

Timeline: Monkey Trial

1859-1925

- 1859** Charles Darwin's *Origin of Species* is published. Its revolutionary theory of natural selection will have profound effects on both the scientific world and society at large.



- 1922** January: William Jennings Bryan begins his anti-evolution crusade in Kentucky, speaking out against the Darwinian "law of hate" and calling for a return to the Biblical "law of love." His campaign catches fire in Tennessee.

- 1925** March 21: Tennessee governor Austin Peay signs into law the Butler bill, outlawing the teaching of "any theory that denies the divine creation of man and teaches instead that man has descended from a lower order of animals."



May 4: Newspapers throughout Tennessee carry a small notice from the ACLU offering to pay court costs for any Tennessee teacher willing to test the anti-evolution law in the courts.

May 5: At a meeting in Robinson's drugstore in Dayton, Tennessee, science teacher John Scopes agrees to become the ACLU's defendant in a trial testing the Tennessee anti-evolution law.



CORBIS

May 13: Though he hasn't practiced law for 30 years, William Jennings Bryan agrees to represent the World's Christian Fundamentals Organization as special prosecutor at the Scopes trial.



BRYAN COLLEGE

May 25: In Dayton, a grand jury indicts John Scopes for violating the Butler Law.

July 10: Case Number 5232, the State of Tennessee v. John Thomas Scopes, comes before Judge John T. Raulston. Prosecution and defense teams choose members of the jury.

July 13: Clarence Darrow delivers an impassioned speech against "religious bigotry and hate." He hopes to convince Judge Raulston to declare the Butler Law unconstitutional.



NORTHWESTERN UNIVERSITY

July 15: Judge Raulston upholds the Butler Law and the trial continues. Witnesses for the prosecution and defense testify. Darrow and the defense team bring prominent scientists to Dayton to testify for evolution.

July 17: Judge Raulston reads his decision forbidding the defense team's scientific experts to testify before the jury. Darrow objects strenuously. Believing the trial is over, many reporters leave town.

July 20: Because of the heat and the crowd, Judge Raulston re-convenes court outside, under the trees. The defense calls Bryan to the stand as an expert on the Bible. Darrow's relentless interrogation of the elderly Bryan becomes the most famous event of the trial.



CORBIS

July 21: After nine minutes of deliberation, the jury returns a verdict of guilty. The judge imposes a fine of \$100 on the defendant and John Scopes speaks for the first time, vowing to "to oppose this law in any way [he] can."



BRYAN COLLEGE

July 26: Five days after the trial ends,

Bryan dies in his sleep in Dayton. Many blame his death on the stress of Darrow's interrogation, but he had been ill with diabetes for some time.

July 31: In a pouring rain, William Jennings Bryan is buried in Arlington National Cemetery just across the Potomac River from Washington, D.C.

What is the ACLU?

American Civil Liberties Union



The American system of government is founded on two counterbalancing principles: that the majority of the people govern, through democratically elected representatives; and that the power even of a democratic majority must be limited, to ensure individual rights.

Majority power is limited by the Constitution's Bill of Rights, which consists of the original ten amendments ratified in 1791, plus the three post-Civil War amendments (the 13th, 14th and 15th) and the 19th

Amendment (women's suffrage), adopted in 1920.

The mission of the ACLU is to preserve all of these protections and guarantees:

Your First Amendment rights - freedom of speech, association and assembly; freedom of the press, and freedom of religion.

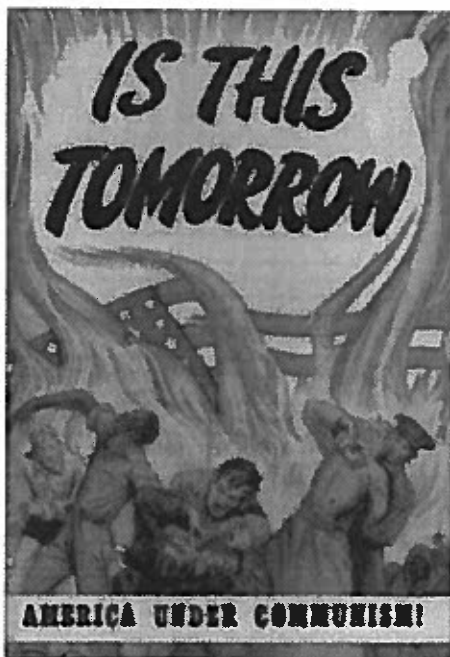
Your right to equal protection under the law - equal treatment regardless of race, sex, religion or national origin.

