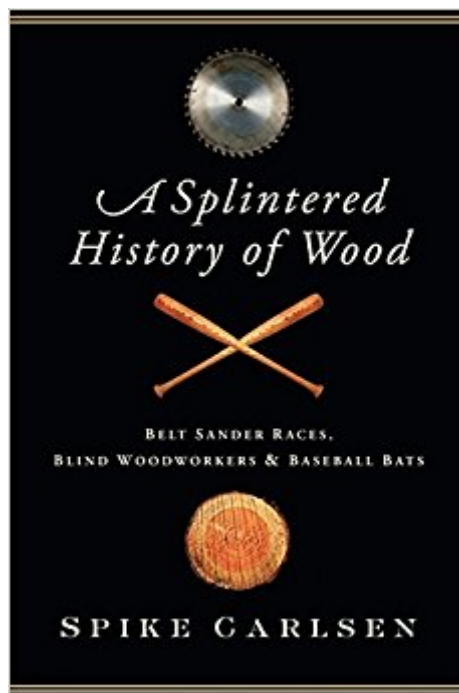




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A Splintered History Of Wood: Belt Sander Races, Blind Woodworkers, And Baseball Bats



Synopsis

A Splintered History of Wood is a passionate and personal exploration of nature's greatest gift: wood. In the successful tradition of books such as Salt and Cod, writer and carpenter Spike Carlsen explores the history, versatility, and special appeal of something we use everyday "but take for granted" in this comprehensive and dynamic history of wood's global impact and its personal significance to people in all walks of life.

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Customer Reviews

Carlsen (Reader's Digest Complete Do-It-Yourself Manual) gives a solid history of wood as he travels the world, analyzing the vast number of uses of a mundane natural resource. In doing so, Carlsen also uncovers the wide variety of personalities that work with wood every day, from the chainsaw artist appropriately named the Wild Mountain Man to the blind cabinetmaker who can see things with [his] fingers that you may not see with your eyes. He uncovers places where wood golf clubs are still manufactured today; explains which type of wood is best for a baseball bat; takes readers through the painstaking process used to make the beautiful Stradivarius violins and Steinway grand pianos; he also demonstrates how the gondola is a floating work of efficiency and ergonomic art. At one point, Carlsen visits a company in Maine that produces 50 billion toothpicks and 12 billion wooden matches each year. Carlsen includes photographs throughout this engaging and exhaustively researched work. (Sept.) Copyright © Reed Business Information, a division of Reed Elsevier Inc. All rights reserved.

Adult/High School "Carlsen explores our reliance on wood from numerous angles. A carpenter, woodworker, and author of dozens of books and articles on home improvement, he knows his subject well, and his love and respect for trees and all things made from them are evident on each page. The author includes just enough of the science of trees and wood, and of the technology of wood products and woodworking, to inform but not burden lay readers. Numerous stories add immeasurably to the book's appeal. Readers are told how a Steinway piano is built, why a Stradivarius violin is so special, about the role of the long bow in military history, and how pens and pencils evolved. In addition, there are discussions of the offbeat, including a full-scale (and functional) Ferrari carved of wood, the 36-year remodeling project known as the Winchester House, a staircase with no visible means of support, and the use of wood forensics in the Lindbergh kidnapping case. Carlsen explores the extraordinary variety of woods on our planet, the profession and hobby of fine woodworking, the tools used to work wood, and the many uses of it in our lives "in music, sports, shelter, furniture, weapons, and transportation. The volume ends with a word on the highly complex issues surrounding human use of the world's forests and the consequent effects on the global environment. Black-and-white photos are included. Thoroughly researched, thoughtful, and entertaining." "Robert Saunderson, Berkeley Public Library, CA

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This book is a light survey of different wood-related topics. With the large popularity of this book, I was expecting a great read; something with Ken Burns documentary quality, in book form. While the book delivered in some respects, it failed in others. I agree with the other reviewers who say that the narrative is meandering and leaves the reader wanting to know more. Depending on your personal interests, you may find some sections interesting, others boring -- I know I did. While I enjoyed certain sections (e.g., the ones on George & Mira Nakashima, the Spruce Goose, and wood as ancient support structures/piping), others (such as belt sander races) I found unnecessarily lengthy. A good writer/editor could have made those boring sections more interesting even to the casual reader. Perhaps a good gift for the burgeoning woodworker as a fun read over Christmas holiday break.

