

Exploring the Scopes “Monkey” Trial in Dayton, Tennessee: A Guide to People & Places

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ABSTRACT

Many biology teachers visit Dayton, Tennessee, to experience “ground zero” of the evolution–creationism controversy. This article provides concise descriptions, addresses, and GPS coordinates for the trial-related sites in and around Dayton.

Key Words: Scopes “Monkey” Trial; John Scopes; William Jennings Bryan; evolution.

In 1925, while trying to revive his failing mining company in Dayton, Tennessee, George Rappleyea took up the American Civil Liberties Union’s (ACLU) challenge of finding a teacher to test the new Butler Law banning the teaching of evolution in Tennessee’s public schools. John Scopes was the perfect candidate, for he was a young teacher who had recently completed his first year at Rhea County High School; Scopes also accepted evolution, though he did not recall actually having taught it. Clarence Darrow, the nation’s leading defense attorney of the 1920s, led Scopes’s defense. William Jennings Bryan, a leader of the fundamentalist movement, had not tried a lawsuit in 25 years, but he volunteered – on behalf of the World’s Christian Fundamentals Association – to help prosecute Scopes in what initially seemed to be a minor misdemeanor case. To help publicize his message, Bryan wrote a response to the trial’s result, but he died in Dayton 5 days after the trial and never got to deliver his highly anticipated speech.

On paper, the country’s first “Trial of the Century” resulted in little more than a loss for the defense and a \$100 fine for Scopes, both of which were set aside when the case was appealed. To the people of Dayton and elsewhere in the United States, however, the result was so much more. Although the jury sided with Bryan, Darrow had brought the theory of evolution to the forefront of public education. The Butler Law was repealed 42 years later (i.e., in 1967), thereby allowing teachers in Tennessee to teach evolution as an accepted scientific idea. The Scopes Trial became an iconic

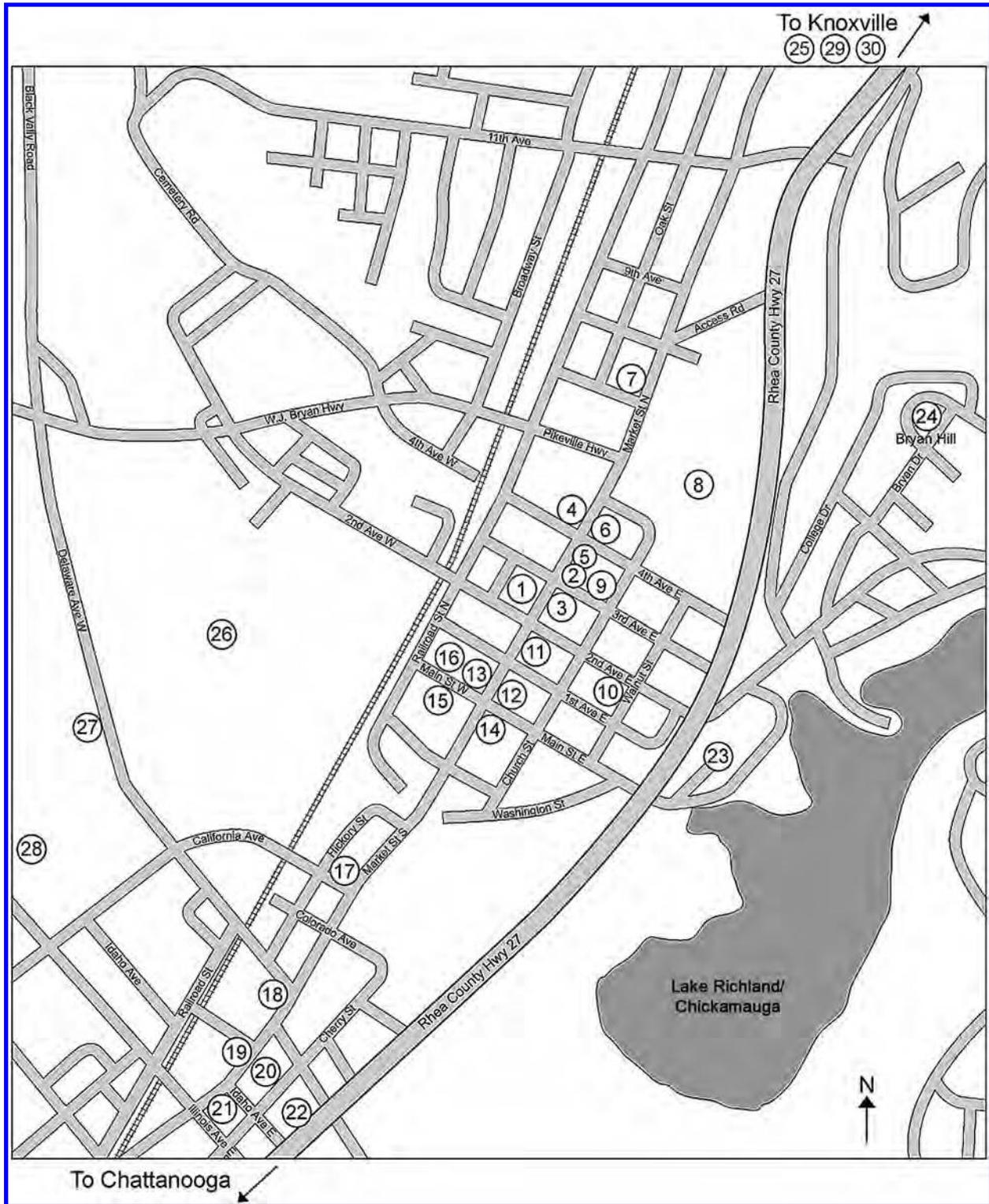
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confrontation between science and religion that remains the most famous event in the history of the evolution–creationism controversy.

