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Household Closets and Storage Spaces  
Michigan State University Extension Service  
Julia Pond  
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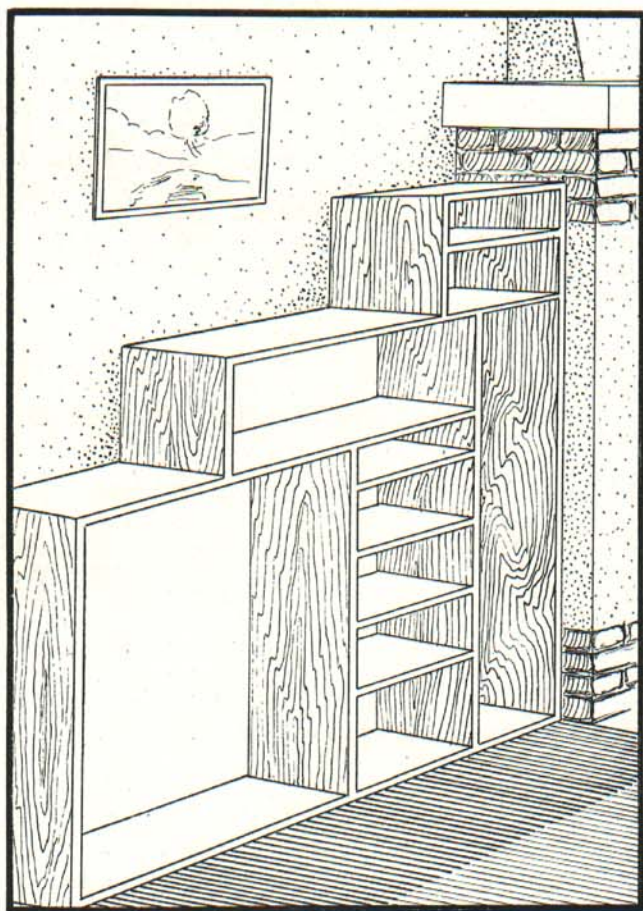
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# Household Closets

and

# Storage Spaces



**Michigan State College**  
of Agriculture and Applied Science

Extension Division  
R. J. Baldwin, Director

# Household Closets and Storage Spaces

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JULIA POND

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Sufficient and well-planned storage space is a necessity to a happy, smooth-running home. Time, energy, money, and confusion are saved by making it possible for one to locate articles without hunting for them, by keeping the house in order, and by protecting the articles to be stored from dust and dirt. These factors mean that the length of life is increased and the upkeep and cleaning costs of personal and household goods are decreased. There should be enough space to give each member of the household definite storage space for personal clothing and articles. Shelves, rods for hangers, and hooks can be used where conditions will not permit built-in cupboards.

Closets and cupboards are needed for clothing, bedding, household linen, cleaning and laundry supplies, food, utensils, dishes, medicines, reading material, sewing supplies and equipment, recreation equipment and garden tools.

## SUGGESTED CLOSETS AND CUPBOARDS

### **Clothing:**

A closet located near the front entrance and large enough to hold some of the outside clothing of the family and guests of the household is desirable. No farm home is complete that does not furnish a closet or cupboard near the back entrance for outside work clothing. Such a closet is more convenient if located in the back service hall than in the kitchen. The other clothing closets are best if located adjacent to the bedrooms, and no bedroom can meet the essential needs without at least one fair-sized closet or wardrobe. Hooks, racks, and rods should be provided in closets and placed so that they may be easily reached by both adults and children.

### **Bedding and Linen:**

Storage space for bedding should provide shelves or drawers deep and wide enough for blankets, quilts, and pillows. Linen closets for bed, table, and bath linens are needed in every home. Often a sufficiently large closet can be located in a central hall, which it will provide convenient storage for all household linens. Careful spacing of the shelves will decrease the necessity of stacking the linens and will make placing and removing them easy. Drawers, instead of shelves, may be provided for storing some of the seldom-used linens. A cupboard 24 inches deep by 36 inches wide and 98 inches high will be



adequate for the storage of bedding and linens of the average family if shelves and drawers are properly spaced.

### **Cleaning Equipment and Supplies:**

Cleaning equipment and supplies used on the main floor can be stored in a space in the kitchen or a hallway. Such a cupboard should be constructed to take care of long-handled brooms and mops, sweepers, dusters, dust cloths, and supplies of soap, waxes, and polishes. The lower part of the closet should be fitted with hooks for equipment that will hang, while the upper is best equipped with shelves. The portable ironing board and table leaves are often stored in one section of this cupboard. Where the house is large and some cleaning materials can be duplicated, a second cleaning closet on the upper floor is practical. The cleaning materials used at the sink or in the bathroom are most convenient if stored near their places of use. A small shelf or shallow cupboard will provide ample space. The laundry supplies may be kept in the lower part of the sorting table, on shelves over the table, or if the laundering is done in the kitchen, in the cleaning closet just mentioned.

### **Kitchen Storage:**

Cupboard space in the kitchen should provide for storage of perishable and non-perishable foods, dishes, silver, cutlery, cooking utensils, and equipment. These cupboards should be so constructed and grouped that the worker takes the least possible number of steps in preparing, cooking, and serving food and in clearing away soiled dishes. Daily supplies of perishable foods should be kept in or near the kitchen, and space for storing a week's supply is desirable.

Cooking utensils and equipment are most easily stored in a deep cupboard equipped with hooks for hanging those utensils that can be suspended. Vertical shelves or racks lessen the difficulty of storing pie, muffin, and cake pans, and covers. The less accessible upper sections of the cupboard should be used for storing seldom-used dishes or equipment.

Dishes used for meal service can be kept in a cupboard in the kitchen or a built-in dish and silver cupboard can be located in the dining room. A cupboard similar to the one shown in Fig. 16 saves steps and can be attractive.

### **Books-Magazines:**

Books and magazines are most likely to be used and enjoyed if stored in open shelves or racks. The book shelves may be located on either side of the fireplace, in one corner, against one side of the room, or wherever space permits. See figures 20, 21A, 21B, and 22. A shelf 7 to 8 inches wide will accommodate the average-sized book.

### **Miscellaneous:**

Sewing, recreation or play equipment, and garden tools may be listed under materials needing miscellaneous cupboard and closet space. A very compact ironing and sewing center is pictured in Fig. 23. The

children's toys and accumulated treasures should be kept in a space that the child can reach easily and if possible near the play center, not in the attic or a far corner of the basement. Often an extra drawer or section of the kitchen or hall cupboard can be used for such a purpose. The family recreation equipment may be stored in cupboards and closets such as shown on the title page and in Fig. 25. Figure 26 shows a possible gun and fishing equipment cupboard. Space for garden tools and lawn mower can be provided in the garage, wood house, or basement.

## GENERAL SUGGESTIONS FOR CLOSETS AND CUPBOARDS

### Essential Requirements for a Well-planned Closet:

- Correct apportionment of space as determined by articles to be stored.
- Use of all available space through a properly equipped closet.
- Convenient access to every garment or article.
- Adequate light.
- Ventilation if possible.
- Adequate protection against dust, insects, and mice.

### Suggestions for Both Closets and Cupboards:

Storage space for clothing should be at least 30 inches deep or wide, depending upon position of rod for hangers, and high enough to allow the rod to be at least 63 inches from the floor. Rods for children's clothing may be 30 to 45 inches from the floor.

Do not use the closet floor space for storage. Equip the closet with shelves, hooks, rods, or racks, depending upon the needs. Shoe, hat, or tie racks, hooks, and bars, may be placed on the closet door.

Space the shelves to meet particular needs of articles to be placed on them. Deep shelves are difficult to use unless they are intended for boxes, luggage, or bedding. Do not waste space or make it necessary to stack articles by spacing shelves too far apart. Do not have the lower shelf so near the floor that cleaning under it is difficult.

Vertical racks or partitions are convenient for storing articles that stand on end, such as trays (Fig. 17).

Several small drawers, unless used for bulky articles, make for ease in finding articles and keeping drawers orderly. Large drawers may be divided. Where the cupboard is deep or in a difficult position to reach, sliding trays may be used instead of shelves.

Build all cupboards to the ceiling. Use the upper space for seldom-used articles. The doors for the upper space should be separate from those for the lower part of the cupboard.

Light is important. If electricity is available, the problem is an easy one. An automatic switch that operates with opening and closing of the door is the most desirable. A wall switch or pull-cord just inside the door may be used. Where electricity cannot be used, a flashlight hung in a convenient place is advisable. For the sake of safety, provide some light other than matches or oil lamps. Light-colored walls reduce the lighting problem.



Every clothes closet should be ventilated, if not by a window, then by openings in the walls or doors.

