

—INSIDER HISTORIES OF— CARTOONING



Rediscovering Forgotten Famous Comics
and Their Creators

ROBERT C. HARVEY

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To Jeremy Lambros,
my webmaster and partner, who diligently and expertly
posted in our online magazine many of the chapters
of this book in their primordial states.

And to Linda,
whose love and forbearance have enabled me
to transform a consuming hobby into
a happy career for my dotage.

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A WORD TO THE FORE

Insider Histories of Cartooning

At first, when this book was a mere twinkle in mine eye, the working title was *Secret Histories of Cartooning*. Or *Secret Origins of Comics*. But I knew almost right away that such a title wasn't an accurate description of what I was doing. None of these histories are secret.

Most cartoonists know most of the stories I tell here. The cartoonists are the insiders in the book's title. They know most of these tales. But not all of them. Many have never heard of Bill Hume, for instance, or Bailin' Wire Bill or Abe Martin or the *Texas History Movies* or the Weatherbird at the *St. Louis Post-Dispatch*. Or AWOL Wally. And many insiders don't know why we call comic books "comics" even though many of them aren't at all funny.

And although they may know most of the stories in broad outline, many of the chapters to the right are wrapped around fugitive tidbits, shreds and patches and happy scraps, that are almost unknown. Which of Bill Mauldin's famous duo is Willie? Which is Joe? What was the big secret about E. Simms Campbell? Who was Funnyman? And why?

And some of the pictures are pretty rare, too. Hugh Hefner's cartoons. Kin Hubbard's illustrations for *Short Furrows*. Betty Swords's pictures for the Male Chauvinist Pig Calendar of 1974. Babysan, the Far East pinup. Illustrations for *Popo and Fifina*. Red Ryder's last bow.

The second word in this tome's title doesn't serve quite as exotic a function as the first, but it works just as hard. "Histories" is determinedly plural: the book is a collection of little histories, not one big unified chronicle. Although the arrangement of the chapters is roughly chronological, you needn't read them in order: each history is a stand-alone essay, and, except for the first introductory chapter, they're intended to be read one at a time and in any order. As Disney historian Jim Korkis said recently about a book of his: "Think of the book as a box of chocolates with different delights and maybe some tasty hidden surprises to enjoy during a pleasant afternoon" (in *Who's Afraid of the Song of the South?*).

Many of the stories I culled from my online magazine, *Rants & Raves*, which is published fortnightly (or so) at my website, RCHarvey.com. To almost all of them, however, I have added new information, sometimes doubling their length.

In the final moments of preparing this book, an antique adage gave me pause for a minute. That old saw about those who don't know their history being doomed to repeat it. The logic, or the absence thereof, is momentarily daunting. What, then, of the reverse? What if we know the histories? If we're no longer ignorant of them? I

thought: wait—I'm inordinately fond of the history of cartooning, comics of the past, and old time cartoonists; so if I tell their stories, will I doom them to be forever forgotten? Knowing those histories, I'll never be able to repeat them?

Nonsense. Learning history is perforce repeating history.

And so I defy the wisdom of adages. I invite you to join me in rebellion, revisiting some histories of cartooning. Even if no secrets are divulged herein, the stories are too seldom heard and many of the pictures not seen often enough. Ergo, we are happy to meet our doom in repeating histories. Onward.



Figure 0.1. A one-time freelance magazine cartoonist who has also published in comic strip, editorial cartoon, and comic book genres, Robert C. Harvey, Ph.D. (in English literature), is a comics chronicler who explores the artistry as well as the history of the medium. Among his books are *The Art of the Funnies* (1994), an aesthetic history of newspaper comic strips, and its sequel, *The Art of the Comic Book* (1996), *Accidental Ambassador Gordo: The Comic Strip Art of Gus Arriola* (2000), and *Meanwhile: A Biography of Milton Caniff, Creator of Terry and the Pirates and Steve Canyon* (2007). Harvey publishes regularly in the *Comics Journal* and in his online magazine *Rants & Raves* at www.RCHarvey.com, where he reviews current comics and reports news and lore about cartooning. The spectacled rabbit looking over Harvey's shoulder in this picture is his "dingbat" signature, often affixed to his cartoons in lieu of an actual verbal signature. Harvey calls the rabbit Cahoots, but that's not his name. His name, of course, is Harvey, like his six-foot tall cousin in the James Stewart movie of that name. Our author is only five-foot-eleven, but he has aspirations.

