

Audel Covers the Roof

Audel Complete Roofing Handbook (2nd edition)
by James E. Brumbaugh, revised by John Leeke
(Macmillan, 1992; 800/562-1272). 519 pages.
Hardcover, 5 1/2 x 8 1/2. \$30.

by Paul Hanke



In the February issue, I came down hard on Audel's four-volume *Carpenters and Builders Library*, which I found to be dated and lacking in depth. So I'm sure my editor thought twice before asking me to consider Audel's *Complete Roofing Handbook* for review this month. But he'd heard it was "better than the others," and it is. In fact, I'd say it's a pretty good reference for most (but not all) aspects of residential roofing.

First on the agenda is an introduction to roofing styles, from simple gables to conical roofs, with descriptions of various framing methods used to accomplish each. Terms are clearly defined and lots of crisp, black-and-white drawings and a few photos accompany the text. Following this introductory material is a concise overview of roofing and reroofing procedures, including a clear explanation of the difference between "pitch" and "slope," and discussions of tools, materials, safety, and estimating. The remainder of the book is mostly devoted to practical applications of common roofing materials, from preparing the roof deck to installing French tiles. There is a lengthy and informative chapter on ventilation, and separate chapters on skylights, dormers, and flashing, plus gutters and downspouts.

Unfortunately, several glaring errors stand out amid all this otherwise useful information. Some are simple transpositions which can, nevertheless, confuse the uninitiated. For example, in reference to two figures showing gable vents and soffit vents, the text erroneously states that ridge vents are not effective when used with soffit vents. Since the author correctly points out later that ridge vents provide the best roof ventilation, this is apparently a muddling of text and pictures that somehow slipped by both the author and his editors. Similarly, the chapter on dormers says that subflooring should be laid with the long dimension *parallel* to the joists, instead of perpendicular.

There are also several glaring omissions. The chapter on sky-

lights mentions, for example, that trusses may need to be cut, but gives no warning of the perils of doing so. And the purpose of collar ties — and the care required when removing them — is not discussed at all. Similarly, several

contemporary materials are utterly ignored or mentioned in passing. For example, there is no mention of using staples to fasten shingles, and there's only a simple note about substituting "a special ice and water shield material" for heavy felt paper at the eaves, without explaining what it is, who makes

it, or where to get it. Nor is there a hint that single-ply rubber roofing is becoming more popular than built-up roofing systems.

These omissions might be deliberate, given the author's stated "conservative bias" against new materials, but if that's the case, I wish he had specifically noted his reservations instead of ignoring the subject. It is an unfortunate flaw in an otherwise useful trade reference. ■

Paul Hanke is an architectural designer, teacher, writer, and occasional builder in Warren, Vt.

Footnotes

Way back in 1984, I recommended architect/builder Bob Syvanen's book *Interior Finish: More Tricks of the Trade From an Old-Style Carpenter* (Globe Pequot Press; 800/243-0495). It's a delightful little compendium of the kind of trade tips that are usually omitted from carpentry texts, such as how to pare down a joist with a hatchet when a circular saw won't do, how to straighten a bowed stud, and how to use saliva to repair a dimple in finish wood. Although the cover and the price (\$11.95) have changed, my opinion of Syvanen's book hasn't. It's a welcome addition to any builder's library.

—P.H.

