

CULTURAL HERITAGE EVALUATION REPORT

Building Name and Address: 195 Bradford Street

Construction Date: circa 1898

Original Owner: Bertha McEthinney (nee Harmer)



195 Bradford Street, west and south façade, Source: City of Ottawa, 2024

Executive Summary

195 Bradford Street is a cross gabled, one and a half storey vernacular style residence constructed circa 1898 in Britannia, Ottawa. The first homeowner was Bertha Harmer, daughter of Frederick William Harmer, one of the pioneer residents of Britannia Heights. Bertha was the wife of Dr. Mark G. McElhinney, who was a prominent member of the Britannia Yacht Club especially during its formative years and was a lifetime member. The house was built just prior to

Britannia's peak as summer resort from 1900-1914. This building exemplifies Britannia's vernacular style cottage and contributes to the character of Britannia as a summer cottage community after the turn of the century.

The property has cultural heritage value for its design, associative and contextual values. It meets four of the nine criteria for designation under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act.

Architecture

195 Bradford Street is a one and a half storey vernacular house built circa 1898 as a seasonal cottage and later became a year-round residence. The architect or builder of the house is unknown. The property is located on the east side of Bradford Street north of Salina Street in Britannia Village. The structure was built as a detached house and it continues to be used for residential purposes.

195 Bradford was constructed shortly before Britannia's golden years as a summer resort, from 1900 to 1914. Around the turn of the century, Britannia's established vernacular cottage style residences typically featured one and a half storeys, a simple box or L-shaped form, horizontal lap siding or shingle cladding, a verandah on the front façade or wrapping around multiple facades, and ornamentation focused on the roof and verandah.



195 Bradford Street, west and south façades, Source: Google Maps, 2021

The residence at 195 Bradford exemplifies Britannia's vernacular cottage style as it is a L-shaped wood frame structure, clad in horizontal lap siding, with a wide wraparound verandah on the south, west (front), and north façades, and is one and a half storeys in height. A characteristic feature includes horizontal lap siding as the primary cladding painted white with dark green architectural details, and the second storey porch, which can be seen at several other vernacular residences from this period in the neighbourhood (i.e. 73 Britannia Road). The entrance on the front façade may have been used historically, as an entrance on the south façade on the east one storey portion of the house appears to be used contemporarily. There is some early structural elaboration of the simple vernacular character as the building has an irregular roofline with a cross gabled roof, and an open second storey porch, which is covered by an extension of the gable roof. The cross gabled roof and massing are a variation on the basic vernacular cottage and provide a contrast of light and shadow. The second storey porch is a prominent feature that is set back from the verandah edge and sits over the historic main entrance on the west façade, creating a strong

horizontal line at the verandah roof. The second storey porch gable end is clad in cedar shingles, which can also be seen at 2775 Rowatt Street and 95 Kirby Road.



119 Bradford Street, second storey porch, Source: City of Ottawa, 2024

The wide verandah roof is supported by square columns with a square box cap and box base on a low wall sheathed in horizontal lap siding. The prominent wraparound verandah fully incorporates the Late Victorian concept of a creating transitional interior and exterior living spaces into the building form in this purpose-built design as a summer cottage.



195 Bradford Street, West and North Façades, Source: Google Maps, 2015The only

alteration appears to be the enclosure of the east portion of the verandah on the south façade at least since 2007.¹ Otherwise, the house maintains its original form and massing, and appears to have materials consistent with its original construction in the late 1890s, including its wood horizontal lap siding. Its design features which elevated the simple form contributed to defining the vernacular cottage style in Britannia around the turn of the century.

History

The original owners of lot 26 on Plan 40 ½ in Nepean Lot 20 Concession 1 were Frederick William Harmer in 1890 with three quarters of the lot, then his daughter, Bertha McElhinney in 1897 received the other quarter of the lot. In 1898, F. W. Harmer signed his portion to Bertha, who now owned all of lot 26.



Mr & Mrs Frederick William Harmer, in front of their home, Bleak House on Richmond Road in Britannia Heights built in 1870, Source: City of Ottawa Archives, MG165-01-06, CA027941.

¹ “195 Bradford Street,” Google Maps, 2007-2021, accessed October 23, 2023, <https://www.google.com/maps/place/195+Bradford+St,+Ottawa,+ON+K2B+5Z2/>.

The Harmer family emigrated from England to Canada in 1858² and in the 1861 Census of Canada, the family is living in a one and a half storey log home in Nepean.³ F. W. Harmer was a farmer until he was the Clerk of the Division Court and operated the toll gate on Richmond Road, then served as the Township Clerk for Nepean from 1866 to 1905 during the township's evolution into an urban municipality.⁴ With the township offices in Bell's Corners, F. W. moved his family there until their home was destroyed by the Great Fire of 1870.⁵ The Harmers built a new home known as Bleak House, on Richmond Road south of Britannia, and was known as the oldest stone building in the community.⁶ Formerly referred to as Mosgrove and currently as Britannia Heights, the Harmers became one of the pioneer families of the area. This can also be demonstrated by two of F. W. Harmer's sons, Arthur and Fred, marrying Ellen and Margaret Robinson respectively, the daughters of Nelson G. Robinson (owner of Britannia's mills from the 1840s to 1870s).⁷ F. W. Harmer's brother Walter, also operated a store at Cassels and Britannia to serve the early mill workers.⁸ F. W. Harmer was highly involved in the community and in 1898, he was the secretary for a local committee that petitioned the Ottawa Electric Railway (OER) to bring streetcars to Britannia.⁹

² "Death Occurs of Miss M. Harmer," *The Ottawa Journal*, September 11, 1939, accessed October 24, 2023, <https://cityofottawaarchives.newspapers.com/image/46286888/>.

³ "1861 Census of Canada: Canada West, Carleton," Ancestry, Statistics Canada, accessed November 2, 2023, <https://www.ancestry.ca/sharing/7430527?mark=7b22746f6b656e223a227265762f486f744b4642776231300646d513467646e746747472b4241537752787071456b5765556e3747553d222c22746f6b656e5f76657273696f6e223a225632227d>.

⁴ "Thought Nothing Of Walking Ten Miles To Attend A Philharmonic Concert," *The Ottawa Citizen*, November 26, 1955, accessed November 2, 2023, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/456962500/>; "A Tribute to Late F. W. Harmer," *The Ottawa Journal*, August 14, 1906, accessed November 2, 2023, <https://cityofottawaarchives.newspapers.com/image/41898591/>; Bruce S. Elliot, *The City Beyond: A History of Nepean, Birthplace of Canada's Capital, 1792-1990*, (Nepean: City of Nepean, 1991), 193.

