

Register of Old Buildings
Macon County Historical Coordinating Council

Address: 452 W. Main St.

Date of original construction: 1879.

Name of original owner: Heston I. Baldwin of the H. I. Baldwin Grain Co.
and Ada Baldwin, his wife.

History: "Thirteen logs were uncovered when the structure, known as the old Baldwin home, burned November 15th (1967).

"Since they were removed from the burned structure in December, Houchen, a Decatur attorney, (and present owner), has been refinishing them.

"Houchen said he is unsure whether all thirteen will be required in the remodeling of the kitchen. He may have several left."

Decatur Herald & Review Files
March 7th, 1968

"The Baldwins purchased the site of the house at 452 W. Main St. in 1862 as part of an 80-acre tract of land from Mrs. William Hanks, Jr., Abraham Lincoln's aunt. (Hanks claimed the 80-acre tract March 21, 1829).

"The Hanks had lived in a two-room log cabin on the tract, and local historians believe that Lincoln visited them there in 1830.

"Logs from the original log cabin were thought to have been used in the construction of the Baldwin house.....

"When uncovered two of the logs showed notched ends of the type used at the corner of a cabin. They also showed broadax marks, evidence that they were handhewn.

"Houchen, the present owner, said he thinks the Hanks cabin was probably deteriorating at the time Baldwin built his house, and that the thirteen logs were saved because they were still in good condition.

"Otto R. Kyle, former Herald & Review writer, and a Lincoln historian, says the logs could very well have come from the Hanks cabin.....

"The logs, 7 feet by 16 inches, are reported to be worth about \$1000 each.

"Houchen says he is not interested in selling them, though he would give one to a historical museum if it were interested.

"Houchen said he is looking for some one who can restore the logs. He will have them incorporated in the kitchen of the house as it is rebuilt."

Newspaper clipping Friday, 12/15/67
"Old Logs Uncovered"
Herald & Review File

Present owner's name: Vernon H. Houchen, Attorney.

452 #. Main St.



Picture, courtesy of H. Lynn Bohon
Taken in 1972

Pratt's Cereal Mill

The manufacture of corn products represents one of Decatur's important industries. The territory covered by the Decatur Cereal Mill Company embraces the civilized world. The products of this plant go all over America, to most of the countries of Europe and Africa, and an interesting trade is being established in China and Japan. It has been a stable institution, having been shut down for only a very few times within the past three years, and then only for repairs. Sixty men are given steady employment, and the plant is kept running night and day. About 2,000,000 bushels of corn a year are ground. The plant has a storage capacity of a quarter of a million bushels of grain, mostly in steel tanks. The big elevator, which forms a part of the company's plant, transfers fifty carloads of corn a day, and also does the transferring here for the Wabash railroad company. The commercial products of the Decatur Cereal Mill Company are table goods, brewers' grits and cattle feed.

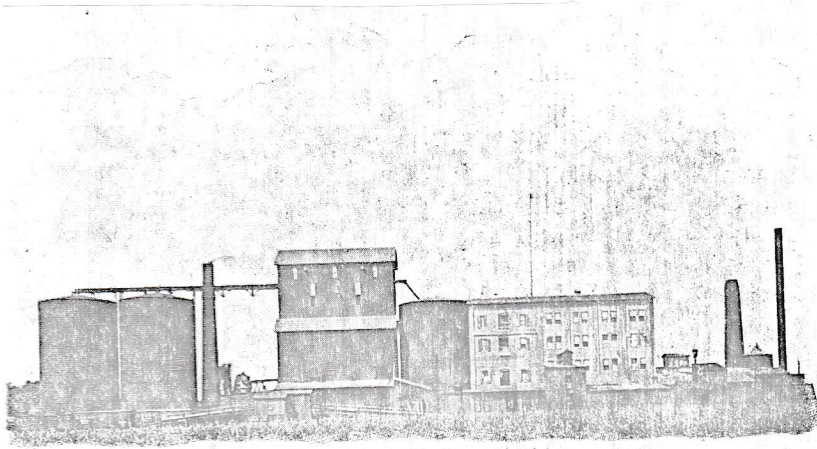
Connected with the plant is an experimental station, where, in the past two years the company has been conducting a series of

experiments for economically extracting the oil from corn.

H. I. Baldwin, who was recently made superintendent of the plant, has moved his office to the mill and now spends all his time there.

Perhaps nothing can better illustrate the importance of this plant to Decatur and vicinity than to say that it requires thirty-five tons

of coal every day to keep the plant in operation.



Pratt's Cereal Mill

From Progressive Decatur, Published by the Review Printing and Stationery Co., Decatur, Ill., no date given; estimate of date, 1899 to 1901. Page 85.

H. I. Baldwin Dies of Injuries; Funeral May Be Conducted Thursday

Prominent Grain Man Was Important Figure in Business, Social Life

HAD WIDE INTERESTS

Funeral services for Heston I. Baldwin, fatally injured when struck by a car while crossing West Main street near his home Sunday night, were expected Monday to be conducted Thursday afternoon. Arrangements for the services are to be completed Tuesday.

Mr. Baldwin died at 4:15 a.m. Monday in Decatur and Macon County hospital, where he was taken immediately after being struck by the car of Walter Reed, 1129 West Wood street, at 7 p.m. Sunday. Mr. Baldwin did not lose consciousness after the accident, and as he seemed to suffer less from the shock than was expected, some hope was held for his recovery. He sank quietly into death as dawn approached.

