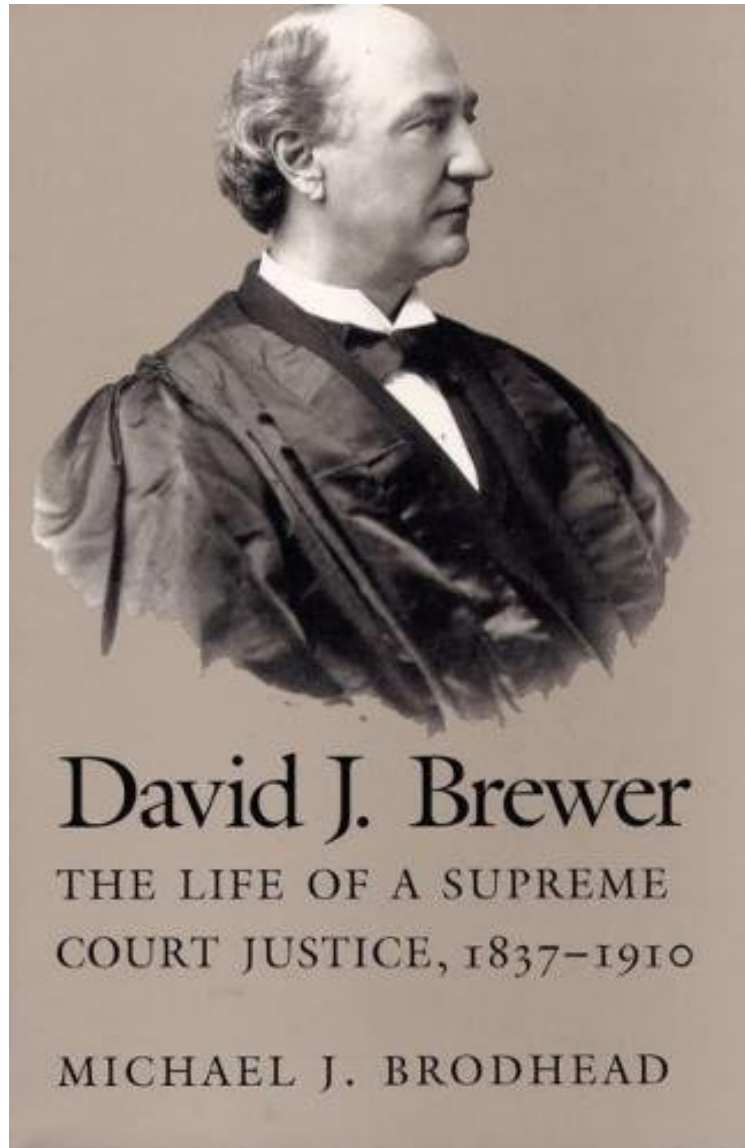


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## David J Brewer: The Life of a Supreme Court Justice, 1837-1910

*Professor Emeritus Michael J Brodhead PhD*  
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**Professor Emeritus Michael J Brodhead PhD : David J Brewer: The Life of a Supreme Court Justice, 1837-1910** before purchasing it in order to gage whether or not it would be worth my time, and all praised David J Brewer: The Life of a Supreme Court Justice, 1837-1910:

This is the first biography of David J. Brewer, an Associate Justice of the United States Supreme Court from 1889 to

1910. Prior to rising to the nations highest tribunal, Brewer served as a county probate judge, a state district judge, a Kansas State Supreme Court justice, and a federal circuit court judge. He was known not only for his long tenure on the Supreme Court but also for his numerous off-the-bench statements as an orator and writer. Many of Brewers judicial opinions and nonjudicial utterances created controversy, particularly when he confronted the reform issues of his day. The court, then presided over by Chief Justice Melville W. Fuller, has been seen as reactionary, determined to infuse the law with social Darwinism and laissez-faire ideology. Yet, contrary to this assessment of the Fuller Court as a whole, Brewer accepted most of his generations reform goals. He championed many forms of social legislation, the regulation of business, the rights of women and minorities, the support of charities, educational reform, and world peace. Michael J. Brodhead contends that until recently historians have carelessly and inaccurately created a false image of Brewer, partly by citing a small sample of his opinions and public statements as representative of his alleged conservatism. They have also assumed that the disputable decisions of Brewer and his contemporaries were based on ideological predilections and that precedent and recognized legal principles played no role. During his term, Brewer was the author of such notable court opinions as *In re Debs*, *Muller v. Oregon*, and *Kansas v. Colorado*. He supported property rights, admired honest entrepreneurial activity, and opposed the concentration of power in any form. Brewer favored the individual in all instances, whether that individual was the initiator of a great economic enterprise or a farmer struggling to extend agriculture into the western plains.

About the Author Michael J. Brodhead is a professor emeritus of history at the University of Nevada, Reno, and an archivist at the National Archives Central Plains Region, Kansas City, Missouri.