

O T T A W A ' S  
**BRITANNIA**

**Eva Taylor • James Kennedy**

**Britannia Historical Association**

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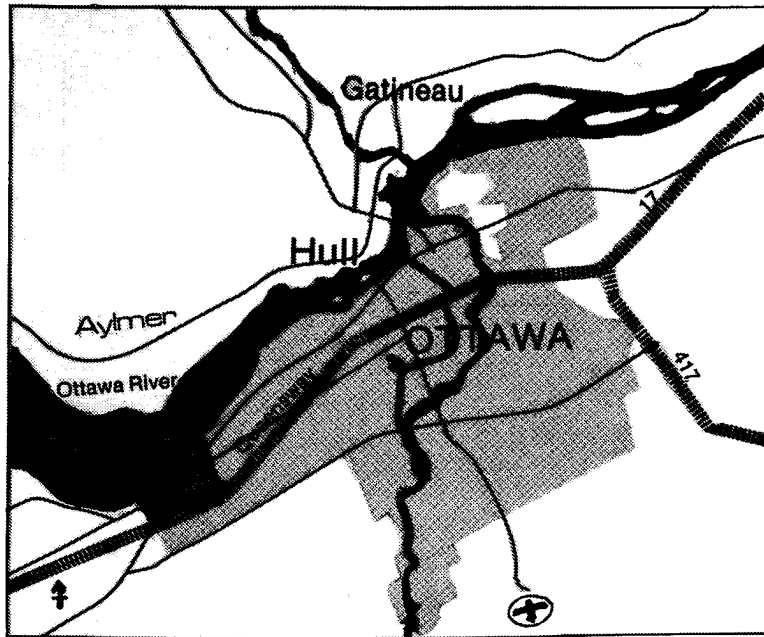
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### **Foreword...**

Britannia is a diverse riverside neighbourhood in the far west end of the City of Ottawa. The area referred to as Britannia in this history is the same as the City's Britannia Ward today, that is, the area between the Western Parkway, the western city limits, the Ottawa River and the Queensway (Highway 417).

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*To the people of Britannia*



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**1613-1869**  
**The Beginnings**

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**1613 - 1869**

## **The Beginnings**

The Ottawa River valley was once the home of Indians and French fur traders. The French Government claimed this part of the New World for itself in the sixteenth century. Once the French saw the wealth to be gained from the seemingly unlimited natural resources in their colony, they wanted to establish a permanent base on the St. Lawrence River. They sent Samuel de Champlain to explore the vast interior to help make the imperial goals come true. Champlain's voyage up the Ottawa River in 1613 in pursuit of his task is the first attempt by non-Indians to travel this route.

Champlain's journey must have been frustrating. As he and his party paddled upriver, they encountered the Chaudière Falls and other obstructions on the river. After portaging these falls, they met up with the Remic Rapids. A few more miles beyond these, at a narrowing of the river, there lay the Deschênes Rapids, a ridge of limestone crossing the river and creating a gradual fall of about nine feet.<sup>1</sup> Once Champlain had made his way around the rapids by land along the banks, he was probably relieved by the sight of the long, broad lake that followed. Lake Deschênes offered Champlain and his crew several trouble-free miles of canoeing.

The Algonquin Indians occupied the banks of the Ottawa long before the French had to come to terms with the Chaudière and the nearby rapids. An Indian trail is believed to have existed between Lake Deschênes and the Rideau River at Black Rapids.<sup>2</sup> At one time, remnants of a wharf could be seen at the head of the **Deschênes** Rapids near the present site of the Britannia Yacht Club. This was likely either a portaging point bypassing the rapids or one end of a route between the Ottawa and Rideau Rivers in the days before any thought was given to a canal bypassing the Rideau Falls where the Rideau entered the Ottawa.

The Indians had also long been settled on the opposite side of the Ottawa River across from what became Britannia. Both sides of the river immediately above the Deschênes Rapids served as points where river travellers took to the banks and made their way around the white waters.<sup>3</sup> Partly because of this feature, Britannia's growth paralleled in certain ways the development of Aylmer, its counterpart on the other side of the river. A rivalry between the two places was being shaped by their like roles in river transportation.

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After New France fell to the British in 1760, and after the British subsequently lost their New England colonies, newcomers arrived who changed the destiny of Eastern Ontario, then mostly unsettled. Anti-revolutionary residents of the American colonies fled to the British territory north of them. Compensation for their loyalty, or at least for making the northern colonies their new home, took the form of land grants from the Crown. The children of Loyalists were also entitled to free lots of land upon reaching adulthood.

Before any extensive granting could take place, the yet unsurveyed territory recently acquired by treaty from the Indians, had to be divided into readily disposable parcels of land. Upper Canada, as it was then, was surveyed into townships which were in turn divided into long strips of land or concessions. Each concession was then divided into lots. Concessions were separated from one another by allowances for roads. At intervals of about a mile, sideroad allowances were placed between lots to join concession roads. To illustrate, in the Britannia part of Nepean, Carling Avenue and Baseline Road were originally concession roads laid out by surveyors in the early nineteenth century, and Pinecrest Road and Woodroffe Avenue were sideroads. In Nepean and other townships, rectangular lots of 200 acres were set aside for granting purposes, although the lots north of Carling were not always that size because they fronted on the river. Two out of seven lots were also reserved for the use of the Crown and the Protestant Clergy and could be leased from them for short periods. (Map I)

When it was time for children of Loyalists to receive their promised grants of land, most of the lots along the St. Lawrence River, where many of their parents had settled, had been allocated. The Crown turned to the townships farther away from the settled areas. Grants of 200 acres came with the provision that the grantees already in the province were expected to settle and improve their new landholdings. This, however, was not strictly enforced.

Nepean was one township where land was granted to children of Loyalists. In the early years of the nineteenth century, the south shore of the Ottawa River at Deschênes Rapids was granted to people like Eunice and Mary Twohey, daughters of a Loyalist who had served in the King's Rangers Regiment. They received Lots 20 and 21, in Concession Two of the Ottawa Front, situated on either side of what is now Pinecrest Road.<sup>4</sup> William, son of James Forsyth of Cornwall, gained title to the waterfront Lot 21, Concession One where Britannia Filtration Plant is now. Tamer Wright, a married

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daughter of Daniel Burritt of Augusta Township, was granted the lands where Britannia Village came to be.

These names are of no lasting importance to the history of Britannia. Like many Loyalist grantees, they probably never saw their land grants. Some of them would not have been very impressed if they had. The low-lying land along the shores of the shallow Britannia and Graham's Bay was marshy and thickly wooded. The peninsula, where Britannia Village was later developed, was low-lying. The land rose steeply behind this level stretch to the heights, an area of rich, well-drained clay-based soil.

The actual settlement of this part of the Ottawa Valley proceeded slowly after 1800. The earliest settlement took place on the Lower Canada side. Philemon Wright, a New England farmer, attempted to establish an agricultural community above the Gatineau River in the first decades of the nineteenth century which later became Hull.<sup>5</sup> On the Nepean side, Ira Honeywell, son of a Loyalist, ventured to locate and settle on the free land that he had received from his father, Rice Honeywell, totalling a thousand acres. A few other families joined Honeywell early in the century.

The first settlement that affected the growth of the Ottawa Front concessions of Nepean Township was situated many miles from it. The village of Richmond was planned as a central core of one of several military settlements promoted by the colonial government to provide settlers reward the officers and men for their services, and provide this part of Upper Canada with trained soldiers in the event of a repeat of the War of 1812. When the 100th Regiment was disbanded in 1818, its officers and men were given land grants in that area.

Richmond was 15 miles from the Ottawa River and had no access route to it. In order to reach their new landholdings, the newcomers landed immediately below the Chaudière at a point that became known as Richmond Landing. The women and children camped at the landing while the men cut a road to the new settlement, passing close by Britannia Bay.<sup>6</sup>

In 1820, the newly-blazed Richmond Road was a "miserable road".<sup>7</sup> The stumps were not removed when it was built, and there were no ditches into which surface water could flow.<sup>8</sup> It soon became, however, a route of some importance to settlement along the way since it was the main corridor through Nepean Township before railroads appeared on the scene. (Map II)

There was substantial settlement along Richmond Road before the building of the Rideau Canal between Lake Ontario and the Ottawa River. Between 1818 and the early 1830s, a community of fairly prosperous farmers grew in the Britannia area. Among the most prominent of them was the Bell family whose patriarch, William Bell, emigrated from County Monaghan, Ireland, in 1818. In time, Bell acquired 600 acres of good land between the bay and what is now Baseline Road and became the largest landowner in the Britannia area.<sup>9</sup> Bell set up a tavern on Richmond Road where the present Bell home, Fairfields, is situated. Prosperity came quickly to Bell, who replaced the log tavern in the 1840s with a stone one. William sold 200 acres of his land to each of his sons, George and John. The riverfront farm went to another son, Robert. The remainder was left to his widow, Elizabeth nee Scrivens in 1864. George Bell's property consisted of Lot 17, Concession One, at the bay, and half of Lot 18, Concession Two. This farm was sold in 1873 to Thomas and William Graham, for whom Graham's Bay was named.<sup>10</sup> John Bell's property on Richmond Road and the farms of widow Elizabeth and her sons, William N. and R.A. Bell, remained intact over this period. The stone house was consumed by the fire that ravaged much of the west part of Carleton County in 1870, but it was soon rebuilt. (Maps IV & V)

The Magees were another longstanding Britannia farming family. Charles Magee settled there shortly after the Bells, possibly in 1820.<sup>11</sup> He was active in local matters; at various times in the 1840s, he was poundkeeper, pathmaster and township councillor. A tavern was also operated on his property, only a mile away from Bell's but closer to Bytown. Charles' son, Robert, managed the tavern after his father's death until the 1860s. Later, Hugh Sparks operated the tavern. James Magee, another son, rented property from John LeBreton Ross, a descendant of Captain John LeBreton, and farmed further east along Richmond Road.

The Honeywells gradually sold some of their large grant of land to new settlers. Rice Honeywell bought the land east of the Bells and west of the intersection of Richmond and the sideroad that became Pinecrest from the original Loyalist grantee in 1809. This was sold to Ira Honeywell, who in turn sold 100 acres to each of recent settlers, Edward Watson and Henry Hare. Rice Honeywell also helped establish Bernard Hughes on the other side of Pinecrest in 1831. Hughes was considered a man with "a large family peace-

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ably disposed, avoiding the Shiners and mixing themselves up in no quarrels.”<sup>12</sup> Hughes erected a homestead on the site of the present Britannia United Church. Nearby, Peter Campbell bought 50 acres from John LeBreton in 1834 and built a stone house there. At various times, Campbell was a pathmaster and assessor for Nepean Township.

The land that these farmers tilled may have accounted for their long stay in Nepean and their eventual prosperity. Reverend William Bell, the Presbyterian minister at Perth, while on a journey to Bytown in 1833, figured that “most of the land was excellent, and only wanted improvement.”<sup>13</sup> In a report on agriculture in Carleton County of 1855 it was noted that “there (were) some good farms to the westward on the Richmond Road, which (were) well farmed, worth going miles to see, and excellent crops raised, although some of the soil is light....”<sup>14</sup>

Other activities besides farming began to appear along the road. Small parcels of land along the road were sold, signs of how important the road was to the area. An acre was sold by Edward Watson to Andrew Thompson in 1831 who later sold it to a weaver, Isaac Warbrick.<sup>15</sup> Another parcel was sold to George Horton, a butcher, in 1870.

George Winthrop started to provide the services of blacksmith in 1830, after settling at the junction of Richmond Road and March Road, later Carling Avenue. He bought an acre of land from Robert Hare in 1846, and another three and a half acres adjacent to it in 1857. When he died in 1868, he left the house, property and livestock to his widow, Jane, and his business and tools to his son, Robert, who carried on the trade.<sup>16</sup>

While farming was the mainstay on the heights, quite different activities were starting on the riverside. The timber industry had taken hold in the Ottawa Valley by the 1830s. Upriver, local woodlands were being cleared by entrepreneurs and logs were floated down the main waterways towards mills and markets abroad.

The Deschênes Rapids created a difficulty for this industry. Rafts that came down from the Upper Ottawa were towed from Fitzroy to Britannia. There, cribs were separated and logs were run over the rapids one at a time by two or three raftsmen. At the same time, the rapids may have been an asset to the timber industry. Saw and lumber mills were set up on the islands at the Chaudière, and soon similar mills and grist mills were operated elsewhere along the Ottawa.



The era when Ottawa was the centre of the local timber industry was young when Captain John LeBreton came on the scene. LeBreton, a native of Jersey in the Channel Islands, and formerly of the Royal Newfoundland Regiment and the Canadian Voltiguers,<sup>16</sup> established himself as owner of strategically placed waterfront land west of what became Bytown. LeBreton was noted for acquiring the area near the Chaudière, now known as LeBreton Flats, in 1819, which came under dispute when the government wanted the site for a supplies depot. Only a year before this, LeBreton bought half of Lot 18 and all of Lot 20, Concession One from Tamer Wright, the original grantee. The former lot was later sold to Henry Buchanan who resold the wedge-shaped property along the bay to William Bell in 1835. Lot 20 was the future site of LeBreton's home and mills. LeBreton also leased in 1821 a Clergy Reserve, Lot 22, Concession Two, later the site of much of Britannia Heights.

LeBreton began to explore the potential of the Deschênes site for milling in the mid-1820s. He started off with a grist mill before 1826.<sup>16</sup> A sawmill soon followed. He named the mills and his home Britannia, the poetic name for the United Kingdom. It was likely a snub against his American rival across the river, Philemon Wright, who tended to name places in his domain Columbia.<sup>17</sup> LeBreton had made the peninsula his home by 1820, when a weary Hamnett P. Hill paid him a visit and found "a resting place in LeBreton's ark."<sup>18</sup>

LeBreton expanded his waterfront holdings in the Britannia area where his mill must have been successful. He bought the lot next to the mill in 1828 and part of the next lot in 1831. The mills and the growing estate were considered by one observer to be "exceedingly well situated" and having "the advantage of the greatest utility to the surrounding settlements."<sup>19</sup>

A barrier to the continued success of LeBreton's mills, however, was the ongoing rivalry among commercial enterprises along both banks of the Ottawa River. A small but important transshipping point emerged at Aylmer opposite Britannia. Steamships used the wharf at Aylmer as a terminus for logs and passengers taken along the river between Chats Falls upriver at the Fitzroy settlement and Deschênes Rapids. A portage road was built between Hull, downriver from the Chaudière, and Aylmer because the rapids could not be crossed safely.

Rivals on the Bytown side of the river wanted to cash in on this transshipping market. First, however, they had to either match their

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counterparts across the river by building similar portage roads, or come up with some other way of bypassing the rapids. Waterways themselves needed improvements, like dams or timber slides. It generally took groups relying on the rivers for their livelihood to see that these often costly improvements were made. Such co-operation was necessary to overcome the Deschênes Rapids.

