
chapter 1. INTRODUCTION

Although wood has been used as a material of construction for thousands of years, wood construction as we know it is a modern invention. The platform frame system evolved directly from the balloon frame that was developed in the Chicago area in the latter part of the nineteenth century. Once established, changes were generally incremental until the explosion in construction following World War II.

The construction system has changed both rapidly and radically since that time. For confirmation one needs only to look at the difference in character of communities developed in the thirties as opposed to those of the eighties. These changes have appeared in every aspect of the construction process. As a result, we have the finest housing delivery system in the world.

This delivery system has not been achieved without cost. As the scale of construction has increased and each of the participants has become more specialized, the system has become disconnected, with few individuals knowledgeable in any area except their own specialties. The final owner no longer knows, generally, the capabilities of the construction team or the merits of the design and materials used. Designs, materials, and construction methods, along with the knowledge and abilities of the individuals involved, have

changed. So have codes and regulations governing construction. Planning requirements were generally nonexistent 50 years ago, and building codes have evolved from a concern limited to life safety issues to one heavily directed to property values as well. In the process, these codes became regarded by many as defining an optimum quality of construction rather than the minimum level they were intended to set. Small wonder that litigation over construction quality is common and that a distinct specialty of law practice has evolved, bringing with it a community of forensic experts in a field of "building pathology", with specialists in every possible subcategory.

Wood products and components probably perform no better or any worse than those fabricated of other materials. Wood is the only major construction material that derived nearly unmodified from growing plants, which gives it a set of properties that is unique. The following chapters offer ideas and suggestions that, if followed, we believe will result in improved performance. These have been formulated through years of experience, including many in this field of construction pathology.

These details are not necessarily more expensive, although many are. Our objective is to achieve a significantly higher

level of performance than that too often found in typical wood construction. Suggested details result from more than 50 years of combined authors' experience and exposure and still are not intended to be the "last words" in appropriate design. Accordingly, we welcome suggestions and ideas that meet the objective of this manual which will result in better or more realistic

details of wood construction. It is the intent of the authors that individual details will be updated as better ideas or increased experience become available. Also, important areas have not been included in this first edition. We felt our first priority was to establish the manual. Expansion, both in breadth and depth, is left for revisions.