

# Annex 1 To

## The Gruen Style Number Dating Technique

### *How to read the information contained in the back of the case of a Gruen watch*

This update is to the paper describing how to utilize Style Numbers, a piece of information in nearly all Gruen wristwatch cases, to date when the watch was first made available for sale.

The technique for using the Style Number to date a watch is explained in the paper located [here](#). This Style Number Dating Technique has proven to be very accurate and is a great place to start researching your watch. The Style Number Date is but one bit of information used to find the model name of a watch, typically the goal. A general tutorial on how to research a Gruen watch can be found [here](#). Both are located on the [GruenWristwatches.com](http://GruenWristwatches.com) website.

When asking for help identifying a Gruen watch, the first question asked by Gruen collectors in-the-know is - **"Can you tell me what information is written inside the back of the case?"** Why is this information important? Because it can be used to quickly get a date for your watch and sometimes can tell you the model name of your watch without further research. You've opened your Gruen watch case or have a picture of an open Gruen, what now?

It's critical to understand how to read the information in a Gruen case if it is to be used to help research your watch. Serial numbers are commonly being confused with Style Numbers thus the need for this update.

So what are you looking for exactly? There are 3 pieces of information (fields) that are important for you to read correctly. They are

- The manufacturer of the case
- The Case Serial Number
- The Style Number and Movement Caliber Number

Figure 1 is the interior of a typical Gruen wristwatch case.



**Figure 1 - A Typical Gruen case interior**

Finding the manufacturer of the case is straightforward. Gruen cases usually start with the words "Cased & Timed in U.S.A By Gruen Watch CO." If Gruen made the case, no casemaker name or logo will follow these words. If not, then the case manufacturer's name or logo will be shown. Sometimes the manufacturer's name is spelled out, such as in this example, Wadsworth. Other case manufacturers Gruen utilized were Star, Apex, WB Ogush (typically 14K cases only), Pioneer, etc. The list is rather lengthy.

Figure 2 is an annotated version of the case shown in Figure 1. On this picture of the case being studied, each of the 3 fields are circled and labeled.

Most of the time, the order of the information is the case manufacturer, the case serial number, and finally the Style Number & movement caliber number.



**Figure 2 - Annotated Gruen case interior**

The order the 3 fields you are searching for are sometimes swapped around. This is when you need remember that *the format of the Style Number & movement caliber number is 2 separate 3-digit numbers*. The exception to that rule is for very old watches. These can have a pair of numbers, sometimes less than 3-digits, or a single 3-diggit or less number.

That was a complex way of saying "look for something that looks like XXX YYY or XXX / YYY"

The format of the serial number varies from manufacturer to manufacturer. Some have letters and numbers, some only numbers and the number of digits can vary. For some cases, the serial number is located on the back exterior of the watch.

At this moment in the history of Gruen research, only one manufacture's serial number has been decoded and can be used to obtain additional information about the date of your watch. That manufacturer is Wadsworth. You can read more about how to decode the Wadsworth case serial numbers

and in an article published in the [September / October 2012 edition of the NAWCC Bulletin](#).

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A quick sidebar on the NAWCC (National Association of Watch and Clock Collectors). Yes, it's another of my NAWCC membership drives.

Not an NAWCC Member yet? Then please consider joining the community of watch collectors and help keep this unique hobby alive for generations to come. The list of benefits is long. My favorites are

- A downloadable archive of every NAWCC Bulletin published since 1940, in searchable PDF format. The number of articles about history, collecting, repairing, research results is staggering
- An extensive library of over 30,000 books that allow you to **check out books and have them mailed to your home**. They have any book you've heard of, especially those out of print! You will find all of my books there so you don't need to buy them and still get the benefits from them.
- Dates your local NAWCC Chapter meets. You can attend the chapter meetings and buy stuff, watches, tools, junk, treasures from other members. They have tutorials, seminars, often their own library of materials. You will likely find someone with similar interests as you and have someone near you to enjoy the fun together.
- A digital archive that includes online videos from past seminars and guest speakers. I particularly like the Gruen talk given by Charles Cleves, an early **pioneer in Gruen watches**. Today's Gruens researchers recognize the **significant contribution** Mr. Cleves has made. For Hamilton Electric watch fans, on the same video Rene Rondeau, another watch community great, gives a talk on Hamilton Electrics.

