

Gentleman Ross Hamilton, formerly of Great Village, was a member of

moved a great deal. Other places where they lived were Great Village; possibly Truro as well as Parrsboro.

On the outbreak of W.W.I. Ross enlisted in the C.A.M.C., C.E.F., joining the 9th Field Ambulance Corps and took part in some heavy fighting in the Allied lines in France. At that time Captain Merton Plunkett was organizing a troupe for entertaining the soldiers and,

discovering that Ross had talent, took him into the group. Ross was able to sing in a beautiful soprano voice and he became a female impersonator, using the name "Marjorie". The troups called themselves the "Dumbells" adopting the name from their regimental insignia.



Ross Hamilton dressed in drag!

The first show was staged in the military theatre at Guoy-Servins, outside the town of Poperinghe, Belgium. Much improvisation had to be done in the way of costumes, etc. Quoting

Coliseum asked them to play there. The Dumbells accepted the offer and the show ran there for four weeks.

They continued after the war, with performances in many of the big American cities, and in Canada from Halifax to Vancouver. Hamilton remained with the troupe, now mostly new

faces and with several female performers, until 1930, when he retired. The show folded in 1932.

In 1940, following the outbreak of W.W.II, Ross joined the Army Medical Corps, in Toronto, and dumbfounded the clerk by insisting that his occupation was an "actress!" After the war the show was revived for a time, with one notable performance in 1955 to an enthusiastic audience of over 3000 people in Massey Hall, Toronto.

Lieutenant Ross Hamilton retired to a log cabin in Pleasant Valley, near Brookfield, Nova Scotia, where he spent his remaining years. He died in Camp Hill Hospital, Halifax, September 29, 1965, at the reported age of 76, and is buried with his parents and grandparents, in Bell Gift Cemetery, West New Annan.

(Mr. Kennedy, of Tatamagouche, wrote the above article in 1981. Courtesy Great Village Historical Society).



Harold McLeod and Lela att, Belmont, ready for be the summer of '42. (Pratt



ROSS HAMILTON AS A BC

By Neil M. Morash

Ross Hamilton was a good neighbour of our family for many years and I remember well his beautiful flower gardens, in which

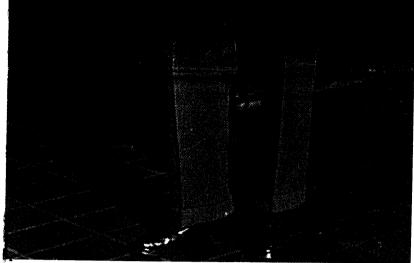
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Gentleman Ross Hamilton, formerly of Great Village, was a member of "The Dumbells," a World War I entertainment group which featured female impersonators. (Photos courtesy Mildred Van Tassel, Brookfield, d the Great Village Historical Society).

Ross Hamilton of "Dumbell" fame

By Roy M. Kennedy

Among the many famous people who claim Colchester as Dumbells fame.

grandmother, Janet 1894. Aitcheson, daughter of William Aitcheson, was born in Dumfries. (Bertha) Cassidy and they had a Scotland, and emigrated with her family of two daughters, and parents, six sisters and two three sons; William, Hedley and brothers, to Nova Scotia in 1834. Ross. William They settled at Millbrook where undertaker in the town of four more children were born. Amherst while Hedley was a His grandfather, Thomas veterinarian in Sackville, New Hamilton, was born at Green Brunswick. Hill, Pictou County, October 23,

They were married on December 17, 1857 and settled at New Annan where Thomas was a their home is one known to many farmer and merchant. He died in - particularly the Canadian service 1887 and his widow removed to men - Ross Hamilton of W.W.I. Pugwash to live with their son, James Edward, where she died in

> James had married Tabatha became

Ross was born in Pugwash and grew up in Amherst. The family



Ross Hamilton dressed in drag!

The first show was staged in the military theatre at Guoy-Servins, outside the town of Poperinghe, Belgium. Much improvisation had to be done in the way of costumes, etc. Quoting Ross, "For our very first show my gown was made of tent canvas...My hat was a helmet covered with canvas, curtains and feathers and my first beads were a rosary." It was a huge success and the cast was increased from eleven to sixteen.

They continued to entertain the troops, sometimes so close to the front lines they would be interrupted by enemy fire. Often the soldiers in their audience would be in action following the show, some being killed only hours later.

A command performance was staged for the King of Belgium; but, in London, England, where they attempted to rent the prestigious Coliseum, they were turned down by the management and were forced to go to the lowly Victoria Palace. However, their show was such a success that on hearing it, the manager of the

with his parents and grandparents, in Bell Gift Cemetery, West New Annan.

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By Neil M. Morash

Ross Hamilton was a good neighbour of our family for many years and I remember well his beautiful flower gardens, in which he took great pride.

He was always dressed in fashionable clothes, colourful jackets, fancy shirts, slacks etc. When viewing athletic events and other outdoor activities, he always carried a "shooting stick", sort of a cane with a built-in leather seat. When he became tired standing, he simply opened the leather seat and sat down.

An unusual man, he also had an unusual pet, a black sheep which followed him everywhere even into houses. Once in awhile, the sheep, not being housebroken would leave small black deposits!

Ross was always willing to lend his talents for local amateur events, putting on his famous "Marjorie" costume and singing songs in a lovely high ten

He liked to come ove house and have my mot the piano while he sang a

One time when he had guests staying at his he came over and borrowed eggs. The guests we outdoors, since it was summer morning. Who went back with the eg proceeded to have a catch with them. It was before all the eggs were and they were back for This time they had th breakfast.

Young girls, including n Helen, always had a cr Ross, and since he convertible car, that was a attraction.

He would get tired of attention after a while a the girls 25 cents apiece home and stop bothering