



Historic Gloucester

Newsletter of the

**GLOUCESTER
HISTORICAL
SOCIETY**

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Built in 1897, it was originally named Jubilee House until 1910

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Contents

President's Message.....	Glenn Clark	2
Besserer's Grove - Gloucester's Riverside Resort	Glenn Clark	3
Membership Form.....		10

President's Report

By Glenn Clark

Our 'summer' newsletter is late going to the presses, and I apologize. I had an opportunity to travel for the first time since before Covid with rock-bottom air fares and I could not refuse. I learned this morning that those air fares have since increased dramatically to a level that is not within my budget, so it was a wise choice.

This edition's story is about Besserer's Grove, which was later renamed Hiawatha Park. As a summer resort, it was the appropriate topic for this edition. The story was surprisingly complex with many ups and downs, mostly downs. Although much of the story has died with the people involved, I was able to uncover many details particularly the end demise of the hotel, that I was not expecting to find. I hope you enjoy it. It is an important and fading part of Orléans and Gloucester history.

The further good news is that we already have a story for our fall newsletter, which will cover Tally-Ho Water, which operated out of the Ottawa Hunt and Golf Club. This is a story from an era when safe drinking water was a big problem in the City of Ottawa.

As Covid restrictions are gradually lifted, I wish everybody a pleasant autumn.

THE GLOUCESTER HISTORICAL SOCIETY HISTORY ROOM WILL BE OPEN TO THE PUBLIC
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(ENTER FROM AT LEITRIM ROAD, NEXT TO FIRE STATION)

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Historic Gloucester is published by The Gloucester Historical Society. It is intended as a Newsletter to members of the Society to provide interesting articles on Gloucester's past and to keep them informed of publications available, upcoming events and other items of general interest. Comments and suggestions regarding the Newsletter are always welcome.



Gloucester Historical Society gratefully acknowledges the financial support of the City of Ottawa.

Besserer's Grove Gloucester's Riverside Resort

By Glenn Clark

Gloucester is bounded by two rivers offering attractive landscapes and vistas at many locations but only one riverside resort has ever existed in its history. Besserer's Grove and subsequently Hiawatha Park had a history that spanned 50 years and was established by one of Ottawa's most prominent early families. The story was affected by local and international events that changed Ottawa and the world forever. While it was longstanding location in Gloucester and the newer Hiawatha name persists to this day, it is doubtful that it could ever really be considered a success. The story explains the constant challenges to attract enough customers and the repeated closures and attempts to resell the property. Its founder, Donald Besserer, was almost certainly left in financial ruin.

Louis Theodore Besserer

The story begins with Louis Theodore Besserer, son of Johann Theodor Besserer and Marie-Anne Giroux. Johann was a German military surgeon and a Calvinist. He came to Canada in 1776 where Louis Theodore was born on January 4, 1785, at Château-Richer near Quebec City. He became a notary on August 28, 1810, and was well regarded by his clientele.

He entered the War of 1812 as a lieutenant in the militia and was promoted to captain on September 25, 1813. During the war, he had gained the confidence of Lower Canada Governor, Sir John Provost who entrusted him with special missions including the establishment of settlers along the Portage Road between Rivière-de-Loop and the New Brunswick border.

Like many others, he was given a land grant for his military service. He chose land in Horton Township, Arthabaska County, Quebec. After the war, he returned to his notarial profession. On February 25, 1830, he married Angèle Rhéaume of Quebec City who gave him five children.

He served in the Lower Canada House of Assembly from October 7, 1833, until March 27, 1838, representing the County of Quebec. He agreed with the 92 resolutions and was one of the Patriotes of the Quebec region but was more interested in constitutional methods of reform over rebellion. As a result, he refused to follow Louis-Joseph Papineau in 1837.

Louis Theodore was forced to retire from politics in 1838 and escaped arrest because of his business dealings with the British. The friends of Louis-Joseph Papineau never forgave him for his moderation. Interestingly, following Louis Theodore's death in 1861, Louis-Joseph Papineau attended the baptism and became the

