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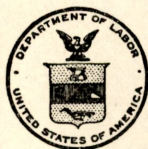
THE ECONOMIC PROBLEMS OF THE
WOMEN OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS
OF THE UNITED STATES

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR
FRANCES PERKINS, Secretary
WOMEN'S BUREAU
MARY ANDERSON, Director

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WOMEN OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS
OF THE UNITED STATES

BY
ETHEL L. BEST



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LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF LABOR,
WOMEN'S BUREAU,
Washington, June 4, 1936.

MADAM: I have the honor to transmit a report of a survey made by the Women's Bureau of the present economic condition of women and their opportunities for work in the Virgin Islands. Every assistance in obtaining information was furnished by the Governor of the islands and his associates, and without their helpful guidance and advice this survey could not have been made. The bulletins of the Navy and the Interior Departments were freely used for general background in this report.

The survey was made and the report written by Ethel L. Best, industrial supervisor.

Respectfully submitted.

MARY ANDERSON, *Director.*

HON. FRANCES PERKINS,
Secretary of Labor.

REPORT OF THE BOARD OF DIRECTORS

For the year ending December 31, 1911

W. H. BAKER, President

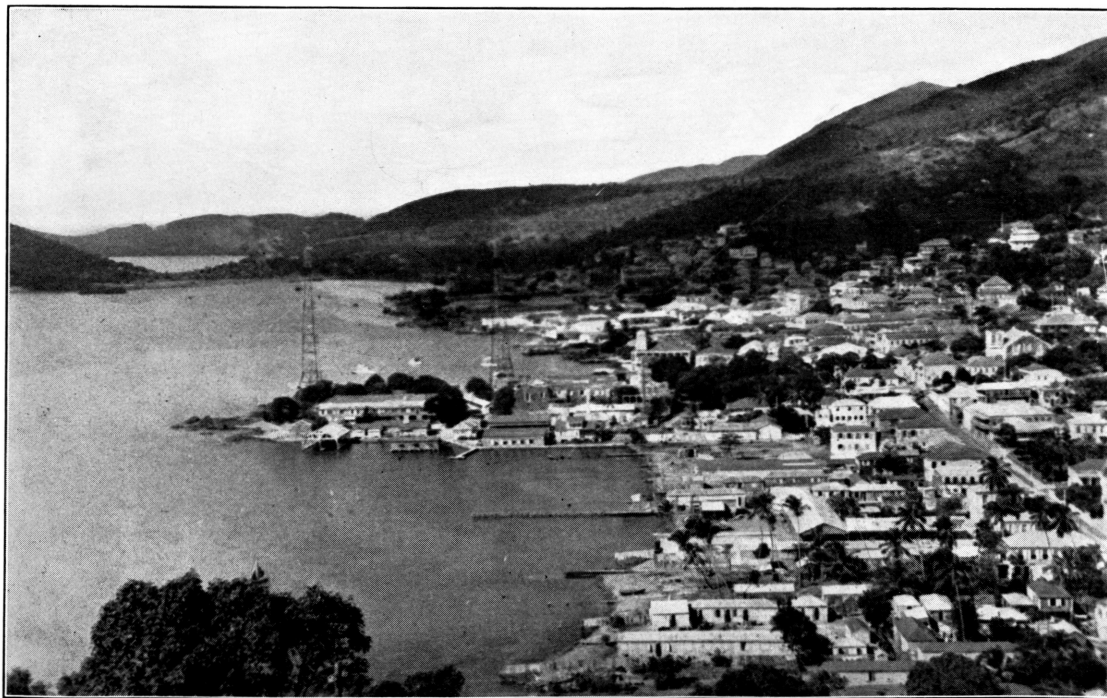
W. H. BAKER, Secretary

The Board of Directors has the honor to acknowledge the receipt of a copy of the report of the management of the present year, and to express its appreciation for the same. The report is an excellent one, and shows that the management of the company has been most successful. The Board is pleased to note that the company has been able to maintain its position as one of the leading companies in the industry, and that it has been able to increase its production and sales. The Board is also pleased to note that the company has been able to maintain its financial position, and that it has been able to pay its dividends in full.

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W. H. BAKER, President

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THE TOWN OF ST. THOMAS.

THE ECONOMIC PROBLEMS OF THE WOMEN OF THE VIRGIN ISLANDS OF THE UNITED STATES

INTRODUCTION

It has been said that the "proper study of mankind is man", but it is equally necessary to include the environment and history of the special section of mankind under consideration in order to understand its present habits and customs. In a brief study of the problems of the women in the Virgin Islands of the United States made by the Women's Bureau in November and December 1935 many of the difficulties found were similar to those of women on the mainland, while others were the result of environment, inheritance, and economic history. In order, therefore, to understand the present problems of the women of the Virgin Islands and the possibility of bettering their position, it is necessary to review briefly the history and natural resources of the islands.

THE ISLANDS

Geographic location.

The Virgin Islands consist of three major islands, St. Thomas, St. John, and St. Croix, and some 50 smaller islands largely uninhabited. The islands lie at the eastern edge of the Caribbean Sea in a line between Europe and the Panama Canal, so the island of St. Thomas with its magnificent harbor is a natural port of call for vessels sailing between Europe and the canal.

The total area of the three islands is about twice that of the District of Columbia.

St. John, the smallest of the three islands, is about 3 miles east of St. Thomas. St. Croix, the largest, lies 40 miles to the south-east of St. Thomas. It is not, however, so much the differences of size that are significant as their physical characteristics.

Topography.

St. Thomas is of volcanic origin and has a range of rocky hills running east and west. On the western part of the island these hills reach an elevation of 1,550 feet. The soil of the island is very thin and is liable during the heavy showers to be washed from the hilly slopes, which are sparsely covered with vegetation. The island is poorly supplied with water, the main dependence being on rain water collected in cisterns. The rainfall is not excessive, about 47 inches a year, and as a result of this the vegetation frequently becomes brown and dry.

The island of St. John is quite similar in configuration to St. Thomas, being composed of hills and valleys with little level land. The soil is more fertile than in St. Thomas, and its many streams insure a fairly good supply of water. There are no good roads on

the island, most of them being mere trails, and all traveling is done on horseback or on foot.

St. Croix, the largest of the islands, is entirely different from the others. It is mountainous on the northern part, but most of the island consists of fertile plains of rich soil. There are several rivulets from the mountain slopes, and the low rolling country of the southern part of the island is well adapted to modern agricultural methods.

The climate is semitropical in all the islands and the temperature is equable, ranging from around 69° Fahrenheit at night in the winter to as high as 91° during the day in August, September, and October. Though there is day after day of sunny weather, the heat is not prostrating, since it is tempered by the trade winds.

History of the islands.

Christopher Columbus on his second western voyage in 1493 discovered the Virgin Islands and named them "St. Ursula and the Eleven Thousand Virgins." These islands, at first claimed by Spain, were later colonized by several countries. Danish, English, Dutch, and French colonists came during the seventeenth century, and the ownership of the islands drifted from one nation to another until 1754 when they came under the direct control of Denmark as royal colonies. Since that time the islands have been held twice by the English, for 10 months in 1801 and 1802 and for the 8 years from 1807 to 1815. From that time until 1917, when the United States purchased them for a naval base, they remained colonies of Denmark. After purchase by the United States, they were first under the supervision of the Navy Department but were transferred in 1931 to the Department of the Interior by President Hoover.

In spite of the long period of Danish possession, the islands show little influence of Danish culture. The language of the natives is English, spoken with a slight Scotch accent and with peculiar intonations so that to an outsider it is difficult to understand. The English influence also is seen in the custom of passing to the left instead of to the right, and there seems to be no more inclination to change this habit under the rule of the United States than under that of Denmark. A few years ago the Colonial Council, at the suggestion of the Governor, voted down any change with the argument that the donkeys were accustomed to pass on the left side and a change would tangle traffic!

