

A Golden Age for Heritage: Some of the World's Most Historic Comic Books Leap to Auction March 31-April 2

The Dark Knight's Detective debut, first-issue Superman, birth of Marvel Comics and newly discovered Batman No. 1 among event's highly graded issues

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DALLAS, Texas (March 8, 2023) — Heritage's latest Comics & Comic Art Signature®Auction, which takes place March 30-April 2, will rank among the auction house's most historic. This isn't the inevitable hyperbole of a media release, just mere fact, as this event counts among its essential offerings one of the most significant groups of key Golden Age books ever available in a single auction, especially at such high grades, among them Detective Comics No. 27, Superman No. 1, Marvel Comics No. 1 and a Batman No. 1 never before seen at auction. These books introduced us to the brightly-tightly clad men and women who fueled limitless fantasies and became immutable myths, the orphans and outsiders searching for truth, justice, maybe vengeance, always a better tomorrow. These are the pages in which our forebearers first met Superman, Batman, Wonder Woman, the Human Torch, the Sub-Mariner, Captain Marvel, Doctor Fate and other warriors, wizards and wonders generations before they were considered intellectual properties and building blocks for cinematic universes and streaming time-killers.



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This auction takes us back to the beginning, the very genesis of the medium, when the sight of a man in blue tights leaping tall buildings in a single bound could still take your breath away. And when young, hungry men with sharp pencils and sharper imaginations could fill blank sheets of paper with images and ideas that inspired awe and delight.

"Before Heritage, it was a rarity for most collectors to see even one of these books," says Vice President Barry Sandoval. "You could go to conventions for a year and never see a copy of Detective 27 and Marvel Comics No. 1. But to have them all in place, side by side, is breathtaking. It's why we all got into comics collecting in the place — our love for these characters, their legacies, their influence, what they meant to us as kids, what they said to culture. And perhaps above all else, they're

just beautiful books."

In this auction, collectors will find Batman's May 1939 debut in Detective Comics No. 27 — a book so rare there are just 75 copies known to exist in any condition and only 14 graded higher than the CGC Fine 6.0 offered in this auction. This copy could rank among the most coveted of all: As CGC notes, Batman's co-creator Bob Kane left a message, written in ink, on its first page to his friend (and beloved collector) Robert Crestohl.



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It's also one half of a dynamic duo that includes two stunning copies of Batman No. 1 from the spring of 1940. One is graded CGC Very Fine 8.0, and has a remarkable origin story involving a father's secret collection of 300,000 books and a son's revelation in 2020. This Batman No. 1 is so spectacular it bears the first CGC custom-made provenance collection label: Fantast Collection Custom. The label also notes that this issue is featured in Selling Superman, an in-the-works documentary about the collection in which this Dark Knight hid for decades. This Batman's grade is breathtaking — there are only seven higher, and "it's the finest copy I've ever held in my hands," says Comic & Comic Art Consignment Director Matthew McGee — and its origin story only adds to its allure.

"I think it's an amazing story, and I can't wait for people to hear all about this," CGG President Matt Nelson says about this Batman. "The stories always stay with the books — they know where it came from and the backstory."

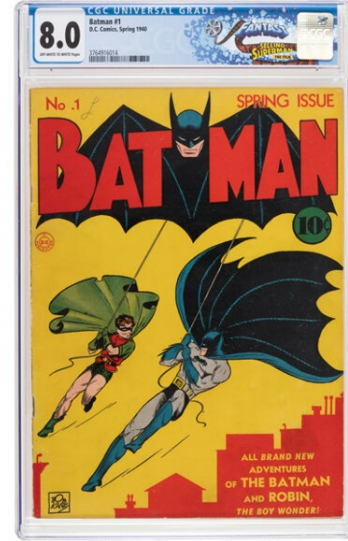
Rounding out the World's Finest team is another essential from the medium's earliest days: a Superman No. 1 bearing a CGC Restored Grade of Apparent Very Fine 8.0. Launched in the summer of '39, and the shadow of Action Comics No. 1, this was the first comic book whose title and contents belonged to a single hero, himself the very first of the superheroes. It wasn't even intended as the beginning of a series, merely a one-off meant to ride Superman's cape and coattails, hence the lack of a No. 1 on its cover.