On the third weekend of every July, throngs of biology teachers and other tourists descend on tiny Dayton to celebrate the Scopes Trial Play and Festival (<http://www.scopesfestival.com>). The festival includes a reenactment of the famous trial, as well as a “History Within Us” session for local residents to share stories about the trial that have been passed down through the generations. Not surprisingly, hundreds of biology teachers visit Dayton each year to see the many sites associated with “ground zero” of the evolution–creationism controversy.

If you are among the many biology teachers who visit Dayton to retrace the events of July, 1925, this guide and accompanying map (Figure 1) will help you see “the rest of the story.” (Sites designated with an asterisk are marked with “Scopes Trial Trail” plaques.) Readers who want additional information about the many people, places, and events associated with the Scopes Trial are encouraged to examine the several classic accounts of the trial (Tompkins, 1965; de Camp, 1968; Larson, 1997). The numbers designating each site correspond to the numbers on the map (Figure 1).

1. **The Rhea County Courthouse and Scopes Trial Museum**, a Romanesque Revival/Italian Villa Style courthouse erected in 1891, is located in the center of Dayton and became the stage for one of the greatest clashes between science and religion. It is hard to imagine the second-floor courtroom filled with hundreds of spectators as it was during the Scopes Trial, but standing near the original judge’s bench, or in one of the jurors’ chairs or in the gallery, visitors can travel back in time. On a hot summer day, one can imagine the atmosphere and how the weight of the crowd cracked the courtroom’s floor, causing Darrow’s famed examination of Bryan to be moved outside to a dais on the courthouse’s north lawn. This came to be called the greatest cross-examination in courtroom history as Darrow got Bryan to concede



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Figure 1. A guide to the many sites in and around Dayton, Tennessee, associated with the Scopes Trial (modified, expanded, and revised from Cornelius & Davis, 1990).

