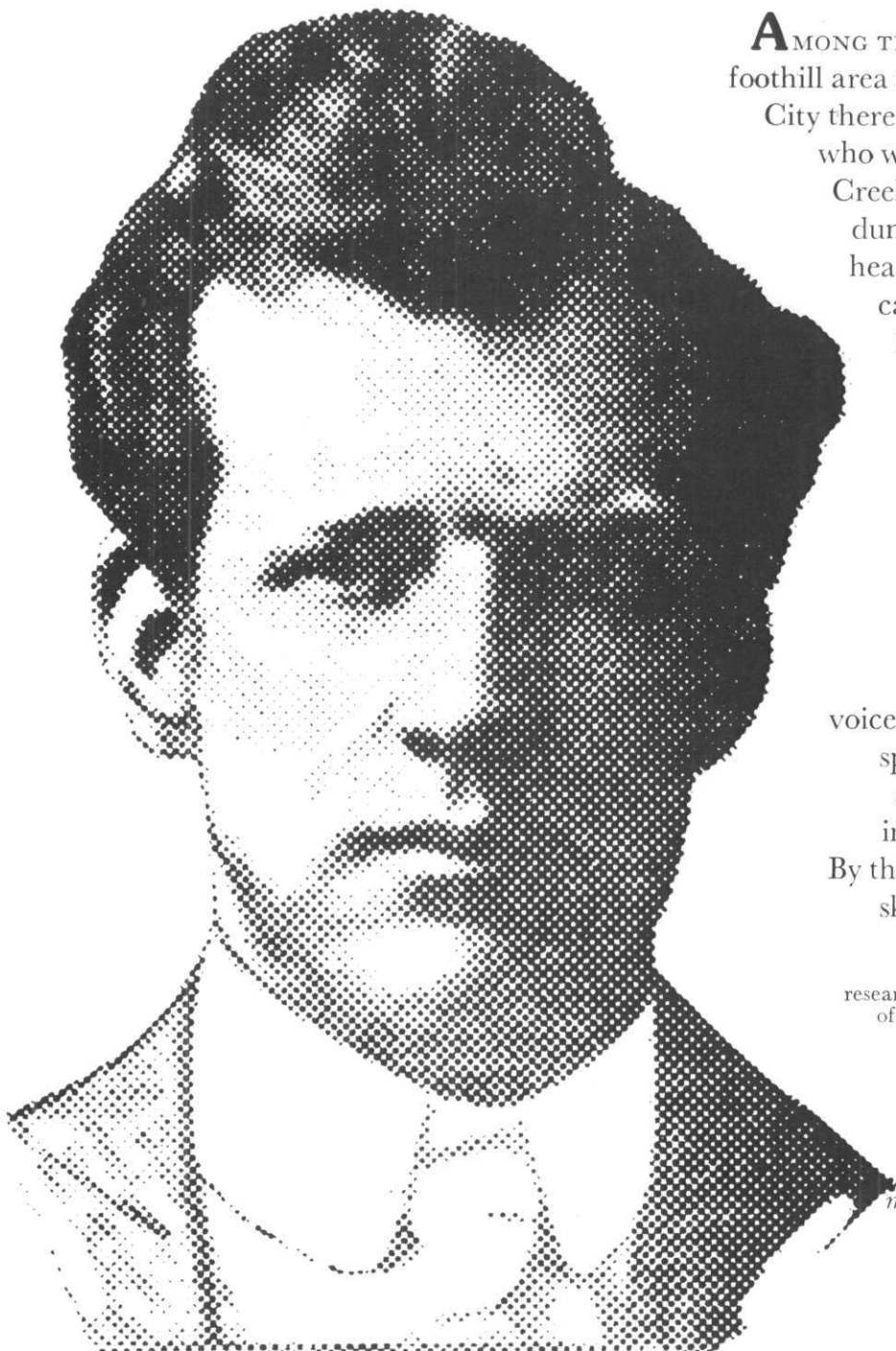

Nathaniel Baldwin, Utah Inventor and Patron of the Fundamentalist Movement

BY MERRILL SINGER

AMONG THE RESIDENTS OF THE foothill area southeast of Salt Lake City there is a story about a man who while traveling up Mill Creek Canyon one day was dumbstruck by a voice he heard booming down the canyon walls. The man looked around, but he was all alone. Bewildered by the sound, he continued his journey up the canyon until he finally came upon an embarrassed Nathaniel Baldwin testing his new compressed-air voice amplifier. This loudspeaker was the first of a number of Baldwin inventions with sound. By the 1930s his innovative skills had helped Utah

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*Screened print of
Nathaniel Baldwin
from photograph in
Deseret News advertise-
ment, December 21, 1929.*



become a leading manufacturer of radio loudspeakers and headsets. His products were marketed worldwide, being especially sought by the United States Navy in the First World War.

