

WatchTime SPOTLIGHT

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**A HISTORY OF
LONGINES
WATCHES,
FROM THE PAGES
OF WATCHTIME
MAGAZINE**



LONGINES



Longines' manufacturing site at the end of the 19th century

Pioneering Spirit, Precision and Elegance

In 1832, Auguste Agassiz founded a *comptoir* that would develop into the Longines company we know today. From 1852 to 1900, Ernest Francillon put the business on a path of modernization leading toward its present-day significance.

Text: Gisbert L. Brunner

Every era has its mission, the fulfillment of which leads to the advancement of humanity, wrote Heinrich Heine in his *Reisebilder II* (Additions to Travel Pictures) in 1831 or thereabouts. This same year Auguste Agassiz, the son of the pastor

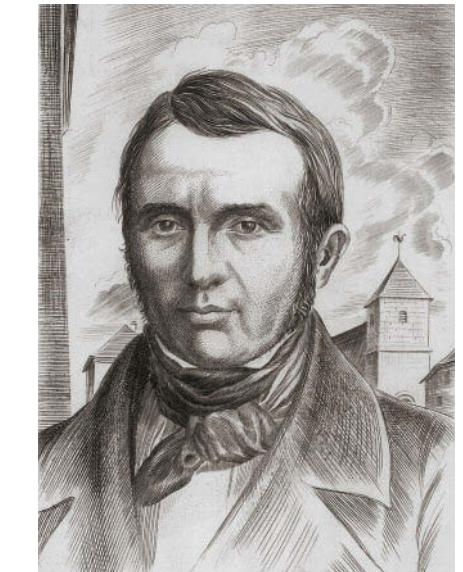
Louis Rodolphe Agassiz and his wife Rose, was probably already occupying himself with the theme of watches. Auguste Agassiz had been born in 1809. During the course of his vocational education, he worked for some time in Neuchâtel, where his uncle ran

a bank. During a business trip in the Jura region, Agassiz received an offer from Henri Raiguel, with whom his uncle's bank cultivated a very cordial business relationship. Raiguel asked Agassiz to join him as a partner in his *comptoir d'établissement*. The 23-year-old businessman didn't wait for a second invitation. On August 14, 1832, he became an active participant in the watch business known as "Comptoir Raiguel Jeune" in the village of Saint-Imier, in Switzerland's Jura Region.

Comptoires were small businesses that acted as intermediaries between various cottage industrialists, most of whom still worked small farmsteads



Pocket-watch (ca. 1840, with verge escapement), similar to the ones built in the *comptoir* of Agassiz & Cie.



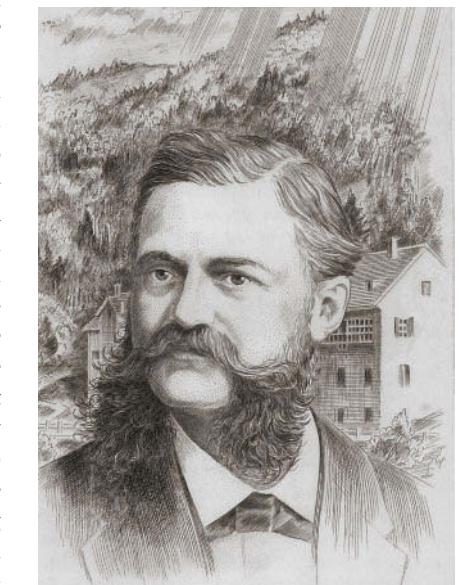
Auguste Agassiz established a *comptoir* in 1832, thus laying the cornerstone for Longines

in the mountains. Messengers delivered components that had been manufactured in the Swiss or French Jura region and then returned several weeks or months later to pick up and pay for the finished articles. Comptoir workers also encased movements and assembled dials and hands. Afterwards the completed goods continued on their way to customers. On February 25, 1833, Raiguel and Agassiz signed a contract that established a business whose name can be translated as "Raiguel Jeune & Co., Manufacture and Trade with Watches."

After Raiguel's retirement, the remaining partners ran the business from November 1838 onward under the name "Agassiz & Compagnie." The excellent reputation of this company's timepieces extended far beyond the Swiss border. Its watches with cylinder escapements, of which several thousand were produced each year, were even known in the New World.

As specified in the contract, Agassiz' partner Florian Morel left the firm on December 31, 1846. Agassiz now continued on his own, but after his wife's death, and with his own health weakened, he moved to Lausanne at the beginning of the 1850s and left the operative management of his business in the hands of Edouard Savoye. Saint-Imier expressed its appreciation of Agassiz' dedicated service to the community by awarding him honorary citizenship.

Francillon married a pastor's daughter named Ida Grosjean late in August 1857. The business in its previous form was dissolved in 1861. One year later, Francillon began directing the *comptoir* on his own



Ernest Francillon enlarged Longines during the second half of the 19th century

and under his own responsibility. On the morning of July 1, 1862, a new sign appeared on the house at 11 Agassiz Street. It read: "Ancienne Maison Auguste Agassiz, Ernest Francillon, Successeur."



Longines pocket-watch, Cal. 18B, from 1869

Turbulent Activities

The young businessman didn't hesitate to thoroughly reorganize his venture, beginning with the personnel and continuing through to the products and their prices. He concentrated on modern, high-quality watches. And the resultant commercial success

was the welcome fruit of his efforts. He was assisted by his uncle, who contributed advice, constructive criticism and shares of stock in the company valued at hundreds of thousands of Swiss francs.

The comptoir was soon delivering more than 20,000 timepieces each year. The lion's share of these pocket-watches were "Lépines" with cylinder escapements, but higher-quality timepieces with Swiss lever escapements gradually acquired greater importance. Francillon was also able to sell a remarkable number of petite ladies' watches encasing 12-, 13- and 14-ligne movements.

