

WOMEN'S MODEL A FORD ERA WRIST WATCHES

By
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I collect wrist watches made between the years 1928 to 1931 and enjoy wearing them with my era fashions and when riding in my Model A. This information will assist you in identifying wrist watches made during the Model A era.

Women were first to wear wrist watches. Napoleon's sister is shown in an 1850's portrait wearing a wrist watch. Convenience and styling made wrist watches a popular accessory for daytime, evening and sportswear. They did not become popular with men until after World War I. The most important American watch companies during the Model A era were Elgin, Bulova, Waltham, Gruen, Illinois and Hamilton. Many Swiss watches were imported for sale.

Popular era wrist watch case shapes.



Octagon



Tonneau



Oval



Rectangle



Baguette

Wrist watch cases were solid gold, gold filled, gold plated or gold reinforced with metal. White gold was more popular than yellow gold. A few cases were chromium or platinum finished. Platinum was the most expensive metal used.

Rubies, sapphires, genuine or synthetic, were commonly used as bearings in wrist watch movements. The number of jewels and the metals used in the case, movement and band determined, for the most part, the value of the wrist watch. Higher grade watches had 17 or more jewels. Diamonds, emeralds,

and sapphires and other precious and semi-precious stones were used on watch case bezels as decorative accents.

Common wrist watch bands were black or gray silk grosgrain ribbon, woven metal mesh, metal expansion bracelets, silk or metal chord bracelets and leather strap bands.



Grosgrain



Metal Mesh



Expansion



Cord



Strap

Millions of wrist watches were made during the four years of the Model a Ford era. In fact, by 1928 wrist watches were outselling pocket watches. Finding era watches is not difficult. A good first step is to begin with your family and friends. Mothers, grandmothers, aunts and cousins may have laid away family heirloom watches in jewelry boxes and dresser drawers just waiting for you to rescue them. They may also be found at flea markets and antique stores. The largest selection of era watches is to be found on eBay. Search for ladies/women's pre-1940 wrist watches in the Jewelry and Watches category. Refine your search by searching for a brand name such as Bulova. eBay has helpful tutorials on how to search for what you want.

Dating wrist watches is both easy and difficult, depending on the make of watch you are dating. Waltham, Elgin and Hamilton kept serial number lists that you can find by using Google. By knowing what serial number is stamped on the watch movement, you can identify the year your watch was made. Gruen, Illinois and Bulova are more difficult to date. Gruen's serial numbers were destroyed by fire in the late 1940's. Illinois was bought by Hamilton in 1928. Look for Illinois serial numbers for 1928-1931 in conjunction with Hamilton serial numbers. Bulova began to identify year of manufacture in the late 1940's. Serial number lists for Swiss made wrist watch movements are not available. CAUTION: Unless you are handy with tools do not try to open the watch case to read the serial number on the movement. Take your watch to a jeweler and ask them to open the case. They usually do so without charge.

It is possible to get an idea of the age of your wrist watch by using 1928 to 1931 catalogs. Sears and Montgomery Wards and many other catalogs contain sections that feature wrist watches that can be used to identify and date your watch. The most commonly used book to identify watches of all types and makes is the "Complete Price Guide to Watches" by Cooksey, Shugart, Engle and Gilbert. This book is usually available at Barnes and Noble and Amazon.com

Some of the author's wrist watches purchased on eBay.



1928
Swiss



1931
Hamilton



1931
Elgin



1930
Waltham



1929
Bulova

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Sources:

1929 MW Savage Co. Catalog-Spring and Summer

1930 Montgomery Ward & Co. Catalogue-Spring and Summer

1931 Montgomery Ward & Co. Catalogue-Spring and Summer

1931 Montgomery Ward & Co. Catalogue-Fall and Winter

“Complete Price Guide to Watches” by Cooksey, Shugart, Engle and Gilbert