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Article Summary: Longtime *Omaha World-Herald* cartoonist Guy Spencer displayed his wit and his unique style of drawing in a series of cartoons for every month of the year.

Cataloging Information:

Names: Guy R Spencer, Gilbert M Hitchcock, William Jennings Bryan, Edward Rosewater, William F Gurley

Nebraska Place Names: Omaha

Keywords: Guy R Spencer, *Omaha World-Herald*, *The Commoner*, Spanish-American War, Republican Party, railroads (monopolies); Game, Forestation and Parks Commission

Photographs / Images: uncaptioned cartoon of the artist sketching Father Time

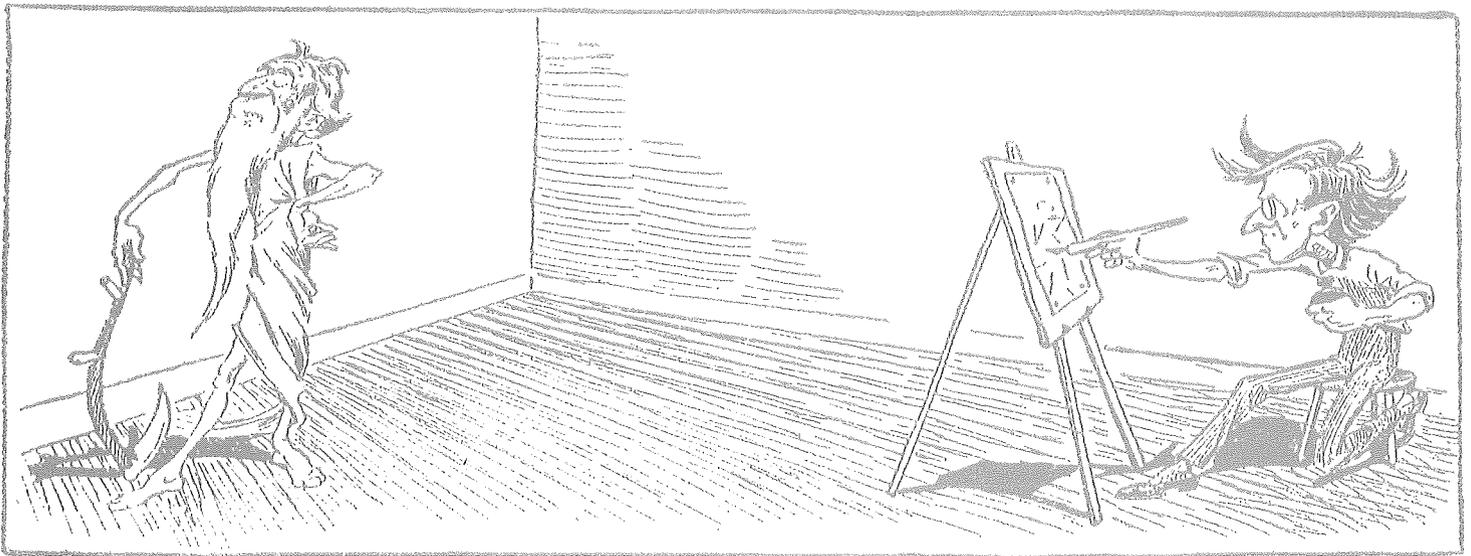
Calendar Cartoons:

- "On time!" (January)
- "The shortest month but with the most 'days' " (February)
- "The gentleman with the menagerie" (March)
- "The jester" (April)
- "Mother Nature's favorite" (May)
- "June, the month of roses and weddings"
- "The joy-rider" (July)
- [uncaptioned]: a man pulled downhill by "Dog Days" (August)
- "A noise like an oyster" (September)
- "Nebraska's favorite" (October)
- "The original turkey trotter" (November)
- "And last, but not least" (December)

