A SEVEN-PART LIMITED SERIES

In the Trenches

The Canadian soldiers who put on a dress, and the law that was waiting for them.

WRITTEN/PRODUCED BY **DANIELA BARBOSA**
WET NOSE FILMS
BASED ON THE RESEARCH OF **SARAH WORTHMAN**

In the shadows of the Great War, queer people fought, loved and created, *risking everything to be seen in a world that criminalised them.*

THE PREMISE

In April 1917, a stretcher bearer from Pugwash, Nova Scotia built a dress out of tent canvas, old curtains, pillow feathers and rosary beads, and became Marjorie.

The Canadian Army loved her. Officers posed with her. Army photographers shot her. She was paraded past cheering troops on a wagon and headlined the London Coliseum. And the whole time, under the same Army's regulations, the men in the audience could be court-martialled for who they loved.

In the Trenches is about that contradiction, and about the people on both sides of it. All of them were real. Most of them you have never heard of.



The Dumbells Concert Party arriving at the Corps gathering at Tincques. The two leading ladies on the wagon are Privates Allan Murray and Ross Hamilton.

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THE COMPANY

Ross Douglas Hamilton

No. 9 Field Ambulance, CEF · reg. 530643 · 1892 to 1965

Stretcher bearer. Created the drag persona Marjorie in April 1917 and headlined the Dumbells through the London Coliseum in 1918 and Broadway in 1921. Re-enlisted in the Second World War and was discharged for “reasons other than medical.” Spent the rest of his life in a cabin near Truro, gardening and volunteering at the local theatre.

Capt. Merton Plunkett

35th Battalion, YMCA · Orillia, Ontario · 1888 to 1966

The entertainment officer who formed the 3rd Division's concert party near Vimy in 1917 and ran it as managing director and comedian. Showman and fixer. The man who decided what the Army was allowed to see, and who put Marjorie in front of the entire Canadian Corps.



Studio postcard, inscribed “Ross Douglas Hamilton as Marjorie.”



‘Marjorie’ (R. D. Hamilton) and ‘Marie’ (Allan G. Murray) with their manager, Capt. M. W. Plunkett. Library and Archives Canada · MIKAN 3522918

Ellanore Parker & Murney Pugh

Nursing sisters, CAMC · met 1915, Netheravon House

Life partners who served together through the war. Gas exposure in 1917 left Parker with permanent lung damage. They spent the rest of their lives together and are buried side by side. Parker wrote poetry about the men she treated; her manuscript “Vimy” survives in the Royal BC Archives.

Frederick Lea Hardy

8th Battalion · enlisted at 16 · 1900 to 1917

Arrested in a hop field near Abeele in July 1916 and sentenced to eighteen months' hard labour. Released early because Vimy had left the line short of men. Killed at Hill 70 six weeks later, aged seventeen. No known grave. His name is on the Vimy Memorial.

ALSO IN THE RECORD

Alexander McKenzie · Sylvio Rousseau · Laura Holland · Mildred Forbes · Jo Whitehead · Hugh Pope-Hennessy · Samuel Harding · Charles McDonell

Each one navigating service, identity and survival. Alexander McKenzie, like Hardy, was punished under these laws, sent back to the line, and killed in action in 1917.

THE ARC

I. A BOLD BEGINNING

A comic chase in drag opens the story, then back to the start of the war and Ross's first meeting with Plunkett.

II. PARALLEL LIVES

Ross carries the wounded at the front and finds a stage; Ellanore and Murney build a life inside the hospital wards.

III. BEAUTY AND BRUTALITY

From the Somme to the stages of London, performance becomes both escape and resistance.

IV. TURNING POINTS

Concert tours, a club raid, Hardy's court martial, Ellanore's gassing: choices that change everything.

V. A REUNION THAT ENDURES

A final Christmas gathering, and what courage, identity and friendship actually survive.



"The Dumbells," London Coliseum. Studio photograph by Hana.

AT A GLANCE

FORMAT	GENRE	LANGUAGE
7 × 60′ limited series	Period drama	English, with French and Mi'kmaq
TERRITORY	**STAGE**	**SEEKING**
Nova Scotia · Ontario · UK	Development: series bible and pilot in progress	Development financing and a Canadian broadcaster

COMPARABLES

Fellow Travelers Showtime · 2023	Queer history as prestige limited series. The audience and the awards appetite are proven.
All Quiet on the Western Front Netflix · 2022	Four Academy Awards. The First World War travels, and it travels big.
Benediction 2021	Queer WWI through a poet's life. Our closest tonal cousin.
Testament of Youth 2014	The nursing-sister war, in the register of Ellanore and Murney.
Bomb Girls Global · 2012 to 2013	The Canadian precedent: a homegrown wartime ensemble with a queer lead.

