

# Towards Explosion 2017:

*Perspectives on the Centenary of the Halifax Explosion*



1917: the flattened remains in the district of Richmond following the Halifax Explosion



# Towards Explosion 2017

## *Halifax before the Explosion*

Halifax is a colonial port city that prospered during times of war in the 19th and early 20th centuries. Halifax served as the primary base for the British Royal Navy in North America. The port's protected coastal location and natural, deep water harbour allowed access of increasing ship sizes. By 1917, the population of Halifax was 60 000 to 65 000 people. The onset of World War I resulted in an abundance of activity in Halifax Harbour as the Royal Canadian Navy served with their British allies. Halifax played an integral role in North America's connection to the British Royal Navy during World War I. Convoys carrying soldiers and supplies were dispatched to Europe, while hospital ships arrived with wounded soldiers to be treated in Halifax Hospitals. The war resulted in major expansion and development to the city. The quantity of goods, including ammunitions, passing through the harbour increased rapidly.



1900: view North toward the narrows



1890: the grain elevator at the foot of Cornwallis Street, piers 2-4 visible beyond



# Towards Explosion 2017

*Halifax before the Explosion*



1899: HMS Canada, the first ship to enter the graving dock on the day it was opened. The graving dock is still operational today as part of the Irving Shipyard.



# Towards Explosion 2017

*Halifax before the Explosion*



1906: Mi'kmaq women selling bead work near Halifax for the September Provincial Exhibition



# Towards Explosion 2017

*Halifax before the Explosion*



stone survey marker (predating the Halifax Explosion)  
located near Turtle Grove



1790s: reproduction of a painting of Turtle Grove



1871: Mi'kmaq people at Tuft's Cove



# Towards Explosion 2017

*Halifax before the Explosion*



1910: looking Northeast from the grain elevator at the bottom of Cornwallis Street



# Towards Explosion 2017

*Halifax before the Explosion*

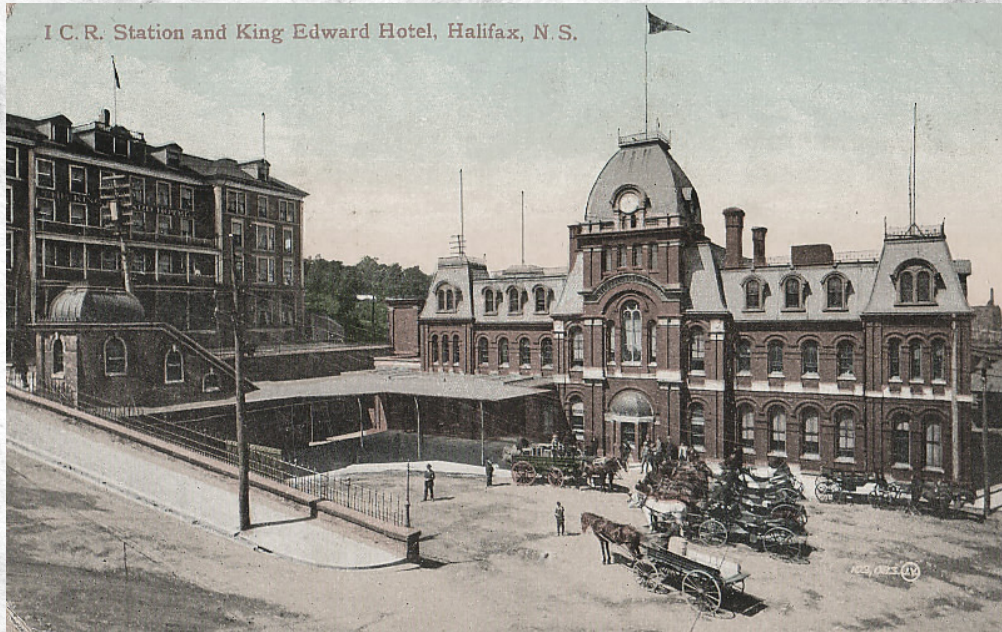


1910: view West from the grain elevator at the bottom of Cornwallis Street

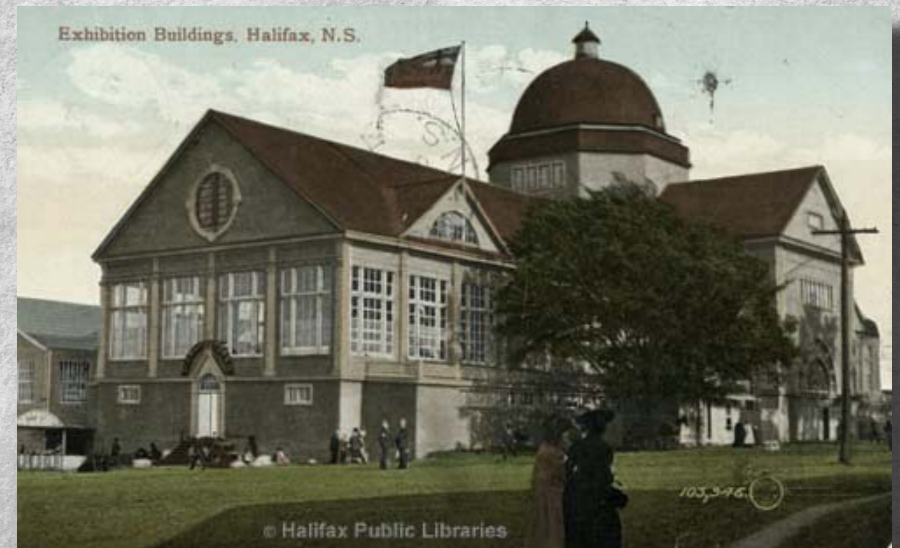


# Towards Explosion 2017

*Halifax before the Explosion*



1912: postcard of the Intercolonial Railway Station and King Edward Hotel at the foot of North St. in Halifax (location of present-day approach to MacDonald Bridge)

