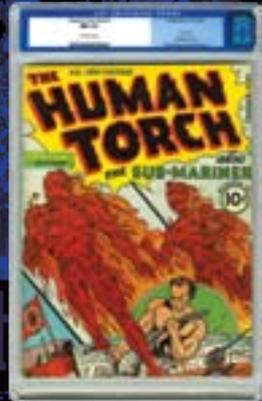
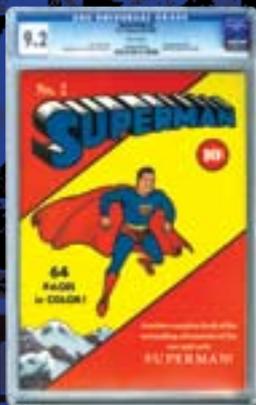
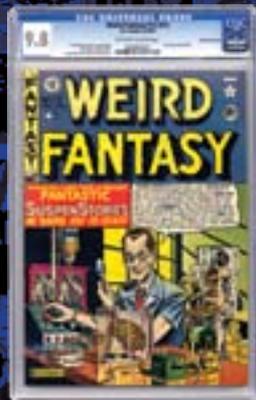


HERITAGE

Auction Galleries



A BRIEF HISTORY OF COMIC BOOKS



BY JOHN PETTY
DESIGN BY KEITH CRAKER

A BRIEF HISTORY OF COMIC BOOKS

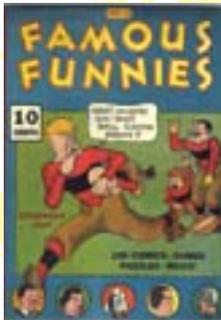
THE PIONEER (1500-1828), VICTORIAN (1828-1883) AND PLATINUM (1883-1938) AGES

(Please note: In this article, all dates given for various "Ages" are approximate. With the exception of the beginning of the Golden Age and the beginning of the Silver Age, little consensus exists on starting/ending dates. In fact, if you really want to start an argument between comic book geeks, just ask any two of them when the Silver Age ends and the Bronze Age begins. Just make sure that you're standing well back and wearing protective clothing when you do, though...)

Although many comics historians will point to European broadsheets of the sixteenth century as the ancient precursors of comic books (these broadsheets used text and illustration to get their point across, so there is some merit to this argument), or satirical magazines of the 1780s (in which the first recorded examples of "dialogue balloons" are seen), most would agree that



true comics began on May 5, 1895 in the pages of the New York *World* with the first appearance of R.F. Outcault's Hogan's Alley (which itself may have been inspired by the turn-of-the-century photography of Jacob Riis or the cartoons of Michael Angelo Woolf). This single-panel humor cartoon, which focused on the shenanigans of a group of young hooligans, introduced The Yellow Kid, one of the most popular fictional characters of the first few decades of the 20th Century (by the way, Outcault is perhaps better known as the creator of Buster Brown, who later lent his name and image to a line of shoes).



Soon, comics became a popular mainstay of newspapers nationwide, and such legendary characters as Happy Hooligan, Maggie & Jiggs (in the popular strip *Bringing Up Father*), Mutt & Jeff, the Katzenjammer Kids, Crazy Kat & Ignatz Mouse, and Barney Google were born. Although the earliest strips were all humorous, it didn't take imaginative creators long to realize that the form could be expanded to accommodate other genres. Some, like visionary artist Winsor McCay, flourished in the fantasy field, and brought the odd and surreal to the printed page in strips like *Dreams of a Rarebit Fiend*, *Little Sammy Sneeze*, and, most successfully, *Little Nemo in Slumberland*. Others explored a more adventurous route, and soon the likes of Little Orphan Annie, Buck Rogers, The Phantom and Mandrake the Magician were starring in serialized stories on the comic page.

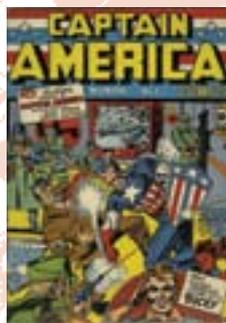
THE GOLDEN AGE (1938-1949)



It's generally accepted among collectors that the first comic book was FUNNIES ON PARADE, published in 1933. This was mainly a collection of newspaper strip reprints, featuring such favorites as *Mutt & Jeff*, *Joe Palooka*, *Hairbreadth Harry*, *Reg'lar Fellers*, and more.

But for all intents and purposes, the comic book industry really started with the publication of ACTION COMICS #1 in June 1938. This landmark issue, the first comic to present all-new material, saw the first appearance of The Man of Steel, Superman. The product of two teenage boys from Cleveland, Ohio, Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster, Superman was an overnight sensation and forever transformed the fledgling comic book industry. It is the publication of ACTION #1 that marks the beginning of the "Golden Age" of comics.

The reason for Superman's instant popularity in the late 1930s is obvious: during this time, America was a nation of immigrants. People were coming from all over the world in search of "The American Dream." Superman, as the last survivor of the doomed planet Krypton, is the ultimate immigrant. It wasn't uncommon for children to be separated from their parents during this time, either in their home country or once they got to Ellis Island. This is the feeling, of both adventure and uncertainty, that Siegel and Shuster, both the sons of European immigrants, tapped into with their strange visitor from another planet.

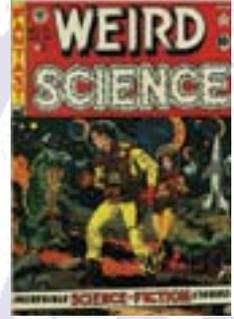


With the success of Superman, a plethora of super-characters was quickly released to a breathlessly waiting world. Batman, Wonder Woman, the Human Torch, Captain Marvel, the Sub-Mariner, Dr. Fate, the Spectre, Captain America... they all donned colorful costumes and waged war against crime and criminals on the homefront, and, in those patriotic days of World War II, the Nazi menace as well. They fought separately, of course, and also banded together as the Justice Society of America, the All-Winners Squad, and the Seven Soldiers of Victory. At their height, superhero comics were selling up to a million copies per monthly issue. It was a good time to be a hero.

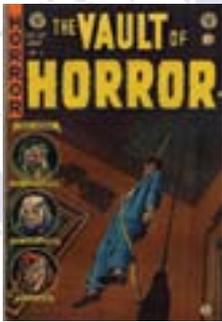
And then the war ended, and the heroes who had kept the world safe for democracy found themselves without worthy enemies to fight. Truly, after triumphing over Hitler and his Axis hordes, using those same superpowers to catch bank robbers was sort of like using a tank to swat a fly. The heroes limped on, doing the best they could, until about 1949, but their days were clearly numbered.

THE ATOMIC AGE (1949-1956)

Comics publishers saw the writing on the walls. Suddenly, everyone was scrambling to find the hot new trend. Lev Gleason had been publishing CRIME DOES NOT PAY since 1942, and, a few years later had a blockbuster on his hands. Crime and gangsters were hot! Radio gave us “Dragnet,” “The Shadow,” “The Black Museum,” “Crime Classics,” and “Night Beat,” and comics were quick to jump on the bandwagon. CRIME EXPOSED (1948), TRUE CRIME COMICS (1947), CRIMES BY WOMEN (1948), THE KILLERS (1947), and many, many more crime titles littered the newsstands, fueling the public’s insatiable appetite for “true crime” stories (an appetite that continues unabated to this day. Witness the O.J. Simpson cottage industry and the ever-ongoing Jon Benet Ramsey investigation, not to mention the current phenomenon of court TV shows, such as “The People’s Court,” “Judge Judy,” and all their various imitators and competitors). The infusion of this new genre would prove to be the savior that the comics industry had been looking for. It would also prove to be its downfall.

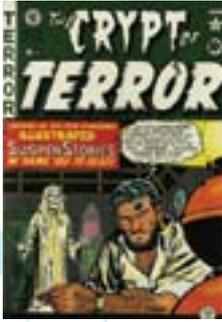


Another trend in popular culture in the late 40s and early 50s was the horror film, which, in turn, gave birth to the science fiction movie. Horror films had lain dormant since the start of World War II. Who cares about vampires and werewolves when there’s a real monster to fight in Germany? Avon Publications tried to enter the horror comics niche in 1946, but EERIE, their sole offering, lasted only one issue. But by 1949, the war was over, and monsters were making a comeback in both films and comics. 1951 gave us “The Thing,” “It Came From Outer Space,” “War Of The Worlds,” “Robot Monster” and “Invaders From Mars” terrified us in 1953, “Godzilla” first stomped Tokyo in 1954, and Cold War paranoia reached its height in 1956 with “Invasion Of The Body Snatchers.”



