

Register of Old Buildings
Macon County Historical Coordinating Council

Address: 356 W. Decatur St.

Date of original construction: 1888 or 1889.

Name of original owner: Andrew H. Mills.

History: The Andrew H. Mills home was completed in 1888 or 1889. The attached picture shows how it appeared before being remodeled, and the attached sketches show the floor plan of the first and second floors. It is a ten room house. On the main floor is a parlor, living room and dining room (arranged from south to north), a library west of the living room, a half-bath off the library, and a kitchen and pantry west of the dining room. Staircases ascend to the second floor from the west front entrance and from the southwest corner of the dining room.

On the second floor are five bedrooms and a bath room. A staircase leads to the attic from the north end of the main hall.

The house has a full basement with brick walls, which is partitioned into four rooms. The south two rooms have a brick floor, and the other two have a cement floor. (The fruit room has beautiful brown brick in it).

The attic is open from north to south, completely floored and plastered with a small storage room on each side and a closet.

The house sits on a rather large lot with a gravel drive extending the full length along the west edge to a garage on the alley. Many shrubs surround the house. A grape arbor covers the walk leading from the back steps to the alley. Landscaping includes a large red bud, two magnolias, a ginkgo tree, lilacs, and other flowering shrubs and perennials.

The house was remodeled about 1909, chiefly by the substitution of an L-shaped front porch on the south and east for the original two separate porches. It was perhaps at the same time the electric lights were installed to replace the original gas lights. This change may have come later.

The house was heated originally by a hot water heating system and a coal-fired furnace. About 1925 the furnace was converted to gas, but the original radiators are still in use.

The three fire places are unusually attractive. Those in the parlor and master bedroom are wood-burning, and the one in the living room has been converted to gas. Their ceramic tile borders are decorated with raised figures, and both first floor mantels have beautiful mirrors above them. All the woodwork in the house is remarkably well preserved. It is of oak with the exception of the parlor mantel which is a dark wood and handsome. The rooms have hard wood flooring throughout except perhaps for the kitchen and bath room. The open stairway in the front hall is especially attractive with its large newel post and oak spindles.

(Reverse side of sheet)

Present owner's name: Mrs. Andrew Hubert (Mary Eleanor) Mills.

The side door that leads into the living room has a window of small panes of leaded glass. Art glass windows formerly in the upper sashes of the living room bay, are no longer there, but the house is generally very sound and well-cared for.

(The preceding was written by De-Lloyd W. Keas in consultation with his wife, who is a granddaughter of the A. H. Mill's, and with her aunt-in-law, the present occupant, Mrs. A. Hubert (Mary-Eleanor) Mills.)

Submitted January 12th, 1974.

Data from Decatur City Directories:

- 1880 - A. H. Mills, Law student - Clokey & Mills.
Residence North & College.
- 1884 - A. H. Mills, 405 N. College - residence.
Mills Brothers, Attorneys
Isaac R. Mills
Andrew H. Mills
- 1887 - A. H. Mills, 405 N. College, residence.
- 1888 - No City Directory available.
- 1889 - 356 W. Decatur St., A. H. Mills, Ass't. States Attorney.

The property has remained in the family.

- 1888 or 1889 - A. H. Mills.
- to the pres- - A. Hubert Mills, son.
- ent. - Mrs. A. Hubert Mills, widow of son.

THE DECATUR REVIEW

MILLS PROPOSED FIFTEEN MEMBERS SUPREME COURT

2/4/1920 The Review

One of Four Proposals Advanced by Local Man at Constitutional Convention.

Attorney A. H. Mills, constitutional convention delegate, Tuesday introduced a proposal at the convention which provides a supreme court of fifteen members appointed by the governor and confirmed by the senate. The men would hold office for life. This was only one of the four proposals introduced by Mr. Mills. Summarized the four proposals are:

FOUR PROPOSALS

Mills—Providing that all lands, money or other property donated to schools and colleges, and proceeds thereof, shall be exempted from taxation.

Mills—Repealing section two or article six of the present constitution.

Mills—Providing that the property of the state, county, municipal corporation, agricultural and horticultural societies, schools, cemeteries, and religious institutions shall be exempted from taxation.

