

Britannia Enters the 20th Century

Britannia Topics as Reported in One of the Newspapers Dated June 13th, 1900

“Mr. Ed Murphy, Main St., has completed the foundation of a new brick house. Mr. John Whitton’s house on the same street is nearing completion.

The ladies of the Britannia Methodist Church are to have a strawberry social on the lawn of Mr. Cochrane on June 28th. This has been an enjoyable party in past years.

Rev. Mr. Short has been appointed to take charge of the Methodist Church and will arrive during the week. Hitherto, Rev. H.E. Warren of Hintonburg has been looking after the congregations.

Miss Annie McAmmond has returned from Gracefield where she was visiting her sister Mrs. Wood.

The C.P.R. Station has been overhauled and is now a very handsome structure.

Campers will not be allowed to locate on the Metropolitan Electric Company’s property this year. It has been decided to take this step in view of the work that is going on and other valid reasons. Last year over 20 camped on the grounds.

Messrs. T.H. Kirby, Richard Kirby, Robert Masson and George Faulkner recently moved out to their cottages. Messrs. A.A. Fournier and Anderson of Ottawa, and Mr. Grignard and Family from New York will arrive during the week.”...

Street Cars on the 25th May, 1900

The double track line of the Ottawa Electric Ry. was completed to Britannia Park. In the Britannia Boat House Club’s 1900 Year Book, the Company ran this advertisement:

“Take cars to the beautiful summer resorts of Rockcliffe and Britannia-on-the-Bay. At the latter there is unequalled boating, fishing and a safe bathing beach. A magnificent stone pier is constructed running 1000 feet onto the lake and affords a fine view of Lake DesChenes.”

The opening of this street car line to Britannia was a great boon to the settlements along the line, as well as to encourage further settlement.

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On July 3rd, 1900, the *Ottawa Journal* captioned their weekly Britannia News as "Work on the important Canal by the Metropolitan Electric Co. and the Ottawa Electric's Park. These projects may be a disadvantage to Britannia as a summer resort. Although all the cottages are occupied and most of the families are there as usual, there is a disposition on the part of the casual visitor to give the place the 'go-by' under present circumstances. Few, if any, of the campers will be there for there is no place to set up their canvas".

The island is denuded of its trees and foliage and the groves to the east are occupied by workmen, and therefore, the woods are to be avoided. (Note : The island mentioned being denuded of trees refers to the east side of Mud Lake where a fine grove of trees stood, but they were cut down and earth removed for the building of the breakwater stonepile. E.T.)

Thus Britannia as an attractive summer resort will suffer this summer, while the important improvements being done must in future tend to build up and popularize a retreat so contiguous to the city and having such natural artificial attractions."

The names of both permanent and summer resident families are listed:

John McAmmond
Mrs. J. Sparks
W.J. Lynch
Mrs. J. O'Meara
Mr. Bompas and lodgers
Mrs. Fermoyle
D. Cassidy
Jos. Hudson
Grignard family
Georges Howe
Mr. Faulkner
Thos. H. Kirby
Robt. Masson
Mrs. Wm. Kehoe
Misses Lapointe and Paradis
Mr. Campbell and Mr. Farmer
Robt. Burland
Mrs. W. Wainwright
Miss Jones

W. Rowatt
Fred J. Graham
Wm. Howe
Louis LaHaise
W.H. Murphy
J. Whitton
G.H. Urquhart
H.R. Belden
John O'Grady
Mr. Bush and others
Mrs. R. Kenley
Douglas Kenley
Mrs. and Miss Von Charles
Ketchum and Fanning
families at Balmoral
Wm. Wyld
Morrison, McNeil, Dickson and Whitney
G.R. Nettle
Mr. Mead Jr.
Hudson and Powell Store
E.E. Stockton
Fred Rogers
John McGirr
W.W. Hammond
F.A. Scott
C.S. Scott
H. Moss
Sidney Kirby
J.M. Conroy
G.H. Girling
J. Rose Smith and sister
W. Anderson
F. Hayes
A.A. Fournier
A.H. Martin
Mr. Lamourie and family
W. Percival
W.L. Donnolly
Mrs. Howarth
Dr. Mark McElhinney
Wm. Jamieson

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J.C. Jamieson
J.P. Fisher
Mrs. R. Johnston and sister
Mr. Plant
Jas. Palangio
W.W. Wylie
H. Thicke
C.S. Scott
D. Roy

And the *Citizen* of Sept. 13th, 1900, reported a very bad storm had hit the area.

"Yesterday's storm was very severe on Lake Deschênes, fortunately no boats on the lake, but many torn from their moorings. Mr. Brittain's yacht piled up on the rocks and F.B. Robson's half-rater "Wasp" sank.

The steamer *Albert* was towing some 14,000 logs down river when the gale was fiercest. The Captain deemed it wise to take his vessel to a place of safety, so the tow of logs was let go. They are now scattered around the shore of the lake".

It was a most trying year for the summer residents who had come to enjoy the beauty and quiet surroundings. There was blasting and noisy work daily going on at the canal, and work being done at the park as it was being established. Strange people walked the streets, but such is progress when changes have to be faced.



The Albert of the Upper Ottawa Improvement Co. was a powerful tow boat that could tow six to eight booms of sawlogs from Quyon to Deschênes Rapids. It was built at Aylmer, 1888 and dismantled at Quyon in the 1940 s.

James Skuce

The Skuce family dates back to pioneer days when Thomas and his wife from County Cork, Ireland, decided to come to Canada - sometime in the 1840s. They located at South Mountain and proceeded to clear the land. Married twice, Thomas produced 22 children.

Needless to say the children soon learned to get out on their own; the boys learned trades and the girls married.

James Skuce, the eldest, became a blacksmith and moved to Ottawa where he had a business on Queen Street. He married Margaret Boulger, daughter of Robert, who had likewise come from Ireland in 1840. James moved out to Bell's Corners about 1888 and had a business there. Moving to Mosgrove (Britannia Heights) in 1900, he carried on his business in Winthrop's forge until his shop at the intersection was built beside the frame house (built 1890). There the family grew up and attended the local school.

After their passing, son G. Orval continued to reside at that location until 1959 when the property was expropriated by the City for widening of the intersection.

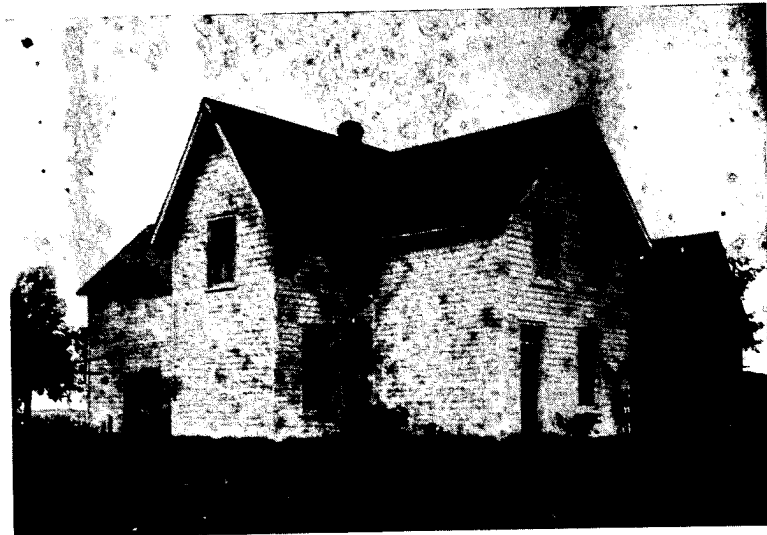
James and his wife had four sons, John H., James Milton, Thomas Lewis (Lou), and G. Orval, all very active in local sports.

Lou Skuce became world famous. Starting his career with the *Ottawa Journal*, he went on to the *Toronto World and Star*, and for 14 years was Art Editor for the *Sunday World*. He was a great cartoonist, whose drawings of the sport world were famous. One of his great works was the murals in the Toronto Men's Press Club. He was a playwright; one of his better plays was "Bill of 13" done while living in New York. He was as versatile as he was brilliant. A great athlete, he had played hockey and rugby, and it was this background that produced the cartoons for the sports page. Still at work, he died in 1951, age 65, in Toronto.

G. Orval, during his Britannia days, was a leader in church work, involved as a lay reader, in the Sunday school, and scouting in scouting and boys' work. His wife was Bessie Graham family whose family was Nepean pioneer stock. Orval and Bessie all a big part in all the local endeavors of the community.



*James and wife at home, pictured with nieces Ethel, Muriel and Vinnie.
(1907)*



*The Skuce home on Carling Avenue, near the intersection of Carling and
Richmond Road, across from the Winthrop Forge, Built in 1895 by Cowan.*

Britannia — Looking Back to 1901

April 13th, 1901, the *Journal*, reported the Annual Meeting of the Britannia Boat House Club. Officers elected were Honorary President, William Wyld; Honorary Vice-President, Fred J. Graham, T. Lindsay; Directors, W.R. Rowatt, A. Taché, E.E. Stockton, H. Taché, E.R. McNeil, W.L. Donnolly, J.R. Munro to represent the stockholders, and E.M. Armstrong, R. Craig, Harvey Pulford to represent the members; Secretary, E.R. McNeil; Treasurer, J.R. Munro. The Club's finances were in good shape, bank balance showed \$76.57, and excess over liabilities was \$645.67.

July 16th, 1901 — *Evening Journal* — “Where Ottawans are spending their Summers — Britannia still popular. Since last season five new homes have been erected and improvements made, but no campers, as their favorite spot is now fenced private property. The health of the residents is good. There have been no illnesses reported.”

The new houses erected are on the Main Street and built by Messrs. Whitton, Murphy, Fermoye, King, and Doctor W.J. Lynch has just finished a private shower bath. It is covered with canvas and a reservoir on top holds the water.

At the Balmoral Hotel, kept by Miss Mead, the guest list shows the families of Mr. & Mrs. Bouchette, G.R. Barthe, W.P. Hinton, A.V. Wade, A.A. Dion, Mr. & Mrs. Bailey of Montreal, Alderman and Mrs. Poulin, George A. Hollingsworth, M.T. Carson, J.A. Faulkner, Arthur & Henri Taché, Walter Hatch, E.S. Putman, F. Proctor, J. Belden, Mrs. Pink and E.A. Wiggins.

To add to the pleasure of the residents, the music from the Park pier floats across the bay to the summer homes.”

The year 1901 saw the failure of the Canal project due to funds. With the exodus of workers, and the unfinished project, Britannia quieted down. But a resident caretaker had to take charge for the disposal of machinery. This year the Taylor family took up residence, when my father, W.J. Taylor, inherited the caretaker job. His employer was Thomas Lindsay of the Metropolitan Electric firm. The term was to be for a few months, but instead lasted for 40 years. The 160 acres in his care was protected from careless use by the public for all those years.

The Park in the Early Years

Long before the Park was in existence, it was known as Sandy Beach. An oldtimer said it was a marvellous place where raspberries watered by the lake grew in abundance.

The Ottawa Electric Railway Company, branching out to develop its franchise to various parts, saw the possibilities in the Britannia area of the bay, and bought up several parcels of unused land. Britannia, long enjoyed by the few, could be now a boon to all citizens of the city. The Company made plans both for the end of their street car line and development of an amusement park.

Prior to the opening of the park, Victoria Park existed along Holland Avenue. When Britannia was considered, much of that Park's material was put into the Britannia project. The Auditorium was re-erected to serve the people. Bathing houses were built plus two pavillions, one for refreshments and the other as a large comfort building. To safeguard the CPR Railway crossing, an interesting bridge was built over the tracks. This was a joy to many a youngster who climbed up there to get showered with cinders from the trains as they thundered through.