Successful in Business

The death of Mr. Baldwin brings to an end the career of a man who for several decades has been an important figure in Decatur's business and civic life. He was eminently successful in his own business affairs, and numerous civic and social endeavors depended heavily upon him for guidance, but he had insisted upon finding time to cultivate his tastes in other things which he held to be really important parts of life.

Mr. Baldwin was born in Newark, N. J., Nov. 22, 1856, a son of the late Ichabod and Julia V. Baldwin. History of the family dates back to the Crusades, when an ancestor, an Archbishop of Canterbury, accompanied Richard the Lion Hearted to the Holy Land. Another ancestor landed in New England in 1600 and helped found Milford, Conn.

Home On Old Site

When Mr. Baldwin was four months old his parents moved to Decatur, first residing for a year and a half in the St. Nicholas hotel. The father then bought from William Hanks, uncle of Abraham Lincoln, a two-room cabin on a narrow lot in 452 West Main street, and during the remaining 70 years of his life Heston Baldwin's home continued to be on that ground. Logs from a home built there by his father were used for sills and beams in the stately house which now stands there.

Attending public schools of Decatur, Mr. Baldwin was graduated from high school when 17, and at once went to work. For a few years he worked in a grain office at Decatur, then was for a time employed by J. G. Starr & Sons, harness and saddle manufacturers. In the 1880's he joined the firm of Pratt & Co., which at the time was one of the country's principal grain dealers, with offices in Chicago and Buffalo, as well as in Decatur. The firm for many years had a milling plant on the site of the present Staley starch works.

On Official Boards

Sometime before 1900 he went into business for himself, his first office being on the second floor of the Review building. He bought grain all over Illinois and sold it in carload lots all over the United States. In his present offices in the Decatur club building, orders for millions of bushels of grain have been handled, even during recent dull times. He had served on official boards of state and national grain associations, and more than once had suggested changes in government regulations or methods in the grain business that attracted to him nation-wide attention.

On Oct. 12, 1882, Mr. Baldwin was married to Miss Ada Pratt, daughter of Hon. and Mrs. E. B. Pratt. Last October the couple celebrated their 50th wedding anniversary by entertaining 160 guests at the Country club of Decatur with a banquet and re-enactment of the wedding scene. Mrs. R. R. Montgomery, who was the maid of honor at the wedding, again served in the ceremony.

"Business is a means of getting a living, but it is not life," Mr. Baldwin once said. "I now have time to travel some, to be with my friends more, and to work for the expansion of the Decatur and Macon County hospital."

On Hospital Board

As a member of the hospital board he attended meetings, made plans, took leadership in undertakings in its behalf. He was one of the most regular members in attendance at meetings of the Rotary club, and in tribute to his memory in their meeting Monday fellow Rotary club members bowed their heads in silent prayer.

An important part of his enjoyment of life had always been the garden surrounding his West Main street home. Twice he had bought additional ground adjoining his home and had planted it to shrubbery and flowers, until the grounds had become one of the show places of the city.

Mr. Baldwin was a member of the First Presbyterian church. He also was a member of Stephen Decatur lodge No. 979, A. F. and A. M.; Macon chapter No. 21, R. A. M.; Beauvois Commandery No. 9, Knights Templar and of Ansar Shrine. He was a member of the Country club of Decatur and of the Decatur club, and in 1920 served as president of the latter.

Mr. Baldwin leaves, besides his widow, Mrs. Ada Pratt Baldwin, one daughter, Mrs. Ethel Foote of Champaign, three grandchildren, Mrs. Burton Goodloe of Hillsboro, Oka, Burlingame, Cal., Wallace Foote of Champaign; student in

Mrs. Heston I. Baldwin, Resident 80 Years, Dies

Mrs. Ada Emeline Baldwin, prominent Decatur resident for the past 80 years, died at 7 p. m. yesterday at her home, 452 W. Main St. She was 90.

Mrs. Baldwin was the widow of Heston I. Baldwin, Decatur business and civic leader who was killed in an auto accident here on March 27, 1933.

She was born in Litchfield, Conn., on Aug. 12, 1863, a daughter of Enos B. and Emeline Pierce Pratt. She moved here in 1873 and on Oct. 12, 1882, was married to Mr. Baldwin.

She was a member of the First Presbyterian Church and of the Daughters of the American Revolution.

She is survived by a daughter, Mrs. Ethel Foote, Champaign; two granddaughters, Mrs. Burton Goodloe, Chicago, and Mrs. Emily Shanemeyer, Peoria; a grandson, Wallace H. Foote, Chicago; two great-grandchildren and several nieces and nephews.

Mrs. Baldwin was dramatically handsome, tall, with snow white hair, and dressed always in white, regardless of the season. Until her health failed she was frequently seen being driven in her big black limousine, which often was upholstered in white.

The Baldwin house on West Main Street has long been a Decatur landmark, freshly painted white each year, and with a distinctive amount of rich ironwork on the house and in the yard. The house is overhung with heavy green vines and is brilliantly lighted at night.



Mrs. Ada E. Baldwin

Flowers in the borders are changed periodically to provide continual blooms.

Mrs. Baldwin was one of Decatur's most benevolent women, and in many cases did her good deeds anonymously. She made many gifts to her church, and to those who guided its work. She was an unknown but kindly friend to many a student in Decatur high schools and at Millikin University.

Until recently she had had extremely good health, but several years before her death said to a friend:

"Everyone feels fine but me, and I feel terrible."

The body is in the Dawson & Wikoff Funeral Home. Arrangements are incomplete.