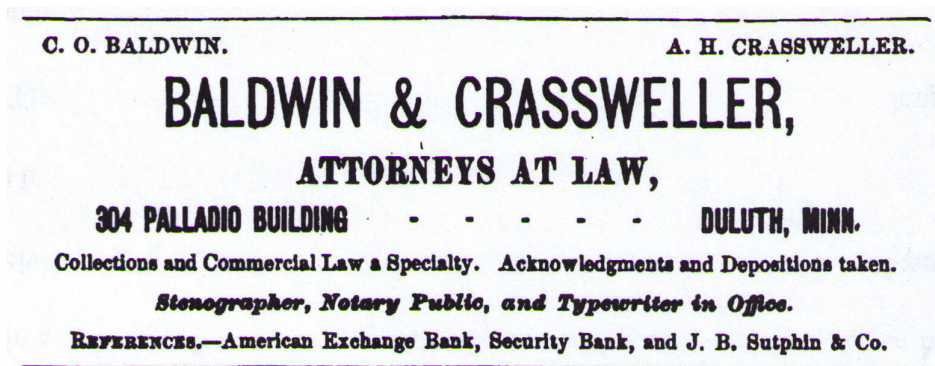


Charles O. Baldwin

(February 1, 1861 - September 10, 1932)

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Charles Oliver Baldwin arrived in Duluth, Minnesota, in May 1887. He was twenty-six years old, a college graduate and former school teacher. After briefly reading law with Seward D. Allen and Charles M. Parkhurst, he was admitted to the bar on October 14th of that year.¹ He continued working at Allen & Parkhurst until 1889, when the firm was dissolved.² From 1890 to 1893 he practiced with Arthur H. Crassweller.³ Their business card appeared in *Hubbell's Legal Directory* in 1892:⁴



When that firm ended, he formed another association with Seward Allen. In 1894, his brother Albert joined the firm, and it became Allen, Baldwin & Baldwin. Three years later Allen left, leaving the Baldwins to carry on.⁵

¹ 1 *Roll of Attorneys: Supreme Court, State of Minnesota, 1858-1970* 21 (State Law Library, 2011); see also his obituary in the *Duluth Herald*, September 12, 1932; curiously the subsequently transcribed "text" of the Rolls erroneously lists his brother Albert as being admitted on October 14, 1887; however, upon close examination, it is Charles Baldwin's signature that appears in the "image" of the original page 21 of the Roll.

² 5 *The Shield* 139 (October 1889). It is the publication of Theta Delta Chi Fraternity. Allen was a member of the 1878 class while Parkhurst was admitted in 1880.

³ *Little Sketches of Big Folks in Minnesota* 94 (1907).

⁴ *Hubbell's Legal Directory*, Appendix 97 (1892).

⁵ 5 *The American Lawyer* 281 (June 1897) ("Duluth, Minn.—Allen, Baldwin & Baldwin have dissolved partnership, Mr. Allen retiring. C. O. and Albert Baldwin will continue under the firm name of Baldwin & Baldwin.").

In 1898, C. O. Baldwin, as he was known, entered politics. Running on a fusion ticket, with Democratic-Populist endorsements and the support of local newspapers,⁶ he was elected state senator from the Fifty-first District, and served in the 31st and 32nd Legislatures, 1899-1903.⁷ In 1902, members of