Your right to due process - fair treatment by the government whenever the loss of your liberty or property is at stake.

Your right to privacy - freedom from unwarranted government intrusion into your personal and private affairs.

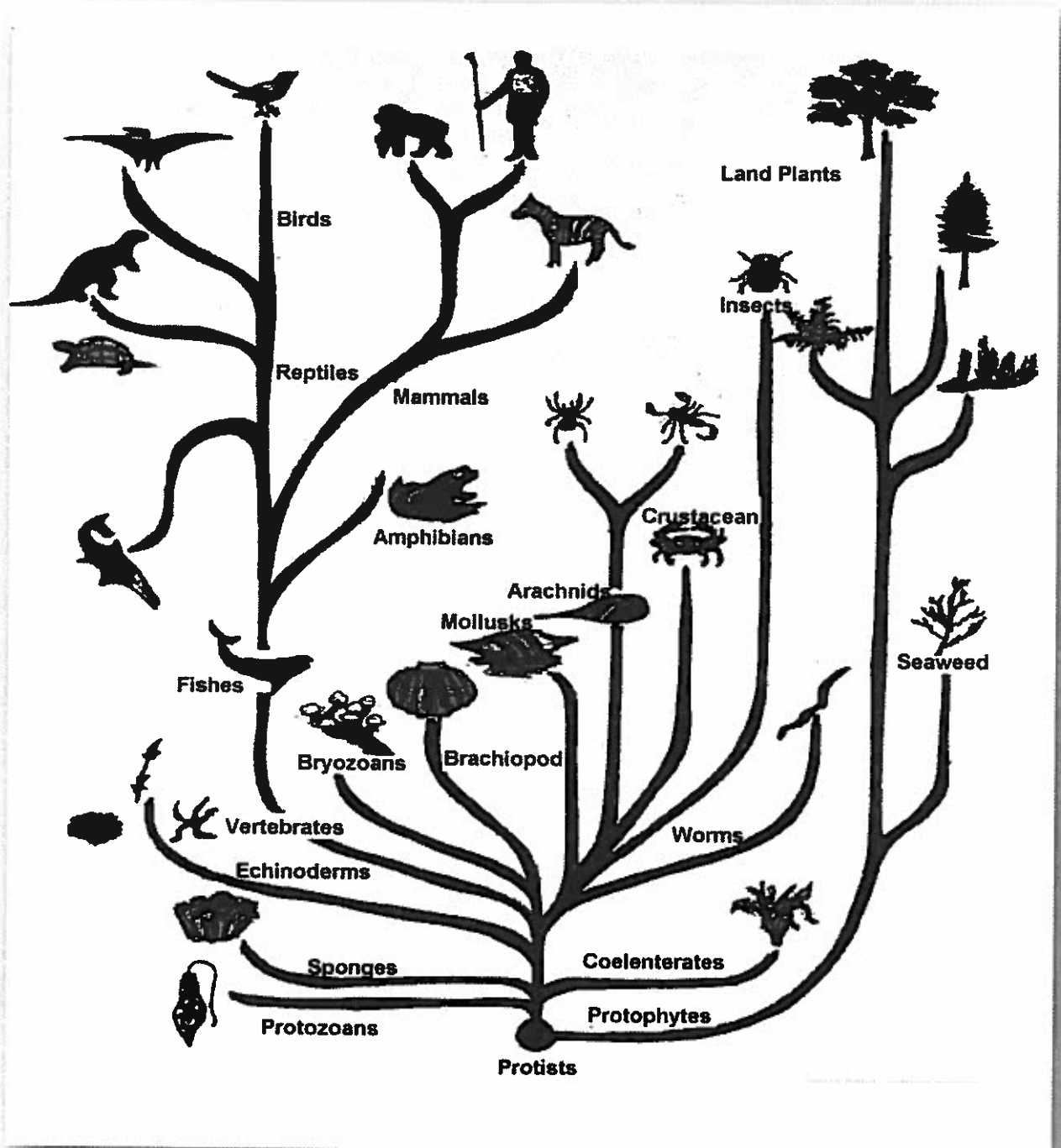
What is McCarthyism?

