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Cooperative Extension Work in Agriculture and Home Economics

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Agricultural Colleges Cooperating

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COUNTY AGENT WORK

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OFFICE FILING SYSTEM FOR COUNTY  
AGRICULTURAL AGENTS  
IN THE NORTHERN AND  
WESTERN STATES

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Agriculturist, County Agent Work



CIRCULAR 2

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FIG. 1.—A suggested form of filing cabinet for a county agent's office. Where two drawers are needed for bulletins, a cabinet with four letter-size drawers with a section of 4 by 6 inch card-file drawers to set on top may be used.



# OFFICE FILING SYSTEM FOR COUNTY AGENTS.

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## INTRODUCTION.

**A**N UNORGANIZED office in which the county agent has difficulty in finding material when needed not only wastes his own time and that of those conferring with him, but also makes an exceedingly bad impression upon farmers and other business and professional men who may be calling at his headquarters. This circular describes a system of filing calculated to assist in correcting this difficulty. The aim has been to make it simple but efficient. It is based on the office work of the average county agent, but it may be expanded or contracted to meet the needs of any county agent's office. It is intended to conserve the county agent's time in order that he may devote a maximum amount of his time to work in the field.

## FILING CABINET.

The system requires a filing cabinet of three vertical letter-file drawers for filing letters, miscellaneous matter, and bulletins; and four 4 by 6 card-file drawers for filing records of farm visits, photographic prints, negatives, and lantern slides. (See fig. 1.)

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NOTE.—This circular describes a simple, efficient system of filing correspondence, agricultural bulletins, photographic prints, negatives, lantern slides, newspaper clippings, miscellaneous matter, and a follow-up and record-card system for the use of county agricultural agents in the Northern and Western States.

### LETTER FILES.

File all letters alphabetically in a vertical file drawer by the name of the person writing the letter or to whom the letter is sent. File the carbon copy of reply attached to the letter. Place the letters back of the guide tabs. Folders are not used except in a few cases indicated below. A set of 50 alphabetical guide cards will be needed. (See fig. 2.)

### LETTER LIST.

Letters should not be filed until the stenographer or county agent has copied upon an 8 by 10 inch sheet of paper called the "Letter

