

The Ship That Blew Up City Of Halifax In 1917

In Less Than Thirty Seconds Death Claimed Over Fifteen Hundred People—Eight Thousand Were Injured

(By MAY C. O'REGAN)

The 6th of last month was the anniversary of the world's greatest munition explosion.

On that day seventeen years ago, in less than thirty seconds, death claimed or set its fatal seal on more than fifteen hundred people, eight thousand were injured, and property valued at four million pounds was destroyed at Halifax, Nova Scotia.

An entire section of the city was reduced to debris, and within a radius of two miles the stricken and torn landscape resembled the wartorn sectors of France and Belgium, where for three years the great guns of war had found their range.

It was war-time regime which ruled that all east-bound freight must call at Halifax for convoys and which brought the French munition ship Mont Blanc into the harbour that morning.

The Fatal Cargo

In Bedford Basin, somewhat to the north of Halifax Harbour and approachable by sea only through the Narrows, a natural gateway formed by the jutting shores of the city and Dartmouth town, freighters and transports lay at anchor awaiting the order to slip quietly down to the harbour mouth some dark night, where would be found waiting the convoys which would guard them through the submarine-infested European waters.

On the morning of December 6, 1917, there was one ship in Bedford Basin which did not need a convoy. A Belgian relief ship, the Imo, freighted with food and clothing and bound for Antwerp made ready to slip her mooring shortly after eight o'clock.

On her sides in great letters "Belgian Relief" was painted. By special arrangements with the Germans a relief ship passed unmolested through the submarine area.

Benzol Cargo

At the same time the squat grey Frenchman, the Mont Blanc, which had been lying at the harbour entrance at night, began her slow and careful progress towards the basin.

She was loaded to the deck with picric acid, wet and dry, and with trinitro-toluol—the deadly T.N.T.

On her deck she carried a cargo of benzol, put aboard at the last minute just before she sailed from Sheepshead Bay, New York. Both the Mont Blanc and the Imo carried Halifax pilots.

All along the Halifax waterfront shipping was brisk, practically every wharf was occupied and in the stream other craft lay at anchor awaiting their turn at a berth.

It was a glorious day of brilliant sunshine, with a touch of frost in the air, and on the streets a powdering of snow hinted at approaching winter.

The Imo cleared the Narrows, and sailed along the Dartmouth shore.

The Mont Blanc passing the lower section of the city, was quickly nearing her just before Richmond, the northern section of Halifax.

THE DAILY MAIL

Is on sale at the following places of business in the city—

UP-TOWN:
W. G. Quinn, 147 Westmorland St.
F. Denahoe, Smythe, & Charlotte Sts.
Geo. A. Farris, 332 York Street.
W. A. Erb, grocer, York St.
Alonso Staples, York Street.
S. Keetch, grocer, Charlotte-York Sts.
J. E. Saunders, 199 Northumberland Street.

DOWN-TOWN:
Crowley's Cigar Store, Queen St.
Royal Cigar Store, Queen street.
Hawthorne's Cigar Store, Queen St.
A. E. Eardley, Grocer, St. John and Brunswick Streets.
H. C. Jewett, cor. Charlotte & Regent.
VanWart Grocery, Cor. Charlotte and St. John Streets.
C. C. Wood, Grocer, University Ave.
O'Neill's Bakery, Regent Street.
John F. Timmins, Grocery, King St.
Devon, N. B.

Claude J. MacDonald, South Devon.
J. R. Monteith, North Devon.
J. K. Morrison, North Devon.
and from the carrier boys in the city and in Devon and Marysville.

If you have any trouble in the delivery of your paper, please complain to us. Ring Phone 67 and we will have your paper at your door at ONCE!

The two ships came into collision, the Imo striking the metal ship thirteen feet abaft the bow and penetrating the side.

Drifting Helplessly

The damage to the Imo was not serious, but the result of the collision was terrific. Either a spark generated from friction fired the benzol, or the shock broke the containers and the seeping liquor flowed to the galley, which was on deck, and there ignited.

Fire broke out within a few seconds, and, carried by the streaming benzol, was soon racing along the deck, wrapped long, curling tongues of red and gold and crimson about the superstructure, snapping up the rigging and masts.

The Imo, out of control, drifted helplessly about the harbour.

In Richmond men, women, and children poured out from homes, business places and shops to witness the thrilling spectacle of a blazing ship.

Witnesses saw a small boat filled with men lowered from the side of the Mont Blanc. It was rowed frantically towards the Dartmouth shore.