I don't know what the negative reviewers have in mind, except that they seem to be professional wood people who prefer an academic wood volume. For me, a hobby woodworker (boat, furniture) this book is a book of wonders. Not only do we get the scope of woodwork through history and now,

but we also get the fascinating details of varieties of wood, their properties and values, and the strange and wide-ranging uses to which they have been put. However, I am deducting one star because of the author's frequent cutesy-wootsy writing style that he must think is funny, but really only irritates. Because of this penchant for verbal acrobatics I would have put the book down early on, but the subject matter is so interesting I just held my nose and ploughed through it.

This book has been a big hit at the Schindler branch, and we've already given a copy as a gift. If you are (or know) someone who enjoys woodworking in any form, this is a no-brainer. Save the time spent reading this review and just click on the Order This button now. However, don't imagine that this book is interesting only if you have a power tool in your garage. Because this is darned great writing, wonderful "Wow I didn't know how they made that!" material, and -- well, heck, it's just FUN READING. This falls into the same entertaining category of books that explore one item in depth (such as Kurlansky's *Salt: A World History* or Mark Pendergrast's *Uncommon Grounds* on coffee). Unlike a lot of nonfiction, which is interesting in a plodding sort of way, you could easily bring along this book on an airplane flight. The book is in several sections: extraordinary woods; the wacky world of woodcrafters; the tools that work the wood; wood in music; in sports; in shelter; in day-to-day life; wood, weapons, and war; wood by land, air, and sea; in unusual uses and peculiar places. Each chapter has several vignettes. If you aren't excited by one essay, the next one will probably grab you (though I didn't have any ho-hum responses until near the end, and I think I was simply sleepy by then). So you might be interested in the quest for the most expensive board-foot, or maybe you'll be fascinated with Carlsen's interview with president Jimmy Carter (an avid woodworker), or you'll get excited to learn about Stradivarius violins. Perhaps it'll be baseball bats that capture your interest, or ten great moments in catapult history. For me, the most fun was the section on creating a xylarium -- a collection of wood samples (and isn't that one heck of a great Scrabble word?); there's even an International Wood Collector's Society. Because this book isn't only about wood -- it's about what we humans do with it. And Spike Carlsen infuses each essay with a celebration of how inventive we all are. I completely enjoyed this book. I think you will, too.

Beautiful book, well written and especially interesting if you enjoy reading about the origin of wood.

This book shows a side of wood most of us take for granted, or never even knew existed. The way Spike Carlsen covers the history, science and industrial uses of wood is not so detailed and dry that its mind numming, but rather gives a broader view of things most will be able to understand to

appreciate the wide versatility of mother natures engineering masterpiece, in a light hearted and upbeat way. The book also has many fun stories about encounters with some of the world's most famous wood workers and covers the joys of wood through chain saw contests, sander races, & more. This is not just a book wood workers will enjoy, but is a book for anyone who wants a look at the world around them in a different light as to how wood makes such an impact on lives throughout the world and history. Being a woodworker myself, I enjoyed the book thoroughly, & my wife, not a woodworker, enjoyed reading about the many interesting trivia pieces and historical impacts one doesn't normally hear of or think of when it comes to wood.

If you are a history person and like learning about the history of things and how they shaped the past and how they are shaping the future this book is for you. Yes it's a book about wood but its quite an interesting one. Finding out how wood first started getting used to how and why it became a defacto building material was an interesting journey. Toss in all the rare and hard to find woods that people pay tons of money for as well as belt sander races, and blind wood workers and you have a great read. They even touch on how lowly old wood has been used in America's great past time, baseball. All in all I would recommend it without even thinking twice.

Woodworkers, home builders, foresters and anyone who loves objects made of wood should read this book. Mr Carlsen could significantly contribute to the future of our environment by writing a version for young children. Especially the sections on the value that trees and wood add to our existence, and the value of our care of the trees by our proper use and management.

I find the book boring but it came right away

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