An enigmatic figure like Baldwin seems bound to attract tall tales and legends. At one time a published story claimed that in the factory Baldwin set up to produce his radio equipment he required all his employees to marry plural wives.¹ Stories about Baldwin still circulate. A young resident of the area claims that the old Baldwin factory, still standing near the East Millcreek Public Library, was the site where “the first T.V. ever” was built. The truth about Nathaniel Baldwin, inventor, writer, and philanthropist, is as fascinating a tale as any of those of a more dubious nature. But unlike popular stories, the truth often lacks a felicitous ending. Baldwin’s intriguing story involves two interwoven threads. One is a rather straightforward but sad account of a young inventor’s arduous rise and his rapid fall from wealth and prominence in early twentieth-century Utah. The other, more obscure thread, winds through the polygamous world just beyond the bounds of Mormon orthodoxy.

Like many Utah residents, Nathaniel Baldwin’s story begins in the cross-country trek of the Mormon pioneers. His father, Nathan Bennett Baldwin, was a stonecutter from New York who converted to the Mormon church not long after its inception. As a member of Zion’s Camp, the Mormon force organized to rescue endangered Missouri Saints, Nathan Baldwin became acquainted with Joseph Smith. Following Smith’s assassination, Nathan Baldwin and his wife, Sarah Ann Pine, crossed the plains to join the newly formed community of Fillmore, Utah.² Here Baldwin built a crude flour mill powered by a wooden paddle wheel, the first in the area. His livelihood, however, was based mainly on his homestead and on a small lime-burning business. In the year 1863 the senior Baldwin followed the urgings of the church’s leadership and took a second wife, Margaretta Oler, a native of Pennsylvania. Over the years Margaretta bore seven sons, but most of them died in infancy. The last child, born December 1, 1878, was christened Nathaniel after his father.

The young Baldwin exhibited an early interest in school and learning, particularly in scientific subjects. Even as a child he was noted for

¹ Edward Doherty, “Polygamy on the Santa Fe Trail,” *Liberty Magazine* 14:8.

² Brief accounts of Baldwin’s family background and later history can be found in Noble Warrum, ed., *Utah Since Statehood: Historical and Biographical*, 4 vols. (Chicago and Salt Lake City: S. J. Clarke Publishing Co., 1919–20), 3:887–88, and in the *Historical and Pictorial Remembrance Book* (Salt Lake City: East Millcreek Chapter, Sons of Utah Pioneers, 1972), pp. 26–31.

“always building things.”³ To make the long trek to school a more pleasant journey, Nathaniel built his own bicycle. He also put together a steam engine at a young age.⁴

Much of Baldwin’s early life has been likened to the tale of “hard labor,” “privation,” and “struggle for an education” common to many creative persons.⁵ Baldwin’s insatiable curiosity and unbounded desire to learn were greatly hampered by the lack of educational opportunities available in rural southern Utah before the turn of the century. Eventually, however, he was able to attend Brigham Young Academy in Provo, Utah. There the impecunious but eager student inhabited an adobe hut which the townspeople dubbed “Baldwin’s Castle.” Even in his domestic life Baldwin’s inclination to build and create found a productive outlet; all the furnishings of his primitive abode were the product of his own talented handiwork. From Brigham Young Academy, Baldwin moved north to Logan to attend the Utah State Agricultural College. He remained in Logan for one year and then completed his education in physics and electrical engineering with a year in Palo Alto, California, at Stanford University.

