

## HOUSING IN VINCENT COUNTY

The dates of making additions and alterations were significant. There was some waiting for money to become available, but on the whole additions and alterations were made about the time the house was taken over by the present occupants. It would appear to be well for people who have lived for years in one house to take stock of their home and of their manner of life from time to time and decide whether the arrangements within the house are still as suited to their circumstances as they were when the house was first lived in. Changes in the size and composition of the family, the acquisition of new equipment, and other more general changes outside the family during the years may mean that the original arrangements are no longer the most comfortable or the most efficient for work.

Though economy of energy and time reduces many tasks about the house to habit and routine, this process should not be followed blindly for ever, but should be adapted to changing circumstances as the ideas and aims of the family alter. The house is there to serve the needs of the family; it is a means to an end, not an end in itself.

### Washing, Ironing, and Airing

A small number of homes had either a separate table or a bench for ironing. Women whose ironing time was broken into short periods found the separate space most convenient, for the time and handling required for putting equipment out or away were much reduced. The ironing equipment is often overlooked when cupboard space is allotted. If it can be kept at the place where the ironing is most frequently done, instead of its having to be collected from several places, work is saved.

Occasionally sewing was done in a spare room, but usually it was carried out in the main living room, which in 41 per cent. of the houses visited was the kitchen.

In almost all houses the hot-water cupboard was used for airing clothes, sometimes supplemented by rails which could be let down from the kitchen ceiling. When the water was heated by a coal range and the cupboard was easily accessible and well provided with rails or racks for clothes, the method was satisfactory. It was less so when the water was electrically heated and the cylinder well lagged to prevent loss of heat and when the cupboard was difficult of access and lacked racks or hanging space. Leaving part of an electrically heated water cylinder uncovered to provide warmth for airing is not desirable, for heat is lost all the time, whether or not clothes are being aired, and as a consequence electricity is wasted. One good airing cupboard was provided with a thermostatically controlled tubular electric heater.

There was some division of opinion on the question of having the laundry under the same roof as the dwelling. Most women recognised the convenience of having it in the same building, but some objected that too much steam would enter the house; good ventilation would overcome that objection. No dissatisfaction was expressed by any woman whose wash-house was under the same roof as the house.



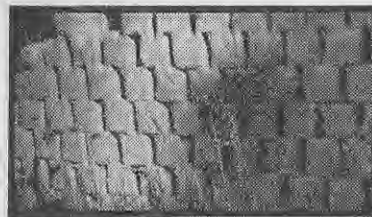
[V. C. Browne photo.]

Alexandra, in Vincent County, is one of the focal points of Central Otago's flourishing fruit-growing industry.

### Toilet Facilities

A water closet was generally agreed to be the best toilet arrangement. In most houses the water closet opened off the laundry, which nearly always meant that the living room or kitchen or both had to be traversed to reach it from the rest of the house, though on the whole it was conveniently reached from outside. Most housewives agreed that the best place for the water closet was not in the bathroom but next door to it, with an entrance from inside the house and another from outdoors directly to it.

Fewer women objected to a water closet in the bathroom if there was a second one elsewhere. In a few instances where there were either young children or elderly people a preference was expressed for a water closet in the bathroom, but in all these cases the housewives considered this arrangement to have drawbacks for other stages of the family cycle.



Sun-dried bricks, such as these stacked awaiting use, are a local building material which was used in the earliest days of pioneering in Vincent and has returned to favour in recent years.

Farmers' wives in particular recognised the need for access to the water closet from outdoors without passing through any rooms of the house. A number of farms had an extra toilet at the farm buildings.

In the older houses the water closet was often added at some date after the house was built and some compromise was necessary in selecting a place for it.

### Storage Space

Nearly all housewives desired more cupboards. Most houses had some built-in storage place for food, but many depended on furniture for clothes storage. Because of the climate of Vincent County housewives place a refrigerator high on the priority list for electrical equipment. One type of storage which was often lacking—to the regret of the housewives concerned—was space for cleaning equipment such as brooms, mops, and vacuum cleaners.

Very few houses had carefully planned storage space for all purposes. Access to cupboards was often difficult because they were too deep and doors were too small or hinged at the wrong side. Not all builders or carpenters know what is best for different types of storage, and the only way out of the difficulty is for the housewife herself to be prepared to instruct them at the time the cupboards are to be made. To do this she must study the problem herself. She must make up her mind how much storage space she wants and where it is to be, how deep the cupboards should be and how far apart the shelves, whether racks or rails or any other special features are to be