During this time, Francillon devoted considerable attention to finding a way to eliminate the winding-key. Crown winding had been in existence since 1820 or thereabouts, but Francillon wanted to integrate this principle into his inexpensive pocket-watches. By 1867, he had achieved this goal. All his movements operated entirely without keys. Francillon was unpleasantly aware of the shortcomings of comptoir-style watchmaking, which included limited ongoing quality control, delays in customer service, and the lack of a service-friendly spare-parts stockpile.

Francillon wanted to replace the mostly handmade individual timepieces with precise, serially manufactured products. If the artisans and the machines all worked under one roof, he reasoned, this would surely result in greater competency and significantly higher efficiency. It would also end the interminable waiting for deliveries of movement-blanks and components.

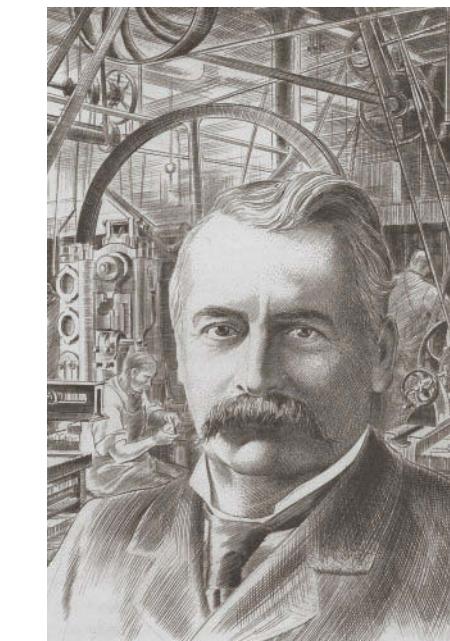
The Revolution Begins

Francillon lengthily discussed his revolutionary plans with his uncle in the autumn of 1865. It became clear to both men that their new factory building would have to be built beside a river or

stream so that the planned machinery could be operated economically.

Fate smiled on the ambitious businessman in March 1866, when he was able to purchase two neighboring plots of land not far from Saint-Imier, on the shore of the Suze River. An entire year would pass before construction work finally began in the spring of 1867. The masons labored and the brick walls of the new building rose steadily. The permitted sluice was built above a waterfall and a 10-horsepower turbine began to turn in June 1867. Its power would be the vital force for an innovative machine park, which was primarily designed by the watchmaker Edouard Châtelain and the engineer Jacques David of Saint-Quentin, who was the talented son of an industrialist. Because there were so many tasks to be done, a typical workday lasted at least eleven hours. Gas lamps illuminated the factory during the evenings. And it went without saying that the old-fashioned comptoir operation continued to run simultaneously.

The gears finally began turning to everyone's satisfaction at the end of 1867. The first components became available in March of the following year. Francillon summarized: "We've achieved a lot, but much still remains undone." He commuted constantly between Saint-Imier and the "Longines." On the one hand, unfinished comptoir merchandise needed to be completed and sold; on the other hand, he needed to administrate the factory. To assure that the costly machinery wouldn't grind to a halt due to an inadequate supply of water, he arranged to have a second turbine installed below a 600-cubic-meter reservoir. A second building was erected along the extension of the first turbine. Francillon was ultimately able to entirely close the offices and ateliers on Agassiz Street. He and 40 employees settled into the opulent new edifice.



The engineer: Jacques David enlarged the factory and became technical director



The etymology of the brand name: a map of Saint-Imier showing the "Longines" or "Long Meadow" in the south of the town

protected trademark of this traditional manufacture.

A Journey to Philadelphia

Châtelain was a practical man, but his personality included idiosyncrasies that occasionally precipitated disputes between him and the engineer Jacques David. Despite their quarrels, the duo created an exemplary production facility that made efficient use of the available water power.

The ensuing years until 1873 were anything but easy. Doubts about the future even sometimes plagued Agassiz. But with their unshakeable faith in a successful outcome, Francillon and David persuaded Agassiz to continue to be a limited partner.

Customers were thoroughly satisfied with the endurance, longevity and precision of the manufacture's own calibers. Faith in the potential of contemporary technology grew stronger.

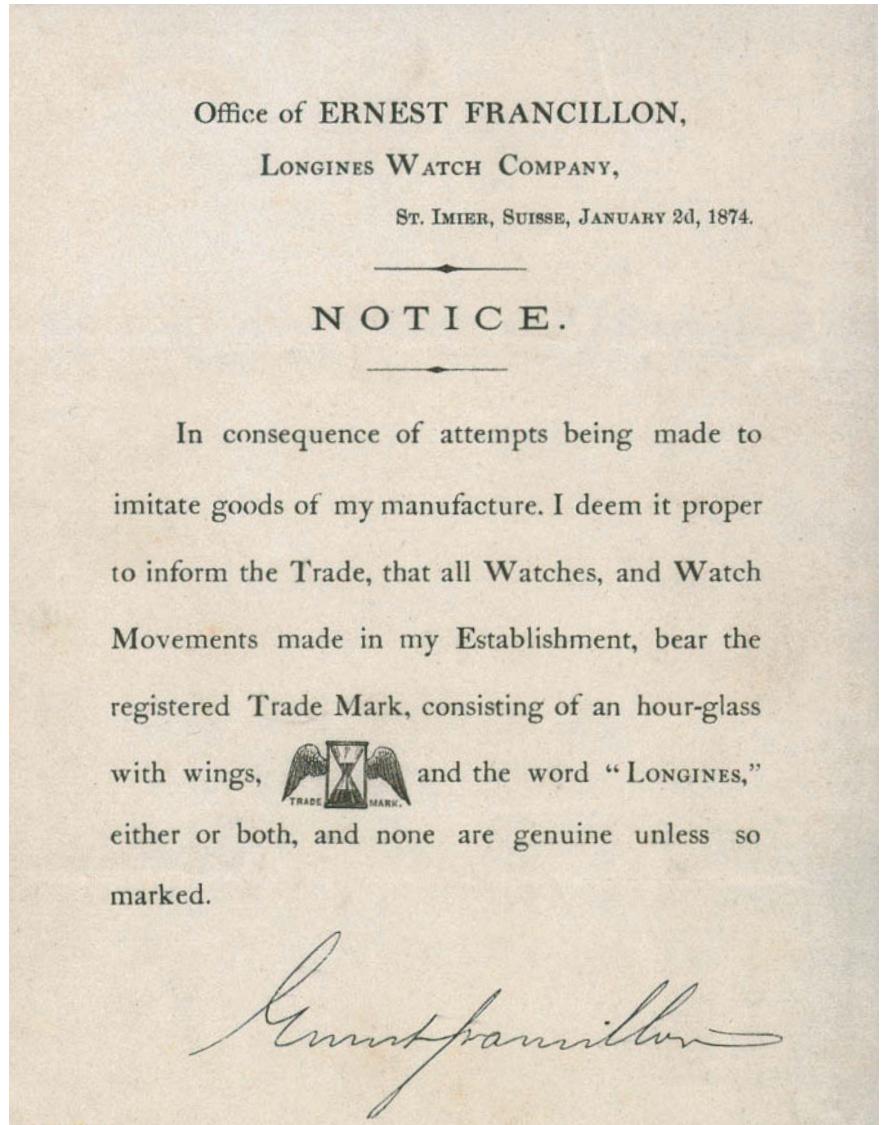
The new watches succeeded admirably as first-class, high-quality products, but their success also attracted unscrupulous counterfeiters. Longines was obliged to defend itself against poor-quality imitations. One weapon in this battle was, and still is, the winged hourglass that's engraved, in various versions, on the company's movements and cases as the legally