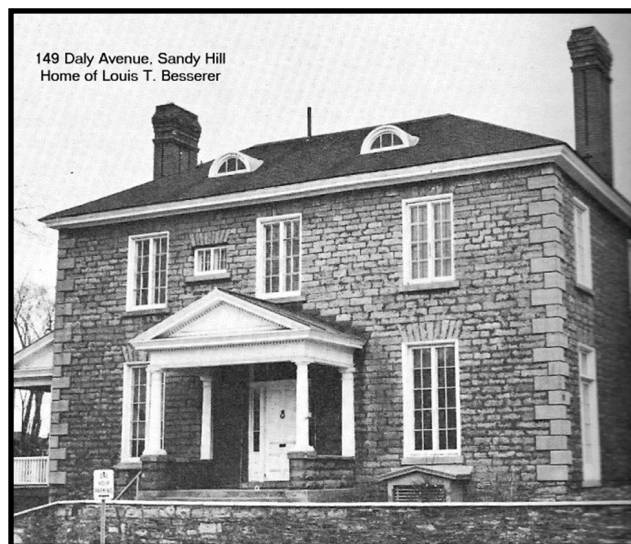
godfather of his youngest son and namesake, Louis Joseph Papineau Besserer in 1863. This son was born in 1860 [*Ottawa Citizen*, January 25, 1923, p.12 and baptismal records].

Embittered and disappointed by political events in Lower Canada, he moved to Bytown around 1842 and sadly lost his wife on August 5, 1843. He had previously obtained 124 acres of land on the south side of Rideau Street and east of Waller Street, now known as Sandy Hill. This land was originally granted to his brother René for military service but on his death and with considerable outstanding debt and valueless land (before the founding of Bytown), his heir and mother refused to accept his estate and the land passed to Louis Theodore in 1823 [*Ottawa Citizen*, July 22, 1933, p.2]. A further tract at Lot 7 Concession 1, Ottawa Front in Gloucester, near Orléans was also acquired from the Crown in 1831.

As a shrewd businessman, he subdivided his land in Bytown, laid out streets and donated property for a school and church (St. Joseph's) to attract buyers. This brought him a fortune. Besserer Street honours his involvement in the area. He also supported and advocated for the incorporation of Bytown which took place in 1847 and he married again on August 26, 1845, to Margaret Cameron (August 19, 1822, at Carillon, Quebec – April 17, 1892). Margaret gave him eight additional children.

As a practical man and opportunist, and because of his business dealings and second wife's family, he adopted English customs and attitudes after he came to Bytown.

His second wife Margaret acquired Lot 5 Concession 1 Ottawa Front in Gloucester in 1849 and Louis Theodore also acquired Lot 6 in 1851. This brought their total land holdings in Gloucester Township to over 600 acres. At the time of the 1851 census, they were residents on their Gloucester property but later retired to 'Besserer House' at 149 Daly Avenue.



He died on February 2, 1861, and was buried in Sandy Hill Cemetery (now MacDonald Gardens Park). His remains were later transferred to Beechwood Cemetery. His Daly Avenue residence was subsequently owned by the Honourable William McDougall, a Father of Confederation from 1866 to 1870. His second wife later remarried Andrew Cowan.

Orléans Property

Our story now turns to Lot 6, Concession 1, Ottawa Front near Orléans and particularly the east half of that lot. The lot was divided by their father on February 15, 1860, the east half to son Napoleon and the west half to son, Wilbrod. Wilbrod Street in Sandy Hill is named for him. The east half was again transferred to another son, Andrew 'Donald' Besserer, later affectionately known as 'Uncle Donnie' on December 19, 1879.

A road between Lot 5 and 6 accessing farms on both sides appears in the 1879 Belden Map for Gloucester Township and may have existed as early as 1861. This eventually became Hiawatha Park Road which ran from St. Joseph's Boulevard to the Ottawa River.

Besserer's Grove

Besserer's Grove made the newspapers for the first time on July 5, 1887, when the Ottawa Journal reported that a 'Union Sunday School Picnic' was held there. It was located along today's Radisson Way and west of Hiawatha Park Road. Four thousand children, teachers and friends from various Anglican parishes converged at Queen's Wharf for a steamer trip to the 'Grove'. Steamers travelled back and forth every few hours. The picnic and festivities included a performance by the Governor General Foot Guard band. On the same day, the Ottawa Bicycle Club organized a race from Cummings Bridge to the 'Grove'.

On August 17, 1887, the Ottawa Citizen reported '*a pleasantly situated little pleasure resort*' with proprietor Alexander (David Alexander) Besserer. He organized a trip to the picnic grounds that day when the steamers 'Empress' and 'Maud' were chartered from Queen's Wharf.

During those early days, the park was used for picnicking, games, baseball, boat races, fishing, swimming, archery, rifle shooting and had a 158-foot deep artesian well offering excellent tasting drinking water. Its most distinctive feature which gave it its name was the grove of pine trees on high ground above the river's edge [Ottawa Citizen, June 30, 1888, p.5, Ottawa Journal, June 28, 1888, p.1, Ottawa Journal, July 8, 1899, p.3].

