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

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.

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

Ernest Francillon enlarged Longines during the second half of the 19th century.
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 “Lépine” 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 thoughtfully 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 Suarez 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, and by 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 components 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 400-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.

Skillfully Overcoming Problems

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 protected trademark of this traditional manufacture.

A Journey to Philadelphia

Francillon’s never-say-die character and strongly pioneering spirit were manifest again in 1875. Well aware of the progress brought about by the largely automated manufacturing methods which were being practiced in the United States of America, he instigated the creation of the “Société intercantonale des industries du Jura.” This specialized commission occupied itself with the quest for solutions to the problematic situation posed by the American competitors. The Société dispatched a delegation, headed by David, to the New World in 1876. This was the year when the U.S. Congress, to celebrate the first centennial of American independence, organized an illustrious world exposition in Philadelphia. When the Swiss delegation saw the downright revolutionary advancements on display in the watch division of this exhibition on the western shore of the Atlantic Ocean, their breath was quite literally taken away.

Despite his own progressive manufacturing methods, Francillon must have been simultaneously impressed 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 perishable 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
many of the ideas suggested in David’s report, but he none the less 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 exhibition 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 perenially 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 2014, 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 already exported to 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 upward. Longines had become a force to be reckoned with, especially in the field of high-quality watches, where profit margins are widest. One particularly popular item was a new circular caliber with a lever escapement. A mere 20 millimeters in diameter, it was a natural choice for use in ladies’ pendant watches, which were very popular at this time. The same caliber later found its way onto the wrist. When the Duke of Abruzzi organized a polar expedition in 1889, his explorers relied on Longines chronometers to help calculate their longitude in the Far North. Despite the extremely low temperatures, these silver deck watches performed very well in the Arctic. The affirmative reports submitted by the duke’s explorers also served as welcome advertising for Longines products. The world exposition in Paris in 1900 brought additional positive results. When this exhibition ended, representatives of the manufacture took home to Saint-Imier “La Renommée,” the grand prize that had been awarded to Longines for its best product. This prize further brightened the gleam on Longines’ image. Unfortunately, this triumph came too late for Francillon, who died of influenza at six o’clock on the evening of April 3, 1900, soon after having given his characteristic meticulous scrutiny to the collection for the Parisian exhibition.

Longines sprouts wings: Ernest Francillon announced in 1874 that his watches were authentic only if they bore an engraved hourglass.
A growth spurt: the factory underwent major expansions in 1910, 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 knew, combined with the manufacture’s horological competence, to lead 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 brilliantly 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 South America.

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 its founder, who agreed to the company’s urgent requests and orders increased 400 percent in the five years prior to the outbreak of World War I. Longines’ staff in 1912 numbered 1,187 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 stimulating effect on sales.

Sedicifying on foreign markets was Longines’ strategy as early as 1874, and the company’s history is filled with events that marked the prestige of the Swiss watch industry. Stung but not disheartened, Longines created two special instruments exclusively for Hughes’ globe-girdling journey: a chronometer with a stop-seconds function and the legendary “Sidérographe.” 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 production. 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.

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 1936, when the pilot Howard I. 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 “Sidérographe.” 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.

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

Accuracy and reliability made Longines watches so warmly received by American railroad companies that they placed large orders for the company’s newest wristwatches. These watches were so warmly received that production had to be increased.

Moreover, 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.

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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 fervently on technology that would decisively influence the second half of the 20th century. The first transportable quartz clock, which Longines debuted in 1954, exceeded its predecessor’s accuracy 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 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 necessitated modern semiconductor technology. The overall volume of the first “cold” instrument was 21.6 cubic decimeters. Its clockwork weighed four kilograms. Longines presented an electronic onboard chronometer with analogue time display automatically jumped 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 leap-year cycle whenever needed. The 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

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 process which would advance at an increasingly speedy pace, thanks to the uncommonly strong innovative energy on the “Long Meadow.” European journalists were more than a little astonished on August 20, 1969, when Longines introduced “the first quartz wristwatch suitable for aerial production.” Its name: “Ultra-Quartz.” The clockwork employed the latest microchips, and the timepiece’s oscillator had a frequency of 9,350 hertz. In retrospect, one would have to say that 9,350 hertz was “still” its frequency, because this value would become obsolete only a few years later.