Mills—Providing for a supreme court of fifteen members appointed by the governor and confirmed by the senate, and to hold office for

356 West Decatur
1888

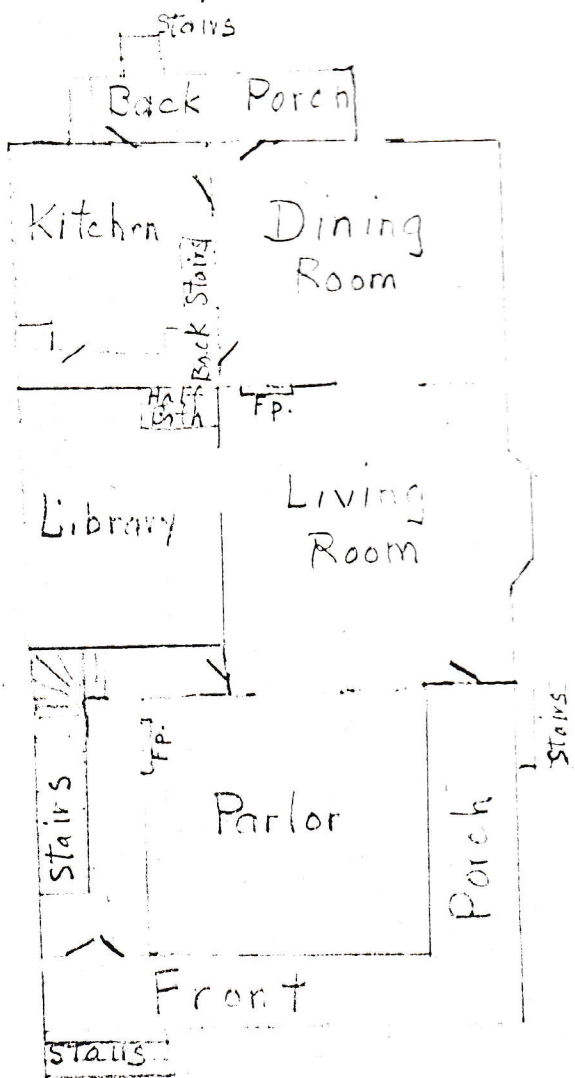


Photo, by Margaret M. Meyer, 1974

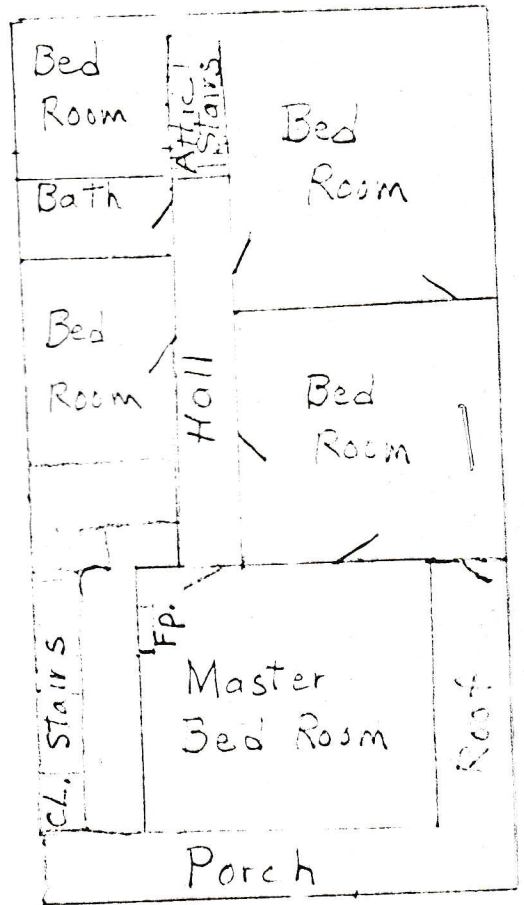
Andrew H. Mills Home.
356 W. Decatur St.
Decatur, Ill. 62522
(Prior to Remodeling)



Andrew H. Mills Home
356 W. Decatur St.
Decatur, Ill. 62522



First Floor



Second Floor

This is a very rough sketch, not to scale, and with many details omitted.

Jan. 1, 1971

Globe Trotting Doctor Has Returned to Open Office

Dr. Ralph G. Mills Latest Move Reunites Him With Mother and Brother

Sum
Sept. 4, 1938

Wanderings that began in Lincoln more than three decades ago, and which since then have taken him to the ends of the earth, at last have brought Dr. Ralph G. Mills back to the land of his youth and have reunited him with a mother and brother from whom he has been separated almost continuously for 35 years.