THE ASK

$225,000

Development financing · plus a Canadian broadcaster letter of interest

To deliver the series bible and the pilot script.

STRUCTURE

Built to CMF Development guidelines: 50% of eligible costs to a $200,000 cap, against a broadcaster development fee.

UNDERLYING RIGHTS

Shopping agreement in negotiation with Sarah Worthman for *Queering the Western Front*: her manuscript, research files and archival citations. Option and purchase terms pre-agreed, exercisable on close of development financing.

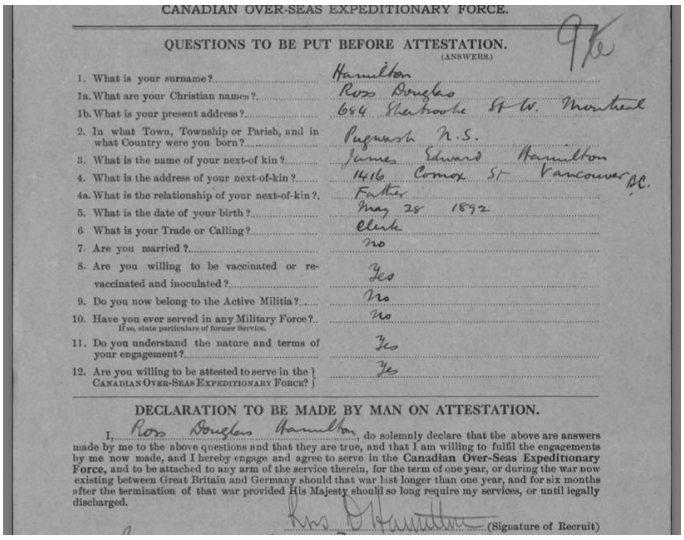
ARCHIVAL IMAGES

To be cleared separately with Library and Archives Canada and the Royal BC Archives. Budgeted in development.

THE RECORD

The series is based on the research of Sarah Worthman: *Queering the Western Front*, her work on LGBTQ2S+ Canadians who served in the First World War, supported by the LGBT Purge Fund. Service records, court-martial files and photographs are held by Library and Archives Canada and the Royal BC Archives.

These people are not composites. The records exist. queeringww1.ca (https://queeringww1.ca/home)



CANADIAN OVER-SEAS EXPEDITIONARY FORCE.

QUESTIONS TO BE PUT BEFORE ATTESTATION.

(ANSWERS.)

1. What is your surname? — Hamilton
1a. What are your Christian names? — Ross Douglas
1b. What is your present address? — 684 Sherbrooke St W. Montreal
2. In what Town, Township or Parish, and in what Country were you born? — Pugwash N.S.
3. What is the name of your next-of kin? — James Edward Hamilton
4. What is the address of your next-of-kin? — 1416 Comox St Vancouver BC.
4a. What is the relationship of your next-of-kin? — Father
5. What is the date of your birth? — May 28 1892
6. What is your Trade or Calling? — Clerk
7. Are you married? — No
8. Are you willing to be vaccinated or re-vaccinated and inoculated? — Yes
9. Do you now belong to the Active Militia? — No
10. Have you ever served in any Military Force? If so, state particulars of former Service. — No
11. Do you understand the nature and terms of your engagement? — Yes
12. Are you willing to be attested to serve in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force? — Yes

DECLARATION TO BE MADE BY MAN ON ATTESTATION.

I, Ross Douglas Hamilton, do solemnly declare that the above are answers made by me to the above questions and that they are true, and that I am willing to fulfil the engagements by me now made, and I hereby engage and agree to serve in the Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force, and to be attached to any arm of the service therein, for the term of one year, or during the war now existing between Great Britain and Germany should that war last longer than one year, and for six months after the termination of that war provided His Majesty should so long require my services, or until legally discharged.

Ross D Hamilton (Signature of Recruit)

Attestation paper, Canadian Over-Seas Expeditionary Force. Ross Douglas Hamilton, No. 530643.



Reception tent for stretcher cases. The work Ross did before Marjorie.

Canadian official photograph O.910



The troupe in khaki: Capt. Merton Wesley Plunkett, manager, with Ptes. Ross Douglas Hamilton and Allan G. Murray among the company.

Library and Archives Canada · MIKAN 3522922

Wet Nose Films

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Wet Nose Films

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