Subject: Curvex Portrait
Posted by jeffb071 on Thu, 12 Feb 2015 19:06:03 GMT
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Model name :Portrait
Type :Curvex
Period/date :1952
Gender :Gents

Case Maker :Wadsworth
Case Material :14K SG
Case Serial :L207305
Case Style no :498

Caliber :440
Movement Maker :Gruen
Movement Serial:

Bracelet :

Hi fellow Gruen Enthusiasts!
I need some help identifying my current Gruen.
Here is what I know. It is a 440 Caliber and 498 Model. The serial number reads - L253888. Is this from 1942 or 1952? Also, what does the L stand for? Am I correct in thinking this is a Portrait with Rope Lugs? Please help!

File Attachments

1) gruen 1.jpg, downloaded 3487 times



2) gruen 2.jpg, downloaded 3497 times


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3) gruen 3.jpg, downloaded 3536 times


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4) gruen 4.jpg, downloaded 3513 times


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GRUEN
CURVEX
PRECISION
SWITZERLAND

Subject: Re: Please help me identify the "name" of my Curvex
Posted by C. Hurt on Thu, 12 Feb 2015 20:06:25 GMT
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Hi Jeff,

I answered your question on the NAWCC forum, but will repeat here for the benefit of those that don't frequent both sites.

Your watch is a Gruen Curvex "Portrait", first advertised in 1950. It was apparently quite popular, as they are fairly frequently seen.

The L2 leading the Wadsworth serial number indicates production in 1951-52. This ties with the observed advertisements. There were other, earlier watches using the 498 style number, so dating by that method can only tell when the style number was introduced, not when a particular watch was produced. This method is helpful for low production watches, and especially for those when there was only one use of the style number, but in many cases, including this one, it only provides a rough estimate.

Subject: Re: Please help me identify the "name" of my Curvex
Posted by Barney Green on Thu, 12 Feb 2015 20:09:28 GMT
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Fully agreed!

Subject: Re: Please help me identify the "name" of my Curvex
Posted by jeffb071 on Thu, 12 Feb 2015 22:06:39 GMT
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Thank you so much Cary! I appreciate your help. Can you direct me to those that may be able to fix it? It won't wind, unless you pull out the crown. Or, better yet, do other 440 caliber models fit this case, or would it have to be a 440 / 498?

Subject: Re: Please help me identify the "name" of my Curvex
Posted by MikeTheWatchGuy on Thu, 12 Feb 2015 22:14:07 GMT
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I'll second that sentiment Barney.

To follow on briefly, particularly about the Style Number and its ability to date and identify this watch. The caliber-StyleNumber pair in this case is 440-498. This specific combination is known to be HEAVILY reused. What this basically means is that the Style Number dating (498=1942 if

using the Style Number table) doesn't work. If you wish to learn more about the Style Number dating technique and when this sort of breakdown happens you can read the entire article a number of places including on GruenWristwatches.com.

The 440-498 combination is known to be used by at least 4 watches, the Curvex Captain, Centurion, Companion, and Portrait. The 498 was also used with an unusually large number of calibers including the 335, 3351, 422, 430, 435, 440.

