



Brush The Great

Born: Edwin Homer Brush, Sr. on March 21, 1873 in the Township of Bonus, Boone County, Illinois, U.S.

Died: March 14, 1967 in San Francisco, California, U.S., just one week before his 94th birthday.

◆ How He Became a Magician

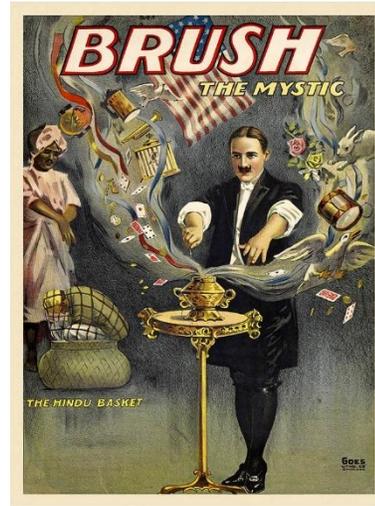
Edwin Brush grew up on a farm and first became interested in magic as a boy when a neighbor showed him some **pocket magic tricks** — which sparked his fascination.

At age 16 he saw **Herrmann the Great** perform — the famed turn-of-the-century magician — and resolved to become a full-time magician.

Brush studied business in college and later worked in sales, where he used magic as an **icebreaker** to engage customers — which helped him build confidence and a reputation as a performer before eventually transitioning into full-time magic

◆ Influences

- **Herrmann the Great (“Alexander Herrmann”)** — seeing Herrmann’s performance had a decisive impact on young Brush and inspired him to pursue magic seriously.
- Brush was also influenced by the Lyceum/Chautauqua entertainment circuit — a network of adult education and variety shows where many magicians honed their art in the late 19th and early 20th centuries.



◆ What Type of Magic He Did

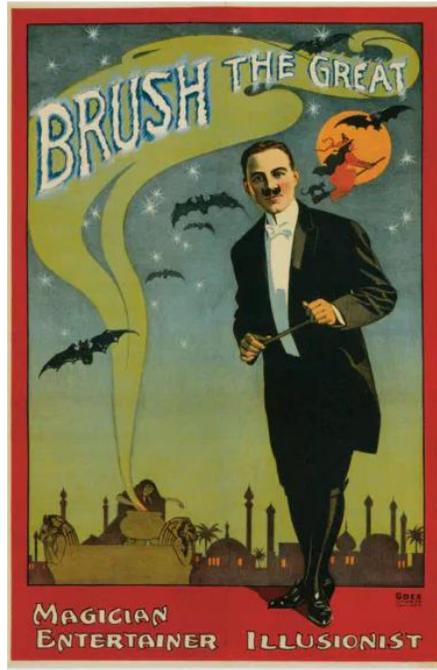
Brush performed mainly **stage and parlor magic** that was popular on the Lyceum and Chautauqua circuit:

- **Sleight-of-hand and small illusions**, such as **Miser's Dream** (plucking coins from the air), Chinese Linking Rings, and vanishing/reappearing birds.
- **Oriental-themed effects and ventriloquism**, reflecting his billing as *Brush the Mystic* in some posters and show advertising.
- Moral and educational talks woven into his programs — including lectures on exposing fraudulent mediums and gamblers — tailored to Lyceum audiences.

Although not a large-scale illusionist like some contemporaries, he was **well respected for his finesse, personality, and versatility** on the stage.

◆ Performance Career Span

- Brush's first real Lyceum season was in **1902**.
- He **retired from regular Lyceum touring in 1927**, but he didn't stop performing magic.
- In the **1930s**, he moved to California and continued to perform in schools, churches, lodges, and community events with a portable "ten suitcase" show system.
- During **World War II**, he even returned to perform in U.S.O. camp shows.
- Brush's performing career **spanned roughly from 1902 into the 1950s and '60s** — well over **60 years**.

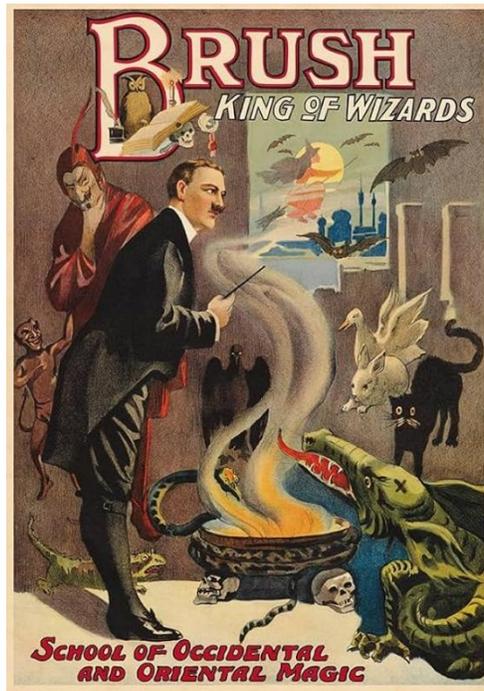


◆ How he Died

Edwin Brush **died on March 14, 1967**, at nearly 94 years old, still remembered as one of the long-lived performers in American magic.

Brush's career bridged the **turn of the 20th century and the modern era of stage and parlour magic**. He was a **respected Lyceum performer** and entertainer, known for combining classic magic tricks with personality, humor, and educational talk — and he kept performing into his 80s and 90s.

Listed in "Who's who in the lyceum" as performing Oriental tricks, ventriloquism and eccentric comedy,



Signature Tricks, Illusions & Show Elements

1. *Miser's Dream*

A classic close-up crowd-pleaser in Brush's show where he seemingly plucks coins out of thin air during the performance — a popular staple of early 20th-century magic.

2. *Chinese Linking Rings*

Brush performed the well-loved linking rings routine — metal rings that magically join and separate — in a way suited to his Chautauqua-style repertoire.

3. *Vanishing & Reappearing Canaries*

Tiny birds would vanish from one prop and then reappear elsewhere — a visual effect that delighted audiences of all ages.

4. *Floating Ball & Rising Cards*

Visual manipulations where a ball seemed to float and cards appeared to rise by magic — effects well suited to lecture-hall-sized Lyceum audiences.



Signature Tricks, Illusions & Show Elements

5. Small Illusions with Costumed Exchanges

In some routines, Brush and an assistant would swap places or identities in costume mid-illusion, sometimes even involving a volunteer from the audience — a theatrical flourish that added personality to his presentations.

6. Hindu Basket (Basket Trick)

Posters from the 1920s show Brush performing the **Hindu Basket** effect — a routine where objects (or sometimes live helpers or birds) appear or vanish in a large woven basket, reflecting the “Mystic” branding of his show.

7. Oriental-Themed Magical Effects

Brush’s marketing and posters often featured exotic stylings and props that suggested mystical, “Oriental” mysteries — part of the theatrical presentation that drew audiences to his Chautauqua and tour dates.

These elements show how Brush **blended sleight-of-hand, visual magic, audience engagement, and theatrical flair** into a full evening show perfectly suited to the lecture-hall and tent-circuit entertainment of the Chautauqua and Lyceum era.