

# BARRINGTON POST

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## THE TREE FOR BOSTON



This clock on City Hall shows the time of the Halifax Explosion. photo johntomlinson.ca

### NEW YEARS RESOLUTION CHALLENGE

If  
**YOU**  
could improve  
Barrington Street

What would  
**YOU**  
do?

Email your idea to  
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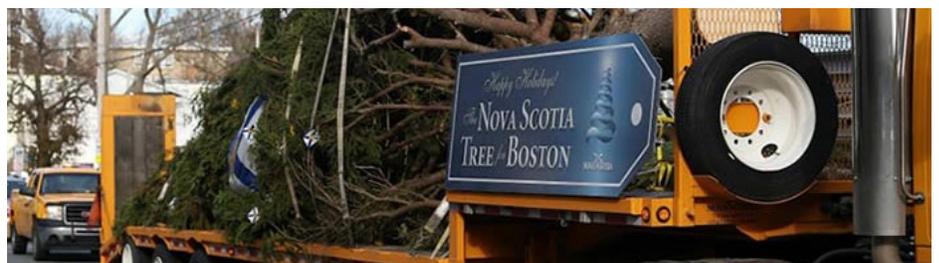
**Prize.**

The clock north clock on City Hall shows the exact time of the Halifax Explosion 9:04am, Dec 6, 1917. It stands as a memorial to those that were lost when the SS Mont-Blanc detonated with 2400 tonnes of warfare explosives. This was the world's largest accidental explosion by human hands; and could be felt and heard as far away as Cape Breton.

When SS Mont-Blanc, loaded with explosive material, collided with SS Imo in the harbour shortly before 9am, a fire ignited on Mont-Blanc and hundreds of people watched in concern from their windows. The tragic explosion that soon followed as a result of the fire was catastrophic as hundreds of homes were destroyed or damaged, and hundreds more were left with shattered windows. The death toll of this accident was about 2000 and 9000 left injured or perminately disabled. The medi-

cal treatment required for those who were blinded from their windows required rapid advances in research of eye care.

The immediate damage was terrifying but the blizzard that followed that night was a horrific coincidence. This was one of the largest blizzards on record for the city, and hundreds of people were now lacking adequate shelter. Rescue efforts were suspend until the storm subsided. Several more perished during the storm, but the aid Halifax received was bountiful. One such generous supporter, The City of Boston and the Boston Red Cross, dispatched an emergency relief train to Halifax immediately after hearing the news via telegraph. It is because of this notable and generous aid, that Halifax now cuts down two holiday trees each year: one for our own Grand Parade, and one for the City of Boston as a small gesture of gratitude.



A tree for Boston. photo novascotia.ca/treeforboston

# BROWSING ON BARRINGTON

BY HELEN HANRATTY

I hope readers will bear with me if I wander a bit away from my usual shopping expeditions on Barrington Street. This being December, my thoughts have turned to the Halifax explosion.

Like many people outside this city, I had heard about it but didn't really know a whole lot of the details. When I moved here, I made it a bit of a project for myself to learn more.

One of the things that caused me to ponder is the role that fate plays in our lives. According to what I have read, the Imo had been given permission to leave Halifax December 5th, but because the coal supplies required for its fuel did not arrive in time for it to get out to open sea before dark, it had to stay in harbour until the next morning. The Mont Blanc, on the other hand, had been slowed down on its way to Halifax by a snow storm and arrived too late to go into the main harbour. It had to wait until the next morning. Nobody could have foreseen the dire results from these events over which nobody had control.

At this time of the year, and having attended the send-off for

the Christmas tree to Boston, I am again impressed with the way disasters can bring out the best in all of us. I'm of the generation whose parents and/or grandparents had to leave Nova Scotia in order to find work. Many of them headed for Boston, so I've always thought of Bostonians as Maritimers with funny accents. (Please don't pass that comment on to any friends you might have in Boston. I mean it as a compliment, but they might not take it that way.)

In 1917, the people of Boston responded immediately to this disaster. Think about it – with no Twitter, no crowdfunding ability, no source of instant communication except the telegraph machine, within hours a trainload of volunteers and supplies was on its way from Boston to Halifax.

Help came in from other parts of the world as well. As might be expected, Nova Scotians from other parts of the province responded immediately. Fellow Haligonians were there from the beginning. I wouldn't even attempt to name the many heroes I've read about. There are so many it would take much more

space than I have here, but their actions and those of most of the people demonstrate that we Nova Scotians, wherever we were born, are a resilient people.

Because I never like to leave on a somber note, I must tell you my favourite story which I happened to hear on CBC radio last year. A young man was in school that day and when the explosion happened, the windows on his school blew in and many of his classmates were injured. He was saved because he had an apple in his desk and wanted to eat it, so he had pulled up the top of his desk so the teacher wouldn't see him. Fate/destiny, or whatever you want to call it, can work in many ways.

There are many books and articles available about this incredibly tragic event. For those interested, you might want to start on the HRM website: [http://www.halifax.ca/community/HalifaxCityHall/halifax\\_explosion.html](http://www.halifax.ca/community/HalifaxCityHall/halifax_explosion.html).

Of course, the Maritime Museum of the Atlantic is also an excellent source of information: <http://maritimemuseum.novascotia.ca/what-see-do/halifax-explosion> 

## UPCOMING EVENTS

**Halifax Explosion Memorial Service (December 6, 8:50am):** Meet at the Memorial Bell Tower, Fort Needham Park.

**Christmas on the Grand Parade (December 15, 7-8:30pm):** An evening of choral selections, readings, ensemble works and carol singing at St. Paul's Church.

**Party on the Parade (December 31, 9:30pm):** Grand Parade is the site of the region's largest New Year's Eve party, and this year is the 20th anniversary.

### Win What You Wish

Post a picture of something on your holiday wish list for a chance to win \$100

### #WINWHATYOUWISH

Post a picture of something on your holiday wish list from any Downtown Halifax business to Instagram or Twitter using #WinWhatYouWish, and you could win \$100 to make your wish come true. Contest runs until December 17.



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