and dismayed by the subsequent travel report, which offered him plenty of food for thought. While in the USA, David had procured detailed information about the innovative manufacturing methods used there. Thanks to these documents, he was able to include many notes and sketches in his final report, of which Longines published a facsimile edition in 1992.

David's concluding remarks lauded the outstanding quality of merchandise manufactured using mechanical production methodologies. He praised the advantages of interchangeable, identical, perfectly fitting components, as well as the virtues of well-organized working processes and optimized quality-control methods. He argued in favor of comfortable temperatures in the production facilities, suggested that it would be worthwhile to pay greater attention to orderliness, and opined that it would be beneficial to encourage employees to have a stronger sense of loyalty, pride and identification with their employer.

A Process of Rethinking

Thanks to his visionary personality, Francillon had already implemented



Longines sprouts wings: Ernest Francillon announced in 1874 that his watches were authentic only if they bore an engraved hourglass

many of the ideas suggested in David's report, but he nonetheless took these recommendations to heart. After the death of Agassiz on February 25, 1877, Francillon was able to preserve the shareholder relationship with Agassiz's heirs. A successful collection of watches shown at the world exposition in Paris in 1878 earned the firm many medals, and plentiful orders followed. Business

was reviving in the USA, too. This situation and the resulting supply-side bottlenecks prompted Francillon to initiate large-scale renovations and to begin new construction work in the spring of 1879. He also improved the energy supply for the machine park. The limited water power available from the Suze River prompted Longines to install its first steam turbine and its requisite boilers. This, in

turn, enabled the company to establish its own workshop for silver cases. And these cases brought the long-awaited independence from perennially tardy case suppliers. The response was overwhelmingly positive when Longines joined other Swiss watchmaking companies to present its wares at a joint exhibition in Melbourne, Australia in 1880. Above all, the famous Lépine Caliber 18 L was so immensely popular that, despite expanded production capacity, the factory could scarcely satisfy the demand. This exemplary watch movement was likewise a bestselling item in the USA. In addition, Longines 1878 dared the launch of the new chronograph movement 20H, which marked the firm's first successful venture into the realm of horological complications.

David deserves much of the credit for the company's achievements during this period. Francillon rewarded David's dedication by inviting him to join the company's board of directors. Francillon likewise reaped honors and accolades. The community of Saint-Imier made him an honorary citizen in 1881. He was later also elected to the Swiss National Council.

A Wave of Success – With a Sad Ending

In 1883, the Swiss State Exhibition in Zurich awarded one of its coveted diplomas to Longines in recognition of the manufacture's trailblazing production methods, innovative dynamism and meticulously well-made products. Longines enjoyed similar success in Antwerp two years later. The sun above the "Long Meadow" was shining brightly. Longines was able to pay off Agassiz' heirs in 1886, after which the business could be transformed from a joint-stock company into a collective company according to Swiss law. The official pur-