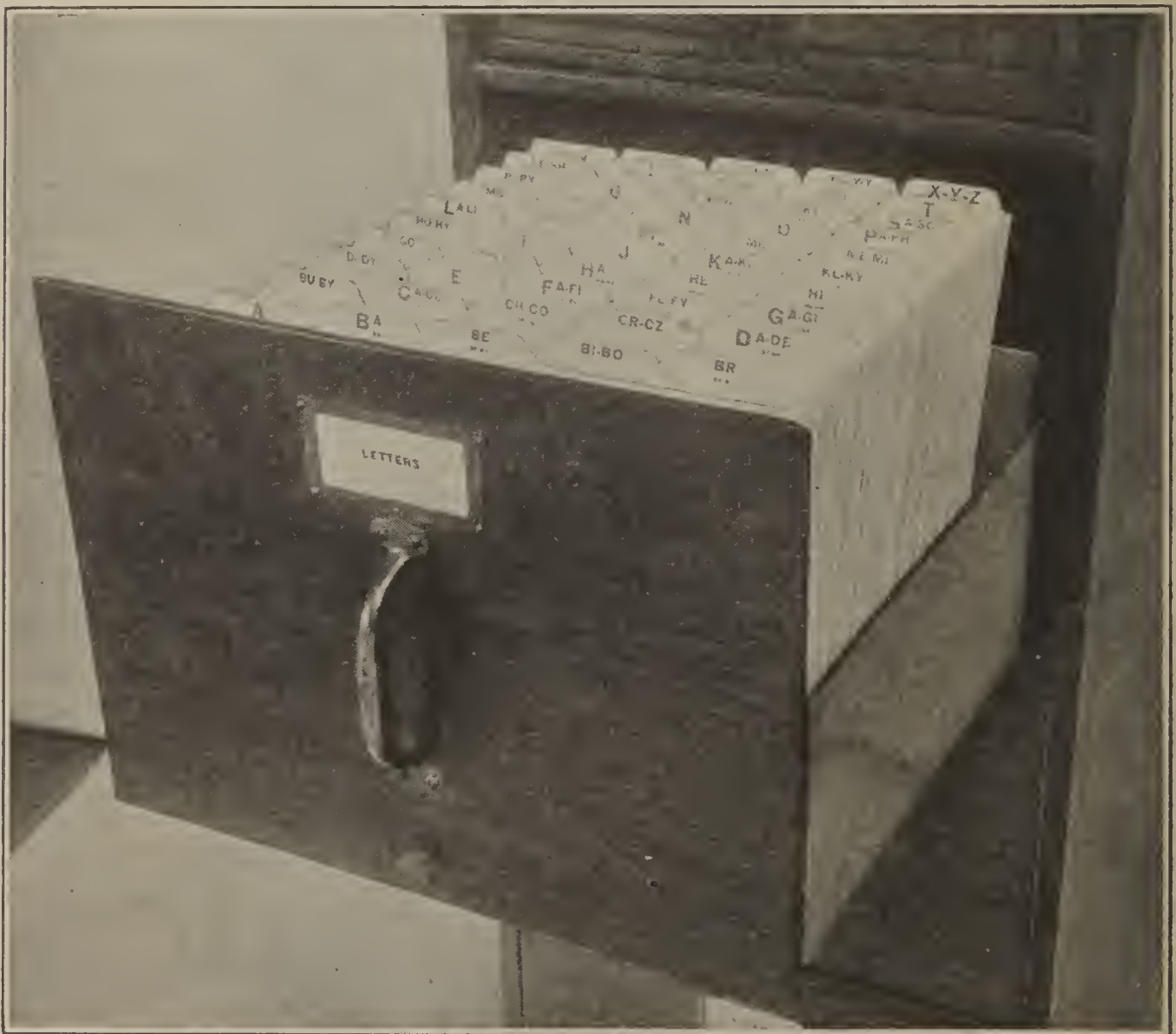


FIG. 2.—Letter-file drawer for filing letters.

list," the name of the person, the address, the date of each letter received or date of each letter sent, and indicate in the last column headed "File index" where all letters, other than those filed alphabetically, are filed as illustrated by the following form:



## LETTER LIST, 1915.

Oct. 20 to 30, inclusive.

Name.	Address.	Date of letter received.	Date of letter sent.	Subject.	File index.
Roe, Richard.....	Okemos.....	10/18	10/20	Farm-bureau meeting.....	
Knight, John.....	Chesaning.....	10/18	10/20	Potato diseases.....	
Do.....	do.....	10/24		Alfalfa data.....	A. P.
Brown, D. H.....	Columbia.....	10/21		Instructions, annual report.....	Inst.
Crusher, Mfg. Co....	Chicago, Ill.....	10/24	10/22	Price limestone.....	L. P.
Jones, John.....	Chelsey.....	10/25	10/28	Hog cholera.....	
Brown, D. H.....	Columbia.....	10/26	10/28	Veterinary specialist.....	Ex. D.
Peters, E. D.....	Chesaning.....	10/27	10/28	Dairy rations.....	
Jones, Edward.....	Cheney.....	10/28	10/28	Hog cholera, feeding hogs.....	
McIntyre, E. B.....	do.....	10/28	10/30	Hog cholera, dairy rations.....	
Wilson, J. H.....	Okemos.....	10/29	10/30	Dairy rations, cement barn floor..	

The following letter, which is the second on the "Letter list" above, and its answer, will illustrate the use of this sheet:

OTTAWA, Mo., *October 20, 1915.*

Mr. JOHN KNIGHT,  
*Chesaning, Mo.*

MY DEAR MR. KNIGHT: The potatoes which you left at this office Thursday are affected with scab and fusarium wilt. I am inclosing herewith the agricultural college bulletin on "Potato diseases and their control." On pages 6 to 12 you will find descriptions of these diseases and methods given for their control. I shall be very glad another spring to assist you further to put into practice the methods described.

We are very anxious to complete the tabulation of the data on the alfalfa demonstrations in order that we may use it in our extension schools and in published reports. We would, therefore, greatly appreciate it if you would send us soon the data on your alfalfa demonstration.

Very truly, yours,

JOHN DOE,  
*County Agricultural Agent.*

This letter is filed back of the "K" tab in the letter-file drawer, but as the reply contained nothing but the alfalfa data asked for, there is but one subject to enter in the "Letter list"—namely, "Alfalfa data." Because these data are to be used in connection with the alfalfa project, the acknowledgment is filed in the alfalfa-project folder in the miscellaneous subject-matter drawer. This is indicated in the last or "File-index" column on the "Letter list" by the letters "A. P."

Letters are listed on this "Letter-list" sheet in chronological order, generally at the end of each week or whenever opportunity presents for filing. When one sheet of the "Letter list" is full, the year and the date of the first letter and of the last letter on the sheet are placed at the top of the page. This is for convenience in searching through the various sheets to find a letter.

In looking for a letter, if the name of the person addressed or the writer, as the case may be, is remembered, the agent looks first back

of the proper guide tab, but if the letter is not there because of being filed irregularly, he locates it by means of the "Letter lists."

If the name is forgotten, but the date, address, or the subject matter is known, the letter may be found by looking through these sheets. The "Letter list" is kept in the front of the letter-file drawer. By means of this system the time expended in making the "Letter list" and in searching for the few letters that can not be found by looking directly in the files will be very much less than that required to keep a card index.

