

# Harry Houdini, the Masonic Magician

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Harry Houdini, the Hungarian-born illusionist, is most commonly known for illusions such as his suspended straitjacket escape, buried alive trick, and the “Houdini Upside Down.” However, many people do not know the man behind the magician, Freemason Eric Weiss.

## Humble Origins

Born on March 24th, 1874 in Budapest, Hungary, Eric Weiss and his family were subject to an onslaught of anti-semitism. A few years later, Eric’s father accepted a job as a rabbi and moved the family of five boys to Appleton, Wisconsin. Eric’s father’s conservative views were not in sync with the Wisconsin culture, and after a series of moves, the family ended up in New York. The Weiss family did not have a lot of money, and Eric did not have any formal education. He longed to make a name for himself. At age 17, he had become very interested in magic, following the work of magician Jean Eugene Robert-Houdin.

It was not overnight success for the young magician who named himself Houdini, adding an “i” to his beloved role model Houdin’s last name. It was hard work, and it took many years, mentorships, and training before his illusions became a success and his talents were honed.

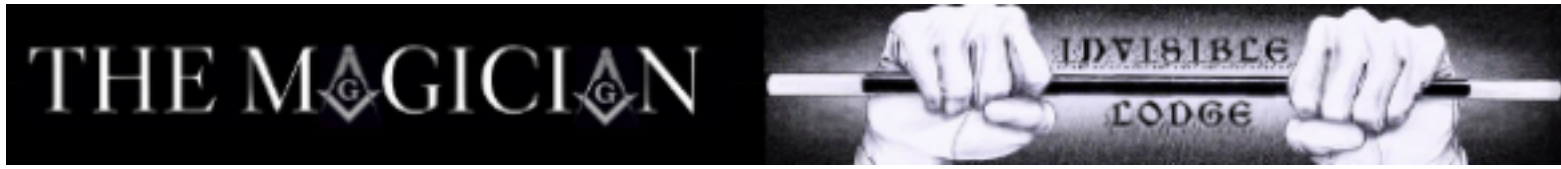


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## Houdini the Freemason

Harry Houdini was initiated into St. Cecile Lodge in New York in 1923 and was passed and raised in July 31 and August 21 in 1924. He was proud to be a Freemason and even held a performance for the Scottish Rite Valley of New York. The event was attended by 4,000 people in the Scottish Rite Cathedral and raised money for Freemasons in need. Houdini became a Shriner a few weeks before his unfortunate death in October 1926. Houdini is among a cohort of Masonic magicians like Harry Keller, Howard Thurston, and Harry Blackstone. Today, there is even an “[Invisible Lodge](#)” for Freemasons who wish to become magicians or learn about the artform.



## A Lasting Legacy

When talking about magicians, even today, Houdini always comes up in the conversation. His talent was awe-inspiring, and in the years following his death, no one has been able to match his skill, resilience, and passion for the art of illusion and magic. We are proud to call Brother Houdini just that, a fellow Brother. He helps to make up the rich and unique story of Freemasonry, woven throughout the halls of every Lodge and in the hearts of every Mason.

Research material provided by the Scottish Rite Museum and Library via the work below:

*Houdini Master of Illusion, William E. Parker, The Short Talk Bulletin from The Masonic Services Association of North America. Volume 78, January, 2000.*



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