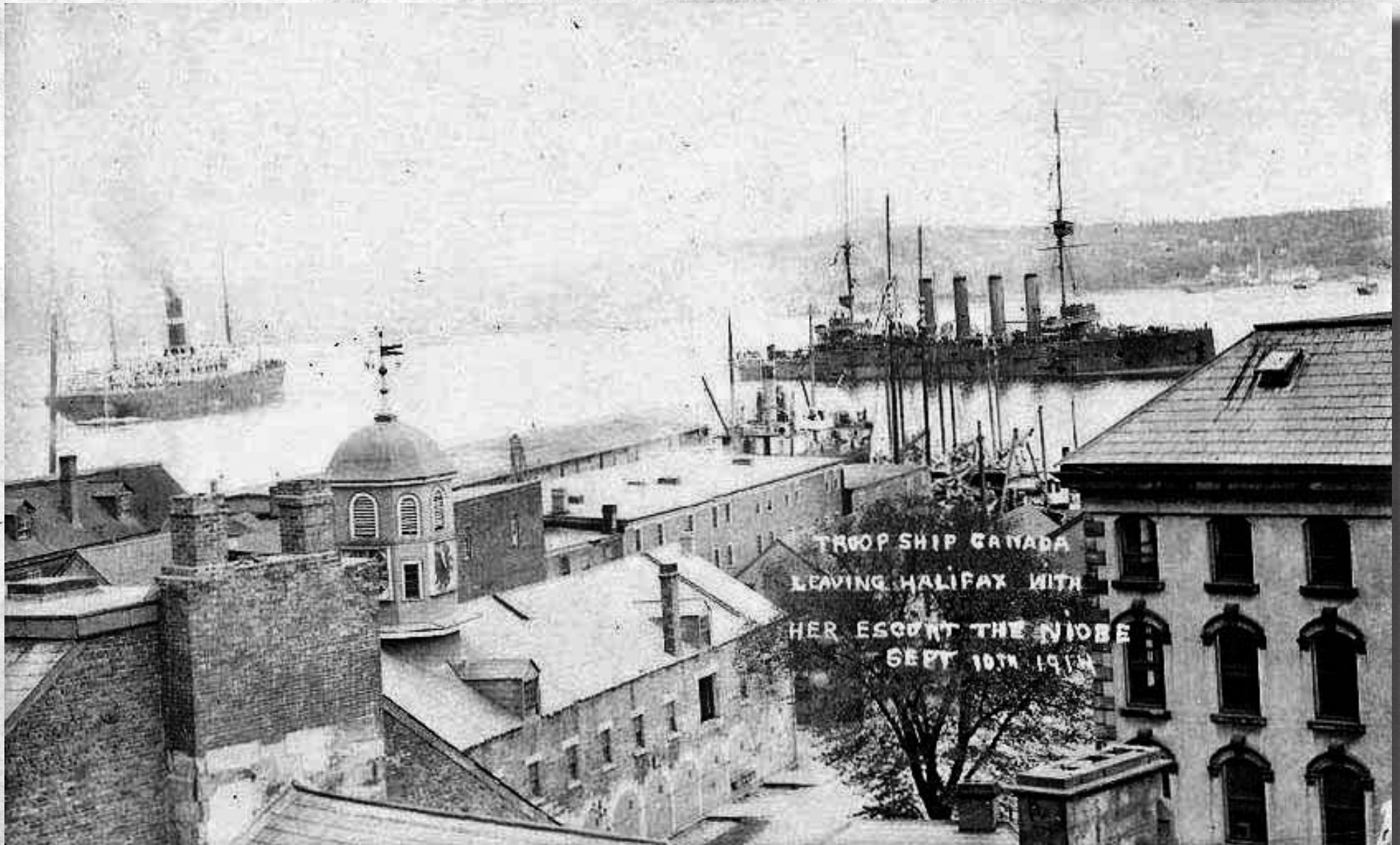


1913: postcard of the Exhibition Building located near Windsor and Almon St. in Halifax



