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Superman Chronicles, Vol. 1



Synopsis

DC Comics Proudly Presents The Earliest Adventures Of Superman • Complete And In Exact Chronological Order • From The Pages Of Action Comics, New York Worldâ„¢s Fair Comics And Superman. For over sixty years he has been one of the most recognizable American icons. An instant hit from his first appearance, Superman's popularity has grown through the decades • and today he is known worldwide as the defender of Truth, Justice and the American Way. But his earliest stories reveal a Superman who took no prisoners, made his own laws and gleefully delivered his own brand of justice • even if it meant dangling a crook by the ankle from above the city, or giving a wife-beater a taste of his own medicine. This was a Superman who embodied pure wish fulfillment, with his early adventures showing a raw super-hero in the making • and the development of an enduring classic! DC Comics is proud to present this definitive and affordable collection of Superman's first stories. Assembled here are his earliest adventures from ACTION COMICS #1-13, NEW YORK WORLDâ„¢S FAIR COMICS #1 and SUPERMAN #1 • including all covers. For fans of The Man of Steel, both old and new • or of popular culture in general • THE SUPERMAN CHRONICLES is an indispensable addition to any library!

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Customer Reviews

Born in 1914 in Cleveland, Ohio, Jerome Siegel was, as a teenager, a fan of the emerging literary genre that came to be known as science fiction. Together with schoolmate Joe Shuster, Siegel published several science-fiction fan magazines, and in 1933 they came up with their own

science-fiction hero • Superman. Siegel scripted and Shuster drew several weeks' worth of newspaper strips featuring their new creation, but garnered no interest from publishers or newspaper syndicates. It wasn't until the two established themselves as reliable adventure-strip creators at DC Comics that the editors at DC offered to take a chance on the Superman material • provided it was re-pasted into comic-book format for DC's new magazine, ACTION COMICS. Siegel wrote the adventures of Superman (as well as other DC heroes, most notably the Spectre, his co-creation with Bernard Baily) through 1948 and then again from 1959-1966, in the interim scripting several newspaper strips including Funnyman and Ken Winston. Jerry Siegel died in January, 1996. Joseph Shuster was born in 1914 in Toronto, Canada. When he was nine, his family moved to Cleveland, Ohio, where Shuster met Jerry Siegel. The two became fast friends and collaborators; together, they published the earliest science-fiction fan magazines, where Shuster honed his fledgling art skills. In 1936, he and Siegel began providing DC Comics with such new features as Dr. Occult, Slam Bradley and Radio Squad before selling Superman to DC in 1938. Influenced by such comic-strip greats as Wash Tubbs, Roy Crane, Joe Shuster drew Superman through 1947, after which he left comic books to create the comic strip Funnyman, again with Siegel. Failing eyesight cut short his career, but not before his place in the history of American culture was assured. Shuster died of heart failure on July 30, 1992.

A Superman fan will certainly enjoy reading about his first adventures, regardless of their simplicity when contrasted to modern plots influenced by realism and a more mature audience. This is the Superman of pre-WWII era, a progressive superhero who fought on the side of the oppressed and the underdog. There are no supervillains in these stories that range from Action Comics 1-13 and Superman 1. The villains are the socio-political forces that victimize and fail to protect the underdog. There is a clear mistrust of government in these pages. Among many of his progressive actions, Superman clears an innocent woman from false accusations, protects a woman from an abusive husband, destroys a slum to force the government to build new homes, and wages war against reckless drivers. In these stories readers can see influences of social realism that pervaded the political world of the depression era. Superman does act as Nietzsche's "supermensch" when he makes his own decisions and goes above the law to protect and change the lives of the citizens in his community. Superman is very aware of his powers and he is willing to use them even if he has to go against legal authority. He is ruthless and destructive: just watch him destroy the slum and a car lot in the name of justice. Another interesting fact is that he doesn't send the bad guys to jail;

