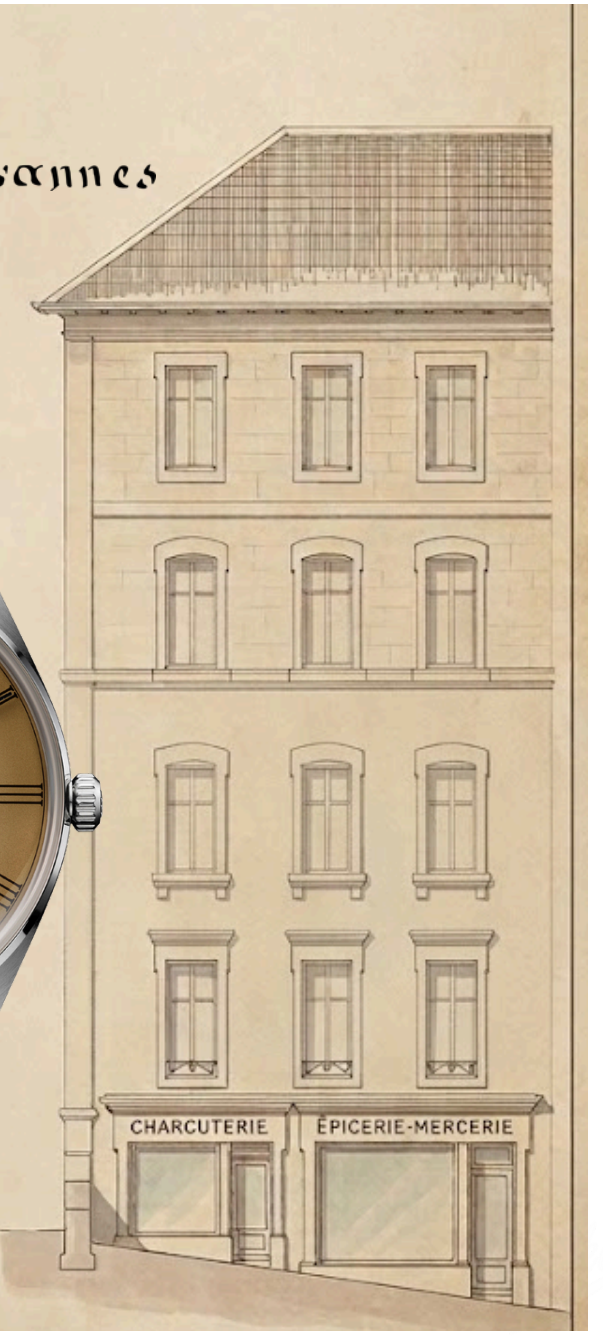
ELKA Watch Co.



