

John Denison Baldwin 1809-1883

The description of Mr. Baldwin in the historical archives of the U. S. House of Representatives serves as a brief introduction:

BALDWIN, John Denison, a Representative from Massachusetts; born in North Stonington, Conn., September 28, 1809; moved with his parents to Chenango County, N.Y., in 1816; returned to North Stonington in 1823; attended schools in Chenango County, N.Y., and in North Stonington, Conn.; studied law for a time but discontinued the study for theology; was graduated from the Yale Divinity School in 1834; was licensed to preach and assumed Congregational pastorates in West Woodstock, Conn., 1834-1837, in North Branford 1838-1845, and in North Killingly 1846-1849; member of the State house of representatives 1847-1852; engaged in newspaper work in Hartford, Conn., 1849-1852, in Boston, Mass., 1852-1859, and was connected with the Worcester Spy from 1859 until his death; delegate to the Republican National Convention in 1860; elected as a Republican to the Thirty-eighth, Thirty-ninth, and Fortieth Congresses (March 4, 1863-March 3, 1869); was not a candidate for reelection in 1868; resumed his newspaper interests; died in Worcester, Mass., July 8, 1883; interment in the Rural Cemetery.

Source: history.house.gov/People/Detail/8891
or bioguide.congress.gov/scripts/biodisplay.pl?index=B000091

Baldwin left a strong mark on Worcester through his operation of the Worcester *Daily Spy* between 1859 and 1880, when he semi-retired and his two sons took control of the newspaper. Both the *Spy* and the *Evening Gazette* published substantial editorials, as well as obituary notices for him upon his death on July 8, 1883.

Charles Nutt ***History of Worcester and Its People***
vol. IV, pp. 752-754

Daily Spy **Editorial**, Jul-09-1883 (by sons John S. and Charles)
Obituary notice, Jul-09-1883

Evening Gazette **Editorial**, Jul-09-1883 (Charles Doe)
Obituary notice, Jul-09-1883



Source: wikipedia

Charles Nutt, *History of Worcester and Its People*, v. IV, pp.752-54:

p. 752

HON. JOHN DENISON BALDWIN, Editor and publisher of the Worcester "Daily Spy" for many years, congressman, was born in North Stonington, Connecticut, September 28, 1809, and died in Worcester, July 8, 1883, son of Daniel and Hannah (Stanton) Baldwin.

He traced his ancestry to Richard Baldwin, who held the manor of Dunbridge in Aston-Clinton, Buckinghamshire, England, early in the sixteenth century. Sylvester Baldwin, the American immigrant, was of the fourth generation, but he died on the voyage, and his son John, born in England in 1635, settled in Stonington, Connecticut, in 1664. In New London and vicinity the family lived for five generations. Among the ancestors of Mr. Baldwin were many other of the pioneers of Connecticut. All of his ancestry were of the original English stock. Among other notable ancestors were Captain John Mason, the Indian fighter, Rev. Peter Hobart, minister of Hingham, Massachusetts, Colonel George Denison, Thomas Stanton.

When John Denison Baldwin was seven years old the family moved from his

native town to Chenango county, New York, at that time a wilderness, and for seven years he labored with his father and others of the family in the task of clearing the farm. There he learned to shoot straight and to love nature and he grew to manhood strong and vigorous in physique. He returned with the family to Stonington when he was fourteen, attended school there and studied diligently for three years. At the age of seventeen he began to teach school. He entered Yale College, where he pursued his course from time to time as his other duties permitted. He did not graduate in regular course. Beginning the study of law, he soon abandoned it and took up theology. For a short time he preached in a Methodist church, but later entered the Divinity School of Yale College and graduated in 1834. In 1839 he was granted the degree of Master of Arts at Yale, out of the regular course. He was ordained, September 3, 1834, and was pastor of the church at West Woodstock, Connecticut, until July 25, 1837. From January 17, 1838, to May, 1845, he was pastor of the church at North Branford, Connecticut, and from April 29, 1846, to September 17, 1849, at North Killingly. He made his mark as a preacher, and took an active part in public life. He was elected to the General Assembly of the State of Connecticut by the Free Soil party, and as chairman of the committee on education reported a bill to establish state normal schools, a bill that was enacted in 1850, and he was one of the first board of trustees. The site was selected at New Britain. While in the Legislature he became more than ever interested in the Free Soil party and the anti-slavery movement, and sought a larger field to advance the reforms in which he was interested. Turning to journalism he became editor of the "Charter Oak," a Free Soil newspaper (afterward "The Republican,") of Hartford. The work was congenial and he exerted a powerful influence through his editorials. In 1852 he became one of the owners of the "Daily Commonwealth" of Boston, and its editor and manager. At the time of the formation of the Republican party he gave the movement vigorous support, and was intimately associated in politics with Sumner, Wilson, Claflin, Howe, Alley, Spooner, Theodore Parker and other leaders.