Cracks in the walls and floors should be filled to prevent insects and dirt from entering. The doors should fit tight. The floor of a wardrobe closet should be at least 2 inches above that of the room to prevent dirt from collecting.

Two or more narrow doors for a wide closet are more convenient than one wide door.

### **SUGGESTIONS FOR BUILDING A NEW KITCHEN CUPBOARD**

Build cupboard to ceiling if possible.

Have work table top correct height for worker.

Allow for "toe" room by extending top beyond base 3 inches, or make top flush with base and push in board at base of cupboard 3 inches.

Have work table top as narrow as possible, 22 or 24 inches.

Allow 14 to 16 inches between table top and upper cupboards.

Have upper cupboard as shallow as convenient for storage.

Doors should not be too wide. Doors on upper cupboard should not swing out beyond the edge of the work table.

Have drawers as shallow and small as possible for convenience.

Floor of lower cupboard should be 2 to 4 inches above floor of room.

Shelves that cannot be conveniently reached when one is standing on floor should be inclosed with separate doors.

Movable trays are more convenient than shelves in compartments below work table space.

### **EQUIPMENT FOR CLOTHING CLOSETS**

#### **Shoe Racks:**

Shoe racks are essential. They may be made at home or purchased. See figures 6, 7, 8, 10, and 11.

#### **Hat Stands:**

Portable hat stands or those fastened to the wall add to the orderliness of the closet and to the life of the hat. Hats may also be kept in a hat box in which there is a pasteboard collar to support the hat and to prevent it from becoming crushed. Boxes are essential for storing hats from one season to another.

#### **Rods:**

Rods in a closet increase space and keep clothes from becoming crushed. They may be permanently fastened to the wall or rest in brackets, which permit the removal of the rods when desired. Discarded heavy curtain poles, broom handles, galvanized pipe, towel racks, or commercially made rods may be used. If the closet is shallow, a clothing carrier for hangers can be purchased and fastened to the back of the closet. It is telescopic and can be pulled out into the room when placing or removing garments.

Stationary brackets or long hooks less than 12 inches in length can also be used in a shallow closet or in one where the slant and height of the ceiling will not permit a long rod. These hooks should be at least 30 inches apart to provide space for garments hung on hangers.

**Hangers:**

Hangers should always be provided. Inexpensive wire or wooden ones can be purchased. Hangers that fit the garments placed on them will decrease the need for pressing. Special skirt and pants hangers are convenient to have. An ordinary towel rack makes a satisfactory rack for ties or belts.

**Dress Protectors:**

Dress protectors should be procured for garments seldom worn. A discarded night gown or sheet will inexpensively meet this need. Protectors may be made from cretonne or gingham, or they can be purchased (Fig. 6).





Fig. 1. A cupboard and closet of this type can be built in the kitchen, hall, or back entry for the storing of every day wraps. The shelves and drawers are used for miscellaneous storage. The drawer may be omitted and the entire lower section used for hanging the children's clothing. A rack for rubbers and overshoes could then be built into the back of the full-length cupboard. The size depends upon space available.



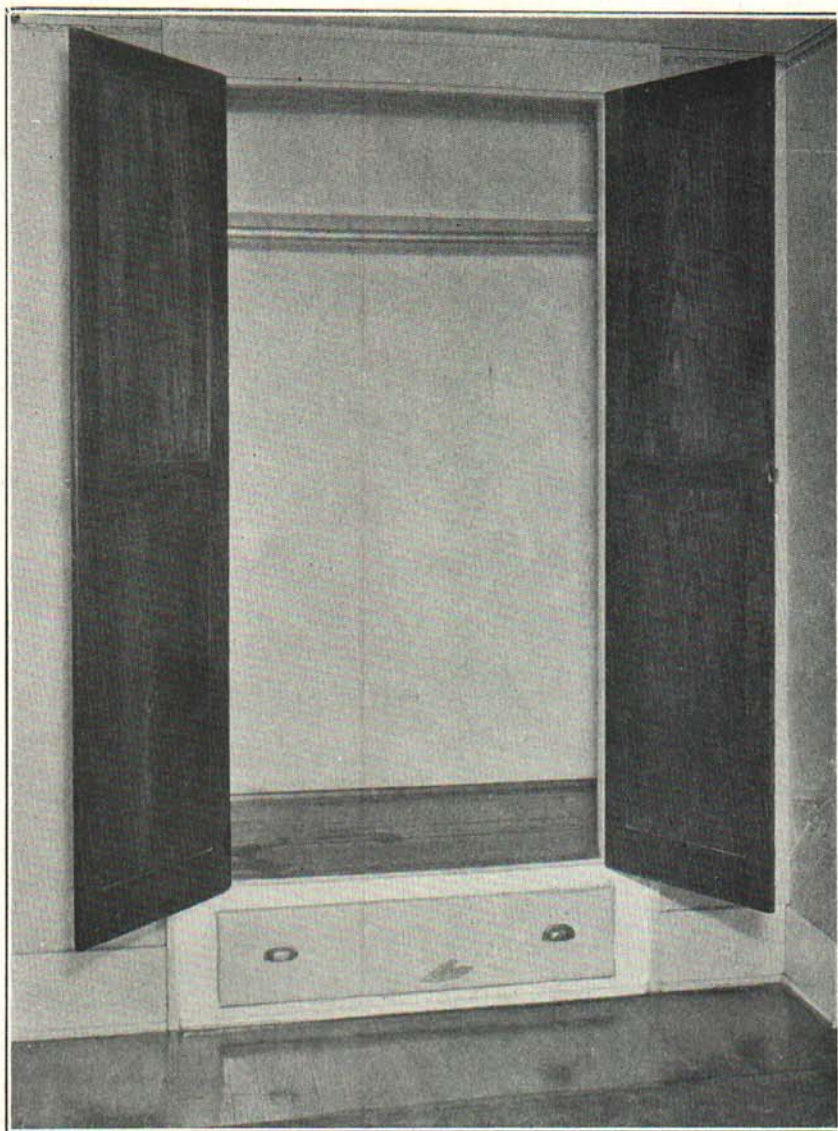


Fig. 2. The wardrobe pictured here measures 2 by 5 feet and is an example of what might be done between two bedrooms. A similar wardrobe opens into the adjoining room. Note the shelf, rod for hangers, and drawer at the bottom.

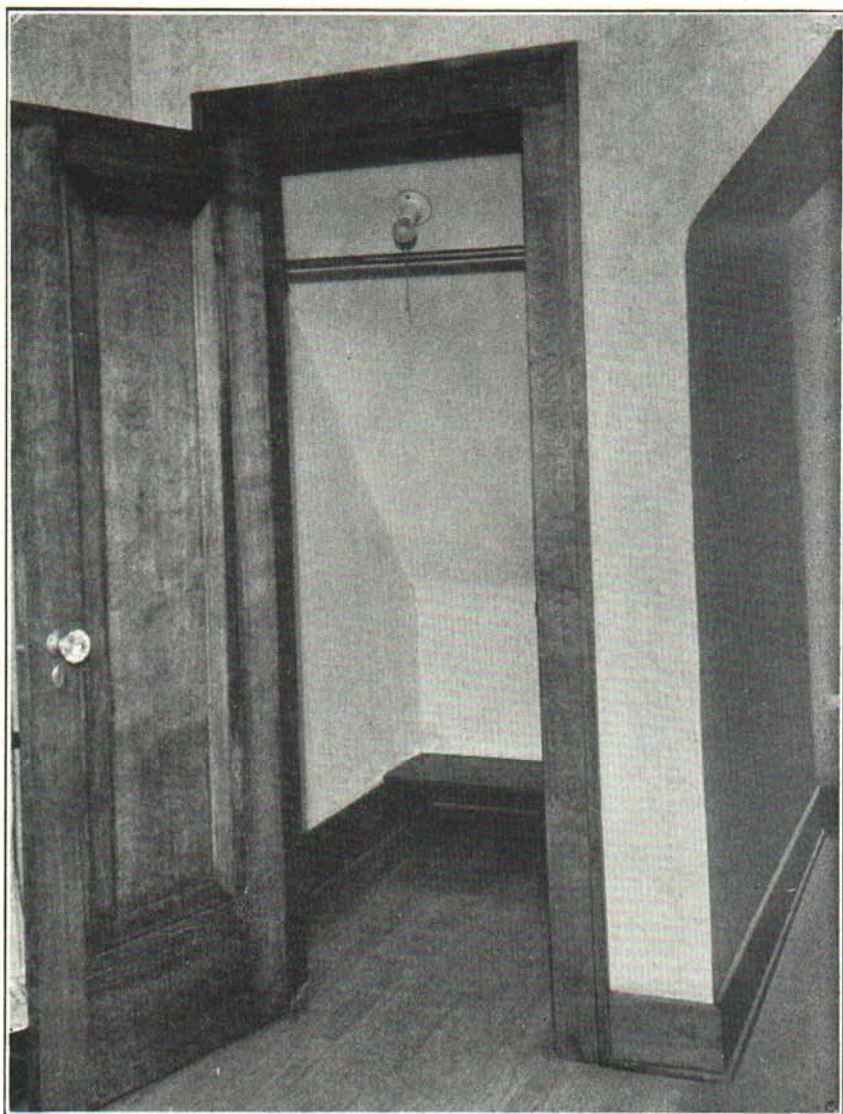


Fig. 3. This shows very clearly the use of space under the roof near the eaves. Note these particularly desirable features: a rod for hangers, shelf for shoes or boxes, and the light.



