

# Hazel Gwinnup and the Six Royal Hussars – a brass sextet in early 19<sup>th</sup> century America

*Gavin Holman, 4 April 2021*

Hazel Marie Gwinnup was born on 12 May 1892 in Indianapolis, Indiana, to Charles A. Gwinnup (1868-1962) and Alice Margaret Slocum (1874-1904). She had two brothers and a sister.

Not much is known about her early life, but there were indications that her home was not a happy one. She turned to music to help her escape that household at an early age. In the 1900 US census, she lived with her parents at 2714 Brighton Boulevard, Indianapolis. She became proficient on the trombone and the saxophone - if you played multiple instruments you were paid more. In the 1910 census she was listed as still living with her parents, now at 1627 Arsenal Avenue, Indianapolis, and her occupation given as “musician in the theatre”.



However, by this time, she had joined Helen May Butler’s Ladies’ Brass Band, as a trombonist – probably from 1909 onwards. She remained with the Butler band until it disbanded, in 1913, when it became no longer economical to keep the band on tour on the road.

Hazel is seen here, on the right of the picture, with her trombone, in 1910, aged 18.



*Helen May Butler's Ladies' Brass Band, 1910*



*Helen May Butler's Band at the Chautauq, Sabetha, Kansas, 1909*



*Helen May Butler's Ladies' Brass Band*

Hazel then joined up with Kate Mullini and four other girls, to form the "Six Royal Hussars", a brass sextet using trumpets, cornets, trombones, saxophones, piano and vocals, together with hussar-type uniforms, and started to tour with their act in the new 1914/15 vaudeville circuit season.



*The Six Royal Hussars*

Kate Mullini (born in 1891, of Irish parents) was the leader of the troupe, but she was rarely mentioned as such. The other girls were Martha Rogers, Celeste Stevenson, Ethel Grace, and Lucile Farwell. Sadly, nothing more is known at present about the five other girls.



*The Six Royal Hussars – Hazel on far right*

The Six Royal Hussars carried on touring the USA for the next six years, eventually ceasing at the end of June 1921. Sometime prior to that, probably in November 1920, at Memphis, Tennessee, Hazel met her future husband, Harry Grady Walker, who was in the orchestra pit and she was on stage. When her reed broke, he gave her his spare, and the rest, as they say, is history. They married on 15 June 1922, at Memphis, Tennessee, and she did not go back on the stage, instead raising a family of her own. She died on 9 March 1975, at Searcy, Arkansas.

Kate Mullini carried on with her Royal Hussars, touring again in September 1922, this time as a quintet. The *Five Royal Hussars* were still touring in 1925.



*A promotional photo of five of the girls, Hazel 2<sup>nd</sup> left, given to her boyfriend, Harry*

### **Hazel's appearances with the "Six Royal Hussars":**

- October 1914 – Empress Theatre, Des Moines, Iowa – *"vocalists and instrumentalist of the first rank – stunning in appearance, being attired in dashing military costumes, and their performance throughout reflects the utmost skill as musicians"*
- November 1914 - New Grand Theatre, Minneapolis, Minnesota
- November 1914 – Strand Theatre, Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada
- Bijou Theatre, Lansing, Michigan, February 1915 – *"clever musicians, beautiful costumes, pretty maidens" – "... nature has been unusually prodigal with them in the matter of pulchritude and rich costumes have augmented what nature couldn't improve upon. There are six of them – count 'em – blondes and brunettes, calculated to suit any fancy or taste. What they haven't got in their musical repertoire isn't harmony. Finished musicians all, correct technique, good looks and swell costumes combine to make the act one of the best ever."*
- March 1915 – Lyric Theatre, Lincoln, Nebraska
- April 1915 – New Majestic Theatre, Houston, Texas
- April 1915 – Majestic Theatre, Little Rock, Arkansas
- May 1915 - Empire Theatre, Tulsa, Oklahoma- *"... in a melange of music and song - special scenery"*
- June 1915 - Federal League Park Hippodrome, Chicago, Illinois
- July 1915 - Six Royal Hussar Girls (novelty musical group) - Grand Forks - North Dakota State Fair
- August 1915 – The County Fair, Belvidere, Illinois
- October 1915 – Grand Theatre, Iola, Kansas
- October 1915 – Empress Theatre, Kearney, Nebraska
- October 1915 - Grand Theatre, Moberly, Missouri



