

Preface to the First Edition*

This Handbook is intended to supply both the practicing engineer and the student with a reference work which is authoritative in character and which covers the field of mechanical engineering in a comprehensive manner. It is no longer possible for a single individual or a small group of individuals to have so intimate an acquaintance with any major division of engineering as is necessary if critical judgment is to be exercised in the statement of current practice and the selection of engineering data. Only by the cooperation of a considerable number of specialists is it possible to obtain the desirable degree of reliability. This Handbook represents the work of fifty specialists.

Each contributor is to be regarded as responsible for the accuracy of his section. The number of contributors required to ensure sufficiently specialized knowledge for all the topics treated is necessarily large. It was found desirable to enlist the services of thirteen specialists for an adequate handling of the "Properties of Engineering Materials." Such topics as "Automobiles," "Aeronautics," "Illumination," "Patent Law," "Cost Accounting," "Industrial Buildings," "Corrosion," "Air Conditioning," "Fire Protection," "Prevention of Accidents," etc., though occupying relatively small spaces in the book, demanded each a separate writer.

A number of the contributions which deal with engineering practice, after examination by the Editor-in-Chief, were submitted by him to one or more specialists for criticism and suggestions. Their cooperation has proved of great value in securing greater accuracy and in ensuring that the subject matter does not embody solely the practice of one individual but is truly representative.

An accuracy of four significant figures has been assumed as the desirable limit; figures in excess of this number have been deleted, except in special cases. In the mathematical tables only four significant figures have been kept.

The Editor-in-Chief desires to express here his appreciation of the spirit of cooperation shown by the Contributors and of their patience in submitting to modifications of their sections. He wishes also to thank the Publishers for giving him complete freedom and hearty assistance in all matters relating to the book from the choice of contributors to the details of typography.

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* Excerpt.