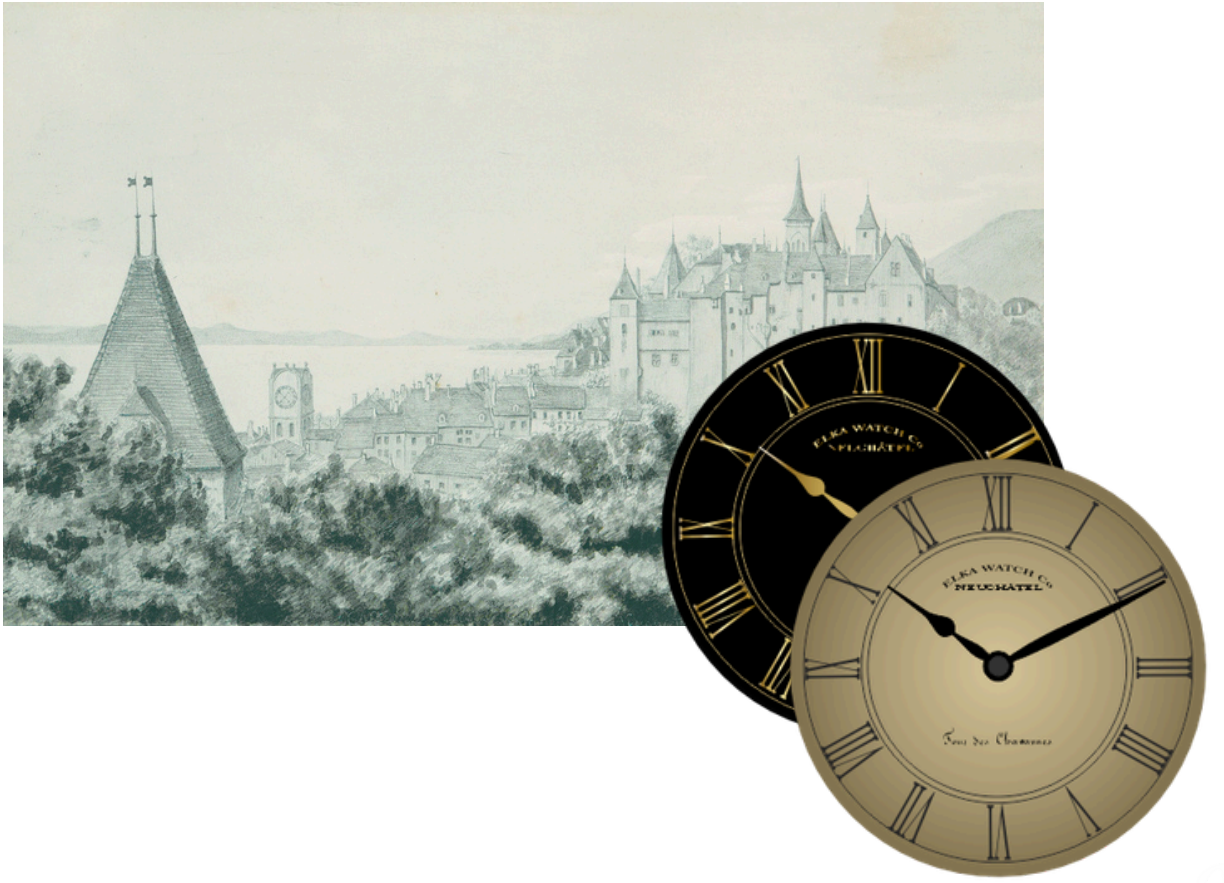
Tour des Chavannes





The Tower, the Street, and the City

Tour des Chavannes



Ferdinand Louis Gagnebin, Neuchâtel seen from Le Tertre, lithograph, circa 1840

WELCOME
TO 16 RUE DES CHAVANNES





Boutique facade in 1899.

On December 15, 2025, Elka Watch Co. reached a milestone by opening its boutique in the center of Neuchâtel. In a climate that encourages caution, we chose to assert our physical presence at number 16 Rue des Chavannes. This space is much more than a retail point: it is a platform for exchange, a meeting place where proximity and direct contact take center stage once again.

This brochure, along with the accompanying project, was born from the desire to bring this location to life and anchor it in the history of Neuchâtel. The choice of this location stems from a personal approach. For decades, these walls housed a craft workshop, whose presence still marks the space. By observing our partitions, one can still discern the impressions and silhouettes left by the precision tools of the past—a testament to generations of manual labor. By occupying these premises, Elka Watch Co. becomes part of this continuous tradition of passion and rigor.
This space was designed for enthusiasts of craftsmanship, local history, and design. While our boutique brings together the Elka Watch Co. collections—whose editions directly echo the past of the Tour des Chavannes—it is also intended as an open place for discovery.

In an era marked by all things digital, we have chosen the tangible. We believe that a watch, a work of art, or an object is best seen, touched, and shared within a fitting framework. Our ambition is to make 16 Rue des Chavannes a hub of culture and watchmaking—an address where experience and time take precedence over immediacy.