A 1914 CARTOON CALENDAR



Drawings by Guy R. Spencer



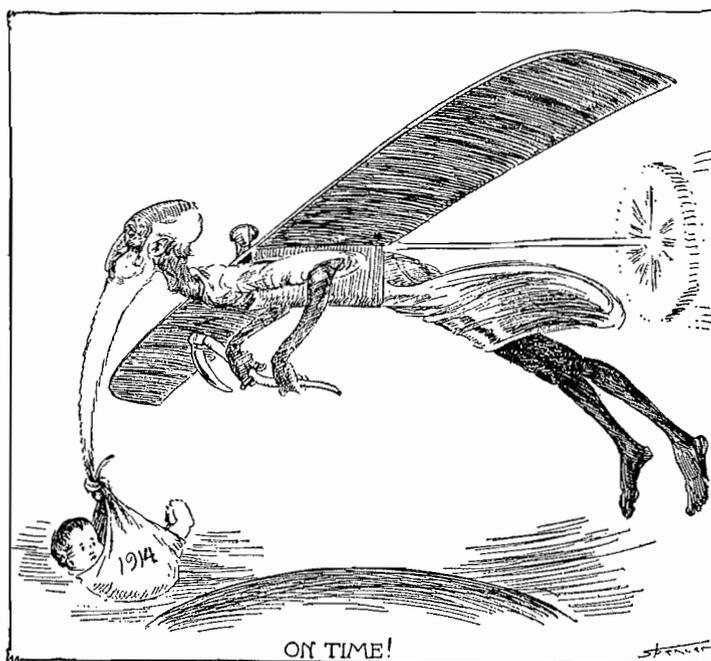
"HAVE YOU SEEN SPENCER'S CARTOON TODAY?"
was a commonly asked question throughout the
Midwest during Guy R. Spencer's phenomenal forty-
year career (1899-1939) as an artist and editorial
cartoonist with the Omaha World-Herald.

BY PATRICIA C. GASTER



Patricia C. Gaster is assistant editor of Nebraska History.

He left Nebraskans a pungent pictorial record of many topics—political, civic, humanitarian, and social. His cartoons were widely reprinted, and his personality sketches of state legislators, the first of which appeared in 1903, have earned a solid niche for their creator in Nebraska history. Spencer's whimsical drawings depicting the state's changing seasons and holiday celebrations found in "A 1914 Cartoon Calendar," reproduced here, are among his best.

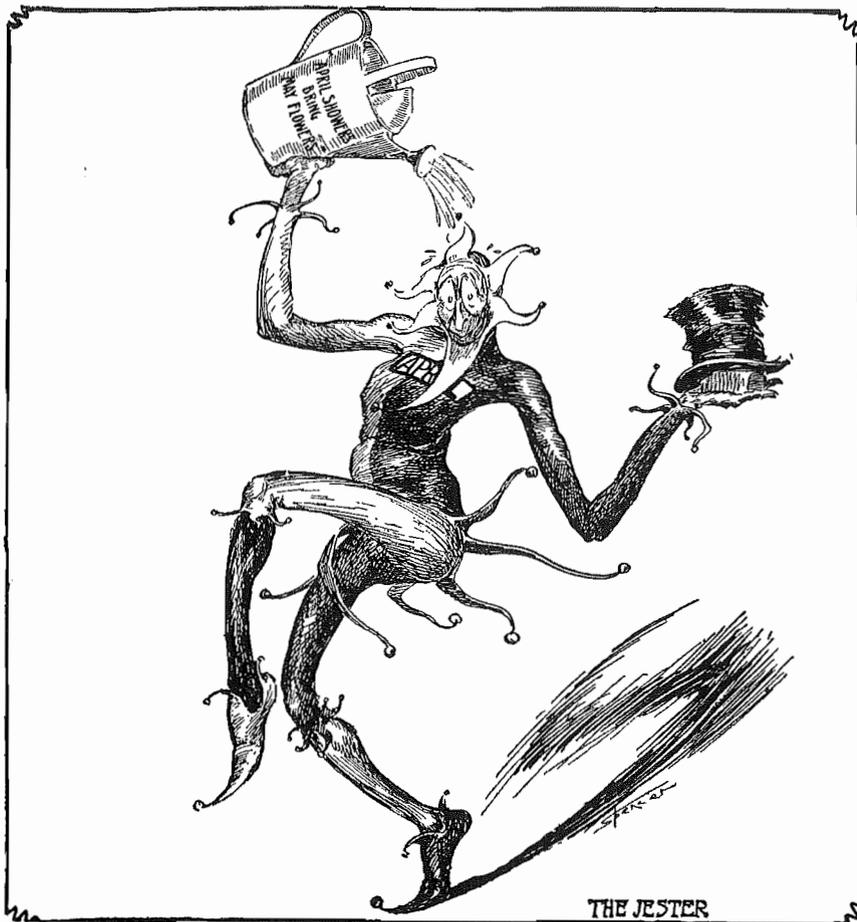


Spencer

Spencer was born September 1, 1878, in Jasper County, Missouri, and grew up in Falls City, Nebraska. After graduation from high school there in 1896, he enrolled in a three-month course at an Omaha penmanship school, which also taught art. He then tried to land a job with the Omaha World-Herald, where he

could use his drawing skills. He was at first unsuccessful, although he did piecework for the paper. In June 1899, Gilbert M. Hitchcock, publisher of the World-Herald, offered him a regular job at a starting salary of ten dollars a week. Spencer stayed with the paper until his retirement in 1939.¹





