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

\textit{Mont Blanc}

Flag: France  
Type: General Cargo, Munitions  
Location: At Narrows inbound to Bedford Basin  
Fate: Obliterated by blast, crew escaped

\textit{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

\textit{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).

\textit{Acadian}

Flag: Canada  
Type: General Cargo Inbound  
Location: 15 miles from Halifax  
Fate: Undamaged, felt concussion, saw blast cloud

\textit{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)