In 1835, a group of Bytown and area men joined forces to muster public support for building a macadamized turnpike or toll road from Bytown to the head of the rapids near Britannia.<sup>21</sup> Macadamizing was a process by which small broken stone was compacted into a convex, well-drained road bed using fine stone dust and water as a cement. This was a method that required more than the statute labour, the gathering of ratepayers to help maintain township roads as part of the duties of resident landholders. If a new road was to be built, it would have to be achieved by private initiative. A committee was appointed to discuss with LeBreton the chances of obtaining sufficient land to make a road through his property and to build a store-house and tavern near the spot chosen for a wharf. The project never got off the ground, owing perhaps to a lack of capital resources to construct this six-mile macadamized road.

The lumber industry was becoming more sophisticated at this stage as the United States and countries abroad kept up a strong demand for sawn lumber. Just as the British stopped giving trade preferences to their North American colonies in 1846, two further innovations in transportation that would have changed Britannia's development were considered.

The importance of Aylmer as a transshipping point led to its rise as a bustling village. Bytown businessmen and other local elite united to take advantage of the latest technological advances in an effort to capture the lead. Their solution was a portage railway between Bytown and Britannia. This was to be one link in a chain of railways portaging the Ottawa River on the Upper Canadian side. Others were to operate between Montreal and Lachine, Carillon and Grenville, and another at Chats Falls. Like the abandoned turnpike scheme, the portage railway would stop at a point on Lake Deschênes above the rapids where a steamboat could meet it. The instigators figured on lower transportation costs and the speedy shipment of supplies for the timber trade which a land road could not offer. High stage fares could also be avoided for passenger

traffic. At a meeting called in December 1845 a motion was passed by this group calling for incorporation, which was supported by LeBreton and forty others.<sup>22</sup>

The company was formed under the aegis of local property owners along the proposed route who stood to gain immensely by the railway. One supporter, Nelson G. Robinson, bought the elderly LeBreton's Britannia mill property in 1846. LeBreton held onto lands immediately south of this property, perhaps hoping to share in Britannia's expansion. Also part of the scheme were area half-pay officers, like Hamnett P. Hill, who had large estates in Carleton County. The new Bytown and Britannia Railroad Company was incorporated in 1848 with the power to have a terminus at or near Britannia Mills and to operate steamboats "to ply the waters of the River Ottawa" from the railroad to Fitzroy Harbour and then on to Portage du Fort.<sup>23</sup>

Aylmer lumber merchants were not about to sit back and be outdone. In March 1846, while the Bytown and Britannia Railway was being planned, these merchants asked the Governor of the Canadas to plank or macadamize the road from the Chaudière to Aylmer. Their request, however, was not granted. Instead, they approached the government with the desire to form a company for this purpose. In their proposal, they mentioned that Bytown inhabitants were "endeavouring to get a railroad established on their side in order to get all the traffic."<sup>24</sup> By 1849 the company was formed and a year later the Bytown-Aylmer Turnpike Road was in service and collecting tolls from its users.

Despite this direct challenge from across the river, nothing ever came of the Bytown-Britannia railway. Perhaps it did not gain the financial support needed to build the six-mile iron road. Like other railway schemes in Eastern Ontario at this time, there was much enthusiasm, but little chance of bringing it to fruition in the face of the commercial depression that hit the colonies in the late-1840s after preference for colonial grain by Britain was ended.<sup>25</sup> Perhaps, too, its supporters were discouraged by the completion of the Bytown-Aylmer Turnpike Road.

Plans were also afoot to build a canal across the peninsula to bypass Deschênes Rapids. This might have been part of a larger plan to construct a canal to connect Lake Deschênes and Chats Lake above the falls at Fitzroy Harbour in 1852. The idea matured as far as a petition to the Legislative Assembly of the United

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Provinces, but it did not receive consideration. The route appeared on a survey prepared for Nelson Robinson in 1855. Like the other schemes, it remained an unmaterialized dream. (Map III)

Another collective venture, which was actually carried through, was the formation of a joint stock company at Bytown in 1851 to construct a macadamized road from Bytown to Bells Corners, more or less following the route of the Richmond Road. Up to that point, the Richmond Road was “stony rough” and bad, and yet was widely used by farmers and travellers.<sup>26</sup> Several taverns were set up along the road to meet their needs.

This road company went immediately to work, hiring a contractor to build the first section from Bytown westward in 1852. Although the road did not go directly to Britannia, it skirted it and provided a better land route between the lumber town and the farming community on the highlands. This road no doubt fostered the growth of roadside taverns.

Amidst these plans, the mills at Britannia continued to operate under their new owner, Nelson G. Robinson. He made several changes to his home and mills. Two years after buying the property, Robinson, already indebted by mortgage to LeBreton for buying the land, took out a second mortgage quite possibly for capital to expand his activities there.<sup>27</sup> Robinson probably needed to diversify for survival. He faced competition from lumber barons like James Skead, who set up a mill a few miles downriver in 1851.<sup>28</sup> Robinson opened a carding mill manufacturing cloth and flannel and employing three people. He was eager to exploit the river power to its fullest. In 1855, he hired a surveyor to prepare a plan for the purchase of a small rocky island lying in front of his property and near his mills from the government. (Map III)

A second sawmill was established at Britannia along the bay near the foot of what became Rowatt Street. The older mill at the rapids was closed, likely because the buildings and equipment were getting old and outdated. Heavy competition in the lumber industry in the Ottawa area probably forced Robinson to find better facilities even though the sawmill was yielding an annual production of 100,000 boards as of 1860.<sup>29</sup>

By 1871, Robinson, described in the census of that year as being a farmer, was devoting most of his time to his 350-acre farm. He nevertheless continued to operate the carding mill six months each year producing 10,000 pounds of wool valued at \$3,000.<sup>30</sup> Like the

farmers nearby on Richmond Road, Robinson gained prominence in civic affairs. He was Reeve of Nepean Township in 1862 and 1863 and was Country Warden for 1863. By this time, Robinson had abandoned LeBreton's log house for a frame house near the intersection of Richmond and Carling, joining the Magees, Bells and other families there.

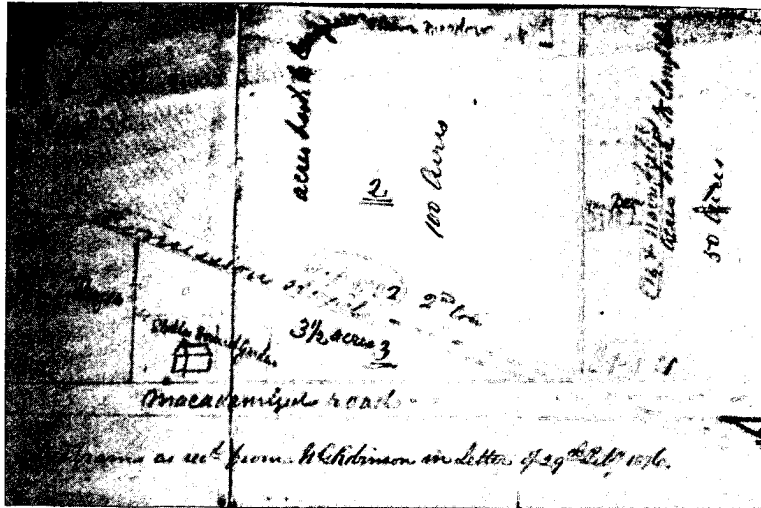


Diagram from N.G. Robinson, 1876. It shows the Richmond Road and Carling Avenue intersection, the macadamized road being Richmond, and the names of the land owners and lot sizes.

By the 1860s, Britannia could not be called a village or a single community. As early as the 1840s, the school was the one institution that served all of its residents, bringing them together. It was situated on John Bell's farm on the north side of Richmond Road, immediately inside the present City limits, on the heights where most of the residents were. One observer noted, "The school itself was a one room log affair and had so many cracks in it that it was very bitterly cold. In the winter, the benches had to be moved close to the stove to keep the children from freezing to death. "The farmers and other folk between Lots 17 and 23 in Concessions One and Two, the area that more or less became the Britannia area, sent their children to this common school in School Section Three, Nepean Township.<sup>31</sup> By the 1860's, 25 children regularly attended the school. The running of the school, as for all rural schools in Ontario, was in the hands of three trustees elected by property

## 14.

owners. Every year, Britannia's taxpayers assembled to decide who would be responsible for hiring teachers, taking care of the schoolhouse and managing the finances on their behalf. This was perhaps the first organization in Britannia that required the residents to work as a community with common interests and objectives.

At this time, there were no churches that served primarily Britannia families. Baptisms, confirmations, marriages and burials of local people were performed by ministers either stationed at churches in Ottawa, Bells Corners, or in what became Westboro. There were relatively few families at Britannia and no apparent need or desire for churches of their own.

Britannia's growth in these years was slow. The riverside site had gained the attention of people like LeBreton and supporters of major transportation schemes because of the need for overcoming the Deschênes Rapids, a main barrier to the lumber and other industries. While the potential was there to make Britannia a stronger rival to Aylmer across Lake Deschênes, proposals for making the necessary transportation links between Britannia and Ottawa amounted to nothing. There was a community at Britannia, the persistent and prominent farming families on the heights above the Ottawa River. There was also the makings of a rural service centre.

It would take a railway intended to serve a larger region, and the entrepreneurial drives of a Nepean farmer paired with two Ottawa bakers to transform the mills at the waterfront into a community of its own.

## The Old Indian Trail

Let us go back to the beginning of time when the sound of Indian war whoops resounded over the waters of our old river and lake and echoed against the sandy hills of the height of land. Yes, this area must have witnessed many interesting scenes, so better let your imagination take over to see the squabbling between tribes and the scalps adorning their tepees. Then came the white man to change the way of life, then the lucrative fur trade which caused the tribes to vie with each other to get the best of the trading. Read all about it in your history books!

One thing we are certain of is that the river and the bay of our lake must have seen much activity, a natural stop-off to evade the rapids, or maybe to set up an ambush for unwelcome groups going through.

In the days of my youth, I have seen arrowheads and other artifacts which were picked up on the little island opposite Aylmer. Venturesome youths during the summer days often paddled up to this island and had a good time searching for these finds. So the island too must have been a favorite haunt for the Indians as they paddled up and down river.

It is interesting to note that there was an old Indian trail which extended between Black Rapids on the Rideau, overland to Lake Deschênes.

Earl Wilson writing *Oldtime Stuff* for the *Ottawa Citizen*, dated June 16, 1927, discussed this information with Chief Justice Latchford of the Ontario Supreme Court and an Ottawan. He had a summer cottage for years up beside the old Methodist (United) Church at the top of Britannia Road (since demolished). He was much interested in Indian history.

Justice Latchford received first knowledge of the trail from an old pioneer, J.C. Murphy of Woodroffe, who in turn had it from other pioneers of the township who had seen it with their own eyes.

In this interview, Justice Latchford thought this trail might explain how Ira Honeywell and his wife, in February 1811, were able to reach their destination on the banks of the Ottawa at the foot of Lockhart Avenue. The distance from Black Rapids to his land was but a few miles, so it is easily understood how Honeywell followed the trail with some comfort at least part of the way from the Rideau.

Mr. Murphy also told him a tragic tale about this old trail. Sometime in the 1840's, a young girl who lived near it walked down

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*Stone Cairn in Pinecrest Cemetery*

to the Deschênes Rapids and ended her life, being in a state of mental despair.

Further confirmation of this trail was substantiated by Andrew Hobbs who died in 1926 in his 80's. His father was Dan Hobbs, who came from Ireland, and settled off the Baseline Road on Concession 2, Lot 34, beside the Cemetery. Andrew was born in the old log house and vividly recalled the trail crossing their farmlands. It was a well-worn trail, and he spoke of his early days wandering up and down it.

Happily, a portion of the old Indian trail can still be seen today, a little winding trail through the crest of white pines fringing the entrance to Pinecrest Cemetery.

The management of Pinecrest Cemetery is to be complimented, as in 1966, they erected a Cairn beside the trail, commemorating this historic fact of Indian life in the area.

It is inscribed:

'The Old Indian Trail Between Black Rapids and Lake Deschênes'

'Now Abeka's footsteps quickened, For he saw a well-worn pathway Through a grove of giant pine trees, Just as promised by traditions, Old traditions of his people, Coming from the distant ages...'

(from "The White Stone Canoe", a legend of the Ottawa's, James D. Edgar, 1885).



## Romance of the Old Richmond Road

As I begin this little talk for the next issue of the 'Flyer', it is good to be on the inside looking out. Blowing out the East is a good howling storm, and the radio is warning to stay off the highways. Today the weatherman keeps us well-informed, but in days of yore we usually consulted Dr. Chase's Almanac. A ring around the moon, Mother complaining about certain aches, and an East wind meant to put a few extra sticks of wood in the woodbox. We were prepared.

But, motorists, do you ever think of the beginning of the Richmond Road as you drive along so easily today. Let's take a glimpse into the past. We have come a long way.

In 1818, the 99th and 100th Regiments stationed at Quebec were being disbanded. They were offered grants of land if they would stay in Canada, and the location was about 20 miles from yet unnamed Bytown. In late August, the first settlers with families arrived at Richmond Landing, just below the Chaudière Falls. Tents were set up for the families, while the able menfolk under Sergeant Hill, proceeded to blaze a trail through the bushlands to the proposed site on the Goodwood River. It was the birth of our Richmond Road and the opening to settlement.

A topographical map of the District of Montreal shows outlines of the Britannia area, the faint outline of the Richmond Road, and a creek falling into the Ottawa River below the Deschênes Rapids. Only a few scant dots indicated homes there. This map was made by Colonel Joseph Bouchette, Surveyor-General of Lower Canada, date 1831, in the Public Archives.

1833 — J.L. Gourlay in his *'History of the Ottawa Valley'* 1896 — pages 54-55, speaks of starting out in the company of 17 settlers to reach the settlement of Huntley. Leaving Bytown the morning of July 12th, he said that the Richmond Road was opened by cutting of trees and brush. However, the stumps were not extracted and stood as obstacles for the ox teams to struggle over. Oxen drew the wagons, and horses came later as settlements began. Lush berry bushes along the trail took the eyes of the youngsters in the party.

"The party reached William Bell's tavern at high noon, located about six miles from Bytown. He was at dinner but sprang up and served the party a fine dinner. Mr. Bell even pulled some young onions to please the children. And Gourlay's mother, who held the

purse, said the charges were most moderate..."

In the 1849 Minutes of the Municipal Council, Nepean Township, there is the first mention of Britannia, when E.L. Wood was the Pathmaster from Wm. Thompson's (Rochester's at the foot of Broadview) to Britannia Corner and F. Bearman from Britannia Corner to the cross. Pathmasters looked after the condition of roads.

