



American Legends: The Life of Harry Houdini

Charles River Editors

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"I knew, as everyone knows, that the easiest way to attract a crowd is to let it be known that at a given time and a given place someone is going to attempt something that in the event of failure will mean sudden death. That's what attracts us to the man who paints the flagstaff on the tall building, or to the 'human fly' who scales the walls of the same building." (Harry Houdini)

A lot of time has been spent covering the lives of history's most influential figures, but how much of the forest is lost for the trees? In Charles River Editors' American Legends series, listeners can get caught up on the lives of America's most important men and women in the time it takes to finish a commute. And they can do so while learning interesting facts long forgotten or never known.

There is no shortage of professional magicians and stunt men in the 21st century, but all of them owe something to the most famous stunt man of them all: Harry Houdini. A century after he began to thrill audiences with his patented escape acts, Houdini's name remains synonymous with seemingly miraculous escapes and getaways. His name is instantly recognizable even among those who have never seen pictures of his stunts.

Houdini wasn't the first of his kind. But after he got his start as "Harry Handcuff Houdini" during a traveling European tour he added the kind of showmanship and flair that have become standard fare among performers of his kind. His initial repertoire of escaping handcuffs eventually gave way to far grander feats, involving skyscrapers, straitjackets, and being buried alive.

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