*The Six Royal Hussars, October 1915*

- November 1915 - Star Theatre, Columbia, Missouri
- November 1915 – The Lagniappe Fair, St Joseph, Missouri – “... girls handsomely gowned, playing all kinds of brass instruments. Their costumes are handsome and elaborate, and they have numerous changes of wardrobe. They play trumpets, drums, bugles, saxophones, trombones and cornets.”
- December 1915 - Empire Theatre, Rock Island, Illinois – “The Six Royal Hussar Girls close the bill. They have a beautiful act, in which several kinds of brass instruments are played. One member of the company sings while accompanied by the band.”
- December 1915 – Orpheum Theatre, Muscatine, Iowa
- December 1915 - Hippodrome, Keokuk, Iowa - "The Musical Maids from Melody Lane" – “These young ladies studied in Europe for years, being trained to master musical instruments” - “... are artists known all over this country and Europe, made a tremendous hit with their audience. They use piano, violin, cello, saxophone, cornet, harp, etc.”
- January 1916 - Sandusky Theatre, Sandusky, Ohio- "... direct from the Winter Garden Revue, New York"
- January 1916 – Orpheum Theatre, Lima, Ohio – “Instrumentalists of consummate skill”. They also played for the Lima Rotarian luncheon meeting.
- February 1916 – Family Theatre, Rochester, New York – “a symphony of music and song”
- March 1916 – New Butler Theatre, Butler, Pennsylvania
- March 1916 - Odeon Theatre, Clarksburg, West Virginia



*The Six Royal Hussars, January 1916*

- May 1916 - Bijou Theatre, Benton Harbor, Michigan
- July 1916 - Electric Theatre, St Joseph, Missouri
- August 1916 - Vaudeville Xtraordinary, McAlester, Oklahoma
- August 1916 - Wonderland Park, Wichita, Kansas
- August 1916 - Riverside Park, Hutchinson, Kansas
- September 1916 - Great Audubon County Fair, Iowa
- October 1916 - Folly Vaudeville, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
- November 1916 - Prince Theatre, Houston, Texas - *"Musicians de luxe"*
- November 1916 - Empire Theatre, Montgomery, Alabama
- December 1916 - Grand Theatre, Knoxville, Tennessee
- January 1917 - Unique Theatre, Minneapolis, Minnesota
- April 1917 - Empress Theatre, Lansing, Michigan
- May 1917 - American Theatre, New York City
- June 1917 - Scolly Square Olympia, Boston, Massachusetts- *"America's foremost lady instrumentalists"*
- July 1917 - Lyric Theatre, Atlanta, Georgia - *"six sisters who use cornets and horns modelled after the type that the Angel Gabriel is expected to use when he pays his long-prophesied visit. On looks the visitors have little claim to distinction, but their instrumental selections are well chosen, and the art in the use of the horns that is displayed makes the act enjoyable."*
- August 1917 - Davis Theatre, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania - *"Miniature Sousa Band"*
- November 1917 - Loew's Orpheum, Boston, Massachusetts
- November 1917 - Bijou Theatre, Fall River, Massachusetts
- December 1917 - St James Theatre, Boston, Massachusetts
- December 1917 - Loew's Hippodrome, Baltimore, Maryland

## Odeon Theatre

---

**BIG VAUDEVILLE SHOW**  
 Monday, Tuesday and Wednesday  
**THE ROYAL HUSSARS**  
 6—Beautiful Girls—6  
 In Singing and Instrumental Musical Act  
**MAJOR JAMES DOYLE**  
 The Famous Lilliputian, in his Funny Girl Stories  
 and Comic Songs.  
 Every Thursday—"THE GIRL AND THE GAME"

- December 1917 - Loew's American Theatre, New York City
- January 1918 – Avon Theatre, Rochester, New York
- January 1918 – Olympic Theatre, Buffalo, New York – *“six attractive young ladies offering a musical novelty of unusual merit. Each one is an instrumentalist of skill, and their repertoire of numbers is exceptionally well balanced. They also make several changes of beautiful wardrobe.”*
- January 1918 – Loew’s Vaudeville Theatre, Montreal, Canada
- February 1918 - Loew's Bijou Theatre, Birmingham, Alabama
- February 1918 - Loew's Grand Theatre, Atlanta, Georgia
- March 1918 – the Opera House, New Brunswick, New Jersey
- April 1918 - Loew's Fulton Theatre, New York City
- May 1918 - Scolly Square Olympia, Boston, Massachusetts
- August 1919 - Loew's Grand Theatre, Atlanta, Georgia
- August 1919 - Loew's Bijou Theatre, Birmingham, Alabama



*The Six Royal Hussars, August 1919*

- August 1919 - Loew's Lyceum, Memphis, Tennessee - *"a sextet of pretty young women musicians who will render both classical and popular selections on a number of instruments, including the trombone, saxophone, cornet, and others. They also have several vocal numbers."*
- August 1919 - Loew's Empress, Kansas City, Missouri - *"Instrumental and vocal harmony"*
- August 1919 - Loew's Garrick Theatre, St Louis, Missouri

