

## CULTURAL HERITAGE EVALUATION REPORT

**Building Name and Address:** The Gables, 95 Kirby Road

**Construction Date:** circa 1895

**Original Owner:** Harriet Isabel Wainwright nee Cochrane



South façade of 95 Kirby Road, Source: City of Ottawa, 2016

### Executive Summary

95 Kirby Road is a complex, multi gabled two storey cottage built in the vernacular style in Britannia, Ottawa. The house was built circa 1895 when Britannia was a popular summer resort among Ottawa's affluent, shortly before the village's golden age and peak as a summer destination from 1900 to 1914. The home was built by Charles Robinson for Mrs. Harriet Isabel Wainwright nee Cochrane and her family. Mrs. Wainwright and her daughters summered at 95 Kirby Road and wintered in the Ottawa until around the time of Harriet's death in

1914. The Gables demonstrates the early seasonal and continuous use of Britannia cottages during its golden age.

The house was built by local carpenter Charles Robinson who also constructed the cottage across the street at 2775 Rowatt Street, and other cottages in the Britannia and buildings in Ottawa. He also renovated J. C. Jamieson's Old Mill in the 1890s into apartments, and built St. Stephen's Anglican Church in 1892, and the Britannia Boathouse Club (on its current site today) in 1896. The house exemplifies Charles Robinson's work, and its architectural features are an elaboration of the early Britannia vernacular cottage and exemplify the fully developed vernacular styling that emerged around the turn of the century. This developed style included larger massing, complex and irregular shapes, second storey porches, more focus on detailing, and retaining the verandah as a defining feature.

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**

95 Kirby Road is a two storey vernacular house built circa 1895 as a summer cottage. The builder of the house was Charles Robinson. The property is located on the north side of Rowatt Street on the east side of Kirby Road in Britannia Village. The structure was built as a detached house and its use continues to be for residential purposes.

95 Kirby Road was constructed at a time when Britannia was a popular summer resort for Ottawa's affluent citizens and civil servants, and shortly before Britannia's golden years as a summer resort, from 1900 to 1914, when it became accessible to the general public. Approaching 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.



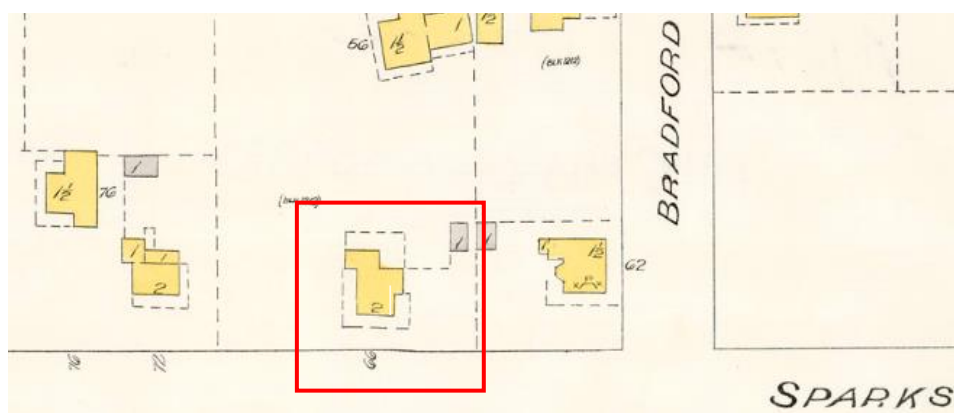
West façade of 95 Kirby Road, Source: City of Ottawa, 2016



Southwest corner of 95 Kirby Road, Source: GoogleMaps, 2019

The house exemplifies Britannia's an elaboration of the vernacular cottage style, which was developed by Charles Robinson. The progression can be demonstrated by 195 Bradford Street and 2775 Rowatt Street, however the concepts are fully developed at 95 Kirby Road. This included elaboration in the form, irregular or complex massing, more complex roofs, a variety of cladding materials, wider verandahs, and second storey porches. These features enlivened the early, simple cottage and provide a play of light and shadows.

This elaboration on the basic vernacular form can be demonstrated at 95 Kirby Road with its larger massing at two storeys, a complex roof with multiple gables, which is likely why the house was known locally as The Gables, an irregular shape created by the multiple gables and dormers, multiple chimneys, wall articulation, and integration of the first storey verandah into the overall structure. The verandah and the south façade second storey porch are integral features of the house and contribute to the massing complexity. The verandah wraps around almost the entire house with only small portions on the west and east façades without, as seen in both the 1912 and 1922 Ottawa Fire Insurance Plans.<sup>1</sup> The verandah features simple wood square columns, wooden arched spandrels creating an arcaded effect, and is low to the ground.



66 Sparks Street (now 95 Kirby Road), Source: 1912 Ottawa Fire Insurance Plans, page 168

<sup>1</sup> Ottawa Fire Insurance Plan, 1912, 168; Ottawa Fire Insurance Plan, 1922, 168.

Britannia's vernacular cottage prefers the use of natural materials, and 95 Kirby Road is constructed of a wood frame and demonstrates the Shingle style, which is a sub-category of the Queen Anne Revival style. Shingle style predominantly features the use of wood shingles as both cladding and decorative elements. This can be demonstrated at 95 Kirby Road as wood cedar shingles are its primary cladding material, used on the second storey and the second storey enclosed porch, and shingles are used as decorative elements in a diagonal pattern on the gable frieze, and the gable end has square fishtail shingles in a dentil pattern. The first storey of the house is clad in wood horizontal lap siding, typical of Britannia vernacular cottages. These defining Shingle style features can be seen in a photograph of the house from 1905 and are still present today.



The Gables, dated 1905; 95 Kirby Road built by Charles Robinson circa 1895, Source: City of Ottawa Archives, MG165-01-04, CA025471



West and south façade of 95 Kirby Road, Source: Tumak and Horwitz, Heritage Survey and Evaluation Form, 1996



West façade arched spandrels and box bay window, Source: Tumak and Horwitz, Heritage Survey and Evaluation Form, 1996

Around 1985, the first storey box bay window was installed on the west façade near the southwest corner, taking influence from with the Queen Anne Revival style.<sup>2</sup> However the main alteration to the house was the removal of the second

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<sup>2</sup> City of Ottawa, “95 Kirby Road,” 1996.

storey balcony on the west façade above the main entrance, seen in the 1905 photograph of the house. The date of this alteration is difficult to determine from aerial photos as the width of the porch was the same as the verandah roof. Otherwise, the house retains the majority of its original form, massing, materials, and aesthetic.

