

## SIGNIFICANT TRIALS IN AMERICAN HISTORY

Law  
Lehnhart

### ANNE HUTCHISON TRIALS 1637 & 1638

The most famous of the trials intended to squelch religious dissent in the Massachusetts Bay Colony.

### SALEM WITCH TRIALS 1692

America's only massive witch-hunt trial gives a glimpse into the American religion and political climate during the colonial period.

JOHN PETER ZENGER TRIAL 1735 - Case centered around freedom of the press in colonial America.

### THE BOSTON MASSACRE 1770

In the revolutionary period's politically charged environment two reasonably fair trials were held.

### MAJOR JOHN ANDRE TRIAL 1780

This espionage trial sent shock waves through the American colonies by revealing the depth of a treason plot by General Benedict Arnold to hand over the American stronghold at West Point to the British.

### MARBURY v MADISON 1803

May be the most important case in American history because it established the principle of judicial review.

### AARON BURR TRIAL 1807

The Aaron Burr trial was the only time in American history that a court tried such a high-level official of the United States for treason.

KNAPP TRIALS 1830 - First cases in which accessories to murder were tried and convicted.

### CHEROKEE NATION v GEORGIA 1831

By refusing to help the Cherokees, the US Supreme Court left the Indians at the mercy of land-hungry settlers. It eventually led to the Cherokee move to Oklahoma along the famous "Trail of Tears".

### U.S. v CINQUE 1839

After slaves, aboard the schooner Amistad, killed their captors to free themselves the trial highlighted the cause of abolition.

### ALEXANDER HOLMES TRIAL 1842

The trial dealt with self-preservation as a defense to homicide when sailors threw passengers overboard in order to save themselves.

ALBERT TIRRELL TRIAL 1846 - Trial centered on the use of sleepwalking as a defense against a murder charge.

### DR. JOHN WEBSTER TRIAL 1850

Murder trial which required a conviction based on testimony of medical experts without showing the *corpus dilecti*, or proof of the murder, namely the body.

TRIAL OF SIMEON BUSHNELL - Fugitive Slave Law 1850

DRED SCOTT DECISION 1856 - Case dealt with the issue of whether slaves were property.

### EMMA CUNNINGHAM TRIAL 1857

Murder trial which highlighted the "victorian" attitudes that American's held towards women.

### "DUFF" ARMSTRONG TRIAL 1858

Abraham Lincoln's most famous trial where he used an almanac to prove his client was not guilty.

### DANIEL SICKLES TRIAL 1859

The first use of a plea of temporary insanity by a criminal defendant in a murder trial. The case captivated the nation's press since it contained glamorous celebrities, political intrigue, spellbinding lawyers and an adulterous affair.

### JOHN BROWN TRIAL 1859

Trial of the leader of the unsuccessful raid in Harpers Ferry, with the object of arming Southern slaves. Brown became a martyr to Northerners determined to abolish slavery.

PACKARD v PACKARD 1864 - Case centered on the ability of a husband to institutionalize his wife.

### MILLIGAN CASE 1864

Abraham Lincoln suspends habeas corpus during the Civil War. Lambdin Miligan was arrested for treason and tried in a military court.

#### DR. SAMUEL MUDD TRIAL 1865

Following Lincoln's assassination, the trial of Mudd as an accomplice highlighted the post-Civil war Union's thirst for retribution and the military's assertion of its authority over that of civilian courts.

#### TRIAL OF CAPT WIRZ 1865

The first war-crimes trial and only trial for war crimes of a Confederate after the Civil War. Wirz was the commander of the notorious Andersonville POW camp.

#### PRESIDENT ANDREW JOHNSON IMPEACHMENT 1868

U.S. Congress for the first time exercised its Constitutional prerogative to try a president for impeachable offenses.

#### BOSS TWEED TRIALS 1873

After decades of blatant embezzlement Boss Tweed's hold on power was broken in these trials.