Charles Nutt, *History of Worcester and Its People*, v. IV

p. 753

Mr. Baldwin bought the Cambridge "Chronicle" and edited it for a few months. In 1859 he bought the Worcester "Spy," and under his management, assisted by his two sons, John S. and Charles C. Baldwin, it grew rapidly in prestige and circulation. The Civil War wrought great changes in the newspaper business; the telegraph came into daily use and comparatively dull and stagnant dailies became real newspapers. The "Spy" prospered, and a brick building was erected opposite the City Hall. A history of this newspaper is given elsewhere. Mr. Baldwin continued as editor to the time of his death. He was a journalist of the old school, but a sagacious business man, progressive, keen, able and upright. He left the management of the counting room and mechanical plant largely to his sons, and devoted himself to editing the paper. He was a clear and forcible writer with high ideals, and a leader of public opinion.

To further the principles that he advocated as an editor he entered public life. In 1850, the year after he came to Worcester, he was elected delegate to the Republican National Convention, and it was upon his suggestion that Hannibal Hamlin, of Maine, was nominated for vice-president. In 1862 he was elected to Congress by a large majority; re-elected in 1864 and in 1868 by even greater majorities. In Congress he served on the committees on expenditures, on public buildings, on the District of Columbia, on printing and on the library. He spoke frequently and some of his speeches were published. He spoke March 5, 1864, on state sovereignty and treason, the house being in committee of the whole, and he made a brilliant speech, April 7, 1866, on Congress and Reconstruction, and another, January 11, 1868, in reply to James Brooks, of New York, on the negro race. He worked in vain for an international copyright act.

Mr. Baldwin will be remembered not only for his prominence in Congress, not only as one of the great editors of the Civil War period and later, but as an author. In his autobiography written during his last years, he confessed that he had never known a time when it was not a pleasure for him to study. While he was a preacher he acquired the French and German languages and made a special study of archaeology. He was one of the first to make portraits by the daguerreotype process and some of his work has been preserved. His book on "Prehistoric Nations" was published by Harper Bros. in 1869. His work on "Ancient America" was published in 1872 and had a large sale. In 1880 he published his genealogy of the descendants of John Baldwin, of Stonington, Connecticut. In 1881, in collaboration with Rev. William Clifton, he published a Record of the Descendants of Captain George Denison, of Stonington, and in 1882 he published a partial genealogy of the descendants of Thomas Stanton, of Stonington. Early in life he was inclined

Charles Nutt, *History of Worcester and Its People*, v. IV

p. 754

to poetry, and in 1847 published a collection of his poems entitled, "The Story of Raymond Hill and Other Poems." He was a member of the American Oriental Society, of the New England Historic-Genealogical Society, of the American Antiquarian Society, and an honorary member of the Worcester Society of Antiquity.

One who knew him well wrote at the time of his death :

"Mr. Baldwin was a man of imposing stature, much exceeding six feet in height, of large frame and great muscular strength. In his early manhood, his massive head, erect figure, and stalwart proportions, indicative of activity and power, gave an aspect of uncommon force and dignity. His mind like his body was large and vigorous. His political sagacity was highly esteemed by those who had long associated with him. Though so much of a recluse, especially in later years, he knew human nature well and could foresee with great accuracy the political effect of any measure or event. His election forecasts were in general singularly near the truth, and his judgment of men, their character, capabilities and popularity was rarely at fault. His advice in political matters was often sought and highly valued. It was delivered confidently, but without arrogance, and more than once those who had refused to be guided by it at an important juncture had cause to regret that it had been rejected. As a writer Mr. Baldwin was direct, clear and forcible. His style had no ornament. It was sometimes rugged, but always strong and sincere. His wide range of reading and retentive memory gave him a vast store of facts, and his knowledge of political history was especially large and accurate. But though his profession of journalism kept his mind occupied much with such subjects, his favorite pursuit was the study of antiquity, both the dim past of which authentic history gives only hints and suggestions, and the less remote but almost as difficult field of family genalogy, to which most of his later years, while his health allowed, was devoted."

