



W.R. Cobb acquires B.A. Ballou

— W.R. Cobb launches Cobb/Ballou Findings – one of the world’s largest high quality findings companies —

Cranston, RI – W.R. Cobb Company announced the acquisition of B.A. Ballou, one America’s oldest jewelry manufacturers. The acquisition of Ballou by W.R. Cobb is highly complementary and the new Division, Cobb/Ballou Findings will operate under the W.R.Cobb corporate structure.

As part of the acquisition, W.R. Cobb has secured all of Ballou’s intellectual property, equipment, tooling, and their management team. No member of the Ballou family will continue with the Company.

“The acquisition of B. A. Ballou is a major strategic opportunity for our Company. For the past 130 years, W.R. Cobb has competed with the 140-year-old B.A. Ballou. The two companies have been the leaders in manufacturing high quality jewelry findings and the combined company creates a powerful global manufacturer,” said Roderick Lichtenfels, Chief Executive Officer of W.R. Cobb.

Cobb/Ballou Findings will focus its manufacturing in the United States at its facilities in Rhode Island. In addition to the Rhode Island headquarters and manufacturing operations, Cobb/Ballou Findings will operate offices in Ireland, England, Vietnam, Thailand, India, and Hong Kong to name but a few.

“The W.R.Cobb and B.A. Ballou product lines greatly complement one another. For everyone from for the local quality jeweler to the large national retailer, combined we now offer the most complete solutions,” said Lichtenfels, “Over the past five-years W.R. Cobb has launched an array of creative solutions to help the jewelry industry modernize. These new initiatives have included the development of the industry’s first true-white gold – Precise[®] White Gold – to the creation of WRCobbOnline, a Web solution for jewelers to go online. Each of these initiatives as well as the Ballou acquisition are intended to assist the jewelry industry provide the best possible products to consumers through a variety of channels.”

Combined, Cobb/Ballou Findings will operate sales offices in more than 20 countries around the world. Additionally, immediate steps are being made to add all of Ballou’s products onto the www.WRCobb.com -- one of the world’s largest business-to-business Web sites.

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W.R. COBB Company

ABOUT W.R. COBB: The Company has been continuously manufacturing in the United States since 1877. Located in Cranston, Rhode Island, the concern is one of the leading supplies of jewelry findings, castings, and precious metals for the jewelry industry internationally. W.R. Cobb has locations in the United States, Hong Kong, Thailand, India, Belgium and Vietnam.

FACTS ABOUT PRECISE[®] WHITE GOLD:

Precise[®] White Gold does not need to be rhodium plated. Rhodium is commonly used on all white gold to cover the natural yellowish color of gold for a more pleasing white color. Rhodium plating usually adds approximately \$7 to \$20 to the retail price of a typical ring.

This patented white gold retains its shine and luster with no special TREATMENT, as there is no rhodium plating to wear off revealing a less pleasant color. As a result customers are more satisfied with their purchase.

Precise[®] White Gold lowers manufacturing costs significantly because there is no special handling or plating costs. The finished jewelry is simply polished like any other gold product.

This innovative gold lowers the cost of after sales service as there are no problems with a plated rhodium finish wearing off, and repaired jewelry no longer requires special handling or rhodium replating.

Precise[®] White Gold was also developed with the jeweler in mind. Not only can it be polished and finished as easily as yellow gold, it is not brittle like some other white gold alloys, having the ductility and ease of use for diamond setting and hand fabrication.

ABOUT B.A. BALLOU

Ballou findings have long been recognized for their exceptional performance, uniform precision and quality craftsmanship. Our expertise also allows us to provide customized solutions when required. For over 140 years Ballou's reputation for innovation and customer satisfaction had been built upon providing the highest level of quality and service the consumer. Ballou operated globally with offices in Dublin, Ireland; London, England; and Hong Kong.