

Gentleman Ross Hamilton, formerly of Great Village, was a member of the "Dumbbells" World War I entertainment group which featured

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 troupes called themselves the "Dumbbells" 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 Dumbbells 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).

ROSS HAMILTON AS A BOY

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



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



songs in a lovely high tenor voice. He liked to come over to our house and have my mother play the piano while he sang along. One time when he had several guests staying at his house, they came over and borrowed a



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 VanTassel, Brookfield, and the Great Village Historical Society).

Ross Hamilton of "Dumbell" fame

By Roy M. Kennedy

Among the many famous people who claim Colchester as their home is one known to many - particularly the Canadian service men - Ross Hamilton of W.W.I. Dumbells fame.

His grandmother, Janet Aitcheson, daughter of William Aitcheson, was born in Dumfries, Scotland, and emigrated with her parents, six sisters and two brothers, to Nova Scotia in 1834. They settled at Millbrook where four more children were born. His grandfather, Thomas Hamilton, was born at Green Hill, Pictou County, October 23, 1825:

They were married on December 17, 1857 and settled at New Annan where Thomas was a farmer and merchant. He died in 1887 and his widow removed to Pugwash to live with their son, James Edward, where she died in 1894.

James had married Tabatha (Bertha) Cassidy and they had a family of two daughters, and three sons; William, Hedley and Ross. William became an undertaker in the town of Amherst while Hedley was a veterinarian in Sackville, New Brunswick.

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.

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

ROSS HAMILTON AS A B

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 tenor.

He liked to come over to our house and have my mother play the piano while he sang a

One time when he had several guests staying at his home he came over and borrowed some eggs. The guests were sitting outdoors, since it was a summer morning. When he went back with the eggs he proceeded to have a good catch with them. It was before all the eggs were laid and they were back for breakfast. This time they had their breakfast.

Young girls, including my daughter Helen, always had a crush on Ross, and since he had a convertible car, that was a big attraction.

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