Quoting from *Canada, Past, Present and Future* by W.H. Smith page 356 — mention of the Richmond Road in 1851 — "nine miles from Bytown you get a glimpse of the Ottawa River, usually called the Grand River. As you approach the river, the land becomes very stony and the fields are separated by piles of stones. But the road up to within a mile or two of Bytown is very stony, rough, and bad. This road is about to be macadamized to Britannia, a settlement on the Ottawa six miles from Bytown, where there is a sawmill and wool-len factory... As you approach Bytown, numerous good houses are scattered along the roadside, many of them comfortable mansions..."

With increasing traffic along this Road, the Bytown and Nepean Road Commission was formed. Mr. William Graham headed the Commission between 1862-86. It was responsible for maintaining the Road in good condition for travel, and continued until 1913 when Toll gates were done away with. There was one near Island Park Drive and the other at Bell's Corners.

Statute labour was used to fix the roads. Stone was brought to the side of the road needing repair and older men from the city were brought out to do the cracking of the rock by hand. It is said that one was so lazy that he made a hole in the stone by letting the hammer fall on it.

Mile stones were placed along the road to measure distance. One was at the corner of Croydon. On October 3, 1973, I took a picture of it, came back a week later to check on it to find it had been removed. The next stone was near the home of G.B. Acres.

An interesting part of our Richmond Road began after Wood-roffe Avenue. A heavy bush extended from Carling Avenue to the River, with the road threading through it. Trees grew very close to the road. Even in daytime, it was not too bright. Nighttime, way-farers needed courage to pass through because of holdups, and farmers coming home from market planned to get through before dark. There was a cabin in the woods which was believed to be haunted, and some strange tales were told by oldtimers. The bush

was owned by G.P. Baker, Postmaster of Bytown, and was known as Baker's Bush. There still remains a bit of the bush on the north side of the road today. In the 1940's the south side was developed for housing.

How well I knew the old Richmond Road in the horse-and-buggy days when a motor car was a novelty to see. With no ploughed road, though occasionally a roller went over it, you followed in the sleigh lines or made your own trail like a pathfinder. Coming up from the village, we youngsters faced that long stretch to the old stone schoolhouse. Hitching a ride on a sleigh or wagon was rare, as farmers were on their way to town or coming home. The warmer months were a delight, especially autumn when Mosgrove's grapes were ripe and apple trees tempted us.

Look back with pride as you drive along this old Richmond Road — you are following the footsteps of the pioneers.



*Richmond Road - looking east towards the intersection of Richmond Road, Carling and Pinecrest. Taken from the tower of the Mosgrove home, 1870's. Note the vineyard in the foreground.*

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*The old milestone on the southeast corner  
Croydon Avenue and Richmond, (1973)*



*Intersection of Highway 15 and 17, (Carling Avenue and Richmond Road) 1940's.*

## Old River, Old Roads and Streets

The old La Grand Rivière du Nord still flows on peacefully, except when spring floods come to overflow its banks, to the despair of the 20th Century folks who have built too near its shores. In our area, she widens into Lac Chaudière to continue over the familiar Rapide Deschênes. Indian tribes lived beside the river and lakes, travelling in their birchbark canoes. From early settlers up on the Sandy Hills, there was a well-used Indian trail extending from Black Rapids to Lac Chaudière. A last remnant of this trail which can be seen in Pinecrest Cemetery, has been commemorated with a Cairn. Gone are the Indians, the early French explorers, missionaries, the great days of lumbering, the boats hauling supplies up river and towing logs on the expanse between Britannia and the Chats Falls. La Grand Riviere du Nord, the highway was known as such by the early hardy French who went afield. Now the Ottawa River, and Lac Chaudière became Lake Deschênes. Truly a river of romance in our history, do you ever give a thought about its past?

The year 1818 was the birth of Richmond Road. When Britain disbanded the 99th and 100th regiments at Quebec, a great many soldiers accepted grants of land in Nepean Township. Blazing a trail to their grants on the Goodwood, they made our celebrated Richmond Road. The great era of settlement began. To get to the March Township settlement, the old March Road (Highway 17) followed the shores of the Ottawa. Captain John LeBreton's grant was off this road, which is an original grant registered in 1819. Pleased with his location, he bought up large tracts surrounding Lac Chaudière, and his first abode was a log cabin on its shores. The road leading into it was enlarged when he established his mills in 1826. As early as 1822, he referred to the place as Britannia.

1838 Minutes of the Municipal Council, Nepean, pathmasters were appointed to see that roads were usable. E.L. Wood's section ran from W. Thompson to LeBreton road, and William Bell, the old 1818 pioneer had from this road to Malcolson's (Bell's Corners). First mention of Britannia was in the 1849 minutes, when a pathmaster had to go to Britannia corner, the old LeBreton road.

Smith's Gazeteer, *Canada, Past and Present* (1851), says, "This road (Richmond) is about being macadamized to Britannia, a settlement on the Ottawa, 6 miles from Bytown, where there is a sawmill and a woolen factory..."

The year 1869 saw the opening of a railway through to Carleton Place. They had a flag station at Britannia, but no village there. It was a great boon for transporting supplies to the fast developing farms.

In 1862, Robert Sparks, Provincial Land Surveyor, in his survey ran a road dividing lots 20 and 21.

From 1870 - 1875, the Township had the site of Britannia surveyed into lots and streets laid out. The deed for my lot on Britannia Road was surveyed in 1875 by Mr. Sinclair, PLS.

The year 1879, Belden's Historical Atlas, Carleton County, shows a small map entitled Britanniaville, Lot 20, 1st Concession, Nepean, showing the first streets and names as follows:

From the railroad to the river: Britannia St., Main St., Bradford St. Side streets: Bay St., Jamieson, Sparks and Cassels. Above the railroad: Britannia St., Centre St., West St. Side streets: Dufferin, Fletcher, Queen, Princess Ottawa and Chaudière.

Britannia officially became a village on the map Britannia St. runs a straight line from Cassels St. up a steep wooded hill to the March Road (highway 17). In the surveyor's report, 1870, J.C. Jamieson was awarded the old road, lying west. I recall taking this road as a short cut to school, avoiding the steep hill. A wonderful growth of wildflowers grew in the woods, particularly before crossing the old railroad line. In my youth I was told that the railway had their station to the east and it would have meant moving it, thus the curve in Main St. as on the map.

The 20th century saw Britannia the playground of Ottawa. L.N. Poulin bought from J.R. Booth a parcel of land lying to the east of Britannia Rd., and before long its grove was settled with new cottages, as well as on the west side. Belltown saw its waterfront filled.

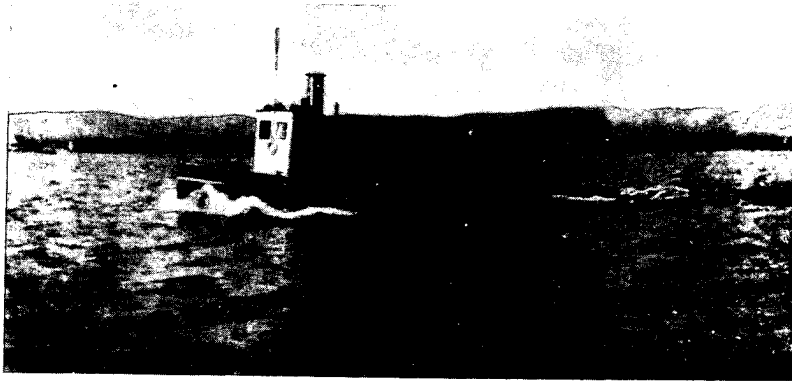
Britannia Highlands began to grow. On February 16, 1911, Nepean Council recorded "Plan of Britannia Highlands (part of N.G. Robinson land) Sub. Div. E½ lot 21, 1st Con, etc.

The year 1950 when the City of Ottawa annexed this area, a complete survey had to be made by their Street Naming Department, in order to rename duplication, and ready us for door-to-door mail delivery.

How to find out how the streets got their names would take some research in the City Archives, or in their Naming Dept. We do know what remains from the 1970 survey: Dufferin Street is now Howe, an early resident. Bay is changed to Salina (?) — Jamieson

for J.C. who came to Britannia in 1870, Spark St. is now Rowatt for W.R., a very early resident, whose house still stands on Bradford Street, and Cassels, for Cassels, president of the Ottawa Forwarding Company. I have not yet discovered how Bradford got its name.

Check the National Capital Region map for today's street picture.



*Lumbering on the river was replaced by the use of lake loggers like the G.B. Pattee, owned by Upper Ottawa Improvement Co. for towing logs. Thomas Fuller converted the hull of the G.B. Pattee into the Black Jack in the 1950's.*

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## Birth of Britannia

### 'A Settler's Cabin on Lake Chaudière'

#### William Henry Bartlett 1809 - 1854

Canadians owe a lot to William Henry Bartlett, mainly because of the sketching trip he took through Eastern Canada during the summer and fall of 1838. It was his only visit to Canada, but what a record of our early days he recorded in the sketches. About 1840, the sketches were printed into a two-volume edition in London and New York. Many referred to our own area, and the above is a precious one. His original volumes have become a collector's item, and even today single copies of the 1840 vintage are valuable. During Centennial celebrations, Bartlett sketches adorned sets of china.

Take a good look at this sketch, "A Settler's Cabin on Lake Chaudière" for it is a peek into our past as Bartlett saw it. It is Lake Deschênes, formerly known as Lake Chaudière.

Captain John LeBreton gave Britannia its name. The cabin in the sketch looks not unlike the cabin he first erected when he took up his grant of land. History research is fun — you never know where it will lead you! Knowing that LeBreton served with the Royal Newfoundland Regiment, I made contact with Mr. David Webber, Curator, Royal Newfoundland Naval and Military Museum, St. John's, Newfoundland. It is recorded that LeBreton received a commission as a lieutenant in the Royal Newfoundland Regiment (Skinners). He was about 18 years of age. It was the year 1795. Mr. Webber suggested that LeBreton was one of the many channel Islander families who settled in Newfoundland as traders in the latter half of the 18th century.

Continuing his military career from 1803 to 1816, he served in the Royal Newfoundland Regiment of Fencible Infantry. During the war of 1812-1814, he served with distinction as an adjutant with the Canadian Voltigeurs, and fought at the Maunee with the Royal Newfoundland Regiment. In July 1884, he was mentioned in dispatches, and the same year was severely wounded at the Battle of Lundy's Lane. Unable to continue service, he returned to England and was promoted to a captaincy. (Information from H.P. Hill's

booklet, *Robert Randall and the LeBreton Flats, 1919*).

He returned to Canada and in the 'State Records of Upper Canada — 1792-1841; (Public Archives), the following letter appears showing Captain LeBreton making claim for his services as an original Land Grantee:

"Office of the Settling Department, Richmond, 10th April, 1823.

"I certify that on the 24th day of July 1819, Capt. John LeBreton was located in this office for Crown Reserve Lots 9 in the 1st Concession and Concession A, from the Ottawa River in the Township of Nepean, the Crown Reserves being open for location, and that he has performed all the location duties required by the rules of the Department."

(Sgd) George T. Burke  
Superintendent.

This grant of land was located on the river up from Crystal Bay. Looking over the area he was much impressed for, in that same year of 1819, he purchased Lots 20 - 21 and 22 (part of) which comprised hundreds of acres surrounding the shores of the lake and river. There had begun an influx of settlers taking up land along the newly-blazed trail to Richmond and branching into the townships. He saw possibilities for development.

And on the lakeshore, he built a log cabin. We are most fortunate to have a glimpse of it as it looked in June 1820. I quote from the Diary of Hamnett Pinhey, who had served England during the Napoleonic War as a civilian. He had arrived from England on his way to locate in the Township of March. (H.P. Hill Papers — Public Archives.)

"Through the woods was a miserable road leading to a newly established village. The following morning upon an almost empty stomach, I commenced my pedestrian excursion towards Richmond. Having learned that a gentleman of the name of LeBreton, late captain in the army, was forming an establishment on the banks of the Ottawa about nine miles from the Falls where I landed, I resolved to present arms to him. It was just dusk as I got a glimpse of his cabin. His reception, hospitality, and a pretty girl made this otherwise miserable though temporary residence a Chateau Champetre.

"Here I feathered my nest for the night after having paid up with interest the three days arrears due to my rebellious stomach. I

should have had some reluctance to take leave for I felt that they (LeBreton) were the only civilized beings within my reach and that I could from time to time, like Noah's dove, find a resting place in LeBreton's Ark. He referred to LeBreton's cabin as a mansion, where he was hospitably fed, etc. Mr. Pinhey then proceeded by canoe up river to his lands in March Township. He started to build a home on July 1st, 1820... and if you look at Bartlett's Sketch, "March on Lake Chaudière", you will see what was accomplished by 1838."

The pretty girl referred to at the cabin was a niece of the Captain's, his sister's daughter. This sister, Jeanne (Jane), had married a fellow officer of LeBreton's in St. John's in 1798.

One hundred and sixty years have passed since LeBreton came and built his log cabin on the lakeshore and became the first developer of this area.

## LeBreton Mills

During the early 1820's, Captain LeBreton had troubles. In the Public Archives in the old records, there are memorials sent off to the Lieutenant Governor Sir Peregrine Maitland, complaining about poaching by men he names, cutting down large quantities of oak and pine much in demand for the European market. He had to keep a watchful eye for these trespassers.

More troubles loomed which caused him great concern, and this was with Lord Dalhousie the Governor. But this I do not intend to dwell on as the 'Controversy about the Flats' is ably covered in H.P. Hill's booklet, *Robert Randall and the LeBreton Flats*, as well as history books written about the Rideau Canal. It is Britannia and its history that has to be told.

So put on your old grey bonnets and take a look into our past. The Richmond Road leading out from what was to become Bytown in 1827 was only seven years old and still a stumpy trail leading to the fast growing settlements springing up. They need a mill to grind their grain, obtain lumber and other supplies.

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The Year 1826 — The Place — The Shore of Lake Chaudière.

Listen to the ring of the axes, the buzz of the saw, oxen hauling freshly cut logs, sturdy bearded men going about their respective jobs clearing the land of trees, there to erect a group of buildings directed by the Captain. It was to be the first grist mill on this side of the river — the nearest mill was Wright's in Hull. So we see LeBreton as the first developer in these parts.

It amazes me how the Captain made such progress with this development. It must have taken much time to plan and obtain machinery for the buildings, for they had to be brought in from, no doubt, Montreal (no local hardware or foundries to drop into for supplies).

It was now ready for customers, and on December 1st, 1826, handwritten signs were posted on the trees along the travelled trails and the Richmond Road for the settlers to see.

I believe that the grist mill was built at the foot of Rowatt Street on the lake shore. Nothing remains today, but in the early years I recall, when swimming there, old bolts and spikes that must have been the remains of something. According to a grand nephew of the Captain's, the grist mill fell prey to the flames, but it was a long time after the Captain had disposed of it. The mill, he said, cost the Captain over \$35,000 to build, a lot of money in those days.