Dr. Mills, allergist, diagnostician and practitioner of internal medicine, came here Sept. 1 to open offices in the Standard Office building. His moving here reunites him with his mother, Mrs. Elizabeth E. Mills, and his brother, Hubert Mills, manager of the Decatur branch of the Chicago Motor club.

Born in Lincoln 57 years ago, Dr. Mills received his doctor's degree from Northwestern university. He was an interne in St. Luke's hospital, Chicago, for one year during parts of 1907 and 1908, and in the fall of the latter year went to Kangkai, Korea, to assist in building Kennedy hospital there. He served as head of the Kennedy hospital from 1908 until 1912.

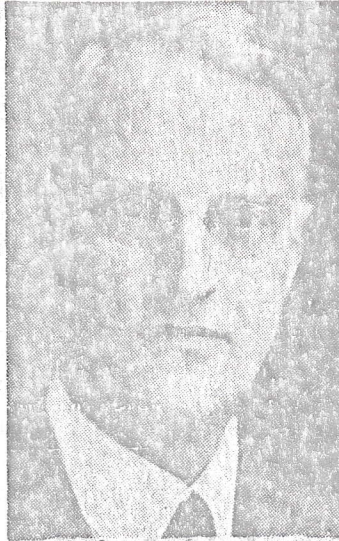
Introduced Lespedeza Plant

In 1912 Dr. Mills returned to the United States to do graduate work in the University of Chicago. A year later he returned to Korea as professor of pathology and bacteriology and director of the clinical laboratories and research department of Severance Union Medical college, Seoul. He remained there until 1918.

It was while he was stationed in Seoul that Dr. Mills sent to the Department of Agriculture at Washington, seeds of the lespedeza plant, which he found growing beside the sea, where it seemed to grow hardily in spite of heat and spray of the salt water.

Numerous agricultural and technical publications have cited Dr. Mills' introduction of lespedeza as one of the most important additions to soil regeneration ever made in America.

From 1918 to 1925 Dr. Mills was head of the department of pathology in Peking Union Medical college. In 1919 and 1920 he was instructor in pathology in Johns Hopkins university, and studied graduate medicine in the University of Chicago in 1924 and 1925. For an



DR. RALPH MILLS

other year he served as professor of pathology in the University of Colorado school of medicine, then entered the Mayo clinic, Rochester, Minn., as associate in pathologic anatomy and later became professor of pathology in the graduate school of the University of Minnesota.

Left Mayo in 1929

Dr. Mills left the Mayo clinic Oct. 1, 1929, to practise allergy, diagnosis and internal medicine in Fond du Lac, Wis., where he was a member of the staff of St. Agnes hospital.

Dr. Mills on June 1, 1908, married Mary E. Bumgarner, who was a member of the first regular class to be graduated by Millikin university. After leaving Millikin Mrs. Mills took nurse's training in the Woman's hospital, Chicago. While in the Orient with Dr. Mills she wrote Decatur friends and relatives many letters that were of unusual interest in which she told of conditions and customs in the East.

Dr. and Mrs. Mills have one son, who is a district manager of the Standard Oil Co. of Soerabaja, Java, and a daughter, Marion, who is connected with the Zoller Dental Research clinic in the University of Chicago.

1938-30-1437

About Town

The missionary to the Arctic who had to reverse the air conditioning of the next world when he found that the Eskimos all wanted to go to the warmest place, would have found very satisfactory material for illustration in the temperatures at Singapore. It has been over 153 degrees in the sun.

Roger Mills, grandson of Mrs. A. H. Mills of Decatur, and son of Ralph Mills of Fond du Lac Wis. has been living there for the last month trying to condition himself to the climate in order that he might be able to function as a representative of the Standard Oil company under whose direction he was sent there.

Roger and two boys from Kansas City took a course of training with the Standard Oil company in New York. The course was completed and they were to have a few days with their parents in the Middle West before sailing from San Francisco to the Orient to be gone four years.

In order to have as much time as possible at home, the boys decided to make the trip by airplane. There were only two seats available on the first plane out which were taken by the boys from Kansas City.

That plane cracked up near Pittsburgh and both boys lost their lives. Roger, taking the second plane, made his visit, continued by plane to Los Angeles, then up the coast to San Francisco from which port he embarked for Hong Kong.

He "weathered" in Hong Kong a few weeks to get used to the changed conditions of heat and humidity and then went to Singapore over 1,200 miles farther south.

