

The Halifax Explosion

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One of the worst man-made explosions occurred on 6 December 1917 at 9:06 am in the town of Halifax, Nova Scotia. Two thousand people were killed and 9,000 were injured. About three hundred and twenty-five acres were destroyed. What caused this devastation you may ask?

World War I was ongoing in Europe, and Halifax was used as a jump off port for troops, supplies and munitions. It was a busy port with lots of people. That morning, a Belgian ship Imo was leaving the harbour, while the French munitions ship Mont Blanc was arriving. The Mont Blanc was filled with TNT, gun cotton, benzol and other flammable substances, enough combustibles to blow up a city.

As a result of traffic in the channel, the Imo was forced to the wrong side of the channel. The two ships signaled each other, but the instructions misunderstood the information. As a result, the two ships collided.

The crew of the Mont Blanc knew they were carrying explosives supplies. They immediately lowered their lifeboats and headed in the opposite direction of Halifax. The damaged ship started to burn from sparks lit during the impact. The ship floated towards Halifax while most of the citizens watched in horror as it came towards them.

When it exploded, much of the area was leveled. Then, the fire started and burned a great deal of the city. Portions of the ship were found miles from the harbor.

Every year on December 6 at 9am, the Memorial Bells are rung in remembrance.