

Baldwin Brothers and Brothers College

Courtesy of Drew Magazine. Article originally appeared in the Winter 1999 edition, by John T. Cunningham C'38

If I were to ask the first 50 people whom I met on the Drew campus if they knew of Brother's College, nearly all would point toward the colonial style, red brick building on the north-east corner of the grounds. [Brother's College](#) is to most people a building, not a symbol of enduring family love.

Mentioning the [Baldwin brothers](#) likely will bring blank stares. Brothers? What brothers? *Baldwins*? Oh yes! Weren't they the guys who played infield here four years ago? *Baldwin*? That's a dorm or something, isn't it? *Baldwin*? Hey, that's the gym in Simon Forum, or maybe it's the weight room. The correct answer is none of those.

Leonard and Arthur Baldwin were the generous East Orange brothers who, on January 22, 1928, gave \$1.5 million to found, endow, and build a college of liberal arts in The Forest. It is a gift that keeps on giving. Today, I estimate \$1.5 million might get you a hallway in a building named for someone else. In 1928 it was enough to build a handsome college building and to change dramatically and forever the course of the university. Despite all that, the Baldwin name is lapsing into vague mystery.

Student indifference to that past was present even in the autumn of 1935, when I strolled beneath the oaks as a member of the 10th class to enter Brothers College. I never saw either of the brothers, and I knew only slightly of their gift to me, to young men in all of northern New Jersey and, ultimately, to young men and women anywhere who could qualify.

It seems unforgivable, in retrospect, that no one ever directly related the Baldwin endowment to the incredibly low \$400 tuition I was paying *for a full year*. The college's well invested endowment poured income into the budget process, even in the years of the Great Depression. Some of that income helped keep me in college.

The brothers made sure that the gift would not perish. Originally, they donated 4,000 shares of Great Atlantic & Pacific Tea Company (A&P) stock, worth approximately \$1 million, to insure the endowment. They withdrew the stocks in October 1928 and replaced it with a \$1 million check (plus \$500,000 check for erecting the college building).

The exchange of cash for stocks was in a very real way the Baldwins' second great gift to Drew. A year later Wall Street collapsed, plunging the A&P and all stocks into violent tailspins. By presenting money rather than stock to Drew, they provided the means for a safe investment. The Baldwins did not repeat the mistake that Daniel Drew made, when the \$250,000 endowment he had given to Drew was wiped out in the Panic of 1873

I knew none of this as an undergraduate, but the greater shame of it was (and still is) that the family story was the kind of intriguing saga that an entering freshman would like to hear. It can be told with charm and wit in 45 minutes or so. Certainly, that's as long as it took for the late Winnifred Baldwin to relate the tale to the delight of students, alumni, and faculty on several occasions.

If Winnie were speaking now, we would meet Leonard and Arthur Baldwin as warm, living people, born on a poor farm near Cortland, NY, at about the time of the Civil War. Their story even in barest bones outline could have been the plot for one of the popular rags-to-riches stories that Horatio Alger wrote in the last years of the 19th century. The Baldwin brothers walked barefoot to school, worked their way through college, went to the big city, and eventually prospered. The difference from Alger was that a strong thread of mutual respect, humor, admiration, and love intertwined their lives forever.

Leonard, the older, graduated from Cortland Normal School and then taught school until Arthur caught up with his Cortland degree. Together, they went to Cornell University, sold books to earn tuition, and received law degrees from Columbia University in 1892. When they united in 1897 with former Republican Governor of New Jersey John Griggs to form the soon to be notable firm of Griggs, Baldwin, and Baldwin, their net worth was about \$800, invested in a joint account.

The firm prospered in varied interests in lumbering, manufacturing, transportation, and other enterprises that ranged from owning the Grosvenor Hotel in New York City to Arthur's legal counseling for the rising McGraw-Hill publishing empire. Dollar by dollar, they became millionaires-investing their profits in both their names. They were known on Wall Street as conservative investors, albeit voting and working for the quite radical Democratic party in its Tammany Hall days.

The story was quite Horatio Alger to that point, but none of Alger's poor-bot-to-tycoon stories permitted the streaks of adventure and quixotic whimsy that prompted the brothers to invest in South Carolina timber and whale oil in the South Pacific, much less conceive the fantastic gamble for Alaskan deer meat that they financed in the early 1930s.