Captain LeBreton used his training as a soldier to follow rules and regulations. He provided a special house for his patrons to smoke in. He had several buildings as he makes references to a carpenter shop and a forge in addition to the sawmill. He may also have had a small general store.

The following is the contents of the sign he put up along the trails:

“The subscriber expects that on or before the 25th instant to have his Grist Mill in operation, and as every expense has been incurred and every pain taken to accommodate the public, all persons are hereby notified that the following regulations must be strictly adhered to, and any person not complying herewith shall not be allowed to have his grain ground at the said Mill:

1. All bags to be marked with the initials of the owner's name.
2. No person to come drunk to the Mill, or to take liquor into the Mill or to any of the workmen on the premises.
3. No persons allowed to loiter about the Sawmill, carpenter shop or in the Grist Mill, except when their grain is grinding,

- as a house will be appropriated for them to stop in.
4. No pipes to be smoked about the premises, except in the house appropriated above.
  5. No Grain to be ground without passing through the smut mill for which an appropriate toll will be required.
  6. All persons are required to behave themselves with propriety, sobriety and civility and any difficulty arising between them and the Millar must be referred to the Subscriber or his agent on the premises...

The Captain had just reason for being so rigid, for despite primitive living conditions, there was always a good flow of spirits to be had, particularly when men gathered together. And it was a good meeting place to get the local gossip and news (no dailies came delivered to your door).

The mills at Britannia must have been doing a good business and the Captain was pleased. Col. Joseph Bouchette must have thought so too when it was considered worthy to mention in Vol. 1 of his 'British Dominions of North America', printed in 1832.

"Some distance above Bytown is Britannia, the valuable estate of Captain LeBreton. It is exceedingly well situated at the lower extremity of Lake Chaudière and near the head of the beautiful Rapide Deschênes whose broad surface and agitated waters gliding swiftly between partially inhabited, luxuriantly verdant and picturesque banks add to the beauty of the spot. The Mills there have the advantage of the greatest utility to the surrounding settlements."

In the year 1828, the Captain turned his thoughts to the affairs of his heart, a bit late in life as he must have been about 50 years of age. On Nov. 18, 1828, he married Susanna George in the Church of the Holy Trinity, Quebec City.

In 1835, the Captain started to dispose of his land holdings. On Sept. 21st, he sold his Army grant; Concession 1 and A, Lots 9, to John and Thomas Beattie - 350 acres for \$300.

The Britannia Mills and some 150 acres was purchased by Nelson G. Robinson.

Capt. LeBreton then took up residence in Bytown. Belden's Historical Atlas of 1879 refers to him, "He was one of the very first settlers on the Flats, and always took great interest in educational matters. It was he who presented the county with the site of the old 'Model School' " built in that area about 1840.

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The LeBreton era was closing. On July 24, 1847, the Bytown Packer reported the death of his wife, Susanna, her burial made in the Sandy Hill Cemetery (information from Archives).

On March 2, 1848, the *Bytown Gazette & Rideau Advertiser* reported "Died on the 24th instant, at his residence in Richmond Street (Toronto) John LeBreton, late Captain in the 60th Rifle Brigade and Deputy Assist, Quarter-Master-General, during war with the U.S., aged 71 years" (Archives).

The Captain was buried in the church cemetery of St. James the Less, Toronto, on February 26th, 1848. After tracing his history for over 20 years, I visited the cemetery on a misty bleak November day in 1969. There I looked upon his memorial, blackened with age, moss covered obelisk, and blessed his memory for putting Britannia on the map of memory.

In conclusion, there is no doubt Captain LeBreton had great dreams for his Britannia mills, but the building of the Rideau Canal, and the growth of the Bytown Mills overshadowed that dream.

## Britannia Might Have Become a Town!

It was the heyday of the lumber trade, and during the open water season, the river was a very active area with shantymen and boats plying up and down stream. Settlers up river and goods for the shanty establishments were a transportation problem. Hauling material by boat was much easier than on the primitive roads. Bytown merchants were confronted with problems. Supplies had to be hauled over to Hull and the 10-mile trek up to Aylmer, the port of call for the *Lady Colourne* that plied the river up to Quyon. So the business men of Bytown began to get something going!

The *Ottawa Advocate & Packet* reported: "A public meeting was held at Doran's Hotel on Tuesday, Dec. 1st, 1845, and on the motion of Augustus Keefer, and seconded by Wm. Stewart, that Nelson G. Robinson be called to the chair, to consider the following motion: "That application be made at the next session of the Provincial Legislature to incorporate a Company to be called "The Bytown & Britannia Railroad Co.," with the usual powers and privileges.

Some 40 of Bytown's most influential citizens signed this application. Capt. LeBreton was one of them, and Nelson G. Robinson, who chaired the meeting, was now the owner of the LeBreton Mills. The newspaper did a most impressive reporting of the plan.

It is not known when the scheme failed or why, but the prospectus issued by the promoters was exceedingly interesting. It is likely plans for railroads were under way, for in 1854, a line was laid from Prescott to Ottawa. Dreams for Britannia faded.

When LeBreton sold his mills at Britannia, the purchaser was Nelson G. Robinson (1808-1893). He came to Canada in the 1830's with his first wife, Caroline Christopher, from Durham, England. He was a good businessman and had his mills operating on an efficient basis, as can be observed when he was called to chair that meeting of 1845.

In the Canada Census 1851 (Archives) Nepean Township, there is recorded: "Nelson G. Robinson, farmer from England with wife Caroline - lived in a frame house - occupation - carding mill and factory- invested £250 - 3 employees, and attending sawmill, both waterpowered. £200 invested - 2 employees - 1500 yards manufactured of his own cloth - 1400 yards of flannel."

Nelson G. Robinson is listed as a merchant in Nepean, a lumber



*Family of Nelson G. Robinson and first wife, Caroline Christopher. (Standing), Edward, James Septimus, Henry Octavius. (Seated), Mary Elizabeth, Nelson George Jr., Nelson George Sr., George, Margaret. Missing were Christopher Clerke, Frances Isabella, William Thomas.*

merchant and woollen manufacturer in *Canada Past, Present, and Future*, Vol. 2, printed in 1851 by W.H. Smith.

Gourlay in his *History of the Ottawa Valley*, printed 1896, referred to Robinson taking over the LeBreton Mills and much interest in municipal affairs and that, "we went to school with his boys".

Wilson, who wrote the *Citizen's "Old Time Stuff"*, interviewed Edward Burns about Nepean, Oct. 3, 1931. He said his father, John, came from Wexford, Ireland, in 1840 and worked in the Robinson sawmill at Britannia. It is on record that for the first two winters though the weather was intensely cold, he refused to wear mitts.



## Nelson G. Robinson

### Name Carved in Britannia's History

Mr. George Robinson, a direct descendant of Nelson Robinson, contacted me in 1974 when he learned about the writing of Britannia's history, and to him we are indebted for providing the missing links, precious photographs, and family history, a truly valued contribution.

Nelson G. Robinson was born in Durham, England, in 1808. In 1830, he married Caroline Christopher. And to Canada they came.

Gourlay, 1896, in his *History of the Ottawa Valley*, said, "He (Captain LeBreton) sold afterwards to Mr. Robinson, also an Englishman, with whose boys we went to school, and who took much interest in municipal affairs'.

The Canada Census 1851 (Archives), Township of Nepean, records Nelson G. Robinson, from England, and wife Grace (his first wife died in 1848) lived in a frame house. Also — occupation, carding mill and factory, 3 employees, and attending sawmill, both water-powered, 2 employees. 1500 yards manufactured of his own cloth, 1400 yards of flannel.

*Canada, Past, Present, and Future*, 1851, (page 146), Merchant, Robinson, lumber merchant and woollen manufacturing. Britannia.

Nelson G. Robinson owned considerable land around Britannia as well as his mills (see Belden's *Historical Atlas*, Nepean, 1879). Also in a handdrawn map, done by Nelson Robinson, was indicated the lands above the Richmond Road, showing the location of his home.

This big family saw the quiet growth of Britannia, and they took part in what was going on. Mr. Robinson, held in high esteem, took part in the township's affairs. In 1860, as Deputy-Reeve, he was authorized to make necessary preparation to meet the Prince of Wales when in Ottawa. In 1862-63, he served the Township as Reeve.

The Robinson family and that of Frederick Wm. Harmer's were good friends as Mr. Harmer lived on the Richmond Road and was the Township's Clerk. Two of the Robinson girls, Ellen and Margaret, married Arthur and Fred Harmer respectively, and went to live in Michigan.



*Children of second marriage to Grace Bell Scott. Emma Grace, Charles, Sara Alice, Margaret (seated), Albert (kneeling). Grandchildren, Fannie (daughter of James Septimus), George P. (son of George). Missing were Ellen and John J.*

There is still in Britannia evidence of the Robinson family. In those early days as Britannia beckoned the city's elite, son Charles built many substantial cottages — some are still standing today — as well as old St. Stephen's Anglican Church. He was a member of the Boating Club and was one of the members of the Brits War Canoe in 1898, when the Brits won a spectacular race with the Aylmer Club across the Bay.

Another old home on Cassels Street was likely a residence of the Robinson's. When the present owner was making renovations not too long ago, he found copies of *London Illustrated News*, 1847-48 and 51, as well as a record book with Robinson's name inscribed.

Nelson G. Robinson died at the home of a daughter in Michigan in 1893. Son Charles, the builder in Britannia, died in Ottawa at the age of 86 and was buried in Pinecrest Cemetery in July, 1944.

## Britannia 1840 - 1870

In 1936, Wilson was interviewing two ladies in their late 80's who looked back with happy memories when they attended the log school house near Bell's (our first Britannia school), and how the two Robinson girls, Margaret and Ellen, helped them with their lessons.

In 1880, Mr. Robinson become Deputy-Reeve of Nepean. In the Minutes of the Municipal Council, August 14, 1860, he was authorized to make necessary preparations for the corporation of Nepean to greet the Prince of Wales at the laying of the cornerstone for our first Parliament Buildings. Robinson was to have a field and flag ready.

In 1862-63, Mr. Robinson served as Reeve of the Township. His interests also helped in the formation of a Union Church and cemetery at Bell's Corners in 1853. In 1861, he was elected Chairman and secretary of the church.

Mr. Robinson married twice. His first wife died in 1848, and his second wife was Grace Bell Scott. There were a number of children born to each marriage.

The 1868 City of Ottawa Directory (Nepean) shows him located on Concession I lot 21, and I believe this would be about where the Town & Country Restaurant (now Hemingways) is located today. He may also have lived on Cassels Street when renovation on an old house there took place. Copies of the *London Illustrated News* 1849-50, addressed to him were found in the walls.

Nelson G. Robinson was a very active businessman, and played a big part in the development of the township. He is one of the builders to be remembered.

In the 1860's, from the Nepean sandstone quarries up the old Corkstown road, workmen were quarrying stone for the new Parliament Buildings. All along the Corkstown, March, and Richmond roads wagons could be seen hauling the stone to the site of the building.

Development along the Richmond Road out of Bytown was rapid well into the township. Bell's Corners was a flourishing crossroads village. The farmers had well-stocked farms, and stone was replacing the log homes. Schools were established at Skead's Mills, (Westboro), at Britannia, and at Bell's Corners. A stagecoach ran to Richmond.

36.

The year 1869 saw the Canada Central Railway open a branch line to Carleton Place through Britannia, a distance of twenty-nine miles from Ottawa. Belden's *Historical Atlas*, 1879, quotes, "The C.C.R. have a flag-station in the Township, known as Britannia, but there is no village there."

So much for the 1840-1869 era.

2

1869-1900  
From Mills to Cottages

## 1869 - 1900

### From Mills to Cottages

Britannia remained a rural landscape along the Richmond Road. The Bells, Magees and others continued to farm their fertile acres as the years passed. Robert Winthrop attended to their needs at his forge, and local children went to the school on John Bell's farm just north of Richmond Road west of its junction with what became Carling Avenue.

Below the farms, Britannia consisted merely of Nelson Robinson's two waterfront mills equipped with "engine boilers, wheels, pullies, shafts, belts and ... all the machinery in a pen about" them.<sup>1</sup> Britannia's first major turning point came when a railroad passed through the area making it accessible by train as well as by horse and cart or by boat from Ottawa. The scheme of a railway between Ottawa and Britannia was finally realized as part of a larger regional railway. This was the Brockville and Ottawa Railway which had been operating since the 1850s and was extended in 1869 from Carleton Place to Ottawa. The railroad passed through Bells Corners and met the Ottawa River at Graham's Bay, followed the shore within hailing distance of the Britannia mills, and went on to Ottawa another six miles away. It was later amalgamated with other short railroads in Eastern Ontario to form the Canada Central Railway (C.C.R.) and later part of the Canadian Pacific.

This improved transportation link with Ottawa probably encouraged the first signs of a village at Britannia. Since the opening of Ontario's Grand Trunk Railway in the 1850s, small regional railroad companies were greeted eagerly by municipalities and local businessmen who gave generous bonuses to them, so that trains could provide service to their communities. They took for granted that these railways would give them unlimited new commerce and wealth.

Similar notions might have prompted John McAmmond, Jr., to buy the 54-acre parcel of land that included the two Britannia mill sites, one at the rapids and the other along the bay, in early 1873. At the time, he had a farm four miles away at City View which now forms part of the Central Experimental Farm in Ottawa. Robinson was in his mid-sixties and probably weary of milling, although he continued to farm his other land in Britannia after the sale.<sup>2</sup>

McAmmond had ambitious plans for the peninsula he bought for \$5,450. A month after the purchase, he had the property surveyed into 65 lots along three streets, which were named Main (later Britannia), Bradford and Cassels. The first two streets were crossed on the registered plan by Sparks (Rowatt) and Bay (Salina) streets. (Map XI)

The early 1870s were a time of great confidence in the local lumber industry. Many mills were expanding since lumber production increased considerably in the 1860s.<sup>3</sup> John R. Booth, the prominent lumberman who operated a mill on the Ottawa side of the Chaudière, of Ottawa, also showed interest in Britannia property. He acquired part of the land immediately east of McAmmond from Nelson Robinson at about the same time.<sup>4</sup> Booth may have wanted this site for expanding his own milling activity, or for speculating on the further development of the existing Britannia mills. The land itself was low-lying and marshy, and would otherwise not have been worth buying.

