

## An Alpine History Mystery – Solved!

### Who Was Alpine's Star of Stage & Screen?

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Were you able to solve our History Mystery and identify the real name of the movie and theater star that lived in Alpine and went by the stage name Julian Eltinge? This star of stage and screen convincingly played many female roles in Vaudeville, on Broadway and in silent films from 1904 to 1941. The given name for this most accomplished thespian and movie star was William Julian Dalton. Yes, Bill Dalton played the role of all those lovely ladies and earned quite a reputation doing it!

Are you shocked? Surprised? Perhaps an explanation will help. In the early days of theater, it was customary for men to dress and play the part of women on stage. Although this custom had relaxed by 1890's, it was still quite well accepted for men to portray women in the theater. And so it was that Bill Dalton, at the young age of 10, got his first acting job as a player in the Boston Cadets Revue. His sterling performance here led to other roles each building on the previous until he was the most widely sought after female impersonator in the business. In fact, he is the only known female impersonator to have a Broadway theater named for him.



In 1923 Bill Dalton moved to Alpine with plans to build a "dude ranch" or a resort that would be "A Mecca for Artists, Writers and all those desiring the last word in Mountain Resorts". On his property at 2690 South Grade Road, he built a home with a huge swimming pool, but had to abandon his plans when the Great Depression and loss of acting jobs nearly wiped him out. His last starring role on the silver screen was in the 1925 film classic *Madame Behave*, where he played both the leading male and female roles. Eltinge was so strongly stereotyped as a female impersonator that by the 1930's, when female impersonations had lost their popularity, it became impossible for him to land a job in Hollywood. To stay afloat, Bill Dalton had to liquidate some of his holdings and go back to the stage. Tragically, during a 1941 show at a night club in New York, Bill Dalton became ill and died in his apartment ten days later at age 60.

Carol Morrison, president of the Alpine Historical Society, tells us that "When Bill Dalton, a.k.a. Julian Eltinge, died, Alpine friends affectionately remembered him as a manly man who entertained the community at the Woman's Club and walked around town greeting people in his overalls. He was loved and highly respected in our mountain community and was known as a good man."