THE INHABITANTS

The Virgin Islands were at one time the center of the American slave industry. Negroes were brought on slave ships from Africa to the slave market on the Virgin Islands. Some were transported to the West Indies and some to the cotton and tobacco fields of the United States, while those who remained tilled the soil. It is reported in Knox's History that the number of slaves on the islands never exceeded 3,500 in St. Thomas, 2,500 in St. John, and 26,000 in St. Croix, but that these numbers are not inconsiderable is shown by the fact that the figure for St. Croix is greater than the entire population of the three islands according to the 1930 census. During the period from 1733 to 1848 there were several insurrections of

slaves, which finally culminated in a proclamation by the Governor granting them their freedom in 1848—15 years before President Lincoln's Emancipation Proclamation in the United States.

From 1835, when the population of the islands was approximately 43,000, the number for the most part declined at each recording until in 1917, when the United States bought the islands, the population was approximately 26,000, a decrease of about 40 percent. The last census of the islands, taken in 1930, gives the figure as 22,012, showing a still further decline in population of a little over 4,000. This decrease probably is caused to some extent by a lower birth rate as well as emigration to the mainland of persons unable to find work on the islands.

Color, nativity, and sex.

The color of those who now inhabit the islands is mainly black, though a large number are a mixture of white and black. Only about 2,000, or 9 percent, are white. This small proportion of whites includes some of the Federal Government employees from the mainland and their families, some Danes who remained after the islands were sold to the United States, and a colony of about 700 French who live on St. Thomas. In the last few years a number of Puerto Ricans have migrated from their island and settled here. These Puerto Ricans find the conditions very satisfactory after experiencing the crowded conditions in their homeland. Many are engaged in business, though the greater number work in the fields.

Because of male emigration, the female population of the islands exceeds that of the males by about 16 percent.

Economic conditions.

The economic problems of the Virgin Islands are largely those of a stranded population. The mainstays, cane and commerce, have long been in decline as increased sugar production in more favorable locations gradually reduced prices and as ships grew in number and size and improved their equipment. Renewed rum production now holds forth new promise, and the bunkering business is again improving, but returns are still far short of former days. Cattle grazing has advanced and now utilizes nearly 80 percent of the islands' acreage. Unfortunately it employs relatively little labor.

Unreliable rainfall, high evaporation, and topography make horticulture difficult and uncertain, while distance from sizable markets adds much to the handicaps. Industries that must meet the competition of mass machine production are impractical for the Virgin Islands. Except for the basics of cane, cattle, and bunkering, successful industrial activities must be almost entirely along lines of specialized production for specialized markets where individuality and novelty rather than price will constitute the appeal.

There are three definite developments under way that have demonstrated their soundness and their value. Small farm ownership through homesteading is replacing the former high rental system of land cultivation and is increasing the individual's productivity and income. Handicraft production has been increased tenfold in 4 years by the styling of products and the development of northern market outlets. The Virgin Islands Co., with Federal moneys, has purchased and is rehabilitating several defunct sugar mills with their

acres; is demonstrating the profit possibilities of modern production methods; and is affording employment for hundreds who have long been idle.

St. Thomas, long famous for its wonderful harbor, was for many years one of the principal ports of call in the West Indies and the point of transshipment for merchandise brought there for redistribution. The heavy walled warehouses still standing bear testimony to the former commercial importance of the island.

With the increased use of steam vessels longer distances could be traveled without stopping for supplies, and fewer vessels touched at St. Thomas on their way west. Still later, with the increase in oil-burning vessels, it was found less necessary to call for refueling, as plentiful supplies of oil could be carried on the larger boats. Refrigeration has largely eliminated the food problems of ships. With fewer vessels stopping for supplies fewer people came ashore, freighters carried their cargoes straight to their destinations, and the glory of St. Thomas declined even before the World War largely interfered with ocean travel.

The island of St. John did not enjoy the advantage of a harbor like St. Thomas's, but it was almost equally dependent on the ships that used the port of St. Thomas. Travelers and sailors stopping for fresh vegetables and fruits after a long tedious voyage were supplied with these commodities from St. John. At the time of four different censuses, 1835, 1841, 1846, and 1850, the island of St. John supported a population of over 2,000, but by 1880 the number had declined to a little under 1,000, and at the last census only 765 were enumerated. At the present time the island is little cultivated and the exporting of garden products to St. Thomas is left largely to Tortola, a neighboring island belonging to Great Britain.

St. Croix, the largest of the islands, has always depended on agriculture. Extensive estates on this island produced cane from which sugar, molasses, and rum were made in quantities that were shipped all over the world. The cultivation of the island by slaves made production cheap and shipping was not a problem since vessels stopped to sell slaves or to coal and buy food supplies. During the many years of the slave trade, Christiansted and Frederiksted also were important as wholesale centers for the American slave industry, until in 1848 when slavery on the island was abolished. Even after 1848, when slaves were given their freedom, St. Croix continued to prosper, but gradually as other parts of the world increased their sugarcane acreage and as beet-sugar consumption grew, the industry became less profitable and declined. In 1932 less than 5,000 acres of cane were planted where at one time 18,000 acres were given over to its cultivation, and only one mill of 250 tons capacity remained of the three that formerly ground 1,100 tons daily. As will be seen later, projects recently introduced have been planned in an endeavor to improve these conditions.

Fields were left uncultivated or turned into grazing lands where cattle were raised to supply the local market demands, the pasturage increasing from 31,255 acres in 1909 to 41,500 acres in 1931. With this shift from sugarcane growing to cattle raising there followed naturally a decrease in employment on the island.

Economic position of women.

The most recent census material on employment shows that in 1930 43.4 percent, or well over 2 in 5, of the women on the islands who were 10 years of age and over were gainfully employed. When these figures are compared with those for the mainland the proportion of women working is seen to be almost twice as high in the Virgin Islands as the 22 percent on the mainland. This difference is not surprising. Not only are wages of men very low, but many women are the heads of families so that their work is as necessary as the men's for the support of the family. The woman feels the responsibilities for the home and children more than the father does. As a rule, she is the mainstay, and largely through her efforts the children are clothed and fed and the home is held together.

According to the 1930 census there were 4,067 women 10 years of age and over gainfully occupied. The largest part, somewhat more than one-half, were engaged in domestic and personal service; the next, close to one-fifth, in agriculture; slightly more than one-eighth in manufacturing and mechanical industries; somewhat less than one-tenth in trade; and the remainder in professional service, transportation, public service, and unspecified industries.

In an analysis made by the director of public welfare in St. Thomas for the period from March 31 to August 31, 1935, it was shown that 61.1 percent—a little more than three-fifths—of the employables registered at the department of public welfare were women. The need of additional employment for women is clearly shown when, of the 5,462 women on the single island of St. Thomas in 1930, over 2,100 applied for work-relief jobs.

To give a picture of the present employment opportunities for women in the Virgin Islands and the possibilities of increasing such opportunities it is important to consider each of the three islands separately. Due largely to the natural advantages and to different degrees of accessibility to the outside world both now and in the past, the people and their capabilities, as well as the islands themselves, vary considerably. Much of the work on the islands is irregular and spasmodic to a far greater degree than on the mainland and both the workers and their employers accept such a condition as natural and unavoidable.

In an island community the needed products can be imported if they are not available on the island, but when there is a shortage of means to earn a living one cannot depend on neighboring islands or the mainland to furnish work.

Facts illustrating the differences in the islands as well as many showing similarities will be reviewed separately for St. Thomas, St. Croix, and St. John.

ST. THOMAS

Present employment opportunities.