This venue functions as an evolving platform. Beyond watchmaking, we regularly open our walls to artists, painters, photographers, and artisans who share our rigor and commitment to fine workmanship.

Through the pages of this catalog and via the pieces and documents gathered for this presentation, we invite you to travel back in time, from the medieval ramparts to the watches designed for this address.

THE CITY THROUGH THE CENTURIES

FROM NOVUM CASTELLUM TO THE REPUBLIC



Neuchâtel 1180



Walter Welter, Neuchâtel, the Seyon captured from Les Bercles, lithograph, 1840.

- **1011 | The Founding Act:** The first written record of the city under the name Novum Castellum (New Castle). This is a deed of gift from the King of Burgundy, Rudolf III, to his wife Irmengarde. The city was then part of the Kingdom of Burgundy.
- **1180 | The Primitive Core:** The Castle and the Collegiate Church are under construction. The city has about 400 inhabitants, protected by the lake to the south and the Seyon to the north and west.
- **1250 | First Expansion:** The city expands at the foot of the Castle hill and along the Seyon. Creation of the Les Moulins district, surrounded by vineyards and vegetable gardens.
- **1400 | Crossing the Seyon:** The city crosses the river and extends onto the left bank. It is during this era (13th–15th centuries) that fortifications and towers are built to protect these new neighborhoods.
- **1450 | The Great Fire:** A devastating fire almost entirely destroys the city. Traces of this tragedy remain visible today on the reddish stones of the Castle and the Collegiate Church.
- **1579 | The Flooding of the Seyon:** Torrential rains cause the Seyon to overflow, destroying part of the city and sweeping away the earliest archives kept along the river. During reconstruction, the city reclaims land from the lake.
- **1707–1848 | The Prussian Principality:** Neuchâtel becomes the personal property of the King of Prussia, with a French interlude between 1806 and 1814 under Marshal Alexandre Berthier.
- **1843–1845 | The Diversion of the Seyon:** Decided for reasons of hygiene (the river serving as an open-air sewer) and safety, the Seyon is diverted out of the city center, completely altering urban planning.
- **March 1, 1848 | The Revolution:** Republicans seize the Castle and overthrow the Prussian royalist government. Birth of the Republic and adoption of the green-white-red cantonal flag.

LIFE IN THE NEUFBOURG

RUE DES CHAVANNES AND ITS GUILD



Matheus Merian, View of Neuchâtel from the east, etching, 1642.



Bird's-eye map of the city and suburb of Neuchâtel taken from the height towards Serrières, gouache on paper, 1769

The Neufbourg district (Noveville) was built in the 13th century on the left bank of the Seyon. It was fortified by a wall, ramparts (fausses-brayes), and three main towers: the Tour du Rateau, the Tour des Chavannes, and the Tour du Chien.

Toponymy

Rue des Chavannes is a steeply sloping thoroughfare lined with tight, small houses, running up from the Pont des Petites Boucheries to the Porte des Chavannes (Porta de Cavannis). The Neufbourg follows the upper wall toward Grand-Rue.

Street Life

The neighborhood possessed a very strong and autonomous identity. It featured:

- The town bread oven.
- The small butcher shops (reserved for small livestock).
- Hôtel du Cerf and the Treize Cantons inn.
- A population of artisans, winemakers, and magistrates.

The Bourgeois Guild (The Noble Street)

The "internal bourgeois" of the street formed a closed society presided over by a bailiff (avoyer) and managed by two account masters (the Senior and Junior Masters). They traditionally met on Quasimodo Sunday at the Town Hall. The guild held significant wealth which it lent out at interest (censes) at a rate of 5%.

