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**Scopes' Monkey Trial - Part II**

**Lead: In the summer of 1925, in Dayton, Tennessee, William Jennings Bryan and Clarence Darrow met in legal conflict during the trial of John Thomas Scopes. Their clash was as much cultural as it was legal.**

**Intro.: A Moment in Time with Dan Roberts.**

**Content: Scopes agreed to be the defendant in a case testing the constitutionality of the Butler Act which was Tennessee's attempt to prevent teaching of ideas in the public schools thought to be in conflict with**

**the Bible. The prosecution invited William Jennings Bryan to lead its team. John Scopes accepted the help of Clarence Darrow in the defense.**

**The two leaders, though coming from similar backgrounds, represented widely divergent approaches to life, religion and the law. Bryan was the far-better-known of the two. Born of a deeply religious middle-class Illinois family, he had been a national figure since the 1890s, served in Congress from Nebraska, and was three times nominated for President by the Democrats. A dynamic speaker and a tireless campaigner who brought to his political style the enthusiasm of his upbringing which placed great stress**

**on morality both personal and political. Though he lost his bid for the White House he was very popular among rural and small town people who admired his stand against eastern, urban industrial changes that were transforming the United States after the Civil War. He served as Secretary of State under Woodrow Wilson but resigned as he saw Wilson drawing the United States into World War One. He was a Protestant Fundamentalist and came to Dayton, in part, to defend the faith.**

**Clarence Darrow also had small-town roots. Born in Ohio, he moved his legal practice to Chicago in 1887. He built his reputation defending labor leaders and others on the fringe of the**

**legal system. As the years passed he shifted to criminal practice and defended many whose cases were considered hopeless. He was a lifelong opponent of the death penalty. In contrast to Bryan, Darrow departed from the intellectual underpinning of his youth. He became very skeptical of religion and its leaders and tended toward socialism in politics. His involvement in the Scopes trial meant that a vigorous proponent of modern thought, progress and a true believer in the theory of evolution would lead the defense. Next time: the circus and the trial.**

**At the University of Richmond, this is Dan Roberts.**

## **Resources**

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**Tierney, Kevin. *Darrow, A Biography*. New York, NY: Book Sales, 1981.**

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