## Builder

95 Kirby Road was built by Charles Robinson, son of Britannia lumberman Nelson G. Robinson.<sup>3</sup> Charles was born in Britannia in 1858 and lived there year-round for over half of his life before he moved into the city.<sup>4</sup> In the mid 1890s, Mr. and Mrs. Charles Robinson and family are documented as part of a small group of permanent residents on Britannia, living on Sparks Street (now Rowatt Street).<sup>5</sup> Charles married Fanny Dowler in 1888 who passed away in 1907, and later married Lillian Smith in 1913, and had two sons, Harry and Milton.<sup>6</sup>

Charles Robinson was well-known and reliable carpenter and contractor in Ottawa who built several houses and cottages in Britannia and the city, before and during the resort's golden age from 1900-1914.<sup>7</sup> Eva Taylor credits Charles Robinson with the building of Burland Cottage (2775 Rowatt Street) circa 1890 and The Gables (95 Kirby Road) around 1895 across the street from each other, among other cottages. This included 154 Britannia Road around 1906 for his wife, Fanny Dowler, however she passed in 1907 and he never resided at this cottage.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>3</sup> Tweedsmuir Histories, City of Ottawa Archives, MG165 Britannia Women's Institute, Vol 7, Pioneer Settlers Nelson G Robinson, 2-3.

<sup>4</sup> "Charles Robinson," *The Ottawa Journal*, July 17, 1944, accessed November 30, 2023, <https://newspapers.com/image/46300607/>.

<sup>5</sup> "The Bay Dwellers: List of Those Who Are Summering Out At Britannia," *The Ottawa Journal*, July 20, 1895, accessed on November 30, 2023, <https://newspapers.com/image/44430073/>.

<sup>6</sup> "Charles Robinson;" "Robinson-Smith," *The Ottawa Journal*, April 11, 1913, accessed November 30, 2023, <https://newspapers.com/image/43190127/>.

<sup>7</sup> Tweedsmuir Histories, Vol 7, Pioneer Settlers Nelson G Robinson, 3.

<sup>8</sup> Tweedsmuir Histories, Vol 7, Pioneer Settlers Nelson G Robinson, 3.



South façade, 2775 Rowatt Street, Source: Google Maps, 2019

Arguably, Robinson's work helped stimulate Britannia's popularity of the summer resort. In the early 1890s, Robinson was hired by J. C. Jamieson renovate his Old Mill.<sup>9</sup> This project included retaining boat storage on the first floor and a room dedicated for the Britannia Nautical Club, while converting the remaining space into apartments to rent. The renamed Britannia Boathouse Club was outgrowing the Old Mill as a meeting and storage space, Charles was hired to implement Edgar Lewis Horwood's design for a new clubhouse, which he completed in 1896.<sup>10</sup> This building is the current site and building of the Britannia Yacht Club today, which remains an important community hub. On a personal note, Charles was known in the community for his athleticism in his youth and was a member of the Britannia Boating Club and crew member of the famous 1898 war canoe race where they defeated the Ottawa Alymer Club for the Championship.<sup>11</sup>

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<sup>9</sup> Tweedsmuir Histories, Vol 7, Pioneer Settlers Nelson G Robinson, 3.

<sup>10</sup> "Britannia To Have A Boat House," *The Ottawa Journal*, September 18, 1895; accessed November 30, 2023, <https://newspapers.com/image/44430447/>; "Jottings About Town," *The Ottawa Journal*, December 16, 1895, accessed November 30, 2023, <https://newspapers.com/image/43357923/>.

<sup>11</sup> Tweedsmuir Histories, Vol 7, Pioneer Settlers Nelson G Robinson, 3; "Charles Robinson."



Robinson was also responsible for constructing in 1892 St. Stephen's Anglican Church which was known as, "The Little Church among the Pines."<sup>12</sup> St. Stephen's was built in the Gothic style and had thirteen stained glass windows, and Charles continued the upkeep and renovations.<sup>13</sup> The following year, he finished the interior ceiling and walls with polished ash,<sup>14</sup> which was an identifying feature of Robinson's workmanship.<sup>15</sup> He worked on other local churches including the Britannia Methodist Church's (now the Britannia United Church) renovations in 1897.<sup>16</sup> Contemporary articles documented, "Everyone was delighted with the improvement of the church which is indeed the personification of neatness and beauty and reflects the credit of Charles Robinson of Britannia and Peter Stewart of Ottawa who did the work."<sup>17</sup>

Overall, Charles Robinson was a local well known and respected carpenter and his work in Britannia defined the vernacular cottage style and built popular local institutions frequented for generations and helped Britannia gain its popularity as a summer resort.

## History

95 Kirby Road is located on Lot 8 Kirby East (formerly Beatrice) of Plan 110, boon 111.<sup>18</sup> Plan 110 was created in May 1890 and was originally Block C part of

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<sup>12</sup> Taylor, *Ottawa's Britannia*, 72; City of Ottawa Archives, Tweedsmuir Histories, MG165 Britannia Women's Institute, Volume 9.

<sup>13</sup> "Small, But Handsome: Is St. Stephen's Anglican Church At Britannia," *The Ottawa Journal*, May 18, 1895, accessed November 30, 2023, <https://newspapers.com/image/43442090/>.

<sup>14</sup> "St. Stephen's, Britannia, Is Observing 50<sup>th</sup> Anniversary," *The Evening Citizen*, May 30, 1936, accessed November 30, 2023, <https://news.google.com/newspapers?id=wm0uAAAIBAJ&sjid=U9oFAAAAIBAJ&pg=1196%2C2094456>.

