

Holland and Belgium, visiting Rotterdam, Amsterdam, Antwerp and Brussels. His account of this trip, and his impressions of the cities he visited, are covered in some detail in the diary.

The team that worked on the diary manuscripts appear to have fully transcribed the diaries, including some sections that had been crossed out, but which remained legible. For me, this raises some ethical issues about whether material that was written but then (presumably) deliberately, partly, obscured, should actually be transcribed. I would probably not have included these entries. In conclusion, the transcription and publication of these diaries is a valuable contribution to the history of journalism, and provides useful commentary on some of the urban areas of north-west England in the second half of the nineteenth century. I suspect that few will read the book from cover to cover, but there is a good index, and the volume can be easily dipped into to extract information relevant to a particular purpose.

Colin Pooley 

Lancaster University

c.pooley@lancaster.ac.uk

Amy D. Finstein, *Modern Mobility Aloft: Elevated Highways, Architecture, and Urban Change in Pre-Interstate America*. Philadelphia: Temple University Press, 2020. 304pp. 103 halftones. 12 maps. \$115.50 hbk. \$29.95 pbk.

doi:[10.1017/S0963926823000251](https://doi.org/10.1017/S0963926823000251)

Amy Finstein's *Modern Mobility Aloft* is a timely book amidst our present-day focus on infrastructure, a focus spurred by the passage of the bipartisan infrastructure law and growing conversations about the historic impacts of highway projects on marginalized communities. In the book, Finstein offers an important addition to our understanding of the roots of America's current transportation systems and of modern American cities. She posits that to understand contemporary struggles about the legacy and future of auto-centric infrastructure, we have to look at the rise of elevated highways before World War II.

The book shows that the push to build elevated highways through city centres in places like Chicago, New York and Boston was an important early step in America's shift to an auto-oriented world. To Finstein, the construction of the elevated highways opened the door to the idea that officials and engineers could rebuild entire cities to incorporate the car and to address the problems caused by growing density. Further, she shows that the era of the elevated highway set an example that later officials would supersize through post-war urban renewal and interstate highway construction. But, more than simple antecedents to later change, *Modern Mobility Aloft* shows how the elevated highways helped spur transformation of American cities. Read alongside other works that delve into the rise of auto dominance, as well as into the politics and planning regimes of the 1910s to the 1940s, *Modern Mobility Aloft* helps to clarify how America's streets and transportation systems became what they are today. Finstein argues that within the rapid transitions of the inter-war years, the role and import of elevated highways has been understudied. She contends that the highways reflected the influence of cutting-edge engineering practices, architectural techniques and new ideas

about urban planning that were coalescing in the inter-war period. The history of these projects has been subsumed by the post-1956 interstate period, but Finstein shows how the aesthetics and planning practices used in the creation of elevated highways helped reshape commerce, travel and living arrangements in US cities, often in ways that remain in place today.

One of the greatest strengths of Finstein's work is the effective job she does of showing how a diffuse group of proponents viewed the elevated highways as the perfect solution to a range of issues faced in inter-war cities. Some believed the roadways would help solve growing congestion and issues with parking and commerce. Others saw them as the pinnacle of engineering and a reflection of City Beautiful and urban utopian tenets. All these backers viewed them as cutting-edge interventions that would remake cities for the modern world. For many, the highways were a natural extension of urban railways, but were 'elevated' aesthetically and through engineering to prepare cities for their next evolution. As cities changed rapidly between 1900 and 1940, planners and engineers grappled for solutions that could keep up – elevated highways thus emerged at this moment as a potential solution to a range of challenges.

Through three detailed chapters on Chicago's Wacker Drive, New York City's West Side Highway and Boston's Central Artery, Finstein adeptly interweaves the range of hopes that designers, politicians and engineers placed on the highway projects. She also sheds light onto the local contexts and politics of the inter-war period in each of the case-studies in ways that make these chapters helpful to scholars working on these cities from other angles. With each case-study, she explores the problems local decision-makers hoped to solve by building an elevated roadway. In each, struggles with the growing density and congestion of American cities played a starring role. As she tracks the histories of each project through their ideation, engineering, construction and use, Finstein also traces the contradictions of their decline and lingering influence.