⁶ *The Cook County Herald* (Grand Marais) September 10, 1898, at 3 ("The fusion forces of the Fifty-first legislative district placed a strong ticket in the field at the convention held in Duluth on the 2nd inst. The ticket is headed by Charles O. Baldwin, the well known Duluth attorney, in whom the people of this district have a candidate they should be proud of. His well known ability and character recommend him as a candidate whose election to the state senate will be a credit to this district."); *The Labor World* (Duluth), September 24, 1898, at 3 ("The nomination of Charles O. Baldwin by the democratic, silver republican and populist forces to represent the Fifty first district in the senate is a particularly wise selection. Mr. Baldwin is an able lawyer and a gentlemen whose integrity is unquestioned. He is not the tool of the Minnesota Iron company or any other corporation; he realizes the needs of St. Louis county and has the ability, honesty and energy to see that measures beneficial to this section are presented and passed. He is an old resident of Duluth, stands high in his profession and if he is elected—and he will be—the county will have at least one representative in whom entire confidence can be placed."); *Duluth Evening Herald*, November 3, 1898, at 4 ("Duluth needs strong, reliable men in the state legislature, and with Charles O. Baldwin in the senate they would feel certain that this section of the state was well and ably represented. Mr. Baldwin is well known throughout the district he seeks to represent, and he is generally recognized as superior in every way to his opponent. Mr. Searle, who was nominated as the candidate for the iron companies, has nothing to recommend him to the consideration of the voters. He is comparatively a new comer to Duluth, and the only record he has made since coming here is president of the Marine bank, which went into bankruptcy and swallowed up the savings of many people who could ill afford the loss which they experienced.").

The *Duluth Evening Herald* welcomed his election:

The election of Charles O. Baldwin to the state senate by the voters of the Fifty-first district is very gratifying. Mr. Baldwin will be a very creditable representative of the district, and the people will have no reason to regret the choice they made last Tuesday. Mr. Baldwin accepted the fusion nomination after much urging, as he feared he could not spare the time from his professional duties to conduct a winning campaign in a district that two years ago gave a heavy Republican majority, but the many proffers of support from men of all political beliefs caused him to make the race. Once in the field, he made a careful canvass, and the result is his election by a large majority. Mr. Baldwin is a man of good ability a pleasing speaker and one who makes friends wherever he goes, and The Herald feels sure that he will be one of the most popular and influential members of the senate.

Duluth Evening Herald, November 11, 1898, at 4 (reprinted in *The Cook County Herald*, November 19, 1898, at 3.

⁷ The Fifty-first district covered Lake and Cook Counties the first, second, and fourth wards of Duluth, and other parts of St. Louis County. The results of the election on November 3, 1898, were:

Frank E. Searle.....1,675
Charles O. Baldwin (Dem-Pop).....1,898

the Duluth delegation nominated him for governor at the Democratic Party convention in St. Paul, but his name was withdrawn before the first ballot was completed, permitting Leonard A. Rosing to be nominated by acclamation.⁸ He did not seek re-election to the Senate in 1902 and never sought elective office again. In 1902, his photograph appeared in *Men of Minnesota*:⁹



1899 *Blue Book*, at 516. The party affiliation of Searle is not listed; however, he was a Republican when he served two terms in the state house, 1889-1893. Baldwin's biographical sketch in the *Blue Book* provides:

CHARLES O. BALDWIN (Democrat) was born in Perry, Ill., in 1862 (sic). He graduated from the Illinois College at Jacksonville, Ill., in 1886; came to Minnesota May 31, 1887. Mr. Baldwin is a practicing attorney at law at Duluth, Minn., and is not married.

Id. at 613. Baldwin was born on February 1, 1861, according to his death certificate (No. 1932-MN-026574).

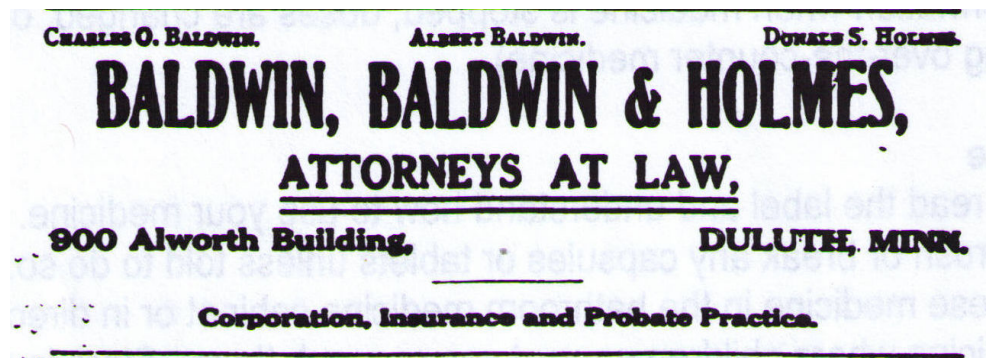
⁸ *St. Paul Daily Globe*, June 26, 1902, at 1, 3.

