



Robert Dowling, Honor Swimmer, United States of America, 1970



Videos: [Swim 1 at 0:50 presenting flowers](#)

Robert Dowling, at age 18, became the first person to swim 45.9 km around Manhattan Island in 1915 in 13 hours and 45 minutes. His swim paved the way for this to become one of the world's icon marathons and part of the triple crown. He was followed shortly afterwards by IMSHOF Honoree Ida Elionsky in 1916 - the first female to complete the swim, at with a faster time.

In 1917, he competed in a 64 km upstream river swim in the Hudson River.

Robert was a successful businessman; real estate principal; Tony award winning theatre owner; philanthropist; and leading citizen. His gifts help establish Dowling College (gift of \$3 million in 1968 to Adelphi University) and he was president of the National Urban League and a director of the Negro College Fund.

[Expanded Biography \(Openwaterpedia\)](#)

[Long Swims Database \(Marathon Swimmers Federation\)](#)