INSIDER HISTORIES OF CARTOONING

1. PREAMBLING BY THE MILESTONES

Comics Acquire Their Distinctive Lineaments



The centennial of comics that we celebrated just as the twentieth century was expiring into the twenty-first provoked at least one substantial benefit for the appreciation of the medium: in a fine froth of newly aroused nostalgia, numerous of us began rummaging through the attic of the nineteenth century where it abuts the twentieth in search of remnants of the early days of cartooning in America. Suddenly, it seemed, the history of comics was born. But it was a twin birth, fraught with complication. “Comics” denote both comic books and newspaper comic strips, and each format had its own passionate devotees and wannabe historians.

Until the mid-1960s, no one much cared about the ancient history of comic books. Judging from the content of most early periodicals published by fans and students of

the art form, the history of comic books started with Stan Lee at Marvel Comics and Julie Schwartz at DC Comics, whose antics in the late 1950s and early 1960s were preceded by a vast unexplored prehistoric period that began with the birth of Superman in 1938 and included Will Eisner's *The Spirit* (1940–52) but not much else.

Newspaper comic strips were largely neglected by early comic-book fandom. Only a few commercially published histories had surfaced. Art critic Thomas Craven surveyed the ground in 1943 with *Cartoon Cavalcade*, and Martin Sheridan's *Comics and Their Creators* in 1944 offered a collection of brief individual cartoonist autobiographies coupled to short histories of their strips. Coulton Waugh's watershed work, *The Comics*, followed shortly thereafter in 1947. But then we waited a dozen years for Stephen Becker's authoritative *Comic Art In America* (1959) and fifteen more years for Jerry Robinson's *The Comics: An Illustrated History* (1974, revised and expanded in 2011). Comic books were mentioned in these works but scarcely examined in any detail.

But in the 1960s, the Golden Age of Comic Books assumed a few more dimensions as savants remembered Plastic Man and Uncle Scrooge and Captain Marvel: Jules Feiffer in *The Great Comic Book Heroes* (1965) followed by Don Thompson and Richard Lupoff and others in *All in Color for a Dime* (1970), and Jim Steranko in two volumes of his still-unfinished *History of Comics* (1970 and 1972). But it wasn't until Ron Goulart produced his *Great History of Comic Books* in 1986 (extensively revised and beautifully reformatted in 2001 as *Great American Comic Books*) that funnybooks had anything like a formal, comprehensive history. Meanwhile, whatever life cartooning may have had in newspapers was still largely ignored in the fan press until Woody Gelman started producing reprint collections with his Nostalgia Press in the 1970s.

Still, such histories of comic strips that came along soon thereafter didn't reach back much further than Winsor McCay's *Little Nemo* (c. 1905–11). Then in the mid-1990s, virtually overnight, we started seeing the jug-eared, gap-toothed bald-pated visage of the 1890s' Yellow Kid grinning at us from every venue. Comic strips, it appeared, had a longer history than we'd supposed.

Beginning in the 1990s, comic-strip historians started off in every direction at once, surrounding the nineteenth century and several of its predecessors. Some plundered old newspapers on microfiche; others dug up tattered magazines found moldering in heaps in the cobwebbed corners of the garages of the lately deceased. Still others haunted flea markets and the shops of dealers in old paper. In 2011, Brian Walker produced the first comprehensive profusely illustrated history of American newspaper comic strips, *The Comics: The Complete Collection*, by combining two of his earlier histories, *The Comics Since 1945* and *The Comics Before 1945* (published in 2002 and 2004 respectively); and in 2012, Allan Holtz finished his *American Newspaper Comics: An Encyclopedic Reference Guide*.