In cases where an agent has considerable correspondence with one man, it may be convenient to insert back of the proper letter guide card a folder with his name upon it, keeping all letters to or from this man in this folder and all other letters coming under that particular alphabetical guide card loose.

It may also be found advantageous to file all letters addressed to different men representing the same office or firm in a single folder. To illustrate, a folder entitled "Extension division" might be placed back of "E" guide where all letters addressed to the extension director and county-agent leader or assistant county-agent leader may be filed. This will be convenient because often a letter may be addressed to the county-agent leader and answered, in his absence, by his assistant, etc. Where such a folder is used, every letter filed in it should be so designated in the "File-index" column on the "Letter list."

For the convenience of the stenographer or county agent in entering letters on the "Letter-list" sheets, the subjects in the letter should be underscored or otherwise indicated when the letter is written or read. This will often save reading the letter at the time of making this "Letter list."

If a county agent has no stenographer and lacks time to make the complete "Letter list," all letters filed alphabetically by name of person may be omitted and only those filed irregularly entered. Where this is done, however, there is no way of locating a letter filed alphabetically if the name of the writer or person addressed is forgotten, and in case such a letter is lost there is no check or way of telling that it had ever been received and answered.

A key indicating the meaning of the characters used in the "File-index" column on each "Letter-list" sheet should be kept in the front of each drawer of letters so that anyone looking for a letter could ascertain the meaning of the characters used in the "File-index" column. To illustrate, a key for the characters used in the "File-index" column of the "Letter list" given above would be as follows:

"A. P." Alfalfa project, miscellaneous subject-matter file.

"Inst." Instructions, miscellaneous subject-matter file.



“L. P.” Liming project, miscellaneous subject-matter file.

“Ex. D.” Extension division, guide card “E” in letter file.

### MISCELLANEOUS SUBJECT-MATTER FILE.

The second drawer is used for filing in folders arranged alphabetically by subject all miscellaneous material, including the few letters as suggested above. This may be expanded to any size to meet the requirements of any individual county agent's office. Undoubtedly most county agents will find it convenient to have most of the following folders:

County agricultural survey.	Newspaper clippings of county agent's agricultural articles.
Club work, boys' and girls'.	Projects: subdivided into—
Catalogues: subdivided into—	Alfalfa.
Farm machinery.	Corn.
Farm garden seeds, nursery stock, etc.	Spraying, etc. (or into headings to correspond with the various projects conducted by the agent).
Live stock.	Reports: subdivided into—
Farm books.	Weekly.
Cooperative associations.	Annual.
Farm bureau.	Project.
Farm management analysis records.	Special.
Instructions (college and department)	
Mailing lists.	
Miscellaneous.	

These folders have the titles in front as shown in the cut. (See fig. 3.)

The folder entitled “Miscellaneous” is used to file all matter coming to the office which the agent wishes to preserve that can not be filed under any subject for which he already has a folder. When the material in this miscellaneous folder becomes too great to look over conveniently to find what is wanted, it is gone over carefully and subdivided, one or more folders being provided with headings and the matter removed from miscellaneous folders and placed in them, and these folders placed in the drawer in proper alphabetical order. For convenience in finding the different subjects the proper alphabetical guide cards are used and all subjects are filed immediately back of their letter-guide tab. In the above list of subjects the C, F, I, M, N, P, and R guide cards are used.

A sheet of paper containing all subjects arranged alphabetically that are filed in this miscellaneous subject-matter drawer is kept upon the agent's desk for reference and another is kept in the front of the miscellaneous file drawer. Whenever a new folder with a new subject is placed in the file the subject is written in its proper place in this list.

When a clipping or any other matter which the agent wishes to preserve, other than a bulletin or a letter, comes to the agent's desk,

he runs over the list of subjects and determines under which one to file it. If there is no proper subject, the agent has only one place to put it, namely, the miscellaneous folder. Later when the agent wishes to find this matter he runs over the list of subjects and if there is no subject under which it could be properly filed he knows