Baldwin then returned to his native state to take up a teaching post in physics at Brigham Young University. He also held a position in theology and was involved in various LDS church activities.⁶ During this time Baldwin made the acquaintance of John Tanner Clark and began his active involvement in the growing Fundamentalist movement.⁷

Mormon Fundamentalism was undoubtedly linked to the social transition occurring during the late nineteenth and early twentieth centuries in Mormon territory. The previous years, especially the 1880s, had witnessed an intense struggle between the Mormon church and the government of the United States over a number of issues including Mormon belief in plural marriage. But with the issuance of the Manifesto banning plural marriage in 1890, the confiscations of church property, “polyg hunts,” and other federal interventions in Utah began to slacken, and Mormonism’s conflict with the Gentiles became less and less an open confrontation. As the sociologist Thomas O’Dea has suggested, “Mor-

³ Personal communication from Nathaniel’s daughter, Thora Baldwin, August 16, 1976.

⁴ Stella H. Day and Sebrina Ekins, comps., *Milestones of Millard: 100 Years of History of Millard County* (Fillmore, Ut.: Daughters of Utah Pioneers, 1951), p. 87.

⁵ “How a Church Service and War Promoted Utah’s Radio Industry,” advertisement in *Deseret News*, December 21, 1929.

⁶ Warum, *Utah Since Statehood*, 3:887.

⁷ The meeting of Baldwin and Clark at this time and the nature of their association is suggested in the report of the lawsuit involving both men—*Omega Investment Company v. Woolley et al.*—in the *Pacific Reporter* (Saint Paul, Minn.) 271 (1924):813.

monism accommodated itself and became reincorporated within the American community from which it had gradually and half consciously seceded."⁸

From the ashes of Mormon resistance, however, there arose a number of dissident coteries clinging to the outlawed practice of polygamous marriage. Several individuals began to attract attention because of their outspoken opposition to the new policies of the Mormon church. Claiming that the Manifesto was "a covenant with death and an agreement with hell,"⁹ men like John T. Clark and Josiah E. Hickman developed small followings among the disillusioned Mormons who felt that the church was giving in to "the ways of the world." There is some indication that Provo, Utah, was one of several centers of early resistance to the ban on plural marriage. Besides being home to Baldwin and Clark, Provo was also the residence of men like Benjamin Cluff, Jr., who resigned his position as president of Brigham Young Academy over the polygamy question, and Moses Gudmundson, a BYU professor of music who founded his own polygamous sect in 1918.¹⁰ The Mormon church's attitude toward these dissenters, or Fundamentalists as they were later titled, began to rigidify following the Reed Smoot hearings in Washington and the release of the so-called Second Manifesto in 1904.¹¹ The new decree threatened excommunication for individuals who performed or entered into polygamous marriage.

In line with this pronouncement, the LDS church initiated punitive action against a number of plural marriage advocates. Nathaniel Baldwin and John T. Clark were among the first to suffer for being out of harmony with church officials. With Baldwin's financial backing, Clark had been involved in writing religious tracts supporting plural marriage.

⁸ *The Mormons* (Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 1957), p. 111. For a discussion of some of the ramifications of this transition, see Hans Baer, "The Levites of Utah: The Development of and Conversion to a Small Millenarian Sect" (Ph.D. diss., University of Utah, 1976).

⁹ This charge appears in a pamphlet written by Clark around 1905, *The Last Records to Come Forth*, a copy of which is on file in the Archives Division, Historical Department, Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints, Salt Lake City. For accounts of the development and beliefs of the Fundamentalist movement, see Dean C. Jessee, "A Comparative Study and Evaluation of the Latter-day Saint and Fundamentalist Views Pertaining to the Practice of Plural Marriage" (M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1955); Lyle O. Wright, "Origins and Development of the Church of the Firstborn of the Fulness of Times" (M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1963); and Jerold A. Hilton, "Polygamy in Utah and the Surrounding Area Since the Manifesto of 1890" (M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1965). It should be noted that these works include several inaccuracies about Nathaniel Baldwin.

¹⁰ See Kimball Young, *Isn't One Wife Enough?* (New York: Holt, 1954), for a discussion of these individuals. Kate B. Carter, *Denominations That Base Their Beliefs on the Teachings of Joseph Smith* (Salt Lake City: Daughters of Utah Pioneers, 1962), p. 54, suggests that Cluff was a follower of Josiah Hickman.