Improvements were made in 1889 when Besserer's Grove was leased to Captain Alex Bowie of the Ottawa Navigation Company through to 1892. It was temporarily renamed Bowie's Grove to represent the change of management, but the original name returned in 1890. Improvements included a band stand, dance plat-

form, swings, roundabouts, and a racetrack. The wharf was also strengthened [Ottawa Citizen, May 28, 1889, p.4, Ottawa-Carleton property records].

1892 brought further big changes. Andrew Donald bought out his brother Wilbrod on the west half of Lot 6 and then mortgaged the entire property to the Metropolitan Loan and Savings Company to pay off his brother. Some of the mortgage money may have been used to construct a building to offer accommodations for overnight visitors and called the 'Pavilion' [Ottawa Journal, July 29, 1896, p.2]. Advertisements for weekly or monthly boarders first appeared in the Ottawa Journal on August 7, 1893. But was this a wise investment?

Signs of financial trouble appeared when a Sheriff's sale was scheduled August 7, 1894, and included 9 cows, 3 heifers, 1 self binder and 40 tons of hay that were to be auctioned off, but the auction was called off at the last minute [Ottawa Journal, August 6, 1894, p.7]. Matters became much worse when the mortgage was foreclosed, and the High Court handed over most of Lot 6 to the mortgagee on March 29, 1895.

Despite the foreclosure, Besserer's Grove continued to be managed by Donald Besserer. To recoup its losses, the Metropolitan Loan and Savings Company subdivided Lot 6 into 25-acre park lots on March 11, 1897. This was registered as Subdivision Plan 162.

Margaret Hutchison, Donald's sister purchased Park Lot 1 and 2, the site of the 'Grove'. A further investment was made when the Jubilee House hotel was built in the spring of 1897. It is unclear whether this was built on the existing 'Pavilion' or if it replaced it. It was a frame 3 storey structure with verandahs on three sides and included 25 bedrooms, a main floor dining room and sitting room, and a kitchen extension with pantry. It opened on July 6, 1897, to a performance by Valentine's Orchestra. Charles Hutchison and Donald (A.D.) Besserer were the contacts. Jubilee House was named to honour Queen Victoria's diamond jubilee being celebrated that year. The hotel faced Radisson Way and the Ottawa River and was between Beauchamp and Potvin Avenues.

The business was heavily advertised in 1897 but the hotel and picnic grounds were not terribly successful and could not make a profit during Ottawa's short summer season. As a result, in 1901, the property was further subdivided with Plan 212. This laid out several cottage lots to be sold to increase revenue from the site. At this time, streets were laid out and named for members of the Hutchison and Besserer families. Hiawatha Park Road at this time was named Metropolitan Avenue for the Metropolitan Loan and Savings Company and the wharf was situated slightly to the west of the hotel and accessed by Hutchison Avenue. This staved off business failure

but only for one year. The market for cottage lots was very limited and did not generate many sales. The 'licensed' Jubilee House was up for sale [*Ottawa Journal*, February 20, 1902, p.8] and operations appeared to have ceased after the 1902 summer season.

Over these last years, Donald Besserer remained the manager, but once the business had closed, it was time to move on, his money likely lost in the 1895 foreclosure. He moved to North Bay around 1903 to live with his nephew Louis Theodore who had moved there earlier. Donald was a life-long bachelor as was his brother and one-time business partner Alexander, who remained in Orléans on a 1-acre property at the southeast corner of Lot 5, Concession 1, Ottawa Front, now the corner of Notre Dame Street and St. Joseph Boulevard.

Over the next several years, the property was up for rent, sale or auction several times with little or no interest. An ad appearing in the *Ottawa Citizen* on April 27, 1908, describing the property for sale including the hotel, 2 cottages, a large barn and stables and mineral springs while also mentioning the new Canadian Northern Railway which was under construction at the time and would run close-by. During the period of 1903 through 1909, the odd picnic took place at the 'Grove', but most boat excursions travelled to the area without stopping. It was not possible to maintain a wharf with little or no business.

Various steamers ran to Besserer's Grove while it was open for business. In the early years, the most frequent steamer was the 'Empress', but others also called on the 'Grove' at various times including the 'Mansfield', 'Dagmar', 'Marquis of Lorne'. 'Maud' and others.