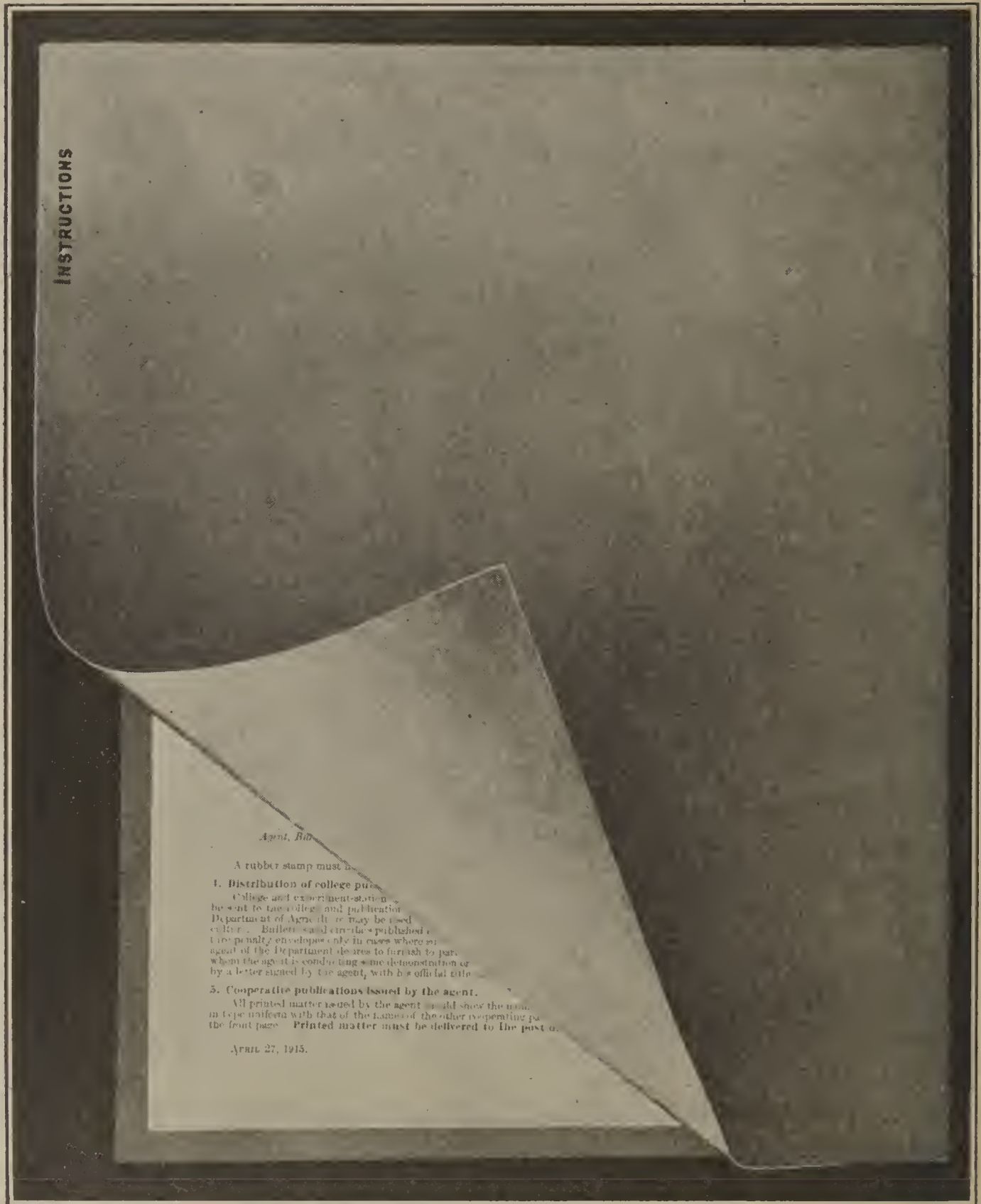


FIG. 3.—Form of folder used in the “Miscellaneous subject-matter” drawer.

at once that the only place to look for it is in the miscellaneous folder.

#### STORAGE OR “DEAD” FILES.

At the end of each year all letters which are not still pending are “dead-filed.” That is, the letters together with the alphabetical



guide cards are removed from the letter-file drawer and put away for safe-keeping generally in dead or storage files which are cheap files made for this purpose. The "Letter lists" and "Letter" key are "dead-filed" with the letters. At the same time the miscellaneous file drawer is cleared of all except live matter. Some of it may be discarded, but all valuable information or record matter is "dead-filed" in the same manner as the letters.

### BULLETIN FILE.

The bulletin file classification is based on a decimal system and provides for the filing of bulletins on agricultural and home-economic subjects. It is intended only for a reference bulletin file and constitutes a part of the working library of the county agent.

### CLASSIFICATION KEY.

#### 1. General.

- 1.1 Agricultural education.
  - 1.11 Extension work.
- 1.2 Weather.
- 1.3 Injurious animals.
- 1.4 Birds.
- 1.5 Weeds.
- 1.6 Seeds.

#### 2. Soils.

- 2.1 Fertilizers.
  - 2.11 Commercial.
  - 2.12 Farmyard manure.
  - 2.13 Green manures.
  - 2.14 Liming.

#### 3. Field crops.

- 3.1 Cereals.
  - 3.11 Corn.
  - 3.12 Wheat.
  - 3.13 Oats.
- 3.2 Forage crops.
  - 3.21 Alfalfa.
  - 3.22 Clovers.
  - 3.23 Soy beans.
- 3.3 Root crops.
  - 3.31 Potatoes.
  - 3.32 Sugar beets.

