

How The States Got Their Shapes Too: A Fascinating Exploration

Have you ever wondered how the states in the United States got their unique shapes? The history behind the formation of state boundaries is a fascinating tale filled with political intrigue, territorial disputes, and even natural landmarks. In this article, we will dive deeper into the topic of "How The States Got Their Shapes Too" to uncover the secrets and stories behind the maps we are so familiar with today.

The Early Days: Colonization and Expansion

The journey of how the states got their shapes begins with the European colonization of North America. When the first European settlers arrived, they claimed lands for their home countries without much regard for precise boundaries. As more European nations sought to establish their presence in the "New World," they often encountered conflicts over who owned what territory.

Gradually, through treaties, colonial charters, and sometimes even warfare, boundaries between various colonies were established. Colonies such as Virginia, Massachusetts, and Pennsylvania expanded their territories over time through a combination of negotiated agreements and land purchases from Native American tribes.

How the States Got Their Shapes Too: The People Behind the Borderlines by Richard T. Wright(Kindle Edition)

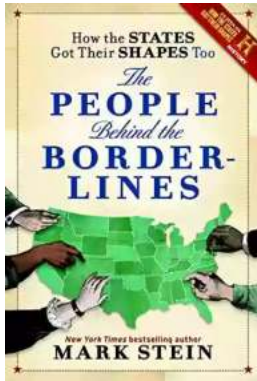
★★★★☆ 4.6 out of 5

Language : English

File size : 3375 KB

Text-to-Speech : Enabled

Enhanced typesetting : Enabled



X-Ray for textbooks	: Enabled
Word Wise	: Enabled
Print length	: 352 pages
Screen Reader	: Supported



The Birth of the United States

With the American Revolution came the birth of the United States of America. As the thirteen colonies sought independence from Britain, the issue of establishing a national boundary became crucial. The Treaty of Paris in 1783 marked the end of the Revolutionary War and solidified the western boundary of the new nation, which was set along the Mississippi River.

However, the boundary disputes didn't end there. As the United States expanded westward through the Louisiana Purchase and territories acquired from Mexico, new conflicts emerged. The influx of settlers spurred debates over the ownership of lands and the formation of new states, leading to the formation of the famous Missouri Compromise in 1820, which established a boundary between free and slave-holding states.

Manifest Destiny and the Westward Expansion

During the 19th century, the concept of "Manifest Destiny" fueled the desire for westward expansion. The belief that it was the divine right and duty of Americans to spread their influence from coast to coast drove the country's territorial ambitions.

As the United States acquired new territories, the issue of shaping their boundaries became increasingly complex. The Oregon Treaty in 1846 solidified the border between the United States and British North America (Canada) in the Pacific Northwest, while the Gadsden Purchase in 1853 resolved a dispute between the United States and Mexico over a strip of land in the southwest.

Civil War and Reconstruction

The American Civil War brought significant changes to the country's boundaries. The secession of southern states and the formation of the Confederate States of America led to the reconfiguration of state lines. West Virginia, for example, separated from Virginia during the war due to regional conflicts and remained part of the Union.

After the Civil War, the process of Reconstruction and the readmission of former Confederate states into the Union led to further adjustments in state boundaries. For instance, Texas was forced to cede some of its western territories to form present-day Colorado and Wyoming.

The Lasting Impact of Historical Events

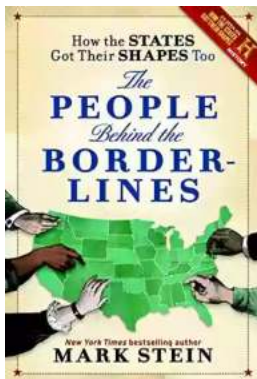
Today, we can still see the remnants of historical events and territorial disputes in the shapes of many states. The states of Colorado, Wyoming, and Utah, for example, have rectangular shapes due to the land acquired from Mexico during the Mexican-American War.

Similarly, some states bear the legacy of colonial land grants and early settlements. The irregular shape of Maryland, for instance, can be attributed to Lord Baltimore's extensive land grant, which encompassed diverse terrain.

: A Tapestry of History

The story of how the states got their shapes is an intricate tapestry woven across centuries. From colonial ambitions and territorial disputes to the desire for expansion and the impact of major historical events, the shaping of state boundaries in the United States has been an ever-changing and often contentious process.

Understanding the history behind these boundaries allows us to appreciate the rich tapestry that is the United States. So, the next time you glance at a map, take a moment to think about the stories it holds and how the states got their shapes too.



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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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