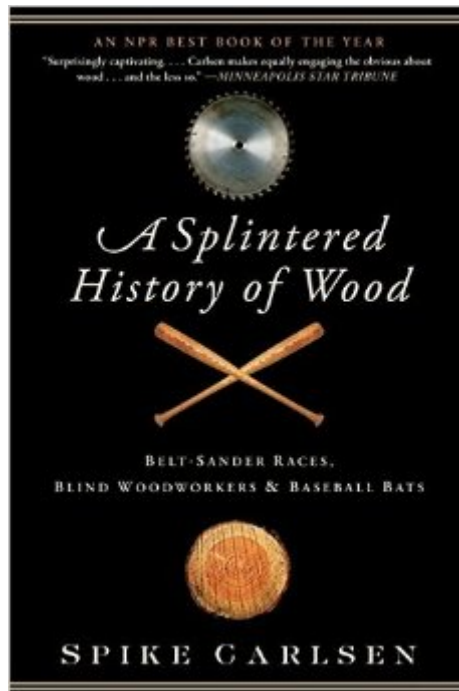


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# A Splintered History Of Wood: Belt-Sander Races, Blind Woodworkers, And Baseball Bats



## 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.

## Book Information

Paperback: 432 pages

Publisher: Harper Perennial; Reprint edition (August 18, 2009)

Language: English

ISBN-10: 0061373575

ISBN-13: 978-0061373572

Product Dimensions: 5.3 x 1 x 8 inches

Shipping Weight: 1.3 pounds (View shipping rates and policies)

Average Customer Review: 4.3 out of 5 stars See all reviews (46 customer reviews)

Best Sellers Rank: #292,445 in Books (See Top 100 in Books) #14 in Books > Crafts, Hobbies & Home > Home Improvement & Design > How-to & Home Improvements > Woodworking > Furniture & Carpentry #53 in Books > Crafts, Hobbies & Home > Home Improvement & Design > Furniture

## Customer Reviews

This is a book about wood that will amaze you, inform you, make you wise and make you laugh. Where else, between two covers could you hope to learn about the history of the catapult, the world's largest wooden airplane, a model city built of 2 million toothpicks, how a grand piano is made, the world championship belt sander races, and much, much more. On top of that you will get more solid, well-informed information about wood and trees than you ever thought you'd want to know. And you'll keep reading right to the end because it's beautifully and smoothly written and great fun throughout.

Spike Carlsen took a topic that could have been as exciting as, well, watching wood grow, carved it into a well-written story, with lots of humor and tales of how us humans---our very society itself---would not, could not be the same as it is today without this precious resource. This book, and the folks in it (and their unique personalities), and the woods themselves (each exotic specimen having its own incomparable story) is written with the same reverence an author would bring to a

well researched and documented historical novel. He explains in exquisite, easy to read detail why certain woods are used for specific applications and how highly skilled craftsmen produce one of a kind pieces, which because they are made from material that were once alive, have taken on a life of their own. Great book I know will enjoy as much as I have!

I noticed this book in the new release section of my local bookstore and picked it up to take a look-see and I am glad that I did! This book truly was a fun and enjoyable read. It is broken down into chapters that talk about different types of wood, it's uses and qualities which turn out to be infinitely varied and really interesting. And just as interesting are the stories of the people, the cultures and even the author who we get to learn about in this book. I really enjoyed picking this book up learning about table sander races, maple bats, how Venice was built, bow and arrows, mysteries and miracles. I am not a wood worker and before I read this book I would never have thought to have listed "wood" as a hobby or interest but after reading this I realize we all are. And I already caught myself looking at the wood of my cello which I don't think I had ever done before and thought about the chopsticks I used last night. I recommend this book to anyone who enjoys "characters" because this book is full of them- the people and the wood kind. The book is conversational and you read it that way; you also learn a few things along the way. Whether you are wood worker or just a curious kind of person.

Because this book is as much about people as it is about wood it's incredibly readable -- and funny. The author got out from behind the desk and got into the stories as much as possible and shares self-effacing tales along the way. The book is set-up as individual essays so readers can pick and choose where to start. I was drawn to the one on Jimmy Carter and how wood forensics helps to solve crimes. It's good for the Cliffy Claven in your life as well as the public radio essay listener looking for a human lesson behind the facts.

I like a good book where I can imagine the author is talking directly to me, like he's sitting on my sofa, entralling me with story after story. That is pretty much how I felt about Spike Carlsen's *A Splintered History of Wood*. It isn't one of those books you can plow through in just one sitting, though. You have to read it more like you read Robert Fulgum or James Krenov - one chapter at a time, taking a break in between sittings to absorb what you've just read. You can't read this book when you're in a hurry, either. You have to approach it with a calm and relaxed mind; you have to be willing to be drawn away from your hectic day into a narrative about one of every woodworker's

favorite topics - wood. As you read the first chapter on extraordinary woods, you'll develop mysterious cravings and desires when Spike reports on where you can get 50,000 year old Kauri wood (I have some), discusses WOOD PORN with Mitch Talcove, and interviews people who make a living salvaging redwood logs. Later, you'll be awed by stories of woodworkers who are blind, artists who can carve your name in a pencil with a chainsaw, and an inspirational visit with Mira Nakashima. Spike then dives into wood as it relates to music and sports, detailing what goes into making a world class violin, a Steinway piano, a persimmon wood golf club, and a pool cue. With a knack for making even the mundane seem amazing, Carlsen jumps into stories about wood used in construction, from people who live in trees to the 36-year remodeling project called the Winchester House. His chapter on weapons and war, interesting to anyone who ever played knights as a child, covers such topics as catapults and the English long bow. He ends his book on a note he describes as, "emotional, environmental, and political." In this final chapter, which includes an interview with Patrick Moore (one of the founding members of Greenpeace), he details reasons for using wood more than steel, concrete, and plastic. He also discusses methods for maintaining natural forested areas while planting trees specifically for harvesting and his thoughts on purchasing endangered woods. I don't know - it all seemed like common sense to me.

This is a fabulous "fill-in" book. It fills in when you just have a few minutes to read at a time, like during the week for me. But I don't mean that negatively. You can start and finish however many little interesting stories you can cram in within the time allotted. I happen to be a carpenter and woodworker but nearly every tidbit in here was still new and interesting to me. (Well, at least with the exception of what framing lumber dimensions actually are). I'm kind of a minutiae nut and if you're the same way, you'll love this book. He does an uncanny job of painting mental pictures of arcane topics like the building of guitars, pianos or baseball bats. It's fortunate that the writing is so understandable and concise because the pictures are a bit lacking. OK so there's one negative comment!

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