# Towards Explosion 2017

*Halifax before the Explosion*

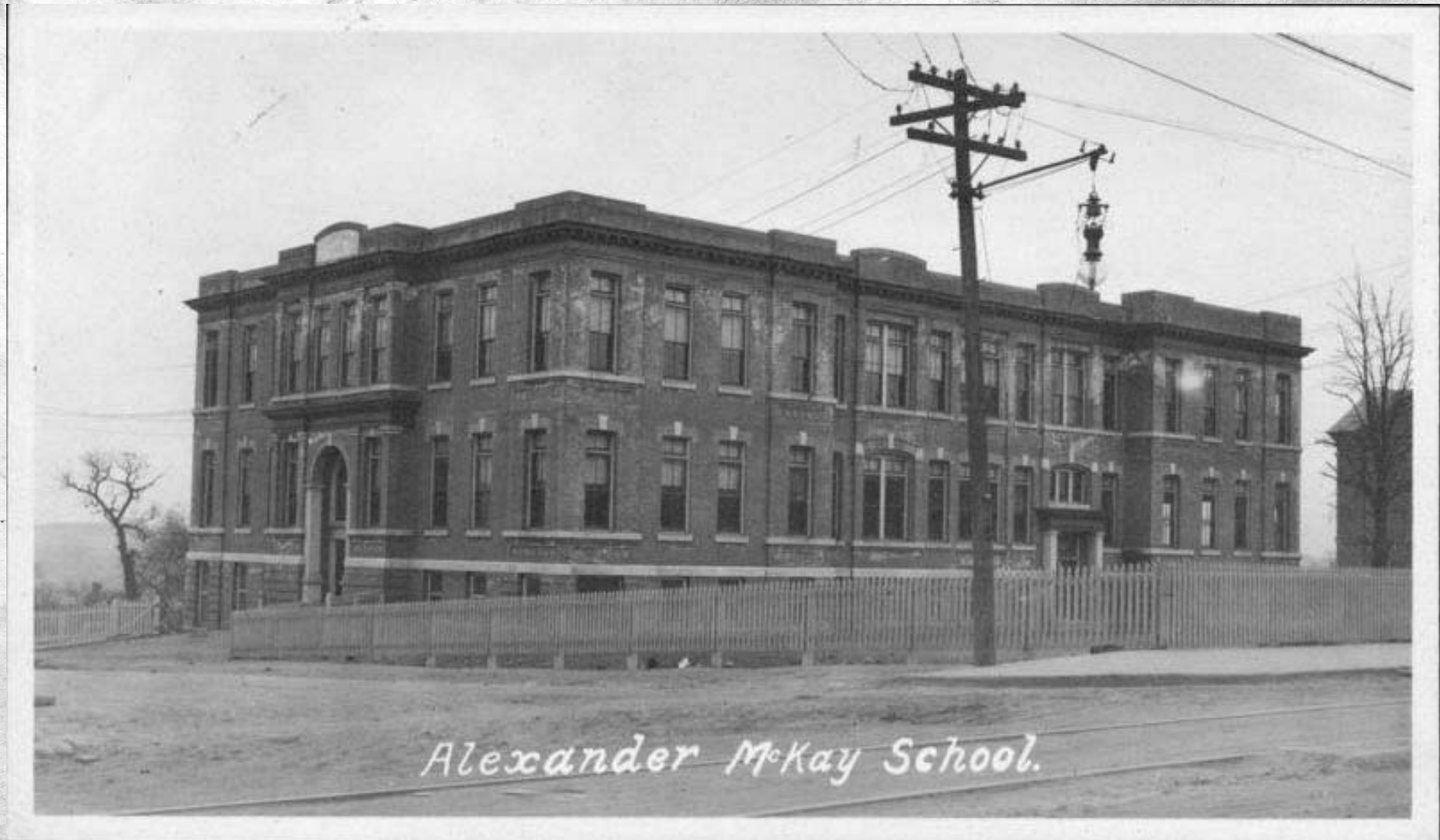


1914: a troop ship leaving Halifax with her escort Niobe



# Towards Explosion 2017

*Halifax before the Explosion*



1916: St. Joseph's Alexander McKay School on Russell St. in North End Halifax



# Towards Explosion 2017

## *The Halifax Explosion and the Aftermath*

During World War I, the rate of shipping traffic in Halifax Harbour was extremely high. Ships carrying soldiers, supplies, and ammunitions were continuously arriving and departing from port. In early December 1917, the Norwegian ship SS Imo was in port to refuel before departing for New York to obtain relief supplies for Belgium. A French cargo ship, SS Mont-Blanc was also in port, preparing to depart for Europe with a supply of heavy explosives. On the Morning of December 6, 1917, the two ships crossed paths in the narrows of Halifax Harbour. A series of poor decisions in navigation and seamanship resulted in the collision of the two ships in this compressed section of the harbour. A fire developed subsequent to the collision and immediately posed a grave threat given the nature of SS Mont-Blanc's cargo. There was no time to act and a disaster was immanent. The resulting explosion, the greatest blast prior to the atomic bomb, would change the history of Halifax.



1917: The Halifax Herald Front Page



1917: The Halifax Herald Front Page



1917: SS Imo aground in Dartmouth following the explosion



# Towards Explosion 2017

*The Halifax Explosion and the Aftermath*



1917: SS Imo aground in Dartmouth



# Towards Explosion 2017

*Halifax before the Explosion*



1917: Tuft's Cove School (located on Windmill Rd. near Albro Lake Rd.) after the explosion



Indian School at Tufts Cove. The principal was killed on his way to school. The pupils lost their lives in the Indian settlement.

1917: the school for Mi'kmaq children at Turtle grove (possibly located near Nivens Street) after the explosion

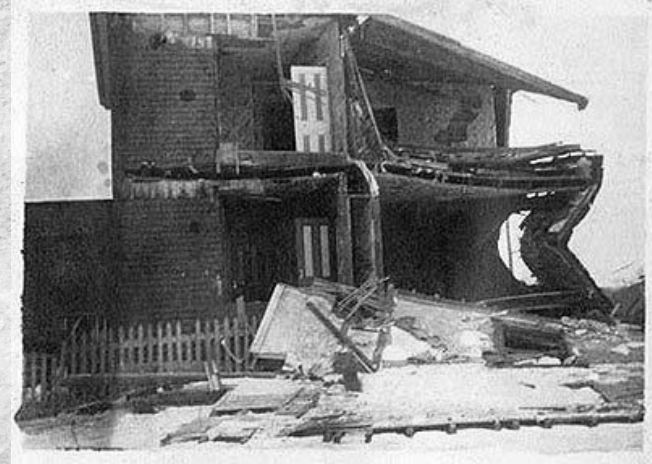


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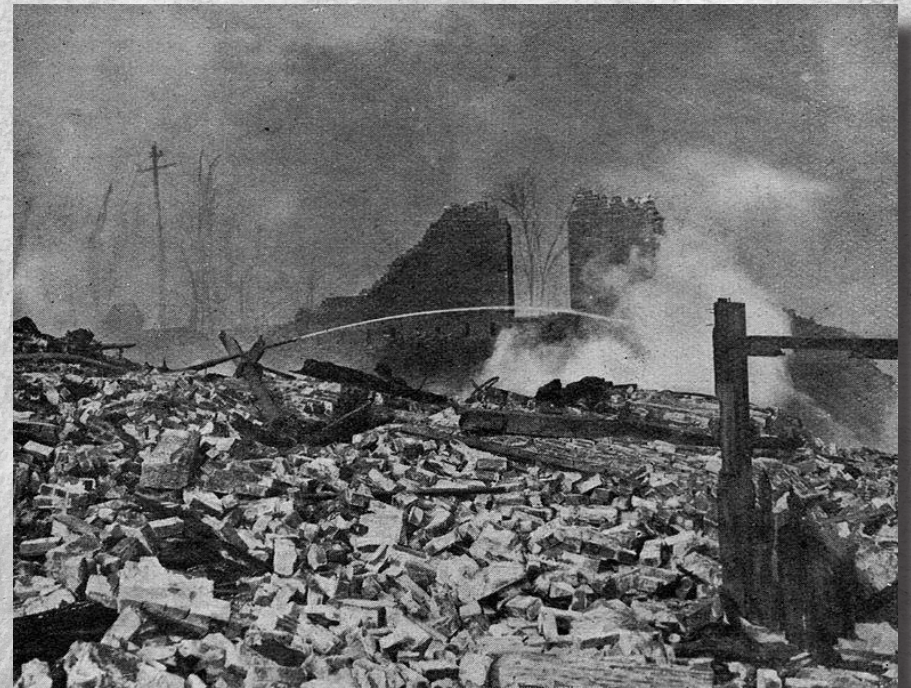
*The Halifax Explosion and the Aftermath*



1917: St Joseph's Convent, corner of Gottingen and Kaye st.