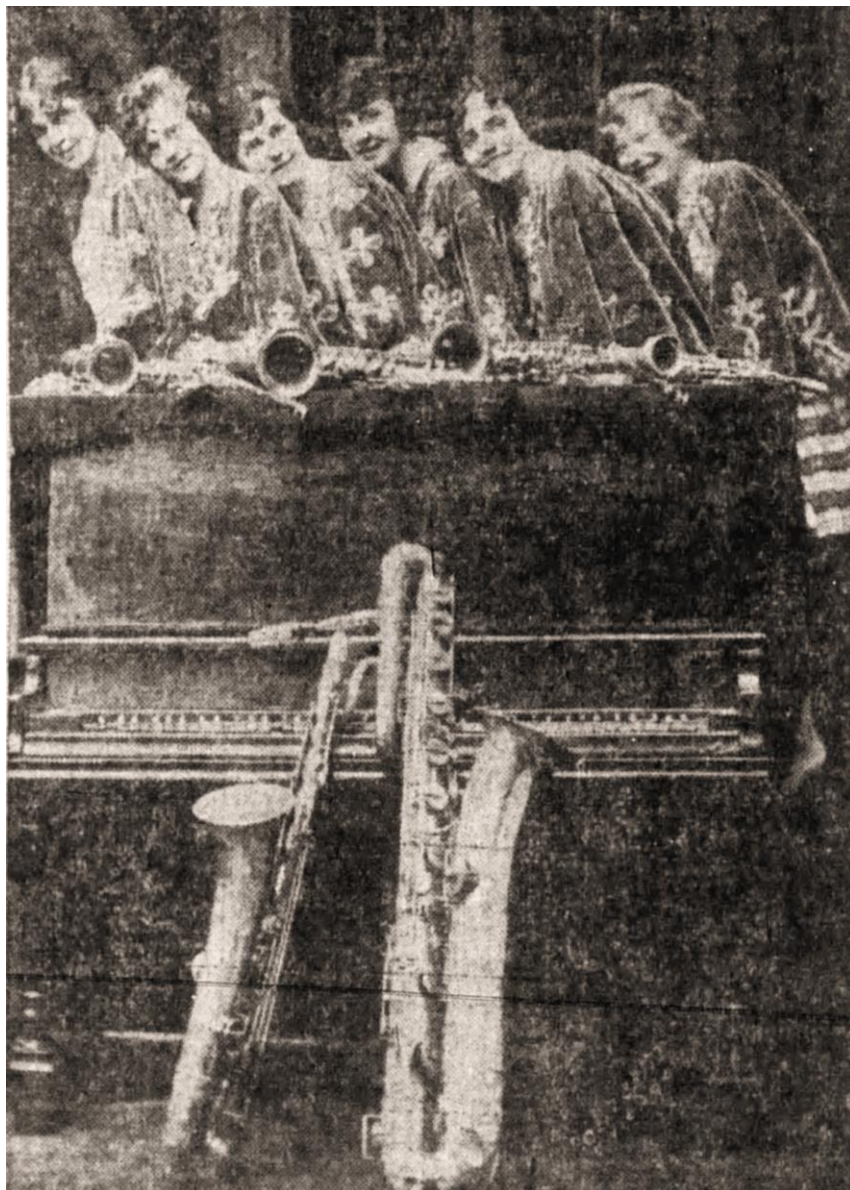


- September 1919 - Jones, Linick & Schaefer's McVicker's Continuous Vaudeville, Chicago, Illinois
- September 1919 – Colonial Theatre, Detroit, Michigan – “... an artistic melange. It's the right use of the adjective. The sextet tops the bill, and the music and singing of the girls form a luminous spot in a program that is all up and down the scale in merit.”
- September 1919 - Loew's Lyceum, Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania
- September 1919 - Columbia Theatre, St Louis, Missouri
- October 1919 - Cosmos Theatre, Washington DC - "*The Hussars, a galaxy of robust young women, with much artistry in instrumental and vocal numbers, make a striking headliner and blow their trumpets and beat their drums like veterans, while in the more artistic numbers they give a sympathetic shading to their selections that make them particularly beautiful*"
- October 1919 - Loew's American Theatre, New York City
- November 1919 - Empire Theatre, Fall River, Massachusetts
- November 1919 – St James Theatre, Boston, Massachusetts
- November 1919 - Loew's Metropolitan Theatre, Brooklyn, New York
- December 1919 - Palace Theatre, Hartford, Connecticut
- January 1920 - Loew's Hippodrome, Baltimore, Maryland
- January 1920 – Hippodrome Theatre, Pottsville, Pennsylvania
- January 1920 – Palace Theatre, Olean, New York
- February 1920 – Hippodrome, Spokane, Washington
- March 1920 - Columbia Hip Vaudeville, Vancouver, British Columbia - "*A Sextette of Dainty Femininity in a Syncopation of Music and Song*"
- March 1920 - Loew's Palace Hip, Seattle, Washington - "*A sextette of dainty, fascinating girls in a hodge-podge of syncopation*"