The present work opportunities for women in St. Thomas are extremely limited. The only manufacturing industry of any importance is the making of bay rum. At the time of the survey a maximum of 14 women were employed in two establishments making this product. There is no agriculture aside from a few truck

gardens. Articles for daily living as well as those for food are largely imported and as there are no duties and only a 5-percent internal revenue tax, this arrangement may be cheaper than to try to make the island more self-sustaining. It is necessary, however, to have money to buy the goods imported and there are few opportunities to earn money.

At the time of the survey women were found in the following lines of employment:

	<i>Number of women employed</i> ¹
Domestic service.....	300 to 400 (estimated).
Hotels and restaurants.....	20 to 25.
Stores.....	29 full time, 8 part time.
Bay-rum plants.....	10 to 14.
Hospitals.....	46.
Schools.....	40.
Bunkering of ships.....	30 to 75.
Cooperatives of the Virgin Islands (exclusive of rugs).....	(2)
Hooked rugs (under Cooperatives).....	(3)

¹ There were a few women employed in offices, in a telephone exchange, in the public library, and in one laundry.

² Not reported (average number of persons regularly employed 103).

³ Not reported (average number of persons regularly employed 50).

In addition to the lines of employment mentioned, there are a number of dressmakers who work in their homes and a considerable number of women who take in washing. Women also sell candy, fruits, and vegetables along the street or in their homes. These latter places can hardly be called shops, for frequently they consist of a table or tray containing the articles to be sold, or of one side of a room with a counter carrying the stock. In the center of the town is the public market, where women sell fruit, vegetables, poultry, and eggs. In the majority of cases the women have bought the products they offer, purchasing them either from the neighboring island of Tortola or from a small colony of French farmers who live on the other side of the town of St. Thomas. Very rarely does a woman raise and sell her own produce, since truck gardens are rare in St. Thomas.

In 1935 there was also a work-relief project for women that employed a total of 165 women. These women did not work steadily but were employed for a few weeks and then laid off for a couple of weeks while another group took their places, the object being to spread the work so that as many women as possible might benefit by it.

Not only in work relief was the work irregular and earnings uncertain. In the stores about a fifth of the women employed were on part time. Work in the bay-rum factories was spasmodic, varying according to the demand of the industry, frequently with days and weeks of no work and then a full week with overtime.

Bunkering ships by hand—that is, loading coal by carrying it in baskets from the island to the ship—is still done by men and women in St. Thomas, but that work too is irregular and uncertain. When a boat is in the harbor a siren notifies the coalers, who are scattered all over the island, that a boat is coming. They flock to the docks and even before the gang plank is down begin to fill the baskets. The number of coalers has decreased markedly of late years. Though there is no record of the actual number employed, it would appear

to vary from 50 to 200 according to the time of day and day of the week. Sunday, the day on which the coaling was observed, there appeared to be about 60 workers, with perhaps a third of them women. Because of the pleas of the workers, the company still employs men and women and a third of the coaling on a ship is allotted to them, while two-thirds is done by the loading crane. According to the West India Co., hand coaling is an expensive method compared to the modern electric crane and costs about 40 cents a ton more than machine coaling. The work is heavy and dirty and most undesirable, yet in spite of these facts the men and women have begged the company to continue hand coaling. A common remark of the other workers on the island, when a job is very difficult and undesirable, is "I'd rather coal than do that."

The Cooperatives of the Virgin Islands (located in St. John as well as St. Thomas) were started in 1931 with Government funds to provide a market for native products. Handicraft sales have increased sixfold, ranging from \$3,978.52 in 1931 (part of the year) to \$23,371.67 (exclusive of rugs) in the fiscal year 1934-35. The articles made consist of baskets, embroidered linens, preserves made from native fruits, tortoise-shell pieces, mahogany boxes, hooked rugs, and so forth.

According to the Governor's annual report, the Cooperatives gave work to over 300 persons on a full- or part-time basis during the fiscal year ending June 30, 1935; the average number of persons given regular employment was 103. The hooked-rug project, established by an F. E. R. A. grant of \$5,000 and fostered by the Cooperatives, gave work to about 400 different persons from January 1, 1934, to June 30, 1935, the average number on the pay roll weekly being 50.

Every available means of earning a few pennies is utilized and a chance to earn a decent living is eagerly sought. If a tourist plans to rent a house and start housekeeping, he receives numerous offers of service, and for any other work where a few extras are needed the supply far exceeds the demand.

Especially for the younger woman who has completed school is the situation difficult. When an investigation was made in November 1935 of 18 girls graduated from high school in 1935, 5 had jobs, only 1 was continuing her education, while 12 were at home, helping around the house, doing a little dressmaking, or just waiting for possible work.

The conditions, therefore, that complicate the problem of wage-earning women in the Virgin Islands are the few jobs available, the low wages paid, and the unusually heavy responsibilities the women carry.

Earnings.

Earnings of women in the different occupations in which they were engaged varied considerably.

In 1935 domestic servants received from \$6 to \$18 a month, the usual amount being from \$8 to \$12. If meals were not furnished and the worker supplied her own food, an extra \$3 a month was paid.

In hotels women were employed in the kitchen and as chambermaids. Wages were similar to those in private homes, though cooks,

as a rule, received more in hotels. Monthly wages of from \$6 to \$40 were reported in the three hotels included, one being in St. Croix. The latter figure (\$40) was twice as high as any other reported in domestic service or in hotels. In 6 of the 12 cases reported the pay was \$12 a month; meals were furnished the two assistant cooks receiving this amount.

In the employment of women as salespeople in stores a wide variety of wages prevailed. The most usual wage was \$25 a month, but of the 29 women for whom salaries were reported 1 earned only \$8 a month and 11 earned from \$10 to \$15. These earnings seem extremely low even when compared with the amount paid to household servants, as in the case of domestic workers meals and frequently living quarters were included, while the workers in stores had no such additions and the character of their jobs required them to be better dressed while at work.

The municipal hospital and the public schools were the largest sources of employment for the professional and semiprofessional women. A graduate nurse earned from \$30 to \$40 a month with board and room provided, while the visiting nurse and the school nurse received \$10 a week without meals or room. Obstetrical nurses were paid slightly more in cash, \$50 a month, though they were not furnished meals or rooms. Wages of domestic help, exclusive of the housekeeper, in the hospital were similar to those of domestics in households and ranged from \$6 to \$11 a month. Domestic help other than laundresses received meals in addition to a cash wage.

The teachers in the schools were the most highly paid group of women workers on the islands, and yet their salaries generally were extremely low compared to teachers elsewhere. A little over two-thirds of the 40 teachers were paid less than \$600 a year, while about one-third received less than \$400. Only two had salaries of over \$1,000. A comparison of the earnings of women teachers with those of men teachers shows no man receiving less than \$600 and 9 of the 11 being paid over \$1,000. The qualifications and duties of the men and women may have varied but the amounts necessary on which to live and carry their relative responsibilities probably were similar.

At the other extreme from these groups are the women employed on the coaling of ships. They were paid 1½ cents a basket¹ and of this amount they must pay a third to those who fill their baskets. Their earnings depend on the number of boats that coal, the proportion of this work done by hand coaling, and the number of workers that turn out for work. On Sundays and late in the day fewer workers appear, and those who do come get more work, while if several boats dock on the same day some boats may have to be entirely coaled by crane.

One woman, who had done the work for 16 years, said that she usually "gets" from 20 to 40 baskets per ship; the baskets weigh 80 pounds, and at 1 cent net per basket she earned from 20 to 40 cents per ship. In some weeks a number of ships coal and she can earn

¹ Recently the rate paid for coal carriers in St. Thomas was reduced from 1½ cents to 1 cent per basket. This has had the effect of making it practically impossible for the coal carriers to continue. It is probable that most coaling will be done hereafter by the use of the crane, which, incidentally, is an electric crane and not a steam crane.