Dr. Ralph Mills was for many years a medical missionary to Korea (now Chosen). Both Roger and his sister were born in the Orient and this has been quoted as a reason why Roger is so well fitted for his new position.

SINGAPORE is as far west of Korea as Omaha is west of Philadelphia, and as far south as Ecuador is south of New York. The weather is the thing that has to be beaten by the white man. Besides the heat there is the humidity. It rains 182 days of the year. The annual rainfall in one year was 129 inches or nearly a hundred inches more than falls in Decatur.

Roger is one of about 3,000 white people in a population of approximately 300,000, mostly Chinese.

L. C. T.

Jan. 3, 1938 About Town

SINGAPORE is not a "jungle city" where men go mad from loneliness. Whatever atmospheric magazine serial you have read dealing with lives of Englishmen and Americans lost among Orientals and wild animals may have led you to believe, a letter from Roger Mills would dispel your illusions.

Roger is the grandson of Mrs. A. R. Mills and the son of Dr. Ralph Mills whom many will remember as having gone to Korea some years ago as a medical missionary, returning to serve on the faculty of Colorado university and then on the staff of the Mayo Clinic.

Singapore, according to Roger, is in every way a desirable place in which to live in spite of its location upon the equator in the Orient.

"The temperature here has never yet been as hot as in Wisconsin in the summer. So far as I know it never has been higher than 90 degrees and often following a tropical storm may go as low as 70 but the humidity is such that I am perspiring heavily and must keep a magazine under my arm as I write."

Emphasizing the modern life he leads he writes: "I leave a modern flat in the morning after a conventional (British) breakfast, get into a modern automobile (that is if 1932 can be called modern), travel over modern highways regulated by policemen and traffic lights, park in front of a modern office building and go through the usual business routine of any large business firm.

"I start out to make my modern sales calls over the same roads in the office cars on up-to-date men who know the difference between a Diesel and a gasoline engine. I go back to the office and make a routine report upon the success of modern business methods in a modern world."

Or, he continues: "I may travel over a narrow gauge railroad to another city complete with a modern business section, recreation center and residence districts. Or I may go to a small town to find a government rest house serving good meals and offering modern living quarters. Perhaps sanitation is sometimes a little primitive without running water, but there is a bathroom with a Shanghai jar for bathing and clean, polished enamel basins and toilets."

Furthermore, he says that if he is looking for malaria he has to go out of his way to find it; that he can fly to London in 10 days; that he can go to market and buy fresh milk or even "San Francisco ice cream;" that he can enjoy sports at any one of four clubs; and that he can drop into the homes of British, American, German, Dutch, and even Chinese and Malay friends for a chat.

A happy New Year to you, Roger (though this may not reach you before Washington's birthday) for your glimpses of what you term "simply one corner of New Orleans inhabited by a different breed of people carrying on the functions of living in a very slightly different way."

L. C. T.

May 12, 1938 About Town

ROGER MILLS, son of Dr. and Mrs. Ralph Mills of Fond du Lac, Wis., and grandson of Mrs. Elizabeth E. Mills living on West Du street, has been transferred again from Singapore, a few miles north of the equator, to Batavia, the capital of Java, south of the equator.

We have known Roger since he was a boy in high school. He learned easily and was always ambitious to be doing something profitable with his time. His youth was spent in Korea, now a Japanese possession. There he learned the Chinese language which gave him a background for much he has had to contend with in languages and dialects since returning to the Orient.

His first assignment was to Hong Kong then on to Singapore and now to Java. Each location required the learning of a new language and numerous dialects. The Malay language of Singapore was corrupted by the Portuguese and in Java the same language is changed by Dutch occupation.

WE HAVE on the desk before us three lengthy letters telling of his experiences in the tropics, from business, social and curiosity standpoints. He even mentions the fact that he still is collecting stamps and that the Oriental countries are as progressive as ours in the matter of putting out "new issues."

Just before leaving Singapore, Roger made a trip to Bangkok, the capital of Siam. He tells of his trip as follows: "Where one might expect to find, under normal circumstances, the densest jungles, almost without exception clearings have been made, and planted in their stead, are orderly rows of rubber trees a mile on end or tall coconut palms also planted in rows and laid out as slick as an apple orchard, or there may be squat thick leaved pineapple plants looking for all the world, from a distance, like a thousand acres of corn judged on our proverbial Fourth of July standard."