Then through the flames another man was seen on the deck, wildly waving his arms and calling. The little boat put back the survivor was taken off and the ship's boat resumed its journey towards Dartmouth. The crew of the Mont Blanc had left their ship and all escaped with their lives.

Terrific Heat

At the mercy of the tide the blazing ship drifted closer and closer to the wharves and was getting dangerously near the Naval Dockyard, the only refitting station on the North Atlantic coast available to Allied ships at that time.

Two boatloads of men, sailors from H.M.S. Highflyer, put off from the dockyard with orders to try to get a line aboard the ship and tow her to a position where she would not be a menace to shipping.

The collision occurred a few minutes before nine o'clock. Every instant the flames spread with increasing ferocity, and the heat became terrific. At six minutes past nine the tortured sides of the metal ship could no longer withstand the strain.

With a roar which was heard for many miles the Mont Blanc blew up, her metal hull torn into thousands of pieces and hurled through the air to scatter over the town and city.

The earth rocked and the seaboard was torn into giant waves which rose to a great height and flooded the wharves and lower streets; houses and factories fell like houses of cards, ships buckled and sank, buildings collapsed.

Within a radius of two miles not a building remained intact, sides were torn out, roofs ripped off, men and women were flung bodily into the maws of death.

160-Mile Shock

Scarcely a pane of glass in buildings within four miles of the explosion remained unbroken, damage was done to buildings five miles away, and in the north-end streets the dead and dying lay.

Death had come in every conceivable form to men, women and children, who were instantly killed, and within the fallen buildings many were trapped, in some cases to die a terrible death in the flames which followed the overturning of stoves and furnaces.

In Truro, sixty miles distance, the church and school bells tinkled, and the shock was felt on the shores of Newfoundland, 160 miles away. There were actually two shocks one carried by the air, the second by the water.

The Highflyer crews were never seen again, men on shipboard and on the wharf were swept into the boiling sea by the great tidal wave which rose as the vessel exploded, the Imo was driven high on the Dartmouth shore, all her crew and her pilot being killed.

He Saved a Train

There was no fire float in Halifax and when the Mont Blanc approached the wharves a business men sent in

a call for the fire apparatus.

The motor engine Patricia responded with six men. It was traveling northward at the time of the explosion, and the heavy apparatus was twisted to a mass of broken metal. Only one of the crew escaped with his life.

In his little office a telegraph operator was dead across his keys; the last message he sent out delayed an inbound train at a suburban station.

The Halifax terminal of the railroad was situated near the Narrows. The heavy roof of the building collapsed entombing some scores of employees and waiting passengers. But that last message saved a train.

The Acadia sugar refinery, valued at more than one million pounds, was operating part time, and the eleven men on duty were killed and the plant utterly demolished.

Hurled 2½ Miles

Hillis' foundry and factory, built of concrete, was wiped out. Fifty-two men perished in its ruins. Two escaped.

Hundreds of children in the schools were killed or injured. About one hundred and thirty persons were blinded.

Part of the anchor of the Mont Blanc was hurled two and a half miles away and embedded in the earth on the shores of the Northwest Arm. It weighed 1,256 pounds. One of the guns was carried in the opposite direction and was found about a mile and a quarter away near Albros Lake.

Five churches, a cotton factory, three schools, a graving dock, sugar refinery, two breweries, and an engineering plant was wiped out. The naval and military hospital was shattered and property damage to the dockyard was appalling.

Men shut their ears to the pitiful cries of those entombed in burning buildings and forced themselves on towards their own homes, conscious that their families might be trapped in the same manner.

False Report

Then the report was sent out that a second explosion was imminent, that fire was approaching the munition dump. Every one was ordered to leave their houses.

From all parts of the city men and women flocked to the open spaces on citadel hill and the commons, or made their ways from the centre of Dartmouth to the country roads.

Had it not been for this second and unnecessary warning many more lives might have been saved.

Gradually the fear of the second catastrophe died down, and the rescue work went on. It continued all day and throughout the following days.

All through the afternoon and night of December 6 weary men and women made the pilgrimage to morgue and hospital, shelter and relief bases seeking missing members of their families.

Temporary hospitals had been opened to care for the injured, for there were not enough beds in the hospitals to accommodate those who were hurt.

Nurses and doctors, their ranks depleted by the demands of war, worked frantically, handicapped by the lack of sufficient antiseptics to cope with such a disaster.

On the night of December 6 a furious blizzard came on, and for days the snowstorms continued, hampering recovery of the dead, adding to the misery of the homeless.

