

University of Chicago Library

Guide to the Loammi Baldwin Papers 1821-1842



© 2006 University of Chicago Library

Table of Contents

Descriptive Summary	3
Information on Use	3
Access	3
Digital Images	3
Citation	4
Biographical Note	4
Scope Note	5
Related Resources	5
Subject Headings	5
INVENTORY	5

Descriptive Summary

Identifier	ICU.SPCL.CRMS203
Title	Baldwin, Loammi. Papers
Date	1821-1842
Size	1 linear ft. (2 boxes)
Repository	Special Collections Research Center University of Chicago Library 1100 East 57th Street Chicago, Illinois 60637 U.S.A.

Abstract Loammi Baldwin was a pioneering civil engineer who lived in Massachusetts from 1780 to 1838. He planned and executed public works projects in several Eastern states including canals, public monuments, dams, and tunnels. His lifework was a series of dry docks he built on commission by the United States government in 1833. The collection contains 247 handwritten letters both from and to Baldwin and his business associates, colleagues, and family members. The letters reveal aspects of Baldwin's personal life as well as his professional projects and meditations.

Information on Use

Access

The collection is open for research.

Digital Images

Original documents, texts, and images represented by digital images linked to this finding aid are subject to U. S. copyright law. It is the user's sole responsibility to secure any necessary copyright permission to reproduce or publish documents, texts, and images from any holders of rights in the original materials.

The University of Chicago Library, in its capacity as owner of the physical property represented by the digital images linked to this finding aid, encourages the use of these materials for educational and scholarly purposes. Any reproduction or publication from these digital images requires that the following credit line be included: Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library.

The images presented here may include materials reflecting the attitudes, language, and stereotypes of an earlier time period. These materials are presented as historical resources in support of study and research. Inclusion of such materials does not constitute an endorsement of their content by the University of Chicago.

The University of Chicago Library appreciates hearing from anyone who may have information about any of the images in this collection.

Citation

When quoting material from this collection, the preferred citation is: Baldwin, Loammi. Papers. Crerar Ms 203, [Box #, Folder #], Special Collections Research Center, University of Chicago Library

Biographical Note

Loammi Baldwin received his education at Westford Academy and Harvard College, where he took his degree in 1800. His earliest technical interest was mechanics. While Baldwin wanted to enter a career in instrument-making, his frustration at the duration of a costly seven-year apprenticeship convinced him to study law instead. He moved to Groton, where he entered the preceptorship of Timothy Bigelow. In Groton, Baldwin designed and built the town's first fire-engine at the age of 22. The machine remained in the town's use for over eighty years.

Baldwin passed the bar exam in 1804, but abandoned law for civil engineering in 1807. To prepare to become a civil engineer, Baldwin traveled to Europe to study public works there and in England. On his return, he opened an office in Charlestown, Massachusetts, where he sold his expertise as an engineer of buildings and other civic work projects. In 1819, he took up employment by the City of Boston as an engineer of improvements. He concurrently assisted with public works projects in Virginia.

In 1821, Baldwin became engineer of the Union Canal, one of the largest engineering projects of the era. The project entailed extending the canal seventy-nine miles from Reading to Middletown, PA, and included building a 739-foot tunnel, three large dams, and an 800-acre artificial lake. One of the dams was to be the largest and strongest dams yet built in the United States. Despite the high caliber of his work, Baldwin resigned over a controversy surrounding the proposed width of the canal. After the work was completed, Baldwin's original proportions were found to be correct, and costly repairs had to be effected.

Baldwin continued to travel between the United States and Europe to study advances in civil engineering. In 1825, after a year in France studying public works, Baldwin joined the effort to erect the Bunker Hill Monument. He accepted the responsibility of determining the proportions of the shaft. Baldwin performed a demonstration before his fellow committee-members by taking them to the Roxbury Mill Dam, from where Bunker Hill was visible, and exhibiting the effects of various heights by affixing small models to the railing of the sidewalk so that, from the right distance, each would appear to rest on the hill. The committee estimated proportions based on that model.

