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Shelbys Folly: Jack Dempsey, Doc Kearns, and the Shakedown of a Montana Boomtown

By Jason Kelly

University of Nebraska Press. Hardcover. Book Condition: New. Hardcover. 238 pages. Dimensions: 8.6in. x 5.8in. x 1.0in. In 1923, not long after oil had started gushing from northern Montana fields, real-estate sales in nearby Shelby were declining, dimming the little towns prospects of becoming the Tulsa of the West. Then the mayors son dreamed up a marketing ploy: offer to host heavyweight champion Jack Dempseys next fight. What began as a publicity stunt soon spiraled into a civic drama unlike any Montana had ever seen or ever would again. Shelbys Folly tells this story in full for the first time. Against the background of boom-and-bust Montana history, the folly of Shelbys would-be promoters unfolds in colorful detail. It took months to persuade Dempseys conniving manager, Jack Doc Kearns, to sign a 300, 000 contract. With less than two months before the July 4th fight, the town still had no stadium and no accommodations for tens of thousands of expected fans. Jason Kelly describes the promoters desperate measures and their disastrous results, from the first inkling of the idea to the bitter end of the fifteen-round boxing match. Shelby residents identified with the underdog challenger, Tommy Gibbons, who went toe-to-toe with the champion...



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