



# The Great Rent Wars: New York, 1917-1929

By Robert M. Fogelson

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**The Great Rent Wars: New York, 1917-1929** By Robert M. Fogelson

Written by one of the country's foremost urban historians, *The Great Rent Wars* tells the fascinating but little-known story of the battles between landlords and tenants in the nation's largest city from 1917 through 1929. These conflicts were triggered by the post-war housing shortage, which prompted landlords to raise rents, drove tenants to go on rent strikes, and spurred the state legislature, a conservative body dominated by upstate Republicans, to impose rent control in New York, a radical and unprecedented step that transformed landlord-tenant relations.

*The Great Rent Wars* traces the tumultuous history of rent control in New York from its inception to its expiration as it unfolded in New York, Albany, and Washington, D.C. At the heart of this story are such memorable figures as Al Smith, Fiorello H. La Guardia, and Oliver Wendell Holmes, as well as a host of tenants, landlords, judges, and politicians who have long been forgotten. Fogelson also explores the heated debates over landlord-tenant law, housing policy, and other issues that are as controversial today as they were a century ago.

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### Review

"A powerful history of a remarkable contest over the governance of the housing market in New York City from World War I to the eve of the Great Depression. A highly original contribution to our understanding of American urban politics."—Elizabeth Blackmar, Columbia University, author of *Manhattan for Rent, 1785–1850*  
(Elizabeth Blackmar 2013-03-05)

"A must-read for understanding urban housing issues not just in New York but across the nation, *The Great Rent Wars* provides an in-depth analysis of the notoriously complex relationship between landlords and tenants in America's largest city. This is a meticulously researched study about a subject that troubles us almost a century later." —Lisa Keller, Purchase College, State University of New York, executive editor, *The Encyclopedia of New York City*  
(Lisa Keller 2013-07-19)

"[Fogelson's] thorough research and meticulous documentation will be a gold mine for fellow urban historians."—*Publishers Weekly*  
(*Publishers Weekly*)

"Mr. Fogelson's book, while scholarly in tone and approach, provides a readable guide to these difficult years that will appeal to readers beyond the academy."—*Wall Street Journal*  
(*Wall Street Journal*)

### About the Author

**Robert M. Fogelson** was born and raised in New York City. He is professor of urban studies and history at the Massachusetts Institute of Technology and author of several books, most recently *Downtown: Its Rise and Fall, 1880–1930*, and *Bourgeois Nightmares: Suburbia, 1870–1950*, both published by Yale University Press.

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