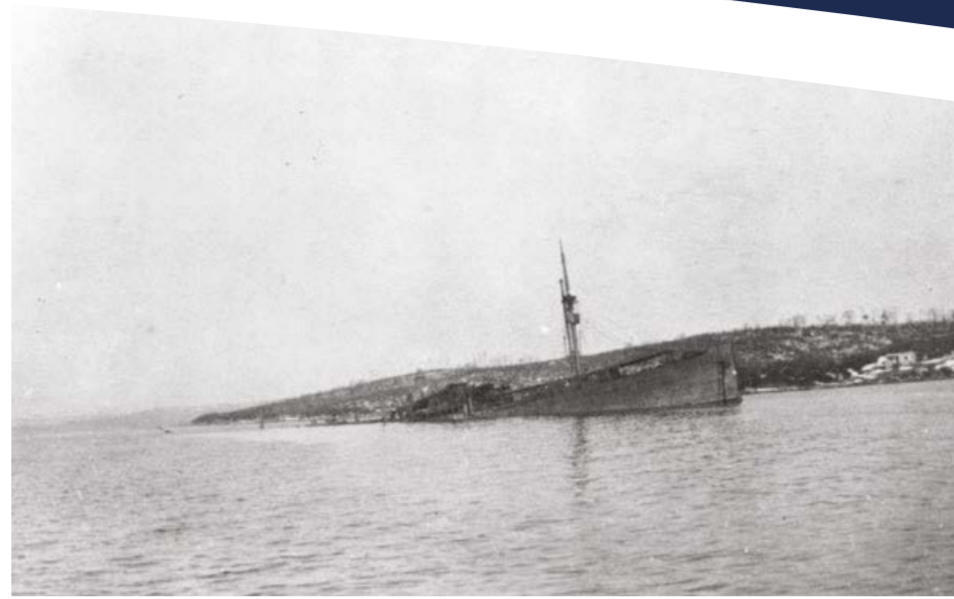


Halifax, Nova Scotia, Canada – 06 Dec 1917



On the morning of 6th December 1917 the SS Mont Blanc, a French cargo ship laden with high explosives, collided with the Norwegian vessel SS Imo in the Narrows, a strait connecting the upper Halifax Harbour to Bedford Basin.

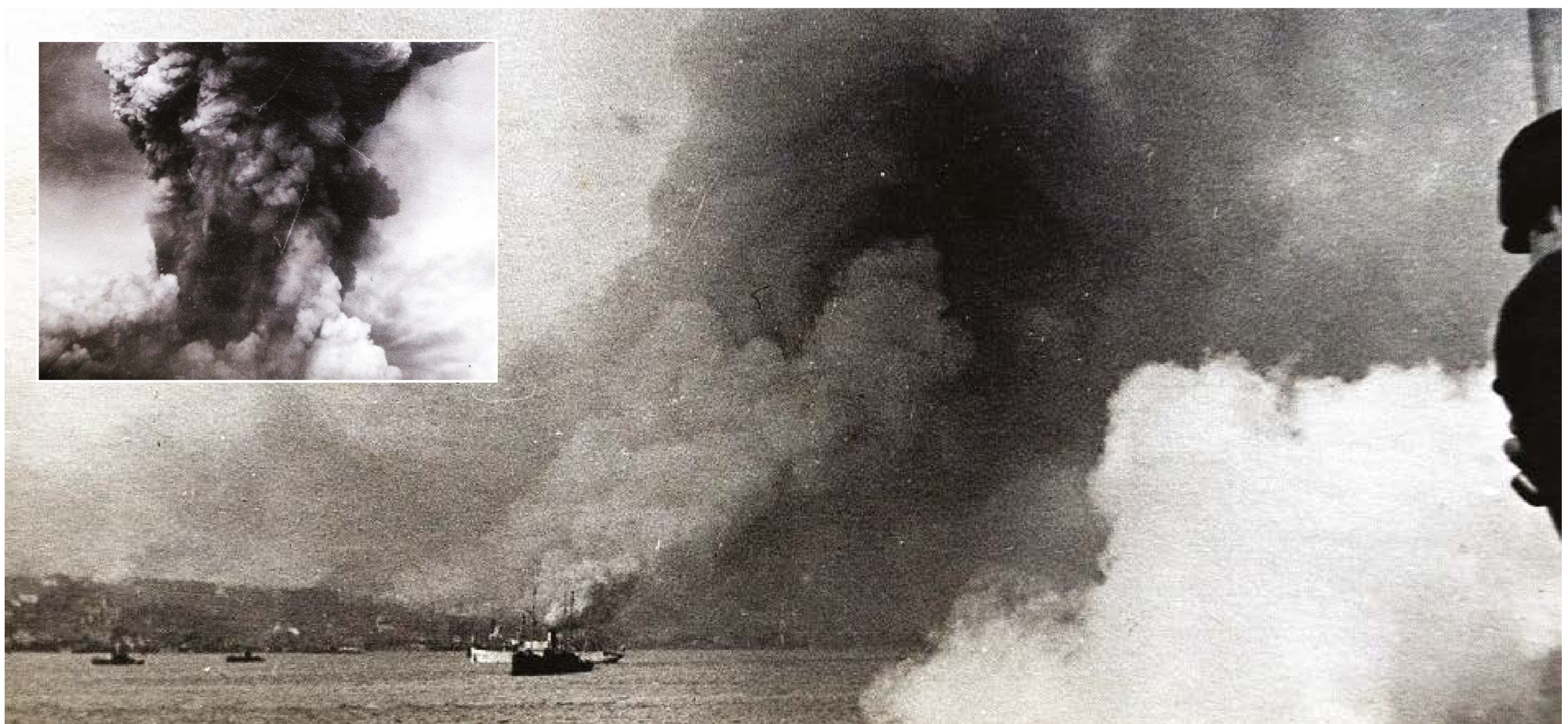
The SS Mont Blanc was carrying 2.3 million kg of explosives, the majority of which was picric acid, and 220,000 kg of fuel as deck cargo. The collision opened her hold and ignited the fuel carried on the deck. Blazing fuel spilled into her hold through the openings caused by the collision and ignited the high explosive cargo. Expecting the ship to explode the crew abandoned her to drift in the channel.

The SS Mont Blanc burned for several hours, during which she was boarded by a fire fighting party from a British warship in the harbour. Tug boats were sent to attempt to get her out of the channel. The ship eventually drifted against the piers alongside the channel and detonated in a blast which engulfed the major part of the city and harbour.

Approximately half the city was levelled and a number of nearby ships were completely demolished. The wave which resulted carried other ships ashore leaving them stranded inland far above high water. The noise of the explosion was heard over 300 km away.

Exact casualty figures are not known, but at least 1,800 people were killed and at least 8,000 people were injured.

This accident is believed to be the largest man-made explosion prior to the development of the atomic bomb. The energy released was estimated to be roughly equivalent to 2.9 million kg of TNT.



1800 Fatalities

8000 Injuries

C\$35 Million Damages (1917)