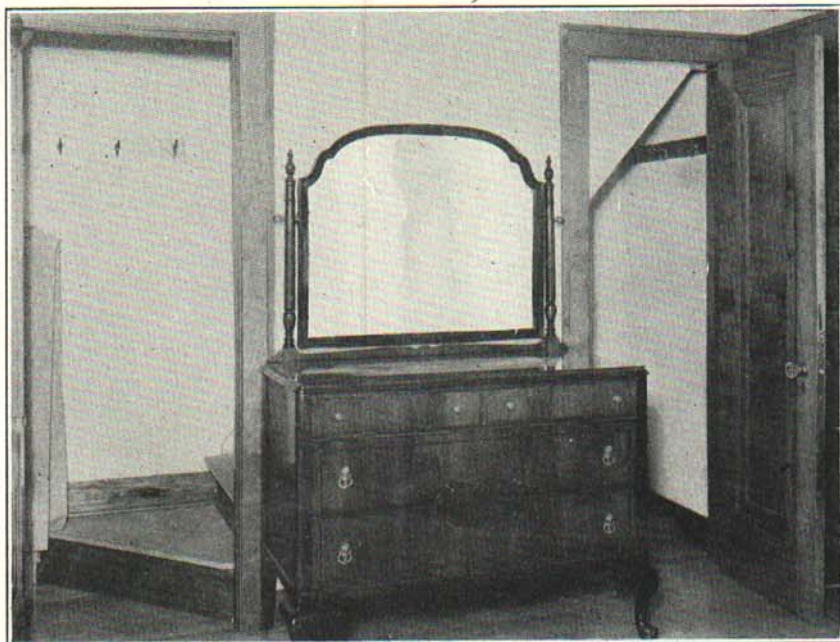


Fig. 4. The narrow attic stairway which is seldom used offers another possibility for two closets in this bedroom. The closet at the foot of the stairway is equipped with a rod for hangers and hooks for clothing. Due to the slant of the staircase, only hooks could be used in the other closet. This might also have been divided into shelf and drawer space.

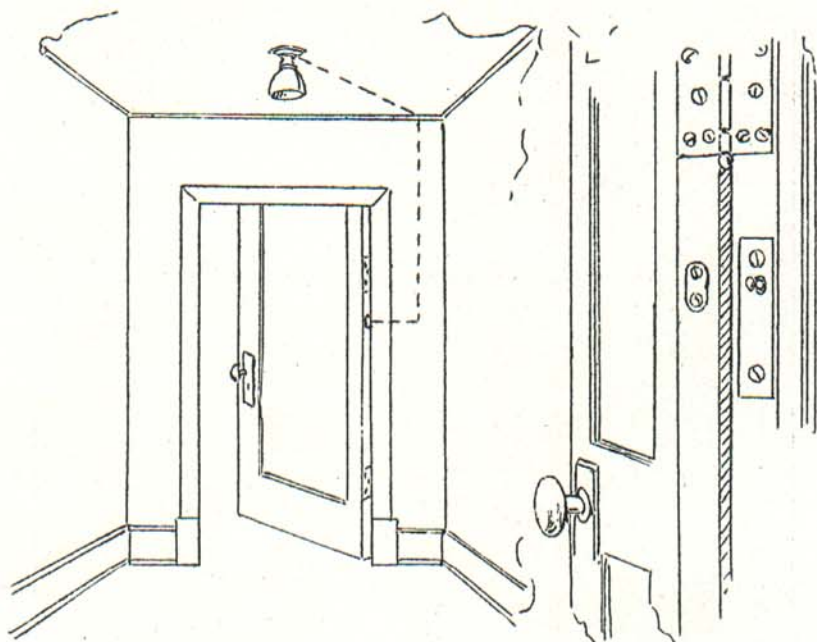


Fig. 5. The deluxe method for operating the closet light is shown here. The automatic switch controls the closet light by the opening and closing of the door. Contact is made and broken on the hinged side of the door. The above sketch shows the light as it appears from the inside of the closet.



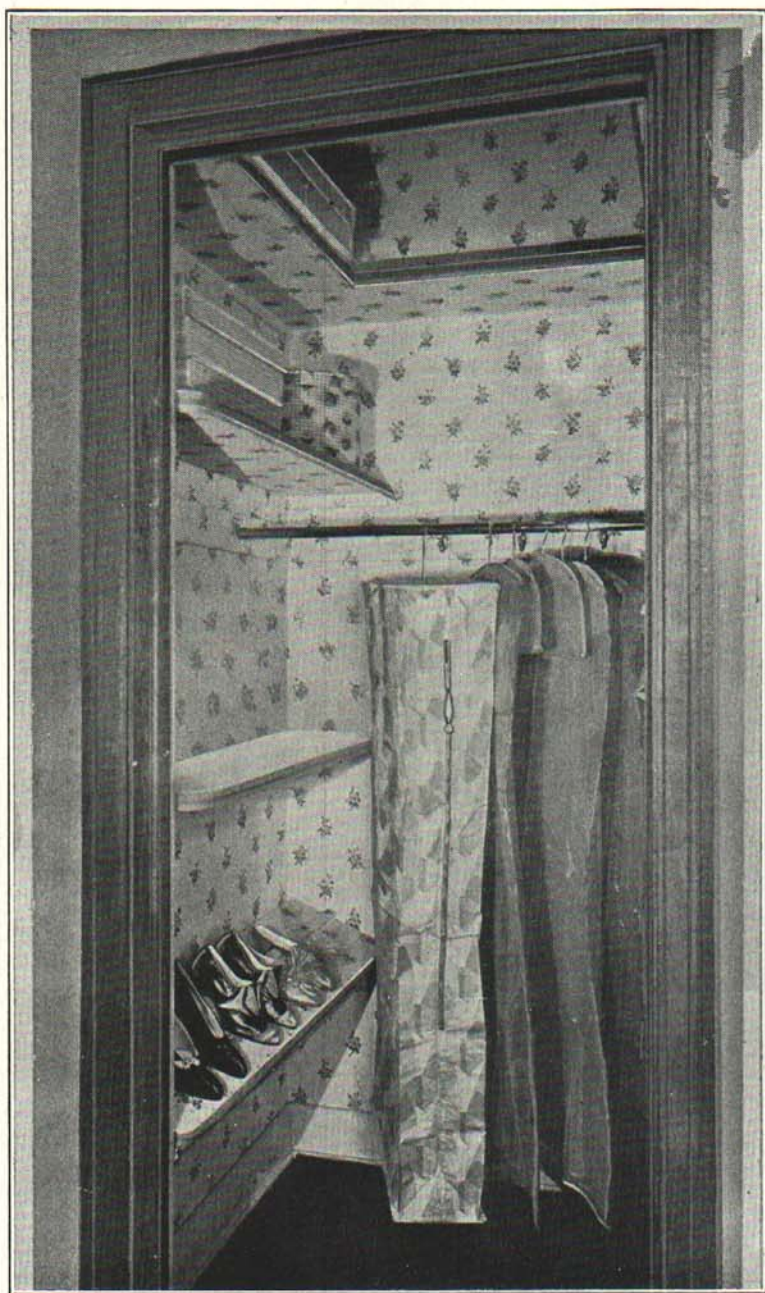


Fig. 6. An excellent utilization of space. There are shelves for shoes, hats and boxes, and a rod for hangers. It is a closet without anything on the floor to be moved when cleaning is done.