Max Miller dramatically captured the drama, the hardships, and perhaps the foolishness of the deer episode in his book *The Great Trek*. On paper, the idea made sense, however risky. Great herds of deer roamed the Alaska tundra while people were starving in the United States during the Depression. All the Baldwins' hired crew had to do was drive 3,000 deer hundreds of miles from Alaska to Canada, over dissolving ice floes and frozen ground, in thermometer readings that dipped as low as 60 degrees below zero. The trek took three years, succeeded in a very small way, but very definitely added no money to the Baldwin exchequer.

That venture came up over breakfast with 73 year old Phillip Haselton Jr., Leonard Baldwin's grandson. A Drew trustee for 43 years (1954 to 1997) who remains very involved, he served under six board chairmen and four university presidents and chaired the board himself from 1979 to 1984. He was described in a retirement resolution as a "Methodist gentleman of intellect, good sense, and persistence, who has met good times and bad with unflinching good humor."

The resolution might well have added that Haselton is a crackling good raconteur. He jokingly recalled the reindeer hunt, noting that the family still has a tie to that adventure. "As part of the settlement, Arthur and Leonard received rights to about 20 mining claims near Nome, Alaska. No one ever became rich from that." Mentioning the Grosvenor Hotel, Haselton asked: "You know why they brothers bought it?" He supplied the answer: "Arthur wanted a New York address so he could run for the New York legislature. A seat there would enable him to push through legislation closing 32nd street, easing the way for the new Pennsylvania Railroad Station to be build."

Grosvenor Hotel was a fine New York City address to visit, but East Orange, N.J., was where the Baldwins chose to settle. The family life at 56 Munn Street was incredible. The brothers, their wives, and combined six children lived quietly together in a large, single family house for more than 30 years. Their wives fortunately (and necessarily) were longtime mutual friends whom the brothers had met while working summer college jobs at Lake Minnewaska in New York. Sounds of growing infants and children echoed through the house. Each brother fathered three children; Arthur two sons and a daughter, and Leonard two daughters and a son, born alternately in different years.

Even the redoubtable Mr. Alger could not have imagined the smooth-flowing existence of two families almost constantly together. The wives took turns each week in running both households, buying food, dealing with plumbers and other tradesmen, and hosting major parties that included well-known New Yorkers. Every Sunday night the two families gathered for supper, open to all friends of either the parents or the children. There were not "drop in if you're in the neighborhood" affairs, but rather command performances. Family members had to give notice if they could not attend. Free flowing discussions had only one limitation: an anti-knocking sigh was given if someone not present was being berated.

When they were together without the burdens of law, business, or politics, the brothers could be downright playful. "Grandfather died in 1933, when I was eight," Haselton recounted. "But I remember him and Arthur engaging in great taffy pulls. The sight of those two big guys strenuously pulling taffy in the kitchen was something to behold."

The brothers lived without ostentation or expectation of acclaim in their sequestered lives in the Oranges. They participated actively and financially in the Orange YMCA and Orange Memorial Hospital, although never giving more than \$1,000 to either. They also taught the Mens Bible Class in the East Orange Episcopal Church for more than 35 years.

[Ezra Squier Tipple](#), who became Drew's president in 1905, had welcomed the brothers to his prominent New York City Methodist Church when they came to Manhattan. He continued his friendship with Arthur and Leonard after he moved to the Drew campus, with Leonard becoming a seminary trustee in 1919.

There was nothing in any of those quiet lives that could have prepared Tipple for the startling announcement that the Baldwins wished to underwrite a liberal arts college on the campus. They astonished president had believed they would be contributing to the sputtering financial drive underway by the seminary.

The seminary trustees accepted the huge gift at a tense meeting held less than a week after receiving word of the donation destined to radically transform the institution. Arthur spoke briefly at the meeting, telling of a love shared by the brothers. He expressed a modest hope: "If it could be known as Brothers College, it would not mean much to the average man, but to everyone who has known us it will mean something."

And so it was done, and that was the extent of the personal requesting. The brothers never sought to influence building design, choice of contractors, nature or scope of the curriculum, or payment of construction bills. This was not the be *their* college, fashioned in their image, tailored to meet their religious beliefs or personal philosophies. Non-interference was their third gift to Drew.