From all this dedicated scurrying, a new crop of "firsts" has emerged, extending the history of cartooning in America further and further back into the dim recesses of the nineteenth century. The annually issued *Overstreet Comic Book Price Guide*, eager to be of help, added sections that list these new finds, assigning to many of them the price of a ransomed potentate. Writing in the most recent annual editions (and

updating every edition beginning sometime in the 1990s), Doug Wheeler and Robert L. Beerbohm, with assists from Richard D. Olson and Richard Samuel West, have identified the landmarks of “The Victorian Age Before the Yellow Kid: American Comics of the 19th Century” as well as the distinguishing features of the “Platinum Age” that followed immediately, 1900–38. Somewhat breathlessly on occasion (or maybe that’s me, scarcely able to contain my excitement), they lay out a nicely illustrated catalogue of “firsts,” which, as partially cited below, mark the road traveled in comics history with individual cairns of achievements to remind us that the art form took a generation or so to coalesce into a recognizable artifact (just as a pile of rocks takes a while to pile up). Among these memorials (augmented here by some of my own plundering, those preceded with an *asterisk):

- ◆ 1842, September 14: The first “sequential comic book” in the U.S., *The Adventures of Mr. Obadiah Oldbuck*, a pirated reprint *originally published in Europe in 1837 as *The Loves of Mr. Vieux Bois*, the work of a genial Swiss schoolteacher named Rodolfe Topffer who created the unpublished first version of it in 1827, according to David Kunzle’s authoritative *Father of the Comic Strip: Rodolfe Topffler*.

- ◆ *1846, October 10: Debut of the humor magazine *Yankee Doodle*, an imitation of the British *Punch* (founded in 1841 in imitation of the French *Le Charivari*).

- ◆ 1849, June: *Journey to the Gold Diggins by Jeremiah Saddlebags*, by James and Donald Read, the first American-produced “sequential comic book.”

- ◆ 1850, June: First issue of *Harper’s Monthly*, which included illustrations, cartoons reprinted from *Punch*, and, beginning in *December 1953, “sequential comics.”

- ◆ 1857, January 3: *Harper’s Weekly* launched; on March 19, 1859, “Political Scandals,” a page of the first cartoons for *Harper’s* by Thomas Nast, who inspired many imitators in American political cartooning for the rest of the century.

- ◆ 1863: The start of *Merryman’s Monthly* in which German influence was manifest in 1864 with publication of Wilhelm Busch’s picture stories, among which, *Max and Moritz* would inspire the Katzenjammer Kids.

- ◆ 1871, March 18: German-language edition of Joseph Keppler’s *Puck*, in St. Louis; English version a year later, but both ended in August 1872.

- ◆ *1876, February: *Harvard Lampoon*, another imitation of *Punch*, founded—as an “illustrated comic newspaper”—in which “comic” means “humorous” because otherwise “illustrated” and “comic” would be redundant.

- ◆ 1876, September 27: German *Puck* appears in New York, where Keppler had moved after his St. Louis adventures; the English *Puck* starts March 14, 1877. Keppler’s cartoons are lighter, funnier, than Nast’s, ushering in a divergence in approach to editorial cartooning that continues even today.

- ◆ 1870s: Almanacs begin to print cartoons as a way of getting people to read the advertisements, and cartoons started to appear in promotional publications and in book collections (“graphic novels”!).

- ◆ 1881, October 29: *Judge*, the Republican voice to oppose *Puck’s* Democrat one, started by a former *Puck* cartoonist, James A. Wales.

- ◆ 1883, January 4: *Life*, a more genteel, politically independent voice (neither Republican nor Democrat), launched by Harvard graduate John A. Mitchell and some

of his campus cronies, including Edward S. Martin, one of the founders of *Harvard Lampoon*. Mitchell was an artist; Martin, a writer (who would write for the magazine well into the 1920s, years after Mitchell had died). *This same year, incidentally, William Randolph Hearst was elected to the *Lampoon* staff, becoming business manager, a position he filled ably, increasing the circulation of the magazine by 50 percent and tripling advertising revenue, thereby putting the *Lampoon* in the black.