The Change to Hiawatha Park

Finally, 1910 brought another brief period of prosperity. But why? During the years leading up to World War I, a real estate frenzy was developing in the Ottawa area. Many familiar subdivisions within Gloucester Township (and Nepean Township) were registered at this time. It was a time of prosperity and population growth, and real estate was considered a great investment opportunity, for a few years anyways. Many would later lose their investments when the market quickly became oversaturated.

On January 15, 1910, the *Ottawa Citizen* introduced the renamed Hiawatha Park on the former site of Besserer's Grove. It still featured the summer hotel, which was to be renovated and renamed 'The Hiawatha'. It still had the beautiful views of the river, the pine grove and its artesian well. The resort was named for the poem "*The Song of Hiawatha*" by Henry Wadsworth Longfellow.

JUBILEE
HOUSE...

BESSERER'S GROVE.

A. D. BESSERER, Manager,
ORLEANS, P.O., ONT.
or
C. HUTCHISON,
34 Kent Street, OTTAWA.

STEAMER EMPRESS
ARRIVING AT BESSERER'S WHARF.

FOTHERINGHAM AND POPHAM, PRINT.

In preparation for a spring opening, an icehouse was being stocked with plenty of ice. A new wharf was to be built to allow for both steamers and smaller craft and a railway station was to open along the new Canadian Northern Railway. The station was also being named 'Hiawatha Station'. A sidewalk would even be constructed from the station to the hotel. For the first time, this summer resort would be accessible by both boat and rail. Of course, the property was to be further subdivided under Plan 288 to create 237 building lots available for sale.

The subdivision plan was presented in the Ottawa Citizen on February 12, 1910. The map features lots on 35 of the total 50 acres, the hotel, picnic and tennis grounds, and a wharf and boasts of its high ground, not prone to spring flooding, its springs that are typhoid-free and its best feature of all, it's a summer resort and not suburban property. Who could resist buying here? The Hiawatha Company was the new owner. The syndicate behind the company consisted of William J. Best, Aylesworth E. Shaver, and George R. Christie. An Ottawa Journal article on the same day boasts of hourly boat service in addition to rail service, sidewalks and drains on every street and an electric light plant, long before hydro was available this far from the city.

A further article appearing in the Ottawa Citizen on April 23, 1910, offered pictures of the hotel and grounds and their newly acquired steamer. The ad described the accommodations as: *"This resort offers every possible accommodation for the city business man or employee. The C.N.R. runs 4 trains per day to and from the city at a 6-cent fare. The Hiawatha Syndicate will operate a steamer (The Hiawatha) which will make the return trip every two hours. Delightful boating, bathing, and fishing facilities prevail. One of the best mineral springs in the country is on the property. In fact, it is the one ideal resort for the Ottawa resident."*

When the steamer schedule was released in June, instead of the originally announced hourly schedule and then bi-hourly schedule, the real schedule included 5 round trips on Saturdays and two on other days of the week. Fares were 25 cents for a round trip or 10 one-way tickets for \$1.00. Service began on June 8, 1910, with the Hiawatha hotel opening on June 11th. The steamer was renamed the Antelope [Ottawa Citizen, June 10, 1910, p.9].

An Ottawa Journal article on June 4, 1910, announced the completion of the Hiawatha Park Ho-

