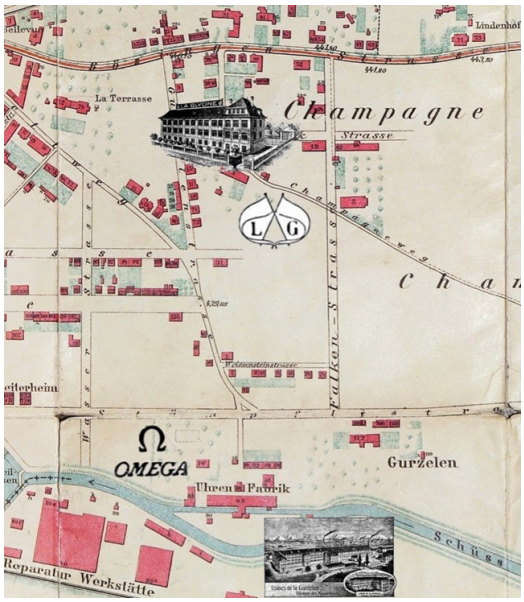
The Story Behind Piccola & Jofrette

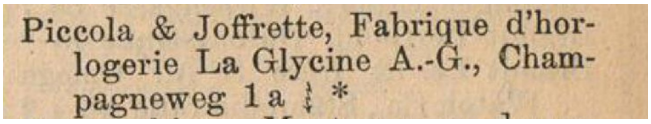
The brand Piccola & Jofrette as we know it today was first registered in this form in the Swiss trademark register in 2021. Its roots, however, go back much further. The name was inspired by the historic brands «Piccola» and «Joffrette», whose story began more than a century ago at the heart of Biel's watchmaking industry.

The trail leads to what was then Champagne 1a in Biel, today Chemin Frédéric Ingold 5. It was here that Charles Perret, Georges Flury and Fernand Engel founded the La Glycine watch factory on 20 May 1914. At the time, the Champagne district was an important hub of Biel's watchmaking industry and home to several renowned watch manufacturers. The historical city map shows just how closely the different production sites were located to one another.



The Champagne district in Biel at the beginning of the 20th century. The La Glycine watch factory was located at what was then Champagne 1a.

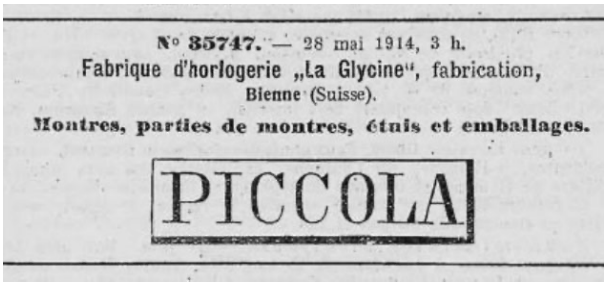
The name Piccola & Joffrette (today Piccola & Jofrette) also appears in historical records in connection with the La Glycine watch factory and its location at Champagne 1a. The fact that both names were already used together and directly associated with the watch factory at the time is an important reference point for the inspiration behind today's name.


Piccola & Joffrette, Fabrique d'horlogerie La Glycine A.-G., Champagneweg 1a

Historical record of Piccola & Joffrette in connection with the La Glycine watch factory at Champagne 1a in Biel.

However, the origins of these two names only become clear when looking back to the very beginning, to the early days of the young watch factory, when the individual brand names were created one after another.

Just a few days after the founding of the La Glycine watch factory, the company officially registered the brand «PICCOLA» in the Swiss trademark register on 28 May 1914. The original registration lists not only watches, but also watch components, cases and packaging, documenting the early use of the name within Biel's watchmaking industry.


N° 85747. — 28 mai 1914, 3 h.
Fabrique d'horlogerie „La Glycine", fabrication,
Bienne (Suisse).
Montres, parties de montres, étuis et emballages.
PICCOLA

Official registration of the brand «PICCOLA» in the Swiss trademark register on 28 May 1914.

A few months later, the outbreak of the First World War fundamentally changed the conditions for the European watch industry. While demand for traditional watches became more difficult, the need for watches for military use increased at the same time. At the time, men typically carried pocket watches, while wristwatches were still largely reserved for women from well-to-do families, who wore their jewellery watches on the wrist. The young watch factory responded to these developments early on by exploring suitable products and new brand names.

One of these names was inspired by two of the best-known Allied generals of the time. French General Joseph Joffre (1852–1931) and British General John French, 1st Earl of Ypres (1852–1925), lent their names to the new brand «JOFFRE FRENCH». Combining their surnames directly reflected the political and social climate of the time. There was also a clear commercial strategy behind the choice. A name that brought together the two Allied commanders-in-chief promised strong sales, particularly in Allied countries.