that reading the Bible required interpretation to give certain passages meaning. Near the south corner of the courthouse, a statue depicting Bryan (in 1891, the year he began his congressional career) by Cessna Decosimo was dedicated on the courthouse lawn in 2005, and at the front of the still functional courtroom is a page

from the *Congressional Record* listing the Ten Commandments. The courthouse was designated a National History Landmark in 1977. The recently retired Rhea County General Session Court judge, James W. “Jimmy” McKenzie, is the grandson of Ben McKenzie, who helped prosecute Scopes. GPS N35 29.682, W085 00.761*

2. **Frank E. Robinson's home** at 1534 3rd Avenue (the west corner of 3rd and Market Street) was home of "The Hustling Druggist." As president of the school board and owner of the local drug store, Robinson was instrumental in instigating plans for the trial in an attempt to boost business. Following the trial, Robinson also played a key role in establishing Bryan College as a memorial to William Jennings Bryan. The house was built as a wedding gift by A. P. Haggard for his daughter Clarke Haggard when she married Robinson. It is across the street from the courthouse and is still owned by Robinson's family. GPS N35 29.712, W085 00.715*
3. **The former home of Frank E. Robinson**, now a paved lot across the street and east of the courthouse between Service Loan and Regions Bank, was occupied by photographers during the trial. GPS N35 29.682, W085 00.732
4. **Darwin Cunningham home**, one lot north on Market Street from the courthouse, housed journalists from England and *The Boston Globe* during the trial. The Scopes Trial was the first trial broadcast live on the radio, and 200 reporters came to Dayton to write about it. Today, the lot on which this house stood is occupied by the Uptown Day Spa. GPS N35 29.772, W085 00.678
5. **McKenzie Law Office** is located at 1568 Market Street, adjacent to Frank Robinson's home. It was formerly used by James McKenzie. GPS N35 29.727, W085 00.707*
6. **W. C. Bailey's boardinghouse** at 1598 Market Street (the northeastern corner of 4th Avenue and Market) was where John Scopes lived during his 1 year of teaching at Rhea County High School. Scopes's father, journalist Bugs Baer, and (briefly) the performing chimpanzee Joe Mendi (brought to Dayton just before the trial) also stayed at the house. Today, the building houses the law offices of J. Shannon Garrison. GPS N35 29.763, W085 00.672*
7. **A. M. Morgan home** at 1767 Market Street (near the southwest corner of Market and 7th Avenue) and the adjoining alley is where famed journalist H. L. Mencken stayed during the Scopes Trial. Reporting for *The Baltimore Sun*, Mencken coined the phrase "Bible Belt" and generally disparaged the overall good folks of Dayton, even leaving town before the verdict was reached. After the trial, A. M. Morgan was a founder of Bryan College. GPS N35 29.905, W085 00.579
8. **Site of Rhea County High School**, where John Scopes taught science and coached football in 1924–1925, was used by Bryan College from 1930 to 1935. The original school was 25 m behind what is now the Rhea Family YMCA. GPS N35 29.704, W085 00.568*
9. **Ballard/Bailey house** at 250 3rd Avenue (the northwest corner of 3rd and Church Street) is where chimpanzee Joe Mendi stayed during the trial after being evicted from Bailey's boardinghouse (see no. 6 above). GPS N35 29.679, W085 00.650
10. The site of the **Luke Morgan home** at 191 2nd Avenue (the second lot from the southwest corner of 2nd and Walnut Street) is where Clarence Darrow and his wife Ruby stayed during the trial. Upon arriving in Dayton, Ruby quickly realized that the lack of plumbing at "The Mansion" (see no. 28 below) was less than desirable. Morgan and his family moved out of their home to give the Darrows a nicer place to stay. Luke Morgan, a former student of John Scopes, testified during the trial. GPS N35 29.580, W085 00.621