Once a week in the summer months, there was a band concert, mostly put on by the 43rd D.C.O.R. or the G.G.F.G. Bands. The Band would meet at the old City Post Office and after a couple of "snorts" at the old Bodega Hotel, would board a special street car, open air model. They would then roll to Britannia via Sandy Hill, the Band playing off and on all the way out. A great cotton streamer proclaimed "Bank Concert at Britannia Tonight". And so the Band, being transported through the city streets, was like the Pied Piper calling the lads, lassies, and older folk to an outing in the Park. It was like going into a far country after leaving Holland Avenue as much as open space with farmlands.

Mother often told me that she used to wheel me up in my baby carriage to listen to the concerts and to see the early movie pictures thrown onto a screen. She always managed to get a seat on the outside so my carriage was beside her (baby sitters were not known in those days). She also told me that they were great for having sing-songs. Usually there was some singer, man or woman, who would assist the pianist while the song words were illustrated on the screen. One favorite of remembrance was *The Man in the Overalls* .



The Balmoral was located on the corner of Bradford and Rowatt Streets.

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Spring flood waters going into the canal. The cottages in the background are the ones along Cassels Street and the intersection with Britannia Road is on the left side, between the first and second cottage.

The Hey-Days of Britannia 1902 - 1903

The *Journal* of April 23rd, 1902, reported the Annual Meeting of the Boat House Club with A. Taché presiding. Reports were good and memberships were increasing. The club had approached the Ottawa Electric Railway with a view to have a boathouse at the end of the pier and permission to hire out boats to obtain revenue. Plans for the proposed boathouse had been submitted and it was hoped they would be acceptable to the company. A new War Canoe was ordered from Peterborough and some \$300 had been raised to pay for it.

July 11, 1902 — The *Journal* — There was a full complement of residents enjoying the attractiveness of Britannia. Two new cottages had gone up. Mr. J.C. Jamieson, an extensive property owner here, is of the opinion that things are likely to boom around the village during the new few years. Only recently he had two offers for the purchase of property along the river front.

Although not recorded in the Scrapbook, I made my entry into this world on November 12th, 1902.

July 11, 1903 - The *Journal* reported the increasing popularity of Britannia. Mr. William Rowatt has a beautiful new steam launch.

The Park is very popular. Every second evening or so, the Railway Company provides a Band Concert, and the less fortunate from the city come out to get some fresh air and cool off.

Crowds come out whether or not there is a concert and are well repaid by the delightful ride out into the country. Car tickets are 6 for 25¢.

The War Canoe race between crews captained by Mayor Cook and Alderman Sam Rosenthal promised to eclipse all events in Boathouse history this season.

July 25th, 1903 - The biggest thing that Britannia has had in its existence was the Venetian night on Tuesday last!

All the small craft on the lake were decorated with coloured lights as well as the Park buildings, presenting a colourful Mardi Gras effect as the lights danced over the waters. There was a band concert with everybody in a gay mood, drinking gingerale, lemon sour or treating with an ice cream cone, made of pure cream, that stuck to the roof of your mouth. The Rogers Confectionery firm catered at the refreshment pavilion, and made their own ice cream.

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The population of the village was swelled. Everybody had visitors, some to stay overnight, some even sleeping in hammocks on the verandah.

Came time to get home from the Park, and there wasn't a streetcar in sight. Usually when there was such an event, extra cars were out on the siding to take care of the crowds. The folks milled about in ill humour about being stranded so far from the city. Word soon reached the Park that cars had jumped the switch at Holland Avenue. Word got through to H.B. Spencer, Superintendent of the Broad Street Railroad Station of the C.P.R. and a special train was to be dispatched. This all took time, but the train actually got out just about the same time as the streetcars appeared. People got home a bit late, but it was something to talk about for days after.

Britannia was prospering. Everything was comfortable, except for the unsightly canal at the Rapids.

June 19th, 1904 - The Britannia Canoe quarters looked very pretty last evening when the Brits entertained over 300 guests at their opening Concert and Hop. A spice of excitement was added to the entertainment by Valentine's Orchestra providing the excellent music.

Let's Take a Street Car Ride Out to Britannia

Britannia was so well known in 1904 or thereabouts that Anson Gard and his pal from the United States considered it an important part of the capital area to visit. The result shows in Gard's book, published in 1904, entitled *The Hub and the Spokes*.

"The Britannia Trip" (page 11). The Britannia trip is one of the most enjoyable outings about Ottawa. It reminds me of the run out from Brooklyn, passing down the bay to Coney Island. You take the car on Sparks Street either marked Britannia or Somerset. Somerset Street is well paved and with its pretty rows of shade trees, neat detached houses, and nice lawns, surely a pleasant sight. At Bay Street, No. 578, we see the house of the Victorian Order of Nurses, quaint little St. Luke's Church, and at Division St., the effects of the 1900 fire.

Westboro — Mention is made of the extensive Cole property, lands worth \$200 and upwards — John McKeller's fine place — and running parallel by the river is the C.P.R. tracks. Such a pleasure to have such a courteous conductor to guide us on our way.

At Britannia, the trolley company has gone to much expense in beautifying the place, with the 1000 foot pier extending out into Lake Deschênes. It forms here a half circle and on the east side are many pretty cottages and a boat clubhouse. The park is well equipped in buildings and the beach ideal for children who can wade out a long distance as the water is shallow.

The village, with its churches and neat cottages, is one of Ottawa's most fashionable suburbs. Much is due to Mr. John Jamieson, who, like Bradley of Asbury Park, has made a pretty resort out of what was once a sand beach.

Some people of national note reside here. One might even say they are of international or world-wide repute. A few of them are: W.J. Lynch, head of the Patent Office Department; Sidney Fisher; Ottawa's ex-Mayor Fred Cook; Charles Morse, LLD of the Exchequer Court; Mr. E. Taschereau, son of the Chief Justice of Canada; Errol Bouchette, well-known author; Messrs. Arthur and Henri Taché of the famous seigniorial Tache family; the Rosenthals, the leading jewellers of Ottawa — Samuel, one of the sons, an alderman has done much for athletics and youth; Fred C. Capreol — Mrs. Capreol is a niece of the late Sir James Edgar; Fred Graham of the

Bryson-Graham firm on Sparks Street; Mrs. Willis Wainwright; Robert Burland, manager of the British Bank Note Co.; Robert Masson, shoe merchant; Wm. Howe manufacturer; Edward Brittain, Finance Dept.; T.S. Kirby, T. Blythe, and J. Watson, merchants. Everybody seems to be prominent at Britannia Bay!"

Gard was very surprised to find someone of international fame in "this pretty little suburb of Ottawa", the famous scientist Prof. E. Stone Wiggins, MA, LL.D, MD. (How, in 1883, we all watched for the storm predicted by him for March 5th and announced 6 months before. It came, one of the greatest storms ever known to occur, and exactly to the day.)

As a child, I remember Dr. and Mrs. Wiggins. They lived in a fine home built in 1893 named "Arbor House". Both were natives of New Brunswick. His career covered teaching in Ontario, headmaster of Ingersoll High School, and in 1871, principal of the Institute for the Blind in Brantford. Returning to New Brunswick, he continued teaching and established a boys' school in St. John.

Dr. Wiggins came into prominence by making predictions and sent them to the newspapers under the heading "An Astronomer's Warning". One of his predictions was the storm that swept Ontario in Sept. 1882, disastrous to shipping on the Great Lakes, the greatest loss including 134 lives, being the *Asia* in Lake Huron.

He wrote to Sir John A. Macdonald in the 1880's offering him "his secret formula". He was asked for a listing of the events that had proved true. But the government of that day had other more important things to deal with. So Dr. Wiggins decided that a position was of more financial benefit. Author of a number of books, he died at home in Britannia in 1910.

Dr. Wiggins had married his cousin, Susie Anna Wiggins in 1862. Privately educated, she was a brilliant student of Latin and Greek. She was the author of the celebrated *Gunhilda Letters* entitled "Marriage with a deceased wife's sister". They were written to the Lord Bishop of Ontario, and were published in booklet form by the *Daily Citizen* in 1881, selling for 20¢ a copy.

These letters resulted from a Bill introduced into Parliament which was thrown out by the Red Chamber. In 1881, D. Girouard, member for Jacques Cartier, brought down a Bill to legalize marriage with a deceased wife's sister. The Bill passed in the Commons but was defeated in the Red Chamber due to pressure of the church.

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After her husband's death, Mrs. Wiggins married Judge Bice of Colorado, eventually an unhappy marriage. She returned to Ottawa and died here in 1921.



Arbour House, the Britannia home of Dr. and Mrs. E. Stone Wiggins on Bradford Street near Rowatt. (1950)



The Britannia on the Bay. Britannia Park Beach and Pier. Note the cottages along the village shoreline in the background.

Busy Days of 1905 - 1906 in Britannia

The *Journal* reporter of July 15th, 1905, found lively and unusual activity at this lovely summer resort.

The lake presented a busy area full of racing canoes practising on the Regatta course, the grand anticipated event the summer residents looked forward to hoping for laurels when their stalwart young men showed how they could perform.

The boat house was a hub of activity preparing for the big Hop to follow, when entertainment was given to members and visiting competitors.

The paddlers were outstanding, taking many honours at the C.C.A. and other events, which helped to put Britannia on the map. The boys took great pride in the splendid showings made by their War Canoe races, which were something to view.

It was also reported in this news item that John McAmmond was putting up a large building on Main Street opposite the Anglican Chapel. He planned to have a general store and an up-to-date restaurant. (*Note:* The large building was built, but did not get used as he planned. It was known for years as the barracks, because it had been used by the Salvation Army at times.) McAmmond's wife, who was postmistress, died in 1906 and so his plans did not materialize.

And in the year 1905 the Ottawa Electric Railway Co. began construction of a large Club House at the end of the pier.

The Boat House Club held its annual meeting as reported by the *Journal* of April 4th, 1906. The reports attested to the Club's growth and popularity to the youth of the city and to the summer residents. At the election of officers, Capt. J. Hutchison and J.D. Fraser of the Ottawa Electric Railway Company were given the position of honorary members.

The Club's finances were good showing a balance of over \$100 with memberships up and not too many expenses. Mr. G. Retallack's Report, the 10th annual, stressed the success of last season, when the Britannia War Canoe crew were winners locally and came close to getting the CCA prize at St. John's. Tribute was paid to the memory of the late Mr. Howe, a good member and friend of the Club.

The new Club House will be finished by May 15th, and so it was announced, "The next meeting will be held at the new Boat House

Britannia Pier on Tuesday, May 15th, 1906”.

The Ottawa Electric Railway Company really put the finishing touches to the building of the Park with the erection of this outstanding structure at the end of the 1000 ft. pier, as can be seen by photos taken over the years. Besides accommodation for boats, the upper floor contained a spacious dance floor with windows everywhere so the breezes blew through on the warmest days. It was to be the scene of many glorious evenings of dancing by the young of that day. And the old Boat House Club was exceedingly proud of this new addition for their activities.

They were glorious happy days at Britannia in those years when it was known far and wide as the Capital's playground, and one could purchase postcards showing it off to the public. Street cars came out loaded with passengers, to enjoy bathing or with the family having picnics up in the spacious groves of trees where tables and benches abounded.

