

## Golden Age Heroes

The contents of this document have been accumulated over many years, from multiple sources. These sources include scholarly works, first- and second-hand accounts, works of fiction and, especially in the case of the “Historical Timeline”, my imagination and those of many others. This is *not* a historical textbook, and is only intended for use as a resource for RPG campaigns set in the WW II era. If anyone anywhere derives some use or enjoyment from this document, it has served its primary purpose.

In a time of great social and political upheaval, America has begun to pull out of the Great Depression. Europe, North Africa, Most of Asia, and the Pacific are in the grip of global warfare. Nazi Blitzkrieg thunders into Russia, the Luftwaffe rains destruction on England, and the Kriegsmarine threatens Atlantic shipping. The Japanese Empire dominates Eastern Asia and the Pacific. Without warning, the Japanese attack Pearl Harbor! America girds itself for war...

In the midst of this maelstrom, the first comic book superheroes came to life, many of whom are still popular today. Most of these heroes and their adventures from 1938 to 1945 were influenced by the greatest event of the time, World War Two. Comic book historians often refer to these years as the "Golden Age of Comics".

The Golden Age is an excellent setting for superhero role-play. During the forties far more adults read comic books than children. In the Serviceman's PX (Post Exchange), comic book sales outnumbered the combined sales of Life, Reader's Digest, and the Saturday Evening Post by a margin of *ten to one*! By the end of World War Two, comics outsold every other type of magazine in the world.

This popularity tells us something important. Almost nobody thought superheroes were just overly-muscular adolescent fantasies running around in their pajamas. In fact, the Golden Age Superhero was the symbol and protector of everything Good, Just, God-fearing, and *American*. He (or, occasionally, *she*) was respected and held forth as a role model, if only because it was believed that their comic book adventures would inspire young people to adhere to the “right” sort of morals and cultural values.

Mom: "Have you children brushed your teeth?"

Kids: "Well... sorta?"

Mom: "What would Superman think of someone who doesn't brush his teeth?"

Kids: "Okay, we'll go do it right this time."



PEP comics before Archie, Betty, and Veronica were invented..

<sup>1</sup> Actually, some argue that the Golden Age didn't end until ten years later, but that's *another* story.

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Adulation and recognition were the true Hero's due and comic book Superheroes occupied a place of respect second only to American Servicemen.

In the *real* world, comic book publishers often kept their four-color heroes stateside foiling fifth-columnists and Axis supervillains, and promoting War Bond sales. The reason for this is that although “Schlepperman” might be able to turn a tank battalion into a scrap heap in only three lurid panels, the *real* heroes, the American soldiers, might take months or even years to defeat the Axis. It was felt that letting the comic book heroes upstage the real soldiers wouldn't show the proper respect for the folks doing the actual bleeding and dying.

Not that the heroes didn't try to enlist, but they were either "too valuable on the home front" or had the simple bad luck to be assigned to a stateside (non-combat) unit such as a supply depot or a training base. Some were underage, while others' secret identities were 4-F (see below). Some (post-war) storylines suggested that the Axis nations possessed mystical or technological devices that gave them mental control over Allied superheroes who strayed into Axis territory, preventing direct intervention. In the Superman<sup>®</sup> storyline, Clark Kent tried to enlist, but accidentally read the eye chart in the next room with his X-ray vision, thus failing his eye exam ("Sorry, pal, but you're Four-F. You really *do* need those glasses, don't you?") That said, some heroes did venture into (and behind) enemy lines in their efforts to give “Fritz” (or Tojo or Benito) their share of mayhem.

The tone set by most of the comics emphasized the importance of the support provided by ordinary folks at home – not just moral support, but real, practical support such as conserving precious war resources (rationed items), supporting a scrap drive, working part- or full-time in a defense-related job, buying War Bonds, donating time and/or money to the Red Cross or USO, entertaining servicemen<sup>2</sup>, rolling bandages for civil defense, or even just paying your taxes on time ("YOUR taxes will beat the Axis!")

This is *your* opportunity to play the part of a Golden Age superhero. Give Axis spies a justly deserved thrashing! Demonstrate your Superior American Morality by refusing to kill them!<sup>3</sup> Conserve precious gas and rubber by hand-delivering them to the (always grateful) police! And above all – don't forget! **BUY BONDS!**

**A few facts about the Golden Age:** Those of you who don't regularly watch old movies or whose parents/grandparents haven't told you all about life in the forties might want to know a few things before your character begins play. This section

The image shows a yellowed, vintage "REGISTRATION CERTIFICATE" or "Draft Card". It is for a man named Carl Pendleton, residing at 6811 S. East End Ave. in Chicago, Illinois. The card is dated April 27, 1942. It includes a signature of the registrant, Carl Pendleton, and a signature of the registrar, Rebecca Cohn. The card is marked with "D. S. S. Form 2 (Revised 6/9/41)" and "16-21631". A vertical stamp on the left side reads "Carl Pendleton (Registrant must sign here)". The card also contains the text "THE LAW REQUIRES YOU TO HAVE THIS CARD IN YOUR PERSONAL POSSESSION AT ALL TIMES".

*Typical Draft Card.*

<sup>2</sup> True story: Some eager young women made then great for our boys in uniform". These were sometimes known as patriotes . in polite society they were called "victory girls".

<sup>3</sup> This was a widely-held convention of the comics in the 1940s. Non-recurring villains regularly died, but not because of the heroes' actions. Instead, they tended to get bumped off as a direct or indirect result of their "criminal" actions. Of course, *prior* to the forties, heroes were a bit more... "pulpy" and killed bad guys pretty casually. There were exceptions, of course.

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gives details about “the Draft”, Technology, and Life in the Forties. The last section is a fictionalized timeline of the events leading up to America’s involvement in the war.

### The Draft

To a young man in the 1940s, the second-most riveting fact in his life was the Draft<sup>4</sup>. Beginning in October 1940, all men between the ages of 21 and 35 were required to register for the Draft. A man's age and Draft classification determined his odds of being called up. Also, a man could get a deferment if he was the sole means of support to his family or if he was a student.

Most draftees were sent into the Army. Sometimes, a potential draftee might discover "his number was up" (a sympathetic Draft Board member might tell him). If he didn't want to go into the Army, he would try to enlist in the branch of service he preferred. If he could do this before official notification arrived, he could ignore the notification, since he was already in the service.

Women were exempt from the Draft, but were allowed to enlist if they wanted to. Initially, every service had its own “Women's Auxiliary Corps”, a separate service that allowed women to contribute, but with a less harsh disciplinary atmosphere. Eventually, each of these auxiliary services were incorporated into its associated male-only service. Women were never assigned to combat specialties, but Army nurses still might find themselves in the line of fire. The intent was to pad out the forces by filling rear echelon jobs with women, freeing able-bodied men for combat duties. Welcome to the Forties.

During the war, the age groups selected from gradually expanded to include ages 18 to 63. A list of the possible draft classifications are given below, with a brief description of each one.

- **1A - Fit for general military service.** Most fell into this category. This indicates a man suitable for any position in the military.
- **1B - Fit for limited military service.** Someone who has a slight physical problem might fall into this category. Qualifiers might be slightly bad vision or a slightly game leg. This just means he won't be given a combat position. He still might be given a cook's hat and a rifle and sent to a war zone as a support troop.
- **1C - Member of the Armed Forces.** Self Explanatory. If they've got you, they've got you.
- **2A - Deferred for critical civilian position.** Policemen, Firemen, and Defense workers fell into this category. They were exempt from the Draft, with one exception. Mayor Fiorello La Guardia, the Mayor of New York, was also a member of the New York Draft board. He felt that if someone was fit for service, the US Military needed them more than New York City. New York policemen and firemen were not given this exemption for this reason.
- **3A - Deferred due to dependents.** Many thought this classification would effectively shield them from the draft, but they were wrong. As the war stretched on, 1As and 1Bs began to run out. 3As were called up to make up the difference.
- **4A - Prior service in the Armed Forces.** Anyone who had retired or been discharged from the service was in this category. They couldn't be drafted, but could be recalled to active duty if necessary.

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<sup>4</sup> I'll give you three guesses what THE most riveting fact in his life was, and the first two don't count!

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- **4B - Deferred by law.** Government officials were exempt from the draft. Judges, Mayors, Congressmen, etc., were exempt, and so were high level government appointees. This is different from 2A, in that the person is a government official, not just an employee.
- **4C - Alien.** Perversely, foreigners living in the US couldn't enlist, but *could* be drafted. Enemy aliens were either detained or deported.

As of February 19, 1942, executive order 9066 dictated that American residents of Japanese descent be interned as enemy aliens. The fact that many of these "aliens" were American citizens was considered irrelevant until the war had nearly ended.<sup>5</sup>

- **4D - Minister.** Men of the cloth could be Drafted, but only into the Chaplain's Corps.
- **4E - Conscientious objector.** Less than 1% of all potential draftees fell into this category. The U.S. Government only allowed someone to conscientiously object if they belonged to a religion or sect which the Government recognized as having opposed war in general even before the outbreak of hostilities. Objecting to war on the authority of your own personal conscience was viewed in a dim light, and might get you classified 1-A despite your objections. Many would-be objectors found themselves in Basic Training surrounded by Gung-ho troops who would very likely beat the objector up, were his objections known. Some kept quiet and served, while others sought every opportunity to protest their involuntary servitude.

John Q. Public's regard for conscientious objectors depended on their reason for objecting. Some objected to killing on moral/religious grounds, but were willing to serve in noncombat positions, such as a medic or a Chaplain's assistant. These objectors were held in less respect than combat troops, but were considered "OK".

Others were against war but would serve in a non-military capacity. Patriotic pacifists could and did serve as medical guinea pigs. These objectors were considered to be a little strange, but still "OK".

About 6,000 men objected to war so strongly that they refused to serve in any capacity. Public consensus about this group is reflected by their treatment. They were jailed.

One conscientious objector of this type was the cell-mate of Louis Lepke, the boss of "Murder, Incorporated". At first Lepke didn't realize what his cell-mate was in for. When the penny finally dropped, he exclaimed: "You mean, they put you in here for *not* killing?!?"

- **4F - Physically, Mentally, or Morally unfit for military service.** Those in this category were judged to be physically handicapped, mentally ill, or too immoral to serve in the military.

The local draft board members had quite a bit of freedom to "award" the 4F classification. They could classify a man 4F if he was handicapped, but they also gave it to convicted felons, "mental incompetents", or homosexuals<sup>6</sup>. If a draft board member disliked someone, they might classify him 4F out of spite.

The 4F classification carried quite a stigma. If a man classified as 4F didn't have an obvious physical

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<sup>5</sup> In his arguments in favor of issuing an internment order for Americans of Japanese descent, the General charged with defending the Western States explained that a lack of evidence of Japanese spy activity was proof of the efficiency of the Imperial Japanese spy network.

<sup>6</sup> If a homosexual concealed his sexual orientation, he ran the risk of going to prison for falsifying his enlistment documents, but only if he was caught.



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handicap, people often concluded that he was a coward (or worse).

### Technology

*Note that everything that follows assumes that Science! (Mad- or Super-science) hasn't had much of an impact on the available technology of the day. If you have a particular vision for this era or want to allow the scientifically-inclined PCs to make a difference, you can always change the availability of advanced technology to suit your campaign.*

Other than the spoken word, mail was the primary means of communication during the Forties. Postage was only 2 cents an ounce for First Class and 3 cents for Air Mail. Local mail was actually much faster than it is today. A First Class letter mailed in the morning could be delivered that afternoon in the same town. A letter sent across the state only took one or two days at most, while across the country took about seven or eight days. Air Mail was delivered within one to three days of posting. In most towns and cities, mail was delivered twice daily, once in the morning and once in the afternoon. Mail was delivered only once on Saturdays and no mail was delivered on Sunday.



1942 Postage Stamps



Typical 1940s telephone.

Telephone service was quite different from today. The American Bell Telephone company (“Ma Bell”) was a legal monopoly. Even the phones in your house belonged to the phone company<sup>7</sup>. You didn't own your own phone, but leased one from the phone company. Only phone company personnel could legally install or service phones. The phones themselves were wired directly into the wall, instead of plugging into a jack.