McAmmond's registered plan was the first step in the growth of a milling village with services and facilities for a resident working population. Several large blocks of land along the bay were kept aside for mills or other industrial enterprises that might take advantage of the waterfront location. According to a contemporary description of Britannia Village, carding and grist mills were expected to emerge alongside the existing sawmills within only a few years.<sup>5</sup> Most important of all was the allowance given in McAmmond's plan for a branch railway line between the mills and the main line of the new C.C.R. This branch line would make the C.C.R. the main artery between the city and this industrial oasis. Mill products could then be easily and cheaply shipped out by rail, and supplies brought in. (Map XI)

The timing of the first sales of land under McAmmond's plan suggests that the enterprising farmer had pre-arranged some of this development and intended to sell his valuable property piece by piece rather than take an active role himself in the expansion of the milling. The mill on the bay was promptly bought by John Cameron Jamieson and his brother, Robert, two Ottawa bakers, who also leased another two large blocks from McAmmond. J.R. Booth and John Rowatt, an Ottawa stonemason, also acquired some of the blocks as well as some village lots.

McAmmond and J.C. Jamieson, who was the more active of the

two brothers in dealing with their newly gotten property, attempted very early in Britannia's growth to provide for the expected onslaught of mill workers by promoting a store and post office. Walter Harmer, a Nepean farmer and relative to the township clerk, F.W. Harmer, opened a store at the southwest corner of Cassels and Britannia Road. He was successfully recommended by Jamieson to be the first postmaster of the village in 1875. Plans were also made for a school in the village although the area still belonged to Nepean's School Section Three which Bell's schoolhouse served.

The villagers' religious needs also had to be met. There would have been enough churchgoers to warrant their own house of worship. McAmmond sold to the Methodist Episcopal Church land atop a knoll on the west side of Britannia Road across the road from where St. Stephen's Anglican Church was later built. This denomination was already established with churches nearby in Bells Corners and in City View. McAmmond himself played a leading role in Methodist circuit affairs. Despite the Methodist association, a church was erected for the use of all denominations in the village by 1875 possibly on this site.<sup>6</sup> A union church seemed only fair to local residents as Anglicans and Roman Catholics, who were well represented in the village at this time, did not have their own churches close by.<sup>7</sup>

The peopling of the new industrial village was rapid. The area's Post Office Inspector noted in his report recommending the opening of a post office there in 1875 that "judging from the progress (Britannia) has so far made ... (it) appears likely to become rather a stirring little place in a year or two more."<sup>8</sup> There were already some 25 dwellings erected.<sup>9</sup>

McAmmond responded to this surging demand for land at Britannia. In August 1875, he added another 34 lots along the east side of Britannia Road between Cassels and the C.P.R. line. Since these lots backed onto a municipal road allowance they were smaller than the other surveyed lots.<sup>10</sup>

Land was also subdivided above the railway, but for less enterprising reasons. John LeBreton who had left Britannia and died several years before, had held onto some property between the railway and Carling Avenue. After he died, his grand-nephew, John LeBreton Ross, claimed title to his estate in trust for LeBreton's five heirs. Ross registered a subdivision plan of the estate which he called Britanniaville, and laid out approximately 230 lots along streets named Dufferin, Queen, Princess, Ottawa and Chaudière.



These lots were divided equally among LeBreton's heirs according to his will.<sup>11</sup> The heirs neither sold nor rented these lots despite the growing interest in Britannia towards the end of the century. Perhaps they hoped that even greater demand for their land would send values soaring. The roads remained unopened, merely lines on a map.

Back at the waterfront, the mills did not meet expectations. The confidence in the Ottawa area lumber industry vanished in 1873 when a depression brought about by the collapse of American railway stocks led to a drop in American and British markets. Mills on the river were hit hard. This economic setback continued for six years.<sup>12</sup> Competition from other mills on the Ottawa River may also have accounted for their lack of success. The Chaudière mills, for instance, were larger and more directly linked to land transportation routes. The railway siding between Jamieson's mills and the main line of the C.C.R. was not built as planned.

The impact of these circumstances on Britannia was critical. The village stopped growing, and only a few new dwellings were put up during the next five years. None of McAmmond's newly surveyed lots were sold, and neither additional mills nor the school were built. The assessed value of Jamieson's mills was also reduced by Nepean Township Council from \$3,000 in 1875 to \$1,500 in 1880. By 1880, Britannia was still a small community of labourers and carpenters who probably worked at the neighbouring mills.<sup>13</sup> It was both home and place of work for most of them. A large part of the village was owned by people who did not live there but had built on their land.

Interest in the little riverside village did not wane for long. Britannia was to benefit from its location on Lake Deschênes. No other point on the Ottawa either above or below the city was as wide or smooth for long and peaceful stretches of canoeing and rowing on calm summer days. A particular attraction was the protected Britannia Bay, an indentation in the shoreline safe from the hazards of the Deschênes Rapids.

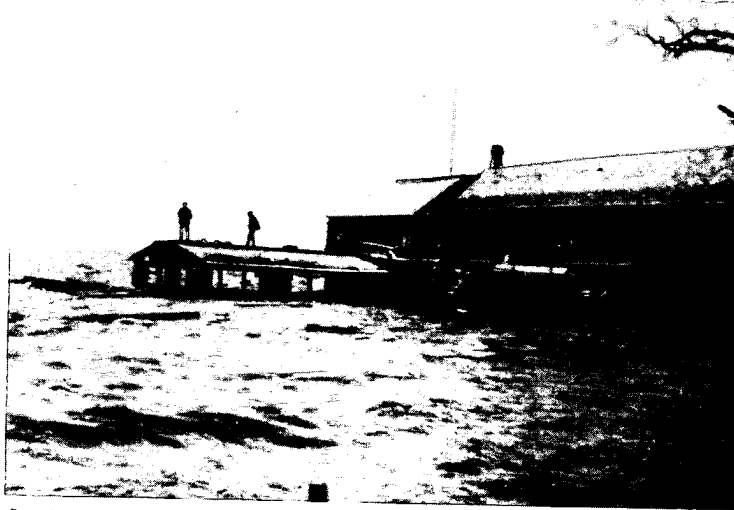
One of the first indications that some of Ottawa's well-to-do were seeking their summer leisure on Lake Deschênes was the conversion of Jamieson's mill into summer apartments. By the early 1880s, the mills were not flourishing. Robert Jamieson withdrew from the partnership in 1887. In order to remain profitable, lumber mills in the region diversified into pulp and paper and improved their production efficiency.<sup>14</sup> John C. chose to close his mills and



*The Fisher cottage in "The Grove," 1910.*



*View of "The Grove" from Bradford Street.*



*Jamieson's mill, that had been renovated to apartments in a 1890's spring flood.*

renovate them into small apartments with storage space beneath for pleasure boats. The office house for the mills, situated in an open area surrounded by tall pine trees, was turned into a summer cottage in what became known as "The Grove" of Jamieson's estate.

At the same time cottages were being built by summer visitors escaping the city heat; others lived in tents. Much of their leisure time was spent on the water, and before long an informal summer colony came into being. The closing of the mills provided a great opportunity for the summer visitors to establish a base for their aquatic activities. The "Old Mill" was used for boat storage and as a meeting place. The first step towards a positive identity was taken in the summer of 1887, when the little group of boating enthusiasts decided to organize a boating club, which they called the Britannia Aquatic Club.

Boating on the river at this suitable spot gained a strong foothold on both banks by the early 1890s. On the Britannia side, enough activity was being generated that a more formal organization was set up in 1891 to encourage water sports and to organize races and regattas. This development was stimulated by two Maritimers, Edwin L. Brittain, an accountant with the Department of Finance, and Dr. Mark G. McElhinney, whose father was a well-known master of square-rigged sailing ships. It is likely that the back-

grounds of these two men had a significant influence on the new name chosen for the club in 1891, the Britannia Nautical Club. The following year the new organization was formalized, with George Howe re-elected President and Mark McElhinney, Commodore. E.L. Brittain was elected to the Executive Committee. A room in Jamieson's mill apartments was set aside for club activities, and about 35 persons paid the one dollar annual fee that began the formal history of the organization.

A similar club was formed during the same summer across the river at Aylmer. The Aylmer Boating Club, later the Victoria Yacht Club, rivalled Britannia in taking advantage of the waters of Lake Deschênes. The spirit of competition between the two sides of the Ottawa River at this location that had begun with transshipping was revived by recreation.

Britannia was changing both in image and in nature, although some vestiges of the village conceived by McAmmond and Jamieson remained. Over the 1880s, the number of year-round village households barely increased and half of them moved out of the village while others took their place (Table VI). More than half of the lots owned in 1880 were owned by someone else in 1890.

Some prominent Ottawa people obtained land at Britannia for summer homes. Among them were lawyer William Wyld, an active member of the Nautical Club; T.H. Kirby, Ottawa's City Treasurer; A.P. Sherwood, Commissioner of the Dominion Police Department; A.S. Woodburn, a prominent local printer-publisher; merchants like Joseph Esmonde, stove and tinware dealer; and the Howes, painters and paint suppliers. The ten or so cottages that had been built before 1890 brought the total number of homes in the village to 30. Britannia was becoming a community with two sets of residents: those who lived year-round and those who only spent their summers at this shady site.

There were also well-to-do who saw an opportunity for investment in Britannia. William Allan, an Ottawa contractor, bought seventeen vacant lots at Britannia in the 1880s. William Wyld, a cottager himself, bought most of the lots on the east side of Britannia Road from McAmmond in 1887 for an average price of \$22. per lot, and sold them for at least three times the price within three or four years.<sup>15</sup>

The growing demand for land at Britannia for cottages prompted further subdivision of land near the waterfront into small, marketable parcels. In 1878, John Kehoe, an Ottawa blacksmith, bought

two blocks on both sides of Jamieson's former mills. At that time, Kehoe was likely hoping that Britannia would become a milling centre. He held on to the land while interest in Britannia as a summer resort took over. In 1890 Kehoe subdivided one of the blocks into 15 lots. This block lay between Rowatt, Bradford, a line south of and parallel to Cassels, and the bay. Some of these lots fronted on a small street which Kehoe named Beatrice (Kirby). Two years later Kehoe broke up his other block into 29 lots. This was the area between Jamieson, Bradford, Salina, and the river. A street named after Kehoe was laid out parallel to the waterfront. The plan also called for small streets, Maud and Cascades, which gave access to lots back from the waterfront.

J.C. Jamieson also continued to develop his property for the summer recreation market. Unlike Kehoe, Jamieson wanted a long-term investment from his land. Rather than sell small lots like Kehoe did, Jamieson built and rented cottages. He chose to maintain his property and play an active part in Britannia's future as a summer colony. Jamieson planted his roots firmly in Britannia soil while Kehoe's influence waned over the next generation. Jamieson



*Jamieson family house on the corner of Bradford and Rowatt streets, 1982.*

came to live permanently in Britannia, and his large red brick two-storey house at the corner of Bradford and Rowatt Streets is still occupied by his descendants.

The 1890s saw more cottage building at Britannia. Ottawa newspapers kept close tabs on Britannia, noting each new cottage and the people who were associated with it. In 1893, for instance, Arthur Taché, patent branch clerk in the public service, had a summer residence built, and Dr. E. Stone Wiggins, a renowned weather foreseer and a Finance Department clerk erected "Arbor House". By early July, some 60 cottages were reported occupied including six at the "Retreat", presumably Jamieson's mill apartments. Five years later, the *Ottawa Journal* noted incorrectly that over 100 cottages and tenements were being lived in at Britannia.<sup>16</sup> There were actually only about 40 cottages and tenements.

Those who wished only to enjoy Britannia for short periods patronized its hotels that were established during the 1890s. The Chateau Von Charles, one such hotel or boarding house, was opened sometime before 1891 under the management of Mrs. Frederica Von Charles, a French immigrant who came to Ottawa in 1888.<sup>17</sup> It was on leased property at the corner of Bradford and Rowatt. Its name reflected the high calibre clientele whom Von Charles wished to attract. Another hotel, the Balmoral, was set up later at the same intersection and boasted "every modern convenience", "superior cuisine", and reasonable prices. In 1900, it was being operated by Minto Dining Parlours.

The cottagers and investors of Britannia by 1900 generally were civil servants, some of whom held relatively senior posts, lawyers, merchants, a publisher, a dentist, a druggist and a jeweler. It was no surprise that such citizens of Ottawa made up the summer community. Before the turn of the century, Britannia could only be reached by train, bicycle, or by horse and carriage on the Richmond Road. The Canadian Pacific Railway, which took over the Canada Central, maintained a station at Britannia. Trains ran from early in the morning until late at night serving the village's commuters. Ottawa's less fortunate people could neither afford the time nor the money to live or have a cottage at Britannia. Many chose instead to camp on the fringes of the cottage settlement in the 1890s.<sup>18</sup> When Anson Gard summed up Britannia as a place where "everybody (seemed) to be prominent", in his book on the Ottawa Valley, *The Hub and the Spokes*, published in 1904, he was most likely referring to its summer outlook.<sup>19</sup> If he had visited Britannia in the dead of winter, his description probably would have been less flattering.



*Members of the Scott and Bishop families camping at Britannia, 1896.*

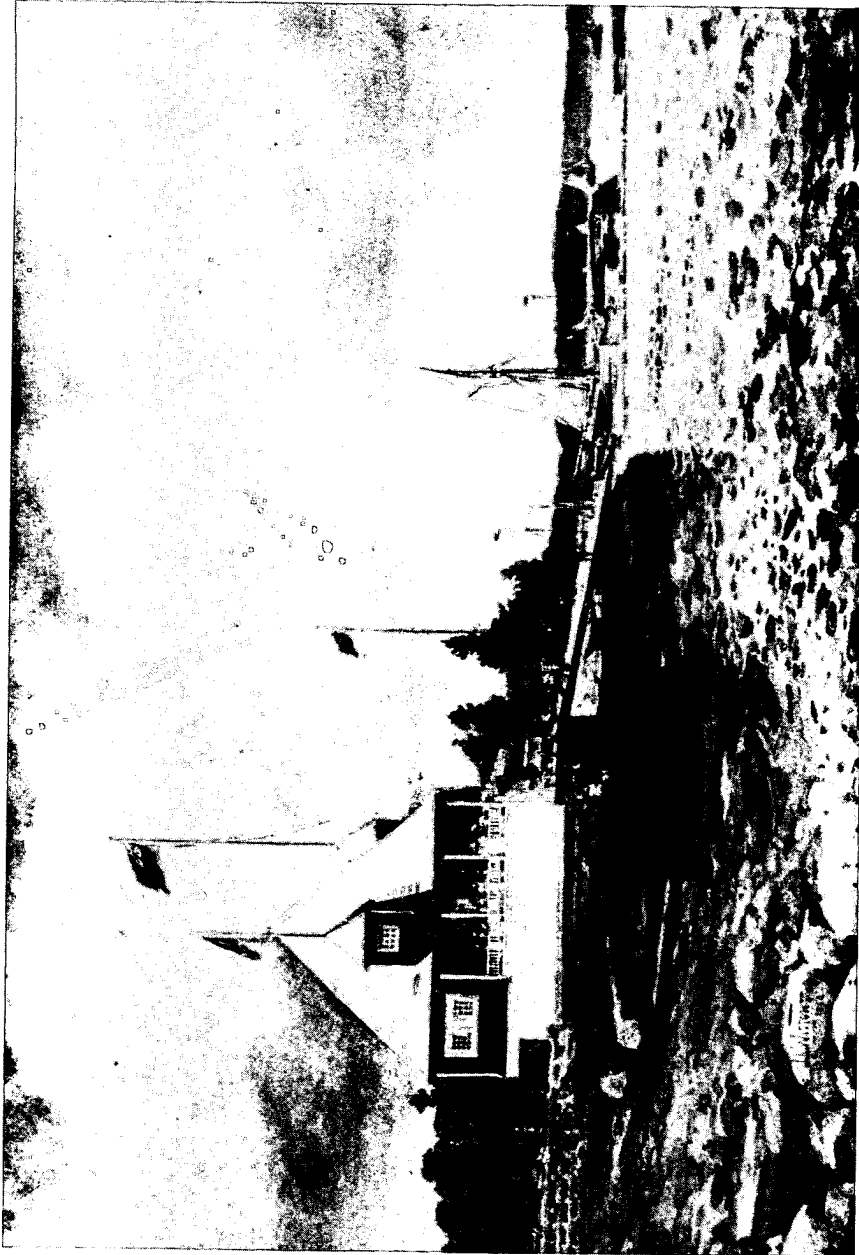
During this period of growth, Britannia began to attract year-round residents again as well as seasonal ones. The number of year-round households in the village alone increased from 13 in 1890 to 22 in 1900. By the end of the century, 26 landowners had summer cottages in the village.

