Seventh Annual NASS Conference - September 2001 in Montréal, Québec

Fred Sawyer (Glastonbury, CT)

Faced with the emotional turmoil and disrupted travel schedules in the aftermath of the September 11th terrorist attacks, many of our members were unable to attend the Montreal conference planned for later that week. Indeed, we thought long and hard about whether or not the conference should even be held, but in the end, two simple facts argued persuasively for the event to go on as planned. The first was the fact that disrupting our daily lives was no doubt a major goal of the terrorists – one on which we did not wish to grant them victory. The second was the realization that several of our members, including some from overseas, were already en route and there would be no way to let them know of a cancellation. So the conference was held with 31 in attendance, instead of the 50 who had planned to be there.

As usual, registration was an informal get-together on Thursday night. As exhibits were being set up all around us, we took the time to get to know one another – new acquaintances and longtime friends alike.

André Bouchard's wife Monique was kind enough to offer to take spouses around the city on Friday when all the conference talks were scheduled. So at one end of the room, spouses planned their day out, while at the other end, NASS members met CCSQ (Commission des Cadrans Solaires de Québec) members and talked about their joint passion.

Stone Dials by CCSQ member André Beaulieu


Paul Lapp and the assembling crowd

The door prizes that have become a common feature of registration night included a direct east/west universal dial with analemmic hour lines – won by Roger Bailey – and a pewter and resin pillar dial designed for the latitude of London – won by Tony Moss of the U.K.

As usual, the display area was filled with photo albums of sundial safaris, items that members were selling, new forms of sundials that intrigued us all, and many displays of beautiful traditional dials designed and manufactured by NASS and CCSQ members. One of the highlights of the conference would prove to be the opportunity to view the works of André Beaulieu and Réal Manseau, true artisans who dedicate long hours to perfecting their beautiful creations.

Friday morning began with a moment of silence for those lost in the disasters earlier in the week. We then decided that with some reworking of the schedule, all of the talks of those who were able to make it to Montreal could be delivered on Friday, followed by the

bus tour on Saturday – thus allowing us to adjourn on Saturday evening instead of Sunday afternoon, allowing those who had to drive long distances to get a good start.


Robert Felix, Ron Anthony, Margrit Felix, Mac Oglesby and Kate Pond

André Bouchard began by giving us a first look at the the Stewart Museum collection of sundials that we would be seeing on our Saturday tour. He noted how the variety and wide range in age of the sundials helped to capture and illustrate the cultural diversity of the region. The collection illustrates the importance of France and French civilization of the 16th and the 17th centuries in that part of the continent, in New France and along the Mississippi River. It also gives an idea of the changes that occurred in the 18th century, when Quebec became a British colony.

Fred Sawyer then introduced a new NASS publishing project – a series of digital facsimile reprints of rare works on dialing. He presented a hardbound copy of the first book in the series (Samuel Foster's *The Art of Dialling*, 1638/1675) to our conference host André Bouchard.

Then Robert Felix spoke to us about the Sunmaster 2002, a very interesting form of universal ring dial that he has developed, beautifully engineered and and is selling in his sundial shop in Basel, Switzerland.


Robert Felix' Sunmaster 2002

After a brief break, Bob Kellogg explained the new developments he is working on in the area of digital sundials, which he introduced to us at NASS' first conference, in Washington DC. By using the shadow plane concept that has been discussed by Mac Oglesby, Fer deVries and Bill Maddux in earlier issues of The Compendium, Bob has found a means of creating vertical declining digital dials suitable for window installation. The interior view of the dial presents the local time in real alphanumeric form such as "12:30 PM". He plans on having a completed one to show us next year in Tucson!

André then gave us some background information on the Commission des Cadrans Solaires de Québec, outlining its history (having been formed the same year as NASS) and its ongoing work. CCSQ maintains a very healthy registry of Quebec sundials, publishes a quarterly bulletin (LE GNOMONISTE) and has its own web site: cadrans_solaires.scg.ulaval.ca.