At first, Spencer worked primarily as an artist, not a cartoonist. His first cartoon appeared on August 14, 1898. A caustic comment on the Spanish-American War, it depicted a Spaniard dressed as a pirate, saying, "Another Spanish victory. We made the Yankee pigs dictate the terms of peace." His second cartoon hit railroad influence in the Republican Party. Spencer's lifelong adherence to the Democrats and his hatred of trusts and monopolies, particularly railroads, were apparent even at this early date.²

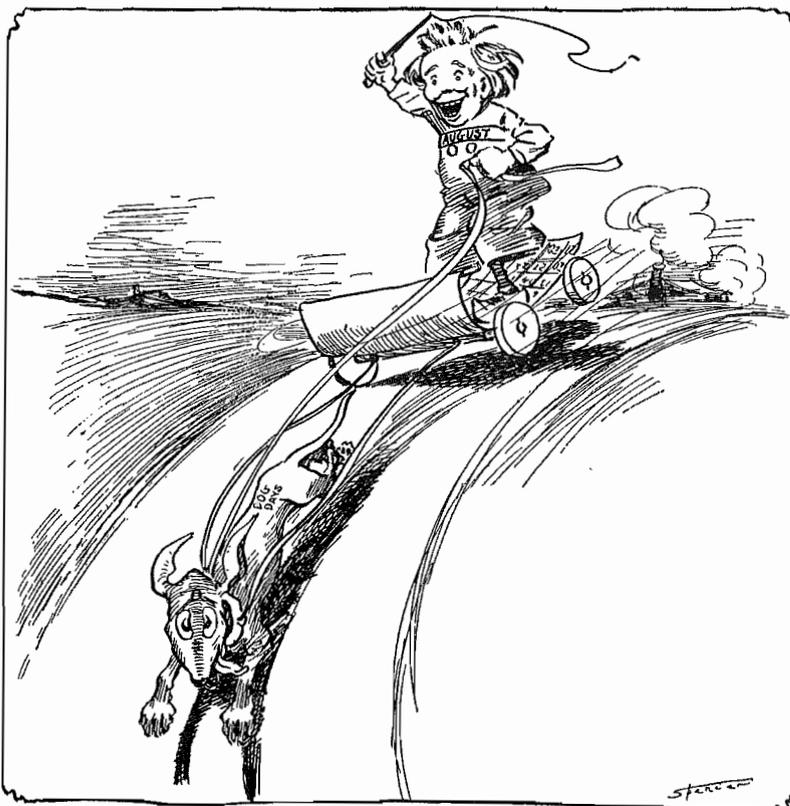
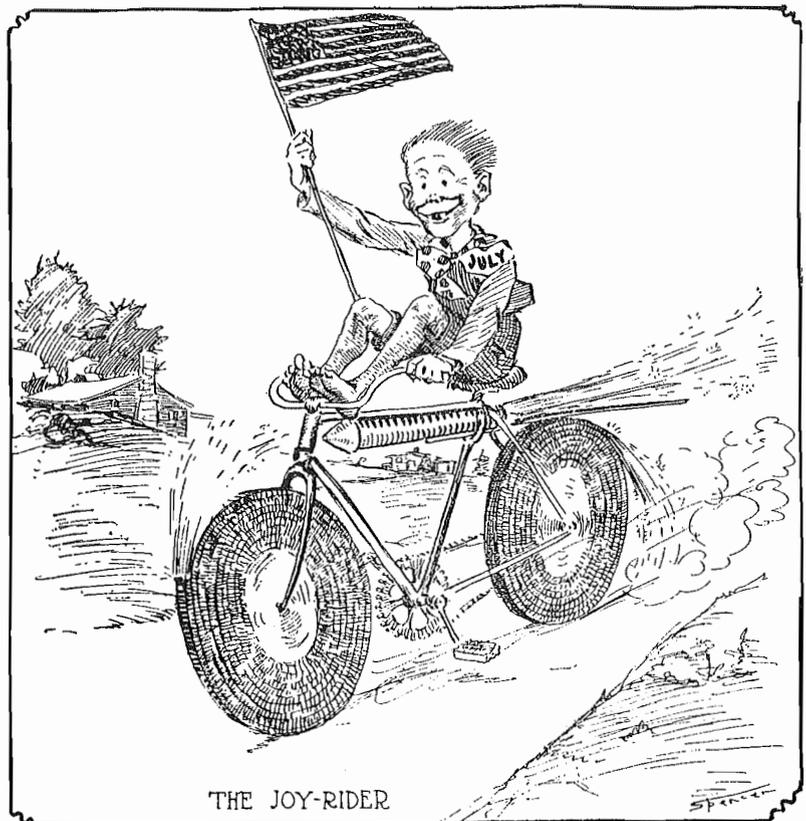