Mr. Baldwin married, April 3, 1832, Lemira Hathaway, daughter of Captain Ebenezer and Betsey (Crane) Hathaway. They had four children: 1. Ellen Francis, born in Dighton, January 19, 1833, died in New Orleans, March, 1854. 2. John Stanton (see biography). 3. Charles Clinton, born in Woodstock, Connecticut, May 4, 1835 (see biography). 4. Mary Jane, born at Woodstock, May 6, 1836, died in Hartford, Connecticut, December 29, 1850.

From *The Spy*:

While at the state capital he first became interested in newspaper work, and from that time he turned his attention from the ministry to journalism. He succeeded William H. Burleigh in the publication of the free soil newspaper, printed in Hartford, which became known as the Republican. In 1852 he became editor and publisher and part owner of the Daily Commonwealth of Boston, which was subsequently known as the Daily Telegraph, and was afterward merged in the grand consolidation of several newspapers with the Traveller.

In 1859 Mr. Baldwin came to Worcester, with his two sons, and purchased the Spy, then notwithstanding its long, influential and honorable history, not in a flourishing condition. His diligent and skillful management restored its prosperity and gave to it a character and influence that were speedily recognized.

Mr. Baldwin was a member of the republican national convention in 1860, and it was at his suggestion that Mr. Hamlin was nominated as vice president. His reputation as a sagacious political counsellor, and his services to the party by his pen and otherwise, suggested his nomination for congress in 1862, and he was elected by a large majority a representative in the thirty-eighth congress, and by a still greater preponderance of votes was re-elected to the thirty-ninth and fortieth. During his service in congress he was a

Mr. Baldwin was a member of the republican national convention in 1860, and it was at his suggestion that Mr. Hamlin was nominated as vice president. His reputation as a sagacious political counsellor, and his services to the party by his pen and otherwise, suggested his nomination for congress in 1862, and he was elected by a large majority a representative in the thirty-eighth congress, and by a still greater preponderance of votes was re-elected to the thirty-ninth and fortieth. During his service in congress he was a

member of the committees on expenditures, on public buildings, on the District of Columbia, on printing, and on the library. He was not a frequent speaker, but diligent and thorough in his committee work and in the service of his constituents. In his last term, as a member of the committee on the library, he attacked the difficult problem of international copyright, and his report and speeches on that subject attracted much attention. The exciting political events of that time distracted the attention of congress from that subject, and his bill made no progress, but his name will always be associated with the history of the agitation for the rights of authors. One of his speeches in this congress on certain phases of the reconstruction problem was circulated by the republican committee as a campaign document.

While attending conscientiously to his congressional duties, Mr. Baldwin found nothing else in Washington so attractive as the library of congress. His special line of research was ancient history and archæology, and many volumes on these subjects were added to the library at his suggestion. The fruit of his studies in this direction were given to the public soon after his retirement from congress in a volume entitled "Prehistoric Nations; or Inquiries Concerning Some of the Great Peoples and Civilizations of Antiquity, and their Probable Relations to a still Older Civilization of the Ethiopians or Cushites of Arabia." The title gives a clue to his archæological theories, which were worked out with great labor and research, as well as much ingenious and original speculation. This book was not his first venture in authorship, nor was it the last.

(continues)

He had published in his youth a volume of verses, entitled "Raymond Hill, and Other Poems," and some years after leaving congress he gave the result of his labors in another portion of the archaeological field of "Ancient America, in Notes on American Archaeology," its purpose being to give a summary of what is known of American antiquities, with some thoughts and suggestions relative to their significance. This volume grew out of a series of papers originally prepared for the Spy. It has had a large circulation and much influence in directing attention to the interesting and mysterious remains of the earlier races on this continent.

