

# *The* *History* *of* TIME

What would the “*Time Issue*” be without an in-depth look at mankind’s fascination with time: from the first sundials, to the modern smart-watch? *L’Officiel Austria Hommes* embarks upon a historical fact-finding mission on the greatest milestones in watch-making history.

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Sundials, which divided the time between sunrise and sunset into 12 sections and utilised the length and direction of shadows cast by the sun, were used by ancient Egyptians as early as 1500 BC and later improved by the Greeks and the Romans. In China, people utilised incense and candle clocks, whose burning would indicate how much time had passed. The Romans also used water clocks, commonly called “Clepsydra”, to keep track of time when there was no sunlight.

During the 13th century, a weight-driven mechanical clock was installed at Dunstable Priory in Bedfordshire, England, in 1283, marking the creation of the first mechanical clock. Clocks started being made for churches and cathedrals in Italy and France as churches had the resources to hire the best craftsmen. The escapement, whose creator is still unknown, brought about a revolution

in watchmaking. Now, neither the descending weight nor the gear wheels (which had been around for at least 1.300 years) produced its motive force that transferred the power; rather, the escapement.

When the German inventor Peter Henlein, now considered the father of the modern clock, created the first mainspring for a pocket watch in the 16th century in Europe, the first pocket watches began being produced. The spring-driven balancing wheel, though initially not particularly accurate, allowed precision to be within ten minutes each day by 1670. The first “complications” also started to appear around this period, which meant that watches could now do more than just tell the time.

The striking mechanism developed in 1676 by Reverend Edward Barlow, which announced the time with a sound like a gong,









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was one of the first complications. This later developed into the minute repeater function we know today. The earliest calendars were introduced after the alarm feature from the late 16th century. In the 1700s, British horologist Thomas Mudge created the first perpetual calendar.

Clocks evolved into a recognised piece of science in the eighteenth century. The pendulum clock was developed by Dutch physicist Christiaan Huygens using Galileo Galilei's theories. The normal gain or loss of 15 minutes per day was reduced to about a minute per week by the advent of pendulum clocks, which were approximately 100 times more accurate than their forebears. A pendulum swing constituted one second.

The Breguet No. 160 great complication, also known as the Marie-Antoinette, is one of the most notorious timepieces for women. Abraham-Louis Breguet created the watch, and it took over 20 years to finish. It was commissioned in 1782 by Count Hans Axel von Fersen, an admirer of the French queen. It was taken in 1983 from an Israeli museum in Jerusalem and returned in 2007. Nicolas Hayek, the late founder of the Swatch Group, requested a remake in 2004. With a price of 30 million USD, it ranks among the most costly timepieces ever made. Incidentally, Abraham-Louis Breguet also created the first tourbillon in 1795. It was intended to increase a watch's accuracy. The word "tourbillon" is derived from the word "whirlwind" in French, and it refers to the revolving cage that houses the escapement and balance wheel.

Although there is much debate surrounding this topic, watchmaker Abraham-Louis Breguet was said to have created the first "modern" wristwatch for the Queen of Naples in 1810. According to the Guinness Book of World Records, Patek Philippe was the one who was hired to create the first wristwatch for Countess Koscowicz of Hungary in 1868. It was an ostentatious piece of yellow gold and diamonds intended to make more of an impression than Breguet had with his royal piece for Marie Antoinette.

Wristwatches have always been associated with femininity because women wore bracelet watches in the 19th century. The pocket watch, however, was altered during World War I so that it could be worn on the wrist and seen more easily on the battlefield; as a result, the male trend for wristwatches took off following the war.

In 1853, Charles-Felicien Tissot invented the dual time zone complication, a wristwatch that simultaneously displays the times of two different time zones.

Chronographs, a sophisticated complication that enables the user to track passing time, date back to the 19th century and were created by a French watchmaker named Nicolas Rieussec. Famous chronographs include the Rolex Daytona and the Omega Speedmaster, a chronograph worn by astronauts during the first lunar landing. In 1945, Rolex became the first company to market a timepiece with a date display. The model is still called the "Datejust" in modern times.

By the 20th century, the atomic clock, which uses an atom's periodic oscillation between two of its energy levels as its natural resonant frequency, was developed. What is commonly referred to as a quartz movement is a quartz crystal-based resonator that receives electrical signals. Its resonance at 32,000 pulses corresponds perfectly to one second. The second, which was accepted as the new standard unit of time in 1967, was also introduced by this development. It is a contemporary unit of measurement based on the resonance frequency of the caesium atom.

Now that we have approached modern times, we return to Patek Philippe, who created one of the newest complications. Only in 1996 was the first "annual calendar" developed as a less expensive and less complex alternative to perpetual calendars, this



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calendar showed the date, considered months with 30 and 31 days, and only required adjustment once a year in February. Based on Thomas Mudge's invention, perpetual calendars were also first placed into a wristwatch by Patek Philippe. A perpetual calendar tracks the month of the year, the date, and whether it is a leap year. As a result, you only need to change the date on the watch when the Gregorian calendar misses a leap year. It is one of the most challenging watch complications and will occur again in 2100, making it almost eternal.

Whether you love or hate them, the smartwatch movement has overtaken the watchmaking industry. The "Pulsar," the first digital watch, debuted in 1972. Only 24 digits could be stored in it. Microsoft introduced the first smartwatch in 1994 under the name "Datalink 150" in partnership with Timex, launching it 12 years before Apple did. The rest, as they say, is history.

What would a lesson on the history of watchmaking be without naming some of the most notable models coveted by collectors and watch enthusiasts due to their rarity and craftsmanship? The Patek Philippe Grandmaster Chime, which has 20 complications, is the most expensive watch ever sold at an auction, going for 31.19 million USD. The Vacheron Constantin Reference 57260, which has 57 complications, including The Patek Philippe Grandmaster Chime, which has 20 complications, is the most expensive watch ever sold at an auction, going for 31.19 million USD. Ability to tell the time of sunrise and the date of Easter recently dethroned the Chime as the watch with the largest number of complications.

From the ancient Egyptians to the smartwatch era – the discerning gentleman must be well acquainted with the origins of his most important accessory: his timepiece!



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