Production at Longines in the late 19th century

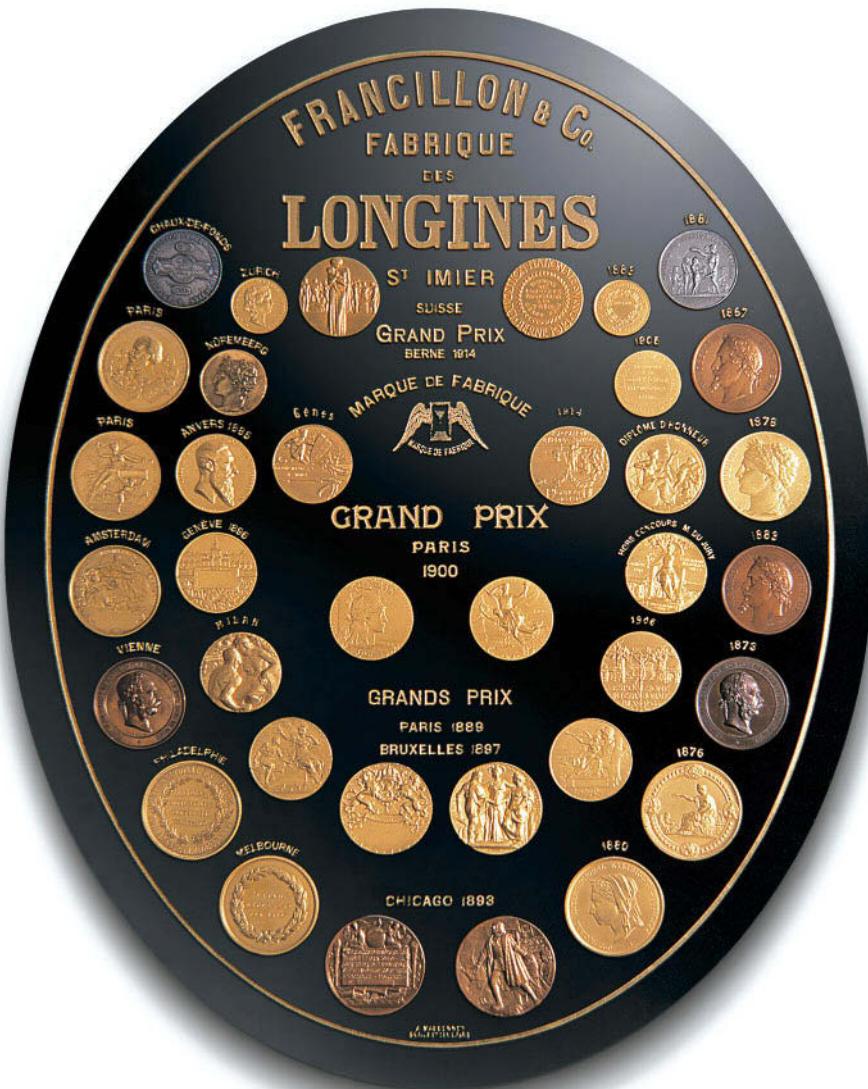
pose of the business was to manufacture precise timepieces. Arnold Vuille-Roulet was entrusted with the task of precisely adjusting the chronometers. His best pieces were entered in competitions at the Neuchâtel Observatory, where they achieved remarkably good results.

Longines' collection at this time included pocket-watches with gold, silver and nickel cases in ladies' and men's sizes. Due to American import restrictions, Longines offered only watch movements to its clients in the USA, where these calibers were encased and sold as finished watches. Adequate supplies of well-fitting spare parts were now available in the USA, and this was an important precondition for long-lasting success in the New World, where the name "Wittnauer" was heard with increasing frequency. Longines grew speedily in this part of the world, thanks in large measure to the efforts of the brothers Albert and Louis Wittnauer. The founding of "A. Wittnauer & Co." in 1904 as a joint-stock company further leveraged the upswing.

Longines had become a force to be reckoned with, especially in the field of high-quality watches, where profit margins are widest. One particularly

Dynamically into the 20th Century

Longines' top management was now embodied in the persons of Jacques David, Baptiste Savoye and Louis Gagnbin, on whose shoulders rested the difficult task of maintaining the grand legacy as Francillon would have wished. The trio accepted this challenge and mastered it with flying colors. Official accreditation at the chronometer tests administered by the Neuchâtel Observatory was forthcoming in 1905. Prizes for the accuracy of Longines chronometers followed soon thereafter. These awards proved that even Longines' serially manufactured movement-blanks were capable of achieving optimal precision. The strategy of offering highly precise timepieces at affordable prices proved to be exactly the right policy. Some 800 employees now produced 122,000 watches annually at Longines; the corresponding volume a mere ten years earlier had been only 39,000. Nevertheless, delivery delays still persisted because manufacturing capacity had once again reached its limits. To rectify this situation, bricklayers were summoned in 1905 to erect on the left bank of the river a new building, of



Plenty of medals: Longines' watches won numerous awards at various exhibitions

which Longines remains proud today. The main complex was moved eastward in 1906.

The company's directors always remained aware that Longines' success rested on the pillars raised by Francillon, and sought to maintain family involvement in the company. This goal was achieved with the help of Adrien Francillon, the nephew of Longines' founder, who agreed to the company's urgent requests and moved to Saint-Imier to assume an active role on the executive team in 1907.

There was no shortage of work for the younger Francillon and his colleagues. The book of commissions was brimful, largely because railroad companies had placed large orders for the company's newest wristwatches. These watches were so warmly re-

ceived that production had to be increased.

Meanwhile, Longines gained still greater prestige in the USA. The reason: the Naval Observatory in Washington had tested two Longines deck watches and awarded them first prize for their excellent performance under severe testing conditions.

Orders increased 400 percent in the five years prior to the outbreak of World War I. Longines' staff in 1912 numbered 1,167 onsite employees. Though Longines did not long remain wholly unaffected by the negative consequences of the war, the manufacture continued to perform extraordinarily well despite the conflict. First prizes at observatory tests in Neuchâtel, Geneva, Washington and Kew Teddington naturally exerted a stimu-

lating effect on sales. Equally welcome were the awards and commendations earned at the applied arts exhibition in Paris in 1925, and at the world exhibition in Philadelphia the following year.

Accuracy and reliability made Longines watches ideal companions for pilots. The company's timepieces also proved themselves on numerous polar expeditions and scientific research journeys. Charles Lindbergh shared with Longines the experiences he had gained during his solo transatlantic flight from New York to Paris in 1927. The aviator's know-how, combined with the manufacture's horological competence, led to the creation in 1931 of the famous Hour-Angle Watch, which would ultimately exert a stronger influence on the company's history than any other timepiece.

An Eventful Epoch

Longines' executives had nothing to complain about in the early part of 1929. When Commander Byrd and his men carried Longines' pocket-watches along on their spectacular expedition to the South Pole, these timepieces blithely withstood the extreme cold of the Antarctic. And after the jury at the world exhibition in Barcelona awarded a grand prize to the manufacture, auspicious opportunities beckoned on the markets in the Spanish-speaking nations of South America.

But this clement economic climate changed abruptly in October 1929, with the New York stock market crash. The resulting economic crisis soon spread to Europe, including Switzerland and its watchmaking industry. Stung but not disheartened, Longines worked hard to thoroughly modernize existing movements and to develop new ones. Better machinery, improved tools and stricter control of the manufacturing went

hand in hand with a significant increase in quality.

