

## HARRY HAMILTON'S STORY

Henry (Harry) Russell Hamilton was born at Howies Cottages, Westlake in the Federal Capital Territory on 25 July, 1927. The attending midwife was Nurse Britten (later Mrs Gus Phillips). The doctor was Dr Findlay who remained the family GP until his death. Harry's sister, Margaret Galloway Alston Hamilton (now McAuslan) was born three years later on 2 December, 1930 in Crown Street Hospital in Sydney.

Harry's parents, Alexander (Alex) Hamilton and Jean (nee Meikle) were born in Rutherglen Scotland - Alex on 10 May, 1895. At age fourteen Alex left school and was apprenticed to his father who owned a coachmaking business. He enlisted in the armed services in World War I and during this period Alex's father died and the family business closed. Upon return to civilian life after the war Alex worked as a painter and decorator.

Alex's aunt and uncle, Mary and David Gardner migrated to Canberra. It is probable that David Gardner worked for contractor Howie and lived in one of Howies Cottages. It is also possible that this family connection with Canberra was the reason for Alex's migration to Australia. He sailed on the *SS Berima* in 1923 and arrived in Canberra in the autumn of the same year. His first home was at Molonglo Tradesmen's Camp and later at Howies. He was employed on the construction work of the Hotel Canberra and later on old Parliament House.

In 1925 Jean Meikle travelled to Australia and probably stayed with the Gardners until she and Alexander were married at St John the Baptist Church at Reid on 15 October, 1925. Following their marriage they moved into a Howies Cottage. When Jean arrived at Queanbeyan Railway Station and had her first sight of the Canberra/Queanbeyan District - she described the alighting as *like walking into the set of a Wild West Movie!* She missed her beloved Scotland but was happy to be with her new husband and described her new homeland as *a great place for drying clothes.*

Like all migrants Alex and Jean sought the company of fellow countrymen and social life revolved around them and the early days of the Burns Club. Alex, for example, along with his Uncle David and others met on 13 October, 1924 in the Mess Room of Howies Hostel Camp *to consider the advisability of forming a Burns Club on Federal Territory.* This was duly carried out and in 1925 Alex was elected secretary of the club. He was also a keen soccer player and Captained the Burns Club Soccer Team. Harry, his son, has a medal inscribed *FCTSF Assn. Winners League and KO 1926. Burns Club. A. Hamilton.* Both Alex and Jean enjoyed singing and sang in concerts at Acton, Causeway, Westridge and Friendly Society Halls.

Alex's mother migrated to Australia with four children. They arrived on Australia Day, 1927. Alex's two brothers, Harry and Bob came to Canberra and stayed with Jean and Alex at Howies Cottages. Both worked in the building industry. Bob stayed only a short time. Harry stayed on and played soccer with the Burns Club. Eventually he too returned to Sydney. Life during that period was recalled as *good times* and the only mention Jean made of shopping in the *city* was walking across the rough paddocks to JB Youngs store in Kingston with Harry in the pram.

During the Depression Years work in Canberra dried up. Jean, Alex and son Harry moved to Sydney where Alex sought work. Their daughter Margaret was born in Sydney on 2 December, 1930. In 1934 the family returned to Canberra at which time Alex began work with the Department of Interior as a painter. He continued in this work until his retirement in 1960. He was made a Life Member of the Painters and Decorators Union. Both children attended Telopea Park and Canberra High Schools.



This time family moved into a house in Kingston and in 1937 moved to *The Cottage* at St Andrew's Church. Migrant Scots families were welcomed into their home at *The Cottage* as they themselves had been welcomed at Westlake. Jean Hamilton died at *The Cottage* 27 December, 1962. Alex stayed on until 1966 when he moved to Barton. He died on 2 August, 1970. Harry and his sister, Margaret live in Canberra.<sup>1</sup>

Left: Harry and his mother at Howie's cottages.

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<sup>1</sup> Some of the names listed at the first meeting to form the Burns Club are the same or similar to those mentioned in *Builders of Canberra 1909-1929* (lived at Howies). They are, John Brown, Donald Dinnerville, David Gardner, Alex Hamilton, William Kelly, Thomas McCulloch, James Millar, Christopher Patrick, Alex Peacock, Walter Scott and James Young. (Reference: *Canberra and the Scots, The Canberra Highland Society and Burns Club - Its First Seventy One Years*.) Nick Guoth is currently researching the history of ACT Soccer and has kindly given the lists of names of the Burns Club Teams: 16.7.1927 - McNeil, Morgan, Richie, H Hamilton, Cruikshanks, O'Keefe, A Hamilton, Cunningham, McCallum, McGivan. 18.6.1927 - McGregor, B McNevan, McCallum, Scott, Ball, Jones, McNicol, Lennox Bell, Hamilton, Young. Another team list included - Dinnerville and the photograph of the team owned by Harry Hamilton Jr includes the names of Haines and Dave Gardner in addition to H & A Hamilton.