

history, performance studies, women and gender studies, and memory studies. She successfully pulls meaning from these ephemeral spaces of transitory activities. By linking each performance to the perpetuation of racial hierarchy and southern culture, Boyd places the blame of southern mythology and the hope of future change onto the actions of southern white women, asking, “what sort of trauma has their frivolity obscured? The power is theirs to alter the performance, share the memory, and change the South” (146). Academics and practicing public historians will benefit from her nuanced interpretations on perpetuating the Lost Cause narrative through gendered rituals. I see the opportunity for future scholarship to build upon this work, perhaps exploring Black beauty culture in the South and how that relates to the creation of regionalism.

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Inventing Idaho: The Gem State's Eccentric Shape by Keith Petersen. Pullman, WA: Washington State University Press, 2022. ix+217 pp.; illustrations, maps, notes, bibliography, index; paperback, \$26.95.

As an Idaho native, I always found myself wondering why my home state is shaped so strangely. Local kids paying a visit to the library were frequently met with large-scale illustrations depicting the state as the silhouette of a woman, the profile of an old man, or other whimsical oddities. However, it wasn't until well beyond my time as a graduate student that the story of how Idaho got its shape became a bit clearer. To this end, *Inventing Idaho: The Gem State's Eccentric Shape* is a welcome addition to existing Idaho history literature. Written by former Idaho State Historian Keith Petersen, this piece examines a concept that has only been addressed in passing by other historians.

Inventing Idaho thoughtfully contributes to the story of the Gem State through the synthesis of engaging primary sources and builds upon Petersen's expertise as state historian. The narrative, lively and dynamic in its approach, thoughtfully describes how Idaho earned its bizarre shape by analyzing the growing pains associated with expansion. Those in need of a comprehensive, readable text describing the nature of Idaho's political, social, and geographic complexity should look no further than Petersen's recent publication. However, although *Inventing Idaho* provides meaningful additions to the historiography, the piece's contributions to public history are varied. Although Petersen's lively writing and array of primary sources demonstrate excellence in historical research, the book lacks the diversity of voices and opinions essential to the public history discipline.

As state historian, Keith Petersen served as the expert on the history of Idaho for over a decade. Throughout his career, Petersen traveled to every corner of the state, gathering stories of its rich past along the way. *Inventing Idaho* is a tangible reflection of both Petersen's professional legacy and personal passions for geography, the

American West, and storytelling. The detailed examination of the relationship between Idaho's boundaries, economy, and culture approaches the state's legacy from an entirely new perspective; one that uses Idaho's geography as the focal point of the book's narrative. Although Idaho is not the only state with such a strange shape, Petersen argues that its irregular edges play a central role in its identity. This unique approach to Idaho history brings a fresh perspective to the existing historiography with its captivating writing and engaging new focus.

Petersen argues in the preface that his book "focus(es) on the diversity of ways in which Idaho's boundaries have over time influenced those living within their confines" (ix), and this argument is thoughtfully reinforced and examined throughout. The text is divided into eight chapters with distinctly different themes. Chapter 1 provides insight into the broad formation of the western United States, the six central chapters examine the formation of each of Idaho's six borders, and chapter 8 concludes by examining the lasting implications of the state's shape. Each central chapter is paired with a corresponding border story: narratives that explore both the historical and current effects of Idaho's borders on the community. This structure nicely synthesizes Petersen's practical, academic knowledge with well-chosen primary source material. Organizing the text in this way provides the reader with a more holistic understanding of the content beyond the basic history.

Among Petersen's strengths as an author is his propensity for energetic, lively writing, a skill he harnesses to the fullest throughout *Inventing Idaho*. This bright writing style is best demonstrated in the border stories included throughout the text. These stories are, arguably, the strongest sections of Petersen's work, peppering a much-needed historical research piece with tangible evidence of its lasting impact. Each border story thoughtfully describes how the people of Idaho, ranging from the Indigenous population to Mormon settlers, have been influenced by the ever-changing and abstract shape of the state over time. These narratives provide captivating background into how policy profoundly impacts geography, the economy, and local culture. For example, "Greater Idaho," the border story that corresponds with chapter 4, highlights the ongoing proposal to merge portions of rural Oregon with Idaho, potentially reinforcing the endless cycle of Idaho's reshaping and reflecting the United States' tense political climate. Petersen's energetic narrative and synthesis of historical research with contemporary challenges serves as an excellent model for public historians who are tasked with the hefty responsibility of making history accessible, relevant, and engaging, which Petersen accomplishes with ease.

Though *Inventing Idaho* is certainly a much-needed addition to existing Idaho history literature, there are times when it falls short of meeting the needs of public history practitioners. Petersen occasionally lacks balanced viewpoints, frequently uses passive language, and the book contains very few in-depth, first-hand accounts of the state's history. The inclusion of diverse community perspectives would certainly be a welcome addition to the public history practice and, unfortunately, is an element often lacking in Idaho history literature. Though *Inventing*

Idaho certainly elaborates upon research executed by other Idaho historians, such as Carlos Schwantes's *In Mountain Shadows* (1991), it lacks this kind of engagement, present in newer publications. As an example, Adam Sowards's recent anthology *Idaho's Place: A New History of the Gem State* (2016) pairs each chapter with an engaging oral history interview, giving a personal voice to previously untold histories. Petersen's border stories presented an ideal opportunity for the inclusion of first-person narratives. Though *Inventing Idaho* does include some analysis regarding the thoughts and ideas of those in the past, allowing the community to share their stories directly would have been a worthwhile addition to an already captivating argument.

Inventing Idaho's epilogue thoughtfully summarizes the tone and argument of the book concisely. Although Idahoans had little influence in how their state took shape, they "adapted and persevered . . . (and) in the process, a distinct Idaho character emerged" (181). Petersen's recent publication encourages historians and community members alike to examine Idaho's shape as not simply a geographic boundary, but a fundamental cultural, political, and economic marker. *Inventing Idaho* is written for those with a general interest in Idaho history as opposed to an exclusively academic audience. Readers from all walks of life looking for a lively, engaging history of Idaho's geography are in for a pleasant experience.

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