The founding of Longines-Wittnauer in New York in 1936 restored the old dynamism on the American market. And plenty of welcome publicity was forthcoming in 1938, when the pilot Howard R. Hughes flew around the world in an airplane that he had equipped with control devices from Saint-Imier. Furthermore, Longines created two special instruments explicitly for Hughes' globe-girdling journey: a chronometer with a stop-seconds function and the legendary "Siderograph." Both devices facilitated the task of determining the momentary position of an aircraft. Aviation was thriving, so demand for these useful items was correspondingly high.

Imagination and Foresight

The outbreak of World War II affected many of the approximately 1,200 peo-

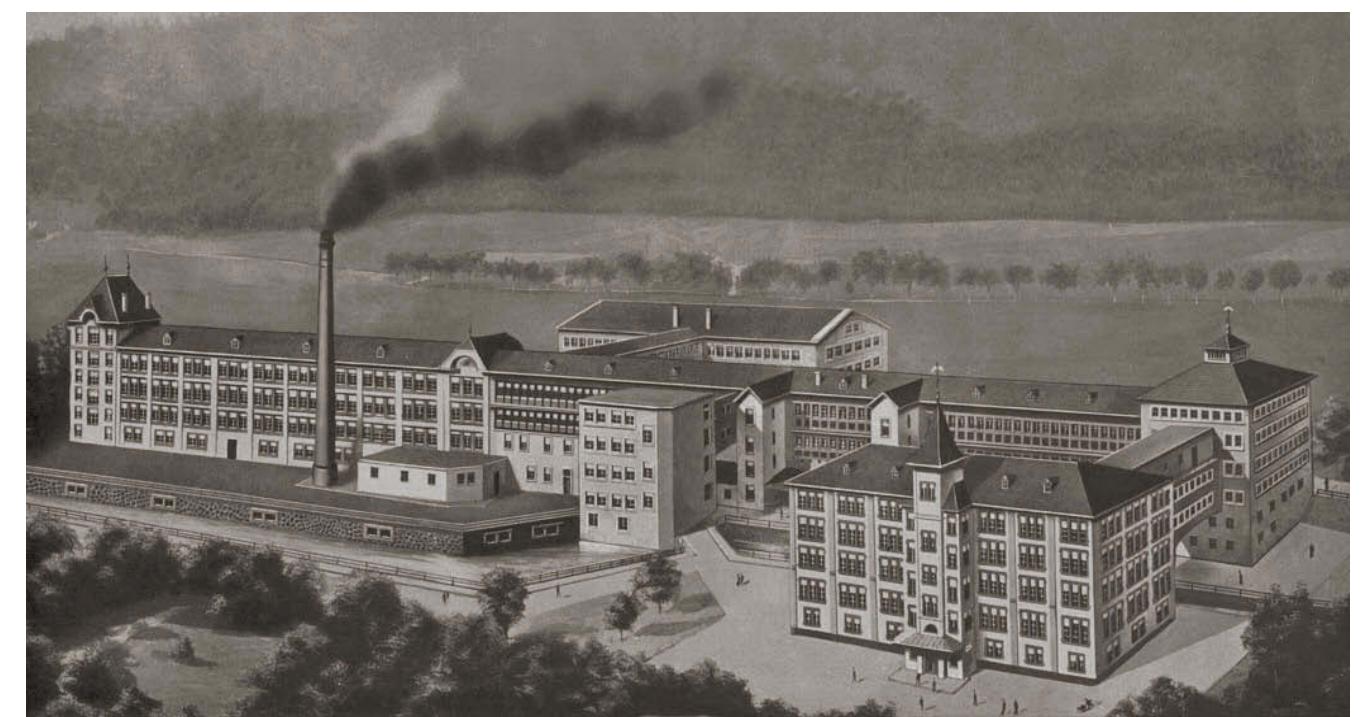
ple on Longines' staff. The hostilities also demanded plenty of imagination to assure the export of watches ordered by foreign customers. For example, Longines' Czech representative, who resided in Bahrain, arranged to receive completed watches hidden inside hollowed-out Bibles. When each Good Book arrived, the Czech agent would remove its concealed contents and insert gold into the emptied cavity. He would then reseal the package and write "delivery not accepted" and "return to sender" on the wrapper. Thanks to this trick, the watches and the gold flowed undiscovered and unhindered by customs agents.

By sending timepieces to exhibitions in Milan, Bratislava and Budapest, Longines did everything in its power to continue cultivating its contacts with former customers, who returned this favor by placing orders. Meanwhile, Longines was already eagerly planning for the post-war

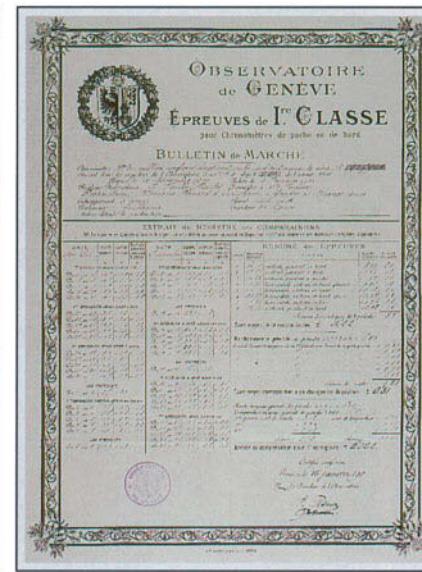
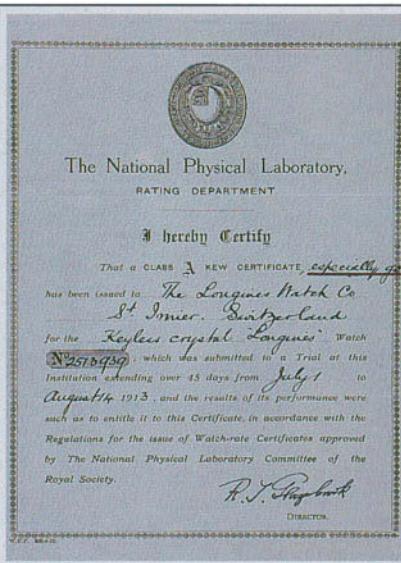
years. Innovative self-winding movements and wristwatches with watertight cases were designed and constructed. A renovated machine park made it possible to electrically weld watch cases, to cut threads with greater precision, to true up the profile of the teeth on gears, and to precisely roll pivots with the help of tungsten disks.

