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**Sioux City native among the cartoonists featured in traveling editorial cartoon exhibit at the Sioux City Public Museum**

An illustration from Sioux City native J.N. “Ding” Darling is among the editorial cartoons featured in a new traveling exhibit now on display at the Sioux City Public Museum. *Lines with Power and Purpose: Editorial Cartoons* features 51 original editorial cartoons from the nation’s great metropolitan newspapers during the Golden Age of print journalism. Included in the mix are six Pulitzer Prize-winning cartoonists, each demonstrating the theme of political commentary through editorial illustrations and addressing issues from the first half of the twentieth century.

Editorial cartoonists deliver biting social commentary made palatable through amusing and well-crafted illustration. These deceptively simple drawings frame the public’s understanding of early-to-mid twentieth-century world events and trends ranging from the two world wars, the great depression, public discontent with the US government, presidential elections, daily battles regarding work-related rejection, nostalgia for homespun neighborhood charm in the Midwest, and more. Along the way, these cartoons served a dualistic intention: to provide welcomed comic relief as well as shape opinion.

The cartoonist draws strength from the limited conventions of the newspaper context. Just as the strict rules of a haiku challenge the poet to create exactly the right mood within the tight construction of very few words, the editorial cartoonist presents a powerful distillation of political argument through a single image and maybe a few well-placed labels or a short caption. To accomplish this underappreciated feat, cartoonists develop their own language—a language taught to and subsequently shared with their readers. Standard symbols such as the oft-used Uncle Sam or Statue of Liberty evoke abstract concepts such as nation, patriotism, and public interest. On a darker side, cartoons reveal the inherent cruelty of prejudice, xenophobia, and ignorance.

Political humor relies on an informed and receptive audience. Headline stories prime newspaper readers to more quickly grasp the cartoonist’s unique take on the news of the day. A talented cartoonist makes even complex political arguments accessible to ordinary citizens. The friendly strokes of the cartoonist’s pen often belie the rawness and reality of the issues at hand. This exhibition of editorial cartoons conveys how cartoons effectively expose hypocrisy, reveal contradictions, introduce news ideas, and promote fresh perspectives as news events unfold.

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Included in this exhibition are Pulitzer Prize winners for Editorial Cartooning: Bruce Alexander Russell, Herbert Lawrence Block (Herblock), Charles G. Werner, C.D Batchelor, Charles R. Macauley, and Vaughn Shoemaker.

The Melton Gallery at the University of Central Oklahoma, curator of the exhibition, has housed this set of political cartoons for more than three decades. This exhibition was organized by ExhibitsUSA, a program of Mid-America Arts Alliance.

### About ExhibitsUSA

This exhibition is toured by ExhibitsUSA, a national program of Mid-America Arts Alliance. ExhibitsUSA sends more than 25 exhibitions on tour to over 100 small- and mid-sized communities every year. These exhibitions create access to an array of arts and humanities experiences, nurture the understanding of diverse cultures and art forms, and encourage the expanding depth and breadth of cultural life in local communities. For more about ExhibitsUSA, email [MoreArt@maaa.org](mailto:MoreArt@maaa.org) or visit [eusa.org](http://eusa.org).

### About Mid-America Arts Alliance

Mid-America Arts Alliance (M-AAA) strengthens and supports artists, cultural organizations, and communities throughout our region and beyond. We achieve this primarily through our national traveling exhibition programs, innovative leadership development, and strategic grant making. We are especially committed to enriching the cultural life of historically underserved communities by providing high quality, meaningful, and accessible arts and culture programs and services. We believe in more art for more people. Additional information about M-AAA is available at [maaa.org](http://maaa.org).

The *Lines with Power and Purpose* exhibit will be on display from January 9 through March 14, 2021. Also on display is *Vintage Sioux City Coffee Memorabilia* featuring unique merchandising artifacts from a century of local coffee roasters. These businesses are chronicled in the newly released online program, "History at High Noon: Sioux City Wholesale Grocers & Coffee Roasters." Presented by Matt Anderson, Curator of History, the program became available at [SiouxCityMuseum.org/history-at-high-noon](http://SiouxCityMuseum.org/history-at-high-noon) on January 21.

Located at 607 4th Street in downtown Sioux City, the Sioux City Public Museum hours are Tuesday through Saturday 10 a.m. to 5 p.m. and Sunday 1 to 5 p.m. Admission is free. Protective masks/face coverings and social distancing are required in all City buildings by members of the public. Hand-sanitizing stations are available. For more information, call 712-279-6174 or visit [SiouxCityMuseum.org](http://SiouxCityMuseum.org).



A cartoon by the artist known as X. Ding, ***Every Day is Ground Hog's Day in Europe***, 1939; 22 5/8 x 17 3/8 inches, ink on paper; Courtesy of University of Central Oklahoma Galleries and Collections.

Sioux City native J.N. "Ding" Darling started his career at the *Sioux City Journal* before gaining fame as a cartoonist for the *Des Moines Register*.

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