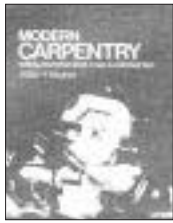




Modern Carpentry Update

by Paul Hanke



Modern Carpentry, 1992 Edition, by Willis Wagner (Goodheart-Wilcox, 1992; 708/333-7200). 592 pages. Hardcover, 8 1/2 x 11. \$33.20.

Willis Wagner's *Modern Carpentry* has been a staple reference in the building trades for years. My own copy dates from 1976, so I was interested in comparing the 1992 edition with my old one. The most apparent and pleasant difference is in the graphics. The new version has lots of color — both photos and colored drawings — and even the text is improved, with large, bold type and improved headings that make for easier reading.

While much of the material is similar to the older version, virtually every chapter has been either reorganized or partially rewritten. Some updating has also been done. There are two entirely new chapters on solar applications and remodeling, both of which are good overviews. The passive solar unit even includes rule-of-thumb design guidelines. And Wagner, like his colleagues in the following review, has added a few paragraphs on "entrepreneurship" to his chapter on construction careers, to encourage young builders who dream of someday going it alone. There is also new information on steel beams and joists, floor trusses, metal bracing, roll roofing, and modern high-performance glazing. As a sign of the times, hex shingles and asphalt siding have disappeared, and the interior finish chapter now begins with gyp board instead of plastering.

The new edition is over 100 pages longer than my original, but still remains more concise than *Carpentry and Building Construction*. However, Wagner does a decidedly better job than his competitors on the subjects of plans and specs,

plank-and-beam framing, and especially hand tools. Curiously, Wagner's only mention of laminated veneer lumber and wood I-beams is in a photo appended, seemingly as an afterthought, to the section on ceiling framing, and no reference whatsoever to these materials appears in the index. Other minor complaints I had were the failure to discuss rubber roof membranes (built-up roofing still seems to be the state-of-the-art for Wagner), the short shrift given to the usefulness of radiant barriers in hot climates when discussing reflective insulation, and the suggestion that deciduous trees are preferable to roof overhangs for solar shading (bare trees still cast a 30% shadow pattern, and are therefore a poor choice).

If your old copy of *Modern Carpentry* is getting worn, if you simply want to trade up, or if you are a teacher looking for a graphically exciting textbook, I recommend that you pick up a copy.

Another Good Carpentry Text



Carpentry and Building Construction, 4th Edition, by John Feirer, Gilbert Hutchins, and Mark Feirer (Glencoe, A Division of Macmillan/McGraw-Hill School Publishing, 1993; 800/334-7344). 954 pages. Hardcover, 8 1/2 x 11. \$32.97.

My initial reaction when I received the new edition of *Carpentry and Building Construction* was to ask, "Does the world really need another carpentry book?" But after reading it, I realized that it may actually be the best of the bunch — despite an above-average number of glitches and quibbles.

One reason for my enthusiasm is that this updated edition includes material on metal connectors, engi-

neered lumber, wood I-beams, pneumatic nailers, staples, and other new-fangled technology. This is good information, especially if you're in the business of training young carpenters.

The other feature that strongly recommends this book is its expanded scope. The authors reach far beyond the narrow confines of the methods and materials of rough and finish carpentry. There are sections on energy-efficiency, foundations, metal roofing, brick veneer, radiant barriers, sound attenuation, drywall, vinyl flooring, and even ceramic tile. A "Related Activities" section discusses chimneys, fireplaces, decay and insect protection, scheduling, mechanical systems, and painting. The final chapter discusses model-building, coastal and seismic design, wood foundations, renovation work, and manufactured housing. All of this adds up to a book that will be of interest to seasoned builders and homeowners, as well as to students, apprentices, and teachers.

A few oversights plague an otherwise good book. For example, pressure-treated lumber is not suggested as a mudsill material, and the chapter on hand tools consists solely of photos with very brief descriptions. (The chapters on individual power tools are much better, however.) The advantages of continuous ridge vents are all but ignored, and readers will have to look elsewhere for instruction on how to build anything other than the most elementary tract-style cornice return.

Nonetheless, this would be my current first choice if I were looking for a basic carpentry or house-building textbook, or if I were teaching a basic building course. I would only caution that instructors should not make assignments without reading the material, so they can make corrections and fill in gaps as necessary. ■

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