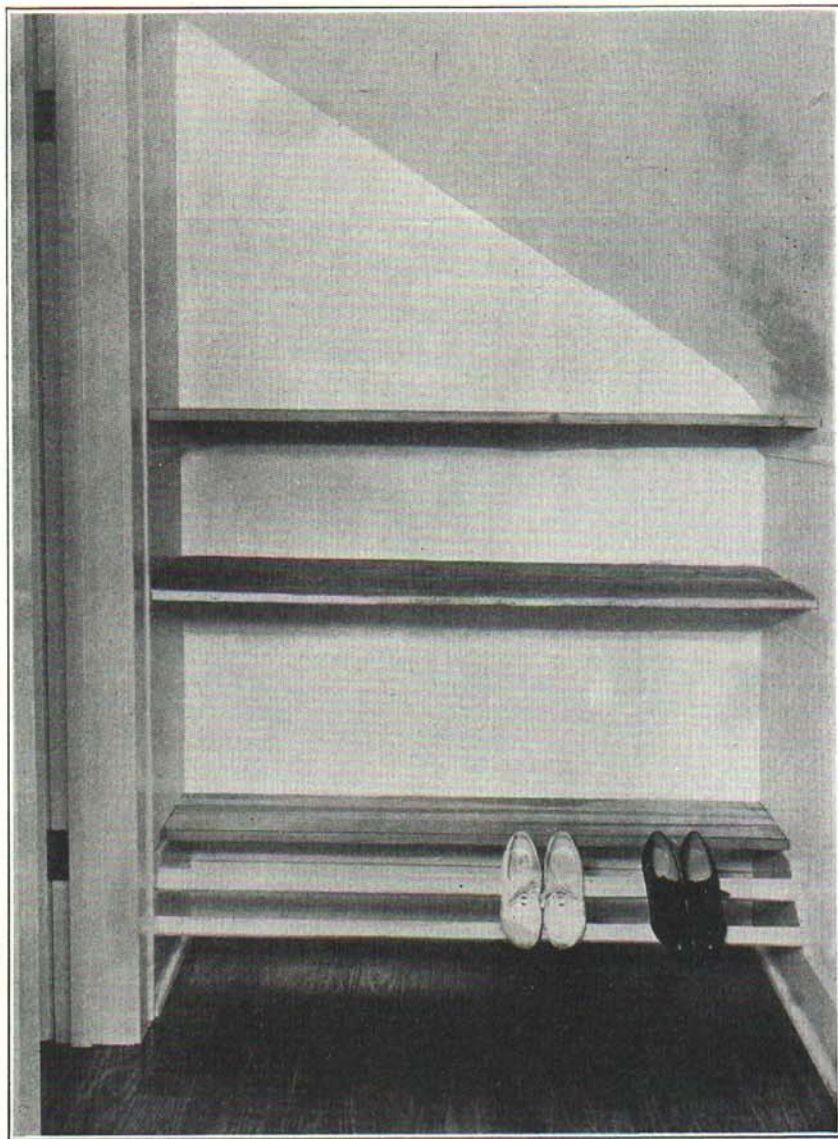


Fig. 7. This spacious closet, only the one end of which is pictured here, measures 5 by 10 feet and was built of waste attic space. Note the convenient shelves which can be used for storage of luggage and extra bedding. The shoe rack enables one to keep shoes off floor and is high enough that dusting can be done without removing shoes from rack.



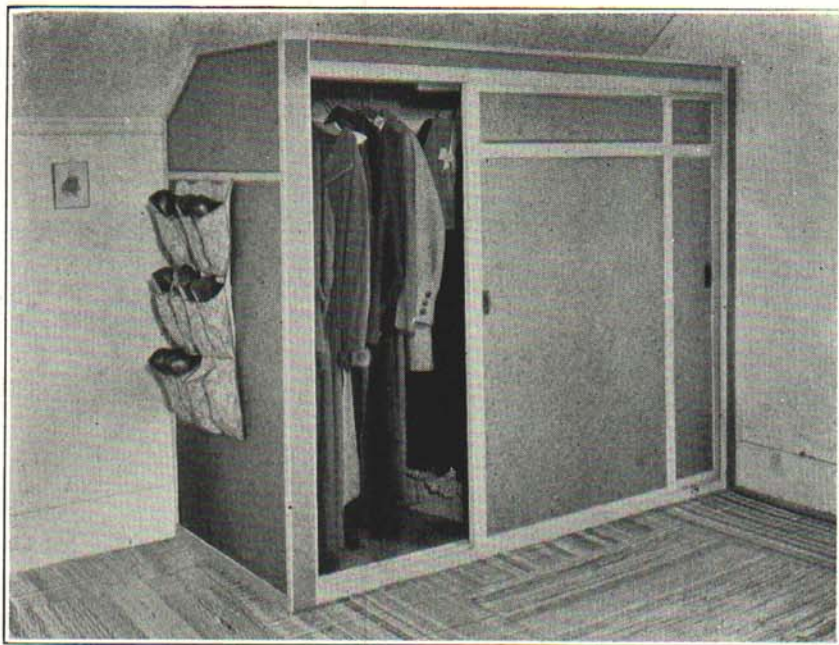


Fig. 8. When no other arrangement can be made for closet space in the bedroom, a wardrobe of this type will prove satisfactory. It should be at least 30 inches wide in order that hangers can be hung on the rod which extends the full length of the wardrobe. It is built of wallboard and inexpensive wood stripping. The doors are of the sliding type, thus making it possible to utilize more of the floor space near the wardrobe. Building the wardrobe to the ceiling would eliminate a dust catcher. The shoe bag does not add to the attractiveness of the room and should, if space permitted, be hung out of sight.

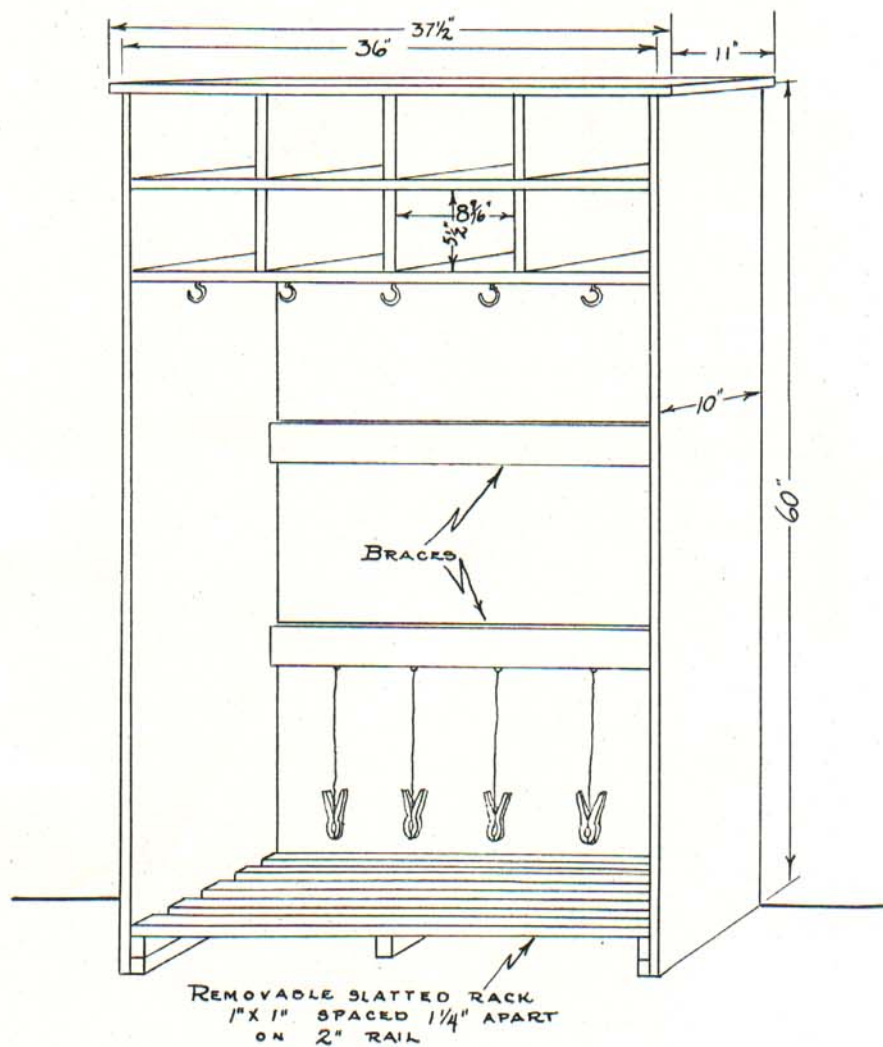


Fig. 9. Convenient and compact storage space for children's out-of-door clothing. The space at the top is for caps, mittens, and school books. The suspended snap clothes pins hold overshoes. Coat hangers may hang on a rod.