⁵ "Thought Nothing Of Walking Ten Miles To Attend A Philharmonic Concert."

⁶ "Death Occurs of Miss M. Harmer."

⁷ Eva Taylor, *Ottawa's Britannia*, (Ottawa: Britannia Historical Association, 1983), 33.

⁸ Eva Taylor, *Ottawa's Britannia*, (Ottawa: Britannia Historical Association, 1983), 40.

⁹ "Britannia Ambitious: Residents Take Steps to Secure Electric Railway Extension," *The Ottawa Journal*, August 8, 1898, accessed October 17, 2023, <https://cityofottawaarchives.newspapers.com/image/43078065/>.



Young photo of Bertha Harmer, Source: *The Ottawa Citizen*, December 3, 1955, page 17

195 Bradford Street was built circa 1898 with the first mortgage given that year to Bertha by her sister, Elizabeth Harmer, and Bertha owned the property until 1910.¹⁰ Around two years after 195 Bradford Street was constructed, immediately next door at 205 Bradford Street was built and resided by her father, F. W. Harmer and family.¹¹



119 Bradford Street (left) and 205 Bradford Street (right), Source: City of Ottawa, 2024

¹⁰ “Ottawa-Carleton (04), Nepean, Book 70, Plan 40Y; Bradford; Cassels; Railway,” Ontario Land Property Records Portal, accessed October 23, 2023, <https://www.onland.ca/ui/4/books/82342/viewer/187893946?page=73>, 73.

¹¹ “Mosgrove,” *The Ottawa Journal*, November 12, 1900, accessed November 2, 2023, <https://cityofottawaarchives.newspapers.com/image/42371681/>.

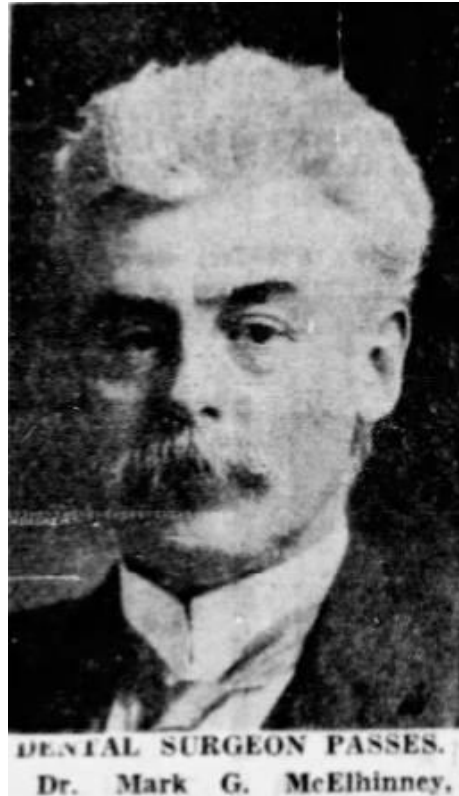


William Rowatt, Mrs. E Harmer, Mrs. Rowatt, Mariam Harmer, Bertha McElhinny (nee Harmer),
Source: City of Ottawa Archives, MG165-01-07, CA027944.

Bertha Harmer was one of the few children of Mr. and Mrs. F. W. Harmer who was born and raised in Nepean, and in 1893, she married dentist, Dr Mark Gamble McElhinney. From 1893 to 1901, Dr. McElhinney's office was in Ottawa while he resided in Britannia.¹² *Ottawa Journal* articles in 1896 and 1900 documenting summer residents of Britannia list "Dr. and Mrs. McElhinney and family" indicating Bertha and their children also lived in the village during this period.¹³

¹² "Mrs. M. McElhinney Pioneer Britannia Resident Dies," *The Ottawa Journal*, February 23, 1959, accessed October 24, 2023, <https://cityofottawaarchives.newspapers.com/image/41054384/>; *Ottawa City Directory*, 1893-94, 331; *Ottawa City Directory*, 1895-96, 340; *Ottawa City Directory*, 1896-97, 294; *Ottawa City Directory*, 1897-98, 300; *Ottawa City Directory*, 1898-99, 309; *Ottawa City Directory*, 1901, 334.

¹³ "Still Has A Charm: Britannia Holds Its Own As A Summer Resort," *The Ottawa Journal*, August 5, 1896, accessed October 10, 2023, <https://cityofottawaarchives.newspapers.com/image/43432067/>; "Britannia-On-The-Bay: Those Who Are Summering There," *The Ottawa Journal*, July 3, 1900, accessed October 12, 2023, <https://cityofottawaarchives.newspapers.com/image/42998236/>.



Dr Mark G. McElhinney, Source: *The Ottawa Citizen*, October 17, 1938, page 18

Originally from Nova Scotia and whose father was a naval captain and master of square-rigged sailing ships, Dr Mark G McElhinney in the early 1890s was highly involved in the Britannia Aquatic Club.¹⁴ McElhinney is credited as one of the members who implemented more organization to the club due to the popularity of water sports in Britannia Bay and its growing membership. Along with another Maritimer, Edwin L Brittain, the two recognized there was enough interest to arrange formal races and regattas, and the first regatta held on August 29, 1891.¹⁵ In the same year, the Britannia Aquatic Club adopted the name Britannia Nautical Club, and the formal organization of the club was ratified on April 13, 1892, with Dr McElhinney elected Commodore that year.¹⁶ Dr Mark McElhinney was involved in local Britannia boating activities such as acting as a course clerk

¹⁴ “Dr. M. M’Elhinney Drowned in Lake,” *The Ottawa Journal*, October 17, 1938, accessed October 24, 2023, <https://cityofottawaarchives.newspapers.com/image/48295646/>; Taylor, *Ottawa’s Britannia*, 43.

¹⁵ Taylor, *Ottawa’s Britannia*, 43; John Grover, *Britannia Yacht Club: Historical Highlights 1887-1982*, (Ottawa: Runge Press, 1982), 6.

