

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.

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.

U.S. v CINQUE 1839 After slaves, aboard the schooner Amistad, killed their captors to free themselves the trial highlighted the cause of abolition.

JOHN BROWN TRIAL 1859 This was a 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.

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.

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.

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

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.

LEOPOLD AND LOEB TRIAL 1924 Clarence Darrow saves two murderers from the death penalty with shrewd legal tactics.

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.

ALGER HISS TRIALS 1949-50 Cold war politics polarize Americans during this trial of alleged communist Alger Hiss.

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.

SAMUEL SHEPPARD TRIALS 1954 & 1966 Pretrial prejudice and media publicity deny the defendant's constitutional rights.

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.

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

CHICAGO EIGHT (Seven) 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.

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.

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.

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.

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. Cases that influence

CLINTON IMPEACHMENT TRIAL 1999 For only the second time in United States history, the Senate conducted an impeachment trial of a President. The acquittal came as no great surprise, given the near party-line vote on impeachment charges in the House of Representatives leading to the trial. The trial also raises fascinating questions about the distinction between public morality and private morality.