Again in the *Journal* of May 30th, 1906, “Britannia this year is likely to be more popular than ever, with new cottages being built and campers returning to their tents. Mention is made that Mr. and Mrs. Ed Clarke are in residence at Windsor Cottage, and J.E. McClenaghan, Dept. of Marine and Fisheries, is putting up a cottage. Happy days to enjoy and little to disturb the peaceful surroundings, except the horse-drawn deliveries and the occasional visit of the ragpickers singing out their song, “any rags, bottles and bones”. The local youths kept the place clean by gathering up this loot to receive the odd penny.

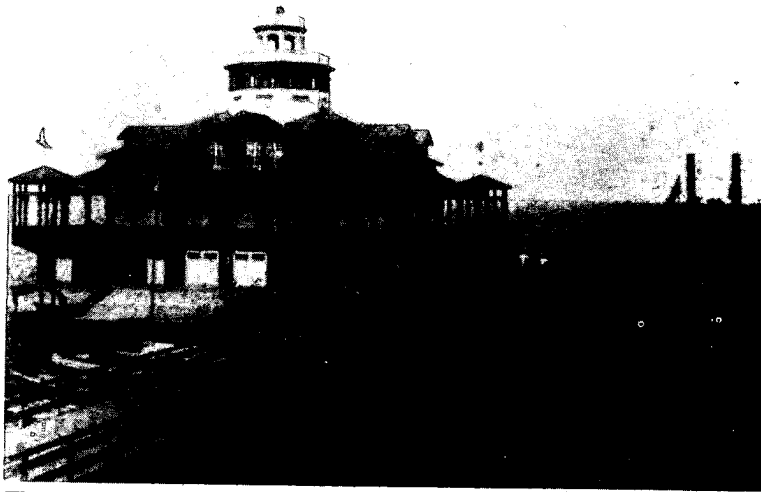
Britannia was Expanding with the Development of Loma Park

This was a parcel of land extending from the streetcar line up to the Richmond Road, east of Britannia Road. When J.R. Booth sold his Britannia holdings to the Metropolitan canal project, L.N. Poulin, Ottawa merchant who was in residence in Loma Cottage on Richmond Road, purchased it and began selling it in lots.

In 1906, Justice F.R. Latchford had just completed a pretty cottage situated in a most advantageous position on the crest of the hill overlooking the lake and mountains, just behind the Methodist Church. Mr. C. Holbrook was completing his cottage on Violet Street, and also Alderman Hopewell was building. Mr. W.R. Barnard

of the W.R. Barnard Paper Company was completing one on Dufferin Street (now Howe). Others mentioned who had purchased lots to build on were: Mrs. Leonard, R.F. Simson, W. Huber, Samuel Lawson, Mrs. Jos. Flynn, L. Duhamel, etc.

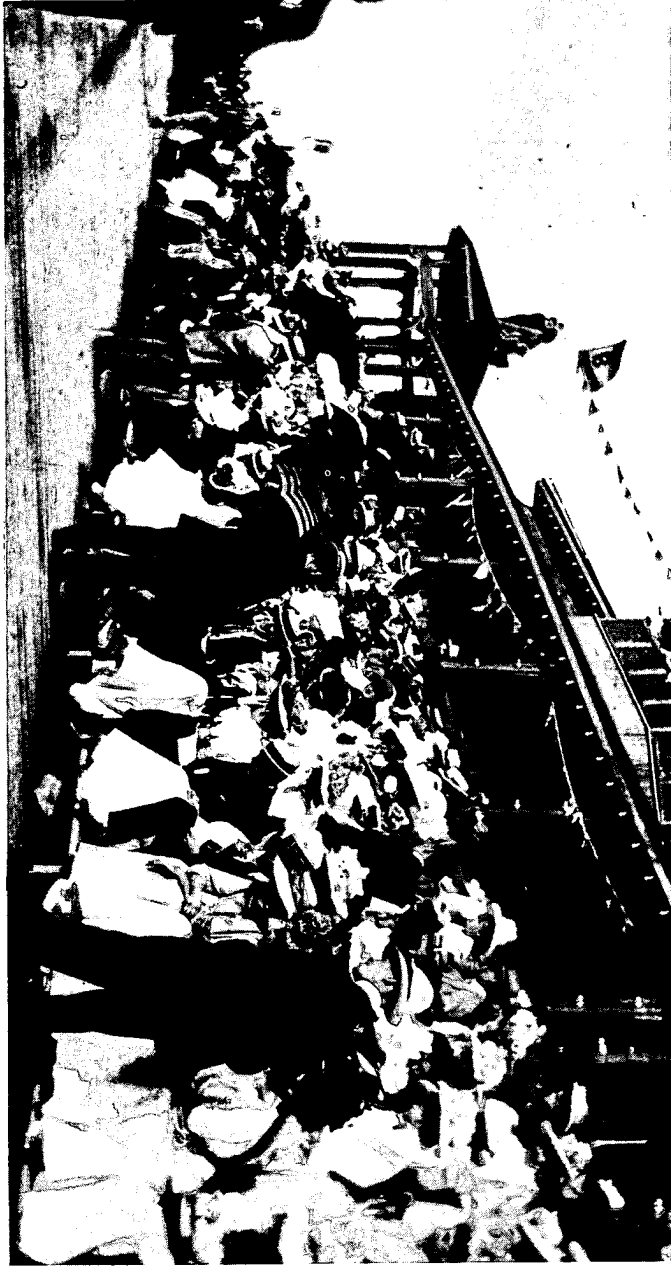
It was no time before a host of lovely cottages enhanced the delight of residents, sprinkled here and there midst the lovely growth of trees, and long known as Loma Park.



The Britannia Boat Club on the Britannia pier.

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The crowds attending some water event at the Britannia Boat Club. (circa 1914)



Britannia in the News

The annual meeting of the Boat Club was reported in the March 6th issue of the *Ottawa Journal*. They were looking forward to one of their most successful years, if enthusiasm and hard work count for anything.

With the new Clubhouse, membership was close to 350 with the possibility of reaching 500. The racing victories won by the young athletes had brought home coveted trophies, and receipts for the year amounted to \$2,542. A motion was made to erect Memorial tablets in the Clubhouse to honour the memory of the late W.W. Wyld, T.H. Kirby and William Howe who had done so much to advance the Club's interests.

And not forgetting the Spiritual, the *Journal* of Sept. 24th, 1907, reported the vestry meeting of St. Stephen's Anglican church with the Rev. J.J. Lowe in the chair and Mr. E.L. Brittain acting vestry clerk. Opened only in the summer, givings amounted to \$228.63, and they managed to pay \$50 off the mortgage held. City clergy were commended for coming out Sunday afternoons to conduct services. Mrs. Capreol, Mrs. Rowatt and Mrs. Stockton received thanks for their help as well as Misses Flora McNeil and Miss Bishop for teaching the Sunday School classes and then having a picnic for them.

Passing of steam yachts on Lake Deschênes was the subject in the *Journal* of Feb. 18, 1908. "All over the world the steam yacht is fast disappearing, with the influence of the change from steam to gasoline, and has made itself felt on the boating on Lake Deschênes and on the little fleet of 'steam tooters', once the pride of their owners. The first of these was the *Lilias* a handsome yacht owned by Thomas Ahearn, President of the Ottawa Electric Co., which was splendidly equipped and about 30 feet over all. Mr. Taylor, General Manager of the Hull Electric Co., boasted one - another, the *Rita*, was sold and taken to the upper lakes. The *Beatrice B*, owned by the Brighams, is still with us and arouses interest at its arrival and departure."

And, if my memory serves me right, in the spring of 1909 there was exceptionally high water, with cottages and Bradford Street under water. A rushing stream flowed through on Salina, and I recall rivermen in their shanty boats coming down through the woods and into the river below. The boardwalk was under water

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necessitating a boatman to take people across to get to the street car. For many years you could follow the course through the woods by the bared rocks and uprooted growth of trees. The Township attempted to build a breakwater.

It was in 1909 that E.B. Bessey had published his song about "Britannia-On-The-Bay".

The Britannia Boat Club was celebrating, said the *Journal* of May 17th, 1913, "its history founded 18 years ago". The Club has now over 600 members and was organized December, 1895. The year 1896 saw the erection of a fine clubhouse at the head of the rapids, and it became the focus of enjoyment for the aquatic youth away out in the "country", and was reached only by carriage or train. Today street cars go there and it boasts one of the finest clubhouses located at the end of the Park pier. Many prominent men have played a part in its formation. Erected by the Ottawa Electric in 1905 at a cost of \$35,000, it was leased to the Club and is now probably one of the largest aquatic clubs in Canada. Mentioned were some of its members who brought honours, Harvey Pulford, who won the single blade championship of Canada, Edgar Day, Morley Neate, Charlie Crabbe, Skuce brothers, Ormie Stitt, Charles Robinson, and countless others, including Guy Boyce, now Captain.

A Tribute to the Late E.L. Brittain He died in 1960 at the age of 93.

To this gentleman we owe a debt of gratitude for having had a hobby of keeping a scrapbook which covered the period from 1890 to the above last entry of 1913. These clippings, mostly from the good old *Ottawa Journal* of happy memories - some were from the *Citizen* - revealed what summer life was in the fashionable summer resort of Ottawa. The growth of the village, names of those early summer residents, and construction of cottages, and what transpired in daily life. And particularly the excellent coverage of Boat Club News and its asset to enjoyable life.

Born in St. John, N.B., he came to Ottawa in 1884. He joined the Department of Finance in that year and retired in 1934. Athletically minded, especially water sports, he discovered Britannia and there built a cottage in 1892 at the foot of Jamieson right on the lake front.

He called his home "Iris Cottage" shortly after bringing a bride to grace the location. In 1913 with his growing family, he left for another location up the river. His cottage was destroyed by fire in

the 1930s. His life was one of activity as he was most interested in sports, club work, and Anglican Church affairs. He was Ottawa's oldest member of the Governor General Foot Guards, and during World War 1, was treasurer of the Patriotic Fund and received the O.B.E. He was an enthusiastic sailor from early spring until late autumn, and a valued member of the Boat Club.

Bless his memory for he has left us an historic heritage to remember, and I look back with happy memories talking about old days, and his generous loan of the scrapbook.

A Time of Remembrance

First World War Years Recalled

It is necessary for me to try and refresh my childhood memories of what it was like to enter the year 1914. I shall miss Mr. Brittain's scrapbook which ended in 1913.

However, the Village population was but a few families. Winters were long and those first out in the morning after a snowstorm were pioneers breaking a path to the street car. There were no ploughs to clear the way! The little brick waiting room at the streetcar line provided a dropin to get a "shin-heat" on the way to school, or for elders who were waiting for the car.

The height of winter saw the harvesting of ice on the lake. Farmers driving teams of fine horses came out onto the lake where ice was being cut, and locals were paid \$1 per day. As well, many teams made the crossing of the lake to Fraser's Mill in order to replenish their sawdust supply, which was necessary to preserve the ice in summer heat. Mr. Murphy and Mr. LaHaise and later Mr. Dagg had to fill their ice houses for service to the summer residents to keep their food fresh. The freezers that we know today had not been invented!

The only sound to disturb the winter silence was the C.P.R. trains as they thundered through. On sleety nights, the streetcar lines on both sides of the river flashed like a thunderstorm in summer. One pleasant chore on the way home from school was to drop into the

Post Office to gather the mail and newspaper, and have a chat with the locals on the same errand.