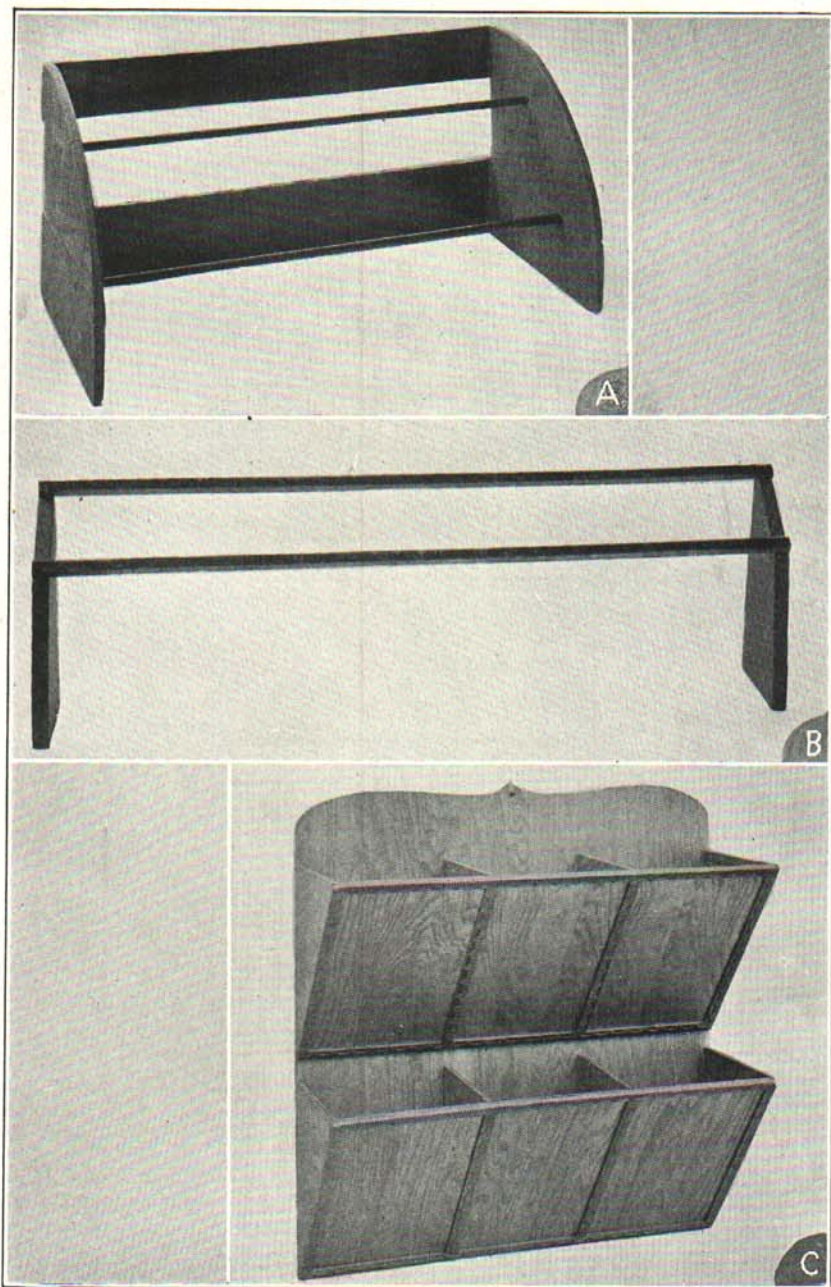


Fig. 10A and 10B. Two very easily constructed shoe racks. Because the rack in 10B is not braced it should fit snugly into the end of a closet.

Fig. 10C. A rack to be hung in the back entrance and used for rubbers, overshoes, skates, and mittens.

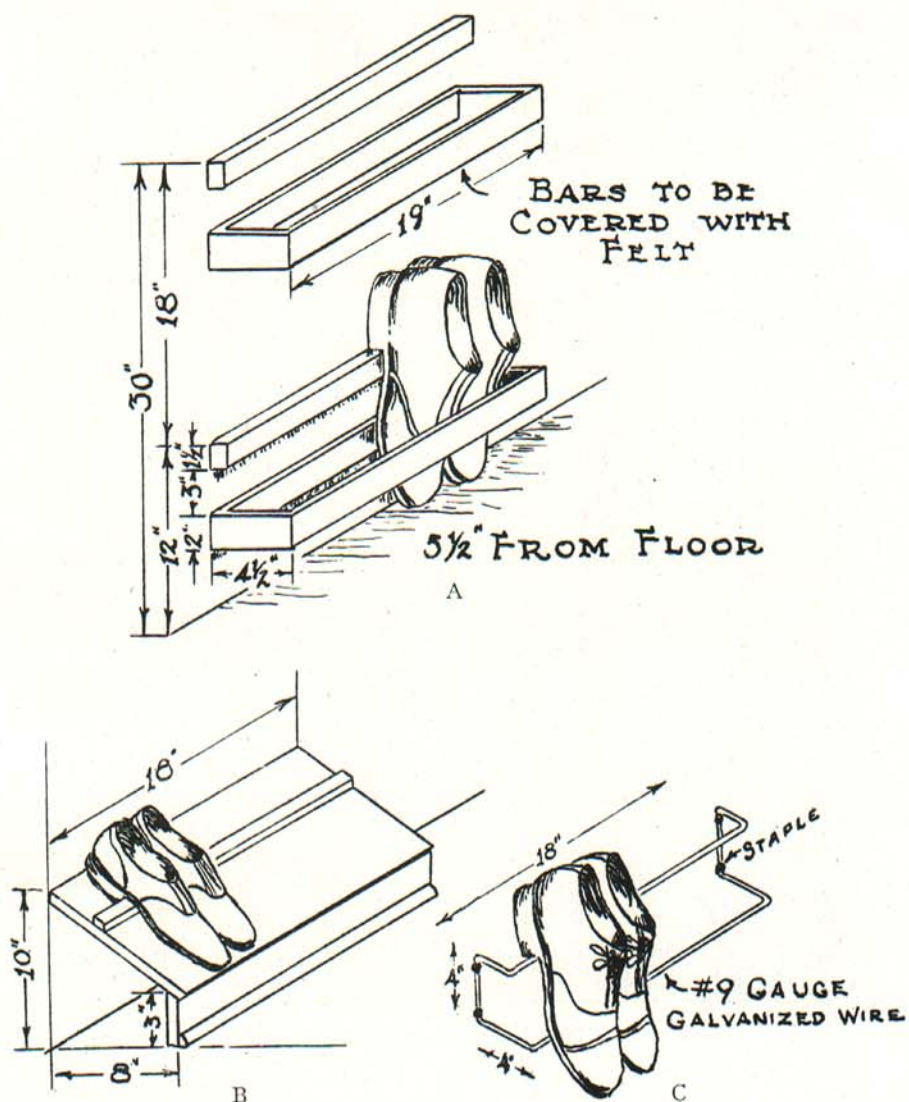


Fig. 11. The shoe rack in Fig. 11A is for use where wall space is less limited than floor space. Fig. 11B shows how space may be used below garments on hooks.



