

June 2013

Book Review: The American Boy's Handy Book by Daniel Carter Beard

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Recommended Citation

Weaver, Robert, "Book Review: The American Boy's Handy Book by Daniel Carter Beard" (2013). *Faculty Publications and Presentations*. Paper 86.

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Book Review: *The American Boy's Handy Book* by Daniel Carter Beard

By Bob Weaver

A nostalgic re-print of a practical manual for a boy's life around the turn of the 20th century. Sadly, many of the activities in this book are out of reach for the modern boy. The manual assumes the reader lives if not in utter wilderness, at least within walking distance of nature; which is no longer the case for most urban or even suburban boys. Also, a lot of the projects for building things assume the boy has access to items which are no longer commonly to be found; wooden barrel lids for one.

The book is not for these reasons useless; several activities, such as knot-tying, are still practical skills to learn. In areas that get snow in the winter, the directions for building snow forts and playing winter games are clear and the designs work.

As a practical how-to manual or as a social history of childhood in America, the Handy Book is an enjoyable and useful book.