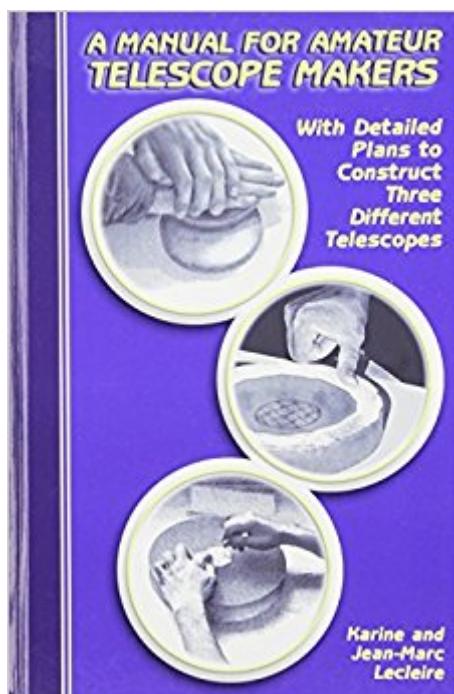


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A Manual For Amateur Telescope Makers: With Detailed Plans To Construct Three Different Telescopes



Synopsis

This is a manual for amateur telescope makers with plans to construct three telescopes.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

This is a manual for amateur telescope makers with plans to construct three telescopes.

This book clearly shows its age, with references to some older items in certain designs, but it has a tremendous amount of foundational information on mirror making.

This is primarily a book about astronomical mirror fabrication, and a very good one. Although it discusses the fabrication of three different telescopes, a 5" Newtonian, a 10" Newtonian and a 12" Cassegrain in some detail, don't imagine it's like Richard Berry's classic, "Build Your Own Telescope". Berry's book is concerned principally with fabrication of the mounts and includes cautionary, almost discouraging comments on optical fabrication, but nevertheless includes a couple of very good chapters on elementary optical work near the end of the book. A "Manual for Amateur Telescope Makers" on the other hand, is more in the tradition of Jean Texereau's classic, "How to Make a Telescope", but is a far more readable and modern format. Using the three different telescope designs mentioned above, it introduces the reader to progressively more demanding concepts and techniques. Abrasive selection, grinding and polishing technique, Foucault testing, fringe testing flat mirrors, judging acceptable tolerances, defect correction, wire test, caustic test and

telescope window fabrication are just a few examples. There are a couple of features I really liked about this book. It has little "tip" boxes in the style of computer books. Things like "A Few Essential Rules for Polishing", "Dealing with a Severe Turned Down Edge", "Blocking Pitch, How Thick" or "Advantages and Disadvantages of the Caustic Test" to give just a few examples from dozens in the book. The text is always succinct, clear and authoritative. Did you know that the thinner the wire, the more precise the wire test and that the diameter of the wire should be slightly larger than the opening of the slit? There are lots of tips and answers to questions that many ATMers have no doubt asked and not been answered in Texereau or Ingalls' books. In this day of cheap, value for money, mass produced telescopes, why bother to make a telescope anyway? The authors give the following reasons: it enables you to understand your own telescope more fully, it's exciting and it saves you money. Somehow these explanations seem to miss the excitement felt by those who have successfully completed quality instruments. Certainly you'll understand your scope far better than buying one off the shelf. However you'll probably be able to buy a reasonable second hand or even new small aperture (8" or less) scope for about the same price as making your own. Larger telescope fabrication does offer the chance to save quite a bit of money. Mastering techniques of optical fabrication, on the other hand, opens a new world of possibilities to you. Make your own large aperture mirrors, Cassegrain or TCT optics or whatever your imagination suggests. No longer are you confined to the design ideas of the engineers at Meade, Celestron or any other telescope makers, however worthy their thoughts may be. As the authors say, "... the figuring and testing techniques used for the 300mm mirror can be applied in the making of 375- to 500-mm mirrors." My advice to readers concerning which books to buy about telescope making is this: If you're a half reasonable handyman and want to get a mirror and build a scope for as little as possible, buy Richard Berry's "Build Your Own Telescope". If you're a half-reasonable handyman and want a big mirror and scope, but optical fabrication is not your interest, Berry and Kriege's "The Big Dobsonian" just can't be beat. Buy a big mirror. If you hanker for a deeper understanding of telescope systems and might ultimately like to make larger or more sophisticated optics and instruments of your own design, "A Manual for Amateur Telescope Makers" is the best place to start. If you've got something out of it but still thirst for knowledge, you should follow up with Texereau's, "How to Make a Telescope" and Ingalls' "Amateur Telescope Making". Then if you're still enthused, Willmann-Bell and some other publishers provide a large number of books of more specialized interest. I have to give "A Manual for Telescope Makers" five stars although it does have some shortcomings. On many occasions it states how to do things without detailed explanations of why. It doesn't say why the authors chose a Coude type arrangement for the 300mm scope, for example, although the

experienced ATMer will understand the advantages and disadvantages. Generally the book, although having a pervading tone of authority, is somewhat dogmatic and doesn't state any alternative views or areas of controversy, and it's also a little too brief in some places in order to achieve succinctness. The mount designs are briefly described, seem to be quite functional, but won't win awards for aesthetics, although they're a step up from Richard Berry's designs in "Build Your Own Telescope", which look about as boxy as a 1975 Volvo. Overall I'd say that a book like "A Manual for Telescope Makers" has been overdue and should be the first choice of novice ATMers in the decades to come. The big financial advantage of ATMing in the future will be in the fabrication of large mirrors and this book introduces the techniques involved. I love it.

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