Comics weren’t slow to notice this trend. William Gaines, the heir to M.C. Gaines, publishing magnate, and head of Educational (soon to be Entertaining) Comics, found himself presiding over a dying line. PICTURE STORIES FROM THE BIBLE and FAT & SLAT just weren’t setting the public on fire. So Bill turned to the then-hot genre of crime and published CRIME PATROL and WAR AGAINST CRIME. Never one to miss an opportunity, he also helmed SADDLE JUSTICE, GUNFIGHTER, MODERN LOVE, and SADDLE ROMANCES, and a little gem of a parody comic called MAD. Then, in the back pages of CRIME PATROL #15, Gaines introduced The Crypt Keeper, and the Horror Genre in comic books was officially born.

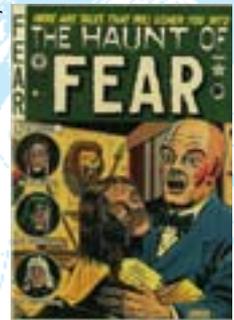
Gaines had some of the most talented artists in the business working for him. Jack Davis, Wally Wood, “Ghastly” Graham Ingles, Jack Kamen, Harvey Kurtzman, and Al Williamson, to name just a few, could all be counted on to turn in top-notch stories month after month. And they really took off when the all the stops were pulled out for the horror books.



THE VAULT OF HORROR, THE CRYPT OF TERROR, THE HAUNT OF FEAR... if it slithered, slimed, crawled, killed, maimed, or devoured, it found a home in the pages of these books. No idea was too twisted, no image too terrifying for Gaines’ Ghouls to illustrate for a white-knuckled public. “O. Henry”-style twist endings abounded: a baseball player who killed a rival was himself killed and his body parts used to play a midnight ball game. In another, a dutiful wife found that her husband, the butcher, had sold tainted meat that had accidentally killed their son. Come the next morning, his remains are proudly displayed in the meat case, while she stands glassy-eyed behind the counter.

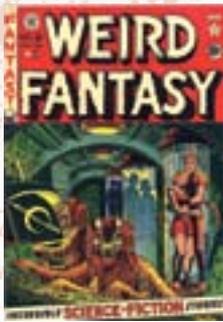
And science-fiction wasn’t neglected, either. There were books like WEIRD SCIENCE, WEIRD FANTASY, and INCREDIBLE SCIENCE FICTION. Rockets, spacemen, and a plethora of weird aliens populated these magazines, with all the promise of the newly-born Atomic Age.

But then the unthinkable happened. The publication of SEDUCTION OF THE INNOCENT in 1954 by Dr. Frederic Wertham rocked the comic-publishing world. Wertham claimed to be a crusader, obsessed with protecting America’s youth. He claimed to have done a study of juvenile delinquents that “proved” comic books had turned them into criminals. Never mind that the majority of his subjects came from broken homes or from parents who had had unfortunate run-ins with the law; comic books, and comic books alone, were the scourge of the country and had to be wiped out.



Today, a crackpot like Wertham would be laughed out of the media, but, much like the infamous “Tail Gunner” Joe McCarthy and his “Red Scare”, people heard Wertham’s message and took it to heart. The Supreme Court actually held hearings on comic books, and, as the publisher of the most flagrantly horrific comics, William Gaines took the stand. It was not a pretty sight.

In response to this incredible threat, and to avoid any kind of government interference, comics publishers banded together and created their own Comics Code, which specifically banned, for example, the words “Horror” and “Terror” from the title of a comic book. It also banned vampires, werewolves, ghouls, zombies, and other



supernatural creatures from the pages of comics literature. This seemed to satisfy Wertham and his allies. There are those who say, however conspiratorially, that the Code was designed to put EC, the most successful publisher of the day, out of business. It all but succeeded.

In 1955, grasping at straws, Gaines inaugurated his “New Trend” line of comics that included titles such as VALOR, ACES HIGH, EXTRA, MD, and PSYCHOANALYSIS, all designed to obtain Code-approval. None of them lasted the year, and, except for a little book called MAD, which had been converted to magazine format to avoid the Code, EC went quietly into that good night.

Comics weren't dead, however. Over at National Comics, BATMAN, SUPERMAN, and WONDER WOMAN had been plugging along at a time when superheroes were out of favor. However, now that the Code was in place, and horror and crime comics were a thing of the past, it seemed like a good time for a resurrection of the heroes of yore.

THE SILVER AGE (1956- CA. 1970)

Julius Schwartz was a man of many talents. For years he had been an agent for some of the nation's top science-fiction writers, including Ray Bradbury, Robert Bloch, and H.P. Lovecraft. By 1956, he was Editor-In-Chief of National Periodical Publications (soon to become DC Comics), who owned Superman, Batman, and Wonder Woman. Looking over the bleak comic book landscape of the day, Schwartz decided that the time was right to bring back the superheroes of yesteryear. Not just bring them back as they were, however, but bring them back updated for a modern age.



In the pages of SHOWCASE #4 (cover dated October 1956), Schwartz reintroduced the Sultan of Speed, the Vizier of Velocity... The Flash! After three more try-outs in SHOWCASE, the Flash graduated to his own starring book, and the Silver Age of Comics was born.

Hot on the heels of the revitalized Flash came other heroes of the Golden Age, reinterpreted for a savvier audience. Hawkman, Green Lantern, the Atom... all were reborn. And then, inevitably, subscribing to the theory that if one is good, more is better, they all met in the pages of THE JUSTICE LEAGUE OF AMERICA, the greatest gathering of heroes the world had ever known.

WRITTEN BY: SWIRLING STAN LEE
ILLUSTRATED BY: SWIRLING STEVE DITTO
LETTERED BY: SWIRLING SAM ROS

Across town, Martin Goodman, publisher of the struggling Atlas/Marvel line of comics, wasn't slow to pick up on this new trend. Atlas had been plugging along since the establishment of the Comics Code, turning out lightweight monster yarns about such Code-approved creatures as Tim-Boo-Bah, Fin Fang Foom, Grootah, Googam, and Metallo. Tight scripts by Stan Lee, and imaginative artwork by Jack Kirby, Steve Ditko, Larry Lieber, and others, made these books fun and exciting to read, but they certainly weren't setting the world on fire.

And then Martin Goodman made a momentous decision: since National had a successful superhero team book, Marvel needed one also. Stan Lee was tasked with creating it.

In collaboration with Jack Kirby, Lee produced the first issue of THE FANTASTIC FOUR, which went on sale with a cover date of November 1961. Made up of a quartet of characters who had been exposed to cosmic radiation during an unauthorized space flight. The group consisted of Reed Richards, the highly elastic Mister Fantastic, Sue Storm, the now-you-see-her-now-you-don't Invisible Girl, Johnny Storm, Sue's brother, a reinterpreted Human Torch, and Ben Grimm, the tragic, monstrous, super-strong Thing.



But this wasn't just any super-group. The FF was a family. They fought amongst each other, they had no secret identities, they had money and dating problems, and, for the first couple of issues, they had no colorful costumes. Clearly, these were not your father's superheroes.

The Fantastic Four were a smash, and it didn't take Stan and crew long to capitalize on their success. Before long, Marvel introduced such icons as Spider-Man, Thor, the Hulk, Iron Man, and the X-Men. Comics became hip with the college crowd, and, by about 1964, comic collecting became an increasingly organized hobby.



The Silver Age was in full swing. Fueled in part by the burgeoning "Pop Art" movement championed by such influential artists as Andy Warhol and Roy Lichtenstein, both of which drew inspiration from the four-color page, and stoked by the growing number of fans on college campuses and in the "adult" world, comics were "cool." Batmania, a brief but intense national obsession ignited in 1966 with the premiere of the "Batman" TV show starring Adam West and Burt Ward, helped to kick the Silver Age into high gear, as even the day's most popular and powerful entertainment stars vied for a chance to cross paths as colorful villains with the Gotham Guardian and his youthful ward. "POW!," "ZAP!," and "WHAM!" were the watchwords of the day, given life in glaring, day-glo colors. Superman starred in his own Broadway musical, and superhero

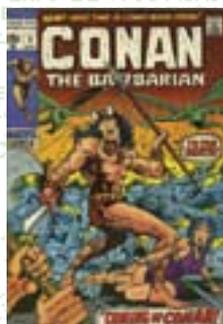
cartoons rocked the airwaves on Saturday mornings. It was a good time to be a comic character, as publishers, licensors and merchandisers were finding out.