1917: wreckage of a house in Dartmouth

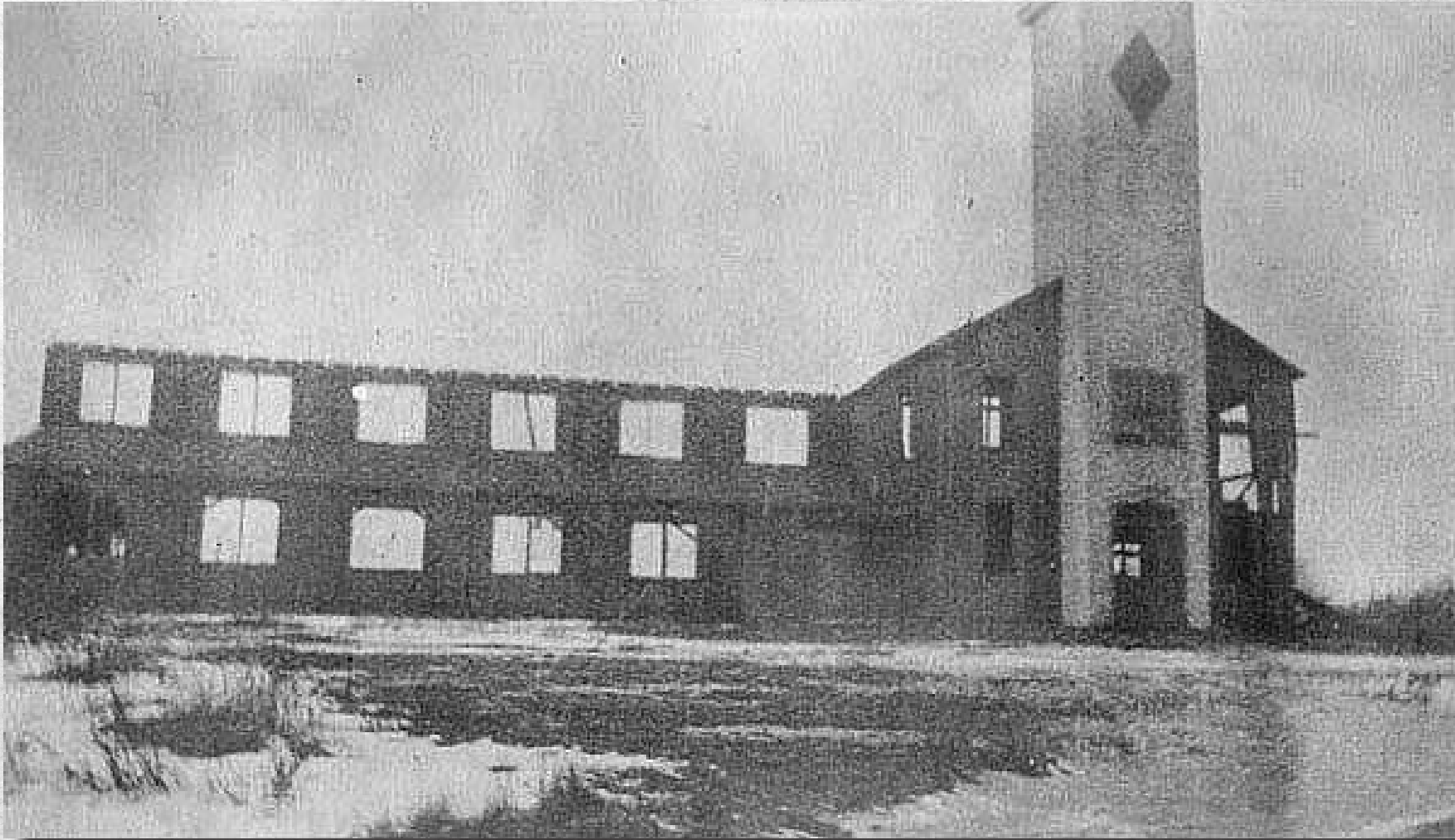


1917: rubble left by the explosion, unknown location



# Towards Explosion 2017

*The Halifax Explosion and the Aftermath*



1917: the remains of the Dartmouth Rink at Wyse Road following the explosion



# Towards Explosion 2017

*The Halifax Explosion and the Aftermath*

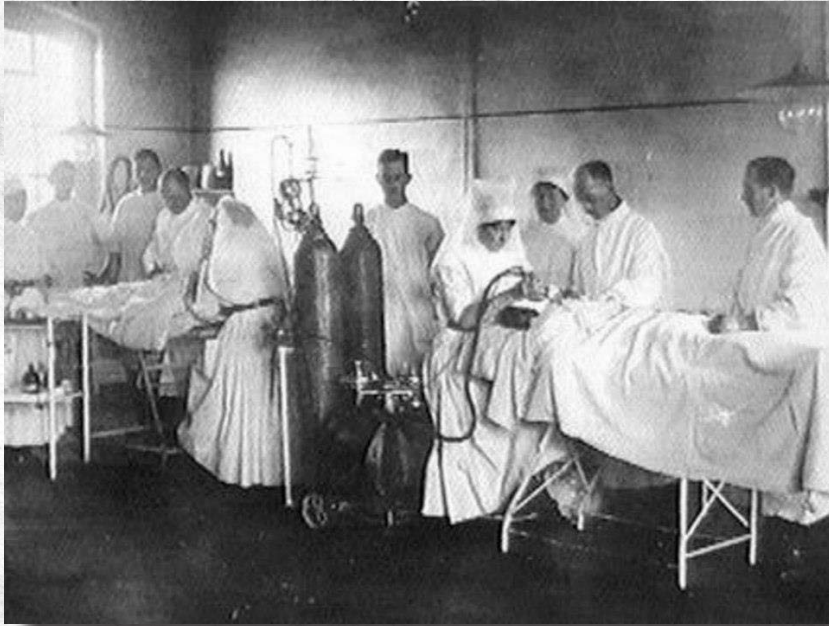


1917: the Halifax Exhibition Building destroyed by the Halifax Explosion



# Towards Explosion 2017

## *The Halifax Explosion and the Aftermath*



1917: medical team attending to Halifax Explosion victims at Victoria General Hospital