¹⁶ Taylor, *Ottawa’s Britannia*, 44; Grover, *Britannia Yacht Club: Historical Highlights 1887-1982*, 6.

at the 1896 regatta, organizing moonlit ice boat skimming on Lac Deschênes, and educating the public by writing an article on yachting accidents and their prevention.¹⁷ McElhinney was well known in the boating, bicycle, then automobile clubs in Ottawa, and also served as Commodore for the Ottawa Motorboat Association.¹⁸ Over his career, he owned approximately twenty seven boats, and his contributions to the Ottawa boating community directly impacted the early organization of the Britannia Yacht Club.¹⁹

Bertha McElhinney owned 195 Bradford until 1910 when she sold to James Gamble, who lived there that year.²⁰ James Gamble sold to Levi Warren Whitney, “one of the city’s best known retail clothing salesmen, and a lifetime resident of Ottawa,” who resided at 195 Bradford from 1911 to 1913.²¹ Levi or his mother, Hannah Whitney nee Davis, owed the property until 1934.²²

Neighbourhood History

The village of Britannia slowly emerged in the first half of the 19th century due to early settlers moving to farmland along the south side of the Ottawa River, and the completion of the Richmond Road connecting Bytown to Richmond in 1818, resulting in the establishment of nearby communities.²³ Around 1819, the shores

¹⁷ “Sails, Paddles, Oars: Successful Regatta At Britannia on Saturday,” *The Ottawa Journal*, July 20, 1896, accessed October 24, 2023, <https://cityofottawaarchives.newspapers.com/image/43431846/>; “Ice Boat Sport,” *The Ottawa Journal*, January 13, 1897, accessed October 24, 2023, <https://cityofottawaarchives.newspapers.com/image/43241225/>; “Yachting Accidents on Lake Deschenes And Their Prevention,” *The Ottawa Journal*, May 13, 1899, accessed January 16, 2024, <https://cityofottawaarchives.newspapers.com/image/43537206/>.

¹⁸ “Dr. Mark G. McElhinney Found Drowned in Lake,” *The Ottawa Citizen*, October 17, 1938, accessed October 25, 2023, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/456489412/>.

¹⁹ “Dr. M. M’Elhinney Drowned in Lake.”

²⁰ Ottawa City Directory, 1910, 833.

²¹ ““Lee” Whitney, Former Clothing Merchant, Dies,” *The Ottawa Citizen*, June 3, 1941, accessed October 25, 2023, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/455504014/>; Ottawa City Directory, 1911, 890; Ottawa City Directory, 1912, 954; Ottawa City Directory, 1913, 1054.

²² “Ottawa-Carleton (04), Nepean, Book 70, Plan 40Y; Bradford; Cassels; Railway,” 73; Ancestry, “Death Certificate of Levi Warren Whitney,” Province of Ontario, accessed October 25, 2023, https://www.ancestry.ca/imageviewer/collections/8946/images/48785_556635-01228?pId=24493924.

²³ Harold Kalman and John Roaf, *Exploring Ottawa: An Architectural Guide to the Nation's Capital*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983), 154.

of Lake Deschênes was granted to Captain John LeBreton, and the following year he settled and built a log cabin, and in 1826 he constructed a grist mill situated west of Main Street (currently Britannia Road), and called the area “Britannia.”²⁴ Combined with the access to the Ottawa River, the growth of the lumber industry, and in 1848 the opening of the Bytown and Britannia Railway Line, Britannia became a small industrial suburb of mill workers.²⁵ Nepean lumberman, Nelson G Robinson purchased LeBreton’s grist mill in 1846 and converted it into a carding mill by 1851, and operated a sawmill around the same time.²⁶

In 1873, John McAmmond [or McAmmond] Jr purchased fifty four acres of Concession 20 Lot 1, and had it surveyed and divided into sixty five lots to sell as cottage properties.²⁷ Nelson G. Robinson’s mills, one by the rapids and one along the bay, were included in this purchase. A month later, John Cameron Jamieson, a baker on Wellington Street, purchased a large amount of McAmmond’s land, including Block A and the mill by the bay with the intention of revitalization the mill operations.²⁸

²⁴ Kalman and Roaf, *Exploring Ottawa*, 154; Tweedsmuir Histories, City of Ottawa Archives, MG165 Britannia Women’s Institute Vol 7, Pioneer Settlers Nelson G Robinson, 2.

²⁵ City of Ottawa, “Neighbourhood Heritage Statement, Britannia - Crystal Bay,” 1.

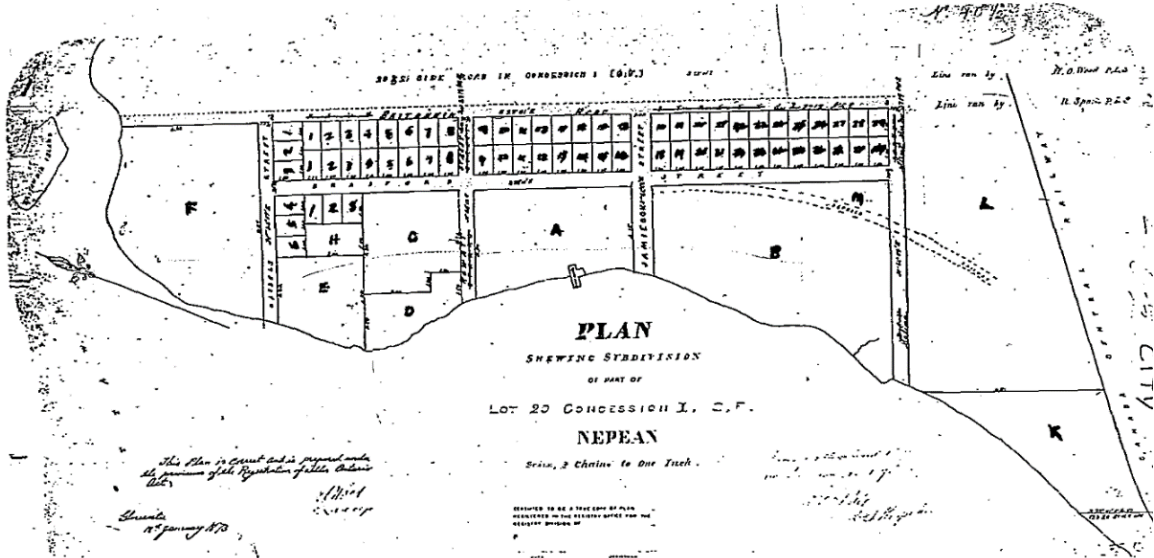
²⁶ Kalman and Roaf, *Exploring Ottawa*, 154; William Henry Smith, *Canada: Past, Present and Future: Being A Historical, Geographical, Geological and Statistical Account of Canada West*, Volume II, (Toronto: 1851), accessed October 30, 2023, 356, https://www.google.ca/books/edition/Canada_Past_Present_and_Future/zjETAAAAYAAJ?hl=en&gbpv=1&dq=Smith,+W+H.,+Canada,+Past,+Present+and+Future&printsec=frontcover.

²⁷ Taylor, *Ottawa’s Britannia*, 38.

²⁸ Taylor, *Ottawa’s Britannia*, 38, 12, 96. Note: J C Jamieson’s brother, Robert E Jamieson also owned Block A from 1874 to 1887, and it was when J C Jamieson took over his share that he began developing Britannia as a summer resort. “Ottawa-Carleton (04), Nepean, Book 70, Plan 40Y; Bradford; Cassels; Railway,” 73; “Old Time Stuff,” *The Ottawa Citizen*, November 24, 1923, accessed October 17, 2023, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/455775065/?match=1>.