Visit [NAWCC.ORG](#) for more information on this awesome organization that works tirelessly to preserve the traditions, history, relics, and an enormous collection of watches too.

You can view the NAWCC's current Bulletin publication [here](#). There is a free article that you can download every month.

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OK, now... where were we? Style Numbers...right

The final piece of information you will hopefully find in the interior of the back, and the reason for carefully opening the back of your watch, is the Style Number and Movement Caliber Number of your watch.

Remember that the article you are reading is an **annex** to the Style Number Dating Technique paper. The overall technique is not documented in this document. Before you read any further, please be sure and [read that tutorial](#) or the next part will not make any sense.

Onward...

Did you really read the main Style Number Dating Technique article? Come on... be honest... if not, [back you go](#).

We've reached the bottom of the case at this point. You should see a pair of 3 digit numbers. As discussed in the Style Number Dating paper, some cases, such as round ones or solid gold cases do not have this pair of numbers.

Should you have only a single number; the chances are that you have a watch that is older than the range that is valid for this technique of dating. That number likely matches the caliber of the movement in your watch.

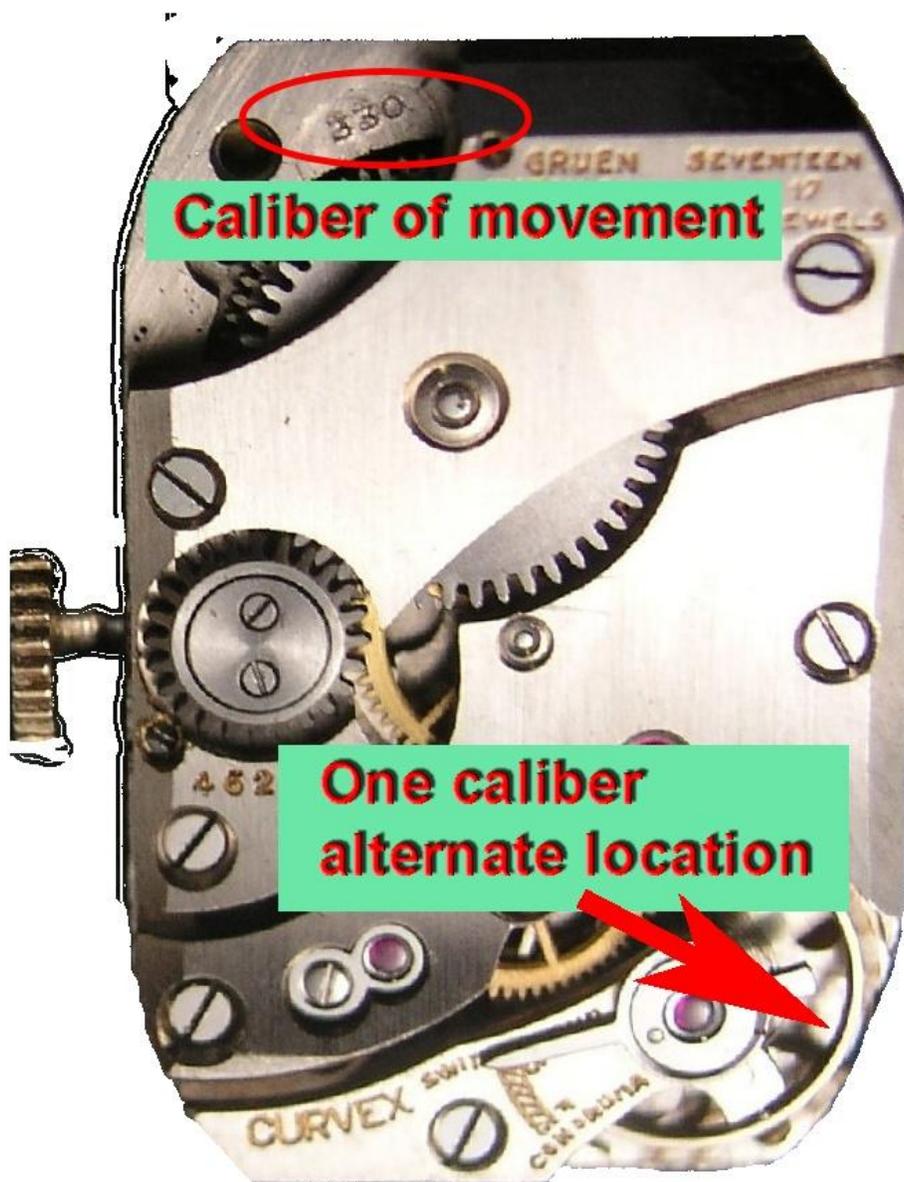
One of those 3 digit numbers should match the caliber of the watch in your case. This is how seasoned Gruen collectors determine if the watch is a "valid" Gruen watch. If the number stamped in the case doesn't match the number stamped on the movement, then chances are someone has monkeyed with the watch and has as a result, turned your watch into a dreaded "Franken Gruen". This is not good. You should seek the help of an expert to see if you've read the data correctly before you become too depressed.

