

Ships of the Halifax Explosion

Halifax Harbour was crowded with wartime shipping on December 6, 1917. Vessels were loading cargo, awaiting convoys, or under repair. The following lists include the major vessels involved or affected in the explosion. Selected vessels have links to images and more information.

The Two Ships in the Fatal Collision

Mont Blanc

Flag: France

Type: General Cargo, Munitions

Location: At Narrows inbound to Bedford Basin

Fate: Obliterated by blast, crew escaped

Imo

Flag: Norway

Type: General Cargo, charter for Belgian Relief

Location: At Narrows outbound from Bedford Basin

Fate: Severely damaged, driven aground, bridge & deck crew killed

Other Ships Affected by the Explosion

HMCS Acadia

Flag: Canada

Type: Auxiliary Patrol Ship acting as Bedford Basin Guard ship

Location: East side, Bedford Basin entrance

Fate: Minor damage. (Now part of the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic & the last surviving vessel from the explosion).

Acadian

Flag: Canada

Type: General Cargo Inbound

Location: 15 miles from Halifax

Fate: Undamaged, felt concussion, saw blast cloud

Baleine (RCN tug)

Flag: Canada

Type: Minesweeping Trawler

Location: Sweeping Harbour approaches for mines

Fate: Felt explosion, undamaged, continued sweeps

Booton

Flag: Canada

Type: Tug

Location: unknown

Fate: Towed Old Colony to No. 4 Dockyard Pier for emergency hospital duty

CC 1 & CC 2

Flag: Canada

Type: Submarines

Location: At Dockyard Pier 1 under refit

Fate: Broke moorings, minor injuries

CD-73 (Commanded by Herbert Whitehead)

Flag: Canada

Type: Coastal Drifter acting as Duty Boat

Location: Heading to HMCS *Niobe* for Supplies

Fate: Badly damaged, crew injured

Calonne

Flag: Britain

Type: General Cargo

Location: Loading horses at Pier 9

Fate: Severely damaged, hove over, 36 crew killed

HMCS *Canada*

Flag: Canada

Type: Auxiliary Patrol Ship

Location: Dockyard Anchorage by Jetty 2

Fate: Minor damage, 1 serious injury, crew sent ashore to assist

HMCS *Cartier*

Flag: Canada

Type: Auxiliary Patrol Ship

Location: At Dockyard Jetty 3 following coaling

Fate: Minor damage

HMS Changuinola

Flag: Britain
Type: Armed Merchant Cruiser (Escort Ship)
Location: At Dockyard anchorage
Fate: Minor Damage. Crew assists in rescue

Clara

Flag: United States
Type: General Cargo "Tramp Steamer"
Location: Arrived in Bedford Basin from Narrows
Fate: unknown
Note: Proceeded Mont Blanc through Narrows, complicating Imo and Mont Blanc manoeuvres

Curacas

Flag: Britain
Type: General Cargo
Location: Loading horses at Pier 8
Fate: Blown across harbour, sank at Tufts Cove, 48 crew killed. Refloated in 1918

Dartmouth

Flag: Canada
Type: Harbour Ferry
Location: somewhere between Halifax and Dartmouth
Fate: Damaged but continued running

Douglas H. Thomas

Flag: Canada
Type: Tug
Location: At Dry Dock wharf
Fate: Severe damage, 3 deaths. Towed to safety in Dartmouth

F.W. Roebling

Flag: Canada
Type: Schooner
Location: unknown
Fate: Severe damage, 1 death

HMCS Grilse

Flag: Canada

Type: Torpedo Boat Destroyer (Armed Yacht)

Location: Dockyard Jetty 2 on stand by for Harbour Defence

Fate: Minor damage and injuries

CGS Gulnare

Flag: Canada

Type: Bedford Basin Guard Vessel, anchored off Africville

Location: West Side Bedford Basin entrance

Fate: Minimal damage

Halifax (II)

Flag: Canada

Type: Harbour Ferry

Location: Mid Harbour approaching Halifax

Fate: Serious damage but continued running. Many minor glass injuries

HMS Highflyer

Flag: Britain

Type: Light Cruiser

Location: At Dockyard Anchorage

Fate: Damaged, 8 killed on whaler, 3 killed onboard, 50 injuries, crew assists with rescue

Hilford

Flag: Canada

Type: Tug, RN Charter, Port Convoy Office (Captain James Anderson Murray)

Location: In harbour - witnessed collision.

Fate: Severe damage, blown out of water onto Pier 9. 3 killed, 2 survivors

Hovland

Flag: Norway

Type: General Cargo

Location: In Dry Dock for repairs

Fate: Upper works seriously damaged, five crew members killed

J.A. McKee

Flag: Canada
Type: Coal Carrier
Location: At Dry Dock Wharf for repairs
Fate: Heavily damaged, no deaths

HMS Knight Templar

Flag: Britain
Type: Commissioned Escort Ship
Location: Alongside at Dockyard
Fate: Blown adrift by explosion. Two injuries. Sends rescue party and doctor ashore to assist.