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J. W. ARMSTRONG
Land Registrar



Block A located between Rowatt Street (formerly Sparks Street) and Jamieson Street. The existing structure on Block A may be Nelson G Robinson then J. C. Jamieson's mill. Source: "Ottawa-Carleton (04), Nepean, Book 70, Plan 40Y; Bradford; Cassels; Railway," Ontario Land Registry Access



Old Mill, Jamieson's, Britannia, 1870, Source: City of Ottawa Archives, MG165-01-06, CA027942

Jamieson's attempt to revitalize the industries failed, likely due to the competition in Bytown's saturated lumber industry and the economic depression of the 1870s, so the mills closed in the 1880s.²⁹ With industrial operations ceased, J. C. Jamieson converted his sawmill, referred to as the "Old Mill," located on the lakefront between Jamieson Street and Sparks Street (currently Rowatt Street)³⁰ into residential apartments, along with one room on the second storey dedicated to a meeting space for the Britannia Aquatic Club with storage for boating craft on the first level.³¹ The Old Mill even before the turn of the century was a community hub for social activities and events.



Flood waters at J. C. Jamieson's mill, Britannia, circa 1893,
Source: City of Ottawa Archives, MG165-01-06, CA025473

Boating enthusiasts formed the Britannia Aquatic Club in 1887, renamed themselves the Britannia Nautical Club in 1891 and hosted their first annual regatta, incorporated in 1895 as the Britannia Boathouse Club, renamed to

²⁹ Taylor, *Ottawa's Britannia*, 41, 43, 62.

³⁰ Donald S. Kirby, *Historical Sketch of Britannia Yacht Club 1891-1967*, (Ottawa, Ontario: Britannia Yacht Club, 1967), 2. Noted that the sawmill was located 75 yards north of Jamieson Street, and the area bounded by Jamieson Street, Rowatt Street, and Bradford Street, was used as a piling ground.

³¹ Taylor, *Ottawa's Britannia*, 12, 43, 96.

Britannia Boating Club in 1907, and adopted their current name the Britannia Yacht Club in 1950.³² Club activities continued operating out of the “Old Mill” until 1896 when a new clubhouse was built on the current location, on the north side of Cassels on the west end. The club remains an integral part of the Britannia neighbourhood.



Britannia Club House circa 1896, Source: William James Topley, Library and Archives Canada, Topley Studio fonds, Item ID number: 3325416

With Jamieson’s holdings in Britannia, he became the principal developer. He subdivided and sold land as cottage properties, constructed, and rented cottages and apartments, helped establish water infrastructure, and can be credited with Britannia’s development.³³

Many prominent individuals from Ottawa purchased land in Britannia and built cottages were also highly involved in the boat club such as John Cameron

³² Taylor, *Ottawa’s Britannia*, 43-44; John Grover, *Britannia Yacht Club: Historical Highlights 1887-1982*, (Ottawa: Runge Press, 1982), 16.

³³ “Old Time Stuff,” *The Ottawa Citizen*, November 24, 1923.

Jamieson, Edwin Lester Brittain, William Wyld, Thomas Halder Kirby, Dr. Mark G McElhinney, and Edmond Ebenezer Stockton.³⁴

Two churches opened, St. Stephen's Anglican in 1892 and St. Bonaventure's Roman Catholic in 1894, along with summer hotels such as the Chateau Von Charles in 1894 to serve the community and the summer resort visitors.³⁵

Britannia's popularity in the late 19th century can be linked to Late Victorian views of a healthy lifestyle that including getting fresh air and physical activity found in the country or resort settings. Some individuals set up tents along the waterfront, others seasonally rented cottages, whereas Ottawa's wealthy bought property and built summer or year-round residences and took horse-drawn carriages or the Canadian Pacific Railway into the city for work.³⁶

The Ottawa Electric Company (OER) operated its first streetcars in Ottawa in 1891, and in 1896, there were proposals to extend the line from the western end on Holland Avenue to Britannia.³⁷ Local residents initially opposed to the new line after witnessing how popular termini, such as Rockcliffe Park, were overwhelmed with summer visitors which would result in the area losing its tranquility and quaint atmosphere.³⁸ Come 1898, Britannia residents were not satisfied with the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) service and formed a committee to bring the streetcars to Britannia.³⁹ The committee consisted of community members including J. C. Jamieson, William Howe, A. N. McNeil, and F. W. Harmer.⁴⁰ Consensus was determined and the OER extended the tracks thirteen kilometers

³⁴ Taylor, *Ottawa's Britannia*, 44.

³⁵ Bruce S. Elliot, *The City Beyond: A History of Nepean, Birthplace of Canada's Capital, 1792-1990*, (Nepean: City of Nepean, 1991), 213-214.

³⁶ Elliot, *The City Beyond*, 191.

³⁷ Taylor, *Ottawa's Britannia*, 59.

³⁸ Taylor, *Ottawa's Britannia*, 59.

³⁹ "Britannia Ambitious: Residents Take Steps to Secure Electric Railway Extension," *The Ottawa Journal*, August 8, 1898, accessed October 17, 2023,

<https://cityofottawaarchives.newspapers.com/image/43078065/>.

⁴⁰ "Britannia Ambitious: Residents Take Steps to Secure Electric Railway Extension."

to the new Britannia-on-the-Bay station, running generally south of Richmond Road and parallel with the CPR.⁴¹



Streetcar, Britannia Village Stop, circa 1900-1909,
Source: City of Ottawa Archives, MG165-01-02, CA018366

The public opening of the OER streetcars to the new end of the line at Britannia occurred on May 24th, the Victoria Day weekend in 1900.⁴² To encourage weekend visitors to use their services, the OER built a fifty acre amusement park with extensive facilities and a T-shaped pier at “Britannia-on-the-Bay.”⁴³ Across North America in the early 20th century, amusement parks built at the terminus of streetcar lines were gaining popularity, and they were known as “electric parks.”⁴⁴

⁴¹ Bryan D. Cook, *Ahearn and Soper: The Electrification of Ottawa*, (Ottawa: The Historical Society of Ottawa, 2023), 39, accessed October 23, 2023, <https://dam-oclc.bac-lac.gc.ca/eng/296291c4-db44-4afc-beba-130e9aded6b4>.

⁴² Andrew Waldron, Harold Kalman, and Peter Coffman, *Exploring the Capital: An Architectural Guide to the Ottawa-Gatineau Region*, (Vancouver: Figure 1 Publishing: 2017), 183, 211.

