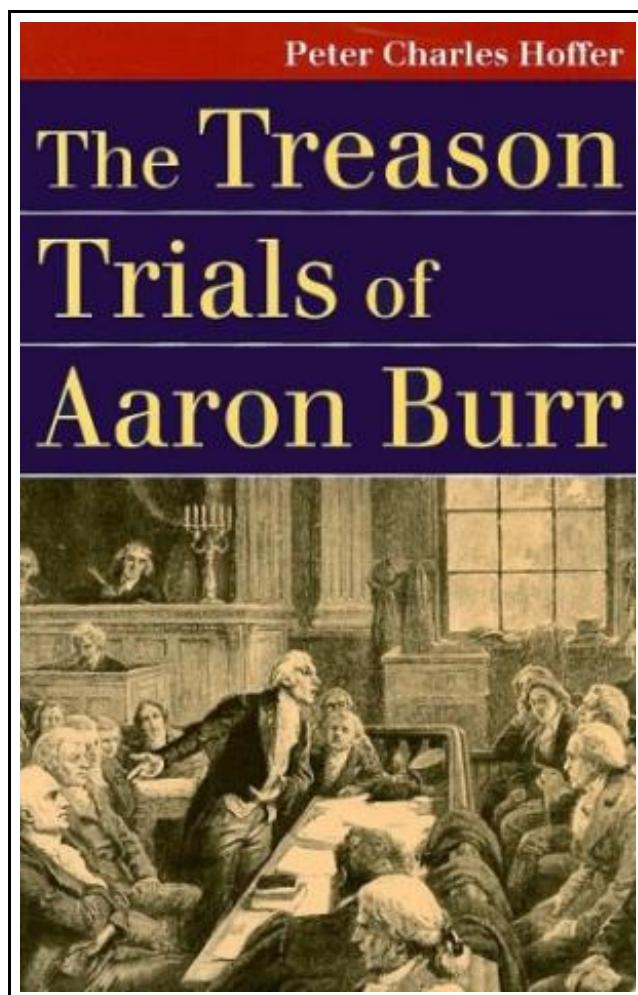


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Reviews

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University Press of Kansas. Paperback. Book Condition: new. BRAND NEW, The Treason Trials of Aaron Burr, Peter Charles Hoffer, Aaron Burr was an enigma even in his own day. Founding father and vice president, he engaged in a duel with Alexander Hamilton resulting in a murder indictment that effectively ended his legal career. And when he turned his attention to entrepreneurial activities on the frontier he was suspected of empire building - and worse. Burr was finally arrested as a threat to national security, under suspicion of fomenting insurrection against the young republic, and then held without bail for months. His trial, witnessing the unfortunate intrusion of partisan politics and personal animosity into the legal process, revolved around a highly contentious debate over the constitutional meaning of treason. In the first book dedicated to this important case, Peter Charles Hoffer unveils a cast of characters ensnared by politics and law at the highest levels of government, including President Thomas Jefferson - one of Burr's bitterest enemies - and Chief Justice John Marshall, no fan of either Burr or Jefferson. Hoffer recounts how Jefferson's prosecutors argued that the mere act of discussing an "overt Act of War" - the constitution's definition of treason - was tantamount to committing the act. Marshall, however, ruled that without the overt act, no treasonable action had occurred and neither discussion nor conspiracy could be prosecuted. Subsequent attempts to convict Burr on violations of the Neutrality Act failed as well. A fascinating excursion into the early American past, Hoffer's narrative makes it clear why the high court's ultimate finding was so foundational that it has been cited as precedent 383 times. Along the way, Hoffer expertly unravels the tale's major themes: attempts to redefine treason in times of crisis, efforts to bend the law to political goals, the admissibility...

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