North American Sundial Society

Guide for Dial-Hunters

Introduction:

Searching for sundials can be an interesting and rewarding activity. Finding dials in your local area and researching their history is enjoyable for its own sake; in addition, you are also making a contribution to the local historical records, and helping to keep alive the interest in these most ancient of time-tellers.

Learning the history of a sundial falls naturally into three parts: locating dials, recording them, and researching them. Sometimes the first of these is the most difficult. Simply learning that there is a dial in a particular location is often difficult. The most useful sources to locate dials are your public library, especially if it has a local or regional history section, and local or regional historical societies. College and university libraries are also excellent places to begin your search, especially since many campuses have dials of one kind or another on them. These same sources will be valuable when you are attempting to learn the history of a dial that you have located. Often newspaper archives will reveal the date when a particular dial was constructed, and something of its history.

The main purpose of this brochure is to outline the modest tools required, and the procedure used for recording data about the dials you find. The form included with this brochure has spaces for you to record all the pertinent data needed so that it can be incorporated into the database the North American Sundial Society is assembling.

Do not be intimidated by the requirements. Any information you send will be helpful.

Tools:

It will be handy to have:

- A tape measure (6' - 8')
- A protractor (or inclinometer)
- Camera (optional)
- Recording form
- Pencil & clipboard
- An ordinary compass

It will be helpful to know:

- The latitude and longitude of the site. (If this is unavailable, record the direction and distance from the nearest street intersection that will show up on a map.)
- If you are using a compass, the magnetic declination at the site

The compass, along with your knowledge of the magnetic declination at your location, will let you determine the orientation of the various parts of the dial. The tape measure will allow you to record the dial's dimensions. You should also record the dimensions of the pedestal or surface on which it stands.

The protractor or inclinometer is used to measure the angle of the gnomon. For horizontal dials, the angle should be the same as the latitude of the place where the dial is located, but there are exceptions. An inclinometer is the simplest tool, as you simply place it on the slanting gnomon and read off the angle directly. Inclinometers are sometimes sold under the less intimidating name of "Angle Finders." They are used to measure various slopes and can be purchased inexpensively in most hardware stores. A common school protractor can be used. The most useful type has the center point on the bottom edge

Please use the back of the form for more detailed notes or a sketch. Artistic skill is not important. Dimensions on the sketch will help, even if you are able to include photos.

Recording Data:

The Registration Form should be filled out according to the following guidelines:

State/Province:	Self-explanatory
City:	Self-explanatory
Long/Lat:	If known, otherwise nearest major street intersection
Location:	Many dials are in parks, campuses, etc. Give detailed directions, so another person can find the dial. Be explicit; e.g. "In front of Old Chemistry Building", not "On State University Campus."
Owner:	Government agency? school? private firm? individual person?
Accessibility:	Open to the public? Advance permission required? Private?
Dial Type:	Horizontal, vertical and equatorial are the most common.
Condition:	Excellent/Good/Fair/Poor: Consider all parts of the dial.
Material(s):	Bronze? Stone? Wood? Other? Be as specific as you can.
Date:	Date built, or best estimate
Dial Dimensions:	Diameter if circular, edge dimensions otherwise
Gnomon:	Length of style, length of substyle, height above dial plate at tip, position of node, if any.
Gnomon Angle:	Angle of gnomon relative to dial face.
Gnomon Bearing:	Typically true North.
Dial Furniture:	Non-standard hour lines, declination, etc.
Inscription:	Mottos, sayings, quotations, etc.
Pedestal Details:	Nature of supporting column (stone, brick, metal, etc.)
Designer/Builder:	Self-explanatory
References:	Give any references to this dial in newspapers, books, etc.
Remarks:	Any correction for equation of time, such as a table or an analemma? Include other facts of interest not elsewhere covered.
Photos?	If you have any. please send a print to the Registrar

On the back page are sketches of the most common kinds of dials. The gnomons are indicated by bold lines.

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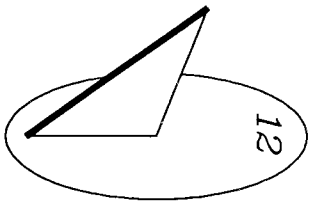
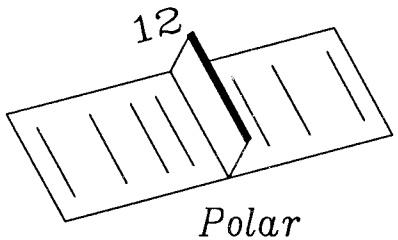
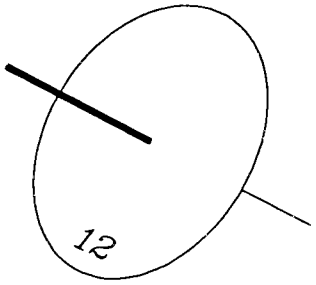
Common Dial Types



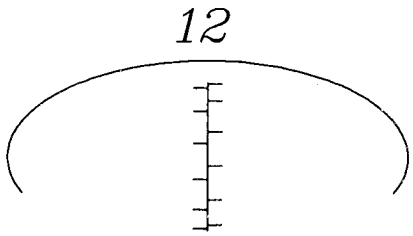
Horizontal



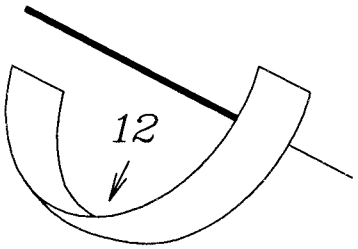
Polar



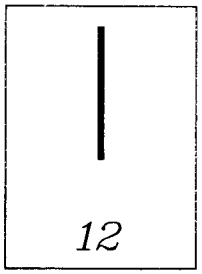
Equatorial



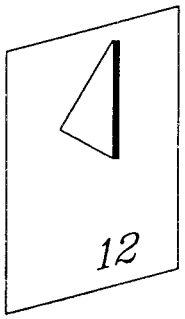
Analemmatic
(Often on the ground)



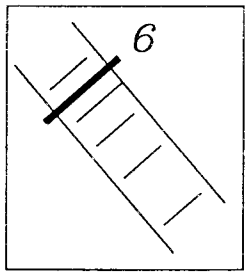
Vertical Dials



Direct
South



Declining East



Direct East

(West dials will mirror)

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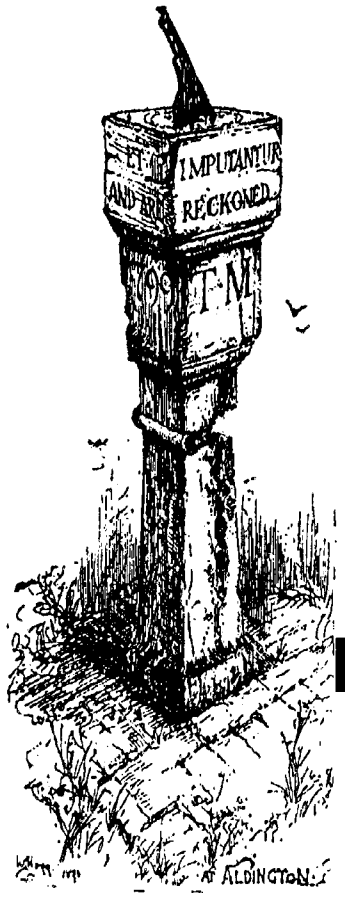

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