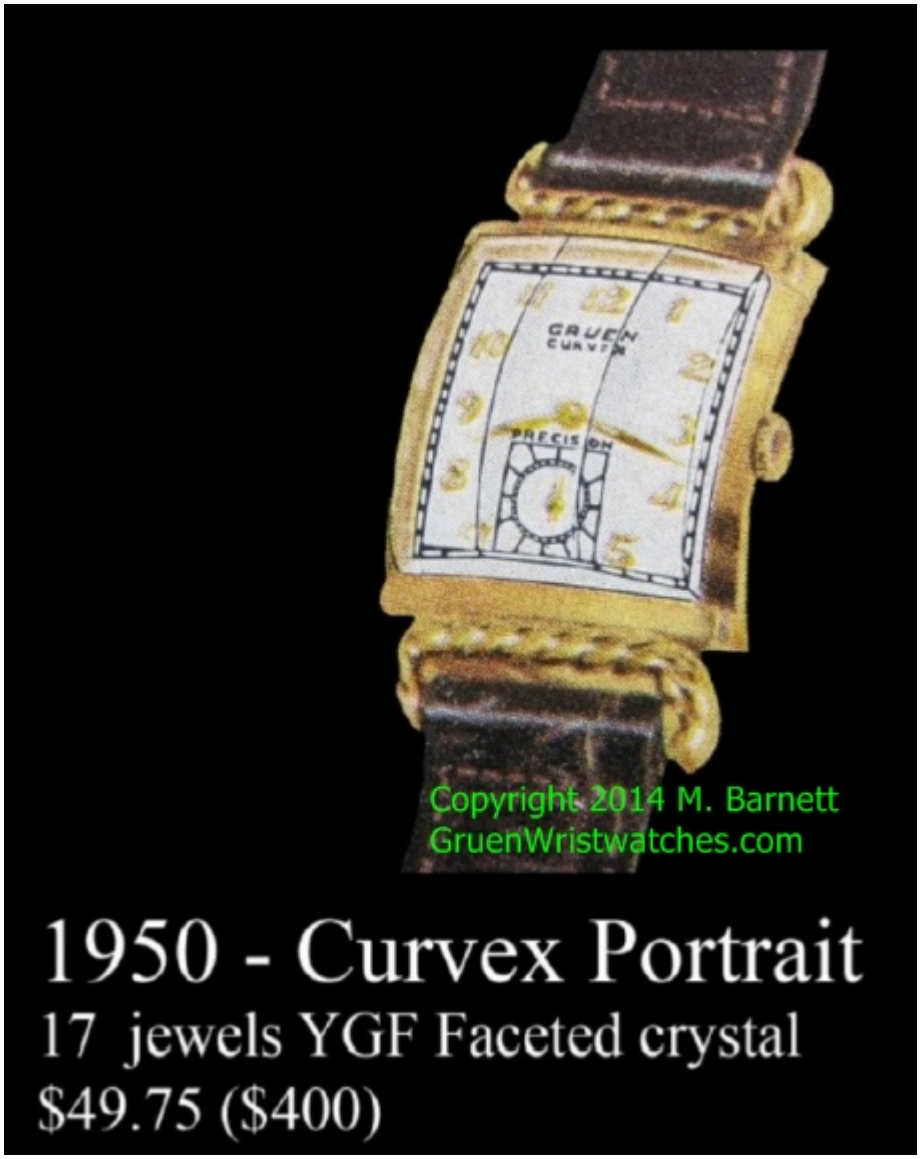
I'm attaching an image from the Gruen Model ID Guide Vol 1 to show one other aspect of this watch perhaps not known to you and that is the faceted crystal that originally accompanied them. All six of the ad images I have show this faceted crystal and often mention it in the wording of the ad. I personally believe they were only sold with this crystal.

I can't tell for sure, but your watch seems to be spared from the brassing of the ropes that are often present with this model.

This is one of the ad images showing the faceted crystal.

File Attachments

1) 1950 Gruen Curvex Portrait.jpg, downloaded 3116 times



Subject: Re: Please help me identify the "name" of my Curvex
Posted by jeffb071 on Thu, 12 Feb 2015 22:21:12 GMT
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Thank you Mike. Can you confirm - 1942? Cary mentioned 1951/52, as well as that ad mentions the 50s. I did a little research and came up with 42 but am not really experienced in Gruen Watches. You are correct. There is no brassing on the ropes. The case is in excellent condition as well as the crystal. I wish it wound.

Subject: Re: Please help me identify the "name" of my Curvex
Posted by mikey on Thu, 12 Feb 2015 22:21:19 GMT
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I knew that Cary would pick this one off fairly easily...

Cary's explanation about the date differencing is correct & we've discussed that here a few times. While the style# (498) was first introduced in '42, the Wadsworth case had its own dating of when it was actually produced during this period so the correct answer for this watch would be 1952.

As for the 440, you may find that trying to source a good running 440 will cost the same as having this one cleaned/overhauled. It you want to keep it original then i would have this movement serviced rather than fitting one of the other movements Mike B mentioned. You can probably find a little more information over at Mike B's excellent site 'gruenwristwatches.com'

Subject: Re: Please help me identify the "name" of my Curvex
Posted by Gary on Thu, 12 Feb 2015 22:26:08 GMT
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jeffb071 wrote on Thu, 12 February 2015 22:06Thank you so much Cary! I appreciate your help. Can you direct me to those that may be able to fix it? It won't wind, unless you pull out the crown. Or, better yet, do other 440 caliber models fit this case, or would it have to be a 440 / 498?

Yes that is odd for winding. The 440 is the correct caliber, 498 is actually the model style. Give Timeticker a PM, he can help.

Subject: Re: Please help me identify the "name" of my Curvex
Posted by jeffb071 on Thu, 12 Feb 2015 22:26:10 GMT
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AH, okay. Thanks for the clarification Mike.

Subject: Re: Please help me identify the "name" of my Curvex
Posted by jeffb071 on Thu, 12 Feb 2015 22:28:23 GMT
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Thanks. I will do that.