A MODERN SCHOOLHOUSE IN THE COUNTRY.

\$1.50 or \$2, but in other weeks no ships come, so that she can never tell what she will earn. This woman lived with her father and mother, who owned a house and a small garden, but her money comprised the entire cash income for the family. Another woman stopped while coaling to speak to the director of public relief, whom she knew, and after she left he remarked that she had never applied for relief, an exception to most of the coalers.

Fairly steady work may be the case among women in many of the industries, yet weekly or monthly earnings, even if multiplied by 52 and 12, respectively, make very little to live on for an entire year.

The women employed by the Cooperatives, with the exception of a few in the store and in the hooked-rug department, worked in their homes and brought the result of their week's work to the Cooperatives once a week and received their pay. It was possible to obtain for these workers complete records of earnings over a year's period, as the books were carefully kept and free access to these was given by the director.

As is true of all home work, there were wide variations in the amount of work brought in, depending on the speed and industry of the worker and to an even greater extent on the number of workers in the family. Since no attempt was made to visit all the workers, the number responsible for the work turned in was not ascertained.

The Cooperatives were expanding during 1934-35 and anxious to increase their production. Classes were given with Federal Emergency Relief Administration funds to train women in weaving palm and wist reed and in making baskets. These classes furnished many new workers, and 302 names were added to the pay rolls in the first 10 months of 1935, not all of whom, however, became steady workers. Of the total number of women only 111 had earned sufficient money to be discussed, and many of these 111 could hardly be termed steady workers if judged by their earnings.

Well over one-half (54 percent) earned less than \$50 during the entire year and only 12 (11 percent) earned \$200 or more. Mention should be made here that even these small earnings may represent the work of more than one person.

The work when divided into three groups, according to its type, varied markedly in earnings. The workers in palm and reed goods such as baskets, purses, mats, hats, and so forth, earned considerably more than those in linen work, or than those producing specialties such as bead work, dolls, and purses. Of the 47 basket makers, 29 earned \$100 and more and 2 showed yearly earnings of \$393.10 and \$482.83, respectively. None of the women hemming and embroidering linen earned as much as \$100 and about four of every five workers earned less than \$50 during the year. A smaller number of women than in the preceding two groups (10) made a variety of articles, dolls, belts, and purses from beads, and some jellies and preserves. Their earnings were irregular and only 3 of the 10 women who reported earned as much as \$50.

The earnings of the linen workers and those making specialties are to a great extent the result of the work of a single member of a family, while the basket work is more or less that of several members of the family. In a family of six persons, five, the mother and four

children ranging from 15 down to 5 years of age, worked making mats and purses for the Cooperatives. The woman with the highest earnings, \$482.83, had one son who worked steadily with her and two others who worked after school, evenings, and Saturdays and Sundays, and the father helped evenings and when not employed on the roads.

In the majority of these families there may be some slight income besides the earnings from the Cooperatives, but that this frequently was not the case is shown by the annual report of the director, which states that out of 150 fairly steady workers 100 were known to have no other means of support. In interviews with some of the women themselves the principal support of the family was found to be the Cooperatives. In a number of families the father and brother helped by fishing, which added more to the family larder than to the pocketbook. The earnings of the fishermen per week varied from nothing in some weeks to \$3.50 in others. An average of \$1.50 to \$2 was said to be the rule. Occasionally a brother was in the C. C. C. camp and contributed, or a husband sent money from the United States, or a boy ran errands and earned a little, but without doubt work from the Cooperatives was the most important when not the only contribution to the family budget.

The hooked-rug department of the Cooperatives has been another source of earnings to the women in St. Thomas, but due to foreign competition this work has been largely discontinued. In spite of a 20-percent special tax in addition to the prevailing regular duty, Japan was able to ship rugs into the United States and sell them for 25 cents a square foot, while rugs from the Cooperatives cost 30 cents to make. The average weekly earnings were low, about \$1.40 per worker, but the more experienced workers earned as high as \$5 and one exceptionally good worker received \$7.92 for 1 week's work. The hooked-rug industry cannot, however, be included among the present opportunities for women's employment as there is little work being done at this time.

The same past tense must be used in regard to the work-relief projects, conducted by the public-welfare department. Sewing projects were conducted on each island. Towels, sheets, and pillowcases were made in addition to a quantity of clothing, all of which were distributed to needy families. A mattress project in St. Thomas produced over 500 mattresses made from Federal surplus relief commodities material by relief labor. The cotton was shipped in bales and the women combed and cleaned the cotton, cut and stitched the ticking, and labeled the finished products. A total of 165 women were given more or less employment. Some weeks only a few seamstresses and a cutter were necessary and in others as many as 49 women were employed. The daily hours were 8, but the week varied from 1 to 5 days. In order to spread the work, a certain number of women were given a few weeks' work and then others were taken on for a few weeks. The pay was on an hourly basis. It varied from 10 to 15 cents an hour during the first half of the period to 15 and 20 cents after June 1, 1935. Not only were these earnings of assistance to the women but the mattresses and pillows, which were given away to the needy on the three islands, were much appreciated. One woman who looked at least 80 was carrying hers away from the

dock on her head. It was a warm day and the mattress was hot and heavy. As she stopped to rest she was asked if it was not pretty heavy, and her reply was: "I'd be mighty glad to carry it twice as far. I always have wanted a bed and I'll sure sleep well tonight."

The foregoing earnings although very low can hardly be judged by standards on the mainland. Tradition and custom on the islands have established a different pattern of living and although many desires and even needs are unsatisfied nevertheless the mild and agricultural climate and the ease with which vegetables and fruit are grown, prevent the suffering from cold and hunger that might occur in other less-favored localities.

Hours.

Most of the work of the women was not done in industrial establishments with regular hours of work, so the actual amount of time spent each day on the job was impossible to obtain. From statements of employers it was found that in most cases the hours of saleswomen in stores were from 8 to 6, with an hour for lunch, excepting that on Saturday they were on duty until 10 or 11 in the evening, an hour for dinner being given on Saturday. These hours resulted in a long workweek for women in stores.

The work of women in the bay-rum plants was very irregular, as to both daily and weekly hours, as well as being very seasonal. In one plant the work was steady for about 12 weeks in the year, with a 5-day week and a 7-hour day, but for the rest of the year there was work for only a day or two now and then. Another plant reported a 7-hour day, with sometimes a full week of 6 days, but frequently only a few days a week or no work at all. In this plant, also, the work was largely seasonal, with the most work during the fall and winter months.

The hours of workers in hotels (includes one hotel in St. Croix) resembled those of domestics in private employment, with a long day of anywhere from 11 to 13½ hours between beginning and ending but time during that period allowed for meals. The chambermaids had several hours off in the afternoon and one whole afternoon off each week.

Graduate and student nurses had a 12-hour schedule with 2 hours off during the day, with a half day off twice weekly. The hours for cooks, pantry maids, and dishwashers in the hospital were long also, beginning at 6 and ending at 6 with two hours off in the afternoon. One afternoon a week was given off duty, but, of course, Sunday work was necessary, as in hotels, so weekly hours were around 60. The workweek for the ward maids was somewhat shorter—a 9-hour day and a 60-hour week. One full day a month was given these workers. For laundresses the hours were considerably shorter, consisting of an 8-hour day, with a half day on Saturday and no work on Sundays or holidays.

ST. CROIX

Present employment opportunities.

