

Management.” Facing dwindling funding, the Army cut personnel and outsourced “non-core” jobs and housing and food services. The trends, Mittelstadt argues, signaled a powerful blow to the ideals espoused in the 1970s—that the Army should “take care of its own.”

Mittelstadt is most concerned with the ideological tensions surrounding entitlements, not with providing a political or institutional history of all forms of Army social assistance. A helpful Appendix briefly describes the variety of entitlements that comprised the military welfare state and could serve as the basis for further case studies.

The Rise of the Military Welfare State makes a variety of important contributions and deserves wide readership. Scholars have offered perspective on veterans’ benefits of the nineteenth and twentieth centuries, the selectivity and nebulosity of the U.S. welfare state, and the political underpinnings of the advent of the AVF and its impact on individuals and communities. Mittelstadt’s work relates to and builds upon each of those diverse fields of inquiry by artfully demonstrating that the military welfare state of the 1970s and beyond was predicated on historically contingent ideals regarding worthy service and just rewards.

JESSICA L. ADLER, *Florida International University*

Building the Skyline: The Birth and Growth of Manhattan’s Skyscrapers. By Jason M. Barr. New York: Oxford University Press, 2016. Pp. xvii, 437. \$49.95, hardcover. doi: 10.1017/S0022050717000407

Jason Barr, Associate Professor in the Department of Economics at Rutgers University, is intrigued by the built environment of Manhattan and its many skyscrapers: Why does the skyline look the way it does? He reduced his curiosity to a series of research questions that he has endeavored to answer through historical research and economic theory. This book presents his various studies related to the general questions, “How and why was the skyline (of Manhattan) created, and what were the forces that shaped its history and growth?” More specifically, he focuses on skyscrapers: “what has driven and continues to drive skyscraper heights, locations, frequencies, and shapes since the late nineteenth century” (p. 3).

The book is not a narrative nor an extended argument. Rather, it collects previously published research (half the chapters are revisions of published articles), which deal with the development of Manhattan generally and skyscrapers particularly, and adds some history as background to the studies. The first part of the book, “Before the Skyscraper Revolution,” contains most of the background, with chapters on the geology of Manhattan, and early settlement and patterns of land use. The second part deals with topics related to skyscrapers: what accounts for their height, the reason Midtown became a location for tall buildings, and, most importantly, the reasons for the absence of tall buildings between Lower Manhattan and Midtown.

Because the book treats so many different, often unrelated topics, it is difficult to evaluate as a whole. The most interesting part for me was Barr’s discussion in Chapter 9 of who built skyscrapers in the 1920s and a source of project financing called Gold Bonds. But I found many parts of the book problematic. An example concerns the shape of early skyscrapers. He questions Carol Willis’s finding (*Form Follows Finance*. New

York: Princeton Architectural Press, 1995) that the tower-type skyscraper in Lower Manhattan—a tall building on a small footprint—resulted from the difficulty of assembling large sites from the small lots found in the area. Barr asserts that if land prices are rising, landowners will sell; therefore, the specific conditions did not prevent “skyscraper developers from amassing the lots they needed or wanted” (p. 74). Then why this distinctive shape? Yet he argues that early patterns of development were a barrier to redevelopment elsewhere, that is, the reason for the absence of skyscrapers in the area of “warehouses and slums” between Chambers St. and Midtown. Of this area, he wrote, “likely no skyscraper developer was interested in performing the necessary ‘slum clearance’ to have a vacant parcel on which to build” (p. 77).

The question of why there are no skyscrapers between Lower Manhattan and Midtown receives the most attention in the book. It is treated in a chapter devoted to the “bedrock myth” and is the reason for the chapters detailing Manhattan’s geology and land use before the Civil War. The idea is that the location of bedrock—hard rock below all other strata of earth—determined where skyscrapers were built. In the “bedrock valley” between Chambers St. and 14th Street, bedrock supposedly was “too far down and hazardous for developers to safely anchor their skyscrapers, so they avoided building them there” (p. 210). Despite Barr saying this story is “accepted as truth” (p. 214) and constantly repeated, it has not led writers of key books on the finances and technology of New York skyscrapers, such as Willis and Gail Fenske (*The Skyscraper and the City*. Chicago: University of Chicago Press, 2008), into error. In fact, Barr notes that Sarah Landau and Carl Condit address the story in their book, *Rise of the New York Skyscraper, 1865–1913* (New Haven: Yale University Press, 1996: 24–26), and they set it aside with an explanation similar to Barr’s: that “preestablished land use ... was a major factor,” later more or less fixed by zoning and historic district regulations, which discouraged skyscraper construction in that area.

