



# Harry Blackstone Sr.

**Born:** Henry Boughton *aka* Harry Blackstone Sr. on **September 27, 1885** in Chicago, Illinois, U.S.

**Died:** **November 16, 1965** in Hollywood, California, U.S., at age 80.

## ◆ **How He Became a Magician**

Blackstone's interest in magic began as a child. He received a magic trick for his **eighth birthday**, which sparked his fascination with illusion and sleight of hand. By age **14 he was already doing his first paid performances**.

## ◆ **Influences**

As a teenager, one of his big inspirations was **seeing a performance by magician Harry Kellar**, who was a leading stage magician of that era and helped shape Blackstone's ambition to become a professional magician.



### ◆ **Type of Magic He Performed**

Blackstone became famous for **grand stage illusions and sleight-of-hand**, combining showmanship with elaborate apparatus. Some of his signature effects included:

- **The Dancing Handkerchief**
- **The Vanishing Birdcage**
- **The Floating Light Bulb**
- Large illusions often requiring many assistants and props, presented in formal stage shows.

He performed mainly as a traditional **stage illusionist**, unlike close-up or street magicians, and was known for his elegant, gentlemanly presentation.

### ◆ **Performance Career Span**

Blackstone's career began in his **early teens (around 1899–1900)** and continued through **the 1950s**. He started touring in vaudeville with his brother Pete in the early 1900s and remained a major stage performer for **over five decades**, including participating in **USO shows during World War II**. In the 1950s he retired from touring but continued appearing on television.

### ◆ **How He Died**

Harry Blackstone Sr. died of natural causes on **November 16, 1965** in Hollywood, California, at the age of 80 after a long and celebrated career in magic.



## Signature Tricks & Effects

### 1. Floating Light Bulb

A glowing light bulb appears to float on its own — even over the audience’s heads — with no visible wires or supports. This became *his most iconic illusion*.

### 2. Vanishing Birdcage

Blackstone invites children onstage, has them place their hands on a small cage holding a canary, then tosses it into the air — and *both bird and cage vanish*.

### 3. Dancing Handkerchief

A borrowed handkerchief comes “to life,” darting and dancing through the air as if animated by magic.

### 4. Sawing a Woman in Half

One of the early big-stage sawing illusions, performed with a large, dramatic circular saw — a jaw-dropping spectacle in its day.

### 5. The Enchanted Garden (Garden of Flowers)

From a simple cloth, countless colorful feather flowers seem to sprout and fill the stage — a lush, visual flourish.

### 6. Levitation (Kellar’s Levitation / Princess Karnac)

A levitating woman illusion originally popularized by Harry Kellar that Blackstone incorporated into his repertoire.

These effects showcase Blackstone’s mastery of **large-scale stage illusion, visual spectacle, and elegant presentation**, blending showmanship with mechanical ingenuity that captivated audiences for decades.