



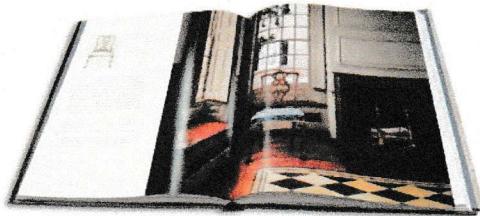
Book 'Em, Danno

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I FOUND ALL OF THESE AT USED-BOOK STORES, FLEA MARKETS, AND WOODWORKING SHOWS

I've had a love affair with books for as long as I can remember. So when I started making furniture, it was just another excuse to check out those second-hand bookstores.

I did a quick count before writing this article. Sixty-seven books on building, turning, carving, finishing, history, etc. line my bookshelves. Some were looked at once and will never be cracked again. Others are beautiful coffee-table books that are great to look



at but don't teach you anything. The most valuable ones, though, are those that I actually turn to when trying to figure out how to build something. Here are a few.

The Complete Illustrated Guide to Shaping Wood, by Lonnie Bird, is one of my favorites. I find myself turning to it almost every time I run into a problem, especially when trying to create some complex shapes (Taunton Press, 2001).

Another go-to reference book is the Encyclopedia of Furniture Making. Written by Ernest Joyce in in 1970 and updated by Alan Peters in in 1987, some of the photographs and styles are dated. But there's a ton of useful information in there, dealing with "basic handcrafts," as Joyce put it.

Bob Flexner's Understanding Wood Finishing is always helpful (Reader's Digest, 2005). But George Grotz's The Furniture Doctor is a lot more fun.

With chapter titles such as Bleaching—The Blonds I Have Known and A Shameful Guide to Some Nefarious Practices, how could it not be (Doubleday, 1962)?

Another favorite is Fine Furniture for the Amateur Cabinetmaker by A.W. Marlow. Aimed at "amateurs with a serious purpose but little experience," it offers clear instructions and more than 450 photos. Projects range from simple to challenging.

Chests of Drawers by Bill Hylton is a collection of projects by various craftsmen. It taught me a lot about basic construction techniques. I built Glen Huey's Queen Anne chest-on-frame and found the instructions very clear (Taunton Press, 2002).

Once I started getting into period furniture, I found Norman Vandal's Queen Anne Furniture: History, Design and Construction very helpful. It includes measured drawings for 18 pieces, with lots of history and how-to. (Originally published in 1990 by Taunton Press, my copy is a 2006 reprint by Algrove Publishing.)

More recently, I acquired a copy of American Furniture of the 18th Century by Jeffrey P. Greene. Again, a good mix of history and technique, though it would have been nice if the drawings were measured drawings. I referred to it while building my latest project (Taunton Press, 1996).

I don't do dovetails every day, so I always pull out Rob Cosman's Hand-Cut Dovetails—Shop Copy as a refresher. You probably won't do everything his way, but you won't go wrong if you study this little book (American Craftsman Publications, 2006).

Thomas Moser's Artistry in Wood probably shouldn't be on this list, since it's not really a reference book. But it's one I look at every once in a while, because it's full of beautiful photos and

many thoughtful reflections on design and creativity. (It does contain some useful tips. For example, his finishing process includes heating boiled linseed oil to 130 degrees before application. "While a drop of room-temperature oil would slowly and reluctantly soak into the wood, a heated drop vanished into it like melted butter on a cotton shirt.")

The best part about this collection is that, other than the Moser book, I found all of these at used-book stores, flea markets, and woodworking shows. This doesn't have to be an expensive hobby, unless you're collecting rare first editions. Will having a big collection of books make you a better cabinetmaker? Of course not. But finding ones that offer useful information and inspiration will certainly help.

Despite the internet and all the DVDs and courses now available, there's still nothing quite like finding a great book in the dark recesses of some little bookstore where you least expected it. And then finding just the answer you're looking for when you need it.

I'm sure you have many other books on your list. Pins & Tales would love to hear from you. Shoot me an email at woodworker@rogers.com and share your favorites. —JB



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