

Baldwin, Scranton, Victor and the Monogram "WV & B" by Dave Thorpe

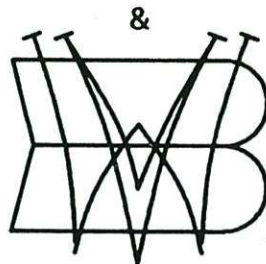
On August 28, 1907, The Baldwin Lamp Company was established in the Commonwealth of Pennsylvania by five men:

L.M. Evans, Scranton, Pa. (President)
W.L. Allen, Peckville, Pa.
A.F. Law, Scranton, Pa.

J. VonBergen, Scranton, Pa.
W.J. Frees, Scranton, Pa.

Just how Fred Baldwin was involved is unknown, but he seems to have always depended on a manufacturing benefactor, as the above stockholders were the probable equivalent of John Simmons Co. in New York. Nonetheless, on July 6, 1909, the company changed its name to **The Scranton Acetylene Lamp Company** whose ads for the Scranton and Scranto lamps have been known to many.¹

The very earliest Baldwin "half-shift" lamps (circa 1906) looked like tin cans and were constructed primarily of steel. Recently, several of these have been photographed in the Smithsonian museum. A very interesting finding is the monogram WV & B stamped very artfully into the screw-on water door.² This same monogram has been seen stamped into the screw-cap of a spare bottom.³



The WV & B Monogram

Early advertisements, as well as Van Fleet's photographs, show a tin wire clip soldered to the water tank. Looped over this clip (in the advertisements) is a dime-sized slug of sheet steel with a little eccentric hole in it. The little hole is how the piece attached to the wire clip. These interesting metal slugs have been seen elsewhere. In 1984 I bought two unfired "Non-Justrite Victor" lamps, along with about six matching bottoms with screw caps (Chuck Young collection). Rattling around within each of these spare bottoms was the exact same piece of metal! And soldered to each slug was a 1/4" piece of wire just the right size to be used as a tip cleaner. In fact, these simply could be *nothing other* than wire tip cleaners. The tiny hole in each was just large enough to fit over the cap hook on the "Non-Justrite Victor."

If one can draw any conclusions from the above, they would be that.

1. While Fred Baldwin designed the pinchwaist lamp for John Simmons Co. in New York, he designed the Scranto-like lamp for the group of five in Scranton, Pa.

2. The "Non-Justrite Victor" was the earliest of the Scranton lamps (made under the name of The Baldwin Lamp Co.), utilizing the same tip cleaner as the tin-can lamps made in New York.

One question still remains. While it is clear that the monogram WV & B is now clearly associated with Baldwin lamps, what do the initials actually stand for? Jim Van Fleet first speculated that it may stand for "Baldwin Water Valve." However, subsequent research led to more concrete possibilities. An oil lamp with the inscription "W V & B Metalcraft" has been reported.⁴ The oil lamp has a tin body and a brass screw-cap. The early Baldwins also have tin bodies and brass screw-caps. Although the oil lamp does not have the monogram found on the Baldwins, the identical initials and the similar construction is compelling evidence. Further investigation showed that a tinware and metal stamping company named "William Vogel & Brothers" existed in Brooklyn, New York in 1906, the period in which the early Baldwin lamps were manufactured⁵. Furthermore, the Baldwin company was also located in Brooklyn, New York. Although the evidence is not 100% conclusive, it is felt that the early Baldwin lamps were probably manufactured by "W V & B Metalcraft" or "William Vogel & Brothers" which may actually be the same company.

1. Research by Bill Spence. Letters from the Executive Department, Commonwealth of Pa.
2. Photography by Lindy and James Van Fleet.
3. Underground Lamp Post, 1980.
4. Underground Lamp Post, Spring 1982.
5. Thomas Register of American Manufacturers, 1905-1906.

Baldwin Acetylene Mine Lamp



**Burns In Light
Or Foul Air
Absolutely Safe.
Does Not Smoke.
Stays Lit.**

It has proved
itself much
cheaper than
any known meth-
od of lighting
in the mines.
Well construct-
ed, light to car-
ry, easy to oper-
ate. No valves
or springs to get
out of order, or
require atten-
tion.

Patented.
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Manufactured by
JOHN SIMMONS COMPANY
102 Centre St., New York

ACETYLENE

For Mines

SAVES 50%

10 Candle Power Light
COSTS 2 CENTS PER SHIFT

F. E. Baldwin Mfg. Co.
104 Center Street, New York.



Ads from Engineering and Mining Journal, January 1909.