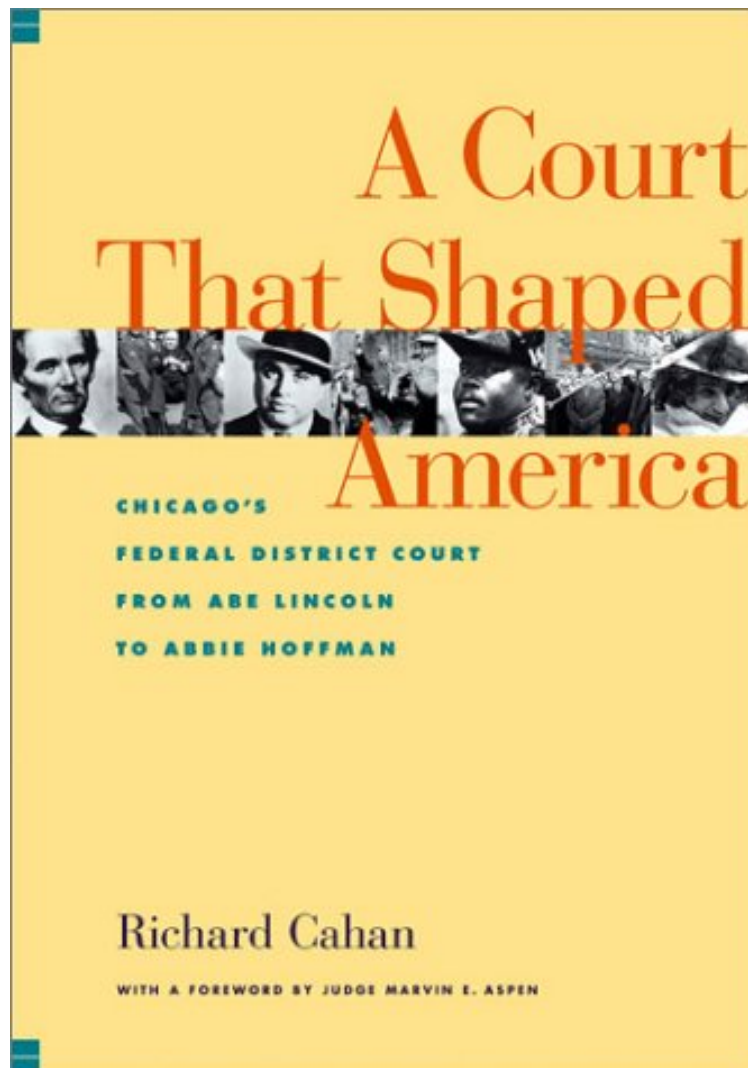


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A Court That Shaped America : Chicago's Federal District Court from Abe Lincoln to Abbie Hoffman

Richard Cahan

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Big and small dramas play out every day in the United States District Court for the Northern District of Illinois. Headquartered in Chicago, the court has played a pivotal role in U.S. history. This is where Abraham Lincoln, as a young lawyer, changed the direction of westward expansion when he argued that trains-not steamships-were America's future. This is where Al Capone met his fall, at a trial that finished him as Public Enemy Number One. And this is where Abbie Hoffman, the nation's first Yippie, butted heads with Judge Julius J. Hoffman and the Establishment at the trial known as the Conspiracy Eight. A Court That Shaped America traces the flesh-and-blood courtroom scenes from the district's first cases in the early nineteenth century through the turn of the millennium. Historical figures--including Mormon leader Joseph Smith, inventor Thomas Edison, and author Mark Twain--as well as contemporary superstars like Michael Jackson and Oprah Winfrey have all had their day in the Northern Illinois court. Some were victorious; some came out scathed. This book examines these great trials and the people behind them to offer a unique look at Chicago and U.S. history.

From Booklist Cahan places a federal district court squarely at the center of America's legal development. From its historic origins as part of the Northwest Territories under French and Spanish rule, through the pre-Civil War period when a young Abe Lincoln practiced law, the body that became the Northern District Court of Illinois has had great impact on the nation. In addition to past personalities Mark Twain, Mormon leader Joseph Smith, and Thomas Edison, contemporary figures such as Michael Jordan and Oprah Winfrey have had their day in this court. In this engaging treatise, Cahan places civil and criminal developments in the context of popular regional and national history and reflects on the evolving legal and ethical consciousness of the nation. Whether as the venue for the trial of heavyweight champion Jack Johnson on "white slavery" charges (for marrying a white woman), or the trial of Al Capone on tax evasion, or the Chicago Seven antiwar protest trial, the court both influenced and reflected American social, legal, and political mores. Vernon Ford Copyright American Library Association. All rights reserved "A Court That Shaped America is an extraordinary history of an institution that has reflected the interaction of our justice and cultural systems. An exciting read, it demolishes the notion that books about courts tell only the stories of anonymous, black-robed men and women who hear lawyers drone on." --James R. Thompson, former governor of Illinois