1917: Four Africville residents walking through Halifax after the Explosion



1917: the Intercolonial Railway at North end Barrington St. reopened two days after the Halifax Explosion



# Towards Explosion 2017

*The Halifax Explosion and the Aftermath*



1917: Coffins of explosion victims outside present-day Five Fisherman at Argyle and Carmichael St. At the time of the explosion, this building housed the Victoria School of Art and Design (later to become NSCAD) with artist Arthur Lismer as Principal.



# Towards Explosion 2017

## *20th Century Halifax Following the Explosion*

The Halifax Explosion killed approximately 2000 people and left thousands more injured. Much of the immediate city was left in ruins and varying levels of destruction spread for kilometers. Shortly after the event, a blizzard swept across the city causing further damage. Immediate rescue efforts were made by survivors from all walks of life. Additional relief efforts were provided from around Atlantic Canada and the U.S. Unfortunately, not all relief funding was distributed equally. The African Canadian community of Africville was devastated by the blast but received very little assistance from the city.

Halifax recovered and continued to grow through the 20th century. By virtue of its deep-water harbour, it flourished as a port city, shipping and receiving goods from around the world. Communities such as Uniacke Square and Mulgrave Park were formed to assist former residents of Africville. The true spirit of Africville lives on today through a church rebuilt in its original location.



1957: Gottingen Street



1972: MacKay Bridge, two years after the bridge's opening and the demolition of the last Africville houses



1919: arrival of SS Olympic in Halifax



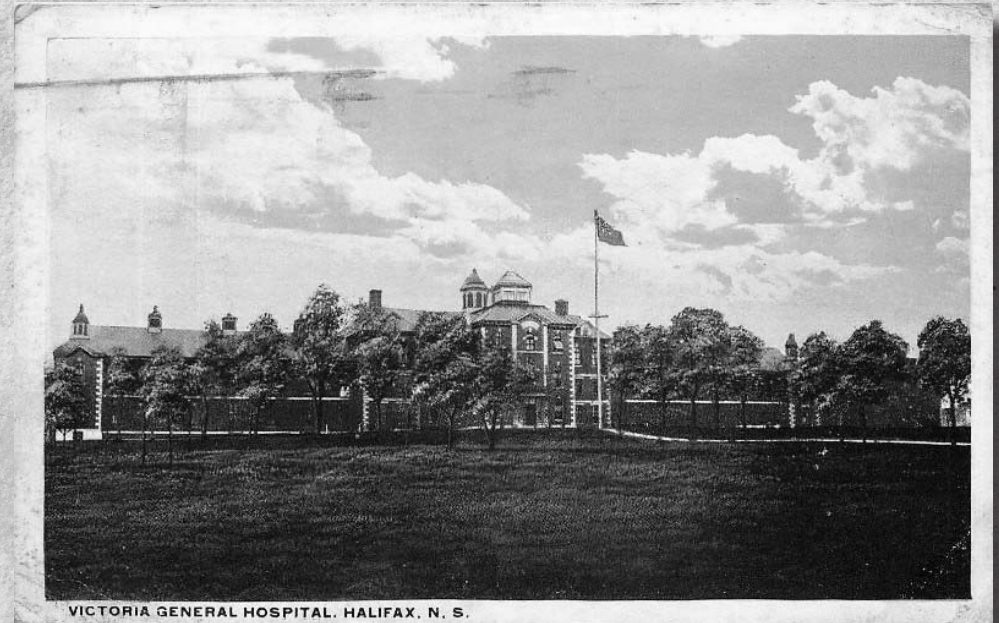
# Towards Explosion 2017

*20th Century Halifax Following the Explosion*



Bird's-eye View looking North, Halifax, N. S.

1924: Halifax, looking North toward Citadel Hill



VICTORIA GENERAL HOSPITAL. HALIFAX, N. S.

1924: the Victoria General Hospital



# Towards Explosion 2017

*20th Century Halifax Following the Explosion*



1927: demolition of the Halifax Exhibition Industrial Building at Windsor and Almon St.



# Towards Explosion 2017

*20th Century Halifax Following the Explosion*



1931: SS Olympia in port in Halifax after returning to Cunard White Line service



# Towards Explosion 2017

*20th Century Halifax Following the Explosion*



1942: loading TNT on merchant ship in Halifax



1944: Torpedo boats in Halifax Harbour



1945: Explosion of munitions at the magazine near Bedford



# Towards Explosion 2017

*20th Century Halifax Following the Explosion*



1940s: North End Taxi founders on Almon St.  
(Piercies smokestack in the background)