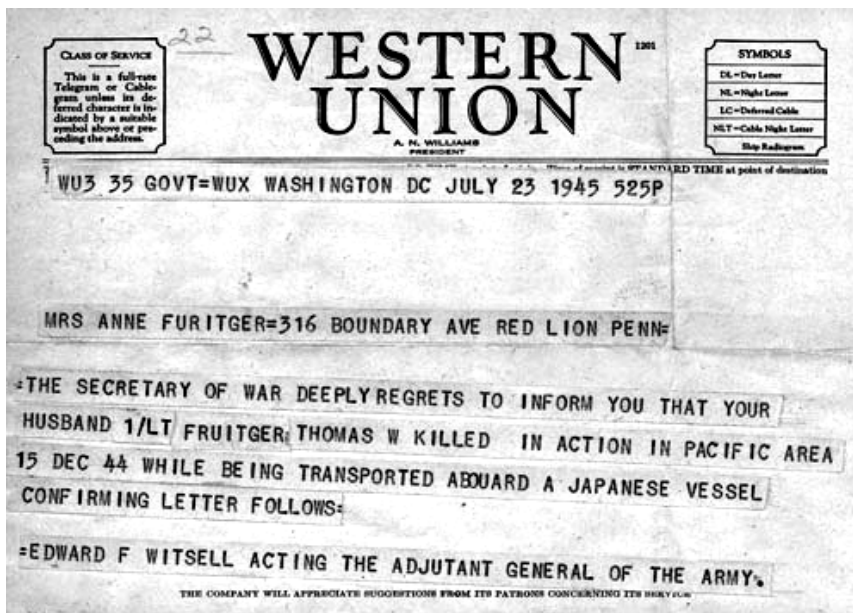
Most areas didn't have direct dialing at all. This required an operator to connect callers. Other areas had “party lines” where all the phones were connected simultaneously. You turned a hand crank on the side of the phone and rang all the phones on the line. Each household was assigned a specific pattern of long and short rings, and you'd turn the phone crank accordingly to produce the pattern. Everyone's phone would ring, but only the person you were calling was supposed to answer, although nosy neighbors were known to indulge their curiosity at times.

A long distance call always required operator assistance, and there was no such thing as an area code. To make a long distance call, you'd ask the Local operator to connect you to the Long Distance operator. Once you had the Long Distance operator on the line, you told her<sup>8</sup> who you wanted to call, the city and state they were in, and perhaps the address(es) they were likely to be found at. Then you'd hang up. The operator would call you back when she finally got your call put through, a process which could take an hour or more.

<sup>7</sup> Occasionally, local service might be provided by a local company, but “Ma Bell” was usually the local *and* long-distance carrier.

<sup>8</sup> And it was nearly always a “her”. Telephone operators in the 1940s were almost always female, since their higher-pitched voices didn't garble as much over the primitive phone lines and they were less prone to pick fights with rude customers.

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*An Official Death Notice telegram.*

Another means of rapid communication was the Telegram. A telegram guaranteed same-day service (even on Sundays or holidays) at a premium price (about 5 cents a word). During the war, sending personal messages via telegram fell out of common usage. This was partly because people didn't want to tie up a valuable wartime resource. Many dreaded the appearance of the telegram delivery boy, since the military routinely informed next-of-kin by telegram when loved ones in uniform were killed or missing in action. Good news (usually) came by mail. Bad news

arrived courtesy of a Western Union courier (Watch the movie *The Human Comedy* for a good illustration of this.)

The only radio communication in (relatively) common civilian use was shortwave (Ham) radio. Thousands of youngsters built their own shortwave sets (either from kits or scrounged/home-made parts) and got licensed to operate them (only required if you intended to transmit. Listening was free). Ham radio was what Alpha-Geeks did in the Forties, and the young person involved in this hobby was regarded by his community as something of a genius.

Prior to the war, Ham radio was used to assist in communication during natural disasters. When the War in Europe began in 1939, many nations banned amateur radio, and the U.S. placed restrictions on communicating with other nations. In 1940 all licensed operators were required to provide fingerprints, photos, and a copy of their license to the FBI.

After December 7, 1941, the War Emergency Radio Service was established. Except for WERS, all amateur radio transmissions were halted. WERS assisted in Civil Defense communications, wartime communications, as well as continuing to provide communications assistance during natural (and other) disasters.

The primary source of information during the Forties was the printed word. In larger towns, newspapers printed two daily editions, one in the morning and another in the evening. If a fast-breaking story was developing, a newspaper printed extra editions<sup>9</sup>. Add to this the incredible variety and number of magazines, comics, books, and pamphlets being printed, and you begin to understand the pride Americans had in being the most literate nation on the face of the Earth<sup>10</sup>. Most homes boasted a fairly extensive library, or at least a full book-case.

<sup>9</sup> The main difference between an "Extra" edition and a regular one was that the information on the front page had changed. Anything that wasn't front page news could wait for the regular edition.

<sup>10</sup> Widely-believed, at least by Americans, whether true or not.

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Radio was the only widely-used broadcast medium during the war. Radio had the same importance that TV or the internet does today, providing news, sports, education, and entertainment to all but the most remote areas. A radio cost anywhere from around \$15 for a basic model up to almost \$700.00 for a deluxe console radio with a built in shortwave receiver and record player. When you realize that nearly every household had one or more radios, its importance becomes apparent.



*A common sight during the '40s.*



*Clockwork mechanisms were a viable alternative to batteries, and cost nothing to recharge.*

Apart from the radio, recorded music was available in the form of 10-inch diameter disks.

The music was recorded as an analog signal in a groove that coiled along the surface of the record in much the same way as the pits of a DVD or CD are arranged. They were played on a record player, by placing a needle which mechanically traced the analog information, reproducing the sounds electronically or mechanically. While a home console unit would be powered by electricity, portable units were almost always powered by a clockwork (spring-driven) mechanism. The Military sometimes distributed Armed Forces Radio entertainment programs on disks to the troops in the field. They were then played on clockwork phonographs.<sup>11</sup>

Before the war, the BBC was broadcasting television programs on a semi-regular basis. In America, television sets were being sold in large metropolitan areas like Chicago and New York City, but this was in advance of regularly-scheduled network broadcasts<sup>12</sup>. When the war began, all TV broadcasts were halted for the duration<sup>13</sup> since television components were vital wartime materials. Plans for regular TV broadcasting in the US were postponed for the duration (there were fewer than 20,000 sets in homes in either country).

While automobiles were priced within the reach of most people, many in rural areas still relied on horse-drawn vehicles for daily transportation. In towns and cities, horses were only used by mounted police, street sweepers and milk delivery wagons. With the outbreak of war, many patriotic citizens put their car in the garage and resorted to horse-drawn transportation when practical.

Automobiles weren't very powerful (or reliable) by today's standards. Most cars' top speed was between 45 and 65 miles per hour<sup>14</sup>. The fastest road cars were limousines powered by eight, twelve, or

<sup>11</sup> Battery technology was very poor. In my own childhood, it was rare for any battery-powered device to function for as long as 30 minutes of continuous operation. I can't imagine WW II batteries were any better.

<sup>12</sup> In larger cities, stores that sold televisions usually had broadcasting equipment on the premises and some even had a regular broadcast schedule.

<sup>13</sup> In WW II, "for the duration" invariably meant "for the duration of the war."

<sup>14</sup> The Ford V-8 could do about 85 miles per hour, something of an embarrassment to luxury car owners of the time 0-60

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even sixteen huge cylinders, producing, at most, a rather modest (by today's standards) 120 horsepower, but capable of 90-100 MPH. Cars and motorcycles were judged not by top speed or quarter-mile times, but by the lowest speed the vehicle could be put in top gear and still accelerate smoothly. These motors had few horsepower but the best of them had gobs of torque. Gas mileage hovered around 15 MPG, except for tiny cars like the *American Bantam*.<sup>15</sup> Highways existed, but outside the Northeast they varied from fairly decent stretches of two-lane blacktop to dirt tracks hardly different than the untrammelled sod to either side of the right-of-way. Mountain roads were narrow and winding and often lacked guard rails. Between towns, average (safe) speeds were considerably less than the cars were capable of, and a long trip that was not punctuated by one or more flat tires was remarkable.



*An ad for the Bantam automobile.*

The train was the preferred mode of travel during the Forties. Prices were very competitive with the only other alternative, the airplane. Comfort levels were high, even in coach class. A coast-to-coast trip could take up to 6 or 7 days. An express train<sup>16</sup> took about 3 days to cross the continent and was equipped with cars manufactured by the Pullman company. Pullman car seats converted into bunk beds for overnight (sleeper) service. A few cars on each long distance train had private compartments roughly equivalent to a small hotel room. These were often used by the well-heeled traveler. Diesel-Electric locomotives were being introduced, but until the post-war era, most trains were pulled by steam engines.



*The Superchief*

The extremely wealthy could buy or lease a private rail car. For a substantial (much more than first class rates) fee, their private car was hitched to the end of a passenger train going where the private car's owner wanted to go. When the VIP arrived, his car was placed on a siding at the destination to be used as a temporary residence<sup>17</sup>. This practice halted when the war began. Many private cars were

times were between 20-30 seconds (in some cases longer) for most vehicles, in any case.

<sup>15</sup> The American-manufactured version of the Austin Seven, the bantam averaged 30 mpg, and was smaller than any car I can think of except maybe a Smart car. Of course, its zero-to-sixty time was infinite unless you dropped it from a tall cliff (Top speed 45 or thereabouts), but it was cheap to own and could seat two very chummy adults. The back seat was strictly for children or other very small items.

<sup>16</sup> Express trains had few scheduled stops. Regular trains stopped anywhere passengers were waiting for pick up. This made the "Express" much faster because it maintained a much higher average speed.

<sup>17</sup> Private cars were as luxuriously-appointed as a yacht might be, and filled the function that luxury motor-homes do today.



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either mothballed for the duration or loaned to the government as VIP transportation. A sanctioned superhero team might be offered the use of a private rail car as a mobile base-of-operations.

The airplane was the fastest form of intercity travel. Most airliners cruised at about 200 MPH. Private planes often flew at less than 100 MPH, but could land on shorter runways or even unimproved fields. The fastest military combat planes were capable of about 300-400 MPH, but actual speeds in a dogfight could be much lower, often between 100 and 200 MPH.

Rotary wing aircraft (helicopters) were just beginning to transition from unpowered rotor designs (gyroplanes, gyrocopters or autogyros – all mean the same thing) to powered rotor designs (true helicopters). Gyroplanes were the nearest thing to a helicopter in common use in the '30s. They could land vertically but required a short take-off roll. Some gyroplanes could take off vertically, but none of them could hover. Gyroplanes topped out around 60-75 MPH. The French were the first to fly a fully controllable Helicopter in 1936, followed closely by Germany. Igor Sikorski was testing his ultimately successful design by 1939. Despite the promise of the helicopter, its development took a back seat to improvements in conventional aircraft, and few rotary-wing aircraft were fielded by any of the combatants. Germany fielded the most helicopters, but the U.S. deployed small helicopters late in the war, using them for search-and-rescue and directing artillery fire.

Airships of the time were blimps. There had been a series of rigid airship disasters throughout the thirties, and plans to utilize them for military and peaceful purposes had been abandoned<sup>18</sup>. Blimps had no rigid framework and derived their shape from the gas pressure within the envelope<sup>19</sup>, much like a large balloon. In turbulent winds, a blimp would flex rather than break apart. Blimps could travel at up to 50 MPH (about half the speed of a Zeppelin-type rigid airship). Since blimps were held aloft by buoyant gases rather than aerodynamic forces, they could float along for days at a time, using their engines intermittently or at low power settings to remain in their assigned patrol area. Their time aloft was limited only by the amount of food and water that could be carried for the crew. Blimp patrol missions over the Atlantic could last up to a week, depending upon the weather.



*Boeing 247 interior. Main spar highlighted in yellow.*

The Douglas DC-3 was the premier airliner of the day. Previous airliners carried only 10 or 12 passengers in a cramped fuselage barely six feet in diameter. The DC-3 carried 21 or more passengers in a fuselage 10 feet in diameter. The Boeing 247, the next best airliner of the day, had an 8-foot-diameter fuselage but to walk up the center aisle between the seats you had to step over the main wing spar, as it ran right through the cabin. Not so in the DC-3. Some airlines even provided overnight service, with DC-3 aircraft modified by the Pullman company. The DC-3 was the first airliner to provide passengers with hot in-flight meals. The DC-3 could make a transcontinental flight in about 20 hours<sup>20</sup> – 5 hours better than previous airliners. Without a doubt the DC-3 was the first truly efficient passenger airliner. Operating costs were so low that airlines didn't need federal subsidies (airmail contracts) to stay in the black, only passengers.