The college opened in September 1928, although when the first twelve students began classes the building was little more than a hole in the ground and architect's plans. William Pearson Tolley, the 28 year old dean who shaped the college's first curriculum and philosophy, believed the Baldwins might wish to share in the process. He sounded them out. They told Tolley that he and the faculty were in charge.

Leonard was followed in death by Arthur in 1939. Neither of the brothers left large estates. Haselton estimated that his grandfather's will showed an estate of "less than \$350,000." He stressed that the brothers dug deeply into their assets when they gave the money to establish Brothers College. "No one should get the idea," he said, "that the gift was mere play money."

Donald Baldwin, son of Arthur, became the heir apparent as far as Drew affairs were concerned. Donald was not like his gregarious father. He was serious, not given to public appearances, and certainly not to dabbling in politics. His outgoing wife, Winifred, was an active (and good) golfer, a leader for the Orange Memorial Hospital, and a woman devoted to both her husband and Drew University.

Donald made quick decisions. His daughter, Mrs. Diana Dunnan, recalled that, "when the railroad ferries stopped running to downtown New York, Pop never went to the offices again." Haselton noted that Donald "hated any meeting that lasted more than 40 minutes." There is no question that Donald Baldwin put the university on the road to academic and financial stability. He fully supported the intensive building program of Drew's seventh president, [Fred Garrigus Holloway](#). It was not mere lip service. He underwrote the men's dormitory (Baldwin Hall) that opened in the fall of 1953. He was also a major contributor to the Donald R. Baldwin auditorium-gymnasium-natatorium complex that is now a significant part of the Simon Forum.

Over breakfast, Donald's grandson, Revd. Dr. Donald Stuart Dunnan, observed that his grandfather's greatest gift to Drew was his management of the endowment, building on the original gift of his father and uncle. "The rate of increase under his management was phenomenal; it was an invaluable gift of his genius to the university." A Drew trustee since 1997, Dunnan is the 39 year old headmaster of prestigious Saint James School in St. James, Md., close to the Civil War battlefield at Antietam. A graduate of both Harvard and Oxford and an Episcopal priest, he calls himself "the first academic" in a long line of family lawyers, businessmen, and financiers. Dunnan has sent four Saint James graduates to Brothers College.

The headmaster, whose young, pleasant face radiates enjoyment of life, gives a sense of the genuine warmth that ties him to his deceased grandparents, Donald and Winifred Baldwin. He calls them Gampa and Gana, the affectionate names he has addressed them by all his life. To him, they are not university benefactors but two grandparents who loved a little boy.

"Our family's continuing relationship with Drew," mused Dunnan, "is less a matter of affection for the university than affection for each other. Arthur gave to Drew because of his love for Leonard. Leonard gave because of his love for Arthur. Both passed that love on to their children. Gana's relationship with Drew rose from her love for her husband and for her father-in-law. Gampa, in turn, passed that love to his nephew and to his children and grandchildren."

For Drew, that love has made all the difference. Funds given to the university by the Baldwin family since the founding of the college total more than \$5 million. The support has addressed various needs, from establishing a full professorship to providing scholarship aid and buildings. Leonard Baldwin's daughter, Grace Baldwin Riker, gave Drew a 71 acre farm in Long Valley, N.J. Development rights to this property were sold to the state and country for \$1.9 million. And Phillip Haselton Jr., on top of his years of service and guidance, has given generously to the university.

From a student standpoint, though, the major demonstration of love has come in the Drew Scholars Program, a merit initiative that helps the university attract outstanding students. Over the years, 962 students have received ten awards, most notably the recently named Rhodes Scholar, Dena Pedynowski.

Oddly, none of the children, grandchildren, or great grandchildren of Arthur and Leonard Baldwin ever studied at the university. Phillip Haselton, as a child, had what his father perceived was a close brush with Drew: "Grandmother drove me up to Drew to visit President [Arlo Ayres Brown](#) . Father was not too pleased. He told me he feared I would want to go there." His father hopefully was joking.

The Baldwin legacy came in full cycle in May 1994 when Brian Whipple Gregg, great grandson of Donald and Winifred Baldwin, was graduated from Brothers College.

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