Joseph Raymond McCarthy (November 14, 1908 – May 2, 1957) was a Republican U.S. Senator from the state of Wisconsin between 1947 and 1957. Beginning in 1950, McCarthy became the most visible public face of a period of extreme anti-communist suspicion inspired by the tensions of the Cold War. He was noted for making unsubstantiated claims that there were large numbers of Communists and Soviet spies and sympathizers inside the federal government. Ultimately, his tactics led to his being discredited and censured by the United States Senate. The



term "McCarthyism," coined in 1950 in reference to McCarthy's practices, was soon applied to similar anti-communist pursuits. Today the term is used more generally to describe demagogic, reckless, and unsubstantiated accusations, as well as public attacks on the character or patriotism of political opponents.

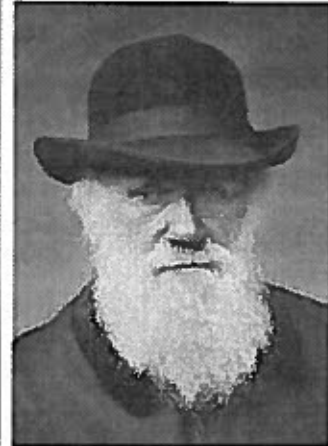




WHAT IS EVOLUTION?

Evolution is a fairly simple idea. A broad definition of it is "Species change over time."

Evolutionary theory is supported by a huge body of evidence, including the fossil record and observations of organisms alive today. That is one of the reasons it is embraced by most mainstream scientists.



Charles Darwin

WHAT IS CREATIONISM?

Many people believe that the Earth and all the creatures in it were created by God. Although most religions have creation stories as part of their beliefs, those who refer to themselves as Creationists are mainly fundamental Protestant Christians. These Creationists believe the



version of creation found in the Bible in the book of Genesis. In this account, God created the Universe, including the Earth and all the creatures in it, in seven days. Most Creationists believe this means seven twenty-four hour days. Other Christians and Jews believe the seven days symbolize periods that lasted much longer.

The Major Players in the Trial

Eighty two years ago, in July 1925, the mixture of religion, science and the public schools caught fire in Dayton, Tenn. The Scopes trial -- or "Monkey Trial," as it was called -- dominated headlines across the country. The trial lasted just a week, but the questions it raised are as divisive now as they were back then.



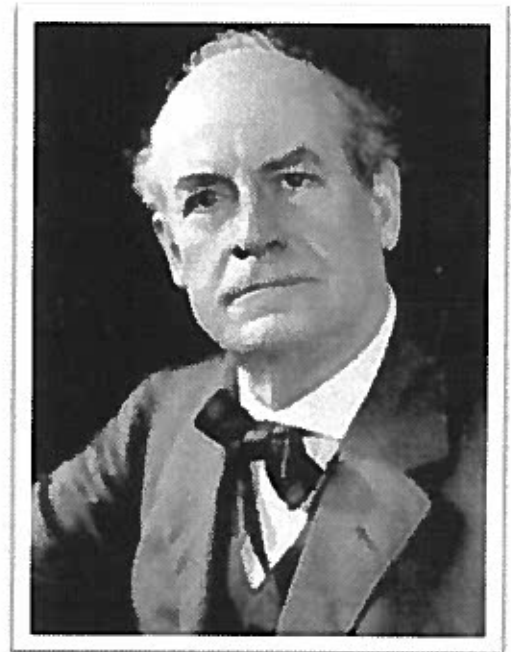
Rhea County Courthouse in Dayton, Tenn., as it appeared in 1925 at the time of the Scopes trial. Built in 1891, the building was designated a National Historic Landmark in 1977. The courtroom is still used today, and the building also houses a museum dedicated to the famous trial.