#### 4. Horticulture.

- 4.1 Fruit culture.
  - 4.11 Orchard fruits.
  - 4.12 Small fruits.
- 4.2 Vegetable gardens.
- 4.3 Floriculture.

#### 5. Forestry.

#### 6. Plant diseases and remedies.

#### 7. Animal husbandry.

- 7.1 Horses and mules.
- 7.2 Cattle (beef and dual purpose).
- 7.3 Swine.
- 7.4 Sheep.
- 7.5 Poultry.
- 7.6 Feeding farm stock.

#### 8. Dairy husbandry. (Including manufacturing and dairy products.)

- 8.1 Dairy cattle.
- 8.2 Butter making; creameries.

#### 9. Veterinary science.

#### 10. Entomology.

- 10.1 Injurious insects.
- 10.2 Beneficial insects.
- 10.3 Apiculture.

#### 11. Rural economics.

- 11.1 Farm management.
- 11.2 Cooperative organization.

#### 12. Agricultural engineering.

- 12.1 Drainage.
- 12.2 Farm buildings.
- 12.3 Farm machinery.
- 12.4 Roads.
- 12.5 Irrigation.

#### 13. Agricultural technology.

#### 14. Home economics.

- 14.1 Nutrition.
- 14.2 Clothing.
- 14.3 Sanitation.



There are 14 main divisions or headings in this classification key. All bulletins are filed under these general subjects until the number becomes so great that it takes too long to find the bulletin desired. When that occurs, the heading is subdivided. For example, the first general division which is used to classify all bulletins that do not come under any of the other heads is subdivided first into agricultural education and is numbered "1.1," indicating the first subdivision under the first main division. The second subdivision in the key is "1.2 Weather," the third "1.3 Injurious animals," etc. If the bulletins become too numerous for convenience under one of

