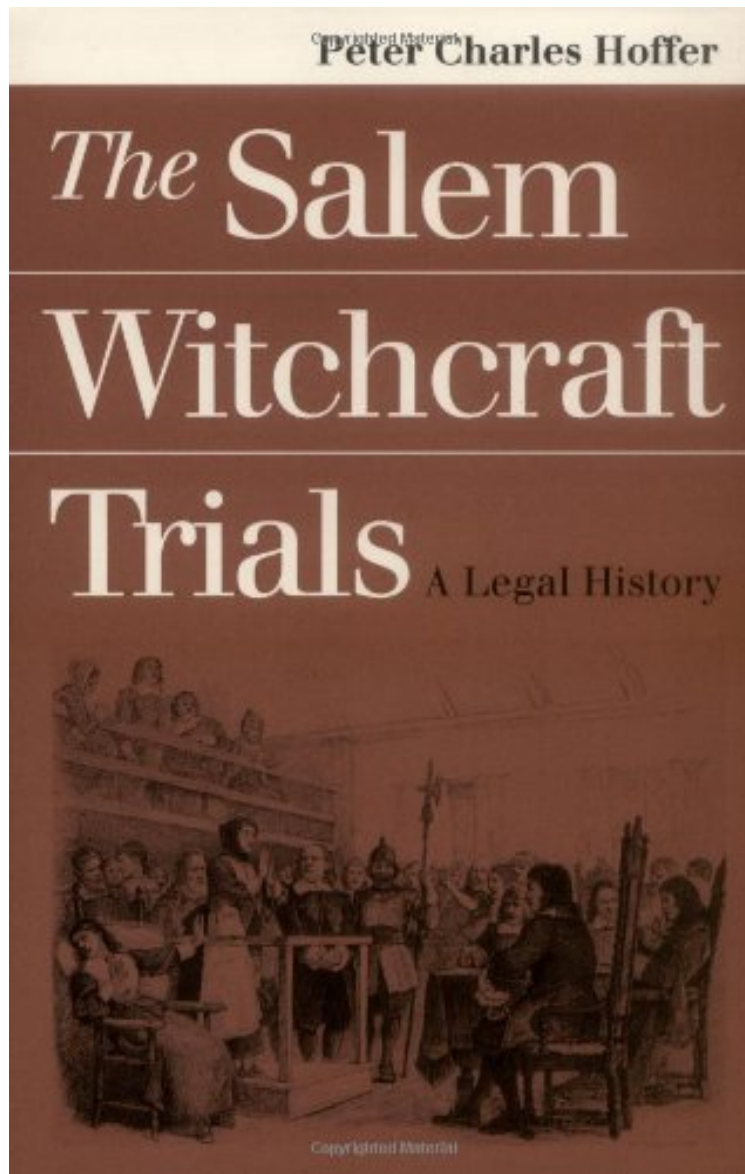


(Download) The Salem Witchcraft Trials: A Legal History

## The Salem Witchcraft Trials: A Legal History

*Peter Charles Hoffer*

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**Peter Charles Hoffer : The Salem Witchcraft Trials: A Legal History** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised The Salem Witchcraft Trials: A Legal History:

0 of 0 people found the following review helpful. Lacks Focus and Immediacy By herrmannfan If you're looking for a chronological account of the trials told in a straightforward manner, this is NOT the book for you. If you're looking for an account of the trials with an emphasis on the finer points of pre-Revolutionary War politics and jurisprudence, this

IS the book for you. I found it difficult to get through, even though it's only 146 pages. I repeatedly found myself shouting internally (and once or twice out loud), "Just tell me what happened!" Again and again the writer starts to tell some detail of the events only to then head off into abstruse points of law. To be fair, the book did seem to improve as it went along, and perhaps so many records have been lost that we can't have detailed chronological accounting of the events. But even the ending left me hanging--so what happened to the young women whose lies created such havoc? Did they just stop "having visions"? Were they punished? Were they repentant? People DIED because of their lies. To have them just sort of vanish at the end of the book was a big disappointment. On the positive side, I felt the writer gave the Puritans a fair shake, not mocking them for their beliefs or their credulity. But the book never gives you that sense of "you are there," the immediacy that separates acceptable historical writing from outstanding historical writing.

10 of 11 people found the following review helpful. Great account, fascinating history  
By Carolynn N. This book is full of theories easily proven and ideas that are common-sense and stuff we never heard about in social studies and history classes. The with trials were NOT about religion, they were about factions in a small, bored town. It is absolutely fascinating. Can't recommend this highly enough.

1 of 1 people found the following review helpful. Just What I Needed  
By Daniel Busman III needed this book for a research project for college and it proved to be a good purchase. It had some good information about the trials and worked out well.

In late seventeenth-century New England, the eternal battle between God and Satan was brought into the courtroom. Between January 1692 and May 1693 in Salem, Massachusetts, neighbors turned against neighbors and children against parents with accusations of witchcraft, and nineteen people were hanged for having made pacts with the devil. Peter Charles Hoffer, a historian long familiar with the Salem witchcraft trials, now reexamines this notorious episode in American history and presents many of its legal details in correct perspective for the first time. He tells the real story of how religious beliefs, superstitions, clan disputes, and Anglo-American law and custom created an epidemic of accusations that resulted in the investigation of nearly two hundred colonists and, for many, the ordeal of trial and incarceration. He also examines life during this crisis period of New England history a time beset by Indian wars, disease, severe weather, and challenges to Puritan hegemony to show how an atmosphere of paranoia contributed to this outbreak of persecution. Hoffer examines every aspect of this history, from accusations to grand jury investigations to the conduct of the trials themselves. He shows how rights we take for granted today such as rules of evidence and a defendant's right to legal counsel did not exist in colonial times, and he demonstrates how these cases relate to current instances of children accusing adults of abuse. *The Salem Witchcraft Trials*, a concise history written expressly for students and general readers, contains much new material not found in the author's earlier work. It sheds important light on the period and shows that our horror of these infamous proceedings must be tempered with sympathy for a people who gave in to panic in the face of a harsh and desolate existence.

"This book provides perhaps the best one-volume introduction to an episode that has challenged historians for centuries. It provides not only a lucid and engrossing narrative but also satisfying explanations that seamlessly interweave the best of modern scholarship." David Thomas Konig, editor of *Devising Liberty: Preserving and Creating Freedom in the New American Republic*

"Hoffer writes with a rare lucidity and vividness, and with a rare compassion as well. He makes the actors in this perplexing drama as comprehensible as they are ever likely to be." Michael Zuckerman, author of *Almost Chosen People and Peaceable Kingdoms*

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About the Author Peter Charles Hoffer, research professor of history at the University of Georgia, is the author of *The Devil's Disciples: Makers of the Salem Witchcraft Trials*, *Law and People in Colonial America*, and other books on legal history.