

# PATEK PHILIPPE MUSEUM

Treasures from The Patek Philippe Collection  
The Quest for the Perfect Watch



1800

1850

1900

1950

2000





1800

1825

1850

1875

1900

1925

1950

1975

2000

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1800 1839 1900 2000



## Precision and Beauty

This volume together with its companion volume provides new images and information on priceless treasures from the collections of the Patek Philippe Museum. Included are the company's own watches dating back to 1839, "The Patek Philippe Collection," which formed the core of the collection I started in the 1960s, and "The Antique Collection" with historic items that go back to the dawn of the portable timekeeper around 1500. Combined they represent a unique homage to Europe's horological heritage, for which I have long felt a passionate affinity. These books are intended for anyone, from generalists to experts, who is drawn to historic machines of unparalleled precision and beauty.

Each book might be compared to a play in twenty acts in chronological and thematic sequence. Each act is introduced by a concise historical account setting the scene. The stars of our drama are timepieces that have made history. All have been carefully auditioned (indeed chiming sonneries sing to you) by our expert curatorial team for their precision performance, dramatic presence, and beauty—a special beauty that not only resides on an enamel painted surface, but grows directly from choreographed motions of wheels and springs hidden within. These watches are masterpieces of form and function. Therefore, unlike most books of this type, we emphasize their inner mechanisms.

Representative artifacts document a confluence of aesthetics and technical genius in the mechanical watch. This complex history involves a constant dialog between innovation and tradition, which I regard as an essential tension. Nothing speaks more eloquently to this tension than the Calibre 89, introduced by Patek Philippe in 1989 in commemoration of the company's 150th anniversary. With its unprecedented 33 complications and revolutionary technologies, it is the superstar of the latter acts of our drama. But it also converses with the past, defying time itself and evoking time-honored traditions of the master watchmakers of the Vallée de Joux. Calibre 89 represented a major turning point in watchmaking that secured the success of the luxury mechanical watch in the face of ubiquitous, highly accurate, and inexpensive quartz watches, which ironically Patek Philippe had a hand in inventing.

Our books are dedicated to the creative spirits who have worked at our company over the past 183 years to realize the visions of our founders, Messieurs Patek and Philippe, to build the most precise and beautiful watches in the world.

Philippe Stern  
Honorary President, Patek Philippe SA

"The stars of our drama are timepieces that have made history."

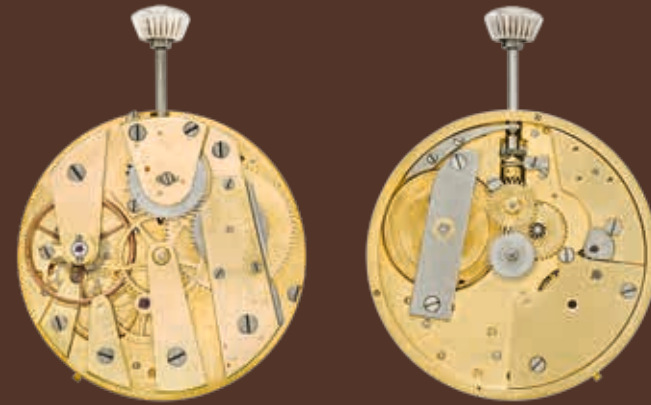


Philippe Stern in the Patek Philippe Archives, holding the Star Caliber 2000. Behind him are volumes documenting every watch produced by the company from 1839 onwards.

The watch shown on the left is the Calibre 89, which was in its day the most complicated watch ever built.

Patek, Philippe S.A.  
Geneva, 1989  
Caliber 32", Prototype  
Ø 88 mm; P-1989

1800 1839 1851 1900 2000



## Origins of the Company

In 1839, two immigrants, Antoni Patek Prawdzic (1812–1877) from Poland and François Czapek (1811–after 1869) from Czechia, founded a watch company in Geneva. After the partnership dissolved in 1845, Patek, who had changed his name to Antoine Norbert de Patek, remained in Geneva, becoming a citizen of the city and integrating himself into the local culture.