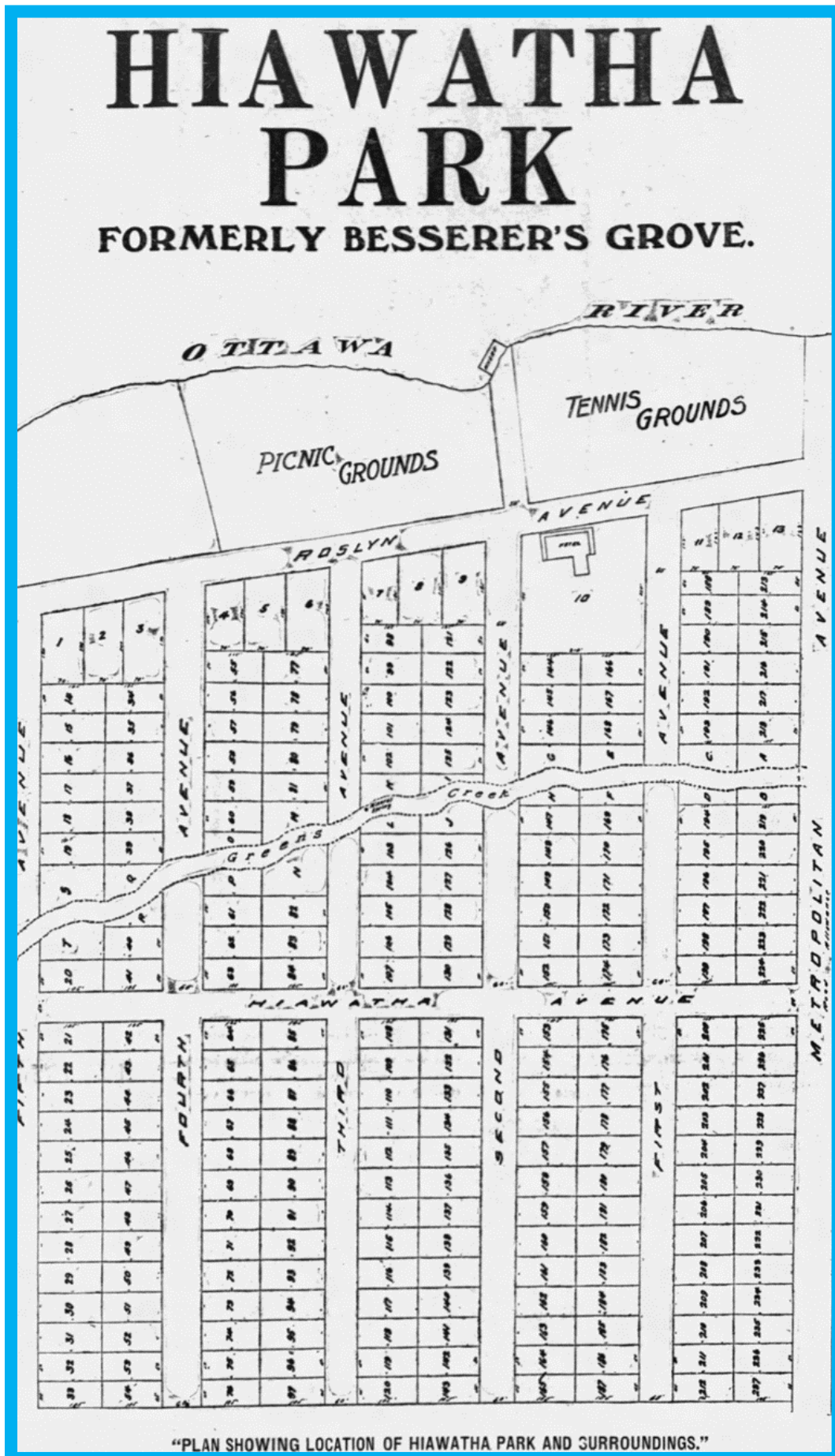
tel, furnished, lighted and staffed. The Park also featured an ice cream parlour and refreshments were available.

News reports throughout the 1910 season suggested a constant flow of visitors to both the picnic grounds and hotel, so much so, that a larger steamer named the "Wanakewan" was purchased for the 1911 season, doubling passenger capacity. In addition, arrangements were made with the Ottawa River Navigation Company to also have "The Duchess of York" and "The Victoria" also stop at Hiawatha Park [Ottawa Journal, May 6, 1911, p.1, Ottawa Citizen, July 6, 1911, p.2].

Typhoid Epidemic of 1911

January 1911 brought a crisis to Ottawa's water system. Typhoid and other communicable diseases were an ongoing problem and could be traced to garbage disposal, animal carcass removal, yard inspections, meat and milk sanitation, and most importantly, the quality of the water supply. Methods for the improvement of water quality were already well known. Prior to 1911, the number of illness cases had been manageable, mostly affecting those living in poorer neighbourhoods. This was politically acceptable and little action was taken. 1911 brought a massive typhoid outbreak affecting the entire city. No longer was it just the lower class. There were 987 cases and 83 deaths. The contamination was traced to the recently annexed Hintonburg, which was not well connected to the sewer system and many outdoor privies drained into Cave Creek which flowed into Nepean Bay where the city's water intake pipe was located. In addition, an emergency valve had been opened and the intake pipe had leaks and was generally in unsanitary condition. City officials were either incompetent or were scape-goated by their political bosses, who were more concerned with protecting their own reputations despite their lack of action for many years. Following this epidemic, various improvements were discussed and discarded but a new intake pipe was installed in Nepean Bay.

This was assumed to be enough to solve the problem. Ongoing water tests subsequently provided conflicting results due to inconsistent methodology. Rather than erring on the side of caution, the warnings were not heeded which led to an even worse epidemic in the summer of 1912 [The Ottawa Typhoid Epidemic of 1911 and 1912. A Case Study of Disease as a Catalyst for Urban Reform by Sheila Lloyd].