Subject: Re: Please help me identify the "name" of my Curvex
Posted by afire on Thu, 12 Feb 2015 22:46:51 GMT
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MikeTheWatchGuy wrote on Thu, 12 February 2015 16:14
I'm attaching an image from the Gruen Model ID Guide Vol 1 to show one other aspect of this watch perhaps not known to you and that is the faceted crystal that originally accompanied them.

All six of the ad images I have show this faceted crystal and often mention it in the wording of the ad. I personally believe they were only sold with this crystal.
That's surprising to me. I feel like you usually see faceted crystals on cases that sort of "ask" for them, and this one doesn't really to me.

Subject: Re: Please help me identify the "name" of my Curvex
Posted by MikeTheWatchGuy on Thu, 12 Feb 2015 23:33:44 GMT
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The date that Cary provided and is shown in the image from the Gruen Model ID book indicate a date of 1950 for when this watch was originally introduced. The ads I have are all from either 1950 or 1951 which lead me to believe it was a model only made for two or 3 years. You watch's case is from 1952 so it was at least 3 years.

The date of 1942 was the example I was giving of how using the 498 Style Number will give you an incorrect answer for the date of your watch. As I mentioned, it's an example of "Style Number Re-use" and in these rare situations causes the Style Number dating technique to break down and not work on those watches.

You will have to read the article to understand the details of what Style Number re-use means, but you can basically throw out using the 498 to date this particular watch. The case serial number of L2 and the advertisements date this model to the 1950 to 1952 timeframe.

Sorry for the confusion about the 1942 date.

afire, I hear ya on the faceted crystal being associated with this model. The case certainly isn't cut in a way that suggests a faceted crystal is the norm or would fit the case well. Perhaps it was Gruen's way of trying to make this Curvex model unique among others. Certainly puts an interesting spin on it. It's another an unusual cut for a faceted crystal. Can't recall seeing that specific design on other watches.

(Mikey, thank you for the awesome compliment. It's greatly appreciated!)

Subject: Re: Please help me identify the "name" of my Curvex
Posted by Barney Green on Fri, 13 Feb 2015 07:59:24 GMT
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My collection of ads shows the Curvex Portrait starting September 1950 and ending June 1953. Mike is perfectly correct, all nine ads are showing the watch with the faceted crystal. Unfortunately I can't confirm with one of my watches as my collection has a gap between the styles #487 and #507, but I have again checked the ad with the names given by Mike. Neither the Captain nor the Centurion or Companion seem to have been advertised with a faceted crystal. So it is pretty much likely that the style number "only" specifies the footprint of the crystal, not the

exact crystal itself. That was new to me...

Subject: Re: Please help me identify the "name" of my Curvex
Posted by C. Hurt on Fri, 13 Feb 2015 15:48:23 GMT
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Barney Green wrote on Fri, 13 February 2015 01:59Neither the Captain nor the Centurion or Companion seem to have been advertised with a faceted crystal. So it is pretty much likely that the style number "only" specifies the footprint of the crystal, not the exact crystal itself. That was new to me...

The purpose of the style number was to allow the matching of cases produced in the USA to movements (shipped complete with dial and hands) produced in Switzerland. The style number signifies the specific dimensions and contours of the bezel opening, regardless of which movement is used, or the styling of the lugs. This made it possible to match up the proper pairing of case and movement without inspecting and measuring every time.

It also means, as you deduced, that it specifies only the footprint of the crystal, and explains why replacements often do not match the original format.

As an aside, faceted crystals, as well as colored crystals, were kind of a fad in the post WW2 years, so it doesn't surprise me that earlier cases using the 498 style number didn't use them, and the Portrait, likely being the last to use that number, did have the facets. Many other early '50s models used faceted crystals, while I don't believe that any produced in the 30s, and only a few in the late 40s did. Perhaps it had something to do with the advent of the formed, molded cylinder crystals, as opposed to the cut and ground crystals used earlier. I don't know when the cylinder crystals were introduced, but it seems like it was around that time.

Subject: Re: Please help me identify the "name" of my Curvex
Posted by MikeTheWatchGuy on Fri, 13 Feb 2015 18:51:18 GMT
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Good stuff Cary!
Barney I never thought about the different cuts of a crystal when a Style Number is re-used.

