

Baldwin, Alice Mary ^[1]

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By Mattie U. Russell, 1979

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Alice Mary Baldwin, educator, was born in Lewiston, Me., where her father was head of the Latin School. She was the eldest of the five children of the Reverend Fritz Walter and Sarah Bingham Lyman Baldwin. Coming from a long line of congregational ministers and educators, she grew up in a family environment of strong religious, moral, and educational principles. When she was nine years old, her father accepted the pastorate of Trinity Congregational Church in East Orange, N.J., where he served until his retirement in 1915.

Following her graduation from a private school in East Orange, Miss Baldwin entered [Bates College](#) ^[2] in 1896 and won first prize in the freshman class for scholarship. After that year, she transferred to [Cornell University](#) ^[3], being graduated in 1900 with a degree in history and membership in Phi Beta Kappa. During the next two years she was a graduate student and assistant in history at Cornell. After receiving her M.A. degree in June 1902, she went on a traveling fellowship to Europe for study at the [Sorbonne](#) ^[4] and research in Sweden. In December 1903 she began teaching French, German, and English at the Glen Ridge (N.J.) High School. The following year she went to Fargo College, Fargo, N.D., as dean of women and instructor in history, but she also taught American literature and German. She became instructor of history at the [Baldwin School, Bryn Mawr, Pa.](#) ^[5], in 1906 and was appointed head of the history department in 1912. During these years she also studied in the graduate schools of [Bryn Mawr College](#) ^[6], [Columbia University](#) ^[7], the [University of Pennsylvania](#) ^[8], and the [Teachers College of Columbia University](#) ^[9]. She served as trustee of the Baldwin School from 1919 to 1921, when she took a leave of absence and entered the [University of Chicago](#) ^[10] as a fellow in history, to study toward the Ph.D. degree. She became an assistant to Professor Andrew C. McLaughlin, who directed her dissertation. In her second year there she was president of the Graduate Club. In 1923 she went to [Trinity College in Durham, N.C.](#) ^[11], as acting dean of women for the summer. She had been given a teaching assistantship in the history department at the University of Chicago for the coming year, but while she was at Trinity, President [William P. Few](#) ^[12] invited her to accept the position of dean of women and assistant professor of history. McLaughlin would have preferred her to become a permanent member of the history department at the University of Chicago, but because he saw no possibility of a woman being added to the departmental faculty in the foreseeable future, he encouraged her to accept Few's offer. She worked out an arrangement with the University of Chicago that permitted her to return to Trinity after teaching only one semester on her assistantship. In January 1924 she assumed her new duties at Trinity as the first woman to have full faculty status there. She finished her dissertation on the New England clergy and the American Revolution and graduated *magna cum laude* in 1926.

After Miss Baldwin returned to Trinity College, James B. Duke signed the indenture that provided for the expansion of Trinity into [Duke University](#) ^[13]. It was decided that a coordinate college for women would be among the several colleges of the university, and Miss Baldwin was named dean of the Women's College in 1926. She held that post until her retirement in 1947. More than any other person, she deserves credit for the standards of excellence that have characterized the college.

Believing that the position of dean was strengthened by classroom and faculty experience, Miss Baldwin continued to teach history until her other responsibilities made it necessary for her to stop. She continued to hold faculty status, though, and in 1939 she became a full professor. She served on many local, state, and national committees dealing with education and held membership in a large number of professional and civic organizations. During the [Second World War](#) ^[14] she served with seven other distinguished women educators on the [Educational Advisory Council](#) ^[15] that worked with the Bureau of Naval Personnel in organizing and directing the WAVES. She was a [Daughter of the American Revolution](#) ^[16], a [Colonial Dame](#) ^[17], a Congregationalist, and a Democrat.

The writings of Miss Baldwin include [The New England Clergy and the American Revolution](#) ^[18], "[The Clergy of Connecticut in Revolutionary Days](#)" ^[19], "The Development and Place of the Coordinate College," "College Bound," [The Woman's College As I Remember It](#) ^[20], "History of the North Carolina Division of AAUW, 1947–1957," and contributions to various magazines. She was coeditor of [North Carolina Occupations](#) and at the time of her death had almost completed a study of the reading interests of women in the American colonies before 1750.

As a tribute to her untiring efforts in promoting higher education for women and in recognition of her many achievements, the class of 1943 of the Woman's College established the annual Alice M. Baldwin Scholarship Fund. In 1946 she was awarded the LL.D. degree by the Woman's College of [The University of North Carolina](#) ^[21], and, two years after she retired, Duke University bestowed the same honor upon her. In 1958 she was presented the ninth annual North Carolina Distinguished Service Award for Women by The University of North Carolina's chapter of the Chi Omega sorority. In 1964 the auditorium of the Duke Woman's College was named in her honor, and her portrait hangs in the Union Building at Duke.

In retirement, Miss Baldwin continued to live in Durham. After her death a memorial service was conducted in the Duke University Chapel ^[22], and her ashes were buried in the family plot at Lenox, Mass.

References:

Alice Mary Baldwin Papers (Duke University Archives, Durham)

Julia R. Grout, personal contact

Who Was Who in America, vol. 4 (1968)

Image Source:

"Dean Alice M. Baldwin and Students, undated". Image courtesy of Flickr user Duke Yearlook. Available from <https://www.flickr.com/photos/dukeyearlook/6855552108/> ^[23] (accessed April 5, 2012).

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