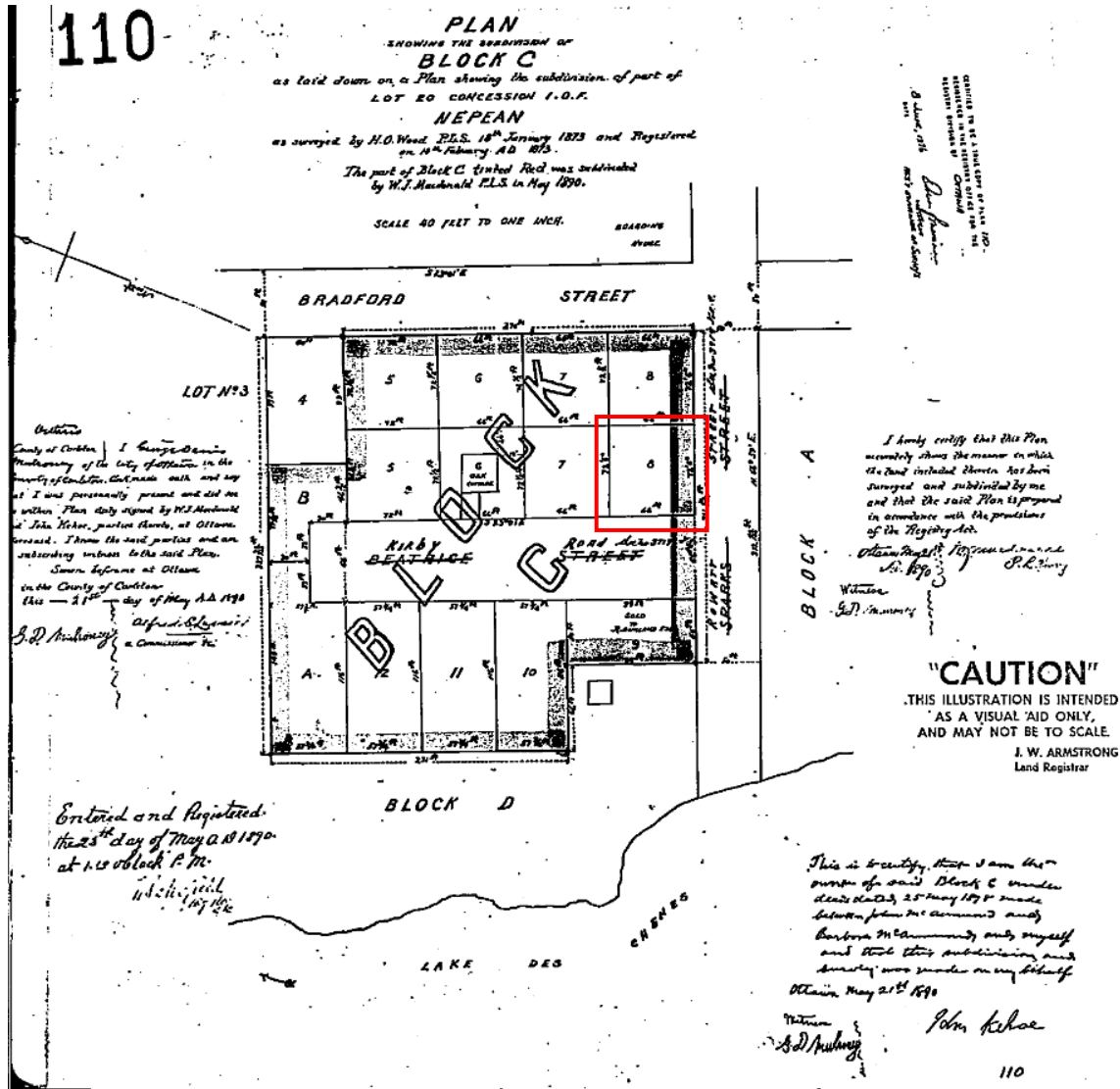
<sup>15</sup> Tweedsmuir Histories, Vol 7, Pioneer Settlers Nelson G Robinson, 3.

<sup>16</sup> "Church Re-opened," *The Ottawa Journal*, July 3, 1897, accessed November 30, 2023, <https://newspapers.com/image/43907873/>.

<sup>17</sup> "Church Re-opened."

<sup>18</sup> "Ottawa-Carleton (04), Ottawa-Carleton, Book 111, Plan 110," Ontario Land Registry Access, accessed November 2, 2023, <https://www.onland.ca/ui/4/books/80508/viewer/195233928?page=34>, 34.

Plan 40 ½ (Book 69) in Nepean Lot 20 Concession 1 which was created in 1873.<sup>1920</sup>



Lot 8 Kirby East (formerly Beatrice), Block C, Plan 110, 1890, Source: "Ottawa-Carleton (04), Nepean, Book 111, Plan 110," Ontario Land Property Records Portal

<sup>19</sup> "Ottawa-Carleton (04), Nepean, Book 69, Plan 40Y, Britannia," Ontario Land Registry Access, accessed November 2, 2023, <https://www.onland.ca/ui/4/books/80451/viewer/992156587?page=13>, 13-15.

<sup>20</sup> It should be noted that when the plan was created in 1890, lot 8 was a corner lot on the north side of Sparks Street and the east end side of the dead end street named Beatrice. However, the half street which extends north from Rowatt Street parallel with Bradford Street was not built until between 1948 and 1950, as the street is not present on the 1948 Ottawa Fire Insurance Plan, and the renaming from Beatrice Street to Kirby Road is included in a city of streets renamed at the time of amalgamation with the City of Ottawa in 1950. Ottawa Fire Insurance Plans, 1948, 333; "114 West End Streets Renamed: Affects Nepean Wards," *The Ottawa Journal*, July 3, 1950, accessed December 1, 2023, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/50133998/>.

The lot was first deeded after the plan's creation in 1890 to C. E. Henderson, who then deeded the lot to Harriet Isabel Wainwright nee Cochrane in 1895.<sup>21</sup> Her husband, Major Willis Riddick Stowe Wainwright was a military clerk for the Department of Militia and Defense,<sup>22</sup> and he passed away in January 1894.<sup>23</sup> Shortly thereafter, Harriet hired local carpenter Charles Robinson to build 95 Kirby Road for her.<sup>24</sup>

Mrs. Wainwright and family are documented summering on Bradford Street in 1895,<sup>25</sup> then again as listed summer cottagers in Britannia in 1896,<sup>26</sup> 1897,<sup>27</sup> and 1900,<sup>28</sup> and in the 1897-98 Ottawa City Directory, Harriet is documented as residing in Britannia Bay.<sup>29</sup> On the 1901 Census of Canada, Harriet Wainwright and her children Gilbert, Rosalie, Muriel, and Marjorie are residing in Hull, Quebec,<sup>30</sup> however in the same year, Rosalie Wainwright's address on the 1901 Ottawa City Directory is Britannia Bay,<sup>31</sup> suggesting the family had two residences. During the early 1900s, the residence of Harriet's children Dora,<sup>32</sup> Godfrey, Rosalie, and Muriel was Britannia Bay, and in 1910 when Britannia Bay is listed as a suburb, Harriet, Muriel, and Rosalie are living at "h n s Sparks" [house north side Sparks, now Rowatt Street].<sup>33</sup> Come 1911, the family is

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<sup>21</sup> "Ottawa-Carleton (04), Ottawa-Carleton, Book 111, Plan 110," 34.

<sup>22</sup> Ottawa City Directory, 1893/4, 423.

<sup>23</sup> "Death of Major Wainwright," *The Ottawa Journal*, January 22, 1894, accessed December 6, 2023, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/43907522/>.

<sup>24</sup> Tweedsmuir Histories, Vol 7.

<sup>25</sup> "The Bay Dwellers: List of Those Who Are Summering Out At Britannia."

<sup>26</sup> "Still Has A Charm: Britannia Holds Its Own As A Summer Resort," *The Ottawa Journal*, August 5, 1896, accessed October 10, 2023, <https://newspapers.com/image/43432067/>.

<sup>27</sup> "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/>.

<sup>28</sup> "Fine Races: Two Splendid Events at Britannia," *The Ottawa Citizen*, July 7, 1900, accessed December 6, 2023, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/456050039/>.

<sup>29</sup> Ottawa City Directory, 1897-98, 408.

<sup>30</sup> "1901 Census of Canada: Quebec, Wright, Hull," Ancestry, Statistics Canada, accessed December 6, 2023, <https://www.ancestry.ca/imageviewer/collections/8826/images/z000176578?pId=14590716>.