Later in 1825, Baldwin was appointed by the Massachusetts State Legislature to survey the route for a proposed canal from Boston Harbor to the Hudson River and the Erie Canal. During the next seven years he designed and built, simultaneously, large masonry dry docks at the Charlestown, MA and Norfolk, VA navy-yards, both completed in 1833. These were works of great magnitude at the time because of the lack of power-driven machinery and the primitive character of many of the tools used. Pile-drivers were operated by treadmills, which many 'reputable workmen' felt was a violation of the American spirit. While on these works Baldwin made surveys for a third naval dry dock in New York Harbor, which was not built until after his death. He also designed and built buildings for Harvard College, a canal around the Ohio River falls, a stone bridge called the Warren Bridge at Charlestown, and the Harrisburg Canal in Pennsylvania.

In 1834 he published his Report on the Subject of Introducing Pure Water into the City of Boston, which listed all neighboring ponds and located all wells into the city as possible sources of supply. Two years later he published the elaborate Report on the Brunswick Canal and Railroad, Glynn County, GA, giving details of a proposed inland navigation system, including 900 miles on the Ocmulgee and Oconee Rivers. Another project for which he furnished complete plans was a 'marine railroad' from Pensacola, FL. He was a member of the Massachusetts state Executive Committee under Governor John Davis in 1835 and a presidential elector in 1836. About a year before he died he had a stroke of paralysis; a second one proved fatal. He died in 1838 at the age of 58 and was buried in Woburn, MA.

Scope Note

CrMs 203. The correspondence is both professional and personal. Much from his brother, a few legal documents about stock share movement. The collection contains 247 handwritten letters both from and to Baldwin and his business associates, colleagues, and family members. The letters reveal aspects of Baldwin's personal life as well as his professional projects and meditations.

Related Resources

The following related resources are located in the Department of Special Collections:

<http://www.lib.uchicago.edu/e/spcl/select.html>

Subject Headings

- Baldwin, Loammi, 1780-1838
- Canals
- Civil Engineering
- Hampshire and Hamden Canal Company
- Civil Engineers
- Engineers -- United States

INVENTORY

Box 1

Folder 1

Brief biographical statement re; Baldwin

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/crms203-0001-001>

Box 1

Folder 2

Correspondence, 1821

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/crms203-0001-002>

Box 1

Folder 3

Correspondence, January-February 1822

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/crms203-0001-003>

Box 1

Folder 4

Correspondence, March-May 1822

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/crms203-0001-004>

Box 1

Folder 5

Correspondence, June-July 1822

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/crms203-0001-005>

Box 1

Folder 6

Correspondence, August-September 1822

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/crms203-0001-006>

Box 1

Folder 7

Correspondence, October-December 1822

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/crms203-0001-007>

Box 1

Folder 8

Correspondence, 1823-1824

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/crms203-0001-008>

Box 1

Folder 9

Correspondence, January-April 1826

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/crms203-0001-009>

Box 1

Folder 10

Correspondence, May-December 1826

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/crms203-0001-010>

Box 1

Folder 11

Correspondence, 1827

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/crms203-0001-011>

Box 1

Folder 12

Correspondence, 1828

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/crms203-0001-012>

Box 1

Folder 13

Correspondence, 1829

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/crms203-0001-013>

Box 1

Folder 14

Correspondence, January-July 1830

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/crms203-0001-014>

Box 1

Folder 15

Correspondence, September-December 1830

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/crms203-0001-015>

Box 1

Folder 16

Correspondence, 1831

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/crms203-0001-016>

Box 1

Folder 17

Correspondence, 1832

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/crms203-0001-017>

Box 1

Folder 18

Correspondence, 1833

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/crms203-0001-018>

Box 1

Folder 19

Correspondence, March-July 1834

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/crms203-0001-019>

Box 1

Folder 20

Correspondence, August-December 1834

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/crms203-0001-020>

Box 1

Folder 21

Correspondence, March-July 1835

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/crms203-0001-021>

Box 1

Folder 22

Correspondence, August-September 1835

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/crms203-0001-022>

Box 1

Folder 23

Correspondence, October-December 1835

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/crms203-0001-023>

Box 2

Folder 1

Correspondence, January-May 1836

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/crms203-0002-001>

Box 2

Folder 2

Correspondence, June-October 1836

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/crms203-0002-002>

Box 2

Folder 3

Correspondence, November-December 1836

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/crms203-0002-003>

Box 2

Folder 4

Correspondence, 1837

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/crms203-0002-004>

Box 2

Folder 5

Correspondence, 1838

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/crms203-0002-005>

Box 2

Folder 6

Correspondence, 1842

View digitized documents. <http://pi.lib.uchicago.edu/1001/scrc/md/crms203-0002-006>