"The most interesting aspect of the trip is to watch for the tiny little villages which one occasionally sees beside a small stream. The Chinese and Tamils both like very much like the native Malays; although they have each their own characteristics. The real Malay is always a cleanly individual as to his person. It is the usual sight to see him and his wife and about half of the children splashing water over themselves with shouts of laughter. The Tamils are a dirtier race of people as a whole, and more solitary when it comes to the matter of bathing. The Chinese would have a real honest to goodness heart attack if one even mentioned bathing to him."

"AS FAR as living quarters are concerned they all three seem able to adapt themselves to the universal cottage on stilts. Even the European has done that and it is not uncommon to see a modern type of house perched on top of columns of mortar and brick. The great majority of estate homes are so constructed."

Roger's experiences at the end of the railroad journey when he transferred to an Invicta custom built English automobile with a 250 horse power motor with the driver shifting to second gear when the car slowed to a few miles an hour, were something we would rather read about than take part in.

He says "I was scared blue. I thought I could drive but this lad would put me and American drivers to shame and we could do what he did with the usual run of American cars."

L. C. T.

ANDREW H. MILLS.

Andrew H. Mills, who has been a successful attorney of Decatur for three decades, is the senior member of the firm of Mills Brothers, one of the leading law concerns of the city. His birth occurred on a farm in Putnam county, Illinois, on the 6th of October, 1851, his parents being Eli R. and Elizabeth (Kimber) Mills, who were natives of Fayette county, Pennsylvania, and were married in Brownsville, that state. The father's natal year was 1809. During his active business career he acted as captain on a river steamboat which plied between Pittsburg and New Orleans and occasionally made the trip up the Illinois river to Peru. In his early manhood he arrived in Illinois and in Putnam county, this state, he acquired over one thousand acres of valuable land, his farm being situated near Magnolia. In connection with his duties as a steamboat captain he also supervised the operation of this property. Unto him and his wife were born the following children: Susan, the wife of R. N. West, of Rocky Ford, Colorado; Joseph and Thomas, who are deceased; Herman, who

died in infancy; Sarah, the wife of Fred M. Cox, of Decatur; Henry C., county judge of Putnam county, Illinois; Andrew H., of this review; Isaac R., who has passed away; and Eli R., who died in infancy.

Andrew H. Mills attended the district schools until 1870, when he entered Lincoln University at Lincoln, Illinois, completing the classical course in June, 1875. Subsequently he acted as a tutor in the university for two years, at the same time pursuing a post-graduate course. During the next three years he taught in the Waverly graded schools at Waverly, Illinois, reading law in the office of Clokey & Mills. The following June the firm of Mills Brothers was organized, the partners being Isaac R. Mills and his brother, Andrew H. This relationship was maintained until the 3d of July, 1904, when the senior partner was killed in a wreck on the Wabash Railway.

His son, Walter H. Mills, took his father's place in the firm of Mills Brothers, which has been continuously and successfully engaged in the general practice of law to the present time, having offices in the Millikin Bank building. The partners enjoy an enviable reputation as leading attorneys of Decatur and are accorded an extensive and important clientage. Much of the success which has attended Andrew H. Mills in his professional career is undoubtedly due to the fact that in no instance will he permit himself to go into court with a case unless he has absolute confidence in the justice of his client's cause. Basing his efforts on this principle, from which there are far too many lapses in professional ranks, it naturally follows that he seldom loses a case in whose support he is enlisted. He owns some land in Putnam county, Illinois, and also some in Shelby county. His home is at No. 356 West Decatur street, where he owns a comfortable residence.

On the 2d of January, 1877, Mr. Mills was united in marriage to Miss Elizabeth E. Bell, of Lincoln, Illinois, a daughter of Rev. William C. and Sarah A. (Doss) Bell, who were natives of Illinois and Kentucky respectively. The father is deceased but the mother still survives, making her home with our subject. Mrs. Mills was a classmate of her future husband in the university at Lincoln, the two young people pursuing the classical and master's courses together. Later she assisted him as teacher in the schools at Waverly. Unto Mr. and Mrs. Mills have been born five children. Ralph G., a medical missionary in Kangkai City, Korea, is to be transferred to the Severance Hospital at Seoul, where he will have charge of the department of pathology. Judith B. is the wife of Keach Bone, of Petersburg, Illinois. Helen E. and Harold E., twins, are at home. Andrew Hubert is the youngest member of the family.

