

MANUFACTURE HISTORY

navialtus

Exklusiv generalagent för Revue Thommen i Sverige:

Navialtus Handelsbolag

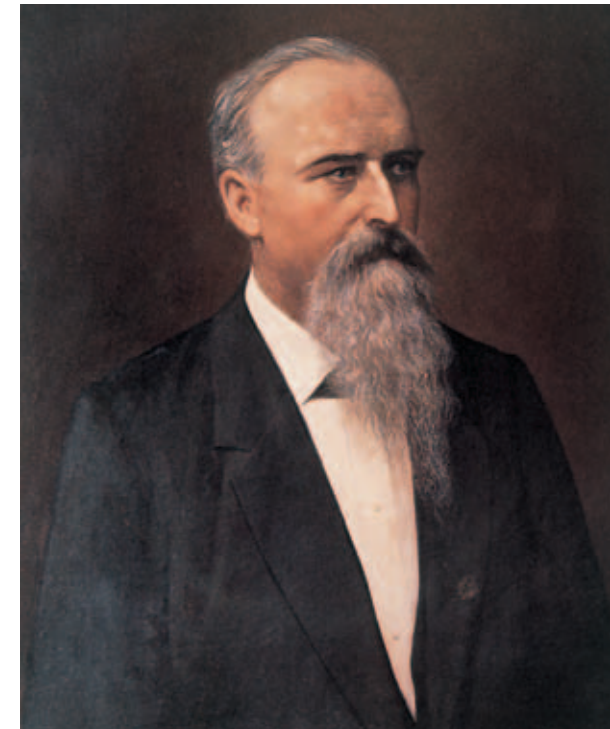
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After the construction of the Basel-Olten railway line in the 1850s, the little Jura town of Waldenburg, situated on the Basel-Geneva trade route, was forced to fight the unemployment and poverty in its population. In 1853, the borough decided to introduce the watch and clock making industry and founded the “Société d’Horlogerie à Waldenburg”(Waldenburg clock and watch making company).

But the enterprise didn’t flourish until it was privatised and taken over by the young merchant Gédéon Thommen in 1859. Manufacturing and assembly methods were fundamentally improved and a particular importance was attached to the production of quality watches.

The company, managed under the name of “Gédéon Thommen – watch makers”, originally gave its watches the brand mark “G.T.”. The “système à pièces interchangeables”(interchangeable components system), which consisted in the interchangeability of individual watch components, was groundbreaking, and made it possible to transfer to series production. An invention protected by a “Remontoir patent” led to the simplification of the spring winding device and hand adjustment.



Gédéon Thommen, 1831-1890

While 4 000 watches were produced in 1870, an output of 13 000 watches was reached in 1890. G. Thommen was becoming less and less dependent on suppliers, as the aspiring company could produce movement blanks in its own workshops. From 1875 the company was not only making cylinder watches – they were also producing lever pocket watches. An invention patented in 1885, and which is still amazing today, was the G.T. “Springeruhr” with a



The Waldenburg factory in 1859

very modern looking mechanical digital display.

G. Thommens' far-sightedness and capacity for work were no secret to the public, to whom he devoted himself in many ways. He was co-founder of the "Waldenburger Bezirksblatts" (Waldburg local newspaper) and played an eminent part in the founding of the Waldenburg railway, which was opened in 1880 as the smallest narrow-gauge railway in Europe operated by steam and brought

traffic to the Waldenburg valley. He was a member of the national assembly for 26 years. The education system was a particular matter of his concern.

After the death of the industry pioneer G. Thommen, his son Alphonse founded the company Thommens Uhrenfabriken AG in 1905. The REVUE watches produced with their own production machines according to modern methods met with general approval among experts. The



Pocket jumping hour watch made in 1885 according to Gédéon Thommen's patent



increasing demand for wrist-watches was based on the product's outstanding quality and the opening up of new markets. Subsidiaries were opened in Gelterkinden and Langenbruck and another production facility was built in Waldenburg. The currency breakdown in many countries, the severe economic crisis of the 1930s and the "templating", i.e. the mass exportation of watch components, which was

damaging to the prestige of Swiss watches, also caused the Waldenburg watch manufacturer a lot of trouble. The Thommens Uhrenfabriken AG research and development department surprised the industry experts more than once with innovations, which marked their epoch. To mention just a few: the self-compensating Nivarox balance spring, the timing machine for watch timing and



Watchmaker at Revue Thommen studio in 1932

the REVUE-SPORT wristwatches meeting the toughest demands for the first time.