◆ *1884: *Stuff and Nonsense* by A. B. Frost, the first anthology of work by a single American cartoonist; reprinted in 2003 by Fantagraphics Books with an introduction in French and English by Terry Smolderen.

◆ *1884, August 10: the *New York World* publishes its first political cartoon. By Walt McDougall, “The Difference between Two Knights” contrasts presidential candidates James G. Blaine—the famed “plumed knight”—and Grover Cleveland. Political cartoons appeared in successive Sunday editions, proving so popular that they were introduced in the daily editions (Lee, 362). But political cartoons had been published irregularly in other American newspapers for decades, beginning with Benjamin Franklin’s famed “Join or Die” picture of a dissected snake in the *Pennsylvania Gazette*, May 9, 1754. Just as memorable is Elkanah Tildale’s “The Gerry-mander,” published March 26, 1812 in the *Boston Gazette*.

◆ 1887: *The Brownies, Their Book*, by Palmer Cox, the continuation of a merchandising empire. The Brownies appeared first in the February 1883 issue of *St. Nicholas*, “The Brownies’ Ride”; and subsequently, they appeared in other venues, but this 1887 production was their first performance in book form.



Figure 1.1. Outcault’s fourth bald kid cartoon, as it appeared in the February 9, 1895, issue of *Truth*. The joke here depends upon readers knowing that Palmer Cox, creator of the popular Brownies, had copyrighted his diminutive bug-eyed elfin denizens of field and farm and was zealous in pursuing his rights. With his Brownies,

Cox had demonstrated the merchandising prowess of pen-and-ink creations and, thereby, the importance of copyrighting one's characters, which he did assiduously beginning in 1883.

- ◆ *1888: *Puck's Opper Book*, by Frederick Burr Opper, the country's second solo anthology.

- ◆ 1880s: *Puck*, *Judge*, and *Life* publish periodical "collections" ("annuals" or "albums") of material initially published in the magazines during the preceding months.

- ◆ *1892, June 23: Debut of the *Chicago Inter Ocean's* weekly *Illustrated Supplement*, the first color newspaper supplement, albeit with only the front and back covers in color. With the September 4 issue, according to Richard Samuel West in *Society Is Nix* (11), Art Young began supplying editorial cartoons in color for the back cover.

- ◆ 1893, May 21: Joseph Pulitzer's *New York World* publishes its first color comics Sunday supplement. The cover is a color cartoon by *World* stalwart Walt McDougall.

- ◆ 1893, October 1: In the *Chicago Inter Ocean Illustrated Supplement*, a non-political narrative sequence of comic pictures ("comic strip") by Tom E. Powers appears.

- ◆ 1894, January 28: The *World* publishes what was recently—and until the discovery of the Powers comic strip published the previous fall—called the first newspaper comic strip in color by artist Mark Fenderson. Until Fenderson's strip was acclaimed the first newspaper comic strip, a November 18, 1894, effort in the *World* by Richard F. Outcault, "Origin of a New Species," was often promoted as the first (see [Figure 3.1](#)), a now-admitted erroneous claim, dubiously supported by the ironic poetry of the strip's title.

- ◆ *1894: Charles Saalburg's color comic panel cartoon featuring a bunch of vaguely Asian-looking kids, the Ting Lings, appears in the *Chicago Inter Ocean Illustrated Supplement*, running for about three months, West says, without offering specific dates; but the Ting Lings indisputably preceded Outcault's bald-head nightshirted Yellow Kid.

- ◆ *1894, June 2: Outcault's first street urchin cartoon with that bald kid in a nightshirt appears in *Truth* magazine, another of the many "comic weeklies" like *Puck*, *Judge*, and *Life*.

- ◆ *1894, September 16: Outcault's first multi-panel full-page cartoon is printed in the *World's* Sunday comics supplement; no bald kid.

- ◆ *1894, November 18: Outcault's "Origin of a New Species," his first comic strip in color, is published; no bald kid again.

- ◆ *1895, February 17: The fifth of Outcault's *Truth* cartoons with the bald kid is reprinted in the *New York World*, inaugurating a continuing series that eventually appeared under headings that refer to "Hogan's Alley," which, in turn, became the name of the feature.

