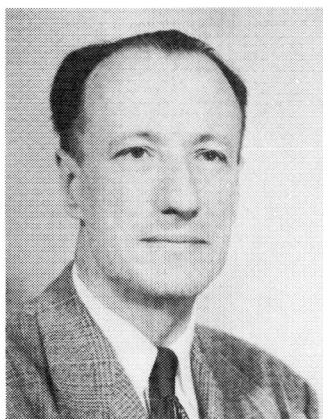


# Memorial to Joseph John Fahey

## 1901–1980

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Joseph John Fahey, "Joe" to his many friends, chemist and mineralogist of the U.S. Geological Survey for nearly half a century, died on June 29, 1980, after a long illness.

He was born in Messina, New York, July 30, 1901, but moved to Washington, D.C., with his family when very young. He attended Gonzaga High School, a strict and difficult school, where he was trained in a rigorous classics curriculum. He then studied engineering and chemistry at Catholic University and George Washington University.

From 1922 to 1927, Fahey was laboratory assistant at the U.S. Bureau of Public Roads, then transferred to the U.S. Geological Survey as a junior chemist. He rapidly mastered the science and art of rock analysis

and became one of its acknowledged masters. Long before the availability of the electron microprobe, he devised methods for the determination of traces of mercury, far more sensitive and accurate than any then known.

From W. T. Schaller and C. S. Ross he learned to use the petrographic microscope and became an enthusiastic and expert practitioner. He described seventeen new minerals, determining both their chemical compositions and their optical properties; every one of them is still regarded as valid. His bibliography contains 66 titles, nearly all collaborative efforts. Joe was easy to talk to and eager to help solve problems, so that many sought his help and few failed to get it. Some notion of the scope of his work is given by the appended selective bibliography. Among other accomplishments not listed, there may be mentioned the identification of the extensive trona deposits in Wyoming, the invention of a better means of extinguishing magnesium incendiary bombs, and helping to devise a simple method to prevent the disintegration of the concrete foundation of the Pentagon building. Joe was awarded the Distinguished Service Medal of the Department of Interior in 1970. The mineral faheyite was named for him in 1953.

Fahey was a Fellow of the Geological Society of America and the Mineralogical Society of America, a member of four foreign mineralogical societies, the Geochemical Society, the Geological Society of Washington, and the Chemical Society of Washington, which he served as president.

He was married to Gertrude Lucas who died in 1978. He is survived by 2 sons and 2 daughters, 22 grandchildren, and 4 great-grandchildren. The Fahey home was a warm, loving environment for family and friends. Joe and Gertrude liked to have big gatherings in their home; these inevitably ended with everyone clustered around the piano with Joe playing all the old favorite songs. We shall not soon see his like again.

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