Then came the delights of spring and the migrating flocks of wild geese resting on the lake on their way to their northern nesting. Midsummer was at its height, cottages all filled with happy families. Britannia's famous Park was the delight of thousands, picnicing, bathing, or taking a trip upriver on the *G.B. Greene* or a romantic "moonlight excursion". All was right with the world, except for a gathering storm in Europe.

The Clubhouse at the end of the pier was a hive of activity. Weekly hops were the order of the day, and, as the old poem goes, "there was a sound of revelry by night — where youth and beauty meet". Then, blazoned across the news of the land, WAR. On the morrow, the call to join was answered by the cream of the Boat Club's youth. And from "Yachting", December 1918, there is listed the Britannia Club's Honor Roll. Killed in action: J. Cunningham, N.S. MacDonald, C. Saunders, R.W. Nichols, U. Sequin, R. Stata, D. Masson, G. Masson, W. Salton, S. McDonald and prisoner-of-war Ken Slater. On active service or honourably discharged was listed over 40 names.

The Club's membership had been depleted and those who returned found much change. Gone was the beautiful Clubhouse at the end of the pier. On a nice warm late August afternoon in 1918, it was completely destroyed by fire, a tremendous loss to the Park as well. Memberships began again in the old Clubhouse at the head of the rapids.

The Red Cross Society was active in the area, I recall, and Mother, who knitted all our socks and mitts, spent many an extra hour knitting articles from wool supplied to her by the Red Cross, and as well for two brothers overseas. Mrs. Thomas J. Graham, wife of the well-known Nepean farmer, was president of the Nepean chapter.

I do have a vivid memory of an afternoon concert given in aid of the Red Cross and held in the Auditorium. A summer resident, Mrs. Anna Wolfe Margoshes, was a prime organizer. I had often sold her white water lilies to earn a few pennies to go to the Exhibition, and she requested me to provide a big bouquet to be presented to her sister, a noted New York singer who was to be a guest performer at the event. I remember both these ladies for they had luxuriously red curly hair. I did not attend, but stood outside and watched all the beautifully gowned ladies arriving.

Britannia's Two Nursing Sisters Serve Overseas

Nursing Sister Etta Sparks was born in Britannia Village, May 25, 1879, a daughter of John Sparks and his wife, Jane Bradley, of Fallowfield. Their home still stands at the corner of Britannia Road and Salina and is now painted white. Etta Sparks, like many girls of that day, took her training in the United States. After graduation from a Boston hospital, she continued to nurse there, but returned to Canada at the outbreak of the war.

Enlisting with the Canadian Nursing Division on May 5, 1915, she served with distinction in the United Kingdom, France, the Dardanelles, and Egypt. She died on active service, August 20, 1917, at the Kitchener Military Hospital, Brighton, England, and was buried in a Brighton cemetery where a memorial may be seen.

"Mother" Bertha Victoria Hughes was born at Britannia Heights, February 23, 1887, a daughter of Mr. and Mrs. Wm. Hughes, their home being now the site of the Britannia United Church. Educated in local schools, she took training in an Ottawa hospital and was a member of the Lady Stanley Alumni.

She enlisted November 30, 1916, and saw service in Canada, the United Kingdom and France.

Following demobilization, July 16, 1919, she joined the staff of the Rideau Street Hospital to become night superintendent. This post she held until she accepted the appointment of Matron of the Soldiers' Ward of the new Civic Hospital. It was through her love and care of these boys that she became known as "Mother Hughes".

During a visit of the Prince of Wales, Miss Hughes accompanied a party of crippled veterans to Government House to meet him, at which time the Prince lauded the nurse for her overseas record.

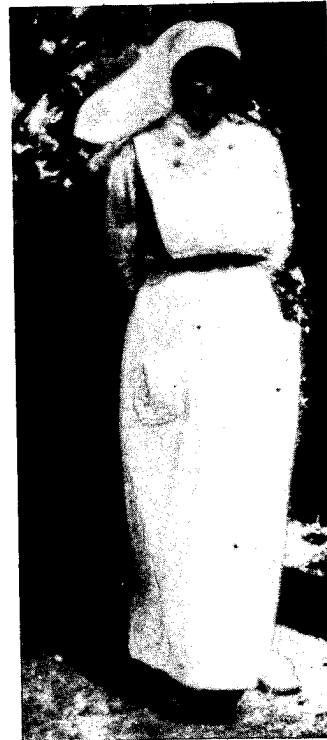
She served for seven years as the beloved matron "Mother" of this war, then followed an illness of five years which ended in her passing August 24, 1937. At her funeral, maimed and crippled war veterans and ex-service men escorted her remains to her last resting place beside her parents in Christ Church Cemetery, Bell's Corners, a much-loved Sister of precious memory.

The Honour Roll of St. Stephen's Anglican Church recorded the following: James Cochrane, killed in action, 1917, Milton and Orval Skuce, Van Riddell, J.D. and R.V. Taylor, George Matthews, Matthew Cundell.

As I remember those years, food costs soared. Sugar was 25¢ a pound, and we not have too much money to come and go on.



Nursing Sister Bertha Hughes



Nursing Sister Etta Sparks

Finishing public school in 1917, I entered high school at Westboro, the beginning year of Nepean High School, which was one room and 25 pupils. After a business course in the city, on a hot July day in 1919 with the city streetcar operators on strike, I went on the staff of the district Income Tax Office.

These years were hard, especially the closing months of the war when the terrible flu epidemic hit almost every household.

The 1920 s

Jazz and Bobbed Hair

They say that old age revives the memories of youth, yet 30 years ago when this history was started, it was a never-ending search in every available corner to record the passing scenes, and what I could recall that stood out in memory. The hunt has had its reward!

Following the war, we entered a new era of *re-adjustment*. The terrible flu epidemic which closed schools and curtailed activities was petering out, but many homes mourned the loss of loved ones and many came home maimed in body and spirit. School days over for me, I daily made the journey into the city to the old Daly Building, an hour's ride, and one got to recognize the folks who lived along the Britannia line. My salary was \$50 per month. Cost of clothing was high, and you were lucky to own two dresses.

During the war years, Ottawa's population was much increased, spreading out along the Britannia line with its good reliable street car service. Britannia did not see much of an increase due to it being a summer resort, and those who owned cottages still used them.

The Boat Club members were recovering from the loss of their fine Clubhouse at the end of the pier in 1918. The old clubhouse became an active haven with paddling and sailing the order of the day. About 1927, they built two tennis courts much to the enjoyment of the members.

Britannia park continued to be well patronized, especially weekends when crowds came out from the city. Churches warmed out with their Sunday School classes for picnics and sports, and the Ottawa Electric provided special cars for the run. Even the C.P.R. used to run an excursion for part of their Montreal workforce to have a day's outing at our famous Park. The special train would go on the siding until ready to return to Montreal.

The *G.B. Greene* was greatly missed for its excursions up river. After a fire, it went off service in 1917 and was relegated to towing logs. In 1920, The *Weldon* made its appearance on the lake. Not seaworthy, it only lasted one summer.

It was the jazz era! The old Auditorium was made over with a dance floor, and 'twas here where the youth gathered to dance away the hours to the music of good orchestras.

Grant Consolidated School was built in 1922-23, to take care of

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the increased student attendance. Old S.S. #3 Mosgrove had served its day.

The year 1922 saw the church scenes for a movie being produced. This exciting event took place when St. Stephen's Anglican Church was chosen for the church scenes in the filming of *The Man From Glengarry*. Henry McRae, a brother of Finley McRae, well-known Ottawa businessman, had been a director at Universal Films in Hollywood. Coming to Ottawa he formed the Ottawa Films Production, with the star, a Hollywood actress, Pauline Garon, to play the lead part. Great excitement prevailed when members of the church and others dressed up in old-time costumes, complete with shawls and bonnets, and in such attended the church scenes. For the dramatic river scene rescue of the "star", a lovely young Boat Club member, Grace Hirsch, was chosen because she was an excellent swimmer, to be the "stand-in" for the star. The Chats Falls area was the place chosen, and a tragedy almost occurred when the young swimmer experienced difficulties in the rushing waters. The film later appeared in Ottawa theatres.

In 1924, Pinecrest Cemetery was opened, located off Baseline Road, and was given that name because of the fine stand of white pine fringing the entrance.

In the year 1926, Britannia's Park was praised in the middle of the Atlantic Ocean. Making my first trip to England on board the White Star Liner, *Baltic*, out of New York, passengers were invited to send a cable home. Presenting the \$1 to the Purser, he looked at me in amazement when I gave my home address. He said he had worked in Ottawa prior to the war and Britannia Park was his playground for two summers. I never forgot his praises of the Park I had taken for granted.

The spring of 1928 saw the worst flooding in years putting all the cottages under water along the shoreline up to Bradford Street.

Winter sports — In the late 1920's, a toboggan slide was built running from the top of the Park and was enjoyed for a couple of years.

The Fresh Air Cottage was a venture started during the war years — I believe about 1916 — by the Kings Daughters Guild. It was for tired mothers and children to have a two-week holiday in the country. For years, the *Ottawa Journal* used to run the Fresh Air Fund to raise money for it, and summer was about to begin when this appeal was being made. For many years, this rest home was at the foot of Britannia Road. The project was discontinued at the

outbreak of the Second War and was used for a rest resort for the Women's Services.

Fires in the village — Residents were very careful over the years, but on a rare occasion, a cottage went up in flames. One very bad one took place in the mid 1920s. As the villagers were getting up early one morning, the shout went up for help. A large cottage halfway down Bradford Street was quickly demolished taking with it the fine old establishment of Mrs. Von Charles who had occupied it from the 1890s. It damaged two houses on Britannia Road, but with help was put out. There was no fire protection in those days, but with the help of residents forming a bucket brigade, they managed to save much of the valued contents of the Von Charles home which was full of lovely antique furniture and treasures.

That same year, on September 15, Britannia had its first fire tragedy, in a cottage almost across from St. Stephen's Church, when a young woman and two children perished. Assured that all was well, the parents went out leaving the mother's sister with the children, and as it was a cool evening, she went to bed early with the cottage well closed. The fire was not discovered until a passerby saw smoke escaping and it was too late for a rescue.

And in the sporting news, Britannia's son Charlie Taylor hit the news when he pitched an Ontario championship for the Glebe Juvenile baseball team.

On April 16, 1926, the "Father of Britannia as a summer resort" died at the age of 85. A son of William Jamieson, a baker from Edinburgh, Scotland, brought his family to Canada in the 1830s. After a try at farming near Rockland, he decided to come to Bytown and set up a bakery.

John Cameron was one of his sons, and in 1870 turned his business over to J.C. and R.E., his sons. It was in the 1870s that Mr. Jamieson bought the mill at Britannia and a large parcel of land on the lakeshore. At the time of purchase Mr. Jamieson said there were but three houses on the land he bought. Operation of the mill was not productive, and as people discovered the beauty of Britannia, started to come out by train or horse.

In the early 1890s, he converted the old Mill into apartments enjoyed by regulars until demolished in 1961.

Mr. Jamieson did much to improve life for the summer residents, laying water pipes to their newly constructed cottages after he had built a windmill, and many other good things that helped Britannia grow.

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The Fresh Air Home's first leased location, next to the Club on Cassels Street.

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**1900-1930
Services and Amenities**

1900 - 1930

Services and Amenities

Streetcar service was crucial to the transportation needs of a community that was six miles from downtown Ottawa, where most of its residents worked. Nepean Township citizens along the Britannia Line of the Ottawa Electric Railway paid double the regular five-cent fare charged to Ottawa residents. For several summers fares were halved to encourage city people to use the streetcar line and the company's Britannia Park. Service in 1911 was as frequent as once every three minutes.

