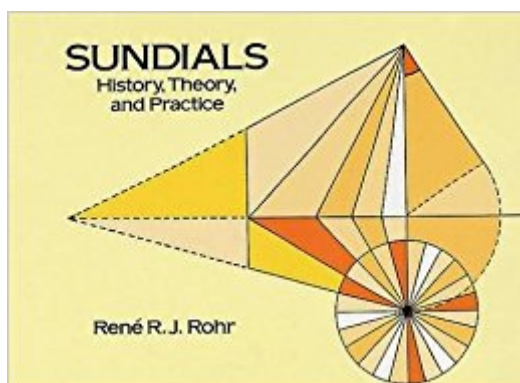


The book was found

Sundials: History, Theory, And Practice



Synopsis

"His lively pen, his direct and simple style, his expressive vocabulary, his avoidance of pedantry, his conciseness in the exposition of his thoughts make his book a pleasure to read." — Henri Michel, International Academy of the History of Science

The story of man's efforts to measure time is a long one — reaching back thousands of years to the dawn of civilization. Among the earliest instruments developed for telling time was the sundial. In this expert study, a noted sundial expert offers a fascinating and informative account of these ancient devices, presented in simple, lively language. Over the centuries, many different varieties of sundials have been constructed, and Mr. Rohr provides detailed, accurate descriptions of them all: classical sundials, inclined dials, solar calendars, analemmatic dials, moon dials, and many more. There is even a chapter devoted to especially remarkable dials past and present, and a listing of the most popular sundial mottoes. In this profusely illustrated volume, you will not only learn about the long and colorful history of the sundial, you will learn a practical method of building one yourself. No special knowledge is required, other than an understanding of the basic principles of cosmography and of the relative movements of the sun and the planets. (These are recalled in an elementary way in a special chapter.) For mathematically inclined readers, more complex formulae and calculations have been included, some of which have never been printed in a book of gnomonics.

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Customer Reviews

First published in English in 1970, Rohr's volume traces a history of sundials as well as the science

behind their operation. Along with measuring time, some of these devices also followed the movements of the moon and were accurate solar calendars. This is for both the lay reader and the scientist alike. Copyright 1997 Reed Business Information, Inc.

Among the earliest instruments for telling time was the sundial. *Sundials: History, Theory, And Practice* is an expert study offering a fascinating and informative account of these ancient devices, presented in simple, lively language and with a profusion of illustrations. Sundials will teach the reader a practical method for building one! For mathematically inclined readers, more complex formulae and calculations have been included, some of which have never before been printed in a book of gnomonics. *Sundials* is unusual, fascinating, and highly informative! -- Midwest Book Review

Serious sundials are serious instruments. The first serious instruments of mankind, and they endured for three millennia, well into the 20th century, as the bedrock of timekeeping. They are deceptive in their apparent simplicity but they are far from simple in their theory and their significance, thus they are the essence of beauty and elegance; blending science, esthetics; astronomy, the universe, and the ingeniousness of mankind into a seemingly simple instrument with no moving parts which, if you understand what it is telling you, it tells you a heck of a lot. This is the one book to own on how sundials really work, not on how to make a rainy day project for a bored child or wood or metal worker but what is at the essence of the serious instrument for serious timekeeping and observations. Though we now think of sundials as quaint garden ornaments, for at least three millennia sundials were our bedrock basis of keeping time, the foundation of astronomy, and fundamental to our understanding of the relationship of our Earth to the heavens. Even the concept of time itself, which is a slippery subject when you dig into it, began with sundials. They are A REALLY BIG DEAL if you are into such things. This book is the best available on the subject. BUT to really fully grasp the sundial you need to know about the celestial sphere model and how the heavens work. Unfortunately this sea captain's explanations on this subject, although complete and correct, are very difficult to follow. He strives to be succinct, and if you already know what he is talking about (which he clearly does) he achieves his goal... but if you don't you will be more than a little lost. Even his representation of the "Equation of Time" is muddled with two representations of the EoT that do not equate algebraically being presented in as many lines, but frankly the EoT is muddled almost everywhere because there is no accepted standard for which way around to state it. However if you study up on the celestial sphere model and maybe even delve into a little celestial

navigation, which is a kindred spirit to the sundial and a subject on which a multitude of good references abound, this book will take you the rest of the way. Beware. This isn't for the faint of heart. This book is about celestial mechanics (though an older model,) history, and man's development of concepts of time. It isn't a how-to project book or a fun Sunday afternoon read. It is the serious science of sundials. You will be introduced to the celestial sphere, declination, sidereal time, hour angles, right ascension, equinoxes, solstices, precession, and all that stuff. If that sounds like a fun read to you then this is a Great Book!

This book describes every type of sundial imaginable. Some of the math involved is formidable, but measuring time by the sun --and the moon, surprise, surprise-- formed the basis of our civilization.

loved it

Great for designing a local sundial. Also a good reference book.

Lots of info for the person looking for info on sundials.

All is Ok

Purchased this book as a gift for my husband who is interested in the history of sundials and has one he wants to repaint.

This is an interesting book, but it is also a very complex one. It includes a brief history of sundials and a lot of pictures of sundials, but if this is all you are looking for this book is clearly much more than what you are looking for. Most of the book is concerned with the geometry of sundials and the stereographic projection of the sun's shadow onto vertical, horizontal or curved surfaces. Much of this information is conveyed in a chapter titled "Some Gnomonic Cosmology" which is as complex as this title indicates. The chapter on "Classical Sundials" is equally complex. It is not just devoted to pictures of classical sundials (although a number are included), but is mostly devoted to the stereographic projection of the sun's shadow on to the surfaces of many types of dials. I have some familiarity with stereographic projection, but nonetheless found this material bordering on the incomprehensible. I was forced to consult Wikipedia in order to get a clearer explanation of the features that were being discussed. I do not know if this is because the book was originally written in

French and this therefore represents translation difficulties, of if the style is just not want a contemporary reader is used to. I would recommend this book to people who are quite familiar with sundials and are looking for a more scholarly treatment. However, I do not think that it is a very good choice for a general reader because when you subtract out the more complicated material you are not left with very much. Hence, I am giving this book only 3.5-stars, but since fractional stars are not allowed I am rounding it up to four-stars.

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