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## ZERSCHLING: New 'Ding' Darling film showcases famous cartoonist's love for Iowa

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Jay "Ding" Darling prepares to take off in a Curtiss Oriole biplane. The Pulitzer Prize-winning editorial cartoonist, who got his start at the Sioux City Journal in 1900, is the subject of a new documentary.

14 hours ago • LYNN ZERSCHLING [lzerschling@siouxcityjournal.com](mailto:lzerschling@siouxcityjournal.com)

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SIoux CITY | Jay "Ding" Darling packed a punch during his career as a Pulitzer Prize-winning editorial cartoonist whose efforts helped launch the conservation movement in the United States.

He produced 16,000 cartoons during his career, which began at the Sioux City Journal in 1900. He started out as a cub reporter.

According to a new documentary, "America's Darling: The Story of Jay N. 'Ding' Darling," Darling was assigned to cover a trial and told to take a photograph of one of the lawyers. Instead, the guy chased him down the street, swinging his cane. Talk about your mobile journalists.

Undaunted, Darling drew a cartoon of what had happened, and the Journal published it. Although he had drawn since he was a child, that incident launched his career.

After he married Genevieve Pendleton, daughter of Judge Isaac Pendleton, in 1906, he went to work for the Des Moines Register. He moved to New York several times but returned to Des Moines each time. Eventually, his cartoons were syndicated in 150 newspapers around the country.

He won a Pulitzer Prize in 1924 and again in 1943.

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#### If You Go

**WHAT:** Public screening of the new 75-minute documentary "America's Darling: The Story of Jay N. 'Ding' Darling."

**WHEN:** 1 p.m. Saturday and 1 p.m. Nov. 23, at the Sioux City Public Museum, 607 Fourth St. Admission is free. Producer Sam Koltinsky will introduce the film Saturday.

**DOCUMENTARY DVDs:** For sale at the screenings for \$20. Net proceeds will be donated to the Sioux City Public Museum.

**MORE:** Koltinsky plans to present Museum Director Steve Hansen

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“He was a modern-day renaissance man,” Sam Koltinsky, executive producer of the film, told me. He is head of Marvo Entertainment Group, based in Princeton, Ky. “We told his story from that perspective.”

In addition to the biting political and social commentary evidenced in his cartoons, Darling started the Federal Duck Stamp Program, began the agency that evolved into the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service and founded the National Wildlife Federation.

Koltinsky told Darling's story through interviews with a number of people. It's narrated, in part, by his 17-year-old great-great-grandson and his grandson, Kip Koss.

Perhaps the best part of the movie is hearing Darling's own words recorded years ago, seeing many of his outrageously stinging cartoons and the gorgeous vistas of nature he loved so much, including the wildlife refuge that bears his name on Sanibel Island, Fla.

“I don't think he suffered fools lightly,” Sioux City Public Museum director Steve Hansen said.

What is clear throughout the film is Darling's affection for Iowa. He moved to Sioux City in 1886 when his father, Marc, became minister at First Congregational Church. Some of Jenny Darling's family members still live here, including her niece through marriage, Roberta Pendleton, 94, and her son, John Pendleton, who lives in Sioux City and Seattle.

“I met him in 1960, two years before he died,” John Pendleton told me. “My father (Judge Donald Pendleton) and mother took my two sisters and me to Des Moines. My brother James wasn't born yet. We visited him in the Register building. I remember one thing he told me – to never let myself grow old!”

That was the only time he or his mother met Darling.

And where did Darling get that nickname? He abbreviated his last name, using the first and last three letters to sign his cartoons, “D-ing.” Eventually, he became known as Ding.

He died in Des Moines in 1962 at the age of 85. He is buried with other family members at Logan Park Cemetery in Sioux City. Koltinsky plans to visit their graves when he is in town this weekend.

He credited the public museum staff for digging up pictures no one knew existed. Plans call for the film to be distributed through PBS and shown on the Documentary Channel.

“We tried to create something not only to be a testament to his legacy and inspire others but also to share his great messages,” Koltinsky said. “If you're looking for the great American story, this is it.”

**Tags** [History](#), [Jay "ding" Darling](#), [Documentary](#), [John Endleton](#), [Roberta Pendleton](#), [Judge Donald Pendleton](#), [Mark Darling](#), [Marvo Entertainment Group](#), [Sioux City Public Museum](#), [Sioux City Journal](#), [Des Moines Register](#), [Pulitzer Prize](#), [Genevieve Pendleton](#), [Conservation](#), [National Wildlife Federation](#), [Federal Duck Stamp](#), [Cartoonist](#), [Sam Koltinsky](#), [J.n. Ding Darling National Wildlife Refuge](#), [Steve Hansen](#), [Christopher "kip" Koss](#), [Chris Steffen](#), [Spectator Column](#)

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