#### U.S. v SUSAN B. ANTHONY 1873

Decision which did not extend 14th Amendment protection to women and left women in the position of having to fight for their rights for the next 100 years.

#### MARTINEZ v. DEL VALLE 1877

The famous lawyer Joseph Choate handling of a witness has been hailed as a model of the art of cross-examination.

REYNOLDS v U.S. 1879 - The case that ended the Mormon practice of polygamy.

#### WHITTAKER CASE 1880

Justice and equality issues in the post-reconstruction period following the Civil War. Questions the legality of a court-martial proceeding in a military court.

#### CHARLES GUILTEAU TRIAL 1881

The assassin of President James A. Garfield trial dealt with the defendant's sanity and was subjected to the modern legal test, namely whether or not Guiteau understood that his actions were wrong.

#### HAYMARKET TRIAL 1886

The Haymarket Riot was one of the most famous confrontations between the growing labor movement and the conservative forces of industry and government. The public backlash hurt the labor movement and a setback for unions. Governor John Peter Altgeld pardoned three of the defendants.

#### LIZZY BORDEN TRIAL 1893

Rule of law won over common prejudice in this murder trial where Borden was charged with stabbing her father and stepmother to death.

#### DR. HYDE TRIAL 1910

Charged with murder and facing overwhelming evidence against him Hyde was never convicted thanks to the immense wealth of his wife.

#### TRIANGLE SHIRTWAIST FIRE TRIAL 1911

Trial of the owners of a sweatshop which burned to the ground killing 146 young workers focused attention on the problem of poor workplace safety conditions.

#### LEO FRANK TRIAL 1913

A national scandal which exposed the double standard of Southern justice and ended with the hanging of an innocent Jewish man.

#### SCHENCK v U.S. APPEAL 1919

Supreme Court ruled directly on the extent the government may limit speech. Justice Oliver Wendell Holmes produced two of the most memorable and oft-quoted statements on the law.

#### SACCO-VANZETTI TRIAL 1921

A simple murder trial which ended as an international cause and provides a superb lesson in how myths are made.

#### SCOPES TRIAL 1925

Trial concerning the teaching of evolution in Tennessee schools. Features two of the prominent attorneys of the day Clarence Darrow and William Jennings Bryan.

#### MOORE et al. v. DEMPSEY APPEAL 1923

Twelve African-Americans condemned to death appeal on account of racial prejudice in the original trial.

#### LEOPOLD AND LOEB TRIAL 1924

Clarence Darrow saves two murderers from the death penalty with shrewd legal tactics.

#### MITCHELL CASE 1925

Trial concerning a military officer's right to free expression.

#### SCOTTSBORO NINE TRIALS 1931

Nine black men tried for rape in the racially charged climate of the South.

AL CAPONE TRIAL 1931 - Trial of country's most notorious gangster on tax charges.

#### BRUNO RICHARD HAUPTMAN TRIAL 1935

Trial of the man accused of kidnapping and murder of the Lindbergh baby. The prominence of the father created worldwide attention and a circus-like trial atmosphere which dealt with scientific crime detection and a conviction based on circumstantial evidence.

#### KOREMATSU CASE 1942

Case deals with the relocation of Japanese Americans to detention camps during World War II.

#### CARYL CHESSMAN TRIAL 1948

An accused rapist, kidnapper, and robber defends himself against a possible death sentence.

#### ALGER HISS TRIALS 1949-50

Cold war politics polarize Americans during this trial of alleged communist Alger Hiss.

TOKYO ROSE TRIAL 1949 - One of only seven American treason trials following World War II.

#### ROSENBERG TRIAL 1951

Trial of Julius and Ethel Rosenberg suspected of leading an espionage operation which provided the Soviet Union with secret information about the recently developed nuclear bomb.

#### BROWN v BOARD OF EDUCATION 1950

Case deals with the separate but equal policy in public schools which segregated black and white students.