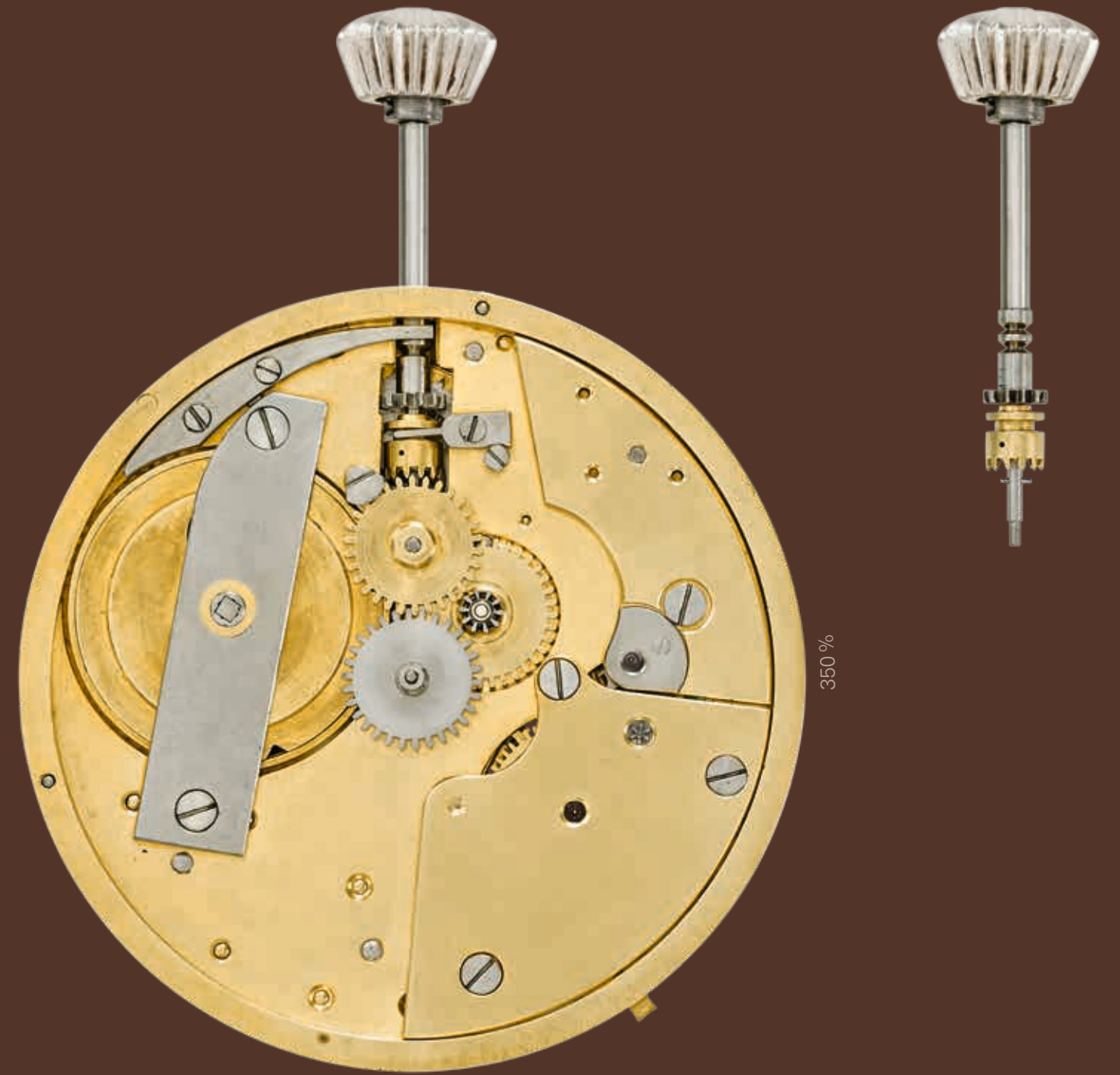
In 1844, Patek had met the French watchmaker Jean Adrien Philippe (1815–1894) at the Exhibition of the Products of French Industry in Paris. National and international expositions played a major role in the Patek Philippe story.

