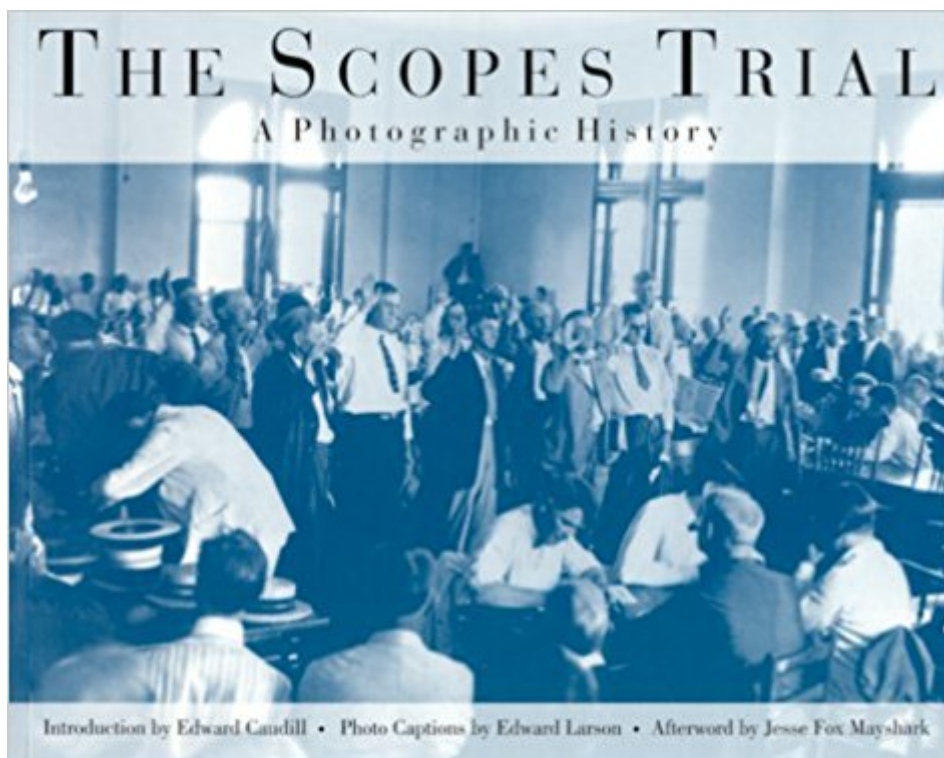


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# Scopes Trial: Photographic History



## Synopsis

It was a big story in a small place. During the summer of 1925, the tiny hamlet of Dayton, Tennessee, became the setting for one of the most controversial trials in American history. In a move designed partly as a publicity scheme and partly as a means to test a newly enacted anti-evolution law, a young teacher named John Thomas Scopes agreed to be arrested for teaching Darwin's theory of natural selection in the public schools. The resulting courtroom showdown pitted Clarence Darrow, the brilliant trial lawyer and self-proclaimed agnostic, against Williams Jennings Bryan, three-time presidential candidate and fundamentalist Christian. For twelve days all eyes focused on Dayton as a spirited public debate unfolded. Published on the seventy-fifth anniversary of the Scopes trial, this book vividly recalls that famous episode through an array of fascinating archival photographs, many of them never before published. Images of the circus-like atmosphere that overtook Dayton during the trial alternate with candid photos of the key players. The accompanying text and captions summarize the events and clarify the underlying issues of the trial. While the legal consequences of the trial were minuscule—it ended in Scopes's conviction, which was later overturned on a technicality—its symbolic importance was enormous, defining the science-religion debate in the twentieth century. In addition to revisiting the Scopes trial, the book also examines its continuing legacy in Tennessee history, politics, religion, and education. Although the 1925 law was finally repealed in 1967, state legislators have made subsequent efforts to challenge the teaching of evolution. "Like life itself," notes Edward Caudill in his introduction, "the controversy does not simply stop, but keeps evolving." The Contributors: Edward Caudill is associate dean for graduate studies and research in the College of Communications at the University of Tennessee, Knoxville. He is the author of *Darwinian Myths: The Uses and Misuses of a Theory*. Edward J. Larson is Richard B. Russell Professor of History and professor of law at the University of Georgia. His book *Summer for the Gods: The Scopes Trial and America's Continuing Debate over Science and Religion* won the 1998 Pulitzer Prize for history. Jesse Fox Mayshark is senior editor of *Metro Pulse*, a weekly newspaper in Knoxville, Tennessee.