ARCHIVAL FRAGMENTS

OBJECTS, CHRONICLES, AND DAILY LIFE

- **The 1674 Walnut Chest:**

The street's precious archives and funds were kept in a walnut chest made by the joiner Noé Boive, ordered in 1671 and delivered in 1674. Its front bears a relief carving representing the city wall flanked by the Chavannes and Chien towers, with the inscription: POUR LA NOBLE RUE DES CHAVANE DU NEVF BOURG 1674. The chest had two chiseled locks; the two street masters each held a key, requiring their simultaneous presence to open it**.**

- **Pewter Wine Flasks (Semaisses):**

To transport wine during banquets, the guild owned two large flasks (pewter containers fitted with a leather strap) engraved with the street's coat of arms. Records frequently mention the purchase of vinegar to "cleanse" them (disinfect/clean them). In 1732, they were repaired by Neuchâtel pewterer François Perrin before being sold in 1782 for 28 livres.

- **The Borney (The 1605 Fountain):**

In 1605, the street tapped the spring at the bottom of Le Tertre and built a vaulted ashlar stone arch. Builder Daniel Sire constructed the fountain basin (borney) at the top of the street. To make room for the fountain and widen an intersection too narrow for grape harvest wagons, the guild purchased and demolished in a single day a ruined old house belonging to Jean Faure. Water began flowing on Friday, December 13, 1605.

- **The Pig Alert (1670):**

Prosecutor General Brun owned a garden directly above the source of the Chavannes fountain. When he installed a pig there, the street panicked for fear of water contamination. The bailiff seized the Four Ministers, who sent a bailiff's officer to order the immediate expulsion of the pig. The prosecutor complied two days later, after the fair.



Public Lanterns (1754):

The very first public lantern on the street was installed in 1754 at the top of the street, against the house of key-master Martenet, opposite the fountain. In 1763, a second lantern was installed at the bottom of the street, between the houses of Madame Pury and Mr. Germon. They functioned modestly using a wick dipped in tallow.

SENTINEL AND CIVIL JUSTICE

THE TOWER AND THE JAVIOLE



- **The Sentinel Tower:** Located in the upper part of the street, it protected the northwestern flank of the medieval enclosure.
- **The Javiole (The Prison):** The tower housed the street's javiole. According to the 1542 ordinances issued in the name of Sovereign Joan of Baden-Hochberg, it served as a civil disciplinary prison.
- **Punishment for Excesses:** The ordinance "Punishment for those who drink too much" forbade "bringing" (pressuring others to drink). Any citizen found "laden with wine beyond measure" was condemned to be locked in the javiole for a day and a night on bread and water, with a 20-sol fine upon release.
- **Banquet Discipline:** During the grand street festival (the Feast of the Bordes), it was strictly forbidden to hide meat or bread in one's pockets or pass them to servants under the table. Culprits were excluded from future feasts and "taken by the arm to be shamefully escorted from the table".



THE TOUR DES CHAVANNES
AND ITS CLOCK



The earliest mention of the Tour des Chavannes gate dates back to 1285; it was built to close the upper end of the street, through which people entered the city when arriving from the upper canton. In 1531, the city installed the javiole there, the prison intended for bourgeois guilty of non-criminal offenses.

Like any tower of a certain importance, the Chavannes tower housed a clock, built in 1679. A year later, a sundial was also painted on one of its exterior walls. It was the work of architect Jonas Favre. Providing the time to citizens and passersby thus became one of the building's essential functions. The first watchmaker tasked with its maintenance was Pierre La Tente, a member of the Compagnie des Favres, Maçons et Chapuis; he also took care of the hospital tower clock.

In 1736, the original clock was replaced. The new one was equipped with two dials: the old one facing Rue des Chavannes, and a second dial sheltered by a small overhanging roof. It was painted black with gold numerals by heraldist and sign painter Samuel Müller. The artist also painted the city's coat of arms on it. The clock was then entrusted to Abraham Pétremand, who also maintained those in Colombier and Corcelles-Cormondrèches.