The **caliber** is **usually** the first 3-digit number. If it is, then the second number is the Style Number and it is this number that you can utilize to date your watch, again using the technique described in the Style Number Dating paper.

Looking again at the case in Figure 2, the pair of numbers to be examined is 330 417. The first number, 330, should match the movement in this watch. Figure 3 is a picture of the watch in the case. The caliber stamped on it is 330, so we have a match.

Locating the movement's caliber number can be difficult and sometimes nearly impossible. If you don't see it in any obvious places, look **under** the balance wheel. It's a difficult place to see, but it's often the location of the caliber on Gruens and other watch brands. If you can't find it, don't worry. Assume you have the right movement in your watch.

Either you've found the caliber number and it matches or you assume you've got a match. Regardless the assumption is the remaining number is the Style Number. You can use it to look up the date of your watch. But keep reading anyway as there is valuable information on verifying you're using the right number for the Style Number.

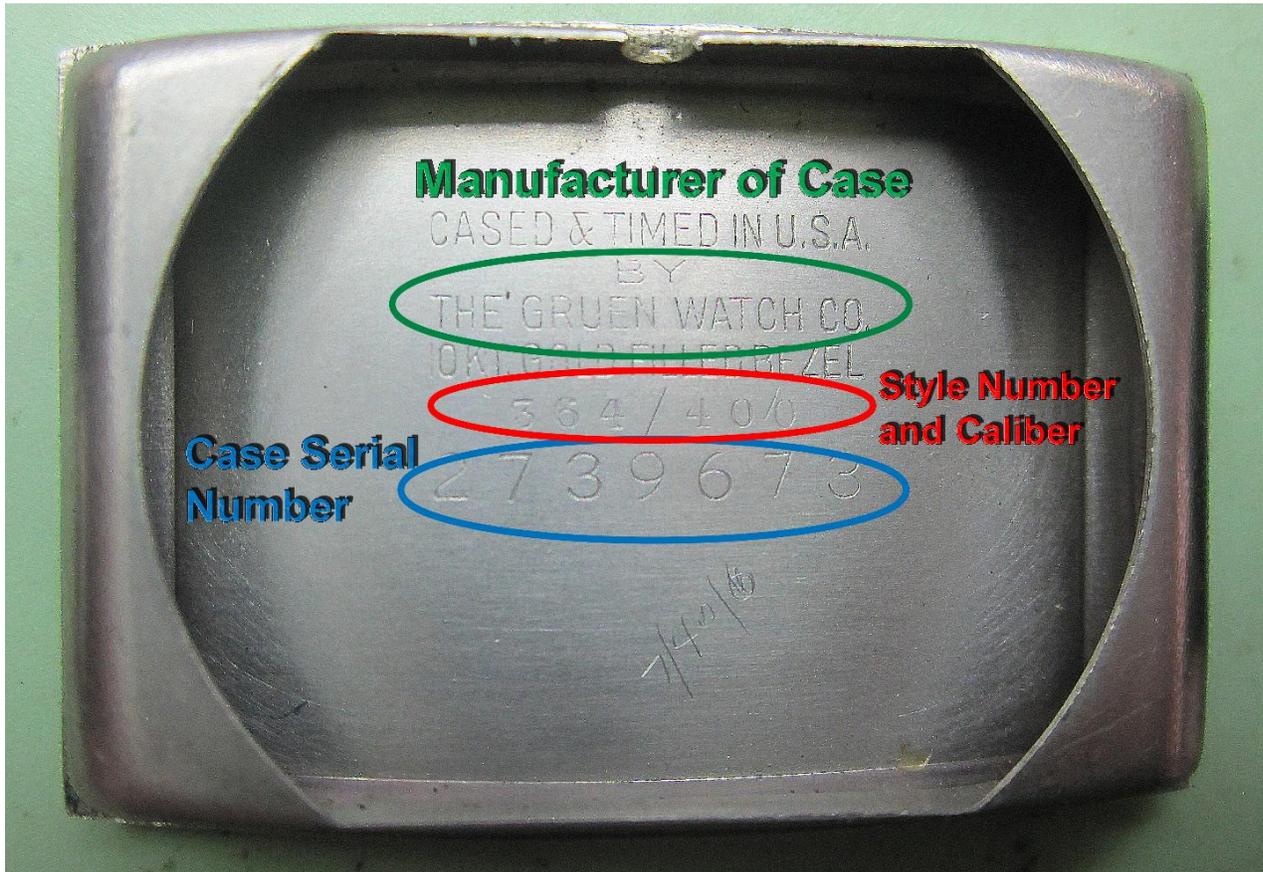


**Figure 3 – Annotated Gruen Caliber 330 Movement**

Get ready to duck... CURVE BALL.....

**Some cases have Caliber and Style numbers that the order of them is swapped. The Style Number is first, then the Caliber number.**

To confuse you further, the order of the 3 fields in the case may be different. Let's look at the nightmare situation caseback shown in Figure 4.



**Figure 4 – Caseback with information in different order**

Right away you'll see some differences from the first case examined that are obvious. There is no case manufacturer such as Wadsworth shown, and the order of the fields is different. The Caliber - Style Number precedes the case serial number in this watch.

That wasn't the curve, this is... the Caliber / Style Number have been switched. Remember above there was a statement that the Movement Caliber is usually the first of the two 3-digit numbers, well this case is one where the Caliber is not the first number. But how do you know when this has happened??

Let's discuss how I know this and why it's **important to ALWAYS UTILIZE Figure 6** in the original Style Number paper. Figure 6 from that paper is called the "Style and Caliber Table". That table lists the Style Numbers in the first column and then the columns to the right are the calibers that use that Style Number.

What you must do, each time you utilize this technique, is look up your Style Number from your case in the first column of the table, and check the other columns for the Caliber of the movement shown in your case.

Let's look at the data we found in the first case. It was 330 417. The task, find 417 column 1.

This is a snippet from the table in the main paper. The Style Number is 417 and is in the first column. We see in the other 2 columns the number 330 and 430. This means that Style Number 417 can be paired up with Caliber 330 AND caliber 430 movement. For our example, 330 417, we now know with confidence that the Style Number is 417.

