

**DOTTIE FAITH
“MIGNON”
LAIRD
1904-1984**



**AIRPORT
NAMED FOR
ZIEGFELD
DANCER**

In the early 1900s, Dr. Henri and Elbertine Laird bought 160 acres west of Cheyenne. Although they considered it their home, they traveled from town to town in a luxurious oversized Pullman car named “Mignon” where Dr. Laird provided medical care and was known as the “Painless Dentist”. After hours the family would provide entertainment starring their extraordinarily-talented daughter Dottie Laird.

Dottie Faith Laird was born in Oklahoma City in April 1904 and began her theatrical career when she was twenty months old. Billed as “Baby Mignon”, she became the star of Lairds’ traveling show with a butterfly song-and-dance complete with colored spotlights and beautiful costuming. Her parents also taught her singing, dancing, and dramatics. In the 1920s, Dottie attended the University of Oklahoma one semester for vocal training.

In 1921 the Lairds headed East to New York City. At this time, she became known theatrically as Mignon Laird. She danced her way from vaudeville to Broadway. Will Rogers introduced her to Florenz Ziegfeld, who was impressed with her beauty and childlike innocence and hired her immediately for his Ziegfeld Follies, where she played the vaudeville circuit all over the United States. She often danced while playing the harp!

In 1923, Mignon became famous for her acrobatic dancing. “She had a wonderful ability as a high kicker possessing the rare accomplishment of being able to kick straight up while holding her body in a perfectly straight yet graceful position.” She signed a two-year contract with the Strand Theater as “one of the most talented dancers seen on Broadway”. The following year Mignon developed a solo act with her harp and dancing, becoming a full-fledged Broadway star with her name flashed in sparkling electric lights.

Even during the Depression, Mignon’s star continued to shine. New York Evening World called her “a lady contortionist who plays the harp as it has never been played before.” But the theatrical world soon changed when the nights of glitter disappeared. Mignon began teaching the harp and dance as well as giving voice and acting lessons. She danced in some 1930s movies for Warner Brothers and became involved in radio shows in the 1930s and 1940s.

In 1967, Mignon sold the homestead land to the town of Cheyenne for the airport named in her honor. Although she had lived in New York since 1921, she never forgot her roots and proudly proclaimed herself an Oklahoman. Mignon described the Cheyenne area as a tender symbol of her parents’ young love and their dream of some day establishing a home upon their land.

She lived in the same New York City apartment for 63 years until she died in August 1984 at age 80. Her harp and other memorabilia are in the Black Kettle Museum and the Minnie Slief Memorial Library in Cheyenne. The remainder of her estate was left to the Cheyenne Airport Authority for maintenance of the airport.

On her final pilgrimage to western Oklahoma in April 1982, she made plans to have her remains scattered at the airport by a Cheyenne Indian chief riding horseback at full gallop to be a part of western Oklahoma forever. She also requested that a six-foot-tall red granite monument be erected in her family’s memory.