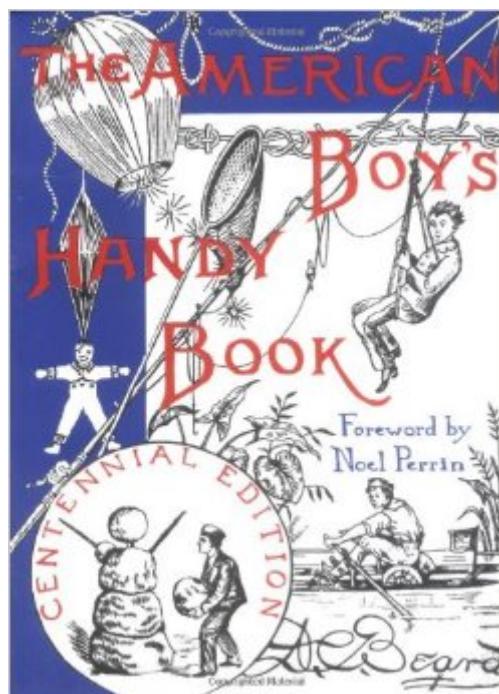


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The American Boy's Handy Book: What To Do And How To Do It, Centennial Edition



Synopsis

First published in 1882, this is a wealth of projects and games, with practical directions on how to make them, by one of the founders of the Boy Scouts of America. The ultimate pre-TV, anti-couch potato activity book, it answers the question, "What's there to do?"

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

I had a copy of this as a kid and read and re-read it to the point that the cover was more tape than original material. A wonderful guide to doing things yourself, and a welcome antidote to today's passive consumer paradigm of childhood. A fair number of the materials called for are hard if not impossible to find today, but the spirit of adaptation and improvisation that imbues this book will inspire the reader to find substitutes. Some parents may suspect the fair number of projectile-launching devices described, but the book is infinitely less violent than most child-oriented television shows and never fails to stress safety. My friends and I learned a lot of practical mechanics and crafting skills, developed our hand-eye coordination, and never shot anything more fragile than a plastic figure. We did a heck of a lot more damage to each other and our environment playing soccer and broomstick polo. My own future children will unquestionably have a copy of The American Boy's Handy Book when they're old enough.

Filled with black & white illustrations and schematics, this guide for American boys, originally published in 1882, is organized by season and is chock-full of instructions, suggestions and advice about kites, fishing, knots, telescopes, tents, soap bubbles, animals, snowball warfare, puppets,

kaleidoscopes, whirligigs, costumes, decoys--even fireworks!! The emphasis is on building things yourself, and to that end it is an extremely valuable handbook for our increasingly passive society. There are definitely things here that will give you pause or that are culturally dated -- like making a blow gun, trapping and raising wild animals and taxidermy at home -- but that is where parenting comes in, and all-in-all I would say this is a valuable and exciting book for kids, filled with pragmatic insights and a fun historical document as well. Snowball war, anyone?

In 1949, I was given a 1890 hard bound addition of this book. I can not begin to tell you how many of the projects in this book gave me so much fun and a sense of achievement to complete. To this day, I'll thumb through the pages and remember a time when life was a lot easier and children were allowed to be children.

I read this book for my own pleasure (as an adult) and refer to it for activities for my own sons (ages 3 and 7) and for my den of Wolf Cub Scouts (2nd graders). It's excellent and fun and useful!

I'm divided as to how to review this book. Part of me wants to address the parents of the children this book seems to be directed to. And part of me wants to treat this book as a historical reference. To take the easier path first, let me talk about the American Boy's Handy Book's place in history. The book was written by Daniel Carter Beard. Carter was an artist, naturalist and early founder of the Boy Scouts of America. His love of the outdoors and empathy for youth is evident right from the start of the first chapter: he writes, "[I]t is a pleasant sensation to sit in the first spring sunshine and feel the steady pull of a good kite upon the string, and watch its graceful movements as it sways from side to side, ever mounting higher and higher, as if impatient to free itself and soar away amid the clouds." And it was his concern with the lack of structure and supervision of city kids that caused him to write this book. His own childhood was in antebellum Ohio. When his life took him to the city of New York he despaired at seeing the news boys sleeping on the wet streets and he began writing all sorts of articles for children's magazines of the time. Eventually, he was urged to collect these pieces and to put them in a single volume. The American Boy's Handy Book is the result. Chapter Headings, under the major seasonal divisions: Spring 1. Kite Time 2. War Kites 3. Novel Modes of Fishing 4. Hand-Made Fishing Tackle 5. How to Stock, Make, and Keep a Fresh-Water Aquarium 6. How to Keep Aquatic Plants in the House or Flower-Garden 7. How to Stock and Keep a Marine Aquarium 8. How to Collect for Marine Aquarium Summer 9. Knots, Bends, and Hitches 10. The Water-Telescope 11. Dredge, Tangle and Trawl Fishing 12. Home-Made Boats 13. How to Rig