Mr. Mills is a republican in politics and since attaining his majority has taken an active part in every campaign as a local speaker and otherwise. Both he and his wife are valued members of the First Presbyterian church, in the work of which they are actively and helpfully interested. Mr. Mills was superintendent of the Sunday school for eighteen years and is now teacher of the Sisterhood bible class of one hundred and ten members. He is now and for the past eight years has been chairman of the executive committee of the Illinois Sunday School Association and for a similar period has acted as the Illi-

nois member of the International Sunday School Association. As the of his deep interest in Sunday school affairs he has become keenly alive fact that the liquor traffic is a menace to the future welfare of our you takes an aggressive stand on the side of temperance, doing everything power to promote those measures and movements which tend to

From
Nelson's
History of
Macon County

How Korean Lespedeza Came Here

Dr. Ralph G. Mills of Decatur Found Plant on Shores of Yellow Sea, Sent Seed to U. S. to Develop Annual Demand for 4,200 Tons

By L. C. TROW

Dr. Ralph G. Mills, son of Mrs. Elizabeth E. Mills and brother of Hubert Mills, manager of the Decatur Motor Club, is given credit by the United States Department of Agriculture, in Circular No. 317 of the department, for introducing into the United States a forage crop which has become of great value to the farming interests of the country. The crop is known as Korean lespedeza.

In 1919, while Dr. Mills was at a summer resort, Sorai Beach, on the shores of the Yellow sea in Korea, he noticed a wild clover that was growing close enough to the shores of the sea to receive the splash of the spray from the salt water. In spite of this bath of salt water it was growing with creditable luxuriance. He noticed further that the cattle ate the clover greedily. He thought of the waste places in the southwestern part of the United States and also the alkaline wastes of the Dakotas, and figured that if the plant could stand so much salt it might be of use to the Department of agriculture.

With that in mind he sent specimens of the plant with the seeds and made that recommendation. The package was shifted around for a long time in the office of the Seed Plant Introduction division before it was finally opened by some one who had an order to "sort out and clean up the place." This was at a time when samples of alfalfa were coming into the office from all parts of the world

in such a volume that there was not time to give field trials to one half of the receipts. Finally the subordinate opened Dr. Mills' package, took one squirt at the contents, labeled it "Alfalfa," and tossed it into a pile with the rest that were eventually to get to the alfalfa specialist's desk. In this pile it reposed for at least a year until one cold winter's day the specialist himself decided to clean up some of the accumulated mess. One look was enough to tell the specialist that this small packet of seed was not alfalfa, but some kind of lespedeza. The sample was carefully laid aside and the next spring, three years after the original date of shipment, it was sown in a plot of ground at the government experimental farm at Arlington, Va.

There was enough of the seed to plant one row of less than a rod. The seed from this planting was saved and sown the next year and the next; the third year the harvest yielded 250 pounds of seed. From this first start seeds were distributed to the leading universities all over the country. The results have proved most favorable. Today over nine million pounds of seed are harvested annually.

Besides its value as a hay for winter feeding and late fall pasture, the lespedeza, being a legume, has great value as a nitrogen gatherer for nitrogen depleted soils. J. Sidney Cates, in the Country Gentleman, gives one of the outstanding stories on this subject which he had gathered from the superintendent of the agricultural

high school at Woodleaf, North Carolina. The story is as follows: "Four thousand acres had been planted to oats and seeded with the Korean lespedeza. The oat crop that year yielded 20 bushels to the acre. The land was put to oats again the next year, and the yield jumped to 40 bushels. Following the oat harvest the volunteer stand of lespedeza came along and made a heavy seed crop.

"The third year the land went back into oats which yielded 67 bushels to the acre. After the oat crop was taken off the land yielded two tons of lespedeza hay to the acre."

The plant is able to grow in very poor soil as well as the richest, in clay and rock soil where other forage plants will not grow, and also in places along ditches where erosion of the land is so great that other plants will wash out.

A. J. Pieters, principal agronomist in charge of the United States Bureau of Plant Industry, wrote to Dr. Mills, after finding his address in the Illinois Alumni News, and asked permission to use the doctor's picture in a book on lespedeza which he is writing. The photograph will be used among pictures of men who have made material contribution to the welfare of agriculture in the South. Mr. Pieters advised the doctor in his letter that the crop in the United States yielded to such an extent that 8,500,000 pounds of seed are sold in one year and that in the dry years the crop had proved a "life saver" all over Kentucky and Missouri.