At the exhibition Philippe introduced his new invention, a keyless winding and setting mechanism for watches (page 11, P-1842). Patek was quick to realize the potential of the invention, which forever changed the world of watches. In 1845, the French watchmaker joined him in partnership in Geneva. Patek, the astute entrepreneur, and Philippe, the watchmaker par excellence, shared a common vision of making the world's best, most complicated, most elegant watches.

In 1851, Philippe's name was added to the company, now known as "Patek, Philippe & Cie." It was an amazing success story: Two ambitious young immigrants ventured from their homelands to seek business opportunities in the newly formed Swiss Confederation. They were drawn to an informal network of highly skilled individual watchmakers, known as the "Fabrique genevoise."

Bringing together the talents of watchmakers in Geneva and the surrounding Jura Mountains, this production system went back at least 150 years. Distinguished by the division of labor and specialized craftsmanship associated with the Industrial Revolution, it was practiced by watchmakers from Geneva to La Chaux-de-Fonds.

Patek and Philippe capitalized on this local resource of skilled labor to create a worldwide market for their precision-made, beautifully designed watches. These innovative young entrepreneurs had begun to define a new and unique brand in watchmaking.



## The Crown Supersedes the Key

This movement is the oldest surviving example of Jean Adrien Philippe's first combined crown-winding and setting mechanism: the crown can be turned to wind the mainspring and pulled to set the hands. A key is no longer needed.

Jean Adrien Philippe  
Paris, 1842  
Caliber 17'''  
Ø 38 mm; P-1842

1800 1851 1900 2000

## Going to the Fairs



Patek Philippe's marketing strategy was crucial to its early corporate success. It was no accident that "Patek, Philippe & Cie," as it rebranded itself in 1851, began to gain global name recognition at the same time that the first World's Fair, the "Great Exhibition of the Works of Industry of All Nations," opened in London, running from May to October 1851. The world's nations and their manufacturers came together to display new products, submitting their best examples for prize competitions. Inventions of all types were on display, including daguerreotypes, an early fax machine, manufacturing and agricultural machinery, fire-arms, and vulcanized rubber. The Great Exhibition and world's fairs that followed were immensely important in promoting international trade. The fairs provided a grand stage for the Industrial Revolution.

The two entrepreneurs Patek (1812–1877) and Philippe (1815–1894) immediately understood the importance of world's fairs to their position in international business and always prepared meticulously for them. The London exhibition presented an unparalleled opportunity to showcase their products and to build their brand. As it turned out, the company made a grand showing, winning a gold medal for the quality and beauty of their watches.

Just as Samuel Colt's (1814–1862) exhibit of his prototype revolvers made with interchangeable parts put America on the map as an industrial force to be reckoned with, Patek Philippe kept Geneva on the map as an international watchmaking powerhouse.

Their exhibits awakened the interest of American retailers, then a new market for Swiss watches. Traveling to the U.S.A. in 1854, Patek came home with enough orders to keep the company busy for at least a year; an order from the important Tiffany & Co. in New York launched a business relationship that lasts to this day.

Queen Victoria (1819–1901), who formally opened London's Great Exhibition, bought from Patek Philippe a small, light blue pendant watch for herself and a hunter pocket watch with repeater for her husband, Prince Albert (1819–1861). Aristocrats and royal personages followed the queen's lead. Excited by their reception in London, the Genevan watchmaker adopted world's fairs as a central marketing platform for years to come (page 22, P-27).

## Queen Victoria



Queen Victoria (1819–1901) paid several visits to the Great Exhibition in London in 1851—the first World's Fair. She greatly admired Patek Philippe's watches, especially for their innovative stem-winding and setting feature. Jean Adrien Philippe personally showed this pendant watch to her.

Patek, Philippe & Cie –  
Fabricants à Genève  
Geneva, 1850  
Caliber 13'''', No. 4536  
Ø 33 mm; P-24

Queen Victoria by W. Warman after a painting by Thomas Sully from 1838; National Portrait Gallery, London



400 %

1800 1873 1968 2000

## Chronometers and Observatory Trials



Punctuality is a major concern of modern industrial society. Accurate watches, considered the epitome of precision, were key to the Industrial Revolution. Patek Philippe built the most accurate timekeepers in the world and early on set the pace in the highly competitive watch market. Before quartz technology in the 1970s drastically lowered the prices for accurate watches, customers had to pay a premium for this precision.

