



Skilled Hands, Strong Spirits: A Century of Building Trades History

Grace Palladino

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Skilled Hands, Strong Spirits follows the history of the Building and Construction Trades Department from the emergence of building trades councils in the age of the skyscraper; through treacherous fights over jurisdiction as new building materials and methods of work evolved; and through numerous Department campaigns to improve safety standards, work with contractors to promote unionized construction, and forge a sense of industrial unity among its fifteen (and at times nineteen) autonomous and highly diverse affiliates. Arranged chronologically, Skilled Hands, Strong Spirits is based on archival research in Department, AFL-CIO, and U.S. government records as well as numerous union journals, the local and national press, and interviews with former Department officers.

Grace Palladino makes the history of the building trades come alive. By investigating the sources of conflict and unity within the Building and Construction Trades Department over time, and demonstrating how building trades unions dealt with problems and opportunities in the past, she provides a historical context for the current generation of workers and leaders as they devise new strategies to suit their current situation.

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