⁴³ Lisa Horwitz and Mark Horwitz, *The Natural Charm of Britannia: A Heritage Character Statement*, (Ottawa: City of Ottawa, 1996), 4.

⁴⁴ James Powell, “Britannia-on-the-Bay,” The Historical Society of Ottawa, accessed October 17, 2023, <https://www.historicalsocietyottawa.ca/publications/ottawa-stories/significant-technological-changes-in-the-city/britannia-on-the-bay-75>.

Britannia Park included an auditorium seating seven hundred people, changing rooms, bathing houses, and two pavilions with concession stands.⁴⁵ The auditorium hosted a variety of concerts, dances, and themed events such as “Venetian Nights” which brought thousands to the Park.⁴⁶



Postcard, Britannia On The Bay, circa 1900-1918, Source: City of Ottawa Archives, MG366, CA027935. Note the beach, two octagonal pavilions, and the dense forest in the background

The OER extended the pier and added a new, larger “T” shape pier end, which now measured approximately 1000 feet in length and was electrically lit.⁴⁷ At the end of the pier, the OER built the new three storey building for the Britannia Boathouse Club that included boat storage below and a grandstand and a large ballroom above, which hosted a variety of social events.⁴⁸ Construction was complete in 1905, however due to ice damage in the spring of 1906, it was not

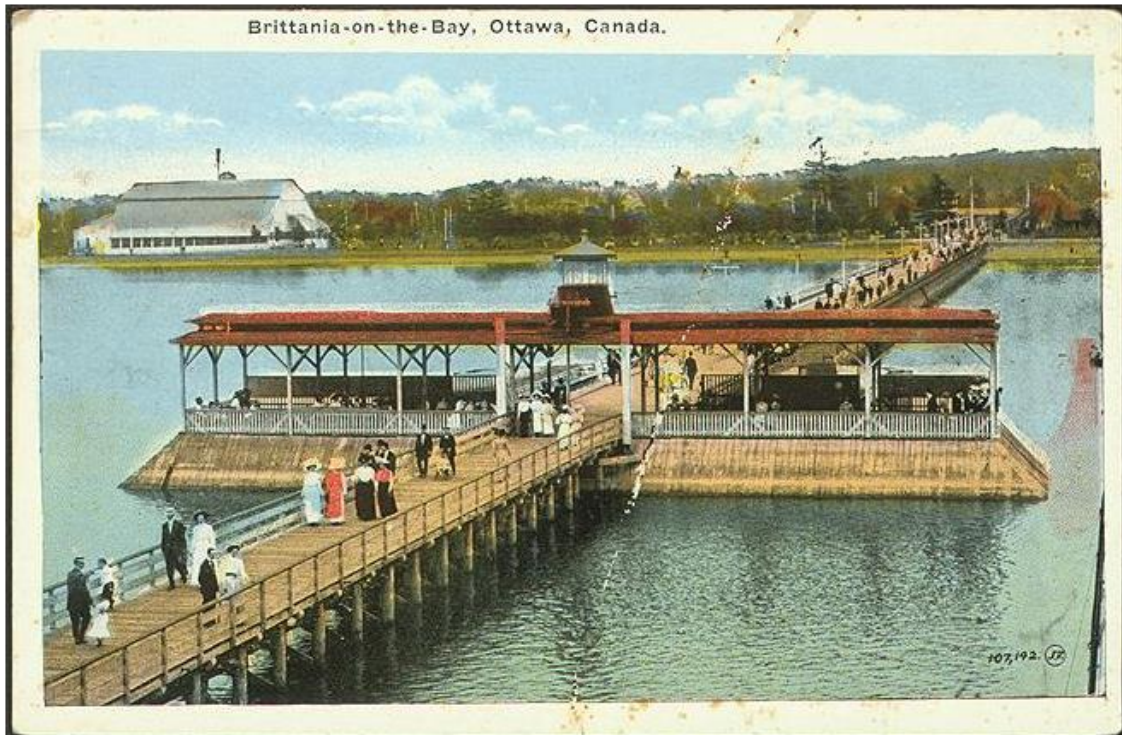
⁴⁵ Ottawa Neighbourhood Study, “Britannia Village,” accessed October 17, 2023, <https://www.neighbourhoodstudy.ca/906britannia-village/>.

⁴⁶ Taylor, *Ottawa’s Britannia*, 346.

⁴⁷ Cook, *Ahearn and Soper: The Electrification of Ottawa*, 39.

⁴⁸ Horwitz and Horwitz, *The Natural Charm of Britannia*, 4.

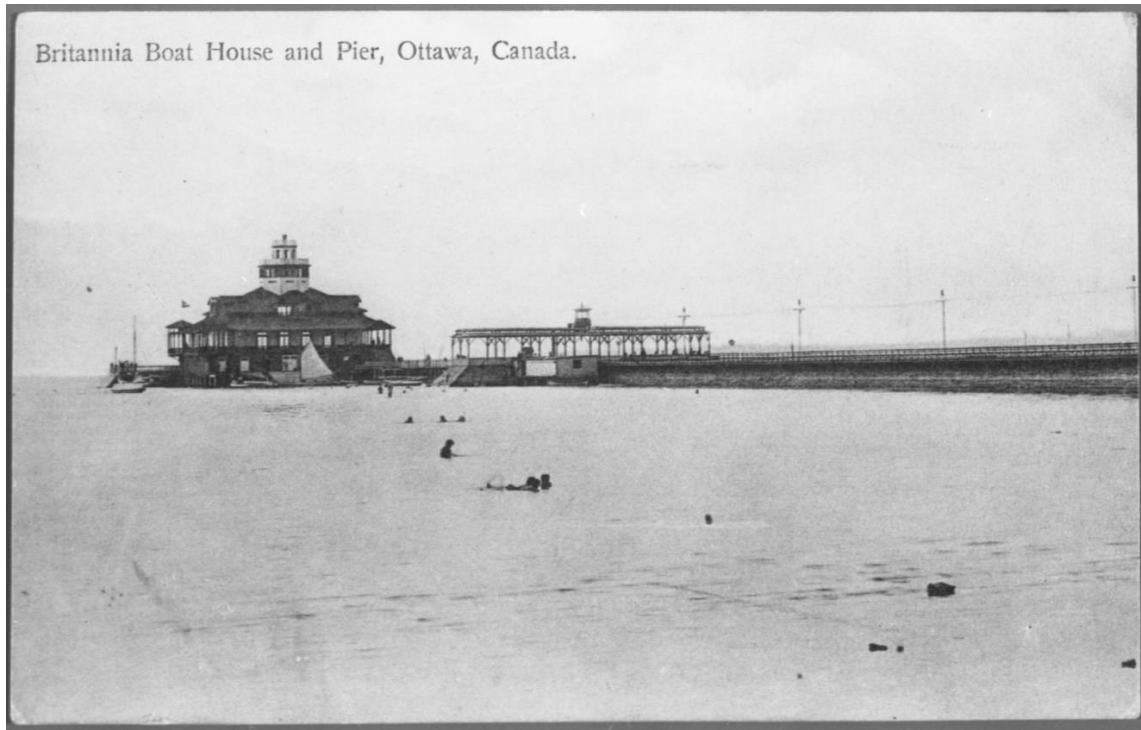
until 1907 that club activities fully resumed at the new facility.⁴⁹ Unfortunately, a fire in August 1918 destroyed the clubhouse and all two hundred watercraft being stored there, so the club resumed activities in the 1896 clubhouse, today's current location.⁵⁰



