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Main

Stealth towers Kristen Dodge

If you have ever noticed an unusually stiff-looking tree with an abnormally thick trunk, frugally spaced branches, and an unchanging appearance through all seasons, you have unwittingly identified a stealth telecommunication tower. Whether disguised as a tree, flagpole, or church steeple, a stealth tower is the solution offered by tower companies to local jurisdictions that refuse the construction of tall metal structures in the town square, a high-school field, or a local church. Each particular location requires a customized stealth tower to best suit the aesthetic demands of that environment. Tower companies do not build palm trees in New Hampshire.

In order to be functional, a stealth tower has certain non-negotiable structural requirements. A stealth tower must accommodate up to three carriers to match the minimum capability of traditional towers, be constructed to a certain height in order to

provide adequate signal strength, and be wide enough to house wires and other internal equipment. These requirements restrict the potential for effective camouflage.

Stealth design falls into two categories: towers that imitate man-made structures, and towers that imitate nature. Towers that mimic man-made structures are more deft at achieving invisibility. Stealth flag-poles and church steeples, for example, maintain their visible identities while disguising their intended function. These structures are in fact what they appear to be, albeit with a hidden infrastructure. Unlike the stealth towers that imitate nature, the structural requirements of these towers and their adopted frames are not in conflict. Even before telecommunication towers, flagpoles were stiff and steeples were tall.

Nature is less accommodating. Consider the stealth palm trees with metal rectangles integrated awkwardly into the false sway of

faux palm leaves. Even stealth cacti outdo their prickly neighbors with their unprecedented height, width, and stiffness. Rather than creating unseen towers, telecommunication companies have assembled distinct and noticeable structures.

In the end, however, failed camouflage functions like a poorly designed costume, lending the fake vegetation a certain charm. The greater the gap between their high-tech interiors and their low-tech exteriors, the less threatening stealth towers become. Perhaps the true stealth maneuver made by tower companies has been achieved not through camouflage, but through winning the affections of unenthusiastic Americans. 🌵



Above
Stealth cactus and palm telecommunication towers. Courtesy of Larson Camouflage

Animals on trial

Jeffrey Kastner

*Man is the only animal that blushes.
Or needs to.*
Mark Twain

In the image, the crowd is thick around the gallows. Townspeople fill the foreground of the medieval view; some turned toward their neighbors in conversation, most focused on a raised platform in the middle distance and the three figures arrayed on it. At the left edge of the group stands an official of some sort—a prelate reciting the last rites for the condemned perhaps, or an officer of the court, reading out the charges. At right, the hunched and hooded shape of the executioner looms, knee bent and back arched as he sets to his task. And in the middle, the star of the entire scenario (and the narrative it illustrates): the doomed head thrown back in terminal agony; the mouth a thin frowning spasm beneath a blunt nose. A really blunt nose. A pig's nose, actually—a sow's, to be exact—attached to a porker that inexplicably seems to be sporting a man's shirt.

The scene comes to us courtesy the frontispiece engraving for an oddball gem of social history, *The Criminal Prosecution and Capital Punishment of Animals*. Written by Edward Payson Evans and drawn from a pair of articles he originally published in *The Atlantic Monthly* in 1884—"Bugs and Beasts before the Law" and "Modern and Medieval Punishment"—the text (revised and expanded, utilizing both historical and contemporary research by other scholars) was first brought out in book form in 1906.¹ A remarkably detailed piece of research and interpretation, Evans's volume includes dozens and dozens of documented proceedings brought against animals by either governmental or religious bodies—from his earliest citation, discovered in something called the *Annales Ecclesiastici Francorum*, noting the prosecution of a number of moles in the Valle D'Aosta in the year 824 to the charges lodged against a cow by the Parliament of Paris in 1546 to the 20th-century conviction of a Swiss dog for murder, reported in the *New York Herald* the same year the book came out.

The history of animals in the legal system sketched by Evans is rich and resonant; it provokes profound questions about the evolution of jurisprudential procedure, social and religious organization and notions of culpability and punishment, and funda-

mental philosophical questions regarding the place of man within the natural order. In Evans's narrative, all creatures great and small have their moment before the bench. Grasshoppers and mice; flies and caterpillars; roosters, weevils, sheep, horses, turtle doves—each takes its turn in the dock, in many cases represented by counsel; each meets a fate in accordance with precedent, delivered by a duly appointed official.² Yet for all the import (both practical and metaphysical) of the issues on which they touch, in their details the tales Evans spins often seem to suggest nothing so much as a series of lost Monty Python sketches—from the story of the distinguished 16th-century French jurist Bartholomew Chassenée, who was said to have made his not inconsiderable reputation for creative argument and persistent advocacy on the strength of his representation of "some rats, which had been put on trial before the ecclesiastical court of Autun on the charge of having feloniously eaten up and wantonly destroyed the barley crop of that province,"³ to the 1750 trial in Vanvres of a "she-ass, taken in the act of coition" with one Jacques Ferron. In the latter case, the unfortunate quadruped was sentenced to death along with her seducer and appeared headed for the gallows until a last minute reprieve was issued on behalf of the parish priest and citizenry of the village, who had "signed a certificate stating that they had known the said she-ass for four years, and that she had always shown herself to be virtuous and well-behaved both at home and abroad and had never given occasion of scandal to anyone..." Nudge, nudge; say no more.

Other less elaborated details also emerge from Evans's extensive tabulation of the dates, locations, and defendants in various trials featuring non-human participants, made into a long list that appears among the book's many appendices.⁴ Its breadth, though said by the author to undoubtedly be incomplete, is awesome; its "ye olde" timeframe and quaintly exotic Continental locales (predominantly in Germany, France and Switzerland, but also extending to the British Isles, North and South America, Scandinavia, Russia and other areas) and often improbable casts (e.g. the "Cow, two Heifers, three sheep, and two Sows" on trial in one 1662 case) will have many contemporary readers filling in the numerous factual gaps with narrative scenarios that are equal parts Breughel and Gary Larson.



Protestants hanging a cat, 1554.
Courtesy Mary Evans Picture Library