

WILLIAM ERNEST HAMILTON

1902 - 1985

William Hamilton was born on March 15, 1902, in Guelph and attended Guelph Schools: Central, King Edward, and the GCVI. He began his studies at the GCVI in 1915, when he was 13 years old. His extra-curricular activities were mainly sports: football, basketball and baseball. He graduated from the GCVI in 1920.

After graduation, Hamilton went to work at the Bank of Commerce, and then accepted a job in sales at the Guelph Soap Co. Later he attended the Ontario Agricultural College (OAC) in Guelph, and took over his father's Sun Life Insurance Company after his death. In 1926 Hamilton became the secretary of the Guelph Association, and at the same time became secretary of the Guelph Canadian Club. On June 30, 1928 he married Jean Irene Clark, and together they had five children.

At the age of 22 he became a member of the YMCA board of directors, and its president in 1929-1930. In 1934 he became chair of the House Improvement Loan plan, and the following year was the campaign chair of the Boy Scouts' financial appeal. From 1935 to 1936 he organized the Wellington County Advanced Registry Yorkshire Breeder's Association, and along with Hugh Guthrie, established Hamilton-Guthrie Farms. He also served as president of the Guelph Curling Club from 1937 to 1938, served on the Guelph Board of Trade (Chamber of Commerce), and was elected its president for two years.

In 1939 Hamilton was an organizer and campaign chair of the \$30,000 Red Cross wartime appeal. The same year he organized the war savings campaign in homes, stores and factories throughout Guelph. He also organized the Community Chest group which coordinated the major charities in Guelph. In 1942 Hamilton joined the 63rd reserve battery as a lieutenant and gunner.

In 1949 Hamilton joined the Conservative Party Cabinet, and in 1953 he was elected to the board of directors of Homewood Sanitarium, later becoming president. In May of 1955, Hamilton accepted an invitation to become the first vice-chair of the Hydro-Electric Power Commission of Ontario. He was also sworn in as Minister of Reform Institutions and a member of the Treasury Board. In 1961 he was elected mayor of Guelph. After his term as mayor, he served as chair of the planning committee of the Board of Governors of the University of Guelph from 1964 to 1974. He also served as a member of the Grand River Conservation Authority from 1969 to 1972.

William Ernest Hamilton died on June 8, 1985 at his home in Guelph. Hamilton received the title "Mr. Guelph" for his service to the city in politics, and in community affairs. W. E. Hamilton Park and a wing of the Homewood Sanitarium were named after him for his outstanding contributions to Guelph and to Canadian society.

Jeff Haines
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