The initial drivers for timekeeping accuracy were the practical needs of navigation, scientific measurement, modern time-and-motion studies, and, not least, competitive sports. Fractions of a second, tenths, hundredths, and thousandths of a second were the new units of modernity.

Chronometers are extremely precise timekeepers. Their manufacture pushed watchmakers ever closer to the limits of their capabilities. Formal external validations of precision became standard procedure, with major astronomical observatories taking the lead. In 1873, the Geneva Observatory set up and served as judges for a watch competition with strict rules. Participating companies of course had to submit their timepieces anonymously for rigorous evaluation over several weeks.

By the 20th century, observatory-tested watches played a critical role in timing Olympic events. Conversely, the chronometer trials, which continued until 1968, themselves became a kind of Olympiad for precision watches where superstar “adjusters” were responsible for the critical fine-tuning. In Geneva Observatory competitions between 1900 and 1950, Patek Philippe received 1,728 prizes—more than all other watch companies combined. Over the years, the firm garnered 325 First Prizes, which reinforced their undisputed market position. They had a spectacular year in 1884, for example, when they dominated competition by winning the first five places.

Accuracy was of utmost importance, especially the ability to stay accurate over long periods of time. Patek Philippe aimed for nothing less than absolute precision—the “perfect watch”—such that a watch never had to be reset. It would show the correct time forever and ever.



500 %

## Precision Record

Crafted in 1930, this pocket chronometer with lever escapement and one-minute tourbillon set a precision record in the 1962 Geneva Observatory competition—a record that still stands. French for “whirlwind,” the tourbillon is a rotating cage containing the balance and parts of the escapement, ensuring the constant frequency of the balance. It was awarded a “Record de

pièce” and “Bulletin de Première Classe” with “First Prize” mention.

Patek, Philippe & Cie, Société Anonyme Geneva, 1930 (movement), 1951 (case), 1983 (dial and hands) Reference 810, Caliber 17”, Movement No. 198 411 Ø 48 mm; P-424

1800

1861

1900

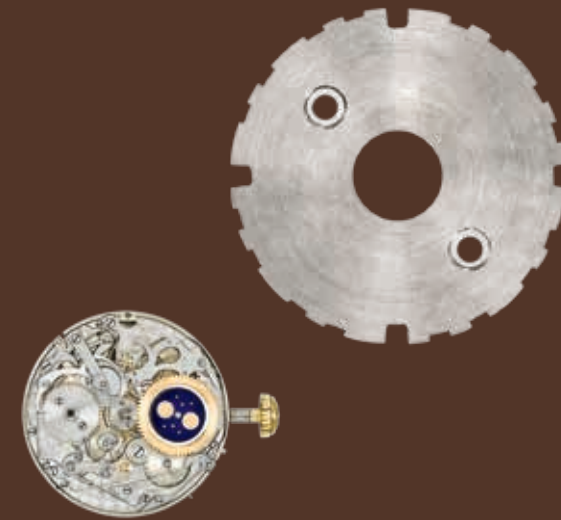
2000

## Perpetual Calendars

Patek Philippe reveled in the exploratory spirit of the Machine Age. It struck out into new and unknown territory in the development of highly accurate mechanical calendars, one of the most challenging of all horological “complications.” The goal was to produce a complex gear train that drastically reduced the need to adjust the calendar.

Early in its history, the firm was equipping pocket watches with mechanical calendars. The week-day, date and month, and sometimes the year and phases of the moon were assigned their own hands, windows, and symbols on the dial. Simple movements required resetting the calendar on the first day of each month.

The company then produced an automated annual calendar, although it still had to be corrected on the first of March, since the watch was not yet capable of accounting for Februarys with 28 or 29 days. Patek Philippe took a major step forward with the so-called “perpetual calendar,” which only needed to be adjusted on centennial years that are not leap years—that is, only three times in every 400 years. In 1925, a milestone in watch history, Patek Philippe was the first firm to succeed in equipping the smaller wristwatch with a perpetual calendar (page 35, P-72).