In 1805, the City of Neuchâtel decided to distribute mean time rather than solar time through its public clocks. It was one of the first cities in the world to set this example. Solar time—or true time—varies from one place to another, whereas mean time is like the time we know today: it is calculated on a 24-hour time measurement based on an average. It allowed for better synchronization of civil and social activities.

The Tour des Chavannes clock took part in this innovation. Mean time was calculated using a telescope and a regulator located at the Town Hall. From there, the time was "transported" to a pocket watch carried to Rue des Chavannes so that its clock could be adjusted accordingly.

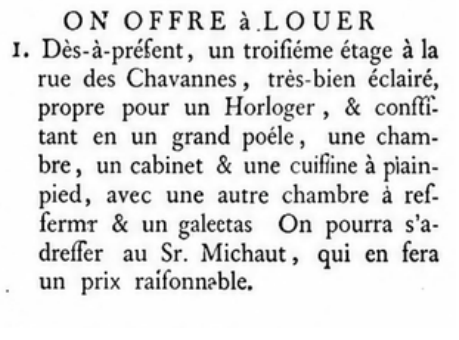
Accused of making the neighborhood unsanitary (rats and bats had made it their home), the Tour des Chavannes was demolished in 1867. Like other elements of the building, the clock was put up for sale in February 1868 along with the bell, which was ultimately transported to the Tour de Diesse. The mechanism had generated interest in Besançon, but its ultimate fate remains unknown today.

WATCHMAKERS

WATCHMAKERS OF RUE DES CHAVANNES



Neuchâtel clock, movement signed Jeanjaquet, circa 1850.



ON OFFRE à LOUER

1. Dès-à-préſent, un troiſiéme étage à la rue des Chavannes, très-bien éclairé, propre pour un Horloger, & conſiſtant en un grand poéle, une chambre, un cabinet & une cuiſine à plain-pied, avec une autre chambre à reſſermr & un galetas On pourra s'adreſſer au Sr. Michaut, qui en fera un prix raiſonnable.

Excerpt from the Feuille d'avis de Neuchâtel, November 1770. e-newspaperarchives.ch.

While the watchmaking history of the canton of Neuchâtel is primarily associated with La Chaux-de-Fonds and Le Locle, its oldest traces are actually found in Neuchâtel and along the lake shores, particularly in the construction and maintenance of monumental clocks. As early as 1380, a certain Guillaume Potter was working on a clock for Countess Isabelle, perhaps intended for the Collegiate Church.

The craftsmen entrusted by the authorities with the clocks of the Tour de Diesse, the hospitals, and later the Tour des Chavannes were not necessarily professional watchmakers by trade. They frequently came from the world of forging and metalworking. Thus, the town's watchmakers joined the Compagnie des Favres, Maçons et Chapuis at least by the 17th century. Founded probably in the 15th century, this guild brought together iron, stone, and wood artisans; it oversaw the professions under its umbrella and supervised apprenticeships.

Around the middle of the 18th century, the presence of genuine watchmakers of Neuchâtel or Swiss origin progressively increased. The authorities also encouraged this promising industry through various initiatives, such as the creation of a proto-watchmaking school at the Maison de la Charité—the current Town Hall—in the 1740s. Around the same time, watchmaking undoubtedly took up residence on Rue des Chavannes as well. While the names of the officially domiciled watchmakers have not survived, rental advertisements published in newspapers of the time reveal that this upward-sloping street was favored by watch and clock artisans: it offered an ideal location to set up workshops bathed in light on the upper floors of buildings.

The Elka Watch Co. space perpetuates the tradition of this discreet presence in the daily life of Chavannes.

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MATTHIAS HIPP
AND ELECTRIC CHAVANNES: AT THE HEART OF THE REVOLUTION



Rue du Tertre and the Hipp workshops, on the site of the former Tour des Chavannes.



Matthias Hipp electric pendulum clock, 1920.

In the 1860s, Matthias Hipp's telegraph and electrical appliance factory set up operations at the top of Rue des Chavannes. Shortly after, the tower was demolished.

