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From the beginning, what has given our culture its distinctive texture, pattern, and thrust, according to Michael Kammen, is the dynamic interaction of the imported and the indigenous. He shows how, during the years of colonization, some ideas and institutions were transferred virtually intact from Britain, while, simultaneously, others were being transformed in the New World. As he unravels the tangled origins of our culture, he makes us see that unresolved contradictions in the American experience have created our national style. Puritanical and hedonistic, idealistic and materialistic, peace-loving and war-mongering- these opposing strands go back to the genesis of our history.