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## Customer Reviews

On the 75th anniversary of the Scopes trial, Caudill (Univ. of Tennessee) and Larson (Univ. of Georgia) have surrounded fascinating photographs of the trial with excellent, accessible essays on its history and aftermath. Caudill shows that Tennessee's Butler Act, which outlawed the teaching of evolution in the state's public schools, was passed to appease conservative constituents. With a nominal fine as its punishment, it was not intended as a major law. However, the town of Dayton, TN, desperate for an economic boost, used a contrived violation of the law to promote itself. The book does an excellent job of placing the trial in context and illuminating the personalities of Clarence Darrow and William Jennings Bryan. The endnotes reference the major works on the trial for further research. The photographs and captions alone are worth the price, showing how the news coverage of the trial transformed a town and shamed a state. Larson's afterword demonstrates that religious fundamentalists and the American Civil Liberties Union both gained from the trial. The facts are more complex, he argues, than shown in the play/movie *Inherit the Wind*. Highly recommended for all collections. DHarry Charles, Attorney at Law, St. Louis Copyright 2000 Reed Business Information, Inc.

It was a big story in a small place. During the summer of 1925, the tiny hamlet of Dayton, Tennessee, became the setting for one of the most controversial trials in American history. In a move designed partly as a publicity scheme and partly as a means to test a newly enacted anti-evolution law, a young teacher named John Thomas Scopes agreed to be arrested for teaching Darwin's theory of natural selection in the public schools. The resulting courtroom showdown pitted Clarence Darrow, the brilliant trial lawyer and self-proclaimed agnostic, against William Jennings Bryan, three-time presidential candidate and fundamentalist Christian. For twelve

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When I was in high school I read L. Sprague de Camp's account of "The Great Monkey Trial," became enamored of H. L. Mencken, and was fascinated with Dudley Field Malone's speech in Dayton. My interest in the Scopes Trial was such that eventually I used it as my dissertation topic. Since that time I have continued to collect materials about the trial and have followed contemporary versions of the 1925 battle between science and religion with quite some interest. It is certainly nice to have such an extensive collection of photographs from the trial, especially since I have not seen most of the 38 shots. For me the best of the "new" photographs is of Rabbi Herman Rosennasser delivering a mock class in biblical translation. Having heard of the rabbi's fascinating translation of Genesis from Hebrew into German and then into English to make its meaning compatible with the theory of evolution. Except for shots of the monkeys that were brought to Dayton, all of the photographs are full page shots covering all of the major players and the fun both inside and outside of the Rhea County Courthouse. There seems to have been a concerted effort not to include a lot of the traditional shots (e.g., Judge Raulston and the jury posing outside the courthouse). The

introduction by Edward Caudill, author of "Darwinian Myths: The Legends and Misuses of a Theory" provides a 20-page of the drama in Dayton that covers the passage of the Butler Act, the ACLU's decision to intervene, the defense putting Bryan on trial and the legacy of the case. It is a concise coverage of the multi-faceted trial, certainly superior to the mostly erroneous treatments found in so many reference books that confuse the play/film "Inherit the Wind" with the actual trial. Jesse Fox Mayshark, a senior editor of a Knoxville weekly newspaper, provides an afterword "Seventy-five Years of Scopes" that provides some nice insights into what the trial has meant to the State of Tennessee. Since the volume is published by the University of Tennessee Press this is not particularly surprising, but it is a topic that has been pretty much dismissed in the past and I found it quite interesting. What I really liked were the photo captions provided by Edward J. Larson, who won the 1998 Pulitzer prize for history for his book on the Scopes Trial, "Summer for the Gods." Whereas Caudill provides the groundwork for the photographs, Larson provides the detail work. Certainly it would be worth your while to have read Larson's book before you go through these photographs. The more you know about the Scopes Trial the more you will appreciate what you are seeing and reading in this photographic history. Personally I would have liked to have seen portraits of my hero Malone and A. T. Stewart, the true head of the prosecution in Dayton, because the importance of those two men in the trial is always underplayed in the literature. The most glaring photographic omissions of course would be the celebrated cross-examination of William Jennings Bryan by Clarence Darrow that took place on a platform on the courthouse lawn. I have seen a half-dozen photographs of this infamous confrontation and am surprised one is not included. But since the photos came from the collections of W.C. Robinson (he ran the drug store in Dayton where the plan for the trial was hatched) and Sue K. Hicks, I have to temper my disappointment. Overall this is certainly a first class presentation of a collection of photographs.