<sup>18</sup> Of course, in a world of mad scientists and superheroes, some of these events may have been prevented, so if you want them in your setting, go right ahead.

<sup>19</sup> The gasbag that held the helium.

<sup>20</sup> This included stops for fuel. At least two were necessary for a DC-3 to cross the U.S.

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Perhaps the greatest medical breakthrough of the Forties was the discovery of antibiotics. During World War I, the majority of casualties were from disease and infection. The advent of antibiotics meant that if your wounds weren't immediately fatal, you were probably going to live. Penicillin was only administered by medical personnel, by injection.

In WW II, American Army troops were issued 10 doses of sulfa (a very effective sulfur-based antiseptic) as part of their standard kit (7 pills and 3 packets of powder). The pills were to be swallowed and the powder was to be sprinkled liberally into any wounds to reduce the risk of infection. Servicemen quickly discovered they could cure most "social diseases" by taking one pill or packet a day for ten days. The threat of court-martial only slightly curtailed this practice. Some commanders resorted to only issuing sulfa packets prior to an attack to prevent this "frivolous waste".

### Life in the Forties

World War II launched America from economic depression to near-instantaneous prosperity. The Federal budget rose from \$9 billion to \$98 billion by the war's end. The gross national product more than doubled. The war created over 17 million jobs. Military manpower rose from 300,000 in 1939 to 1.5 million in 1941, to 12-13 million in the later years of the war. The loss of one in eleven Americans to the Armed Forces combined with the increased labor demand to create a manpower shortage.

The US population was just under 150 million in 1940. The labor force was about 56 million of this total. By the war's end, the labor force had increased to 66 million. From 1941 to 1944, the jobless rate dropped by 90%, from 8 million to 800,000. Hiring Women, Blacks, and the handicapped alleviated much of the labor shortfall.

The minimum wage in 1940 was about 40 cents an hour, amounting to just over \$800 a year. The median income was about \$2,000 a year. Women and "colored people"<sup>21</sup> (non-whites) made about 40% less than white males in the same position. To justify this, a white male would have a different job title than a minority worker. For example, a male forklift driver might be called a "heavy equipment operator" while a female fork lift driver would be called a "light equipment operator", even though both drove identical forklifts and performed identical duties. The attitude was that a man probably had to support a family, but a woman only had to support herself. The motivation behind paying minorities less was simple racism. There is no real defense for this, but many whites never stopped to question why this was so. It was just the way things were. The fact that blacks and other minorities were being hired at all was progress. Typical annual earnings are listed below

Job	Typical income <sup>22</sup>	Job	Typical income
Average factory worker	\$2,450.00	Waitress (plus tips)	\$725.00
Typist	\$1,450.00	US Soldier	\$264.00
Steelworker	\$2,600.00	Coal Miner	\$2,370.00

One "occupation" not listed deserves mention. A serviceman's wife received an allotment of \$65 a month. Since records-keeping was poor and picture I.D. was not in widespread use, an enterprising young woman could marry a serviceman as he was about to go overseas, then marry another and

<sup>21</sup> This term was, at the time, the polite way to refer to people of color.

<sup>22</sup> Minorities earned about 60% of the listed amount or less. The same goes for women in traditionally male positions.



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another. Not only would she receive an allotment for each serviceman, but if one died, she'd get his death benefits. Most wrote letters to their husbands, possibly out of patriotic fervor but more likely as a salve to their conscience (and to allay suspicion). Eventually, most of these "Allotment Annies" would get caught. Either more than one of her "husbands" would show up on liberty at the same time or an observant postal worker might notice he was delivering multiple letters addressed to a variety of young married last names at an address occupied by only one or two women, starting an investigation. Many Allotment Annies were caught flat-footed at war's end because they simply hadn't considered what to do when all these extra husbands came home at once.

Labor unions were powerful during the Forties, and Management/Labor relations were highly adversarial. At the beginning of the war, labor leaders took a "no strike pledge" for the duration. For the most part, they stood by their word. When a strike did occur, it made national headlines. Few strikes lasted very long. Since our soldiers' lives depended on the output of the factories at home, it was considered unpatriotic to strike. One rather interesting strike situation was the railroad walkout of December, 1944. When the workers went on strike, the government went to the railroad personnel and told them: "You are now a Colonel in the Army. If the trains don't run on time, we're going to court martial you." The strike was immediately resolved. In another instance, lumberjacks struck for larger food rations due to the strenuous nature of their work.

As US industry went to war, consumer products took a back seat to military production. Automobile production halted as assembly lines changed over to tank, artillery and aircraft production. Home appliances vanished as even sewing machine companies began producing war materials. Household utensils, tools, even nails became scarce as metals joined the war effort. Most toys of the day were made of metal or other materials vital to war production, and production of these ceased. Toys made of paper or cardboard continued to be produced. Books printed under wartime conditions were formatted with as little white space as possible, to save on paper. Blank pages were avoided as much as possible, and finer print was used.

The war in the Pacific eliminated most of our rubber supplies, 80% of which came from the Dutch East Indies (modern-day Indonesia), resulting in shortages of tires, raincoats, and rubber boots. New silk from the orient disappeared. What remained was needed to make parachutes, not stockings. The rubber and silk could have been replaced by synthetics, but that required oil and German U-boats prevented many oil shipments from reaching the East coast. There were no overland pipelines at the time or the Texas and Oklahoma oilfields could have made up the shortfall. One way women dealt with the lack of silk and nylon stockings was to use makeup on their legs. They even painted a "seam" along the back of their leg for added realism. One interesting effect of the rubber shortage was government pressure on swimsuit manufacturers to design and promote two-piece (not-quite-bikini) swimsuits, since they used less cloth and rubber.

Shortages and the Government's solution for them: rationing, affected nearly every aspect of American life. Consumers answered this solution with a new problem, the Black Market.

The Office of Price Administration (OPA) administered the rationing program. The OPA determined what items or categories of items were essential and in short enough supply to require rationing. Strict price controls were placed on items which, though plentiful, were still essential to the war effort. These price controls were used not only to control consumption, but also to keep wartime perceptions from artificially inflating the price of non-essentials. Some items which were rationed were: rubber,

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automobiles, typewriters, sugar, bicycles, gasoline, farm machinery, fuel oil, coffee, oil and coal stoves, shoes, canned foods (especially canned meats), firewood, canned milk, and soft cheese.

Perhaps the worst "calamity" to hit consumers was gas and tire rationing. The national speed limit was lowered to 35 mph to conserve these vital resources, and a ban on "pleasure driving" was enacted<sup>23</sup>. Rubber shortages caused a freeze on tire sales and a ban on recaps. If you owned more than 5 tires, you had to turn the extras in at a service station. If you didn't, you were hoarding! Horse drawn carts and wagons regained popularity for newspaper, dairy and other product delivery while OPA agents scoured the countryside looking for "pleasure drivers" to confiscate their ration books.

Automobile owners were issued a ration sticker and card. The driver carried the card and affixed the sticker to the windshield. These were shown monthly to receive the appropriate ration coupon book. The coupons were dated and color-coded to limit use on a weekly basis. The colors changed monthly to discourage hoarding and would-be counterfeiters. There were six categories of gas stamps. A brief description of each follows.

- **A-Card:** Lowest priority card issued. Authorizes 3-5 gallons per week.
- **B-Card:** User is essential to the war effort. Authorizes 6-10 gallons per week.
- **C-Card:** User is very essential to the war effort. Authorizes 12-20 gallons per week. Doctors were invariably given this level of card.
- **X-Card:** Highest priority card issued. Allows unlimited gasoline. Congressmen and ministers were given this card.
- **T-Card:** Trucker essential to war effort and allowed unlimited gasoline usage. Delivery men and mass transit operators were routinely given this card.
- **E-card:** This card stood for "Emergency Use--Unlimited Gasoline". It was issued to policemen, firemen, and ambulance drivers. In a superhero campaign, government-sponsored heroes would qualify for this card.

Tires were also strictly controlled. If you had a flat tire, you'd put on the spare and take the flat to the service station. If it couldn't be patched, you went to the local OPA office and filled out reams of paperwork to request a new tire. If your request was approved, (taking 6 to 8 weeks), the OPA issued authorization to purchase a new tire. This required another trip to the service station and a long wait for delivery. Of course, if you were in a hurry, there was always the Black Market.

Some items weren't officially rationed, but might as well have been. Food sold in stores on a price *and* point system. The government issued books of coupons worth points (blue for canned goods, red for meat, fish, and dairy products). These were used along with cash to purchase products. To purchase an item, you had to have the points *and* the cash necessary to pay for it. Beef, pork and fish were high-point items, while poultry required fewer points. The design of the coupons was periodically changed to prevent counterfeiting and hoarding. A few items (locally-raised rabbit, for instance) were "zero-point" items and could be had for cash only.

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<sup>23</sup> "Is this trip *really* necessary?" was a phrase coined by the Government to remind the public that travel for "frivolous purposes" consumed vital war resources. It inevitably found use in many a wartime conversation as a punchline and was immortalized in many a Warner Brothers© cartoon.

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A lot of people grew some or all of their vegetables in a “Victory Garden” in order to reduce civilian demand for produce and thus making more available for “our boys” in uniform. Most often, this would be an empty neighborhood lot, one's own back (or front) yard, or even a window box. For some, the fresh vegetables were a boon, but for many, a Victory Garden was more a symbol of pride in their dedication and patriotism than a source of food.

The result of all the above was an increase in disposable income accompanied by a lack of things to spend it on. Some people simply socked their money away in banks or War Bonds. Others spent their money any way they could, including the Black Market.

The Black Market, alias “Mr. Black”, thrived during the war. It delivered items that might otherwise be difficult to acquire, but at a high price, often double the legitimate value. Many saw “Mr. Black” as a harmless means of getting around government rationing. It was easy to rationalize such a purchase: “My shoes have a hole in them, and my work keeps me on my feet.”, “I needed a new pair of nylons for my date last night.”, “My boss was coming for dinner and I wanted to give him steak.”; etc.

Because of the ready market for such items, shipments of rare or rationed items were often hijacked to accommodate the demand. Counterfeit gasoline stickers and ration coupons increased throughout the war. Government records show that 15% of all “C” gasoline coupons and stickers were counterfeit. Many citizens saw nothing wrong with the Black Market, viewing it in the same light as exceeding the speed limit by 5 MPH or failing to report a cash transaction on your income tax. Of course, the Black Market *was* illegal.

The potential profits from Black Market operations led to more harmful criminal activities. A new type of cattle rustler appeared. He drove trucks of stolen cattle to be butchered and sold on the Black Market; a short stop at a nearby pasture and suddenly a few cattle were missing. Trucks laden with rare items were commonly hijacked. Often, the driver was killed. The law tried to break up the Black Markets, but public sympathy often supported them. Hoarding was illegal. If you had a surplus of rationed items, you were guilty.

### Sports and Entertainment

More money meant more spending. Nightclubs appeared everywhere and made record profits. Restaurants had large numbers of customers because they were able to get more meat and dairy products. Theaters and sports became more important. Distractions from the war were very popular, and it was unusual for even a small town not to have someplace you could go for dinner, dancing, and live music.

Radio shows enjoyed widespread popularity. Favorites were *The Shadow*, *Gangbusters*, *Fibber McGee and Molly*, and *The Jack Benny Show*. By the end of the war, that list included *The Fred Allen Show* (which aired opposite *The Jack Benny Show*), *One Man's Family*, *Queen for a Day*, *The Red Skelton Show*, *The Green Hornet*, *Superman*, and *The Inner Sanctum*.

Popular movies and plays were *The Wizard of Oz*, *The Road to Singapore*, *Citizen Kane*, *Yankee Doodle Dandy*, *Going My Way*, *Harvey*, *Bambi*, *This is the Army*<sup>24</sup>, *Oklahoma*, *On the Town*, *Casablanca*, and *Fantasia*.

The 1940 Olympics scheduled in England and the 1944 Olympics scheduled in Tokyo were both, of course, canceled. Other sports affected by the war included horse racing and auto racing. Banned for

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<sup>24</sup> Starring then-future president Ronald Reagan. Who knew?

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the duration, horse racing was considered nonessential to the war effort. Auto racing used too many rationed items.

Always popular before, baseball became THE national sport during the war. Sentries routinely used baseball trivia questions to identify US troops. This wasn't always successful: General Omar Bradley missed such a question at the Battle of the Bulge. For many, the World Series was the high point of the year.

