

## Frank A. Day – Newspaper Man

Frank A. Day was a very well respected individual known for his enthusiasm for his city, his county, his state, his principles, and his friends. His presence had a significant impact on Martin County and Minnesota in the late 1800s and early 1900s.

Frank Day was born in Attica, Wisconsin, in 1853. His youth was spent on a Wisconsin farm and his education was meager. He credits the McGuffey Reader for much of his education.

His family moved to Hamilton County, Iowa, after the Civil War where he learned the printing trade in the office of the *Freeman* in Webster City. He was paid fifty cents a week, and he soon showed his aptitude for journalism.

Day worked for a few months in Hampton, Iowa, and then, at age eighteen, he went on his own as a journalist and partner at the *Vindicator-Republican* in Estherville, Iowa. Early in 1874, Mr. Day left Estherville and decided upon Fairmont as the next stop in his newspaper career. This would soon become significant for Mr. Day as well as Fairmont, Martin County, and the state of Minnesota.

In June of 1874, he met with Col. C. H. Bullard, Sheriff of Martin County. Bullard had planned to start a newspaper. Mr. Day was said to have asked Bullard if he wanted a partner. Initially declining Day's offer, Bullard soon changed his mind and caught up with him at noon the next day at the tavern owned by Cornelius Personius in Tenhassen where Day was having lunch. Bullard told Day that he had changed his mind and wanted him as a partner. They shook hands, rode to Mankato the following day to purchase equipment, and thus began a six year partnership. Incidentally, Mr. Day is said to have chuckled at the fact that while in Mankato he and Bullard were arrested for horse stealing. It was soon straightened out as a case of mistaken identity.

Frank Day was first and foremost a newspaper man; however, he enjoyed politics, which he referred to as "A great game." Frank Day had a very lengthy political career, which can be divided into two stages. Initially, he rose to prominence as a leading republican, serving fifteen years as chairman of the Martin County Republican Committee. He also served several terms on the Republican State Executive Committee, and was a delegate at large to

two Republican National Conventions. He was elected in 1878 to his first legislative position as a member of the lower house from Martin County.

His state senate career began in the 1880s when he was elected senator from Martin and Jackson counties. He was reelected twice, and was president pro tem of the senate when Governor Knute Nelson was elected to the United States Senate. This moved David M. Clough to governor, and Senator Day was advanced to lieutenant governor.

Day appeared quite upwardly mobile in the Republican Party; however, he and several other republican leaders of the time left the party in 1896 to follow William J. Bryan. Soon, Day became a full fledged democrat. He was a leading democratic proponent in his newspaper, and he reentered politics in 1904 to assume the management of John A. Johnson's campaign, a fellow editor and close friend. Johnson was elected after a spectacular fight, and in turn made Mr. Day his private secretary. Day continued as Democratic State Committee Chairman and Johnson's private secretary until Johnson's death in 1909.

Following Governor Johnson's death, Mr. Day returned to private life. He briefly went to Montana, founding the Missoula Daily Sentinel; however, this turned out to be an unfavorable business venture. He soon sold his interests and returned to Fairmont as the editor of the Fairmont Sentinel.

In 1926 Day was again elected to the state senate from Martin and Watonwan counties. He was preparing for the next legislative session at the time of his death.

The *Martin County Sentinel* was founded by Frank A. Day July 3, 1874. His writings were widely read and commented on frequently. He was at the editorial helm from then until his death in July of 1928. It was said that his daily editorials had a "kick" and a "Dayesque" twist to them that made them out of the ordinary, very interesting reading, and they always "said something." In addition, he wrote the "Lake Breeze" column which appeared in the Monday edition of that time. He served one term as president of the Minnesota Editorial Association and helped to organize the Second District Editorial Association.

Frank Day was known as a man of the people. He talked to everyone and was equally comfortable visiting prisoners in jail, which he visited and

wished them a Merry Christmas during the holiday season, as well as conversing with local and state leaders in business and politics. He was perhaps best known throughout the state as a vibrant supporter and promoter of Fairmont and all of Martin County.