<sup>31</sup> Ottawa City Directory, 1901, 460.

<sup>32</sup> "1891 Census of Canada: Ontario, Ottawa City, Wellington Ward," Ancestry, Statistics Canada, accessed December 6, 2023, [https://www.ancestry.ca/imageviewer/collections/1274/images/30953\\_148161-00659?pId=3997379](https://www.ancestry.ca/imageviewer/collections/1274/images/30953_148161-00659?pId=3997379).

<sup>33</sup> Ottawa City Directory, 1903, 513; Ottawa City Directory, 1905, 563; Ottawa City Directory, 1906, 550; Ottawa City Directory, 1908, 608; Ottawa City Directory, 1909, 657; Ottawa City Directory, 1910, 831.

enumerated on the census in the Nepean sub-district with nearby neighbours including the Rowatt's, Howe's, Brittain's, and Von Charles' suggesting this is Britannia, and the Wainwright's are permanently living at 95 Kirby Road.<sup>34</sup> Local newspapers into the mid 1910s document Harriet and her daughters had a house in the city of Ottawa where they winter, and their cottage in Britannia where they spent their summers<sup>35</sup> until Harriet's death in May 1914.<sup>36</sup> Rosalie lived at 95 Kirby Road until the year following her mother's death, and Godfrey lived on Bradford Street in 1915 and 1916, however no other children are documented residing in Britannia afterwards.<sup>37</sup> The Wainwright's owned the property until they sold it in 1941.<sup>38</sup>

Mrs. Harriet Wainwright and her children were regular summer residents at Britannia Bay prior and during its golden years from 1900 to 1914. They participated in local events, such as the Wiggins' one hundred guest party at the Arbor House, assisted the concert and hop held at the Britannia Yacht Club in 1905 to fundraise for St. Stephen's Anglican Church,<sup>39</sup> and donated to the Church of England Augmentation Fund.<sup>40</sup> Additionally, Harriet's son, Gilbert Cochrane Wainwright who was elected director in 1898,<sup>41</sup> and her son, Godfrey

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<sup>34</sup> "1911 Census of Canada: Ontario, Carleton, 32 Nepean," Ancestry, Statistics Canada, accessed December 6, 2023, [https://www.ancestry.ca/discoveryui-content/view/4392706:8947?tid=156393895&pid=252158135734&queryId=a80a8ba1-a5f5-48bd-91ac-d1bbfaf0619e&\\_phsrc=gnB25&\\_phstart=successSource](https://www.ancestry.ca/discoveryui-content/view/4392706:8947?tid=156393895&pid=252158135734&queryId=a80a8ba1-a5f5-48bd-91ac-d1bbfaf0619e&_phsrc=gnB25&_phstart=successSource).

<sup>34</sup> Ottawa City Directory, 1901, 460.

<sup>35</sup> "Society," *The Ottawa Citizen*, October 29, 1907, accessed December 6, 2023, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/456042668/>;

<sup>36</sup> "Obituary: Mrs. Harriet I Wainwright," *The Ottawa Journal*, May 6, 1914, accessed December 6, 2023, [https://www.ancestry.ca/imageviewer/collections/50019/images/32660\\_300337-00575?pId=1263211](https://www.ancestry.ca/imageviewer/collections/50019/images/32660_300337-00575?pId=1263211).

<sup>37</sup> Ottawa City Directory, 1915, 1132; Ottawa City Directory, 1917, 1162.

<sup>38</sup> "Ottawa-Carleton (04), Ottawa-Carleton, Book 111, Plan 110," 34.

<sup>39</sup> "At Home" At Britannia: Prof. and Mrs. Wiggins Entertain 100 Guests at Their Charming Cottage," *The Ottawa Citizen*, May 22, 1899, accessed December 6, 2023, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/456153227/>; "Pleasing Success: Concert and Hop in Aid of St. Stephen's, Britannia, Delighted Patrons," *The Ottawa Citizen*, September 4, 1905, accessed November 30, 2023, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/456043360/>.

<sup>40</sup> "Further Donations: Steady Growth of Anglican Augmentation Fund," *The Ottawa Citizen*, June 4, 1907, accessed December 7, 2023, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/456094588/>.

<sup>41</sup> "Aquatic: Britannia Boating Club," *The Ottawa Citizen*, April 6, 1898, accessed December 6, 2023, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/456147697/>.

Wainwright was elected a sideman for St. Stephen's Anglican Church in 1913.<sup>42</sup> The entire Wainwright family seems to have some connection to the early Britannia cottage community.

## Neighbourhood History

The village of Britannia slowly emerged in the first half of the 19<sup>th</sup> 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.<sup>43</sup> Around 1819, the shores 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."<sup>44</sup> 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.<sup>45</sup> 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.<sup>46</sup>

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.<sup>47</sup> Nelson G. Robinson's mills, one by the rapids and one

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<sup>42</sup> "St. Stephen's Vestry: Suburban Church Completes Successful Year," *The Ottawa Citizen*, June 3, 1913, accessed December 6, 2023, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/455580212/>.

<sup>43</sup> Harold Kalman and John Roaf, *Exploring Ottawa: An Architectural Guide to the Nation's Capital*, (Toronto: University of Toronto Press, 1983), 154.

<sup>44</sup> 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.

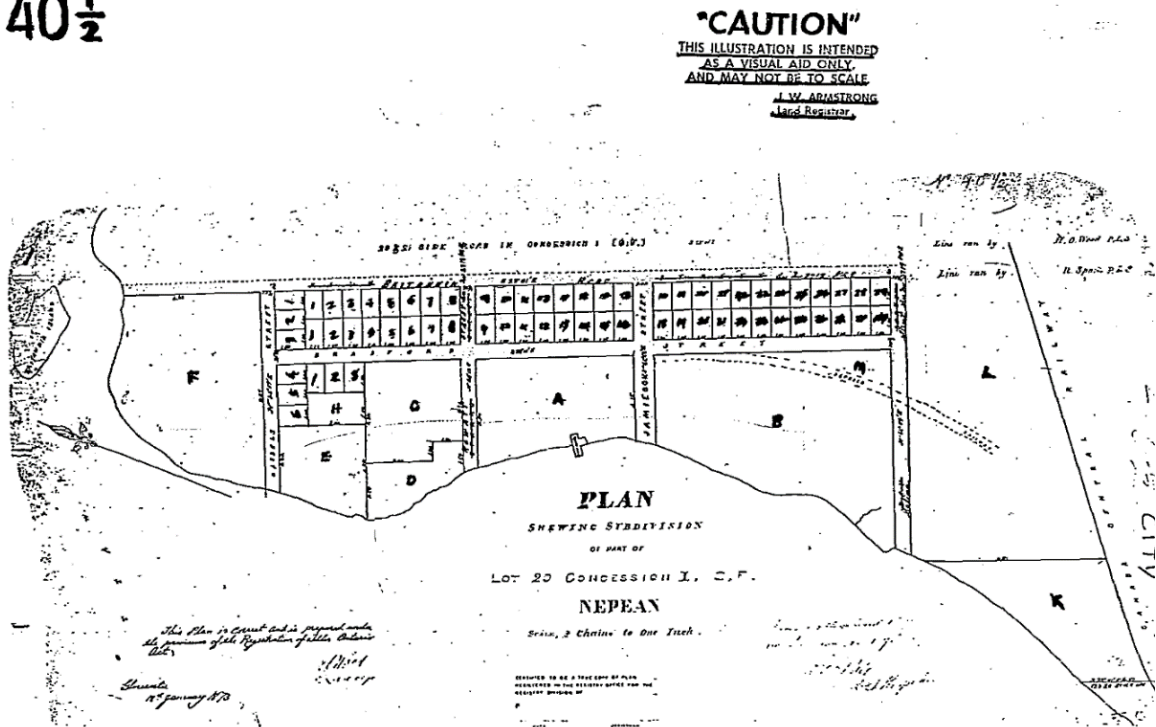
<sup>45</sup> City of Ottawa, "Neighbourhood Heritage Statement, Britannia – Crystal Bay," 1.

