



The Last Greatest Magician in the World: Howard Thurston Versus Houdini & the Battles of the American Wizards

Jim Steinmeyer

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Here is the seminal biography of the magician's magician, Howard Thurston, a man who surpassed Houdini in the eyes of showmen and fans and set the standard for how stage magic is performed today.

Everyone knows Houdini—but who was Thurston? In this rich, vivid biography of the "greatest magician in the world," celebrated historian of stage magic Jim Steinmeyer captures the career and controversies of the wonder-worker extraordinaire, Howard Thurston.

The public's fickleness over magicians has left Thurston all but forgotten today. Yet Steinmeyer shows how his story is one of the most remarkable in show business. During his life, from 1869 to 1936, Thurston successfully navigated the most dramatic changes in entertainment—from street performances to sideshows to wagon tours through America's still-wild West to stage magic amid the glitter of grand theaters.

Thurston became one of America's most renowned vaudeville stars, boldly performing an act with just a handful of playing cards, and then had the foresight to leave vaudeville, expanding his show into an extravaganza with more than forty tons of apparatus and costumes. His touring production was an American institution for nearly thirty years, and Thurston earned a brand name equal to Ziegfeld or Ringling Brothers.

Steinmeyer explores the stage and psychological rivalry between Thurston and Houdini during the first decades of the twentieth century—a contest that Thurston won. He won with a bigger show, a more successful reputation, and the title of America's greatest magician. In *The Last Greatest Magician in the World*, Thurston's magic show is revealed as the one that animates our collective memories.



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