The present opportunities of work and employment needs in St. Croix are largely determined by the physical characteristics and

history of the island. Because of its fertile valleys and good soil, agriculture is the principal industry, and men and women alike depend largely upon it for employment. There are two towns on the island, one, according to the 1930 census, with about 3,800 and the other about 2,700 inhabitants, but the majority of the people live in little hamlets attached to what were formerly estates scattered throughout the island. These groups are a survival of an older method of living when each estate or plantation was a unit with its manor house, its own fields of sugarcane, its own sugar mill, its cattle and horses, and all the appurtenances for an economic unit. With the decline of sugar culture on the island, many of the manor houses and mills have fallen into decay, and fields that formerly were under cultivation are now overgrown with scrub trees and bushes. The workers' houses and the workers themselves still remain, and the latter are anxious to work the fields or get any employment which, together with their little plot of garden and house, may enable them to support themselves and families.

The names of the little villages, taken from those of the estates on which they are situated, bear witness to a former more colorful life. Peter's Rest, Anna's Home, Perseverance, Contentment, Hard Labor, Upper Love, Lower Love, Jealousy, Envy, all sound like names from a romance rather than those attached to actual places.

In a report of the islands published by the Department of the Interior in 1936, the following picture of conditions is given. "Throughout its [St. Croix's] length may be seen the old ruins of former prosperous sugar estates, topping each rolling hill. Around many of these the luxuriant cane still grows, for this island still depends for its life upon sugar. The tremendous increase in the world's cane and beet acreage and the consequent low price of sugar have made it difficult, though not impossible, to continue profitable production of sugar on St. Croix, with its uncertain rainfall and its low acre yield. * * * Of the 51,000 acres of land on St. Croix, 41,000 are now given over to grazing as the least costly and least hazardous use to which it can be put." These cattle are used for the beef market or for the cane fields of Puerto Rico rather than for dairy purposes. This reasonably successful cattle industry, using 80 percent of the land and only 3 percent of the labor, contributes little work for men and women on the island.

Though the present survey was in the interest of women, it is difficult, especially in industries such as agriculture, when men and women do some of the same work or supplement each other, to separate the two sexes. Such is the condition found in the Virgin Islands Co. This company has done more than any other single factor to improve conditions in St. Croix and to give employment to its people, and therefore it ranks first in importance in the industrial life of the island.

The Virgin Islands Co. was created on April 9, 1934, by the Colonial Council of St. Thomas and St. John to aid in effecting the economic rehabilitation of the Virgin Islands. This company is a partnership program by which the Government of the United States and the people of the Virgin Islands cooperate in a long-range social, economic, and industrial program, the profits being available in the islands for educational and social purposes.

According to the Governor's annual report, the general plan is that certain sugar factories, cane lands, and rum distilleries in St. Croix are to be purchased from the appropriation of \$1,000,000 made by the Public Works Administration.

The Government bought 3,000 acres of land on St. Croix, and by the aid of men and tractors uprooted the jungle of trees, plants, and vines on 2,000 acres. Seven hundred acres have been put under cultivation, principally sugarcane. Two sugar mills and a rum distillery were purchased also; one mill and the rum distillery were put into operation; 220,000 gallons of rum were distilled and 26 million pounds of cane were purchased from 650 growers.

About 1,500 persons were employed in November of 1935, approximately one-third being women. The occupations of the men varied widely, as they were employed in the sugar mill and distillery as well as in the fields. But women were nearly all at work in the fields, hoeing and helping to plant the cane, and cultivating and picking tomatoes. Not only did the tomatoes give additional employment to women in the fields, but women were employed to grade and pack them. This was irregular, however, as packing was done for only a few days at a time, and only during the shipping season from December through February.

Field work gives the greatest employment in St. Croix, and it was an interesting sight to see a long line of women dressed in their bright-colored cotton dresses with madras turbans on their heads, often with a hat topping the turban, hoeing slowly across a field, or with wooden trays full of cane seed balanced on their heads preceding the planters down the cane fields. Not far away in another field would be found a modern tractor pulling up roots or plowing, and one realized that modern and up-to-date methods as well as long-established ways of doing, were contributing to the regeneration of the island's chief industry.

During the sugarcane season—that is, from the planting to the shipping of the sugar—employment is given to between 400 and 800 persons, about a third of them women. The work of the women is entirely in the fields, but the men, besides doing fieldwork, are also employed in the refinery. There are three rum distilleries, privately owned, that provide some work for men, but women are not employed in distilleries except to wash bottles. This work is very irregular, and the one plant visited had no difficulty in obtaining plenty of help even though the work is intermittent.

At the time of survey, as in St. Thomas, but to a less degree, there was work for women in: Domestic service, hotels and restaurants, stores, rum distilleries, bakeries, hospitals, and schools.

There was no estimate of the number of domestic servants on the island, but they seemed to be in considerable demand, especially the more efficient ones. The hotels and restaurants were few and small and probably could give employment to not over 15 or 20 women.

Practically all the stores in Christiansted, the larger of the two towns, were visited, and 18 women (exclusive of those in the family) were reported as employed. Because in many stores the wife and daughters of the owner helped to sell goods, the positions available were fewer than would appear to be the case from the number of stores and the women observed in them.

A bakery was attached to a store and five women were employed part time.

The rum distillery gave irregular employment to from 20 to 30 women, and the manager said that if he had work enough he would have no difficulty in obtaining from 4 to 5 times the present number. In other words, there were many more workers available than positions to be filled.

On the island are two hospitals, a leper home, an insane asylum, and an old people's home. These institutions combined employed 59 women, a larger number than in the public schools or any other industry or organization except the Virgin Islands Co. The largest schools were the parochial ones, in which the teaching was done by nuns.

The schools employed 30 male teachers and 34 women, a greater proportion of men than was found in the schools of St. Thomas.

The Self Help Association, a new and philanthropic organization, was run somewhat on the line of a woman's exchange. Women brought in their work and left it for sale in the little shop in Fredriksted. Good cross-stitch work was being done by the pupils of one of the vocational training classes attached to the school, and a wide variety of preserves and jellies were on sale as well as fiber rugs and novelties. No records were obtained as to the number of women contributing.

Earnings.

The wages of workers in St. Croix were reputed to be lower than those in St. Thomas. It would not be surprising if this were the case, as there was a larger percentage of the population living in the country and the towns themselves are smaller than in St. Thomas. Further, St. Croix is more isolated than St. Thomas and less in touch with the outside world. But in spite of these facts there was little difference in wages.

Servants received from \$6 to \$12 and usually less if employed by the natives, but this latter condition also prevails in St. Thomas. Hotel wages compare favorably with those of St. Thomas, and the occasional employee in a restaurant received about the same as those in St. Thomas. The saleswomen in stores, however, did not fare so well as those in St. Thomas. Of 17 women for whom wages were obtained 9 received \$10 a month and two \$6 or less. However, a few women had higher salaries than anything reported in St. Thomas, two women receiving \$50 a month and one woman \$45. The custom of the family helping in the store was prevalent in St. Croix, where 8 stores out of 14 visited employed only members of the family to sell goods. This family service was especially noticeable in the stores owned by Puerto Ricans. In the past 4 years or so many Puerto Ricans have moved to St. Croix to escape the crowded conditions of their own island and in the hope of more opportunities for work. It is estimated that as many as 3,000 have immigrated and settled in St. Croix to work on the land and to build up small businesses in the towns.

There is little industry on the island. The rum factory where women wash, wipe, band, label, polish, and stamp the bottles furnishes rather irregular work. Usually the plant operates 3 days a

week and sometimes it is closed entirely for a week or two. This and a small bakery constitute the industrial life of the town. Wages in these two establishments correspond with the standard set by other industries throughout the island. The rum plant pays better than the bakery, and wages in this plant are similar to those for other semiskilled work. The earnings of the bakery workers are on a monthly basis and lower than in the rum plant, but work is steadier and two meals are furnished. The hours in the bakery, though inconvenient, as they are in the early morning and in the evening with time off between, are such as to allow the women time to attend to their own homes and families, which, without doubt, is considered an advantage.