"PLAN SHOWING LOCATION OF HIAWATHA PARK AND SURROUNDINGS."

Entrepreneurs who had access to alternative pure water supplies quickly stepped in to provide worried citizens who were able to pay with safe water. Tally-Ho Water, which operated out of the Ottawa Hunt Club, was arguably the best known and will be a subject of another newsletter article in the near future. But there were others including Hiawatha Park, which had its deep artesian well. An ad appeared in the Ottawa Journal on February 9, 1911, offering to deliver 5-gallon jars of Hiawatha water to any part of the city at a reasonable cost. There were subsequent concerns following a failed test but a story in the Ottawa Journal on March 15, 1911, reassured the public that their water was indeed 'declared pure' after testing by the city's health department. Offers for water delivery earlier in the year had ended but water was still available on-site.

The hotel and picnic grounds continued in successful operation through the following years and in 1913, a familiar face returned to Hiawatha Park, when Donald (A.D.) Besserer again was manager of the hotel. He had returned from North Bay, but only temporarily.

The Ottawa Citizen on June 7, 1913 described the hotel as follows:

"One thing which particularly strikes the eye of the visitor to the park when he sees it for the first time is the large and beautiful hotel, the Hiawatha. On a beautiful location overlooking the river, and from its upstairs windows one can see down the river for a mile or more, stands this well-kept structure. It has some thirty bedrooms which are elaborately furnished. But the finest room in the house is the spacious dining room where some 75 people can gather at the festive board. It is light and airy. In one of the front rooms is a fine piano and the room can be used for summer dances. The building is excellently lighted and most complete in every way."

On the same date, the following unusual new feature of the park was described: *"The wigwams are rather few and far between but the class that are being erected are the very best and soon this little Indian village will be one of the prettiest spots along the river front."*

David Alexander Besserer, one of the original partners involved with Besserer's Grove died on July 15, 1915, at Widdifield northeast of North Bay. He had lived in Orléans at least until 1914 and was born on August 12, 1855, to Louis Theodore Besserer and his second wife, Margaret Cameron. Following Alexander's death, Donald started a legal action requesting an accounting by Sir Henry Bates to the heirs of Louis Theodore Besserer regarding the disposition of his real estate holdings. Much of his father's land passed into the hands of Bates especially those located in Sandy Hill and there was some concern that the wishes recorded in his father's will were not followed [Ottawa Citizen, July 31, 1915, p.5]. No resolution of this action has been found.

The advent of war was again to bring another end to our summer resort. The May 22, 1915, edition of the Ottawa Citizen offered Hiawatha Hotel for rent and on June 5, 1915, in the Ottawa Journal, the hotel was offered for invalided soldiers. It was later noted that W.M. Scanlon and J.S. Nicol were the new proprietors for 1915 and the season proceeded with picnics and hotel guests as normal.

On September 11, 1915, a large group of local residents and landowners met at the hotel to advocate for the elimination of toll roads and for improvement of the Hiawatha Park Road, which was considered in exceptionally poor condition. *"Why should we have to drag this beautiful room of ladies through the mud?"* Of 80 miles of remaining toll roads in Ontario, half were leading into Ottawa including Montreal Road. The Graziadel orchestra played during the banquet which was followed by dancing. The motorboat 'Rob Roy' was to return visitors to the city at midnight but broke down shortly after departing drifting downstream by a mile and for an hour before being repaired. The boat finally arrived at Queen's Wharf at 2:10 a.m. [Ottawa Citizen, September 13, 1915, p.11]. After this event, the hotel closed for the duration of the war.

On March 24, 1917, the next important player involved with Besserer's Grove died. This was Margaret Hutchinson (nee Besserer) who passed away while visiting her daughter in British Columbia [Ottawa Citizen, March 26, 1917, p.3]. Her husband Charles, the manager of the hotel when it first opened in 1897 had previously died on March 14, 1898. He was born on January 6, 1844, and they married on November 10, 1869. Margaret's cottage at Lot 11 of Plan 288 and just east of the hotel was up for rent in 1916 and following her death in 1917. Not long after, her cottage passed to her son-in-law Edwin F. Holcomb (executor) and wife Florence M. before being sold out of the family in 1925 to John Templeman.

Again, the hotel and grounds were up for sale. This time in 1917. First an auction sale on July 14th which included the entire unsold portion of the subdivision and hotel as a bulk sale or sale by portion, north or south of the creek. When the auction proved unsuccessful, Hiawatha Park was put up for sale again later in the month [Ottawa Journal, July 14, 1917, p.17, July 31, 1917, p.11].