Boxing was also popular. In 1940, Jack Dempsey retired from the ring. Joe Louis was the American Heavyweight Champion from 1937 to 1949. Although he was drafted into the Army in January, 1942, he never saw combat. He served throughout the war as a sergeant giving boxing demonstrations for the troops. In 1945, Rocky Graziano was named "Boxer of the Year".

### Lifestyles and Morals

The forties weren't just a different time and place, but an alien culture. All kinds of relationships were different by today's standards, and some weren't just taboo, they were illegal. For instance, a single woman with "no visible means of support" (no job, no husband, etc.) could be arrested just for that, the assumption being that she must be supporting herself by prostitution. Likewise a male might be detained and charged with "vagrancy" (usually legally defined as having less than \$10 on their person). In either case, they could be fined, jailed, or "asked to leave town" (or else).

Homosexuality was illegal to various degrees, and socially objectionable to the point where staying in the closet could be a matter of life and death.. Depending on the community, there might be an attitude of "live and let live" so long as the homosexual activity was kept out of the public eye. In other communities, even suspicion of such inclinations, even in the absence of evidence, could cast. Sexuality was such a forbidden topic that many people had no idea there was such a thing as same-sex attraction<sup>25</sup>. Upon realizing their "condition", many homosexuals thought they were "the only one". Staying closeted was necessary to survival, but was made easy by the notion that all homosexual men were effeminate dandies, and homosexual women were all exceptionally masculine. If one didn't act like a stereotypical gay, no-one was likely to suspect. A lot of gay and lesbian men married, since no-one would suspect that a married person wasn't straight.

Compounding this ease of camouflage was the widespread notion that men were better company for each other than women, and women better company for each other than men. It's no wonder then, that superheroes in the comics preferred the company of other superheroes, and avoided romantic entanglements. In their day, that was MANLY behavior, and therefore not gay in any way whatsoever<sup>26</sup>. If the comic book superheroes did become romantically involved, they would be expected (by the readers, anyway) to put their superheroic activities ahead of their relationship, and that wouldn't be fair to the object of romantic interest.

Men were the providers and a woman's place was in the home. At least that was the way things were *supposed* to work (and usually did). In actuality, while men did dominate society in general, there were exceptions. There were some female executives, but they were usually employed in a "woman's" business, such as a lingerie or makeup manufacturer. Occasionally, you might have a female CEO, but

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<sup>25</sup> Likewise more than a few couples got married without accurate knowledge about how to conceive a child. Eventually most figured it out.

<sup>26</sup> Of course, they had no idea that society would change to the degree it has (and would have been shocked by the kind and degree of change had they known).

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in that case, she was usually the owner as well. Females sometimes had jobs that weren't traditionally male, such as reporters or pilots. This was so unusual that a "girl reporter" or "girl pilot" was newsworthy just because they weren't men. Because the stereotypical female was scatterbrained, overly-emotional and easily frightened, some men were unable to imagine that a woman might actually be any good at her profession, unless of course, she had the help of a man. Farmers and Ranchers often knew better, because their women were often nearly as strong and fully capable as they were. Agricultural wives weren't expected to be delicate flowers unless they had some kind of handicap. Female superheroes would likely find that their male team-mates will often ignore or downplay her ideas, but this is offset by the tendency of male villains to underestimate her ability and intelligence ("ignore the skirt, get the guy in the cape!")

Race relations ranged from homicidal (the KKK was very nearly a secret government in many southern states) to reasonably tolerant. In many states, mostly the Deep South (former states of the Confederacy) blacks were not legally permitted to use the same facilities as whites, such as lunch counters, drinking fountains, etc. Often there were laws requiring people to carry a "pass" (I.D.) At all times, without which they were not permitted to cross state lines or, frequently, travel at all except on the business of a white employer. Of course the only people who were asked to show their pass were people of color. In Georgia, a license to recruit "colored" labor for out-of-state jobs cost \$25,000. Train Stations would have officials check the trains for Georgian minorities trying to leave the state. In one case, an out-of-state train with many blacks aboard was stopped for two hours while officials checked to ensure no local "colored people" were mixed in among the out-of-state minority people<sup>27</sup>. The intent was to keep the blacks in place as a cheap labor force.

Depending upon the state he lived in, a white person could not legally marry a person of color or even live under the same roof unless the colored person was a servant, cook, or the like. In fact, even in more tolerant states, a minority character would be surprised to be treated as fully equal by a white character. The usual standard for "the good guys" was to treat their minority friends with good-intentioned patronage. Players are not required to exceed this standard, but modern standards of acceptance would be worth a psychological limitation, such as "Unusual lack of prejudice". Outright prejudice on the part of player characters should be cleared with the other players and the GM. Most people during the forties had a fair amount of prejudice towards minorities, but this did not always result in overtly hostile behavior. Ideally, most PCs should have much more progressive attitudes than everybody else, leading by example.

A problem experienced by many (mostly urban) communities during WW II was a sharp rise in juvenile delinquency. Many fathers had gone to war and many mothers became so involved in War Work that many young people were left pretty-much to their own devices. Most kids turned out okay, but some did what kids do today when they are free of adult supervision – they skipped school, experimented with sex and/or drugs<sup>28</sup>, turned to crime, or just made a nuisance of themselves. Venereal disease and unintended pregnancies shot up considerably, as many girls saw a hero in every uniform, for whom nothing should be denied. A lot of young boys' parents signed papers allowing their son to

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<sup>27</sup> I keep dancing around the fact that, in the Deep South at least, black people were usually referred to as "niggers" or "nigras". People were pretty accustomed to hearing the word in everyday conversation. In most other places, they used the term "negro" which wasn't necessarily meant to be insulting. The most polite term used to refer to blacks was "colored people". It wasn't until the 1960s that the people thus called really began to have a voice in what they would be called.

<sup>28</sup> Rock and Roll would come later.

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enlist when the judge gave them the choice of national service or reform school. A few kids who forged their parents signatures or could pass for twenty-one, enlisted and served, at least until they were caught. The youngest confirmed case was a very tall-for-his-age 12-year-old kid who joined the Marines.

Nearly everyone was demonstrably patriotic. People showed respect for the flag, stood up when the national anthem was played, and took it personally if anyone fell significantly short of this standard. “Unpatriotic” was a vile insult, and no hero would suffer any insult to his patriotism silently. Of course, there are kinds and degrees of patriotism, the best of which seeks good for all (hopefully the PCs will all gravitate to this end of the spectyrum) and the worst of which seeks good only for the select group he belongs to, even (or especially) if it brings harm to some other group.

Clothing styles were very conservative. Unless a man were actually performing manual labor, he nearly always wore slacks, a shirt, and a tie. Blue jeans were work (or outdoor activity) clothes. Pants were high-waisted. Shirts had long tails. Shoes were oxfords, but some wore loafers for casual wear. Deck shoes, tennis shoes, basketball shoes, or just about any other shoe than an oxford was considered out of place except in the context of the activity they were intended for. Women were expected to wear dresses. An unusual woman might wear slacks, but usually only if her social position allowed her to “buck the trend” with impunity (as with Marlene Dietrich) or if she were employed in a defense-related job such as a riveter. It was considered indecent for a woman to wear clothing that exposed her navel<sup>29</sup>.

In the comics, superhero clothing wasn't “spandex”, but more closely-related to the athletic clothing (tee-shirts and sweats), circus tights or long-handled underwear<sup>30</sup> of the day. The reasoning was that such clothing would allow more freedom of movement than a suit, a tie, and stiff leather shoes. If the hero wore a luridly colored costume, possibly emblazoned with distinctive markings, it would allow the hero to easily identified as such.

### Living Expenses

The Forties' dollar had roughly twenty times the purchasing power of today's dollar. Some things were relatively more expensive, usually because the technology was new. Cars are the main exception to this rule, as prices have outpaced inflation considerably over the last 70 years. This is mainly due to the addition of things like electronics, safety and emissions equipment, etc.

Note that during the war, many items would only be available used or on the Black Market. Due to low supply, high demand, and price controls, some items might be available only in theory unless a character has priority over other potential buyers.

After the Timeline, there are two tables. One shows the common price of typical items during the forties. The other is a list of recommended reading (and viewing).

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<sup>29</sup> Don't ask me. I don't know why either.

<sup>30</sup> Perhaps Superman wore trunks over his pants out of a sense of modesty? That sounds near-fetched to me!



## Golden Age Heroes

### TIMELINE FOR A SUPERS CAMPAIGN: THE HISTORY OF EVERYTHING<sup>31</sup>

Disclaimer: This is a work of fiction. Any similarity between the persons described within and any real person, living, dead, undead, or “not certain”, is purely coincidental (except for the purpose of entertainment).

Note: many of the events listed in this section actually happened. Some are real, some are fictionalized versions of real events, and the rest are purely fictional.

This timeline draws on multiple sources, including Robert Dorf's timeline posted at [http://surbrook.devermore.net/herosource/champions/wold\\_newton.html](http://surbrook.devermore.net/herosource/champions/wold_newton.html)

1880 – Dr. John Watson solves his first case as a consulting detective. Fearing that his prospects for employment in conventional society might be threatened if knowledge of his unconventional avocation becomes widespread, he gives the credit for the solution to a fictional acquaintance, one “Sherlock Holmes”. Public demand to consult with this “scientific detective” prompts the Doctor to hire a fading Shakespearean actor, Reginald Kinkaid, to assume the persona of Holmes in the flesh. Watson's fictionalized accounts of their adventures are published in The Strand magazine. (Without a Clue, modified)



*Sherlock Holmes and Dr. Watson discuss a matter of some importance.*

1882 – Doctor Percival Moreau is expelled from post-doctoral



*One of the few photos that show a clear image of Mr. Hyde.*

studies at Oxford when the controversial nature of his work, *Forcing Evolution in Lower Animals*, comes to light. Elements of the British government take note. Realizing the potential uses for Moreau's creations (expendable soldiers, nonhuman slaves, etc.), they offer the Doctor financial and material support to continue his scientific investigations on a secluded tropical island.

1886 – Dr. Henry Jekyll develops his “Hyde” formula in an attempt to rid mankind (and himself) of what he terms “unworthy impulses”. The intent is to separate himself into two separate beings, one containing all of the “good” qualities a man possesses, while the other contains all the “evil” tendencies man is heir to. Some evidence suggests that Jekyll may have been collaborating with Dr. Jean Moreau, or at least using information leaked to him by agents of the British Empire from Doctor Moreau's notes. The results are not what he intended.

<sup>31</sup> Ruthlessly abridged.

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The Hyde formula turns Jekyll into a bestial creature with great strength and cunning but little restraint. Worse, some time after the effects wear off, Jekyll suffers terrible withdrawal pangs. Attempting to consume just enough of the formula to stave off the pangs helps, but lowers Jekyll's resistance to drinking enough to turn into Mister Hyde again.

1886 – Frank Reade Jr. and Nicola Tesla collaborate to develop the Electric Man and the Electric Horse, cable-controlled robots far ahead of their time. Tesla and Reade have a falling out when Tesla insists that the robots can be controlled wirelessly.

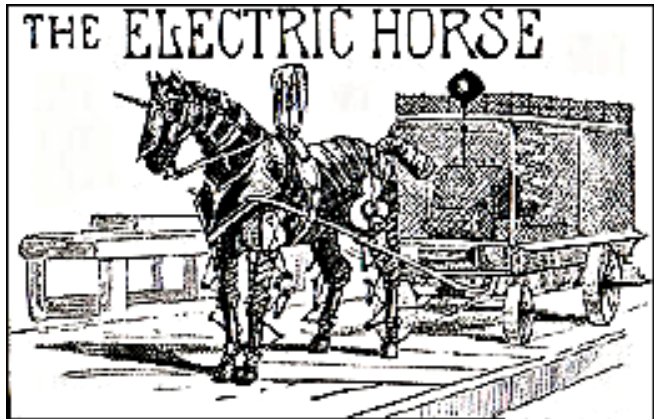
1887 – Edward Prendick returns to civilization, reporting the death of Dr. Moreau at the hands of his own creations. This report, fictionalized and published by H. G. Wells as “The Island of Doctor Moreau” is erroneous. Moreau, whose research was secretly sponsored and monitored by the British Crown, is rescued and removed to a secure, remote location in England to continue his experiments. (*The Island of Doctor Moreau*, modified)



*Tarzan and friend.*

1888 – Tarzan, Lord Greystoke, is born after his parents, John and Alice Clayton, are marooned in the jungles of French Equatorial Africa. When the infant's parents are killed, he is adopted and raised by a tribe of Mangani, the descendants of the semi-intelligent apes released into the wild by Gorilla City.