Fred Sawyer then introduced a new type of horizontal dial he has developed which uses a clock face. The dial is based on a geometric construction pioneered by Samuel Foster in the 17th

century. It is a special case of Foster's circular nomogram (perhaps the first such nomogram ever invented), converting the non-uniform motion of the gnomon's shadow across the horizontal plane into a reading on a perfectly evenly-spaced dial face. Fred then surrounds the circular face with two scales based on a 1915 patent by William Pilkington that make adjusting the reading for the equation of time and for DST as easy as looking up the current date. Fred had a sample of the new dial that Mac Oglesby had made for him.

An excellent lunch at the hotel was topped off with a viewing of a 1935 cartoon feature The Sunshine Makers. This brief film had been identified by Robert Adzema as one that had influenced him as a child to be interested in the interplay of light and dark – and eventually to become a dialist sculptor. Fred Sawyer tracked the cartoon down and was able to show a digitized version of it being run from a computer.

Following the lunch break, we held a brief annual meeting with reports from Fred as editor and president and from Bob Kellogg as treasurer. The election of new officers for the 2002-2003 term was noted: the nominating committee had put forward a slate consisting of Sara Schechner, repeating in the position of Secretary, and John Schilke, replacing Claude Hartman as Vice President.

Bill Gottesman then spoke about his "Mathematical Expedition to the North Pole", presenting a method for aligning a sundial by taking three time readings over the course of a day. Rather than discussing formulas, Bill illustrated his talk quite effectively by juggling a bowling ball.

Roger Bailey next reviewed "The History and Use of Armillary Spheres", tracing the history of the armillary sphere from its origin by the ancient Greek and Babylonian astronomers to its use throughout history.

Briefer, informal presentations were then done by Kate Pond, with an update on her sun sculptures – one of which many of us were able to see as we crossed the border by car from Vermont into Canada; Bill Gottesman, with an update on the Focusing Dial he first presented at the Hartford meeting; Harris Morrison, telling us about developments in his marketing of portable sundials – including a new garden ring dial designed for him by Sara Schechner; and Don Petrie, with a discussion of a simple home-made trigon for laying out sundials.

Tony Moss then followed these talks with his presentation: *Before Your Very Eyes!* - a practical introduction to the layout of a sundial using Adobe Illustrator software. Tony showed us all exactly how he prepares the artwork for the beautiful brass dials he makes, discussing a variety of tools, techniques and shortcuts.


Fred Sawyer presents the 2nd Annual Sawyer Dialing Prize to Robert Adzema

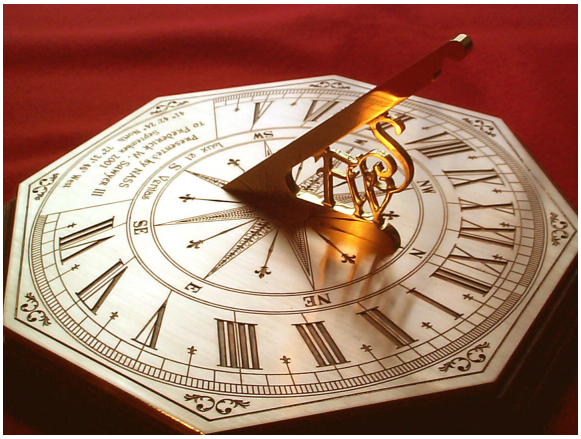
Fred Sawyer opened the final section of the day's presentations by discussing the Sawyer Dialing Prize and introducing the second recipient of this relatively new annual prize: Robert Lee Adzema. Robert then entertained the group with an interesting talk about his career as a sculptor and dialist, punctuated by a slide presentation of

many of his beautiful works. Fred presented Robert with a beautiful Tony Moss trophy equatorial dial and a certificate com-memorating the award. A cash prize of $200 will be donated to a dialing project Robert will select in the near future.


Guests from US, Canada, UK and Switzerland


Dining at Aux Deux Charentes


Dining at Aux Deux Charentes


The sundial presented to Fred Sawyer

To bring a successful first day to a most enjoyable conclusion, we all adjourned to Aux Deux Charentes – an excellent small French restaurant selected by our host André Bouchard.

Bob Kellogg offered many of the appropriate thanks at dinner to those who have helped NASS throughout the year. He then announced a surprise presentation of a beautiful brass sundial for Fred Sawyer. The NASS Board had commissioned Tony Moss to design and make the dial – and we had all had a chance to see how it was done, since, unbeknownst to us at the time, it was the very dial whose construction Tony had taken us through earlier in the day.

