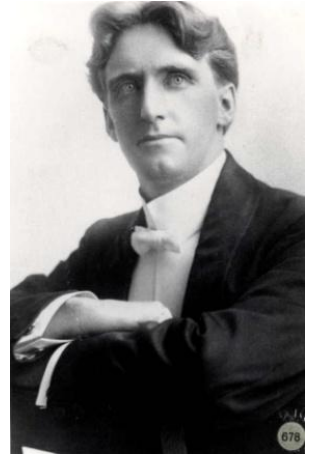


## Two generations of Magic - "Mysterious Alma" and his son Will Alma

The graffiti you see to the right on the wall "ALMA MARCH 27 & 28 1902" (located in the Lodge Room of the Toongabbie Mechanics Institute) shows the date that "Mysterious Alma", father of famous Australian magician Will Alma, the "Amazing Alma" visited Toongabbie to perform in 1902. He was approximately 22 years of age.



[Photo ca. 1900-1910]

Pharos, Alma the Mysterious, was born, Oswald Henry Bishop, in Malvern Victoria 1880. He was a professional vaudeville magician 'Alma the Court magician" who performed a real-life vanishing trick, deserting his wife and child on a tour of Australia from which, as his son, Will put it; he "took off for the Islands and on to the USA." He had changed his name to P.H. Ross and used the pseudonym "Pharos" when embarking on a world tour. It was many a year before Will again met up with his father. Pharos became a US citizen in 1920 and died in Hawaii in 1956.



'Levitation of Aga'

Mr & Mrs Alma Senior 1906



His son, *W.G. Alma*, was born William George Bishop in Melbourne in 1904 and, not surprisingly, Will's mother was determined that he should not become 'a theatrical' but in his early teens it was clear that he had 'the magic bug'. Following in his father's footsteps, he became a magician in 1918 and performed all over Australia and overseas for the next 70 years known as the 'Amazing Alma.' As well as being a performer he was also a craftsman and manufacturer. He created the Alma Magical Company which produced magic apparatus and props which have been used throughout the world.

Right - Rose Alma [Wife of the Mysterious Alma and mother of magician Will Alma]

ca. 1900-1910



Above - Photograph 1914 of Will as a young teen



*Left - Father and Son Magicians, Will Alma to the left [1904-1993] with his father, known as "Mysterious Alma", "Pharos" and P.H. Ross, [1880-1956] Photograph : 1949*



*Right - Will Alma with wife Betty Alma (née Glew) and Bonny Glew [ca. 1942]*

*Magic was to become Will Alma's life. The skills of the "The Amazing Alma" were recognised and in 1954 he became a member of the magic Circle and was elevated four years later to the exalted status of Gold Star Member of the Inner magic Circle.*

*Excerpt From State Library of Victoria News No 7, January 1999-February 1999*

*"One of the Library's most unusual and interesting collections is kept secret, accessible only to a select few. Locked away in rows of drab steel cupboards are the keys to such arcane mysterious as "The Buzz Saw Illusion", 'The Elastic Lady', 'The Protean Cabinet' and "The Electrocution Mystery".*

*When the magician Will Alma donated his magicana collection to the Library, he stipulated that access to the models and detailed instructions of the tricks of his trade should be limited to magicians and bona fide researchers. So the appearance, disappearance and escapes from death by sword and saw will continue to puzzle and astonish audiences."*



*Will Alma (right) with a restored poster of his father's "First Australian Tour"*





*When Will Alma “retired” in 1978 he continued to promote the history and art of illusion throughout his collection of magicana. The following illusion models were part of a State Library of Victoria news article. Photographer: Adrian Flint*

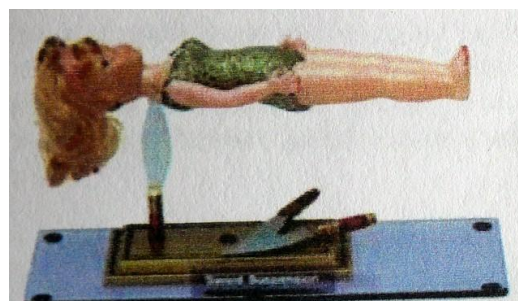
*Illusion model ‘The Disembodied Princess’*



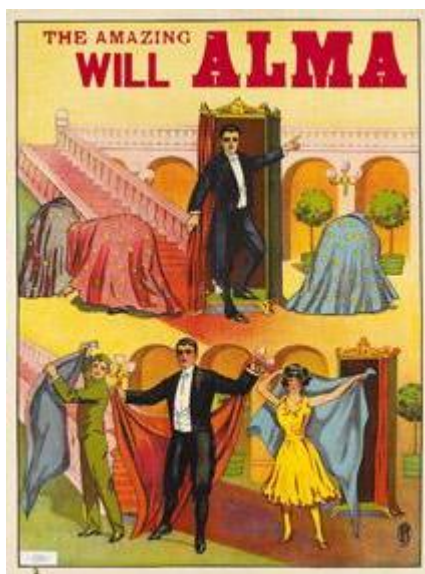
*‘The Buzz saw’ illusion*



*Illusion model ‘The zig zag lady’*



*‘Sword Suspension’ illusion model*



*The amazing Will Alma  
1920's poster*

*Collection - W.G.Alma conjuring collection  
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