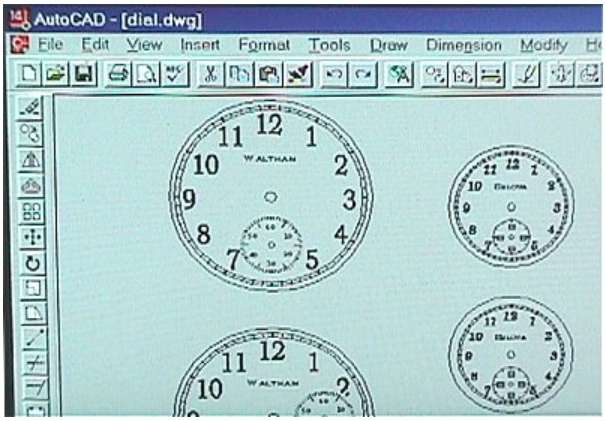
D.I.Y. Watch Dials

by Rob Berkavicius (Rob B)

Before you fall out of your chair in horror at the thought of home-made dials, let me explain why I make my own dials. Although I collect watches, my main interest is in collecting and restoring old watch movements. This is a way of actually getting to use some of these movements, most of which do not have their own cases or dials. So, I have a few watch cases of various sizes in which I can place a particular movement if I want to use it. This method of making dials is not intended to be a substitute for properly refinished dials, but just a method of pressing old movements into temporary service, just for the fun of it.



I use Autocad to do the dial design, as it allows the dial to be drawn in exact 1:1 scale. Also, considerable flexibility is possible in choice of fonts, and also it is very quick to use. A typical dial, as shown, takes me about 10 to 15 minutes to draw.

The image is printed on my 600dpi HP Laserjet printer onto white polyester (or could be Mylar) photocopier film. The finished printing quality is excellent and surprisingly enough, looks as good, or perhaps even better, than many professional redials you might see. Although there is a limitation in colour with this method of printing, ie, black printing on a white background, the effect is not unlike that of a porcelain dial.

The dials are cut out of the sheet with a sharp pair of scissors and the holes are punched with home-made punches made of brass modeller's tubing. They are attached to the movement with three or four 1/8" square pieces of double-sided tape.

Here is a pic of one of these dials on a 12 size Waltham pocket watch fitted with a Waltham 7j movement manufactured in 1896. It's nice be able to restore a movement and then carry it as a working watch. It may have been decades since this movement was last in "revenue earning" service.

Here is the same case with a 15j Waltham hunter movement manufactured in 1900. This illustrates how my method allows dials to be quickly and easily produced to accommodate differing movements, as it took less than 10 minutes to modify an existing drawing, print it, and cut it out ready for use.