HMCS Lady Evelyn

Flag: Canada
Type: Auxiliary Patrol Ship
Location: On Harbour Approaches patrol
Fate: Felt explosion, undamaged, went to action stations to face possible attack

Lola R.

Flag: Canada
Type: Schooner
Location: From Herring Cove to inner harbour
Fate: "Blown to pieces"

Maggie

Flag: Canada
Type: Tug, RN Charter, Port Convoy Office
Location: Downtown Halifax piers
Fate: Carried relief parties & surgeons ashore from RN ships. Commanded by Rear-Admiral Bertram Chambers.

HMCS Margaret

Flag: Canada
Type: Auxiliary Patrol Ship
Location: At Dockyard Jetty 2
Fate: Broke moorings, minor damage, two crew members killed ashore

Middleham Castle

Flag: Britain

Type: General Cargo

Location: Preparing to leave Dry Dock wharf for sea

Fate: Heavily damaged, lost funnel. Third Officer Charles John Mayers lifted up from the deck by the blast and thrown to top of Needham Hill a half-mile away.

USS Morrill

Flag: United States

Type: US Coast Guard patrol vessel

Location: At anchor, Dartmouth Cove awaiting supplies

Fate: Damaged. Debris went right through deck.

Musquash

Flag: Canada

Type: RCN Minesweeping Trawler

Location: At Dry Dock Wharf

Fate: Set afire and adrift

Nereid

Flag: Canada

Type: RCN Armed Tug (Examination Service)

Location: At anchor off Dockyard Pier 4, near Niobe

Fate: Moderate damage

HMCS Niobe

Flag: Canada

Type: Former cruiser, relegated to depot ship

Location: Hospital Wharf, north end of Dockyard

Fate: Serious Damage. Several crew killed. Surviving crew assisted ashore. Entire volunteer steam pinnace crew killed in failed attempt to pull *Mont Blanc*'s aft section away from Pier 6.

USS Old Colony

Flag: United States

Type: Ex passenger ship bound for Britain for naval conversion

Location: At dry dock wharf awaiting boiler repair

Fate: Manned as temporary hospital by naval surgeons

PV-V (RCN)

Flag: Canada

Type: Minesweeping trawler

Location: Dockyard Jetty 3 for refit

Fate: Moderate damage

PV-VII (RCN)

Flag: Canada

Type: General Cargo, Munitions

Location: At Narrows inbound to Bedford Basin

Fate: Obliterated by blast, crew escaped

Picton

Flag: Britain

Type: General Cargo, including munitions

Location: At Sugar Refinery Wharf

Fate: Badly damaged & set ablaze by explosion. Cut loose by Captain James Harrison.

Ragus

Flag: Canada

Type: Sugar Refinery Tug

Location: At sugar refinery wharf

Fate: Heavily damaged, most crew killed. Later refloated and put back into service

Sambro

Flag: Canada

Type: Shipyard Tug

Location: Graving Dock Wharf

Fate: Sunk. Raised in 1920s and renamed Erg

St. Bernard

Flag: Demerara, British Guiana

Type: Schooner

Location: Unloading Lumber, north side of Pier 6

Fate: Completely destroyed. Crew of 3 killed

Stella Maris

Flag: Canada

Type: Tug under RCN charter, former RN wooden gunboat

Location: 200 yards from At Pier 6 in midst of providing a 10 inch hawser to the crew of Niobe's steam pinnace.

Fate: Severely damaged, 19 crew killed, 5 survive. Later repaired.

USS Tacoma

Flag: United States (Commanded by Powers Symington)

Type: Third Class Cruiser

Location: 50 miles at sea off Halifax

Fate: Felt blast, came into port to assist with rescue and provide armed security. Stayed for eight days.

Togo

Flag: Canada

Type: Tug

Location: Naval Dockyard

Fate: Took wounded from rescue parties to USS Old Colony

USS Von Steuben

Flag: United States (Commanded by Stanford Elwood Moses)

Type: Armed Troop Transport

Location: At sea off Halifax

Fate: Felt blast, came into port to assist with rescue

W.H. Lee

Flag: Canada

Type: Naval Motor Boat

Location: At Dockyard Coaling Wharf

Fate: Fought fires on damaged vessels

Abbreviations:

HMCS - His Majesty's Canadian Ship (Canadian naval vessel)

HMS - His Majesty's Ship (British naval vessel)

USS - United States Ship (American naval vessel)

CGS - Canadian Government Ship

RCN - Royal Canadian Navy

RN - Royal Navy (British)