

APR 16 Obituary. 1889

Edwin Baldwin, one of the earliest pioneers of Oakland county, a man ripe in years and experiences of the early settlement of the county and State, passed quietly away at 11 o'clock a. m. April 3, 1889, at his home in Birmingham. He had been in feeble health for a year past, but had been confined to his room and bed for only eight weeks. Notwithstanding his advanced age, he retained his faculties remarkably well to the last.

His funeral was held at his late residence on Maple Avenue, the Rev. Robert Bird officiating, who, with much feeling briefly epitomized the events of his long, active, eventful life, and with deep emotion passed a fitting eulogy upon the deceased brother pioneer.

Mr. Baldwin was born at Vergennes, Vt., Aug. 2, 1802, being at the date of his death 86 years, 8 months and one day old.

In the winter of 1811, with his parents he removed to Black Rock, N. Y. near Buffalo, making the journey with sleighs. He witnessed the burning of Buffalo by the English and was on the border at the time of the battle of Lundy's Lane and Queenstown during the war 1812.

In 1817 he came to Detroit, shipping on board a sailing vessel at Buffalo, freighted with supplies for old Fort Dearborn, situated upon the present site of Chicago.

In the autumn of 1818, he established the first ferry on the Detroit river, passing to and from Windsor and Detroit as business required, using for navigation purposes a canoe and scow, and later a sail boat, but the latter was not a favorite with the French as they deemed it a Yankee contrivance, unsafe to navigate the river, with its uncertain undertow and air currents. At this time there were no wharves at either landing. There was a cribbing out into the river at the foot of Woodward Avenue. At Windsor there was nothing, the landing being made on the clay banks as nature had formed them. At the time Mr. Baldwin established the ferry, the project was regarded by many prominent residents as visionary, impracticable, and in advance of the wants of the people and the times; but with the energy and perseverance for which the people of the Green Mountain State are noted, he pushed his enterprise and made it a success. The citizens of Detroit of to-day, now witness the magnitude of the immense traffic which has grown out of that primitive beginning during these 72 years past.

The river was navigable for "bateaux" and canoes from the foot of Third street to the corner of Bates and Congress. Mr. Baldwin was in Detroit when the first steamboat "Walk-in-the-Water," came steaming up the river and heard the French and Indians declare it to be "the Devil spitting fire and smoke."

His first trip and experience in the interior of Oakland county and the territory was on December 30, 1819. His father had previously located in the south-east quarter of section 13 in town 2, North range 10 east, now Bloomfield township, under the "Two dollar act," and moved upon it with his family. Mr. Baldwin soon after located the east half of the south-east quarter of the same section, and settled upon it, where he resided until 1822, when he removed to Birmingham.

On October 11-87 he married Aurilla Patrick, daughter of Hon. Wm. Patrick, of Troy, by whom he had one child, a daughter, who with the mother survive him.

The Hon. Judge Sance, now a centenarian and pioneer of St. Clair county, who settled there in 1816, in an interview with Rev. R. Bird recently at which he mentioned Mr. Baldwin's name, replied: "Yes, I knew him well in the long, long ago. He was a very kind man and one of the best of those old pioneers."

In the fall of 1822 he accompanied a surveying party under John Mullett, being engaged in that work in Shiawassee and Saginaw counties, and subsequently in the southern and south west part of the State with Sylvester Sibley in 1828, who was engaged in subdividing townships in Barry, Calhoun and Eaton counties. He frequently passed through the surveyors camp of his old employer Mullett, who, with his party had a conflict with two Indians in March 1825, and at which his brother Edward and a Mr. Taylor, had a desperate struggle, escaping with their lives only through the courage and superior physical power of his brother. It was from this occurrence that Battle Creek received its name.

Edwin Baldwin, while packing provisions on poles in one of those surveying trips, encountered the Indian Simo, one of those warned by his brother, who suddenly hid in clump of bushes some distance ahead. When approaching the point where he last saw him he was suddenly covered by the Indian's gun, poised as if to shoot. He met the Indian's demoniacal look with a fearless, unconcerned gaze with his eyes constantly riveted upon him while approaching and called in French, "Come here." The Indian replied that he was deaf. Baldwin then beckoned for him to come, which he did, carrying his rifle at half rest. Upon reaching him Simo exclaimed, "You not the Chemuckaman who crushed my skull in with a gun many moons ago," at the same time lifting a piece of buckskin from the top of his head exposing the wound inflicted by his brother Edward. The brain was discernable through a thin, white tissue which had closed over it, and the pulsations were visible.

There was a strong family resemblance between the brothers, together with his wearing the same vest his brother wore during the struggle, and which had been nearly cut in twain by one of the Indian discharging his rifle at Edward, and which had been mended by his mother in the meantime, and all had led Simo, at first sight, to believe him to be the same white man who crushed in his skull during the conflict at the Mullett camp.

The home of Mr. and Mrs. Baldwin was always a welcome shelter for the orphan, the homeless and needy. Their doors were never closed upon those who were friendless and sought encouragement and aid. The latch string was ever out and many persons yet survive the deceased whose hearts swell with emotion over the recollections of the fatherly and motherly kindness, counsel and watchfulness over them. One of these was Judge A. C. Baldwin, of Pontiac,—not a relative—who came to Michigan in an early day, a youth, inexperienced and without friends. He made Mr. and Mrs. Baldwin's acquaintance and found a home under their roof, and to the present day holds them in grateful remembrance for their counsel and friendship.