After Mr. Baldwin's retirement from congress he was occupied chiefly with his newspaper work, to which he gave uncommon industry and devotion. Until the failure of his health about three years ago he was very rarely absent from his desk. His sedentary habits and neglect of physical exercise no doubt impaired his power of resistance to disease and made his life shorter than his naturally robust constitution seemed to promise. Mr. Baldwin married in 1832 Lemira Hathaway of Dighton, Massachusetts, who, with two of their four children, survives him. Two daughters died before the removal of the family to Worcester. The two sons have been associated with their father in the ownership and conduct of the Spy.

Mr. Baldwin was a man of imposing stature, much exceeding six feet in height, of large frame and great muscular strength. In his early manhood, his massive head, erect figure and stalwart proportions, indicative of activity and power, gave him an aspect of uncommon force and dignity. His mind, like his body, was large and vigorous. His political sagacity was highly esteemed by those who had long been associated with him. Though so much of a recluse, especially in his later years, he knew human nature well, and could foresee with great accuracy the political effect of any measure or event. His election forecasts were in general singularly near the truth, and his judgment of men, their character, capabilities and popularity was rarely at fault. His advice in political matters was often sought and was highly valued. It was delivered confidently but without arrogance, and more than once those who had refused to be guided by it at an important juncture had cause to regret that it had been rejected. As a writer Mr. Baldwin was direct, clear and forcible. His style had no ornament. It was sometimes rugged, but always strong and sincere. His wide range of reading and retentive memory gave him a vast store of facts, and his knowledge of political history was especially large and accurate. But though his profession of journalism kept his mind occupied much with such subjects, his favorite pursuit was the study of antiquity, both the dim past of which authentic history gives only hints and suggestions, and the less remote, but almost as difficult, field of family genealogy to which most of his latest years, while his health allowed, was devoted.

THE SPY SHOULD HAVE THE EYE OF ARGUS; HE IS HONORABLE
IF HE DO BUT LOOK TO THE WELFARE OF THE COMMONWEALTH.

WORCESTER.

MONDAY, JULY 9, 1883.

JOHN DENISON BALDWIN.

A laborious, honorable and useful life ended for this world in the death, yesterday morning, of Mr. John D. Baldwin. With the exception of Mr. C. C. Hazewell of the Boston Traveller, he was, we believe, the oldest editor in the state who has been in continuous work. His work on the Boston press as the editor of the Daily Commonwealth dates back nearly thirty years, and as a free soil editor in Hartford he began ten years earlier. Few persons realize how much literary composition continuous editorial writing for that length of time implies. There is much difference in the quality of work, of course, and in the facility of execution, but it is work even to those who take it most lightly. Mr. Baldwin was not a rapid writer. His task was done by steady, patient labor, and it was always faithfully done. He learned to work early in life. The necessity was upon him, as it is upon most of our countrymen, to earn his own support, and if possible to do something more. He was ambitious not only to get on in the world, but to do good in it, and throughout his life he did with zeal and diligence that which for the time seemed to be the work which he could do best, and which most needed to be done. In his early life his duty seemed to be in the Christian ministry, and he was a faithful pastor. Then a field of usefulness, for which he was conscious of a natural aptitude, appeared in political journalism, not then so profitable a business as it has since become, and in the phase of politics, which alone had attractions for him, an unpromising, almost desperate enterprise in a pecuniary sense, because even in New England at that time almost all the powerful influences of society were leagued against agitation of the slavery question. But earnest and resolute men were determined that it should be agitated, and through the press, at whatever cost of thankless labor and pecuniary loss. Mr. Baldwin was one of the pioneers of free soil journalism, and the rewards of his later years were not too great for the sacrifices of his earlier life.

John Denison Baldwin

Worcester Daily Spy
Jul-09-1883

His editorial work was really the work of his life. He did it well, and took pleasure in it. How faithfully, with what scrupulous care and pains none know so well as those who have been his associates. No doubt he delighted more in the more recondite pursuits of historical research and speculation. His "Pre-historic Nations" and "Ancient America" do not profess to be the result of original investigation among the primitive sources of knowledge on those subjects. They are in part compilations of material not readily accessible to most readers, and in part the author's speculations, ingenious and plausible in the main, not presented as fact, but as probable conjectures, which, if accepted, would explain much that is obscure, mysterious, or, taken literally, impossible. But these were, after all, diversions amid the serious business of life, and so were his genealogical inquiries, in which he took great satisfaction. It is as the editor and publisher of a newspaper that he did the chief work of his life, and in that work he was prudent, skillful, diligent, not venturesome, yet not unenterprising. In the arrangement and make-up of New England newspapers of today there are some features due to his invention.