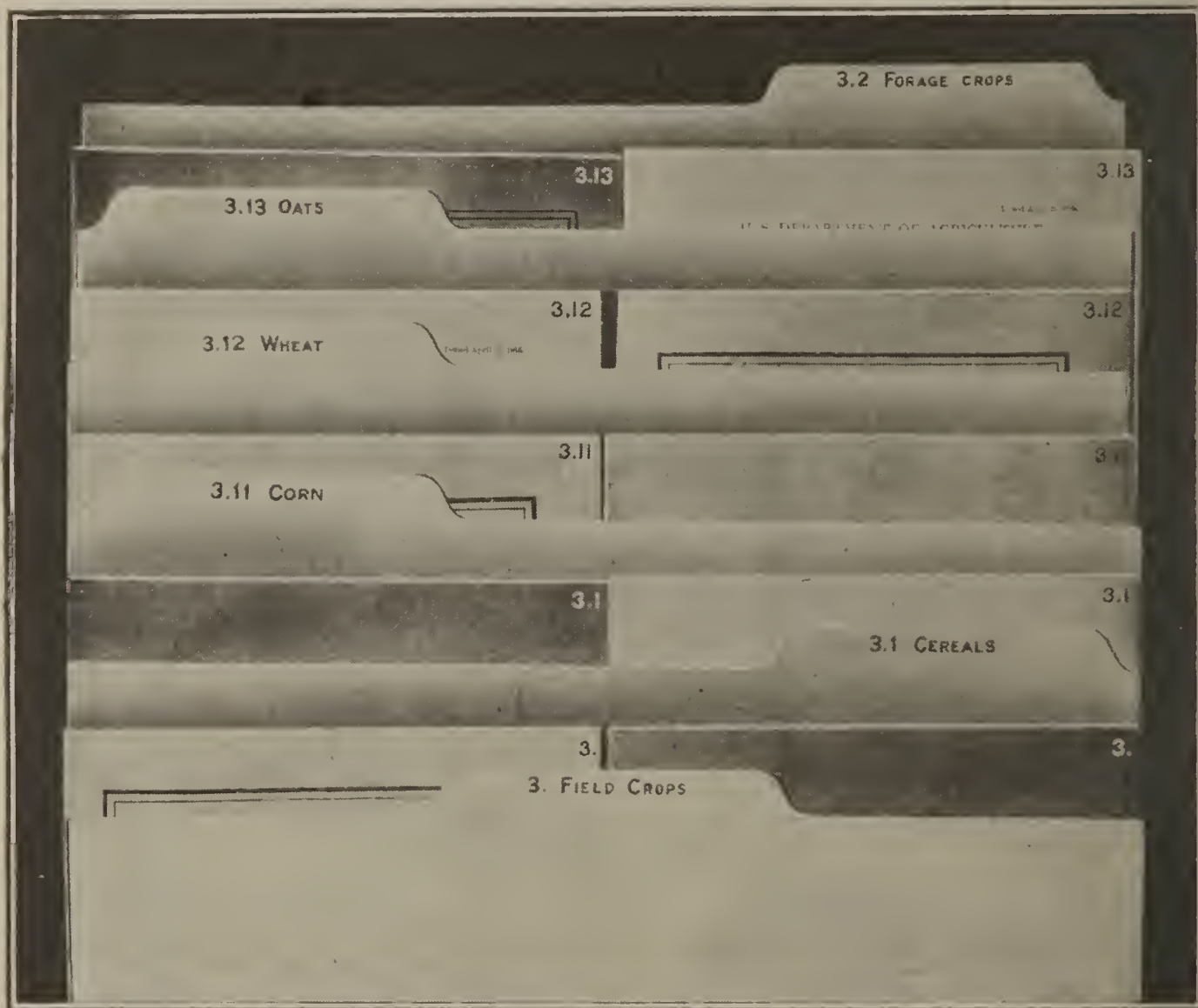


FIG. 4.—Illustrates the method of marking bulletins and placing them back of the guide cards.

the subdivisions it is again divided. The third main division—"Field crops"—is subdivided into "3.1 Cereals" and "3.2 Forage crops," etc. The first subdivision—"3.1 Cereals"—is again divided into "3.11 Corn," "3.12 Wheat," and "3.13 Oats," and can be further subdivided if necessary.

Each main division is capable of being divided into 10 subdivisions by using zero (0) for the tenth. Each subdivision may in turn be divided into 10 parts, and this division continued indefinitely.

In every case the bulletins are filed just back of the general or first division guide until a subdivision becomes necessary. To illustrate, all bulletins on soils are filed just back of guide "2. Soils,"

until they become too numerous to finger over conveniently to find the desired bulletin, when a subdivision is made. If the greater num-



FIG. 5.—Photoprint file drawer, showing the one-third cut guide cards as they appear when in use. The bulletin files are the same, excepting that the guide cards are  $9\frac{1}{2}$  by 12 inches instead of 4 by 6 inches.

ber of bulletins should be on fertilizers, a guide card marked "2.1 Fertilizers" is made, inserted, and all fertilizer bulletins are placed



back of it. If they in turn become so numerous that they need to be subdivided, another guide card is numbered and lettered, as "2.11 Commercial," and all bulletins on commercial fertilizers are filed back of this guide card. All other fertilizer bulletins remain back of guide card "2.1 Fertilizers." New guide cards are not put in until the number of bulletins demand it.

One-third cut guide cards are used in making up the bulletin file drawer. The 14 main divisions are placed on the center cut guide card, the first subdivision on the right tab and the second subdivision on the left tab. (See figs. 4 and 5.) If it becomes necessary to make



FIG. 6.—Negative file drawer, showing numbered guide cards inserted for convenience in locating negatives.

more subdivisions, different colored guide cards, with the title to the right, should be used to facilitate finding them.

The "classification key" is simply a guide. Many more division headings can be added as the number of subjects and number of bulletins demand. No card indexing by subjects is necessary. A bulletin is filed under the subject to which it seems to belong. If there are two or more subjects treated in a bulletin, a second copy may be filed under the second subject or a card referring to this bulletin by its number and by its classification can be placed under the second subdivision, so that when the county agent looks through the files under the second subject his attention will be called to the bulletin filed under the first.



When a new bulletin comes to the county agent's desk, he simply runs over his "classification key" and determines where the bulletin goes, places the proper number upon it (see fig. 4), and files it in the bulletin drawer.

When a bulletin becomes out of date or a new one takes its place, the old one is removed from the file and the new one placed in it.

When one drawer is full, it may be expanded to a second, and so on indefinitely.

No attempt has been made to make a complete classification, for the bulletins which agents will have will vary greatly in the different States and counties, but the general scheme seems to be adaptable to any county in any State.

#### PHOTOGRAPHIC PRINT AND NEGATIVE FILES.

Photographic prints are filed by subjects in a 4 by 6 card drawer, using one-third cut guide cards with the same headings and numbers as those used in filing bulletins. (See fig. 5, also bulletin classification key on p. 9.)

Before a print is filed the history and the data are written on a slip attached to it. The file number is placed in the upper right-hand corner of the print and the negative number on the upper left-hand corner, as illustrated below.

Negative No. 27.	File No. 3.11
CORN :	
Difference in stand and growth is due to carefully selected, dried, and tested seed. Farm of F. H. Tracy, Livingston.	
Photo taken July 1, 1915.	

Back of photographic print prepared for filing.

Each negative is placed in an envelope with all surplus prints of the negative. These envelopes are numbered consecutively, and kept in the negative drawer. For convenience in finding a negative, guides numbered 20, 40, 60, etc., are put between every 20 negatives. (See fig. 6.) When a print is to be filed, the last negative number is ascertained and the next consecutive number is placed on the print and on the negative envelope and both are filed. When a photo of any subject is desired, it is found in the same manner as a bulletin. When a negative of any print is desired, its number is found on the print in the photographic print drawer and the negative in the envelope bearing the same number is easily found in the negative drawer. In case an agent uses a camera with a larger plate than a 4 by 6 inch, larger photographic print and negative file drawers will have to be provided.