<sup>46</sup> 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](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)

<sup>47</sup> Eva Taylor, *Ottawa's Britannia*, (Ottawa: Britannia Historical Association, 1983), 38.

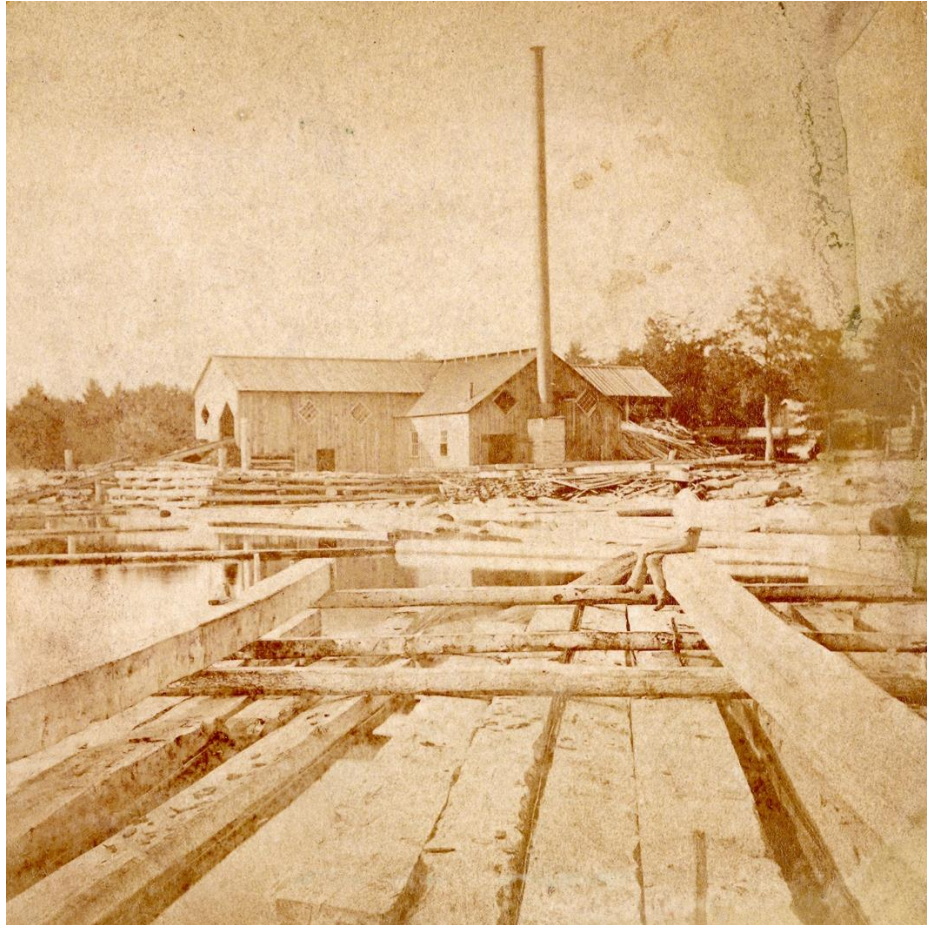
along the bay, were included in this purchase. A month later, John Cameron Jamieson, a baker on Wellington Street, purchased a large amount of McAmmond's land, including Block A and the mill by the bay with the intention of revitalization the mill operations.<sup>48</sup>

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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

<sup>48</sup> 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," Ontario Land Property Records Portal; "Old Time Stuff," *The Ottawa Citizen*, November 24, 1923, <https://www.newspapers.com/image/455775065/?match=1>.



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.<sup>49</sup> 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)<sup>50</sup> 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.<sup>51</sup> The Old Mill even before the turn of the century was a community hub for social activities and events.

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<sup>49</sup> Taylor, *Ottawa's Britannia*, 41, 43, 62.

<sup>50</sup> 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.

<sup>51</sup> Taylor, *Ottawa's Britannia*, 12, 43, 96.



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 Britannia Boating Club in 1907, and adopted their current name the Britannia Yacht Club in 1950.<sup>52</sup> 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.

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<sup>52</sup> Taylor, *Ottawa's Britannia*, 43-44; John Grover, *Britannia Yacht Club: Historical Highlights 1887-1982*, (Ottawa: Runge Press, 1982), 16.





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.<sup>53</sup>

Many prominent individuals from Ottawa purchased land in Britannia and built cottages were also highly involved in the boat club such as John Cameron Jamieson, Edwin Lester Brittain, William Wyld, Thomas Halder Kirby, Dr. Mark G McElhinney, and Edmond Ebenezer Stockton.<sup>54</sup>

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<sup>53</sup> "Old Time Stuff," *The Ottawa Citizen*, November 24, 1923.

<sup>54</sup> Taylor, *Ottawa's Britannia*, 44.

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.<sup>55</sup>

Britannia's popularity in the late 19<sup>th</sup> 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.<sup>56</sup>

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.<sup>57</sup> 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.<sup>58</sup> Come 1898, Britannia residents were not satisfied with the Canadian Pacific Railway (CPR) service and formed a committee to bring the streetcars to Britannia.<sup>59</sup> The committee consisted of community members including J. C. Jamieson, William Howe, A. N. McNeil, and F. W. Harmer.<sup>60</sup> Consensus was determined and the OER extended the tracks thirteen kilometers to the new Britannia-on-the-Bay station, running generally south of Richmond Road and parallel with the CPR.<sup>61</sup>

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<sup>55</sup> Bruce S. Elliot, *The City Beyond: A History of Nepean, Birthplace of Canada's Capital, 1792-1990*, (Nepean: City of Nepean, 1991), 213-214.

<sup>56</sup> Elliot, *The City Beyond*, 191.

