

Bausch and Lomb Scopes

As an affiliate, we may earn a commission from qualifying purchases. We get commissions for purchases made through links on this website from Amazon and other third parties.

When people hear the name Bausch and Lomb, they typically think contacts and sunglasses, instead of rifle scopes. However, in the mid 1960's, Bausch and Lomb did venture into the sporting optics market and produce a number of rifle scopes.

Bausch and Lomb was founded in Rochester, NY in 1853 by John Bausch and Henry Lomb. Bausch was an optician, while Lomb was the financial backer of the company. When the company first started, they manufactured a high end (for that time period) line of monoculars and eye glass frames. By the end of the 20th century, Bausch and Lomb was producing eyeglasses, microscopes and binoculars, as well as projectors, and camera lenses.



During WW1 and WW2, the demand for optical based military equipment reached an all time high for B&L as military products accounted for almost 70% of all the products they sold. Once the wars were over, Bausch and Lomb saw the optics market change so they changes as well.

In 1962, Bausch and Lomb marketed their first series of rifle scopes, called the Balfour. BAL was an abbreviation for Bausch and Lomb and “four” was the power of the scope. This scope was a success, which led to the introduction of other B&L models, including a very popular variable model called the Balvar (var meaning variable). Many people commonly think that the scope series was a “Balvar” and didn’t realize that it was a combination of the abbreviation and the scope settings. Most of the Balvar models were a variable 2.5 to 8 power scope.

In 1968, Bausch and Lomb released their 2nd generation of scopes known as the “B” series. This series was a continuation of the early BAL models with a “B” appended to the name such as a Balvar 8B. The “B” series did well, leading B&L to release a 3rd generation of scopes known as the Elite 3000 and Elite 4000 series.

In 1973, Bausch & Lomb decided to move away from the sports optics field and more towards the medical optical field, so they sold licensing rights of their scope line to Bushnell, who changed the scope model names, but continued to market under the B&L name. Bausch and Lomb scopes of this time period were still manufactured in the Rochester plant, and were still called the Elite series.

In 2004, the licensing agreement ended and Bausch and Lomb elected not to renew the arraignment so Bushnell could no longer use the B&L name. Bushnell moved production of the rifle scope line to a plant in Japan and renamed the line the Bushnell Elite series (which is still produced today).



There are still a large number of very nice B&L scopes from the 1960's and 1970's still floating around today. The B&L elite target models of the late 90's are still highly prized by benchrest and target shooters for their clarity and performance. The older BAL models were very well made scopes for that time period and would have been the equivalent of a high end [Leupold](#) today, costing over \$100 in the late 1960's.