### LANTERN-SLIDE FILE.

Lantern slides are filed by subjects in the same manner as the photographic prints, using the same size drawers and the same guide cards with the same headings and numbers. The slides made up in sets prepared for lectures are not kept in this drawer. But cards containing the numbers of these slides and their titles should be prepared and placed in the front of this drawer for reference, so that in case a county agent was making up a new set of slides for a different

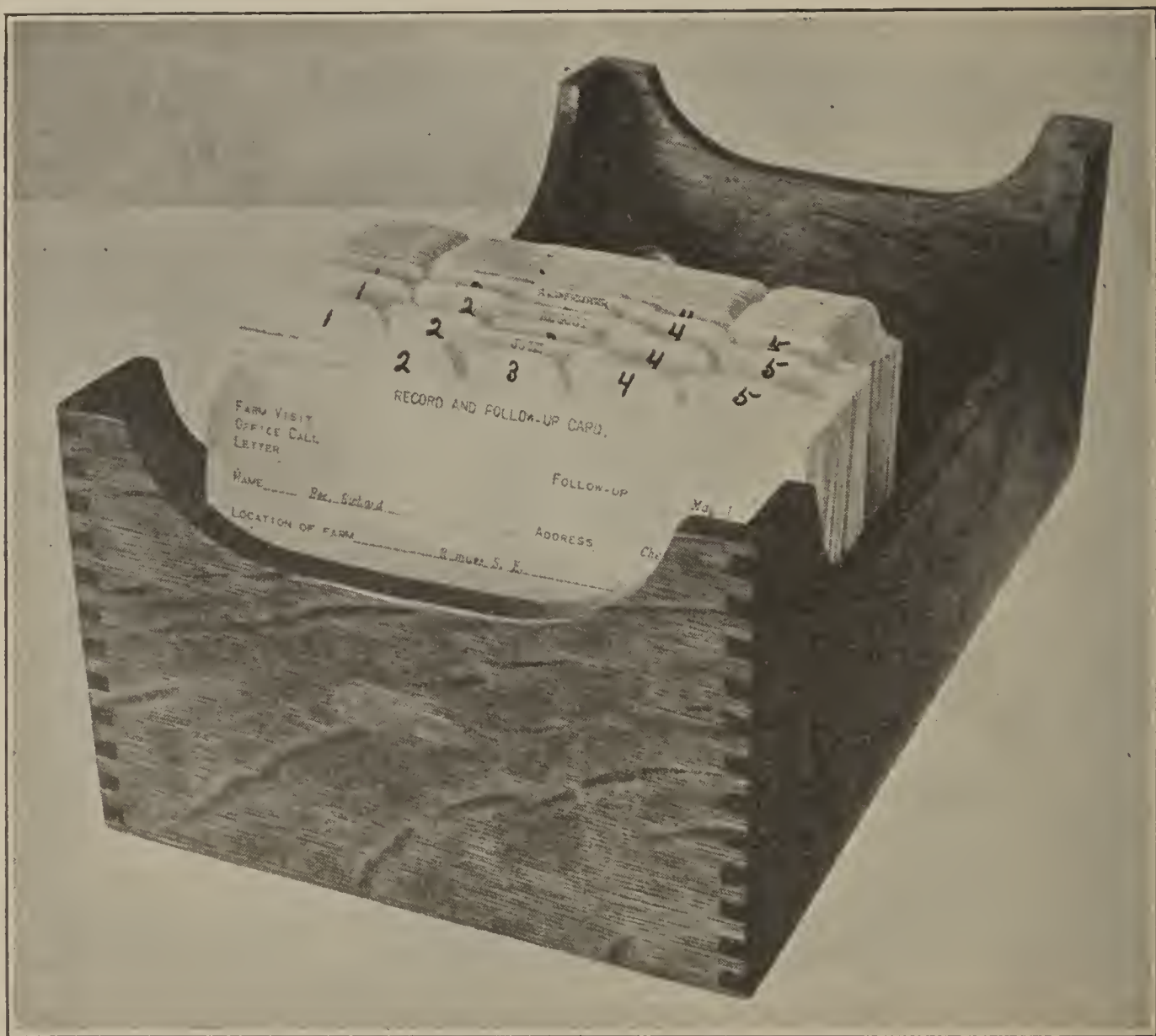


FIG. 7.—Follow-up desk tray.

lecture he could ascertain by looking through these cards whether there were any slides contained in the sets already assembled which he wished to use.