Generally unskilled workers and skilled tradesmen made up most of the permanent residents at Britannia (Table IV). Eight households, owned and 14 rented, homes on the smaller, more affordable lots on the east side of Britannia Road. The waterfront lots were taken up by the cottagers, leaving the back lots for those who did not necessarily choose to live in Britannia because of an interest in boating or other summer recreation. By the end of the century, the cottage community in the village became more settled while the year-round households came and left more frequently (Table VI).<sup>21</sup>

The transformation of the riverside area did not seem to penetrate the rural character of the heights along Richmond Road. The people up there tended to remain on their farms or properties over the years. Nonetheless, a few new faces appeared on the scene that represented the vanguard of changes to come in this part of Britannia. Frederick W. Harmer, Nepean Township's municipal clerk and once a farmer himself, bought four acres facing Richmond Road in 1872 and had a fine residence, "Bleak House", built there. William Mosgrove, a prominent Ottawa barrister, acquired 15 acres on Richmond Road in 1879 and put up a substantial permanent home. By the early years of the twentieth century, a handful of distinguished folk like Louis A. Smith, another Ottawa magistrate, joined Mosgrove on Richmond Road.

The enthusiasm for boating at Britannia in the early nineties grew to the point that the Britannia Nautical Club sought more permanent and spacious club facilities than merely a room in Jamieson's former mill. At an executive meeting of the Club in September 1894, it was resolved that "suitable provision be made for the shelter and safe keeping of all kinds of sailing craft."<sup>22</sup> With a financial base of \$80 and a great deal of perseverance and energy on the part of members, a new boathouse was built on property donated by J.R. Booth, who still held land at the very tip of the peninsula at the rapids. The new two-storey structure completed in 1896, boasted a wide verandah overlooking Lake Deschênes. Members' boats were stored in the lower level, and the upper level was devoted to social activities and entertainment.





*A painting of the Britannia Boathouse Club, 1896, by J.L. Weston.*

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Because the new building was to be used as a community centre as well as a boathouse, the name of the club was changed again, this time to the Britannia Boathouse Club (B.B.C.), and was incorporated in 1895. For many years members, cottagers and villagers flocked to the regular Saturday night "hops" held on the upper deck.

The first directors of the boating club reflected Britannia's relatively well-to-do summer community. Among them were Kirby, Brittain and Wyld, some of the more prominent cottagers.

The club constitution distinguished between resident and non-resident members. Residents either had cottages or resided at Britannia's hotels, while non-residents came out to Britannia only at weekends. In 1899, the 105 club members were almost equally split in number between these two groups.<sup>23</sup> Only 16 resident members then owned property in Britannia, the others were presumably summer tenants and boarders, or were related to other owners. Women were not permitted to be members of the club at that time.

### Early Services and Amenities

During the last 20 years of the nineteenth century while Britannia Bay, the village below the railway tracks, changed from being a mill site to a desirable summer colony and while the heights stayed much like it had always been, various services and community amenities were encouraged to develop in their own way. In this period, three churches, a new school, and many small businesses became features of Britannia which longtime residents well remember. These developments clearly showed the differences and unique characters of the two communities in Britannia.

The school at Britannia was a project that was promoted by the residents on the heights. The log schoolhouse on the Bell farm which saw a few generations of children pass through its doors had become too small and uncomfortable for the number of pupils and no longer suited the trustees and the taxpayers. In 1887 the trustees of School Section Three, which encompassed Britannia village and the heights, wanted to buy property and erect a new school built of stone this time.

A location was found across the road from the site of the existing school, in the middle of the School Section and easily accessible since it fronted on Richmond Road. Most of the children who

attended the school lived on the farms and elsewhere on Richmond Road whereas only a small number came from the Britannia Bay area. Only one in five children between the ages of seven and 13 in the Section lived in the village.<sup>24</sup> The farmers in the area had the largest properties and contributed the largest taxes towards the school of all ratepayers in the Section. The trustees accepted these circumstances and did not envision a future expansion of the village part of the School Section. George and Peter Bell donated the land, directly across the road from their house and farm, and the trustees borrowed \$1,800 from Nepean Township to build the schoolhouse. The stone used for the construction came from the Graham farm.

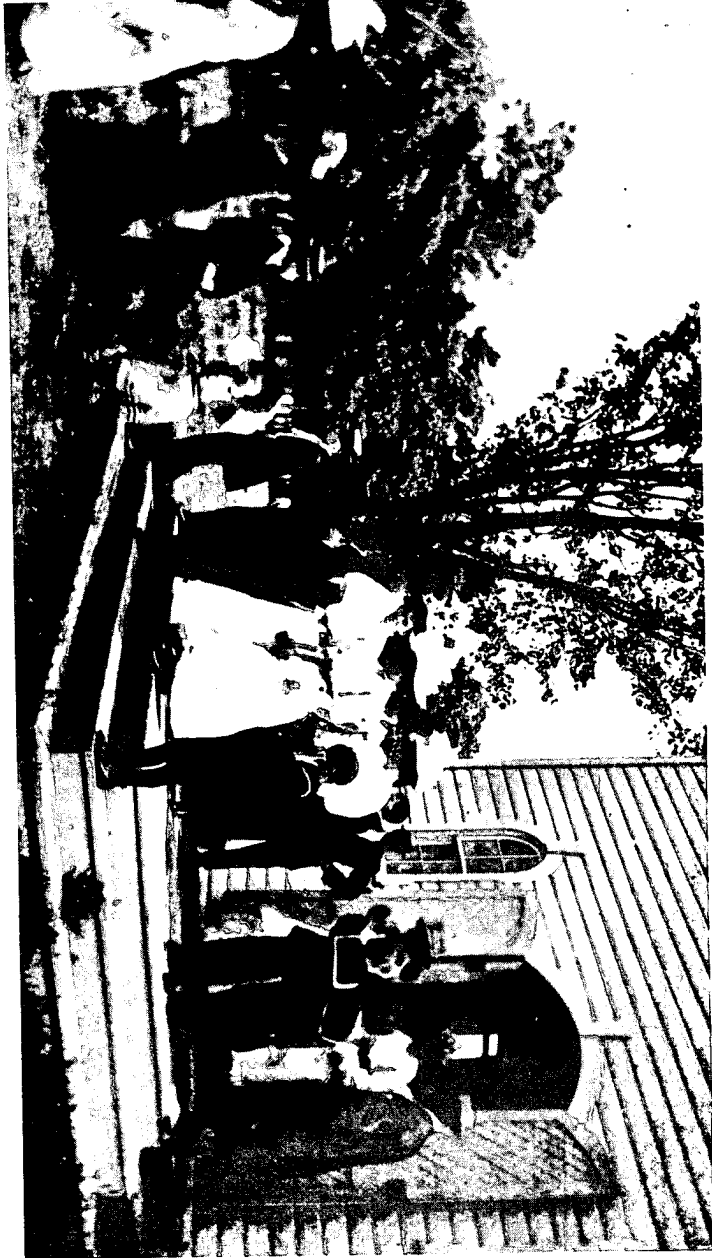
The religious make-up of the area altered considerably during this period. In 1880, about half of the village and heights resident families were Anglican, and most of the rest were either Methodist or Presbyterian. There was a sprinkling of Roman Catholics, and they lived in the village.<sup>25</sup> By 1900, the rise of the summer colony contributed to the number of church-goers generally in Britannia.

The Methodist Episcopal group at Britannia was dominated by the farmers on the heights, and trustees and elders included such heights people as Elkanah Honeywell, Edward Watson and John Bell. The Methodists had provided the first church in Britannia. As mentioned, the trustees of the Nepean mission of the Methodist church acquired a lot in the village from John McAmmond, Jr., the district steward of the mission, in 1874. The church there seems to have been used by all denominations. Three years later, the Methodists built a more permanent church on a site J.R. Booth donated to the same trustees at what became the northeast corner of Britannia Road and Carling Avenue. The new church may have been needed since the Episcopal Methodists and the Wesleyan Methodists united at this time to form the Methodist Church of Canada. The trustees, who no longer needed the village property, resold it to McAmmond in 1893.

The preference for the heights location over the village may have been a question of accessibility, as in the case of the school. It made sense to build the church nearer the majority of the congregation. The number of Methodist families on the heights had grown while the number below the heights had not.<sup>26</sup> Even the view overlooking the Lake Deschênes and the Gatineau Hills might have persuaded the local Methodist leaders to locate their church there.

The local Anglican congregation was organized in the village rather than in the heights, even though most of the Anglicans in the

*The congregation coming out of St. Bonaventure Chapel in the early 1900's.*



area were farming families. Their allegiance was to the older Bells Corners congregation a few miles further along the Richmond Road.<sup>27</sup> It was the expanding summer community in the village that brought the call for local church services in the mid-1880s. Anglican services were first conducted in Britannia Village by Ottawa clergymen who preached from a cottage verandah during the summers of the late 1880s. This makeshift situation was no longer adequate for a growing community, and the first stages of organizing a local church were set in motion. A vestry, the administrative unit of an Anglican church, was set up with summer residents, Mrs. Thomas Kirkpatrick, A.N. McNeill, and R. Burland as its clerk and two wardens.

During June and July 1892, summer villagers worked together to build their new church. Cottager Thomas Kirkpatrick sold a lot on a ridge on the east side of Britannia Road to the trustees of the church. The church was built under the supervision of A.N. McNeill. One of the builders was Charles Robinson, carpenter son of Nelson G. Robinson. On August 7, 1892, St. Stephen's Church was officially opened. Church services were held only in the summer in this period since most of the followers were cottagers.

Like the first church in Britannia set up by the Methodists in the 1870s, the new anglican church was intended to serve all Protestants in the village. The Anglicans gained the support of other Protestants for erecting their church by ensuring that religious services, which non-Anglicans were permitted to attend, would be "low church" in nature. As a further check on the nature of services, the title of the church property was held by the secular trustees rather than by the customary parish vestry.

St. Bonaventure Roman Catholic chapel was also the work of summer residents. W.J. Lynch, a chief clerk in the patent office of the federal Department of Agriculture, asked for the permission of the Catholic archbishop to establish a church for fellow cottagers at Britannia. Lynch's request was granted. A church site and building supplies followed. John Kehoe donated a lot to the Catholics, but it was probably considered too prone to spring flooding and was therefore raffled off and the proceeds used towards the church. J.R. Booth, who had earlier helped out local Methodists by giving them land, treated the Roman Catholics similarly by providing the necessary lumber for the building and land at the edge of the village near Jamieson Street beyond Britannia Road. The archbishop donated \$50 and side windows. Lynch supplied stone pillars for the chapel's

*A visiting priest for St. Bonaventure Chapel. The Powell house on Briannia Road is in the background, 1910.*



foundation, and cottagers Arthur Taché and W.J. Conroy worked on the altar. The 40 by 24 foot chapel was consecrated on July 14, 1894, and from that time, Mass was delivered on Sundays and holy days only during the summer by Oblate and Capucian Fathers from Ottawa. Again, the initiative was taken by the summer residents who had the time and resources to devote to the cause.

Britannia Village itself was adopting a strong sense of community self-interest. Summer cottagers felt that they had special concerns which required nurturing and protecting. The Boathouse Club was one local organization that brought together summer villagers who enjoyed aquatic sports. However, the club did not necessarily get involved in all of the challenges made upon Britannia. A ratepayers' association was formed in the late 1800s, which at one point gave to its executive the titles of mayor and aldermen. In June 1891, nominations for "civic honours" at Britannia resulted in the election by acclamation of William Howe as mayor.

The ratepayers occasionally met to discuss important issues affecting the future of the village. Britannia residents began in this period to group together to challenge anything that appeared to threaten their chosen home.

The growing population brought a demand for places that provide goods and services in the two parts of Britannia, the village and the heights. Early in the village's growth, in 1875, Walter Harmer's store and post office was doing a fair business. By 1880, he and his shop had gone from the stagnating village. The post office remained closed until 1889 when a widow, Catherine Hand, re-opened it on the corner of Britannia Road and Rowatt. This, too, was shortlived since Mrs. Hand died that October, and no one replaced her.

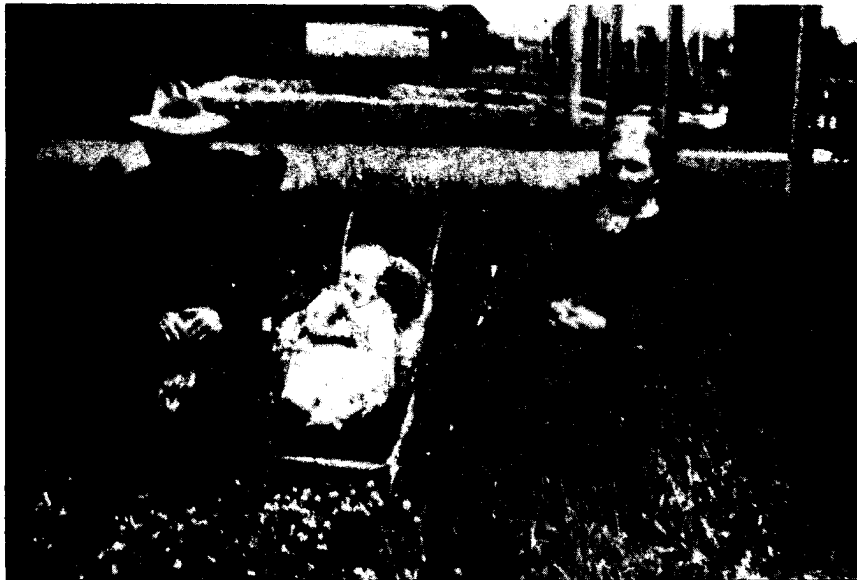
Residents on the heights applied successfully for their own post office in 1890. The Post Office Inspector for the area wished to appease Judge Mosgrove, the prominent newcomer on the heights, when he reported that "although of no commercial importance, (a post office) would be of much convenience to quite a number of persons (including Judge Mosgrove)".<sup>28</sup> The Inspector also recommended that the new post office should be called Mosgrove at the suggestion of Moss K. Dickinson, Ottawa's former Member of Parliament, although the judge had only been associated with the heights for ten years. Mosgrove post office opened with Robert Winthrop serving as postmaster until 1906. Winthrop was the logi-

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cal choice, living as he did near the crossroads of two major roads on the heights.

