

# The Frick Collection: Detail Report

---



## Double-Dial Desk Watch Showing Decimal and Traditional Time

Abraham-Louis Breguet (Swiss, 1747–1823)

**Date** ca. 1795–after 1807

**Medium** Gold, enamel, gilt brass, brass, and steel

**Dimensions** 2 7/8 x 2 7/8 x 13/16 in. (7.3 x 7.3 x 2 cm) H.: 15/16 in. (2.4 cm), diam.: 2 7/8 in. (7.3 cm)

**Credit Line** Bequest of Winthrop Kellogg Edey, 1999

**Accession Number** 1999.5.154

Currently On View

Second Floor, Room 23, Clocks and Watches Room

**Commentary** At the end of the eighteenth and the beginning of the nineteenth century, the innovative horologist Abraham-Louis Breguet and his son, Antoine-Louis, created highly accurate movements set in restrained, elegant cases. The elder Breguet's combination of technical skill, refined design, and exquisite craftsmanship earned him an unrivaled reputation. His patrons included Louis XVI, Napoleon, and most of the civil servants and political leaders of his day. This double-dial desk watch is one of the very few timekeepers that includes both traditional and decimal dials. The decimal system, introduced during the French Revolution, was used not only for weights and measures but also for time. Decimal time divided the day into ten hours and the year into ten months. The decimalization of divisions of the day was established in November 1793, but as it was unpractical, it lasted only eighteen months. This watch, known in Breguet's books as a *garde-temps* (precision timekeeper), was probably made in the spring of 1795. It was sold in 1797 to the celebrated French aristocrat Antoine-César Praslin, Duke of Choiseul. The present twelve-hour dial was added after 1807, when Breguet's son joined the business. Source: Vignon, Charlotte. *The Frick Collection Decorative Arts Handbook*. New York: The Frick Collection/Scala, 2015.