In 1935 the earnings of employees in the hospitals were somewhat above those in St. Thomas. Graduate nurses earned \$50 a month plus meals and student nurses \$25 plus meals, both slightly more than was reported in St. Thomas. Domestic help in the hospitals—cooks, ward maids, and laundresses—received a little better wage in St. Croix, their wages ranging from \$10 paid to laundresses and ward maids to \$12 paid to cooks. In all cases meals were given in addition.

Teachers' salaries, as in St. Thomas, were not high as a rule, only two women earning over \$1,000 a year, while of the 34 women 30 earned \$600 or less. The largest group, 20 women, had a salary of \$300 a year.

With these salaries for professional workers, it is not surprising to find women working in the fields receiving 50 and 60 cents a day. The various privately owned estates paid 40 cents, with a bonus at the end of the year if profits had been made. The Virgin Islands Co. paid 50 cents to women, with no bonus. All labor receives more during the spring months in the busy season when women's wages increase to 60 cents a day. The kind of work determines the pay. The fieldwork is divided into two classes—first and second class—and that of women falls in the second class, while men who do the same work also are considered second-class workers and receive the wages for that class of work.

The work of grading and packing tomatoes is seasonal and irregular. The majority of the work is done between December 15 and March 1, but even during this period the work is not steady, varying from a full week of 5 days to a much shorter one. The pay is 60 cents a day, with extra pay for overtime. It must also be noted that the first- and second-class labor employed by the Virgin Islands Co. were furnished with a house, water, and a plot of land for a garden, rent free, a considerable addition to the straight money wage. This was also the custom on many of the estates.

There were a few clerical workers in St. Croix, with a very wide variety in wages. The most usual wage was from \$5 to \$7 a week, but one woman received as high as \$40 and another, who was a private secretary, received \$1,800 a year. Three operators on the telephone switchboard received \$24 a month for an 8-hour day, about the same as clerical help. The positions available on the island in these occupations were very few and the prospect of an increase in the number would seem slight, at least for the near future.

Hours.

Contrary to the usual impression of the tropics, the hours of work were not excessively long except in domestic service and in a few of the stores. In St. Croix the workday for employees of the Virgin Islands Co. was 8 hours. The same schedule of 8 hours a day was found in the rum factory and even shorter hours were reported in the bakery.

Stores usually were open from 8 to 6 except on Saturdays, when they remained open in most cases to 10 or 10:30 in the evening.

The hours of the women in the hospital were similar to those of St. Thomas, with slightly shorter hours for the cooks in St. Croix. The regular hours of the hotel workers also were much like those in St. Thomas, but it is probable that actual hours worked were rather better in St. Croix, as there were fewer tourists and meals were more regular. They were served at a given hour as in the home, thus eliminating long evening hours for workers in the dining room and kitchen.

ST. JOHN**Present employment opportunities.**

The island of St. John, though nearly as large as St. Thomas, and only 3 miles east of it across Pillsbury Sound, is much more isolated than the two other islands and much more primitive. There are no automobile or driving roads and travel is by foot and horseback. Sailboats go back and forth between St. Thomas and St. John and mail is brought regularly to the island twice a week, but passenger boats run only about every 2 weeks.

There are a few small settlements, Cruz Bay, Coral Bay, and East End. Cruz Bay and Coral Bay each have a little store, but the houses are few and scattering. The only means of a livelihood are those of the other residents on the island, namely, fishing, charcoal making, picking bay leaves, and basket work.

Practically all the houses have some land around them, and on these plots a few vegetables are raised for home consumption; a few families have chickens, or even own a cow, but the eggs and milk usually are sold to the white families on the island, or taken to St. Thomas and exchanged for other necessities.

Near Coral Bay is a bay-leaf distillery that supplies the oil to the bay-rum factories in St. Thomas and other West Indian islands. The bay leaves can be gathered and the distillery operated throughout the year, but the fall is the best time to gather the leaves as they yield more oil at that time. The capacity of the distillery is three times that of the present demand as other islands now grow the bay leaves and distill the oil, but the best leaves are grown in St. John.

The women, often assisted by the entire family, pick the bay leaves from cultivated fields—the plant also grows wild—and pack them into sacks that are carried on backs of donkeys down the hill to the distillery. The sacks contain 75 pounds and the pay is 25 cents a sack. The demand for the oil is irregular, and picking, even in the season, is done only for a few days a week, so weekly earnings must be low, probably not more than \$2 or \$3. Only eight women

were reported picking bay leaves, but these were assisted by other members of the families, and the earnings represent those of family groups.

The other two occupations in which women work are charcoal making and basket weaving. Men and women together work in the charcoal industry. The men cut down the trees and dig the pit, and both men and women carry the wood to the pit and pack it. The fire smolders from 24 to 48 hours; then both women and men rake out the hot charcoal, and after it has cooled, they pack it in sacks or cans, and barrels, for shipping. The price varies according to the supply and demand. Usually a barrel brings from 30 to 50 cents, but occasionally the price rises to 80 cents. A pit may contain anywhere from 10 to 40 barrels, and as it takes 2 or 3 weeks to cut and collect the wood, the product of a month's work would be less than two pits a month. The work is heavy, dirty, and, when the coal is hauled out, very hot. A woman interviewed finished her description with "very hot, heavy work."

A good many women do basket weaving, mostly the type called wist reed work. The wist reed grows wild on the island and must be gathered, stripped, and split. It grows like a vine in the brush, and the gathering often involves miles of walking besides the work of cutting the vines. The stripping and splitting is done with a knife, and the strips must be made round and smooth. It is very tiresome work to do for long at a time; usually the splitting is done for half a day and the worker weaves for half a day. It was estimated by the workers that "if you sat right down to it" you could weave from one to two plate-sized mats in a day, but that would not include time spent gathering the reeds and stripping and splitting. The pay for making these plate mats is \$1.20 a dozen, and from that must be deducted a 10-percent charge for dyeing the straw if a colored straw is desired and if it is not dyed by the woman herself. The general opinion was that earnings were from 50 cents to \$1.50 a week, depending on how much time could be taken from household duties. At present the work seems to be less a family industry than the palm-basket work of St. Thomas, but as the children are learning it will shortly become, like nearly all home work, a family industry.

LIVING HABITS AND COSTS

From the foregoing pages it is clear that the earnings of women are much lower in the Virgin Islands than in the United States, but in any such comparison two points must be carefully considered—the climate and the habits of the people.

It has been stated that no people who for generations have lived in a tropical climate look ahead or save for the future. They desire only enough work to satisfy immediate needs for food, shelter, clothing, and recreation. However, even for these primary needs and in the tropics one must have money.

Housing.

The cost of housing is very low in the islands, but a great deal of it is very inferior. Outside of the towns most of the homes are

built by the owners on rented ground. In some cases the ground also is owned and in others no rent is paid and the owner is, according to the terminology of the mainland, a squatter. The latter condition frequently is unavoidable as on all the islands the landowners are comparatively few, and they are not willing to sell, at least at present prices. The tax system is partly responsible for this as taxes are high on improved property and negligible on unimproved, so that many large tracts of unused land are held as a speculation on the possible increase of values. Rents for a plot of land vary from 50 cents to \$1 a month. In most cases this includes enough land for a small garden, but in the French village on St. Thomas this is not the case. This village, settled by emigrants from St. Barts, a French West Indian island, has little extra space. The houses are primitive affairs built close together. The inhabitants intermarry and young couples build their little houses in the village near the home of one of the parents. About 20 of these families have recently moved to the other side of the island, where it is possible to purchase small holdings of land, and there they are raising garden produce, which they sell to the market women in St. Thomas. The people in the French village earn a bare subsistence by basket work sold at the Cooperatives and by fishing.