Somehow in a surprisingly short time Halifax revived, system and order was restored.

For months the remains of Richmond smouldered sullenly. In April 1918 the last body was brought out from Richmond, and in the early spring the work of reconstruction was under way.

Young Baritone Wins Stardom

(Continued from page seven)
Farrell stands an inch over six feet and weighs 165. He is an excellent swimmer and golfer but says that the theatre is his hobby.

Columbia talent-seekers, including Kate Smith, believe he is one of the outstanding radio "finds" of the year.

A FLATTERING MIRROR

There is such a difference in mirrors, some so flattering and others that seem to bring out all our bad points. If you have two such in your home, always look in the flattering one before going out. It will give you confidence and make you feel happy and well dressed. Avoid that one that puts on 10 or 15 pounds to the stylish stout figure.

29 YEARS AGO TODAY

(FROM THE FILES OF THE DAILY HERALD)
Civic Politics

People are beginning to take an interest in the approaching elections and it looks at this stage as if there would be spirited contests in several of the wards. The names of John S. Scott, Michael Ryan, M. Tennant and W. S. Hooper are being mentioned as prospective candidates for Wellington ward, and it is believed that at least one and perhaps two of these gentlemen will enter the field. Ex-alderman Joseph Walker announces that he will be a candidate in St. Anne's Ward. So far as is known the member of the present council will seek re-election.

Personal Mention

Mrs. John Russel of Newcastle is here, the guest of her mother, Mrs. W. W. McLellan, York street, and will remain several weeks.

Hon. F. J. Sweeney, surveyor general, leaves this evening for Boston to attend the meeting of the North American Fish & Game Association.

WHAT ADVERTISERS WANT TO KNOW ABOUT CANADIAN PUBLICATIONS CAN BE FOUND IN THE DESBARATS DIRECTORY OF CANADA'S PUBLICATIONS—1935 EDITION JUST OUT.

This book of 372 pages is a useful addition not only to the advertiser's library, but to that of any business man.

It not only gives information concerning circulations of Canadian publications, their date of issue, size, publishers, rates for advertising, etc., but the work is also a very complete gazetteer of Canada and gives statistical information concerning places where newspapers are issued which it is difficult to find elsewhere. The populations quoted are those of the 1931 census and thus are the latest authentic figures available.

We understand that the Desbarats Advertising Agency Ltd., 1184 St. Catherine Street West, Montreal, send their book for \$1.00 to the advertising manager of any firm who applies for it on his firm's stationery, mentioning his official capacity. The published price is \$5.00.

ONE WOMAN TO ANOTHER

A married woman's Secret on ENDING PAIN AND DELAY NOW

Don't be alarmed or nervous when nature fails. Get a married woman's dependable secret about regaining happiness and relief from distress. Only a woman knows how another woman can suffer at times, so read every word of this message from another woman who wants to help women everywhere. We positively guarantee our successful Royal-Vibor No. 1, Compound. ACTS QUICKER THAN JUST ORDINARY PILLS OR TABLETS. Compounded of time tested vegetable ingredients used by physicians and nurses for over a quarter of a century because of reputed power to relieve pain and aid in restoring a normal flow. Type often favored for conditions where ordinary regulators might fail. Does not contain any narcotics, habit forming or harsh mineral drugs, only pure laboratory tested vegetable extracts used for their effectiveness in functional menstrual disturbances. Pleasantly relieves many of the most stubborn unnatural delays quickly, often in 3 to 5 days without pain or inconvenience. Grateful testimonials like these from women from coast to coast. Mrs. F.: "I was delayed for nine weeks. Had the natural flow in 3 days." Mrs. N.: "I was about 6 weeks past, in 5 days I was O.K. It is wonderful, being odorless, tasteless and pleasant to take." Mrs. S.: "Delayed 3 weeks. Menses started on 4th day. Simple as ABC." Mrs. S.: "I was two months overtime—started menstruating on 5th day. I don't know how to thank you." Many others. Why experiment or suffer unnecessarily when you can get this proven remedy by return mail? Order now. Use airmails. Fast service. Regular package \$3.00. Special Royal-Vibor No. 2 Formula, for obstinate conditions \$5.00. To insure absolute freshness, Royal Vibor is not sold in drug stores. State age when ordering. To insure package add 25c. extra. Sold only by the Royal Laboratory, 768 Royal Bldgs., Box 140 Windsor, Ont. (SUGGESTION: Clip this ad out and put it away. It may come in very handy some day. Or show it to some needy friend—one good turn deserves another).