1889 – The General Electric Company begins marketing a version of



*Advertisement for the Electric Horse.*

Tesla's Electric Horse, intended to be a much cleaner, less expensive alternative to live horses for pulling trolleys, freight wagons, etc., especially in cities. Many young inventors attempting to improve the range of these mechanical draft animals convert them to steam or gasoline power. Others make a sport of racing them after converting them from pulling machines to riding machines by adding a seat or saddle and reworking as many parts as possible to lighten the frame without weakening it. These are jokingly referred to as “Carriage-less Horses”, a play on the slang term for an automobile.



*Boilerplate and Pancho Villa.*

1890 – Professor Archibald Campion invents a robot soldier based on the Electric Man. The soldier, named Boilerplate, is used in action by Teddy Roosevelt's Rough Riders. Campion attempts to integrate Tesla's ideas for wireless remote control systems, but finds them unreliable.

Digory Kirke and Polly Plummer enter the Wood Between the Worlds, a significant dimensional nexus. Jadris of Charn briefly rampages through London, demonstrating more-than-human strength and resistance to harm.(C. S. Lewis, modified).

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*Hugo Danner's space ship. Picture provided by the Savage Institute.*

1891 – A space craft crashes outside of Indian Creek, Colorado. The ship is quickly located by Professor Abednego Danner. Professor Danner and his wife legally adopt the male infant they find wandering near the wreck of that ship. The wreckage itself is given over for study to Danner's cousin, Dr. Clark Savage Sr. The boy is given the name "Hugo". At first, Hugo seems normal, but as time passes, his strength and resistance to harm increase. By (apparently) age two, he is able to lift the anvil in Danner's workshop. Before he

is three, the boy discovers that ordinary flames can't hurt him.

Hugo Danner's amazing abilities develop further as he ages. His strength, speed, durability and resistance to harm far surpass theoretical human limits. Professor Danner is able to instill a strong sense of right and wrong in Hugo, but the boy's increasing powers will cause him to become a social pariah. (Al Schroeder, modified)

1894 – Ling Ling Fat, master inventor and patriot, becomes increasingly influential in Beijing's government and intelligence services. His paternity may trace to Ling Fu Shan, aka Fu Manchú. Fat will prove to be an implacable political rival of Shan.

1897 – Dracula, a true vampire recently immigrated to England, comes to the attention of the British Crown. He is eventually driven from England and reported as killed.

Dr. Hawley Griffin uses fragments of Dr. Henry Jekyll's research to create his Invisibility formula.

1898 – Mina Harker becomes the first woman to command a group of Britain's Extraordinary-class operatives.

The first War of the Worlds concludes with the "Martians" successfully repulsed. Dr. Henry Jekyll (in the form of Mr. Hyde) gives his life in the battle against the invaders. A statue of Edward Hyde is erected in the renamed Hyde Park. The alien vehicles are held for study by the British government.



*The "Martians" invade.*

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Professor Alfred Gibberne builds on the works of Jekyll, Griffin and Moreau to develop his Accelerator formula. This formula alters the subject's perception of time, permitting the subject to move, think and act at incredible speeds. Unfortunately, use of the formula proves almost invariably fatal.

Dorothy Gale makes her first visit to the pocket dimension known as Oz.

Brisco County, Jr. begins adventuring in the American West.

1899 – Using the anti-gravity metal Cavorite as a key component of his spacecraft, Professor Cavor attempts a trip to the Moon. Evidence suggests that the “meteor” that “donated” the metal was in fact part of the wreck of a space craft being studied by Dr. Clark Savage Sr. Accusations of academic dishonesty are quickly silenced by the British intelligence services. A method for producing more Cavorite has yet to be found.

1900 – Nicola Tesla insists that he has received signals from outer space through equipment in his Colorado laboratory. While his claims are derided by mainstream scientists, he attracts the attention and financial support of such luminaries as John Carter of Virginia and Clark Savage Sr.

1906 – An expedition to French Equatorial Africa is mounted with the aim of determining the fate of John and Alice Clayton. Led by Episcopal minister Henry Porter of Long Island, and accompanied by his daughter Jane Porter, the expedition at first determines that all of the Claytons, including their infant son, were killed by savage apes. The appearance of Tarzan, the spitting image of Lord Greystoke, dispels that notion immediately.

Backed by J. P. Morgan and others, Tesla begins work on the world's first advanced wireless power broadcasting tower. The utopian aim of the project is to make electrical power freely available anywhere in the world, eliminating the need for costly poles, wire or batteries. Profit, he tells dubious investors, will lie in the sale of devices which can use this power. Fearing that Thomas Edison may send agents to sabotage this project, Tesla, aided by Clark Savage Senior, moves his laboratory to a secret site in the wilderness of Colorado.



*Lord Greystoke with Jane Porter.*

1908 – Captain Leonard McKenzie discovers the undersea city of Atlantis, where he is captured by the Children of Dagon<sup>32</sup>. He befriends a beautiful mute girl, and together they escape. Eleven months later, the young woman gives birth to a male child. She leaves the child with McKenzie and returns to the sea. McKenzie names the child Namor. (Dennis E. Power, modified)

July: Nicola Tesla finally completes his prototype power broadcast tower at his Colorado laboratory. Testing is to begin at 10:00 am. on July fourth.

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<sup>32</sup> Aquatic humans descended from survivors of the Atlantean cataclysm.



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July 4: At precisely 5:00 PM, Greenwich Mean Time, the entire sky is illuminated by a brilliant flashing celestial display lasting about 5 minutes. Observed around the world, the “Great Aurora of 1908” seems to impart no aftereffects apart from temporarily dazzled eyesight. Scientists explain this event as a very rare , exceptionally bright, worldwide manifestation of the Aurora Borealis.

July 8: A mysterious celestial object streaks down and explodes over Tunguska Siberia, knocking down trees in a fifty-mile radius. The resultant tremors are recorded worldwide, but are misidentified as earthquakes caused by a volcanic eruption. Czar Nicholas dismisses the reports from Siberia as the hysterical ravings of superstitious natives. A scientific investigation team is not known to be dispatched until the mid-1930s.

Later, one or both of the above events are theorized to be the triggering event which leads to



*Tesla's Prototype Power Broadcaster.*



*Queen Hippolyta*

large numbers

of metahumans emerging during the twentieth century.

August 1908: Nicola Tesla quietly dismantles his broadcast tower, selling the materials for scrap. He moves his laboratory back to Long Island, New York and returns as much of J.P. Morgan's investment money as he can. The Great Aurora appeared at the exact moment he threw the switch for his power broadcaster. Tesla is convinced his wireless power transmission experiment caused the Great Aurora. Traumatized, he never speaks of wireless power transmission again; changing the focus of his investigations to other things.

1910 – The Amazons, having had no children in centuries, petition Diana to allow their queen to have a child on behalf of them all. With Diana's blessing, Queen Hippolyta leaves the Amazon home dimension of Thymiscera, seeking a worthy male to father her child. Using her Amazon abilities, she learns of, tracks down and arranges to meet one Hugo Danner. After determining Danner possesses superior physical and mental characteristics, she wastes little time in seducing him.

Once she knows she is pregnant, Queen Hippolyta returns to Thymiscera. The resulting child, a healthy girl, is born in December of 1910. The Queen names the child Dayana, after the goddess. Despite several hundred doting aunts, each vying

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to spoil her more than the last, Dayana grows up to be a well-rounded person with a great deal of empathy and compassion for others. Due largely to her paternal ancestry, she becomes the greatest warrior among the Amazons.

1911 – Fu Manchu re-creates the Oil of Life, an elixir of longevity. This same formula has long been one of the most closely kept secrets of the Godlike, who use it to maintain influence over their agents. Some speculate that Fu is in fact an agent of the Godlike, while others claim that he is a renegade.

A gorilla with human-level intelligence, “Jacko”, partners with human Victor Brand in the service of the British Crown. It is unknown whether Jacko is one of Dr. Moreau's experiments or a Gorilla City emigr  <sup>33</sup>. Moreau will continue his experiments for decades to come. His experiments are still supported by his handlers in MI6, but no longer encouraged.

1912 – Kent Allard enters the American Secret Service.

1914 – The Great War (World War I<sup>34</sup>) begins. Many low-powered metahuman adventurers begin operating during this time, far more than in previous eras. It is the very dawn of the “Age of Superheroes”, though few of them are more than slightly “super” at this early date.

1916 – Nicola Tesla takes on teen prodigy Hans Zarkov as a lab assistant.

Hugo Danner volunteers for military service in the French Foreign Legion in WWI. In the Army he experiences his first true friendships. His strength, speed, and near invulnerability (nothing less than a bursting shell can penetrate his skin) make him invaluable to the war effort. After one of the few serious injuries he sustains, Hugo learns of his amazing regenerative abilities and also learns that his unique blood makes him a universal donor. By the end of the war, scores of allied soldiers have received blood transfusions from Hugo. In decades to come, many of the children of these soldiers will manifest metahuman abilities. (Al Schroeder, modified)



*17-year-old Hans Zarkov shows off a model of the spaceship he plans to build some day.*

1917 – Philip Strange, teen prodigy, mentalist and stage magician, enters military service. Rising to the rank of Captain, Strange becomes known as the Phantom Ace of G-2; to the Germans, he becomes known as the Brain Devil.

1918 – Professor Champion receives permission to use an improved version of his cable-controlled robot soldier Boilerplate on the front lines in WWI. Boilerplate is at first successful, but its operator is killed and Boilerplate is captured by the Germans.

Clark “Doc” Savage Jr., still a young man, meets the future members of his Fabulous Five while being held in the German prison camp known as Loki.

1919 – Lord Greystoke (aka Tarzan) mounts an expedition to reach the North Pole. The expedition discovers an entrance to “Pellucidar”, a “Hollow Earth” dimension.

<sup>33</sup> While some humans are in contact with Gorilla City, Opar, and Wakanda, at this time these civilizations, like Thymiscera, are considered by most to be fairy tales and legends; Stories told by explorers to impress the ignorant.

<sup>34</sup> However, it won't be called that until World War II.



## Golden Age Heroes

1920 – Hugo Danner continues to try to do good works with his powers, but is not encouraged by the results. While working in a bank, he rescues a man trapped in the vault only to be fired and threatened with arrest unless he divulges the secret of how he opened the safe so quickly. He attempts to clean up corrupt politicians and influence peddlers in Washington and fails completely.

1922 – Kent Allard receives training from the monks of Shambala.

1923 – Zatara Mandrake is trained in magic in a concealed monastery in Tibet. Some scholars suggest that this monastery was maintained by monks of Shambala in service of the Godlike.

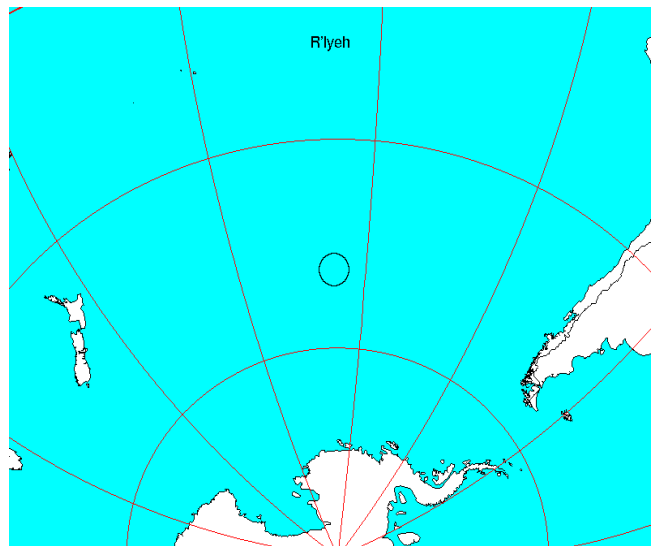
1924 – Namor McKenzie undergoes a partial transformation into a Child of Dagon, maintaining an outwardly human appearance but gaining great physical strength and the ability to survive indefinitely in the depths of the sea. The wings on his ankles, however, are theorized to be an unrelated characteristic inherited from a different Uplifted ancestor. (Dennis E. Power, modified)

Aviators Day and Stewart attempt an unrefueled East-West Atlantic crossing. Their plane is discovered intact in Nova Scotia. A pair of footprints in the snow lead from the plane and end abruptly 40 yards away. The pilots are never found.