Hiawatha Park Used by Social Service Agency

Starting in 1916, the Settlement House organization, partially financed by the Fresh Air Fund, allowed mothers, children and young business girls and boys a summer respite in the country, initially at Clarence, Ontario. This is what we know today as summer camp with normal visits of one or two weeks. When the Clarence site could no longer meet the demand, the Hiawatha Park hotel was rented for the 1918 and 1919 seasons. Hotel rooms had single or double accommodation or visitors could

camp in tents. Fresh produce was available from gardens on neighbouring lots and a canteen selling ice cream and candies was opened in 1919. [*Ottawa Citizen*, May 14, 1918, p.3, May 26, 1919, p.19]. Following two successful seasons, Settlement House suspended its activities in late 1920 and did not rent the hotel that year [*Ottawa Citizen*, November 17, 1920, p.18].

A return to normal park activities in the post-war era occurred on August 21, 1920, when owner W.J. Best "re-opened" Hiawatha Hotel for 350 Bell Telephone workers who enjoyed a picnic, various competitions, and baseball followed by dancing inside the hotel. The group arrived by company truck and by CNR train, which by pre-arrangement, had a station stop near the hotel [*Ottawa Citizen*, August 23, 1920, p.3]. Through the remainder of the 1920s, Hiawatha Park was open for picnics, and in the first half of the decade for dances, and meals. In 1923, Hiawatha Hotel was known as the Hiawatha Park Pavilion and boat service was being offered for last time by the steamer 'Victoria' [*Ottawa Citizen*, July 28, 1923, p.11]. In the following year, it was known as the Hiawatha Park Tea House when 'tea' was being offered for 35 cents at 5 p.m. The hotel was also open at least during the 1924 season for accommodation with daily and monthly rates of \$2.50 and \$12 respectively. Regular meals were 75 cents [*Ottawa Citizen*, May 23, 1924, p.8].

Following the end of steamer service, most arrived by launch, motorboat, bicycle, bus, automobile or even motorcycle. The 1925 topographical map for the area no longer included a hotel or railway station at Hiawatha Park, a sign of decline.

The main proponent of Hiawatha Park, William John Best, a well-known Ottawa realtor, was the next to die on April 2, 1926. He was born on August 29, 1852, in Orono, Ontario. In addition to his involvement with the Hiawatha Park Company, he operated a steamer on the Ottawa River that was subsequently transferred to the Rideau River [*Ottawa Journal*, April 2, 1926, p.1]. Following his death, the hotel and resort were yet again put up for sale [*Ottawa Citizen*, August 10, 1926, p.7] with usual result of no sale.

On March 3, 1927, the Supreme Court of Ontario granted the property to James E. Hanna. Not long after, we learned that Hiawatha Park was in tax arrears, but an arrangement was made with Gloucester Township council to settle the amount owing [*Ottawa Citizen*, May 3, 1927, p.12]. Dr. James Edward Hanna died on August 30, 1935. He was born on February 21, 1861, in Leeds County and near Portland Ontario [*Ottawa Citizen*, August 30, 1935, p.3].

By the time, we had reached the 1930s and the Great Depression, large picnic events, steamer excursions, and summer resort retreats were a thing of the past. Fol-

lowing years of complaints about the condition of Hiawatha Park Road, Gloucester Township finally agreed to widen the road from 30 feet to the standard 66 feet and to grade it for a proper surface. By a September Council meeting, fences on adjoining properties had already been moved back and the project was to be completed by the end of the fall season [*Ottawa Citizen*, June 8, 1932, p.8, *Ottawa Journal*, September 7, 1932, p.5]. By this time, most using the road were summer cottage owners. Few went to the Hiawatha Park picnic grounds anymore.

Property records for Hiawatha Park reveal that some cottage properties were foreclosed for tax arrears in the early 1930s and those lots were handed over to Gloucester Township for eventual resale.

'Uncle Donnie' is Dead

The last founder of Besserer's Grove, Andrew Donald Besserer died at North Bay on February 19, 1936, following a prolonged illness. He was the last surviving child of Louis Theodore Besserer and was buried in Beechwood Cemetery [*Ottawa Citizen*, February 21, 1936 p.4]. He was born on November 30, 1858. His involvement at Besserer's Grove lasted 15 years.

The final published use of Hiawatha Park as a picnic grounds and sports facility involved members of Hull City Council and officials of the City of Hull which took place on July 4, 1937, fifty years after its 1887 founding [*Ottawa Citizen* July 5, 1937, p.5]. The property was again listed for sale in the *Ottawa Citizen* from May 13 to 15, 1937.