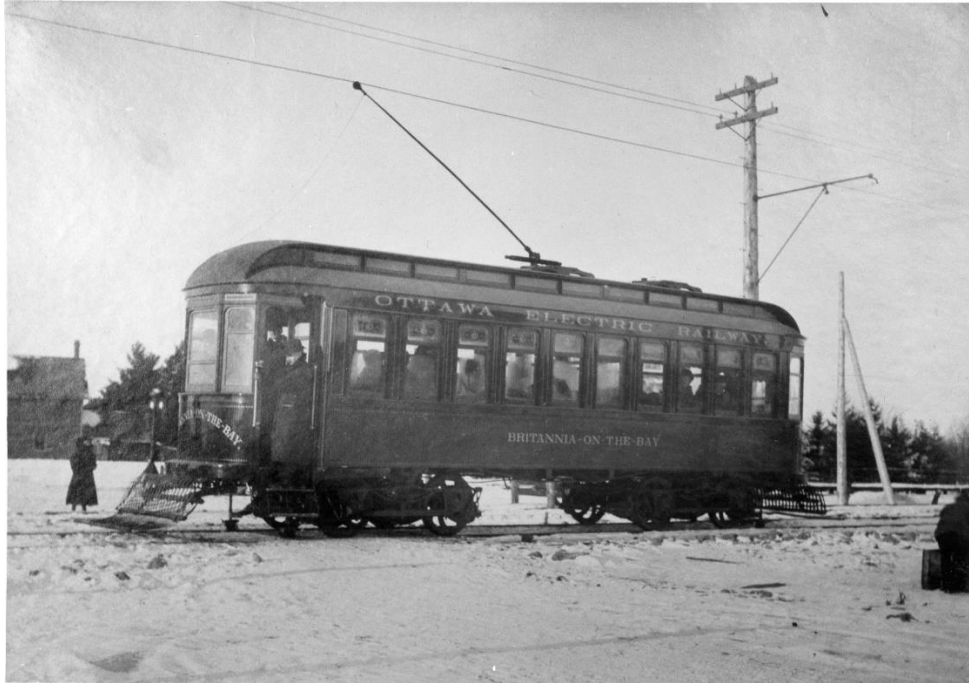
<sup>57</sup> Taylor, *Ottawa's Britannia*, 59.

<sup>58</sup> Taylor, *Ottawa's Britannia*, 59.

<sup>59</sup> "Britannia Ambitious: Residents Take Steps to Secure Electric Railway Extension," *The Ottawa Journal*, August 8, 1898, accessed October 17, 2023, <https://newspapers.com/image/43078065/>.

<sup>60</sup> "Britannia Ambitious: Residents Take Steps to Secure Electric Railway Extension."

<sup>61</sup> 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>.



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 24<sup>th</sup>, the Victoria Day weekend in 1900.<sup>62</sup> 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.”<sup>63</sup> Across North America in the early 20<sup>th</sup> century, amusement parks built at the terminus of streetcar lines were gaining popularity, and they were known as “electric parks.”<sup>64</sup> Britannia Park included an auditorium seating seven hundred people, changing rooms, bathing houses, and two pavilions with concession stands.<sup>65</sup> The

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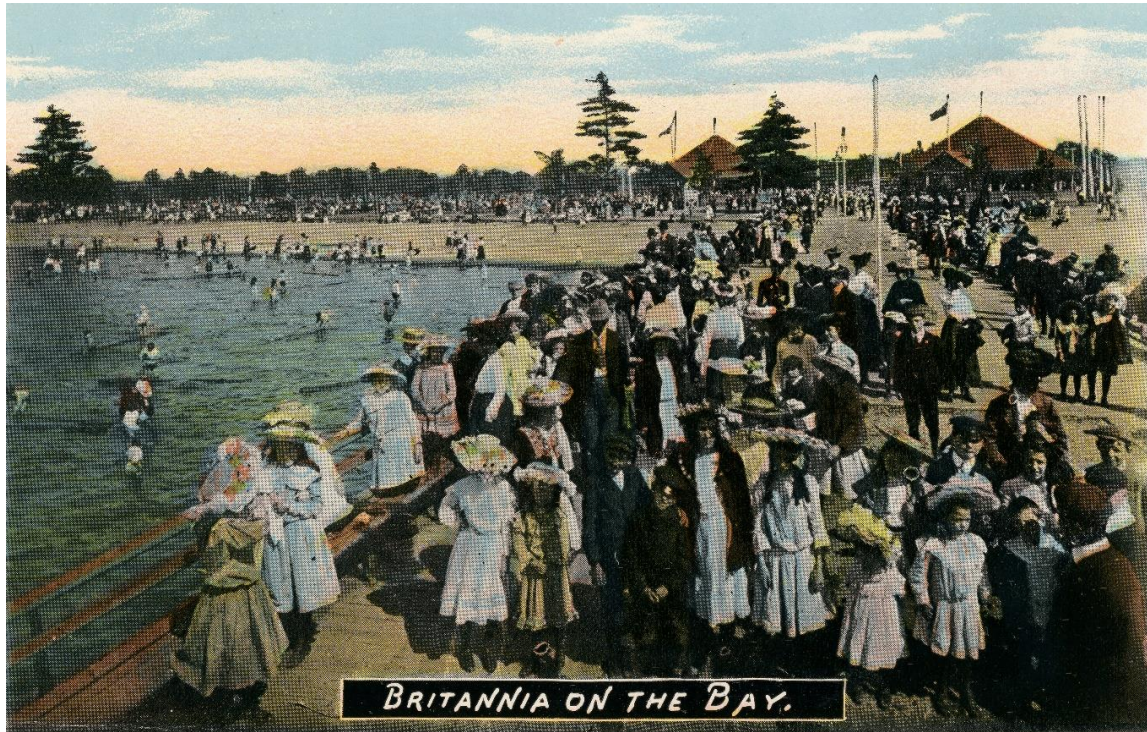
<sup>62</sup> Andrew Waldron, Harold Kalman, and Peter Coffman, *Exploring the Capital: An Architectural Guide to the Ottawa-Gatineau Region*, (Vancouver: Figure 1 Publishing: 2017), 183, 211.

<sup>63</sup> Lisa Horwitz and Mark Horwitz, *The Natural Charm of Britannia: A Heritage Character Statement*, (Ottawa: City of Ottawa, 1996), 4.

<sup>64</sup> 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>.