In 1972, when energy-consuming luminous diodes were still the standard in digital displays, Longines presented the world’s first quartz wristwatch with a modern liquid crystal display (LCD) for the hours, minutes, seconds and date. The reward for these efforts was the confer-ral of an important quartz movement with a perpetual electronic calendar. This intelligent wristwatch 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

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

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

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were packed into a single chip with a small footprint of a mere 1.9 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. The entirely new 340 caliber family of calibers, ticking amongst others in the watches of the classical “Flagship” line, was an off-center rotor with a toothed rim. 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, Caliber 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 itself 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. The ultra-slim manufacture Calibers 990 and 991 relied on double barrels. They and their derivatives are discussed elsewhere at greater length. The first of the duo was launched in 1975, followed in 1977 by the second caliber, which continues to prove its high capability to the present day. The best proof is an event which Walter von Känel, Longines’ visionary president, proudly announced in the spring of 2001, when the traditional brand celebrated its 300,000th timepiece. 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. And in accordance with the motto of noblesse oblige, its rotor was crafted from 21-karat gold.

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, ecology 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 automotive delicacy in 1958. Longines watchmakers developed an ingenious power reserve indicator for this series. The outstanding attributes of the 11½-ligne diameter and 6 millimeter tall Caliber 294 included a central dial 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, Caliber 291 through 294, which were likewise part of the “Conquest” line, also had distinctive power-reserve displays at the “12.”

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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 Fransson’s debut, Longines provided jobs for approximately 1,000 people. About 350,000 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 frequency enabled Longines to achieve 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 manufacturer 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 maze 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 Microélectronique 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 has shouldered the responsibilities of the presidency since 1988. Von Känel also became a member of the augmented directorate of the Swatch Group in 1998.

The exemplary successes that Longines celebrated under his agin are surely not mere coincidence. “I’ve always been fascinated by watchmaking,” 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 neighborhood. It was like a ladder. He and his dedicated team of watch lovers are now responsible for a diverse collection of timepieces ensconcing mechanical or electronic movements in a variety of watch cases of solid gold and silver in 1981. The alloy’s alphanumeric appellation was given to the 125-year anniversary of the winged hourglass in 1976, the same year that the manufacture accepted its fourth “Golden Rose” presentation of the “Serge Marzan” collection, which featured watch cases of solid silver.

The Olympic Games in Montreal challenged Longines to create the “Ultronic” 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, 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 wristwatches. And to top it all off, Longines joined the elite circle of Formula One race cars 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. Those sleek wristwatches, which are still manufactured with great success today, number among the first-rate exemplary products that carry the distinguishing features of mature mastery and which have therefore earned the right to be described as genuine classics.

Longines prepared to honor the 500th anniversary of Christopher Columbus’ discovery of America by releasing the “1492 Christobal Col onbus’ discovery of America by releasing the “1492 Christobal C” collection of solar compass watches in 1991. From 1995 onwards, international sales were almost completely vertically integrated, with Longines independently handling distribution, servicing and on-site servicing. This important innovation also meant that Longines forthwith offered nothing but watches that had been completely developed and manufactured in Switzerland.

The “Longines DolceVita” collection followed three years later. These watches, which paid homage to Fellini’s unforgettable film, enjoyed unparalleled success. And in 2003 “Hommage et Gloire” embodied another high point in the 125-year history of Longines: the Broad Arrow made a comeback after 20 years. The “Longines DolceVita” collection was re-launched in this trio, featuring everything from sports wristwatch chronographs 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 LumiMare 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.

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