

# SPICER, JACK.

## Jack Spicer papers, 1938-1973

Emory University  
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### Descriptive Summary

**Creator:** Spicer, Jack.  
**Title:** Jack Spicer papers, 1938-1973  
**Call Number:** Manuscript Collection No. 1364  
**Extent:** 0.25 linear feet (1 box)  
**Abstract:** The Jack Spicer papers consist of manuscripts and publications of the poetry of Jack Spicer, 1938-1973, including unpublished manuscripts and first editions of printed works.  
**Language:** Materials entirely in English.

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### Administrative Information

#### Restrictions on Access

Unrestricted access.

#### Terms Governing Use and Reproduction

All requests subject to limitations noted in departmental policies on reproduction.

#### Citation

[after identification of item(s)], Jack Spicer papers, Stuart A. Rose Manuscript, Archives, and Rare Book Library, Emory University.

#### Processing

Processed by Meaghan O'Riordan, June 2016.

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### Collection Description

#### Biographical Note

Jack Spicer was born John Lester Spicer in Los Angeles, California, on January 30, 1925. His parents, Dorothy Clause and John Lovely Spicer, were Midwesterners, who met and married in Hollywood and ran a small hotel business. While attending college at the University of California-Berkeley, Spicer met fellow poets, Robin Blaser and Robert Duncan. The friendship

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among these three poets developed into what they referred to as "The Berkeley Renaissance," in reference to the San Francisco Renaissance. Once they moved to the area in the 1950s, Spicer, Blaser and Duncan were befriended by Kenneth Rexroth and Madeline Gleason, the founders of the Renaissance. Spicer left Berkeley after losing his teaching assistantship in the linguistics department for his refusal to sign a "Loyalty Oath," a provision of the Sloan-Levering Act that required all California state employees in 1950 to swear their loyalty to the United States. He returned to Berkeley in 1952, resumed his academic work and completed all but his dissertation for a Ph.D. in Anglo-Saxon and Old Norse. In 1953, he was hired as the head of the new humanities department at the California School of Fine Arts, a job that eventually brought Spicer to San Francisco.

In 1954, he co-founded the Six Gallery in San Francisco, which became famous as the scene of the first public performance by Allen Ginsberg of "Howl" in October 1955 that helped launch the West Coast Beat movement. In 1955, Spicer moved to New York and then to Boston, where he worked for a time in the Rare Book Room of the Boston Public Library. Spicer returned to San Francisco in 1956 and started working on *After Lorca* (1957), a book that represented a change in direction for him, beginning serial poetry, as opposed to stand-alone poems, and what he called "poetry as dictation," inspired by Federico Garcia Lorca. In 1957, Spicer ran a workshop called *Poetry as Magic* at San Francisco State College, which was attended by Robert Duncan, Helen Adam, James Broughton, Joe Dunn, Jack Gilbert, and George Stanley. He also participated in, and sometimes hosted, Blabbermouth Night at a literary bar called The Place. This was a contest of improvised poetry and encouraged Spicer's view of poetry as being dictated to the poet. After many years of alcohol abuse, Spicer fell into a prehepatic coma in his apartment building elevator, and later died at age 40 in the poverty ward of San Francisco General Hospital on August 17, 1965.

In 2009, *My Vocabulary Did This to Me: The Collected Poetry of Jack Spicer* won the American Book Award for poetry.

### **Scope and Content Note**

The Jack Spicer papers consist of manuscripts, some original, some unpublished, and publications, some first editions, of the poetry of Jack Spicer, 1938-1973. Some items are signed by Spicer. There is also some correspondence from Dorothy Livesay, as well as two rejection letters from the *Chicago Review* and *Poetry* magazine.

### **Arrangement Note**

Arranged chronologically.

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## Container List

Box	Folder	Content
1	1	Draft of the last nine lines of the poem, "October 1, 1962," also known as, "The Fix," signed in pencil, undated
1	2	"In a world of snakes and lightnings," signed typescript, unpublished, undated
1	3	"Notice to Poets," typescript, undated
1	4	<i>Cahuenga Blue Eagle</i> , Los Angeles, California: Calhuenga School, third edition of Spicer's elementary school newspaper, Spicer listed as editor-in-chief and contributor, circa 1938
1	23	<i>Colonial Voices 1941</i> , literary magazine of Fairfax High School, Los Angeles, California, 1941
1	5	"A Mystic's Dream," autographed manuscript, 1942
1	6	<i>Berkeley Miscellany</i> edited by Robert Duncan, first edition, signed, 1948
1	7	Mr. and Mrs. Bim Bam (Rezounding) Crackintrash birth announcements, 1955
1	8	Boston newsletter, mostly carbon typescript, paginated in Spicer's hand, in pencil, circa 1955-1956
1	9	<i>Audience</i> , Volume IV, Number 2, Cambridge, Massachusetts, first printing of "Five Words for Joe Dunn on his 22nd Birthday," 1956
1	10	"Dear Lorca, /This is the last letter," original, one page typescript of the last letter to Lorca, published in <i>After Lorca</i> , signed, circa 1956
1	11	<i>Bad Poetry: A Comprehensive Anthology</i> , Target Zero, California: Center of the Universe Press, 1957
1	12	Rejection notice from Paul Carroll of the <i>Chicago Review</i> to Jack Spicer, circa 1957
1	13	Rejection notice from Henry Rago at <i>Poetry</i> magazine to Jack Spicer, 1957
1	14	Announcement, "Jack Spicer will read <i>After Lorca</i> and other of his poems Thursday, April 24 at The Tea Shop and Coffee House..." San Francisco, 1958
1	15	Billy the Kid, illustrated by Jess, Stinson Beach, California: Enkidu Surrogate, first edition, initialled by Spicer in pencil on the last page, 1959
1	16	<i>My Paper Eyes</i> by Goof, The New School Press, A David Booklet, 1960
1	17	XII/XXXI-I/XXIV, Roma Harold DVLL, Jumpbook # One, Rabbit Mountain College Publication, Coyote Presbook Two, 1961
1	18	Announcement for "The Heads of the Town Up to the Aether," San Francisco: Auerhahn Press, 1962
1	19	Livesay, Dorothy, correspondence and poetry sent to Jack Spicer, 1965
1	20	<i>Language</i> , San Francisco: White Rabbit Press, first edition, 1965
1	21	<i>The Red Wheelbarrow</i> , Hove, Sussex: Peter Riley, first edition, 1968
1	22	<i>The Red Wheelbarrow</i> unique printer's copy, second edition, 1973

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