11. **John Morgan Furniture Company** on Market Street (between 1st and 2nd Avenues) rented its second-floor rooms to reporters (e.g., *Harper's Weekly*) during the Scopes Trial. The business opened its doors in 1909 as Rhea County's first retail business. When John Morgan's house burned down, he added a second story to the original building to live in. The Morgan Rent-to-Own Center is still in business in the heart of downtown Dayton. GPS N35 29.637, W085 00.784*
12. **Bailey Hardware** at 1356 Market Street (between 1st Avenue and Main Street) housed more than 100 reporters in its upstairs loft during the trial. The owner of the hardware store, W. C. Bailey, also owned the boarding house where Scopes lived. Until recently, the building housed an antique store, and it is now an art store named ArtCrafters. GPS N35 29.593, W085 00.817*
13. **Thomison Hospital, Wilkey Barbershop, and Richard Rogers Pharmacy** were all in this area. Rogers worked at Robinson's Drug Store during the trial, and later opened a pharmacy here. West of Rogers Pharmacy was the Wilkey Barbershop. In May 1925, barbers Virgil Wilkey and Thurlow Reed staged a fake fight at the courthouse with George Rappleyea to promote the upcoming Scopes Trial. Above Rogers Pharmacy was a hospital operated by Walter Agnew Thomison, whose father, Walter F. Thomison, was the attending physician at William Jennings Bryan's death. A sign for Thomison's office remains on the wall of the building near the intersection of Main and Market Streets. GPS N35 29.581, W085 00.841
14. **Hicks Law Office**, located at 305 Main Street (in the second lot from the southeast corner of Main and Market Streets), was used by Scopes's prosecutors Herbert E. and Sue K. Hicks. Sue was named after his mother, Susana Hicks, who died shortly after his birth, and is the subject of "A Boy Named Sue," a song by Shel Silverstein made famous in 1969 by Johnny Cash. GPS N35 29.557, W85 00.829
15. **Robinson's Drug Store** was where several of Dayton's businessmen devised what became the Scopes Trial around a small table that is now housed in the Scopes Trial Museum. The ACLU had published an article in Tennessee newspapers offering help to any teacher willing to test the newly passed Butler Law. George Rappleyea found that person in John Scopes. Ironically, the drug store doubled as a bookstore that sold George Hunter's *Civic Biology*, the textbook used by John Scopes when he allegedly taught evolution in Dayton. Robinson, a supporter of the Butler Law, took the witness stand and emphasized that "The law says 'teach,' not 'sell.'" Adjacent to the drug store was the three-story **Aqua Hotel**, where John Neal, John Raulston, Arthur Hays, Dudley Malone, and Clarence Darrow stayed, met, or ate during the trial. Dayton had just three hotels, with a combined total of only 200 rooms in 1925. Because these hotels could not accommodate all of the thousands of people who showed up for the trial, many visitors stayed elsewhere in the area. All additional rooming was provided by private homes, tents, and cots. This lot, on Main Street just northwest of Market Street, is adjacent to what is now the Community National Bank. GPS N35 29.581, W085 00.874*
16. **Cumberland Presbyterian Church** was built 2 years after the Scopes Trial and is where Frank Robinson and Scopes juror Jess Goodrich attended church. When Clarence Darrow returned to Dayton years after the Scopes Trial and saw it, he commented, "I guess I didn't do much good here after all." The church has

