

# 100 Years Ago

## NATIONAL NOTABLE EVENTS

On January 5, **Nellie Tayloe Ross** was sworn in as Governor of Wyoming, the first woman to serve as governor of a state. Born in St. Joseph, Missouri, she was married to William B. Ross, elected Governor of Wyoming in 1922 and died after serving less than two years in office. Nellie ran to fill the unexpired term and defeated the Republican candidate but failed to win reelection in 1926. She subsequently was appointed by President Franklin D. Roosevelt to two terms as Director of the U. S. Mint.



On March 2, a **nationwide road numbering and marking system** was adopted. Until then, roads were designated by a hodgepodge of names and signs originated by trail and highway associations and put on roadside trees, rocks, and barns.



**Floyd Collins** was a Kentucky cave explorer trying to open up a small passage into Sand Cave on January 30, in what is now known as Mammoth Cave National Park. A rock collapse trapped him inside and the ensuing rescue operation drew nationwide media attention, including daily reports on radio. Although voice contact was possible, Collins remained isolated and died after 14 days from thirst, hunger, and hypothermia. A rescue shaft reached his position three days later.

On March 21, Tennessee passed the Butler Act, which made it illegal to teach evolution in Tennessee public schools. On May 5, **John T. Scopes** (right), a Dayton high school teacher, was arrested for teaching evolution. His trial, referred to by the media as the Scopes Monkey Trial, began on July 10 and concluded on July 21. **William Jennings Bryan** argued for the prosecution against **Clarence Darrow** for the defense. Bryan, a Fundamentalist and three-time presi-



dential candidate, as well as serving as Secretary of State (1913-1915), relished the publicity of the constitutional test case covered by national reporters. Clarence Darrow was a famous defense attorney from Chicago. Scopes was found guilty and fined \$100 (\$1,700 in today's money). The verdict was later overturned on a technicality. Tennessee repealed the Butler Act in 1967.



Clarence Darrow (left) and William Jennings Bryan.

On April 10, Scribners published *The Great Gatsby* by F. Scott Fitzgerald, who coined the term "The Jazz Age" in reference to the also descriptive term "The Roaring Twenties." The novel was a commercial disappointment after Fitzgerald's first two books, *This Side of Paradise* (1920) and *The*

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*Beautiful and the Damned*, sold very well. *Gatsby* found a new audience after World War II, has sold nearly 30 million copies, and is now considered a modern classic. This scribe remembers well the pleasure from reading *Gatsby* sixty years ago.

The top grossing film of the year was **The Big Parade**. It was a silent World War I drama, directed by King Vidor and George Hill. It starred John Gilbert. In second place was **Ben Hur: A Tale of the Christ**, also a silent movie. However, it was so expensive to film that it was a money-loser.

The best selling record was "I'll See You in My Dreams" by the Ray Miller Orchestra. The runner-up was Gene Austin's "Yes Sir, That's My Baby."

We must have a baseball news item. On April 14, the first radio broadcast of a **Chicago Cubs** game was heard on Chicago's WGN, called by Quin Ryan. The Cubs beat the Pittsburgh Pirates by a score of 8-2. The Pirates, however, had better luck in the World Series when they defeated the Washington Senators

in seven games.

November 28, 1925, is generally regarded as the debut show of the **Grand Ole Opry**, although it was originally called the "WSM Barn Dance." WSM was the Nashville radio station that broadcast the opry. It was launched by the National Life and Accident Insurance Company which sponsored the program and built the radio studio in its downtown Nashville office building. On that first program was announcer/emcee George D. Hay and 77-year-old fiddler player Uncle Jimmy Thompson. The Grand Ole Opry is the longest-running radio program.



## BIRTH

**Dick Van Dyke**, born Richard Wayne Van Dyke, on December 13, 1925, in West Plains, Missouri. Van Dyke has won six Emmy Awards, a Grammy, a Golden Globe, and a Tony Award. He is best known for his 1960s TV sitcom, *The Dick Van Dyke Show*, and his movie roles in *Mary Poppins* (1964), and *Chitty Chitty Bang Bang* (1968).



## DEATH

**William Jennings Bryan** died five days after the conclusion of the "Scopes Monkey Trial" (see previous page) at the age of 65. He died in his sleep from "apoplexy," now termed a hemorrhagic stroke or ruptured blood vessel in the brain. Jennings ran three times as a Democrat (1896, 1900, and 1904) for the presidency, drawing a great crowd in Lebanon, Missouri, while campaigning on October 11, 1903. He trumpeted the wisdom of common people and was nicknamed "the Great Commoner."

**MARK C. PRUGH**  
ATTORNEY AT LAW LLC

**PRUGH LAW OFFICE**

326 Historic Route 66 East Phone 573-774-6444/3444  
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