It would be scarcely becoming in us, holding to him the relation which we do, to speak at length of his personal character and private virtues. But it cannot be amiss to say that he was faithful to every obligation, that he earned the respect of all who knew him, and the affection of those whose close relations gave them the opportunity of learning how much of kindly and generous feeling lay behind his generally reserved manner, that none know so well as those who were daily and intimately associated with him the vigor of his understanding and the soundness of his heart.

From *The Evening Gazette*:

Mr. Baldwin had a strength of physique and of character, which made him sufficiently independent of the opinions of others, yet he was personally amiable and above ordinary prejudices. He was straightforward and conscientious and always carried out his own notions of duty. He was a strict party man, partly, perhaps from naturally conservative tendencies in his character, after his affiliations were carried out his own notions of duty. He was a strict party man, partly, perhaps from naturally conservative tendencies in his character, after his affiliations were once formed. It is to be considered, however, that in 1861-63, there was no other course open to a Republican journal than the most complete and unvarying support of the administration, which represented the government and the Union of the states. There was no alternative; no half-way measure; no such thing as independence possible. Mr. Baldwin's Washington experiences confirmed a habit into which he had fallen as a matter of course. His private life was pure and of great simplicity and his family relations of the tenderest kind. His death can hardly be said to make a void in a community from which he had been to all intents and purposes so long removed, but he will be remembered with kindness and a very deep respect.

Personally, the relations between Mr. Baldwin and the present editor of the *Gazette* have been friendly, although they met but rarely. The editor of this paper well remembers and takes pleasure now in recalling that one of his first visitors, upon establishing himself in this office in 1869, was the senior editor of the *Spy*, who climbed with some difficulty the stairway, to extend the right hand of fellowship to one who was a stranger to him and whom he might have regarded as an interloper in his own field. It is probable that while Mr. Baldwin recognized a certain competition as possible, he realized that the time had arrived for an afternoon newspaper, run on business principles, to become firmly planted, and create a practically distinct

John Denison Baldwin
1809 - 1883

place for itself. He was not a man to be greatly disturbed by notions of business opposition, for he had in his day seen too many mushroom enterprises spring up in the morning, as it were, only to be cut down at night. At all events, the good understanding then established has been always maintained. Such rivalry as has existed between the two papers has been fair and above-board, and while we have often felt called upon to differ from the editorial opinions of the *Spy*, we have recognized the honesty with of personal abuse and chaff between the editors of papers published in the same city, in the old days so common in this country, has, we need hardly say, become old-fashioned and disreputable. Editors do not now lay aside their characters as gentlemen when they take up their pens. They write with ink and no longer with gall. The late Mr. Baldwin was never tempted to use gall, we should imagine, except when he was dealing with the enemies of his country.

OBITUARY.

Death of Hon. John D. Baldwin.

We are pained to announce the death of Hon. John Dennison Baldwin, senior proprietor and editor of the *Spy*, which occurred at his residence on Oxford Street, early yesterday morning at the age of 74 years. He has been an invalid for several years, but his condition for the last few weeks has been quite as comfortable as usual, up to Saturday, when he seemed overcome by the heat and did not rise in the morning as usual. He failed rapidly during the day, and died soon after midnight, apparently from congestion of the lungs.

Mr. Baldwin was a native of North Stonington, Conn., and a descendant of a family who settled at New Haven in 1638. His boyhood was spent in Chenango County, New York, where his father removed. The family returned to North Stonington in 1823, where the young man labored hard to secure an education. He taught school at 17 years of age, and at the same time held his place as a student at Yale. He did not graduate, but in 1839 Yale gave him the honorary degree of A. M. After leaving college he preached for a while to a Methodist congregation and afterwards studied divinity at Yale. He was for 15 years settled over Congregational churches in West Woodstock, North Branford, and North Killingly, Conn. While pastor of the church at North Killingly he was elected to the Legislature of Connecticut, and as Chairman of the Committee on Education he was the father of the State Normal School. He was influential also in organizing the Free Soil party in the Legislature.