It's not as easy to precisely define the end of the Silver Age as it is to place the end of other ages. Different people have different ideas about when this halcyon time came to an end. Some say it happened as early as 1970 when Jack Kirby left Marvel to go to DC and the first *OVERSTREET COMIC BOOK PRICE GUIDE* was published. Some say the release of *CONAN* #1 (October, 1970), and the birth of the "sword-and-sorcery" genre in early 1971 is as good an ending date as any other. For many, however, the Silver Age ended in 1973, when Gwen Stacy, Spider-Man's girlfriend and long-time love interest, was killed. Really killed. Not a hoax, not a dream, not an imaginary story. For the first time, death was real in comics. For the first time, no one was safe. "Happily ever after" was no longer a guarantee.

It was the end of innocence. It was the end of the Silver Age.

THE BRONZE AGE (CA. 1970-1980)

But just because the Silver Age ended didn't mean that comics came to a crashing halt. Far from it. The form was alive and well, and entering a new age with new artists and new ideas. "Relevant" comics were big in the Bronze Age, with characters like Green Lantern and Green Arrow (in stories masterfully told by Denny O'Neill and Neal Adams) confronting such topical issues as drug abuse, pollution, racism, and poverty. Stan Lee actually challenged the Comics Code when he wrote a story spanning *AMAZING SPIDER-MAN* #96-98 (1971) that dealt with drug abuse. The Code refused to approve the book, so Lee ran those three issues without the Code Seal. It had taken 15 years, but the Comics Code armor was beginning to crack.



Other new, young creators began to enter the field as well, bringing with them new sensibilities and new ideas. Bernie Wrightson, Mike Ploog, Jim Starlin, Howard Chaykin... these were just a few of the "young turks" that invaded the comics industry during the Bronze Age. They were The Beatles of comics. It was a time of experimentation and expansion, about seeing how far the envelope could be pushed. It was a time of transformation. For the first time, heroes began questioning their motivations, just as their creators had been questioning their government on topics ranging from Vietnam to drug enforcement laws for several years. Captain America, once the unflinching symbol of the US of A, began to question his role as a symbol of America in light of the atrocities in Southeast Asia that were then coming to light. Green Lantern explored a range of topical issues, from racism to environmentalism to Native American concerns, all the while

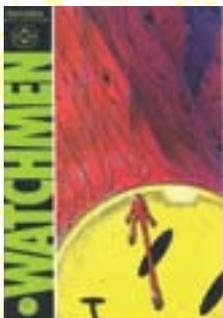
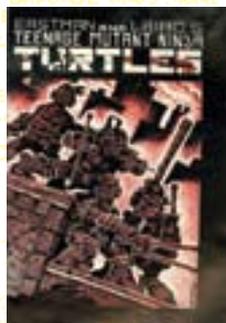


questioning his current role as part of an intergalactic police force. Even Lois Lane got into the act, going so far as to submit to an experimental procedure that changed her from Caucasian to African-American so she could better understand the plight of blacks during the height of the Civil Rights era. It was, indeed, a brave new world between the slick covers of America's comic books. But, as with all things, it too would come to an end.

Many people see the end of the Bronze Age as some undefined time in the late 1970s. Certainly, the "DC Implosion" of 1978, when DC Comics ceased publication of roughly a third of their titles, is a plausible end. Also, it would not be remiss to note that 1980, with the election of Ronald Reagan to the White House, saw a societal shift that was definitely felt in the comics world. However you look at it, by 1980 the Bronze Age was well and truly over.

THE MODERN AGE (CA. 1980-PRESENT)

Which brings us to the current age, the Modern Age of comics. This has definitely been a period of booms and busts for comics. Black and white comics were on fire in the early 1980s, led by the unlikely success of such garage-projects as **TEENAGE MUTANT NINJA TURTLES**. Now you'd be hard pressed to give them away. Speculators found comics in the early 1990s. Like the prospectors who discovered "gold in them thar hills," they strip-mined the field for all it was worth, buying and hoarding massive quantities of current comics, certain that they'd be able to retire and live a life of ease on the resale proceeds to be gained in just a few short years. A few short years later, they all but lost their shirts and cratered the industry. The end of the century saw the rise of trade paperbacks, which caused creators to rethink the ways in which comics were traditionally packaged and marketed. Currently, a small but passionate group are exploring the frontiers of web comics. A few, like Dallas-area cartoonist Scott Kurtz, creator of PVP (www.pyponline.com), have found enormous success in this field, but it's still too early to know what the future of this branch of the industry will be.



The 1980s also saw the influx of British creators to American comics, in a move that has been termed "The Second British Invasion." Writers such as Alan Moore and artists including Dave Gibbons, John Bolton, Brian Bolland, and Alan Davis brought a new, fresh sensibility to comics. Moore and Gibbons created one of the most revolutionary works of the decade with **WATCHMEN**, a book that was both popularly and critically acclaimed, and is today considered one of the cornerstones of comics literature. It artfully deconstructed the

superhero genre, and brought cape-and-cowl characters, some kicking and screaming, into the new era.



Part of the second wave of British creators to make their marks on the comics landscape, Neil Gaiman made his debut quietly in the pages of a new horror comic, SANDMAN, published by DC Comics' Vertigo imprint. Within a dozen issues, the original concept of SANDMAN as a horror comic was largely forgotten, and the book became Gaiman's canvas on which he and a variety of artists could tell virtually any type of tale they wished, from the mundane to the fantastic. An author who has won numerous awards for both his comics and prose fiction, Gaiman infamously won a World Fantasy Award for Short Fiction in 1991 for his story, "A Midsummer Night's Dream," published in SANDMAN #19 as part of "The Dream Country" storyline. "Infamously" as, since that time, the World Fantasy Awards rules have been changed to prohibit a comic book from ever again receiving this coveted honor. Fortunately, DC Comics has chosen to keep the entirety of Gaiman's SANDMAN work in print in a variety of graphic novel formats.

Perhaps one of the most significant events in graphic novel history was the publication of Art Spiegelman's MAUS: A SURVIVOR'S TALE in the pages of RAW MAGAZINE in 1977. Collected into graphic novel form and issued as a trade paperback in two parts in 1991, Spiegelman deftly tells the story of his father's experiences as a Jew in Poland during the Holocaust. In order to tell the tale effectively, and to allow himself some distance from the oftentimes painful retelling, Spiegelman cast the Jews as mice and the Nazis as cats.

Spiegelman's treatment was so effective that MAUS won a Pulitzer Prize Special Award for Letters in 1992, and has been in print in one form or another ever since. It is a groundbreaking work, and one that should be read by anyone who has even the slightest interest in events in Europe during the Nazi regime.

Today, the comics industry is as diverse as it's ever been. Readers and collectors can find comics to fit any taste, including crime, horror, western, romance.... even superheroes! Major bookstores carry comic books now, and their offshoots, the "graphic novel." Even more importantly, comics and comic characters are entering people's everyday lives through the medium of big-budget movies, which are increasingly drawing inspiration and subject matter from the four-color page. In just the last few years, we've seen multi-million dollar



films focusing on the exploits of such spandex-clad superstars as Spider-Man, The X-Men, Batman, the Hulk, Daredevil and Elektra, with Superman and Wonder Woman soon to follow. In addition, films such as THE ROAD TO PERDITION,

THE LEAGUE OF EXTRAORDINARY GENTLEMEN, V FOR VENDETTA, and FROM HELL are all based on comics and graphic novels.

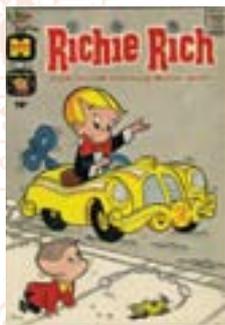
It wasn't all that long ago that any adult seen reading a comic book in public was looked on as stupid and slow. Public ridicule was the price one often paid for indulging in these four-color fantasies. Now, with film, TV, and the popular media making comics "hip," it's cool to be a geek. Comics have finally come into their own, and those of us that have been around for the ride since we were kids couldn't be happier.

