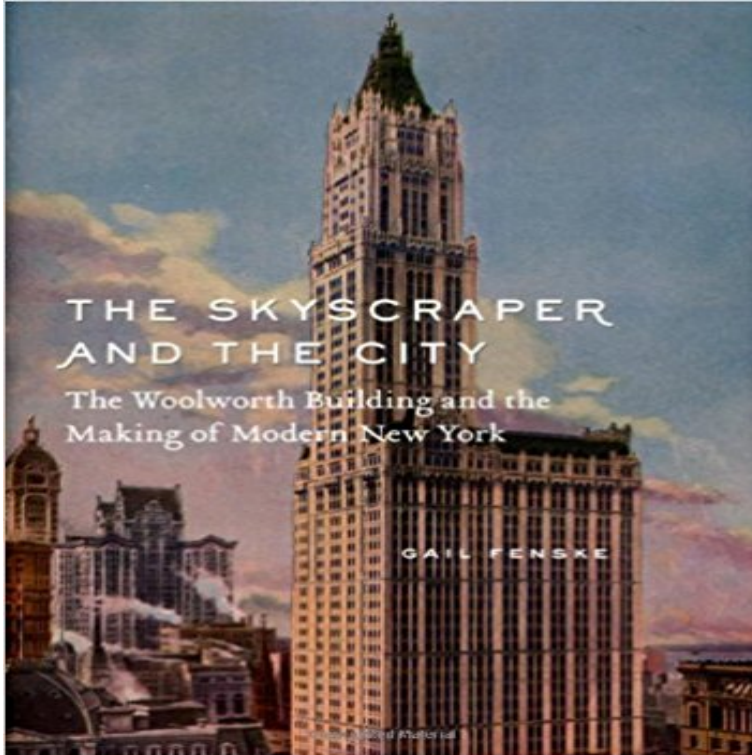


The Skyscraper and the City: The Woolworth Building and the Making of Modern New York



Once the world's tallest skyscraper, the Woolworth Building is noted for its striking but incongruous synthesis of Beaux-Arts architecture, fanciful Gothic ornamentation, and audacious steel-framed engineering. Here, in the first history of this great urban landmark, Gail Fenske argues that its design serves as a compelling lens through which to view the distinctive urban culture of Progressive-era New York. Fenske shows here that the building's multiplicity of meanings reflected the cultural contradictions that defined New York City's modernity. For Frank Woolworth, founder of the famous five-and-dime store chain, the building served as a towering trademark, for advocates of the City Beautiful movement it suggested a majestic hotel de ville, for technological enthusiasts it represented the boldest of experiments in vertical construction, and for tenants it provided an evocative setting for high-style consumption. Tourists, meanwhile, experienced a spectacular sightseeing destination and avant-garde artists discovered a twentieth-century future. In emphasizing this faceted significance, Fenske illuminates the process of conceiving, financing, and constructing skyscrapers as well as the mass phenomena of consumerism, marketing, news media, and urban spectatorship that surround them. As the representative example of the skyscraper as a cathedral of commerce, the Woolworth Building remains a commanding presence in the skyline of lower Manhattan, and the generously illustrated *Skyscraper and the City* is a worthy testament to its importance in American culture.

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