One element of the dial that Tony had not previously revealed was the beautiful scrollwork at the base of the gnomon, spelling out Fred's initials: FWS. Fred was completely surprised and very touched!

Finally, the day was concluded with a drawing for a copy of Hester Higton's new book *Sundials: An Illustrated History of Portable Dials*. The book went to Ron Anthony – and we all then returned to the hotel to get some sleep before Saturday's bus tour.

Nicholas Copernicus at the Planetarium of Montreal

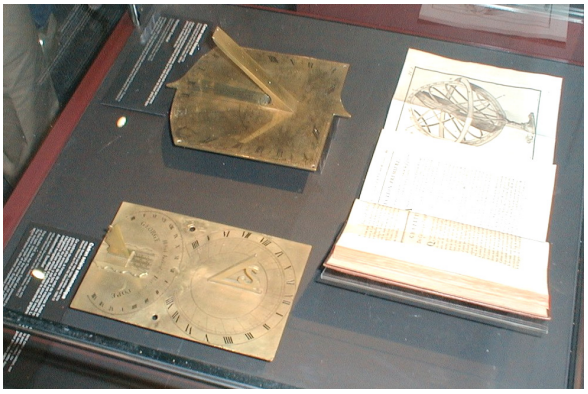
Even before we boarded the bus on Saturday morning, it was clear that we would not be able to see all that André had hoped to show us of Montreal. The scheduled tour through Montreal, Laval, Longueuil and Boucherville would have highlighted 19 sundials, but André found in doing a dry run that it probably would have taken us three days to see everything! So we decided we will just have to save much of the tour for a future date and proceeded to see however much we could realistically fit into the schedule.

Our first stop was the Planetarium of Montreal, where we were greeted by a monumental statue of Copernicus, sited only a few yards away from the first sundial. The dial was a large equatorial with a badly misaligned gnomon, rising above the horizontal at an angle of about 60° - far too high for the latitude of Montreal. An explanatory text with the dial acknowledged that the gnomon was placed at the wrong angle, but then proceeded to claim that it didn't make much difference in the reading.

A misaligned dial at the Planetarium of Montreal

Selections from the Stewart Museum Collection displayed at the Planetarium of Montreal

Inside the Planetarium – before it was open to the public – we were treated to an exhibit of 24 sundials and several rare books from the Stewart Museum. This special exhibit was arranged by André, with the very welcome help and cooperation of the two institutions, to acknowledge the occasion of the NASS conference. The exhibit runs until January 5, 2002.



Note the Julien LeRoy sundial at top center

At the Parc régional de Longueuil

Our next stops were at the Parc régional de Longueuil and a Marina in Boucherville to see two dials – one modelled after the other.

The Parc régional de Longueuil

At the Marina de Boucherville

We then found our way out to l'Ile-Ste-Hélène, a task that gave us an opportunity to see more of Montreal because of rerouting required by work being done on some of the bridges in the city.

There is a dial at the center of this gathering - a common sight on our tours, that the spouses refer to as a feeding frenzy.

At the Stewart Museum, stone worker and dialist André Beaulieu proudly showed us one of the dials he had designed and constructed – displayed prominently on the lawn of the old fort.

Dial maker André Beaulieu stands proudly by the dial he made for the Stewart Museum

It was quite a pleasure for all assembled to learn more about the actual process involved in carving and engraving the stone.

We then had lunch at the Restaurant Hélène de Champlain with a view of Mount Royal. The meal and the view were both spectacular.

The geodesic dome on l'Ile-Ste-Hélène

On an apartment building on rue Milton

Our day of touring was completed with brief stops at two apartment buildings in Montreal with old vertical sundials that one wonders if the inhabitants ever even notice – and then a visit to André Bouchard's home to see the polyhedral dial made for his garden by André Beaulieu.

André talking about the focal point of his garden

Many thanks to André and Monique Bouchard for their wonderful hospitality throughout our stay in Montreal!

We had a great time in Montreal – if you weren't there, be sure to join us next September in Tucson Arizona!

A stone polyhedral dial designed by André Bouchard for his own backyard – and constructed by André Beaulieu

A Blessing! - photo by Mac Oglesby