

# HE WROTE THE BOOK

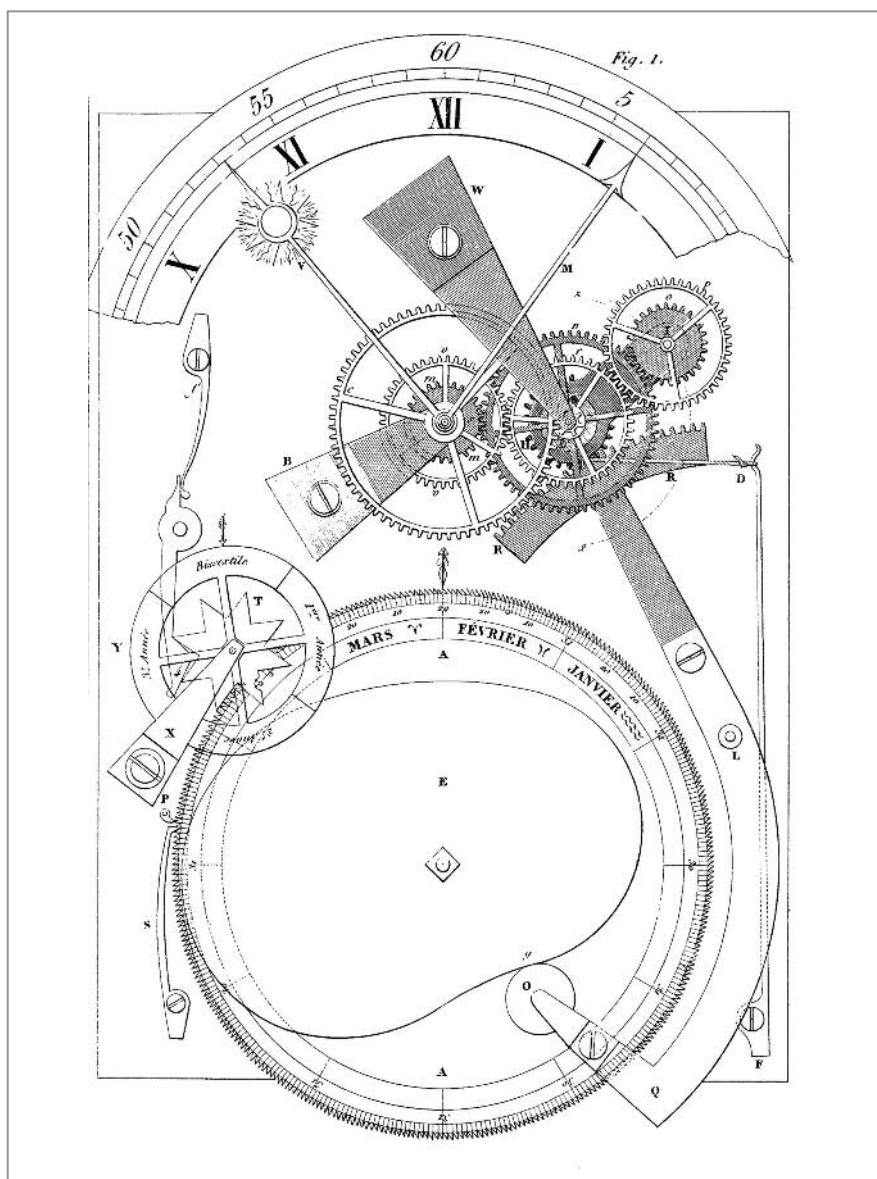
## RESURRECTING AND REINTERPRETING LOUIS MOINET

There are many watch brand names based on individuals' names—Roger Dubuis, Gérald Genta, JeanRichard, Breguet, Jaquet Droz and many more. Without a doubt, French watchmaker Louis Moinet deserves to be among the most famous names in watchmaking, right up there with Abraham Louis Breguet and Daniel Jean-Richard.

“Louis Moinet, even as a small boy, was interested in art and watches,” says Jean-Marie Schaller, president and CEO of the newly launched brand Louis Moinet. “He took apart watches and reassembled them at an early age. When he was 20, he went to Italy to study the arts. When he came back to France, he was made professor of Fine Arts at the Louvre at 27 years old. When he came back to Paris, it was art and watches for him. Five years later, the balance shifted, and he was making only watches. He was making the movements, and he was interested in the art of it as well. He made clocks for Napoleon.”

