

funding, reasons for steamboat losses, and the longevity of boats. Numbers are never exciting reading. Thus, this study will appeal mostly to serious students of economic development and public policy. Nonetheless, everyone who labors under the misapprehension that laissez faire economics was the sole reason for American growth should read it. Paskoff concludes that the federal river improvement program not only succeeded in making navigation safer, but was also a major stimulus to increased productivity and economic growth.

This book should be useful to anyone interested in steamboating and public policy. Understandably, Paskoff does not include much specific information about Iowa, which became a state in 1846. But, because Iowa is flanked by the Mississippi and Missouri rivers, commercial navigation is a vital aspect of its history. Paskoff aptly describes the origins of federal river improvement, which after the Civil War radically changed Iowa's two major rivers.

How the States Got Their Shapes, by Mark Stein. New York: Smithsonian Books, 2008. xv, 332 pp. Maps, bibliography, index. \$22.95 cloth.

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In *How the States Got Their Shapes*, Mark Stein, a playwright and screenwriter, employs his flair for the dramatic in narrating the creation of American political boundaries. But readers seeking accurate information about boundary making will find little in this informal book to inspire them to shout "Bravo!"

Stein's work begins with a chapter emphatically titled "Don't Skip This: You'll Just Have to Come Back Later," in which he presents the major ideas he traces throughout the rest of the book. This overview chapter provides the work's only real contextual framework, and introduces Stein's most cherished and repeated notion, that the federal government used the motto "all states should be created equal" while drawing political lines (8). From there, he shifts to an alphabetical organization by state, describing how each of its lines came to be. In this way, he loses any thread of historical context, and his work shifts from a study of the boundary-making process to an artificially segregated tale of each state. Stein suggests that investigating each state individually is the best way to demonstrate their equality as created by boundaries, but such an organization treats the lines as isolated and divisive phenomena rather than as tools to provide a political structure within the vast tracts claimed by the United States.

Throughout the pages of Stein's work, one finds a multitude of factual errors: Plymouth and Massachusetts Bay colonies are treated as interchangeable; the location of the 1763 settlement prohibition line is misidentified as the Ohio River; the Confederation and federal governments are often confused; and so on. Perhaps the most dramatic error is his misunderstanding of longitude in American boundary making. While some internal lines correspond with Greenwich meridians, most vertical boundaries — especially in the trans-Mississippi West — emerged from a longitudinal system developed via the U.S. Naval Observatory, making them lines "west of Washington," not of Greenwich. With its state-by-state organization, the book thus repeats these errors frequently. Strangely enough, some of the maps included in the book show the slight discrepancy between Greenwich and Washington meridians, but Stein does not recognize that problem in the text.

Stein repeatedly returns to the notion of Congress's intentions to create equal states through boundaries of relatively similar width and height. In one example, he declares the northern and southern lines of Colorado to be "artifacts of foresight and planning by our elected representatives" (43). Perhaps the most bizarre instance of Stein's insistence on equality arises when he credits Congress with drawing lines "to make New Mexico's Spanish-speaking population feel secure, represented, and equal" (195). The ethnic hostility underlying New Mexico's 62 years of territorial peonage belies Stein's claim. State equality has a certain philosophical appeal, but a careful consideration of primary sources — especially congressional debates on boundary making — would have revealed that lines were rarely drawn to accommodate grandiose ideologies. Instead, the process was driven by practicality of local governance. The concept that all states were supposed to be relatively equal is a modern idea imposed on the past and has little bearing on the reality of American boundary making.

Scant documentation casts further clouds upon Stein's work. There are no in-text citations to show where he got his information. Throughout the work he makes sweeping or curious claims (beyond the equality issue) without any evidence. For example, he vaguely argues that a nefarious judge in Idaho single-handedly shaped that state's boundary with Montana. Stein also suggests far more congressional knowledge of geography (especially the course of interior rivers) in the early nineteenth century than that body likely possessed. What Stein attributes to patriotic design more often came about by coincidence. In addition, his "selected bibliography" generally includes only one or two dated secondary entries per state, with no evidence that he sought valuable primary information about boundary making.

In regard to Iowa's boundaries, Stein proves somewhat more reliable than in other chapters. His discussion of the contentious southern line is understandably simplified, considering the many complications that defined the boundary with Missouri. But his discussion of Missouri's western line, which preceded and affected the design of Iowa's southern boundary, misses several key elements involving the role of the Osage and ignores the "Platte Purchase" of 1836. He also fails to observe the importance Iowans placed on access to the Missouri River leading up to statehood, and excessively credits Congress rather than Iowans themselves with playing the most effective role in determining the state's ultimate shape.

For a topic so desperately in need of thorough treatment as state boundary making, *How the States Got Their Shapes* falls far short of the mark. The fact that it went to print with so many factual errors and grandiose yet unsubstantiated claims also reflects poorly upon its publisher; one would expect better from the Smithsonian. For a better researched and organized — not to mention more accurate — recent discussion of state boundaries, readers should consult Gary Alden Smith's *State and National Boundaries of the United States* (McFarland, 2004). The reader finishes Stein's book feeling like the audience of a play destined to close on opening night, wishing the experience had lived up to the promise emblazoned on the marquee.

Man of Douglas, Man of Lincoln: The Political Odyssey of James Henry Lane, by Ian Michael Spurgeon. Columbia: University of Missouri Press, 2008. x, 291 pp. Illustrations, notes, bibliography, index. \$42.50 cloth.

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Among the parade of characters who bled Kansas during its territorial and Civil War periods, only John Brown surpassed Jim Lane in the attainment of historical fame — or infamy. For pure weirdness, he was unmatched. In this new political biography, Ian Michael Spurgeon has brought to life this icon with all of his complications. His attempt to reclaim Lane's image from those who depict him as an unprincipled opportunist and fanatical (even suicidal) demagogue is not as successful.

Lane's charisma and warring will in Kansas are epic. Known widely as the "Grim Chieftain," Lane exacted justice for a half-decade of proslavery sins in Kansas. A Mexican War veteran and native of southern Indiana, where he practiced law and served one term each as