417	330	430		
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Let's try the same technique in the second case that the order of data is swapped, but you don't know that yet.

We assume the first 3-digits are the Caliber and the second are the Style Number. It's difficult to read but the case has "364 / 400" stamped in it. We assume this yields a Caliber of 364 and Style Number 400. Looking again at the table shown in Figure 6 in the paper, we find the row with Style Number 400 has:

398	210		
399	211		
402	405		
403	406		

Hmmmm... there is no Style Number 400 in the table. That's the alarm that the numbers may be swapped. Let's try Style 364.

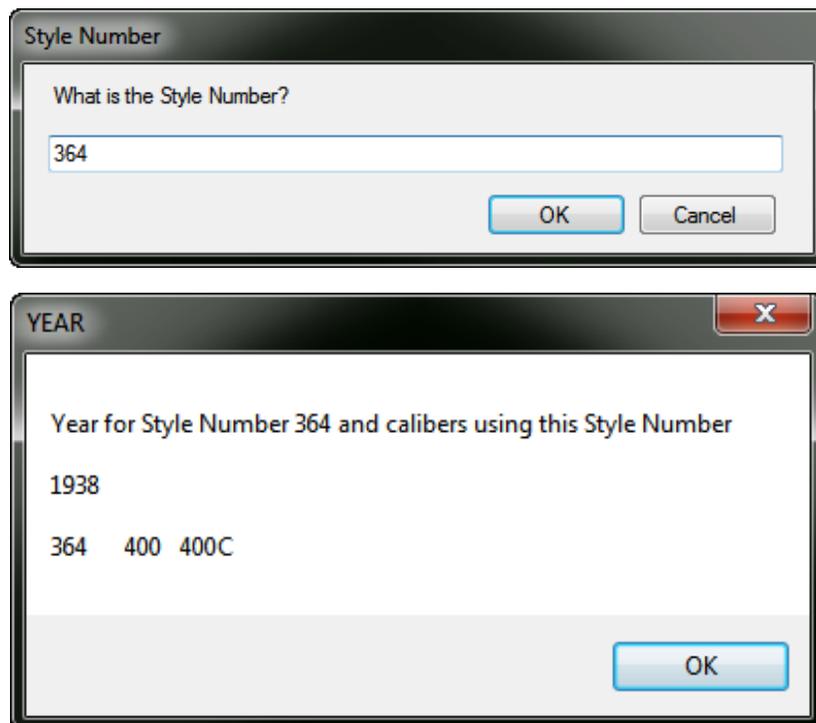
364	400	400C	
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Hey! Style 364 is paired up with Caliber 400 movements. So, we know that the numbers were swapped. The watch should have a Caliber 400 movement and we can use Style 364 to look up the date.

Style 346 dates the watch in question to a date of 1938. If we used the number 400, incorrectly, as the Style Number then the date estimated would have been 1940. Not a huge difference, but still enough to throw off your investigation of our watch. Some swapped numbers yield errors of 20 years or more so you want to make sure you're reading everything correctly.

To help you find if your case has one of these swapped pairs, try the windows program located in the [page](#) with the Style Number paper. It requests the Style Number you've found and then displays the row found in Figure 6. It makes checking your numbers trivial.

The two windows below demonstrate what it is like to use the program. The first dialog box labeled "Style Number" is where you enter the Style Number to look up. In this example, 364. The second window is the output from the program which tells you that the Style Number 364 corresponds with the year 1938. It also gives you the movement caliber numbers that utilized that Style Number. For Style Number 364 those calibers are 400 and 400C



**Windows Program that Aids Locating Style Number Date**

You should now have a better understanding of some of the trickery that you could run into that causes the Style Number Dating Technique to not work correctly and how to protect yourself from getting an incorrect result.

End of annex 1