French General Joseph Joffre (1852–1931, left) and British General John French (1852–1925, right), who inspired the brand name «JOFFRENCH».

On 5 November 1914, the company applied to register the resulting brand name «JOFFRENCH» in the Swiss trademark register. The historical registration shows how closely brand development at the time was tied to current events and how quickly the young watch factory adapted its brands to changing circumstances.



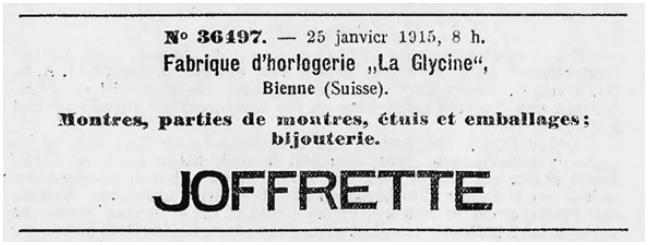
Historical registration of the brand «JOFFRENCH» in the Swiss trademark register in 1914.

Contemporary reports show that the new name was not only registered, but also actively used. On 24 November 1914, the Journal du Jura described the registration of the «JOFFRENCH» brand as an «idée ingénieuse», an ingenious idea whose success, at least among the Allied countries, was considered virtually certain.[1] The close connection between the brand and the events of the time was also reflected in the design of the watches themselves, which featured patriotic motifs honouring Joffre and the Allies. Just a few months later, the story behind the name continued to evolve.



Front and back of a contemporary wartime watch: the dial bears the circular engraving «Honneur à la France et aux Alliés» (Honour to France and the Allies, 1914), while the case back features a relief portrait of «Généralissime Joffre» (1914–1915).

On 25 January 1915, the brand «JOFFRETTE» was finally registered (later Jofrette). It seems likely that the aim was to create a more elegant evolution of the previous brand name, one that was less directly associated with the military. The name may also have been intended to appeal specifically to women, who at the time were already accustomed to wearing watches on the wrist. The original trademark registration therefore documents the name that, more than a hundred years later, would once again inspire the brand as it is known today.



Official registration of the brand «JOFFRETTE» in the Swiss trademark register on 25 January 1915.

A further report in the Journal du Jura from 5 February 1915 shows just how closely the two names were connected to the watches of the time.[2] It describes military wristwatches sold under the brands «JOFFRENCH» and «JOFFRETTE», decorated with enamelled coats of arms of the Allied nations. For fallen or missing soldiers, the manufacture also produced wristwatches and medallion pendants featuring a photograph of the deceased, framed by stylised motifs of laurel, thuja and cypress on black enamel, together with inscriptions such as «Mort au champ d'honneur. 1914.» or «Pour la Patrie».



Surviving pocket watches from this period with finely engraved gold cases; inside the case cover are the Swiss cross and the inscription «Remontoir Supérieur – Haute Précision».

[1] «Une idée ingénieuse», Journal du Jura, issue of 24 November 1914. Digitised by the Swiss National Library, e-newspaperarchives.ch (Journal du Jura).

[2] «Une nouvelle fabrique biennoise – La Glycine», Journal du Jura, issue of 5 February 1915. Digitised by the Swiss National Library, e-newspaperarchives.ch (Journal du Jura).

The spirit that first took shape at Champagne 1a in Biel in 1914 has never truly faded over the years and decades.

Stephan Lack, founder of Piccola & Jofrette and former owner of the traditional Glycine brand, has now revived this spirit of Biel's Champagne district, inspired by its remarkable contribution to the world of Swiss watchmaking. He did so in exactly the same place and in the very same premises where Charles Perret, Georges Flury and Fernand Engel had founded their watch factory more than a century earlier.

Together with his team, his vision is to create watches under the brand Piccola & Jofrette that are developed and built with great respect for the values and craftsmanship of the Swiss watchmaking industry. Watches whose components are entirely developed and manufactured in Switzerland and offered at a fair price. In the same spirit as the generations before us, who cultivated this craft and helped establish Swiss watches as a cultural icon renowned around the world.

Piccola & Jofrette watches embrace the latest technological achievements of the Swiss watchmaking industry while remaining true to the philosophy and authentic tradition of Biel's Champagne district. Even back then, a watch from the Champagne was a truly Swiss watch, developed in Switzerland and made exclusively from regional Swiss watch components. And that will never change.



The PJ1 by Piccola & Jofrette, 100% developed and manufactured in Switzerland.

The journey back to the future has begun.