

**HISTORICAL SKETCH OF THE  
U. S. DEPARTMENT OF  
AGRICULTURE; ITS OBJECTS  
AND PRESENT ORGANIZATION**

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Historical Sketch of the U. S. Department of Agriculture; Its Objects and Present Organization  
by Charles H. Greathouse

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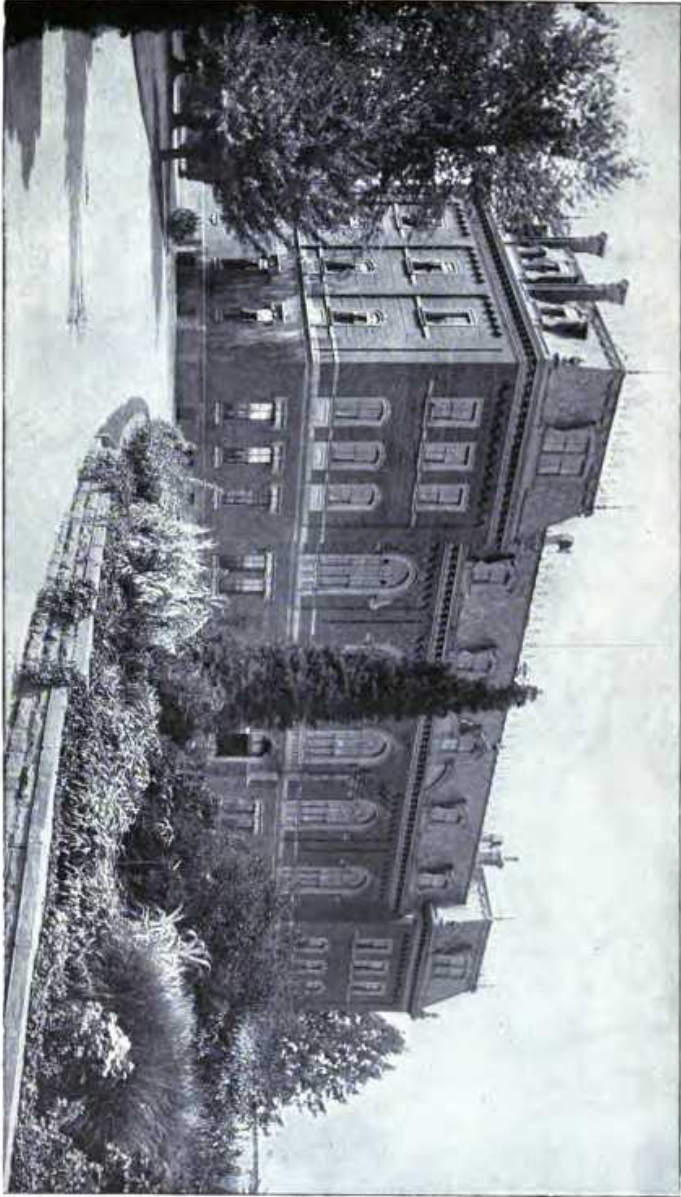
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**CHARLES H. GREATHOUSE**

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GEO. WM. HILL, Chief of Division.

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HISTORICAL SKETCH

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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE;

ITS OBJECTS AND PRESENT ORGANIZATION.

COMPILED BY

CHARLES H. GREATHOUSE,

*Division of Publications.*



WASHINGTON:  
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1907.

## LETTER OF TRANSMITTAL

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U. S. DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE,  
DIVISION OF PUBLICATIONS,  
*Washington, D. C., January 2, 1907.*

DEAR SIR: A frequent demand for information regarding the origin and development of the Department of Agriculture led to the compilation of the accompanying historical sketch. The compiler, Mr. C. H. Greathouse, of this Division, was instructed to follow as closely as possible, in the selection of subjects mentioned, the annual reports of the several Commissioners and Secretaries, prominence being given to those features of the work of the several administrations which the administrators themselves seem to have regarded as specially worthy of attention.

This historical sketch has been supplemented by a statement of the origin and duties of the several bureaus, divisions, and offices of the Department, in which the several chiefs have concurred, by citations from the several laws under which the Department has attained its present stage of development, and by a statement of appropriations and disbursements for the Department of Agriculture, 1839-1906, inclusive, which was furnished by the Division of Accounts and Disbursements.

The original edition of this bulletin was issued in 1898. It has now been revised and brought up to date, and I recommend its republication without change in the number of the bulletin.

Respectfully,

GEO. WM. HILL,  
*Chief.*

HON. JAMES WILSON,  
*Secretary.*



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**HISTORICAL SKETCH**  
OF THE  
**UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE.**

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**ORIGIN AND DEVELOPMENT.**

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**EARLY GOVERNMENTAL AID OF AGRICULTURE IN AMERICA.**

The Department of Agriculture had its origin in the farsighted wisdom of Washington and the practical activity of Franklin. The former as President suggested the organization of a branch of the National Government to care for the interests of farmers, and the latter, when the agent of Pennsylvania in England, sent home silkworm eggs and mulberry cuttings to start silk growing. When the representatives of the new United States Government went to foreign lands after the Revolution, they followed Franklin's example. The number and value of their contributions increased till Hon. Henry L. Ellsworth, of Connecticut, in 1839, induced Congress to make a trial of a small appropriation for the distribution of the seeds, cuttings, etc., thus collected, and for the publication of agricultural statistics. The experiment was successful, and the work of the Department has since had a steady growth.

Governmental aid to agriculture, however, antedated the time of Washington and Franklin, though it was desultory and uncertain. James I, in 1622, encouraged the breeding of silkworms in Virginia; in 1642 the general court of Massachusetts offered premiums for sheep raising, and in 1657 the Virginia legislature passed an act to stimulate the raising of hops. In 1732 a parcel of government ground in Georgia was allotted for growing mulberry trees in aid of silk culture, and in the ten years preceding 1743 Parliament granted \$600,000 to promote the cultivation of indigo and other crops in Georgia. In 1748 Parliament put a premium on silk culture in the colonies, and in 1766 the South Carolina assembly voted £1,000 for the establishment of a silk filature in Charleston. In 1775 the South Carolina and Virginia legislatures were taking steps to encourage the sheep industry, but the Revolution came on, and all special efforts in behalf of agriculture were lost sight of.