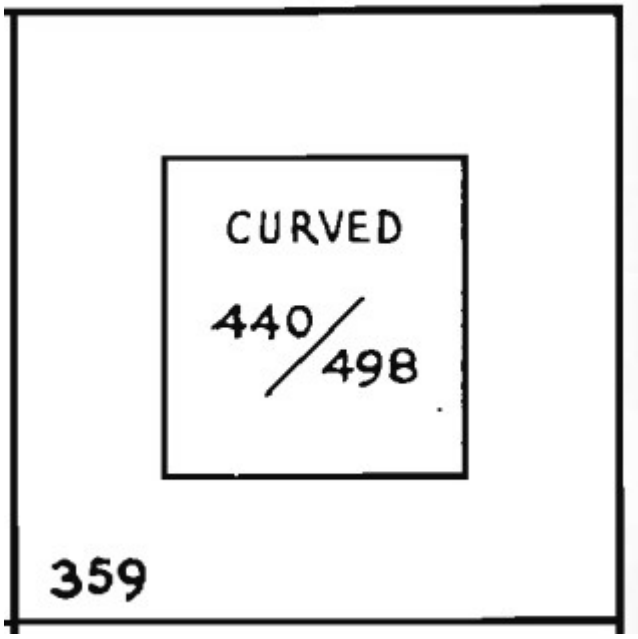
I found 2 interesting entries in Gruen's Crystal Chart that you can find at the back of the Gruen Repairer's Reference. The entry for Style Number 498 simply says "Curved", matching Cary's explanation.

The second thing I found was a Style Number re-use that resulted in two completely different crystals. I knew these existed, but did recall seeing them in a Gruen crystal book.
Style Number 370 is used with calibers 355C and 401C according to the chart. The crystal chart

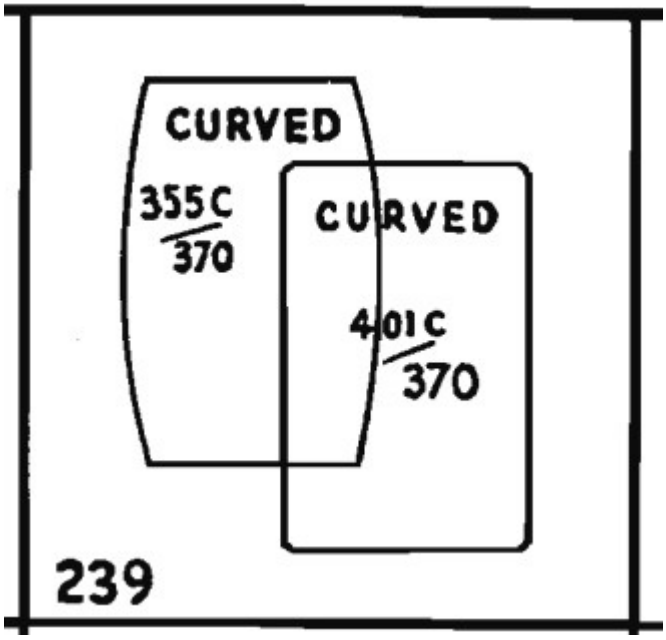
shows 2 completely looking crystals. It's not a big deal because when ordering crystals both numbers are supplied (e.g. 401C-370) and are shown in crystal catalogs that way.

File Attachments

1) Crystal for Gruen 440 498.jpg, downloaded 3154 times



2) Crystal for Gruen Style Number 370.jpg, downloaded 3011 times



Subject: Re: Please help me identify the "name" of my Curvex
Posted by Barney Green on Fri, 13 Feb 2015 19:24:52 GMT
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Mike,

your dating method by style number always give a very good starting point when looking for a watch. It was always absolutely helpful for me. I thought that Gruen would have issued a new number for such a difference as shown with this faceted crystal vs. the plain one. But thanks to this thread we now know it better...

The strange double use of the 370 might simply have been a human error.

Barney

Subject: Re: Please help me identify the "name" of my Curvex
Posted by MikeTheWatchGuy on Fri, 13 Feb 2015 21:16:05 GMT
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jeffb071 -- question for you on your Curvex Portrait....

Can you tell me if your crystal is perfectly square as shown in the figure I posted from the Gruen Crystal Catalog? I can't tell from the angles in your photographs.

Barney... agreed that the Style Number dating often gives a great starting point for researching a watch. I pointed it out in my tutorial on researching your Gruen watch. But, it's not perfect and for these 440-498 watches it's frustrating as it provides an incorrect "answer".

[EDIT..... 01:00 AM 2015-02-14]

I answered my own question about the size of the crystal. I had one of these Curvex Portraits in my backstock. The crystal is square.