“For Louis Moinet, watches were a combination of mechanical and artistic work,” Schaller continues. “Soon, he was recognized by his peers as a gifted gentleman. At 32, he was nominated president of the chronometry society of Paris, a gathering of watchmakers who wanted to share experiences and develop watchmaking. He also collaborated with a famous bronze object maker, Thomire, and together they produced clocks that they sold to Napoleon and King George IV of England and two American presidents, Jefferson and Monroe. There is a Louis Moinet clock, featuring the Goddess Minerva, in the White House, purchased by President Monroe. It says Louis Moinet on the movement. The Jefferson clock is at Monticello.”

In 1848, Moinet published a book called *The Watchmaking Treatise* (*Traité d'Horlogerie* in



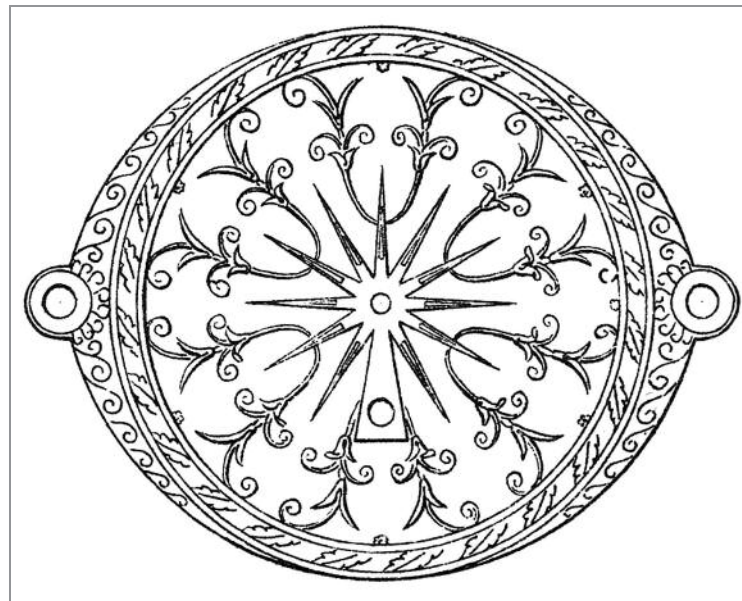
*Plate XXI of Moinet's Traité d'Horlogerie, illustrating Moinet's design of an equation watch made by Berthoud.*

French), a definitive two-volume work in which he shared his ideas and concepts with the world. Filled with Moinet's own illustrations and drawings, the book took him 20 years to write, and it is widely considered the best-written and most comprehensive book on watchmaking of its time. It became an important reference for nineteenth century watchmakers and is still in libraries throughout the watch industry. "Louis Moinet was a good man; he encouraged young watchmakers; he was helpful in mediating disputes about watchmaking; they went to him for arbitration," Schaller says. "He was held in high esteem by the other watchmakers."

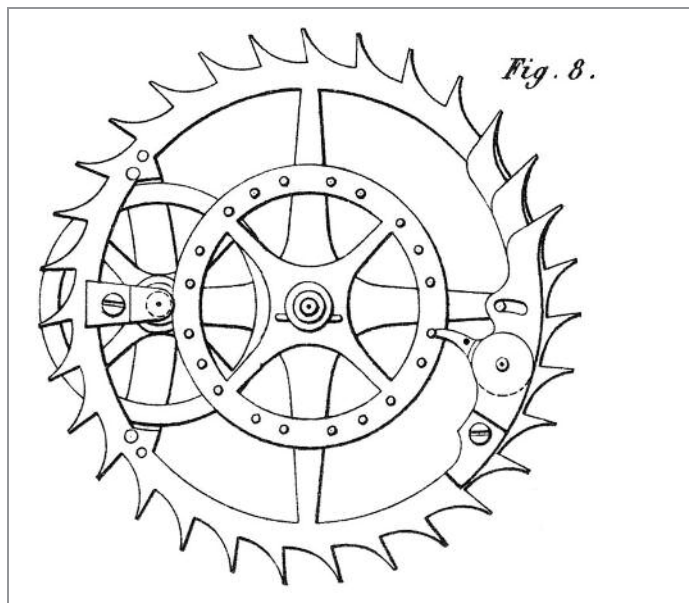
Schaller fell in love with Louis Moinet's unique universe and now represents the younger generation in charge of maintaining the company's traditions. When he started his research in 1999, he knew of Moinet's illustrious history, but there was nothing else to be purchased—Moinet had died in 1853, and there was no stock and certainly no watches. Then Schaller discovered original editions of Moinet's treatise, including illustrations and sketches in Moinet's own hand, and these have since become the very backbone of the brand. When reading the treatise, he also discovered astonishing inventions, such as a counter that displays a 60th of a second, which Moinet called a *compte-tierce*, the goal of which was to enhance Moinet's astronomical observations. This instrument was superior then to any other time measurement, and it makes Louis Moinet one of the fathers of chronometry. Another invention was a jeweled escapement that oscillated at 216,000 beats per hour without any trace of wear or increased friction during prolonged use.