Patek Philippe then pushed the technology further with the “secular” calendar, which also included leap centennial years in the calculations. In principle, watch owners would not have to touch a secular calendar in their lifetimes, nor would their heirs (page 37, P-421).

This modern watch complication was based on very old knowledge, going back to the Julian calendar created in Rome over 2,000 years ago and the Gregorian calendar in the Renaissance almost 500 years ago. Patek Philippe was able to capture this knowledge in the algorithms programmed into its mechanical calendars: It produced a Machine Age wonder that was a major step toward its ultimate vision of a perfect, fully autonomous watch—one that in principle worked without human intervention for time eternal.

## Milestone



Made from 1898 to 1925, this is the first wristwatch with a perpetual calendar—a milestone in watchmaking. It always shows the correct date, even in leap years. For over 250 years, the invention of a movement with a reliable perpetual calendar posed a major, but not insurmountable, problem to watchmakers. Fitting it into a small wristwatch was extremely difficult.

Pictured on the facing page is the cam storing the program for the perpetual calendar over four years. The depth of the notches relates to months with 28, 29, 30, and 31 days.

Patek, Philippe & Cie,  
Société en nom collectif  
Geneva, 1898 (movement), 1925 (case)  
Caliber 12”, Movement No. 97 975  
Ø 34 mm; P-72



1800

1900

1980

2000

## Evolution of the Wristwatch

The wristwatch is the direct descendant of the pocket watch. At the turn of the 20th century, both types co-existed. But the wristwatch gained currency in the First World War, because soldiers found it more efficient to steal a quick glance at the wrist than to reach into the pocket. In 1923, Patek Philippe considered committing itself to the wristwatch. In short order, in fact, that became the backbone of its business. The trend toward wristwatches was unstoppable, and within a few decades they outnumbered pocket watches fifty to one. But just as early automobiles evolved from and, consequently, partially resembled horse-drawn carriages, early wristwatches showed vestiges of their pocket watch origins.

The transition from the pocket and neck to the wrist forced technical innovations. There was not only the challenge of reducing the size of the movement, but also of building sturdier cases to protect the delicate mechanism in its unpocketed position from exposure to water, dust, and magnetic fields. The new location also provided a technical advantage: the natural motion of the wrist assisted the self-winding feature.

No one company can be credited with the invention of the wristwatch; many saw the potential for a huge market. But Patek Philippe put its own stamp on the new devices, developing special functions like chronographs, calendars, and striking mechanisms. For watches without complications, which showed only hours, minutes, and seconds, style and fashion became paramount considerations.

The wristwatch gained further momentum in the 1930s, when Patek Philippe's designers developed a distinct in-house style based on Art Deco; it was in keeping with current fashion but still unmistakably their own. Simplicity and functionality are the guiding principles for timeless elegance. Experiments with unusual design were tried, but these were relatively rare. Rather, the firm's designs for the case, dial, hands, and especially its signature crown adhered to the "form-follows-function" modernist tradition.



## Machine Age Beauty

This ladies' wristwatch combines classical elements with a Machine Age aesthetic. Concealed within the elaborate wristband is a small watch.

Patek, Philippe & Cie, S.A.  
Geneva, 1945 (movement), 1944 (case)  
Reference 2126, Caliber 8-80 baguette,  
Movement No. 842 390  
W. 28 mm; P-1428

Form Follows Function

1800 1900 1980 2000



### Seventies Style



200 %

This ladies' wristwatch—with matching earrings and ring—is set with 26 diamonds, 18 lapis lazuli, and 18 corals. The flashy color scheme, as well as the shape of the wristwatch, reflects the joyful and exuberant fashions of the 1970s.

Patek, Philippe S.A.  
Geneva, 1978 (movement), 1976 (case)  
Reference 4406/2J-010, Caliber 16-250,  
Movement No. 1 278 982  
W. 35 mm; P-1960

### Nature in the Raw



175 %

This ladies' wristwatch exemplifies the avant-garde look of Patek Philippe watches of the early 1960s. The uneven gold nuggets suggest nature in the raw, yet hidden beneath was a precision watch movement caliber 8-85.