⁹ *Men of Minnesota* 179 (1902).

The following year, now out of politics, he placed this profile in *The Book of Minnesota*:

CHARLES O. BALDWIN, of Duluth, was born in Perry, Illinois, in 1862 (sic). He graduated from the Illinois College at Jacksonville, Illinois, in 1886, and came to Minnesota May 31, 1887, locating in Duluth, where he immediately took front rank at the bar and walked into a magnificent private practice. Such a man as Mr. Baldwin naturally became interested in politics, and almost as a matter of course he was sent to the legislature as senator from the Fifty-first district. He is one of the ablest and most popular attorneys of the Zenith city, and as a legislator served his district and the State most creditably.¹⁰

After his stint in politics, he seems to have become consumed by the law, devoting his energy to his growing firm, serving its clients, rarely seeking publicity.¹¹ He was very successful.¹² After his graduation from the University of Minnesota Law School in 1912, Donald Holmes joined the firm, which was renamed. Its business card appeared in *the Lawyers' and Bankers' Directory* in 1915:¹³



¹⁰ James G. Nelson, ed., *The Book of Minnesota* 49 (1903). It is subtitled "Development, Resources, Enterprise and Beauty of the North Star State." A fragile copy is available at the Historical Society.

¹¹ In its account of his funeral, the *Duluth News-Tribune* noted his generosity and modesty: "His benefactions were unobtrusive, but numerous and varied." September 12, 1932, at 3. There are no reports of his service on local boards or commissions.

¹² A Probate Court proceeding disclosed that C. O. Baldwin bequeathed \$1,000 to a Duluth Orphanage, \$5,000 to Illinois College, his alma mater, \$500 each to four employees of his law firm, and the rest in trust for his sister and two brothers. *Duluth News-Tribune*, September 24, 1932 ("File Baldwin \$226,850 Estate"); see also, *Duluth News-Tribune*, September 12, 1932, at 3.

¹³ *Lawyers' and Bankers' Directory for 1915* 1344 (July 1915).

Detailed profiles of the firm's members, which now included Robert L. Mayall, appeared in *The American Bar* in 1921, with a list of its corporate clients:¹⁴

BALDWIN, BALDWIN, HOLMES & MAYALL

General civil practice. Firm consists of: Charles O. Baldwin, Albert Baldwin, Donald S. Holmes, Robert L. Mayall.

Charles O. Baldwin, b. Perry, Ill., Feb. 1, 1861; a. to bar, 1887, Minn.; grad. Ill. College, B.A., 1886; legal

ed. law office, Allen & Parkhurst, Duluth, Minn. State Senator, Minn., 1899-1903. Mem. Eleventh Judicial Dist. (Pres.), and Minn. State Bar Ass'ns.

Albert Baldwin, b. Perry, Ill., Feb. 19, 1865; a. to bar, 1895, Minn.; grad. Ill. College, B.A., 1890; legal ed. law office, Allen & Baldwin, Duluth. Mem. Duluth, Minn. State, and American Bar Ass'ns.

Donald S. Holmes, b. Fergus Falls, Minn., Sept. 20, 1888; a. to bar, 1912, Minn.; ed. pub. schs., Duluth; grad. Univ. of Minn.; legal ed. Univ. of Wis., LL.B., 1912. 1st Lieut., Inftry., U. S. Army. Mem. Sigma Chi, Phi Delta Phi fraternities; Eleventh Judicial Dist., and Minn. State Bar Ass'ns.

Robert L. Mayall, b. Maroa, Ill., Feb. 24, 1887; a. to bar, 1913, Minn.; ed. pub. schs., Maroa, Ill.; legal ed. Univ. of Mich., LL.B. Mem. 11th Judicial Dist., and Minn. State Bar Ass'ns.

Firm is counsel for: Duluth Missabe & Northern R. R.; Great Northern Ry. Co.; McKinney Steel Co.; Travelers Ins. Co.; City National Bank; Board of Education; Great Nor. Iron Ore Properties; Bridge-man-Russell Co.; Scott-Graff Lumber Co.

