



State Library of Massachusetts - Special Collections Department

Ms. Coll. 90

Massachusetts-Halifax Relief Committee Records, 1917-1919: Guide

COLLECTION SUMMARY

Creator: Massachusetts-Halifax Relief Committee.

Call Number: Ms. Coll. 90

Extent: 1 box (1 linear foot)

Preferred Citation Style: *Folder Title, Box Number #.* Massachusetts-Halifax Relief Committee Records. State Library of Massachusetts Special Collections.

About This Finding Aid: Description based on DACS.

Provenance: Received from the Massachusetts Committee on Public Safety, March, 1921.

Processed by: Finding aid prepared by Brenda Howitson, 1997; updated by Abigail Cramer, July, 2012.

Abstract: This collection documents the efforts of the Massachusetts Halifax Relief Committee to offer assistance to Halifax, Nova Scotia after a destructive explosion in 1917.

SCOPE AND CONTENT

The collection contains reports on the Halifax disaster and reports prepared by the Massachusetts-Halifax Relief Committee. Minutes of meetings of the Halifax Branch of this Committee are included as are sample documents and copies of letters from those aided by the Committee. A large collection of photographs (79) of the damage in Halifax and the efforts to repair it is included at the end of the collection.

HISTORICAL NOTE

On December 6, 1917, a tremendous explosion occurred in Halifax, Nova Scotia, that was the result of a collision in the harbor between two ships, one carrying compounds used in explosives. The disaster caused great destruction and loss of life. Almost all buildings within one half mile of the harbor were leveled, and those within a one mile zone were badly damaged. There were 1,800 people killed, 3,000 seriously wounded, and 10,000 more in need of medical attention. Property losses from the explosion were estimated at above \$30,000,000. The news reached the State House in Boston at 11:00 a.m. on December 6, and Governor Samuel W. McCall immediately sent a telegram to the Mayor of Halifax offering unlimited assistance. He also called a meeting of the Massachusetts Public Safety Committee to take action concerning the relief work. A train with doctors, nurses and medical supplies was sent that night to Halifax. On December 14, the unit left Halifax for Boston and on the trip home formed the Massachusetts-Halifax Relief Committee. Their goal was to raise money from the citizens of Massachusetts to be used to help those who had lost furnishings and belongings to refurnish their homes. A sum of \$500,000 was raised for this effort. Over 1800 homes were refurnished and \$25,000 was also spent for the care and education of the numerous people who were blinded in the explosion.

ADMINISTRATIVE INFORMATION

Arrangement

The records are arranged in their original order. The photographs are arranged and numbered to correspond to the list of photographs received with the collection.

Conditions Governing Access

This collection is open for research during the Special Collections Department's regular hours.

Conditions Governing Reproduction and Use

Copyright restrictions may apply. Requests for permission to publish material from this collection should be discussed with Special Collections staff.

Languages and Scripts

The materials are entirely in English.

Immediate Source of Acquisition

Received from the Massachusetts Committee on Public Safety, March, 1921.

Container List

Folder #	Folder Title	Date
1	Report of Halifax disaster by Gilmour, Rothery Insurance & Co. of Boston and New York	Dec. 6, 1917
2	Report of the Halifax Relief Expedition to Governor Samuel W. McCall; misc. reports and memos	1918
3	Plans (blueprints) of city of Halifax and for the Governor McCall Apartments	1917-1918
4	Minutes of meetings of the Massachusetts-Halifax Relief Committee	Dec. 10, 1917- Jan. 12, 1918
5	Report by Dr. Victor Heiser to Committee on effect of disaster on health	Aug. 13, 1918
6	Report of the Massachusetts-Halifax Relief Committee, Halifax Branch	May 19, 1919
7-10	Minutes of meetings of Halifax Branch (4 folders)	Jan. 8, 1918- May 19, 1919
11	Copy of the documents relating to a sample case; includes list of family members and descriptions of injuries, lists of household goods lost, correspondence, letters of appreciation from family	1918-1919
12	List of names and addresses of all persons and institutions who received gifts of furniture	undated
13	Transcripts of selected letters of appreciation received by the Halifax Branch	1918-1919
14	Letters transmitting reports from Halifax Branch to the Massachusetts-Halifax Relief Committee, Boston	1918
15	Act to incorporate the Massachusetts Halifax Health Commission, House of Assembly, Nova Scotia	May, 1919
16	Photograph of people outside Governor McCall Apartments, on	1918

