

Dedication:

Denton E. Alexander

Teacher, Maize Geneticist, and Breeder

Robert J. Lambert

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Denton E. Alexander (Alex) was born on a farm near Potomac, Illinois, on December 18, 1917. He was farm-reared and educated in rural elementary and secondary schools in the area. From 1935 to 1937, Alex attended Illinois State Normal University in Normal, Illinois, receiving an elementary school teacher certificate. He taught in a rural school, near his home, for two years. He attended the University of Illinois Urbana–Champaign from 1939 to 1941 receiving the B.S. degree in Agriculture.

During the early months of World War II, Alex was an aircraft engine instructor in the U.S. Army Air Corps (1941–1943). From 1943 to 1947, he was involved with mass spectrographic separation of uranium isotopes at the Manhattan Project, Oak Ridge, Tennessee. He returned to Illinois in 1947 and entered graduate school at the University of Illinois, Urbana–Champaign and received the Ph.D. in 1950. In 1950 to 1951, he served as a postdoctoral Fellow with Marcus M. Rhoades in the Botany Department. He joined the Department of Agronomy faculty at the University of Illinois Urbana–Champaign, as an instructor in 1951 and attained the rank of Professor of Plant Genetics and Breeding in 1963.

Alex's early tenure in the Department of Agronomy was devoted to organizing and teaching the first undergraduate introductory course in genetics in the College of Agriculture. This course was cross-listed with Animal Science, Dairy Science, Horticulture and for a time, Veterinary