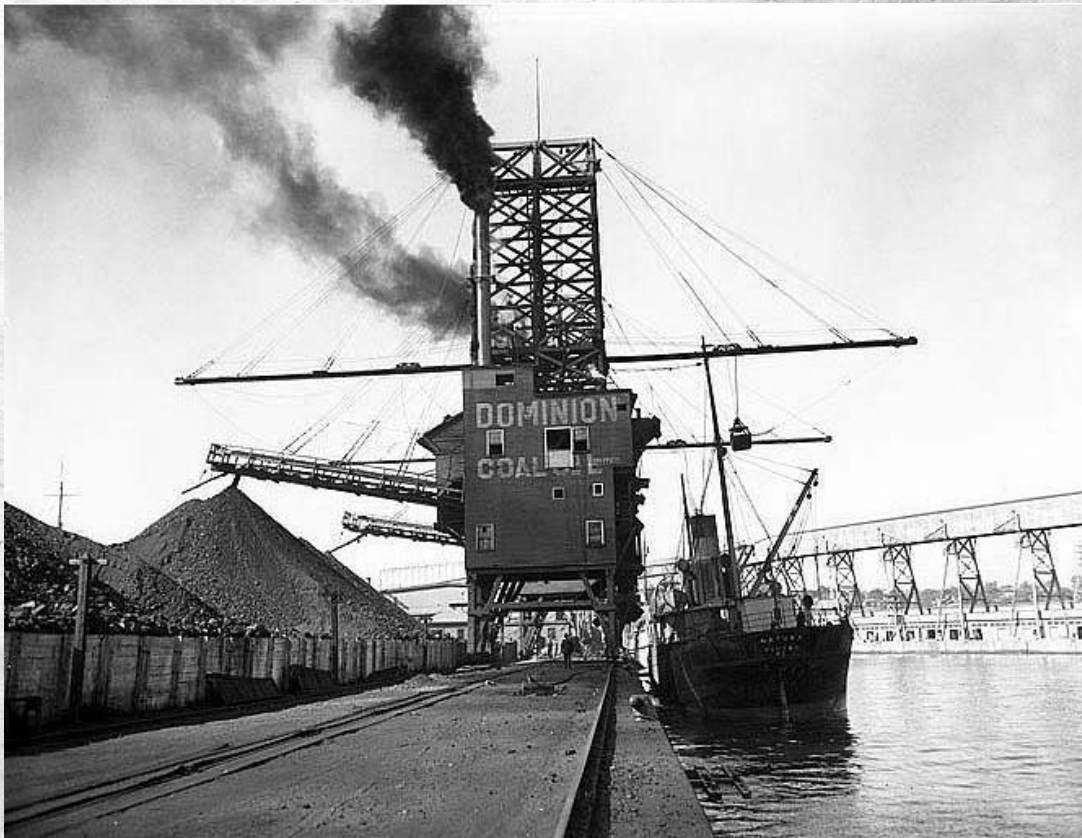


1941: Glebe Lands Wartime Housing at North end  
Barrington Street



# Towards Explosion 2017

*20th Century Halifax Following the Explosion*



1941: Dominion Coal, Halifax waterfront



1941: CIL Fertilizer Plant on Duffus Street



1941: CIL plant loading potash on the waterfront

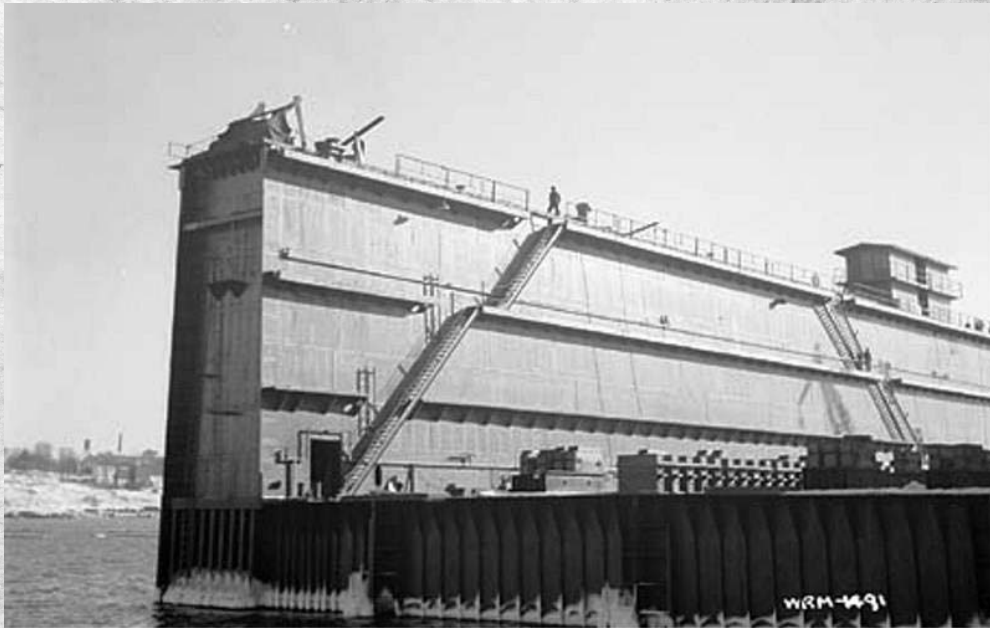


# Towards Explosion 2017

*20th Century Halifax Following the Explosion*



construction of the new  
Halifax Shipyard



1942: dry docks at the Halifax Shipyard in the narrows



1950s: Lathe workshop at the Halifax shipyard



# Towards Explosion 2017

*20th Century Halifax Following the Explosion*



1955: aerial view of downtown Halifax



# Towards Explosion 2017

*20th Century Halifax Following the Explosion*



1960s: unloading cars on the Halifax waterfront

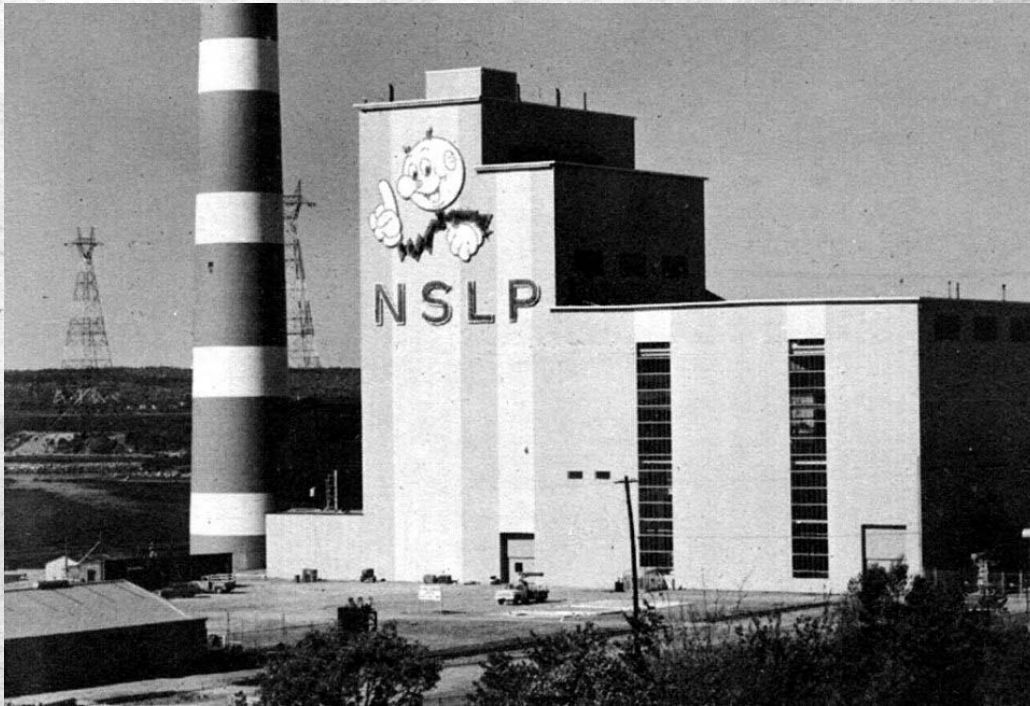


1960s: Volvo assembly plant arrivals in Eastern Passage



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*20th Century Halifax Following the Explosion*



1960s: Tufts Cove generating station (South side) and Logan Reddy Kilowatt sign (visible from Macdonald Bridge) erected 1964 and removed for expansion in 1969



1969: view of Macdonald Bridge from Dartmouth



# Towards Explosion 2017

*20th Century Halifax Following the Explosion*



1966: aerial view of Halifax Harbour



1974: Halterm container pier



1967: Canadian Centennial Naval Review (navies from Canada, Great Britain, Colombia, France, Denmark, Finland India, Japan, Netherlands, Sweden, Norway, Portugal, United States)