It's not the Louis Moinet mission to just copy the vintage watches and try to sell them. "There is a strong history, but we don't want to simply repeat the past," Schaller says. "We update the designs and make them contemporary. We use the Côtes du Jura engraving pattern, which we have created, because we are not in Geneva, so we didn't want to do Geneva striping. We have registered the Côtes du Jura pattern, and it is a strong element of our brand DNA."

Certainly, the exclusivity of the product is a major draw, but that alone is not enough for the folks at Louis Moinet. Knowing that there is a place in the industry for a watch company that aggressively pursues customer service, they are working hard to come up with new ideas and new approaches that will directly benefit the customer. "We are dedicated to providing a unique experience to our customers that reflects the exclusive nature of Louis Moinet," promises Michael Brader-Araje, president, Louis Moinet North America. "When collectors are acquiring a fine timepiece at considerable expense, they deserve to be treated accordingly. While preparing for the US launch, I discovered there was great dissatisfaction in the luxury watch segment with lack of customer service. We intend to change that by being 'high touch'—enthusiastically performing personalized sales and service, providing the type of experience befitting a luxury timepiece. We are also unveiling [www.lmtime.com](http://www.lmtime.com), with plentiful in-depth information,



from top—Illustration of a decorative cock by Louis Moinet, used to protect the balance wheel from dust; today's Twintech employs a similar component; the Louis Moinet Tempograph in rose gold.



from top—A detail of Plate XLIV from Moinet’s treatise, illustrating a wheel; Louis Moinet headquarters and atelier in Saint-Blaise, Neuchâtel, Switzerland.

such as revealing videos of the watches. We did a lot of research on our potential clients, who spend an average of eighteen hours a week online. With such an exclusive watch, and only 200 being available in the US per year, we want to make it as easy as possible to get a hold of a Louis Moinet. If we begin distribution via the traditional route, due to limited production, we could only supply a few retailers around the country. So presently, we favor the personalized sales approach to best communicate the values of the brand. We definitely look forward to working with retailers later on as Louis Moinet becomes more readily available.”

“Our feeling is that people are busy,” he continues. “I came into this business as a watch collector, and I acquired a lot of watches on the web. Likewise, I want busy collectors to quickly and easily be able to find exactly what they want on our official website.” Another of the intriguing ways that Louis Moinet is going to distinguish itself is to offer North American customers ten years of free service. Currently, most companies offer two to three years’ warranty, which doesn’t include the regular maintenance that manufacturers suggest at three- to five-year intervals. Louis Moinet North America is offering ten years’ free regular service. An amazing offer, it helps to confirm that Louis Moinet is a different kind of watch company.

While many companies are trying to bring many parts of the production process in-house, Louis Moinet is doing things the old fashioned way. Design, logistics, marketing and distribution are based in the company’s headquarters in Saint-Blaise, Switzerland, in a beautiful old building that used to be a bank, but for the production of the watches, the brand works with a network of small suppliers. “Our suppliers are our partners, people who share the same spirit,” Schaller says. “We have already changed a lot of suppliers because the relationship was not there. Being a small company, sometimes it works best if we work with other small companies. If we go to a big dial maker, we don’t get the attention that we need.”