¹¹ The Reed Smoot hearings are in U.S., Congress, Senate, Committee on Privileges and Elections, *Proceedings . . . in the Matter of the Protests against the Right of Hon. Reed Smoot . . . to Hold His Seat*, 4 vols. (Washington, D.C.: Government Printing Office, 1906).

In April 1905 Clark was called before the bishop's court of the Provo Fifth Ward in regard to a letter he had circulated to church members. In this letter Clark pleaded the cause of plural marriage and forecast the imminent arrival of a "one Mighty and Strong" to set the church in order.¹² A month after his hearing Clark was formally excommunicated. Baldwin also fell victim to the Mormon church's hardened stand on plural marriage. In the same year as Clark's expulsion, Baldwin was fired from his teaching position at BYU. He was terminated because of his continued "belief in the coming of a great prophet who would bring forth the sealed portion of the Book of Mormon and because he would not accept the manifesto regarding plural marriage."¹³

Baldwin, having married Elizabeth Butler in 1899, now found himself out of work and with a wife and small child to support. Only after a period of considerable hardship was he able to find another job, this time as an electrician and air compressor operator at the Mountain Lake mine in Wasatch County, Utah. Reportedly, Baldwin only secured this assignment because the previous operator was frightened by the ever present threat of snowslides in this mountain region.¹⁴ But the isolated working conditions appealed to him. In the three years that he was employed at the mine, he had ample time and the necessary tools to investigate some of the projects rebounding in his fertile mind.

Baldwin's initial endeavor was the construction of a boilerless steam engine. But this was one enterprise he never completed. While attending a general conference of the LDS church, the young inventor was struck by the difficulty he had in hearing the speakers in some parts of the world-famous Salt Lake Tabernacle. As he later explained:

... until that day nothing was further from my mind than the problem of amplifying sound. But, after that day, the thought could not be pushed into the background. It persisted to the point where I was unable to concentrate on the steam engine.¹⁵

His curiosity aroused, Baldwin set out to construct a voice amplification device. It was this invention that later bewildered Mill Creek Canyon travelers and led to Baldwin's rise as a noted Utah inventor.

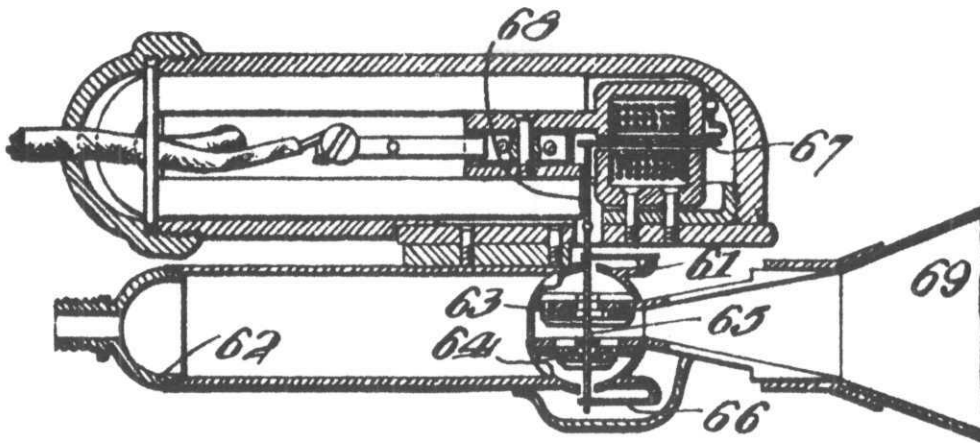
The "Second Manifesto" is a statement by Joseph F. Smith, LDS church president, found in *Seventy-fourth Annual Conference of the Church of Jesus Christ of Latter-day Saints... Report of the Discourses* (Salt Lake City: Deseret News, 1904), p. 75.

¹² Clark's letter appears in his pamphlet *The Last Records to Come Forth*, pp. 2-3. Reference to the "one Mighty and Strong," a central Fundamentalist concept, is based on Doctrine and Covenants, 85:7-8.

¹³ Warrum, *Utah Since Statehood*, 3:887-88. Baldwin, like others during this period, very likely believed this "great prophet" to be John T. Clark. See Harry Shewell, *Who Is John T. Clark* (n.p., 1935), and W. A. Hudson, *Believe It or Not...* (Salt Lake City, 1953).