since been converted into the Dayton Revival Center. GPS N35 29.600, W085 00.883

17. **First United Methodist Church** is where William Jennings Bryan made his last public appearance. (The renovated church does not look like it did at the time of the trial.) During the trial, the church at this site – the northwest corner of California and Market Street – was a Southern Methodist church. GPS N35 29.365, W085 01.073*
18. **Smith's Crossroads** historical marker designates where, around 1820, Cherokee people being moved to the Southwest came through the area on "The Trail of Tears." The town's name was changed from "Smith's Crossroads" to "Dayton" by N. D. Reed, a former mayor and postmaster. This marker is at the southwest corner of Delaware and Market Streets. GPS N35 29.244, W85 01.164*
19. **The F. Richard Rogers home** at 711 South Market Street (at the intersection of Georgia and Market Street) is where William Jennings Bryan and his entourage stayed during and after the Scopes Trial. On July 26, 1925, just 5 days after the trial, Bryan died during an afternoon nap in the Rogers' home. Bryan is buried in Arlington National Cemetery beneath the inscription "He Kept the Faith." Only the retaining wall of the property is as it was in 1925. GPS N35 29.177, W085 01.230*
20. **A. P. Haggard home** at 716 South Market Street was built across the street from the Rogers' home by Dayton attorney Andrew Pleasant "A. P." Haggard, the father of Scopes prosecutor Wallace Haggard. Wallace was a young Dayton attorney at the time and volunteered to assist the prosecution. Wallace was the brother-in-law of E. E. Robinson, and A. P. Haggard's second wife was the sister of Herbert and Sue Hicks. After the Scopes Trial, A. P. Haggard lost his wealth and, in 1932, killed himself in an upstairs bedroom of Frank Robinson's home. The A. P. Haggard home is now owned by Robinson Manufacturing and is used as a guesthouse. GPS N35 29.161, W085 01.236*
21. **Walter F. Thomison home** at 656 South Market Street was built in 1890 by Walter F. Thomison for Ella Darwin, his 16-year-old wife. Dr. Thomison was the chief doctor for the Dayton Coal and Iron Company, was the attending physician at Bryan's death, and signed Bryan's death certificate. This Greek Revival house is now the Magnolia House Bed & Breakfast and is on the National Register of Historic Places. GPS N35 29.133, W085 01.289*
22. **Broyles-Darwin home** at 108 East Idaho Avenue (at the corner of East Idaho and South Cherry Street) housed two reporters during the trial. Built in 1861 by the first resident of Dayton (then called Smith's Crossroads), S. D. Broyles, it is the oldest house within Dayton's city limits. The house was bought by the James Robert Darwin family in 1908 and is on the National Register of Historic Places. GPS N35 29.088, W085 01.207*
23. **Cedar Hill** at 123 Chickamauga Drive, the first hospital in Dayton, was built in 1929 by Walter Agnew Thomison (known to the locals as "Dr. Agnew"), son of Dr. Walter F. Thomison. After the Great Depression, the physicians working at Cedar Hill were forced to move their office to a smaller building on Market Street. The building was leased to Bryan College and was used as a women's dorm, dining hall, and kitchen from 1932 to 1938. Jess Goodrich, one of the trial jurors, owned the building and ran it as a tourist home from 1938 to 1946. The building, which was sold to Bryan College in 1967, is now part of River's Edge Apartments. GPS N35 29.473, W085 00.543*
24. **Bryan College** sits atop a hill just off Rhea County Highway behind its motto "Christ Above All." The Christian liberal arts university was opened in 1930 as a memorial to Scopes prosecutor William Jennings Bryan. Bryan always dreamed of building a college that taught the Word of God, and several individuals involved in the trial, including Judge John Raulston, helped realize his vision. Today, Bryan College enrolls more than 1400 students. The campus includes several exhibits related to the Scopes Trial. GPS N35 29.771, W085 00.314*
25. **Coke ovens of the Dayton Coal and Iron Company** are in the Laurel-Snow Natural Area. The ovens are difficult to find, for they are now covered by kudzu. You can find them by turning left onto Walnut Grove from Highway 27, after which a short drive will bring you to Back Valley Road; the furnaces are just south of the main parking lot, in a long line near what was once a bustling railroad. At one time, more than 300 coke ovens in the area were used to convert the coal mined in the mountains into industrial coke. This was done by sealing the doors of the ovens with brick and mud and allowing the coal to burn for several days at extremely high temperatures. The undesired gases escaped through the hole in the roof of the oven, and the remaining coke was carried on the rail spurs to the blast furnaces, where it was used to make pig iron. Recently, a group of archeologists and volunteers has been attempting to get the site onto the National Register of Historic Places to improve preservation while there are still remnants of this once thriving industry to save. The coke ovens are located at GPS N35 31.358, W085 00.008
26. **Dayton Coal & Iron Company** was established in 1883 and became one of Tennessee's largest mining operations. The factory housed the blast furnaces where coke was brought in on the railroad. The company was managed by George Rappleyea, an instigator of the Scopes Trial. Rappleyea was initially a prosecutor in Scopes's trial, though he later relinquished this role to school superintendent Walter White, who held more conservative religious views. The land is now a recreational area (Delaware Avenue Sports Complex) across from Lane's 1891 House Restaurant (see no. 27 below). GPS N35 29.686, W085 01.354
27. **St. Genevieve's Academy** at 449 Delaware Road was where about 40 children of Dayton Coal and Iron Company workers were educated before the Scopes Trial. When Irish and Scottish immigrant workers came to Dayton with their families, George Rappleyea took it upon himself to build a Catholic school for their children at the base of Dayton Mountain. When the company closed shortly after the trial, the school closed along with it. Don and Colleen Fehn bought the former school in 2003. After more than a year of renovations, and with the school's original chalk board and rail still intact, the building became Fehn's 1891 House Restaurant in 2004. The restaurant was sold to Mike and Sharon Lane in 2014 and has been renamed Lane's 1891 House Restaurant. GPS N35 29.551, W085 01.410
28. **The Mansion** was an 18-room house located about 150 m behind St. Genevieve's Academy. When George Rappleyea, a mining engineer from New York City, moved to Dayton, he renovated an old Victorian house overlooking the Coal and Iron Factory on the outskirts of town. The secluded home was the perfect spot for Rappleyea, who was described by the locals as