The native houses in the country districts are made of clay, wood, or sometimes of corrugated tin from roofs blown away by a hurricane and consist of one or two rooms very sparsely furnished. In a few may be found big mahogany four posters that completely fill the room, handed down from some former estate owner, but in many there is no bed nor even a chair. The houses have no chimneys; the cooking is done out of doors on charcoal braziers. The Virgin Islands Co. and the Works Progress Administration are building comfortable two- and three-room houses with an outside shed where cooking and washing can be done. The two photographs facing page 19 give some idea of the difference between the old and new living quarters.

In the towns the houses usually are small and close together. If larger than average, they are divided for two or more families. Rents in the less well-to-do quarters range from \$3 up to \$10 or \$12 a month, and these houses, like those in the country, have few conveniences such as inside plumbing or stoves.

Except in the towns, few of the houses have glass in the windows, but they all have heavy hurricane shutters, which usually are tightly closed at night. This is done partly because of superstition—evil spirits or “jumbies” entering if windows are left open—but more largely because of the belief that night air and insect life are injurious. The result, in small overcrowded rooms, may be imagined.

A housing survey made by the welfare department in February 1934 covering the 6,319 persons residing in the town of St. Thomas revealed challenging facts:

1. Forty percent lived in one-room houses.
2. Twenty-one percent lived in two-room houses.
3. Fifty-four percent of those living in one- and two-room houses had families of more than two persons.
4. Twenty-eight percent of the occupied one-room houses were classified as to condition as very bad and only 53 percent as good.

The study showed an appalling lack of decent housing for the lowest-income groups.



CLUBHOUSE AND GROUP OF STRAW WEAVERS IN THE FRENCH VILLAGE.



A TYPICAL HOME OF BASKET WEAVERS IN THE FRENCH VILLAGE.



TWO VIRGIN ISLANDS HOMES AND HOME OWNERS (VISITING NURSE WITH HAT ON).



HOME OF FIELD WORKER—OLD TYPE.



HOME OF FIELD WORKER—NEW TYPE.

No complete housing survey had been made in St. Croix, but the conditions are known to be even worse than in St. Thomas, and in St. John the proportions living under bad housing conditions probably would be even greater than in St. Thomas or St. Croix.

A housing survey in October 1933 in St. Croix, where the need is greatest, showed 2,623 one-room houses, with from 1 to 12 persons in each house. There was found to be no privacy. There was no back door (indeed only one door), so that washing, cooking, and living is within the few feet at the front of the house.

The Governor states in his report that correction of the housing situation is of paramount importance in any program attempting to raise the standards of living and morals of the people of the Virgin Islands. Incidentally, the building program involved would aid materially in solving unemployment problems.

Homesteading.

Homesteading was inaugurated in the fall of 1932 with the purchase of two estates in St. Croix and one in St. Thomas, totaling 2,635 acres, of which 2,127 are in St. Croix, where the land is best suited for agriculture, where people are experienced farmers, and where sugar mills can take their cane. Half of the sugarcane on the island of St. Croix was, at that time, being raised by about 600 small-farm renters paying from \$7 to \$12 rental an acre a year for their land. Two hundred and fifty of these are now cultivating their own homestead plots of about 6 acres each, which they are purchasing at an annual average cost of less than \$3.50 per acre, and which will pay for the land, with interest charges, in 20 years.

Roads were built, drains installed, and the land was cleared and plowed for homesteaders as desired, the cost for clearing and plowing being charged additionally against their crops for the first 3 or 4 years.

Homesteaders are buying their farms for less than half of the previous rentals charged, and with the aid of mechanical equipment now available to them they are cultivating twice as much land as previously and are doubling their net cash income. Less than 15 percent of these homesteaders have failed to meet payments due and to satisfactorily develop their land—both considerations being equally required by the homestead commissions.

The average homestead is slightly under 6 acres, and the average price with permanent improvements exclusive of house is about \$210, requiring an annual payment of \$16, including interest. To this are added the charges for cultivation aids and for houses now built for some. Only five have defaulted their payments completely, although 54 have made only part payments chiefly because of development delay. A score have made advance payments of next year's installments.

While homesteading has not been so markedly successful in St. Thomas as in St. Croix because of the difference in basic conditions previously referred to, yet the St. Thomas project has fulfilled all that was expected of it. In St. Thomas 50 plots have been allotted and aid given for the initial work of clearing and cultivating part of each plot. Because of rugged topography, mechanical cultiva-

tion was possible on only a small percentage of the acreage. The immediate market dependence of the St. Thomas homesteaders has been fruits and vegetables for local sales. The extensive planting of fruits and other perennials is being encouraged to relieve homesteaders of the uncertainties and the toil of seasonal production of vegetables only.

Houses are constructed for homesteaders only after they have passed a probationary period of land cultivation and have so developed their homestead plots as to reasonably assure the payments necessary for house purchase. These natives, who are ready to incur almost any indebtedness with only the hope that they may be able to meet it, must be protected from themselves lest they lose land as well as house by inability to meet installments. This policy not only has proved sound in itself but has increased ambition and developed healthy competition.

The two-room concrete house, 12 by 24, with front and back galleries, small kitchen, and cistern, costs about \$700 and may be purchased on a 20-year plan at a cost of about \$4 a month. This is considerably more than the previous rent most of these homesteaders have been paying for their one-room, tumble-down quarters in the nearby towns or in some estate "village", but the living conditions are many times better and result in marked improvement in family pride and family status. Fifty houses have already been built or are building and 80 more are planned and provided for from funds now available.

Fuel.

The cost of fuel is a very different problem in the islands from what it is in a colder climate. No provision is made for heating—probably it is not necessary—and the cooking is done almost entirely on charcoal braziers, the cost of charcoal ranging from approximately 8 to 44 cents a week on St. Thomas. In the country districts of St. John they make their own charcoal, and among some of the poorer families on the other islands twigs and branches of trees are gathered from the neighboring country. Electricity is available in the towns, but many use lamps, as they are cheaper, and the cost of kerosene, as estimated by the families, is usually from 1 to 2 cents a night, depending on how late it is burned.

Clothing.

The problem of clothing also is largely determined by climate. No very heavy clothes are needed, and there is too little variation in the seasons to make different types of garments necessary. Most of the women buy materials and make the dresses at home or, as is the custom in the French village, have them made by local dress-makers. The cost of having them made is not great, varying from 25 to 85 cents. The ready-to-wear dress is an innovation appearing in the islands only in the past 2 or 3 years. Women living in the country have for everyday wear madras turbans, usually crowned by broad-brimmed hats; a church hat, costing from 80 cents to \$2, is part of the usual wardrobe.

A sample wardrobe for a year was given by one women as follows:

3 church dresses.....	\$1.30 to \$1.50 apiece.
5 everyday dresses.....	75 to 80 cents apiece.
2 church hats.....	\$1 apiece.
2 everyday hats.....	65 cents apiece.
3 pairs shoes.....	\$2 to \$2.50 apiece.
6 pairs stockings.....	15 cents a pair.
Underwear.....	\$5 total cost.

Food.

It is common knowledge that a far greater proportion of the total income is spent on food in the lower-earnings group than in the higher. Naturally, hunger demands satisfaction before money is used for clothing, better housing, or recreation. Actual hunger can be satisfied at very little cost in the Virgin Islands, but anything approaching a well-balanced diet is expensive.

The families in St. Croix and St. John grow in their gardens or pick from native trees part of their food supplies, but the staples such as groceries must be bought, and these are supplemented by fish and an occasional chicken or piece of pork.

With no ice, all meat and fish must be eaten fresh. An interesting example of how superstitions grow and also of the feeling of the native that newcomers from the North are "different" is shown by the experience of one of the Government representatives. He caught a large fish and had it sliced so as to share it with his friends. He asked the servants how much they would like kept for them. They replied that it was poison, all large fish were, and that they would not touch it. The next day much interest was taken in the health of the family, and when no ill effects were forthcoming, it was pointed out to the servants that the family had eaten and not been poisoned. The answer was: "You're different from us, big fish poisons us"; as it probably did if kept too long without ice! The more well-to-do on the islands have electric refrigerators, but the poorer people have no means of keeping perishable supplies.