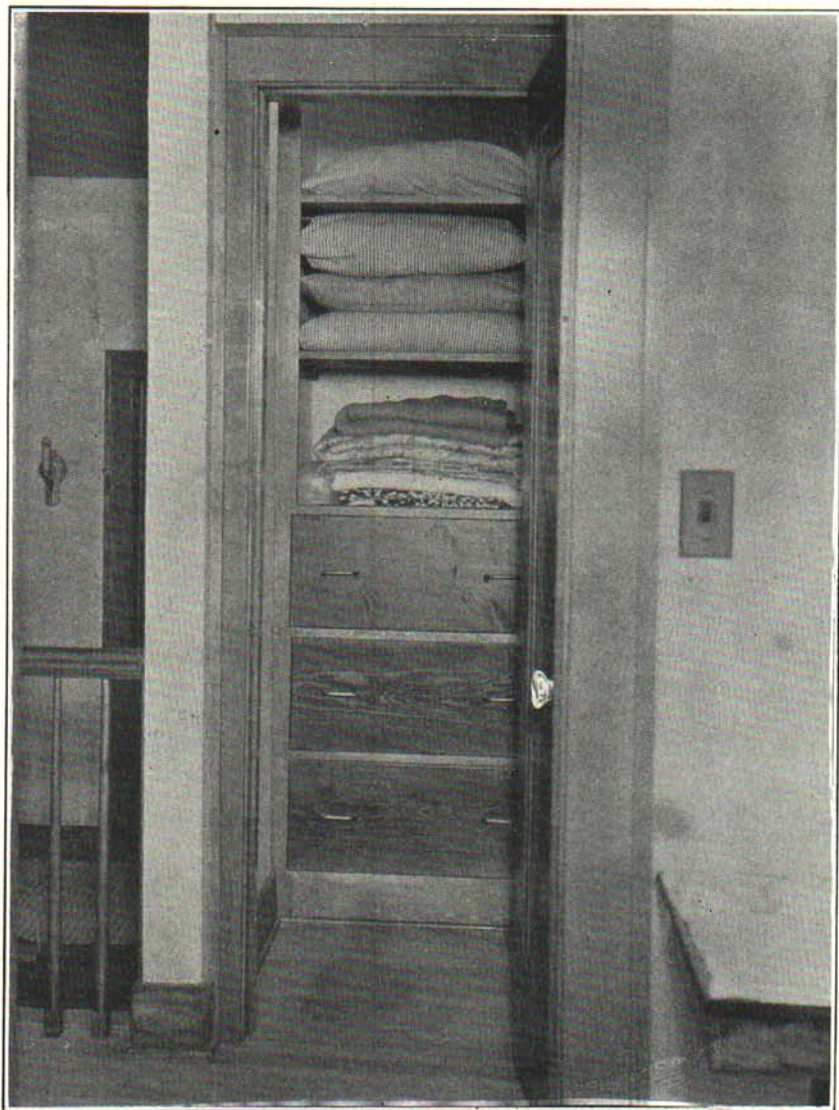


Fig. 12. A linen and bedding closet conveniently located in the central hallway of the second floor. The broad deep shelves and drawers are particularly convenient for storing bulky articles. There is a ceiling light fixture which operates by a pull-cord.

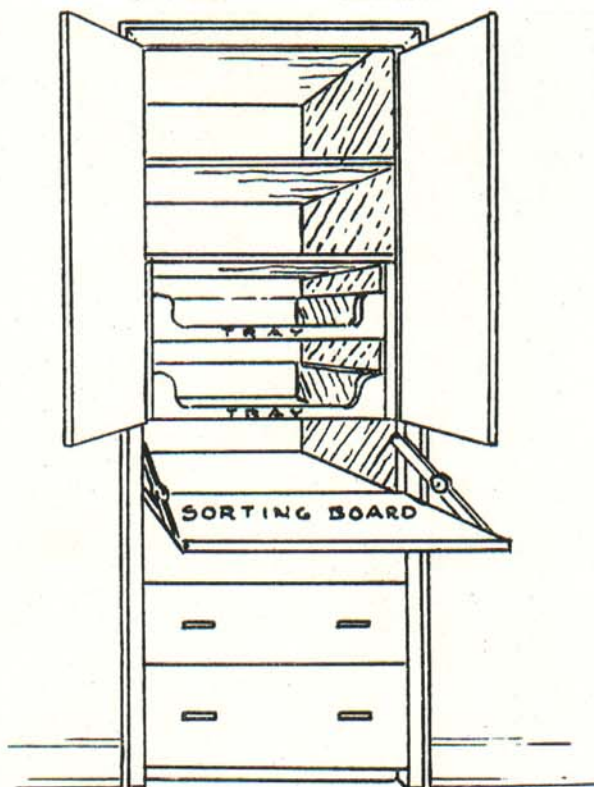


Fig. 13. Closet for bedding and linen. Note the hinged sorting board. The following dimensions are helpful details for such a cupboard:

A depth of 18 to 24 inches accommodates articles commonly stored in bedding closets, including sheets and spreads as they are usually folded after ironing. If bed coverings and pillows are kept elsewhere the closet may be only 14 inches in depth.

A desirable length is 36 inches. This accommodates most blankets and comforters (folded once) and pillows.

In determining distances between shelves or trays, allowance should be made for space at the top of a pile of articles as follows:

	Inches
Shelves at elbow height or above .....	4
Shelves below elbow height .....	6
Drawers or trays .....	2

These allowances are for space above articles in frequent use. No allowance is required for articles infrequently used. A desirable distance between shelves that are 15 to 18 inches wide is 10 inches. If shelves are 24 inches wide, they should be at least 12 inches apart. The sorting shelf may be from 30 to 40 inches from the floor.



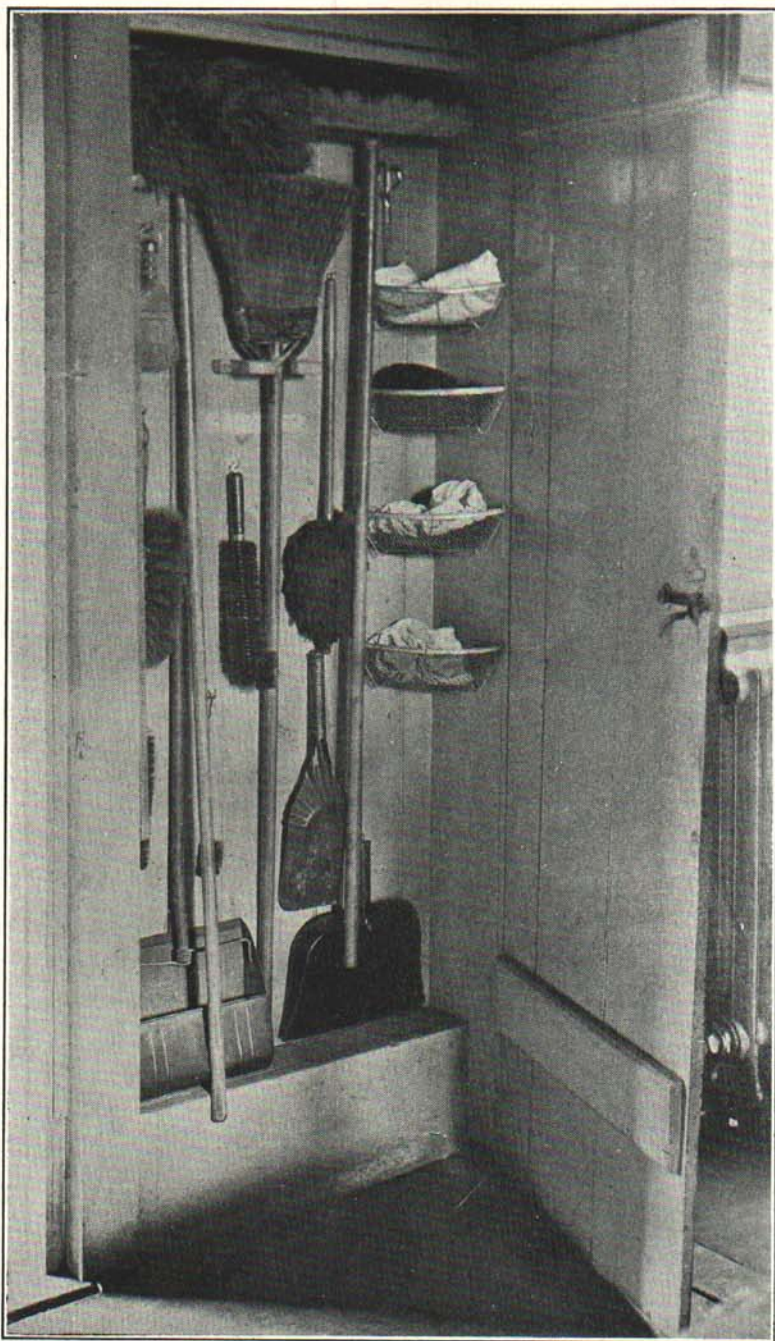


Fig. 14. Cleaning closet built in between studs. There is a hook for everything. The wire sink strainers make practical shelves for dusters.