“a stranger to the south and southern ways.” Once rumored to be haunted and since torn down, the Mansion housed several members of the defense team during the Scopes Trial and was nicknamed “The Defense Mansion.” Before he moved into the Morgans’ home, Clarence Darrow stayed at the Mansion, and it was at the Mansion that Darrow and biologist Kirtley Mather prepared for Darrow’s questioning of William Jennings Bryan. Many blamed Rappleyea for Bryan’s death because of the stress the trial had caused him, and he left Dayton shortly thereafter. In *Inherit the Wind*, several of the participants stayed at a hotel named “The Mansion.” GPS N35 29.487, W085 01.604

29. **Buttram Cemetery**, just outside Dayton on the east side of Highway 27, is where many participants in the Scopes Trial and their families are buried, including Walter Thomison, F. R. Rogers, Walter White, Frank E. Robinson, Ben McKenzie, Charles Jones (who preached at Bryan’s funeral service in Dayton), A. P. and Wallace Haggard, juror Jess Goodrich, and Robert Harris (the sheriff who arrested Scopes). GPS N35 31.092, W84 59.780
30. **Dayton Drive-In Theater**, 2.5 miles north of Dayton, was the site of the U.S. premiere in 1960 of *Inherit the Wind*, which coincided with the 35th anniversary of the trial. Scopes himself attended the premiere. To this day, locals remain displeased about the public image *Inherit the Wind* gave Dayton. The site

is now occupied by Bo’s Wrecker Service. GPS N35 31.507, W084 59.519

Acknowledgments

We thank Richard Cornelius, Tom Davis, Eloise Reed, Dean Wilson, and Don and Colleen Fehn for their help during our visits to Dayton.

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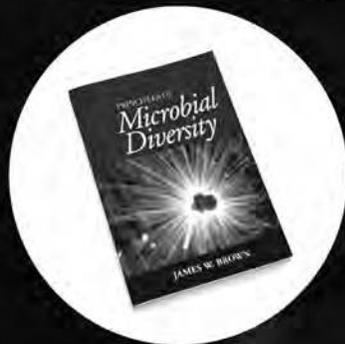
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