SO ALL COMICS ARE ABOUT SUPERHEROES, RIGHT?

Absolutely not.

Although there's no doubt that superherofare has driven the industry since 1938, there have always been other genres that have proved popular at one time or another. Some, such as Crime, Science-Fiction, and Horror comics, have been mentioned in other parts of this essay. It should be noted, however, that Romance comics, Westerns (fueled by the popularity of Cowboy shows on TV, such as "The Lone Ranger," "Paladin," "Gunsmoke," and all of their Wild West brethren), and Humor comics all have had their time in the sun. Even great Western literature was given its due in the pages of the long-running CLASSICS ILLUSTRATED.

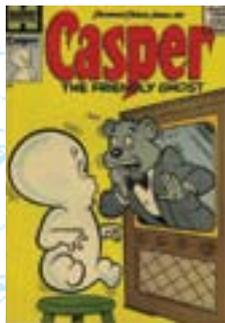
Although some critics would claim that all comics are, at best, intended for children, there are and always have been publishers that focused solely on comics for younger readers. Several of them have very interesting stories.



The debut of comics as periodicals with new, adventurous content in 1938 gave entrepreneur Alfred Harvey an idea: If he printed comic books at a smaller size, he could offer twice as many pages for the same thin dime. His math may have been a bit off, but this idea spurred him to form what would eventually become The Harvey Comics Group and to issue their first publication, Pocket Comics. The book flew off the shelves. Unfortunately, for all the wrong reasons. The small size made the book much easier to shoplift than standard sized comics, either by slipping it into one's pocket or planting it inside another magazine. The comic only lasted a few issues, but by then Harvey was irrevocably in the comics game.

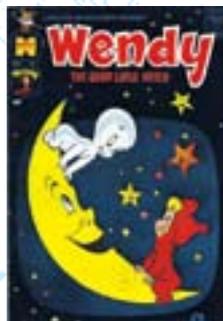
Harvey published standard superhero books during the 1940s, including the GREEN HORNET, which was a success as his first licensing venture. By late in the decade, however, as noted above, superheroes were on the way out, and Harvey was left looking for "the next big thing."

In Harvey's case, that "next big thing" came about as a result of another licensing venture. In 1945, Paramount/Famous Studios released a short cartoon about a friendly ghost named Casper. Sensing greater potential in the character than the silver screen could give him, Paramount licensed the character to St. John Publishing in 1949. St. John released five issues of Casper's book between 1949 and 1951, then the rights were given to Harvey in 1952.



This was the beginning of a new era for Harvey Publishing, one that would see them through the next several decades. Also in 1949, Harvey gained the rights to publish the comic book adventures of the enormously popular Sad Sack, who had made his debut during the war in LIFE Magazine. In 1957, Alfred Harvey purchased all the rights to Casper, as well as several other Famous properties, including Herman and Katnip, Little Audrey, and Baby Huey. With the artistic services of stellar illustrators like Warren Kremer, Steve Muffati, and Marty Taras (to name just a few), along with writers like Lennie Herman and editor Sid Jacobsen, Harvey and his crew soon began creating their own humor characters, and Richie Rich, Little Dot, Little Lotta, and a host of others, were born. In fact, Richie Rich would go on to become the most successful comic book character ever created, with more titles and more pages devoted to him than to any other character, including Superman, Batman, and Spider-Man.

As always, all good things come to an end, and Harvey closed their doors and ceased publication of their comics in 1982. There was a brief revival in 1986, but the giant's time had passed. Since then, there have been several movies made based on Harvey characters, including Casper and Richie Rich, and these characters remain a fond memory to millions of adults worldwide who grew up with their adventures.



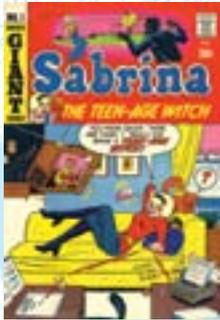
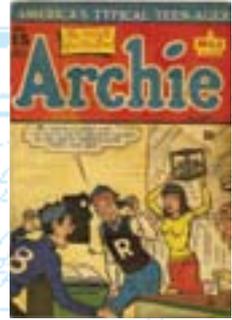
The history of humor comics, of course, predates Harvey by several decades. As has been discussed previously, most newspaper comics, and the comic books they initially starred in, were devoted to humorous content. Even the big superhero publishers had their humor titles, published right alongside their superhero counterparts. Sometimes even in the same book...

Such was the case with MLJ Magazines, a comic publisher known for such titles as PEP COMICS, which featured The Shield (the first patriotic hero, who predated Captain America by more than a year), the Comet (who has the dubious distinction of being the first comic superhero killed in the line of duty), and the Hangman (the Comet's brother). Other titles included TOP-NOTCH COMICS, ZIP COMICS, and BLUE-RIBBON COMICS. It was all pretty standard stuff, and MLJ would have gone quietly into that good night were it not for a small strip that ran in the pages of PEP COMICS #22, cover dated December 1941. PEP covers typically

featured the Shield doing something heroic: from destroying a tank to ripping guns off the decks of battleships to hurling villains around like ragdolls, the Shield asked for no quarter and certainly gave none. He faced the best and the mightiest that the Enemies of America could throw at him, and he triumphed, issue after issue.

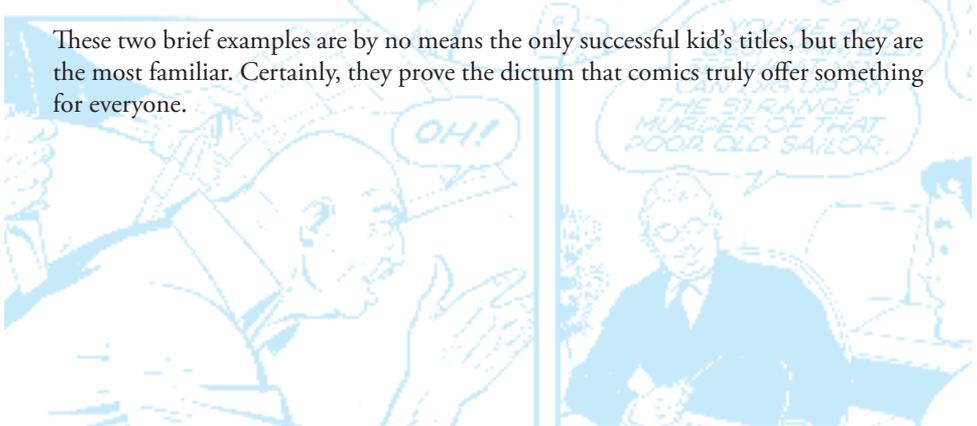
How is it then, that a gangly, freckle-faced red-headed teen, with no discernible superpowers, brought down the Mighty Shield?

The cover that greeted potential purchasers of PEP COMICS #22 did little to prepare them for the monumental event they would find inside. In a largely symbolic cover, the Shield, aided by his kid sidekick Dusty and his erstwhile companion, the Hangman, holds back a giant spiked boot, marked with both the Nazi swastika and the Japanese War Flag, that is attempting to crush the globe. By all appearances, this was merely another issue of PEP.



But appearances were deceiving, as inside readers were introduced to Archie Andrews of Riverdale, who, along with his pals Jughead and Reggie, and the vivacious Betty and Veronica, would charm America for years to come. Created by writer Vic Bloom and artist Bob Montana, after a suggestion from publisher John L. Goldwater, Archie was the Andy Hardy of comics. Archie first appeared on the cover of PEP with issue #36 (February 1943), along with the Shield and the Hangman, and he pushed the heroes off the covers entirely with issue #41. To add insult to injury, Archie took over the magazine all together with issue #65, and in issue #66, the Shield's former fan club officially became the Archie fan club. PEP would stay in print until 1987, presenting 411 issues before its demise, but Archie and his gang can still be seen regularly in traditional comic books as well as digest-sized editions available at most supermarkets and grocery store checkouts. In short order, Archie truly became "America's teenager," and built a dynasty along the way.

These two brief examples are by no means the only successful kid's titles, but they are the most familiar. Certainly, they prove the dictum that comics truly offer something for everyone.



