

BRIGHTEN THE CORNER WHERE YOU ARE

Ina Mae Ogdon, Lyrics, 1912; Charles Gabriel, Music; 1913

"Brighten the Corner Where You Are" was written by Ina Mae Ogdon (1872-1964), a prolific hymn writer and gifted speaker. She had been selected, after years of auditions to be part of the famous Chautauqua Circuit in 1912. However, when her father was injured in a car accident, a few weeks before scheduled to leave, she chose to abandon her plans so she could take care of him. Rather becoming overcome with disappointment and resentment, she turned the tragic experience into an inspirational poem. She entitled it, *"Brighten the Corner Where You Are"* to tell how, in her words, *"One can serve in many different circumstances, and wherever you happen to find yourself"*.

Composer Charles Gabriel (1856-1932), Ogdon's friend and colleague, wrote the tune: BRIGHTEN THE CORNER to pair with the words. The hymn was first sung at a church service in Wilkes-Barre, PA in 1913, where it was heard by a man named Homer Rodeheaver, who happened to be the musical director for the Billy Sunday Evangelical Crusades. It soon became the regular theme song of the Billy Sunday crusade programs, both at live events, as well as on the radio. It quickly became wildly popular throughout the country, and eventually was translated into 10 different languages around the world.

Ina Mae Ogdon was a school teacher who lived most of her adult life in the Toledo, Ohio area in a log cabin that was originally built in the 1840's. The cabin became known as *"The Old House"* after her first book of poetry was published under the name *"Keepsakes from the Old House"*. Today, the cabin is maintained by the local historical society. Ogdon is said to have written the words for over 3,000 hymns in her lifetime, a number of which were set to music and published in various hymnals. The first of these, entitled *"Open Wide the Windows"*, was published in 1892.

~ Tull