Changes in service and fares on the Britannia Line beyond Holland Avenue, where the city limits were at the time, raised several issues. Many people often missed the last scheduled run at 11:10 p.m. and as a result Britannia residents successfully petitioned the O.E.R. Co. in 1912 for a midnight car. When in November 1913 the O.E.R. Co. decided to forego the summer reduction of fares, it encountered vehement opposition from its users. Nepean Township Council and angry householders argued that the double fare would create hardship and seriously retard the progress and development of the suburban part of the township.¹ The Britannia Boating Club was also concerned that an increase in fares might force many of the young Ottawa men to drop out of the club. In Nepean a committee was formed composed of delegates from its various communities to provide the Council with information on the subject. J.C. Jamieson and W.T. Nesbitt served as Britannia's representatives. In reply the O.E.R. Co. backed down and postponed its fare increases for a year, claiming that it needed time to compile more information.

Again in 1918, the O.E.R. proposed to add ten more cents to the five cents that Ottawans paid for regular fare within city limits. Residents organized once more against the move with backing from Nepean Township, and in the end there was a compromise on a ten cent regular fare.

With time, roads had become a chronic source of frustration for Britannia residents. The Bytown and Nepean Road Company continued to own and maintain Richmond Road from the city limits at Holland Avenue to Bells Corners. It was expensive for a Britannia resident to pay the road tolls charged. In 1904, to drive an automobile from Britannia Heights to Ottawa, same day return trip, cost

sixteen cents, while the usual streetcar fare for the same trip was ten cents. Further, the Britannia end of Carling Avenue was little better than a country road at this time so it could not be used for getting to and from Ottawa quickly.

The toll roads across Ontario were no longer practical or useful thoroughfares. The provincial government pursued a campaign in this period of promoting the construction of good roads employing the latest methods of road-building. It also set about establishing the provincial highway system that exists today. In 1920, Carleton County expropriated the Bytown and Nepean Road and other such toll roads in the area. After the company dissolved in 1922, Richmond Road was assumed by the provincial government and became part of Highway 15, free to use without charge. The growth of provincial highways and the efforts the Department of Highways made to upgrade these roads encouraged automobile use between Ottawa and Britannia.

Local roads that remained the responsibility of the Township Council provided continuing problems through this period in Britannia.

In the beginning, access from Richmond Road to Britannia Village was by a forced road known as the Ida May which ran to the west of the present Britannia Road. It was forged by years of use by villagers and school children and was considered by everyone as a legitimate public road. A problem arose when Poulin and Jamieson subdivided the area between Richmond Road and the tracks. No consideration was given to maintaining this route. Instead, they laid out a new road allowance, the present extension of Britannia Road to Richmond Road.

In 1906, Jamieson presented a petition to Nepean Township Council signed by 27 ratepayers, asking it to open the municipal road allowance. The Council agreed to declare the new road open and the forced road closed only after the ratepayers had constructed a roadway there. It was necessary at this time for ratepayers to work on local roads as part of their civic duties, or statute labour.

Some residents did not want the new road. Jamieson had apparently planted lot posts on the forced road, but complaints arose because of them, and the Township Council insisted that he remove them. In 1908 three villagers and R.W. Winthrop expressed to Council their stand against the closing of the old road. No reason was noted for their preference, but it may be that the slope of the old

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road was more manageable than that of the new one. In spite of the opposition, Nepean Township stayed with its original decision.

The state of repair of the only road into Britannia Village did not help matters. In 1913, Britannia Road was graded and stoned, but four summers later, ratepayers complained of the dangerously deep holes in it. Increased automobile and pedestrian traffic, particularly during the summer, prompted ratepayers to demand that Nepean Township improve their roads. By this time, municipal councils no longer relied on the inefficient and uneconomical statute labour but used hired road crews instead. One of the main problems was the streets of the oldest part of Britannia Village. Bradford Street was a big problem with over 40 cottages and homes fronting on it, and the roads in the Kehoe Street area raised seven complaints between 1912 and 1917.²



Britannia Road, near Rowatt Street. Note the wooden sidewalk, the Traversey house and the outhouse in the background.

At this time, residential streets were set out by the subdivider and then graded and improved under the authority of the municipality. It was common in Britannia in this era before regulated development for lots to be sold and cottages and homes to be built before the streets had been constructed. This led subdividers to ask Nepean Township Council to open streets that had been laid out in plans so that residents could drive their cars onto their properties. In 1915, Poulin asked the Township to open the surveyed streets of his Loma Park and in the following year, Jamieson asked it to consider opening up part of Zephyr Street.³

Demands for street openings and improvements in Britannia Highlands arose in the twenties when several requests from year-round residents were made to Nepean Township for better roads and sidewalks. In 1922, the residents wanted the Council to replace the boardwalk between the electric railway and their neighbourhood with a more permanent walkway.⁴

Householders felt so strongly about such matters that they joined together to express their demands as a single voice. This gave birth to the Britannia Ratepayers' Association in Britannia Heights during the 1920s, an early example of community initiative among local residents. Their main complaint was the need for physical improvement. Some of the key members of this association appeared before Council regarding streets and "work they wished to have done" in the area in 1923.⁵ The Association expressed itself strongly and lobbied Nepean Council on other transportation issues. They fought alongside the Britannia Line Citizens' Association, a group that patronized the streetcar on the matter of streetcar fares.

Belltown, as the Bell subdivisions came to be known, was the last area to raise its concerns on neighbourhood roads. The demands were not as intense here as in other parts of Britannia, perhaps because Belltown was primarily an area of summer residents who had to put up with their road problems for only a few months a year.⁶ They were, however, wary of the low, flat terrain, the problems of spring flooding from the Ottawa River and runoff from the uplands. As a result, they asked Nepean Township for drains to help deal with this perennial nuisance.⁷

Traffic and street lighting were the subjects of other complaints about streets at this time. Cars were blocking roadways and speeding worried local residents. Street lighting was requested as early as 1922. Ratepayers from the Heights, Britannia Bay and the High-

lands together made the request of Nepean Township for this service, but the only action taken at the time was the installation of a 100-watt light at the corner of Carling and Richmond in 1924.

As Britannia grew in size and more permanent residents moved into the area, community groups organized to obtain facilities that they thought would enhance life in Britannia. Some took the initiative to request Nepean Township Council for improvements and services.

The basic amenities of water, electricity and sewage removal were far from what they are today. The nature of these services was worked out by the early part of the century, and remained essentially the same for the next 40 years. Water was supplied in different ways in the various parts of Britannia, but all ratepayers relied on co-operation and private enterprise for the service.

In Britannia village there were four main sources of water — Jamieson's water tank, the O.E.R.'s park tank, private or community wells, and the rain barrel. A local resident, W.R. Rowatt, and others sought and got permission from Nepean Township in 1903 to construct and operate a water works, sell water and to distribute electricity among area residents. The scheme was not carried out. The task fell instead on J.C. Jamieson, the village's largest landowner. In 1907, Jamieson expanded his local waterworks by installing a power house at the end of Cassels Street adjacent to the Britannia Boathouse Club clubhouse. This was used to pump water to his estate and certain paying residents along Bradford Street between Cassells and Jamieson Streets from May to September of each year. A galvanized iron pipe lay on the ground and was disconnected each fall and reconnected each spring at the joints. Problems arose from this arrangement. When a car or heavy cart ran over a pipe, it would break and the tenants and customers would be without water until it was repaired.

The 62,000-gallon water tower at Britannia Park served the park facilities and the residents nearest the park in Britannia Village and Belltown. Otherwise, residents in these areas resorted to wells, springs, or rain barrels. In Belltown, Abraham Bell had a pump which several local cottagers used in the summer, and a spring on the east side of Ritchie Street provided good water for summer residents. In Loma Park, George Foy provided householders with water from his well, because this area was heavily bedded with rock and it was difficult for deep wells to be dug or drilled. On the heights, public water pumps were maintained on several streets,

including High and Maplewood. Those residents living close to the pumps co-operated in maintaining them. Few people here had their own wells in the early years of the century. A spring opening onto fields below the wooded hill near Alpine Avenue also supplied water for some nearby residents.

Electricity was provided to the Britannia area shortly after World War I. A local petition was started in 1897 asking the Deschênes Lighting Company across the river to light Britannia, but nothing ever came of it. Britannia Park had been electrically lighted by the O.E.R. Company since 1903. Requests for electricity in Britannia and other suburban areas of Nepean led the Township Council in 1909 to grant the Metropolitan Electric Company authority to supply it in Nepean. Their scheme to harness the Ottawa river at Deschênes Rapids to generate power was never revived.

The supplying of electricity by such local operations was quickly assumed by the extensive network and resources offered by the Ontario Hydro-Electric Power Commission. The O.H.E.P.C. made cost-sharing agreements with municipal councils to provide electricity. The first large-scale scheme for the Britannia area was arranged in 1918 when Nepean Township asked the Commission to supply electricity at the same rates it charged the City of Ottawa. Signatures of ratepayers were secured to show support for the proposed agreement, and Nepean subsequently made the arrangement with the Commission in 1921. The poles and wires were promptly put up and most residents of Britannia were receiving electricity before 1925.

Almost every house or cottage in Britannia had an outhouse. Complaints about the necessary evil of sewage collection were being made as early as 1906. The following year, E.L. Brittain told Nepean Township he wanted an end to the unsanitary conditions along Kehoe Street, and six years later, he demanded a rebate on taxes for the cleaning of his water closet. This was not accepted, but the Township Council decided to pass a by-law providing for the cleaning of privies exclusively by a person appointed for the purpose. From then on, residents witnessed the regular collection of their night soil by these men, one of whom was appropriately nicknamed Jimmy Pew. One such man, a Bells Corner farmer, carted the night soil to his farm and used it as fertilizer. Apart from a few complaints in the Britannia Heights area later, this ended their sanitation problem. There was no garbage collection; each household was responsible for burning it or disposing of it by other

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means.

Fire and police protection were further sources of complaint among Britannia residents. By the 1920s, Britannia residents were becoming painfully aware of the need for better safety for their lives and belongings.

In 1913, the Nepean Fire Brigade was formed and stationed at Westboro, but still several residents complained to the Township Council that the seriousness of fires was the result of delay in getting chemicals to the fire, a lack of buckets, and the inefficiency of the volunteer bucket brigade.

One tragic instance which took place at a cottage nearly opposite St. Stephen's Church on a summer's eve in 1928 demonstrated the problem all too well. A visitor at the cottage and the three children of its occupant were inside the building when fire broke out. Villagers were soon warned of the blaze by the tolling of St. Stephen's Church bell. A bucket brigade was hastily organized but failed to save the lives of the people from the inferno. Jamieson's water did not have the force behind it to provide much help either. The fire was kept under some control by the bucket brigade until the municipal brigade arrived. Heavy rains during that day fortunately kept neighbouring homes from suffering the same fate.

The lack of adequate police protection was the subject of a letter to the *Ottawa Journal* from a Britannia resident in early 1921. The writer observed that 18 robberies had occurred in a relatively short time and that constables could not be found when the need arose.

The problems of police and fire protection boiled down to the distance between Britannia and the central location of these services of Westboro, some three miles away. As late as the 1940s demands were still being made for improvement in this area.

The expanding seasonal and year-round population of Britannia spelled the need for changes and advancements in other areas. The school and three churches, all permanent fixtures in Britannia that were forged in the last century, adapted to the growing size and needs of the community.