#### SAMUEL SHEPPARD TRIALS 1954 & 1966

Pretrial prejudice and media publicity deny the defendant's constitutional rights.

MAPP CASE 1957 - Case about the evidence gathered during an illegal search.

GIDEON CASE 1962 - Case concerning the right to an attorney for a Florida man who couldn't afford one.

ESCOBEDO CASE 1964 - The right to counsel by suspects of a crime when being questioned by police.

#### U.S. vs. HOFFA 1964

Attorney general Robert Kennedy and labor boss Jimmy Hoffa square off on corruption in organized labor versus intrusive investigative tactics by the government.

NEW YORK TIMES COMPANY v. SULLIVAN 1964 - The high court sets national standards for certain libel cases.

#### GRISWOLD v. CONNECTICUT 1964

A case surrounding the distribution of information on contraception leads to a constitutional definition of the 'right to privacy'.

LENNY BRUCE TRIAL 1964 - Obscenity laws face a test against the constitutional right to freedom of speech.

MIRANDA 1966 - A question of an individual's need to fully understand his right against self-incrimination.

GAULT CASE 1967 - The application of certain adult constitutional rights to juvenile cases.

#### CHICAGO EIGHT 1968

After being arrested for violating Chicago's anti-riot laws the trial of the Chicago eight focuses on their right to assemble amongst other things.

#### WILLIAM CALLEY TRIAL 1968

After an attack of a South Vietnamese village went awry the 24 year old American commander is charged with 102 counts of murder. The case centers around chain of command and the following of military orders.

CLAY SHAW TRIAL 1969 - The only trial associated with a possible conspiracy in the assassination of President Kennedy.

#### CHARLES MANSON TRIAL 1970-71

Manson and followers are tried for murder according to the U.S. Supreme Court's *Aranda* ruling. The case turns into one of the costliest in U.S. history.

#### NEW YORK TIMES v. U.S. 1971

The Supreme Court narrows the government's ability to restrain the press from its right to publish.

#### BAKKE CASE 1974

Case centers around the constitutionality of affirmative action policies which denied a qualified white man acceptance to a California medical school.

#### IN THE MATTER OF KAREN ANN QUINLAN 1975

The New Jersey Supreme Court tackles a right to die case thereby opening the debate on the legal definition of death and other "bioethic" issues.

#### PATTY HEARST TRIAL 1976

The kidnapped daughter of Randolph Hearst, wealthy newsman, faces robbery charges though she was apparently a prisoner of the Symbionese Liberation Army at the time.

#### THE MARVIN v. MARVIN 'PALIMONY' SUIT 1979

The case established the right of partners in nonmarried relationships to sue for a division of property.

#### SILKWOOD v. KERR-MCGEE 1979

The estate of deceased nuclear plant employee Karen Silkwood sues her former employer for negligence in causing her plutonium contamination.

#### CLAUS VON BUELOW TRIALS 1982 & 1985

The trials of suspected murderer von Buelow focus on the capacity of the super-rich to obtain better legal counsel.

FALWELL v. FLYNT 1984 - The Rev. Jerry Falwell takes aim at *Hustler* magazine publisher Larry Flynt for libel.

#### OLIVER NORTH TRIAL 1989

A case focusing on the individual responsibility of an officer defending himself on the grounds of having been ordered by his superiors to commit a crime.

#### MAPPLETHORPE OBSCENITY TRIAL 1990

Homosexual art faces obscenity charges and again questions the bounds of First Amendment rights.

#### LOS ANGELES POLICE DEPARTMENT OFFICERS' TRIALS 1992 & 1993

Police officers involved in the beating of Rodney King face brutality charges and civil rights violations in a high-profile case outlining the difficulty of securing a fair trial amidst public scrutiny.

#### OJ SIMPSON TRIALS 1995 & 1996

First a murder trial which attracted world-wide attention by mixing fame, wealth, media scrutiny, questionable police procedure, race and a verdict which polarized America followed by a wrongful death charge and a civil trial.