# Towards Explosion 2017

*20th Century Halifax Following the Explosion*



1960: Mulgrave Park on opening day



1965: Africville, North End Halifax



# Towards Explosion 2017

*20th Century Halifax Following the Explosion*



1965: aerial view of Africville



1965: CN Rail cuts through Africville



# Towards Explosion 2017

*20th Century Halifax Following the Explosion*



1967: the relocation of Africville residents, using city garbage trucks



2016: present day Mulgrave Park



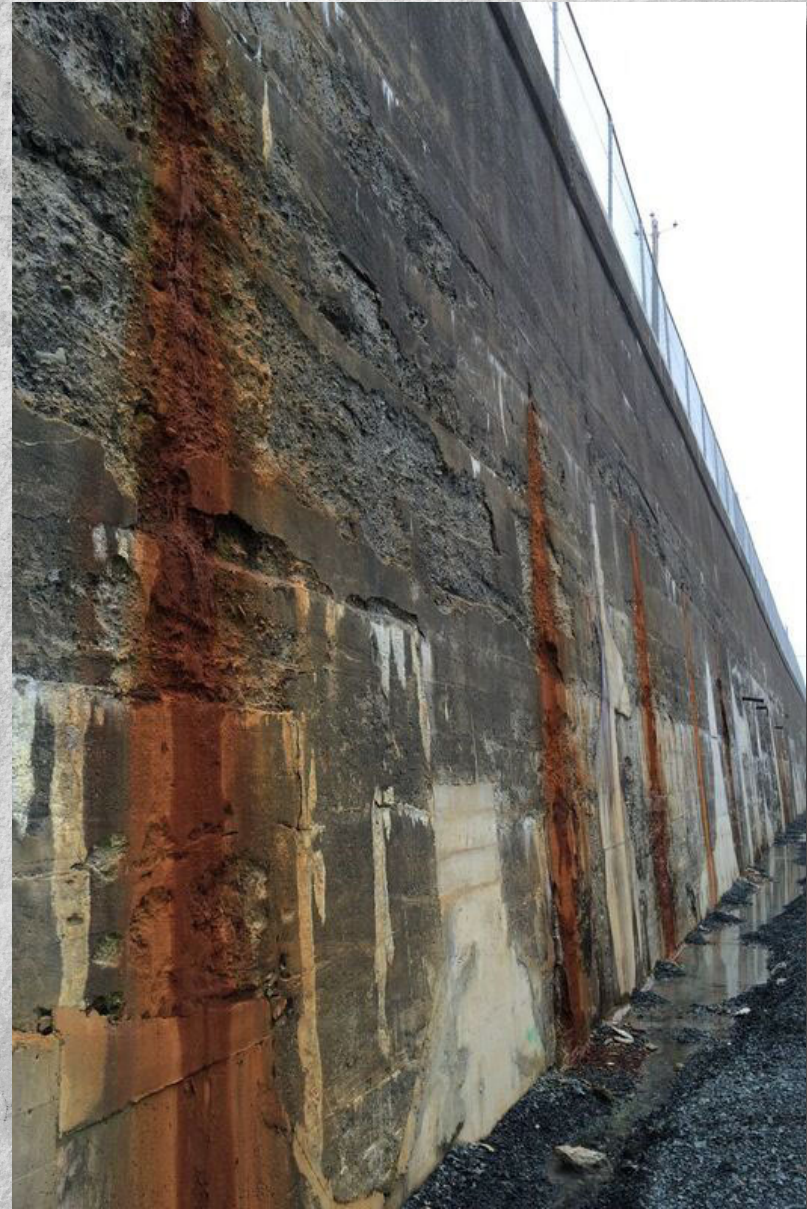
# Towards Explosion 2017

## *The Story of the Halifax Explosion Lives on and Continues to Teach*

In present-day Halifax, the stories and history of the Halifax Explosion live on and inspire our residents. There is always more to learn. Continual teaching of the Halifax Explosion's history has resulted in further discovery of the communities it affected in 1917 as well as in present-day. The act of walking provides a tremendous opportunity for discovery; taking relaxed walks through the debris field, observing the contemporary surroundings, and discovering artifacts have led to further inspiration for research on the Halifax Explosion. These walks can also be called a *dérive* in the study of psychogeography. This practice has been adapted at the Dalhousie School of Architecture Free Lab program. Students go on *dérives* to study and explore the debris field, using their findings to inform design/build projects employing both architectural and fine art practices.