The movement of families from Ottawa to Britannia more than doubled the number of year-round resident households between 1900 and 1920 (Table I). The average school attendance rose from 15 or 16 shortly before World War I to some 58 children in School Section Three, Mosgrove Nepean Township, in 1922.⁸ The one-room school was no longer adequate for so many pupils. In 1921, a partition was put up in the centre of the room and a second teacher was hired.

The trustees of the School Section who were local farmers were anxious to solve this problem of accommodation. A deputation of ratepayers from the School Section to Township Council suggested dividing the section so that part of it could unite with School Section Four in Bells Corners. However, the Bells Corners School was also overcrowded. In 1921, there was a meeting of School Sections, Three, Mosgrove; Four, Bells Corners; and Five and Eleven, Greenbank, about the possibility of readjusting section boundaries, but nothing came of it. Finally, School Section Fifteen, a small adjoining rural school section, amalgamated with Section Three and the overcrowding problem was solved by the trustees' decision to build a new school to serve the two sections.

This solution brought to the forefront the differences between the farmers and the villagers that had existed for some years. The immediate source of contention lay with school taxes. The village ratepayers, who owned small lots, individually paid a very small part of property taxes to Nepean Township, but collectively comprised a major part of them. The farmers, because of the size of their properties, individually paid large sums to Nepean's coffers and towards the maintenance of the school, but less overall. The villagers supported the view that the new school should be large enough to provide for the future growth of the Britannia area, and should have a gym and community hall. The farmers and trustees, however, did not want to devote their tax dollars to what they considered as a white elephant that would remain half filled for several years.

Finally, on June 29, 1922, after much debate, the ratepayers voted on the school debentures and the vote was two-thirds for the largest amount, \$90,000. The village and non-farming people had won.⁹ The trustees received the funds from Nepean and bought a ten-acre property from Annie O'Grady near the corner of Richmond and Carling, leased at the time to Michael J. Connolly. This site was closer to the homes of most of the school children than the earlier school. In the meantime, to help take the pressure off the one-room school, the Trustees rented a cottage owned by Mr. C. Shaw on High Street for the junior grades in 1922 and 1923.

The two-storey brick school was erected at a cost of \$110,000 and named after the Minister of Education and local Member of the Legislative Assembly of the day, Robert H. Grant. It was opened in September 1923 with three classes and 67 pupils. By the late twenties, there were some 90 pupils going to the Grant Consolidated School each day.⁹



The O'Grady house on Carling Avenue, in 1900.

The churches of Britannia likewise responded to the needs of their expanding congregations. St. Stephen's Anglican, for instance, widened its range of activity. The mortgage debt for the building of the church was reduced by giving concerts and selling a donated lot of land. A church guild was organized in 1915 to foster the interests of the church, visit the local sick in hospital, organize sleigh rides, and paint the church shutters, among other things. A summer Sunday School was formed in 1916 which was soon attended by over 20 pupils. Most of the longstanding residents will recall the Christmas tree concerts and Sunday School picnics in Taylor's Grove — the former Metropolitan Electric Company property — and at Richardson's Creek. St. Stephen's was also captured on celluloid as the film crew and cast of "The Man from Glengarry" made use of the church for exterior shots in 1922.

The growing number of permanent Anglican residents in Britannia underscored the need for winter church services by 1920. In 1921, the vestry decided to provide year-round services in view of the high regular and Sunday School attendance and of the improved collections in recent years. The St. Stephen's congregation and that of All Saints in Westboro had become so large that the parish was divided into the St. Stephen's parish, St. Martin's in Woodroffe, and the parent parish of All Saints.



Mosgrove School's primary grades (1921-22) that attended school at the Shaw house. It was located on High street, and built prior to 1910.

The hierarchy of St. Stephen's remained much the same as it had been at its beginnings in 1892. The vestry wardens continued to be seasonal residents of Britannia village like E.L. Brittain and Thomas Fuller, Sr. People on the heights, especially Orval Skuce and George G. Kezar, were also becoming prominent in church affairs.

The conservatism of St. Stephen's was also illustrated when trouble arose over transferring the church property from the trustees to the rector and wardens. When this was proposed in 1909, the trustees feared that a change in the church service, namely, standing up when alms were presented, could lead to further leanings towards a High Anglican Church service. This, they argued, broke the agreement of keeping the services in the tradition of the low church when the parish was set up in the 1890s. The trustees therefore agreed to yield their title to the church property to the rector and wardens only if no other such changes would take place. These terms were accepted, and the transaction was made.

The congregations of the other two Britannia churches grew. St. Bonaventure Roman Catholic Church was enlarged in 1906 to meet this growth. It, too, was concerned with reducing its debt. In support of this cause, L.N. Poulin gave one of his subdivision lots to the church in 1905 to be raffled for funds. The church continued to be used only during summer months. There were still probably not enough Roman Catholic families living permanently in Britannia to warrant year-round services.

The Britannia Methodist Church became a United Church with the union of most of the Methodist, Presbyterian and Congregationalist churches to form the United Church of Canada in 1925. The membership of the local church was still made up mostly of Britannia Heights and Woodroffe people although the number of farming families had declined appreciably. On the eve of union, 38 names were listed on the membership roll, of whom ten were neither heights nor Woodroffe people.¹⁰ Most of these lived on Zephyr Street near the church.

Like the school and churches, local businesses changed in many ways to suit the new age and the new people. The demands of a swelling population gave the area different kinds of commercial enterprises. Although the heights gradually lost its rural character to the subdivisions, there remained in the twenties two sets of services for the area — one for the heights and one for the village.

When the automobile became popular, Richmond Road

provided a service centre for residents and passers-by. In 1920, Captain Edward Gamble rented the former Mosgrove property which had been used until World War I by William and Edgar Mosgrove for their vineyard. Gamble converted the house into the Wayside Inn where he and his wife served luncheons, afternoon and high teas, arranged parties and dances, and took in paying guests.

The dwindling use of horses in farming and transportation, and the growth of Ottawa brought changes in other services and land uses to the rural community. James Skuce operated a blacksmith's shop on the north side of Richmond Road near the intersection of Carling. During and after World War I, he rented his shop to N. Quilty and then to Richard Neill, a Woodroffe resident. Later, he converted his shop into a garage for servicing automobiles.

A sand pit was opened on Mosgrove land by George Lark after he bought out Gamble, who reopened his Wayside Inn farther along Richmond Road towards Ottawa. Lark sold the property to R.R. Foster, a gravel pit operator, in 1930. The noise and the dirt this pit created alarmed heights people, and several complaints were directed to the Township Council for resolution.

Land west of Britannia, served by two railroads, the Canadian Pacific and the Grand Trunk (later part of the Canadian National system), and the electric railway, was a potential area of development that was not fully exploited. The Ottawa Car Company, which manufactured railway cars and was headed by Thomas Ahearn, the king of the Ottawa Electric and other companies, bought most of the old Graham farm above Belltown as a site for a large new factory and possibly a "model suburb for the housing of workmen employed".¹¹ Although the company held onto this land for many years, it did not develop it.

Farther upriver from Britannia, a Montreal syndicate opened the Connaught Rifle Ranges in 1909. A new electric railway, the Ottawa and St. Lawrence Electric Railway Company was formed that year with the intention of constructing a line from Holland Avenue, through Britannia Highlands and on to the new rifle range. The Britannia Highlands Company, confident that the new streetcar line would be built and that it would improve lot sales, bought back property it had disposed of and resold it to the Electric Railway Company in order to provide a right-of-way through Britannia. The electric railway company, in return, promised a station at Britannia Heights and a nickel regular fare. However, World War I and the decline in the interest in Britannia as cottage and suburban prop-



The Skuce Garage on the north side of Richmond Road, opposite the Olde Forge, 1920.

erty spoiled these plans, and the railway was never built.

One surviving vestige of rural enterprise was the general store and post office on the heights. The Mosgrove post office had not been successful; its revenue fell during the years, and it closed in 1906 when Winthrop resigned as postmaster.¹² After some years, the number of cottage and permanent residents on the heights increased enough to warrant a general dry goods and hardware merchant. Magistrate Smith, a prominent summer cottager, asked George Lark Jr., to take on the postmastership and open a grocery store on the west side of Pinecrest at Carling in 1912. The revived post office was given the name Britannia Heights. Lark and his sister, Mary, conducted their business until 1923 when it was bought by Cameron MacLaurin, a colourful figure who operated the store and post office for 37 years. This time the needs of the growing year-round population on the heights kept the post office open.¹³

Below the heights, the new subdivisions and the continued development of the village fostered more of their own services. The "business district" of Britannia Bay, the name given to the post office there, was at the intersection of the two sets of railway tracks, Britannia Road and Howe Street. It was an ideal site since it was on the route of all traffic entering and leaving the village.

The store and post office below the railway tracks changed hands several times. It continued under Barbara McAmmond until her

death in 1906. Albert McKay carried on the business until 1912. From that time, W.F. Nesbitt was grocer and postmaster. He left it in 1917, and Wilbert Sully stepped into the position. Nesbitt returned to the post office and store in 1920.

Another change in this particular part of Britannia was the location of the streetcar station. The original one sat on the south side of the tracks until it was destroyed by fire in 1908. It was replaced by a new brick station on the north side.

At the corner of Howe and Britannia Road on the south side of the two tracks, other shops were being set up by 1910. Like the post office, these also saw many proprietors or operators come and go, particularly during Britannia's slump in the war years and shortly afterwards. First of all, a grocery operated by Ruggles Birtch was set up at this corner. By 1920, Birtch's grocery had been assumed by James Isbister, and William Govier was operating a confectionary nearby on Britannia Road. H. Graham, butcher, briefly did business along this street during World War I. He was replaced by Louis Piche and by Charles Devlin in 1916. Later a grocer, Garfield Cummings, took the reins and, shortly after World War I, Charles Paul established a restaurant there for a short time. John Farrell took over from Isbister in 1927 and also took on the postmastership of Britannia Bay when Nesbitt resigned.

In the village itself, other establishments met the needs of summer residents. Robert E. Powell ran a store at the southwest corner of Rowatt and Britannia over several summers before World War I. In the first years of the grocery he had a partner named Hudson. Oliver Roy, a carpenter, and his son, William, also operated a restaurant at the corner of Salina and Britannia Road that remained until only a few years ago, when it burned down. The ice dealer and hauling man, Louis LaHaise, retired in 1922 and his sons, Robert and Emile, carried on the business. Area residents also needed supplies to heat their homes. George Dagg set up competition with LaHaise in 1916 with a coal, transfer and ice business on the west side of Britannia Road, between Cassels and Rowatt, which continued until around 1942 under his son, Hubert Dagg.