¹⁴ *Salt Lake Tribune*, June 9, 1929.

¹⁵ *Deseret News*, December 21, 1924.



Inventor

Nathaniel Baldwin,

A. B. Wilson & Co

Attorneys

Witnesses

W. J. Brown,
W. Milton

This illustration, courtesy U.S. Patent Office, combines two Baldwin patents. The upper portion is his telephone receiver (pat. no. 957,403) which is connected to his compressed air-sound amplifier (pat. no. 450,798).

After long experimentation, Baldwin discovered that by attaching a tube of compressed air to a noise-sensitive valve, he was able to amplify his speaking voice many times. He then attempted fastening his mechanism to a telephone but found the voice that came over the wire far too weak to trigger the valve on his loudspeaker. To remedy this problem, he decided to improve the telephone receiver.¹⁶

While working on these projects, Baldwin continued in his theological interests as well. During his stay at the Mountain Lake mine he completed the first section of a pamphlet he later issued under the title of *Times of the Gentiles—Fulness of the Gentiles*.¹⁷ Like many of his later writings, this tract warns of the dangerous path being followed by the LDS church.

When the Mountain Lake mine shut down in 1909, Baldwin was hired by the Knight Power Company to operate a power plant on the Snake Creek near Heber City, Utah. There he remained for two years until the power plant was acquired by Utah Power and Light Company, and Baldwin was transferred to the company's hydroelectric plant in Mill

¹⁶ *Salt Lake Tribune*, June 9, 1929.

¹⁷ (Salt Lake City, 1917). This and other Baldwin pamphlets are in the library of the Utah State Historical Society, Salt Lake City.

Creek Canyon. The inventor and his growing family settled into a two-room frame house four miles up the canyon, but their stay would not be long in this home either.

Despite the many moves, Baldwin continued to perfect his sound equipment. By May 1910 his earphone receivers were completed and registered with the patent office.¹⁸ This instrument consisted of two super-sensitive sound receivers affixed to an operator's headband. Within each earphone was coiled a mile of fine copper wiring and a mica diaphragm, giving the Baldwin headset the most sensitive reception yet possible.¹⁹ The discoveries of Marconi in wireless transmission at the turn of the century created a demand for efficient reception equipment, but like all inventors, Baldwin now faced the onerous task of convincing others of the superiority and workability of his product.

Baldwin's initial efforts to sell his invention met with disheartening rejection. He sent letters off to various manufacturers of radio and wireless supplies, but his attempts were in vain. Private companies seemed uninterested in his instrument. Finally, Baldwin tried contacting the Smithsonian Institution in Washington, D.C. Again he failed to generate any interest. But, the Smithsonian did suggest that the United States Navy might have an interest in sensitive radio equipment. Baldwin fired off a letter to the navy detailing the advantages of his radio earphones. This time his efforts were rewarded with a positive reply. After testing his headset, the navy sent Baldwin an order for several more sets, which he enthusiastically filled. After several additional orders and further testing, the navy, seeing a possible war looming in America's future, requested one hundred sets "at once."²⁰ The demand was too great for Baldwin's individual efforts. In the fall of 1914 he resigned from his position as power plant operator and built a twelve-by-fourteen-foot wooden factory at 3477 South 2300 East along the creek. This building was the first step of what eventually blossomed into a multimillion-dollar radio industry in Utah.

Although a former power company employee, Baldwin dreaded purchasing electricity to power his machinery. As his father had done many years before in Fillmore, Utah, Nathaniel constructed a water wheel on Mill Creek. The wheel was three feet in diameter and was fitted with six to eight paddles, which, via several bicycle wheels and a piano wire belt,

¹⁸ Patent no. 957,403.

¹⁹ For a more complete description and diagram, see Morgan E. McMahan, *Vintage Radio* (Palos Verdes, Calif., 1973), p. 191.