Shortly after the Mosgrove post office was set up, Barbara McAmmond, wife of John, Jr., sought the position of postmistress of Britannia Village. The Post Office Inspector, however, held off because of the existence of the nearby Mosgrove office and because of the few permanent residents in the village at the time. The stand taken by the Post Office Department soon changed as they recognized the growing importance of postal service for the summer community. In June 1891, Barbara McAmmond got her wish and set herself up with a grocery store beside the railway tracks at what was then the south end of Britannia Road. She kept the store and post office named Britannia Bay for 14 years. Her role in the village befitted the wife and later widow of the man who had set the growth of Britannia in motion years before.

The junction of Richmond Road and Carling on the heights continued to be the service centre for the local farming community. Robert Winthrop diversified his activities. Apart from being postmaster, he sold farm implements and groceries. He also worked



*John McAmmond, who set Britannia's growth in motion and his wife, Barbara, who was postmistress for the village in the 1890's. Note the C.R.R. station in the background. Taken in the 1890's.*



for Nepean Township as a caretaker and messenger, and was a sanitary inspector for a few years. His days at the forge were over. He rented his blacksmith's shop in the mid-1890s to James Skuce of Bells Corners who later set up on his own property across the road using Winthrop's equipment. William Saunders had operated a blacksmith's shop near this site in 1879-80. In 1895, Francis Armstrong, a butcher, bought a small parcel of land along the north side of Richmond Road. Mrs. Charles Robinson had a grocery business for a brief time in the 1890s. The curiosity on the heights was Judge Mosgrove's vineyards and wine manufacturing operation. His Chateau du Chene Wine enjoyed several years of popularity among Ottawa's elite.

Down in the village, there were different needs to be met. Ice was harvested from the river in the winters for the ice boxes of cottagers and year-rounders. Furniture and other personal belongings had to be brought to and from village homes and the city. Together, these two services provided employment for some permanent villagers. W.H. Murphy, an early resident of the village, established an ice and cartage business after working in his father's lumber business and on the C.P.R.. He sold ice at a nickel a block during this period. Louis LaHaise also began a similar line of work which lasted several years. Both lived on Britannia Road between Rowatt and Salina. Edward Murphy operated a livery stable for people from miles around who took horses in from the countryside, left them in Britannia and boarded the train and later the streetcar to Ottawa. William Rowatt, who lived year-round in the village, was the local C.P.R. agent. He also sold insurance to local residents.

In the summer of 1887, the Bell Telephone Company brought wires from Richmond Road down to the village, where an office was opened in Mr. Hand's grocery. Subscribers could purchase \$5 tickets, each good for 50 calls. The tickets were divided into squares and punched each time a call was made.<sup>29</sup> It was not until 1903 that long distance service to Ottawa was introduced.

Some of the very basic needs of summer and permanent village residents also had to be worked out. Water for domestic use was drawn directly from the river, collected in rain barrels or cisterns. A few people had their own wells. In order to supply his apartments with water, J.C. Jamieson put up a windmill on the cliff near the head of the rapids and a 5,000-gallon tank on the edge of his property from which surface pipes ran the water to the cottages on his estate. During long calm periods, the tank went dry and a water

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cart was used instead for obtaining and distributing water. No one worried about pollution in those times. Up the Ottawa River from Britannia there were only farms, small villages and towns to soil the water with sewage. Residents on the heights either had wells or used spring water. Sanitary sewers were unheard of in Britannia. Out-houses were normal for the day and every cottage had its little companion.

While Britannia continued to be the summer haven of Ottawa's merchants and professionals, the streetcar was on the horizon, ready to bring change. Schemes to give Britannia access to streetcar service hinged on Britannia's prospects as a summer resort and place of residence. It was initially scorned by villagers and cottagers.

In 1891, the Ottawa Electric Street Railway Company, later simply the Ottawa Electric Railway Company (O.E.R.), was formed by Thomas Ahearn and William Y. Soper to replace horse-drawn trams in Ottawa with electric ones. The O.E.R. laid its first tracks along some of Ottawa's main streets with a terminus at the Central Canada Exhibition grounds at Lansdowne Park.

In an effort to promote the use of streetcars, many North American electric railway companies built amusement parks and other recreational spots and linked them by streetcar with the downtown core. Streetcars brought people to and from work during the weekdays and to and from these popular playgrounds on Sundays. This allowed streetcars to run frequently and profitably each and every day.

The Ottawa Electric Railway Company pursued the same strategy. During the 1890s, the O.E.R. extended its lines to Rockcliffe Park and the Dominion Experimental Farm, two favorite areas of Sunday jaunts for Ottawans. The company bought land along Holland Avenue for a park of its own which was called Victoria or West End Park and equipped it with an auditorium for popular amusement.

The decision to extend the O.E.R. across miles of open farmland to Britannia was a similar attempt to attract weekend business by taking advantage of the village's fresh air and desirable location. It was also intended to keep up with the recent advancements of electric railways on the Quebec side of the river in promoting Aylmer as a summer resort.

The first action made towards putting an electric railway through Britannia was that of a new company, the Ottawa and Aylmer

Railroad and Bridge Company. This company was formed with the aim of operating an electric railway from Ottawa to the Deschênes Rapids and across the river to Aylmer, Hull and Fort Coulonge. In 1896, it wanted to build a line from a point on Holland Avenue, the westernmost point of the O.E.R. line, to and through the streets of Britannia.

When villagers got wind of the proposal, they opposed it in what became the first of many conflicts between a concerned group of Britannia residents and an outside agency whose intentions ran at odds with the ideals held by the group. Cottager E.L. Brittain advised Nepean Township Council to make no concessions to the company until a committee of local residents had been consulted. Brittain and others held a meeting at which a resolution was passed stating their view that an electric railway running along their streets would be harmful to the best interests of Britannia. Most of the residents at the meeting apparently expressed satisfaction with the excellent service given them at reasonable cost by the C.P.R. and felt that they should continue to patronize it. Their real concerns, however, were more selfish. Villagers were afraid that the streetcar "would make Britannia a dumping ground for the riffraff of Ottawa."<sup>30</sup> Having observed the growing popularity of Rockcliffe Park and other termini of the electric railway, these residents probably felt that Britannia would be swarming with holidaymakers all summer long which would mark the end to the quiet seclusion and "exclusiveness" of their village.

Residents reported at a subsequent meeting that they would only accept the proposal if certain changes were made. Nepean Township Council in turn informed the Ottawa and Aylmer Railroad and Bridge Company that the line must follow the course of Richmond Road from Holland and Britannia as closely as possible, that commuters' tickets must be issued to residents living within a mile of the track, that winter service should be provided as early as possible, and that crossings and land around their track must be maintained in good order. The company apparently did not accept these terms.

The rivalry between the streetcar companies in Quebec and Ontario over their desires to promote their respective waterfront areas as popular summer recreation spots brought the question of a line to Britannia to the forefront again in 1898. The year before, the Hull Electric Company bought the Aylmer branch of the C.P.R. which it had been leasing. The company wished to bolster Aylmer as a summer resort for the growing American vacation market. It

established Queen's Park west of Aylmer at the end of its line. Equipped with a hotel and frontage on Lake Deschênes, it far surpassed Ottawa Electric Railway's land-locked Victoria Park. Rumours started that the Ottawa company was seeking a way to gain the edge over the Hull company. At one point, it was thought that the O.E.R. would purchase a railway to the Gatineau Valley and convert it into an electric line to foster recreation in and around the picturesque mountains. The O.E.R. chose instead to revive the idea of extending a line to Britannia and to set up a new lakeside amusement park there which would rival Queen's Park.

In the meantime, the attitude of Britannia residents towards the electric railway had changed. People there now felt that the C.P.R. could not provide the necessary continuous service that an electric railway could offer. The last train in the day arrived in Britannia at 7:00 in the evening, which most residents considered too early, and no trains ran from Britannia to Ottawa after 5:00 in the afternoon. Moreover, the C.P.R. service was apparently "not what it used to be."<sup>31</sup> Just as an earlier meeting Britannia residents had condemned the notion, a similar meeting of residents in August 1898 received the Ottawa Electric Railway with open arms and invited the company to build a line to Britannia. A possible extension of the Hull Electric Company across the Deschênes Rapids and along Richmond Road connecting with the Ottawa railway at Holland was also briefly discussed, but was not pursued.

That the line would only be patronized continually in summer did not seem to concern anyone as it was expected that more people would soon be living along the line and use the service.<sup>32</sup> The extension of the streetcar service was supposed to promote development on the largely rural land between the village and the city. Nonetheless, people along the proposed new line did not want to pay higher fares than city dwellers did. Some summer cottagers said that they would remain there in the winter simply to patronize the Britannia line and encourage the company to operate it year-round. As a result, from the beginning the Ottawa Electric offered year-round service.

The O.E.R. proceeded with its new double-track line. The company created a rival to Aylmer's Queen's Park by buying several acres along Britannia Bay for a park. The O.E.R. purchased two blocks of land from Britannia Village landowners in 1899, and a small beach from farmers William N. and Richard A. Bell beyond the village.

The land that the O.E.R. bought was not enough for their intended park. The land divided up among the heirs of John LeBreton had to be juggled and reassembled before additional property could be obtained. William Taylor, John McAmmond's brother-in-law, acquired these various properties in the subdivision in 1900-01. The O.E.R. and J.C. Jamieson bought separate parcels of land from Taylor. Jamieson, the O.E.R., and Taylor jointly petitioned the County Court to cancel the subdivision plan, which still had a legal bearing on the use of that land. This was carried out, and the O.E.R. was free to develop its park on the 18 acres of field and sandy beach.

While the south end of Britannia was undergoing this transformation, the rapids end was involved in a quite different venture. Hydroelectric power needs were growing in the Ottawa area. Electrification was proceeding in many parts of the city in homes and offices. In order to keep up with the demand, new sources of electric power were needed. The Metropolitan Electric Company, a firm with American and local backing, wished to build a canal and generating station to harness the swiftly-flowing waters at the tip of the Britannia peninsula. The company bought J.R. Booth's remaining holdings there, some 160 acres, in 1898 for \$20,000. The canal was to be 14 feet deep, 150 feet wide and 2,000 feet long, with a generator sufficient to generate 5,000 horse-power of electricity, of which only 2,000 would be needed upon completion. A power house was to be located at the east end of the canal.

The canal disrupted life temporarily at Britannia. Work began the following summer, with approximately 175 men encamped in the fields behind the village. Here, buildings were put up to accommodate the men and their supplies. The company also had its own blacksmith, store and dining areas. Campers and farmers who fished at Mud Lake nearby had to go somewhere else because of the work.

The project was soon troubled with labour, management, financial and legal problems. In early September, the contractors, Roderick Brewder and Archibald McNaughton, abandoned their work. Employees later went on strike when complications arose after the management took over from the contractors. The workers were concerned that their back wages would not be paid. There was also some dispute over the water rights at Deschênes Rapids. The Hull Electric Power Company had previously secured the right to control the diversion of water from Lake Deschênes for the pur-

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poses of generating power. The Metropolitan Electric Company was threatened with legal action by this company because it had apparently violated this right.<sup>33</sup> The company might also have been in difficult financial straits. A number of mechanic's liens were imposed, and the following year saw the company embroiled in legal squabbles regarding its mortgages. Work was stopped and the power project abandoned, but the company held onto its marshy property which was placed under the care of William J. Taylor, who lived there near the village.

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The years from 1869 to 1900 saw Britannia going through two stages. In its early years, Britannia was identified with the mills. Later, the regional railway and some enterprising individuals set the ball rolling and a village was born to explore the potential of the site for industrial uses. This did not develop as intended, a victim of the nationwide depression of the mid-1870s and of strong competition from larger mills in Ottawa.

By the 1880s, the mills had closed, but a new use was being made for the riverside location. Summer recreation, particularly boating on the wide and long Lake Deschênes, encouraged the building of cottages and the forming of a boating club. Britannia became a somewhat exclusive summer colony accessible to those Ottawa people who had the money and time. The location gave Britannia its niche and enabled it to remain competitive with Aylmer, just across the lake from Britannia, which was also seeking a place in the seasonal recreation market.

Men and Women who only spent their summers at Britannia developed the institutions and social features of the place. They also provided the first strong, independent voice in Britannia which stood up to the pressures from outside forces. While they were in command near the waterfront, the area along Richmond Road on the heights remained the home of enduring farming and local service families.

Towards the end of the century, other outside forces were investing in Britannia in quite different ways. The electric railway and the power company schemes contributed to the changing physical shape of the village. The most important changes were just around the corner.



*An aerial photograph taken in the early 1920's looking down the Ottawa River, showing the Metropolitan Electric Company Canal, on the left, the island at the end of Britannia the Deschenes Rapids and port of Deschenes.*





## Disaster Hits the Township

The summer of 1870 was very dry and hot. On August 17th, someone was burning brush just out of Bell's Corners. The fire burned out of control with high winds creating days of terror for the settlers of Nepean, March, and Goulburn. Bell's Corners was wiped out with but a couple of houses standing. It was a horrifying experience for the settlers to have to flee for their lives leaving behind all they had struggled for - homes, buildings and animals. Many stories were told of their experiences of finding refuge in the creeks. All the countryside lay under a pall of billowing smoke.

Frederick William Harmer, then clerk of the Township of Nepean, vividly described his escape when writing to his family in England. His first concern was the Township documents which were kept in a sheetmetal box. He and his personal things, Sunday clothes, the sewing machine and bedding were brought out but much went up in flames. Finding an old buggy, they piled on what they could and with his son in the shafts and he behind, raced the oncoming flames to a safe spot by a creek.

Great billows of smoke and flames advanced toward Ottawa, and the late R. W. Winthrop, of Old Forge history, recalled his father telling how afraid they were as fire balls carried by the wind fell onto some of their buildings and had to be extinguished.

