

MILDRED DILLING



Mildred Dilling was born in Marion, Indiana on January 12, 1894. Mildred was the daughter of a successful candy company proprietor. As a child, Dilling studied piano at the prestigious Marion Conservatory of Music. She began playing the harp when her family moved to Indianapolis in 1905. Dilling performed professionally for the first time at age thirteen. She was given a dozen carnations and a jar of pickles for her mother when she performed as a last minute stand in at a local concert. She continued to mesmerize Indianapolis audiences with her beautiful harp music at receptions and luncheons throughout her teen years.

Miss Dilling went on to study music in New York and Paris before launching an unprecedented career that would span 75 years.

During her career, Mildred Dilling played the harp in 25 countries around the globe traveling up to 30,000 miles per year. She performed for kings and queens, and five US Presidents. Her amazing talent and international presence earned her the title of, "The First Lady of the Harp."

In addition to a performance schedule that included up to 80 concerts a year, Dilling recorded music and appeared on Television and radio shows. She founded the American Harp Society in 1946 and is remembered for her role in popularizing the harp as a solo instrument. She also wrote two books about the harp, and gave harp lessons. Some of Dilling's most notable students included Harpo Marx, Sir Laurence Olivier and Bob Hope.

Mildred Dilling appreciated not only the music of the harp, but the beauty of the instrument. Her collection, which at one point included 110 Harps, is thought to be the largest private collection in the world. Dilling's friend, Harpo Marx, once commented that her New York apartment looked like an angel's cloak room. Upon her death in 1984, a portion of Dilling's collection was donated to Indiana University, in Bloomington, where it is on display today.