The principal vegetables grown on the islands are yams, pumpkins, squash, beans, peppers, eggplants, onions, and to a less extent tomatoes and cucumbers. The usual meal, however, consists of far more starches than vegetables. Bread, johnnycake, beans, rice, and split peas for soup are staples, and on St. Croix "calla-lou", a stew of vegetables with meat or fish, is very popular. Native fruits contribute to the diet but are not used so much as they might be, especially in the towns, where they are purchased usually at the market or at the little home shops. Bananas and sugar apples are popular and fairly plentiful in season, but the other fruits, the papaya, guava, pineapple, alligator pear, mango, soursop, and many more varieties are not in great abundance and therefore cost more and are much less important articles of diet.

All canned goods and groceries are imported, and although there is no duty there is a landing tax of 5 percent as well as freight charges which add to the cost. All butter is canned, and as there is very little fresh milk on the islands canned or evaporated milk is used by those in the lower-income groups.

The following list of the usual foods eaten and their cost for a family of two adults and one child or one adult and three children

for one week as well as other necessary expenditures was compiled by the department of public welfare:

<i>Food</i>		<i>Food</i>		<i>Other necessities</i>	
Bread	\$0.50	Meal	\$0.21	Rent	\$0.75
Fish	.40	Flour	.20	Coal	.18
Meat	.30	Rice	.10	Kerosene oil	.20
Sugar	.18	Beans and peas	.22	Clothing, medicine, entertainments, etc	1.00
Lard	.20	Potatoes	.15	Total	2.13
Eggs	.10	Seasoning	.04	Total expenditures	5.49
Salt	.01	Tea	.10		
Milk	.25	Miscellaneous	.30		
Butter	.10	Total	3.36		

This amount is so low as to be incredible, and yet it is above the earning power of most of the workers.

Steady employment at \$6 a week or \$25 a month would provide this minimum, but even in stores visited in St. Thomas and St. Croix only a little more than a third of the women earned as much as this. Earnings from the Cooperatives, with their less regular employment, showed only two women averaging more than \$25 a month. The 15-cents-an-hour wage of the mattress work-relief project, if 40 hours had been steadily worked, would have yielded the minimum amount, but this could not be done and the work spread among enough families.

In the United States in December 1935, according to the Bureau of Home Economics, a minimum food budget for 1 week in a family of four was \$9.15, and a restricted budget \$6.25. When these sums are compared with the estimated food cost in the Virgin Islands, \$3.36, it is clear that much of the difference is due to an inferior diet in the islands. The Home Economics budget was computed on a planned basis and that of the Virgin Islands on actual food bought, conditioned probably to a great extent by the amount of money to be spent, but at least the figures, allowing for discrepancies of place, show the wide difference between minimum needs and actual consumption of the Virgin Islands family.

SUGGESTED WORK, TRAINING, AND EDUCATIONAL PROJECTS FOR WOMEN

The wisdom of giving unemployed persons the opportunity to support themselves instead of giving them direct relief admits of no argument. Moreover, if the work started as work-relief projects can in a few years be established on a self-supporting basis, it justifies itself.

The Cooperatives of the Virgin Islands not only paid all expenses during the fiscal year ending June 30, 1934, but had a surplus of \$3,190.86 to return to the business. As stated before, total sales grew from \$3,978.52 in 1931 (part of year) to \$23,371.67 in the 12 months ending June 30, 1935. The Virgin Islands Co. of St. Croix is planning its work to establish the project on a like practical business basis while giving immediate work to the unemployed.

It is reasonable to believe that new projects started on the islands should, if possible, be under one of these two agencies, the Cooperatives or the Virgin Islands Co., and thus have the benefit of the busi-

ness ability shown by these managements. Therefore, in the following suggestions, it is urged that all industrial projects not of a temporary character be under the direction of one or the other of these two organizations and also that they be consulted on plans for training.

In creating and establishing opportunities for the women of the Virgin Islands two basic conditions must be observed. The product must either supply local needs or be in the nature of a specialty of the Virgin Islands. There can be no successful project for export that is not based on what the islands themselves can produce that is not produced elsewhere under much more favorable economic conditions. Sugar, rum, bay rum, vegetables that reach the market earlier than the usual crops, basket work, special types of embroidery are all natural products more or less indigenous to the islands. To try to compete with factory production in providing occupations for women is out of the question unless for local consumption. In the latter case, if the material is produced locally and the labor and market also are local, success would seem to be reasonably certain.

In all the islands there is need of training and education to make more general use of natural resources. Teaching food values, cooking, and canning of local fruits and vegetables would not only benefit the people themselves but increase the market for tourist and mainland trade.

Classes in hygiene and homemaking would result not only in better living conditions but in increased demand for household goods that might be supplied by goods made on the islands. It is suggested also that much of the training and educational work can without doubt be carried on by local people, thus increasing positions as well as giving instruction.

The islands have some possibilities in common and others that are peculiar to a single island. In the following list, therefore, certain projects will be suggested for the three islands and others will be better adapted to conditions in one of the three.

ST. THOMAS

Work projects and training:

1. Manufacture of simple furniture from native woods and reeds.
2. Canning, drying, and preserving of fish.
3. Extension of training for the Cooperatives.
4. Community kitchen to teach cooking and canning.
5. Classes in dressmaking and plain sewing.
6. More classes in schools for vocational work.

Education:

7. Classes in—

Personal hygiene.....	} Illustrated by slides or films.
Prenatal and postnatal care.....	
Infant and child care.....	
Home making.....	
Food values.....	
8. A women's committee to aid the Cooperatives by increasing present markets and by suggesting new designs and articles to be made.

ST. CROIX

Work projects and training:

1. Manufacture of simple furniture from native woods and reeds.
2. A cannery for surplus garden products and preserving native fruits.
3. Community sewing rooms.
4. Training courses for women in home and market gardening.

Education:

5. Classes in—

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|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Personal hygiene..... | } Illustrated by slides or films. |
| Prenatal and postnatal care..... | |
| Infant and child care..... | |
| Home making..... | |
| Food values..... | |

ST. JOHN

Work projects and training:

1. Instruction in market and home garden planting and care.
2. Seeds sold at minimum cost.
3. Sale of vegetables and fruits through a central agency on the island that will provide shipping and marketing facilities.
4. Classes in reed weaving.

Education:

5. Classes in—

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|----------------------------------|-----------------------------------|
| Plain cooking..... | } Illustrated by slides or films. |
| Plain sewing..... | |
| Prenatal and postnatal care..... | |
| Personal hygiene..... | |
| Infant and child care..... | |
| Home making..... | |
| Food values..... | |

These suggestions are all for permanent projects and should not be undertaken as relief projects, so that plans should include the money not only for their establishment but for their continuance. The problem of new work opportunities is so closely tied up with the education of the women to want and to use the opportunities that in order to succeed both training and work should go together.

Many of these projects are not new to the islands and have been tried in the past, and from their many attempts and their abandonment much can be learned. For example, on new projects, payment for work done should be equivalent to or slightly better than compensation for like work on the islands, and payment should be prompt. Money is made and spent for immediate needs and postponed payment discourages the worker. As far as possible, seasonal work should be avoided and also spreading the work among too many workers. Pride in good workmanship is developed by feeling it is "my job." These are a few very simple points but they were brought out in talks with the women themselves.

There seems little doubt that with patience and the continuance of the present wise administrative policy the Virgin Islands may become not only a delightful place to visit but an equally successful one in which to live and to work.



