

The “Monkey Trial” March 1925.

- On 21st March 1925 Tennessee passed the Butler Act which stated:
- That it shall be unlawful for any teacher in any of the Universities, Normals and all other public schools of the State which are supported in whole or in part by the public school funds of the State, to teach any theory that denies the Story of the Divine Creation as taught in the Bible, and to teach instead that man has descended from a lower order of animals.

Proposer of the act: John Washington Butler.



Religion vs. Science.

- (State Representative) John W. Butler, a Tennessee farmer and head of the World Christian Fundamentals Association, lobbied state legislatures to pass the anti-evolution law.



The act is challenged.

- John Thomas Scopes' involvement in the so-called Scopes Monkey Trial came about after the American Civil Liberties Union (ACLU) announced that it would finance a test case challenging the constitutionality of the Butler Act if they could find a Tennessee teacher willing to act as a defendant.

- Photograph of John Scopes taken one month before the trial.



Opportunistic Bush Lawyers?

- A band of businessmen in Dayton, Tennessee, led by engineer and geologist George Rappleyea, saw this as an opportunity to get publicity for their town and approached Scopes.
- Rappleyea pointed out that while the Butler Act prohibited the teaching of human evolution, the state required teachers to use the assigned textbook, Hunter's Civic Biology (1914), which included a chapter on evolution.
- Rappleyea argued that teachers were essentially required to break the law.



Some reluctance.

- When asked about the test case, Scopes was initially reluctant to get involved, but after some discussion he told the group gathered in Robinson's Drugstore, "If you can prove that I've taught evolution and that I can qualify as a defendant, then I'll be willing to stand trial."



Unethical behaviour.

- Scopes may have actually been innocent of the crime to which his name is inexorably linked.
- After the trial Scopes admitted to reporter William Kinsey Hutchinson "I didn't violate the law," explaining that he had skipped the evolution lesson, and that his lawyers had coached his students to go on the stand.



No teacher training and no background in biology.

- He earned a degree at the University of Kentucky in 1924, with a major in law and a minor in geology.
- Scopes moved to Dayton where he took a job as the Rhea County High School's football coach and occasionally filled in as substitute teacher when regular members of the staff were off work.



Eminent advocates in the defence team.

- The defence team included Clarence Darrow, Dudley Field Malone, John Neal, Arthur Garfield Hays and Frank McElwee.
- Clarence Darrow: was an American lawyer, leading member of the American Civil Liberties Union, and prominent advocate.
- He was best known for defending teenage thrill killers Leopold and Loeb in their trial for murdering 14-year-old Robert "Bobby" Franks (1924).



William Jennings Bryan: eminent presidential candidate with a personal axe to grind(?)

- The prosecution team, led by Tom Stewart, included brothers Herbert Hicks and Sue K. Hicks, Wallace Haggard, father and son pairings Ben and J. Gordon McKenzie, and **William Jennings Bryan** and William Jennings Bryan Jr.
- Bryan had spoken at Scopes' high school commencement and remembered the defendant laughing while Bryan was giving the address to the graduating class six years earlier.
- He died 5 days after the end of the trial (65).



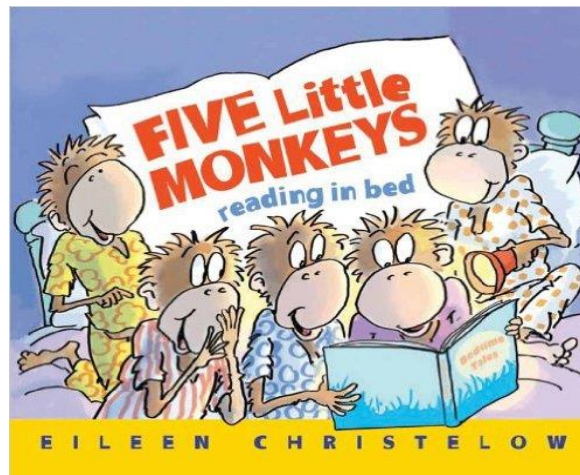
A fundamentalist Presbyterian.

- William Jennings Bryan was an American orator and politician from Nebraska, and a dominant force in the populist wing of the Democratic Party, standing three times as the Party's candidate for President of the United States (1896, 1900 and 1908).
- He served two terms as a member of the United States House of Representatives from Nebraska and was United States Secretary of State under President Woodrow Wilson (1913–1915).
- Clarence Darrow (left) and William Jennings Bryan (right) chat in court during the Scopes Trial.



The prosecution was ridiculed much more than the defence.

- Anticipating that Scopes would be found guilty, the press fitted the defendant for martyrdom and created an onslaught of ridicule.
- Time's initial coverage of the trial focussed on Dayton as "the fantastic cross between a circus and a holy war."
- Life magazine adorned its masthead with monkeys reading books and proclaimed, "the whole matter is something to laugh about".



Prejudicial press.

- Rare exceptions were found in the Southern press, where the fact that Darrow had saved Leopold and Loeb from the death penalty continued to be a source of ugly humour.
- Trained chimpanzees performed on the courthouse lawn.



Propaganda in court: note the banner “read Your Bible”.

- On Monday afternoon, 19th July, and 6th day of the trial, Judge John T. Raulston declared that court would adjourn to where the temperature might be cooler and spectators accommodated more safely – outside the court.



A media circus.

- Scopes was found guilty and fined \$100 by the judge.
- The trial served its purpose of drawing intense national publicity, as national reporters flocked to Dayton to cover the big-name lawyers who had agreed to represent each side.
- The verdict was overturned on a technicality: the jury should have decided the fine, not the judge, since under the state constitution, Tennessee judges could not at that time set fines above \$50, and the Butler Act specified a minimum fine of \$100.



Scopes did not teach thereafter.

- After the trial Scopes accepted a scholarship for graduate study in geology at the University of Chicago.
- He then did geological field work in Venezuela for Gulf Oil.
- There he met and married his wife, Mildred, and was baptized into the Roman Catholic Church.



About thirty years with the United Gas Company.

- In 1930, he returned to the University of Chicago(below) for a third year of graduate study.
- After two years without professional employment, he took a position as a geologist with the United Gas Company, for which he studied oil reserves.
- He worked, in Houston, Texas then in Shreveport, Louisiana, until he retired in 1963.
- He died on October 21st, 1970 (aged 72).