### RECORD AND FOLLOW-UP SYSTEM.

Whenever an agent has made recommendations and there is prospect of them being put into practice, he should follow them up until he knows the farmer has done the work or will do it. Again, many county agents find difficulty in making out their weekly and annual reports because they have not kept a daily record of the recommendations given, the number of acres, tons, animals, etc., involved and have not followed them up to know whether they have ever been put into practice.



The following record and follow-up system is to assist the agent in these two respects and to provide also a record of farm visits, where it is desired to keep such a record.

#### FOLLOW-UP TRAY.

The follow-up tray consists of a small 4 by 6 inch card desk tray in which there are 12 central guide cards with the names of the months of the year. Following each month's guide card are 5 one-fifth cut guide cards, marked 1, 2, 3, 4, and 5, to represent the weeks and portion of a week in each month. (See fig. 7.)

#### RECORD AND FOLLOW-UP CARD.

The following 4 by 6 inch "record and follow-up card" is used to follow up and record the suggestions or recommendations given and to record the amount involved, as number of acres, tons, animals, etc.

RECORD AND FOLLOW-UP CARD.	
Farm Visit 3/2	Follow-up May 1, 1918
Office Call	June 1, 1918
Letter 5/1	
Name.....	Roe, Richard
Address.....	Chesaning
Location of farm.....	3 miles S. E.
Area.....	160 A.
Type.....	Dairy
Owner	Renter
Subject, Amount, etc.....	Recommended liming, inoculating, Grimm seed for alfalfa 10 A. Explained and urged weighing and testing milk of cows, 25.
Date.....	
March 2 1918	

Words in italics written in by the county agent.

Whenever a farm visit, office call, telephone call, or a letter gives promise of resulting in work being undertaken in the future, one of these cards should be filled out, being sure to give the amount of work that will be done, as 20 acres, 25 cows, etc.

The date is placed in the date line at the bottom of the card and the "follow-up date" in the follow-up date line at the top. In the upper left-hand corner check with the date like 3/2, the words "farm visit, office call, or letter," according to whether the record made is the result of a farm visit, office call, or letter. The card then goes in the letter basket on the stenographer's desk, who records the farm visit, letter, or other data on the card for the weekly report and then places the card in the follow-up tray, back of the proper month and week.



Each Saturday morning the cards for the following week are taken from the tray for the attention of the county agent, who makes provision to either visit the farmer, write him a letter, or telephone him about the work recorded on the card. At the same time, he will ascertain if possible whether the farmer will actually undertake the work so that the amounts may be carried to the tabulation for the annual report. If there is still doubt about the work being undertaken or for any other reason it is desired, another follow-up date is written in, and the card again put forward. This may be repeated as often as is necessary. When needed no longer as a follow-up card and the data have been recorded for the weekly and annual reports, the card may be filed alphabetically by the name of the farmer in the "farm-visit" drawer, as a record of the work accomplished on that farm.

The cards may be carried in the field in leather note cases, or they may be made up in book form and perforated for convenience in removing. The size of the cards may also be made to suit the convenience of the county agent. Any blank cards or sheets of paper can be used in the same manner as the card recommended above.

#### LIST OF MATERIAL NEEDED FOR FILES.

1. One filing cabinet with three letter-file drawers and four 4 by 6 inch card-file drawers. (See fig. 1.)  
Or a cabinet with four letter-file drawers and a section of four 4 by 6 inch card-file drawers to set on top of the cabinet.
2. One 9-inch card index tray for 4 by 6 inch cards for follow-up tray. (See fig. 7.)
3. Fourteen center one-third cut blank letter-size guide cards and 49 one-third end-guide cards for the bulletin file drawer. (See fig. 4.)
4. Forty center one-third cut 4 by 6 inch blank guide cards, 98 one-third end cut 4 by 6 inch blank guide cards, and 100 one-fifth cut, 4 by 6 inch blank guide cards. These are for the photo print, lantern slide, and negative file drawers and for the follow-up tray.

The above include only the number required to make up the classification as given on page 9, but it may be necessary to buy the guide cards in packages of 100, which would mean one package of 100 of the letter size or  $9\frac{5}{8}$  by  $11\frac{7}{8}$  for the bulletin file drawer and two packages of 100 each of the one-third cut 4 by 6 inch guide cards, and one package of 100 of the one-fifth cut 4 by 6 inch guide cards for negative and follow-up trays. These whole packages would furnish more cards than are needed, but the extra cards will be handy to supplant those that might be spoiled or to use in the further development of the file and it is probable that the whole packages will cost but little, if any more, than the broken packages.

5. One 9-inch card index tray for 4 by 6 inch cards for follow-up tray. (See fig. 7.)
6. One set of 50 subdivision letter-size alphabetical index guide cards for the letter-file drawer and one set of 25 subdivision letter-size alphabetical index cards for the miscellaneous subject-matter drawer.
7. One set of 25 subdivision 4 by 6 inch alphabetical index guide cards for the farm-visit file drawer.