Mine has the faceted crystal, but you wouldn't know it looking at it. You can feel it quite obviously but it doesn't distort in the right way to make it highly noticeable. This is, however, a replacement crystal at it's plastic. The repairer's marks in the back of the case are numerous and some are from the same watchmaker as he etches the actual service date into the case. I can see it regularly serviced from the early 1950's into 1970's. It must have been worn until the unfortunate accident..... the movement is rusted so it went for a swim at some point, a great loss to someone that took darned good care of it. Why didn't they just pick up a new movement from DASHTO or on eBay?

Mine too has an L2 serial number so it's from 1952.

File Attachments

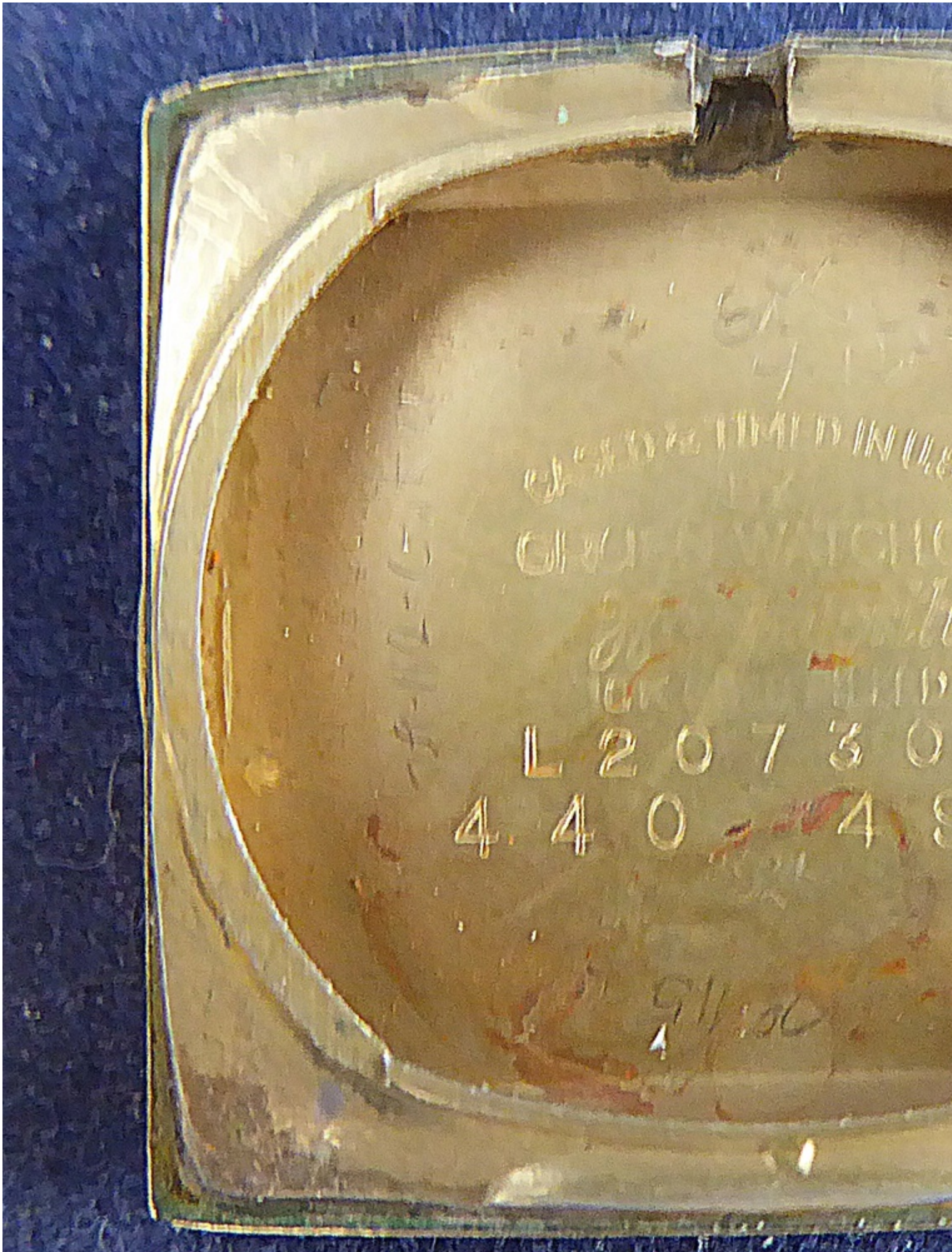
1) Gruen Curvex Portrait 017.JPG, downloaded 3017 times



2) Gruen Curvex Portrait 015.JPG, downloaded 2906 times


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3) Gruen Curvex Portrait 006.JPG, downloaded 2926 times


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