Patek, Philippe & Cie, S.A.  
Geneva, 1961 (movement), 1960 (case)  
Reference 3295, Caliber 8-85,  
Movement No. 857 238  
W. 32 mm; P-1392

### Butterfly Wings



The harmonious proportions of the Golden Ellipse family of watches made them highly desirable as jewelry. This one came with matching earrings. Its movement was custom-made for jeweled watches. Parts of the bracelet, the dial, and the earrings of the set are made of real butterfly wings.

Patek, Philippe S.A.  
Geneva, 1970  
Reference 4117/1 "Ellipse," Caliber  
13.5-320, Movement No. 1 242 426  
W. 25 mm; P-584

1800 1860 1975 2000

## The Lure of Complications



Watches with multiple complications are the glory of watchmaking. Complications are special features that go beyond the usual indications of hours, minutes, and seconds. These finely tuned timekeepers originated in the Swiss Jura, the city of Geneva, and the workshops of Patek Philippe, innovation hot spots where enthusiastic watchmakers competed to fit as many complications as possible into a watch.

The gear trains involved are a unique mixture of the modern and traditional. The makers drew upon the knowledge of their forebears and the inspiration of their peers. Shunning factory work with its typical division-of-labor routine, they operated independently, building the entire watch from A to Z—handcrafting each wheel, lever, and screw, constantly refining their skills. The modernist mantra “less-is-more” is compelling, but these expert watchmakers created breathtaking beauty not from simplicity, but from complex structures in which hundreds of parts blend together as voices in a fugue. Their creations, far from being antiquated, are state-of-the-art testaments to modernity and technological progress.

Complications fall into three general categories: “timing,” such as a chronograph; “astronomical,” such as a calendar; and “striking,” such as a repeater. Watches with two or three complications are called, respectively, “double complications” or “triple complications”; with more than three—indeed some have more than thirty—“Grand Complications.” True watch enthusiasts hungered for ever more complications, even as it became difficult to keep track of so many of them. Just the feeling of personally owning such a remarkable device was enough. Imagine the pride in carrying in your pocket or on your wrist a perpetual calendar, effortlessly vaulting leap years with precise accuracy into the far future.

The pocket watches presented in this chapter date from the earliest years of Patek Philippe to the 1970s. Each is a unique piece, either commissioned by a client or made for international exhibitions. The company used public exhibitions of its acrobatic marvels to convert admirers into passionate collectors.

## Stacked Movement



Reference 541, built in two layers, one atop another, has the reputation among watch enthusiasts as the most important wristwatch ever made. Created in 1930, it was the first wristwatch to be equipped with several complications, paving the way for the celebrated “Grand Complications.” The movement features a minute repeater on two gongs, a perpetual calendar with a central hand for the date, and apertures for the day of the week, the month, and the phases of the moon. This watch is a one-of-a-kind piece.

Patek, Philippe & Cie,  
Société Anonyme  
Geneva, 1930 (movement), 1939 (case)  
Reference 541, Caliber 11<sup>'''</sup>,  
Movement No. 198 340  
Ø 30 mm; P-1065

1800 1900 1960 2000

## Enamel Painting Reborn



Even though Patek Philippe was a pioneer of the quartz technology that would revolutionize the watch industry, it kept an eye on traditional craftsmanship. Seventeenth-century Geneva had become the mecca of enamel painting on watch cases. Starting in the late 1960s, Patek Philippe began to revive that brilliant era with a few pieces decorated with the same technique. In the modern high-tech environment, Patek Philippe was swimming against the tide.

The quartz watch was all about speed, mass production, and high accuracy at low cost. In contrast, enameling was an excruciatingly slow process: Sometimes it took a year to paint a small watch case. Indeed, in the workshop of an enameler, time almost seemed to stand still. A moment's inattention could ruin months of work. No wonder experienced enamelers say their education never ends. In lending its name and prestige to this artistic tradition, it was as if Patek Philippe were telling the whole watch industry to slow down and remember where they had come from.

The fast-paced modern world posed a grave threat to Geneva's enameling community, which, along with years of precious, accumulated knowledge, almost died out. Schools of enamel painting began to close their doors. Among the survivors was master teacher Carlo Poluzzi (1899–1978), considered the 20th century's greatest enameler.