WHO'S WHO IN COMICS

C.C. BECK

Clarence Charles Beck transformed every boy's fantasy into four-color reality: he gave us a magic word that could transform young Billy Batson into the red-and-gold-clad Captain Marvel. That word? SHAZAM! Beck was born on June 8, 1910, and joined Fawcett Publications in 1933 as a staff artist. Beck's whimsical, cartoony style was a perfect fit for the new medium of comic books, and in the first issue (which sports a #2 on the cover due to a pre-publication name-change) of WHIZ COMICS, Captain Marvel was born. Gifted with the Wisdom of Solomon, the Strength of Hercules, the Courage of Achilles, the Power of Zeus, the Stamina of Atlas, and the Speed of Mercury, Captain Marvel was the World's Mightiest Mortal. Mighty, indeed, as it's reported that "The Big Red Cheese" (as the Captain was affectionately called) sold over 1,000,000 issues per month.

After Fawcett folded its comics line in the early 1950s (due to losing a copyright infringement suit brought by DC Comics, who claimed Captain Marvel was an imitation of Superman), Beck dabbled periodically in comics, which he saw as having grown far too realistic and downbeat. He died on November 22, 1989.

JACK COLE

Creator and illustrator of one of the strangest superheroes ever to grace the four-color page, Plastic Man. Jack Cole was born on December 14, 1918, and got his start in comics in 1937, working for Harry "A" Chesler. He went to work for Lev Gleason in 1939, where he created Daredevil (no relation to the Marvel character of the same name), and assisted Will Eisner on *The Spirit*. In 1941, Cole created Plastic Man, a former crook who gained the ability to stretch his body into any shape imaginable. Surreal and bizarre, Cole's Plastic Man stories remain a high water mark of the Golden Age, and his work is increasingly studied by those interested in graphic storytelling. Beginning in 1954, Cole became the premiere artist for *Playboy*, and his gag cartoons graced that magazine for several years until his death by suicide on August 15, 1958. The reasons for his suicide have never been made public.

JACK DAVIS

Born on December 2, 1924, one of the finest caricature artists of this or any age, Jack Davis began his career working for Bill Gaines' EC Comics' titles. Particularly adept at the goriest and creepiest stories Gaines could produce, Davis also had a comic flair that was well-displayed in his work for *MAD*. Currently, Davis's work can be seen in everything from movie posters to product ads to magazine covers.

STEVE DITKO

An intensely private man, Steve Ditko rarely gives interviews, and has mostly left his comics work behind him. An unfortunate state of affairs for the co-creator of one of the most popular comics characters of the last half of the 20th Century: The Amazing Spider-Man.

Born on November 2, 1927, Ditko began his comics career in the 1950s, first at Charlton, then at Atlas/Marvel, where he produced mystery, sci-fi, and horror tales. In 1962, he and writer Stan Lee created Spider-Man for the final issue of AMAZING FANTASY (#15), and a legend was born. Spider-Man received his own title shortly thereafter, and Ditko stayed with the book until issue #38, when he left due to creative differences with Lee. During this time, he also co-created Dr. Strange, and worked on the Hulk, Iron Man, and other Marvel characters.

After leaving Marvel, Ditko returned to Charlton, where he created Captain Atom and revamped the Blue Beetle, then went to DC to bring to life such offbeat heroes as The Hawk and The Dove and the Creeper. In later years, Ditko would briefly return to Marvel before abandoning company-owned comics all together in favor of his own creations.

Steve Ditko is, reportedly, a staunch adherent to Ayn Rand's philosophy of Objectivism, which states, in Rand's own words, "My philosophy, in essence, is the concept of man as a heroic being, with his own happiness as the moral purpose of his life, with productive achievement as his noblest activity, and reason as his only absolute." (*excerpt from Atlas Shrugged, 1957*)

WILL EISNER

One of the most innovative and influential creators the medium has ever known, Eisner's career spanned the history of comics. Born on March 6, 1917 in Brooklyn, NY, Eisner sold his first cartoons at the age of 19 to WOW!, WHAT A MAGAZINE, published by Jerry Iger. The magazine lasted only a short time, but it led to a fortuitous collaboration between Eisner and Iger, who formed their own comics company. In 1939, Eisner dissolved his partnership with Iger and created his most famous and lasting character, The Spirit, who appeared in newspapers nationwide until 1952 (during Eisner's stint in the service during World War II, The Spirit was "ghosted" by Eisner's assistants on the strip, including Jules Feiffer, Lou Fine, and Jack Cole).

Throughout the 1960s, Eisner turned his talents to advertising and marketing, but in 1970, he returned to comics, creating what would come to be called the "graphic novel." A CONTRACT WITH GOD, AND OTHER TENEMENT STORIES told tales based on Eisner's childhood in Brooklyn, and revolutionized the industry. This pioneering publication would set the stage for a graphic revolution, the effects of which are still being felt today. A true giant in a field full of giants, Eisner continued writing and drawing almost until the day he died, on January 3, 2005.



BOB KANE

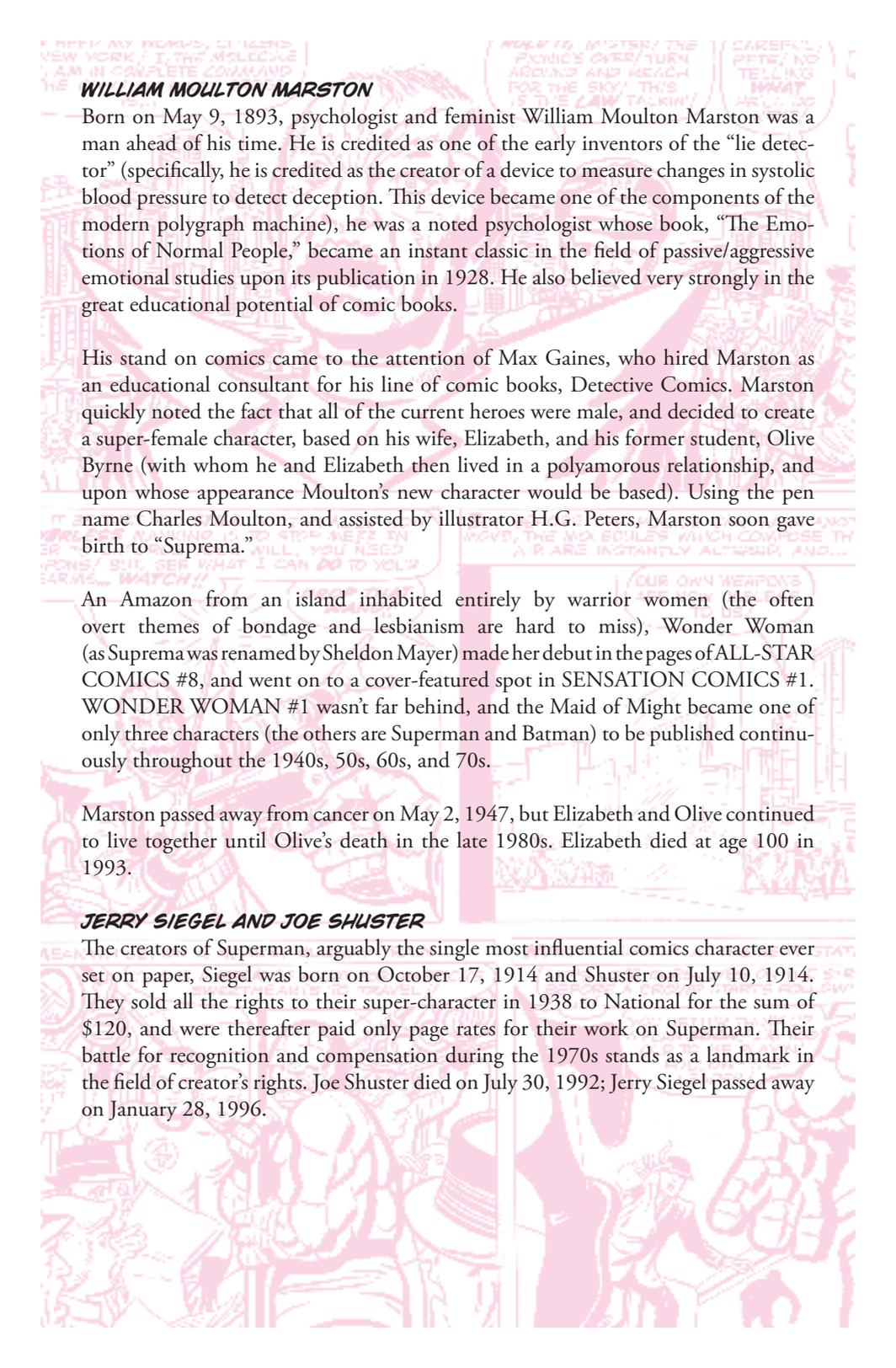
Bob Kane will always be remembered as the main creator of The Batman in 1939 (writer Bill Finger is now credited as co-creator), inspired, at least in part, by his love for the Douglas Fairbanks film “The Mark of Zorro,” and Mary Roberts Rinehart’s “The Bat.” Born on October 24, 1915, Kane learned quickly from the mistakes Siegel and Shuster had made in selling Superman outright to National, and signed a lucrative contract in which, in exchange for outright ownership, Kane was guaranteed credit on each strip, whether or not he was actually involved, and a handsome salary, in addition to other benefits. Kane’s actual day-to-day involvement with Batman pretty much ended in the 1940s, as he handed over more and more responsibility to “ghosts” within his studio, while he more and more enjoyed the life of a minor celebrity, especially during the “Batmania” days of the mid-1960s and the popular revival that accompanied the Tim Burton-helmed film, “Batman,” which starred Michael Keaton. He died on November 3, 1998.

