The Devils Disciples: Makers Of The Salem Witchcraft Trials

Peter Charles Hoffer

Mention the term witch hunt, and Salem, Massachusetts, springs to mind—and with it the power of superstition. The Devil's Disciples is a well-researched study presented in a pleasant, readable style. One of the problems with many of the Salem witch trial books is that the authors try to ascribe the entire phenomenon to only a single cause. Hoffer successfully examines various possibilities and integrates them, showing how a multitude of factors conspired to generate and sustain the hysteria. The information he provides regarding the personalities and experiences of key individuals is particularly interesting. The Devil's Disciples is a well-reasoned overview of the Salem Witch Trials by Peter Charles Holfer. It is easy to read and there are times when Holfer gives a very good picture at what life would have like in Salem Village in the 1690s. I very much appreciated Holfer's decision to look at the many theories that attempt to explain the afflicted girls' fits without giving more weight to his preferred explanation. A more critical approach would be welcomed, but I liked getting an overview of the...