



How the States Got Their Shapes Too: The People Behind the Borderlines

Mark Stein

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Was Roger Williams too pure for the Puritans, and what does that have to do with Rhode Island? Why did Augustine Herman take ten years to complete the map that established Delaware? How did Rocky Mountain rogues help create the state of Colorado? All this and more is explained in Mark Stein's new book.

How the States Got Their Shapes Too follows How the States Got Their Shapes looks at American history through the lens of its borders, but, while How The States Got Their Shapes told us why, this book tells us who. This personal element in the boundary stories reveals how we today are like those who came before us, and how we differ, and most significantly: how their collective stories reveal not only an historical arc but, as importantly, the often overlooked human dimension in that arc that leads to the nation we are today.

The people featured in How the States Got Their Shapes Too lived from the colonial era right up to the present. They include African Americans, Native Americans, Hispanics, women, and of course, white men. Some are famous, such as Thomas Jefferson, John Quincy Adams, and Daniel Webster. Some are not, such as Bernard Berry, Clarina Nichols, and Robert Steele. And some are names many of us know but don't really know exactly what they did, such as Ethan Allen (who never made furniture, though he burned a good deal of it).

In addition, How the States Got Their Shapes Too tells of individuals involved in the Almost States of America, places we sought to include but ultimately did not: Canada, the rest of Mexico (we did get half), Cuba, and, still an issue, Puerto Rico.

Each chapter is largely driven by voices from the time, in the form of excerpts from congressional debates, newspapers, magazines, personal letters, and diaries.

Told in Mark Stein's humorous voice, How the States Got Their Shapes Too is a historical journey unlike any other you've taken. The strangers you meet here had more on their minds than simple state lines, and this book makes for a great new way of seeing and understanding the United States.

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