

Wind Vane Encyclopedia Article

Wind Vane

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Wind Vane

The wind vane, or weather vane, is the simplest and oldest of weather instruments. As far back as 100 b.c., the Greeks mounted wind vanes atop statues of their gods. These functioned as ornaments until the sixteenth century.

Leonardo da Vinci made illustrations of many mechanical devices during the early 1500s, including the wind vane. Although often credited as being an inventor, many of his sketches were of devices already in existence.

In 1578, Egnation Dante, an astronomer from Bologna, was the first to use a directional indicator with a vane. His vane had a vertical dial. The first splayed dial, familiar today, was created in 1797 by G. R. Parrot of Paris. The first practical recording vane was developed in 1868 by F. Pfeiffer. It used a recording drum rotated by the vane's own power. Today, wind direction and velocity are usually recorded electronically at stations distant from the vane.