WHEN THE OCCASION REQUIRES THE PURCHASE OF A FUNERAL

Those who investigate will find our prices lowest. Prompt and efficient service. Complete stock and equipment. Complete funeral including motor hearse and services \$50, \$75, \$100 and upward. No extra charge for delivering to rural districts.

H. R. ADAMS
459-461 KING STREET
(Next Willmot Church)

HOME MERCHANTS

Home owned stores that The Daily Mail would like to see patronized.

AMUSEMENTS:

Gaiety Theatre.
Capitol Theatre.
Capital Billiard Parlor.

AUTOMOBILES:

Phillips & Pringle.
J. Clark & Son.
Capital Garage.

BAKERS:

Royal Bakery.

DRUGGISTS:

Kenneth Staples.

DRY GOODS:

R. L. Black.
Joseph Kileel.
J. J. Weddall & Son.

ELECTRICAL WORK:

Clarence Mills.
Harry C. Moore.

FARM MACHINERY:

J. Clark & Son.

GROCERS:

Harold Yerxa, York Street.
A. E. Eardley.

HABERDASHERS:

J. H. Fleming.

HARDWARE:

J. S. Neill & Sons, Ltd.
E. M. Young.

HOUSE FURNISHINGS:

Cowell & Jennings, Ltd.

HARNESS MAKERS:

H. A. Burt.

HOTELS:

Waverly.
Queen.

INSURANCE:

H. H. Blair.

INVESTMENTS:

Consolidated Investments, Ltd.

JEWELLERS:

Shute & Co.
Mavor Bros.

LADIES' WEAR:

Mrs. J. E. Johnston.

MEAT STORES:

W. C. Lee.
York Meat Market.

MEN'S GOODS & SHOES:

Joseph Kileel.

PLUMBING:

Arthur F. Betts.

PHOTOGRAPHS:

Harvey Studio.

RADIO SERVICE:

J. Brown Maxwell, Jr.

RESTAURANTS:

Lannan's.

STATIONERY & BOOKS:

C. W. Hall.
McMurray Book & Stationery Co. Ltd.

TAILORS:

T. M. Boyd.
F. G. Foster.
Karl Walker.

UNDERTAKERS:

Shaw & Terry.
H. R. Adams

WOODWORK:

J. C. Risteen Co., Ltd.

How about putting down New Hardwood Flooring

either the old-fashioned thick floor or thin kind on top of your old floors. This is a good way to prepare for spring housecleaning. We have a stock on hand to suit your requirements. Write or call.

J. C. Risteen Co., Ltd.

PROFESSIONAL

DR. J. C. McMULLEN Dentist X - RAY

Hours: 9 a.m.-1 p.m. 2 p.m.-5.30 p.m.
Phone 504 Loyalist Building

G. I. NUGENT, M. D.

333 BRUNSWICK STREET
Phone 808.
FREDERICTON, N. B.

Hanson, Dougherty and West

BARRISTERS, SOLICITORS, Etc.
Carleton Chambers,
61 Carleton St. : Fredericton

DR. G. R. LISTER

: Dentist :
QUEEN STREET : Below Regent
Phone 531-11
Burchill-Wilkinson Building

Joe Kileel's

New Stock of Men's
Suits and
Ladies' and Gent's Fall
Footwear

Come In and Get Fitted for Fall

289 KING STREET
Phone 718

ELECTRIC MOTOR and GENERATOR REPAIRS

OF ALL CLASSES

Harry C. Moore, E.E.
360 KING STREET

LANNAN'S Restaurant ON SATURDAY

TRY OUR BAKED BEANS AND
STEAMED BROWN BREAD

Beans, per quart 25c
Steamed Brown Bread, per loaf .. 15c
74 CARLETON ST. 'Phone 1133

APPLES!

WE HAVE SOME NICE COOKING APPLES AT 35c PER PECK
Also McIntosh and Bethel for Eating, from 35c per peck up

GRAPES, GRAPEFRUIT, ORANGES, BANANAS, LEMONS

A. E. EARDLEY Phone 618 and Be Satisfied.
Home-owned Store
Corner Brunswick and St. John Streets

SPECIAL

FRESH HERRING—4 lbs. for 25c
Fresh Smelts—2 lbs. for 35c. Salt Herring—40c per dozen

HAROLD YERXA
PHONE 305 89 YORK STREET

H INSURANCE HOWARD H. BLAIR

RELIABLE BRITISH and CANADIAN
COMPANIES

PHONES—Office 291-21.
Residence 345-11

—You Can Rest Assured—