Other commercial features of the summer colony from the end of the last century faded away. The Chateau Von Charles and the Balmoral Hotel enjoyed a brief period of prosperity before World War I and then closed their doors to society guests for the last time. The first Chateau Von Charles and the Balmoral Hotel were destroyed by fire in 1901. Mrs. Von Charles then took over the

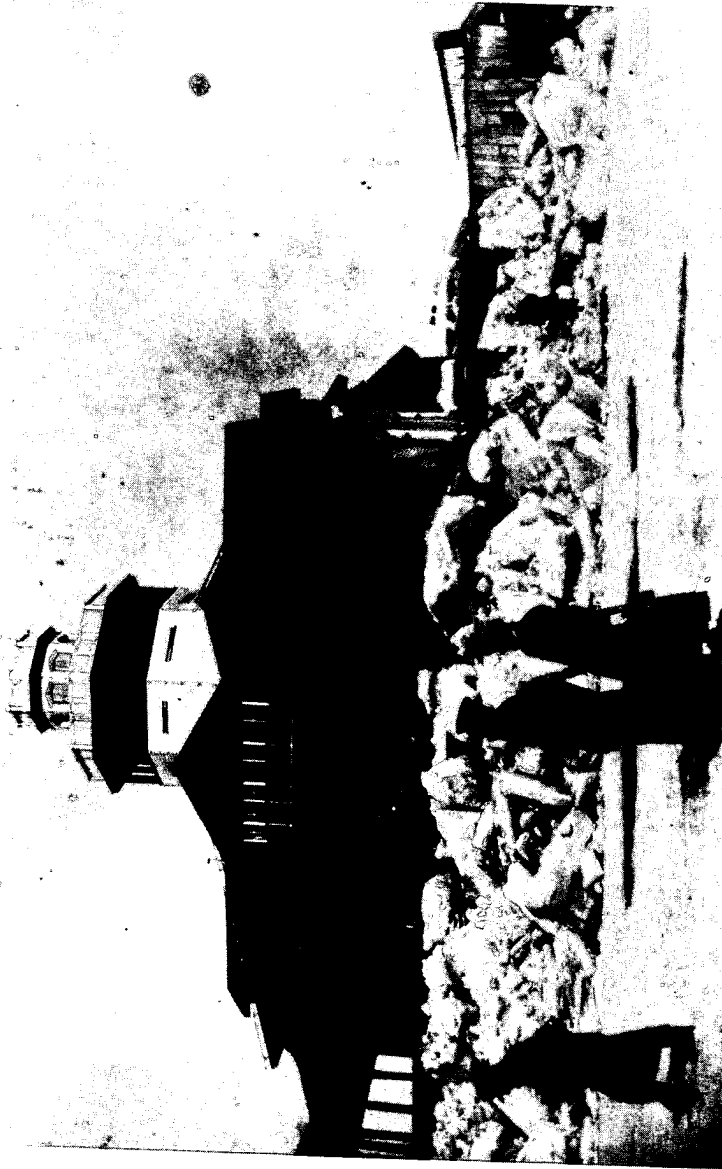
property between Rowatt and Cassels on Bradford, which was twice destroyed by fire in the 1920s. Such hotels or boarding houses suffered the same fate as other resorts on lakes in the province when the economy fell in 1913.

The differences between Britannia Heights and the Britannia Village area spilled over into recreational matters. In this period, the heights began to develop its own recreational facilities. They were distinctive largely because of location — the village was next to the water while the heights was not. Sailing and swimming were therefore the preserves of the village. Boaters could enjoy the many activities of the Britannia Boathouse Club. Cottagers swam or sailed from their waterfront properties or walked to the park a short distance away and used the beach there. Persons who enjoyed tennis could use the courts that were set up in the park, or, if they belonged to the boating club, they could use the courts there.

Facilities at Britannia Park included a pier, dance hall, service pavilions and dressing rooms for bathers. The Britannia Boathouse Club was quick to take advantage of Britannia Park and its facilities. It persuaded the O.E.R. to extend the pier and build a new clubhouse and a shelter for a number of boats in the lee of the structure. After some setbacks due to ice damage in the first year of occupancy, the club settled into the new premises in 1907 under the name of the Britannia Boating Club, although the name was not formally incorporated until 1929.



The Britannia Heights Post Office at the corner of Pinecrest Road and Carling Avenue, in the 1950 s.



The Club House on the Britannia Park pier icebound in Spring in the early 1900 s.

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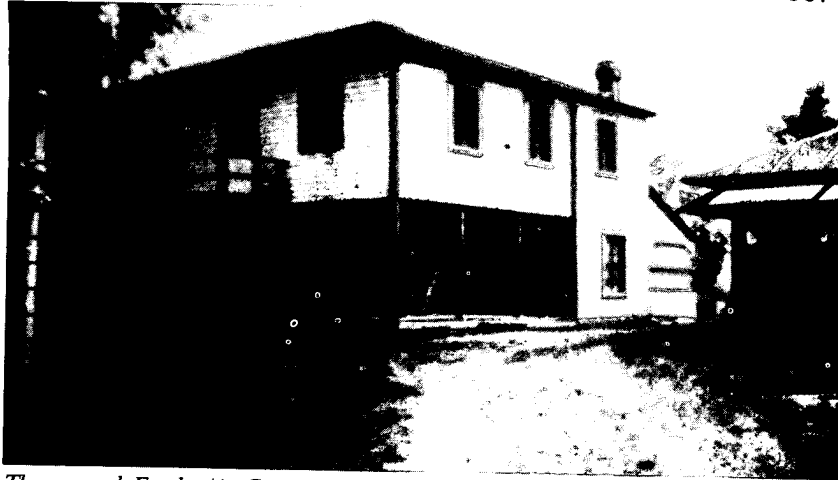
During World War I approximately 500 members of the Britannia Boating Club enlisted, and for four years the affairs of the club were left in the hands of those not eligible for military service. Those who returned from overseas found that the pier clubhouse had been destroyed by fire, together with boats, equipment, trophies and records. The first step towards recovery was to move back to the original clubhouse, which had been used as a storehouse since moving to the pier in 1906, and start all over again. With boats and equipment lost, many members left the club to take up other activities. Only the hard work and determination of the remaining members enabled the club to survive.

The greatly reduced income from dues made it very difficult to find money for property maintenance, so members came out in full force to paint the clubhouse and do other necessary work, such as repairing the ravages of storms, floods and ice jams. Through the many years of club history, these work parties have continued to be an integral part of club activities. In the mid-1920s attempts to attract new members included the formation of special activity groups such as tennis, swimming, water polo, basketball and even football. The recognition lady members had sought for a number of years was finally achieved in 1924, when the Ladies Auxiliary was formed.

The heights started organizing leisure activities in the late 1920s with their own community clubs. The Shadowknoll Tennis Club, which began at this time, made use of three tennis courts that had been erected on the former Harmer estate. A badminton club was organized for adults at Grant School in the 1930s. In winter, a couples' club, organized by Orval Skuce, was involved in tobogganning, sleigh rides, skiing and other such fun pastimes. A slide was put up along the steep slope at Britannia Park for tobogganning. Over 100 people from Britannia Heights belonged to this club which provided people with leisure activities until the 1940s.

Orval Skuce was also responsible for setting up the first local Boy Scouts Cub Pack in 1929, for Britannia's young boys. In winter, many children of the area enjoyed bobsleighbing down Britannia Road to see how far into the village they could go.

While the Britannia Boathouse Club catered to those who enjoyed aquatic sports and could afford a membership, there were two institutions that offered summertime relief for Ottawa mothers and families at the other end of the social scale. The Ottawa Fresh Air Committee, a group that campaigned annually for donations to



The second Fresh Air Cottage location near Britannia Road and Cassels after the enlargements and additions.

give needy mothers and their children a summer holiday, leased a cottage beside the Clubhouse. It was soon found to be too small, and a second cottage was bought near the corner of Britannia and Cassels about 1914. The cottage was enlarged and a playhouse and dining room added. Each summer over 300 mothers and children came to stay for a two-week rest under the guidance of matron, Mary Povah. The cottage remained with the Committee until 1939 when it was commandeered for military purposes.

A similar place was the summer cottage of the Protestant Infants' Home. This was set up in 1920 to help children suffering from whooping cough to regain their strength in a relaxed setting. A dozen children were placed each year under the care of Eleanor Beckett at this cottage on the east side of Britannia Road in Loma Park which was maintained until the late 1920s.

The physical and social changes that Britannia underwent during this period were only the backdrops for more intense activity on the stage. During the first few decades of the twentieth century, Britannias seasonal and year-round residents were coming to grips with physical and social changes. Neighbourhood services and amenities, the school and the churches adapted to conform to new demands and needs. The seasonal playground was no longer simply that. It was soon to become a year-round suburban community wanting the same physical improvements enjoyed by residents of Ottawa.

A Christmas Remembered

Britannia - "The Deserted Village" - 1909

Coming into my bedroom to-night, I did not turn on the light, but rather sat down and looked out the window facing east. It was like a fairyland with the apartment complexes brilliantly lit up like Christmas trees. The clear crisp air brought them very close. Along the river parkway was a continuous snaking of car lights, and in the distance the faint outline of the Champlain Bridge. Like Merlin of ancient days, I saw a vision open out of the mists of time, childhood memories and a "Deserted Village".

It was December. The last long flocks of wild geese had taken off for the south. Mud Lake was frozen over, and the big lake was fast fringing with ice. The last of the late cottagers had returned to their comfortable, warm city homes. (Florida was to come later in time). The *Ottawa Journal* of 1899 reported that the village was comprised of 100 cottages and more had been added since that date. Only a remnant of year round residents remained. Beside the C.P.R. tracks, Mr. McKay had his store and post office and the only sounds over the night air were the odd train thundering through whistling for the crossing, and the half rumbling of the Ottawa Electric Railway travelling back and forth to Holland Ave.

Because they were out of school at 4 p.m., only a few youngsters came from the old village. I went into the store to wait for the mail, and of course to admire the Christmas candy canes strung up on a line, the 20lb. pails of McCormick's mix, and the global chocolates. If someone possessed a penny, it was very carefully spent. Then came the mail train whistling at the crossing and off was tossed the mail bag retrieved by Mr. McKay. There was not much mail in those days, just the paper and an odd letter.

I was nice and warm and it was only a ten-minute walk, so I took my time, looking into dimly-lit homes. I slowly passed the home of John Sparks on the corner. The lace curtains in their livingroom window hung open and I could see their beautiful nickel-decorated coal stove. The glow of the burning coal coming out of the two eyes made me think of a dragon.

Only about twelve families along old Main St. were year round residents, but what a lot of cottages all closed up for the winter.

There were no street lights, no ploughed roads, only the ruts made by sleighs making deliveries.

But December was an exciting month. Despite the fact that twin brothers had been added to the family in September, Mother had her usual 200 or more bottles of jams, jellies, and pickles. The pantry was stocked with 100 lb. weights of sugar, flour and rolled oats, as well as a barrel of spy apples. Out in the shed reposed a haunch of venison and our own rabbit, to be served in a pie, or fried in butter. It was like spring chicken, and we were lucky kids to eat so well.

I always liked the night we prepared the fruit for the Christmas cakes and puddings. My job was to take the seeds out of the raisins, the boys cracked the nuts, and mother slivered the citron and orange peel, made ready for the next day's baking. And for a hungry kid coming in from school, the aroma of cake and newly-baked bread was absolute joy.

How quiet the old village was at night, with rarely anybody venturing out. Working hours were long, and the youngsters had homework and chores to do, so early to bed. You could look across the rapids and see the big Aylmer cars and hear their odd whistle for stops. On our own side, you could see the flicker of electricity as the jigger changed its trolley at the Park and return to Holland Avenue.

It was a Christmas to remember. All was ready for the big day. The wood box was filled, and so was the drinking water barrel. We did not have a well and water had to be drawn from the rapids. In fact, there were very few wells in Britannia at that time.

Awakened by a commotion Christmas Eve, I ventured down to find Father in the kitchen with the "great surprise", a Columbia Gramophone with a magnificent shiny nickel horn. He was relating the fun of playing an odd record on the jigger between stops for the late travellers. But what an addition to the Taylor household, and I have often wondered what my good Mother thought about another musical instrument in the house, when the twins tuned in.