²⁰ *Salt Lake Tribune*, June 9, 1929.

transmitted electricity to the Baldwin factory. Though crude in design and often in disrepair, the wheel worked well enough to one day pull most of the hair from Baldwin's son Kelvin's head as he leaned too close to the spinning shaft.²¹ The successful reception of Baldwin's earphones enabled him in 1915 to add a second building to the factory, and the following year more acreage was purchased to further expand production. Baldwin's original power source was replaced by a more elaborate water wheel, and eventually a large concrete dam and turbine were added. As his need for motor power grew, Baldwin finally conceded and began purchasing electricity from his former employers at Utah Power and Light, but the dam he had built enabled him to install his own culinary water system.²²

Baldwin was well liked by his employees, and residents of East Millcreek still recall Nathaniel Baldwin with fond memories. The high wages he offered—four dollars a day for a forty-eight hour week—attracted people from all over Utah to his factory. Though a shy person, Baldwin made it a habit to walk through the factory, in his soiled and baggy trousers, chatting with his workers and devising new techniques and tools for more efficiently producing his radio equipment. Perhaps Baldwin's greatest creative ability was in recognizing and devising new ways to improve his product or the method of its production.

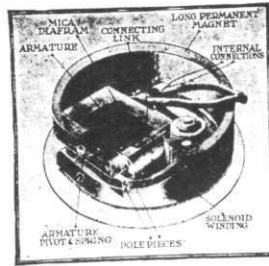
Possibly the turning point in the history of the Baldwin radio industry was the year 1922. The business had proven eminently successful. Baldwin products were recognized throughout the country and in a number of foreign lands as the highest grade of radio receiver on the market. Advertisements of the day claimed that Baldwin headsets added an extra stage of audio amplification to radio reception, and customers apparently agreed because the comparatively expensive Baldwin equipment was in heavy demand.²³ By June 1922 the Baldwin factory was employing 150 men and women on an around-the-clock, three-shift schedule and turning out 150 headsets per day. As the radio became a popular form of entertainment, Baldwin added loudspeakers of the phonograph horn type to his line of products.

* ²¹ This story and a detailed description of the Baldwin plant is in a letter from Kelvin Baldwin to Joy F. Dunyon, a copy of which, with Kelvin's permission, is in the author's possession. Kelvin Baldwin, also an inventor, was named by his father after the noted Scottish physicist Lord Kelvin.

²² Interview with former Baldwin employee F. Earl Walker, August 23, 1976, East Millcreek. Other former Baldwin employees or East Millcreek residents who assisted the author were John and Emma Gardner, Junius Fisher, Martin Shaffir, Seth Chamberlain, Mrs. Lamar Gardner, A. V. Henrichsen, and Joy F. Dunyon.

²³ A typical advertisement from 1922 is found in McMahon, *Vintage Radio*, p. 191.

This illustration shows the amplifying mechanism in a Baldwin unit. Note that four pole pieces of single solenoid act on the armature, which in turn connects with the super-sensitive mica diaphragm.



Type "C" Navy standard\$16.50
 Type "E" Super-sensitive 20.00
 Type "F" light weight 21.00
 Units for loud speakers
 Type "C"\$8.50
 Type "E"10.00

1922

Equal to two stages of radio amplification

THE experience of leading radio operators—who have found Baldy Phones "equal to two stages of radio amplification"—clearly indicates the outstanding advantages of using good phones. From a standpoint of radio efficiency, you will get "more value per dollar" from your investment in Baldwin Amplifying Phones than from any other item of your equipment.

Here are the actual (un-asked-for) letters from experienced radio men, telling of their results with Baldys. They're worth careful reading!

"Have used a pair of Type 'C' Baldys for some time, in naval communication and commercial service. Consider them the most sensitive telephone on the market." (Name on request.)

"I faithfully believe the use of Baldwin Phones will improve any receiving set at least 50%." (Name on request.)

"Equal to one and two stages of radio amplification": Of course Baldys cost more—but where can you get better value? Where else can you buy amplification equal to the super-sensitive Baldwin mechanism for so little?

And the more limited your investment in radio must be, that much more important becomes the use of a super-sensitive and selective Baldwin head set!

The best radio dealer in your town undoubtedly has a supply of booklets explaining the superior construction of Baldwin Phones, Eldredge Meters, and other Firth Specialties. If he does lack a supply, write, mentioning his name and address, direct to

JOHN FIRTH & CO . Inc., 18 Broadway, New York

Distributors for

Baldwin Phones U. S. Bureau of Standards
 Eldredge Meters Wavemeter
 Kolster Decremeter Brownie Adjustable Phones

Dealers: Write for advance information on new popular-priced loud speaker

BALDY FOR LAND SEA AND IN THE AIR PHONES

Advertisement for the Baldwin radio amplifier appeared in 1922. From Vintage Radio.