	<p>the occasion of visit by Governor of Massachusetts Samuel W. McCall, Nov. 8, 1918. First Row – Boys and girls residing in Governor McCall Apartments. Second row, standing. Left to right – (1) E.F. Horrigan, (2) Hon. Samuel W. McCall, Governor of Massachusetts, (3) G. Fred Pearson, Chairman Massachusetts – Halifax Relief Committee (Halifax Branch), (4) Capt. Hathaway, Governor’s Aide, (5) Ralph P. Bell, Secretary Halifax Relief Commission, (6) Dr. G.B. Cutten, Director of Rehabilitation, Halifax Relief Commission. Last Row – Chauffeur, G. Landry, seated in car. Note – Massachusetts State flag flying on automobile with the Stars and Stripes.</p> <p><u>Governor McCall Apartments</u>, Massachusetts Avenue, Halifax, N.S. were the largest apartment houses in the world, sheltering three hundred and twenty families or nearly 2,000 people. Erected by the Halifax Relief Commission to shelter some of the families rendered homeless by the explosion of December 6th, 1917. Completed in three hundred and twenty working hours.</p>	
17	List of photographs received with the collection	Undated
Photos 1-79	Numbered to match list above; all have captions attached to back.	1918-1919
Photo 1	Railway yards near scene of the disaster showing temporary buildings being erected to house the work men engaged in cleaning up. The narrows at Halifax Harbor to the right.	Jan. 10, 1918
Photo 2	Ruins of a car erecting shed.	Feb. 11, 1918
Photo 3	Another view of the ruins of the car erecting shed at Nova Scotia Works.	Feb. 11, 1918
Photo 4	Railway yards near scene of the disaster. Explosion occurred at spot marked (x) to the right. Note the steam boat which was thrown up on the top of the wharf by the force of the explosion.	Jan. 10, 1918
Photo 5	The spot where the explosion occurred marked (x). The wrecked steam boat in the foreground is the Stella Maris, which was making an endeavor to tow the Mont Blanc when the explosion	Jan. 10, 1918

	occurred.	
Photo 6	Ruins of the Sugar Refinery. A ten story building.	Jan. 10, 1918
Photo 7	The wrecked buildings on Barrington Street, looking over the dry docks towards Tufts Cove, Dartmouth.	Jan. 10, 1918
Photo 8	Barrington Street about one half of a mile north of the place where the explosion occurred.	Jan. 10, 1918
Photo 9	The Alexander McKay School; a brick and concrete building which had just been completed. The interior of this building was badly wrecked. Now used as a boarding house, and with a wooden addition at the back accommodating over 1800 men.	
Photo 10	The railway yards near the scene of the disaster. Concrete building on the right marked (x) Hillis' Foundry. Immediately after the explosion a tidal wave swept of the side of the hill to this foundry.	Jan. 10, 1918
Photo 11	View from Barrington Street showing the wreck of Lunch's Bakery. Belgian Relief Ship Imo ashore on the Dartmouth side of the Harbor.	Jan. 10, 1918
Photo 12	Railway yards near the scene of the disaster. Large brick building at the extreme right Wellington Barracks.	Jan. 10, 1918
Photo 13	Barrington Street and Hillis' Foundry on the left. Scene of the disaster marked with (x).	Jan. 10, 1918
Photo 14	Shore immediately adjacent to the scene of the disaster. Steam boat thrown up on top of the wharf at the extreme right.	Jan. 10, 1918
Photo 15	Railway yards near the scene of the disaster. Wreckage principally lumber deal, etc., thrown off of the adjacent docks.	Jan. 10, 1918
Photo 16	Burned District. The narrows of Halifax Harbor marked with (x). Bedford Basin marked with (xx).	Jan. 10, 1918
Photo 17	A church (?).	
Photo 18	Robie Street Methodist Church, about two and one half miles from the scene of the disaster.	

Photo 19	Railway yards just north of the scene of the disaster. Note the freight car marked (x), which was washed from the Halifax side to the Dartmouth side by a tidal wave. The narrows of Halifax Harbor marked (xx). Note the ships in Bedford Basin marked (xxx).	Jan. 10, 1918
Photo 20	Another view of the railway yards showing the progress of the cleaning up.	Jan. 10, 1918
Photo 21	D.A.R. freight shed, Halifax, N.S.	
Photo 22	Canadian Government railway station, Halifax, N.S.	
Photo 23	Railway pier #4 showing progress of repairs.	
Photo 24	Powder House of the C.G.R.	
Photo 25	St. Patrick's Church, Halifax, N.S., nearly a mile from the scene of the disaster.	
Photo 26	Grafton Street Methodist Church, nearly two miles from the scene of the disaster.	
Photo 27	Interior of the Alexander McKay School, showing the destructive force of the explosion.	
Photo 28	Interior of the Alexander McKay School, showing the destructive force of the explosion.	
Photo 29	Interior of the Alexander McKay School, showing the destructive force of the explosion.	
Photo 30	Interior of the Alexander McKay School, showing the destructive force of the explosion.	
Photo 31	Interior of the Alexander McKay School, showing the destructive force of the explosion.	
Photo 32	Interior of the Alexander McKay School, showing the destructive force of the explosion.	