The Post-War Years

Even before the end of the Second World War, Longines had already resumed its participation in chronometer competitions and tests. A steady stream of prizes kept the name "Longines" in everyone's mind. The manufacture won the first serial prize for four wristwatch chronometers in 1944. A second such prize followed in 1946. The chronicles record an individual prize and another serial prize in 1948. These efforts were accompanied by exemplary activities in the



A growth spurt: the factory underwent major expansions in 1910



Precision instruments: first-class rate certificates for Longines' chronometers

field of time measurement for sporting events.

These achievements led to an unprecedented boom during the post-war years. Explosive increases in demand made it possible to hire or rehire many employees and to enlarge the factory. New construction commenced in 1947. The previous year, Longines had already begun an ambitious program to build rental housing for its employees. A free shuttle bus commuted between Longines' settlement and the factory. Longines even paid the travel expenses for employees who lived further from the plant.

Longines performed brilliantly in terms of technology, too, displaying its

powerful innovative potential. The "Vibrograph," for controlling the rate of watches, debuted in 1946. A direct user-to-user connection was established in 1950 so that the Neuchâtel Observatory could continually transmit the precise time to the factory. In 1955 the manufacture established its own laboratory, where it subjected metals, balance-springs, lubricants and other functional parts to strict tests in accord with the company's criteria. The stringency of these tests assured that nothing was left to chance.

Incidentally, Longines also reorganized its archive at this time. Since its earliest days, the company has preserved nearly all of its manufacturing

ledgers, so the caliber, the type and the weight of the case of almost every single Longines timepiece can be identified by referring to the fabrication numbers listed in these comprehensive tomes.

Silently Vibrating Quartzes

While mechanical timekeeping advanced from one acme to another at Longines, specialists in other divisions worked feverishly on a technology that would decisively influence the second half of the 20th century. The first transportable quartz clock, which Longines debuted in 1954, exceeded its era's requirements for precision and reliability. Transistors were still in their infancy at this time, so Longines used vacuum tubes inside this timekeeping instrument, which measured 21.6 cubic decimeters. The device relied on a temperature-stabilized quartz oscillator and could precisely depict time to the nearest hundredth of a second. Eager to know exactly how accurate the clock really was, Longines submitted its spectacular apparatus to the Neuchâtel Observatory. The results of a meticulous rate test spoke for themselves: "After 24 hours in operation, the deviation of rate was equal to zero."

The next task was to reduce dimensions without compromising performance. But this feat necessarily demanded modern semiconductor technology. The overall volume of the first "cold" instrument was 6.4 cubic decimeters. Its clockwork weighed four kilograms. Longines presented an electronic onboard chronometer with analogue time display in 1964. The dimensions of its case had shrunk to a sensational 70 x 67 x 82 millimeters. Despite its small size, this quartz dwarf deviated by only one second after a full year of operation. Just two years later, the manufacture again surprised horo-



An early wristwatch: Longines built this timepiece for the wrist in 1901

piece had an overall height of a mere 1.98 millimeters, and was available in stores under the name "Golden Leaf." Then as now, it had and has no need to hide itself.

Another quantum leap dates from 1984, when the temperature-compensated quartz Caliber L 276 achieved a record-breaking minimal deviation of just one minute in five years, which is equivalent to 0.02 second per day. Its outstanding accuracy earned it the cognomen "V.H.P." which stands for "Very High Precision."

Finally, in 1992, Longines eliminated the need for the troublesome manual task of adjusting the date display at the end of a month with fewer than 31 days. The top-of-the-line "Conquest Perpetual Calendar" contained a microchip programmed with

the length of each month. This clever chip assured, for example, that the date display automatically jumped from February 28 to March 1 in ordinary years and also guaranteed that February 29 wouldn't be forgotten in leap years.

The perfect trend-setting synthesis debuted in 1996 under the name "V.H.P. Perpetual Calendar Conquest." This wristwatch combined the ultra-precise, thermo-compensated quartz movement with a perpetual electronic calendar. This intelligent watch could be reset easily for time zones and for summer/winter times, and it could be triggered to indicate the month or the leap-year cycle whenever needed. All these functions required no fewer than 14,700 transistors, but with typical Longines ingenuity, they



Navigational instrument: Howard Hughes used the "Siderograph"



The special feature of the 340 family of calibers, ticking amongst others in the watches of the classical "Flagship" line, was an off-center rotor with a toothed rim

were packed into a single chip with a small footprint of a mere 19.1 square millimeters.

Other "Conquest" models have an additional liquid crystal display which can be switched on or off by pressing the crown, thereby offering a variety of helpful additional functions. Not to be forgotten is the "Conquest AHP," which debuted in 1997.

This was one of the first Swiss-made quartz wristwatches that made do entirely without a battery. At first glance, its clockwork seems to be similar to a self-winding mechanical movement. But closer scrutiny reveals that its rotor is connected to a micro-generator which produces electrical energy: an ingenious idea that effectively weds ecology and economy.

Peaceful Coexistence

The decision to opt for either quartz or mechanical timekeeping is ultimately a question of one's personal philosophy of life. Aspects such as design, convenience, precision, ecol-

ogy and/or price play important roles. As one of the pioneers of modern timekeeping, Longines has undoubtedly mastered both technologies, each of which has been appropriately represented in the brand's diverse product portfolio for many decades.

In the genre of self-winding mechanical movements, too, Longines has regularly given connoisseurs plenty to talk about: for example, the 13-ligne Caliber 22 AS, which debuted in 1945 with a rotor that wound the mainspring in both directions of rotation. The ladies' self-winding Caliber 14.17, which appeared in 1956, was based on a shaped caliber.

