

# The Roots of Legal Ethics

Research on the root of ethics began with an antique business card and an antique book. The business card of C.C. Baldwin, lawyer, belonged to Cornelius Clark Baldwin, licensed to practice law in Virginia on April 18, 1835 who for most of his professional career maintained his office in Balcony Falls, Rockbridge, Virginia. He was of a distinguished family, attended West Point for a time, and was owner and editor of the Rockbridge newspaper. His business card tells us that he has been "very lucky in collecting old and doubtful claims" and that his "[f]ees in plain cases are less than the usual rates." Baldwin was able to advertise for clients without interference from or regulation by any government authority because rules of professional ethics did not exist at that time to regulate the content of advertising by lawyers.

The antique book is *An Essat on Professional Ethics* by George Sharswood, was published in 1869, and based on a series of lectures given at the University of Pennsylvania Law School in 1854. Sharswood was a judge of the district court in Pennsylvanie, and later became the Chief Justice of the Supreme Court of Pennsylvania. In 1850, he revived the law department of the University of Pennsylvania which had suspended operations. C.C. Baldwin's advertising and George Sharswood's essay on ethics piqued our curiosity about the "beginnings" of rules of ethics and professional conduct in the United States.

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