



Typical Section Foreman's House with Tool House at Right and Bunk House at Left

SECTION HOUSE. A section foreman's dwelling, frequently built or furnished by the railway company with a view to housing the foreman and sometimes the section laborers, in a location convenient to their work on the track.

In sparsely settled districts section houses are indispensable, while even in more populous territory it is frequently advisable for the company to own them to avoid complications due to the foremen living at a distance from their work and the consequent delay in reaching them in emergencies such as night wrecks or washouts. A further advantage accrues when the section house affords room for the section laborers. In some cases the foremen of adjoining sections with their families and the members of their gangs are accommodated at one location at the junction of the sections, in a double house, usually supplemented by a barracks for single men. These quarters are rented at nominal rates or the accommodations are considered as a portion of the employees' pay, assuring them of permanent, suitable and convenient housing. Disadvantages sometimes urged are the isolation of some section houses from stores and schools, the inconvenience and expense of maintenance and the difficulty of obtaining good water and proper sanitation. Local conditions and the status of employees in some measure govern these special cases. The maintenance of way is usually benefited directly and indirectly when appropriate quarters for trackmen are owned and properly maintained by the railway company.

A section house, usually of the cottage type, is limited to two stories or less, and though frequently built within the limits of the right of way, is preferably set back from the tracks on a special adjacent plot of ground where it will not be an obstruction to engineers' view of the tracks and where there is room for outbuildings. A primary consideration is a suitable supply of water for residential use; reasonable assurance that it is available, or may be obtained economically being a governing factor in selecting the location. The extent of the building depends on the number of persons to be accommodated, while the style is that of suitability for use. While ornamentation is not usual, a section house is a permanent facility and real money involves a fair grade of materials and workmanship which tends to minimize the expenditure for maintenance. If there is doubt as to the permanency of the location the building is usually constructed with a view to moving it on cars, the dimensions being restricted accordingly.

The foundation, which usually includes enough cellar room for a stock of provisions, is preferably of masonry, as a house on posts or pillars tends to sag between supports and deteriorates quickly, the floors are cold and any winter banking of earth, straw, etc., against boards about the outside in lieu of a foundation wall tends to decay the posts and sills. Selection of the materials for the building involves the service life expected and the investment as in other structures. Most section houses, especially in the middle and western states, are small frame structures, erected by employees of the company's building department, from standard plans, specifications and bills of materials, these being

revised from time to time to meet the requirements of changing conditions in the methods and materials of the builder's trade. The present tendency is toward the betterment of housing conditions and increasing attention to convenience, permanence and pleasing appearance of section houses and their appurtenances. The construction depends largely on the climate, on the class of laborers employed, on the manner of housing unmarried men, etc. Some consideration is given the probabilities of changes of tenants and the variance in the number of persons in the families, provision being commonly made for the average number of five, with preferably an allowance above this number.

When standard plans are adhered to and the structure to be built or repaired is at a distance from division shops, as is usual, there is opportunity for economy in the framing or other preparatory construction of many items which may be shipped intact for erection, such as stairs, pantry fixtures, dimension materials cut to size, etc. In cold climates the ceilings are made low, storm windows are considered

necessary, the chimneys are made to accommodate flues from all rooms, the kitchen is a room of the main structure and the house is located with particular attention to the prevailing winter winds and to ventilation. In southern latitudes the kitchen is preferably a separate structure connected with the house by means of a covered platform or "outside room"; while the ceilings are comparatively high, windows are higher, extending nearer to the floor, and screens for windows and doors are sometimes indispensable.

A rectangular structure with a plain gable roof, is the usual design, sometimes with three bedrooms on one side from front to back of the first floor and a dining room, kitchen and pantry on the opposite side with a stairway to the second story, which is all thrown into one large room to be reserved for laborers or divided into two or more rooms, a portion of the space being reserved for laborers. In some cases a special stairway leads to the laborers' quarters from which there is no direct access to other rooms in the house. Desirable features are clothes closets, hardwood floors and stair treads, a front porch, an outside roofed entrance to the rear door and insulated walls and ceilings. The porches help to protect and lengthen the service life of the doors, while the clothes closets conserve space in the rooms and eliminate the necessity for driving nails in the woodwork.