<sup>65</sup> Ottawa Neighbourhood Study, “Britannia Village,” accessed October 17, 2023, <https://www.neighbourhoodstudy.ca/906britannia-village/>.

auditorium hosted a variety of concerts, dances, and themed events such as “Venetian Nights” which brought thousands to the Park.<sup>66</sup>



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.<sup>67</sup> 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.<sup>68</sup> Construction was complete in 1905, however due to ice damage in the spring of 1906, it was not until 1907 that club activities fully resumed at the new facility.<sup>69</sup> Unfortunately, a fire in August 1918 destroyed the clubhouse and all two hundred watercraft being

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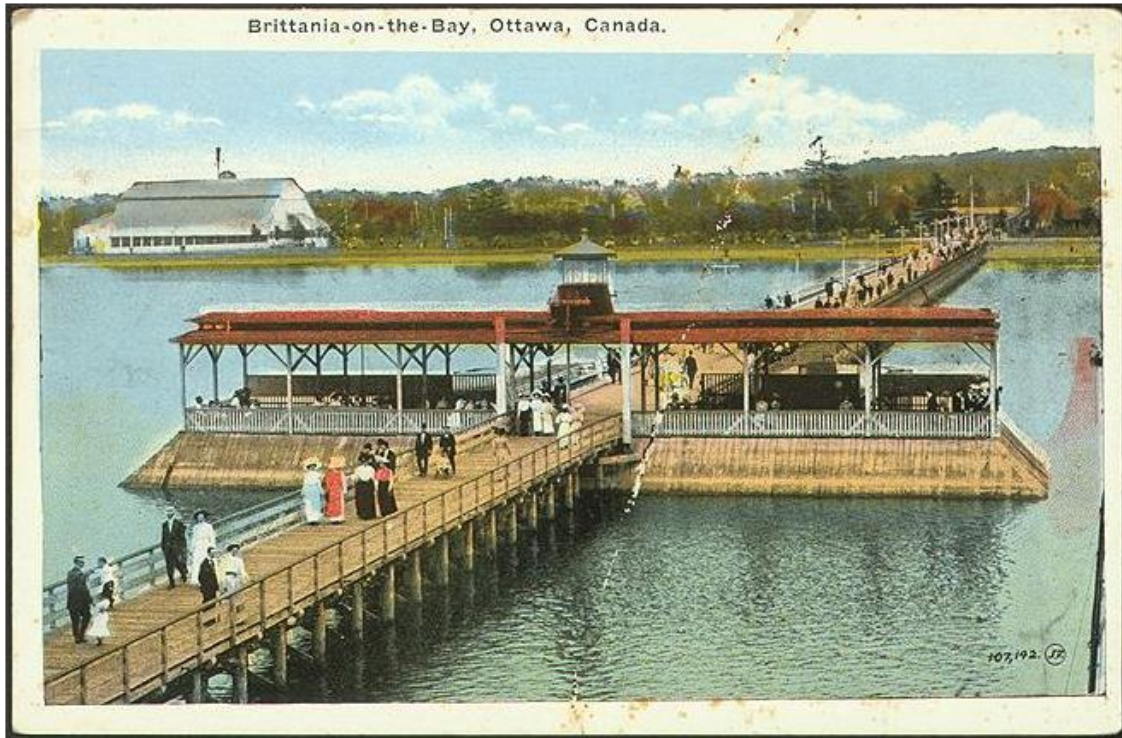
<sup>66</sup> Taylor, *Ottawa's Britannia*, 346.

<sup>67</sup> Cook, *Ahearn and Soper: The Electrification of Ottawa*, 39.

<sup>68</sup> Horwitz and Horwitz, *The Natural Charm of Britannia*, 4.

<sup>69</sup> Kirby, *Historical Sketch of Britannia Yacht Club 1891-1967*, 4-5.

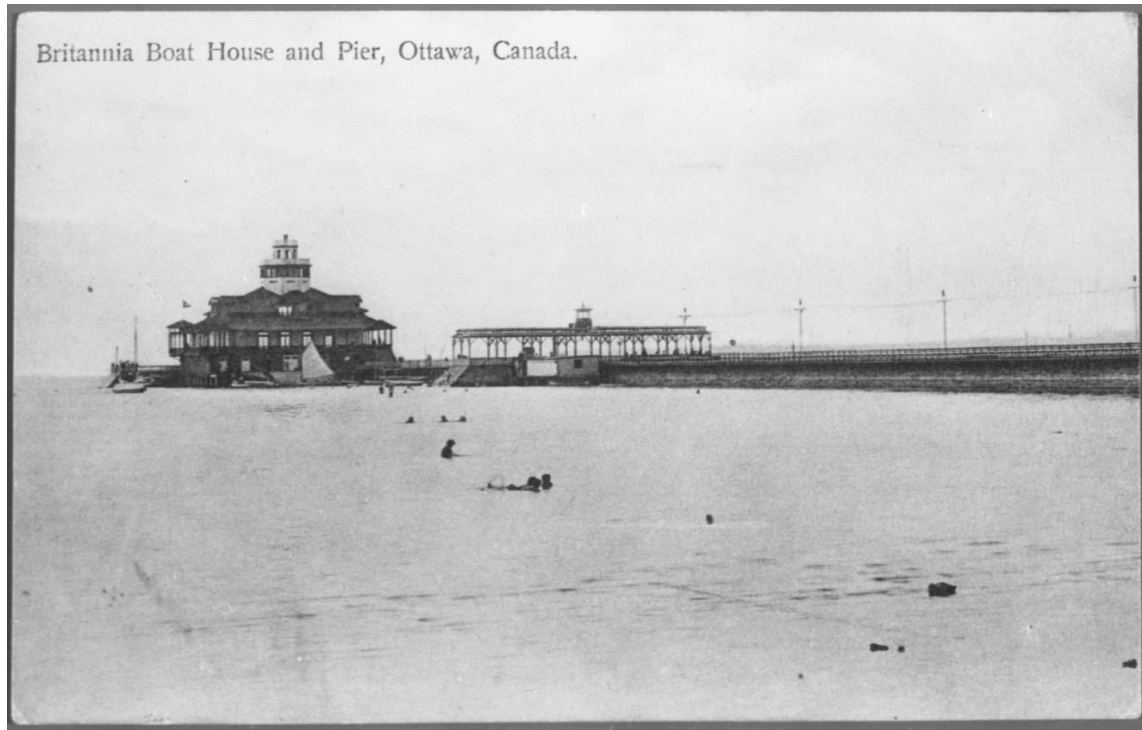
stored there, so the club resumed activities in the 1896 clubhouse, today's current location.<sup>70</sup>



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.

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<sup>70</sup> Horwitz and Horwitz, *The Natural Charm of Britannia*, 4



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.<sup>71</sup> 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,<sup>72</sup> with about 200 members (resident and non-residents) in 1904,<sup>73</sup> 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.<sup>74</sup> 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.<sup>75</sup>

Between the World Wars, despite amusement parks becoming unfashionable, people still frequented the Britannia Park and the boat club.<sup>76</sup> 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 20<sup>th</sup> century when many early structures were demolished to build residential infill for affordable housing for veterans.<sup>77</sup> Only a collection of original

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<sup>71</sup> Ottawa Neighbourhood Study, "Britannia Village."

<sup>72</sup> Grover, *Britannia Yacht Club: Historical Highlights 1887-1982*, 9-10; Kirby, *Historical Sketch of Britannia Yacht Club 1891-1967*, 4.