Undaunted by the disaster, the residents and farmers took heart, and it was not long until Bell's Corners arose out of the ashes into a thriving and active village. The farmers built fine homes and out buildings, but it was truly a disaster never to be forgotten.

## Sites of Villages Surveyed

Westward out of Ottawa there was a growing population. Skead's Mills (Westboro) was surveyed into lots as a village. During the years 1872-75, Britannia became a village. The lot on which my house stands was surveyed by a Mr. Sinclair in 1875.

J.R. Booth played a part in the history of early Britannia. Wilson writing "Oldtime Stuff" in the *Citizen*, May 10, 1934, said: "J.R. Booth obtained the parcel of land east of Britannia Road from the Head of the Rapids east skirting the Magee Farmlands, Old Mud Lake, and up to the Richmond Road." Have a look at Belden's *Historical Atlas* 1879. A map of Nepean shows what he owned.

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### **Ownership of the Mills Changes Hands**

Nelson G. Robinson sold his mills to John McAmmond in 1873, who in turn sold to R.E. and John Cameron Jamieson. They were sons of Scottish parents who had come to Canada in 1838, and had long established a bakery in Victoria Terrace Upper Bytown. The Jamieson brothers operated the mill for a period, but found it unprofitable due to competition from the Ottawa mills.

### **First Britannia Church**

The years 1873-74 saw the erection, at the top of Britannia Road opposite the Old Forge, of a Methodist Church. When remodelling the pulpit platform in 1940, under it was found inscribed, "James & Wm. West, contractors - very dry weather July 3, 1875".

### **Britannia During the 1870's**

The first wedding was performed in that church in 1875 - Barbara Hare was married to Rev. Foster McAmmond. Also of interest to note, it was J.R. Booth who donated the lot on which the church is built, Lot S/W corner of his Lot 21, for \$1.00.

### **High Waters of 1876**

The Ottawa River went on a rampage that spring, and the recent floods of this spring (1979) brought back to memory the many I have seen here in my lifetime. But the one in 1876 had devastating effects, sweeping away land at the head of the rapids and waters pouring through from the lake where Salina Street is today. Even Lady Dufferin, wife of the then Governor General, made mention of the severe flooding in her book, *My Canadian Journal*, stating that the waters of the Ottawa are six feet higher than they have been... there are floods everywhere."

### **Recovering from the Devastating Fire of 1879**

The area showed much progress. Fine stone homes and good barns appeared. Frederick William Harmer, clerk of the Township, built "Bleak House", a lovely home where Richmond Heights Apartments stand today. He had to be nearer the township office

which was moved to Parkdale Avenue after its destruction in Bell's Corners.

In 1878, William Mosgrove (later Judge) took up residence on the Richmond Road and established a vineyard. And so ended the 1870's.

## Growth of Britannia

The 1870's saw the site of the village surveyed into lots. As a result, city residents interested in obtaining a summer cottage, not too far away, bought lots and new cottages began to appear. As Col. Joseph Bouchette wrote in 1832, Britannia had a beautiful location. As well, quite a number chose to tent out.

The Canadian Pacific Railway erected a station, two sidings as well as a cattle enclosure for shipping.

Train service improved yearly. I learned from old history books that there had been few houses here, but the 1880's saw an increase. Today there remains about a dozen homes built prior to 1890, and they have been modernized.

A trip out to Britannia by train or carriage was an event. Good farms along the way were well stocked, and the fields were producing the necessities of life. East of Britannia, the Robert Magee farm (now Lincoln Fields), George Shouldice on Carling, and William Hughes and Ed. Watson on the way to the Baseline were flourishing. Going west on Richmond Road, Judge Mosgrove had his vineyard with Robert Hare across the road, and there were the excellent farms of the Bells, Grahams, and Bearmans, all leaders in the agricultural field. The same applied to the farms along the old March Road. Mr. Winthrop at his Olde Forge did a good business with a store, supplying farm implements as well as repairing them for the farmers far and near.

As soon as the ice left the river, the boats of the Upper Ottawa Improvement Company were busy bringing down logs for the

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Ottawa Mills. The shouts of the loggers and the toots from the boats were familiar sounds as the cribs were guided into their channel to take the rapids.

### **John Cameron Jamieson and His Influence on Britannia**

After closing the mill at Britannia, we find John Cameron Jamieson in city politics. In the Minutes of City Council 1881, he was an alderman, serving on the committees of Public Works and Health. As the city residents turned their fancies to summering at Britannia, Mr. Jamieson saw advantages in the development. He can be credited with putting Britannia on the map as a summer resort.

In 1923, the *Ottawa Citizen's* "Old Time Stuff", written by historian George Wilson, told the Jamieson saga. "J.C.'s father, William, and his family from Scotland, came to Bytown in 1841. From a small beginning, he established a thriving bakery business." According to this story, the Jamieson Bakery was the first in Ottawa to bake by electricity in the early 1890's.

With his brother's withdrawal from the partnership in the mill, Mr. Jamieson began to bring about improvements and this article noted him as "King of Britannia", building and renting cottages. Mr. Jamieson said that when he obtained his property there were but three houses on it.

It is the year 1887, and a new school is built. The old log one on the Richmond Road was replaced with a solid stone building on land donated by George and Peter Bell. Built of local stone quarried from the farm of John Graham of the Rock Farm, the builders knew their art. It still stands today as a heritage private dwelling. It was vacated in 1922 when the growing attendance necessitated a larger one. And so Grant School was built. The old school was known as S.S. #3, Nepean or Mosgrove.

The first Post Office was opened from September 1, 1889 to September 1890. Mrs. C. Hand was postmistress, and it was located at the foot of Britannia Road.

### **The Exciting 1890's**

In the 1950's I was searching high and low for the village history. To Edwin L. Brittain, of blessed memory, I owe a great debt of

gratitude. He kept scrapbooks, and in those books were clippings of what took place during the exciting summer months from 1890 to 1913. He most generously loaned me the books for information. The news items are priceless. And credits of praise are due to the *Evening Journal*, the *Ottawa Citizen*, and the old *Free Press* whose reporters gave Britannia such publicity.

Mr. Brittain was born in St. John, N.B. and its *Sun* dated January 27, 1886, reported that he had been a successful candidate for a position in the Department of Finance, Ottawa. Between 1886 and 1890, his name frequently appears in these clippings, as a worker with the young people of St. John's Church, the YMCA, and the sport of sculling. He was a keen sailor as will be seen in the news.

On August 22, 1890, the *Evening Journal* reported... "A boisterous blow at Britannia. A raft belonging to Messrs. Thistle, Caswell and Francis broke up and the boom had to be cut to prevent total destruction."

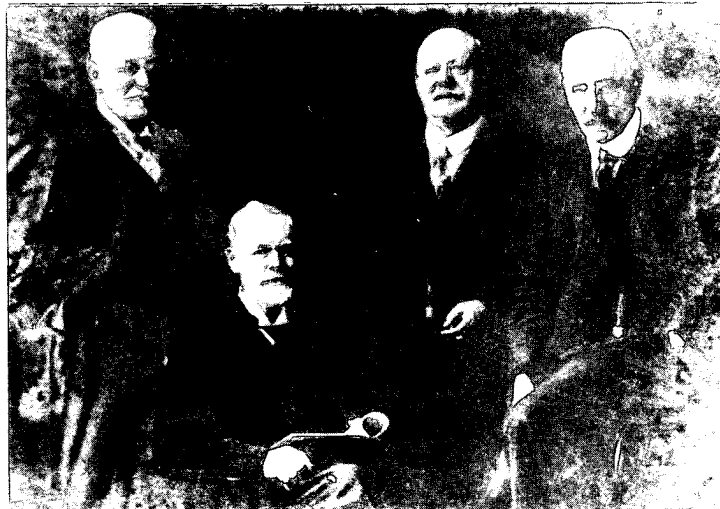
Messrs. Brittain, Labelle, and Harris were out on the "Iris". The waves were high, and Mr. B. reported they nearly drowned off Shirley's Bay. Messrs. Sproule and Ashfield, out in a birch bark canoe, had a narrow escape. It was the liveliest sail of the season down the lake.

Weather prevented the baseball game between the "Clippers" and the "Britannias" at the Sandy Beach (later the Park). The wind took hold of the tents and caused a general scrimmage. Lawyer Wyld had the misfortune to have the chimney of his house catch fire, but managed with help of family and neighbours to get it out. (Something we do not see now, but it was common in the days of wood burning stoves).

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*Old Britannia Mill, about 1870, taken from a Topley Stereoscope*



*John Cameron Jamieson (seated) and brothers, Robert E. William A., and Dr. Charles J. Sisters not shown are Miss Marion and Charlotte (Mrs. J.C. Howel). Copied from a photo taken in 1919.*

## John Cameron Jamieson

### His Interest and Good Helped Develop Britannia into a Fashionable Summer Resort

“King of Britannia” (From the *Citizen's* Old Time Stuf)

“John Cameron Jamieson and his brother, Robert E., bought a large tract of land at Britannia from the heirs of Capt. LeBreton with the intention of erecting a flour mill there. When the brothers dissolved partnership, John Cameron Jamieson took over, as part of his share, the land at Britannia. He turned it into a summer resort, built, sold and rented cottages, and put the place on the map. He installed a water system and supplied his cottages with running water. Though he sold most of the property to summer resorters, he is still the big noise of the place...”

Mr. Jamieson was a son of William Jamieson, a baker from Edinburgh, Scotland. He brought his family to Canada settling in Rockland to farm. In 1841, they moved to Bytown, and he turned to his profession as a baker, starting in a small way. It was to become a flourishing business on Wellington Street. On his retirement, his sons Robt. E. and John Cameron took over. (1868 *City of Ottawa Directory* shows R.E. and J.C. Jamieson, bakers and confectioners - Victoria Terrace, Richmond Road.)

In the early 1870's, the two brothers came to Britannia and acquired a sawmill of extensive proportions and also considerable land on the lake front. It had been part of the LeBreton estate, sold in 1835 to Nelson G. Robinson, who sold to John McAmmond. Before the Jamieson brothers purchase of the mill, it had been idle and taxes were owing.

They put the mill into operation as shown in a Topley photograph on stereoscope No. 16485, captioned “Messrs. Jamieson's Saw Mill, Britannia, DesChenes, Ottawa, Canada”. His niece, the late Miss Bertha Jones, told me that the mill only operated a short time after as it was not a paying concern. The big mills in Ottawa took the trade.

Evidently after the mill operations ceased, Mr. Jamieson turned his attention to city politics and served as an alderman in 1881. He was mentioned as being on the Committee of the Board of Works, as well as the Board of Health.

At Britannia, he was the owner of much land, and as the city

turned its fancies to the delightful summering area, Mr. Jamieson saw the advantages for development. He could be credited with putting Britannia on the map. Sometime in the late 1880s, he turned the mill into living apartments. In an old Journal clipping of 1899, it said the Old Mill had been fitted into apartments, a bachelor's residence! For years following, it was habited by families who came year after year. The Old Mill had fond memories for many.

Mr. Jamieson said that when he acquired his land, there were but three houses on it. By building cottages and selling lots, the village grew, greatly to his credit. In 1892, he erected a windmill on the Cliff which brought water from the lake. This old windmill stood for years. The Citizen of July 7, 1893, said, "the summer residents were much pleased when Mr. Jamieson erected a 5000-gallon tank and had running water piped above ground to their cottages." He also maintained a boat house for the resorters to use for their boats. Pleased with the water supply, residents had to go easy when weather of summer was calm for days and so the water wagon had to bring in a supply.

Miss Jones, the niece, also related to me that the side verandah of the Old Mill was used for dancing during the summer months by its summer residents. She said this was before the Boat House Club was erected, and the Club had a room in the Mill in which to meet.

About the year 1910, Mr. Jamieson erected another large apartment building at the foot of Jamieson Street in line with the Old Mill. It received the name of the Terrace. It had about 10 apartments, and was of two floors. When the Jamieson estate was sold for housing development in 1960, it was demolished, to be followed in 1961 by the demolition of the Old Mill.

Miss Jones spent most of her life with the Jamiesons and as a child recalled the whistle that used to blow at the Mill. She loved boating on the lake and recalled a trip up river on the *Resolute*. She also sailed on the *Edie May* which belonged to Frederick Wm. Harmer, former clerk of the township who lived in Bleak House on the Richmond Road.

She recalled that Charles Robinson was the carpenter for the villagers, and it was he who renovated the Old Mill into apartments. He also built St. Stephen's Church and many area cottages. She recalled the sandy beach around the Bay where grew luscious raspberries. It later became the park.

The very fine Jamieson home has been a landmark for years. Mrs. Agnes Butler (nee O'Grady), whose family had come in the



early 1890's, recalled in her "Memories of early Britannia" that this house was formerly known as the Green house, but some years later was bricked. This confirms my eldest brother's tale about taking his hound dog for a walk. On passing the house when the bricking was in progress, the dog snoped in and had an axe thrown at it. This would be about 1901 or 1902.

John Cameron Jamieson died at this home April, 1926, and is buried in Beechwood Cemetery.

The Jamieson dynasty continued when Gerald Jamieson and his family continued on in the big home. The "Squire" Gerald continued to care for the upkeep and the delights of Britannia's breezes. The beautiful grove surrounding the Old Mill was a playground and the shore a well-kept spot to rest. The old Windmill was replaced by an electric-operated system which insured a flow of water to an increased number of cottagers. Much loved by the residents, he and his family were feted. He passed away March, 1953.

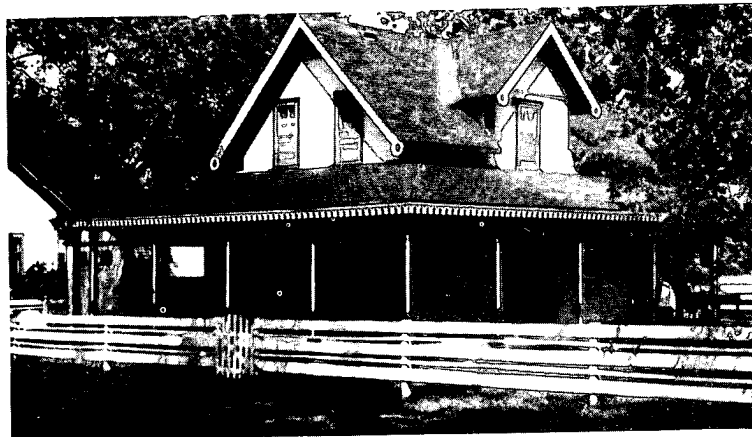


*Britannia's first Post Office at the foot of Britannia Road, 1889. (1950's).*

74.



*George Lark and his wife, with Mary in front of their home on Britannia Road, July 8, 1910.*



*The Conroy cottage on Britannia Road. Built before 1890 by George Lark, destroyed by fire in the 1970's. (1979).*