The entirely new 290 caliber family was introduced as a veritable automatic delicacy in 1958. Longines watchmakers developed an ingenious power-reserve indicator for this series. The outstanding attributes of the 11 ½-ligne diameter and 6 millimeter tall Caliber 294 included a central disk and a rotating calibrated ring. This system assured especially

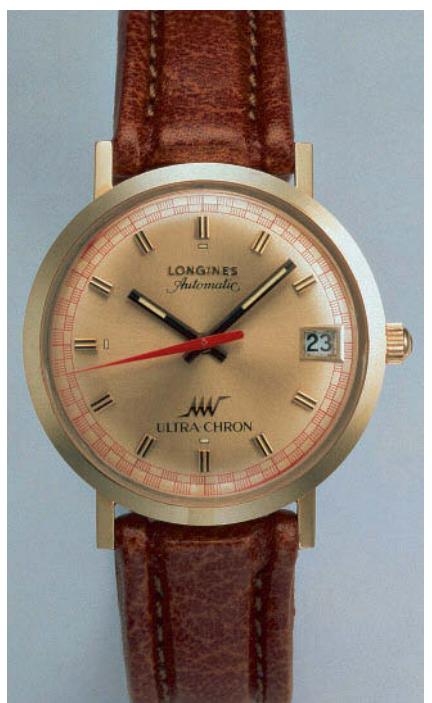
high legibility. The basic movement already had a trend-setting feature: a directly propelled and centrally axial seconds-hand. The central rotor moved above the entire movement, an unprecedented feature that increased significantly the efficiency of the automatic winding process. The rotor's motions were polarized via a cleverly designed ratchet-wheel alternator. If the watch was worn regularly, its mainspring would amass a reassuringly long-lasting power reserve of approximately 45 hours, and this lengthy running autonomy would be unmistakably displayed on the power-reserve indicator. Unlike the basic Caliber 290, Calibers 291 through 294, which were likewise part of the "Conquest" line, also had distinctive power-reserve displays at the "12."

The special feature of the 340 family of calibers, which was launched in 1960 and which lent ticking life to the classical "Flagship" line and to other Longines watches, consisted of an off-center, ball-borne, heavy metal rotor with a toothed rim. With help from a patented planetary-wheel alternator, it wound the mainspring in both its directions of rotation. The self-winding module was artfully integrated into the movement, thus minimizing the overall constructive height.

A chance to purchase this perfect movement in a "package" that's steeped in history also arose in 1987, which was the 60th anniversary of

Charles A. Lindbergh's spectacular transatlantic flight, which had prompted the creation of the ingenious Lindbergh Hour-Angle Watch. For the anniversary, Longines created a replica of this timepiece in four-fifths its original size, which was presented at Le Bourget in Paris on May 21, 1987. Manufactured in a limited edition, the replica was equipped with the same functions as the famed original. After pivoting open the case's hinged back, connoisseurs could peer through its glass back and admire the very fine automatic Caliber 990. This spectacular caliber was also used in the golden "Ernest Francillon" collection, which Longines issued in the mid 1990s to honor this pioneer in the brand's history. For this elite collection, the caliber was painstakingly skeletonized, thus earning it a new designation as L994. Incidentally: von Känel personally monitors the distribution of Longines' other wristwatches to assure that each market is justly served in the 130 countries where Longines is currently represented.

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Rapid oscillator: the "Ultra-Chron" self-winding wristwatch debuted in 1967; its balance completes 36,000 vibrations per hour



A firm hold on time: the first portable quartz clock (1954)



As thin as its name suggests: the Golden Leaf (1979) is just 1.98 mm slim



The limited "Solar Ephemerid" wristwatch was launched in 1989

Paths into the Future

After the death of Maurice Savoye in 1965, shareholders for the first time decided who would succeed him in the brand's directorship. They opted to make the Compagnie des Montres Longines Francillon SA into a member of the General Watch Company GWC, which was the distributing subsidiary of the ASUAG watch concern.

In 1967, which marked the 100th anniversary of Francillon's debut, Longines provided jobs for approximately 1,000 people. About 150,000 watches left the factory annually in this decade. The festivities in the buildings on the "Long Meadow" were crowned by the "Ultra-Chron" model, a self-winding wristwatch with a balance that oscillated at a pace of 36,000 vibrations per hour. This extremely fast frequency enabled Longines to achieve a degree of precision which was nearly equal to the accuracy of electronic timepieces. Two years later, the manufacture accepted the Diamond International Award, a prize that can justifiably be compared to an Oscar in the world of movies.

Despite many remarkable achievements in the art of time measurement, Longines' ship was towed in 1982 by its mother company ASUAG into a maelstrom of grave events which capsized many other vessels in the Swiss watchmaking fleet. Only one sheet-anchor remained to save the ship in 1983: fusion with the SSIH (Société Suisse de l'Industrie Horlogère SA). The merger ensued under the name "ASUAG-SSIH." With the help of the

intrepid and visionary reorganizer Nicolas G. Hayek and several banks, this step led in 1984 to the founding of SMH (Société Suisse de Micro-Électronique et d'Horlogerie SA), which is now the Swatch Group.

As a member of this group, Longines has continued to evolve during the past 23 years – exactly as Francillon and his successors would have wished. Von Känel, who was born in 1941, played an important – or more likely a decisive – role in leading the brand along this glorious path into the 21st century. The holder of an academic diploma in business administration, he joined as a sales assistant of the Compagnie des Montres Longines Francillon SA in Saint-Imier in 1969.

He was first promoted to the post of director of the sales division and later became director of the entire sales and marketing division. He has shouldered the responsibilities of the presidency since 1988. Von Känel also became a member of the augmented directorship of the Swatch Group in 1990.

