring ACHA-run Munhall Homesteads defense housing project with rents eight to ten dollars less than Glen Hazel Heights was also influential.⁴⁰

Chart 1: Rent Schedule for Glen Hazel Heights, 1941⁴¹

Income Limits			Gross Rents		
Number of Minor Dependents			Number of Rooms		
none	1 or 2	3 or more	3	4	5
\$1051-1280	\$1151-1365	\$1256-1450	\$24	\$25	\$26
1281-1450	1366-1500	1451-1550	27	28	29
1451-1700	1501-1750	1551-1750	30	32	33
1701-1920	1731-1950	1751-2000	34	36	37
1921-2100	1951-2200	2001-2250	38	40	41
2101-2300	2201-2450	2251-2500	43	45	46

³⁷. "Glen Hazel Registration Opens Today," *Homestead Daily Messenger*, December 1, 1941, 1.

³⁸. Pittsburgh Housing Association, *Housing in Pittsburgh: Summary of Activities, 1941-42* (Pittsburgh: n.d.), 7.

³⁹. *HACP Minutes*, July 19, 1943, 934.

⁴⁰. *HACP Minutes*, July 23, 1943, 938-939.

⁴¹. *HACP Minutes*, September 2, 1941, 578.

Munhall Homesteads also had problems with construction, but its most serious challenges emanated from the council members of the borough of Munhall. From the time the FWA announced the selection of the site in what was then called Homestead Park, the Munhall council vowed not to cooperate and to block the construction at all possible avenues. Members publicly raised a number of objections about the "invasion" in town meetings and in the local newspaper. First, the township said that a forty-inch Carnegie Gas Company main ran across the site, and to build there would necessitate shutting down the steel works which the main supplied. Second, the township declared that the area in question was already "definitely established" as an area of single family dwellings, and the defense project would devalue surrounding real estate. Third, the township complained that if the defense units were not fully occupied, the township would not receive moneys from them (the borough was to be paid a percentage of collected rent). Frank Palmer, director of the Allegheny County Housing Authority, regretted the borough's lack of cooperation and declared that if the borough and the school board refused to pass the necessary ordinances, they would receive none of the twenty thousand dollars promised in lieu of taxes on the property.⁴²

Hostility between the ACHA and the borough of Munhall continued through the summer and the fall of 1941. Borough officials declared that they would not extend fire or police protection to the defense project, and they also fought the extension of sewerage services to the project.⁴³ Both Munhall and West Homestead refused to pay portions of the cost of installing the Munhall Homestead sewer system. Of the total cost of \$60,500, Munhall's share was to be \$14,561 and West Homestead's share was \$45,935, but the fight was not over these costs in particular.⁴⁴ Rather, the two boroughs' leaders worried that the new system would force them to modernize their own sewer systems and provide a system of treatment and disposal.

Pittsburgh, like many other urban areas in the United States, had been wrestling with the problem of sewage disposal and

⁴². "Bucking Housing May Cost Munhall Borough the Sum of \$20,000 Yearly." *Homestead Daily Messenger*, July 1, 1941, 1.

⁴³. "Local Defense Housing Project Will Be Completed by October." *Homestead Daily Messenger*, July 7, 1941, 1.

⁴⁴. "Munhall, West Homestead Join Forces to Fight Housing Plan." *Homestead Daily Messenger*, July 16, 1941, 1.

sanitation since the mid-nineteenth century. In 1905, the Pennsylvania state legislature forbade dumping untreated sewage into state waterways. Systems operating before the passage of the law could bypass this requirement and continue discharging untreated sewage, but new systems had to be attached to treatment facilities. Many exemptions were granted, however, including one for the city of Pittsburgh that extended until 1959.⁴⁵ The state granted the Munhall Homesteads defense housing project a similar waiver in July 1941, effectively eliminating this expensive obstacle to its completion.⁴⁶ Despite new offers from West Homestead to build the system with financial assistance from the Public Works Administration (PWA), the PWA determined that the Munhall sewage system was sufficient to handle the addition. Munhall engineer, John Fertig, disagreed, saying that sewage from the West Run area had to be pumped over the hill to the Monongahela River and that the two existing pumps were insufficient to prevent overflow during heavy rains. The new housing project would increase sewage flow by 600,000 gallons per day, and the Munhall system simply could not handle that. Fertig argued that sewage from the new project represented a public health menace and should not be permitted. The court that dismissed the borough's objections advised the borough to seek damages from the federal government if modifications to its sewer system proved to be necessary.⁴⁷ By 1944, the project had 10,000 feet of sewer pipe serving its 46 buildings, all connected to the borough of Munhall system.⁴⁸

