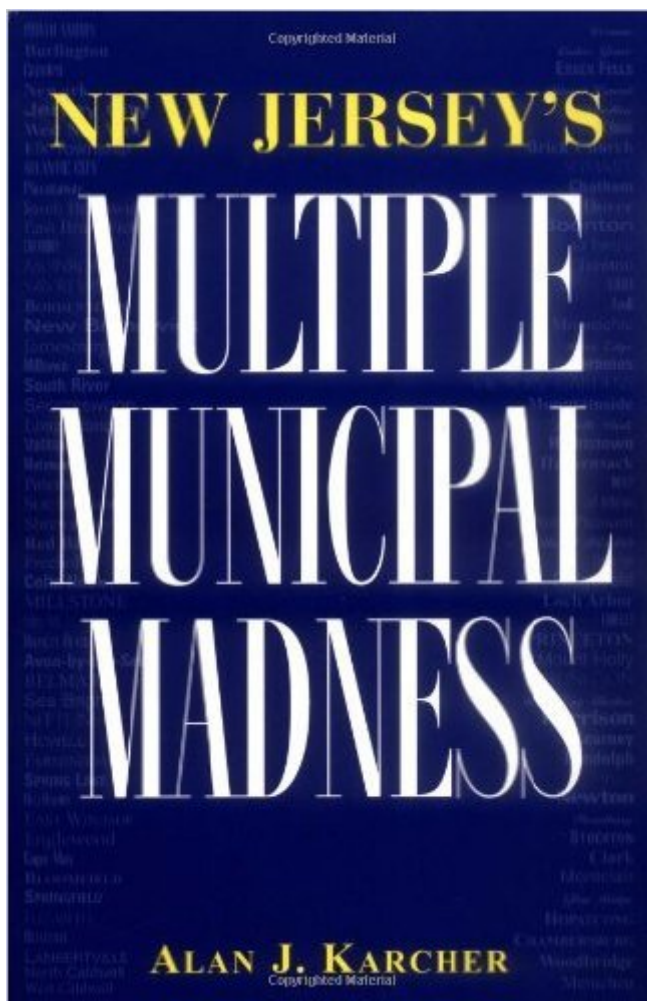


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New Jersey's Multiple Municipal Madness



Synopsis

A critical look at how and why the boundary lines of New Jersey's 566 municipalities were drawn, pointing to the irrationality of these excessive divisions. Alan Karcher looks at the history and high cost of New Jersey's multiple municipalities. He investigates the economic considerations, political pressures, and personal agendas that created the bizarre configurations dividing the Garden State, while analyzing the public policies that allowed and even encouraged the formation of new municipalities. Karcher also examines the political dynamics that thwarted every effort of New Jersey metropolises to join the front ranks of major American cities. Karcher identifies the major motivations behind the unparalleled experience of New Jersey's municipal multiplication. He delves deeply into the primary causes of new lines being drawn, such as road appropriations, the location of a railroad station, control of a local school district, the regulation of alcohol sales, and the preservation of exclusivity prior to the acceptance of zoning. He also assesses the present situation and what has happened in the past 60 years since the municipal multiplication madness ceased, calling on elected officials to confront reality and correct yesterday's excesses. The genesis of the present political map of the state is a story that while interesting is not always charming, while fascinating is far from edifying. Little in the history can be called quaint. Rather it is a story of separation and exclusion, of division and greed, of preservation of prerogatives and prejudices. It is a story that supports the conclusion that these lines are rarely the product of chance, rather they were drawn by politicians with very human foibles and frailties, and with very narrow agendas-agendas that have proven to be egregiously expensive for today's taxpayers. Alan Karcher, the former Speaker of the New Jersey Assembly during the activist 1980s, currently practices municipal law in Middlesex County. He represents the third generation of his family to serve as a member of the New Jersey State Legislature.

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Customer Reviews

The title is question-begging. The "madness" is the result of subdivision of governments by and for the people of New Jersey in order to attain a political goal. The 'Introduction' says municipal boundaries were drawn for personal and economic reasons. The 'Index' does not contain the entry "Company Town", even though it is mentioned in the text (as in Helmetta). Karcher does not mention how the 13 counties in 1776 became 21 counties in the 20th century. This was done for the right reasons: the people voted for it. In other states counties were created as the population increased so as to keep a manageable area. (Laura Ingalls Wilder mentions this in one of her books.) Claiming that 200 of the municipalities have small tax bases also ignores why that was not a problem under the 1844 NJ Constitution (p.4). Chapter 1 concludes with the 8 reasons they created municipalities. Karcher avoids the policies of NJ's power elite, such as the lack of Initiative & Referendum, the 1947 Constitution, etc. Any law to allow solving the problems would require a constitutional change (as in "mortmain" Chapter 2). The example of New York City as over-consolidation is due to its power elite's wish to have the greatest population in the country (p.18). Why would anyone want this for any state? Chapter 3 explains how one large township is now nine separate municipalities. Sectional conflicts created Monroe Township (p.21). Taxes also caused conflicts (p.23). When the War Department prohibited alcohol in townships, Sayreville changed to a "borough" (p.31). Chapter 4 tells how Shrewsbury Township became 75 separate towns. Some municipalities originated from private real-estate developments (Spring Lake, Deal). Sectional conflicts, alcohol prohibition, and local school control led to this fragmentation.

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