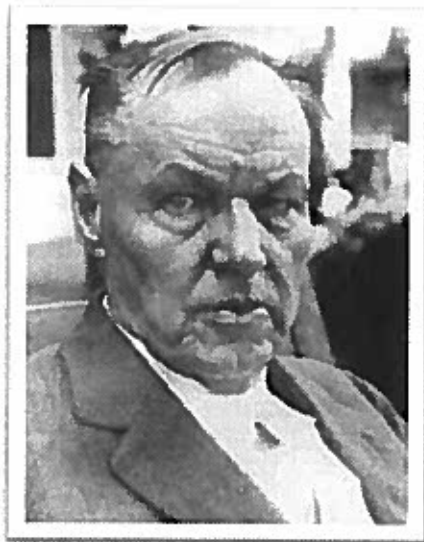
"It would be hard to imagine a more moral town than Dayton. If it has any bootleggers, no visitor has heard of them... No fancy woman has been seen in the town since the end of the McKinley administration. There is no gambling. There is no place to dance. The relatively wicked, when they would indulge themselves, go to Robinson's drug store and debate theology..." H.L. Mencken, July 13, 1925



Henry Louis Mencken (E.K. Hornbeck in the play) (September 12, 1880 – January 29, 1956), (Left) better known as H. L. Mencken, was a twentieth-century **journalist, satirist, social cynic, and freethinker**, known as the "Sage of Baltimore". He is often regarded as one of the most influential American writers of the early 20th century.

A famous orator, **William Jennings Bryan (Matthew Harrison Brady in the play)** (March 19, 1860-July 26, 1925) (right) was 65 when he joined the prosecution team in the Scopes trial. Bryan was a leading **fundamentalist**, traveling widely to warn against "the menace of **Darwinism**." He was a three time Democratic candidate for President and a **populist**.



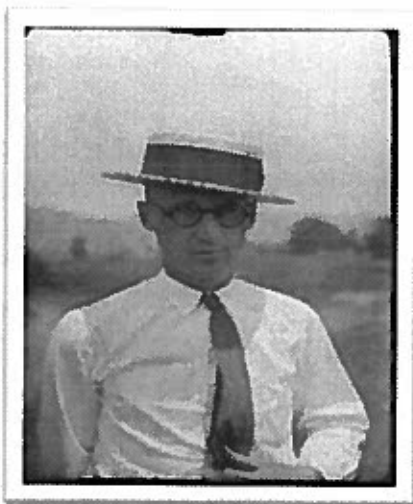


Clarence Darrow (Henry Drummond in the play) (left) (April 18, 1857- March 13, 1938) was 68 when he agreed to act as John Scopes' defense attorney. At the time, he was the most famous criminal defense lawyer in the country, and a very popular public speaker. His favorite topic was anticlericalism. He was hired by the ACLU to defend Scopes.



George Washington Rappleyea (left) and John Thomas Scopes (Bertram Cates in the play) (right), Dayton, Tennessee, June 1925.

Rappleyea was an engineer and geologist who managed the Cumberland Coal & Iron Company, and he is widely credited with suggesting that Dayton challenge the new anti-evolution statute.



John Thomas Scopes, Dayton, Tennessee, June 1925 The 24-year-old Scopes was in his first job after graduating from the University of Kentucky in 1924. He taught algebra and physics, served as athletic coach, and occasionally substituted in biology classes at the Rhea County High School.

QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT.....

Hillsboro, where the play takes place, is a fictional town. The actual trial took place in the town of Dayton, Tennessee. Why did the authors of the play change the names of all the major characters and the town?



The Scopes trial was as much about spectacle as it was about the clash of science and religion. Among those in attendance was a chimpanzee movie performer named Joe Mendi. Journalist H.L. Mencken dubbed Dayton "monkeytown."



Despite the hopes of organizers, the trial didn't draw tourists. But locals turned out in droves. Left, girls from the Dayton area display monkey doll souvenirs at the courthouse.

The John T. Scopes Song



The Scopes trial also inspired music. The excerpt below is from the song "The John T. Scopes Trial," by recording artist Vernon Dalhart.

"Then to Dayton came a man with his new ideas so grand; And he said we came from monkeys long ago; But in teaching his beliefs Mr. Scopes found only grief; For they would not let their old religion go. You may find a new belief; it will only bring you grief; For a house that's built on sand is sure to fall; and wherever you may turn there's a lesson you will learn; That the old religion's better after all."