Office: Suite 900 Alworth Bldg.

The next year this notice was published in *Hubbell's Legal Directory*:¹⁵

¹⁴ James Clark Fifield, ed., *The American Bar: A Biographical Directory of Contemporary Lawyers of the United States and Canada* 495-96 (1921)..

¹⁵ *Hubbell's Legal Directory*, Appendix 234 (1922).

MINNESOTA.

BALDWIN, BALDWIN, HOLMES & MAYALL.

C. O. BALDWIN.
ALBERT BALDWIN.
D. S. HOLMES.
R. L. MAYALL.

ATTORNEYS AT LAW,
SUITE 900 ALWORTH BLDG.,
DULUTH, MINNESOTA.

GENERAL PRACTICE.

ATTORNEYS FOR City National Bank, Great Northern Railway Co., Travelers Insurance Co., McKinney
Steel Co., Board of Education of Duluth, Bridgeman-Russell Co.

He died on September 10, 1932, at age seventy-one. The *Duluth Herald* carried his obituary:

**rites TUESDAY
FOR C. O. BALDWIN**

**Pioneer Attorney, Former
State Senator Dies;
Burial at Perry, Ill.**

Final rites for Charles O. Baldwin, aged 71, pioneer Duluth attorney and a former state senator, who died Saturday night at the home of his brother, Albert Baldwin, 1529 East Second Street, will be held at 2:30 p.m. tomorrow at the home. . . .

Mr. Baldwin, senior member of the law firm of Baldwin, Baldwin, Holmes & Mayall, had been ill for about a week, but death came suddenly.

Born at Perry, Ill., Feb. 1, 1861, Mr. Baldwin was educated there and later was graduated from Illinois college in 1886. After teaching school for a year, he came to Duluth in June, 1887, and entered the law office of Allen & Parkhurst as a student. He was admitted to the bar in October 1887.

VARIED BUSINESS CAREER.

For forty-five years he practiced law here. He represented his district in the state legislature as a senator during 1899-1901. He was also vice president of the City National bank of Duluth. In June 1931, he delivered the commencement ovation at Illinois college and was given the honorary degree of doctor of laws.



A bachelor, Mr. Baldwin is survived by a sister, Mr. S. M. Stead, Covina, Cal., and two brothers, Albert and Mark Baldwin, both of Duluth.¹⁶

An editorial in the *Duluth Herald* noted his success at the bar:

CHARLES O. BALDWIN.

Charles O. Baldwin, a practicing attorney of this city for forty-five years, passed away Saturday, thus depriving the city of another of the leading lights in the profession which he adorned.

Mr. Baldwin, though he serve one term of four years in this state senate thirty years ago, gave his whole life and all his energy to his profession, finding time nevertheless to be a good and useful citizen.

As a lawyer he was thorough and painstaking, full of resources, which made him a tower of strength to his clients. His thoroughness, coupled with high qualities of imagination and insight, made him a leader in the bar of this state of a generation.

¹⁶ *Duluth Herald*, September 12, 1932, at 3 (burial details omitted).

Added to his professional qualities and achievements were qualities of friendliness and sympathy which made him a friend worth having. Duluth, which valued him highly while he lived, will sincerely mourn his going.¹⁷

Unlike many small law firms that dissolve upon the death of their founder, his lived on. Over the decades, attorneys came and went, its name changed but its founder not forgotten.¹⁸ In 2013, his firm, now known as Johnson, Kellen & Seiler, claiming to be the “oldest law firm in Northern Minnesota,” celebrated its 125th anniversary.

Acknowledgment

The MLHP is indebted to Patricia Maus, Archivist and Special Collections Curator, Kathryn A Martin Library, University of Minnesota Duluth, for copies of several articles from Duluth newspapers cited here. •

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Posted MLHP: June 1, 2015;
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Expanded on July 6, 2015, with photograph.

¹⁷ Id. at 6.

¹⁸ Albert Baldwin died on December 6, 1952, at age eighty-seven. According to his obituary in the *Duluth Herald* that day, “He entered the Duluth law office of his late brother, C. O. Baldwin. He studied law for four years and was admitted to the bar in 1894.”