

Foreword

No other material has played as large a role in the history of human development as wood. No other material has influenced us as much, and no other material has been as extensively shaped and transformed by us. Wood does not have a rarefied, exclusive air. The ideas with which it is associated have evolved slowly over millennia. It not only boasts great strength, but can be worked, shaped and altered in a multitude of ways – properties from which dedicated master carpenters, engineers and architects have profited since time immemorial.

“Developments in Timber Engineering. The Swiss Contribution” reports on the work of these masters, placing particular emphasis on the contribution made by Swiss wood builders and architects. The book charts out the development of wood as a building material in Switzerland and depicts the influence of Swiss experts.

Wood was indispensable in many areas of life well into the nineteenth century, but its role was gradually usurped by the new technical materials steel and concrete in the early twentieth century. In recent years, the development of new wooden materials with large dimensions and great strength, as well as improvements in connection technology, have given wood a unique new position in the field of engineered applications. Over the last few decades, daring builders have designed and constructed numerous structures in Switzerland that have not only blazed new trails, but set the tone for further developments. These structures are distinguished by originality, high-

quality design and breathtaking dimensions. Vivid architectural examples reveal the extraordinary interplay between inventive talent, research and the trust designers place in material strength. Now and in the past, the studies conducted by Swiss universities and research facilities have been instrumental in establishing and advancing the technical credibility and reliability of engineered timber construction.

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Anton Steurer