

RAYMOND EARL BALDWIN
Governor of Connecticut, 1939-1941, 1943-1946

Born: August 31, 1893, Rye, New York

College: Wesleyan University, 1916; Yale Law School, 1921

Political Party: Republican

Offices: Stratford Town Court, Prosecutor, 1927-1930

Stratford Town Court, Judge, 1931-1933

Connecticut General Assembly, House, 1930-1935

Governor of Connecticut, 1939-1941, 1943-1946

US Senate, 1946-1949

Associate Justice, Connecticut Supreme Court of Errors,
1949-1959

Chief Justice, Connecticut Supreme Court of Errors,
1959-1963

Died: October 4, 1986, Fairfield, Connecticut



It had been more than 70 years since a Connecticut governor who was voted out of office successfully won it back at a later election. Beginning in 1938, Raymond Baldwin ran for the office in four consecutive elections and won three of them.

Although his ancestors had lived in Connecticut for many years, Baldwin was born just across the border in Rye, New York, the son of Lucian Earl and Sarah Emily (Tyler) Baldwin. The family moved to Middletown, Connecticut in 1901, where he attended Central Grammar School, graduated from Middletown High School in 1912, and graduated from Wesleyan University in 1916. He served in the US Navy during World War I, enlisting as a seaman. He was assigned to officer training school and in February 1918 was commissioned as an ensign at Annapolis. His war service was on a destroyer. Following the war, he received a law degree from Yale in 1921. Baldwin practiced law in New Haven and Bridgeport. On June 29, 1922 he married Edith Lindholm of Middletown, daughter of Andrew and Louisa Lindholm, a graduate of Connecticut College at New London and a teacher at Middletown High School. They had three children. Edith died in 1970.

In 1922, Baldwin was interviewed by Republican Party chairman, J. Henry Roraback, who designated him to be Governor Templeton's personal secretary. However, Baldwin angered the party boss by refusing to do so. He served as prosecutor of the Stratford Town Court from 1927-1930 and judge of the Stratford Town Court from 1931-1933. In 1930 he was elected to the General Assembly; in 1933 he became House Majority Leader and chairman of the Judiciary Committee.

When Roraback committed suicide in 1937, the Republican Party had no one who was able to replace him as the party's boss. Baldwin collaborated with others in the party who called themselves "New Republicans" and was nominated to run for governor as a reform candidate. His campaign was aided by the strong vote gained that year by the Socialist candidate, Jasper McLevy. Baldwin was also helped by the Union Party, a small third party that made him its candidate for governor. This party's 3,046 votes actually gave him the margin of victory he needed to defeat the popular four-term governor, Wilbur Cross. Baldwin won by 2,688 votes out of some 458,000 cast. He served one term and then lost his reelection bid to Robert Hurley

during the nation-wide Democratic sweep of 1940. However, two years later he challenged Hurley and was once more elected governor. He was reelected in 1944.

As governor, Baldwin established compulsory annual audits of state and town books and was able to balance the state budget without seeking new taxes. He tended to support the needs of Connecticut businesses and did not like the increased role of the Federal government under the New Deal. However, he provided a more moderate approach to government than had the Republican administrations of the 1920's.

Baldwin's accomplishments as governor were prodigious. He supported more progressive labor legislation, including an anti-injunction bill, the redefinition of conspiracy laws, greater workers' compensation benefits, and the first comprehensive pension system for state employees. He supported efforts to employ more workers in Connecticut and established a job-training program to prepare workers for defense industry jobs. This program became a model for similar programs throughout the country. In 1943 he established the Inter-Racial Commission so that grievances of the state's African-American population might be heard. This commission is believed to be the first civil rights unit of its kind in the country. He also reformed the minor court system.

Two and a half years before the US entered World War II, Baldwin reorganized the state's Military Department. He also established the State Development Commission and the Aeronautical Development Commission, two agencies that helped convert Connecticut industry from peacetime output to defense and war production. During the war, the State Defense Council was recognized as one of the foremost in the country.

In 1944 Baldwin was elected to a third term. In 1945, there was a 150-day labor strike in Connecticut. Believing it threatened national security, he used troops to stop it. During this term a state labor relations act was passed, a Connecticut Veterans Advisory and Reemployment Commission established, and a program to help equalize educational opportunities was launched.

Baldwin had planned to retire from politics when his term ended in January of 1947, but in 1946 he was convinced by his party to run for the US Senate. In order to gain seniority over other freshman senators, Baldwin resigned as governor on December 27, 1946 and went to Washington to fill the remaining term of Senator Brien McMahon, who had died. This allowed the Democratic lieutenant governor, Wilbert Snow, to serve 13 days as governor.

Raymond Baldwin had a presence on the national Republican stage. In 1940 he was a potential running mate for Wendell Wilkie but failed to gain the nomination. In 1944 he was spoken of as potential presidential candidate. He was the Connecticut "favorite son" presidential candidate at the 1948 Republican National Convention.

In 1949, Baldwin resigned from the Senate to accept appointment by Democratic Governor Chester Bowles to the Connecticut Supreme Court of Errors. He became its Chief Justice in 1959, thereby becoming only the second Connecticut person to have served as the state's governor, US Senator, and Chief Justice (the first was Jonathan Trumbull). As Chief Justice he oversaw a major reorganization of the state's court system. After he retired from the court in 1963, Baldwin continued to work in the justice system as a referee.

He was the chairman of Connecticut's Constitutional Convention of 1965, which rewrote the state's Constitution to conform to the US Supreme Court's one-man, one-vote ruling. Baldwin was a member of the Connecticut State Library Committee and its successor, the State Library Board, from 1957-1982 and served as its chair for many years. In tribute to his service, the board renamed the State Library's museum the Raymond E. Baldwin Museum of Connecticut History in 1983. The Baldwin Bridge that carries the Connecticut Turnpike (Rt. 95) from Old Lyme to Old Saybrook is also named for him. Baldwin was the first governor to use the Governor's Mansion located on Prospect Avenue in Hartford. Two homes he once owned, one in Stratford and one in Middletown, are in private hands.

Bibliography:

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New York Times, October 5, 1986, p. 44.

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State Archives Record Group 5, Records of the Governor, Gov. Raymond E. Baldwin, 1939-41.

RG 6:38, Records of the Secretary of the State: Constitutional Convention of 1965.

RG 12, Records of the Connecticut State Library.

RG 40, Records of the Post-War Planning Board, 1943-45.

RG 49, Records of the Veterans Advisory Commission, 1943-49.

RG 50, Records of the State War Council, 1940-45.

RG 69:10, Papers of Raymond E. Baldwin, 1938-1977. Includes records and manuscripts from his gubernatorial term up through his term as Supreme Court Justice and scrapbooks covering his entire career. Hundreds of photographs from the Baldwin family are housed with the Pictorial Archives.

Materials in the State Archives are subject to the *Rules and Procedures for Researchers Using Archival Records and Secured Collections Materials*.

Portrait: James Weiland of Lyme, CT painted Raymond Baldwin in 1940. The portrait is 47" x 57" in its frame.

Originally researched and written by David O. White, Museum of Connecticut History,
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