At about this time he began his newspaper career, succeeding William H. Burleigh in publishing a Free Soil paper, *The Republican*, at Hartford. In 1852 he became editor and publisher and part owner of the *Daily Commonwealth* of Boston, which was subsequently known as the *Daily Telegraph*, and was afterward merged in the grand consolidation of several newspapers with the *Traveller*. In 1859 he came to Worcester, with his two sons, and purchased the *Spy*, then notwithstanding its long, influential and honorable history, not in a flourishing condition. His diligent and skillful management restored its prosperity and gave to it a character and influence that were speedily recognized.

Mr. Baldwin was a member of the Republican National Convention in 1860, and it was at his suggestion that Mr. Hamlin was nominated as Vice-President. He was nominated and elected to Congress from this district in 1862, and served three full terms. During his service in Congress he was a member of the Committee on Expenditures, on Public Buildings, on the District of Columbia, on Printing, and on the Library. He was not a frequent speaker, but diligent and thorough in his committee work and in the service of his constituents. In his last term, as a member of the Committee on the Library, he attacked the difficult problem of international copyright, and his report and speeches on that subject attracted much attention.

While attending conscientiously to his Congressional duties, Mr. Baldwin found nothing else in Washington so attractive as the Library of Congress. His special line of research was

John Denison Baldwin

Evening Gazette, Jul-09-1883

ancient history and archaeology, and many volumes on these subjects were added to the library at his suggestion. The fruit of his studies in this direction were given to the public soon after his retirement from Congress in a volume entitled "Prehistoric Nations; or Inquiries Concerning Some of the Great Peoples and Civilizations of Antiquity, and their Probable Relations to a still Older Civilization of the Ethiopians or Cushites of Arabia." The title gives a clue to his archaeological theories, which were worked out with great labor and research, as well as much ingenious and original speculation. He had published in his youth a volume of verses, entitled "Raymond Hill, and Other Poems," and some years after leaving Congress he gave the result of his labors in another portion of the archaeological field of "Ancient America, in Notes on American Archaeology," its purpose being to give a summary of what is known of American antiquities, with some thoughts and suggestions relative to their significance.

After Mr. Baldwin's retirement from Congress he was occupied chiefly with newspaper work, to which he gave uncommon industry and devotion. Until the failure of his health about three years ago he was very rarely absent from his desk. His sedentary habits and neglect of physical exercise no doubt impaired his power of resistance to disease and made his life shorter than his naturally robust constitution seemed to promise. Mr. Baldwin married in 1832 Lemira Hathaway of Dighton, Mass., who, with two of their four children, survives him. Two daughters died before the removal of the family to Worcester. The two sons, John S. and Charles C., have been associated with their father in the ownership and conduct of the *Spy*.

As a writer Mr. Baldwin was direct, clear and forcible. His style had no ornament. It was sometimes rugged, but always strong and sincere. His wide range of reading and retentive memory gave him a vast store of facts, and his knowledge of political history was especially large and accurate. But though his profession of journalism kept his mind occupied much with such subjects, his favorite pursuit was the study of antiquity, both the dim past of which authentic history gives only hints and suggestions, and the less remote, but almost as difficult, field of family genealogy to which most of his latest years, while his health allowed, was devoted.

The *Spy* of this morning says of him, editorially: His archaeological studies "were, after all, diversions amid the serious business of life, and so were his genealogical inquiries, in which he took great satisfaction. It is as the editor and publisher of a newspaper that he did the chief work of his life, and in that work he was prudent, skillful, diligent, not venturesome, yet not unenterprising. In the arrangement and make-up of New England newspapers of to-day there are some features due to his invention. . . . It can not be amiss to say that he was faithful to every obligation, that he earned the respect of all who knew him, and the affection of those whose close relations gave them the opportunity of learning how much of kindly and generous feeling lay behind his generally reserved manner, that none know so well as those who were daily and intimately associated with him the vigor of his understanding and the soundness of his heart."

The funeral will be at Mr. Baldwin's late residence, to-morrow afternoon at 3 o'clock. Rev. Dr. Cutler will officiate. The burial will be private, at Rural Cemetery.