It has been said that at about this time Baldwin was offered over a million dollars for his company but declined for fear that the business would be moved out of state and that local residents would be robbed of employment. His small East Millcreek factory, however, could only supply a fraction of the market for Baldwin goods. Following an accidental fire that destroyed his machine shop, Baldwin built a large brick manufactory near his older wooden structures. But, even with expansion, he was unable

to meet the growing demand for his wares. He therefore signed a contract with another firm to produce Baldwin equipment. A factory was constructed in Holladay, Utah, and another in Chicago. Contracts were also signed with companies in Canada and Japan.²⁴

The year 1922 also marked the time that Baldwin incorporated the Omega Investment Company. Housed in an office building adjacent to the new brick factory, the Omega Shop, as it was called, was formed to “purchase real estate, . . . operate mines, . . . railroads, smelters and refineries, . . . and to publish books and other literature.”²⁵

A list of the directors and other individuals involved with this corporation reads like a Who’s Who of the early Fundamentalist movement in Utah. This fact is historically of interest because it ties together many of the individuals who later formed the Council of Friends of God, the parent organization of the larger Fundamentalist groups in existence today. Among the prominent names in the post-Manifesto polygamous movement who either worked for or were in some other way affiliated with Baldwin, were: John T. Clark, Josiah Hickman, Clyde Neilson, Daniel Bateman, Paul Feil, Matthias F. Cowley, John W. Taylor, John Y. Barlow, Israel Barlow, Ianthus Barlow, Albert Barlow, Lyman Jessop, Moroni Jessop, Margarito Bautista, Leslie Broadbent, Joseph W. Musser, and Lorin Woolley. Undoubtedly, many of the ideas and beliefs of contemporary Fundamentalist groups were formulated in the cottage meetings and prayer gatherings dating to the Baldwin period.

Although Baldwin never required his employees to take plural wives, as some have claimed, he certainly helped those individuals who shared his religious convictions. As a former Baldwin employee explained, “If you were interested in polygamy, Baldwin was interested in you.” In line with his noted generosity, Baldwin used the profits from his thriving business to aid the large families of his polygamous friends. He quietly paid their overdue bills and mortgages and hired members of the fledgling and still disorganized movement in his factory. Additionally, he financed the building of a row of twelve bungalow-style houses opposite his own large home on Evergreen Avenue in East Millcreek. Local residents referred to these homes as “polygamy alley.” At one time Ellen and Rhoda Taylor, plural wives of the former LDS apostle John W. Taylor were among the residents of this street.

²⁴ These contracts were later voided. See *Pacific Reporter* 271 (1924):805–6.

²⁵ Articles of Incorporation, Omega Investment Co., Secretary of State’s Office, Utah State Capitol, Salt Lake City.

During this period, Baldwin also became involved in one of the “dream mine” ventures common to this era.²⁶ Over the years, various people have claimed several locations to be the site of an enormously rich gold mine that Brigham Young allegedly prophesied would save the country from economic catastrophe. Baldwin supplied \$50,000 to build a road to one favored location in Farmington Canyon.²⁷ The project met with a disastrous ending, however, when a sudden cloudburst flooded the canyon, drowning several workers and washing away Baldwin’s road. This portentous sign marked the impending reversal in the inventor’s fortunes.

The first step in this turnabout grew out of Baldwin’s firm belief in the righteousness of plural marriage. His outspoken views on this topic eventually revived his earlier problems with the LDS church. He had been active in the East Millcreek Ward, serving in a number of callings, including ward teacher. But his open espousal of plural marriage resulted finally in his disfellowship from the church. He also later had a falling out with some of his Fundamentalist friends, filing suit against a number of them to block what he feared was an attempted takeover of his business.²⁸

The actual collapse of the Baldwin radio industry began in 1924. In January of that year, Nathaniel replaced a number of individuals in the management of his company. Included on the new board of directors were some of his Fundamentalist associates.²⁹ The displaced men formed a separate company and began to turn out products that Baldwin possibly felt were in violation of his patent rights.³⁰ Not long after, due apparently to the poor management of the new directors, the Baldwin company was thrown into receivership by the district court of Salt Lake City. The receiver, Banker’s Trust Company, took over the business, reshuffled its personnel and quickly began to operate at a profit.

