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Archives renew Darling's legacy
A trove of cartoons was found in the Register building.

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About 'Ding' Darling

Born in 1865 in Norwood, Mich., Darling grew up and graduated from high school in Sioux City. In 1900, he began working as a reporter for Sioux City newspapers before establishing himself as an editorial cartoonist. In 1906, Darling began his long career at the Register, interrupted only for a three-

After a discovery of thousands of original printing plates in The Des Moines Register's Locust Street building, a new project will bring the work of Jay Norwood "Ding" Darling, the Register's two-time Pulitzer Prize-winning cartoonist, to the next generation of viewers.

The Register has partnered with Marvo Entertainment Group, a production company that has made a documentary about Darling, to digitize and exhibit the paper's archival collection of Darling's cartoons from the early 1920s to the late 1940s.

"Bringing 'Ding' Darling's work to life for new generations of Americans is an important effort," said Randy Brubaker, Register senior news director. "Many of his editorial cartoons are as relevant and valuable for public debate today as they were nearly 100 years ago."

During the Register's move down Locust Street from its home of nearly a century to its new Capital Square offices, 19 crates of Darling's work were discovered. The crates each contained more than 200 original printing plates by Darling and colleague Tom Carlisle.

Darling's grandson, Christopher "Kip" Koss, said before his death earlier this month that the plates' discovery "offers an extraordinary opportunity to revisit the artist's skills in presenting his timeless commentary."

A four-year effort to preserve and disseminate Darling's work, called "The Extraordinary Project," will include the

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year stint in New York. He retired from the Register in 1949.

Darling's editorial cartoons won him two Pulitzers, journalism's top honor, in 1924 and 1943. He is perhaps best known for his cartoon "The Long, Long Trail," drawn at the time of Teddy Roosevelt's death, as well as a remembrance on the one-year anniversary of the attack on Pearl Harbor of the Americans killed there. He signed his cartoons with a shortened surname, "Ding."

The environment had as much of a place in Darling's cartoons as politics and current events. He was lauded for his work as an ardent conservationist. Darling is credited with starting the national wildlife refuge system and preserving millions of acres for refuges as chief of the U.S. Biological Survey, precursor to the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. He also conceived and designed the first Federal Duck Stamp to pay for wetlands conservation.

" 'Ding' Darling was a catalyst for conservation, not only within the movement but for the entire nation," said Joe McGovern, president of the Iowa Natural Heritage Foundation, a partner in "The Extraordinary Project." "His work called attention to the importance of protecting our natural heritage and the risks we run if we do not. These plates remind us that there is still much work to be done, for his message resonates today just as much as the day they were created."

Darling died in 1962.

See the cartoon plates

To learn more about "The Extraordinary Project" and to view some of Jay N. "Ding" Darling's cartoon plates, visit marvoentertainmentgroup.com/cartoon-plates-home.

See them in person Jan. 25 to March 23, 2014, at the Herbert Hoover Presidential Library and Museum, 210 Parkside Drive, West Branch, IA. Visit hoover.archives.gov for more information.

storage, cataloging and digitization of the collection at the Sioux City Public Museum, in the city where Darling grew up.

"An opportunity to preserve history of this magnitude is one that we do not take lightly," said Steve Hansen, the museum's director. " 'Ding' Darling is a heritage treasure of Sioux City, and we look forward to adding a new chapter to his legacy."

Marvo Entertainment Group is working to create a traveling exhibit to be displayed in Iowa and nationally. Some of the plates also will be included in an exhibit of Darling's works traveling in conjunction with nationwide screenings of the documentary "America's Darling: The Story of Jay N. 'Ding' Darling."

Samuel Koltinsky, Marvo executive producer, was a close friend of Darling's grandson Koss. He said he looked at the project as an opportunity to honor his friend, as well as preserve Darling's legacy. "We are looking forward to celebrating The Des Moines Register's new era with honor, respect and, yes, humor through what the Register has entrusted with us — these special treasures of cartoon plates."

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