One thing that stands out in my memory is the warmth of family life. I bless the precious memory of my parents who gave security and love to the youngsters they had brought into the world - the simple gifts, the hand-knit mitts and stockings, but best of all those extras on the table to feast on. Then we sat around the old Quebec heater, with the records being played, and marvelled at this wonderful invention. The records at that time were ¼" thick and played only on one side.



Britannia Road in the 1940 s.

Above the sound of the music, old hounddog Monarch was giving tongue. So Father went out to investigate, and reported the dog was after a fox that had ventured too near. He also observed that the Foley's and O'Gradys had gone to bed, and so ended a day to remember.

Gone is the "Deserted Village" and the primitive days. The progress of 70 years has brought buses passing the door, street lights, autos, indoor plumbing, electricity, etc.. What more do we want to make us thankful for the good things of life?

A blessed Christmas Season to all!

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Eva Taylor as a young girl.



Britannia Methodist Church built in 1878. (1950s)

Christmas Memories

The magic month of December and the anticipation of greeting a New Year has all our attention!

Out come the Christmas cards, particularly remembering the dear ones in far away places, for many of whom it is our yearly greeting. I have a very old office friend whom I have remembered for over 50 years!

Our once large family has dwindled and their children located in other parts of the country and England. What joy it is to open the cards with all the news of how they are enjoying life.

So now, down to business and don't forget to keep up the good old tradition, even though the postage is up in price. But then what isn't!

Christmas past! Every time I lay my head on the pillows, I bless those heaps of goose feathers that went into them, all from our own flock. For over forty years, father was caretaker of the 150 acres that once was owned by the Metropolitan Electric Company, whose project of building a canal fell through. The land was rocky so we had no garden, but we always had a cow or two and plenty of hens to supply us with eggs, plus a pair of Toulouse geese - big grey fellows.

Old Judy duly laid about a dozen eggs, then promptly considered enough of that and decided to bring forth the fruit of her labours by doing what came naturally, being "broody" for 28 days. It was a great occasion when the delightful balls of yellow fluff emerged, and we kids kept a distance from the old gander. He could give you a powerful wallop with his wings or a nip to make you squirm.

Having Mud Lake below us, after the goslings drew bigger, we took them down to puddle about and get a wash. We had to keep a watchful eye on the flock as in those days, it was not uncommon to have a visiting fox looking for a square meal. It was no time until they were as big as their parents and able to forge for themselves.

Come the month of December, two dear ladies, year-round residents, made known they were able and ready for the "plucking bee" and both being daughters of the farm, knew how to proceed. The day arranged, the ladies appeared ready for work, and all had a great time getting the local gossip reviewed. It was fun listening to their stories, an informing review of how the summer cottagers lived it up!

Coming home from work and on entering the kitchen, there they were seated in a circle finishing off big plump birds, tossing the feathers into two tubs. One tub was for the big ones and the other to fill the pillows. There was always someone who made a request for the pillow type.

Once the operation was completed, the fine row of birds presented quite a picture. So many people used to complain that a goose had so much fat on it. Mother never tried to stuff them but rather spread the extra feeding over a long period, thus more meat. Do you know what price they went for, at 9 to 12 pounds each? A mere 90¢ to \$1.00 a bird!

As long as we kept geese it was our Christmas fare, and, oh my, I can still recall the odour of it roasting. Nothing was lost when preparing the birds for the oven. The wings came off to be kept for use as dusters, and the grease was carefully rendered and bottled.

When we kids developed chest colds, out came the goose grease, warmed and generously applied to the chest. Doctors and drug stores did not exist as they do today, so the good home remedies prevailed. Even today, when I get a cough which nags, I get a cloth dipped in cold water and wrap it around my throat, as Mother used to do. When reports came in that measles and such were about, out came a square of camphor, to be tied in a bag and hung about our necks in order to scare away the germs. There was nothing like the old family cures of childhood - camphor bags and goose-grease rubs.

In recent days, I have watched the long lines of geese on their way south. As the shores of the lakes freeze up, most of the ducks will be gone. And gone are all our lovely song birds, and only the gulls still appear to be about.

But what about the birds that remain with us. For you who live in private homes and have some trees about, do you give a thought to them?

One of my most satisfying winter joys is looking after their needs. Up go the feeders. A kindly butcher lets me have slabs of nice fatty beef discarded, which is hung on the side of my shed so I can see the line-up of hairy, downy woodpeckers, joined by families of chickadees and nuthatches. Hard-working birds scan the bark of the trees for the wintering insects that destroy our gardens, and this supplement to their keeping alive makes me feel it is good to preserve our bird life.

Sparrows will love you for throwing out the crusts of bread, and

the squirrels will too especially if you smear a bit of peanut butter on. Before the building on the Lincoln Fields area, we had for some years coveys of Hungarian partridge feeding under the kitchen window.

So as the snow come and the winter winds blow - feed the birds!

Memories of a Christmas Concert

The place was the Old Methodist Church at the top of the big hill. It was a steep hill in those days, not graded as it is today. Only a couple of houses had been built above the street car line, and the bush grew very close to the road. Remember, there were no street lights to help dodge the holes in the road. But gone is the White Church on the top of the hill, and only those old enough, recall the part it played in the lives of the faithful over the years.

So I go back to that memorable night, which I can still picture when I close my eyes, a memory Christmas card which many long to recall. Inside the church, a great big spruce tree, resplendant with decorations, had been erected at the front where the pulpit had stood. To this day, the odour of its freshness comes to mind when at Christmas time a real tree adorns the home. Oh, how I wanted a small tree for our home, but Father did not believe in cutting down a tree. But he did weaken and brought in a couple of branches which had to serve.

I was about eight years old and our family did not have much of the world's goods. One thing we did have was a table piano. Mother had hopes that her two girls would learn to play. My sister did, and for weeks I was forced to learn a piece for the concert. Said my sister as I feared the unknown; "People won't know you dressed up like a little mother rocking her babe and singing 'Away in a Manger'", so I struggled to memorize the lines.

The great night arrived. Winter had set in with much snow covering the land. A cold north wind was blowing with stars bright overhead. Warmly clad in our homemade stockings and mittens, we

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set off for the church. A fire had been lit earlier in the big box stove, the aroma of heat, Christmas tree, and the varnished walls intermingled with good barnyard smells, like perfume to my youthful nose.

With no electric lights, the oil lamps in the brackets along the walls gave a mellow light. Decorations were everywhere, but our childish eyes were on the base of the tree, piled high with gifts and bags of goodies. Big tin pails of McCormick's mixed candy were emptied into bags with nuts and an orange. Across the elevated choir area, a wire was strung with curtains to form a stage, so the performers could dress for their parts. The curtains were then drawn for the act.

The church was soon filled to standing room only, with children at the front. Outside, you could hear the horses stomping to keep warm in the open shed, and the tinkling sleigh bells as a late comer arrived.

So the concert began. First came the little tots shyly mumbling their lines, little girls with freshly curled hair and the boys in their Sunday best.

The parts played by other children I cannot remember - only my own! Behind the curtain, I was adorned in a motherly outfit and was made to sit in a rocking chair with a doll cradled in my arms, as the curtains were drawn. With my sister at the piano, I bravely went through the first two verses. But 'Be Near Me Lord Jesus, I ask thee to stay ...' awakened, from a hibernating sleep by the heat, a big sluggish black hornet that was struggling up the side of my shawl. 'Close by me forever, and love me I pray'...; up, up closer he came. With trembling trills, I sped to 'Bless all the dear children'...; forgot the last line to let the piano finish and the curtain be drawn.

But what excitement when Santa Claus appeared heralded by the ringing of bells. What joy to receive a gift, and better still, that bag of candy which was carefully stretched for many a day.

Then came the hustle and bustle of bundling up, and cutters and sleighs readying to take off with their families. As we walked our way down the big hill, over the night air the receding sleigh bells along the old March and Richmond roads was the only sound to be heard.

This was my first public appearance as a performer. I believe it started me on a career that in later years gave me the courage to talk before an audience. Praise the little Methodist Church at the top of the hill for all its good works.

The Old Methodist Church Choir

This story relates to memories of the old church before the first Great War. The Methodist Church at the top of Britannia Hill was built in the early 1870s and was open all year for services. It served the farming area and the few permanent village people.

The development of this land into housing this year has prompted this article.

Beside the church was a covered shed where the farmers could park their horses, sleighs or buggies. It was open on the south side but covered on the north from the cold winds and made a safe parking place.

So a young woman of that day looked back to the days when she grew up, attending the old Mosgrove School. As a teenager, she came under the wing of Miss Emma Murphy, longtime resident and a daughter of Wm. Henry Murphy. Her influence and guidance brought her into the membership of the church. Miss Murphy was the church organist and choir leader and, having a good voice, found herself joining the choir.

As a young woman in her teens, this young gal recalled the long dusty walk from her home at the end of the village up the steep hill. The hill was wooded very closely to the road, which was not paved and full of potholes, and her shoes got very dusty.

The congregation had a full view of the choir as there was no railing. Miss Murphy had the double duty of playing the organ and directing the voices, but she did the best she could. Dorothy, the young girl, sang alto, Albert Hare, bass, Morty Honeywell, tenor (of the old farm last owned by Frank Ryan), and Lizzie Henderson, a niece of Edw. Watson whose farm was on Pinecrest Road, with Sophia Armstrong and Miss Murphy the sopranos. It was just a small choir but very dedicated.

Sophia and Dorothy were the youngest members and naturally things tickled them. It was the period of large hats much heaped with flowers and fruit or feathers. Hattie and Christina Bell with their brother Peter used to sit in the middle of the church. Their brother George rarely came with them. One time one of the Misses Bell accused the two girls of making fun of their hats.

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Church Organist

Dorothy's one ambition was to be the organist, and this came about when Miss Murphy married Edward Hodgins in 1912. She said it was quite scary going into the church at night and having to light the coal oil lamps that adorned the walls for choir practice. Sometimes the practices would last a bit long, and she would have to run all the way home as her father had made a rule that she must be home by 10 p.m.

One of the favourite hymns they used to sing was "Lead me gently home, Father". In after years, Dorothy and a friend used to go up to the Honeywell farm to pick wild berries which were in abundance over the fields. They would drop in to see the Honeywells, and Morty always ended up getting her to sing with him this old hymn, with his wife accompanying them on their old organ.

Familiar Names

Recalling early ministers, she distinctly remembered Rev. Mr. Curtis. He was a widower and while there married Jennie, a sister of Morty Honeywell. Then came Rev. Mr. Young in 1910, followed shortly after by the Rev. H.E. Warren till 1914. The Rev. Elwood Lawson then took over. Dorothy's association with the church ended with her marriage in 1914, with Rev. McLawson officiating at his first marriage of a member. Dorothy continued with the West-boro church.

Recalling early members, there were Mr. and Mrs. Albert Shouldice. They had a farm in the vicinity of Johnnie Shouldice. They sat on the west side of the church and always had a long cushion on their seat.

Other members of the church she recalled were the Scott Grahams (in a large brick house about where the Sunoco Station is today); Roch Honeywell and family; Mrs. John Ullett and daughters Jennie, Lola, Della and Edith (Mrs. Geddes); John Ullett Jr. and his wife, the former Emma Honeywell; also Lizzie Honeywell and her sister May. And there were the Bell families; the Draffin sisters, Polly and Eva, and a brother; and, of course, Wm. Henry Murphy and his wife, with daughters Hattie, Lizzie and Emma, and sons Edward and Albert.

She recalled attending the Ladies Aid meetings at Mrs. Murphy's and loved the goodies served! She was also a guest at Emma's