Munhall's non-cooperation extended through the summer and fall of 1941. Only Pearl Harbor and the subsequent declaration of war, and the risk of seeming unpatriotic, forced the borough-council's grudging compliance in the matter of Munhall Homesteads. The first twenty-six families moved into Munhall Homesteads on Armistice Day, to no fanfare or celebration of any

⁴⁵ Joel A. Tarr, Terry Yosie, and James McCurley, "Disputes Over Water Quality Policy: Professional Cultures in Conflict, 1900-1917," *American Journal of Public Health* 70:4 (April 1980), 430-431.

⁴⁶ "Boroughs, Housing Authority Again Attempt Get-Together." *Homestead Daily Messenger*, July 18, 1941, 1.

⁴⁷ "Court Dismisses Munhall's Objections to Project's Use of Boro Sewer Line." *Homestead Daily Messenger*, October 18, 1941, 1.

⁴⁸ Although Munhall was forced to accept the responsibility of sewage services for the project, the borough successfully avoided responsibility for the construction and upkeep of the 91,215 square feet of paved roads in the project, a duty townships commonly shouldered in the construction and maintenance of defense housing projects. *Munhall Homesteads: Public Housing Administration Project PA-36131* (Washington DC: 1954), 3.

kind -- very unlike the opening of Riverview Homes just a few months earlier, at which Eleanor Roosevelt spoke. Rather, they moved in amid threats of lawsuits from the borough of Munhall.⁴⁹

By mid-December of 1941, Pearl Harbor and patriotism had muffled the borough's protests. By that time, ninety-eight families occupied the project, and the borough council publicly declared that it had always wanted to cooperate with the ACHA but had never had the chance because the selection of the site had been arbitrarily forced on the borough.⁵⁰

The first families who moved into Munhall Homesteads lived in an unfinished project for quite some time. Roads were unpaved, buildings remained incomplete, there was no community center, and garbage collection did not begin until eight weeks after these first residents moved in. Munhall residents whose property bordered the defense project expressed animosity towards the newcomers, who trespassed onto surrounding property and dumped garbage into the ravine along West Run Road and onto private lawns and driveways.⁵¹ The ACHA and the FWA had forced the borough to accept the project, but they could not force the residents to accept the new tenants. Although Munhall Homesteads encountered opposition from local government officials and its tenants experienced hostility from local residents, the ACHA-run project experienced nothing like the fundamental construction problems that plagued Glen Hazel Heights. Apart from normal expenses such as interior and exterior painting, the most substantial request the ACHA made of the FPHA for additional money for Munhall Homesteads came in 1943, which was \$230,000 for site improvements.⁵²

Munhall Homesteads was a much smaller project than Glen Hazel Heights. Munhall Homesteads consisted of 397 dwelling units on thirty-two acres and had a total population of 1,709. The cost of the project was \$1,972,000, or \$2,780 per unit -- well below the \$3500 cap set by the Lanham Act in 1940, although this figure does not include fees for utility connections and site

⁴⁹ "Munhall Homesteads to Get First Tenants on Armistice Day," *Homestead Daily Messenger*, November 8, 1941, 1; "No Celebration at Homestead's Opening Tuesday," *Homestead Daily Messenger*, November 10, 1941, 1.

⁵⁰ "Munhall Housing to Confer on Local Project," *Homestead Daily Messenger*, December 17, 1941, 1.

⁵¹ "Munhall Residents Rap Conditions at Housing Project," *Homestead Daily Messenger*, January 10, 1942, 1.