In the 1980s, the company's management decided to strengthen the link with "THOMMEN" navigation instruments for aviation and to rename the watch brand "REVUE THOMMEN". Revue Thommen, supplier of precision instruments for the aviation industry since 1936 is indeed the most legitimate manufacturer of pilot watches. Their Airspeed and

Streamline models in the upper middle market and the elegant creations Wallstreet and Open Heart attracted a lot of interest.



The Revue Thommen "Cricket" wristwatch almost attained cult status. Several American presidents, including Truman, Eisenhower or Johnson, wore these watches. The table clocks, whose design was based on the "Thommen" on-board chronometers for civil and military aircraft, complete the Revue Thommen range.

Until 1961 about a hundred differ-

* Cricket is a TM of PMH SA.



The legendary Revue Thommen Cricket watch.

ent G.T. calibres were developed and produced. From 1961 onwards, further calibres were added, and were identified by initials. The initials from the beginning of the alphabet were for small watch movements, and the initials from the end of the alphabet were reserved for the larger watch movements. For example, the ladies calibre K12 corresponds to the size 8 $\frac{3}{4}$ ''' ,



GT 44, 11 1/2'''', hand-winding movement, with hour, minute and second hand



Model 12110.2532 with manufacture movement GT 56, Automatic

the T-range to 11 1/2''' and the calibre S to 13''' . These calibres are all produced today with the G.T. marking.

The manufacturing tradition of Revue Thommen was almost lost. Up until about 1998, movements were simply assembled with parts from the old stock. The Revue Thommen brand was produced for decades within the MSR holding by the company "Vulcain & Studio" in La Chaux-de-Fonds. In 2000, "Vulcain & Studio" ceased

activity. Thanks to the MSR holding's long-term vision, an exclusive licence agreement was concluded with the company "Grovana Uhrenfabrik AG" in Tenniken/BL. The Grovana company is an old and traditional company in the Swiss watch-making industry. The firm was founded in 1924, and is managed today by the second generation of the Bitterli family. Grovana has a worldwide distribution and service network at its disposal, and is as such the most suitable company

to perpetuate the sales of Revue Thommen watches in their traditional environment.

With the conclusion of an exclusive, long-term licence agreement concerning the use of the Revue Thommen brand, Grovana AG decided to buy Vulcain & Studio's entire stock inventory. After the acquisition of this stock it became obvious what opportunities were provided along with all these movement parts.

After a full inventory was established, it could be determined which movement parts were missing and had to be procured, in order to guarantee the continued production of movement ranges. Luckily Grovana had also bought the tools (etampages) with the movement parts, so the missing parts could easily be produced again.

The former suppliers also played an important role. They really were in line with the concept to keep the Revue Thommen manufacture movements alive. So Grovana can count on excellent support from these suppliers.

Since summer 2002 Revue Thommen manufacturer's movements are back in production. The



GT 82, 13''' , Hand-winding movement, with hour, minute and small second hand at 6 o'clock

calibre GT54 plays a central part in this new production. This automatic movement forms the core part of various calibres. The calibre GT54 has 3 hands. Calibre GT55 (with small second hand display at 6 o'clock) and calibre GT56 (date display with hand and small second hand display at 6 o'clock) are both derived from this movement using a built-on module.



Model 13000.3513 with manufacture movement GT 82, Hand-Winding

From summer 2004 the calibre GT58 (3 hands and date with date disc) will be on offer again.

Since the beginning of 2004, the ladies calibre GT14 (2 hands) and GT12 (2 hands and small second hand at 6 o'clock) are back in production. These 8 $\frac{3}{4}$ " movements are hand-wound.

ments, which are exclusive manufacturer's movements of high quality and precision. The watch movements identified as "manufacturer's movements" are those which are produced and marked solely by an independent watchmaker. Only Revue Thommen watches will be fitted with these exclusive movements.

In the future the Grovana watch maker is going to concentrate its energy on the further development of Revue Thommen move-