In 1967, he extended the life of the tradition by introducing his star pupil, Suzanne Rohr (born 1939), to the president of Patek Philippe, Henri Stern (1911–2002). After their meeting, she went on to work for the company for forty years.

Henri Stern and his son Philippe (born 1938) resolved to keep this Genevan craft alive. At a time when there were very few enamelers left, Patek Philippe almost single-handedly revived the market for this technique. Because of their efforts, the craft of enamel painting not only survives today, but thrives. In many ways, Patek Philippe took a singular position in the watch industry, with one foot in the future and the other in the past.



300%

Suzanne Rohr's enamel miniature on the back of this dress watch is based on Jean-Baptiste Camille Corot's (1796–1875) "Ville-d'Avray." The original painting from around 1865 is today in the National Gallery of Art in Washington, D.C.

Patek, Philippe S.A.  
Geneva, 1976 (movement),  
1973 (case), 1976 (enamel painting)  
Reference 866/69, Caliber 17-170,  
Movement No. 932 674  
Ø 47 mm; P-258

## Rohr's Ville-d'Avray

1800 1860 1975 2000

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Patek, Philippe & Cie,  
Société Anonyme  
Geneva, 1930 (movement), 1939 (case)  
Reference 541, Caliber 11<sup>'''</sup>,  
Movement No. 198 340  
Ø 30 mm; P-1065

1800

1900

Milestones

1989

2020

## Tradition and Innovation



While always looking to the future, Patek Philippe has been respectful of its history and equally interested in looking back. It regularly celebrates company milestones: its 150th anniversary in 1989, the move to its new building at Plan-les-Quates in 1996, and its 175th anniversary in 2014. Not just self-congratulatory or marketing events, these celebrations reflect a belief that today's innovators stand on the shoulders of predecessors. Past and future, tradition and innovation are inextricably linked. According to a Patek Philippe slogan from the 1980s, "If you want to know the future, you have only to reach into the past."

For such events, besides the usual souvenirs, the company produces commemorative timepieces in limited editions based on classic watches. These are not just clones of famous old timepieces. Rather, historic references are reimagined and updated with contemporary designs and the latest technology, resulting in some of the most sophisticated devices the company has ever produced.

Brand new pieces were also constructed for such events, but all represent a step forward in Patek Philippe's honored tradition of technological excellence. Illustrative of this practice are three masterpieces: the Calibre 89 marking the company's 150th anniversary in 1989, the Star Caliber 2000 celebrating the new Millennium, and the Grandmaster Chime honoring the 175th anniversary of

Patek Philippe in 2014. Fewer than ten pieces of each were put up for sale. But in making them, the company tested new technical solutions, new complications, and new materials in order to improve their regular product lines. Their makers used 21st-century tools, while applying skills based on centuries of horological heritage.

One hundred seventy-five years after Patek Philippe's founding, the company continues to realize Antoine Norbert de Patek's and Jean Adrien Philippe's vision of making the world's best, most complicated, most elegant watches.

Collectively these watches represent thousands of separate parts and more complications than the world has ever seen in wristwatches: perpetual calendar, date of Easter, sunset and sunrise, sky charts, split-second chronograph, repeaters. By some alchemy, they coalesce into a continuous whole, a perfect synthesis of art and machine. Indeed, the past, present, and future merge as well. With these brilliant concept watches, Patek Philippe has proven that tradition is not the opposite of innovation; for innovation depends on inspiration, a rich source to draw upon. And the company found that source in its own heritage. The beauty of a watch can only come from deep within, from the mechanism itself, and, ultimately, from the very heart and soul of Patek Philippe.

## Calibre 89

This prototype of the Calibre 89 was created to celebrate Patek Philippe's 150th anniversary in 1989. Only four watches were made after the prototype. Its astronomical complications go back to pocket watches from the 1920s. All told, it has 33 complications made

up of 1,728 parts. At that time, it was considered the most complicated watch in the world. Calibre 89 sent a strong message that the company had secured its future with the mechanical watch.

Patek, Philippe S.A.  
Geneva, 1980–1989  
Caliber 32", Prototype  
Ø 88 mm; P-1989