Eventually, Baldwin was able to return to the head of his business, but his problems had just begun. At the urging of several associates, he now formed a stock company to sell shares in his radio business. Stock was sold out of state in Helena, Montana. The sale evidently involved fraudulent use of the mails for advertising, and a federal indictment

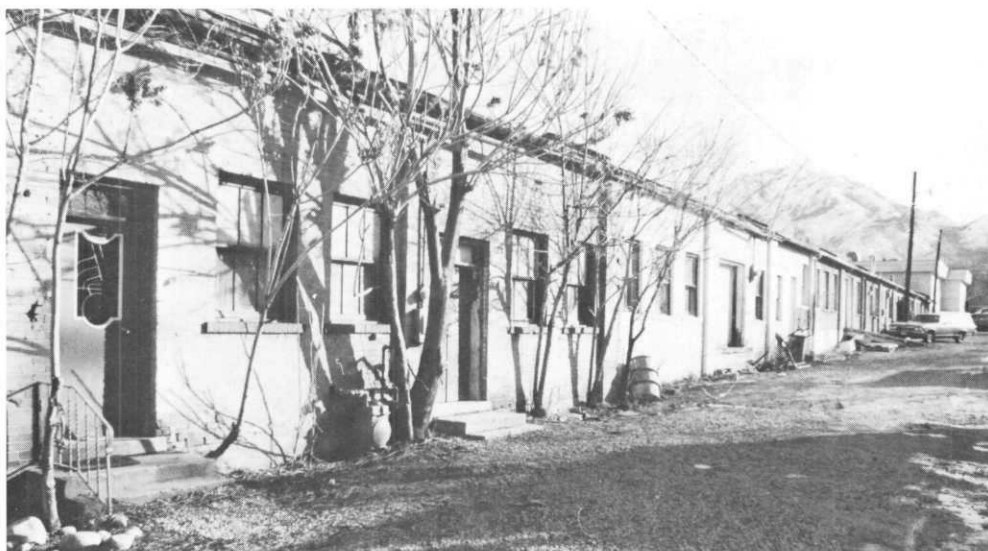
²⁶ James Christianson, “An Historical Study of the Koyle Relief Mine, 1894–1962” (M.A. thesis, Brigham Young University, 1962).

²⁷ Baldwin to Dunyon.

²⁸ *Pacific Reporter* 271 (1924): 797–820.

²⁹ *Omega v. Woolley*, file no. 36745, Third District Court, Salt Lake City.

³⁰ See Articles of Incorporation, Utah Rubber Co., Secretary of State’s Office, Utah State Capitol, and *Pacific Reporter* 271 (1924): 806.



View of the old Baldwin factory still standing in East Millcreek section of Salt Lake City. Plant now houses a variety of businesses. Staff photograph.

was filed against Baldwin and about a dozen other directors of the company. In 1930 Baldwin was convicted and sentenced to five years at McNeil Island Federal Prison. He served two years of his sentence, spending his time pursuing his experiments and electrical inventions.³¹ During this time, his company “folded” and when Baldwin was released from prison he returned to Utah a broken man. Although he spent the remaining years of his life improvising a number of new products, he never regained his position as a prominent inventor and business owner.

Though a mechanical genius of first-rate abilities, Nathaniel Baldwin was apparently neither a good businessman nor a good judge of character. He was extremely altruistic; in fact, some have said that he was generous to a fault. Because of his creative ability, a small rural community was transformed into a factory town, and Utah was thrust into the center of the expanding field of sound transmission.

But the threads of his story end on January 19, 1961, when an impoverished Nathaniel Baldwin died at his son’s home in Salt Lake City. The inventions that engaged his interest have been reworked and improved by other hands. The religious schism that he patronized is still alive, though many of its members know little of the importance of Baldwin in its inception. His factory—converted now to other uses—still stands in East Millcreek, but never again will it bear the title Nathaniel Baldwin Inc.

³¹ Details of this period are found in Baldwin to Dunyon.