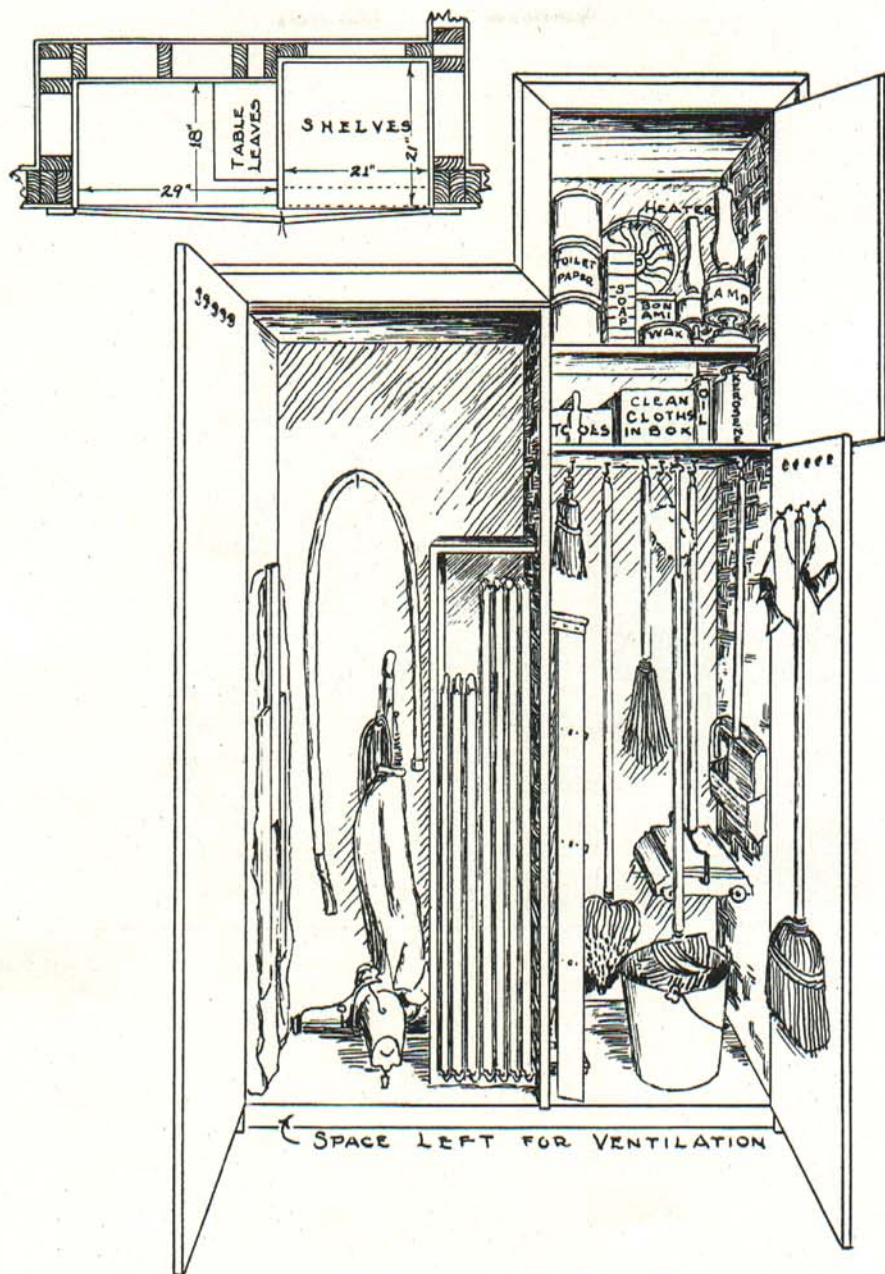


Fig. 15. Cleaning closet. Small diagram gives floor plan and measurements. Large diagram gives the details of inside arrangement of closet.



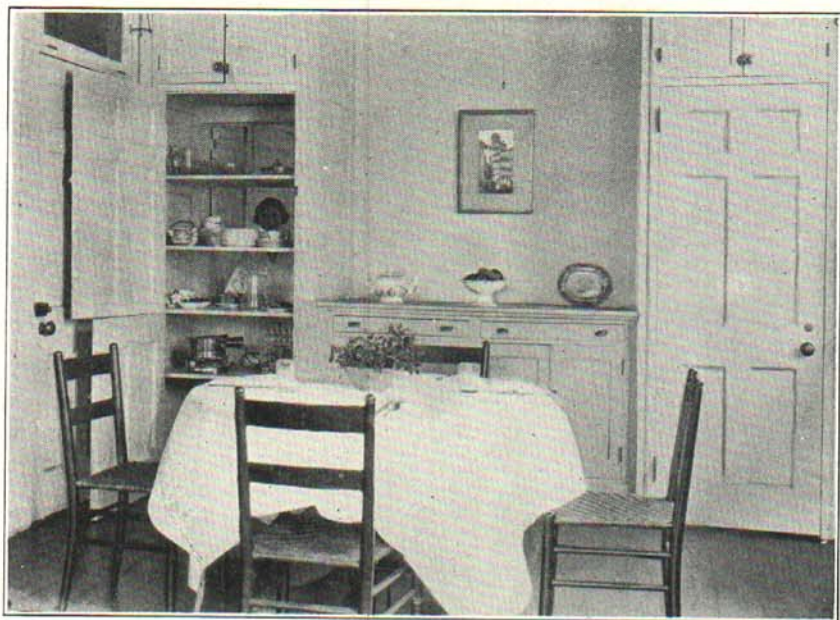


Fig. 16. An attractive built-in pass cupboard and buffet for the dining room. Though spacious it is not heavy looking as so many cupboards of this type are. Note the storage cupboards above the hall door and pass cupboard.





Fig. 17. A kitchen cabinet such as this one adds much to the efficiency and attractiveness of the kitchen. To increase storage space additional shelves should be added in the dish section of the cabinet. Note the rack in lower section for storing lids and pie tins in upright position. Vertical shelves might be used in place of this rack. The hooks for frequently used small articles facilitate ease in food preparation.

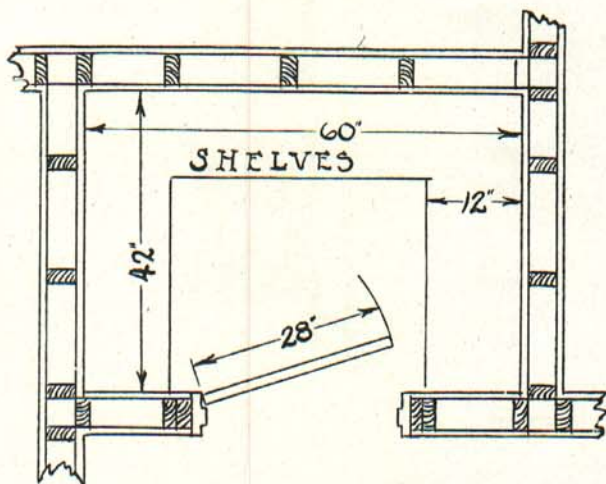


Fig. 18. Above is a possible floor plan of a storage room for canned goods. The following dimensions may also be used as a guide in constructing and equipping such a storage space:

Free floor space sufficient for a person to enter—24 by 24 inches, minimum.

Width of door—2 feet-8 inches if storage room is used for kegs, crates, etc. If room is used for canned goods only, 2 feet-4 inches is wide enough.

Width of shelving—Use 12-inch boards for shelves for small containers. This width accommodates two rows of glass jars or tin cans, or three rows of bottles or jelly glasses.

Wider shelves will be needed for stone jars and for shallow containers, such as crocks or flat pans. For such containers, 18 inches is a good width for shelves and platforms.

For estimating amount of shelving, the following is a good working basis:

Pint and quart glass jars—19 feet per 100 jars, stored two rows to the shelf.

Half-gallon glass jars—20 feet per 100 jars, stored two rows to the shelf.

Tin cans, No. 2½—9 feet per 100 cans, stacked two deep, and stored two rows to the shelf.

Pint glass bottles—9 feet per 100 bottles, stored three rows to the shelf.





Fig. 19. The arrangement pictured here for the storage of canned products protects them from light and dust by the addition of sliding doors to the shelves. If the groove is kept waxed the doors slide easily and do not require floor space when being opened.





Fig. 20. Wise utilization of a corner for open book shelves. It is a cheerful part of the room where any one would enjoy spending time reading. Note the excellent source of daylight.