good book thanks

This collection---published in 2000, the 75th anniversary of the trial---contains an introduction by Edward Caudill (author of "Darwinian Myths: The Legends and Misuses of a Theory" and "Darwinism in the Press: the Evolution of An Idea (Routledge Communication Series)), with photo captions by Edward Larson (author of "Summer for the Gods: The Scopes Trial and America's Continuing Debate Over Science and Religion). They recount the origin of the trial: "A few local citizens contrived the event in the drugstore... They asked John Thomas Scopes to come to the drug store. The twenty-four year old teacher... was a popular young man about town,

and a good candidate for the scheme, as he was unlikely to alienate local people with radical views or activities... In addition, [his] being single meant he did not have a family that might suffer unforeseen fallout from the trial... Scopes did not like the idea of being arrested, and he believed the Bible and evolution could be reconciled. But he finally relented... Scopes then left to play tennis." (Pg. 5-6) Defense counsel Clarence Darrow "saw a grand opportunity to debunk Christianity, and he later wrote that his intention was to focus the nation's attention on Bryan and fundamentalism... [he] saw Darwin's theory as a useful tool in his own mission against religion... It was, for him, the pinnacle of his lifelong war on religious intolerance." (Pg. 7) Although there was a media scene staged reported by some to show Scopes meeting Darrow for the first time, "the two had actually met in both New York City and Dayton prior to the trial. Further, Scopes had been on hand when Darrow had first driven into town, several hours before this staged greeting." (Pg. 31) The book also notes, "[Scopes] later confirmed the persistent rumor that he had never actually violated the law. He simply agreed to test it at the request of Dayton civic leaders... To avoid any further questions on this point, Scopes never testified at trial and the defense never raised the issue. The law itself, rather than the defendant, was really on trial. Violating it only carried a small monetary penalty anyway, which others paid on Scopes' behalf. Scopes was never jailed or threatened with jail and could have remained a teacher in Dayton after the trial, but instead accepted a scholarship to study geology at the University of Chicago." (Pg. 33) Although one always could have wished for a few more "favorite" photos to be included (that one has already seen in smaller copies in other books), those presented in this collection are excellent. This book will be a "must have" acquisition for anyone fascinated with the Scopes trial.

"The Scopes Trial" is a summary of the 1925 John Scopes "Monkey Trial" which brought into question the passing of an "anti-evolution law" in the state of Tennessee. The book is organized into 3 parts: The first is a background of the trial, covering its origins, its backstory (very unlike the entertaining yet inaccurate film representation in "Inherit The Wind"), and its outcome. The second part is where you'll find the "meat" of the book - a collection of photographs which as far as I am aware you will find nowhere else. And the third part consists of the Afterword, where the impact that the Scopes Trial had on the country and in particular on the state of Tennessee is examined. I liked this book - the summaries in the front and back sections are factual, concise, and informative. The photographs themselves are fantastic! They really depict the town of Dayton during the trial and help give you the sense of what it was like during those sweltering 6 days in July 1925. The only reason why I limited this review to 4 stars is quite simply because there are other photographs out

there which could have been included. I don't understand why the selection was as limited as it was. However, for the limited selection that there is, this book is a must for anyone interested in the history of the creation-evolution debate and the Scopes Trial in particular.

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