Professor Phineas T. Horton's experiments on the infant son of his lab assistant, Archibald Storm, successfully awake in the child (Thomas Storm) rudimentary pyrokinetic and psychokinetic abilities. This causes a break between Archibald and Phineas. Archibald leaves Phineas' service.

1925 – R'lyeh rises from the sea.

News item: *Edale, Derbyshire, England*. A large black creature of unknown origin causes havoc here when it kills dozens of sheep. Though rarely seen, the creature is said to have a howl like a fog horn. Locals blame a werewolf.



*Approximate location of R'lyeh*



*Dr. Clark Savage Jr. on expedition in the Sahara.*

Clark Savage Jr. leads an Arctic expedition that uncovers an alien shape-shifter: a thing from another world. The expedition also finds the underground Krell nature preserve the creature escaped from. It contains a menagerie of fantastic creatures, some of which appear to be living, breathing mythological animals. Others seem to be survivors of a forgotten age. The animals are cared for by incredibly ancient, technologically-advanced but still-functioning automated equipment. Savage brings a still-living tissue sample gathered from the creature's remains back to New York for study. A friend of his publishes a short story based upon what he's told of the adventure. Savage and his men keep knowledge of the base secret. They use it as a base of operations and secret laboratory. They study the creatures and machines in an effort to decipher its wonders for the benefit of mankind. (John W. Campbell, modified)

## Golden Age Heroes

1926 – Hugo Danner, despondent over his inability to find a place in “normal” society, fakes his own death. He begins a period of aimless wandering that will eventually bring him into contact with Kent Allard, Clark Savage Jr., and others. (Al Schroeder, modified)

1928 – Namor finds his way to Innsmouth, Mass. The small population of hybrids like himself both fascinates and repel him. He attempts to explore the undersea city of Y'han'thlei, but is refused entrance. Namor takes up residence in Innsmouth.

William Batson is born. His bloodline, descended from Lemuel Gulliver, has been carefully cultivated by the Godlike. Batson's father received a blood transfusion from Hugo Danner in 1917.

Professor Phineas T. Horton abducts New York Police Officer James Hammond and subjects him to both his “Firestarter Process” and a form of drug assisted brainwashing. Hammond manifests impressive pyrokinetic and psychokinetic abilities, suffers partial memory loss, and accepts Horton's claim that Hammond is an “android”. Hammond refuses to accept Horton's authority however, and flees. Horton apparently dies in the resulting blaze. His notes survive partially intact.

1929 – Returning to America, Kent Allard assumes multiple cover identities, establishes a network of agents, and begins his war on crime as “The Shadow”.

Peter Kurten, the infamous “Vampire of Dusseldorf,” a serial killer and child molester, terrorizes the city. Police efforts to capture him disrupt Dusseldorf's criminal element. The gangs organize to capture and try Kurten before a “criminal court”. They then send the body to Dusseldorf Police Headquarters decapitated, with a wooden stake driven through its heart.

Oct. 24, 1929 – The great stock market crash; Stock values plummet. The Great Depression begins.

1930 – Namor witnesses the destruction of the undersea city of Y'han'thlei off the coast of Innsmouth, Mass., when barrels of chemical weapons banned by treaty are secretly dumped in the ocean and break open. Enraged and maddened by what he has seen, he attacks the city of New York. Namor discovers that his strength and telepathic abilities far exceed those of any Deep One, despite his largely human physical appearance. Namor's rampage ends when he is captured by Doc Savage. Namor becomes one of the first patients in Doc's “Crime College”, a sanitarium specializing in curing men of criminal behavior.

1931 – Doc Savage begins the main part of his crime-fighting career. Using technology and data gathered from his many enemies, the facilities in the abandoned Arctic Krell base, the remains of the space craft wreckage that had been given into the hands of his father, and his own genius, Doc lays the foundations for the modern Science Hero. He will eventually act as friend and mentor to Hugo Danner.

The “Star Spangled Banner” is officially declared the US national anthem.

1932 – Richard Wentworth, wartime comrade of Hugo Danner, begins his career as the Spider, assisted by Nita May Van Sloan. Richard manifests near superhuman strength, resilience, and regenerative abilities, fueled by his indomitable will!



*A fictionalized account of Namor's attack on New York.*

## Golden Age Heroes

1933 – Skull Island, one of several active breeding grounds for the bio-weapons of the Krell, is explored by film producer Carl Denham. Denham captures the creature known to the natives of the island as “Kong”.



*"Popeye" and an admirer.*

Kong, a bio-weapon of the Krell in the form of a gigantic primate, is brought to New York by Carl Denham's film company. It breaks free and goes on a desperate search for something like its home environment. During its “rampage”, it causes considerable property damage and many serious injuries. Kong is finally captured by an incredibly strong spinach-eating sailor with bulging forearms and one squinky eye. He identifies himself as “Pop Aye, a sailor”. The press quickly mangles this statement into *Popeye, the Sailor*.

The Rogue Planet crisis: A moon-sized object (actually a dimension ship) moves through Earth's solar system.

Astronomers fear that this object may collide with the Earth. Doctor Hans Zarkov (one time lab assistant to Nicola Tesla), Dale Arden and Raymond “Flash” Gordon use an experimental spaceship of Zarkov's design to fly out to the object. Six days later, the object vanishes. Zarkov, Arden and Gordon are never seen again.

Nicola Tesla draws up the first detailed plans for his “Death Ray” and seeks financial support to develop it from the military. The support is not forthcoming. Tesla takes on the brilliant young mathematician Alexi Luthor as a lab assistant. Luthor has a knack for business and helps Tesla find the funding he so desperately needs.

Dr. Victor Fronkensteen, direct descendant of Herr Doktor Baron Johann Von Frankenstein, inherits his ancestor's title, castle, laboratory and notes. Victor is ashamed of his family history, but when he discovers his multiple-great grandfather's notes, he is intrigued. He plots to duplicate the experiment and thus, vindicate his antecedent. He succeeds, creating first Johann, then Herman. Johann is developmentally challenged but Herman, despite his appearance, is fully functional. Johann remains with Dr. Frankenstein<sup>35</sup> in Austria, while Herman emigrates to England where he is adopted by an eccentric family, the Munsters.

Agents of the Godlike, Doctor Occult and Rose Psychic begin operating openly, primarily on the American East Coast. They cultivate and train numerous American mystics.

“Mystery-men” begin operating throughout the U.S. and abroad. They are called mystery-men because they adventure under evocative noms-de-guerre, usually in some sort of disguise. Many of these are heroic (or at least well-intentioned) while others have malign intent, using their “real” identity as an alibi of sorts. These are mostly low-powered metahumans or normal but highly-skilled humans. Their exploits (both real and fictional) are luridly documented in inexpensive “pulp magazines” and prove quite popular.

1934 – Hugo Danner studies with the mystery man sometimes known as Kent Allard. He later becomes a student of Clark Savage Jr. (Al Schroeder, modified)

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<sup>35</sup> Once he'd vindicated his ancestor, Victor Fronkensteen changed his name.

## Golden Age Heroes

The Green Hornet, making use of an arsenal of advanced weapons and devices, begins a crime spree. His crimes seem to target criminal enterprises exclusively. He is assisted by a number of highly skilled Chinese martial artists.

1937 – Chow Sing Cho, a powerful pan-psionic, appears in Shanghai. Many of mainland China's active psychics in later years claim descent from Chow.

Writer Howard Phillips Lovecraft, historian of the Cthulhu mythos, disappears. Stunned witnesses report his abduction by gibbering, un-namable, vicious, unspeakable horrors.



*The Hindenberg's disastrous final voyage.*

The dirigible *Hindenberg* explodes on arrival at Lakehurst, New Jersey. Thanks to the timely appearance and assistance of several mystery-men, 83 people are safely rescued from the flaming wreckage.

Zatara Mandrake, now a powerful mystic, begins his adventuring career. He is accompanied by Lothar of Opar<sup>36</sup> and Narda Romanov.

Chen Zhen battles General Fujita in Shanghai, then goes on to lead local resistance against the Japanese.

Kitty Carroll, grand daughter of Hawley Griffin, is exposed to Griffin's Invisibility formula. Carroll develops the ability to become Invisible for brief periods of time when exposed to nicotine or alcohol.

For the next decade, she adventures under a variety

of different noms-de-guerre. In 1941 she marries Michael Storm. (Dennis E. Power, modified)

Bruce Wayne, protégé of Kent Allard, becomes the vigilante and some-time government agent known as The Batman. He soon takes on an apprentice and assistant, Richard Grayson. His base of operations is Gotham City, a borough of New York City located on the Southeastern edge of the city. Gotham is NYC in microcosm. It is home to some of the the richest and poorest citizens of New York, and suffers a high crime rate.

1938 – Birth of Benjamin Grimm to Herman and Jada Grimm. Jada is the granddaughter of Dr. Henry Jekyll. (Dennis E. Power, modified)

Lois Lane is hired to write “sob sister” stories for the Daily Star newspaper in Columbus Ohio. She is eager to become a “real” reporter but since she's a woman she finds her efforts stymied by the “Old Boy's Club” mentality of the the bullpen.

Nicola Tesla demonstrates his “Harmonic Shield Generator”. The apparatus, which fills a small room, generates a field of energy that successfully deflects bullets fired from a gun. Reporters are impressed, but the device overheats during the demonstration, catches fire and destroys Tesla's Long Island laboratory. Tesla fails to find financial backing for his invention when rumors spread that the device is a fake. With no money coming in, Tesla is unable to rebuild his laboratory. Most of his remaining work is theoretical in nature as his ability to test his theories is limited. His assistant, Lex Luthor, asks to be allowed to continue as Tesla's assistant without pay. Luthor finds work as an executive at a small toy-making company, but continues to assist Tesla until the Scientist's death.

<sup>36</sup> Lothar is an Oparian Warrior Ape expatriate. Narda Romanov was the first outsider he befriended.



## Golden Age Heroes

Aviator/adventurer Tex Jones, accompanied by the Hunter<sup>37</sup>, circumnavigates the Earth in his ducted-fan-powered amphibious flying boat in just under seventy hours, including stops for fuel. The flight, only weeks after Howard Hughes sets a record flying the same route, shatters Hughes' record by more than ten hours. During the trip, an overly-enthusiastic admirer in the Italian Air Force shows Tex partial plans for a new kind of motor, a “thermojet” (actually, a primitive Jet Engine). When he returns home Tex spends a great deal of time developing a similar, but much improved engine.

When Hugo Danner chooses to re-join society, he takes his new name from the first names of his mentors, Clark Savage Jr., and Kent Allard. Guided by Allard's suggestions, he establishes a meek, mild-mannered cover identity, while adventuring in a colorful costume. His adventuring nom-de-guerre of Superman, is inspired by Nietzsche's *Übermann*. “Superman”, at first thought to be an urban legend, gains considerable notoriety when it becomes clear that he really exists. (Al Schroeder, modified)

“Clark Kent” finds work at Columbus Ohio's premier newspaper, the Daily Star, when he turns in an exclusive story of how a woman convicted of murder was framed. Due to the intervention of Superman, she is pardoned by the



*Superman*



*Lois and Clark*

governor only seconds before her sentence is to be carried out, and the real murderer is turned over to the police.

Clark Kent meets Lois Lane. After an incident with gangsters in a nightclub, Lois concludes that if Clark isn't “light in the loafers”, she'll eat her hat. Later that evening, she is rescued from the same gangsters by Superman, and is swept off her feet by this masculine, mighty man.

Despite Lois' initial antipathy for Clark, she is teamed with him as he is the only male reporter to express a willingness to work with a “girl reporter”. Despite pranking Clark mercilessly and constantly attempting to ditch him so she can get an exclusive story or a scoop, she begins to develop a protective attitude towards “Sweet, Sensitive Clark”. It comes as a completely unexpected surprise then, when she finally discovers that prissy Clark is really that paragon of rugged masculinity,

<sup>37</sup> A Big Game Hunter and adventurer.

## Golden Age Heroes

Superman. Once she discovers Superman's secret identity, she agrees to help keep his secret. Of course, now that Lois knows Clark for what he *really* is, Clark begins to pursue a relationship with her.

Homeless Orphan, eight-year-old William "Billy" Batson is contacted by the Wizard Shazam (actually Doctor Occult aided by Rose Psychic), and taken on a series of vision quests. Billy develops the ability to channel the power of multiple spiritual entities, and to assume a fully adult metahuman form for brief periods of time. He begins a career as the costumed adventurer Captain Marvel.

The Rocketeer begins adventuring in Southern California.