Photo 33	Engine shed at Halifax, about one mile from the scene of the disaster.	
Photo 34	Interior of the Alexander McKay School.	
Photo 35	Exterior of Round House about a mile from the scene of the disaster.	
Photo 36	Shops C.G.R. adjacent to the Round House.	
Photo 37	Another view of the Round House C.G.R.	
Photo 38	Repair shop of the C.G.R.	
Photo 39	Interior of the C.G.R. shop.	
Photo 40	C.G.R. shops.	
Photo 41	C.G.R. Round House.	
Photo 42	Another view of the C.G.R. Round House.	
Photo 43	C.G.R. shops.	
Photo 44	C.G.R. shops.	
Photo 45	C.G.R. shops.	
Photo 46	C.G.R. Depot.	
Photo 47	C.G.R. Depot.	

Photo 48	House. Showing in this case, apparently, the downward force exerted by the explosion.	Jan. 26, 1918
Photo 49	House. Showing apparently the outward force exerted by the explosion.	Jan. 26, 1918
Photo 50	The damage caused by the force of the explosion over a mile away from the scene of the disaster.	Jan. 26, 1918
Photo 51	Another view showing freaks of the explosion.	Jan. 26, 1918
Photo 52	Damage caused by the explosion.	Jan. 26, 1918
Photo 53	Damage caused by the explosion.	Jan. 26, 1918
Photo 54	Damage caused by the explosion.	Jan. 26, 1918
Photo 55	Damage caused by the explosion.	Jan. 26, 1918
Photo 56	Damage caused by the explosion.	Jan. 26, 1918
Photo 57	Damage caused by the explosion.	Jan. 26, 1918
Photo 58	The dry docks to the right. The ruins in the center of the picture are all that remains of the Sugar Refinery. Hillis' Foundry may be observed on the hill on the left marked (x). The explosion occurred about 2000 feet north of this place.	Jan. 10, 1918
Photo 59	Interior of Alexander McKay School.	
Photo 60	The Administration Buildings for the Relief Commission erected at the foot of the Citadel, showing progress after 9 days work.	Jan. 30, 1918 [?]
Photo 61	<u>The Governor McCall Apartments</u> . Situated on Halifax Exhibition Grounds. Massachusetts Avenue on the left. Other streets are called Maine Avenue, Rhode Island Avenue and Endicott Avenue.	Jan. 26, 1918

	40 buildings, 8 Apartments each, for 320 families approximately 2000 people - built in 320 working hours by Reconstruction Committee. Work begun Christmas Day.	
Photo 62	<u>Apartment Houses.</u> (Military Type) These buildings are 96 feet long, 46 feet wide and 2 stories high. They contain 16 Apartments each. View from Bell Road.	Jan. 26, 1918
Photo 63	<u>Apartment Houses.</u> (Military Type) These buildings are 96 feet long, 46 feet wide and 2 stories high. They contain 16 Apartments each. View from Bell Road.	Jan. 26, 1918
Photo 64	Dining-room and Bunk House immediately in the rear of the Alexander McKay School.	Jan. 26, 1918
Photo 65	Governor McCall Apartments, showing coal sheds, one for each apartment at the end.	Jan. 26, 1918
Photo 66	A bird's eye view of Governor McCall Apartments. Massachusetts Avenue 170 feet wide on left. Maine Avenue marked (x). Rhode Island Avenue marked (xx). Endicott Avenue marked (xxx). Photo taken on the day on which the last house was "roofed in". Note the American, British and French Flags.	Jan. 26, 1918
Photo 67	<u>Apartments on South Common.</u> "Roofing in" the last building on Endicott Avenue.	Jan. 26, 1918
Photo 68	<u>Apartments on South Common.</u> "Roofing in" the last building on Endicott Avenue.	Jan. 26, 1918
Photo 69	Temporary housing for workmen of contractor, clearing up devastated area.	Jan. 26, 1918
Photo 70	Plan of the City of Halifax. Each black dot represents a pin, which was placed on the original map to indicate that temporary repairs had been to the house. At the time photo was taken nearly 3000 houses had been temporarily repaired.	[Jan. 23, 1918]
Photo 71	<u>Apartments on South Common.</u> "Roofing in" the last building on Endicott Avenue.	Jan. 26, 1918
Photo 72	Governor McCall Apartments on Exhibition Grounds.	Jan. 26, 1918

Photo 73	Military Apartments at foot of the Citadel.	Jan. 26, 1918
Photo 74	View of progress of construction on South Common.	Jan. 26, 1918
Photo 75	Another view of progress of construction on South Common.	Jan. 26, 1918
Photo 76	Progress on the South Common, showing scenes under which working men labor.	Jan. 26, 1918
Photo 77	Last Apartment House of the Exhibition Grounds being "roofed in."	Jan. 26, 1918
Photo 78	Showing the vagaries of the explosion.	
Photo 79	Administration Buildings for the Halifax Relief Commission at the foot of the Citadel. Photo taken 5 days after work commenced.	