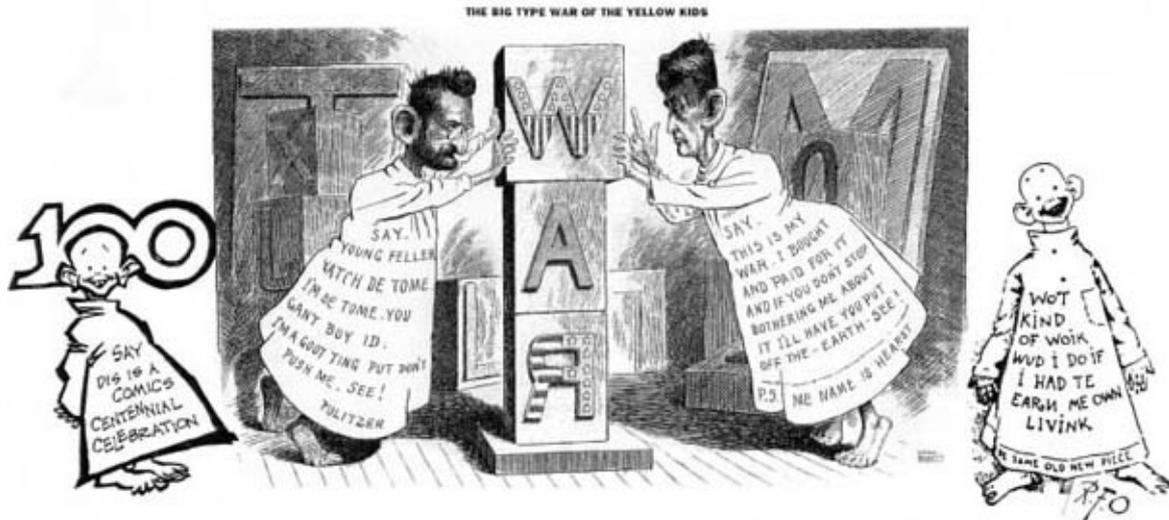


Figure 1.2. This cartoon by Leon Barritt in the June 29, 1898, issue of *Vim* is about the efforts by Pulitzer (left) and Hearst to drum up a war with Spain by bellowing urgency in headlines (the “big type”), but in cloaking the rival publishers in yellow nightshirts, the cartoon asserts the role of the Yellow Kid in the creation of yellow journalism. Outcault’s Kid appears at the right of the cartoon; the version of the character on the left is my deployment of the Kid as a logo celebrating the centennial of the comics in *Cartoonist Profiles*.



Figure 1.3. The December 12, 1897, debut of Dirks’s *The Katzenjammer Kids* (which numbered three at first), appeared without speech balloons. “Katzenjammer” means “hangover” (literally, “yowling cats”) in German. The physical humor here is typical of early comics in which punch lines were often punches to the head, and small children and animals were frequently blown to bits by accidental explosions. Within a month, Dirks had simplified his drawings and the third Kid was gone.

◆ *1896, January 5: In Outcault’s *Hogans’s Alley* cartoon in the *World*, the bald kid is conspicuously at the center of the picture and his shirt is colored a screaming

yellow, and the kid, Mickey Dugan, metamorphoses into the “Yellow Kid” and soon establishes newspaper comics as a viable circulation-boosting feature. The Yellow Kid was so popular that Pulitzer’s rival publisher, the young upstart William Randolph Hearst at the *New York Journal*, hired Outcault and his jug-eared Alley waif away from the *World* in the fall of 1896; the Kid debuted at the *Journal* on October 18. But Pulitzer continued the feature, installing another artist, George Luks, to produce it. For a time, delivery wagons of both papers carried on their sides posters touting themselves as the home of the authentic Yellow Kid, and observers on the sidelines of the circulation war called the papers “the yellow journals.” The kind of sensational reportage practiced by both papers was, by association, “yellow journalism.”

- ◆ *1897, December 12: Rudolph Dirks’s *The Katzenjammer Kids*, inspired by Wilhelm Busch’s *Max and Moritz*, is the first cartoon to appear regularly (every week) in a newspaper as a “strip” of sequential pictures.

