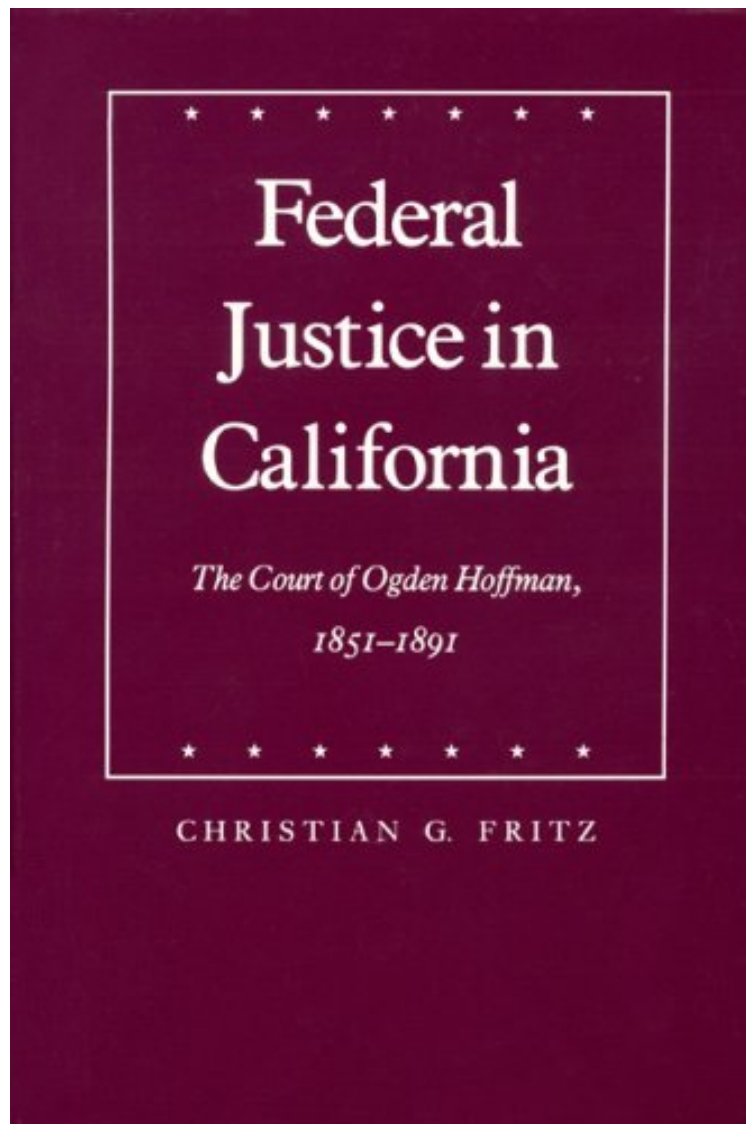


(Library ebook) Federal Justice in California: The Court of Ogden Hoffman, 1851-1891 (Law in the American West)

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Christian G. Fritz

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For forty years Ogden Hoffman presided over the federal district court for the Northern District of California, disposing of more than nineteen thousand cases brought before him. *Federal Justice in California: The Court of Ogden Hoffman, 1851-1891* considers a career remarkable for longevity and productivity and at the same time examines the operation of a federal trial court in nineteenth-century America - the cases adjudicated, their significance, and the court's impact upon the community. Solidly researched, Christian G. Fritz's book is unique in attending to the law on the level at which it was most often encountered by participants in legal actions. During his four decades on the bench, from the time of the California gold rush to the anti-Chinese movement of the 1880s, Hoffman dealt one-on-one with a cross-section of humanity: through his court came sea captains, seamen seeking their wages, wealthy steamship owners and distraught and injured passengers, and Chinese immigrants. Fritz shows him adjudicating land grant conflicts and bankruptcy cases and presiding over the admiralty, criminal, and common law and equity dockets. The author has examined thousands of Hoffman's cases to gain insight into how nineteenth-century federal trial courts were used, by whom, and with what effect. The successful use that a broad range of plaintiffs made of Hoffman's court requires a re-examination of theories suggesting that law of the period primarily developed and courts largely operated in ways that promoted commercial and entrepreneurial interest. Just as important, Fritz's sensitive analysis of an institution never loses sight of the proud life-long bachelor, native New Yorker, and scion of a distinguished family who always identified himself with his court. Christian G. Fritz is a professor of law at the University of New Mexico.