The exemplary successes that Longines celebrated under his aegis are surely not mere coincidence. "I've always been fascinated by watchmak-

ing," affirms von Känel, who has lived in the valley of Saint-Imier and thus in the heart of the Swiss watchmaking region since 1945. "The big Longines business already made an extremely strong impression on me when I was a little boy. Most of the people in our neighborhood earned their living there. Somehow I was convinced that I too would work for Longines someday. Watchmaking shaped our whole region in those days, and I secretly knew that it would one day offer me the opportunity to discover the great wide world."

This wish came true sooner than von Känel had initially thought. Soon after joining Longines, he traveled to the USA, where he acquired relevant experience at Longines-Wittnauer Watch Co. Upon returning to Switzerland, his career followed a steeply upward trajectory. And in 1988, von Känel found himself standing atop the uppermost rung of his career ladder. He and his dedicated team of watch lovers are now responsible for a diverse collection of timepieces encasing mechanical or electronic movements. Each Longines watch embodies a long tradition that equally satisfies today's and tomorrow's demands and that's characterized by praiseworthy quality and an excellent cost-benefit ratio.

Masterful Achievements Nonstop

The 1973 watch fair in Basel was the venue for Longines' presentation of the "Serge Manzon" collection, which featured watch cases of solid silver.

The Olympic Games in Montreal challenged Longines to create the "Ultronics" wristwatch chronograph with tuning-fork resonator in 1976, the same year that the manufacture accepted its fourth "Golden Rose" from Baden-Baden and the gold cup

from an institution known as "Le Bon Goût Français," i.e. "The Good French Taste."

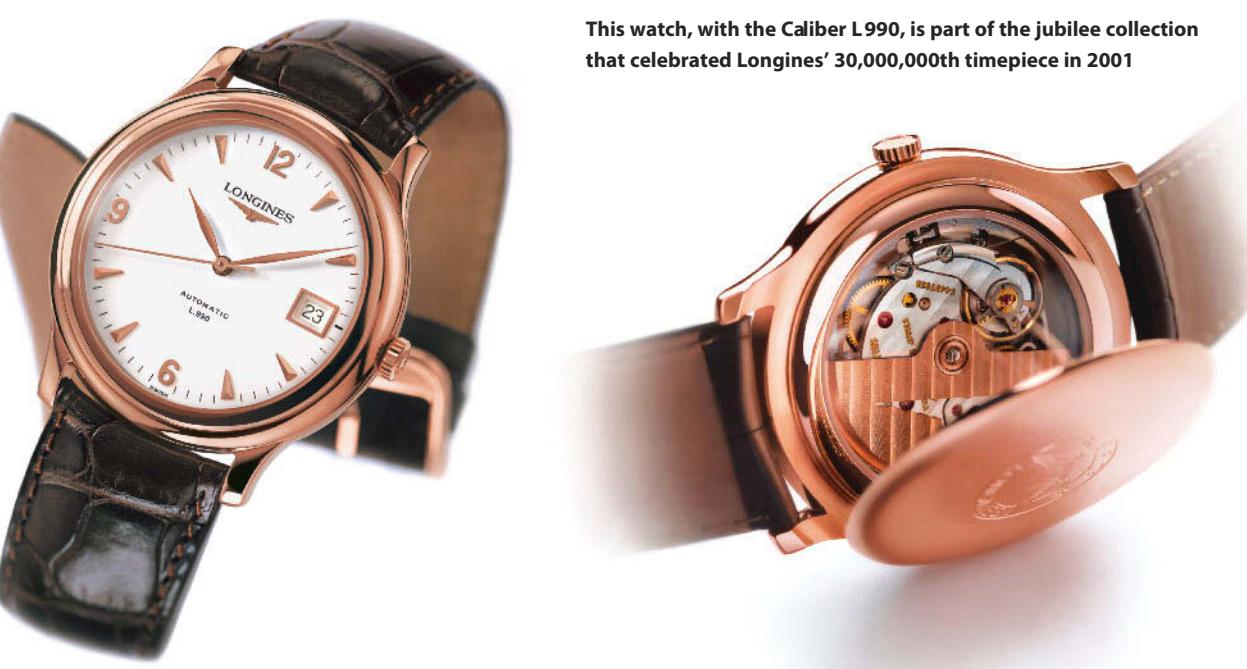
XL* 18, a new alloy made of cobalt, chrome and tungsten and traces of carbon, began to assert itself against gold and silver in 1981. The alloy's alphanumeric appellation was given to an impressive generation of new watches. And to top it all off, Longines joined the elite circle of Formula One racecars as partner of the renowned Scuderia Ferrari.

Longines celebrated the 100th anniversary of the winged hourglass in 1989 with the launch of the "Solar Ephemerid" wristwatch. This very special and naturally also patented astronomical timepiece was released in a limited, individually numbered edition.

Starting in 1990, the extra-slim "La Grande Classique de Longines" models, with their pure case design, developed into inimitable representatives of the brand. These sleek wristwatches, which are still manufactured with great success today, number among the first-rate exemplary products.

The "Longines DolceVita" collection followed three years later. These watches, which paid homage to Fellini's unforgettable film, enjoyed unparalleled success. And in 2003 "Honour and Glory" embodied another high point in the 125-year history of Longines' timekeeping for athletic events. To coincide with the grand opening of an informative and exciting exhibition devoted to sports timekeeping, Longines offered a fascinating set of watches consisting of a practical wristwatch chronograph and a rattrapante pocket-watch. The latter encased a 24-ligne movement that traced its lineage back to the year 1939. No explanation is needed for the fact that the 125 sets which comprised this edition instantly found their buyers.

The Longines evidenza line debuted in 2003, Longines LungoMare followed in 2004, and the Longines Master Collection was launched in 2005: with each of these, and especially with the third in the trio, Longines put itself on a route that will doubtlessly lead the brand toward a successful future. ▶



This watch, with the Caliber L990, is part of the jubilee collection that celebrated Longines' 30,000,000th timepiece in 2001



Essence of the brand: the Longines Master Collection symbolizes the values of elegance, sportiness and watchmaking tradition