**KAUNAS NINTH FORT MUSEUM**

*Exhibit of the Month*

**FEMININE WRISTWATCH**

*Museologist Simona Gustaitytė*

- Materials – copper, zinc, nickel alloy (noisilber);
- Front of the case and surface of the dial – silver-plated;
- Back of the watch – chrome-plated;
- Technique – stamping, chrome-plating, silver-plating;
- Western Europe, the first part of the 20th century

Wristwatches are relatively new among the variety of time measuring devices. Their predecessors are believed to have appeared in the 16th century, but they were not very accurate. Therefore, the creation of a small but exact time-counting device became the main challenge. Such a possibility appeared later, with the development of time measuring mechanisms.

Wristwatches gained more attention in the 19th century, when they began to adorn the wrists of high society ladies. Small devices were attached to a bracelet, chain or strap; therefore, it was widely believed that it was a temporary fashion expression of the fairer sex, an accessory. Among men, this trend did not become common, and the opinion remained that a self-respecting gentleman had to wear a traditional pocket watch. However, since the end of the 19th century and especially during WWI, wristwatches became an important piece of military

equipment, allowing soldiers to keep track of time or calculate the amount of fuel in the tank without searching for a watch in their pockets. The devices adapted for military purposes were characterised by a stronger strap, an easy-to-read dial showing the time at night, and often had a protective case or grid protecting the glass. During this period, the attitude towards wristwatches was changing: from an exclusively feminine piece of jewellery intended for a narrow class of the rich to the perception that it was a functional and useful device. In the next decades of the 20th century, their working mechanisms, functions, design and resistance to external factors were improved, as well as the classic round shape was complemented by more diverse shapes.

In Lithuania, until the 1940s most watches were imported from Western Europe, mostly Switzerland, while during the first and second Soviet occupations (1940–1990) from the USSR. The photo shows a watch found in the 1960s during archaeological excavations in the field of mass massacre of Kaunas Ninth Fort Museum. It was added to the institution's collections in 1974. The watch commemorates the occupation period of Nazi Germany (1941–1944), during which mass executions of citizens of Lithuania and Western Europe, mostly Jews, were carried out in the territory of the Ninth Fort. It is assumed that the watch belonged to a victim killed by the Nazis and their collaborators. The square-shaped watch has loops at the top and bottom for attaching a bracelet or strap. The numerals are Arabic; the two hands stopped at 6 o'clock 2 minutes. The dial and profile are affected by corrosion; the glass covering the dial has not survived.

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