The workshops took over one of the city's vast, disused granaries. Hipp acquired the building in 1863 after initially setting up his factory at Les Sablons. The city, believing in the innovative potential of electricity and Hipp's enterprise, took a 10% stake in his business.

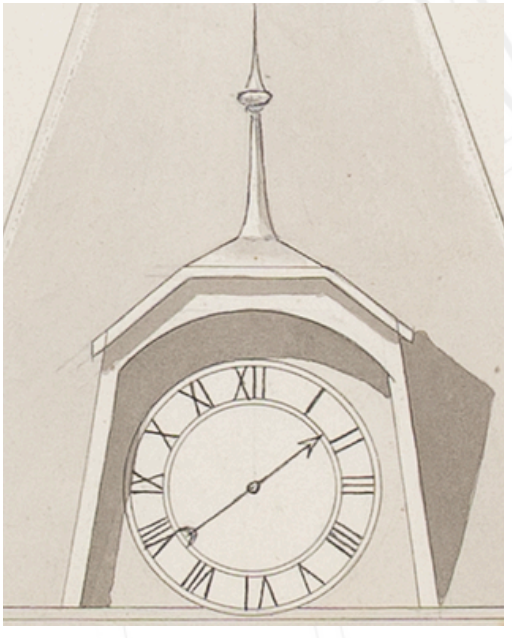
A visionary engineer and builder of high-precision instruments, Hipp was of German origin; before arriving in Neuchâtel, he had organized and supervised the Swiss telegraph network at the cutting edge of innovation. Seeking independence, he forged close ties with the newly founded Neuchâtel Cantonal Observatory in 1858. The expertise of the Hipp workshops would greatly contribute to the Observatory's prestige and make Neuchâtel a center of technological excellence.

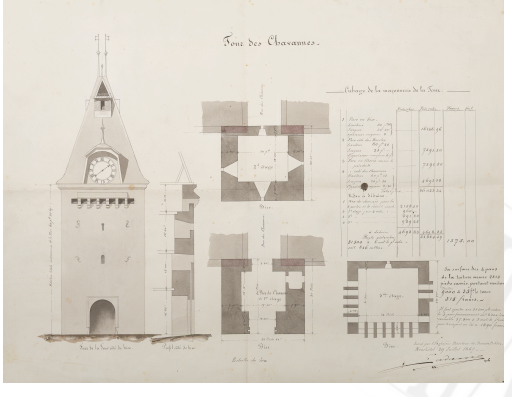
The collaboration between the scientific institution and Hipp notably yielded the installation of the city's electrical time distribution system, of which Hipp is said to be the inventor. He equipped the capital with a network of seven public clocks telling time to citizens in the streets and train stations. Its operation was coordinated by a master clock placed in the Town Hall, where it still resides. The system was gradually adopted by all cities across the country, while the Neuchâtel Observatory specialized in the nationwide distribution of radio time signals.

At the end of his career, Hipp left the factory in the hands of two of his collaborators, Albert de Peyer and Albert Favarger. In the 20th century, the factory moved to the Monruz district, where it became the famous FAVAG, renowned for building railway station clocks.

TIME REGAINED

TWO COMMEMORATIVE EDITIONS





Plan of the Tour des Chavannes drawn on July 29, 1867, by the Director of Public Works, Henri Ladame
© Archives of the City of Neuchâtel

Today, Elka Watch Co. brings the spirit of 16 Rue des Chavannes back to life through two models. These timepieces share a common signature: the inscription "TOUR DES CHAVANNES" placed at 6 o'clock on the dial. This typography faithfully reproduces the hand-drawn lettering by engineer Henri Ladame on his plans dated July 29, 1867.

The "1736" Edition: Memory of Time (R01wo)

This model echoes the lines of the monumental clock that once set the rhythm of life for the people of Neuchâtel from the top of the tower.