It took seven years following Dr. Hanna's death to finally sell the property. On September 25, 1942, it was transferred to Samuel Greenberg of Billings Bridge. With an increasing housing shortage during World War II and with winter approaching, Mr. Greenberg quickly took action, by offering the former hotel as living accommodation for several families [*Ottawa Citizen*, October 15, 1942, p.22]. Mr. Greenberg's next action was to approach Gloucester Township Council to cancel most of the Hiawatha Park subdivision and return it to agricultural use. There was little hope of selling additional lots this far from the city. There was also no interest in 'resort' lots especially those away from the riverfront. Gloucester Township Council granted his request on April 20, 1943 [*Ottawa Journal*, April 21, 1943, p.12].

The End of the Hotel and the Final End of an Era

Although the Hiawatha Hotel had ceased to be a hotel around 1924, the building was still present in 1942. So, what happened to it?

The clue is revealed following a January 5, 1961, fire. The burned structure owned by Mr. Raoul Lepage and partially occupied Mr. and Mrs. Marcel Nadon and their five children was a portion of the old hotel.

This consisted of a total of seven rooms and two storeys. Three rooms were the Lepage living quarters and the remaining four rooms were a separate apartment where the Nadon's were living at the time of the fire. Nobody was injured [*Ottawa Journal*, January 6, 1961, p.36, *Ottawa Citizen*, January 6, 1961, p.44]

Samuel Greenberg had sold off portions of Lot 10 of Plan 288, the location of the Hiawatha Hotel between 1944 and 1950. The portion where the hotel was situated was sold in 1944 to Raoul and Regina Lepage after which they demolished most of the building, with the exception of the 2-storey part lost in the 1961 fire. The original building before partial demolition had 3 storeys and 30 rooms.

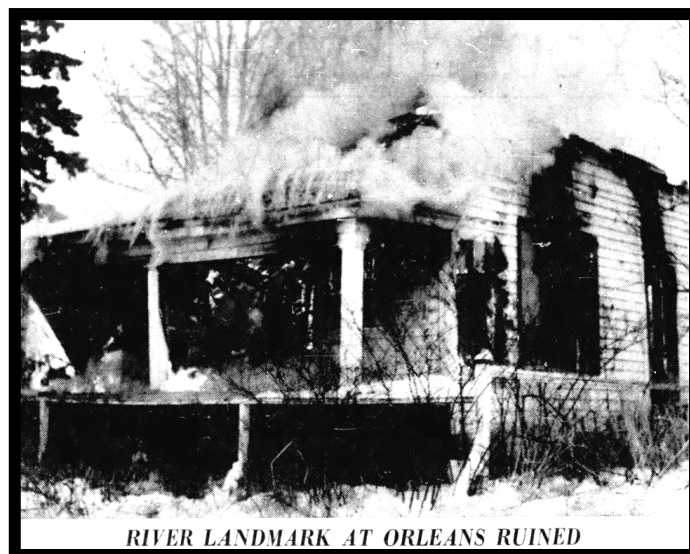
Recent History

The road to Hiawatha Park was long known as Hiawatha Park Road however, this name did not become official until Gloucester Township Council approved it on June 7, 1971. Previously, its official name was Metropolitan Avenue taken from the 1901 subdivision plan mentioned earlier.

Hiawatha Park Road was truncated to make way for the construction of the Convent Glen neighbourhood and the twinning of the Queensway (Highway 174) eastward through Orléans in the 1970s. It no longer connected to St. Joseph Boulevard. The portions of the Hiawatha Park subdivision that were cancelled in 1943 later became

part of Convent Glen. The Convent Glen Park, 'Hiawatha Park', and 'Besserer Place', an independent and assisted living senior apartment facility and part of Bruyere Village on the former Villa St. Louis site, honours the history of the area.

The plane crash at the Villa St. Louis that killed 15 people on May 15, 1956, took place immediately east of Hiawatha Park on the opposite side of Hiawatha Park Road.



The final end of the Hiawatha Hotel on January 5, 1961

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Membership Form—Gloucester Historical Society/Société historique de Gloucester (Membership year runs from April 1 to March 31.)

Please note that we added a new category of long term (10 year) membership and discontinuing life memberships. Current life members will continue to be honoured. Details are below.

Annual Membership/ - \$20.00 for one year..... 10 year Membership \$150.00

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Donations are always welcome. We are a registered charitable organization and provide tax receipts.

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