

# **Proposal for A Campus Statue of Abraham Baldwin Founder and First President of the University of Georgia**

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## **Abraham Baldwin: The Life**

Abraham Baldwin was one of the early giants of Georgia politics, law, and education. As a signatory of the U.S. Constitution, he was also one of the nation's Founders. At home in Georgia, he led a five-person committee appointed in 1784 by the State Legislature to oversee the establishment of a State college. The committee members settled on a 1000-acre plot of land high above the Oconee River in a location known at the time as Cedar Shoals—a place where the University and the town of Athens would soon rise. Aided by correspondence with Ezra Stiles, the president of Yale College in Connecticut, Baldwin wrote a charter for the proposed university and the newly created board of trustees approved the document in 1784. The State Legislature gave the charter its official blessings on January 27, 1785, making it the first ever written and adopted for a state-supported public university.

Here are some highlights of Baldwin's life:

- Baldwin was born in North Guilford, Connecticut, in 1754, the second son of a blacksmith who sired twelve children (including another son who became a Justice of the U.S. Supreme Court). A fervent believer in education, the father went heavily into debt to school his children and help them overcome their humble beginnings.
- He graduated from Yale College in 1772, where he stayed on to study theology and was licensed to preach in 1775. He served as a minister and tutor at Yale College from 1775-1779.
- He served as a chaplain in the Continental Army from 1779-81, where he also began to study law.
- Offered a professorship of divinity in 1781, Baldwin declined and continued his legal studies. In 1783, he gained admittance to the bar at Fairfield, Connecticut.

- Persuaded by Georgia's General Nathanael Greene (also a Yale graduate) to move to the South, Baldwin took up residence in Augusta in 1784 and won approval to practice law in the State. (At the time, Lyman Hall was Governor of Georgia—yet another product of Yale.) It would prove a busy year for the new Georgia resident.

- Just five months after the signing of a treaty of peace that granted Georgia her independence, the Legislature in 1784 carved out a land-grant of 40,000 acres in the northeastern part of the State for the purpose of establishing a “College or Seminary of Learning.” Further, the lawmakers set up a board of trustees charged with administering the land. This group was comprised of Baldwin, Hall, and six others—including another of the seemingly ubiquitous Yale graduates. From the 40,000 acres, the board had 5000 acres surveyed and reserved for the institution of higher learning—their first step in planning for the future. (Eventually the board would selected a separate 1000 acres for the site of the new institution of higher learning.) Then they grappled with the writing of a charter. Baldwin took the lead and, in an exchange of letters with the then-president of Yale College, Ezra Stiles, he came up with charter language. The board of trustees approved the charter near the end of 1784 and on January 27, 1785, the Legislature officially accepted the charter.

- Baldwin was elected president of the new University of Georgia in 1785, but felt the tug of politics and, in the same year, he was elected as well to the State House of Representatives and to the Continental Congress.

- In 1787, while president of the University, Baldwin attended the Constitutional Convention and helped resolve the large-small state representation dispute. He was allied at the Convention with James Madison and Thomas Jefferson.

- Baldwin returned to the Continental Congress for the next two years (1787-89) and was subsequently elected to the first U.S. Federal House of Representatives, serving five consecutive terms (1789-99). He was then elected to the U.S. Senate, serving into a second term (1799-1807), when he passed away at the age of fifty-three after a short illness. For a while he was both president of the University and a U.S. Senator, but relinquished the reins in Athens in 1801.

- Baldwin never married, dedicating his life to public service. Still serving in the Senate at the time of his death, he was buried in Washington's Rock Creek Cemetery.

### **A Profile of Abraham Baldwin from the Federal Convention**

Mr. Baldwin is a Gentleman of superior abilities, and joins in a public debate with great art and eloquence. Having laid the foundation of a complete classical education at Yale College, he pursues every other study with ease. He is well acquainted with Books and Characters, and has an accommodating turn of mind, which enables him to gain the confidence of Men, and to understand them. He is a practicing Attorney in Georgia, and has been twice a Member of Congress. Mr. Baldwin is about 38 years of age.\*

\* He was in fact 33 years old.

From *The Records of the Federal Convention of 1787* [Farrand's Records, Vol. 3], CXIX.

*William Pierce: Character Sketches of Delegates to the Federal Convention.*

### **Abraham Baldwin on Education**

It should be among the first objects of those who wish well to the national prosperity to encourage and support the principles of religion and morality and early to place the youth under the forming hand of society that by instruction they may be molded to the love of virtue and good order.

—Archives, Carl Vinson Institute of Government  
The University of Georgia

### A Portrait of Abraham Baldwin



Detail from ink and gouache drawing (undated) by Emanuel Leutze, after Robert Fulton, Historical Society of Pennsylvania, in Robert G. Ferris, ed., *Signers of the Constitution: Historic Places Commemorating the Signing of the Constitution*, rev. ed. (US. Department of the Interior, National Park Service, 1976).

**An Example of a Statue Similar to the One Proposed**



The statue of Nathan Hale at Yale University by Bela Pratt.

In contrast, the proposed Abraham Baldwin statue would have the right hand holding a book clasped over the heart, with the left arm at his side.

## **The Project Artist**

The sculptor selected for the project, at the strong recommendation of the Chairman of the Art Department at the University of Georgia (Professor Rick Johnson), is Kinzey Branham, a member of the Art Department faculty who resides in Athens. He has had extensive experience in bronze statuary. Samples of his work are available at the Website: [www.kinszeybranham.com](http://www.kinszeybranham.com)

### Estimated Project Costs

The life-size bronze sculpture of Abraham Baldwin, placed on a pedestal and facing the Main Library on North Campus, at the south rim of the President's Garden, will cost approximately \$60,000. The breakdown of the expenses are:

Artist's fee .....	\$30,000
Foundry work .....	20,000
Pedestal .....	10,000

TOTAL \$60,000

Bronze, the selected sculpting material, holds up better than stone, is less vulnerable to accident, and the original mold can be preserved.



## Projected Timetable

Fundraising ..... 1 month

The Sculpting The artist's rendition ..... 10 months The

foundry work ..... 3 months The pedestal placement

work ..... 1 month

15 months

## Sample Solicitation Letter

[date]

Dear :

The University of Georgia calls upon select members of the Abraham Baldwin Society to join together in an important campus project. We hope to place a sculpture of the University's founder and first president, Abraham Baldwin, at the heart of North Campus. A leading public servant, attorney, and educator in Georgia's early history, Baldwin, as you know, was the epitome of public service achievement. The statue will be a life-size bronze likeness that will face the Main Library, book in hand, standing on a pedestal at the south rim of the President's Garden, next to Old College (which is a replica of a Yale College building where Baldwin studied as a young man).

Many of the nation's finest universities—Yale, Harvard, and Stanford, for example— have statues that honor their early leaders. Such a gesture adds considerably to the sense of history and tradition on a campus. Abraham Baldwin is a superb candidate for this remembrance. He embodies the values of the Society that takes his name, for few individuals have risen to his level of distinction in public service and the advancement of education.

The estimated costs for the entire project are about \$60,000 for a bronze work, and some fifteen months will be required to complete the sculpture.

We hope you will join us in making this project a reality. Contributing members of will be acknowledged with their names engraved on a special plaque near the statue, inside Old College. May we count on you for a gift of \$10,000 for this historic commemoration, one that will inspire students and campus visitors for generations to come?

Sincerely,

## **Project Contact Information**

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