BURLINGTON, VERMONT

**Sundials: A combination of art, mathematics**

**BY HANNAH CROWLEY,**

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Enthusiasts will converge on Burlington next weekend from such far-flung places as Japan, England, California and beyond to celebrate the sundial, used in ancient Greece and Egypt, and still created and enjoyed in modern day.

The North American Sundial Society will hold its 16th annual conference in Vermont this year. The event is held each year in a different North American city.

Coinciding with the society's meeting is the dedication of "Come Light, Visit Me," a sundial recently installed behind Champlain College's new Roger H. Perry Hall on North Union Street in Burlington. The sculpture was created by Burlington artist Kate Pond, with the help of sundial designer and craftsman Bill Gottesman, both members of the society and longtime sundialists.

Pond approached David Provost, senior vice president for finance and administration at Champlain College, in 2008 with the idea to create a sundial to coincide with the restoration of the historic residence. Perry Hall, a restored 151-year-old brick mansion with a contemporary addition, is the college's new Welcome and Admissions Center.

The sundial, which will be funded by a private donation, is 6 1/2 feet tall and held in place with a gigantic block of underground concrete. The sculpture is made of corten weathering steel, a material Pond said she prefers for her public sculptures because of the character it develops over time.

"It weathers until a certain point, forms a rich patina, then stops rusting," Pond said.

The process takes between two to three years to be complete, but a warm, rusty orange has already woven an intricate pattern of rivulets across the sculpture's surface.

The sundial is a "pipe dial." Gottesman said the design is simple, elegant. The steel sculpture looks like a pipe that has been split open, and spread a bit wider, resembling a curled "C" from certain angles. The pipe is parallel to the access of the Earth, and the gnomons (the points that cast the shadow that reflects the time) points to the North Star.

"It's so nice to have it near my house," Pond said. The majority of her sculptures are far-flung across the globe. Starting in 1993, Pond installed the first of a series of five global sun sculptures, the final one was finished in 2007. They are located in Stanstead, Quebec; Oslo, Norway; Honolulu; Sendai, Japan; and Nelson, New Zealand. Pond worked with children during each installation and buried time capsules full of their artwork. More than 600 pieces went into the Honolulu capsule; high school students created sheets of paper with watercolor paintings on one side and poetry on the other. Pond will return to each site in 2015 to unearth them.

Pond discovered a love for sundials in the mid-'70s. As a sculptor, she did a residency at Williston Central School through the Vermont Council of the Arts. The principal at the time, a British woman, was interested in combining art and science. Pond and her students did time-lapse measurements of the sun's movements, figuring out the time as they plotted its progress across the sky.

Gottesman, a longtime sundial collaborator with Pond, worked on "Come Light, Visit Me," providing mathematical expertise. He became interested in sundials when he was a student at Dartmouth.

"I happened to pick up a book on sundials. They are such a precise instrument -- not just a discarded garden ornament," Gottesman said.

He went on to study medicine at Duke, eventually going into family practice. He worked as a doctor until 1996, when he decided he'd had enough of medicine and started a sundial company, Precision Sundial LLC. His business now ships three types of sundials that read watch time directly, compensate for daylight saving time, longitude, and the Equation of Time.

"I guess I wanted to be an engineer in another life," Gottesman said.

Of the allure of sundials Gottesman said people are fascinated by the mathematics, the artistic aspect, the history or the mottoes. He said dials are often engraved with a "pithy sentence meaning to instill fear or meaning in life."

During the conference, there is a bus tour of area dials and workshops, lectures and seminars. Pond's sculpture will be dedicated, and Gottesman will present, sharing sundial inventions that he's developed but has yet to build. They include: A wind-powered dial, a hologram dial and wearable sundial -- a take on modern jewelry. The latter would only tell the time from one location -- a sentimental homage to a geographical location, or serve as a practice tool for those who don't stray too far from home.

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**WHAT:** The 16th annual conference of the National Sundial Society

**WHEN:** Thursday-Aug. 15

**WHERE:** Burlington and beyond. The conference will be centered at the Holiday Inn in South Burlington.

**INFORMATION:** 864-3714, www.sundials.org. Registration required.

**COST:** Varies with participation; contact for more information.

**WHAT:** Dedication of "Come Light, Visit Me" by Kate Pond

**WHEN:** 9:50-11 a.m. Friday

**WHERE:** Behind Champlain College's Roger H. Perry Hall and Student Welcome Center in Burlington, the building stands at 251 S. Willard St., across the street from the main campus.

**INFORMATION:** 864-3714

**COST:** Free; open to the public.