

0. ANIMALS as DEFENDANTS - PIGS - Story Preface

1. PEOPLE and ANIMALS in MEDIEVAL EUROPE

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This illustration, of a pig on trial in 1457, appears at page 128 of the 1869 edition of *The Book of Days. A Miscellany of Popular Antiquities in connection with The Calendar*, 2 Vols. (London and Edinburgh: W & R. Chambers). The editor, Robert Chambers, notes the following about this artist-imagined scene (the facts of which are based on the historical record): "Our artist has endeavoured to represent this scene; but we fear that his sense of the ludicrous has incapacitated him for giving it with the due solemnity." Click on the image for a better view.

Medieval pigs seemed to have a history of murder.

Although it seems strange that a pig would eat anyone, a ravenous beast was accused of doing just that in 1266. After a trial on the merits, the pig was found guilty and sentenced - by the monks of Sainte Geneviève - to a death by public burning. The execution took place in the French village of Fontenay-aux-Roses, just south of Paris.

In 14th-century France, another pig was arrested for attacking a child's face (which led to death). Arrested for the killing, the pig went to prison - just like humans accused of murderous acts - then stood trial in court.

We know something about this trial, and the pig's sentence, because of surviving records and a painting. A fresco, depicting the execution scene, was created for the wall of an old Norman church in Falaise (home to a castle and birthplace of William the Conqueror).

Found guilty of the crime, the pig endured a fate similar to that of the child it had harmed:

...the tribunal of Falaise sentenced a sow to be mangled and maimed in the head and forelegs, and then to be hanged for having torn the face and arms of a child and thus caused its death. (E.P. Evans, *The Criminal Prosecution and Capital Punishment of Animals*, page 140.)

The west wall of the Church of the Holy Trinity, in Falaise, is where the fresco was once located. It no longer survives, having been painted-over (in 1820), but a recreated drawing is based on eyewitness accounts of the original painting. The illustration was produced for Arthur Mangin's book, *L'Homme et la Bête* (Paris, 1872).

The pig's execution drew a crowd, as depicted in the recreated drawing. Dressed for the occasion, the pig was wearing the clothes of a man:

...As if to make the travesty of justice complete, the sow [a female pig] was dressed in man's clothes and executed on the public square near the city-hall ... The executioner was provided with new gloves in order that he might come from the discharge of his duty, metaphorically at least, with clean hands, thus indicating that, as a minister of justice, he incurred no guilt in shedding blood. (Evans, page 140.)

The executioner was paid for his services - as were the jailers.

Other people were also paid for services rendered in the trials of animal defendants. The most famous of all - that we know about - was a lawyer named Bartholomew Chasseneau.

His most notorious case involved ... rats.

See [Alignments to State and Common Core standards for this story online at:](http://www.awesomestories.com/asset/AcademicAlignment/ANIMALS-as-DEFENDANTS-PIGS-Animals-as-Defendants)

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Pig Tried for Murder - Falaise

Photo of Falaise, France - a town in Normandy - by Goéland, online courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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Falaise Church of the Holy Trinity

Painting of the Church of the Holy Trinity, in Falaise, by Stephan Serais. Copyright, Stephan Serais, all rights reserved. Image provided here as fair use for educational purposes. The original of this oil-on-canvas is [available for purchase](#) from the artist.

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Execution of a Sow

Execution of the Sow from Falaise

Image from *The Criminal Prosecution and Capital Punishment of Animals* by Edward Payson Evans (1906). The book was published, in London, by William Heinemann.

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Castle of Falaise - Dukes of Normandy

Photo of Castle at Falaise, France - a town in Normandy - by Nitot, online courtesy Wikimedia Commons.

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