That Barr and anyone else would take this story seriously is due to a misconception about building foundations. Throughout the book, Barr describes buildings as being “anchored” to bedrock—a misleading image. Buildings are not always founded on rock—not in the case of low-rise buildings, as Barr discovered: “there was never any need to anchor the (low-rise) building to rock floor” (p. 227). But not in the case of skyscrapers either: foundations of early skyscrapers did not necessarily descend to bedrock. According to contemporary sources, a number of early skyscrapers, such as the World Building, which Barr mentions, and the St. Paul Building (315 feet tall) were built on dense sand, not bedrock.

While holding on to the image of buildings being anchored, Barr comes to the conclusion that the location of the bedrock was not important because foundation costs were a “fixed” percentage of a construction budget. He arrives at this from an analysis of the costs of 53 buildings erected 1899–1915 by one contractor, finding “no statistically significant relationship between bedrock depths and the percentage of the project costs for foundations” (p. 229). But the data include only buildings that were erected, the ones their sponsors expected to be profitable. Not included are projects that, perhaps because of the complexities of a site and therefore high cost of building a foundation there, were never built. So while one must look for reasons beyond simply foundation costs for the absence of early skyscrapers in the bedrock valley, it is not the case—and Barr acknowledges this (p. 226)—that foundation costs are immaterial in a developer’s decision about where to build.

Barr looks into many different questions and presents findings on many topics. Readers interested in the development of Manhattan should find something among them that piques their interest. But this variety works against a coherent book. One does not come away feeling she has answers to the main questions.

SARA E. WERMIEL, *Massachusetts Institute of Technology*

Destructive Creation: American Business and the Winning of World War II. By Mark R. Wilson. American Business, Politics, and Society Series. Philadelphia: University of Pennsylvania Press, 2016. Pp. 1–379. \$45.00, hardcover.
doi: 10.1017/S0022050717000432

Over the last several years a growing body of research in economic history and history has added to our understanding of changes in American society, economy, and politics, brought on by WWII. Together with research on the 1930s and Franklin Roosevelt's New Deal, this literature provides a vital historical window into the institutions that are increasingly in the public view as in need of reform. In order to learn the appropriate lessons for the future, we must recognize the complexity of the environment from which these institutions emerged.

Mark Wilson's *Destructive Creation* is an excellent and informative contribution to this literature. In part, Wilson challenges a stylized view of mobilization for WWII that focuses primarily on the efforts of America's business leaders. More importantly, he documents the origins of the mobilization program in the contentious debate over the role of public versus private ownership in American society during the interwar period. In this way, *Destructive Creation* follows in the tradition of Robert Higgs' *Crisis and Leviathan*. Wilson is more sanguine on the importance of the interplay between public and private interests for the success of the mobilization effort than is Higgs, while also recognizing the long running political-economic dynamic that eventually produced the postwar military-industrial complex.

Chapter 1 provides the pre-history for WWII mobilization and is a superb narrative of the political economy of the interwar period. This account begins with the requisite mention of the country's lack of preparedness for WWI, which provided motivation to military and civilian planners. However, Wilson emphasizes that the transition was not smooth and does not fit neatly with the standard characterization of mobilization during WWI. On the one hand, businesses recognized the potential for large and riskless profits from defense production as long as war continued or the political climate was neutral. On the other hand, the actual experience of the 1920s and 1930s showed the tendency toward government intervention into the management of private firms, progressive calls for more oversight, and greater interest in public ownership outright.

The build-up in military capacity that took place over the interwar period was the result of cautious cooperation on the part of business leaders in the context of a contentious political debate over the role of government in American society. In Chapter 2, Wilson documents how attention to preparedness and the back-and-forth of political process translated to early WWII mobilization efforts, starting with rearmament in the later 1930s. The important finding to emerge from this chapter is the underappreciated role of small firms and subcontractors relative to the large industrial corporations.