

Superman: The Cleveland Legacy

Huntington Convention Center of Cleveland

Superman: The Cleveland Legacy celebrates the artists and writers from Cleveland whose artwork and storytelling have helped bring to life a beloved American DC Super Hero.

Superman was created in Cleveland during the Great Depression by two local high school students Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster. Jerry Siegel was born in Cleveland in 1914 to Lithuanian Jewish immigrants. He grew up in Cleveland's Glenville neighborhood where his father, who passed through Ellis Island in 1900, owned a small clothing store. Joe Shuster was also born to Jewish immigrant parents in Toronto in 1914 where he worked as a newsboy to help his family make ends meet. His family relocated to Cleveland in 1924 where he befriended Jerry Siegel. They quickly became kindred collaborators, creating comics and stories together for their high school newspaper, *The Glenville Torch*. Only a few short years later the duo would dream up a character that would quickly become one of the most iconic and recognizable in the world: Superman.

The contributions from Clevelanders have continued into Superman's modern era. Brian Michael Bendis and Brian Azzarello are both professional comic book creators who started right here in Cleveland and studied at the Cleveland Institute of Art. They have each created original stories and have written for DC and more.

The five iconic images showcased as 6' x 8' canvas banners in *Superman: The Cleveland Legacy* represent just a sampling of the immeasurable contributions that these artists and writers from Cleveland have made to the Superman story.

Special Thanks to: Siegel & Shuster Society, Cleveland Public Library, and DC Comics.

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Cover of Action Comics No. 1 (1938)

Superman © & ™ DC

Writer: Jerry Siegel

Penciller: Joe Shuster

Inker: Joe Shuster

Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster began working for comic book publisher National Allied Publications in 1935 when they were 21 years old: Siegel as a writer and Shuster as an artist. They had already created the character of Superman together years earlier, but their comic strip idea was ultimately rejected by multiple newspapers. After they started working for NAP, which would later become Detective Comics (DC), they pitched the idea again, now as a comic book character. *Action Comics No. 1*, a June issue, was released in April 1938 and Superman made his official debut as a crime-fighting, super-human champion of the oppressed, written by Jerry Siegel and illustrated by Joe Shuster.

First Page of *Action Comics No. 1* (1938)

Superman © & ™ DC

Writer: Jerry Siegel

Penciller: Joe Shuster

Inker: Joe Shuster

The first page of *Action Comics No. 1* showcases both the brilliant art of Joe Shuster and the captivating storytelling of Jerry Siegel. Here we learn of Superman's otherworldly origins as well as details about his character, undoubtedly influenced by Siegel & Shuster's childhood experiences as children of Jewish immigrants during the Great Depression. Jerry Siegel would later say of their relationship: "When Joe and I first met, it was like the right chemicals coming together."

Cover of *Superman #1* (1939)

Superman © & ™ DC

Writer: Jerry Siegel

Penciller: Joe Shuster

Inker: Joe Shuster

Letterer: Joe Shuster

Backgrounds: Leo O'Mealia

Following the popularity of Superman in Action Comics, NAP did something groundbreaking: published entire comic book series featuring one singular character. The now instantly recognizable image of Superman, seen here on the cover of *Superman #1*, helped the sales soar to nearly 1 million copies. The Superman series was the pinnacle of Siegel and Shuster's work together as collaborators and firmly established their legacy on the comic book industry.

Cover of *Superman #204* (2004)

Superman © & ™ DC

Writer: Brian Azzarello

Penciller: Jim Lee

Inker: Scott Williams

Colorist: Alex Sinclair

Letterers: Rob Leigh and Nick J. Napolitano

Brian Azzarello is a Cleveland-born, Eisner and Harvey Award-winning comic creator who rose to prominence through his crime series *100 Bullets*. He has also contributed to DC's *Wonder Woman*, *Batman*, *Hellblazer*, *Superman*, and more. *Superman #204* is the beginning of the For Tomorrow story arc that lasts until *Superman #215*. In the story, millions of people have mysteriously vanished from Earth, *The Vanishing*, including Superman's wife Lois Lane. Through Azzarello's dark, gritty storytelling, Superman attempts to solve the mystery of the disappearance while also grappling with what he could have done to prevent it.

Cover of Superman #1 (2018)

Superman © & ™ DC

Writer: Brian Michael Bendis

Penciller: Ivan Reis

Inkers: Joe Prado and Oclair Albert

Colorist: Alex Sinclair

Letterer: Josh Reed

Brian Michael Bendis is a Peabody Award winning and New York Times bestselling comic creator who was born in Cleveland in 1967. While working at the now closed comic book shop Super City Comics in the Cleveland Arcade between Superior and Euclid Avenue, he sketched the location hundreds of times for use in his graphic novel *Jinx*. The iconic building has since been immortalized in *Superman* (2025 film). *Superman #1* represents a bold new chapter in the Superman story. In Bendis's writing, an introspective Superman explores his place in the world and is forced to confront the possibility that he might not be doing enough to help humanity.