JACK KIRBY

Born Jacob Kurtzberg on August 28, 1918, Jack Kirby was the undisputed “King” of comics. An innovative and influential artist beginning in the Golden Age, Kirby worked for virtually every publishing house in town, from Timely to DC to Harvey, before forming his own studio in the late 1940s with frequent collaborator Joe Simon. During this time, the pair invented and inaugurated the genre of romance comics, beginning with YOUNG ROMANCE COMICS #1 in 1947. Co-Creator of Captain America, the Fantastic Four, the Hulk, Iron Man, Thor, Mister Miracle, and more long-lasting characters than you can shake a stick at, his career can hardly be encapsulated in such a small space. He brought an operatic, nearly Wagnerian sense of drama to his comics, with bigger-than-life characters that practically leapt off the page in all their cosmic glory. No doubt, “Star Wars” owes more than a small debt of gratitude to the work of “The King.” Just remember: when you think of comics, you’re probably thinking of Jack Kirby, who passed away on February 6, 1994.

STAN LEE

Born Stanley Martin Lieber on December 28, 1922, he began his career at Timely in the early 1940s (his earliest published credit is on a text piece in CAPTAIN AMERICA COMICS #3 [1941]) as an assistant to Joe Simon and Jack Kirby. He later became the editor and head writer of Marvel Comics, where he co-created Spider-Man, the Fantastic Four, the Hulk, Iron Man, the X-Men, Daredevil, and countless other characters. In the 1970s, Stan moved to California to head Marvel’s burgeoning media efforts. He is currently the head of POW! Entertainment, and is still creating characters and content for a variety of media. He has had cameo roles in such films as “The X-Men,” “The Fantastic Four,” and “Spider-Man.”



WILLIAM MOULTON MARSTON

Born on May 9, 1893, psychologist and feminist William Moulton Marston was a man ahead of his time. He is credited as one of the early inventors of the “lie detector” (specifically, he is credited as the creator of a device to measure changes in systolic blood pressure to detect deception. This device became one of the components of the modern polygraph machine), he was a noted psychologist whose book, “The Emotions of Normal People,” became an instant classic in the field of passive/aggressive emotional studies upon its publication in 1928. He also believed very strongly in the great educational potential of comic books.

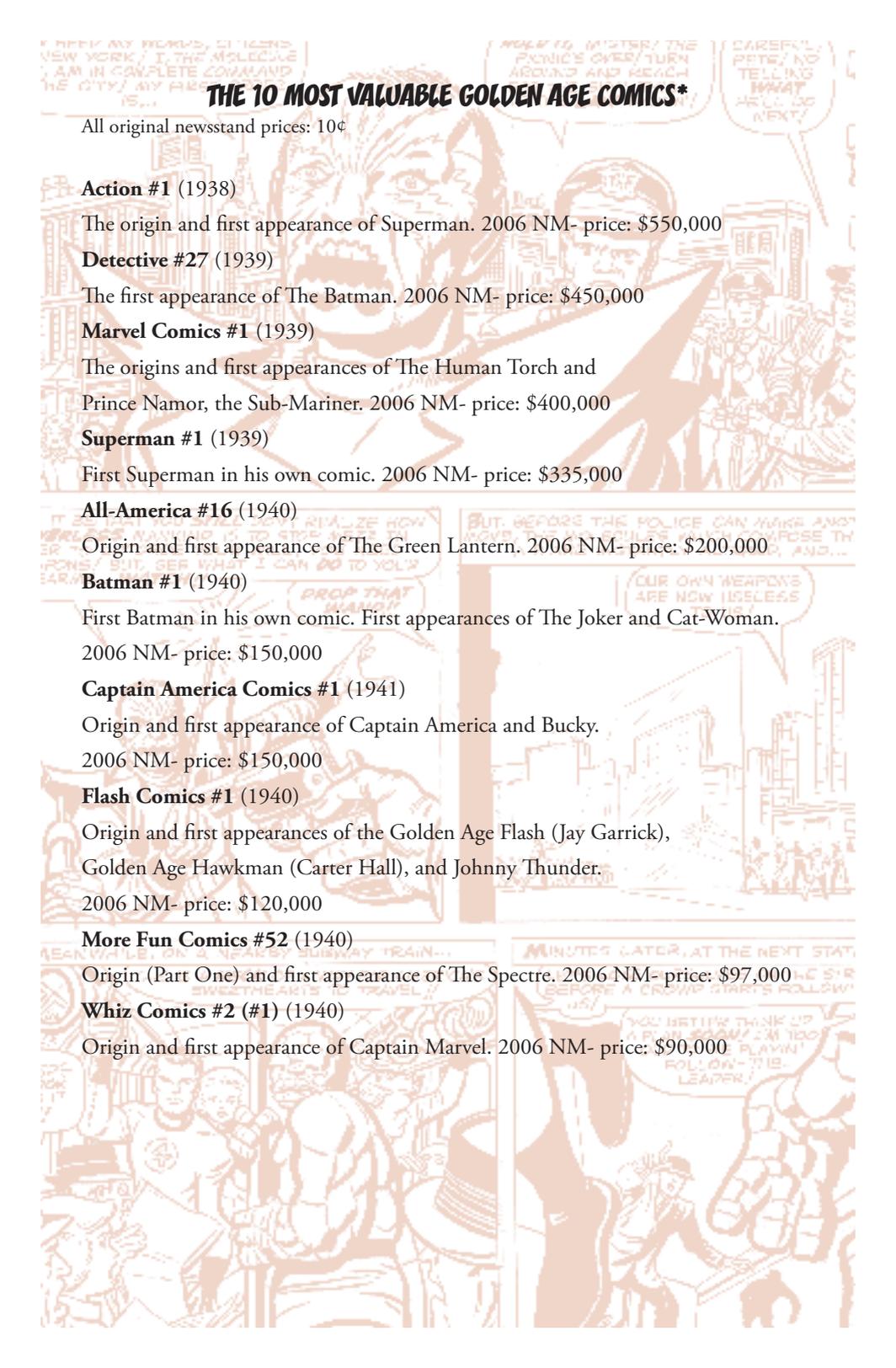
His stand on comics came to the attention of Max Gaines, who hired Marston as an educational consultant for his line of comic books, Detective Comics. Marston quickly noted the fact that all of the current heroes were male, and decided to create a super-female character, based on his wife, Elizabeth, and his former student, Olive Byrne (with whom he and Elizabeth then lived in a polyamorous relationship, and upon whose appearance Moulton’s new character would be based). Using the pen name Charles Moulton, and assisted by illustrator H.G. Peters, Marston soon gave birth to “Suprema.”

An Amazon from an island inhabited entirely by warrior women (the often overt themes of bondage and lesbianism are hard to miss), Wonder Woman (as Suprema was renamed by Sheldon Mayer) made her debut in the pages of ALL-STAR COMICS #8, and went on to a cover-featured spot in SENSATION COMICS #1. WONDER WOMAN #1 wasn’t far behind, and the Maid of Might became one of only three characters (the others are Superman and Batman) to be published continuously throughout the 1940s, 50s, 60s, and 70s.

Marston passed away from cancer on May 2, 1947, but Elizabeth and Olive continued to live together until Olive’s death in the late 1980s. Elizabeth died at age 100 in 1993.