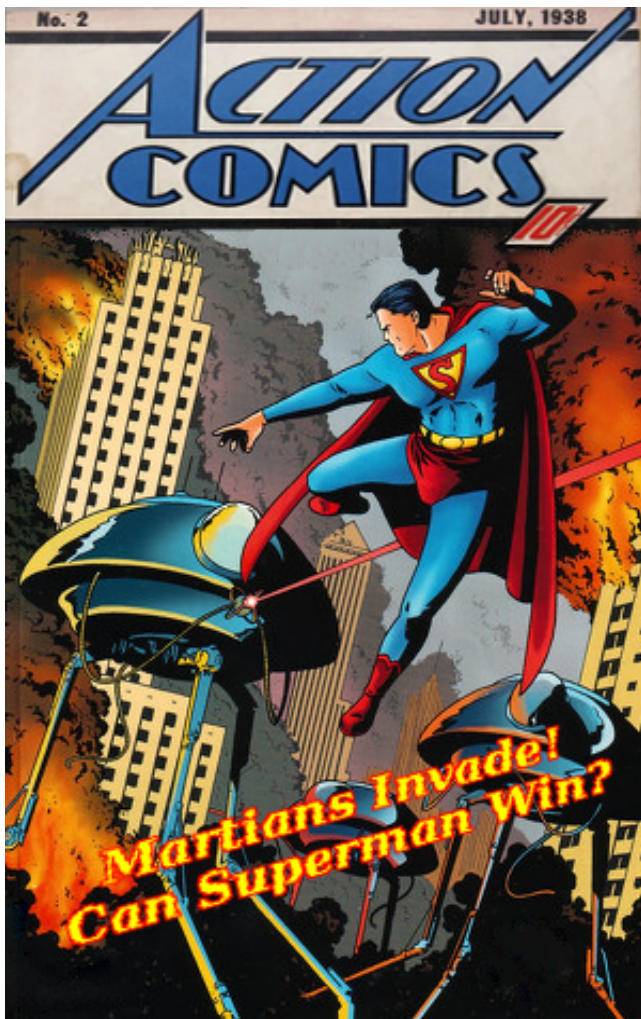
Patrick "Eel" O'Brien, a petty thief, breaks into a warehouse owned by Clark Savage Jr. While investigating the warehouse, O'Brien discovers a holding tank containing a protoplasmic entity. The entity touches O'Brien, partially merging its substance with his own. Driven nearly mad with terror and

excruciating pain, O'Brien passes out. Savage's assistants rescue him. O'Brien learns that his encounter with the otherworldly "Thing" has left him nearly invulnerable and with the ability to stretch and distort any part of his body at will. Savage spends several months curing O'Brien of his criminal tendencies and exploring O'Brien's strange new condition. (Matthew Baugh, modified)

The Second War of the Worlds: Several spacecraft land at Grover's Mill, New Jersey, during a broadcast of the Mercury Theater of the Air's version of H.G. Wells' Account of the First War of the Worlds. This modern version of the tale, intended as a Halloween treat for the listeners, coincidentally relocates the attack from London to Grover's Mill, new Jersey. The resulting confusion delays an official response for several hours. Several heroes (Superman, Doc Savage, Batman, and Captain Marvel) arrive to deal with the threat more than an hour before the New Jersey National Guard sends someone to investigate. The heroes quickly defeat the aliens, earning national recognition.

1939 – Herman Munster emigrates to the U.S. with his wife Lily and her father, a gentleman who claims to be Dracula.<sup>38</sup>

The New York World's Fair Opens with the theme "the World of Tomorrow". Attendance tops 500,000. 22 nations participate in showing off their technological prowess. Notable by its absence is Nazi Germany. The first large-scale demonstration



*Despite the publicity, Superman wasn't the only costumed hero to respond to this emergency.*

<sup>38</sup> If he *is* Dracula, he has mellowed considerably since he was driven from England in 1897. More probably, he is a Mad Scientist who has assumed the identity since Dracula's disappearance. Though he claims to be a vampire, he is unharmed by sunlight, holy objects, running water, etc., and does not seem to be dependent on blood for sustenance.



## Golden Age Heroes

of electronic television takes place at the exposition.

Several American meta-humans and mystery men make their public debuts at the event, among whom are: Superman (portrayed by an actor hired by the Daily Planet, as the real Superman refused to be exploited), Robotman, The Jersey Devil, Hawaiian Joe Sampson, the Mighty Atom, Airwave, Brainwave, The Star-Spangled Kid and Stripesy, the Owl, the Flying Pug, and many others with varying degrees of ability (and, of course, a few with no ability whatsoever but a desire to appear in public wearing an outlandish costume).



*The Nazi Eisenmann prototype.*

Some of the actors portraying superheroes are injured when fair-goers demand a demonstration of their abilities. The fraudulent Superman is rescued by the real Superman from “tough guys” trying to prove they’re as tough as Superman.. Superman obliges them by allowing each of them just one punch at his jaw. After the first two break their hands on his chin, their buddies decline the offer. Superman escorts the tough guys to a first aid station and hints that if they aren’t better-behaved, they might be seeing him in a “professional” capacity. In other cases, after easily thrashing the actor in a costume of whatever superhero it was, many are convinced that mystery men of any sort are either insane fools or con artists.

Working for the Nazis, Dr. Van Thorp uses the WWI era robot called Boilerplate as a starting point to invent a fully articulated suit of self propelled powered armor for use by the German military. British Agent Hugh Hazard steals the prototype and kills Van Thorpe. Hazard uses the armor, code named Eisenmann (Iron Man), to perform acts of sabotage behind German lines.

September: Germany invades Poland. England and France declare war on Germany. The Soviet Union occupies Eastern Poland. Later, the Soviet action is defended as “halting the advance of Nazi Germany”, but at the time it was clear that

this was part of a joint Soviet/Nazi plan to get back territory lost at the end of WW I.

Tex Jones designs, builds and flies the XP-50 in the deserts of Arizona. It’s, an early jet capable of 500 MPH at over 35,000 feet, Its engine is quite advanced, but Tex quickly determines that the conventional airframe is a limiting factor. A Nazi spy attempts to steal the plane, but is thwarted by Superman.

New York Police Detective James Hammond, aka “the Human Torch”, encounters teen-aged orphan Thomas Storm, aka “Toro”. The two feel an immediate affinity for one-another due in part to their highly similar pyrokinetic abilities, and form a lasting partnership.

## Golden Age Heroes

Captain Philip Strange, aka “the Brain Devil”, disappears while on a covert mission in Europe. He is survived by his son, Stephen Strange.

Alan Scott, an engineer, discovers an alien artifact. It resembles a green metallic lantern. Alan feels compelled to wear a ring made by the lamp. The ring gives its user considerable powers of psychokinesis and ectoplasmic projection. Alan creates the costumed identity of the Green Lantern, and begins his career as an adventurer.

After nearly a decade in Doc’s Crime College, Namor comes to accept his condition and to regret the harm caused during his time of madness. His power has only increased during his captivity.

William Batson, in need of money and assisted by Bruce Wayne, follows the example of Kent Allard and starts relating highly fictionalized tales of his adventures over the radio. He also sells stories of his adventures to several publishers. His invention of an extended heroic family helps to further conceal the grains of truth in his satirical monologues. (Dr. Peter M. Coogan, modified)

Millionaire businessman Oliver Queen is inducted into the secret organization maintained by “Britt Reid”, AKA the Green Hornet. The organization's ostensible mission is to use an ostensibly “criminal” organization to gather intelligence on mobsters, and either feeding this information to the police or using it to otherwise neutralize gang activity. Queen takes superbly to the training offered by Reid, but quickly becomes disillusioned with Reid’s methods and dubious about his goals.

American Mystery Men begin discovering German and Italian agents working to covertly influence America to remain neutral or favor the Axis powers.

Patrick O'Brien, aka Plastic Man, engages in a brief affair with Catherine Reid. Reid breaks off the affair and returns to her fiancé, Robert Richards. Catherine and Robert marry. Eight months later they have their first child, Reed Richards. (Dennis Power , modified)

1940 – Peter, Susan, Edmund, and Lucy Pevensie engage in their first inter-dimensional adventure.

The first German Air Raid on London occurs. Several British supers debut in defense of their capitol. A new hero, British Lion, distinguishes himself by single-handedly evacuating a burning Salvation Army mission, suffering terrible burns in the process.

America's smug refusal to take sides in what is seen as a European scramble for other people's territory begins to waver in light of the brutality of the Axis forces and the bravery displayed by the English in the face of terrible odds.

The British choose to share their most advanced technology with the U.S. Information on the Hyde, Griffin, and Gibberne formulas is passed on to US Military Intelligence, in addition to drawings and samples of jet engines, radar, and other devices. In gratitude, the U.S. ships several advanced aircraft to England, including examples of the YP-50 and the XP-53 Firebird.

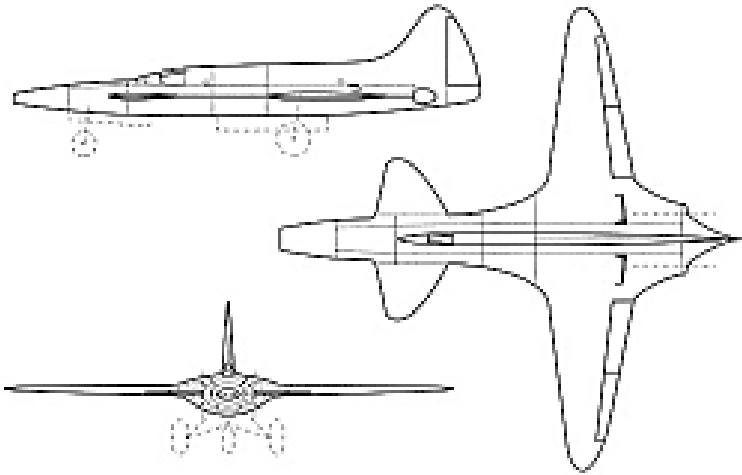


*Captain Marvel.*



*Plastic Man*

## Golden Age Heroes



*Lockheed XP-53 Firebird.*

Tests are conducted using Gibberne's Accelerator formula at Yale University. Jay Garrick, college student, volunteers. He not only survives, but is granted permanent superhuman speed. Garrick's father received a blood transfusion from Hugo Danner in 1917, which may explain Garrick's survival. Other test subjects are not so lucky. Testing of the Accelerator is suspended once it becomes clear that Garrick's survival was a fluke. (Dennis Power, modified)

The FBI begins covert investigation of the German-American Bund and other organizations suspected as being safe

havens for fifth-columnists. Eventually the German-American Bund is revealed as a Nazi organization intended to subvert the American government and institute a puppet government controlled by Nazi Germany. Over the coming year, Axis spies are revealed in the Bund and many similar organizations.

August 1940 marks the first appearance of the so-called Solomon Grundy, aka "It", aka "the Heap": Grundy's super-human strength and durability, regenerative abilities, and marked preference for remaining in or near swamplands cause speculation that he is somehow a blend of plant and human.

1941 – Professor Reinstein, a colleague of Dr. Clark Savage Jr., develops a serum from blood samples taken from Hugo Danner. He lists this critical component as "Chemical X" in his notes. A dose of this serum is used to transform Steve Rogers, a sickly 4-F volunteer, into a near-perfect physical specimen, with strength, vigor and reflexes at the furthest limits of human potential. Almost immediately, Professor Reinstein is killed by spies attempting to steal the formula. The newly-invigorated Steve Rogers handily captures the spies. Since the composition of "Chemical X" is absent from the late Professor's notes, many years are spent trying to determine just what this ingredient was, how it made the serum work, and what could possibly be used as a substitute.



*Captain America.*

Disappointed that brigades of super-soldiers are not forthcoming, the Army uses Steve Rogers, in the costumed persona of Captain America, as a publicity tool to promote goodwill for the Army. Rogers is not pleased to be used as a "circus act". When he indulges in unsanctioned counterspy activities, his



## Golden Age Heroes

superiors' first reaction is to issue Steve a reprimand. Higher-ups note the effectiveness of his efforts and quietly but firmly tell Steve's superiors to rescind the reprimand and issue a commendation instead. Rogers is encouraged to continue his spy-smashing operations. Rogers' handlers are "promoted" to other duties and more supportive people are put in charge.

Oliver Queen is shocked to discover Britt Reid is involved in human trafficking. Queen breaks with Reid's organization, taking with him 14-year-old Roy Harper. Queen designs the costumed identity of Green Arrow, and begins to wage war on Chicago's underworld.