- The Inspiration: The dial painted by heraldist and sign painter Samuel Müller in 1736.
- The Aesthetics: The contrast between black and gold, adopting the visual codes of Neuchâtel's historical dial.
- The Symbol: The "1736" edition refers to the era when monumental watchmaking set the rhythm for the city.

The "Pierre d'Hauterive" Edition: Tribute to Light (R02wo)

This watch refers to the architecture of Neuchâtel and Elka Watch Co.'s address at 16 Rue des Chavannes.

- The Inspiration: The yellow limestone from the Hauterive quarry, used since Roman times to build Aventicum, and later in 1899 by architect Ernest Meystre for the building erected near the site of the tower.
- The Aesthetics: The sand-colored dial recalls cut stone and echoes the boutique's Hauterive stone walls. The black inscriptions replicate the Chinese ink strokes used by 19th-century engineers.
- The Symbol: This watch translates the connection to the local terroir, combining stone with watchmaking mechanics.

ELKA R SERIES
“TOUR DES CHAVANNES”



ELKA R01wo-0804

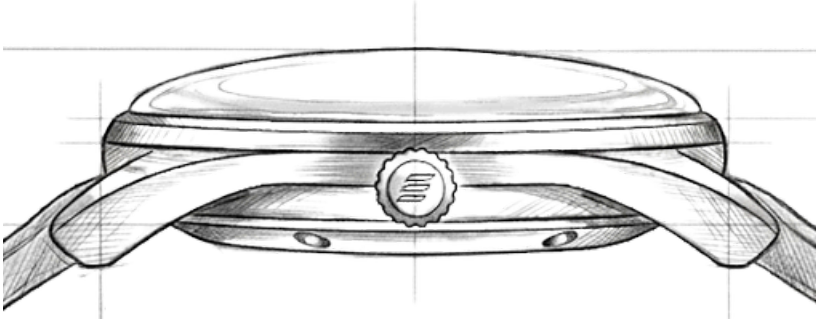


ELKA R02wo-0804

Tour des Chavannes

SPECIFICATIONS





DIALS and HANDS

ELKA models are distinguished by a curved dial and hands.

DIMENSIONS

40.8 mm in diameter, 10.80 mm in thickness, and a lug-to-lug distance of 46.50 mm.

SAPPHIRE CRYSTAL

Chevé-Box sapphire crystals are considered among the most complex profiles to produce in watchmaking. They are specially designed to recreate the vintage design of old Hésalite crystals. Despite their classic aesthetics, these sapphire crystals offer exceptional durability. On the hardness scale, synthetic sapphire is second only to diamond, showing an index of approximately 2,000 HV (Vickers hardness).



MOVEMENT

The G 101 movements feature a 68-hour power reserve and 24 jewels, operating at a frequency of 28,800 vph (4 Hz). Manufactured by La Joux-Perret in La Chaux-de-Fonds, Switzerland..



ABOUT



Founded in 1877 in Amsterdam by Eliazer Kiek—inventor of the tactile watch for the blind and official watchmaker to Queen Juliana of the Netherlands—Elka Watch Co. forged a remarkable history before its disappearance. In 1949, the company established a Swiss branch in La Chaux-de-Fonds, diversifying its production to include wristwatches, pocket watches, braille pieces, chronographs, and even chess or signaling clocks. The brand, led by its last heir Ernst Louis Kiek, ceased operations in the mid-1970s. In 2022, Elka Watch Co. rose from the ashes, bringing its prestigious and history-laden name back to the forefront of the global watchmaking scene.











Thimothée Jacot (ed.), Rue des Chavannes in Neuchâtel, postcard, early 20th century

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Tour des Chasgnes

The Tower, the Street, and the City

CONTACT US

INFO@ELKAWATCH.COM
+41 79 500 91 13
WWW.ELKAWATCH.CH

Jules Jacot Guillarmod, Neuchâtel seen from Le Tertre, drawing with black watercolor highlights, 1861