JERRY SIEGEL AND JOE SHUSTER

The creators of Superman, arguably the single most influential comics character ever set on paper, Siegel was born on October 17, 1914 and Shuster on July 10, 1914. They sold all the rights to their super-character in 1938 to National for the sum of \$120, and were thereafter paid only page rates for their work on Superman. Their battle for recognition and compensation during the 1970s stands as a landmark in the field of creator’s rights. Joe Shuster died on July 30, 1992; Jerry Siegel passed away on January 28, 1996.



THE 10 MOST VALUABLE GOLDEN AGE COMICS*

All original newsstand prices: 10¢

Action #1 (1938)

The origin and first appearance of Superman. 2006 NM- price: \$550,000

Detective #27 (1939)

The first appearance of The Batman. 2006 NM- price: \$450,000

Marvel Comics #1 (1939)

The origins and first appearances of The Human Torch and Prince Namor, the Sub-Mariner. 2006 NM- price: \$400,000

Superman #1 (1939)

First Superman in his own comic. 2006 NM- price: \$335,000

All-America #16 (1940)

Origin and first appearance of The Green Lantern. 2006 NM- price: \$200,000

Batman #1 (1940)

First Batman in his own comic. First appearances of The Joker and Cat-Woman. 2006 NM- price: \$150,000

Captain America Comics #1 (1941)

Origin and first appearance of Captain America and Bucky. 2006 NM- price: \$150,000

Flash Comics #1 (1940)

Origin and first appearances of the Golden Age Flash (Jay Garrick), Golden Age Hawkman (Carter Hall), and Johnny Thunder.

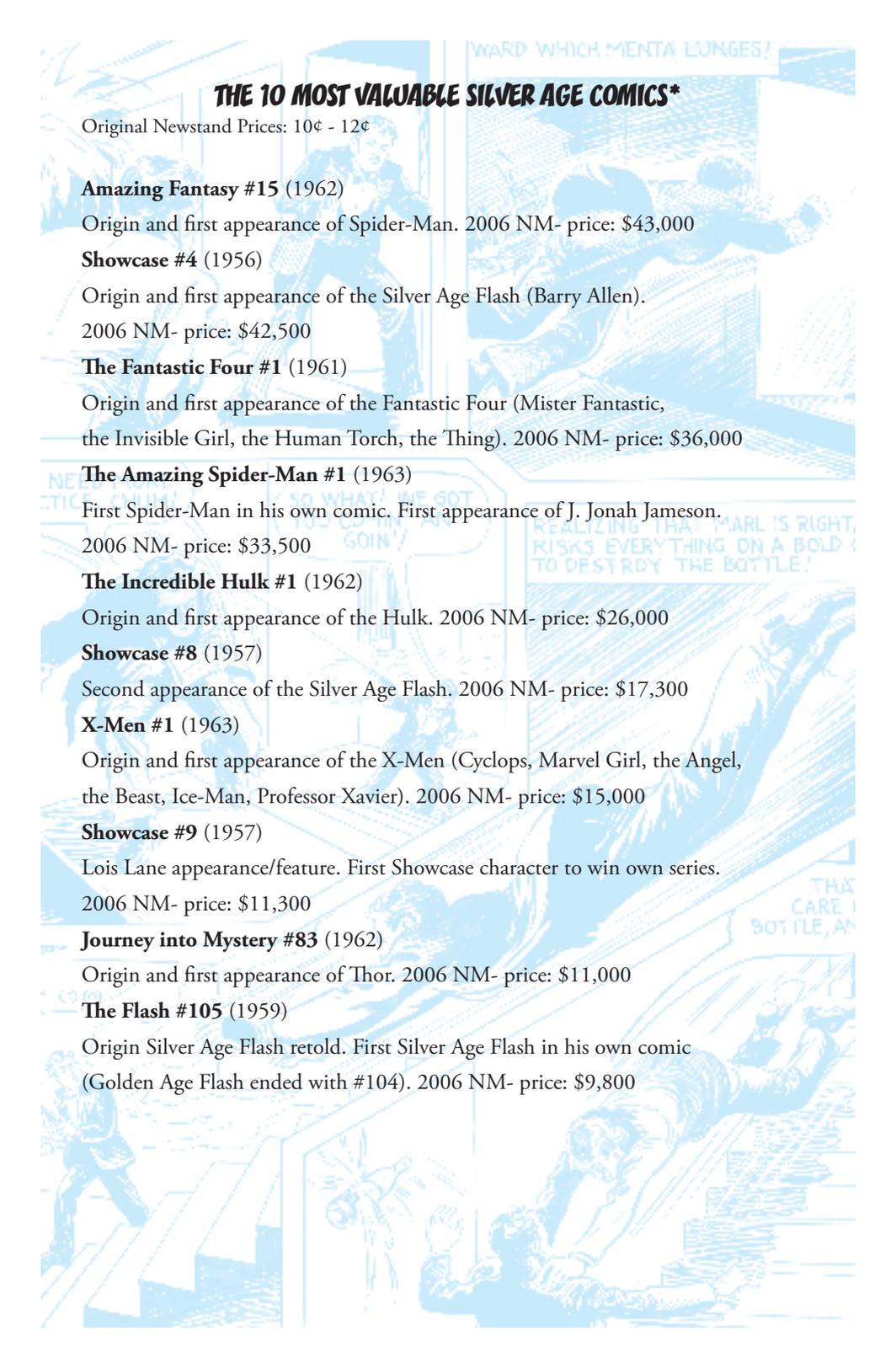
2006 NM- price: \$120,000

More Fun Comics #52 (1940)

Origin (Part One) and first appearance of The Spectre. 2006 NM- price: \$97,000

Whiz Comics #2 (#1) (1940)

Origin and first appearance of Captain Marvel. 2006 NM- price: \$90,000



THE 10 MOST VALUABLE SILVER AGE COMICS*

Original Newstand Prices: 10¢ - 12¢

Amazing Fantasy #15 (1962)

Origin and first appearance of Spider-Man. 2006 NM- price: \$43,000

Showcase #4 (1956)

Origin and first appearance of the Silver Age Flash (Barry Allen).

2006 NM- price: \$42,500

The Fantastic Four #1 (1961)

Origin and first appearance of the Fantastic Four (Mister Fantastic, the Invisible Girl, the Human Torch, the Thing). 2006 NM- price: \$36,000

The Amazing Spider-Man #1 (1963)

First Spider-Man in his own comic. First appearance of J. Jonah Jameson.

2006 NM- price: \$33,500

The Incredible Hulk #1 (1962)

Origin and first appearance of the Hulk. 2006 NM- price: \$26,000

Showcase #8 (1957)

Second appearance of the Silver Age Flash. 2006 NM- price: \$17,300

X-Men #1 (1963)

Origin and first appearance of the X-Men (Cyclops, Marvel Girl, the Angel, the Beast, Ice-Man, Professor Xavier). 2006 NM- price: \$15,000

Showcase #9 (1957)

Lois Lane appearance/feature. First Showcase character to win own series.

2006 NM- price: \$11,300

Journey into Mystery #83 (1962)

Origin and first appearance of Thor. 2006 NM- price: \$11,000

The Flash #105 (1959)

Origin Silver Age Flash retold. First Silver Age Flash in his own comic (Golden Age Flash ended with #104). 2006 NM- price: \$9,800

THE 10 MOST VALUABLE BRONZE AGE COMICS*

Original Newstand prices vary greatly

Star Wars #1 (35¢ Price Variant) (1977)

Released before movie opened. 2006 NM- price: \$1,500

The Incredible Hulk #181 (1974)

First full appearance of Wolverine (one-panel appearance in #180).

2006 NM- price: \$1,350

Giant-Size X-Men #1 (1975)

Origin and first appearance of the New X-Men (Cyclops, Wolverine, Storm, Nightcrawler, Thunderbird, Sunfire). 2006 NM- price: \$1,125

X-Men #94 (1975)

First New X-Men in their own comic. 2006 NM- price: \$1,060

House of Secrets #92 (1971)

Origin and first appearance of Swamp Thing. 2006 NM- price: \$900

DC 100 Page Super Spectacular #5 (1971)

Love Stories. Scarce issue. 2006 NM- price: \$800

Cerebus #1 (1977)

Origin and first appearance of Cerebus the Aardvark. 2,000 copy print run.