*Wonder Woman/Princess Dayana*

Princess Dayana discovers a crashed airplane and pilot on the shores of Paradise Island (the main island in Thymiscera). Never having seen a man before, she doesn't know that's what this mesmerizingly attractive creature is. Major Steve Trevor doesn't resemble in the least the monstrous image conjured by her Amazon sisters' tales of men. She is utterly smitten by the injured and delirious Trevor. She intervenes when Queen Hippolyta orders him killed, and argues that it may at last be time to reestablish contact with "Man's World".

Queen Hippolyta relents and agrees to allow Trevor to be healed and returned to his world, but he must not be allowed to stay on Paradise Island during his treatment. Trevor is kept on one of the lesser islands until he is well enough to be safely transported back to Man's World. Dayana is forbidden to have further contact with Trevor, but defies the Queen to visit the injured pilot anyway.

Queen Hippolyta decrees a contest of skill and prowess to select Thymiscera's first Ambassador to Man's World in its history. Princess Dayana manages to win the contest despite her mother's attempts to thwart her participation. She transports Major Trevor to a Washington hospital.

"Diana Prince" (Princess Dayana) joins the Army, securing a position in Army Intelligence as a WAAC secretary to Major

Trevor. Shortly thereafter "Wonder Woman" begins adventuring around Washington, D.C. Eventually Steve catches on to his secretary's double identity and helps cover for her absences.

Lois Lane and Clark Kent are hired as reporters for Metropolis<sup>39</sup> premier newspaper: the Daily Planet.

Throughout the spring and summer of 1941, Henry Limpet attempts to enlist in the U.S. Navy, but is classified 4-F due to his small stature and frail physique. No regimen of diet and exercise seems capable of bulking Henry up. That September he travels to Coney Island with his wife, Bessie and family friend George Stickel, Machinists Mate Third Class, USN. Henry falls off a pier and is apparently drowned. Police suspect Limpet's drowning was a suicide brought on by despondency over his inability to measure up with the Navy. (*The Incredible Mr. Limpet*, modified)

<sup>39</sup> Metropolis is a borough of New York located on the Northeastern edge of New York City. It is as upscale and prosperous as Manhattan.

## Golden Age Heroes

Patrick O'Brien, aka Plastic Man, joins the Army on the advice of Clark Savage Jr.

Popeye the Sailor Joins the Merchant Marine.

Early November: Heightened tensions between the US and Japan over Japan's continued aggression in the far east lead to an attack warning being issued to all bases in the pacific. The Most likely threat is thought to be from sabotage, so aircraft are lined up in neat rows on the tarmac to facilitate guarding them against enemy agents.

Nov. 15: Soviet troops, aided by soviet Superheroes, halt the Germans short of Moscow.

Nov. 18: The British begin a counteroffensive in Libya.

Dec 6: The War Department determines that the Japanese threat has passed. All units in the Pacific are ordered to stand down from alert status.

Dec. 7: Japan stages a successful surprise attack on the US Naval base at Pearl Harbor, Hawaii. 423 aircraft launched from six carriers attack in two waves, sinking 5 US battleships, 2 cruisers, 1 destroyer, several smaller craft, and severely damage 3 other battleships. Nearly all US aircraft in Hawaii are destroyed on the ground.



*Propaganda poster: Captain America fights "Hitler".*

Only a handful of US aircraft manage to get airborne to repel the attack. At least one is shot down by US anti-aircraft fire.

A third wave of bombers and a marine amphibious assault group is turned back by the timely arrival of American superheroes.

Unfortunately for Japan, the Declaration of War, which was to have been placed in American hands minutes before the attack, took longer than anticipated to decode. It was, in fact, delivered more than an hour later than intended. Americans are incensed that Japan attacked without declaring war first, and are filled with a resolve that might have been less potent had the declaration been delivered on schedule.

1942 – A seemingly disembodied voice picked up by its underwater microphones helps a Navy destroyer direct depth charges onto a submerged German submarine off the coast of New Jersey. The Voice, identifying itself as Henry Limpet, Aids the navy for the rest of the war. It, eventually negotiates a contract where he (regardless of what he actually is) is commissioned into the U.S. Navy, with the pay going to his widow. A friend of the apparently-not-as-late-as-believed Henry Limpet, George Stickel, is assigned as liaison to the underwater voice. Unbelievably, Henry Limpet didn't drown, but somehow transformed into an intelligent fish-like creature.

## Golden Age Heroes

Air raid sirens sound throughout Los Angeles County on the night of 24–25 February 1942. A total blackout is ordered and thousands of air raid wardens are summoned to their positions. At 3:16 am. the 37th Coast Artillery Brigade begins firing 12.8-pound anti-aircraft shells into the air at reported aircraft; over 1,400 shells would eventually be fired. Pilots of the 4th Interceptor Command are alerted but their aircraft remain grounded. The artillery fire continued sporadically until 4:14 am. The "all clear" was sounded and the blackout order lifted at 7:21 am.



*1942: Searchlights and unidentified aircraft over Los Angeles.*

In addition to several buildings damaged by friendly fire, three civilians are killed by the anti-aircraft

fire<sup>40</sup>, and another three die of heart attacks attributed to the stress of the hour-long bombardment. The incident is front-page news along the U.S. Pacific coast, and earns some mass media coverage throughout the nation. An official press conference attributes the incident to “war nerves”, but rumors circulate that *something* was seen in the skies over Los Angeles that morning. If it wasn't the Japanese, then who?<sup>41</sup>

Hugh Hazard dies in action. The Germans recapture the damaged Iron Man armor. The armor is partially repaired and sent to Japan as part of a technology exchange. The Japanese Army, considering the armor to be a worthless novelty, sends it to Korea as part of a load of scrap.

Alan Scott (aka the Green Lantern) and Jay Garrick (aka the Flash) join the Army. Namor McKenzie (aka the Submariner) joins the Navy on the advice of Clark Savage Jr.

Clark Kent (aka Superman) attempts to join the Army, but is classified 4-F when he accidentally reads the eye chart in the next room with his newly-emerging X-Ray vision.

Superman is contacted by General Blankenship, a WWI comrade of Hugo Danner and long time friend of Clark Savage Jr. Blankenship has been asked by Roosevelt to oversee the formation of the “Justice Society of America” (JSA), perhaps the first government-sponsored supergroup. Blankenship asks Superman to serve his country. Superman is delighted to be given this opportunity and agrees. Blankenship selects Military Intelligence officer Steve Trevor to coordinate the activities of American Mystery Men during the war. Trevor quickly builds his plans around the core of Superman, Wonder Woman, and Batman. Lois Lane is asked to serve as publicist and biographer to the group. Later additions include (at one time or another) Captain America, Captain Marvel, Firebrand, the Flash, Green Lantern, Hellcat, Hourman, the Human Torch, the Invisible Woman, Joe Gorilla, Johnny

<sup>40</sup> Unfortunately, Shells that go up come down as shrapnel, a fact that many people overlook.

<sup>41</sup> True story. Look up “1942 Los Angeles Air Raid”.



## Golden Age Heroes



*Lois Lane: Biographer of the JSA.*

Thunder, Liberty Belle, the Mighty Atom, Plastic Man, the Submariner, Wildcat, the Wolfman and others.

Nicola Tesla dies. His papers and equipment fall into the hands of his one-time assistant, Lex Luthor. Luthor immediately patents a number of revolutionary devices and processes essential to the war effort, and becomes a millionaire in the process. He buys out the toy company he worked for ( manufacturing machine gun parts in support of the war effort) and parlays it into an advanced weapons manufacturing and development empire

1943 – Richard Wentworth, aka the Spider, vanishes while conducting an investigation. Distraught, pregnant Nita May Van Sloan turns for comfort to her long time suitor Benjamin Parker. Parker and Sloan wed. Fearing scandal, Nita May Van Sloan becomes known simply as May Parker. She regales her “nephew” Peter with tales of the Spider’s exploits. (Dennis Power, modified)

Zatanna Mandrake is born to Zatara and Narda Mandrake. Lothar of Opar is named the child’s godfather.

1944 – Namor discovers an amnesiac Deep One/Human Hybrid caught in an early stage of her transformation. With the help of Clark Savage Jr., he helps her back from the brink of madness. She becomes romantically involved with Namor, and takes the name Namora.

Steve Trevor's plane disappears over the Atlantic. No wreckage is found. Wonder Woman turns for comfort to Captain America.

The Vril Society in Nazi Germany receives technical aid from an Alien claiming to be the creator of the Aryan race, “Loki”. The Nazis quickly develop spacecraft based on advanced principles, but the effort is too little and too late. They build most of these spacecraft at a secret base in New Swabia, the territory of Antarctica claimed by Nazi Germany.

1945 – The love affair between Steve Rogers and Diana Prince ends when Rogers proposes marriage. Diana isn't over Steve Trevor and declines the offer. The pair part on amicable terms. By mutual request, Captain America is sent to Europe to help capture Nazi war criminals while Wonder Woman is



*Hitler greets "Loki".*

## Golden Age Heroes

stationed in Washington. In August, Diana realizes that she is pregnant and returns to give birth in Thymiscera, since unwed motherhood is rather frowned upon in American culture and carries a stigma.

Namor and Namora have their first child, a boy. Namora names the child Garth.

America prepares to drop three Atomic Bombs on Japan. One bomb, “Uncle Joe”, is prematurely detonated during a test flight to allow the bombardier to practice inserting the radioactive core of the bomb to arm it in flight. The weapon is so new that no-one wanted to risk an accidental detonation when the plane is still at the airfield. Analysis of radio traffic recorded by ground stations reveal that a Japanese spy must have boarded the plane unseen, attempted to kill the crew with poison gas, and steal the plane (and bomb). The crew became aware of their stowaway just as they finished arming the bomb. The bomb was detonated shortly after the poison gas began incapacitating crew members, to prevent it from falling into enemy hands.

The explosion activates long-dormant Krell technology on an island beneath the blast, Sogel Island. The Krell factory's artificially-intelligent computer is damaged by the blast wave and radiation. Unable to contact its Krell masters for instructions, it assumes the detonation is an attack by the Ancients. It begins a breeding cycle of dai kaiju<sup>42</sup> bio-weapons.

Steve Rogers is declared MIA after vanishing during a mission near the Arctic Circle.

The U.S.' atomic attacks on Hiroshima and Nagasaki activate automated Ancient defense systems beneath Mount Fuji and elsewhere in the Japanese Isles. Automatic subterranean factories begin constructing bio-weapons. After millions of years of dormancy, some of the programming has become jumbled, and when they reach maturity and are released, they have no specific mission except to destroy.



*SS diehards load the last saucer for the moon.*

Nazi SS holdouts enact Operation Werewolf. They help Nazi war criminals establish cover identities and escape to South America, save for the few who are in on the Vril project. The Vril flying saucers, which have been completed in much fewer numbers than hoped, are used to ferry men and supplies to the far side of the moon. The SS intends to establish a base there, from which to build strength and ultimately stage an attack on Earth to establish the Fourth Reich. Loki has promised to provide material and technical support, including a means to “purify” non-Aryan genetics and technology which will aid their survival.

Professor Trevor Bruttonholm discovers the entity known as “Hellboy”.

<sup>42</sup> Dai-kaiju = Japanese for “great (huge) monster”.



## Golden Age Heroes

1940s Prices for some common items.			
Item	Price	Item	Price
Middle Class House	\$5,500.00	Vacuum Cleaner	\$59.95
Luxury Car	\$5,000.00	Electric Percolator	\$5.95
Family Car, Deluxe	\$1,000.00	Radio	\$14.95 to \$695.00
Family Car, Standard	\$800.00	Dry Cleaning (one suit)	\$0.29 to \$0.79
Used Car	\$20 and up	Full Car Checkup	\$4.95 to \$9.50
Electric Shaver	\$12.50	Gallon of Gas	\$0.10
Leather Jacket	\$7.00 to \$10.00	Oil Change (5 quarts)	\$0.95
Silk Hose	\$0.6 to \$1.00/pair	Salon Permanent	\$4.00
Woman's Fur Coat	\$69.50		

Recommended Reading and Movies List <sup>43</sup>	
<u>The Good War</u> by Studs Terkel	Almost any movie from the Andy Hardy series (the inspiration for Archie of Archie Comics).
<i>Since You Went Away</i>	<i>The Human Comedy</i>

<sup>43</sup> Not an exhaustive list. Book Titles are underlined while movie titles are in italics