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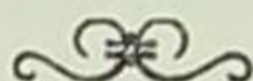
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Bruce E. Mahan

The ranks of those still living who were growing up in Bedford around 1900 have thinned with the passing years. Only a few, perhaps, can recall the eager, ambitious lad who worked in his father's grocery store on weekends and sold candy between acts at Steele's Opera House. Those who do recall Bruce E. Mahan in his formative years remember him as an enthusiastic youth with boundless energy who was clearly marked as one destined to achieve success.

Born on a farm in Taylor County on November 25, 1890, Bruce E. Mahan was the son of Thomas S. and Luvira Titus Mahan. When he was eight years old, his parents moved into Bedford where his father acquired a grocery store and busied himself in other activities. Young Bruce graduated from Bedford Grade School in 1905 and from Bedford High School, as class valedictorian, in 1909. His outstanding record won a four-year scholarship to the State University of Iowa.

In the fall of 1909, Bruce left his parents and well-wishers at the Burlington depot in Bedford and set out for Iowa City to enroll in the University of Iowa. He quickly distinguished himself in history and English, receiving his B. A. from the University in 1914. After four years as superintendent at Cascade, Mahan returned to Iowa City in 1918 to continue his graduate studies, serving as assistant to the principal in Iowa City High School during the next five years. He received his M.A. degree in history and education in 1920.

It was at this point that the career of Bruce Mahan made a sharp turn in a new direction. While working on his doctorate in history, Mahan was named an associate editor for the State Historical Society of Iowa. The youthful editor subsequently was invited to become lecturer in history at the University of Iowa, giving the course in Iowa history. He held this dual position from 1923 to 1929.

Mahan won his Ph.D. in history from the University in 1927, meanwhile demonstrating his capacity as a scholar with his book *Old Fort Crawford and the Frontier*, published by the State Historical Society of Iowa in 1926. This book, coupled with his numerous contributions to the State Historical Society's monthly and quarterly publications, testify to the high degree of excellence attained by Bruce Mahan.

His unusual training and background, combined

with his dynamic personality, admirably equipped Mahan for the new position. He quickly became a leader on the University campus and one of the best-known personalities in Iowa. In addition, he became recognized throughout the Nation in his profession, serving as President of the National University Extension Association in 1938-1939. He was a member of the Film Council of America and a member of the Board of Trustees of the Federal Radio Education Committee. He also served as Chairman of Visual Education and Motion Pictures and Director of Motion Picture Previews for the National Congress of Parents and Teachers. Throughout the thirty-two years he headed up the Extension Division—Director from 1929-1947 and Dean from 1947-1961—Bruce E. Mahan was an efficient and competent administrator, a man with ideas whose training, energy, and ability allowed him to transform these ideas into realities.

Few alumni have demonstrated greater loyalty to the University of Iowa than Bruce Mahan. On April 14, 1914, he was married to Edna Rohret of Cosgrove, a graduate of the University of Iowa. Their two sons, Louis Frank and Thomas Patrick, are graduates of the University College of Engineering and College of Medicine respectively. The Mahans as a family can boast seven degrees from the University of Iowa.

Upon his retirement from the University of

Iowa in 1961, Dean Mahan, at the urging of his friends, entered the field of politics, serving two terms in the House of Representatives of the General Assembly. But his interest in his first love—the writing of history—could not be denied, and he continued to contribute a series of reminiscences to *The Bedford Times-Press* which won widespread local acclaim.

As older readers join with Bruce Mahan in looking back nostalgically over a span of some sixty years, they will share with him the golden treasures of their own youthtime when Iowa was still very young and the future held much in store for all of them. For life in Bedford at the turn of the century was re-enacted in a thousand Iowa communities—large and small—and is the common heritage of us all.

WILLIAM J. PETERSEN