<sup>73</sup> Anson A. Gard, *The Hub and the Spokes: Or the Capital and its Environs*, (Ottawa: Emerson, 1904), 14.

<sup>74</sup> "History of Britannia Boat Club," *The Ottawa Journal*, May 17, 1913, accessed October 17, 2023, <https://cityofottawaarchives.newspapers.com/image/43190648/>.

<sup>75</sup> Kalman and Roaf, *Exploring Ottawa*, 155.

<sup>76</sup> Horwitz and Horwitz, *The Natural Charm of Britannia*, 4.

<sup>77</sup> 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.<sup>78</sup> 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."<sup>79</sup> 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.

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<sup>78</sup> Horwitz and Horwitz, *The Natural Charm of Britannia*, 4.

<sup>79</sup> 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.<sup>80</sup>



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.<sup>81</sup> 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.<sup>82</sup> Known as the

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<sup>80</sup> Cook, *Ahearn and Soper: The Electrification of Ottawa*, 40.

<sup>81</sup> Harold Kalman and John Roaf, *Exploring Ottawa: An Architectural Guide to the Nation's Capital*, 154.

<sup>82</sup> "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/>

“village by the rapids,” Britannia peninsula is located west of Ottawa on the 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.<sup>83</sup> 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.<sup>84</sup>

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.<sup>85</sup> 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.<sup>86</sup> 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,<sup>87</sup> and the following summer the

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<sup>83</sup> Britannia Yacht Club, *Britannia Yacht Club: A History of Water, Place And People, 1887-2012*, (Ottawa: Britannia Yacht Club, 2013), 18.

<sup>84</sup> Bill McKeown, *Ottawa’s Streetcars: An Illustrated History of Electric Railway Transit in Canada’s Capital*, (Pickering: Railfare DC Books, 2006), 75.

<sup>85</sup> Britannia Yacht Club, *Britannia Yacht Club: A History of Water, Place And People, 1887-2012*, 40.

<sup>86</sup> Taylor, *Ottawa’s Britannia*, 53-55.

<sup>87</sup> “Still Has A Charm: Britannia Holds Its Own As A Summer Resort.”

community is called, “one of the best known and generally patronized resort of Ottawa citizens.”<sup>88</sup>

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.<sup>89</sup>

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 20<sup>th</sup> 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.

95 Kirby Road is linked to these contextual values through its role as a seasonal summer cottage, its influence on defining Britannia’s fully developed vernacular

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<sup>88</sup> “At Cool Retreats: Those Out for The Summer, Resorts Convenient to Ottawa are Popular.”

<sup>89</sup> Horwitz and Horwitz, *The Natural Charm of Britannia*, 6.

style near the turn of the century, and contribution to defining and maintaining the character of early cottages in the area.

## 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 1895, the building at 95 Kirby Road is an excellent example of the Shingle Style, which is one of a few examples that can be found in Britannia, however the style is rare in Ottawa and Ontario. Significant stylistic features of the house are the use of natural materials including horizontal lap siding and wood shingles with decorative foci in the irregular shingle patterns in the gables and the arch-shaped spandrels. The style is also illustrated by the complex massing of the porch, articulated walls, multiple chimneys, and several dormers and gables—the basis of the house’s name. 95</p>
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		Kirby Road also represents an elaboration of the vernacular style of cottages in Britannia shortly before the turn of the century, which integrates the verandah into the structure, features second storey porches, and larger and more complex massing. The exterior of the house retains a high degree of its original integrity.
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>	No
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>	Yes

		<p>The property is associated with Charles Robinson, a well-known carpenter and builder in Britannia and Ottawa, having constructed other buildings in Britannia such as 2775 Rowatt Street, 95 Kirby Road, 154 Britannia Road, St. Stephen's Anglican Church. He also renovated J. C. Jamieson's Old Mill into apartments. Robinson's cottages were elaborations on the basic cottage form which included an irregular roofline to create a play of light and shadows, a focus on natural materials, and incorporation of a verandah and second storey porch.</p>
7	<p><i>The property has contextual value because it is important in defining, maintaining or supporting the character of an area.</i></p>	<p>Yes</p> <p>The property has contextual value as it maintains the summer resort</p>

		<p>character of the area. Known locally as The Gables, the building was constructed before Britannia's golden period from 1900 to 1914. Its architectural style, along with its large lot 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</p>



		<p>Railway reaching Britannia in 1900 allowing working class people to move permanently to the growing suburb. Although some Britannia residents, such as the Wainwrights at 95 Kirby Road, continued to summer in Britannia and winter in Ottawa. 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 organization by local residents of the</p>
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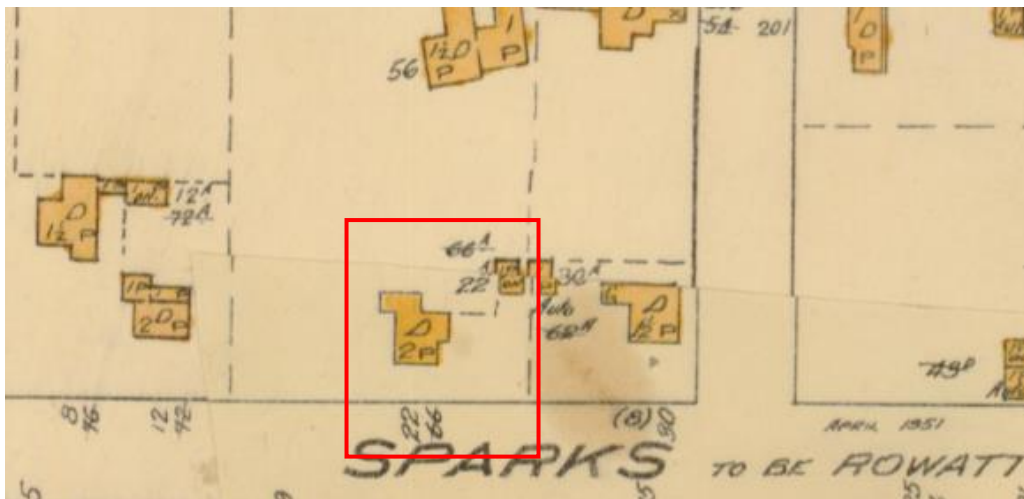
		Britannia Aquatic Club in 1887. The formation and popularity of the boating club correlates to Britannia's development in the early 1890s which saw the construction of seasonal and year-round cottages, two churches, and summer hotels.
9	<i>The property has contextual value because it is a landmark.</i>	No

## Supplementary Photos and Maps

95 Kirby Road (66 Sparks Street), Source: Ottawa Fire Insurance Plan, 1922, page 168



95 Kirby Road (22 Sparks Street), Source: Ottawa Fire Insurance Plan, 1948, page 333



Aerial view of 95 Kirby Road,  
Source: GeoOttawa, 2010



Aerial view of 95 Kirby Road,  
Source: GeoOttawa, 1991



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