2016: Halifax Psychogeographer's on a *dérive*



2016: weathered retaining wall at Halifax Shipyard



# Towards Explosion 2017

*The Story of the Halifax Explosion Lives on  
and Continues to Teach*



2016: an example of a *dérive* taken in Halifax during summer 2016



# Towards Explosion 2017

*The Story of the Halifax Explosion Lives on  
and Continues to Teach*



2016: the Mackay Bridge observed on a *dérive*



2016: the new shed at the Halifax Shipyard juxtaposed against a pre-war concrete retaining wall



2016: construction of the new shed at the Halifax Shipyard



# Towards Explosion 2017

*The Story of the Halifax Explosion Lives on  
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2016: community gardening in present-day Mulgrave Park



2016: Tuft's Cove seen across the narrows on a *dérive*



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2016: Dalhousie Free Lab students visiting the Halifax Explosion Monument at Needham Park on a *dérive*



2016: Dalhousie Free Lab students presenting progress on their Psychogeographer's Table design/build project



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2014: a model of the Acadia Sugar Refinery  
being burned



2015: Dalhousie Free Lab,  
XYZ Monument



2015: Dalhousie Free Lab, XYZ Monument



A wooden table displaying various objects: a piece of crumpled aluminum, a spool of red thread, a small bouquet of purple flowers, a rectangular metal plate with text, a small black object, a rectangular mirror with a black and white pattern, a metal buckle, a small drawing of a fox, a small drawing of a house, a small drawing of a textured surface, and a small card with text.

2016: Dalhousie Free Lab, research and artifact collection



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2016: samples of *black rain* found on a *dérive* through the Halifax Explosion debris field



2016: a dumpster of shattered glass found on a *dérive* through the Halifax Shipyard

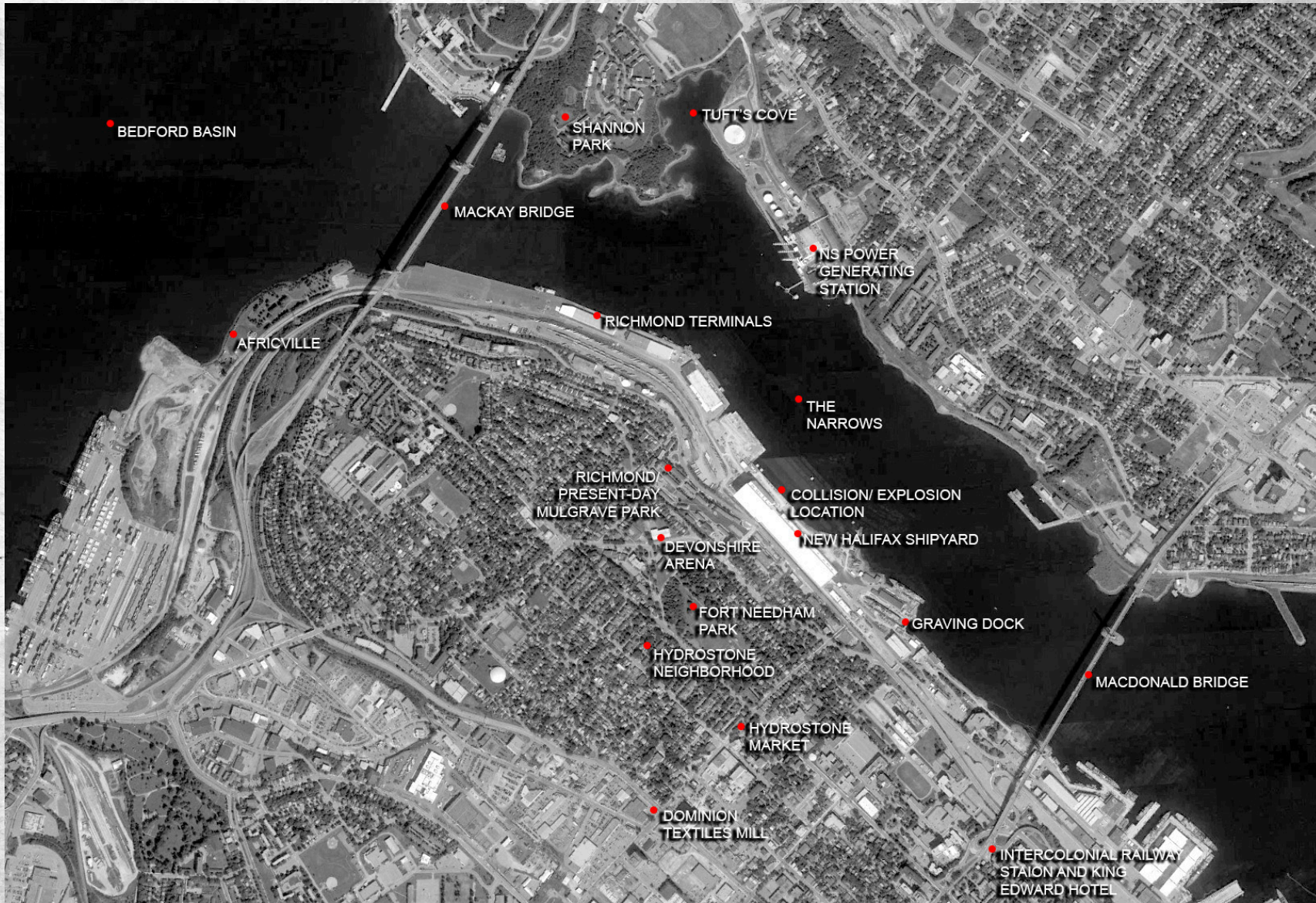


2015: a replica of an explosion mortality bag by NiS+TS



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map of key locations surrounding the Halifax Explosion site