Through the spring of 1900 the World-Herald occasionally ran a series of Spencer cartoons across the front page. The young artist first won popular notice that year for his cartoons supporting William Jennings Bryan during the Great Commoner's second presidential campaign. He became further established in 1902

when he drew a series of political cartoons depicting the Orpheum Theater debates between Republican leader Edward Rosewater and party insurgent William F. Gurley. The young artist's personality sketches of each member of the Nebraska Legislature in 1903 further bolstered his growing reputation.³

Over time, Spencer developed a clean, uncluttered style uniquely his own. A general good humor pervaded cartoons on a range of subjects as broad as the news itself. No topic of current interest escaped his notice. The World-Herald published hundreds of his political cartoons interspersed with pictorial comments on local civic campaigns and other current events. For several years Spencer also drew caricatures and cartoons for Bryan's newspaper, The Commoner. ⁴



In the "Cartoon Calendar" drawings, the infant year of 1914 is introduced in January by an aging 1913, who resembles both a stork and an airplane. February as a piper leads a procession of holidays, while March appears with a menagerie, including a March hare and first robin of spring as well as the traditional lion and lamb. April's unpredictable showers are drenching a jester or April fool. The pages for May and October reveal the cartoonist's preference for the state's moderate spring and fall seasons, with June represented as the traditional month for weddings and roses.⁵



Sport is a favorite topic in the calendar pages. The joys of July and August summer play by carefree schoolboys are succeeded in September by the opening of classes and the start of fall theater performances. The figure wearing a sombrero and about to silently devour an oyster may reflect a contemporary political episode. Spencer's cartoon sketch for November depicted a football chariot drawn by a Thanksgiving turkey. The December portrayal of a small boy's effort to impress Santa Claus, pictured with the aged month of December and a Christmas shopper, concludes the year.

Aside from his cartooning job at the *World-Herald*, Spencer's chief interest was hunting and fishing in outdoor Nebraska. In 1929 Spencer was appointed by Nebraska Governor Arthur J. Weaver to what was to be his only public office—membership on the newly reorganized Game, Forestation and Parks Commission.⁶

Spencer retired in 1939 after a forty-year career with the newspaper which had made his name familiar throughout the Midwest. He died several years later on December 27, 1945, in Lincoln. His cartoons and drawings comprised a one-man history of world events, but were always rooted in Omaha and prepared for the people of Nebraska.⁷ ■



NOTES

¹ "Spencer Lays Down His Pen," *Sunday World-Herald*, Jan. 15, 1939; "Cartoonist Spencer Dies," *Morning World-Herald*, Dec. 28, 1945; Guy R. Spencer Papers, RG1503, Nebraska State Historical Society (hereafter cited as Spencer Papers). For more information on Spencer and reproductions of selected editorial cartoons, see Patricia C. Gaster, "Eye on the Midwest: The 40-Year Career of Cartoonist Guy R. Spencer," *Nebraska History*, 62 (Winter 1981): 497-514.

² Paul Vanard Peterson, *The Omaha Daily World-Herald, 1885-1961* (Ph.D. diss., University of Minnesota, 1966), 331; "Spencer Lays Down His Pen"; "A Sad But Glorious Day for Spain," *Morning World-Herald*, Aug. 14, 1898; "A Man of Putty," *Morning World-Herald*, August 17, 1898.

³ "Spencer Lays Down His Pen"; "Cartoonist Spencer Dies." The original drawings of state legislators in 1903 are in the Spencer Papers.

⁴ "Spencer Lays Down His Pen."

⁵ The 1914 calendar pages are pasted in an oversized scrapbook in the Spencer Papers.

⁶ "Spencer Lays Down His Pen"; "Cartoonist Spencer Dies."

⁷ *Ibid.*

