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25 Watch Greats of the 20th Century

"25 Watch Greats of the 20th Century": this glorious list, including Osvaldo Patrizzi, Chairman of Antiquorum, was compiled by Joe Thompson, Editor-in-Chief of *American Time* and a columnist for *National Jeweler*, and was published in the December 1999 issue of *National Jeweler* (USA).

As the century's days dwindle down to a glorious few, the lists just keep on coming. Recently we listed the Top 20 wristwatches of the 20th century selected by the watch magazine I edit, *American Time*. Having highlighted the century's leading watches, it's important to remember the watch industry's leading figures of the century, those who made a major impact on the watch world and led to the creation of the roughly \$25 billion global watch market we enjoy today.

What follows is my own list of 25 of the most important industry figures of the 20th century. They are listed in alphabetical order with a one-sentence summary of their contributions:

Arde Bulova – Turned Bulova into America's dominant mid-priced brand in mid-century.

Louis Cartier – Designer of the Tank watch and other classic designs.

Fred Cartoun – Longines-Wittnauer president who orchestrated the U.S. revival of the Longines brand after the Depression.

George Daniels – One of the century's most famous watchmakers, creator of unique pocket watches.

Henry Fried – Great American watchmaker, author and teacher, who instructed several generations of watchmakers and encouraged them to embrace quartz technology.

Gerald Genta – One of the century's top watch designers, creator of the Royal Oak and other notable watches.

Gerry Grinberg – Founder of the Movado Group, his marketing and design skills refashioned the U.S. luxury watch market.

Shoji Hattori – Oversaw Seiko's rise to technological prominence as head of Seiko Group factories in the post-war period.

Nicolas Hayek – Marketing genius and father of the Swatch Group who led the revival of the Swiss watch industry in the 1980s.

Andre Heiniger – Turned Rolex into an international status symbol and Switzerland's best-selling luxury brand.

J.V.P. Heinmuller – Longines-Wittnauer Watch Co. executive who forged the firm's links to aviation in the 1920s and '30s.

Robert Ingersoll – Founder of Ingersoll, the brand that produced two of America's most famous watches – the dollar watch and the Mickey Mouse watch.

Edmond Jaeger – Watchmaking genius who created important timepieces for Cartier in the century's first two decades.

Joakim Lehmkuhl – The father of Timex, who turned the brand into the century's dominant affordable watch.

Wong Chue Meng – Chairman of Hong Kong's Stelux Group, he was the earliest of the Hong Kong's watch taipans, one of the founders of the watch industry there.

Norman Morris – The dominant American watch executive of his era, he built the Omega brand in the United States.

Hideaki Moriya – The mastermind behind Seiko's extraordinary success in the U.S. market in the 1970s and '80s.

Osvaldo Patrizzi – Chairman of Antiquorum and inventor of the themed watch auction, his wristwatch auctions forged the secondary market for wristwatches and helped revive the mechanical watch market in the 1980s.

Alain-Dominique Perrin – Took Cartier from a fading jewelry retailer to one of the most powerful luxury brands of the last three decades.

Henri Stern – Patek Philippe patriarch who directed the brand's growth in the post-war period.

Philippe Stern – The architect of Patek Philippe's rise to unprecedented status and prominence in the 1980s and '90s.

Ernst Thomke – Engineered the Swiss watch industry comeback in 1970s and '80s as head of ETA and No. 2 man at SMH; he led development of Delirium and Swatch, two of the century's top watches.

Adolph Vallat – Directed Omega's rise to global dominance as the most important Swiss watch of the mid-century.

Hans Wilsdorf – Founded Rolex, early proponent of the wristwatch.

Iichi Yamada – The longtime chairman of Citizen Watch Co. directed the firm's post-war rise to prominence as the world's top producer of watches and movements.