⁵² *Allegheny County Housing Authority Board Meeting Minutes*, October 7, 1943.

improvements. Of the 397 units, 47 had three rooms, 242 had four rooms, 80 had five rooms, and 18 had six rooms.⁵³ All residential buildings in the project had two stories and no basements.⁵⁴

Defense housing projects commonly offered some services to tenants on site. The Housing Authority of the City of Pittsburgh organized and funded a \$97,000 building in the center of Glen Hazel Heights which housed a tenant-run food cooperative, a drug store, a dry cleaners/laundry, a doctor's office, and a dentist's office.⁵⁵ At Munhall Homesteads, there were four commercial stores as well as a community center, built in 1943, where residents could gather and participate in community activities.⁵⁶ These activities included movies, dances, socials, and Sunday School accommodations. Munhall Homesteads held 110 such activities in 1944, with a total of 7247 residents attending.⁵⁷

The ACHA and the HACP governed the two projects under standard apartment building rules. Rumors of paternalistic "lights-out" rules and random inspections surfaced in 1941 and 1942, which the ACHA and the HACP quickly refuted. To quell the fears of prospective tenants, the two organizations publicized their rules of behavior. The ACHA allowed pets at its projects; the HACP did not. Both organizations had stipulations against disturbances of any kind, but parties were permitted. Tenants had to pay a two dollar breakage deposit and a five dollar fee for fumigation of possessions before moving into the project. Also, tenants could not sublet their apartments.⁵⁸ Tenants at ACHA projects received a ten-page handbook describing facilities at their new homes, tenants' responsibilities, and terms of their lease agreement. Leases at ACHA projects were only for thirty days and were

⁵³ *Victory on the Homes Front*. n.p.

⁵⁴ *Munhall Homesteads: Public Housing Administration Project*, PA - 36131 (Washington DC., 1954). 5.

⁵⁵ *HACP Minutes*, April 29, 1943. 791; May 10, 1943. 805.

⁵⁶ *Allegheny County Housing Authority Board Meeting Minutes*, October 7, 1943. The community building cost \$87,500.

⁵⁷ *Victory on the Homes Front*. n.p.

⁵⁸ "No Special Rules for Tenants of Housing Projects." *Homestead Daily Messenger*, November 18, 1941. 1.

renewed month by month.⁵⁹

Munhall Homesteads and Glen Hazel Heights differed markedly in their racial makeup. Munhall Homesteads was designated a "white-only" housing project by the FWA in 1940 and remained so at least until its cooperatization in 1954. Glen Hazel Heights, on the other hand, admitted both black and white defense workers. Although the policy of racial segregation was federal, local housing officials did not voice any public complaints over housing discrimination. Black and white workers were separated in this way in defense housing projects across the country.⁶⁰ The selection of Munhall as the white-only project was certainly influenced by the relative homogeneity of the borough as well as the anticipation of resistance to the project by the Munhall borough-council and Munhall residents.

Conclusion: Disposal

After the war, the federal government had to dispose of these defense housing projects. Congress and federal public housing officials disagreed on the proper manner of disposal, however, and stalemates in policy-making held up decision-making.⁶¹ In the Housing Act of 1950, the federal government laid out its policy on disposal of defense housing. If not specifically included in the act as eligible to become a low-income housing project, a project was to be offered for sale as cooperative housing. If residents failed to organize for the purchase on a mutual home ownership basis within six months, the project was sold on the open market to the highest bidder.⁶²

Housing cooperatives are designed to foster a sense of community and mutual responsibility in their tenants. This type of group homeownership has a much longer and stronger tradition in Europe than in the United States, but after World War II the tenants of many defense housing projects organized their communities into such associations. The groundwork for this type of disposal was laid before the war and enacted in 1941 as part

⁵⁹. Allegheny County Housing Authority. *Tenant's Handbook* (Pittsburgh, n.d.), n.p.

⁶⁰. Bauman, 56; for a case study of the federal government's conscious policy of racial segregation and its effects in California, see Marilyn S. Johnson, "Urban Arsenals: War Housing and Social Change in Richmond and Oakland, California, 1941-1945" *Pacific Historical Review* 60:3 (1991), 283-308.