From left: Defense attorney Dudley Field Malone, District Attorney General Tom Stewart, William Jennings Bryan, and Judge John Raulston, seen shaking hands with Clarence Darrow. Note the WGN microphone. This was the first U.S. trial broadcast live over a national radio network.

A cameraman (right) captures Bryan and Darrow conferring during the trial. Members of the press were seated inside the bar in the courtroom.



"The selection of a jury to try Scopes... showed to what extreme lengths the salvation of the local primates has been pushed. It was obvious after a few rounds that the jury would be unanimously hot for Genesis. The most that Mr. Darrow could hope for was to sneak in a few bold enough to declare publicly that they would have to hear the evidence against Scopes before condemning him." H.L. Mencken



Defense attorney Darrow cross-examines Bryan, trying to get him to admit the bible is open to interpretation. One of the most famous scenes in American legal history, it took place on the courthouse lawn due to the summer heat.

"I believe in creation... And if I am not able to explain it, I will accept it."

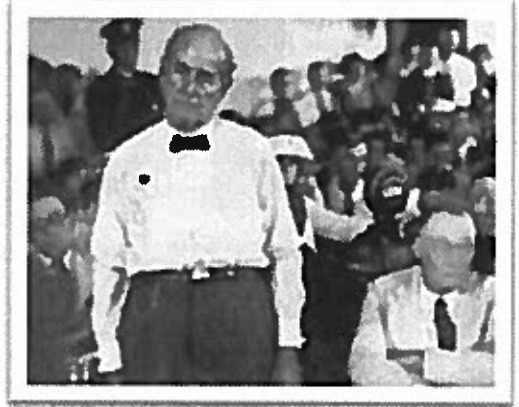
William Jennings Bryan, in response to Clarence Darrow's cross-examination

From left: Defense lawyer Dudley Field Malone; prosecutors Gordon McKenzie, Wallace Haggard, Herb Hicks; and District Attorney General Tom Steward. Seated under the WGN microphone is H.L. Mencken, who covered the trial for the *Baltimore Sun*.





From left: John Scopes, defense attorney Dr. John R. Neal, and George Rappleyea, manager of the Cumberland Coal and Iron Co. and one of the original organizers of events leading up to the trial.



Bryan addresses the court.
He died in Dayton five days after the trial ended.



Clarence Darrow and William Jennings Bryan.

William Jennings Bryan (seated at left, below) being interrogated by Clarence Seward Darrow, during the trial of State of Tennessee vs. John Thomas Scopes, July 20, 1925.

That Monday afternoon, because of the extreme heat, Judge Raulston decided to move the court proceedings outdoors. The session was held on a platform that had been erected at the front of the Rhea County Courthouse to accommodate ministers who wanted to preach during the time of



the trial. Defense lawyers for Scopes (John R. Neal, Arthur Garfield Hays, and Dudley Field Malone) are visible seated to the extreme right. One of the men at left, with his back to the camera, appears to be Scopes. The court reporters are seated at the table. The photographer appears to have been standing on the platform directly behind Scopes. [Image #2005-26202]



Darrow addresses the jury.



Dayton teacher and football coach John Scopes, (right) seen here during sentencing, was fined \$100 on July 21, 1925. Both Bryan and the ACLU offer to pay it for him.

"The Scopes trial, from the start, has been carried on in a manner exactly fitted to the anti- evolution law and the simian imbecility under it. There hasn't been the slightest pretense to decorum. The rustic judge, a candidate for re-election, has postured the yokels like a clown in a ten-cent side show, and almost every word he has uttered has been an undisguised appeal to their prejudices and superstitions." H.L. Mencken, July 18, 1925



People in Dayton still talk about the Scopes trial. Dayton-area farmer O.W. Wooden calls it "something else": "Trying to tell you people come from monkeys and all that stuff. Couldn't be right! Monkeys to me, like a chicken, you know? People is people."

Eloise Reed, now 92, was 12 at the time of the trial.



Ed Larson, author of *Summer for the Gods*, a Pulitzer Prize-winning book about the Scopes trial, says defense lawyer Darrow was the Thomas Paine of his day.

QUESTIONS TO THINK ABOUT....

What is the difference between fundamentalism and creationism? Could you defend either view? What do you personally believe? Do we, as individuals, have the right to choose between religion and evolution? Should the government decide for us? What should be taught in your school?