Postcard, Britannia-on-the-Bay, 1910, Source: Valentine & Sons, Toronto Public Library, Baldwin Collection of Canadiana, PCR-1980. Note in the foreground the original "T" shaped pier end built circa 1900 that was extended in 1905, with the Britannia Park auditorium in the background.

⁴⁹ Kirby, *Historical Sketch of Britannia Yacht Club 1891-1967*, 4-5.

⁵⁰ Horwitz and Horwitz, *The Natural Charm of Britannia*, 4



Britannia Boat House and Pier, Ottawa, Canada.

Postcard of Britannia Boat House clubhouse and pier, circa 1905-1918,
Source: City of Ottawa Archives, MG237, CA015165



Britannia Canoe Club, circa 1905-1918. Source: City of Ottawa Archives, MG341, CA018975.

See passenger steamer *G. B. Greene* in the right background.

The advent of the streetcars stimulated suburban development as the working class could commute daily between Britannia and Ottawa. Alternatively, those working in Ottawa would reside in the city Monday to Friday, then take the streetcar to visit their family for the weekend who permanently lived in Britannia. The OER was also accessible to the general public, and it is estimated ten thousand visitors took the streetcar to Britannia on opening day, and up to six thousand visited daily throughout the summer, especially for social events.⁵¹ The popularity of Britannia as a resort and Britannia Park resulted in higher membership at the Britannia Boathouse Club. Around the turn of the century, the boating club was steadily growing and had approximately 120 members,⁵² with about 200 members (resident and non-residents) in 1904,⁵³ and membership reached its peak before the First World War with over 600 active members in May 1913, and combined with social and associate memberships was over two thousand.⁵⁴ Therefore the popularity of Britannia as a summer resort is often associated with the period between 1900, when the streetcars were extended to the village, Britannia Park was constructed and open to the public, and the Britannia Boating Club had its largest membership, to before the First World War, and are known as its golden years.⁵⁵

Between the World Wars, despite amusement parks becoming unfashionable, people still frequented the Britannia Park and the boat club.⁵⁶ However, with the accessibility of cars after the Second World War, Britannia's popularity as a summer resort deceased. Britannia retained its predominant cottage makeup until the mid 20th century when many early structures were demolished to build residential infill for affordable housing for veterans.⁵⁷ Only a collection of original

⁵¹ Ottawa Neighbourhood Study, "Britannia Village."

⁵² Grover, *Britannia Yacht Club: Historical Highlights 1887-1982*, 9-10; Kirby, *Historical Sketch of Britannia Yacht Club 1891-1967*, 4.

⁵³ Anson A. Gard, *The Hub and the Spokes: Or the Capital and its Environs*, (Ottawa: Emerson, 1904), 14.

⁵⁴ "History of Britannia Boat Club," *The Ottawa Journal*, May 17, 1913, accessed October 17, 2023, <https://cityofottawaarchives.newspapers.com/image/43190648/>.

⁵⁵ Kalman and Roaf, *Exploring Ottawa*, 155.

⁵⁶ Horwitz and Horwitz, *The Natural Charm of Britannia*, 4.

⁵⁷ Ottawa Neighbourhood Study, "Britannia Village."

summer cottages remain today which define the neighbourhood's early character.

In 1950, Britannia was annexed to the City of Ottawa, and in 1951 the city took over management and improvements to Britannia Park, which sparked a renewed popularity.⁵⁸ Although Britannia's popularity no longer compares to its golden years from 1900 to 1914, the area remains a summer destination for city residents, which harkens back to its early roots as a resort community.

Context

Britannia is a unique neighbourhood in Ottawa, for its roots as a summer resort, its geography as a peninsula which led to connections to recreation and the Ottawa River, and its unique architectural character.

As noted above, Britannia's roots as a summer resort outside of the city developed in the 1880s to 1890s as a mix of camps, seasonal cottages, and year-round residences, and became an established community around the turn of the century. The Late Victorian desires of enjoying the outdoors for recreational purposes promoted the creation of summer resorts on both sides of the Ottawa River. In J. L. Gourlay's 1896 *History of the Ottawa Valley*, he documents, "Britannia of to-day is a small riverside retreat where distinguished citizens resort to for fresh air and bathing."⁵⁹ People were drawn to its natural surroundings and the ease of access to recreational activities on the water and land. This enticed many civil servants working in downtown Ottawa looking to leave the dusty city for Britannia's picturesque environment.

⁵⁸ Horwitz and Horwitz, *The Natural Charm of Britannia*, 4.

⁵⁹ John Lowry Gourlay, *History of the Ottawa Valley: A Collection of Facts, Events and Reminiscences for Over Half a Century*, Ottawa: 1896, 62, <https://archive.org/details/historyofottawav00gouruoft/page/62/mode/2up>.

The growth and success of Britannia as a summer resort soared in 1900 onwards with the extension of the OER line, allowing working class people to move permanently to the growing suburb, along with the opening of Britannia Park which was patronized by thousands of visitors annually. Interestingly, the OER's Britannia Park and its streetcar line was unprofitable, however it was successful with the growth of Britannia Village as a suburb and its daily use by commuters travelling into the city.⁶⁰



Postcard, Britannia-On-The-Bay, 1910, Source: Toronto Public Library, Baldwin Collection of Canadiana, PCR-1978. See mature pine trees in foreground and background and pier on the left.

Archaeological evidence demonstrates the presence of arrowheads of Algonquin First Nations near the Britannia peninsula.⁶¹ The Old Indian Trail ran between the Rideau River and Ottawa River from Black Rapids [Lock 13] through what is now referred to as Hog's Back, to the head of the Deschênes Rapids.⁶² Known as the "village by the rapids," Britannia peninsula is located west of Ottawa on the

⁶⁰ Cook, *Ahearn and Soper: The Electrification of Ottawa*, 40.

⁶¹ Kalman and Roaf, *Exploring Ottawa: An Architectural Guide to the Nation's Capital*, 154.