⁶¹. The Korean War also delayed the disposal of some defense and war housing projects, although not generally in the Allegheny County area.

⁶². Bailey. "Defense Housing in Greater Pittsburgh." 24.

of the Mutual Homeownership Plan developed by Lawrence Westbrook, director of the Division of Mutual Ownership Defense Housing of the FWA. Under this plan, residents could form a non-profit corporation called a "Mutual Home-Ownership Association" (MHOA). Each family bought equal shares in the MHOA and received a lifetime lease. The MHOA leased all facilities from the FPFA and paid the FPFA the difference between revenues and operating costs. The tenants could buy the project from the FWA at the fair market price.⁶³

The shift of control of Lanham Act housing from the Federal Works Administration to the Federal Public Housing Authority in 1942 did not significantly change this policy of mutual homeownership. The FPFA maintained the FWA's policy of granting residents of the projects first priority in purchasing their communities. Under the plan set up by the FPFA, residents formed a MHOA and had to pay a 5 percent down payment on the project. The FPFA financed the purchase at a 3.5 percent interest rate over forty years. Although several housing communities were sold under this plan, disposal of the majority of Lanham Act projects was delayed by Congressional roadblocks and the reorganization of federal housing agencies in 1947.⁶⁴

In 1947, the NHA (the parent organization of the FPFA) underwent a postwar reorganization and became the Housing and Home Finance Agency (HHFA). Within this federal agency, the Public Housing Administration (PHA) assumed the task of disposing of Lanham Act defense housing projects across the country, including Glen Hazel Heights and Munhall Homesteads. Under this new administration, the FWA's and FPFA's policies favoring cooperative ownership were continued. The newly formed Federal Housing Administration (FHA), another constituent agency of the HHFA, granted the MHOA's mortgages under terms similar to those set up by the FPFA.⁶⁵

The residents of both Glen Hazel Heights and Munhall Homesteads launched cooperatization campaigns soon after the end of World War II. Only Munhall Homesteads residents succeeded; they formed a MHOA and organized to buy the project in 1954 for approximately \$2 million.⁶⁶ In June 1950, 689 Glen Hazel Heights residents submitted a petition to the HACP, requesting the

⁶³. Bailey, *The Federal Government and the Cooperative Housing Movement*, 51.

⁶⁴. Bailey, *The Federal Government and the Cooperative Housing Movement*, 56-63

⁶⁵. Bailey, *The Federal Government and the Cooperative Housing Movement*, 73.

⁶⁶. *Munhall Homesteads: Public Housing Administration Project*, PA - 36131. 16.

opportunity to form a cooperative, and the Housing Authority reluctantly agreed to grant them a two-month reprieve to do so, but the residents never followed through on this initiative. In January 1953, Glen Hazel Heights passed from the United States government to the Housing Authority of the City of Pittsburgh as a low-income housing project.⁶⁷ Although it is unclear exactly why the residents failed to achieve their goal, in all likelihood the large size of the project and its poor construction quality were serious impediments to organization.

The defense housing program established by the Lanham Act of 1940 achieved its most immediate goal in the Pittsburgh region. War production workers and their families received housing quickly and at rental rates they could afford. The crisis generated by the destruction of a large segment of residential Homestead was averted by local and federal efforts. When the war ended in 1945, Pittsburgh and Allegheny County residents had gained fourteen hundred new homes in the Munhall Homesteads and Glen Hazel Heights defense housing projects.

Although the two projects were adequate responses to the critical needs of Allegheny County and the nation as a whole during World War II, an analysis of "success" must take into account at least the durability of the structures and quality of life at the two projects. By this reckoning, only Munhall Homesteads can be considered a "success." The families who lived at Glen Hazel Heights, first as residents of a defense project and then of a low-income project, suffered poor living conditions due to federal and local parsimony. A more comprehensive comparative study of the construction and disposal of defense housing projects throughout the United States would shed more light on the variety of end-results achieved by the 1940 Lanham Act.

⁶⁷ HACP Minutes, June 6, 1950, 195; January 29, 1953, 132. Glen Hazel Heights was torn down in the 1970's.