Another of comicdom's most important first issues missing a "No. 1" on its glorious front was the book that eventually turned a pulp publisher called Timely into a comics goliath called Marvel: October 1939's debut of Marvel Comics. This is among the finest examples ever to come to auction — one of only three graded CGC Very Fine 7.5, with just five ever graded higher. Save for the Windy City copy Heritage offered in 2019, this is the finest copy we've offered in more than a decade — and the only CGC Universal-certified copy noted as having white pages.

It wasn't long ago that Timely's entry into the superhero market, 1939's Marvel Comics No. 1, was the most coveted title among collectors — partly because there are fewer than 68 copies on CGC's census report, with almost half of them restored. It also introduced two characters still in the company's employ more than eight decades later — the Human Torch and the Sub-Mariner — and others (the Angel and Ka-Zar) whose names were subsequently recycled.

"From a fan's perspective, Marvel Comics No. 1 is essential not only for introducing these characters but also for its influence on the superhero genre," says Comics Consignment Director Rick Akers. "The comic set the tone for the Marvel universe with its mix of

action, drama and humor and helped establish the idea of a shared universe in which characters could interact and cross over. The success of established Marvel Comics as one of the most important publishers in the comic book industry." For proof of this, look no further than the cover of Superman No. 1, at once classic and yet somehow contemporary; The Last Son of Krypton has been made over countless times since his first flight, but he always comes back to the same look. As Jules Feiffer wrote in his essential *The Great Comic Book Heroes*, in which many of these issues are excerpted, "If Alex Raymond was the Dior for Superman, Joe Shuster set the fashion from then on. Everybody else's super-costumes were copies from his shop. Shuster represented the best of old-style comic book drawing. His work was direct, unpretentious — crude and vigorous; as easy to read as a diagram."



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Before Batman took his first swing across the cover of *Detective* No. 27, the series featured a fairly forgettable run of cops-and-crime stories, not to mention a slew of questionable covers. As Reed Beebe once wrote, pre-Batman *Detectives* made it "clear that these early comics are competing with the pulp magazines, and losing." It took a Dark Knight to finally throw a cape over publisher Harry Donenfeld's plans to dominate newsstands with "spicy" pulps that were more pin-up than knock-out.

The first solo Batman book that followed in 1940 remains among the best (and most influential) Dark Knight tales ever published, as it includes the debut of a villain more popular now than ever before: the "a man with a changeless masklike face but for the eyes — burning, hate-filled eyes" called only the Joker. A few pages later follows another iconic debut: a burglar and "beautiful young woman" called The Cat, later renamed Catwoman and still the star of her own book 83 years later.

That same year saw DC expand its roster of colorfully clad heroes in books no less significant and sought-after: The Justice Society of America first gathered around its round table in All-Star Comics No. 3, available in this auction in a CGC Fine- 5.5. Shortly after that, Wonder Woman made her debut — "a little slinky," Jill Lepore once wrote, and "very kinky" — in All Star Comics No. 8 before getting her own book with Sensation Comics No. 1, both of which are also offered here.


This is an event drenched in gold: Captain Marvel's first flight in Whiz Comics No. 1 also soars in this auction, alongside Doctor Fate's debut in the highest-graded copy of More Fun Comics No. 55, a gem bearing the Mile High Pedigree. But all that glitters isn't just Golden Age superheroes: Here, too, is one of the highest-graded copies of Archie Comics No. 1 — a CGC Fine 6.5. The first all-horror book haunts this auction, as well: Eerie No. 1 from 1947 graded CGC Near Mint- 9.2 — the highest graded copy in existence. It's horrifying, but like everything else in this auction, historic.

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