⁶² "Britannia Once Enlivened by Songs and Shouts of Rivermen: Quiet Old Village Was Busy Place Half a Century Ago," *The Ottawa Citizen*, May 19, 1934, accessed October 12, 2023, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/456442917/>.

Ottawa River, at the southwest end of Lac Deschênes, with the Deschênes Rapids to the north. Given its geographical location, the peninsula was likely used by voyageurs and loggers alike to portage the rapids.⁶³ The original landscape was largely wooded with pine trees with swampy areas, a landscape that can be still seen today in the mature trees and in nearby Mud Lake, a provincially significant wetland.

Britannia Bay with its harbour, gently sloped shoreline, and calm waters provided a suitable area for recreational activities such as bathing, fishing, a variety of boating, with a wonderful view of the Gatineau Hills. Many campers and residents set their tents or cottages by the shore among the pines, owned watercraft, and spent their leisure time on the water. This portion of the Ottawa River was a popular destination for summer leisure activities and from 1896 to 1916, the steamer *G. B. Greene* regularly took passengers between Britannia and Alymer and Chat's Falls.⁶⁴

Britannia's growth as a community corresponds to the popularity of water activities and the formal organization by local residents of the Britannia Aquatic Club in 1887. In 1891, the club had enough interest to organize races and events including an annual regatta, which continued until 1918.⁶⁵ The formation and popularity of the boating club correlates to Britannia's development in the early 1890s which saw the construction of seasonal and year-round cottages, two churches, and boarding houses and summer hotels.⁶⁶ In the summer of 1896, the new boating clubhouse was completed located on its current site, and Britannia's summer resident list was the largest yet,⁶⁷ and the following summer the

⁶³ Britannia Yacht Club, *Britannia Yacht Club: A History of Water, Place And People, 1887-2012*, (Ottawa: Britannia Yacht Club, 2013), 18.

⁶⁴ Bill McKeown, *Ottawa's Streetcars: An Illustrated History of Electric Railway Transit in Canada's Capital*, (Pickering: Railfare DC Books, 2006), 75.

⁶⁵ Britannia Yacht Club, *Britannia Yacht Club: A History of Water, Place And People, 1887-2012*, 40.

⁶⁶ Taylor, *Ottawa's Britannia*, 53-55.

⁶⁷ "Still Has A Charm: Britannia Holds Its Own As A Summer Resort," *The Ottawa Journal*, August 5, 1896, accessed October 10, 2023, <https://cityofottawaarchives.newspapers.com/image/43432067/>.

community is called, “one of the best known and generally patronized resort of Ottawa citizens.”⁶⁸

The architectural character of Britannia’s early buildings is unique in Ottawa. Characteristics of Britannia’s vernacular cottages include a simple box or L-shaped form, one and a half storeys, and horizontal lap siding and shingle cladding. The turn of the century vernacular cottage style included the addition and significance of a verandah on the front façade or wrapping multiple façades, which can be seen by comparing early versions such as 48 Bradford Street, constructed circa 1863, to several properties built around the turn of the century such as 195 Britannia Road, 73 Britannia Road, 2775 Rowatt Street, and 95 Kirby Road. Verandahs provided an enlivened addition to the simple form and fulfilled the Late Victorian desire to get fresh air and have transitional living spaces between the interior and exterior.⁶⁹

Architectural styles evident in Britannia include Late Victorian (127 Britannia Road), Queen Anne Revival (154 Britannia Road, 66 Bradford Street, and 84 Bradford Street), and Shingle Style (175 Britannia Road and 95 Kirby Road). Both the vernacular and high-style architecture found in Britannia have related approaches in that they feature a verandah, use similar construction materials, and ornamentation features. Since Britannia was a recreational community that gradually formed rather than being a planned development, most buildings constructed in the early 20th century during Britannia’s peak are on large property lots with mature trees, have informal landscaping, and irregular setbacks, which also contributes to the area’s character.

195 Bradford Street is linked to all three of these contextual values through its role as a summer residence, its contribution to the community’s vernacular

⁶⁸ “At Cool Retreats: Those Out for The Summer, Resorts Convenient to Ottawa are Popular,” *The Ottawa Journal*, August 19, 1897, accessed October 10, 2023, <https://cityofottawaarchives.newspapers.com/image/43908553/>.

⁶⁹ Horwitz and Horwitz, *The Natural Charm of Britannia*, 6.

architectural style and informal landscaping, and the owner's involvement in and role in the boating community in Britannia.

Evaluation using Ontario Regulation 09/06

1	<p><i>The property has design value or physical value because it is a rare, unique, representative or early example of a style, type, expression, material or construction method.</i></p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>Constructed circa 1898, the building at 195 Bradford Street is a representative example of the vernacular cottage style found throughout Britannia, built around the time when the area was a summer resort destination. These modest buildings typically feature a simple form, wood horizontal lap siding, a wraparound verandah, and ornamentation on roof elements. These physical characteristics demonstrate the Late Victorian desire for modest and functional seasonal cottages outside the city, that had a strong focus on transitional spaces from the exterior to the interior. The property</p>
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		exemplifies these elements in its cross gable, L-shaped form, wraparound verandah with squared columns, and one and a half storey height. The building is clad in wood horizontal lap siding and features a second storey porch
2	<i>The property has design value or physical value because it displays a high degree of craftsmanship or artistic merit.</i>	No
3	<i>The property has design value or physical value because it displays a high degree of technical or scientific merit.</i>	No
4	<i>The property has historical or associative value because it has direct associations with a theme, event, belief, person, activity, organization or institution that is significant to a community.</i>	Yes The property is directly associated with the Harmer family, who were one of the early pioneer families of the area, setting up roots in Nepean and Britannia. Frederick William Harmer had a career serving as the Clerk of Nepean Township and was the landowner of both 195 and 205