- ◆ *1899: F.M. Howarth’s booklet, *Funny Folks*, a prototypical comic book, reprinted pantomimic comic strips from the pages of *Puck*.

- ◆ *1900, March 11: Opper’s *Happy Hooligan* debuts as a pantomime comic strip, despite which silence, I claim it as a pivotal occurrence in the history of the medium that we’ll take more notice of in the next chapter.

- ◆ *1901, February 11: The *St. Louis Post-Dispatch* introduces the Weatherbird, the longest running comic character in American newspapers.

- ◆ *1904: Outcault’s Buster Brown becomes the “first nationally licensed comic-strip character in America.”

- ◆ *1905, October 15: Winsor McCay’s *Little Nemo in Slumberland* starts, the first universally acknowledged “work of art” in the funnies.

- ◆ 1905: *Brainy Bowers and Drowsy Dugan*, by R. W. Taylor, the first book collection of daily newspaper strips published in America. *(Which means this strip, if it actually appeared daily, predates Bud Fisher’s *A. Mutt*, erstwhile the first regularly published daily comic strip, starting November 15, 1907. I’ve seen only the Sunday *Brainy*, reprinted in *Society Is Nix*.)

- ◆ *1922, January: *Comic Monthly*, the first 10-cent monthly comic book, with reprints of King Features syndicated newspaper comic strips.

- ◆ *1929: *The Funnies*, the first newsstand comic book with original, nonreprint, material.

And so on, into the night.

The *Overstreet* essayists set a history banquet—a genuinely delectable feast of rare and wonderful incidents and accomplishments which I devoured with unblushing relish. Here before us are benchmarks and milestones galore, assuaging our natural craving for invigorating intellectual games of detection and deduction, of lost and found, of hide and seek.

Best of all, the foregoing litany barely scrapes the surface, leaving acre after acre of the cartooning landscape still to be plowed, turning over more and more heretofore unknown or underappreciated evidences of the cartoonist’s art in America. On the pages that follow, we’ll prolong the process yet some more.

We start by committing the latest in a long line of attempts to define the medium in

a way that includes what we think of as comics and excludes things we don't think of as comics. Hackneyed though this maneuver may be, no self-respecting treatise on comics lately has surfaced without such a gambit, and I'm not about to establish a precedent. Besides, we need to have some idea of what we are talking about before we begin talking about it.

Then we go on to offer an explanation of why we call these artifacts "comics" when so many of them aren't at all funny, a disquisition that also reveals the origin of the term "cartoon."

Although each of the chapters through [Chapter 3](#) is, like the rest, a stand-alone essay and can be read in isolation from the others, together this introductory trio reveals another of the "insider" aspects of the book—the academic world of scholars who have taken of late to pondering the history and arts of cartooning, delving and defining as they go. These chapters offer a brief and admittedly skewed history of the theory of comics and, perhaps, a new theory or two or a twist on a revered one.

Before proceeding to chapters on individual comics accomplishments, we pause to salute the longest-running comics and the oldest continuously appearing daily cartoon character, asking, incidentally, why some characters last and others don't. Then we get to short histories and appreciations of some of the milestones in American cartooning artistry (usually, but not always, as practiced in the pages of the daily newspaper), beginning with Opper's *Happy Hooligan*, which established, I submit, the line of demarcation between the modern comic strip and its prototypes—i.e., everything before *Happy Hooligan*.

With definitions and antecedents firmly in place, we consider an array of inky ventures that suggest the uniqueness of America in its cartooning: the oft-overlooked Kim Hubbard and his Abe Martin philosopher; the preeminent American mythology of the Western with Fred Harman's *Red Ryder*, Stan Lynde's *Rick O'Shay*, and Dick Sebal's Bailin' Wire Bill (an obscure exploitation of the Old West in the modern age); and a glimpse into the cartooning past of an icon in American cultural history, Hugh Hefner, founder of *Playboy*. Other themes are hinted at in the ensuing chapters—feminism, racism, commerce vs. art, and war.