and Sail Small Boats14. Novelties in Soap-Bubbles15. Fourth of July Balloons, with New and Novel Attachments16. How to Camp Out Without a Tent17. Bird Singers, etc.18. Bird Nesting19. How to Rear Wild Birds20. How to Rear Wild Birds - continued21. Home-Made Hunting Apparatus22. How to Make Blow-Guns, Elder Guns, etc. Autumn23. Traps and Trapping24. Dogs25. Practical Taxidermy for Boys26. Every Boy a Decorative Artist Winter27. Snowball Warfare28. Snow-Houses and Statuary29. Sleds, Chair-Sleighs, and Snow-Shoes30. How to Make the Tom Thumb Ice-Boat and Larger Craft31. The Winged Skaters, and How to Make the Wings32. Winter Fishing - Spearing and Snaring - Fisherman's Movable Shanties, Etc.33. In-Door Amusements34. The Boy's Own Phunnygraph35. How to Make Puppets and a Puppet-Show36. Push-In-Boots. Dramatized and Adapted for a Puppet-Show37. How to Make a Magic Lantern - A Kaleidoscope - A Fortune Teller's Box, etc.38. How to Make the Dancing Fairies, The Bather, and The Orator39. How to Make Various and Divers Whirligigs40. The Universe in a Card-Box41. Life Instilled into Paper Puppets, and Matches Made of Human Fingers42. Home-Made masquerade and Theatrical Costumes

You might wonder why I list this chapters. I do it first because I have not found them given anywhere else. And you need to see, as Historians or History enthusiasts the scope of activities that are covered. Carter really provides, in my opinion, a look into both indoor and outdoor activities of the times. These are the activities that the boys and men going into Civil War would have known about. What they would have done to pass the evenings at home, and it gives a precursor of the basic field skills they might have had. Now, for the parents and adults that are considering this book for children. Let me say that this is not a 19th Century equivalent of "The Dangerous Book for Boys". This is a book written before there were Warning Labels and you will have to assess the readiness of your child to read the book. What I mean by this is that The "American Handy Book for Boys" is filled with activities, some of which should not be attempted by anyone under 12 years of age. While some projects like the costumes and "phunnygraph" and kites are more or less timeless and safe activities, there are others like making your own boomerang and outdoor oven, that require tools that most of us don't normally hand over to youngers. And there are other activities that ought not to ever be engaged in, even with adult supervision. Blowing up balloons using natural gas comes to mind. Similarly there are other activities that ought to only be engaged in under adult supervision, like dissecting a bird and stuffing it. There are other activities like making costumes and whirligig's that are harmless. But I would suggest this book for the mature, young adult. Perhaps someone interesting in the times of Huck Finn. I highly recommend this book for it's unique view of the past. It would make a great gift for someone like myself who is interested in the sociological side of history. Or the older child, like an Eagle Scout, who might want to experiment with making their own oven, boat, blow gun, camp

Not much has changed in the 110 years since this book was first published. Children still love the outdoors and to make crafts.Return to the simple life and learn to build all kinds of kites. How about a "fisherman's friend" that alerts you when you have a nibble?Hundreds of simple projects that, if done as individuals, or as families will bring a smile to your face ... and you won't even miss the television

I bought this for my urban, "not-into-reading" nephews when they were 11 and 9 years old, thinking that they might not ever crack the cover, yet today (they are now 17 and 15) I found it in their bookcase well-worn. They say they've really enjoyed it, and tried several of the projects. Although its style is antique, and not quite as easy to follow as the "...for Dummies" type of how-to books, and some of the topics may no longer be of interest, I highly recommend it for all kids (boys and girls). I am buying it for my young daughters (and myself), expecting our family will enjoy it for many years to come.Topics include "Snowball Warfare" and a whole section on Winter, "Home-Made Boats," "Novelties in Soap Bubbles," "How to Camp Out without a Tent," "Dogs," "How to Make Puppets and a Puppet Show," and "How to Make Various and Divers Whirligigs."If you want to get your kids out from in front of the TV or computer and foster their creativity, buy this book and open it!

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