2006 NM- price: \$700

All-Star Western #10 (1972)

Origin and first appearance of Jonah Hex. 2006 NM- price: \$650

Uncle Scrooge #179 (Whitman) (1980)

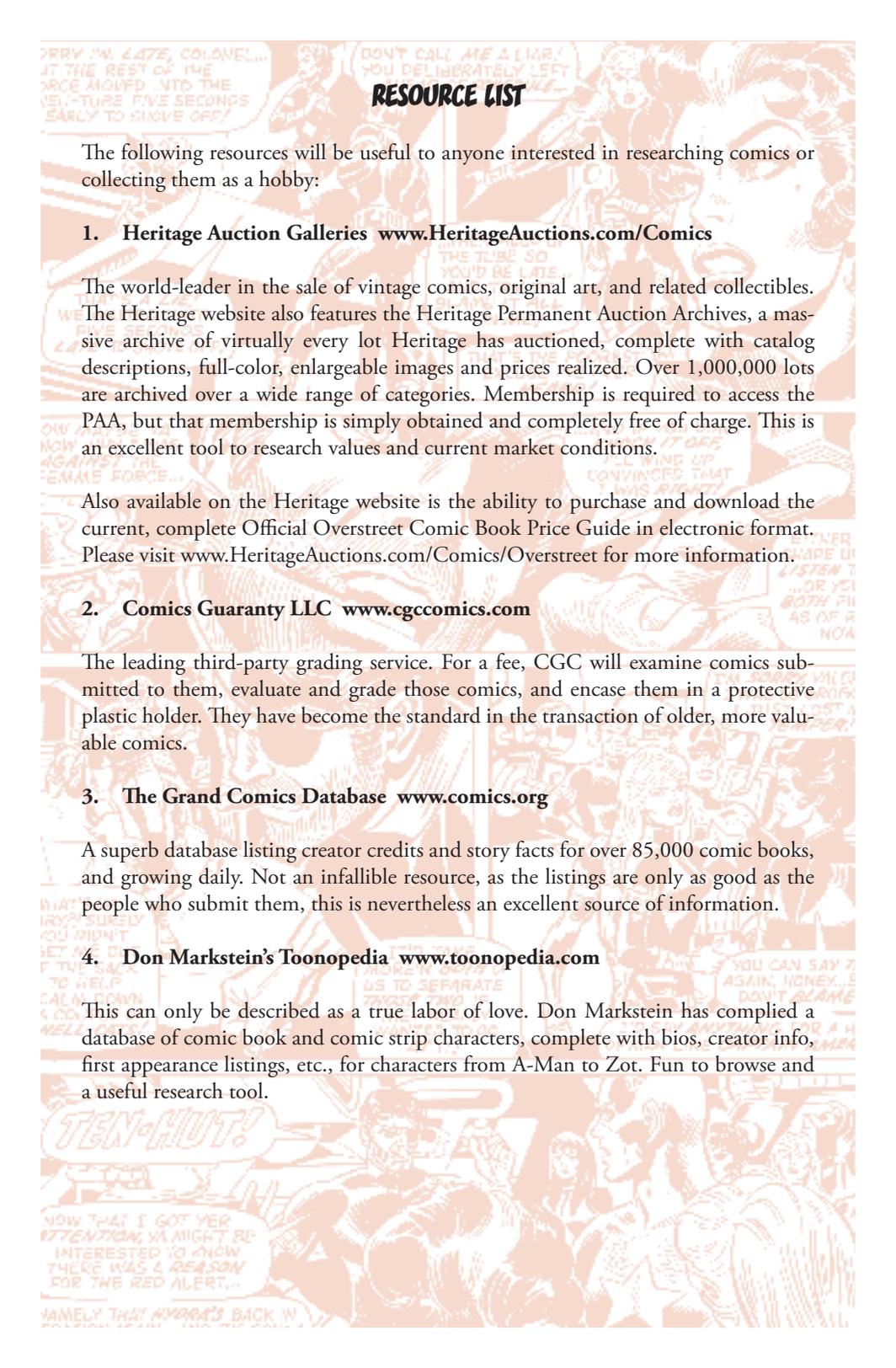
Very low distribution. 2006 NM- price: \$650

Vampirella Special HC (1977)

Only available through mail order. 500 produced, signed and numbered.

2006 NM- price: \$600

**All values based on The Official Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide, 36th Edition*



RESOURCE LIST

The following resources will be useful to anyone interested in researching comics or collecting them as a hobby:

1. Heritage Auction Galleries www.HeritageAuctions.com/Comics

The world-leader in the sale of vintage comics, original art, and related collectibles. The Heritage website also features the Heritage Permanent Auction Archives, a massive archive of virtually every lot Heritage has auctioned, complete with catalog descriptions, full-color, enlargeable images and prices realized. Over 1,000,000 lots are archived over a wide range of categories. Membership is required to access the PAA, but that membership is simply obtained and completely free of charge. This is an excellent tool to research values and current market conditions.

Also available on the Heritage website is the ability to purchase and download the current, complete Official Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide in electronic format. Please visit www.HeritageAuctions.com/Comics/Overstreet for more information.

2. Comics Guaranty LLC www.cgccomics.com

The leading third-party grading service. For a fee, CGC will examine comics submitted to them, evaluate and grade those comics, and encase them in a protective plastic holder. They have become the standard in the transaction of older, more valuable comics.

3. The Grand Comics Database www.comics.org

A superb database listing creator credits and story facts for over 85,000 comic books, and growing daily. Not an infallible resource, as the listings are only as good as the people who submit them, this is nevertheless an excellent source of information.

4. Don Markstein's Toonopedia www.toonopedia.com

This can only be described as a true labor of love. Don Markstein has compiled a database of comic book and comic strip characters, complete with bios, creator info, first appearance listings, etc., for characters from A-Man to Zot. Fun to browse and a useful research tool.

ABOUT HERITAGE AUCTION GALLERIES

Born in 1976 when Steve Ivy of Steve Ivy Rare Coins of Dallas and Jim Halperin of New England Rare Coin Galleries of Boston joined forces, Heritage Capitol Corporation quickly rose to dominate the field of rare coin sales.

In 2001, after expanding their focus to include rare currency, Heritage decided to branch into the world of Popular Culture collectibles. They hired John Petty to head the newly-formed Heritage Comics, which quickly became the world leader in the sale of rare comics, original comic art, and related collectibles. Notable early offerings included the personal collections of Academy Award-winning actor Nicolas Cage, Spider-Man co-creator Stan Lee, and GI Joe creator Don Levine.

Today, Heritage Auction Galleries, located in the Turtle Creek section of Dallas, encompasses a broad range of collectibles, including rare coins, currency, comics and original comic art, sports memorabilia, fine and decorative arts, political memorabilia and Americana, vintage movie posters, music and entertainment memorabilia, rare books and manuscripts, and more.

For more information about Heritage's auctions, and a complete record of prices realized, along with full-color, enlargeable photos of each lot, please visit www.HeritageAuctions.com/Comics.

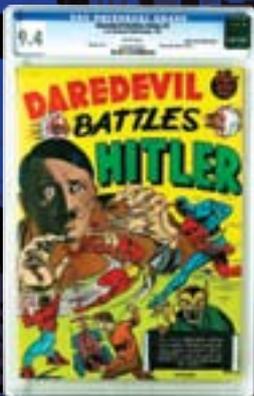
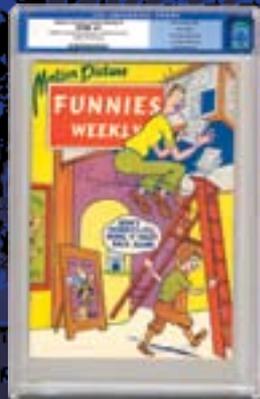
Prospective consignors and sellers of top-end comics material, toys, and original art are invited to call Ed Jaster at 1-800-872-6467, ext. 288 or Lon Allen at 1-800-872-6467, ext. 261 to discuss their rare comics and original illustration and comic art. Or visit www.HeritageAuctions.com and click on the "Sell Now" tab. Or simply email Ed Jaster at EdJ@HeritageAuctions.com or Lon Allen at LonA@HeritageAuctions.com.

To reserve your copy of a catalog for any upcoming Heritage auction, please contact Nicole Jewell, c/o Heritage Auction Galleries, 3500 Maple Avenue, 17th Floor, Dallas, TX 75219, or call 1-800-872-6467, ext. 272.

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