

## Fred L. Mahannah

Agnes Samuelson

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Provide yourself with a bound book or journal which allows sufficient space for your entries. The individual entry should be at least five lines to be of value, and best if it will allow at least fifteen.

Plan a regular time for making your entries. Some will like the evening, as do most people, including the Adamses and Charles Mason. Others will prefer the morning, like the present Secretary of War, Henry L. Stimson. Choose for yourself, but be consistent.

Do not permit a missed day or days, or even a week to bring a feeling of defeat. It is the continuity that counts, keep your eye on that essential to success. An average between a dozen and fifteen entries a month is good.

Make it fun. Keep on the watch for the significant item, the illustrative detail . . . the housewife who bought a hundred pounds of sugar in the "sugar scare" in the fall of 1939, etc. Include personalities, give your own opinions. Enjoy your diary.

And Lastly, preserve it. Keep it in a regular place, keep it secure. Other people will accept the value you yourself place upon it. If your diary is worth making it is worth keeping. See that it is safely provided for in the family, or arrange that it be eventually placed with some public or private depository, such as the Iowa Department of History and Archives. Remember, you can place whatever restrictions you wish upon its keeping.

But in any event, LET'S KEEP A DIARY!

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## **FRED L. MAHANNAH**

### ***Assistant Curator***

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Whatever he did, he did with his might. These words describe Fred L. Mahannah. Life was serious business to him worthy of all the thought, energy, and devotion at his command. Service to him meant working and not dreaming, deeds and not wishful thinking.

A few months before his passing he remarked: "I am going to work as long as I can put one foot in front of the other." And that is just what happened. He died in harness. He had attended a meeting of the Iowa Association of Local Historical Societies on Saturday preceding his sudden death on Sunday October 12, 1941. On that very morning he was planning further improvements in the archives.

Cornell College at Mount Vernon was his Alma Mater. He taught in the North English high school, served as superintendent of Rockwell Public Schools and Cerro Gordo County schools. He was the first inspector of normal training high schools having been appointed to that position in 1911 by A. M. Deyoe, Superintendent of Public Instruction.

Largely through his leadership as president of the Iowa State Teachers Association, the Better Iowa Schools Commission was organized. This commission was responsible for the enactment of legislation relating to high school tuition, consolidated schools, normal training high schools, and other measures which were advanced steps in the direction of greater educational opportunity for country children.

Later he became superintendent of the Iowa Soldiers' Orphans' Home at Davenport. He then returned to public school administration as superintendent of the Monticello Public Schools. He left that position in 1927 to become Deputy Superintendent of Public Instruction. After twelve years of notable service in that office he became Assistant Curator of the Iowa Historical Department.

It was in his capacity of Deputy Superintendent of Public Instruction that we came to know and appreciate the strength of his personality and the caliber of his services. He was first of all a thorough student well versed in school law. He soon became a valuable source of help to legislators, state officers, school boards, and the general public in drafting and interpreting school laws. He was an authority in this field.

He assembled a library in the office of the Department of Public Instruction of all the volumes dealing with school law in our state and spent much time in research work in

connection with the history of many of our present statutes. He compiled a new edition of school laws or a supplement and brought the volumes up-to-date after each session of the legislature.

It is for others to comment concerning the character of his work in the state historical department of Iowa. With his zeal for classification, his flair for orderliness, and his ability to organize details into working machinery, his ingenuity in getting things done, his imagination and clarity of understanding as to what should be done and his appreciation of the importance of records in state government must have made his service unique during his short term as Assistant Curator.

He envisioned the time when the archives could be properly housed and administered in the new proposed state office building. He had gone so far as to draw up plans for new housing arrangements for the archives after consultation with expert authorities over the country. More than once he explained these blueprints to his friends and impressed all of us with their significance.

The intensity and sincerity of his service always impressed the people with whom he came in contact. One might disagree with him but no one ever had any reason to question his motives. He attacked the problems of life with directness and fortitude, never with avoidance. He depended on facts and not on expediencies. His was not the type of service which secures inches of publicity. It was inconspicuous as it was thorough. We need more public servants who are willing to find themselves by losing themselves in the cause they serve.

AGNES SAMUELSON, State Superintendent  
of Public Instruction 1927-1939, Secretary  
Iowa State Teachers Association  
1939—

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