Even as the roadways were being built, or in Boston's case even before construction began, the Interstate era came on in full swing. The evolution of American cities went into hyperdrive after World War II, driven by suburban expansion and the cementing of the automobile as the primary transportation mode for most of the nation. Finstein captures this transition well, showing how the hopes and expectations that many had for the elevated highways fell by the wayside because of the very possibilities their planning helped create. The drive for separate highways and escape from dense cities so exemplified in the Interstate era found its roots in the brief heyday of the elevated highways. Hailed initially as long-term solutions, Finstein instead shows the elevated roadways to be critical steppingstones that laid a path to the later projects. Indeed, the inability of the elevated highways to address the range of problems they purported to solve paved the way for larger and wider roadways after World War II. Importantly, the elevated highways also began to show some of the limitations that later roadways would amplify. The elevated highways started the process of dividing and reformulating cities for the automobile, and this perhaps is their longest-lasting legacy.

Mobility Aloft makes several major contributions to our understanding of the period before the Interstate era. This book firmly and convincingly asserts that the period, the projects and the people who made them a reality influenced a great deal of the post-war world. Moreover, the lasting impact and influence of the projects

still shapes today's cities and conversations about the next generation of infrastructure.

Kyle Shelton 

University of Minnesota

shelt169@umn.edu

Mirelsie Velázquez, *Puerto Rican Chicago: Schooling the City, 1940–1977*. Urbana: University of Illinois Press, 2022. xi + 206pp. 3 figures. 3 tables. £19.39 pbk.
doi:10.1017/S0963926823000287

In this powerful and informative book, Mirelsie Velázquez argues persuasively that urban educational institutions, from kindergartens all the way through universities, serve as microcosms of larger systems of oppression and resistance. As Chicago's Puerto Rican community grew rapidly in the years after World War II, local schools reinscribed the colonial disenfranchisement that migrants – and, crucially, their children – experienced as second-class citizens. Yet the city's schools also 'emerged as a site where Puerto Ricans could work together to confront their marginalized status' (p. 160).

Three central themes run through *Puerto Rican Chicago: Schooling the City, 1940–1977*. First, Velázquez repeatedly highlights the linkages between issues and conflicts in the education sector with the broader arc of urban community development. This is consistent with prior scholarship on the history of Puerto Rican Chicago, which has long stressed the influence of various community organizations. What is new here is careful documentation of the educationally focused efforts of several activist groups, including the widely known Young Lords Organization and the more obscure Union for Puerto Rican Students at Northeastern Illinois University. Among the groups most dedicated to school issues was *Aspira*, founded in New York City in 1961 and brought to Chicago seven years later. *Aspira* of Illinois, initially led by social worker and activist Mirta Ramírez, provided wrap-around services to Puerto Rican youth and advocated passionately for educational equity.

Ramírez also exemplifies the second core theme in Velázquez's book: the gender dynamics of school-based struggles and the key roles played by women. Traditional gender roles in both Puerto Rico and the United States had laid responsibility for child-rearing and thus the education of children on mothers, and not coincidentally teaching had long been one of the few professional careers open to women. *Schooling the City* consistently centres attention on the efforts of women as teachers and organizers, such as María Cerda, who in 1969 became the first Puerto Rican (regardless of gender) to serve on the Chicago Board of Education. Cerda was no radical, and some activists were suspicious because she had been appointed by Mayor Richard J. Daley, head of the city's corrupt political machine, but she used her tenure on the Board to promote increased funding for bilingual education. She had also worked with Ramírez previously and helped secure official support for *Aspira* at local schools within the massive district.

Velázquez's thoughtful treatment of Cerda and her legacy (pp. 81–4) points toward the third and final theme in her book: the need to attend to a multiplicity