By the middle of the twentieth century, women had begun to invade the mostly male redoubt of the funnies—Dale Messick with her adventuring newspaper reporter, Brenda Starr, for instance. The most conspicuous success among distaff cartoonists was probably Marjorie Henderson Buell who made a fortune when her *Saturday Evening Post* creation, Little Lulu, became a salesperson for a famous brand of facial tissue that popped up, one at a time, from the box. To represent the feminist strain in the history of the medium, we offer an interview with magazine cartoonist and humorist Betty Swords, who made a pointed assault on sexism in the profession and in society at large.

Among African American cartoonists, E. Simms Campbell may be the first to escape a racial ghetto to cartoon for publications not produced chiefly for minority consumption: Campbell not only drew for *Esquire*, he invented the magazine's mascot, Esky. In the second half of the twentieth century, African American cartoonists achieved much greater visibility in the comics sections of newspapers: Brumsic Brandon, Jr. (*Luther*), Morrie Turner (*Wee Pals*), Ted Shearer (*Quincy*), Stephen

Bentley (*Herb and Jamaal*), Rob Armstrong (*Jump Start*), Ray Billingsley (*Curtis*), and others. And in comic books: Matt Baker and Milton Knight, among several. Their work was not racially rooted like the later newspaper strips of Aaron McGruder (*The Boondocks*), Barbara Brandon, Brumsic's daughter (*Where I'm Coming From*), Darrin Bell (*Candorville*) and Keith Knight (*The K Chronicles*, *The Knight Life*), but they asserted a presence that signaled greater acceptance for cartoonists of minority races. Each of them deserves a chapter, but in this volume, Campbell, a genuine pioneer, will stand in for them all.

We also look at the oddest of early comic-book creations: Funnyman, a comedic costumed crime-fighter from the creators of Superman, Jerry Siegel and Joe Shuster, trying for a second act. And we delve into what ought to be the strangest kind of cartooning: the juxtaposition of comedy and war. A small contingent of soldier cartoonists helped their comrades in arms survive in the battlefield of World War II, Bill Mauldin being the most conspicuous of the lot who turned their wartime avocation into a full-time civilian career. The doughboys of World War I were entertained by Wally Wallgren, who, unlike Mauldin, virtually disappeared after the war and his stint on *Stars and Stripes*. But none of the uniformed cartoonists match Bill Hume for disappearing acts: after cartooning for American troops in occupied Japan, Hume went back home to Columbia, Missouri, and vanished from the national comics scene.

What begins on the pages at the right is scarcely an encyclopedia of American cartooning. We're attempting here only to shine a light into some of the corners of the nation's cartooning that have remained for too long too dim—to celebrate some of the achievements and achievers in the medium that have faded too far into distant memory or that have never been recognized at all. Throughout, our purpose is to illuminate the arts of cartooning with the objective of enhancing appreciation of the medium.

While all of this historicity was being perpetrated in *Overstreet* and with a fount of reprint tomes and scholarly opuses, comics were attaining some of the cultural status that its fans have so long sought for the medium. Anthologies of comic-book stories and graphic novels are now often found in a "graphic novel" section of bookstores like Barnes and Noble. In late 2000, *Publishers Weekly* started producing a section listing newly minted graphic novels and other comic-book efforts. And graphic novels are being reviewed in the *New York Times Book Review*, the *New York Review of Books*, and elsewhere in respectable periodicals.

This new status is a consequence of at least two phenomena. First, some of the work being done in the comic-book form is much better, more mature in theme, and more expertly rendered in visual as well as verbal terms, than the fondly recalled funnybooks of yore. Consequently, the product often warrants the attention it's getting.

Perhaps a more important factor in the cultural levitation of the comic book is what I call the Jack Davis Effect. Davis, one of the masters in Entertaining Comics of the 1950s, enjoyed a startlingly successful post-EC career in advertising and magazine illustration, and he once explained it by saying that when the readers of EC Comics grew up, many became art directors at magazines and turned to him, a favorite of their lost youth, to make pictures again for them. Davis is also a cartooning genius, which helped; but I'm sure he's right about those art directors being one-time EC Comics