		<p>Bradford Street. He sold 195 Bradford Street to his daughter, Bertha Harmer, and her husband, Dr. Mark G. McElhinney. Dr. McElhinney was highly involved as an executive member of the Britannia Nautical Club (today's Britannia Yacht Club) during its early years, implementing more organization of water activities on Lac Deschênes. He helped to implement the first regatta in 1891 and was later elected Commodore. McElhinney was active in the boating community, educating the public and writing an article on yachting accidents and their prevention. He was a life-long member, contributing to the local boating community.</p>
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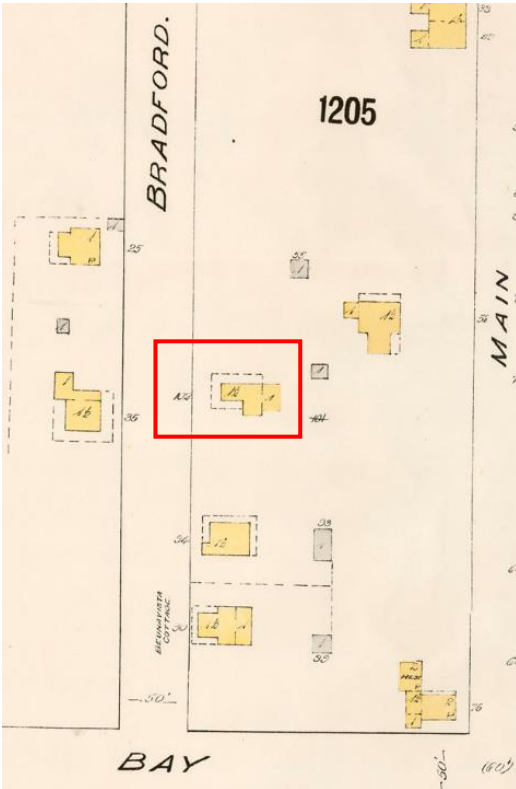
5	<i>The property has historical or associative value because it yields, or has the potential to yield, information that contributes to an understanding of a community or culture.</i>	No
6	<i>The property has historical or associative value because it demonstrates or reflects the work or ideas of an architect, artist, builder, designer or theorist who is significant to a community.</i>	No
7	<i>The property has contextual value because it is important in defining, maintaining or supporting the character of an area.</i>	<p>Yes</p> <p>The property has contextual value as it maintains the summer resort character of the area. The building was constructed shortly before Britannia's golden period from 1900 to 1914. Its architectural style, along with its mature trees and casual landscaping, setback, and retention of its original form and materials, contribute to supporting Britannia's early cottage character. Numerous other remaining cottages in Britannia are also designated under Part IV of the Ontario Heritage Act, including 48, 154 and 175 Britannia Road.</p>

8	<p><i>The property has contextual value because it is physically, functionally, visually or historically linked to its surroundings</i></p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>The property is historically linked to the growth and success of Britannia Village as a summer resort, with the extension of the Ottawa Electric Railway reaching Britannia in 1900 allowing working class people to move permanently to the growing suburb. The expansion of the OER's Britannia line coincided with the opening of Britannia Park, stimulating thousands to visit the village annually. However, it was the daily commuters travelling on the streetcar to the city who made it a success.</p> <p>Britannia's growth as a community corresponds to the popularity of water activities and the formal</p>
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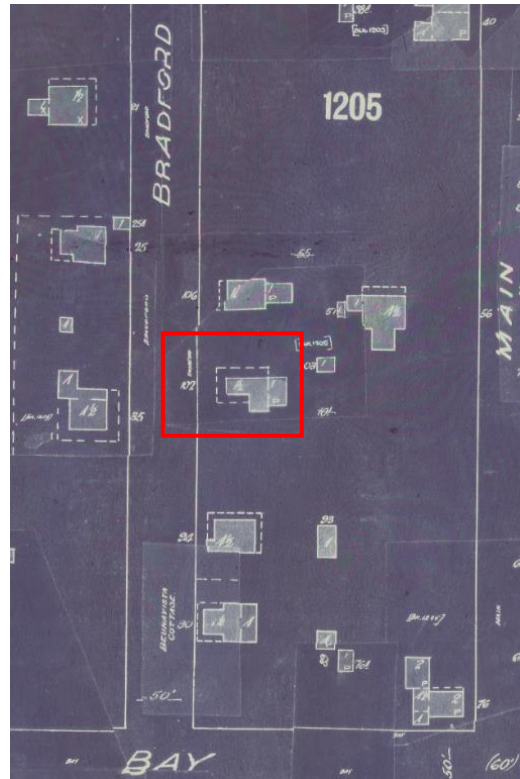
		<p>organization by local residents of the Britannia Aquatic Club in 1887. The formation and popularity of the boating club correlates to Britannia's development in the early 1890s which saw the construction of seasonal and year-round cottages, two churches, and summer hotels.</p>
9	<i>The property has contextual value because it is a landmark.</i>	No

Supplementary Photos and Maps

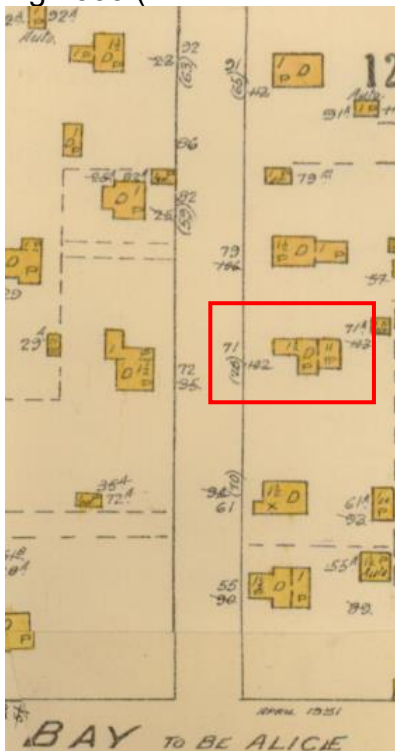
Ottawa Fire Insurance Plan, 1912, page 168 (102 Bradford Street)



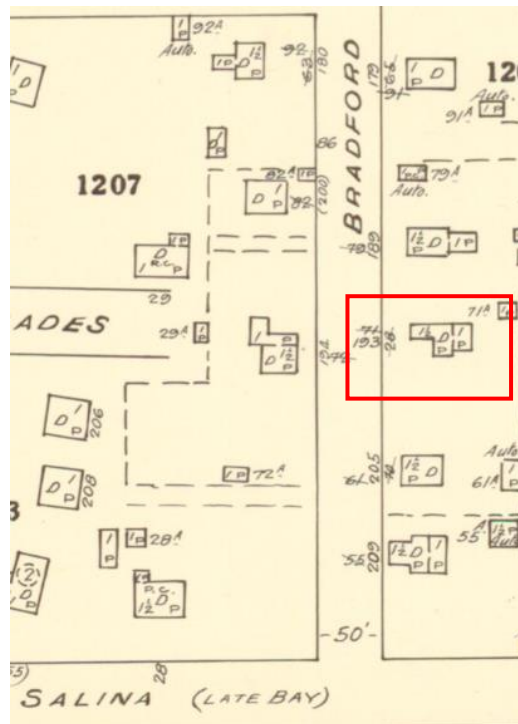
Ottawa Fire Insurance Plan, 1922, page 167 (102 Bradford Street)



Ottawa Fire Insurance Plan, 1948, page 333 (71 Bradford Street)



Ottawa Fire Insurance Plan, 1965, page 333 (193 Bradford Street)



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