*The girls with other vaudeville players, Tracy, California, April 1920 – Hazel 5<sup>th</sup> from left*

- March 1920 - Loew's Hippodrome, Portland, Oregon - *"A half dozen delectable damsels dash onto the stage in a hodge-podge of syncopation that makes their act a welcome and diverting one. The sextet is garbed as hussars in snappy military effect, and each girl is picturesque and pretty. Their music is snappy, too, and of a military flavor at times. They play trombones, trumpets, cornets, saxophones, and one clever maid at the piano sings charmingly. The girls are Hazel Gwinnup, Martha Rogers, Celest Stevenson, Ethel Grace, Lucile Farwell, and Kate Mulini. They are all good musicians, and the act is a real treat and much applauded."*
- March 1920 – Majestic Theatre, Chico, California
- March 1920 – Hippodrome, Sacramento, California
- March 1920 – Hippodrome, San Francisco, California
- April 1920 – Wigwam Theatre, San Francisco, California
- April 1920 – Modesto Theatre, Modesto, California
- April 1920 – Bakersfield Theatre, Bakersfield, California
- April 1920 – Hippodrome, Los Angeles, California



*The Hussars, November 1920*

- May 1920 – Casino Theatre, Salt Lake City, Utah
- May 1920 – Rialto Theatre, Lincoln, Nebraska
- June 1920 – Neenah Theatre, Menasha, Wisconsin
- June 1920 – Unique Theatre, Eau Claire, Wisconsin
- November 1920 - Loew's Grand Theatre, Atlanta, Georgia
- November 1920 - Loew's Bijou Theatre, Birmingham, Alabama
- November 1920 - Loew's State Theatre, Memphis, Tennessee
- November 1920 - Loew's Vendome Theatre, Nashville, Tennessee
- November 1920 – Loew's Vodvil Theatre, Pine Bluff, Arkansas
- November 1920 – Grand Opera House, Shreveport, Louisiana
- November 1920 – Rapides Theatre, Alexandria, Louisiana
- November 1920 – Prince Theatre, Houston, Texas
- November 1920 – Princess Theatre, San Antonio, Texas
- December 1920 – Liberty Theatre, Oklahoma City, Oklahoma
- December 1920 – Loew's Garden Theatre, Kansas City, Missouri
- December 1920 – Loew's Garrick Theatre, St Louis, Missouri
- January 1921 – Casino Theatre, San Francisco, California
- January 1921 – Hippodrome, Spokane, Washington
- February 1921 - Loew's Hippodrome, Portland, Oregon
- February 1921 - Hippodrome, Sacramento, California
- February 1921 – Loew's State Theatre, Stockton, California



*The last photo of the Six Royal Hussars, February 1921*

- March 1921 – Loew's Hippodrome, San Francisco, California
- March 1921 - Loew's State Theatre, Long Beach, California
- March 1921 – Loew's State Theatre, Oakland, California

- March 1921 – Strand Theatre, Modesto, California
- March 1921 – Loew’s Hippodrome, Fresno, California
- March 1921 – Hippodrome, Los Angeles, California
- March 1921 – Loew’s State Theatre, Long Beach, California
- April 1921 - Casino Theatre, Salt Lake City, Utah
- April 1921 - Wysor Grand Theatre, Muncie, Indiana
- April 1921 – Luna Theatre, Logansport, Indiana – *“six girls demonstrating that ladies can play brass instruments equally as good as the men. Practically every horn known is used during the act. One number in which six saxophones ranging from ‘baby’ size to one almost as large as the girl playing it is especially good.”*
- May 1921 - Jones, Linick & Schaefer's Rialto Continuous Vaudeville, Chicago, Illinois
- May 1921 – Fay’s Theatre, Rochester, New York – *“the girls who made jazz music famous”*
- June 1921 - Loew's American Theatre, New York City
- June 1921 - Empire Theatre, Fall River, Massachusetts
- June 1921 – Orpheum, Boston, Massachusetts
- June 1921 - Loew's Metropolitan Theatre, Brooklyn, New York