very often he banishes them from the community. My greatest surprise is that he is an outlaw, something I would only expect from Batman. It is only in Action Comics 13 where readers can see Superman fighting a villain, Ultra-humanite, a possible predecessor to Lex Luthor, since he is an evil scientific genius. As I was reading these stories, I was discovering a phase in the life of Superman that I never suspected. Some elements of Superman lore begin in these issues albeit others are yet to appear. For one, Superman is an alien who comes from a distant planet that exploded because of its old age. In Superman 1, this planet is named Krypton. Readers are informed of his superpowers, which does not come from our sun, but from being of a superior race. In Superman 1, the Kents appear for the first time. He only leaps long distances and tall buildings, but he cannot fly. There is no Metropolis, no Perry White, and no Daily Planet. He works with the Daily Star. New York is mentioned once or twice as setting, and even in one occasion he works in Cleveland, Ohio, the Midwest. The oldest of myths, Superman/Clark Kent's relationship with Lois Lane begins in Action Comics 1 where Superman starts rescuing Lois Lane; by Action Comics 5, he's getting kissed by the famous reporter. Clark Kent constantly pursues Lois in the workplace, but Lois despises him for his displays of cowardice, necessary to avoid any suspicions of his true identity. In sum, although these stories or artwork may not be regarded high quality, a true Superman fan will get a kick out of knowing more about his or her favorite superhero's true origins. Thus, *Chronicles* delivers.

Superman was a hit almost from day one, selling not only millions of comics but quickly went on to star in radio shows, movie serials, TV shows, cartoons, movies and every other media under the sun. And it all starts here. This volume reprints the very first Superman stories from 1938 - the Superman chapters from Action Comics 1-13, the New York World's Fair special and Superman #1, some of the rarest and most valuable comic books ever published. The art is crude but serviceable, but the stories are surprisingly political. Rather than fighting super villains or aliens Superman spends more of his time taking on corrupt businessmen and politicians. In one early story he ends a war in Europe by kidnapping an arms maker and forcing him to fight in the trenches. After his experience he swears never to make weapons again. This is a Superman who takes on the real issues of his time, and while the solutions are simplistic his goals are a lot more impressive than stopping bank robbers or killer robots. An early super villain, the Ultra Humanite, puts in a appearance but even his plot is centered around labor unrest rather than death rays. This is a fascinating look into the history of American comics, politics and popular culture. I recommend it to anyone with an interest in those subjects.

These 1942 stories avoided dealing with ongoing World War II. Superman dealt with petty crooks and fanciful villains. Covers, however, with one exception, dealt with Superman versus enemy weapons. This also challenged the artists who had to accurately draw ships and subs and planes and artillery. The WW II cover images also probably enhanced sales. The cover on page 17, with Superman riding enemy bombs, says (in all caps), "War savings bonds and stamps do the job on the Japanazis!""Case of the Funny Paper Crimes" looks at comics for direct inspiration and the next-to-last panel is said to be an image of Superman co-creator Jerry Siegel. The very last story, "A Goof Named Tiny Rufe," is a satire on the famous strip, LI'L ABNER, and its creator, Al Capp. The Superman Chronicles Vol. 10 This book contains my favorite of the early Superman tales, "The Snake," illustrated by Leo Nowak in his mature style. Heavy brush strokes. Men with heads tucked into forward shoulders. Superman, and the muscular "sandhogs," (see page 57-58) with one arm active to the front and the other swinging to the back. These artists had to work fast for this burgeoning and demanding industry so developed standard poses they could reuse over and over. "The Snake" also shows how Nowak experimented with page layout. Gone were the conventional 6 or 9 clean boxes. Here were circles and diamonds and overlaps, rather cinematic in effect. Sikela also explored that and probably so did artists at other comics publishers. In the very first story, "The Eight Doomed Men," editors errantly credit pencils to that same Leo Nowak and inks to John Sikela. I feel sure it's the opposite. Nowak and Sikela often worked on each other's pencils and for all anyone knows did parts of scenes for each other. Sikela's work often has serious architectural elements and I suspect that he had European architectural training before landing in the US, perhaps like many to escape the Nazis, but that's just a guess. The second story, "The Conquest of a City" is interesting two ways: It deals directly with Nazis. And art is credited to John Sikela which is correct. Compare it with the art in the first story (remember? pencils credited to Leo Nowak) and you'll see the first story was credited incorrectly. The style, the poses, is the same in both. Sikela's style also matured and fast. Editors credit all covers to Jack Burnley. Wrong again. The Action 53 cover on page 70 is not in Burnley's style. I'd guess early Wayne Boring, inked by Anyone's Guess. George Roussos? Roussos inked the story immediately following, so that makes some sense, as does the fact he's known for strong use of blacks, as seen in the folds of the soldiers' uniforms. The cover drawing of a flying Superman, left leg up, fists clenched, is the same image used on the cover of SUPERMAN ACTION ARCHIVES 4. In two places they credit it to Jack Burnley. Very and obviously wrong. The artist, Sam Citron, drew it for a story a year after these, "Make Way for Fate" in Action 67 of December 1943, shown in that Archive. It's in the splash panel.

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