Moinet’s suppliers are some of the best small companies in the business, and they work for some of the biggest companies in the industry; yet they are happy and willing to work with Louis Moinet. Part of it is Schaller, who has been in the watch industry for a long time and has a reputation as a straight shooter, but another large part is the interest these suppliers have in what Louis Moinet is trying to do. It’s doubtful these companies would be working with Louis Moinet if it were just another “me too” watch, but because it is considered something special, they are eager to be on board.

One of the most interesting suppliers is movement constructor Sébastien Rousseau, the mastermind behind the Magistralis one-of-a-kind timepiece. Rousseau had worked in the Christophe Claret workshops then decided to branch out on his own. In the middle of the Jura mountains, Rousseau’s workshop was abuzz with activity. Sandwiched around projects from large brands, Rousseau took time out of his busy day to show me what he was doing for Louis Moinet. Young and energetic, he is enthused by Schaller and the Louis Moinet watches.

In the same vein, Schaller had a special box made to showcase the beautiful sound of the Magistralis Minute Repeater. This box was

hand-made by Claude Bourquard, a violin maker in the Jura. Making the rounds of Schaller's suppliers, I could almost envision how this was done decades ago—relationships, visits and partnerships.

Schaller does all of the exterior design of the watches himself, but lets the professionals do the rest. "I am not good at routine, so I like to invent new things and see the interaction with the market," he says. "I am enjoying the work. My favorite watch is always the next one. To develop these projects sometimes takes two years, so by the time something is out, I am already working on the next watches."

Currently, Louis Moinet makes fewer than a thousand watches a year, with only about 200 of these coming to the US. The production figure should be only around 2,000–2,500 once the brand reaches full capacity. "I fell in love with the brand—the exclusivity, the history and heritage, the designs, all made such a compelling package for me," says US distributor Brader-Araje. "At the end of the day, I asked myself if this was the kind of watch I would want to own, and the answer was yes. I approach being a Louis Moinet distributor as a collector and a watch lover; I am my own target audience."

Louis Moinet literally wrote the book on watchmaking, and his designs, theories and artistic vision are being re-imagined for today's watch lovers by the new House of Louis Moinet. ❖

*By Keith W. Strandberg, international editor. For more information, telephone 919.433.3715 or visit [www.lmtime.com](http://www.lmtime.com) and [www.louismoinet.com](http://www.louismoinet.com).*



*Micaela Bartolucci, Jean-Marie Schaller and Nicole Faro at Louis Moinet's Swiss headquarters.*



## THE LOUIS MOINET COLLECTION

The range of Louis Moinet timepieces is classic, but at the same time interesting and forward looking. Most of the timepieces use the distinctive Côtes du Jura, while others use the visually intriguing balance cock used by French watchmakers, including Louis Moinet, in years gone by. Each watch has fascinating features and complications, so there is much to discover in the Louis Moinet range:

**Datoscope**—a classic round timepiece with elements like the Côtes du Jura, the patent-pending crown integration system (integrates the stem so as to facilitate its replacement if required) and an interesting date display.

**Spiroscope**—This round watch offers a view into the movement, underneath the unique balance cock, used to decorate and protect the balance. The dial is decorated with a Côtes du Jura finish and uses the Louis Moinet patent-pending crown integration system.

**Twintech**—Based on a Louis Moinet sketch of a twin-barrel watch from 1848, the Twintech offers

120 hours of power reserve. The dial is decorated with the exclusive Côtes du Jura and showcases the power reserve and a retrograde date display. A balance cock covers the balance, offering a view into the automatic movement.

**Tempograph**—This automatic watch has a remarkable retrograde ten second display, so the dial is always moving, and is the first retrograde watch with a see-through mechanism, so the cam that powers the retrograde (a gear wheel, entirely matte-polished by hand and enhanced by blued steel screws, with six teeth that revolves once a minute) can be clearly seen. The dial layout is eye-catching and distinctly Louis Moinet.

**Magistralis**—Using a hundred-year-old Geneva Seal movement, Louis Moinet has made a one-of-a-kind timepiece that combines a moon phase (adorned with 2,000-year-old pieces of the moon) with a Minute Repeater, a monopusher chronograph and a perpetual calendar. In addition to the box mentioned above, part of the package of the Magistralis is an original edition of the Louis Moinet treatise, dating back to 1856. ❖