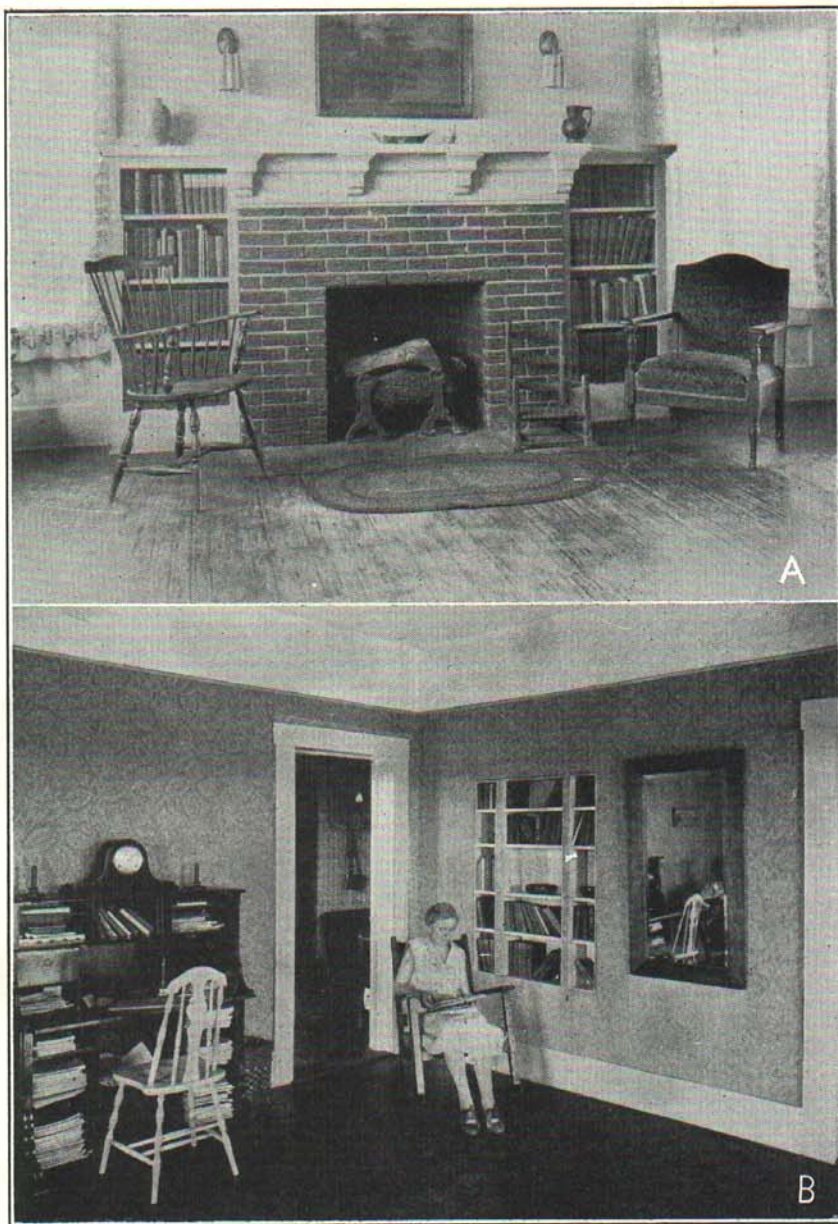


Fig. 21A. Open shelves for books on either side of the fireplace frequently invite people to take a few minutes for reading. The large windows insure good light during the day. Floor lamps or table lamps are needed to provide adequate light for night reading.

Fig. 21B. When the depth of the partition permits open shelves such as these can be built into the wall and make an additional storage space for books. Magazines are stored in lower part of desk.





Fig. 22. An inexpensive, yet attractive, and roomy space for both books and magazines. The shelves and racks could be easily constructed by an amateur carpenter.





Fig. 23. The combination of the ironing and sewing center has many advantages. Behind the ironing board are shelves for storing sewing supplies. The drawers below the ironing board can be used for sewing and ironing equipment. The electric sewing machine is placed in a hinged shelf. When the machine is not in use it can be removed and stored away and the shelf fastened up on the wall. This shelf would also be convenient for stacking clothes or holding the clothes basket when ironing. This unit has good light and ventilation, which are important for such a center.

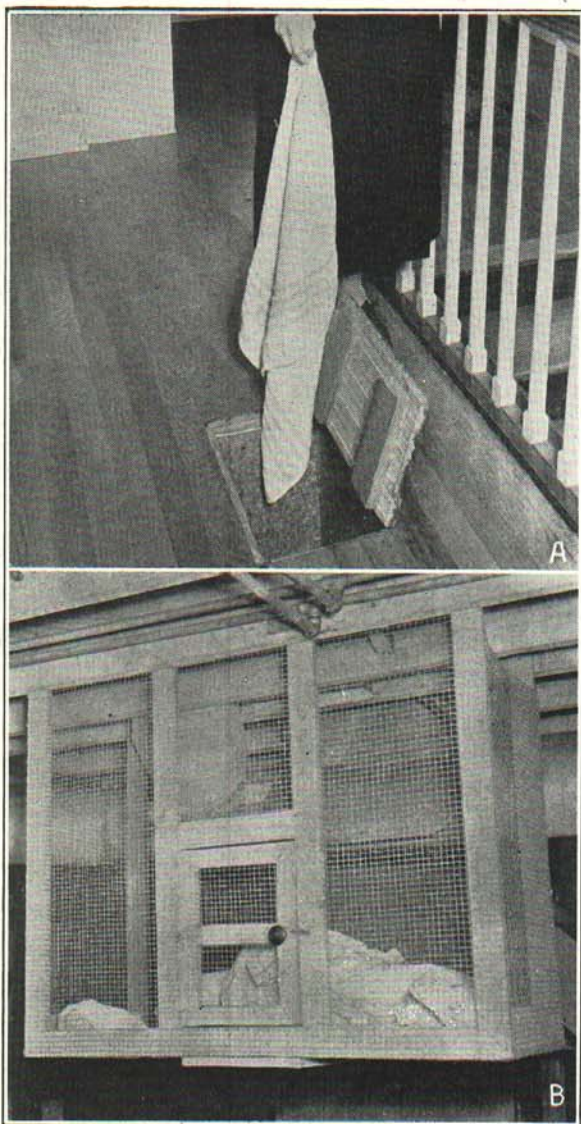


Fig. 24A. When no other opening for a clothes chute can be made the method used in illustration 24A will prove satisfactory. The small door is on hinges and though one must stoop to open it many trips to the basement are saved. A small rug can conceal the opening.

Fig. 24B. This device for catching the soiled clothes as they come down the chute is built of  $\frac{1}{4}$ -inch hardware cloth and 1 by 4 lumber. It is large enough to hold a fair sized washing, well-ventilated, and convenient to reach when removing the clothes. A sorting table placed directly under it eliminates unnecessary stooping while sorting the clothes.



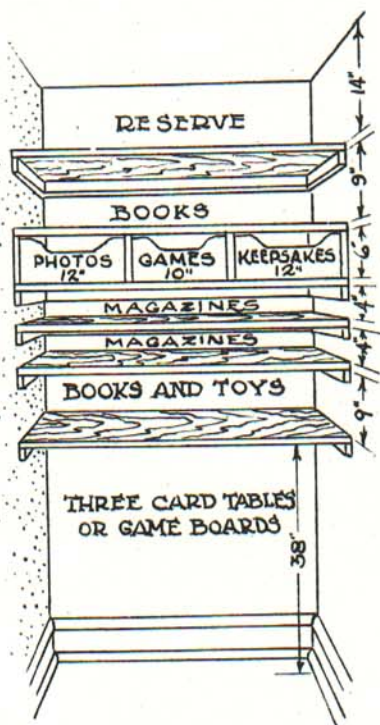


Fig. 25. The above plan gives dimensions and fittings for a cupboard or closet suitable for storing card tables, game boards and other recreation equipment.

Shelves are best if they are adjustable as to distances apart. A 2-inch interval is desirable. Shelves 12 inches wide are needed for music, records, magazines, large books and small musical instruments. Drawers are best for small keepsakes and photographs.

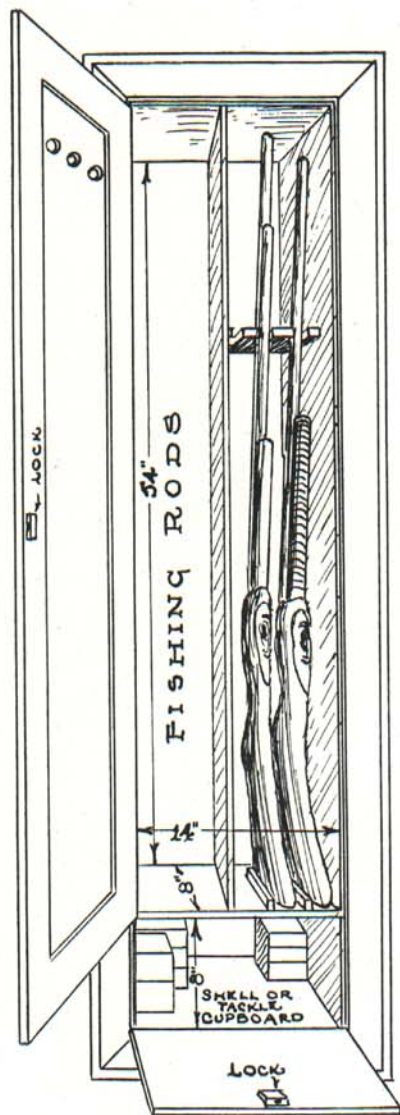


Fig. 26. Closet for guns, shells, and fishing tackle.



Acknowledgment is made to THE FARMER'S WIFE for Fig. 6, to the General Electric Co. for Fig. 5, to the Kellogg Foundation for Fig. 9, and to U. S. Dept. of Agriculture for figures 1, 11, 13, 14, 15, 16, 17, 18, 19, 20, 21A, 21B, 22, 23, 25, and 26.